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Christopher John Short HND

RELIGIOSITY IN RURAL ENGLAND:

the examination of Towler's conventional religious types

MPhil thesis

Social Sciences: Sociology

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Abstract

In 1984 Towler published *The Need for Certainty*, which sets out five ideal-types of conventional religiosity; exemplarism, conversionism, theism, gnosticism and traditionalism. This thesis aims to examine the nature of religious belief, as defined by Towler, in a sample of rural parishioners interviewed during the Rural Church Project (1988-91). Towler's work originated from letters written to John Robinson, then Bishop of Woolwich, when he published *Honest to God*. Consequently, his work is empirical but qualitative rather than quantitative. A weakness he recognises by indicating that he has only revealed the spectrum of religious belief rather than examining it. The Social Science Citation Index shows Towler's work to have been widely reviewed but sparingly cited between 1984-95. This thesis seeks to be strong where Towler's work is weak by using a quantitative and representative sample. The data is divided into religious belief sub-samples using 12 statements from which respondents selected one as being closest to their own religious outlook. The five sub-samples which correspond with Towler's religious types represent 44% of the whole sample. Each sub-sample is assessed against religious characteristics which Towler attributes to that type; in conversionism and traditionalism the compatibility is good, there are similarities with theism and gnosticism but little common ground for exemplarism. The sociography of each sub-sample is developed and a similar picture of compatibility appears. The remainder of the sample chose two statements. This thesis suggests these two sub-samples, shown to be religiously and sociographically distinct, constitute conventional religious types which did not appear in Towler's data. The first involves those who are still 'searching for the Truth', they are perhaps similar to Hedonism as defined by Wilson (1985). The second group are religiously uncertain and detached but not irreligious, perhaps representing agnostics.

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Chapter One

Introduction and Literature Review

Within the sociology of religion, the study of extant, well-established religious traditions (as opposed to new religious movements) has attracted varying levels of interest among its followers. Moreover, since the founding fathers recognised and predicted a shift from a sacred to a secular society the sociology of religion has been principally concerned with the demise of its subject matter. In the mid-nineteenth century there was a broad consensus among sociologists such as Comte and Marx that, as society matured, the influence of religion would decline. However, Marx concluded that religion would be absent from a modern society whereas Comte suggests that religion would be reconstructed to form the foundation of future societies (Bocock and Thompson 1985, Robertson 1969 and Sharf 1970).

Theories suggesting that the influence of religion would continue to decline were developed by Weber and Durkheim writing at the turn of the century. Weber presented a more scientific framework for the study of religion which categorised actions, defining them as 'activity with meaning'. He suggested that such meaningful actions would replace religion as the basis for social actions in society (Bocock and Thompson 1985 and Martin 1967). In such a framework there would be no return to old religious values because social experience and scientific knowledge had revealed the constraints of organised religion. In a similar way Durkheim promised a new individual basis for moral authority. However, unlike Weber, Durkheim based this on the premise that mass religion has its origins in primitive society; thus as society developed, religion would be replaced with a new, more complex, code based around an

individual's faith in society (Robertson 1969 and Martin 1967).

In the decades after the Second World War mainstream religiosity was again seen as an important phenomenon by sociologists. However, in Europe attention was focused on the decline in active adherents and therefore a reduction in the perceived influence of mainstream religion. By contrast, in the USA attendance levels remained high in the mainstream denominations and with it an influence on society. However, sociologists such as Berger (1967) and Luckmann (1967) were beginning to steer the sociology of religion away from the study of mainstream churches and denominations and into the realm of individual belief and new forms of religion. The attraction of new religious movements together with the continued debate over the theory of secularisation served the sociology of religion well, but to the detriment of studies concerning the mainstream churches and their adherents.

Over the past two decades there has been some academic activity in the study of the established church and other mainstream denominations. However, the fact that mainstream denominations still attract a large proportion of the population into church on the average Sunday and a sizable number remain members are important reasons to investigate the enduring nature of religious belief and practice. Furthermore, the predicted growth of the ecumenical movement as a defence mechanism against secularisation has been restricted to discussions among the elite and some grass roots activity. Consequently, there is ample evidence of

talks on the subject of closer co-operation between various denominations, the overall structure has remained largely unaltered. Only one merger has taken place between mainstream churches in Britain, the Congregational Union of England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England which created the United Reformed Church in 1972.

Sociological studies have been undertaken from a number of different methodological perspectives. One such perspective is an empirical approach centring on the spatial and social distribution of adherents and historical change. The work of Gay (1971) and Currie, Gilbert and Horsley (1977) in the seventies has been followed up by Gill's study of church decline (1991 and 1993). There are also less academic but numerous studies by religious organisations such as MARC Europe (Brierley 1991, see also Bible Society 1980 and Harrison 1983).

In-depth studies of traditional religious structures and their adaption to a changing society can be seen in the work of Hornsby-Smith on Roman Catholic beliefs and practices (Hornsby-Smith 1987 and Hornsby-Smith et al 1984) and the Rural Church Project on the Church of England in rural areas (Davies et al 1991). Denominations themselves are sometimes given to self-examination of this type, the two Anglican reports, *Faith in the City* and *Faith in the Countryside*, being good examples (ACORA 1990 and ACUPA 1985).

There is also a great deal of work showing changes in moral values and individual beliefs. For example, the work of the European Values System Study Group (EVSSG) shows a slow but

widespread disengagement from affiliation to and participation within the institutional churches. However, other religious values such as the belief in some sort of supreme being appear to be retained (Abrams et al 1985 and Barker D et al 1992). Davie (1987, 1990a and 1990b) has initiated a recent debate concerning the relationship between personal beliefs and church membership. She relates figures of falling denominational affiliation to seemingly stable beliefs in religious values: resulting in the phrase 'believing without belonging' (see also Winter and Short 1993).

Falling somewhere between the study of new religious movements and mainstream religious practice are studies of 'folk religion' (Clark 1982), 'implicit religion' (Bailey 1983 and 1986a) or 'popular religion' (Vrijhof and Waardenburg 1979). These focus on varying aspects of personal beliefs which are detached from any institutional base and reflect on their importance within social relationships. It is within such a diverse environment in the sociology of religion that Robert Towler published *The Need for Certainty* (1984).

The Need for Certainty

The publication in 1984 of *The Need for Certainty: a sociological study of conventional religion* was the result of work spread over a decade. After a gestation of this length the book is perhaps a surprisingly slim volume, running to 109 pages of text. This is even more surprising considering the main reason for the lengthy interim was the massive data source released to Towler by John Robinson, the

author of *Honest to God* (1963), whose book caused much public interest through press and media coverage. The result was that over four thousand people wrote to John Robinson, then Bishop of Woolwich, expressing a polarity of sentiments from outrage to delight. Such a response is far from common and Towler's work only exists because John Robinson had the foresight to keep the letters and release them to him.

At the time of the book's publication the sociology of religion was dominated by examinations of 'new religious movements'. As a consequence *The Need for Certainty* was seen as having a "refreshing quality to it: in part because of its focus on the 'ordinary' rather than the exotic, and partly because it is quarrying at an unusual source" (Brown 1986). Towler argued strongly that the data source enabled the sociology of religion to refocus itself on the area of beliefs and the range of meaning systems that exist within a seemingly autonomous group. Indeed, he claimed it was necessary to redirect itself to examining the common, so that it was able to understand the exotic. Towler presents his data as an analysis of one religious tradition and predominantly of one denomination, the Church of England. The variety of believers, he suggests, "might be at the same church service . . . , singing the same hymns, saying Amen to the same prayers and listening to the same sermon" (Towler 1984:1). In essence Towler was suggesting that there was a significant variance of belief within a church congregation which would show itself voluntarily in the composition of these letters.

In *The Need for Certainty* Towler claimed to have produced an empirical set of religious ideal-types, in Weber's sense of the term, which cover the whole spectrum of religious belief within the mainstream Christian churches (1984:17). Thus it is important to compare his work with similar studies within the sociology of religion rather than with studies dealing with a different group of adherents. The adherents may be well studied but the method of analysis is not, for the source of data that Towler used was novel and no attempt was made at statistically determining how common or rare each of the types were. He clearly states that he has done little more than take the first difficult step towards understanding the varieties of religious belief existing within one religious tradition. He consequently left it for others to examine the types he had defined.

To date no such examination appears to have been completed¹. There has been no examination of these religious types using a random sample of any size, type or creed. Yet the substance of Towler's types is suitable for such an examination and he even prepares some of the ground in the introductory chapter. Indeed, that is the aim of this thesis, to examine and test the existence and substance of the religious types that Towler specified in *The Need for Certainty*.

Towler provides no solid evidence that the source of his

1. The author acknowledges the current work of Professor Kenneth Thompson, Open University, in analysing letters written to David Jenkins while he was Bishop of Durham. The article is reviewed later in this chapter. For further details see Thompson 1991:282.

letters are, in fact, from the minority of active adherents within the established church. One of the first deductions that Towler made was that many of the authors of the letters written to John Robinson had not read the book themselves. Nearly all the letters made scant reference to the book before proceeding 'What I believe is ...'.

The book was published by SPCK, a Christian publisher with a chain of shops, largely aimed at the religious market. It follows, therefore, that most of those purchasing the book were likely to be of ostensibly Christian adherence.

However, this does not identify the majority of the letter writers, as Towler stated that the authors of the letters are not necessarily readers of the book and therefore not always purchasers. The information that acted as the catalyst for most letters was acquired via a television interview or newspaper article. The book would almost certainly have been a topic of discussion and comment on the various types of religious programme. Indeed, it has been described as the most talked about religious book of the century (Barker 1990).

Work carried out by Svennevig et al (1988) notes that 15% of those with a 'very low' religiosity score and over a third of those with a 'low' score stated they 'paid attention' to a religious programme when it came onto the television. The number 'paying attention' to religious programmes continues to increase with religiosity: up to 79% of those who are very committed. Towler concluded that most letters outlined the author's beliefs and where they diverged from those expressed in the book *Honest to God*. In this sense it is

likely that the authors are sufficiently convinced about their beliefs to put them to paper. However, this does not confirm them as belonging to the minority of the church-going population. Indeed, within the Appendix of *The Need for Certainty* Towler includes the Catalogue of Themes which he derived from the *Honest to God* letters. The category 'other specific beliefs' contains 24 different entries under 21 various subheadings thus revealing the diversity of religious belief contained within the letters.

Towler supports the active adherent assumption by commenting only that "because of the nature of the data on which the study was based ... these people attended an Anglican church in England" (1984:1). The evidence for an Anglican response is presumably that the author of *Honest to God* was at the time a Bishop in the Church of England. Yet it may be that it is precisely this position that motivates an active non-Anglican or a nominal Anglican to take up the pen. An active non-Anglican may stress the folly of such liberal beliefs and the irresponsible use of a position of spiritual influence. On the other hand, a nominal Anglican may state legitimately that the book and the position of the author provide the very reasons for which they themselves are not active.

The problem for Towler and any social scientist looking at his work, is that we are unable to shed light on the age, gender, class or religious commitment (the sociography) of those writing the letters. Consequently there is no sociography and, while the existence of these religious types is proved, their extent, breadth and structure is more

speculative. It is a shame that Towler made no attempt to quantify the sample he used. For example, recording the age, gender and religious information where quoted would give a minimum indication of the type of sample. Such facts are often contained within a letter. Indeed the quotes that Towler uses in illustrating his five religious types provide some examples: "two years ago, I was confirmed and entered the Anglican community ..." (1984:24), "As a widow I have found ..." (1984:24), "Before my conversion ..." (1984:40), "I am a woman in middle age ..." (1984:45), "I am only a twenty-one year old girl ..." (1984:46), "I don't go to church ... I am 62 now, and a widow ..." (1984:76), "I am an old person of eighty-six, ..." (1984:88). Such an exercise would be arduous but the data could be most helpful in further developing a full picture of the research findings.

Towler's desire to refocus the argument was based on the premise that previous attempts to assess the existence of beliefs had been flawed at the methodological stage because of assumptions made by the researchers. Many of the points he makes in *The Need for Certainty* can be found in early examples of his work (see Towler 1974:145-149). He argues that Wuthnow (1976) identified four meaning systems from theoretical work available at the time, thereby, possibly confirming their extent and existence but not the existence of other meaning systems. Stark and Bainbridge (1980) in attempting to construct a 'general theory of religion' only included empirically-established attitudes thereby excluding those falling outside documented conventional beliefs. Even McCready and Greeley (1976) and Glock and Piazza (1981) who

acknowledge the absence of literature to guide empirical studies into belief proceed at the initial stage by assuming something about the types of belief to be studied. Towler insists that empirical work can only begin when the whole spectrum to be investigated has been constructed. Consequently, he cites the pioneering work of the social psychologist William James on the nature of religious experience (James 1960), wherein freely given accounts from a range of sources enabled him to construct ideal types. James used extant independent data in his non-quantitative empirical research to highlight the existence and characteristics of religious experience rather than the proportion of each type. While not comparing his findings with those of James, Towler suggests the focus of *The Need for Certainty* is the same. The letters resulting from *Honest to God* provided a large data set, free from any influence of social science, formulated in the author's own words without the constraints and influences of a researcher's questionnaire or prompting.

The letters were assembled and logged by Towler and three research assistants who then proceeded to conduct a content analysis on each letter to identify themes. At the end of this first stage, half of the letters had been read by at least two researchers independently and a definitive catalogue produced which was checked against the remaining letters. The second stage was undertaken by Towler himself and he carefully designates this process synthesis, rather than analysis, and subjective, rather than objective. The result after much reading, re-reading, classifying and re-classifying was first several, then seven and finally five

types of religiosity. These are outlined and analysed later in the thesis. The remainder of this chapter will deal with the reception and use of Towler's work in the academic worlds of social science and more specifically, the sociology of religion.

Using the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) it was revealed that a total of five book reviews of *The Need for Certainty* were published between 1984 and 1986. The first published review was by Driver in *New Society* and he identifies the central aim of the book as examining the various ways of being 'conventionally religious' and thereby not 'ignoring the normal in favour of the eccentric or the extreme' (Driver 1984).

This was further drawn out by Brown (1986) when he reviewed Wallis' *The Elementary Forms of the New Religious Life* alongside *The Need for Certainty* in *Sociological Review*. He makes the point that "the two books show that we understand more about the former (*New Religious Life*) than the latter" (Brown 1986). He refers not just to the social structure but to social change and its effect on the survival of doctrines and churches and the allegiance of their active and passive members. Bailey in his review for *Sociological Analysis* notes that it is Towler's wish to encourage an adequate sociological study of conventional religion which will then better equip those involved in the study of more remote areas (Bailey 1986b).

Apart from the first review by Driver, all the reviewers recognise the methodological advance made by Towler.

McCaffery, in a review for *Sociology*, comments that "Towler believes himself to have been preserved (from making implicit claims to omniscience) by his accessing the mass of empirical data constituted by these letters sent to Robinson" (McCaffery 1985). This remark compares well with those made by Bailey who acknowledges the competence of the content analysis and Johnson in the American journal *Contemporary Sociology* who states that "the great virtue of Towler's book is that it maps out sectors of the British religious landscape that were not known" (Johnson 1986).

All the reviewers find that in some sense or other Towler's five ideal-types "provide a spectrum of recognisable Christian belief" (McCaffery 1985). However, not all the reviewers agree that the areas Towler has mapped out are as uncharted as Johnson and Towler himself suggested. Driver comments that the "wine may feel new but the labels are old", citing 'theism' and 'gnosticism' as examples. In addition there appears to be some disagreement regarding the further use of the themes. McCaffery feels that Towler has "convincingly drawn [the themes] in such a way as to give a sense of how particular themes in the letters contribute to broader meaning systems" (McCaffery 1985). On the other hand Brown is not convinced that Towler has given "an adequate sociological account" in his introduction. For Brown the variations that exist between the ideal-types are rather rigidly related to belief and not sociological behaviour.

Three of the reviewers put forward additional religious types that may have appeared since the writing of these

letters, largely because *The Need for Certainty* was written some years after the original data set of letters was formed. In a sense they implicitly discard Towler's comment that the work he has completed is similar to that of William James and unlikely to become out of date. Towler's concluding claim that the five ideal-types should, until proved otherwise, be described as the only types of conventional Christian belief is not quoted. Instead, McCaffery makes the point that the types are based on data from the 1960's and that belief has moved on since then, citing liberation theology as one such standpoint that is comparatively new. Johnson suggests that a different type of book to John Robinson's might have "smoked out the millenarians", one of the groups that Towler thought might be present, along with the mystics. Don Cupitt's postbag following the *Sea of Faith* television series was suggested by Driver as a more contemporary source of data. Lastly, Brown states what the previous reviewers perhaps were hinting at, by shedding doubt on the claim that the book classifies all Christian religious beliefs. The authors of the letters were after all committed in their beliefs; it is questionable whether the classification transfers to those who are less committed and of mixed ideal types.

Despite questioning whether such ideal types are able to describe religious behaviour within a single religious tradition, Brown concludes his review by emphasising the stimulative nature of Towler's work. He identifies the work as "speculative and preliminary" with its true value "unclear until it is developed through research on a wider and more varied range of evidence". Other reviewers share

these sentiments and identify the importance of the concluding chapter and its suggestions for further research. Bailey concludes his review by quoting Towler's call for the refocusing on the study of conventional religion before more can be learnt about the 'exotic' areas such as new religious movements (1986b).

With such a positive conclusion to the reviews it is somewhat surprising that there was no reference to *The Need for Certainty* in 1987 and 1988 when checked on the SSCI. The first citation comes in a review of the British contribution to the sociology of religion in the *British Journal of Sociology* by Wallis and Bruce (1989). The article assesses the British contribution in the context of secularisation, dividing it into three themes: the theory of secularisation in Britain, the consequences of secularisation and resistance to secularisation.

Broadly speaking the secularisation theory, which has been presented in one form or another since the mid-nineteenth century, concerns the numerical decline of religious adherents combined with a loss of social and cultural significance. The debate came to the fore within the sociology of religion in the 1960s where Bryan Wilson and David Martin investigated the evidence for the secularisation theory in contrasting ways (Wallis and Bruce 1989). In his book *Religion in Secular Society*, Wilson (1966) presents statistical evidence for decline in various areas: the number of adherents, the increase in ecumenism as a response to secularisation, the age structure within institutional religion and the socio-economic standing of

clergy. He concludes that secularisation in Britain and other parts of Europe has predominately taken the form of disengagement from churches, while in America, where there is little evidence of disengagement, he suggests that it is the churches themselves which have become more secular. As a result of this numerical disengagement religion has lost influence in Europe societies and this is not being replaced by the growth of new religious movements.

Martin recognised the same decline as Wilson but preferred to cite secularisation as a counter ideology rather than a scientific concept (Martin 1969). Whereas Wilson focused on the process of secularisation, Martin went on to outline how secularisation varies under different circumstances. By the mid 1970s the debate concerning the acceptance of secularisation as a scientific concept or as an ideology was still unresolved (Martin 1978 and Wilson 1976). However, there was agreement that the Protestant churches were now reliant on a small number of active adherents with the majority viewing the church as a provider of *rites of passage*.

The work of Towler is discussed under the third of Wallis' and Bruce's themes, 'resistance to secularisation' which looks at new religious movements, immigrant-based religious communities, residues of religion and religion in relation to protest. The subheading 'residues' is defined as 'beliefs and practices of an implicitly religious nature which are not controlled by a religious institution'. Several studies are cited, largely, according to Wallis and Bruce, inspired by the work of Luckmann (1967). They

include work on superstition (Abercrombie et al 1970), implicit religion (Bailey 1983, 1986a), ritualism (Bocock 1970, 1974), and Towler's work on conventional religion. Wallis and Bruce admit that these publications lend some support to the notion of residual religiosity but remain unconvinced that they derail the secularisation theory. They go on to cite the work of Wilson (1982) who suggests that advanced secularisation is revealed in the increasingly individual, fragmented and private nature of religious beliefs.

Towler makes no mention of the secularisation theory in his introduction, instead concentrating on methodological arguments and the influence of Luckmann's *The Invisible Religion* and taking religion away from institutional specialisation. Presumably, he links the secularisation theory with that of institutional belief which he suggests falls outside the focus of his study. Moreover, Towler suggests that *The Need for Certainty* assumes an ageless quality similar to that of *The Varieties of Religious Experience* by William James (1960).

However Towler deviates from Luckmann's theory relating to the private nature of individual religious beliefs in one important aspect when he analyses church-orientated religion. Wilson (1969) suggested that the presence of individualised religious beliefs were an indication of advanced secularisation and therefore focused his work on those beliefs practised outside the church. Towler argued that before we can fully understand the implications and meaning of such individual beliefs we first have to

understand fully existing and established conventional beliefs. Thus Towler aimed to move the focus of Luckmann's work away from individual beliefs and into the traditional established churches to investigate the variety of beliefs among its adherents. In essence, what Towler states is: here it is, within the very churches that everyone thought were so uniform.

The second citation found in the SSCI for 1989 is in the journal *Sociological Review*. The article by Wright (1989) looks at the language and style of American TV evangelists and argues that they use particular language to legitimate themselves to their 'community' or audience. Not surprisingly, his use of the religious types defined by Towler is restricted to one type, namely 'conversionism', since this matches the evangelical focus of his article. Here Wright is stressing the common community that evangelists aim to create despite the obvious dispersed nature of a TV congregation. Conversion is a common theme for the presenters and yet the audience is predominantly 'born-again', thus the show is aimed at involving the audience in the activities of the evangelist and mobilising them as a 'self-conscious, inclusive social movement' (Wright 1989:757). They create a communal identity and embrace the audience into activities such as 'winning converts'.

The example fits Towler's conversionism type well and the quote he uses draws out two important aspects relating to the creation a communal identity. However, comparing the audience of an American TV evangelist to the members of the

established English Church is problematic. In introducing this particular religious type Towler cautions against the assumption that the most extreme characteristics are typical of those he described. While there are many Christians who could be identified in this type, very few could be identified as having all its characteristics. Since Wright is using the characteristics of this ideal-type, rather than its adherents, to compare with his sample Towler's principle focus is lost. Wright might have been better advised to use arguments concerning fundamentalism as this relates to new religious movements (Barker 1989).

The final citation of *The Need for Certainty* occurs in 1991 in an article by Thompson published by *Sociological Analysis*. Entitled 'Transgressing the Boundary between the Sacred and the Secular/ Profane: A Durkheimian Perspective on a Public Controversy' the article deals with the controversy between the Church and the State over policies implemented by the Conservative Government of Margaret Thatcher, relating this to a Durkheimian theoretical framework. The relationship between this work and that of Towler's centres on Thompson's use of letters written to the then Bishop of Durham, David Jenkins, arguably the most controversial bishop of the episcopate. The letters were a response to the Bishop's publicised statements on the policies of the Thatcher government concerning the Falklands and the coal strike. Together with these Thompson also subjected available material from the press coverage to content analysis.

Thus the main similarity is a methodological one proving

that the source that Towler used was not an isolated case. The data enable Thompson to relate the sociology of religion to ideology and social theory, an area he feels the subdiscipline has neglected in favour of theories such as secularisation and the defining and redefining of its subject matter. Whilst the overriding aim of the paper is to look at the Church and State dichotomy, the possibility is recognised for "relating the position taken in these letters with the five types of religiosity that Towler found in his analysis" (Thompson 1991:282). This in part satisfies one of the book reviewers (Driver 1984) who suggested the use of letters to Don Cupitt as well as analysing the religious comment of the religionless media. Unfortunately, content analysis is a long and arduous task and rapid publication is unlikely. Nonetheless, such analysis will provide a partial judgment on the criticism that Towler's work is limited by time and represents the religious types of the 1960s.

The use of the SSCI as a basis for assessing the assimilation and coverage of Towler's work in the academic sphere was in recognition of its place as the most comprehensive and efficient means of undertaking this task. However, in the course of exploring the subject area one further citation was found which did not occur on the SSCI. Barker (1990) writing in an edited volume, *Religious Pluralism and Unbelief*, contributes a chapter focusing on the range of products available in the religious 'supermarket'. The general thrust of the chapter centres around the largely accepted theory that religious pluralism and religious diversity have both increased over recent decades.

However, pluralism within religious movements, referred to as 'internal pluralism', varies enormously. As a generalisation Barker suggests that the more established the religious movement the greater the amount of internal pluralism displayed. Two references are used to support this generalisation, one from a study of Catholicism and the other is Towler's *The Need for Certainty*. Recognition is given to Towler's work in identifying the religious types which coexist within the Church of England. These conventional religious types are seen as examples of internal pluralism and lead Barker to suggest that there is no one type of religious expression which represents 'real' Christianity or 'real' Anglicanism.

The use of Towler in this context is encouraging in that it supports his own comments in *The Need for Certainty*, namely, that the Anglican community is religiously more diverse than at first thought and the recognition of the five distinct types. It is interesting that this is forthcoming from an academic who has largely specialised in new religious movements rather than the study of mainstream religion. However, it is the first occasion on which the central essence of Towler's work has been used in the academic arena. Barker does state that the religious types defined by Towler were 'not claimed to be exhaustive', Towler actually said that until somebody defines other religious types these are the main religious types of the Christian tradition. No-one by 1990 had undertaken to do that work, nor have they since.

Following the completion of the Rural Church Project and the

publication of *Church and Religion in Rural England* (Davies et al 1991), further analysis of personal beliefs was undertaken by Gasson and Winter (1993) in a report to the Archbishop's Commission on Cathedrals, based on a survey of visitors to four English cathedrals. Much of the methodology in relation to the religious orientation section was developed from that used in the parishioner survey of the Rural Church Project. Such data will provide a useful comparison with, and companion to, the major source of data examined in the thesis.

The lack of academic effort devoted to the study of mainstream religions in previous decades has in some sense been cancelled out by the publication of a number of books with a British context. Three of these are identified here for their reference, or lack of it, to *The Need for Certainty*. Forster (1995) discusses this neglect of mainstream Christianity in an edited volume from the University of Hull. The introduction is national but the chapters are focused on the Humberside and Lincolnshire area. Forster reviews national figures regarding attendance, membership and belief. He concludes that while the outward appearance of religious participation and affiliation is often not present there is still an inherent desire to present oneself as being 'religious'. Despite this venture into the territory of conventional religion Forster makes no reference to *The Need for Certainty*.

However, Towler is referred to in one of the chapters in this edited volume (Worsfold 1995). The work centres around the youth group of an Anglican church and attempts to show

the impact on the group of evangelical Christianity. The reference to Towler occurs as Worsfold is describing the dominant leadership style and the explicit boundaries drawn by spiritual principles. As with a previous citation the religious type chosen is conversionism. However, in this context the actors are Anglicans and thus this part of the comparison is supported. The usage is slightly different here as the principles of the ideal type are used to support the basis on which the rules of the group are developed. This fits more easily than the previous, similar citation. However, as with the other citation the work of Barker and other academics on sects and new religious movements is still ignored.

Two further books are of worthy of note, largely for the contrasting manner in which they approach a similar subject matter (Davie 1994 and Bruce 1995). In their respective introductions the likeness becomes apparent. Davie seeks to 'describe and explain the religious situation in contemporary Britain' (1994:xii) whereas Bruce aims to give a 'social scientist's account of religion in modern Britain' (1995:vii).

Davie documents the presents state of the church and the apparent 'drifting away' from orthodox belief using statistics such as the results from the English Church Census (Brierley 1991) to support her case. The belief systems of those who fall into more unorthodox religious categories are then assessed under the title 'common religion'. However, although there is a section outlining the sociological evidence for 'common religion', Towler's

typology of conventional religion does not form part of this basis-forming discussion. Towler's work in this area is not entirely ignored, as reference is made to a major study of common religion in Leeds which he directed. Indeed, from an assessment of earlier work (Davie 1987) Towler played an important part in developing Davie's thinking regarding the nature of belief and *The Need for Certainty* is referred to in a footnote. Moreover, the list of references also cites another work by Towler (1974) which includes a chapter entitled 'Common Religion'. Davie's conclusion is that Britain may not be as secular as we had imagined but, in the words of a phrase that she has made her own, religion is now characterised by 'believing without belonging'. Such a viewpoint is remarkably similar to that of Towler who presented a typology where belief, in the form of the five religious types, is not dependent upon belonging.

Bruce in his introduction to the present state of religion in Britain uses similar references and statistics but concludes that church attendance has 'become an almost purely personal or idiosyncratic matter' (1995:44). When assessing beliefs outside of the church he suggests that secular people 'retain a fondness for vague religious affirmations'. Such a contrasting in interpretation is interesting and worthy of note. The two authors would appear to agree that a greater number of people than ever have no connection with mainstream churches, although Bruce appears to be much closer to a prediction regarding the demise of mainstream religion. Where they would appear to disagree is in the belief structure among those who do not regularly attend church services. Bruce states that those

falling into this group 'do not subscribe to the core beliefs of the religion that shaped their culture' (1995:54) whereas Davie finds that the evidence for the existence of common religion is persuasive. More importantly in the case study relating to the Hillsborough disaster and the subsequent reaction throughout the city of Liverpool, Davie concludes that the 'common religion aspects of what happened ... cannot be separated from the more conventional as they are part and parcel of each other' (1994:91). Thus Davie, rather than Bruce, recognises the interaction and relationship between the conventional and the common forms of religion much as Towler had done so a decade earlier.

This chapter has shown how the work that Towler undertook was received by the academic world and ultimately how it was used. Most of those reviewing the book and subsequently referring to it note the methodological advances; there is some evidence in the work of Thompson that the nature of these has been accepted. Towler's labours were part of a general refocusing of the sociology of religion on more traditional themes of mainstream religious belief. However, the five conventional religious types that Towler defined in *The Need for Certainty* have remained unchallenged and untested.

It is the aim of this thesis to test the five ideal-types that Towler identifies and describes. An empirical study of rural parishioners provides the basis for a comparison between the characteristics that Towler associates with each type using key sociographic and religiosity variables. The following chapter outlines the nature of the methodology

used in gathering the data. Chapter 3 briefly introduces the sample and the key sociographic variables such as age, gender, social class, religious affiliation and attendance of religious services. The next chapter, Chapter 4, investigates the issue of affiliation comparing this study with other similar work. Chapter 5 develops this further and assesses the influence of attendance resulting in the derivation of a key variable on attendance patterns for the whole sample. This enables a close examination of Towler's characteristics. Chapter 6 introduces each of Towler's five religious types and the response of the sample to the questions relating to religious attitudes. The characteristics of each type are then compared with the sample in Chapter 7 together with those not showing any of the characteristics identified by Towler. The next chapter takes the key sociographic variables and assess each of the religious types to highlight differences and similarities. The last chapter, Chapters 9, assess how the examination of Towler's five conventional religious types has worked and formulates some additional characteristics and changes to those he presents in *The Need for Certainty* as well as those who do not appear to fall into the types he defines.

Chapter Two

Methodology

An opportunity arose to examine the five religious types that Towler defined in a study of the rural populace in England undertaken during the Rural Church Project (1988-1991). The methodology associated with the dataset used in the thesis is dealt with later in the chapter. However, at this point the relationship between the Rural Church Project and the thesis will be explained.

The objectives of the Rural Church Project¹ were initially to:

- ◆ assess the changing organisational and spatial deployment of church resources,
- ◆ provide a detailed examination of the work undertaken by the church,
- ◆ make a qualitative and quantitative assessment of this work within a rural context.

A research grant from the Leverhulme Trust enabled four study areas to be chosen, each with contrasting rural characteristics: the Church of England dioceses of Gloucester, Nottingham, Lincoln and Truro. At the time of the research grant being awarded contact had been made with the Archbishops' Commission on Rural Areas (ACORA) which subsequently funded an additional study area, Durham, and the survey of rural parishioners in each of the study areas.

The objective of the rural parishioners survey was to study beliefs and attitudes of both churchgoers and non-churchgoers. The information would then be made available

1. The Project Team consisted of Prof Douglas Davies from the Theology Department, University of Nottingham, and Caroline Pack (University of Warwick), Dr Suzanne Seymour, Dr Charles Watkins (both University of Nottingham), Dr Michael Winter and the author (both Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education) were based at Centre for Rural Studies, Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester.

to ACORA for the formulation of their policy report (ACORA 1990) as well as being disseminated into the academic sphere. In 1988, the author joined the Rural Church Project at its Cirencester base, with special responsibility for the survey of rural parishioners. The data used in the thesis originate from the personal interviews in this discreet part of the project. However, it has to be recognised that this survey was a small part of a larger project and thus aspects of the methodology quoted here were not wholly unique to the survey of the rural populace which forms the database for this thesis.

The objective of this thesis is to empirically test the five religious types that Towler identified in the letters written to John Robinson. Naturally the notion of empirical testing points towards some research method within the quantitative field of social research. However, Towler's research was a deep and rich source of entirely unstructured responses which fall well within the tradition of qualitative research. Until recently such positions have appeared to be diametrically opposed but as Bryman (1988) explains this need not be so:

Most researchers rely on a method associated with one of the two research traditions, but buttress their findings with a method associated with the other tradition. However, the relative weight accorded to quantitative and qualitative research within a single study may shift over time (Bryman 1988:128).

Such is the process within this thesis. The starting point was the gathering of a sufficient data, in this case rural parishioners and their beliefs, so as to be able to look for the characteristics that Towler graphically describes in his book. By definition this is dealing with numerical data.

The need to assess the nature of beliefs as opposed to other, more outward characteristics such as the level of attendance and depth of involvement in a church, deals with qualitative data. Personal interviews were chosen as the most appropriate method of social investigation through which both types of data could be collected. Bryman (1988) notes that when both types of social research are combined, projects tend to be well supported in resources and funds. Both were present through the awarding of an academic grant from the Leverhulme Trust and the additional funding provided by ACORA. As a result the project was able to interview a numerically large sample using a structured questionnaire that gathered important sociographic details and probed areas of belief and understanding. This thesis starts with an examination of quantitative details which are later tied into the qualitative data so as to allow a rigorous assessment of Towler's religious types.

The 'rural' emphasis of the thesis was determined by the Rural Church Project but it could be seen as having some notable advantages. Before detailing these advantages the notion of 'rural' needs further explanation. The traditional distinguishing feature of rural areas has been the surrounding open countryside and extensive land uses. However, factors other than those of landscape and rurality, such as culture and psychology, are of increasing importance in the construction of rural communities (Davies et al 1990). Any measurement of these factors is both complex and generalised, for example the system devised from the 1981 census covering the districts of England and Wales (Cloke and Edwards 1987). This rurality index, which uses sixteen

variables mainly concerning population statistics but also occupation and amenities, was in part used to assist in the selection of the five dioceses.

It has been suggested that rural areas are religiously distinct from urban areas by way of the greater number of clergy and dominant Christian tradition (Davies et al 1990). Indeed, as this thesis will show many members of the rural populace are sympathetic to the Anglican religious tradition from which Towler's study is derived. Rural areas tend not to be as religiously pluralist as many urban or suburban areas, with the church still playing a central role in the life of the community. Such areas are also regarded as the bastion of the Church of England with only regional strongholds for Nonconformity and Roman Catholicism. Consequently, it could be argued that if Towler's types don't 'work' here then they are not likely to work anywhere else.

Nevertheless, there are two important differences between the sample that Towler used and the one examined here. First, there is a time difference of some 25 years as the letters Towler used were written in the mid sixties (*Honest to God* was published in 1963) compared to 1989 when the sample used in this thesis was interviewed. Second, the method of selection is also very different. Towler's sample is comprised of those who composed and sent a letter to an Anglican Bishop and, consequently, they would be seen as articulate and religiously committed. The sample used in this thesis is selected from the rural populace in five areas of England, therefore it is broader in its selection

and likely to be less committed in its religious construction. Having said that it is still true to say that if Towler's five analytical ideal types don't 'work' here then they are not likely to work anywhere else.

Interview Survey Methodology¹

Sampling

The first stage of the project involved a postal survey of all Church of England incumbents within the five study areas and this was supplemented by 20 personal interviews with clergy in each study area. These interviews provided the backbone of the selection process for the rural populace survey with a two tier approach. First, a **degree of rurality** was established for the benefices in the diocese based around Cloke's 'Index of Rurality' (Cloke and Edwards 1986, Cloke 1987) and the Project team's own knowledge of the individual areas. As a result geographical, land use and social boundaries were outlined in each diocese focusing on four main rural influences: commuting, agriculture, coastal/tourism and industry (fishing/mining). The resulting regional divisions in the five dioceses are shown below in Figure 2.1.

The second tier was the **selection of suitable benefices** from each of these core rural areas. The composition was expected to be compatible with that of the diocese as a whole as deduced from the postal survey. For example, the selection of large multi-parish benefices was appropriate in

1. The tables and some of the text in this section are drawn from the author's contribution to *Davies et al (1990)*.

Lincoln where they were most numerous. Selections were checked against a number of criteria, such as population and age of incumbent, to ensure that they were not atypical of the diocese generally.

Figure 2.1 Regional Divisions in the Five Sample Diocese

Gloucester	North Cotswolds South Cotswolds Severnvale Forest of Dean
Truro	Central Cornwall Eastern Cornwall Western Cornwall
Southwell	South Nottinghamshire Clays North Nottinghamshire Clays West Mining area
Lincoln	Isle of Axholme The Marsh The Wolds Central Lincoln The Spine The Fens
Durham	The Dales Rural south Durham Central Durham East Durham

Using the above procedure 20 benefices were selected in each of the five dioceses for the clergy interviews. It was from these 100 benefices that the sample areas for the rural populace survey were chosen. Furthermore, for reasons of containment, the interviews in each of the study areas were divided between **ecclesiastical parishes**. Two main benefits were identified. First, reasonably in-depth profiles could be constructed of each community; second, the information would complement the clergy interview. Thus the general population sample was a direct sub-set of the 100 selected clergy **benefices**, resulting in over 200 potential **parishes** to choose from. Ideally one parish was chosen from each of

the regional divisions outlined in Figure 2.1, with remaining selections covering the largest or most diverse areas.

An overall ceiling of 500 interviews was established representing 100 respondents in each of the study areas. Since more would be gained by interviewing a larger number of people in a smaller number of areas it was agreed that interviews would be conducted with 20 residents in each of the five parishes. This would enable the sample to cover the majority of the rural regions in each study area whilst allowing for variations in structure, population and type of incumbent.

Two key criteria were identified in order to select the most appropriate parishes:

- ◆ the type of benefice organisation of which the parish was a part,
- ◆ the population of the parish.

Other criteria, such as churchmanship and age of incumbent, were checked to ensure that the sample was comparable with the diocese as a whole. All the criteria used in this final check are shown in Figure 2.2¹ together with a summary of how this was conducted in each case.

1.A fuller account of the methodology outlined in Figure 2.2 is given in Appendix I (pp1-9).

Figure 2.2 Criteria against which Parishioner Survey Parishes were Checked

Criteria	Summary of checking procedures
<i>Key criteria:</i>	
Type of benefice	- at least 1 single benefice; multi-parish benefices to be representative; team ministries where suitable; no interregnums.
Population of parish	- exclude 'urban'; select to represent range of rurality.
<i>Other criteria:</i>	
Length of incumbency	- 1 or 2 in post for <5 years of which 1 would be for <2 years.
Residency of Incumbent	- at least 2 parishes where incumbent not resident.
Churchmanship of incumbent	- to mirror diocese as a whole.
Age of incumbent	- 10 year breaks from 30 to 60+ mirroring diocese as a whole.

Composition of the Sample

Several options concerning the composition of the 20 responses in each of the selected parishes were discussed. The first method to be considered was a totally random sample chosen from the Register of Electors for that parish. The Registers are readily available from District Councils and provide an acceptable level of coverage of community members. However, those people who had recently moved to the area, were homeless or were of no fixed abode may be excluded. Such a sample would enable a random survey of virtually the entire community.

However, subsequent discussion raised a particular area of concern as the number of people attending church services or with commitment towards the Church might be only a small proportion of the total sample. The figures concerning average church attendance on a national level show that approximately ten per cent of the population attend a church

service more than once a month (Bible Society 1980 and Brierley 1991). Although rural attendance may be higher, this figure covers all denominations and while the Church of England would be the largest, a level above ten per cent could not be guaranteed.

One of the original aims of the project and of particular interest to ACORA, was the gathering of information on the content of church services, especially those within the Church of England. Eventually it was conceded that an entirely random sample could not guarantee churchgoers in sufficient numbers to properly assess church services. The solution was a 'quota' system whereby 70% of the sample would be selected from the civil Register of Electors and 30% from the Electoral Roll of the parish church concerned. In order to minimise confusion and to maximise the empirical validity of the data only the random sample of residents on the civil Register of Electors will be used in this thesis. Hereafter this will be referred to as 'the sample' or 'total sample'.

Selection of the Sample

Ecclesiastical parish boundaries are largely compatible with those of the civil parish but some deviations do occur. All the ecclesiastical variations of the civil boundaries were transcribed onto 1:100,000 county series maps by transferring the most up-to-date six inch to one mile maps held by the Church Commissioners in London¹. Difficulties were encountered, especially where the ecclesiastical

1. For a fuller explanation see Davies et al (1990:301-303).

boundary divided a settlement. By using place names of the surrounding area and 1:25,000 scale Ordnance Survey maps those lying outside the selected ecclesiastical parish could be excluded before the sample was chosen.

The sample was selected using random number tables. To ensure an equal disposition of the sample throughout the community, important guidelines were established:

- ◆ a single household could have only one member selected for interview,
- ◆ the interviewee must be aged 18 or over and registered on the Civil Electoral Roll.

The above procedure was followed for each of the five parishes in the five study areas. Fourteen interviews would be conducted in each parish, an overall total of 350 interviews, 70 in each of the study areas.

Piloting and Deployment of Interviewers

The third draft of the questionnaire was piloted in late April 1989 in a small parish near Pershore in Worcestershire. The parish was part of a four-parish benefice and at that time in an interregnum. Fifteen prospective respondents were selected from the Register of Electors. They were each contacted by letter mailed first class stating that an interviewer would call later that week.

In the event contact was made with seven people and all agreed to be interviewed. Of these, four were male and three female, ages ranging from 18 to 73. The remainder was unavailable during the period of interviewing. The longest

interview lasted well over one hour, the shortest twenty minutes. All of those who took part were Anglicans and two were regular attenders of the church. The remainder were classed as non-attenders but had varying degrees of involvement.

The outcome of the pilot interviews suggested an average interview time of between 45 and 50 minutes. However, in the case of a committed churchgoer, for example, the duration of the interview could be in excess of one and a half hours. As a result the wording and format of some questions was improved but the major change was that of reorganising the structure of the questionnaire with the aim of minimising the use of filtered sections. This was identified as the major factor in lengthening the interview time. As a result the average interviewing time was reduced to 30 minutes with a minimum of 20 minutes and maximum of 75 minutes.

With this range of time scales in mind it was decided that the interviewing should be conducted in pairs. To aid consistency at least one member of the Project team would interview in each of the study areas with the help of as many other Project members as possible, thus minimising the use of outside personnel. In the event, the author undertook interviews in all the study areas with assistance from other project members in Lincoln, Southwell and Truro. A single external interviewer was used to assist in Durham, Gloucester and Truro.

The benefits of working in pairs, over and above those of

general time saving, were deemed to be threefold. First, a significant saving in travelling cost: second, working together would increase the comparability of the survey data and third, there is the advantage of companionship, especially in terms of motivation, crisis-sharing and decision making. Assuming an average of five interviews in one day and the availability of two interviewers in each parish, interviewing a sample parish would take two days and a study area 10 days. In practice this was taken to represent a two week period in each study area to allow for the completion of outstanding interviews as well as travelling and the collection of other data in relation to the project. Saturdays were included in the interviewing schedule to first, concentrate the interview period and second, contact those people who had been unavailable during the week.

Contacting the Sample

In order to achieve fourteen interviews in each parish extra selections were made in anticipation that some of those selected would be unable or unwilling to be interviewed. However, care was taken not to bias the sample by selecting too many reserves in each parish with the result that only those people who are normally at home during the day, i.e. the retired, unemployed or house-bound, were interviewed. Initially, a sample of 17 per parish was contacted but this was increased to 20 as replacements were frequently required while interviewing was underway and this resulted in an extended interview period in each parish.

As appropriate in a survey of this kind, a covering letter

outlining the research was devised and sent out two weeks in advance of the interviewers¹. The letter contained dates between which the respondent would be contacted by one of the interviewers. The address list provided the interviewers with sufficient information to locate the sample by comparing it with detailed maps and impressions of the area. During this first visit to the area the exact boundary of the ecclesiastical parish was also established.

As a general rule no effort was made to contact any of the sample before 11 o'clock in the morning, except where an interview had been previously arranged for that time. When contact was made with the selected person the aims and background of the project were explained further and either the interview conducted, a more convenient time found or no further contact made. Should the required person not be at home, a projected time of their return was determined through other occupants of the house or by neighbours.

Though working independently it was imperative that the interviewers met at least once on the first afternoon as soon as all or most of the sample had been contacted either directly or indirectly. Progress was checked in terms of completed or arranged interviews, refusals, and those remaining to be contacted. Since the most intensive period of interviewing was the evening, any reorganisation took place at this first meeting to maximise the use of the evening period.

1. A copy of the covering letter is held in Appendix II.

The need for replacements was discussed at the end of the first day following a review of the completed interviews and those arranged for the next day. Respondents would only be replaced if they refused to be interviewed, had moved away, had died or were persistently absent during the period of interviewing in that parish. If required, such selections were made in the field, preferably delivering a covering letter by hand that evening, using the same letter format as the original sample and specifying a visit the 'next day'.

Every attempt was made to contact all of those who received a covering letter. However, this was not possible in all cases and possible reasons for non-contact were assimilated from a wide range of sources including neighbours, other household members and perhaps staff in the village shop. The data are of vital importance since the relative proportions of people who agreed to be interviewed can be compared with those who refused, had left the parish, were on holiday, were deceased or were too ill to participate. These are shown in the next section which deals with the overall response rate.

Interviews were conducted using a structured questionnaire¹. The respondent was preferably interviewed on their own; however exceptions were made in the cases of young children and where others present had accepted that it was the individual being interviewed and not themselves.

Explanations were given for factual questions but those

1.A copy of the questionnaire and accompanying prompt cards is held in Appendix III.

investigating beliefs and values for example were not explained. Care was taken to probe in a non-directive way, asking the respondent to expand on an answer that the interviewer perceived to be incomplete. Responses to open questions were written up in full at the time. If necessary the questionnaire was checked immediately after the interview and notes expanded in order to clarify the meaning.

Response Rate

Table 2.1 shows the different types of responses when matched against gender using the information gathered during the interview period. Overall, completed interviews made up 63% of all the people contacted in the survey. For any interview survey this would be considered a very successful response rate. Thus it is even more satisfying level of response given the potentially sensitive topic of religion and personal beliefs.

Those refusing to be interviewed represented ten per cent of all those contacted by letter. A refusal includes those people who, when contacted, were unable to find a convenient time for the interview to take place. It does not comprise solely those who were uninterested in the survey. Eleven per cent of the respondents were absent when the interviewers called. However, this category undoubtedly includes some who were ostensibly on holiday but such specific information had not been obtained. Among the other categories seven per cent of those contacted had left the parish, four per cent were known to be on holiday, three per cent were too ill or disabled and two per cent had died.

Table 2.1 Type of Response by Gender

Type of response	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Refused	27	10	25	9	52	10
Left parish	19	7	18	7	37	7
Disabled/too ill	6	2	12	4	18	3
Deceased	8	3	1	0	9	2
Away/Not in	33	12	26	10	59	11
On holiday	15	6	11	4	26	4
COMPLETED	159	60	182	66	341	63
Total	267	100	275	100	542	100

The table shows that the percentage of completed interviews was very similar for both sexes, 60% in the case of males and 66% for females. Indeed, all the responses were similar, with the percentage of absences during the time of interviewing higher for men than women by only two per cent. If one accepts that a greater proportion of females remain in the community during the day, the figures suggest that a distortion of the sample by interviewing only those at home in the morning or afternoon has been avoided.

Table 2.2 looks at the types of response by study area. The highest percentage of completed interviews was Gloucester with (70%) followed by Lincoln, Truro and Southwell (65%, 63% and 62% respectively). Durham had the lowest rate of interview completions with 57%. Interestingly, the timing of the interviews in this study area coincided with the 'factory fortnight' and may account for the high number of people away on holiday (nine per cent). Moreover, in one of the sample parishes in the Dales, five selected males were away from the parish working on the Channel tunnel in Kent as there was little employment in the area. The highest number of refusals occurred in Truro (12%) and Durham (11%),

whilst the lowest number occurred in the two regions where the research centres were based, namely Gloucester (six per cent) and Southwell (eight per cent).

Table 2.2 Type of Response by Diocese

Type of response	Glos		Truro		S'well		Lincoln		Durham		Total n
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Refused	6	6	13	12	9	8	10	9	14	11	52
Left parish	6	6	9	9	6	6	10	9	6	5	37
Disab/ill	3	3	5	5	3	3	2	2	5	4	18
Deceased	3	3	-	-	1	1	1	1	4	3	9
Not in	10	10	9	9	14	13	13	12	13	11	59
On holiday	2	2	3	3	8	7	2	2	11	9	26
COMPLETED	70	70	66	63	68	62	68	65	69	57	341
Total	100	100	105	100	109	100	106	100	122	100	542

The methodology described in this chapter accounts for how the sample was structured, selected and finally interviewed. The following short chapter analyses the response according to some of the main sociological variables. Such an exercise builds a context of the whole sample and indicates whether the methodology employed has succeeded in producing a sample that is representative of the communities from which it was taken.

Chapter Three

The Sample Examined

The aim of this brief chapter is to outline the sociographic characteristics of the 341 respondents which form the main focus of the thesis and its attempt to examine Towler's religious types¹. In order to test Towler's ideal types, data were required from a source that was strong where his was weak, in other words a quantitative sample. The letters he analysed were only representative of each individual author, whilst the sample used in this thesis is representative of the rural populace from which it is derived.

Any sociological account depends on several independent and derived variables and a number are used in this thesis. Frequently used variables such as gender, study area and length of residence in the parish require little or no introduction. For others, like church attendance and religious affiliation, the explanation is most appropriate where they appear. The calculation and deduction of social class is an important one for any social science research and consequently the process of classification used in the thesis requires the most explanation.

Data were gathered from the personal interviews regarding the occupational status of the respondent. Such information was of sufficient detail to allow classification along the lines of that adopted by Goldthorpe (1980). A single adaption was introduced concerning women, who were where

1. A more detailed examination of the sample, including tables showing comparisons with regional and national data, is held in Appendix IV (pp39-58). In addition, the full explanation regarding the deduction of the respondent's social class is given.

possible, classified according to their own employment status or previous status, as with the unemployed or the retired. The sociological debate concerning the allocation of women to class positions is unresolved despite a decade of intensive debate (Abbott and Sapsford 1987, Zipp and Pluzter 1996). Thus only for housewives with no outside work does the classification depend on the husband's occupation. The six classes that were identified are detailed in the table below.

Figure 3.1 Categories according to Social Class

Position	Definition
1	All higher-grade professional and managerial occupations; higher-grade administrators; large proprietors,
2	Lower-grade professionals; higher-grade technicians; lower-grade administrators; small-scale managers,
3	Small proprietors, especially farmers; self-employed artisans; and all other own-account workers,
4	Lower-grade technicians whose work is to some extent of a manual character and supervisors/foremen,
5	Routine non-manual workers in clerical, administrative, retail and commercial sectors,
6	Routine manual skilled and unskilled workers.

Characteristics of the Sample

The survey interviewed adults aged over 18. Females represent 53% of the sample. However, national figures tend to suggest a variation between the genders of two percentage points (CSO 1989). The variation can be attributed to two factors: first, national statistics cover urban and rural areas; second, they represent all age groups. There is little variation between the five study areas.

In terms of age distribution the proportion of females increases over the first three age groups from 18 to 54 year

olds. This is reversed in the two older age groups with slightly higher number of males, perhaps surprisingly as women generally outlive men. Consequently, the sample may have missed younger males present in communities as they are the most likely group to be absent during the day. Overall, there are slightly higher numbers of retired people but strict comparisons are difficult.

The variations between the study areas are quite marked. Durham has the highest number of young people in the sample, whilst Southwell is dominated by those about 40 years old. Truro has the most even age distribution. However, over a quarter of the sample was aged 65 or more. Indeed, Truro has the highest average age of the sample of 52.0 years, followed by Gloucester with 50.3, Durham being the 'youngest' study area with 45.0. The average is 48.4.

The marital status of the sample was dominated by those who were married (74%) with the number separated or divorced low (four per cent). The occupational status of the sample shows a marked difference according to gender. Whereas males are predominately either in full-time employment (68%) or retired (23%), females are divided equally between full-time (28%) and part-time (22%) employment, housewife (25%) and retired (23%). The number of unemployed respondents is under three per cent in both genders. More detailed information regarding the respondent's type of employment was essential to allow an accurate assessment of social class according to the six categories shown in Figure 3.1.

In the whole sample just over ten per cent is present in

Classes 1 and 2 with a quarter placed in Class 3. There are very few Class 4 respondents, 15% in Class 5 and a third in Class 6. Males are more likely to fall into the manual category, Class 6, whilst females dominate the largely clerical Class 5. Men are twice as likely to be present in Class 3, representing the self-employed. When combined, the numbers in Classes 1 and 2 are similar but females are more numerous in the lower category.

Variations between the study areas according to the measure of social class support the original selection of distinct regions. Over 40% of the sample in Durham and Lincoln are in Class 6 compared to a quarter in Gloucester and Truro. The petty bourgeoisie, represented by the farming and tourism sectors, is most common in Truro where 35% are apportioned to Class 3. Class 3 is generally higher than national figures reflecting the presence of small businesses, especially agricultural, in rural areas. When combining Classes 1 and 2, 40% of the Gloucester sample are classed as professional and managerial compared to 14% in Lincoln.

An estimation of the proportion employed in agriculture or related work reveals that just under 20% of the sample are involved in either agriculture or a land-based occupation (such as forestry or gardening). When broken down further, nine per cent are farmers, four per cent farm workers and six per cent held other land-based jobs. National and local statistics estimate that two per cent of the population are involved in agriculture (CSO 1989, Hodge and Whitby 1981).

Males are more likely to be connected with the land (24%), especially as farmers. However, females hold more land-based jobs such as forestry or gardening, than males. Within the study areas Southwell has the highest combined proportion with 28%, 12% of these being involved in land based employment other than farming. By far the lowest combined figure is Gloucester with ten per cent.

The relationship between social class and age revealed that there is a directly proportional increase in age and percentage of professionals, whilst managerial and lower grade professional peaked in the 35-44 age group. Small proprietors and the manual working class are evenly distributed throughout the sample unlike the clerical group which declined as age increased. Matching social class with occupational status revealed that 35% of the retired are situated within Class 1 and 2. Those in part-time employment, predominantly females, are likely to be classed as manual clerical workers.

Other indicators of the respondent's socio-economic position shows car ownership in rural areas to be high but, of those without a car, two thirds are retired. Indeed, a single car is characteristic of those over 55 years old whilst over 60% of those under 55 have two or more vehicles per household. Owner-occupied properties are more common than rented accommodation regardless of the respondent's age whereas the margin increased with age. Those who did rent were slightly more likely to do so from the local council than private landlords. The number of respondents living in tied cottage

accommodation is very low, reflecting the decline in the number of agricultural workers. Owner occupiers are particularly numerous in Gloucester (81%) compared to 59% in Truro and 62% in Lincoln. Private renting is more common than council renting in Truro, 23% compared to 11%, whereas the reverse is true in Lincoln, 21% to 10%. The lowest proportion of private lettings occurs in Durham, the most industrial of the study areas.

The data suggest that males are most likely to have been resident for longer, with almost double the proportion who have permanently resided in the parish compared to females. Those most recently moving to the area are evenly divided but females are more likely to have moved into the parish between six and 20 years ago. The greater mobility shown by women perhaps could be explained by females moving to the male on marriage.

Mobility in the sample, in terms of accommodation, is shown to decrease with age and increase with social class. With age the youngest respondents are the most mobile and the oldest least mobile. Over 40% of the unskilled manual workers have always lived in the sample parish compared to only one professional respondent. By contrast, over 60% of the professional and managerial groups have moved into the parish within the last ten years. The study areas showed similar characteristics with Durham and Lincoln, where the proportion of working class is high, showing the least mobility.

This chapter has very briefly introduced the sociographic

details of the sample. The next two chapters move on to areas relating to religious commitment, dealing first with denominational affiliation before moving onto attendance at religious services. Such a process prepares the ground for the examination of the sample with regard to Towler's conventional religious types.

Chapter Four

Religious Affiliation

The main body of this chapter concerns a variable which Argyle (1958) described as "widely used" and "rather unsatisfactory", namely the issue of church membership. The reason for Argyle's disquiet was the lack of information that this indicator provides in two important areas: the one concerning the religious activity of the person; the other the substance of their beliefs. Wide variations of both are possible under the heading of church member.

Further discrepancies arise from the varying definitions that churches attach to membership. Such variations occur not just between the denominations but within the same denomination over time (Currie *et al* 1977). An extreme example is provided by the merger of the Presbyterian and Congregational churches in 1972 to form the United Reformed Church. As a result of the merger 2,500 people in the Birmingham area registered as members by the local churches were actually found to have died (Baxter 1981). Even if the definition of membership remains static for a long period of time there are likely to be variations in interpretation between priests and ministers.

However, in the context of this chapter the decision for membership lies with the individual, embracing their own perception of membership rather than church records. Thus the response cannot be supported with documents or by religious leaders but merely by the concept of 'belonging'. Argyle distinguishes between the documented membership and an individual's understanding. He does this by calling the latter an 'affiliation' and it is this term that will be used here. By analysing the sample in this way certain

characteristics may emerge which will become relevant when the religious types that Towler defines are examined in detail.

Affiliation to Church, Denomination or Religion

The initial question asked was, 'do you belong to any church, denomination or religion?'. The respondent was left free to decide whether they felt that they 'belonged' to such a group or not. Thus being baptised or brought up in a particular church was not a case for automatic categorisation, as this may not represent current circumstances. The purpose behind this decision was an attempt to discourage responses based only around ideas of institutions and ritual, such as when declaring one's religion on an administrative form. At this stage of the question there was no prompting as to which church, denomination or religion the 'belonging' might be associated with. The table below shows the response by gender.

Table 4.1 Belong to Church, Denomination or Religion by Gender

Belong to church etc	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
YES	133	84	169	93	302	89
NO	24	15	13	7	37	11
Don't know	2	1	-	-	2	0
Total	159	100	182	100	341	100

Overall 89% of the rural populace stated that they belonged to either a church, denomination or religion. This leaves just over ten per cent with no sense of belonging in this area in addition to two respondents who are too unsure to give a response. When the data is cross-tabulated against

the gender of the respondents, women are shown to be more likely to perceive belonging to such a group than men. The figure of 11% for those with no sense of belonging does seem to be high. This suggests perhaps that the response represents personal opinion regarding belonging rather than any response requested by an administrative form, such as that required on entry to a hospital.

By contrast, in a survey of residents on a Hull council estate (Forster 1989) the questionnaire asked what religion the respondent would write on a form if asked to do so by a hospital. Just over three per cent stated that they were 'atheist/agnostic' or 'none'. This contrasts strongly with the response from the Rural Church Project and is probably due to the different wording of the question. Forster's question asks for a response based on administrative requirements, rather than the respondent's personal feelings.

Affiliation Specified

The second part of this initial question requested the actual church, denomination or religion that the respondent felt they belonged to. Respondents were free to reply as they wished, with gentle probing only occurring where general responses, such as 'Christian', were stated. All but two of the respondents who belonged to a church, denomination or religion identified Christianity as their religion.

This response is unevenly divided with a clear majority belonging to the Church of England (62%). The most common

of the other denominations is Methodism, totalling eight per cent, with Roman Catholics representing six per cent. The numbers naming Baptist and United Reformed are very low, as are those in the 'other denomination' category which included members of the Church of Scotland and the Society of Friends.

The results are compared in the next table with four other studies also based on religious issues and of a similar sample size. The two rural comparisons are Hinings' (1968) study in Shropshire (n=250) and a Bible Society study (Harrison 1983) which divided its sample into housing types. The table shows the rural (n=309) and overall (n=931) figures, for comparison. The last survey used is Forster's (1989) work (n=207) on an urban council estate conducted at a similar time to the Rural Church Project.

Table 4.2 Denominational Affiliation - Comparison of Different Surveys¹

Denominational affiliation	Total Sample n	%	Hinings Clun %	Bible Rural %	Society Overall %	Forster Estate %
Church of Engl	212	62	75	68	64	77
Roman Catholic	19	6	1	9	11	9
Methodist	28	8	12	)	7	5
Baptists	3	1	)	)12	2	1
United Reform	2	0	) 5	)	1	2
Other Denom.	15	4	)	6	7	-
Christianity	26	8	-	-	-	1
Other religions	2	0	)	-	1	-
Don't know	2	0	) 7	-	-	1
No affiliation	37	11	)	6	7	4
Total	341	100	100	101	100	100

1. Parts of this table have been published in Davies et al (1991:244) as a result of the author's contribution.

On comparing the total sample with the Bible Society 'rural' figure the Church of England figure is similar, 62% to 68% but significantly lower than the figure from the 1968 study (75%). Rather than indicating a decline in the number of Church of England members as a proportion of the rural community, it is quite likely that this discrepancy is a result of Hinings' focus upon a small, localised of Shropshire. Roman Catholics (16%) were more numerous in the whole Bible Society sample due to a higher number in the 'City' sample. This urban preference is also noticeable in the study of religion on a Hull council estate (Forster 1989). The 'hospital' question outlined previously also ensured that Anglicans were far higher in this study at 77%.

The number not affiliated to any religion is shown to be somewhat higher in the Total Sample than in the other studies and this is tied to a further variation in the categorising of affiliation. It centres around the number of people referring to their religion purely as 'Christianity' without any denominational label. None of the other studies record this response and it is difficult to tell if it either did not occur or is coded elsewhere in the data. Interpretations of these data range from the presence of a non-denominational House Church in or near the parish or a significant number expressing a nominal attachment to mainstream Christianity rather than a denomination.

When assessing the gender variation males are more likely than females to have no affiliation as shown in Table 4.3 which looks at the breakdown when respondents specified a

church, denomination or religion.

Table 4.3 Denominational Affiliation by Gender¹

Religious affiliation	Male		Female		Total Sample	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Church of England	85	53	127	70	212	62
Roman Catholic	6	4	13	7	19	6
Methodist	15	9	13	7	28	8
Other Denom.	6	4	9	5	15	4
Christianity	20	13	6	3	26	8
Oth. religions/DK	3	2	1	1	4	1
No affiliation	24	15	13	7	37	11
Total	159	100	182	100	341	100

Interestingly, men were far more likely to align themselves with Christianity in a non-denominational sense than women, 13% and three per cent respectively. Such a response may suggest a disinterest in denominational religion rather than an expression of spiritual unity or the presence of a House Church. If supported by further analysis this group may be comparable with that which shows no religious affiliation - this also showed a male majority.

A greater proportion of females, well over two-thirds (70%), specified the Church of England as their denomination, compared to just over half (53%) of the men. Indeed, the only denomination where the number of males was greater than that of females was Methodism, nine per cent of men to seven per cent of women. This suggests that the Church of England possesses the greatest rate of falling male rolls, those who

 1. In order to assist further analysis the 'other denomination' category has been expanded to include the small number of respondents who stated 'Baptist' or 'United Reformed' as their denomination. In addition, those responding 'don't know' have been grouped with those naming other religions.

now profess an affiliation to 'Christianity' or no religion at all.

Table 4.4 shows that age responses based on the sense of belonging to a church, denomination or religion appear to vary very little. This is in contrast to findings from the EVSSG which showed that non-affiliation was strongly related to age (Harding et al 1986).

Table 4.4 Denominational Affiliation by Age Groups

Religious affiliation	18 - 34		35 - 44		45 - 54		55 - 64		65 +		Total n
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
C of E	54	67	43	57	37	59	38	71	40	58	212
Roman Cath	3	4	2	3	8	13	3	6	3	4	19
Methodist	5	6	4	5	8	13	1	2	10	15	28
Other denom	2	2	5	7	2	3	3	6	3	4	15
Christian	8	10	8	11	3	4	2	4	5	7	26
Other/DK	3	4	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
No Affil	6	7	12	16	5	8	6	11	8	12	37
Total	81	100	75	100	63	100	53	100	69	100	341

The number giving no religious affiliation ranges from 16% of those aged between 35 and 44 to eight per cent for the 45-54 age group. Such variations would appear to challenge conclusions made by Davie (1990a) based largely on data from the EVSSG:

The sociological evidence seems to indicate that ... significant numbers ... are rejecting even nominal belief. In short, for many young people, disconnected belief is, increasingly, giving way to no belief at all. (Davie 1990:462)

The table shows that there is no discernible pattern in relation to affiliation of Anglican church since the youngest age group held the second highest proportion (67%). Roman Catholics were common in the middle-age categories and

Methodism appeared to increase as the respondents became older. The level of disconnection is shown in the category 'no affiliation' and also appears to be influenced little by the respondent's age.

The only tentative evidence in support of an increased non-affiliation among the younger age groups is the slight tendency for those in the two youngest age groups to identify with 'Christianity' rather than a denomination. The ten and 11% in these two groups is matched by only four and seven per cent in subsequent groups. This non-affiliation to a specific denomination may be a disconnected belief, alternatively, it may represent a more radical Christian belief of the 'converted' young evangelical. This distinction will be clarified later but for the moment the response of this sample to the work of Davie and others suggests that in rural areas the young with a "disconnected belief" do not appear to have been overtaken by those without belief. Such a statement equally applies to the older members of the community.

It is possible to suggest two general conclusions. First, that males aged under 45 are more likely than females and the older respondents to specify Christianity in a broad unconnected sense rather than a specific denomination. Second, the proportion of Roman Catholics and Methodists were highest in the older age groups. This is in contrast to Anglicanism which still appears to maintain a strong membership among the younger age groups. One interpretation might be the rapid decline of Nonconformity in rural areas, hence the concentration among older members, together with

an influx of more affluent Roman Catholics from urban to rural areas (Brierley 1991 and Hornsby-Smith 1987).

Regional variations in the study areas did occur but the Church of England was dominant in each case. This dominance is weakest in Truro (54%) where the alternative strength lay not in Methodism, which might have been expected, but in the lack of denominational affiliation. Methodists are strongest in Durham (14%) rather than the traditional Dissenting regions of Lincoln and Truro. In recent times the proportions of Anglicans and Methodists in the Truro area have been understood to be competing from similar levels of membership (Winter 1991a). The data concerning this diocese reveal that whilst the number of Anglicans has declined, the number of affiliated Methodists has dropped dramatically. In Lincoln, another diocese within which the strength of Methodism is well documented (Obelkevich 1976), the number without religious ties is also high at 13%.

The question of affiliation in this chapter refers to an subjective sense of belonging reflecting the respondent's personal choice rather than, say, a theoretical entry on a hospital entry form. The response shows the Church of England to be the dominant denomination in rural areas, irrespective of gender or age. The incidence of the other denominations is weak and varies on a regional basis. Indeed, rural dwellers are three times more likely to be a member of the Church of England than a member of another church, and over seven times more likely to be Anglican than either Methodist or Roman Catholic. This suits the aims of the thesis well as Towler attempted to relate his

conventional religious types primarily to Anglican beliefs.

Chapter Five

Religious Attendance

Participation, and particularly its frequency, forms another of the basic indicators within the sociology of religion. The social act of church attendance overcomes one of the reasons for Argyle's apprehension when using affiliation as a measure of religiosity because information on the activity of the person is gathered. However, even this does not reveal all of the answers as Argyle points out:

There may be some people who simply observe the outward forms of religion, in order to keep up appearances or not to upset their relations, but who have no real religious beliefs or feelings (Argyle 1958:5).

Therefore, attendance is similar to affiliation in that external expressions of religious practice are not synonymous with an individual's religious belief. However, the change from religious affiliation to regular attendance of church services is real, and one which is not universal as the statistics show. The most recent comprehensive study shows that the majority of the English population is affiliated to a denomination but only ten per cent attend church services (Brierley 1991). The last chapter showed some of the sample rejecting an institutional definition of Christianity by choosing not to affiliate themselves with either a religion or denomination. Of the remainder it is important to work out how many are 'active' through attendance of church services and those who are content merely to belong.

As part of the interview all respondents were asked a series of questions centred around the attendance of church services within the last year. Information gathered in this way permitted the construction of a derived variable which covers the full range of levels of participation. The

following two paragraphs outline each of the six questions relating to church attendance in the order set out by the questionnaire.¹

The first question dealt with specific church services under five different headings; *rites of passage* (weddings, baptisms and funerals), Christmas, Easter, Harvest Festival and Remembrance Sunday. All attendances at these services within the past year were recorded. Attendance at other church services formed the basis of the second and third parts of the question. Initially the respondent was asked if they had 'attended any **other** church service or religious meeting' within the last 6 months. Those who had done so were pressed for further information regarding the date and type of the last service which they had attended.

Respondents who gave negative replies to **all** the questions on specific services and other services within the past six months were asked no further questions.

Those giving at least one positive response were all asked about the frequency of their attendance at regular Sunday services. What these data are able to tell us is the degree of commitment, in terms of activity, within the sample over and above the sense of belonging described in the last chapter.

1. Detailed analysis of the responses to these six questions relating to church attendance is given in Appendix V (p59-74).

Characteristics of Attendance¹

A single derived variable was formulated using the data gathered from the questions referring to Sunday services, Christian festivals and *rites of passage*. The variable allows assessment of the various levels of religious observance within the rural communities from which the sample was chosen. It also provides comparative material for other specialised work on church attenders, one example being Macourt (1976). The five categories used in the variable are as follows:

- once a month or more
- less than once a month
- special services only
- weddings, baptisms or funerals only
- never or practically never attend.

The first category, 'once a month or more', represents the regular churchgoers. The information for this group is taken solely from the yearly attendance variable and amalgamating those who attend church monthly and weekly or more often. The second category covers those who attend ordinary Sunday services but on a more occasional basis, between two and 11 times in the year. In both of the above categories the respondents' attendance of an ordinary church service within the past six months was confirmed by a separate question on the nature of the last service they attended. It should be noted that all of these people may well have attended other 'special' services such as Christmas, Harvest Festival or *rites of passage*.

1. The formulation of the derived variable used in this section provided part of the author's contribution to Winter and Short (1993).

The next three groups provide a useful division of those who do not attend ordinary Sunday services but do, on certain occasions, enter a church. The material for this breakdown is provided by the five questions referring to specific services asked of all respondents. The first of these three categories, 'special services only', covers those who attend Festival services, meaning Christmas, Easter, Harvest Festival and Remembrance Sunday. This group's members may or may not have attended a *rite of passage* service in the past year but stated that they did not attend Sunday services. Attendance of these services is seen as voluntary, in some sense showing sympathy with the religious significance of the service, compared to a *rites of passage* service where people may be invited or feel obliged to attend.

Those not attending a regular service or any of the four special services are divided in two: those who attended a wedding, baptism or funeral service in the last year and those who did not. The latter are classed as those who never or practically never attend church. The proportions falling into each category are shown in the table below.

Table 5.1 Overall Attendance of Church Services

Overall attendance	Total Sample	
	n	%
Once a month or more	54	16
Less than once a month	62	18
Specials only	58	17
Rites of passage only	95	28
Never attend	69	20
Data n/a	3	1
Total	341	100

As Table 5.1 shows the new variable covers all of the survey sample with the exception of three responses for which the necessary data were not available. For the purposes of further analysis these three cases will be excluded. As a proportion of the whole sample the smallest group is the regular attenders at 16%. Interestingly, this appears to be lower than the national average weekly attendance of ten per cent (Brierley 1991), perhaps because of the rural nature of the sample and the desire to restrict any exaggerated response. The former is investigated further at the end of this chapter and the latter in Appendix V. A further 18% attend ordinary Sunday services less than once a month with a further 17% swelling the congregation at the major Festivals.

The remaining 48% are divided between the final two categories. Over a quarter (28%) had not attended an ordinary or special church services but had been to a wedding, baptism or funeral within the year. A fifth (20%) of the respondents is defined as never attending church services of any kind. The difference between the last two categories may, after further analysis, prove not to be significant due to the 'invitational' nature of these services. It is possible that all those in the last group would have attended a *rites of passage* service if the opportunity had arisen. If this is the case then the characteristics shown will be similar to the group who responded as having attended such a service. Essentially, the division was made to see if the characteristics and behaviour of the two groups varied.

A comparable study, in a methodological sense, is a report based on the survey findings of 589 respondents in three new towns of the North East. Macourt (1976) looks specifically at church attenders and their characteristics. Macourt claims that his is the first working definition of church attendance to include past attendance, the nature of that behaviour and future intended behaviour. The sample used in this thesis collected data on the two aspects but not future intentions. In Macourt's study respondents were divided into regular and occasional attenders by virtue of their past performance and future intentions. The figure of 12% for regular attenders was calculated over a month and matches closely the 16% of the sample used in this thesis. Occasional attenders included those going to major festivals but were still fewer than the figure in Table 5.1, 14% compared to 18%.

In the following tables the new variable is examined with reference to the gender and age of the rural populace. The table below shows the results when gender is used in the analysis.

Table 5.2 Overall Attendance of Church Services by Gender

Overall attendance	Male		Female		Total Sample	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Once a month +	17	11	37	20	54	16
< once a month	22	14	40	22	62	18
Specials only	28	18	30	17	58	17
Rites of passage	56	36	39	21	95	28
Never attend	33	21	36	20	69	21
Total	156	100	182	100	338	100

The overall figures have already been discussed but this table reveals that they are a blend of two contrasting pictures. The new variable shows that a fifth of women attended Sunday services at least once a month. In contrast only 11% of the men attended this frequently. Those who are defined as occasional attenders of conventional services are also more likely to be women than men, 22% and 14% respectively. The figure for churchgoing as far as special services are concerned is, for both genders, just under a fifth of the sample.

Attendance of *rites of passage* services only is far more likely among males (36%) than females (21%). This variation arises not because females avoid these services but because males are less likely to go to any other sort of service. Further analysis of the data showed that 52% of males who attended a *rite of passage* did not attend any other type of service that year compared to only 29% of women. Having noted the variations in the other categories it is interesting that the number never attending church services of any kind stands, almost identically, at a fifth. One may expect this to be lower in females as they show more inclination for churchgoing generally.

On comparing these data with other surveys some contrasts are found. Macourt also found women (16%) to be twice as likely to go to church on a regular basis as men (seven per cent). However, Forster found that "for regular services and for special occasions, the difference between the sexes was not statistically significant" (1989:31). Further support to the variation between genders is given by

Harrison's work (1983). Using analysis from the whole sample (n=931) rather than the different housing types it was found that monthly or greater attendance among women was 27% compared to 16% among men. In the survey data for this thesis the monthly attendance figures are 20% for women and 11% for men. It is difficult to judge why there was no significant difference in Forster's analysis but the nature of the sample area, a single council estate, may in its isolation provide a valid reason for doubting the findings on a national scale.

Table 5.3 is the product of cross-tabulating the new variable with the five age group categories.

Table 5.3 Overall Attendance of Church Services by Age Group

Overall attendance	18 - 34		35 - 44		45 - 54		55 - 64		65 +		Total n
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
1/month +	8	10	12	16	14	22	8	15	12	18	54
<1/month	19	24	17	23	10	16	8	15	8	12	62
Specials	13	16	14	19	13	21	9	17	9	14	58
Rites of p	27	34	13	17	22	35	18	34	15	22	95
Never att	13	16	19	25	4	6	10	19	23	34	69
Total	80	100	75	100	63	100	53	100	67	100	338

The table shows that the most likely age group to attend on at least a monthly basis are those in the 45-54 age bracket (22%) at a level twice that of the youngest age group (ten per cent). Religious observance would appear to increase with age towards middle age and then decline as retirement and old age is reached.

Referring back to the quote from Davie (1990a) in Chapter 4,

which suggests that rather than a disconnected belief young people have no belief at all, the youngest in this sample seem to retain the belief and sense of belonging but are the most disconnected from participation of all the age categories. This is further supported by the number irregularly attending ordinary Sunday services. This decreases with age from 24% in the 18-34 group to 12% in the oldest group.

Attendance at church services celebrating particular festivals shows a similar pattern, though not as clearly defined, to that of regular attendance, with 21% of 45-54 age group falling into this category. Forster's study (1989) found a similar response by age for those attending services other than rites of passage 'at least sometimes'. The figures were 18% (17-30 years), 35% (31-60 years) and 26% (61+). There is a great deal of data showing that religious belief increases steadily with age (Wadsworth and Freeman (1983), Gerard (1985) and Jerrome (1989)). There are a number of theories attempting to explain why religious belief and observance increase with age. Wadsworth and Freeman (1983) report on the early findings of a cohort study assessing religious beliefs of two generations. They conclude that intergenerational differences can be accounted for by age effects rather than emotional experiences. Jerrome (1989) suggests in a study of aging within an English church that members become more religious as they get older. Both of these studies support what is normally called the life cycle pattern as the cycle is common to most generations. Gerard (1985), writing in part of the EVSSG work, suggests that variations with age have more to do with

generation, in that those who are old now were brought up in a more religious era when they were young. This theory is called the generational shift as it suggests that the behaviour of each generation will remain the same regardless of age. The figures in this table and those of Forster's study would appear to reveal that increasing participation with age is not the case in terms of church attendance.

Comparison is possible with the large databases created by the EVSSG, which collected information over a decade in Great Britain and across Western Europe (Harding *et al* 1986 and Barker *et al* 1992), and longitudinal studies such as Wadsworth and Freeman (1983). The EVSSG study will be used as a means of comparison with the sample data largely because it covers all the age ranges in both time periods. Conversely, the Wadsworth and Freeman study focuses on a single generation in their thirties when the article was published.

Both of the EVSSG surveys in 1981 and 1990 showed that over Europe as a whole, and within Great Britain, the number attending church increased with age. The average monthly or more frequent attendance of the European study was 33% compared to 23% in Britain¹. This is somewhat higher than the sample used in this study, yet the study calculated the

1. The British survey conducted by Gallup asked the question, 'apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days?'. The categories were shown on a prompt card and provided eight choices for the respondent: more than once a week, once a week, once a month, Christmas/Easter day, other specific holy days, once a year, less often and never or practically never. Thus the higher attendance percentage was probably due to the 'optimistic response' of 'once a month' rather than 'once a year'.

proportion of 'core members' for each country. For Great Britain this represented 16% of the whole sample. The European figures are divided into three age groups, 18-34, 35-49 and 50 and over. In the 1990 survey 20% of the 18-34 group attended church monthly, rising to 38% in the next group and 46% in the final group.

The fact that the final age category in the EVSSG findings is so large may conceal a decline in their data similar to that in this thesis. By adding together the three final groups from Table 5.2 to provide a 45 and over group, 19% attended monthly or more frequently. Thus a similar, though less dramatic, increase in regular attendance is reached for the 'oldest category'. With an increasingly aging population the number of respondents who are in their seventies and eighties make up a significant proportion of those in the 65+ age group. In fact, of the 67 respondents in this group 32 are between the ages of 75 and 94. Thus a logical explanation of this pattern could be that as age increases mobility decreases.

In three of the age groups a third of the respondents was classified as attending '*rites of passage only*'. In each of the groups this corresponded with a lower number who had never attended. Total non-attendance shows the greatest variation and is highest in the oldest age group where it represents more than a third (34%) of the sample. One might expect the younger members of the community to show a greater degree of absence but only 16% said that they had never been to church in that year. However, attendance at weddings and baptisms is likely to be high among those in

this group.

The first two tables in this chapter have shown quite clearly that the relationship between gender and religious observance is stronger than the relationship between age and religious observance. Table 5.4 was produced to establish if the lack of a strong relationship between age and churchgoing was the result of merging the data of two genders.

Table 5.4 Overall Attendance of Church Services by Age Group and Gender

Overall attendance	18 - 34		35 - 44		45 - 54		55 - 64		65 +		Total n
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
MALE (n=156)											
1/month +	3	9	2	7	4	16	3	9	5	15	17
<1/month	7	20	5	16	2	8	4	13	4	12	22
Specials	4	11	8	26	4	16	8	25	4	12	28
Rites of p	15	43	6	19	13	52	15	47	7	21	56
Never att	6	17	10	32	2	8	2	6	13	40	33
FEMALE (n=182)											
1/month +	5	11	10	23	10	26	5	24	7	21	37
<1/month	12	27	12	27	8	21	4	19	4	11	40
Specials	9	20	6	14	9	24	1	5	5	15	30
Rites of p	12	27	7	16	9	24	3	14	8	24	39
Never att	7	15	9	20	2	5	8	38	10	29	36
Total	80		75		63		53		67		338

The general picture shown by this table is that age appears to accentuate the variations between gender, particularly in the groups covering middle age. However, the three-way crosstabulation does mean that the number of respondents in each category is small but this does not obscure the general pattern. In the youngest age group 11% of the females were regular and 27% occasional attenders compared to nine per cent and 20% of males. This level is low but there is no large margin between the genders, suggesting that they have

equally disconnected themselves from religious observance.

For the next two age groups, covering the 35 to 54 year olds, females are far more likely than males to attend church services on a regular and occasional basis. In the 55 to 64 age group the number of male and female respondents classified as regular and occasional attenders is closer, seven and nine respectively. The percentages are misleading due to the greater number of males in this age group. In the oldest age group the regular and occasional churchgoers are not divided by gender in either numbers or percentage points.

The evidence presented can only produce tentative results as the numbers in each group are small. However, to summarise, it appears that both genders have similar attendance patterns when they are both young and old. Male attendance falls during the intervening years with the rites of passage services providing a minimum level. During this time females are twice as likely as males to attend ordinary services. In the last age group where a large number stated that they never attend church, account has to be taken of the proportion of residents who, due to immobility, are unable to get to church. Taking this into consideration, in retirement males appear to have a level of attendance comparable to that of women, which in both cases is nearly twice the rate of the youngest group.

It is important to mention at this point that the data presented thus far do not enable any judgment to be passed on the presence or absence of the two theories concerning

religious belief and observance mentioned earlier. The life cycle pattern suggests a wave-like motion with individuals moving through the cycle and changing their pattern of attendance and belief according to the characteristics of that age group. One pattern may be described as disconnected or non-belief during youth with a gradual increase in attachment and belief as age increases. The alternative concept, that of a generational shift, supposes that the respondents' attendance and belief patterns will not change over time. This would mean that the young who are noted as disconnected in the previous table would continue to be disconnected throughout their life.

Davie (1990a) highlights the consequence of misinterpreting these scenarios when she asks:

Are we, in the late 20th century, experiencing a massive generational shift with respect to religious behaviour, rather than a manifestation of the normal life cycle? If we conclude, as many commentators do, that the former is the case, the implications for the future of religious life in this country are very considerable indeed. (Davie 1990:459)

In order to assess the strength of each argument a dataset is required which is repeated a number of years later. One such study is the EVSSG and this used by Davie (Barker 1992). However, the interpretation of the data is not straight forward. For church attendance over Europe the 1990 figure for the 35-49 group was 28%. This is lower than the 1981 figure of 35% and closer to the figure for the lower age group in that year of 24%. Under the life cycle theory the proportion should rise to 35% as the likelihood of religious observance increases with individual ages. In this instance the evidence for church attendance suggests a

generational shift with the proportion similar to that of the younger group (24%) in the previous study. However, when assessing the figures for religiosity over Europe, the 1990 figures are closer to the same age groups in 1981. This would suggest that in terms of religiosity, the individuals have become more religious as they have become older. This indicates the presence of the life cycle theory rather than the generational shift theory.

The effect of the life cycle or generational shift on the work undertaken by Towler is, by his own suggestion, not significant: Towler upholds that he has revealed and described all of the conventional types of Christian belief. Thus regardless of a life cycle change or a generational shift, an individual's beliefs and corresponding religious observance will fall within the five types that Towler expounds in *The Need for Certainty*.

The next table shows religious and denominational affiliation with respect to overall attendance. Those responding who had no denominational or religious affiliation have been amalgamated as the responses were identical. This strengthens the earlier suggestion in Chapter 4 that those stating 'Christianity', rather than a denomination, did so because of their disconnected relationship with the Christian faith. Finally, the four respondents who either adhered to a religion other than Christianity or were unsure of any commitment have been excluded for the purposes of this table.

Table 5.5 Overall Attendance of Church Services by Religious Affiliation

Attend service	C of E		R Cath		Methdm		Other		No Allg/ Chrstnty		Total Sample	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1/month +	32	15	7	37	8	29	6	40	-	-	54	16
<1/month	50	24	1	5	4	15	1	7	5	8	62	18
Specials	37	17	3	16	6	21	1	7	10	16	58	17
Rites of p	57	27	2	10	6	21	3	20	26	43	95	28
Never att	35	17	6	32	4	14	4	26	20	33	69	21
Total	211	100	19	100	28	100	15	100	61	100	338	100

The figures shown in Table 5.5 are small for all the categories with the exception of the Church of England. Any comparative interpretation is therefore made more difficult and only tentative conclusions can be drawn. However, several points are worthy of note. For example, the Anglican church may dominate rural areas in terms of membership but only 15% attend Sunday services on a monthly basis. Even allowing for the size of the sample, members of other denominations appear to be twice as likely to attend church regularly. A further quarter (24%) of the Anglican members occasionally attends Sunday services, a greater number than for the other denominations.

In the case of Roman Catholics there seems to be a degree of polarisation, with the two largest groups either attending regularly (37%) or not attending any church service (32%). Those among the 'other denomination' category also show a similar pattern. A comparison between the Anglicans and Methodists reveals that though the proportion of regular and occasional attendance is reversed, the overall breakdown is very similar.

For the purposes of comparison, only the Anglican data are suitable, as the numbers involved are much larger than the other categories. Some studies covering religious observance refer mainly to the weekly attendance rates of denominations. The monthly Anglican attendance rate is 15% but further analysis of these data produced a figure of six per cent for 'weekly or more often' attendance.

In his review of data relating to religious behaviour Argyle (1958) looks at two studies. The first was set in York where the Church of England attendance rate fell from 12% in 1900 to four per cent in 1950. A second study based in Sheffield showed a similar decline from 12% in 1887 to under three per cent in 1956. Martin (1967), in *A Sociology of English Religion*, summarises a whole series of polls from the 1960s and concludes that 25% attend every month, 40% every four months with 35% never attending church services. Martin goes on to give a figure of 20% for those attending special occasions and rites of passage services. In Table 5.4 this is represented by two categories which when combined total 44%, more than double the figure given by Martin. With the Anglican church so dominant in rural areas his comment on the importance attached to these services would appear to be upheld if not strengthened. The number of those never attending church in the Total Sample was a fifth, far lower than Martin's figure of 35%.

A more contemporary comparison is provided by the statistical work of the Bible Society (1980) and Brierley (1991). The information in both surveys was gathered from

clergy rather than individuals and a national figure of adult church attendance was reached by dividing the national adult church attendance by the adult population. In 1979 11% of adults attended church services compared to 10% in 1989. The ability to compare these data with the attendance figures in the total sample is hampered by the different methodology. However, it is reasonably safe to suggest that the attendance rate in this sample (16% attending monthly or more often) is moderately close to the national figure of 10% attending church services in 1989. The 1989 survey also collected information on the church environment with two 'rural' categories. However, membership and attendance figures are shown only as a proportion of the national figure rather than as a rural equivalent.

The EVSSG also provides data on church attendance over a decade, 1981 and 1990 (Barker et al 1992). However, unlike in the work of Brierley the data is assimilated through personal interviews and thus shows the proportion of respondents who attend church regularly. The European average for monthly church attendance fell from 37% to 33% between 1981 and 1990. The Great Britain figure, however, rose from 21% to 23%. This is higher than the 16% found in the Total Sample for two main reasons. First, church attendance in Wales and Scotland is widely recognised as higher (Currie et al 1977, Davie 1994 and Bruce 1995). Second, the attendance rate was elevated by the Catholic and Non-Conformist minority. Harding et al (1986) calculated the weekly Church of England attendance to be eight per cent, compared to six per cent for the sample as whole. It may be expected that the rural sample used in this thesis

would be higher than the EVSSG study. It is possible that the variation owes more to the rigour of the question and related categories¹ than any sociological factor.

The notion that church attendance in rural areas is higher than in other parts of the country has been suggested by Martin (1967). Harrison (1983) provides a possible geographical comparison in a study funded by the Bible Society. Regular weekly attendance was calculated at 15% with 56% attending *rites of passage* or not at all. The weekly attendance rate among the Church of England respondents was seven per cent. Regular attenders were higher in the town and suburb categories (19% and 17% respectively) rather than the rural category (11%). However, the study noted 'a great deal of occasional church-going in rural areas' with only 14% not attending church services of any kind. In the whole sample 16% attend monthly or more often with 21% not attending any type of service in the past year.

All the studies reviewed suggest that the data arising from derived variable are broadly comparable with national figures. However, church attendance in rural areas is not shown to be stronger; indeed, according to some of the studies the rate of attendance was lower. The reason for this may relate more to the structure of the question and the optimistic views of the respondents than to any sociographic variation (Bruce 1995). This is supported when the church attendance figures from this study are compared

1. See footnote on page 69 for a full explanation

with those of other specific investigations (Macourt 1976) and the clergy-based studies (Brierley 1991) which are noted as showing lower rates of attendance and, according to some commentators, are more accurate (Bruce 1995).

Having introduced the new derived variable and assessed the results when using it on the data, the next chapter will introduce the five religious types that Towler defined. All the variables that have been highlighted in the last three chapters will be used to illustrate and compare those in this sample with each of the five ideal types identified by Towler. By doing this, characteristics associated with a particular type, which Towler was unable to reveal, may be revealed.

Chapter Six

Religious Attitudes

In the previous chapters the sample used in this thesis has been shown to share some of the characteristics of the sample which Towler used, namely that it is predominantly Christian and dominantly Anglican. However, Towler's sample is suggested as being made up of individuals who are more committed and articulate than this sample as well as being separated by 25 years. The first part of this chapter briefly introduces each of Towler's five religious types. The following section describes the questions in this survey relating to religious attitudes, with preliminary analysis showing the variety that exists within the sample.

By way of introduction the table below shows each of the five types that Towler defined in *The Need for Certainty*. The associated phrase is taken from the cognitive style that Towler attributes to each type. He does this by adapting the phrase 'Lord I believe, help me in my unbelief' to the style of each type.

Figure 6.1 Towler's Five Conventional Religious Types

Exemplarism	I hope, may my hope not fail
Conversionism	I am assured
Theism	I trust
Gnosticism	I know
Traditionalism	I cherish and hold dear

The first type that Towler outlines is given the title 'exemplarism' which he defines as a group "focused on the man Jesus ... It sees in Jesus, in his life and death, and in his teaching, an example to follow" (1984:19).

Exemplarists are far less likely to use the title 'Christ' because of the association of this title with a resurrection which they believe detracts from the teachings of Jesus. The exemplarists are best understood, according to Towler,

if they are taken to say 'Lord I hope, may my hope not fail' (1984:31).

The second type defined by Towler is 'conversionism' which he stresses is based on "a real and immediate experience, rather than on hope or an aspiration" (1984:39). At its most fundamental it stresses the need of 'personal rebirth' to set a person free. The Holy Spirit is an important part of the conversionism faith allowing continual rebirth and a true sense of communion with God and fellow believers. For the conversionist the cognitive style is 'I am assured' (1984:47).

The type 'theism' is distinct in its belief in God and an acknowledgement of His role as Creator. In a biblical sense Towler likens it to an affiliation to the Old rather than the New Testament. The world is shown 'to be good' when looked at from the prospective of theism and the positive outlook pervades. Thus instead of 'I believe' the theist would prefer 'I trust' (1984:66).

Towler's fourth type is called 'gnosticism', identified by its "overriding concern with 'spiritual' matters and the 'spiritual world'" (1984:68). This is characterised by a twofold belief in life after death and access to the spiritual world. There is similarity between this group and that of exemplarism in that Jesus is seen as the supreme example. For the gnostic, belief is stated in terms which express 'I know' (1984:78)

The final type is made-up of the 'traditionalism' element

which in Towler's description "has no characteristic object of belief or experience" and, as a result, the "lack of any single, defining focus" (1984:81) is its own distinguishing feature. The traditionalist believes, often strongly, in everything that is considered conventional within Christianity. The substance of the individual's belief will affirm Christianity and within that, an acknowledgement of the Creator, the example of Jesus and the role of the Holy Spirit. To complete the cognitive styles the traditionalist does not believe so much as 'cherish' (1984:83).

Statements on Religious Attitudes¹

Measures of religious participation are useful but tell us little about people's attitudes and belief. Outer actions may not reflect inner feelings. In this respect, religious behaviour is no exception and reliable data on religious commitment are especially difficult to obtain: Wilson (1969:21) stated that there was "no adequate way of measuring religious commitment". However, it was a major aim of the project to obtain from rural parishioners as close a profile of their religious beliefs as possible. The various advantages and disadvantages of using personal interviews to gather information of this kind have been acknowledged earlier in Chapter One. Even when these are taken into consideration, the data provide a prime opportunity to investigate in relative depth the religious nature of the rural populace and, as a result, explore the sample for signs of Towler's five religious types.

1. Parts of the text in this and the following chapters formed the author's contribution to Seymour and Short (1993).

The source of the data which will provide this opportunity hinges around 12 statements presented to each of the respondents on a prompt card. The exact wording and order of the statements is shown in Figure 6.2. The formulation of these statements was influenced by the work of Towler outlined in *The Need for Certainty*, although the range was broadened to cover both specific Christian and more generalised beliefs so that people had a greater choice of response. The wording of each statement was not tested on any group nor was there any basis on which to predict the responses provided by the rural populace.

Figure 6.2 Statements of Religious Attitudes

1. God is the creator of everything.
2. We must keep the faith handed down to us.
3. Each person must receive Christ into their lives.
4. Everything will be all right in the end.
5. We must follow Jesus as an example of how to live.
6. The other world is near to this one.
7. We must search for the Truth throughout our lives.
8. Science explains everything we need to know.
9. We only live once so let's make the most of it.
10. Nearly all religious people are either hypocrites or fanatics.
11. We need renewing by the Holy Spirit.
12. Each person must be 'born again'.

The basis on which the broadening of choice for respondents was founded related to two distinct factors associated with the sample that Towler used. First, the proportion of the population corresponding with either the author of a religious book or an Anglican bishop can only be small. Second, the authors of the letters are most likely to be those who hold their own beliefs with sufficient conviction to put them to paper. Both of these factors could result in religious types not being fully examined or discovered through Towler's work.

The question was divided into two distinct parts.

Initially, all respondents were asked for their opinion on each of the 12 statements in turn. The question was phrased to enable the respondents to describe their 'own outlook on religion' and they were given the prompt card with the statements written in full. Each statement was read out and the respondent given time to debate the sentence in their mind.

Table 6.1 below shows the overall results to this part of the question which encouraged a response based on agreement or disagreement with the statements. The statements are placed in the same order in which they were asked during the survey.

Leaving aside the range of responses, what is immediately striking is the small number of refusals, which never rose above 2% for any of the 12 parts of the question. With only four respondents refusing to give a response to any of the statements the vast majority of the respondents agreed to be asked each of the statements. Their responses are divided into four categories; 'agree', 'unsure', 'disagree' and 'don't know' (DK).

Table 6.1 Statements on Religion by All Responses

Total Statements (n=341)	Agree		Unsure		Disagree		DK		Refused		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
God is the Creator of everything	192	56	70	20	71	21	3	1	5	2	341
We must keep the faith handed down to us	187	55	36	10	101	30	11	3	6	2	341
Each person must receive Christ into their lives	139	41	46	13	139	41	10	3	7	2	341
Everything will be all right in the end	148	44	62	18	92	27	32	9	7	2	341
We must follow Jesus as an example of how to live	199	58	30	9	95	28	9	3	8	2	341
The other world is near to this one	86	25	66	20	85	25	96	28	8	2	341
We must search for the Tr- uth throughout our lives	264	77	19	6	41	12	10	3	7	2	341
Science explains every- thing we need to know	52	15	32	9	239	70	12	4	6	2	341
We only live once so let's make the most of it	227	67	35	10	60	17	12	4	7	2	341
Nearly all religious peo- ple are either hypocrites or fanatics	30	9	32	9	262	77	13	4	4	1	341
We need renewing by the Holy Spirit	127	38	45	13	125	38	37	9	9	2	341
Each person must be born again	50	15	43	12	190	56	51	15	7	2	341

In his concluding chapter Towler outlined the 'implications for research' of his studies. The first point he made stresses the need to distinguish between those who do not understand a religious statement and those who do not consider it to be relevant as far as their way of being religious is concerned. In accordance with this advice the 'unsure' and 'don't know' categories were treated seriously and separately, with those not understanding the statement

recorded as 'don't know'. It was central to the methodology regarding this question, that statements were not explained to the respondents to ensure that it is their own religious opinions that were recorded.

Table 6.2 condenses the responses to each statement by excluding those who either refused or responded within the 'don't know' category. The column on the right shows the useful responses (agree, unsure and disagree) as a total number and percentage of the whole sample (n=341).

Table 6.2 Statements on Religion by Usable Responses

Statements	Agree		Unsure		Disagree		Sample	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
God is the Creator of everything	192	58	70	21	71	21	333	98
We must keep the faith handed down to us	187	58	36	11	101	31	324	95
Each person must receive Christ into their lives	139	43	46	14	139	43	324	95
Everything will be all right in the end	148	49	62	21	92	30	302	89
We must follow Jesus as an example of how to live	199	62	30	9	95	29	324	95
The other world is near to this one	86	36	66	28	85	36	237	70
We must search for the Truth throughout our lives	264	81	19	6	41	13	324	95
Science explains everything we need to know	52	16	32	10	239	74	323	95
We only live once so let's make the most of it	227	70	35	11	60	19	322	94
Nearly all religious people are either hypocrites or fanatics	30	9	32	10	262	81	324	95
We need renewing by the Holy Spirit	127	43	45	15	125	42	297	87
Each person must be 'born again'	50	18	43	15	190	67	283	83

The right hand percentage shows that nearly all of the statements were well understood and respondents were able to express an opinion. In eight of the 12 cases a response of well over 90% was recorded, a further 3 cases elicited responses from over 80%. The one remaining statement, 'the other world is near to this one', had a comparatively poor response rate of 70%. With the exception of this question, which will be analysed later, it would appear that the statements were understood. Of course some respondents may

not wish to be perceived as not understanding a particular statement but this type of response is difficult to determine.

Further analysis was undertaken to reveal responses which may involve a desire to satisfy the interviewer or minimise personal embarrassment. Such responses are understandable in the false environment of a personal interview but the responses are likely to obscure the individuals religious beliefs. It is possible that some cases will be revealed in unlikely patterns of answers such as agreement or disagreement with all 12 statements. Table 6.1 has already shown that four respondents refused to give an answer to any of the statements. One respondent agreed with all 12 and a further respondent did not understand any of the statements. Finally, there were five cases where the respondent was unable to 'agree' with at least one of the 12 statements provided. In total 11 respondents, three per cent of the sample, gave 'unlikely' responses which suggest an unwillingness or inability to grasp the nature of the question. Thus it is assumed that the overall level of comprehension is high and that the first part of this part of this question yielded information that is measurable.

A Single Religious Outlook

The second part of the question on religious attitudes required the respondent to specify which one of the twelve statements 'most closely matched their own outlook on religion or life'. It is these data which will be used in some detail as a comparison with Towler's findings later in the thesis. Given the choice of purely agreeing or

disagreeing with a particular statement, the responses may encompass a wide range of religious belief. By requesting the respondent to select a single statement, one is essentially asking them to define their own brand of religion. It is this selection over and above the other statements that reaches to the core of a respondent's religious make-up. If the question succeeds in its objective the resulting data is effectively a definition of the respondent's religious belief.

The respondents had already debated in their own mind each of the statements and as a result they are familiar to them. The success of this question was, in a sense, judged by the ability of the sample to select one of the twelve options on offer. A large number of refusals or respondents choosing more than one statement might show the choice of statements to be too narrow or too broad. The response to this second part of the question is shown in Table 6.3 with the statements presented in order of magnitude.

The table shows that just seven per cent of the 341 respondents interviewed failed to give a response to this question. A further four per cent stated that none of the statements were close enough to their personal outlook, with three per cent unable to specify a single statement to describe their beliefs. In total these three types of response represented 14% of the sample. Thus, in 86% of the cases the respondent was able to select one of the 12 statements as being comparable with their own beliefs.

Table 6.3 Chosen Outlook on Religion

Chosen outlook on religion	Total Sample	
	n	%
We only live once so let's make the most of it	75	22
We must search for the Truth throughout our lives	57	17
We must follow Jesus as an example of how to live	43	13
God is the Creator of everything	35	10
We must keep the faith handed down to us	29	9
Everything will be all right in the end	17	5
Each person must receive Christ into their lives	14	4
Nearly all religious people are either hypocrites or fanatics	6	2
Science explains everything we need to know	5	1
We need renewing by the Holy Spirit	5	1
Each person must be 'born again'	5	1
The other world is near to this one	2	1
Combination	10	3
None	15	4
Refused/DK	23	7
Total	341	100

The data reveal some interesting variations, with the most commonly expressed statement from the 12 options being 'We only live once so let's make the most of it', selected by 22% of the sample. The 'search for Truth' was the second most popular single belief, the choice of 17% of the sample, with the statement that 'Jesus is an example to follow' slightly lower at 13%. The idea of 'God as the creator' and the desire to 'keep the faith handed down' represented the views of ten and nine per cent respectively. In total these five statements accounted for 71% of all the responses made and 82% of those who making a single selection. The number selecting 'each receiving Christ', 'it will be all right in the end', and 'renewing by the spirit' was very low. Only two respondents affirmed their belief in the least understood statement, 'the other world is near to this one'.

Comparison with Cathedrals Survey

As noted in Chapter one, further analysis of religious beliefs using a similar methodology was undertaken by Gasson and Winter (1993) in a report to the Archbishop's Commission on Cathedrals. The report is reviewed here as it provides the only means of comparing the data in this chapter with an outside source.

Personal interviews were conducted using a structured questionnaire by volunteers attending a cathedral camp during August 1993. A total of 814 interviews was completed with visitors to four English cathedrals. Difficulties were encountered in trying to obtain interviews from foreign visitors and those in tour parties; this was partly responsible for a response rate of between 50 and 60%. Of those interviewed 21% were from overseas and between 32% and 58% came from the region in which the cathedral is situated. A quarter of the respondents was aged over 65 compared to only 15% aged under 26 with females representing 56% of the whole sample. Generally, the methodology and construction associated with the data from the Cathedrals Survey are very different to that of the sample used in this thesis.

In the Cathedrals Survey only six of the original 12 statements were presented to the respondents, owing to constraints with time: 12 statements would have increased the total time of the interview which was largely constructed of closed questions¹. As with the sample in

1. The author assisted Gasson and Winter on the basis of selection for the six statements to be included in the cathedral questionnaire.

this study, respondents were initially asked if they 'agreed', 'disagreed' or were 'unsure' about each of the statements. The second part of the question asked which statement best fitted their own outlook on religion. The comparative results on levels of agreement concerning the six statements between the sample in this study and the Cathedrals Survey are shown in Table 6.4 below.

Table 6.4 Response to Religious Belief Statements, Comparison between Total Sample (TS) and Cathedrals Survey (CS)

Statements	Agree		Unsure		Disagree	
	TS%	CS%	TS%	CS%	TS%	CS%
God is the Creator of everything	58	60	21	20	21	20
We must keep the faith handed down to us	58	63	11	20	31	27
Each person must receive Christ into their lives	43	47	14	21	43	27
We must follow Jesus as an example of how to live	62	59	9	18	29	23
We must search for the Truth throughout our lives	81	79	6	12	13	9
We only live once so let's make the most of it	70	62	11	18	19	20

The similarity in the responses between the two surveys is striking. This is particularly so in the column covering agreement with the six statements where the two sets of figures fall within an eight per cent margin. The responses for one statement, 'God is the creator of everything', are virtually identical with none of the responses varying by more than two per cent. In four others none of the differences are measured by more than a ten per cent variation. Only in one statement, 'each person must receive Christ into their lives', did a variation of greater than

ten per cent occur. In this instance 43% of the total sample disagreed with the statement compared to 27% of the Cathedrals Survey.

Table 6.5 compares the personal religious outlook of the respondents in the two surveys. The figures for the total sample have been recalculated using the 253 respondents who selected the six statements used in the Cathedrals Survey as closest to their own beliefs. This enables a more direct comparison to be made but the total sample figures are not comparable with those from Table 6.3.

Table 6.5 Statement Closest to Personal Outlook, Comparison between Total Sample and Cathedrals Survey

Statements	Total Sample %	Cathedral Survey %
God is the Creator of everything	14	13
We must keep the faith handed down to us	11	6
Each person must receive Christ into their lives	5	12
We must follow Jesus as an example of how to live	17	16
We must search for the Truth throughout our lives	22	31
We only live once so let's make the most of it	29	22

The personal beliefs of the two samples can be seen as similar but unlike in the agreements responses variations have appeared. The two statements which come closest to most people's beliefs are the same in both samples. However, they change places with 29% of the Total sample choosing 'we only live once' compared to 22% in the

Cathedrals Survey. Also, 31% selected 'we must search for the Truth' in the cathedral survey compared to 22% in the total sample. The response for the statements 'God is creator' and 'Jesus as an example' vary by one percentage point in both cases.

The last two statements reveal that the Cathedrals Survey respondents were less willing to believe that 'we must keep the faith' (six per cent compared to 11% in the Total Sample) but more likely to suggest that 'each person must be born again' (12% compared to five per cent in the Total Sample).

Two important factors in influencing the personal outlook of respondents in the cathedral survey were found to be church membership and attendance. Table 6.6 compares the variations in the Cathedrals Survey data with that of the total sample. Church attendance in the Cathedrals Survey was measured by participation in regular Sunday services. A third (34%) attended at least once a week, 30% between once a month and once a year and 36% said they did not attend services at all. For the total sample the derived attendance variable has been used to separate regular and occasional attenders, together with those who only went to *rites of passage* services or not at all.

Table 6.6 Statement Closest to Personal Outlook by Church Attendance, Comparison between Total Sample (TS) and Cathedrals Survey (CS)

Statements	Regular Attender		Occasional Attender		Non-Attender	
	TS%	CS%	TS%	CS%	TS%	CS%
God is the Creator of everything	15	18	14	14	12	7
We must keep the faith handed down to us	17	5	12	10	9	3
Each person must receive Christ into their lives	12	27	4	6	4	2
We must follow Jesus as an example of how to live	29	23	18	17	12	9
We must search for the Truth throughout our lives	17	21	21	35	26	35
We only live once so let's make the most of it	10	6	31	18	36	44

Most of the trends in the Total Sample are echoed in the Cathedrals Survey. One notable variation is the higher number of regular attenders in the total sample who feel that the statement 'we must keep the faith handed down to us' is closest to their own religion (17%) compared to the cathedral survey (five per cent). The reverse is true for the statement 'each person must receive Christ into their lives' where 27% of the regular attenders in the Cathedrals Survey selected the statement compared to 12% of the total sample. The only variation among the occasional attenders in the two samples occurs in the two most popular statements. The statement 'we only live once' is more popular in the total sample, 31% compared to 18%, but the reverse is true for the statement 'we must search for the Truth', 21% to 35%. The profile of the non-attenders is similar in the two samples.

The last three tables have shown that in two samples of very different construction a great deal of similarity can be found. This would suggest that the responses used in this thesis are not unusual or uncharacteristic of the population as a whole as the compatibility of the responses clearly go beyond the bounds of coincidence. As stated previously, the construction of these statements, as well as other areas of the questionnaire, emerged from the desire to investigate further the work of Towler and his development of five types of conventional religion. The next chapter takes each of the five religious types which he characterises and attempts to compare them with the religious characteristics of these data. The examination of a sociography for the different types will be the subject of subsequent chapters, for the moment it is sufficient to concentrate on the religious features. In essence, this is an attempt to test empirically the five ideal types outlined by Towler in *The Need for Certainty* on the religious beliefs of the rural populace.

Chapter Seven

Comparisons with Towler

In this chapter each of the five types that Towler describes and characterises in *The Need for Certainty* will be compared with the beliefs of the equivalent group from these data and identified in the last chapter. However, before any comparisons are made it is important to state that there is a second way in which this thesis and Towler's work may be distinguished. Not only is the sample different but the notion of 'ideal types' is also different. The types identified by Towler are analytical ideal types (Towler 1984:17) whereas as those developed in this thesis are empirical. The ideal types identified by Towler are, therefore, compared with empirically based categories derived from the data used in this thesis.

The comparison will be undertaken by taking those who chose one of 12 statements as being closest to their own beliefs and those who agreed with the statement. These two groups will form the small and large sub-samples respectively and will form the basis for comparison.

For example, the exemplarist statement is 'we must follow Jesus as an example of how to live'. In the first section 199 (58%) of the 341 respondents affirmed the truth of this statement and these form the larger sub-sample. This group may include those who are sympathetic to aspects of the exemplarist type. The smaller sub-sample is made up of the 43 (13%) respondents who selected the above statement as being closest to their own religious outlook on life. This group may include those who are most strongly attracted to exemplarism because it is closest to their own beliefs. Analysis of each of the types will, therefore, focus on the

smaller sub-sample using the larger one where appropriate. The responses of the two sub-samples will be compared with that of the sample as a whole.

Exemplarism

The first of Towler's types that will be analysed in this way is that of 'exemplarism'. According to Towler those in this group focus their thoughts on the teachings of the man Jesus, rather than God; and the type of life he led, rather than the divine nature of his ministry, death and resurrection. Identifying those who choose exemplarism will permit comparisons to be made with the characteristic beliefs that Towler associates with this group in *The Need for Certainty*.

Of the 12 statements on the prompt card 'we must follow Jesus as an example of how to live' was designed to attract the exemplarist belief. In the first section 199 (58%) of the 341 respondents affirmed the truth of this statement. Moreover, 43 (13%) of the whole sample selected the statement as being closest to their own religious outlook on life. These two groups will form the basis of the analysis referred to as the larger sub-sample and the smaller sub-sample. Thus the smaller sub-sample (n=43) may include those who are most strongly attracted by exemplarism because they chose the statement 'we must follow Jesus as an example of how to live' as being closest to their own beliefs. While the larger sub-sample (n=199), made up of those who only agreed with the statement, may include those who are sympathetic to aspects of this type. Analysis of this type will, therefore, focus on the smaller sub-sample using the

larger one where appropriate. The responses of the two sub-samples will be compared with that of the sample as a whole.

In the chapter concerned with exemplarism Towler provides this definition of the religious attitudes associated with exemplarism:

Exemplarism does not believe in God or in the life after death, in sin or in salvation. In order to affirm Jesus as the example for human living it has to deny the whole supernatural realm, or at least be agnostic about it. . . . Jesus appears as the pinnacle of human aspiration, not as the link between the human and the divine. (Towler 1984:26)

This detailed description of exemplarists would seem to indicate the type of response that may be expected to a number of the 11 other statements. For example, the only other statement that referred to Jesus did so under the name of Christ, 'each person must receive Christ into their lives'. According to the above quote it would be expected that some exemplarists may feel this statement places too much stress on 'Christ' as 'link between the human and the divine'. However, in the quotes Towler uses to describe the characteristics of exemplarism, a number refer to Christ rather than Jesus. In fact, both the smaller and larger sub-samples agree more strongly, 47% and 57% respectively, than the sample as a whole (43%). However, the response of the smaller sub-sample is closer to that of the sample as a whole suggesting that this group of exemplarists does not see the term Christ to be more important than or comparable to that of Jesus.

According to the definition quoted, since the accent is on Jesus, the other aspects of the Trinity would be rejected by

exemplarists. Two other statements speak specifically of the notion of 'God as Creator' and the 'need for renewal by the Holy Spirit'. However, both sub-samples affirmed God as creator and renewal by the Holy Spirit to a greater extent than the sample as a whole, with little variation between the two sub-samples.

Towler, as quoted, specifies a low belief in the afterlife and 'the whole supernatural realm' with both seen as unnecessary distractions from the life and words of Jesus. Questions elsewhere in the interview schedule will provide a basis on which to examine such issues and the responses of the sub-samples. In the questionnaire, belief in the afterlife was covered by two questions asking, first, if the respondent believed in life after death and, second, if their belief in some specific statements relating to the afterlife. In both the sub-samples belief in the afterlife shows little difference from the sample as a whole, 51% in the smaller sub-sample and 52% in the larger compared to 42% in the sample as a whole. However, there were fewer cases in both of the sub-samples of unbelief.

As a probe into the 'supernatural realm' each respondent was asked if they had 'ever had any experiences which they thought were religious in any way'. In the sample as a whole, nearly a quarter (24%) gave a positive response with 71% stating that they had not. Exemplarists, according to Towler, are typified by a rejection of the unseen and all that is spiritual, thus a rejection of a personal religious experience would be expected. However, in both of the sub-samples the reality of a spiritual experience is not

rejected with 28% in each sub-sample attesting to a spiritual experience at some point in their lives.

Table 7.1 Exemplarism: Comparing Towler's Characteristics with this Study's Exemplarist Sub-Samples

Characteristic	Towler	Total Sample	Sub-samples	
			Small	Large
Belief in Christ	medium	41%	47%	57%
Belief in God	low	56%	72%	71%
Belief in Holy Spirit	low	38%	54%	52%
Belief in the afterlife	low	42%	51%	52%
Religious experience	low	24%	28%	28%

To summarise this section, there appears to be little common ground between the religious characteristics of exemplarism as outlined by Towler and the data presented here. Table 7.1 shows that among the exemplarist samples in this study the Trinity is affirmed, levels of spiritual experience are similar to the sample as a whole and belief in the afterlife strong. Explanations for this could range from the total failure of this question to attract the exemplarist, the sidelining of its importance as an identifiable type of conventional religion in rural areas or the lack of a genuine Towlerite exemplarists within this group.

Theism

The next group to be analysed in the same manner is theism, which Towler envisages as the reverse of exemplarism.

Firmly rooted in an Old Testament view of God, theism emphasises his creativity (Towler 1984:55). There was only one statement which specifically mentioned God and also his role as creator, that being 'God is the creator of everything'.

The statement 'God is the creator of everything' was chosen by 35 respondents as closest to their own personal belief and this will form the smaller sub-sample. The larger sub-sample is constructed of the 192 respondents who believed the statement to be true. Towler suggests there is a benevolence in this group, placing God centrally in a way that helps to make sense of the world which he created. He goes on to say:

Theism is a monotheistic religious attitude, and it rejects the doctrine of the trinity as an image of God. By a strange irony, theism rejects the divine Jesus for the same reason that exemplarism rejects God. Each sees the additional doctrine as a gratuitous extra which detracts from the stature of human nature. (Towler 1984:60)

As with exemplarism, Towler again outlines a general disagreement among theists with other aspects of the Trinity as being characteristic of this group. However, the role of the Holy Spirit is affirmed more strongly than the sample as a whole in both the sub-samples but most especially in the larger sub-sample (53%). The position of the Son of God is outlined in two statements and, when compared with the sample as a whole, there is a consistently higher level of support for 'Jesus as an example to follow' (71% in the smaller sub-sample and 74% in the larger sub-sample) rather than 'each must receive Christ' (40% and 54%). There is, therefore, a suggestion that Jesus as an example is supported more strongly than Christ or the Holy Spirit when compared to the whole sample. However, the other two aspects of the Trinity are supported as strongly in the smaller group as in the sample as a whole.

With reference to the afterlife Towler comments that:

the inexplicitness of theism is most apparent when it comes to consider what happens after death. It does not know, but it is not anxious, for it trusts that whatever is to be will be good. (Towler 1984:66)

The response to the life after death question is higher than the sample as a whole in the case of both sub-samples, 57% in the smaller sub-sample and 51% in the larger. There are a similar number of respondents who are unsure and few rejecting a belief in the afterlife. Five additional descriptions regarding life after death were asked of those who stated that they either believed in or were uncertain about the afterlife, three of which are examined here¹. The description, 'trust in God, all is in His hands' is, according to Towler, close to the theists' belief and the level of response is higher in the sub-samples, 75% compared to the sample as a whole (60%). However, two more specific descriptions, the 'passing of souls to another world' and 'our bodies await resurrection' are also supported more strongly in the sub-samples than by the sample as a whole.

The last religious characteristic to consider is that of religious experience. According to theism, nature, and the appreciation of it, holds a powerful position in the mind of the believer and is often interpreted as a religious experience (Towler 1984:58). The number in the two sub-samples who stated that they had such an experience is marginally higher (26% in the smaller sub-sample and 27% in the larger sub-sample) than for the sample as a whole.

1. The full list of statements associated with the supplementary question on life after death are given in Appendix III.

Table 7.2 Theism: Comparing Towler's Characteristics with this Study's Theist Sub-Samples

Characteristic	Towler	Total Sample	Sub-samples	
			Small	Large
Belief in Christ	low	41%	40%	56%
Belief in Jesus	medium	58%	71%	74%
Belief in Holy Spirit	low	38%	46%	53%
Belief in the afterlife	high	42%	57%	51%
Afterlife: Trust in God	high	60%	79%	82%
Afterlife: Passage of souls	low	43%	67%	58%
Religious experience	high	24%	26%	27%

In summary, the similarity between theism in this study and the characteristics defined by Towler is variable. There is more support for Jesus as an example than for a Christ whom all must receive, possibly indicating that these aspects of Jesus' ministry are more easily acceptable. The findings suggest that those selecting the theist statement are more likely to believe in the afterlife and 'trust in God' but also appear to believe in 'the passage of souls'. Thus, although the analysis supports Towler's definition of trusting in God, belief in other specific areas concerning the afterlife point to a greater understanding in the whole area than Towler describes. In short, there is limited support for the existence of Theism and some variations on those Towler described.

Traditionalism

The next group, traditionalism, has, in one form or another, provided an abundance of material for anyone wishing to study religious attitudes (Thomas 1988, Boccock and Thompson 1985, Martin 1967, 1978 and Wilson 1966). The style, as Towler describes it, finds security in a pattern that never

changes and a subsequent cherishing of old ways which are seen as standard. Towler sees this attitude as one of:

unquestioning acceptance, of taking for granted, and yet of sincerely appreciating the religious traditions (1984:83).

Consequently, if one of the elements is questioned then the stability of the whole is exposed.

Of the 12 statements offered, the second of those on the prompt card, 'we must keep the faith handed down to us', reaches to the core of traditionalism. We should hand down from generation to generation and not change, we should keep the faith. Over half of the sample agreed with this statement, (55%), and these 187 respondents form the larger sub-sample. Of the 187, 29 respondents selected the statement as being closest to their own outlook on religion and they will form the smaller sub-sample.

With its strong support for the Church and its doctrines one might expect the concept of the Trinity to be affirmed as part of traditionalism. There is increased support for 'God as creator' (69%) and for the Holy Spirit (45%) in the smaller sub-sample when compared to the sample as a whole. However, both figures are only slightly higher than those for the whole sample and lower than corresponding figures in the larger sub-sample. Towler implies that support is particularly emphasised in the belief of both Jesus and Christ (1984:88). In the statement emphasising the role of Christ and the need to receive him, a larger proportion of the sub-samples affirmed the statement (66% in the smaller sub-sample and 62% in the larger) than the sample as a whole

with fewer disagreements. In the case of Jesus as an example, the number affirming the statement is only slightly higher (66% and 75%) but those disagreeing are, again, much lower (seven per cent and 15% compared to 28% in the whole sample).

Towler suggests that traditionalists dislike any attack on the pillars of their faith and such statements are firmly resisted (1984:87). The question on religious attitudes contained one statement of an anti-religious nature. There appears to be a defiant stance taken with none of the smaller sub-sample agreeing that religious people are either hypocrites or fanatics.

Ideas about life after death are part and parcel of the teachings of the Church and the celebration of communion is itself a ritual that embraces this belief. The Nicene creed, part of the liturgy surrounding the communion service, covers the 'passing of souls to another world' and the 'resurrection of the bodies' which were phrases put to the respondents in relation to life after death. Taking the belief in an afterlife first, the smaller sub-sample is more likely to believe than the sample as a whole (58% compared to 42%) but this is only marginally true for the larger sub-sample (48%). In the smaller sub-sample, only two respondents disagree that our souls will pass to another world and most (83%) are prepared to trust in God. However, the notion that our bodies await the resurrection is only supported slightly more than the sample as a whole (24% compared to 19%).

The final religious characteristic which Towler puts forward is that of religious experience. In traditionalism, God is very much aloof and any personal experience or presence is seen as being emotional. It is therefore most interesting that in the traditionalism group the figures for both sub-samples are less than sample as a whole (18% and 21% compared to 24%). In the sample as whole there is a strong relationship between the presence of a religious experience and the selection of the more religious statements. It is interesting therefore that in a sub-sample that affirms such statements more strongly than the sample as whole the level of religious experience is lower.

Table 7.3 Traditionalism: Comparing Towler's Characteristics with this Study's Traditionalism Sub-Samples

Characteristic	Towler	Total Sample	Sub-samples	
			Small	Large
Belief in God	high	56%	69%	72%
Belief in Christ	high	41%	66%	62%
Belief in Jesus	high	58%	66%	75%
Belief in Holy Spirit	high	38%	45%	51%
Belief in the afterlife	high	42%	58%	48%
Afterlife: trust in God	high	60%	83%	77%
Afterlife: passage of souls	high	43%	65%	54%
Afterlife: bodies await	high	19%	24%	31%
Religious experience	low	24%	18%	21%
Religious hypocrisy	v low	9%	0%	9%

Of the three groups that have been studied thus far the similarity between the traditionalism group in this survey and that described by Towler has been the strongest. The teachings of the Church are affirmed and therefore, by the same measure, so are the characteristics that Towler outlined for this type. Similarities are most noticeable in the belief in an afterlife, the decreased likelihood of

religious experiences and affirmation of the Trinity. The increased compatibility for this type may point to a higher presence of traditionalism among rural communities or the similar construction of this type in rural areas to that which Towler derived in his analysis.

Conversionism

The rejection of spiritual experiences which Towler characterises in the religious type of traditionalism is reversed in this next ideal type. Moreover, experience is seen as a central characteristic of the type. Towler states that:

The most fundamental feature of conversionism is that it is based on a real and immediate experience, rather than on a hope or an aspiration: the experience of having been set free from the weight of sin, released from a burden, and alive in an entirely new way. (Towler 1984:39)

Indeed, the reality of this experience leads to a certainty of revealed truth which often is reflected in fundamentalism. From the 12 statements offered to the respondents the conversionist element was most pronounced in 'each person must be 'born again''. In the event five respondents selected this particular statement as the closest to their own beliefs with only 50 respondents (15%) of the whole sample actually agreeing with it. This is not sufficient for empirical analysis.

Such a response may be due to terminology and language contained in the statement. Rather than assuming that this religious type is not present in data, other means of constructing the sub-samples was sought. One option considered was the responses to the statement 'each person

must receive Christ into their lives' but this was rejected on the grounds that it may attract both conversionists and exemplarists.

In the quote above Towler suggests that spiritual experiences form the dividing line between conversionism and the rest of the religious world. In the sample as a whole 24% claimed to have had a spiritual experience. It was decided that by taking these respondents and assessing their response to the 'born again' statement, a group can be identified who have had a religious experience and agree with the principle of being 'born again'. By this method 20 responses were found and these will form the smaller sub-sample. Those who had an experience of a spiritual or religious nature (n=82) will form the larger sub-sample.

Whilst Towler emphasises that other beliefs stand in the shadow of the certainty associated with being saved the complex network of beliefs commonly associated with the Christian religion are affirmed (1984:50). If this is the case then several of the 12 statements would expect support from the conversionism element. Using statements relating to aspects of the Trinity as in previous sections, the statement 'God is the creator of everything' is supported more strongly by the smaller sub-sample (85%) than by the larger sub-sample (64%) and the sample as a whole (56%).

Of the two statements which make reference to Jesus or Christ, setting Jesus as the example also showed a higher pattern of responses among the sub-samples (80% and 69%). However, the response is not as high as in the statement

which calls for all to receive Christ into their lives (75% and 53%). This becomes the first group that supports both Christ and Jesus more strongly than the sample as whole. The number agreeing that we need renewing by the Holy Spirit is twice as high for both sub-samples (85% in the smaller sub-sample and 59% in the larger) than in the sample as a whole (38%). The Holy Spirit is often associated with that of spiritual experience, especially within conservative evangelical groups. This may explain the high figures for 'each must receive Christ' and 'renewing by the Holy Spirit' within the sub-samples, particularly in the smaller one. Moreover, the Trinity is held in high esteem as Towler suggests.

The promise of salvation, a belief apparently held so emphatically by this group, is manifest in a belief in the afterlife or, as the conversionist would put it, 'life eternal'. The response was considerably higher in both sub-samples and virtually unanimous in the smaller one, 90% and 66%. Further analysis in the additional descriptions of the afterlife reveals an interesting characteristic of this group. The idea of 'our bodies awaiting a resurrection' found little agreement in the sample as a whole (19%) but two thirds (65%) of the smaller sub-sample believed this description to be true. This may result from the conversionist placing the emphasis on the written word of God, whereas the traditionalist would accept this notion from the creeds. It appears from this data that the Bible is more central to the conversionist than creeds are to the traditionalist, a characteristic which Towler does not highlight in this group.

Table 7.4 Conversionism: Comparing Towler's Characteristics with this Study's Conversionism Sub-Samples

Characteristic	Towler	Total	Sub-samples	
		Sample	Small	Large
Belief in God	high	56%	85%	64%
Belief in Christ	high	41%	75%	53%
Belief in Jesus	high	58%	80%	69%
Belief in Holy Spirit	high	38%	85%	59%
Belief in the afterlife	high	42%	90%	66%
Afterlife: bodies await	high	19%	65%	28%
Religious experience	v high	24%	100%*	100%*

* a religious experience was a basis for selection

As with traditionalism, there appears to be substantial agreement between the conversionist group in this study and that which Towler describes. This is only the case after the conversionist statement 'each must be 'born again'' is supported by the occurrence of a spiritual experience. However, religious statements are affirmed and belief in all aspects of the Trinity is strong. Life after death is also strongly upheld as an important belief together with a high level of theological understanding. This is particularly true of the smaller sub-sample which, unlike the previous groups, showed a stronger religious belief than the larger sub-sample in each of the specified areas.

Gnosticism

The last of the five types outlined by Towler is defined as gnosticism and is "marked by an overriding concern with 'spiritual' matters, the 'spiritual world'" (1984:68).

Towler defines two ways in which gnosticism can be distinguished from the other four types he describes.

Firstly, it is greatly concerned with the life after death, and secondly it believes that we have access to the powers of the spiritual world, which it is anxious to explore and understand. ... It is important to grasp

from the outset that it is not only the attention paid to the spiritual world which characterizes this type of religiousness, but the degree of attention paid to it (Towler 1984:68).

The existence of two worlds was expressed in the statement 'the other world is near to this one', a statement which is not understood by 28% of the whole sample with a further 20% unsure as to whether they agreed with it. Interestingly, Towler comments that a characteristic of this type is the lack of awareness and understanding of the uninitiated to this 'other world', which the high level of incomprehension and uncertainty may support. However, while 86 respondents agreed with the statement only two respondents specified it as being closest to their own outlook on religion. As with conversionism it was decided that this was insufficient for empirical analysis and the sub-samples may be found outside of the statements.

To match the core characteristics which Towler attributes to this type (and which are expressed in the above quote) those who believed in life after death were considered. In the whole sample 143 respondents (42%) believed in life after death and these are combined with those who agreed with the statement 'the other world is near to this one'.

Consequently, the smaller sub-sample of 56 respondents is made up of those who believed in life after death and agreed with the statement 'the other world is near to this one'.

The larger sub-sample corresponds to those who agreed with the 'other world' statement, 86 respondents.

According to Towler, gnostics believe that the spirit will depart from the body once death has occurred, "the soul or

spirit being detachable from an inferior body" (1984:76). Belief in the afterlife is obviously strong because of the way in which the sub-samples are constructed. However, one of the more detailed descriptions of the afterlife asked if our souls would 'pass to another world'. Support in both sub-samples was high, particularly in the small sub-sample (93%), compared to the sample as whole (43%). However, rejection of a bodily resurrection was not apparent as the response was higher (44% in the smaller sub-sample and 36% in the larger) than the sample as a whole (19%). Another of the five phrases relating to life after death asked if the respondent thought 'we come back as something or someone else'. Interestingly, the response for both of the sub-samples is two or three times higher (34% and 26%) than the sample as a whole (19%) but Towler does not mention a tendency for belief in reincarnation as being characteristic of this group.

Jesus is regarded as the 'supreme example' and 'all spirit' by gnostics (Towler 1984:74). Analysis shows that the small sub-sample does support 'Jesus as an example' more strongly (86%) than the need for each to receive Christ (46%). However, this is common in each of the groups thus far but the variation in this group is particularly pronounced. The figure for 'Jesus as an example' is nearly 30% higher than the sample as a whole compared to a five per cent variation with 'each must receive Christ'. Towler also highlights the fact that, for some in this group, science acts as an aid in achieving the required awareness and he quotes a letter in which this is implied (1984:79). However, neither of the sub-samples shows a higher level of support (9% and 19%) for

the statement 'science explains everything we need to know' than the sample as a whole (15%).

Lastly, Towler stresses that this group shows signs of impatience when it is confused with superstition or mythology. While there were no questions relating to mythology, two questions investigated the area of superstition. The first asked if the respondent believed in ghosts. This was affirmed by 29% of the sample and rejected by over half (53%). The smaller sub-sample shows a greater willingness than the sample as a whole to accept ghosts (45%), with the number believing equalling those who do not. The second question related to Friday 13th being an unlucky day. In both of the sub-samples the response equated that of the whole sample, which was one of rejection (16% in the small sub-sample compared to 15% in the sample as a whole).

Table 7.5 Gnosticism: Comparing Towler's Characteristics with this Study's Gnosticism Sub-Samples

Characteristic	Towler	Total Sample	Sub-samples	
			Small	Large
Belief in the afterlife	high	42%	100%*	66%
Afterlife: passage of souls	high	43%	93%	73%
Afterlife: bodies await	low	19%	45%	36%
Afterlife: come back	-	12%	34%	26%
Belief in Christ	medium	41%	46%	56%
Belief in Jesus	high	58%	86%	86%
Belief in ghost	low	29%	45%	37%
Belief in Friday 13th	low	15%	16%	18%

* belief in the afterlife was a basis for selection

In the analysis undertaken for the gnosticism type there exists some similarity between gnostic characteristics in this study and those Towler's outlines. The group is typified by a detailed belief of the afterlife and its

connection with the notion of another world. Superstitious days are rejected but the existence of ghosts and Jesus as a supreme example are pronounced. Agreement with a bodily resurrection and other traditional notions of Christianity, together with a rejection of the importance of science, contrasts with Towler's description of this group. The group is also the only one to support the notion of reincarnation which, despite not being mentioned by Towler, would appear to be sympathetic with other characteristics of this type.

Those Outside Towler's Conventional Religious Types

The respondents who formed the five smaller sub-samples used in the comparisons made in this chapter with Towler's five religious types, represents just over half of the sample. A number were present in more than one sub-sample due to the variation in the type of analysis for conversionism and gnosticism. When the cases of double counting are excluded, 44% of the whole sample are present in the five groups assessed thus far. If these five groups accounted for just under 50% of the sample, the response and characteristics of the remaining respondents is of vital importance. Table 7.6 shows the breakdown of the sample by the smaller sub-samples and where the majority of the remaining 195 respondents are located.

Table 7.6 Proportion of Sample in Five Religious Types Sub-Samples and Other Statements

Religious type/statement	Small Sub-Sample n
Towler's five religious types:	
Exemplarism: We must follow Jesus as an example of how to live	43
Theism: God is the Creator of everything	35
Traditionalism: We must keep the faith handed down to us	29
Conversionism: Each person must be 'born again' and spiritual experience	20*
Gnosticism: The other world is near to this one and belief in the afterlife	56*

Two Most Popular Statements:	
We only live once so lets make the most of it	75
We must search for the Truth throughout our lives	57
Total	315

* The sub-samples of conversionism and gnosticism both contain respondents who selected other statements.

The table shows that of the remaining respondents, 132 selected two of the seven available statements as being closest to their own outlook on religion. These are; 'we must search for the truth throughout our lives' and 'we only live once so let's make the most of it'. When those specifying these two statements are added to other five and additional adjustment is made for double counting, the seven groups account for 77% of the whole sample or, more accurately, 89% of those who gave a usable response to the selection of a single religious outlook.

This thesis suggests that it is those respondents selecting the above two statements who are not present in the religious types as defined by Towler. These may be the people who have not read *Honest to God* or an article

covering it, nor would they necessarily have watched a religious programme. Those in sample who did read or watch something in connection with the book would not have been motivated sufficiently to send a letter to an Anglican bishop. The next two sections will analyse those selecting these two statements, in the same manner as the other five. However, such an exercise is made more difficult as there is no data to use for comparison, apart from that of the whole sample. The aim is to examine these two statements in a Towler-like manner, thus attempting to examine the religiosity of these respondents. Such an exercise may reveal that these respondents have much in common with one of the types that Towler defined. Alternatively, they may be substantially different. Which ever is the case the analysis will have an inevitable 'added value' effect on Towler's work. Quotes from the actual questionnaires are used to highlight particular characteristics, with quotes identified by a code number.

Search for the Truth

The number of respondents selecting 'we must search for the Truth throughout our lives' as being closest to their own outlook on religion is higher in the smaller sub-sample (n=57) than with any of the previous types. An even larger number, 77% of the sample (n=264), agreed with the statement and for this reason only the small sub-sample will be used in the analysis. The same format will be used with the figures being compared with the sample as a whole. Should any interesting variations occur these will be tested by assessing the questionnaires for underlying themes to draw out important characteristics.

The response to all the other eleven statements in the small sub-sample is similar to the sample as a whole but most often at a marginally lower level of agreement. In three cases those agreeing are about ten per cent lower. The statements concerned are 'we must keep the faith handed down to us' (45%), 'everything will be all right in the end' (33%) and 'the other world is near to this one' (16%). The only other point of interest regarding the statement 'each person must be born again' is where the number disagreeing in the smaller sub-sample is 15% higher than in the sample as a whole at 70%. Thus this group appear to show a rejection of the traditionalism statement and that associated with conversionism. In addition to this the group does not lean towards a positive outlook on life or the spiritual presence of the 'other world'.

With regard to the other spiritual questions in the questionnaire there is only one area of variation. Belief in the afterlife, both generally (36%) and in the detailed descriptions, is slightly less likely to be believed than in the sample as a whole. However, this group does appear more likely to have had a spiritual experience, 30% compared to 24% in the sample as a whole. An assessment of the comments in the questionnaires of those with a spiritual experience reveals that they tend not to have a detailed account to tell. More often they expressed themselves in this questions by referring to 'feelings':

Strange feelings, hopelessness of spirits. (52)
Feeling one night, couldn't sleep as father had died.
(70)
Just feel life is beautiful some mornings. (180)
Not religious but something. (421)

These feelings are not always totally ephemeral, nor are they easily defined. One respondent shows that they can be focussed on something tangible:

Firmly believe that 13th Century carvings are very spiritual. Feel they convey love and belief of the person who carved them. Sensing Angel in Westminster Abbey or Southwell. (84)

Other examples of 'feelings' appear in comments found elsewhere in the questionnaire. The air of the church building is often related in this way: 'feeling of building very important' (8) and 'ancient building and traditional structure to give sense of occasion' (195).

Attendance of church services has often been experienced during their lifetime, according to the quotes, but it did not appear to form part of their current lifestyle:

Have stopped for years as didn't feel the need or believe in anything much. (8)
 Stopped attending as felt people didn't know how to seek God's presence. (64)
 Not for me as I have doubts. (357)

Others, feel that they benefited from church attendance as a child, giving them 'peace of mind' (47) or 'kept way of feeling presence in music' (64).

Table 7.7 Search for the Truth: Characteristics of the Small Sub-Sample

Characteristic	Total Sample	Small Sub-sample
Belief in faith handed down	55%	46%
Belief that all will be ok	44%	33%
Belief in the other world	25%	16%
Belief in 'born again'	15%	11%
Belief in the afterlife	42%	36%
Religious experience	24%	30%

Thus this group appears only slightly less religious than the sample as a whole but there is a religious or spiritual awareness which the group shares, often through experiences earlier in life. This is the first group to be analysed in which the responses in the small sub-sample have been lower than that of the sample as a whole. Consequently, this group would appear to be very different from the five Towlerite groups analysed previously. The characteristics of this group with regard to attendance and the other sociographic variables will be examined in the next chapter. The next section looks at the religious beliefs of those who selected the statement 'we only live once so let's make the most of it'.

We Only Live Once

The second statement, 'we only live once so let's make the most of it', was selected by the most respondents, 75, but there were fewer agreements, 227 (67%). As with the previous statement analysis will mainly centre on the smaller sub-sample. The same format will be used as for the previous section where the figures are compared with the sample as a whole. Interesting variations will be tested by assessing the questionnaires for underlying themes. These will be elaborated using quotes from the questionnaires.

The responses of the smaller sub-sample to the eleven statements shows the most variation from all the previous ones, as specifically religious statements are rejected to a higher degree than the sample as a whole. This is particularly the case for two statements, 'we must follow Jesus as an example of how to live' and 'we need renewing by

the Holy Spirit', where the number agreeing falls by 20% in the small sub-sample (38% and 18%). In both cases those disagreeing constitute over half the respondents. Most of those in the sub-sample also disagree with the statements 'each must receive Christ' (62%) and that 'each person must be 'born again'' (75%).

Only for one statement does this sub-sample give a higher response than the sample as a whole (more than double at 33%) to the statement 'science explains everything we need to know'. However, the fact remains that more than half of the sub-sample disagreed with the statement. In addition fewer specifically religious statements like, 'search for the Truth', are agreed at a similar level to the whole sample, suggesting that the sub-sample are not without a religious dimension. Moreover, religious people are no more likely to be labelled as hypocrites or fanatics by the sub-sample than by the sample as a whole. Such a statement obviously went too far for them.

Responses to other questions relating to the beliefs of the sub-sample show that most had not had a religious experience (85% compared to 71% in the whole sample) nor did they believe in life after death (49% compared to 32%). Comments from the questionnaire suggest that this group has often attended church in the past but a negative experience means that they do not attend now.

Forced to at school. (10)

Went to Sunday School, not through choice and never been since. (28)

Confirmed into Christian faith, went to communion thought it awful so never been since. (157)

I know a big hypocrite, goes twice a week and is the most unkind person I know. (225)

Wanted daughter baptised but needed godparents confirmed into Church of England but I had just come and did not know anyone. I took it seriously, others were baptised but did not see them again. (336)
 Put off, vicar refused to christen son because I was getting divorced so never been. (369)
 When a child enforced to go to Sunday School ... stopped when 11 and never been since. (383)

The responses from this group to all the statements suggest that they are the least religious of the seven groups identified in this chapter. However, this does not imply that they are irreligious.

Table 7.8 We Only Live Once: Characteristics of the Small Sub-Sample

Characteristic	Total Sample	Small Sub-sample
Belief in Jesus as example	55%	38%
Belief in Holy Spirit	38%	18%
Not belief in Christ	41%	62%
Not belief in 'born again'	56%	75%
Belief that science explains	15%	33%
Belief in search for truth	77%	63%
Belief in religious hypocrisy	9%	12%
No religious experience	71%	85%
Not belief in afterlife	32%	49%

In addition, there also appears to be a spiritual and religious uncertainty within this sub-sample. The number of responses in the sub-sample in the 'unsure' and 'don't know' categories is higher than in the sample as a whole. For example, the responses to the statement 'God is the creator of everything' show that those 'unsure' are equal to those who either agreed or disagreed.

The next chapter assesses all of the groups outlined in this chapter, namely, the five associated with Towler's statements and the two groups analysed alongside them, in order to establish their sociographic construction. Taking

each of the key variables described in Chapter 3 all the groups are investigated for particular characteristics and variations.

Chapter Eight

Sociography of the Seven Sub-Samples

This chapter focuses on the sociographic variables and their influence among the seven groups identified in Chapter 7. The sociography has already been described in Chapter 3 and this will be used in the analysis where each of the seven types will be compared with the sample as a whole. Comparisons will be made wherever Towler uses any sociographic characteristics to describe the five types outlined in *The Need for Certainty* (1984). However, since the nature of the sample did not lend itself to this sort of analysis what he is able to say in this regard is limited.

When introducing the data on which the five religious types in *The Need for Certainty* are based, Towler suggests, without quantifying, that the letters form a representative sample of the population with regard to age, gender and class with one exception. He suspects that young, working class males are 'severely under-represented' because, as he explains in a footnote, 'they are not great letter writers' (1994:15). This chapter will assist in any assessment of just how true that statement is and the impact that it has on the five types he identifies. Therefore, part of the aim of this chapter is to construct a profile of each of the groups.

The five main variables to be considered are gender, age, class, religious affiliation and attendance of church services. Davie (1994), having dealt with aspects of belief, comments that gender and age are 'variables whose effect on religiosity is rather more straightforward'. These are straightforward, in the sense that women are consistently more religious than men, a fact which is

supported by this study. Similarly, most literature describes elderly people as being more religious than their younger counterparts. This has been partly challenged by the findings in previous chapters and this chapter will seek to identify any variations within the seven groups.

The method of categorising the information relating to social class has been outlined in Chapter 3, together with the basic analysis. However, as the numbers in some categories are small the six social groups have been amalgamated in to three categories: Classes 1 and 2 form a professional and managerial group (27%), Class 3 remains as the petty bourgeoisie (23%) and Classes 4, 5 and 6 form a lower grade technician and manual worker group (50%). The response of the whole sample is shown in parentheses.

The relationship between religious commitment and class is less straightforward than that between gender and age (Bruce 1995). The social composition of churchgoers is divided in two, according to Bruce. Non-manual workers are more likely to attend church at least once during the year than not. The opposite is true of manual workers: most, according to his evidence, never attend (1995:44). However, the introduction of belief appears to complicate the picture, with those in the manual categories more likely to believe than the non-manual. Bruce concludes that the upper and middle classes are 'more decisive in their religious behaviour and narrow in their use of terms to describe it' (1995:52). Thus while more of the middle-classes are involved in the church structure, those who are not involved are more definite about their unbelief. The working class

on the other hand does not appear to see attendance as a condition of belief.

Davie (1994) develops the information cited by Bruce and suggests that the overall pattern of religious life is changing. People from all walks of life want to believe but do not want to involve themselves in conventional religious behaviour such as church attendance. Thus Davie takes Bruce's comment one step further and suggests that 'aspects of the working class religious behaviour are increasingly becoming the normal pattern of our society' (1994:107). This chapter will assess the social class characteristics of the seven groups as well as those relating to attendance.

Affiliation has been covered in detail in Chapter 4 and is categorised through the respondent's sense of belonging, either to a specific denomination or religion. In addition, a more 'informal' sense of affiliation will be used in this chapter: how well the respondent knew the vicar in their parish. The question was asked of all respondents regardless of formal affiliation or church attendance. The response of the whole sample is shown below in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1 How Well do You Know the Vicar

Know vicar	Total Sample	
	n	%
Very well	21	6
Well	77	23
Not very well	117	35
Not at all	45	13
Never met him	78	23
Total	338	100

In the case of those affiliated with the Church of England there are additional questions relating to their sense of belonging which will be used to draw out particular themes. These concern two objective criteria, baptism and confirmation, and one subjective criterion, the respondent's view of what exactly they felt they belonged to, in relation to the Church of England. The vast majority of the Anglicans in the sample are baptised (98%) but only 53% are confirmed.

The question concerning the sense of belonging was an open one but responses fell into five post-coded categories. The response of all the Anglicans in the sample is shown below in Table 8.2. The combined total of those who feel it is 'not important' or 'nothing' suggests that just under a quarter feel detached from the denomination of their birth. When this variable is cross-tabulated with that of attendance it can be seen that non-attenders feel that the Church of England is a tradition or way of being brought up. Attenders are more likely to feel that they belong to a community or have a spiritual sense of belonging.

Table 8.2 All Anglicans: What Exactly is it You Feel You Belong to?

Belong to	Total Sample	
	n	%
Tradition/brought up	57	27
The Church of the England	26	12
A denomination	15	7
Community/group of people	29	14
Spiritual body	17	8
Nothing/not belong	34	16
Not important	15	7
Don't know/refused	19	9
Total	212	100

The last major sociographic variable concentrates on the attendance patterns of the seven groups using the derived variable examined in Chapter 5. Other information used centres on the respondents' childhood and the attendance patterns of their parents. Overall, 57% of the whole sample said their parents attend (or did attended) church, with 48% of the respondents accompanying them as children. However, members of the sample were far more likely to have attended Sunday School (84%) at some point in their childhood.

In addition to the five variables outlined above, reference is also made to other sociographic characteristics, such as longevity of residence, property ownership and marital status, where the variables further define the seven types. All those used are referred to in Chapter 3 with further detail in the accompanying appendix. As with the previous variables they will be compared against the whole sample.

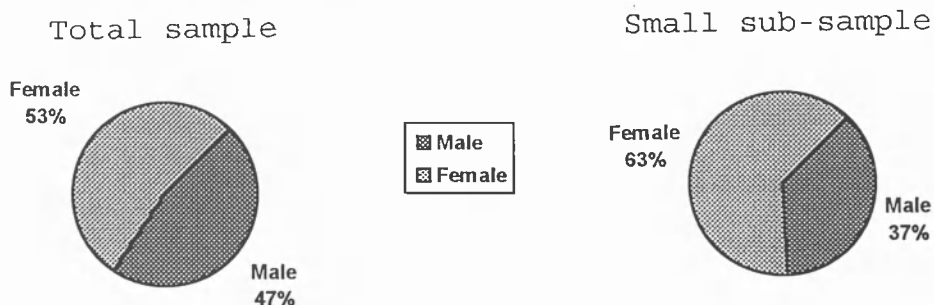
Finally, at the end of each of the seven types, the findings of the previous chapters and their related appendices will be summarised to enable easy comparison of the groups

identified. The first three of these chapters (Chapters 4-6), focused on varying aspects of religious practice and belief. In the last of these, Chapter 6, Towler's five types of conventional religiosity were identified and in Chapter 7 they were compared with the findings of this study. Two groups were identified in this chapter which fell outside of Towler's work. These were analysed in a similar manner using qualitative material from the questionnaires to draw out characteristics of belief. Identification of the sociographic characteristics for each of the seven groups forms the basis for this chapter.

Exemplarism

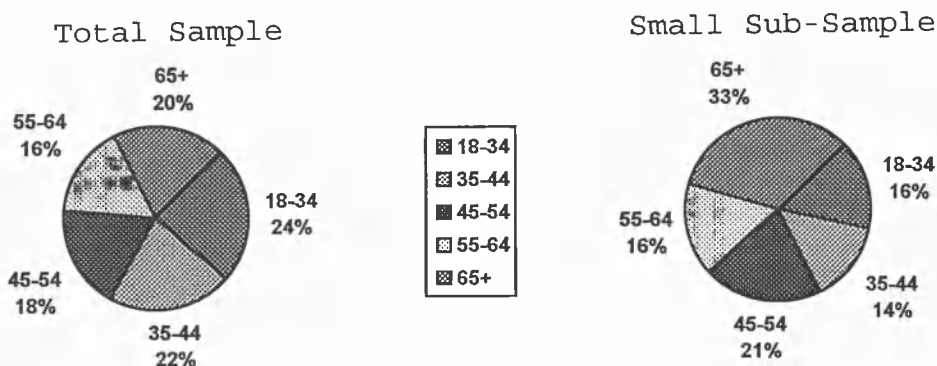
Towler makes no direct reference to the gender characteristics of the Exemplarist type. However, he suggests that they are typified as 'unchurched', developing 'their religion at home, in pubs or the works canteen' (1984:23). This would suggest that the gender ratio is at least equal or, more probably, containing a higher proportion of males as they are less likely to attend religious services and more likely to frequent public houses and works canteens. Towler uses quotes from the letters he analysed to illustrate each of the five types. In the case of exemplarism six letters indicate the gender of the author, of which four are male. The piecharts below in Figure 8.1 show that the respondents in the small sub-sample did not correspond with the strong male presence that Towler intimated in his explanation.

Figure 8.1 Exemplarism: Gender in Small Sub-Sample Compared to Total Sample



Using the above quote as a basis for the likely age construction within exemplarism, it would appear that Towler implies they are of working age rather than retired. Interestingly, there appears to be a natural divide in the smaller sub-sample at about 45 years of age. The eldest group (aged 65 or more) constitutes a third of the group with a further 21% aged between 45-54. By contrast, only 30% were under 44 years of age. This is compared with the sample as a whole in Figure 8.2. It appears that the exemplarist group in this sample most notably represents the retired rather than those of working age.

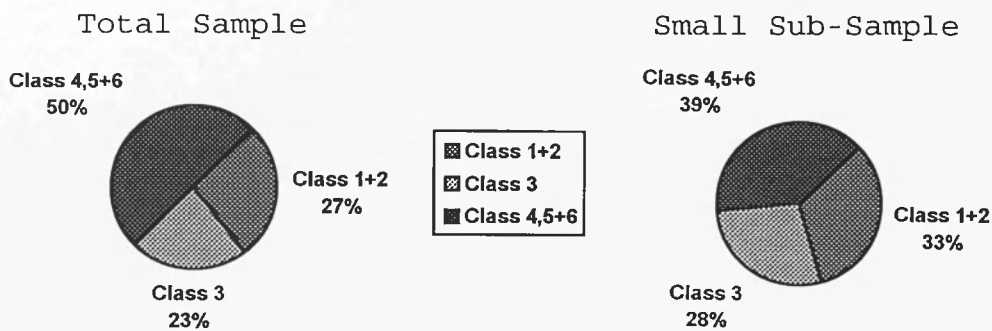
Figure 8.2 Exemplarism: Age in Small Sub-Sample Compared to Total Sample



As with the other two sociographic features Towler implies that only the working classes are well represented in his exemplarism type. The quotes used at the beginning of the section calls them 'unchurched', with religion developed

through the home as well as pubs and works canteens (1984:23). The smaller sub-sample, however, reveals that the third group representing the manual workers is 11% lower at 39% than the sample as whole. However, it can be seen from the figures in Figure 8.3 below that the manual and non-manual workers group is still the largest social group of the small sub-sample. The shift away from that of the sample as a whole is contrary to Towler's description and those in the exemplarist sample of this study appear to be in the upper or middle class and the petty bourgeoisie.

Figure 8.3 Exemplarism: Social Class in Small Sub-Sample Compared to Total Sample



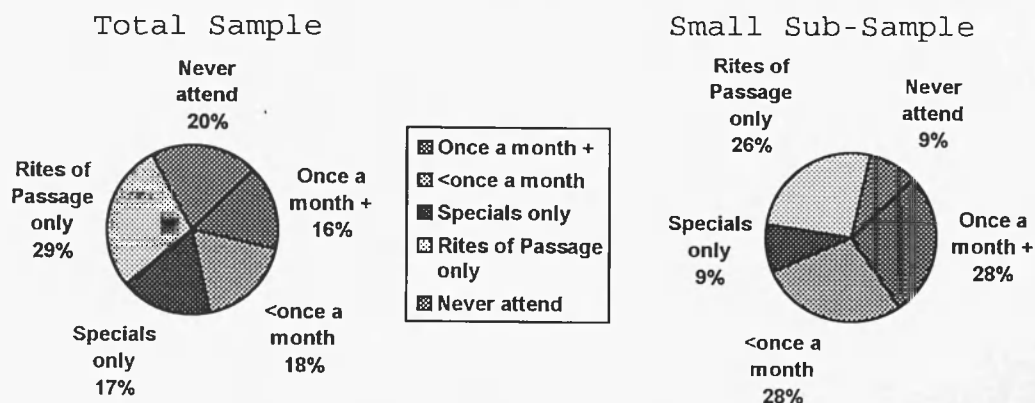
The exemplarism type has already been highlighted as the 'unchurched' by Towler and he further suggests that this type's members are likely to 'fall out with the Church' because of the divine expectations the church has of Jesus (1984:26). Such a description does not imply rejection of denominational affiliation but it may influence the sense of belonging felt by an exemplarist. In the smaller sub-sample the number not affiliated to a denomination is lower than the sample as a whole, with the number of Anglicans slightly higher at two thirds.

The only variation in the sense of belonging among the

Anglicans in the smaller sub-sample is in a slight tendency to see the Church as a community or in a spiritual dimension. The combined response is 36% in the sub-sample compared to 22% in the sample as whole. The largest single group, however, is that of 'tradition' and upbringing (29%). All the Anglicans had been baptised and the majority had been confirmed (64%). This latter figure was slightly higher than the sample as a whole (53%). The evidence presented above suggests that this group appears content to be affiliated with a denomination, which in the majority of cases is the Church of England. Moreover, the group's members are more likely to have been baptised and confirmed rather than merely baptised. Such a step of commitment may have been taken many years ago but the sense of belonging suggests a mixture of contentment and traditional upbringing. The link between this variable and that of attendance will add more detail to the profile of this type.

The attendance pattern of the small exemplarist sub-sample will provide the clearest indication yet as to the similarity of this sample to that of Towler's. Towler clearly calls the exemplarist 'unchurched' and therefore the numbers going only to *rites of passage* services or not going to church at all would be expected to be high. The pattern in the small sub-sample is shown in the Figure below. It can be seen that the number attending regularly or occasionally accounts for over half of this group. However, the number attending only *rites of passage* services is similar to the sample as a whole, those never attending being lower.

Figure 8.4 Exemplarism: Church Attendance in Small Sub-Sample Compared to Total Sample



Historically, the number of parents who attend church is higher (70%) than the sample as a whole with a greater proportion of the respondents who attended with them (61%) as children. Towler, however, describes this group as largely 'unchurched' with their beliefs being a private affair (1984:26). The exemplarists of this study would not be described as 'unchurched'.

In summary, a study of exemplarism found very little similarity between the characteristics which Towler presents and those of this study. This is born out by combining the findings of this chapter with those of Chapter 6 on religious beliefs. Support for the two other aspects of the Trinity remain strong as do levels of spiritual experience, with belief in the afterlife particularly pronounced. Towler characterised this group as rejecting such beliefs as a way of focusing on the teachings of Jesus and the type of life that he led on earth.

The sociographic characteristics of those who fell within the exemplarism group are typified by a female, who is generally older when compared to the sample as a whole. Correspondingly, those in the sample are generally married

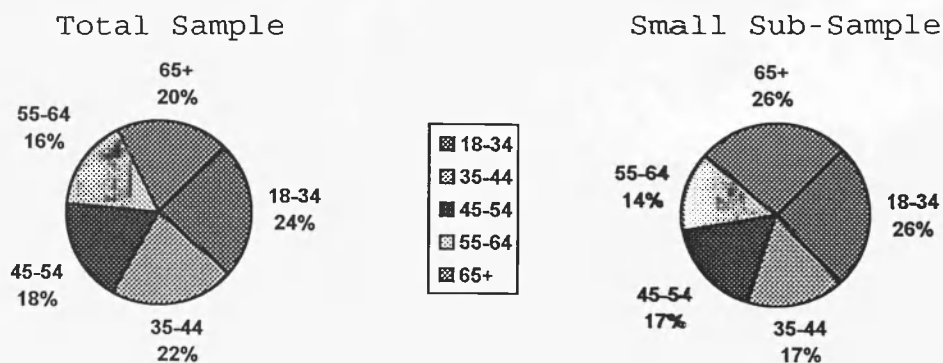
and likely to be either retired or housewives. They are upper or middle class members of society who have lived in the parish for many years but are unlikely to have been born there. Most have been confirmed into the Church of England and attend Sunday services. Church attendance was also characteristic of the respondents' childhood with two thirds accompanying their parents to church services.

Theism

Towler gives even fewer indications of the sociographic characteristics of theism. None of his descriptions gives any indication of the age, gender or social class than might be expected in this group. Within the smaller sub-sample, which related to those who selected the statement 'God is the creator of everything' as closest to their own religious outlook, the proportion of men is 43%, a figure only four per cent lower than the sample as a whole. Thus females are less dominant in this group than they were in the exemplarism type.

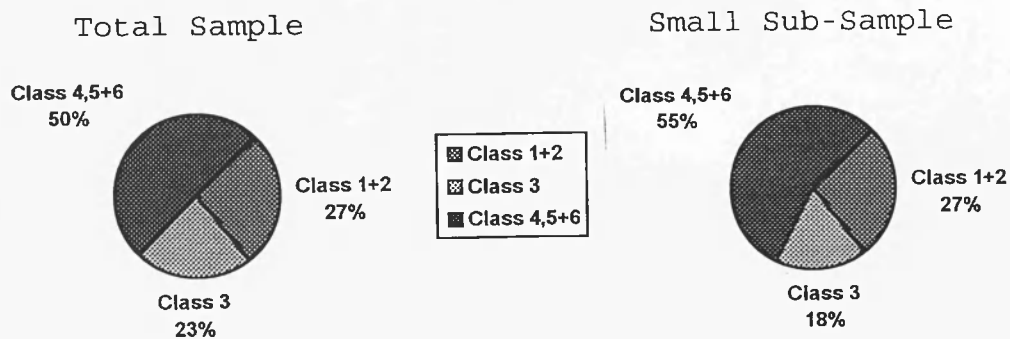
The age characteristics of the smaller sub-sample are interesting, as the two largest groups represent the youngest (18-34) and oldest (65+) at 26%. The remainder is evenly distributed between the other three groups as shown in Figure 8.5. Whereas overall, most of the youngest group did not agree with the statement, it is worth noting that more than a quarter of those who did agree with it went on to select it as being closest to their own beliefs.

Figure 8.5 Theism: Age in Small Sub-Sample Compared to Total Sample



In his description of the theism type Towler quotes a long section from Hoggart's study of the working class, *The Uses of Literacy*, in which he explains the religious sentiment of the working class. Towler uses this to support his typology of theists, with their interest in the Old Testament and the English traditional culture as 'embodied in the writings of Browning and Wordsworth' (1984:65). In the small sub-sample, the manual group is five per cent higher solely at the expense of the petty bourgeoisie. In Chapter 6 this group was identified as being fascinated by nature, and this fascination often developed into a spiritual feeling or experience. It is worthwhile to point out therefore that the petty bourgeoisie includes the farming community. Such findings give qualified support for theism, as far as Towler describes it, but there is a general appeal among the social classes for this religious type as shown in Figure 8.6.

Figure 8.6 Theism: Social Class in Small Sub-Sample Compared to Total Sample



When assessing the religious affiliation of the theism group it is apparent that the sense of tradition and upbringing is strong in the small sub-sample. Religious affiliation is dominated by the Church of England, however, with just over a fifth of all the Methodists in the sample selecting this statement as being closest to their own beliefs. Of the 18 Anglicans who answered the question on a sense of belonging, half of them indicates that tradition and upbringing are the most important. This increase was matched by a decrease in the number who had been confirmed (42%) which suggests a certain amount of detachment in this group. Towler suggests that "it is the normal characteristic of theism to eschew the Church, albeit with regret" (1984:61). The analysis appears to suggest that this group is content to remain affiliated to a particular denomination but that steps of commitment, such as confirmation, are less likely.

Towler goes on to highlight an 'unwillingness to affirm dogmatic articles of faith' and to this end, a 'sense of unease with the Church' (1984:61). Indeed, there was very little variation between the small sub-sample and the sample as a whole when matched with church attendance. This is further born out with regard to the parental pattern with

only 29% of parents attending church services, though almost all of the respondents (26%) attended with them.

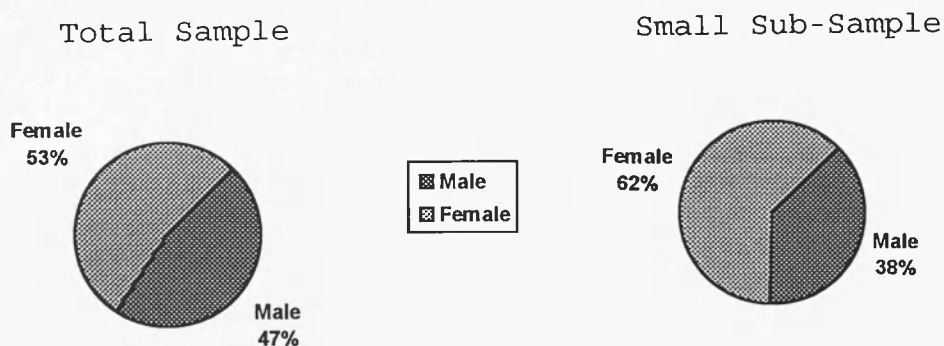
The evidence for the existence of theism within the rural community when compared with the characteristics described by Towler found some limited justification from the analysis described in the last two chapters. Support for Jesus 'as an example' was greater than that for a Christ whom 'all must receive' which may indicate that the historical life of Jesus is more easily accepted than more divine aspects. Belief in the afterlife is higher than normal and those in this group do 'trust in God' as Towler describes. However, they also detailed other aspects of life after death, particularly the passing of souls. This group is also more likely to believe in ghosts. In short, theism, as Towler describes it, would appear to be present among those in this study but some variations exist among the precise beliefs that he ascribes to this group.

A theist, in sociographic terms, is female, although males are not uncommon, and either young or old (18-34 or over 65 years old). All social classes identify with this group but the number of working class is slightly higher. This is supported by a lower proportion of respondents living in owner-occupied accommodation. Theists are largely members of the Church of England though this group attracts a number of Methodists. Those attending church services are most likely to do so infrequently but attendance is not dominant in this group. Moreover, church attendance is less likely among the respondents' parents and their own childhood but nearly all the respondents attended Sunday School.

Traditionalism

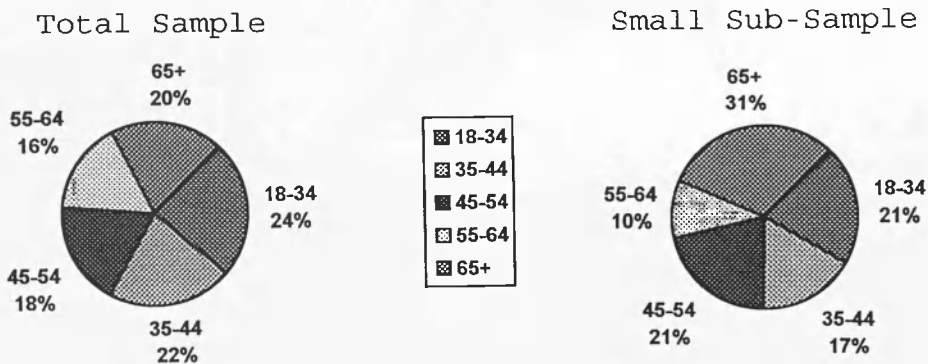
Gender variations within traditionalism are shown in Figure 8.7. In the small sub-sample women outnumber men by 62% to 38%, a level similar to that in exemplarist type. Again Towler is unable to give any direct indication of the gender balance in this group; however, he does indicate that church attendance is a common feature. As a consequence one might anticipate the gender imbalance which occurs.

Figure 8.7 Traditionalism: Gender in Small Sub-Sample Compared to Total Sample



The largest age group in the traditionalism group is that representing the over 65 age group (31%). The statement, however, is well supported by the younger age groups, 21% for the 18-34 and 17% for 35-44 categories shown in the figure below. This would appear to go against theories of increased traditionalism with age. In his description of the traditionalist type Towler suggests that they are characteristically churchgoers and would, on the basis of previous analysis in Chapter 5, be expected to be older.

Figure 8.8 Traditionalism: Age Group in Small Sub-Sample Compared to Total Sample



Whereas few quotes are used in the chapter describing this type, most of those which Towler uses question the beliefs of the author of *Honest to God*. There has been certainly no decline in this type of controversy within the Church of England since *Honest to God*. The outspoken views of the former Bishop of Durham (David Jenkins) and the debate on homosexuality have both caused an outcry among those of a traditional nature. Since such controversies have been characteristic of the last two decades it may not be so surprising to find younger people associating with this type.

There is little variation in the small sub-sample, with the manual group equal to the sample as a whole and the petty bourgeoisie six per cent higher. Towler makes no direct reference to the social structure of this group but, as before, his suggestion that it is composed of regular attenders suggests that this group would be more likely to be popular among the upper and middle classes. However, traditionalism appears to have a wide appeal among all social classes, with working class members as likely to be part of the group as their upper and middle counterparts.

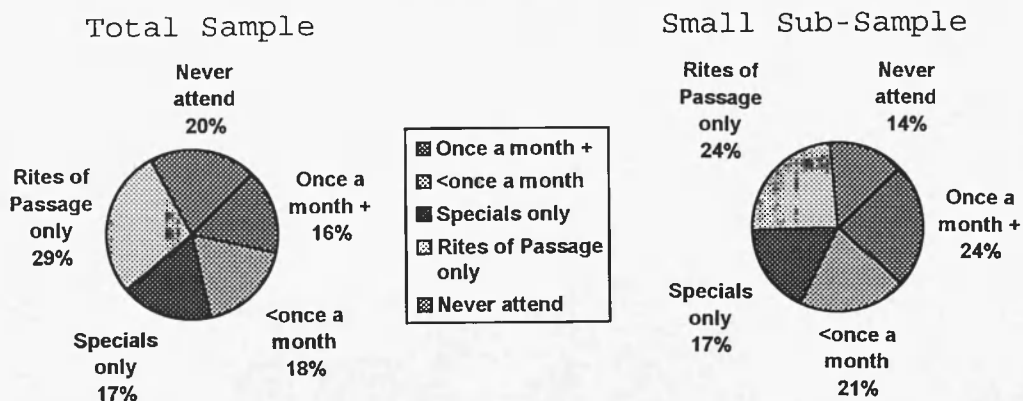
Towler does suggest that the Church is in effect the stronghold for all that the traditionalists believe and, as part of the Establishment, support in some form or other is considered obligatory. Of those in the small sub-sample 24 of the 29 (83%) are affiliated to the Church of England, this being considerably higher than the 62% found in the sample as a whole. Thus the Anglican church, steeped in history and entwined in the national fabric of the nation has a stronger traditionalist element than the other denominations.

One of the additional questions asked of all Anglican respondents sought information regarding their sense of belonging, asking what was it that they felt they belonged to. Over a third of the small sub-sample felt that they belonged to a 'group of people or community', more than twice the level in the sample as a whole. This is further supported by the number who knew the vicar either 'very well' or 'reasonably well', the combined total in the whole sample being 29% compared to 42% for this group. These responses suggest a group who have thought through issues of belonging and feel accepted by the church and their community. Interestingly, levels of confirmation were not especially high, (58%) suggesting that conventional forms of commitment are not universal in this group.

Attendance is one of the main characteristics that Towler associates with the traditionalist type. Churchgoing is perceived to be the public upholding of the beliefs that this group hold so close to its heart (1984:86). On

inspection the small sub-sample shows a consistent decline in monthly churchgoing to those who never or practically never attend a church service. The level, shown in Figure 8.9, is nearly twice that of the sample as a whole. However, a small but notable number felt that they were traditionalists but did not consider attending church services an essential part of that tradition. Part of this may be the result of an elderly element physically restricted from church going and thus there is broad support for Towler's profile of this group.

Figure 8.9 Traditionalism: Church Attendance in Small Sub-Sample Compared to Total Sample



Support for the traditionalism type in the analysis of the last two chapters is most noticeable in the strong belief in an after life and the Trinity together with a decreased likelihood of a religious experience. The two statements that either exclude religion or are non-religious, 'science explains everything' and 'religious people are hypocrites', are firmly rejected. These are important characteristics of the profile presented by Towler for this group. There is also a decreased tendency to believe in unlucky days and the existence of ghosts. The increased compatibility between Towler's description and the findings of this study point to a higher presence in rural areas of the traditionalism

element or the presence of a Towlerite traditionalism.

Females of any age and social class characterise the traditionalist group, though, those aged over 65 and members of the petty bourgeoisie are slightly more prevalent. Long term residence in the parish (11 or more years) is high but few have always lived there. The majority comprises members of the Church of England who feel they belong to group of people more than a denomination, although nearly half have not been confirmed. This feeling of belonging is supported by the high number, over 40% compared to the norm of under 30%, who knew the vicar at least 'reasonably well'. Church attendance is also high as is the number who attended church as a child with their parents.

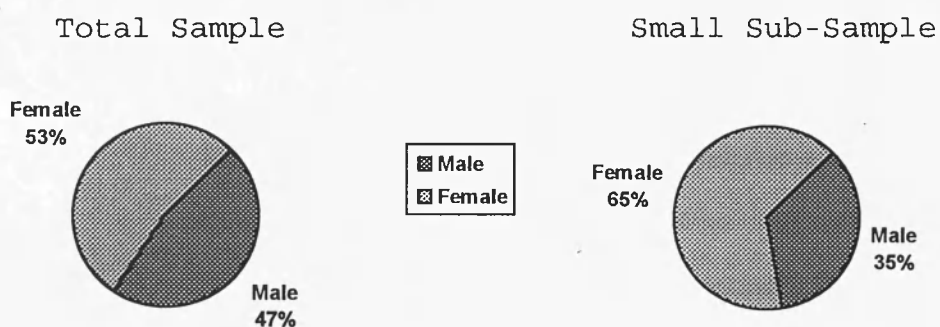
Conversionism

As with the other three groups Towler gives little indication as to the sociographic nature of the conversionism type. He does, however, suggest that church attendance is important and many of the quotes he uses correspond with that of the evangelical tradition (1984:117). The construction of the small sub-sample for the conversionism type varies from other types covered thus far as it is made up of those respondents with a spiritual experience who also agree with the statement 'each person must be born again'. In the other three types the sub-sample is constructed of those who selected the appropriate statement as being closest to their own beliefs.

As mentioned above Towler describes the conversionism type as similar to traditionalism in one respect, that of church

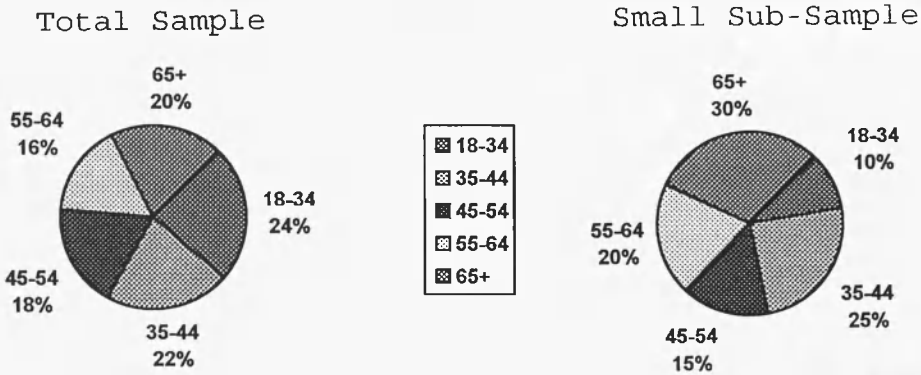
attendance. The relationship between the attendance variable will be assessed later but previous analysis has already shown that females are twice as likely to attend church on a regularly basis. The number of females is, indeed, higher in the small sub-sample with a ratio of 65% to 35% (Figure 8.10). The figure shows that the female domination of this group is the highest so far in any of the groups.

Figure 8.10 Conversionism: Gender in Small Sub-Sample Compared to Total Sample



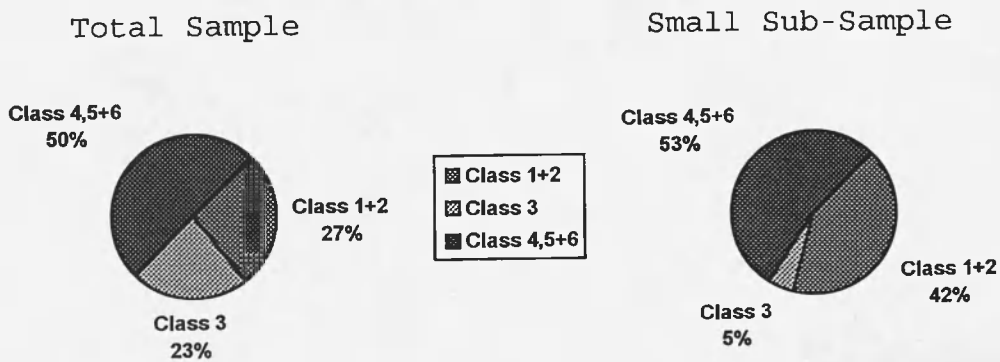
With regard to age Figure 8.11 shows that the 35-44 category is well represented. Together with the oldest category (65+) it accounts for over half (55%) of the sample. Since the 1960's, when these letters were written, the evangelical wing has grown considerably both within the Church of England and other mainstream denominations and in the form of new churches (Brierley 1991). This style of Christianity appears to be particularly attractive to the young and middle class (Davie 1994). The relationship between class and conversionism will be assessed later; there does appear to be an attraction to the conversionist statement by younger members of the sample which has been absent thus far.

Figure 8.11 Conversionism: Age in Small Sub-Sample Compared to Total Sample



The social composition of the small sub-sample, shown in Figure 8.12, is the most pronounced of any type thus far, with the amalgamated group of Classes 1 and 2 up 15% solely at the expense of Class 3, the petty bourgeoisie. As mentioned above, where younger respondents were fairly well represented, the recent growth of the evangelical movement is known to be concentrated in the young upper and middle class (Davie 1994). In that sense, the findings regarding this group would appear to be supported to some extent.

Figure 8.12 Conversionism: Social Class in Small Sub-Sample Compared to Total Sample



In respect of denominational affiliation the conversionism sub-sample shows very little variation from the sample as a whole. One might have expected the Baptist and independent churches to be more prominent but detecting this is difficult as the number of such respondents was small.

However, of the three Baptists in the sample, one did fall into this group together with two from the 'other denomination' category. Two other points which may indicate a largely Protestant evangelical characteristic are that the small sub-sample contains no Roman Catholics, nor does it contain any of those who are unsure or have no religious affiliation. Among the Anglicans in the sub-sample, the more spiritual aspects of a sense of belonging to the Church of England are not prevalent but levels of confirmation are high, 58% compared to 53% in the whole sample.

Towler explains at some length the dilemma which conversionists feel in relation to the Church. Whilst church attendance is essential, 'there is a sense of embarrassment that the Church includes those who have not been reborn' (1984:44). Recent evidence (Davie and Short 1996) has shown that those of an evangelical tradition, particularly a conservative one, are more likely to travel to a church. This enables those who feel the need to be among the 'twice born', as Towler suggests, to find a church and associated community of their liking.

When describing the conversionist type Towler sees the existence of the Church as fundamental, primarily because they have no desire for themselves, nor their experience, to remain isolated. He goes on to say:

Conversionism has a high doctrine of the Church, i.e. the community of believers, is indispensable to it. Only in the Church can conversionists find *koinonia*, fellowship, with others who are living the new life. (Towler 1984:46)

Comparing this definition of conversionism with the data

from the small sub-sample, a similar picture emerges as the level of church attendance is high.

Figure 8.13 Conversionism: Church Attendance in Small Sub-Sample Compared to Total Sample

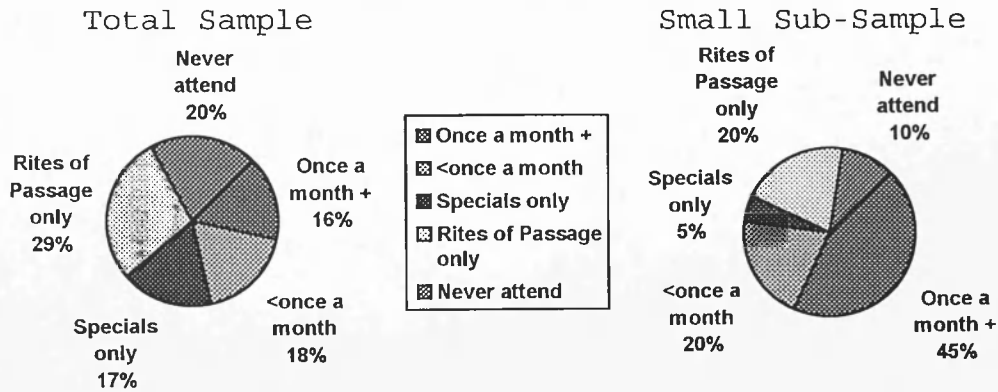


Figure 8.13 shows that nine of the 20 respondents attend church at least monthly (45%) with a further 20% attending occasionally. However, this leaves 35% who are not attenders with 20% of these attending *rites of passage* services only. Explanations for this are difficult to formulate, however: some of the sample are elderly and thus may be physically unable to attend church as often as they wish. Alternatively, there may be the presence of conversionism within respondents disillusioned with the notion of a gathered church. Whatever, as with traditionalism there is some support but the picture is not precisely as Towler describes it.

This chapter and the corresponding section in Chapter 7 appear to suggest substantial, but not total, support for Towler's description that experience is the central focus of the conversionist religious type. Belief in all aspects of the Trinity is strong, as is belief in life after death and its more specifically theological details. Belief in existence of ghosts is high which contrasted with unanimous

rejection of an unlucky day. However, those who claimed a religious experience do not unanimously select or even support the statement, 'each must be born again' but the number agreeing was very much higher. Such mixed messages suggest that most of the attributes of conversionism as described by Towler are verified yet the single conversionist statement did not attract those in this group.

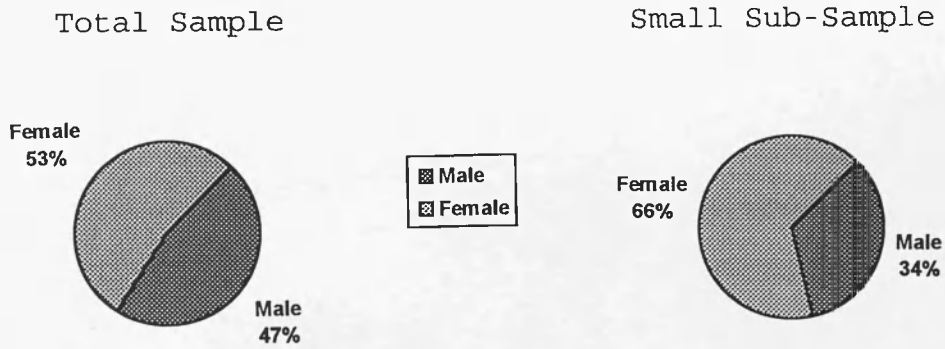
As with the other three groups conversionists are largely females, young to middle aged and generally upper and middle class and not part of the petty bourgeoisie. The household is consistent with the age and class being made up of one or two adults with no children. Those in this group are often either new to the parish or have lived there all their lives. They are members of the Church of England who have been confirmed and attend church. However, church attendance is not historically characteristic of their childhood or parents, perhaps suggesting a 'change' in lifestyle. As with beliefs, the sociographic characteristics support those ascribed to evangelicals (Davie 1994).

Gnosticism

The last of the five groups formulated to correspond with those that Towler describes is gnosticism. As with conversionism the sub-sample is constructed using additional information to that of the gnostic statement, 'the other world is near to this one'. In this case it relates to a belief in life after death, a characteristic which Towler suggests is central to this group. As with each of the

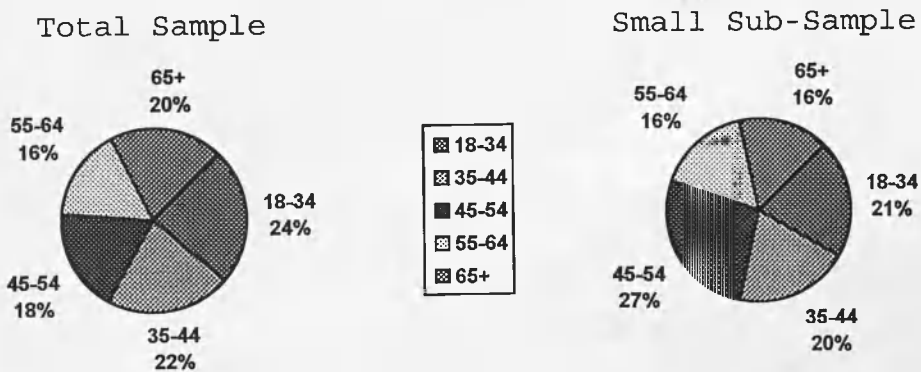
other four groups females outnumber males. The proportions are shown in Figure 8.14. In the chapter describing this type Towler gives very few hints as to the likely characteristics and nothing which might indicate the gender balance.

Figure 8.14 Gnosticism: Gender in Small Sub-Sample Compared to Total Sample



With regard to age the sub-sample (made up of those who believed in life after death and who agreed with the 'other world' statement) contains many of those in the 45-54 group (27%) with fewer respondents in the older categories. As Figure 8.15 shows, most of this group are younger with two thirds in the first three categories.

Figure 8.15 Gnosticism: Age in Small Sub-Sample Compared to Total Sample



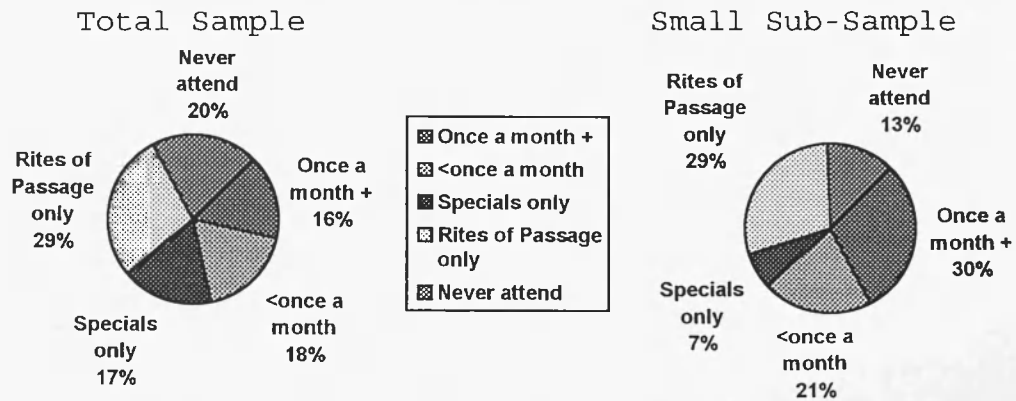
Towler gives virtually no indication regarding the social class of his gnostic type. His does suggest that their cognitive style is related to 'knowledge' and their desire

for hard facts (1984:78). However, there is very little variation with social class in the small sub-sample. Thus this statement possessed a wide appeal to all the social groups.

As with social class, Towler gives little evidence regarding the religious affiliation of those in the gnosticism type. However, he does suggest that there are no negative feelings towards the Church, but that impatience and frustration at the Church's teaching and lack of understanding of the 'spiritual world' make the relationship somewhat strained. The analysis of the small sub-sample showed that there is very little variation from the sample as a whole with about two thirds affiliated to the Church of England. As with theism the number of Methodists is high, a fifth of all the Methodists are found in this sub-sample. The level of confirmation among the Anglicans is high at 64% (compared to 53% in the sample as a whole) suggesting a high level of commitment at some moment as well as some spiritual understanding.

According to Towler, gnosticism as a type is not one which is negative towards the Church but considers attendance non-essential (1984:78). Figure 8.16 shows the attendance characteristics of the small sub-sample, in particular that just over half of the sample attend Sunday services during the year. However, the second largest group (29%) attends *rites of passage* services only. Church attendance is not the norm for their parents with under half (46%) going to services, 41% of respondents were likely to attend with them as children.

Figure 8.16 Gnosticism: Church Attendance in Small Sub-Sample Compared to Total Sample



Evidence from both this and the previous chapter indicates that there is some compatibility between Towler's description of the gnosticism type and the sub-sample used here. This is typified by a detailed knowledge of the afterlife and its connection with the notion of another world. There is also a rejection of areas of superstition together with a confirmation regarding the existence of ghosts and the role of Jesus as the supreme example. However, agreement with a bodily resurrection is not a typical characteristic nor is the rejection of science as an explanation of knowledge. In addition, traditional notions of Christianity are affirmed and in this sense the group appears as conventionally religious as the previous four types. There is, therefore, support for Towler's description of gnosticism but the sub-sample in this study does not appear to be as radical as he suggests.

From a sociographic point of view the gnosticism group is characterised by females aged between 45 and 54 of any social class. Further clarity is provided as the proportion of single people is half that of the norm while those who are divorced or separated rise. Less surprising is the low number of this group in full-time employment, 39% compared

to 46% in the sample as a whole. The group comprises those who are confirmed members of the Church of England, those who are likely to attend church services regularly and very unlikely never to attend, although, under half of their parents were church goers.

Summary of Sociographic Characteristics in Five Sub-Samples

The first point to note is that in each of the five groups based around Towler's religious types women are more numerous than they are in the sample as a whole. This would suggest that Towler was at least partly right in stating that 'young working class males were severely under represented'. However, it does not conceal the fact that a large proportion of the males in the sample, probably of any age and class, avoided the five sub-samples analysed thus far.

No single age group dominates the first five groups, all of which correspond to Towler's five religious types, in the same way as females did. As mentioned previously it is generally accepted that most indicators of religiosity show an increase of religiosity with age. This particular sample shows an overall peak with the 45-54 age group but this is not sustained in the above analysis of religious belief. For each statement the age structure varied which would support the notion that 'belief' is spread throughout the age range. However, the sociography of the remaining two groups assessed in this chapter (based on the two statements 'we must search for the truth throughout our lives' and 'we only live once so let's make the most of it') will fulfil the second part of the check against Towler's comment on

those not represented in his data.

On balance, the study of the first five groups revealed that all social classes were able to find one statement which closely matched their own beliefs. Variations, such as there were, tended to be small but only one statement, gnosticism, closely resembled the sample as a whole. Therefore, it appears that Towler's statement of young, working class males being severely under-represented in the data he used is not supported as strongly as with gender. However, the working classes are only characteristic in one group, theism, which has already been shown to be dominated by females and not males.

Religious affiliation in the first five groups has been characterised by membership of the Church of England and rates of confirmation, with the exception of theism, that are near or above the sample as a whole. For the Anglicans any sense of belonging has typically been one of community or sense of tradition rather than one of separation.

As a characteristic, regular attendance of church services has been found to be prevalent in the first five groups either at a similar level to the whole sample or higher. Findings such as these do not agree with all of Towler's description of the five ideal types but are more consistent with his comments at the beginning of *The Need for Certainty* where he suggest that those identified 'might be at the same church service together' (1984:1). The relationship with the Church was the only sociographic characteristic which he proposed for all of the five types he specified. This study

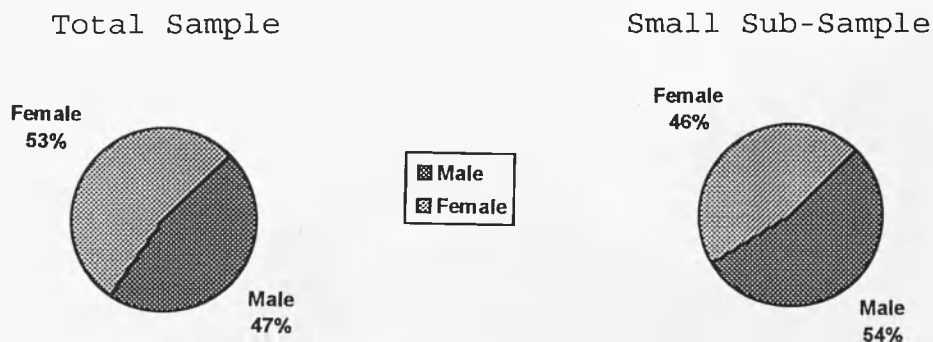
provides broad support in four out of five cases.

At the end of this sociographic analysis two questions remain: which statements did males support more strongly than females and which statements did non-church goers support more strongly than church goers? This question will form the remainder of this chapter and concerns the statements outlined for the first time at the end of Chapter 7. The two statements concerned, 'we must search for the Truth throughout our lives' and 'we only live once so let's make the most of it', are strongly supported by the whole sample and the smaller sub-samples are larger than those of the groups previously studied in this chapter.

Search for the Truth

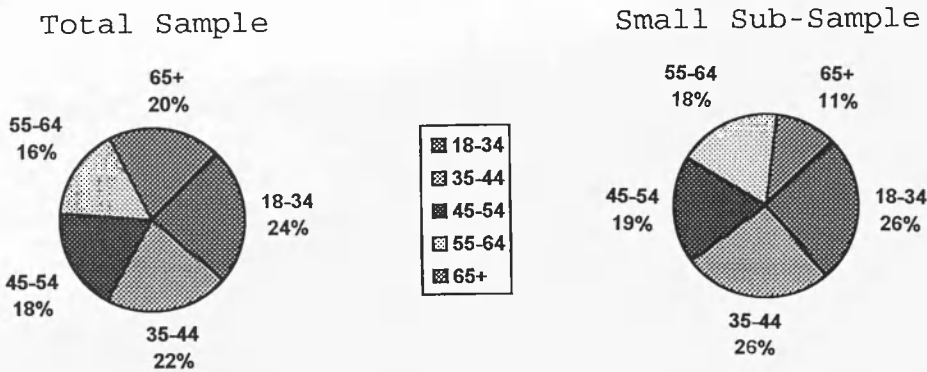
Taking the 'search for Truth' first, Figure 8.17 shows that males do outnumber females by 54% to 46%, an increase of seven per cent from the sample as a whole. Interestingly, the ratio for those agreeing with the statement (77% of the whole sample) is very close to that of the whole sample. This would suggest that women are just as likely as men to agree with the statement but not to select it as being close to their own beliefs.

Figure 8.17 Search for the Truth: Gender in Small Sub-Sample Compared to Total Sample



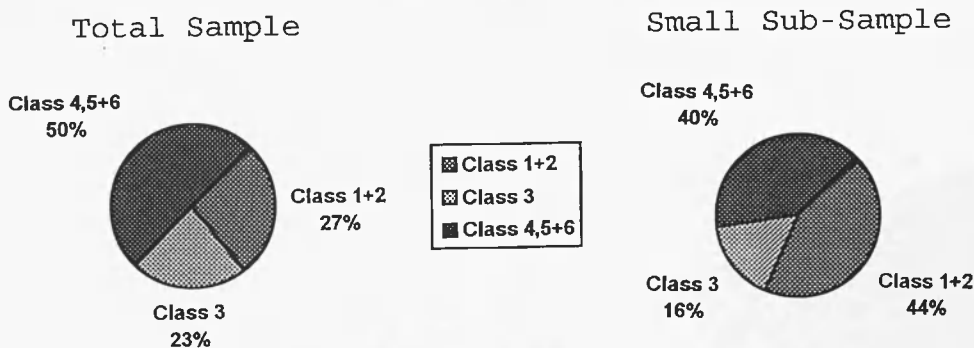
Analysis of the small sub-sample referring to 'search for Truth' shows those under 45 constitute over half (53%) with the oldest age group (65+) poorly represented (11%). Overall, the older the respondents the less likely they are to select this statement. Figure 8.18 compares the figures of the small sub-sample with those of the whole sample.

Figure 8.18 Search for the Truth: Age in Small Sub-Sample Compared to Total Sample



The largest single group among those selecting the statement 'we must search for the Truth throughout our lives' is that of the upper and middle class. At 44% it is nearly double the level of the sample as a whole with both of the other groups lower. This group has already been shown to be largely male and aged 40 or less.

Figure 8.19 Search for the Truth: Social Class in Small Sub-Sample Compared to Total Sample



Those in the 'search for Truth' sub-sample are content to be affiliated with a particular denomination, which is the

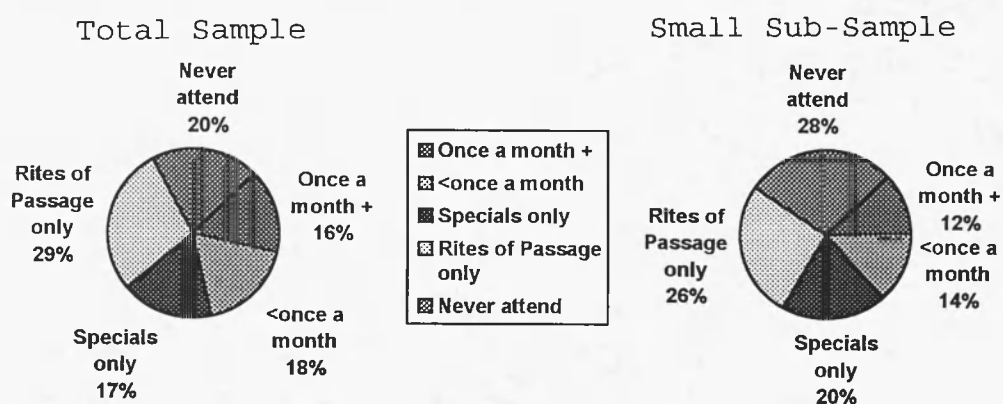
Church of England in most cases. However, there are a significant minority who are either not affiliated to any denomination, those who state 'Christianity', or who have no religious allegiance. In the whole sample there are 37 such cases, ten of them choosing this statement as being closest to their own beliefs. Those showing such sentiments have been shown in Chapter 3 to be disconnected from the church rather than presenting a spiritual dislike of denominational labels. This is further supported by the number who have never met the vicar - well over a third compared to 23% in the whole sample.

Assessing the Anglicans in more detail reveals that the highest response in the sense of belonging question is that of 'not belonging' (24%). This is matched by one of tradition and upbringing with all the other responses lower. One might expect in a group where a sense of disillusionment appears that the number of baptisms and confirmations would be lower. However, the figures are not uncharacteristic of the whole sample. Thus the group, whilst on the whole being affiliated with a particular denomination, does give some indication of separation either literally or through no sense of belonging, though participation may have been characteristic of the past.

Current participation in the small sub-sample is dominated by those attending *rites of passage* services only or those never attending; in all they make up 55% of the group. Over the whole sub-sample it is important to note that the number selecting this statement increases as the attendance levels decrease. This contrasts strongly with those agreeing with

the statement, as is shown in Figure 8.20. The pattern concerning the parents of those in this group is not unusual (52%) but the respondents were less likely to attend with them when children (39%). As suggested previously, the lack of a specific religious element appears to have been more attractive to those not in regular contact with church life but feel that they have a reasonably good idea about what belief entails.

Figure 8.20 Search for the Truth: Church Attendance in Small Sub-Sample Compared to Total Sample



In summary, the first of the two groups to fall outside of parameters outlined by Towler focuses on the 'search for Truth'. Those in this sub-sample appear to reflect the beliefs and spiritual views of the whole sample but generally at a slightly lower level. One striking characteristic is the increased likelihood of a religious experience. This was further supported by analysis of the written comments which found feelings and experiences to be a common theme in responses to questions. The other interesting factor in respect of beliefs is a lower level of belief in life after death.

From a sociographic point of view this group are male and aged under 45, most likely between 35 and 44. They are

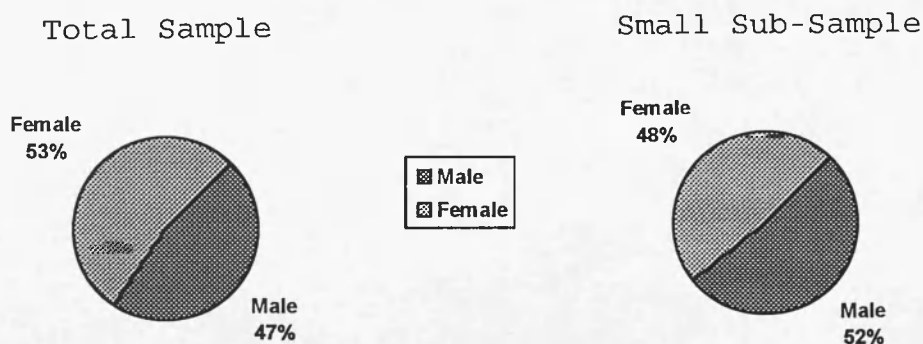
upper middle class, in full-time employment and live in a household with another adult. The majority of this group does not attend church on a Sunday, only special or *rites of passage* services. Most are members of the Church of England without feeling that they have any sense of 'belonging'. In support of this, over a third claimed to never had met the vicar, possibly because many in this group had moved to the parish within the last ten years. Attendance of church services among this group's parents is normal but the respondents were less likely to attend with them when children.

In their beliefs this group's members do not appear to be as detached as they are when the religious participation and affiliation variables are assessed. The higher likelihood of a spiritual experience and the importance of feelings in expressing belief show that, loosely speaking, religion plays an important part in their lives. It may be that this group are exercising their 'right to choice' in the 'religious supra-market', as Barker (1990) called it, where they are 'searching for the Truth. In this sense the self-interested choice is close to that which Bryan Wilson re-coins Hedonism (Wilson 1985). This type is described in Wallis and Bruce's review (1989) as the 'ethic of the consumer society' where the church has been replaced by forms of the media. The world is increasingly technical and whilst the feelings related with religion and God are recognised, the role of the Church has been substantially diminished.

Only Live Once

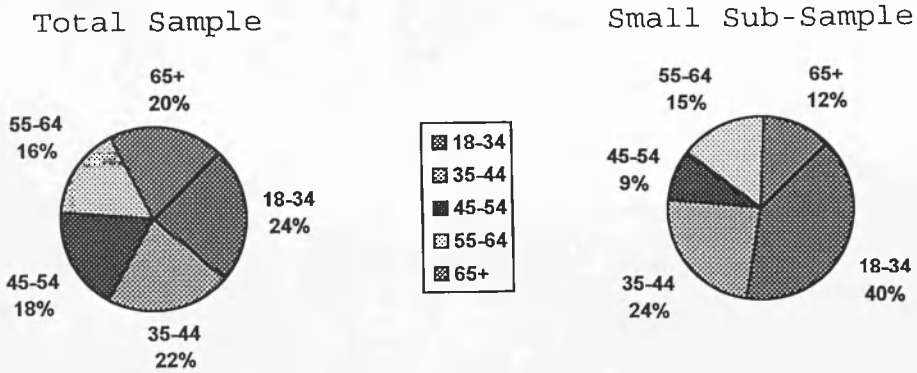
The second of the two sub-samples which fall outside of the five groups associated with Towler's study concerns those selecting 'we one live once so let's make the most of it'. Figure 8.21 shows similarly that they are more likely to be male but not to such an extent: 52% of males to 48% of females. Other variables in this Chapter will shed more light on the characteristics of these two groups which fall outside Towler's five religious types. However, the male presence is clearly a distinctive feature in both groups.

Figure 8.21 Only Live Once: Gender in Small Sub-Sample Compared to Total Sample



Those in the small sub-sample are, according to age, most likely to be in the youngest age category 18-34 (40%). Indeed, over a third of this age group chose this statement as being closest to its own beliefs. Those aged 45-54 were particularly few in this group but the other two older groups are also poorly represented.

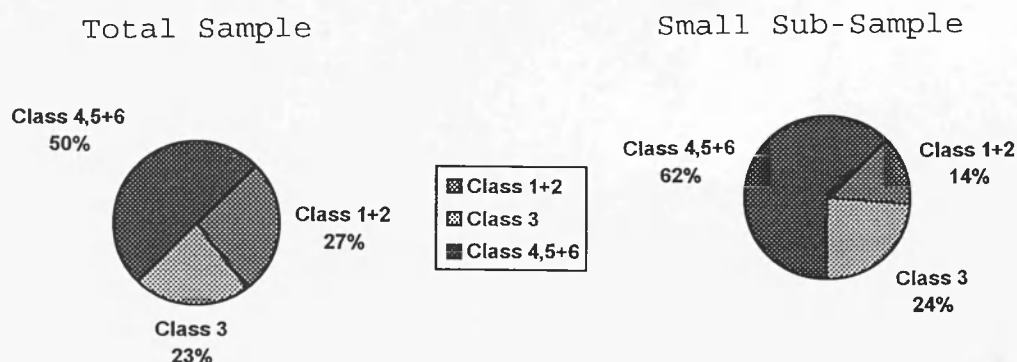
Figure 8.22 Only Live Once: Age in Small Sub-Sample Compared to Total Sample



Consequently, although some of the previous statements did attract some support from those in the younger age groups, it would appear that the majority do not fall into Towler's five types. Such evidence lends further support to his fear that young working class males did not form part of the data source he used.

The social class of those in the 'only live once' sub-sample is very different from that of the previous type as the number of upper and middle class respondents falls to half its normal value. The working class is by far the largest group (62%) with the petty bourgeoisie at a level similar to the sample as a whole. The influence of class in the two groups to fall outside those developed by Towler reveals a distinctive characteristic between them, greater than that of gender or age. Until this point both of these groups had been shown to be broadly similar in their sociographic structure.

Figure 8.23 Only Live Once: Social Class in Small Sub-Sample Compared to Total Sample



Towler's belief that the young male working class was under-represented in his sample is given some credence by this study, with the largest group of working class selecting a statement outside of the Towler framework. However, members of the working class are also slightly more likely than the whole sample to choose the theism statement. Towler, as mentioned before, provides little supportive material, thus the evidence here should be seen as adding to the work undertaken by Towler rather than diverging from it.

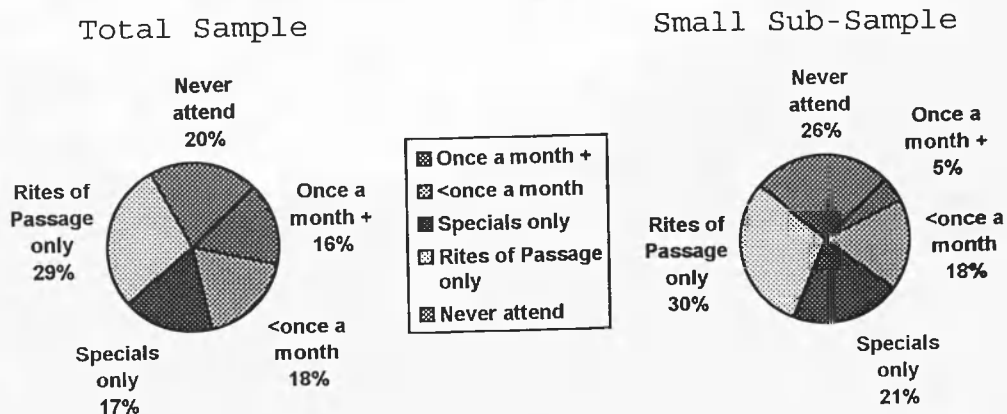
This sub-sample is the least likely to be Anglican (56%), a figure lower than the sample as a whole (62%). The number without any affiliation to a particular denomination is high as is that of those who state 'Christianity' without any denominational affiliation. Analysis in Chapter 5 showed these respondents to be non-attenders and largely detached from most Christian characteristics.

For those who are affiliated with the Church of England there appeared to be little sense of belonging to something in a positive way. A third feels that it does not belong or that it is not important while a quarter indicates a sense of tradition or upbringing. All the Anglicans have

been baptised but only 27% have been confirmed, a figure half that of the whole sample. This response is much lower than for any of the other groups which suggests that the respondents became detached at a much earlier stage. On combining this response with those who have no denominational affiliation, much of the group comprises those having signs of detachment from mainstream religion.

The detachment of this group is confirmed still further when the current participation of the group is assessed. Figure 8.24 reveals a further decline in those regularly attending church with those who never attend higher. Only four respondents who regularly attend church selected this statement. However, 55% did not attend at all or did so only to *rites of passage* services and a further 21% go to special services only. The 41 respondents who fall in the last two groups constitute a quarter of the whole sample in these two groups. Interestingly, attendance among parents is normal (53%) and the respondent was likely to attend with them as children (50%). They were, however, less likely to attend Sunday School than all the other groups (78%), though the level is still high.

Figure 8.24 Only Live Once: Church Attendance in Small Sub-Sample compared to Total Sample



The seventh group is the second to fall outside of Towler's religious types and forms the largest single group of the seven analysed in this chapter. To summarise the findings of the last two chapters, those in this group hold to the theory that we 'only live once' and their beliefs are characterised by a higher level of rejection for all the specifically religious statements. Often the number who are 'unsure' of their beliefs is as high as those who either agree or disagree, as in the case of the statement 'God is Creator'. Agreement that 'science explains everything' is the strongest of any of the seven groups but there is no support for the notion that 'all religious people are either hypocrites or fanatics'. Such a pattern of responses suggests that there is a religious uncertainty about this group: it neither wants to accept or reject conventional notions of religious belief.

As with the previous group, members are likely to be male but the similarity ends there. This group is younger, aged between 18 and 34, with a large number of single people. The proportion of working class is high with both of the other social classes lower. An increase in the proportion of rented accommodation and larger households with three or more adults and two or more children supports this finding. Those in this group may have been baptised into the Church of England but are content to say they do not belong or say that they feel they do not belong. Consequently, they are quite likely not to attend church services at all, even though they may have always lived in the parish.

This group's members are not without religious beliefs, as

they support the statement 'we must search for the Truth' to the same extent as the other groups. However, the 'equivarian' nature of the statement would therefore appeal to their indecision. In their beliefs and sociographic characteristics this group forms a collection of 'detached believers'. Moreover, the uncertainty of their responses to a number of the questions and statements suggests that their beliefs are not fully formed. Towler suggests that not everyone would fall entirely into one of his types and that over time an individual's religiosity is likely to change. It is possible that this group is made up of a number of individuals who are currently 'between types' and thus the group may form a transitional religious type. In addition the religious uncertainty may be part of a general 'agnostic' attitude where the truth of both religious and anti-religious statement is neither affirmed nor denied.

This chapter has shown that where the religious beliefs outlined by Towler for the five types he identified compares closely with the findings of this study, the sociographic details he gave are also affirmed. This is the case in traditionalism, conversionism and, to a lesser extent theism and gnosticism. His suspicion that young working class males are under-represented in his sample is certainly supported in this study. Having detailed the beliefs and sociology of the seven groups in this study and compared them with Towler's five religious types, the next chapter makes an assessment of the findings in this study in the context of the sociology of religion. This will include an evaluation of this study's impact on Towler's work and what this means for the study of mainstream religion.

Chapter Nine

Conclusions

The original aim of this thesis, stated in Chapter 2, is to examine empirically the five conventional religious types that Towler identified in the letters written to John Robinson as a result of his book *Honest to God*. The quantitative sample used to meet this objective is one with a mainstream religious context and compares favourably with the findings of similar studies. Moreover, the data enabled the formation of an accurate attendance variable that accounts for past and present participation. Using this variable the respondents are shown as religious in their activities as the country as a whole; this is also in line with the increased occasional attendance often attributed to rural areas (Harrison 1983 and Davies et al 1991). However, more important is the fact that the respondents, although derived from a distinct set of data, are well suited to be used in the empirical testing of Towler's religious types.

Developing the sociographic context of the sample is critical in order to investigate fully the relationship between religious practice and religious belief. It is a relationship that some believe cannot be reliably tested. Bruce, for example, states that:

It will always be possible to argue that departure from the churches represents only a lack of willingness to participate in voluntary associations and not a general loss of faith in the supernatural products which people once consumed in those voluntary associations. Given the problems of knowing what is going on in people's heads, it will always be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to produce evidence which resolves the issue finally (1995:70).

Yet this study has shown that individuals may share similar levels of religious participation with a number of the sample while their religious beliefs appear to correspond

more closely to others. For example, though many respondents regularly attend church services, they selected one of the seven statements as being closest to their own religious beliefs. Within the sub-samples associated with each of the seven groups, these regular attenders were analysed together with those who attended church for special services only as well as those who never attended.

Therefore, in terms of participation these respondents are part of one community, in terms of religious belief they appear to be members of another. The first general finding of this thesis is, then, that religious beliefs may run against, as well as alongside, those of religious practice. This would support the suggestion (Argyle 1958) that since there is variation within a single religious group, the value of traditional indicators such as membership and attendance becomes increasingly limited. More importantly in the context of this thesis, such a finding supports Towler's statement at the start of his book that people representing these various ways of being religious might be 'at the same church service together, singing the same hymns' (Towler 1984:1).

There would also appear to be support for Davie's notion of believing without belonging (Davie 1990b). The reverse example of the one used in the previous paragraph would be that those who do not appear religious according to traditional indicators are found alongside those who do, in each of the seven groups. Therefore at least some of the respondents in each of the seven sub-samples can be said to 'believe but not to belong'. However, not all those within the sociology of religion agree that this is a fair

assessment of the facts. Bruce presents the analogy of a 'big football fan' who knows nothing of the game or the players and suggests that:

the claim that a significant number of those in Britain who are not involved in any of the vast range of religious activities that are on offer are none the less 'religious' is open to same objection (1995:47).

Whether the respondents were fooling themselves and the researchers or not is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, the first general finding remains that there is no clear demarcation between those who are regarded as religious using the traditional indicators and those who are not.

Before assessing the success of the thesis in empirically testing Towler's work, the compatibility between his work and that of this study in the belief structure of each religious types needs to be assessed. This is the basis of Towler's work in the formation of the five religious types and formed the basis of the methodology in this study; thus the compatibility should be strongest. Of the five ideal-types that Towler specifies there is strong compatibility between the two studies in two of the types, likeness for a further two and limited resemblance for one. The case for each of the types will be looked at in turn, starting with those where the compatibility in terms of belief is strongest. This will then be compared with the compatibility in sociographic terms.

The two types where there is least divergence from the belief structures outlined by Towler, are traditionalism and conversionism. Of the five types described by Towler it is,

perhaps these two types for which the most convincing case could be made for mass appeal among the English population. Traditionalism is a characteristic which has long been associated with rural areas (Davies et al 1991) and communities in such areas formed the basis of the sample used in this study. Conversionism, on the other hand, is not necessarily a characteristic of rural areas but, with its close resemblance to evangelicalism, is known to be a growing phenomenon within the church, particularly the suburban church (Davie 1994).

Of these two groups only the traditionalism sub-sample was formed using the anticipated methodology, that being the selection of the traditionalism statement as being closest to the respondents' own religious beliefs. This sub-sample has a strong belief in life after death, affirms the Trinity and is less likely to have had a spiritual experience. Non-religious statements are also rejected along with some aspects of superstition. All these are characteristics which Towler attributes to this type.

In sociographic terms Towler is less explicit for reasons which have been discussed previously. However, high levels of church attendance and religious affiliation are two characteristics which he does suggest. In both cases there is support with the Church of England the dominant denomination, regular attendance being twice as likely when compared with the sample as a whole.

The conversionism sub-sample used to compare against Towler's belief structure for this type did not select the

expected statement in sufficient numbers to allow empirical analysis. However, the sub-sample was assembled by taking those with a spiritual experience, a feature Towler places as central to this type, who agreed with the conversionism statement. The religious characteristics of this sub-sample are also compatible with those which Towler describes. Belief in all aspects of the Trinity is high, as is belief in the afterlife and the more theological details associated with it such as the resurrection of bodies.

In sociographic terms church attendance is held up as particularly essential in this group. The level in the sub-sample was far higher than the whole sample with 65% attending Sunday services as least on an occasional basis. Towler gives very little other indication for this group but there were no Roman Catholics in the sub-sample nor are there those without religious affiliation.

Concerning the third and fourth types, gnosticism and theism, there is found some similarity between the findings of this study and those of Towler but not to the same extent as those concerning traditionalism and conversionism. In gnosticism, as with conversionism, the number selecting the gnosticism statement were too small for empirical analysis. Thus, a similar means was devised to obtain the sub-sample. It included those who agreed with the appropriate statement and believed in life after death, a characteristic that Towler suggests is fundamental in this group.

There is a strong similarity between the two studies regarding a detailed knowledge of life after death,

particularly for the notion of 'souls departing to another world' at death. The role of Jesus as the supreme example and the higher level of belief in the existence of ghosts are also characteristics which Towler details in this type. However, credence in a bodily resurrection is high and traditional statements about Christianity are supported strongly. None of these is a characteristic which Towler attributes to the gnosticism type he describes.

The reason for this divergence may be twofold. First, the gnosticism type analysed in this study may not be as radical as the ideal-type that Towler developed in *The Need for Certainty*. One factor which Towler associated with this group is a high level of ignorance among those who are not aware of the 'other world'. In the list of 12 statements only one stood out as being misunderstood, the particular statement that was intended to attract those sympathetic to gnosticism. The results were quite striking, with the largest single group (28%) suggesting that they did not understand the statement and a fifth unsure whether they agreed or disagreed with it. Such a response may suggest a poorly worded statement but in the context of the other 11 which were all well understood there may be a deeper misunderstanding of the 'spiritual world', as Towler suggests.

Alternatively, the gnostics as Towler describes them may have been the very small number of respondents who selected the statement 'the other world is near to this one'. Thus the conclusion would be that this type is marginal in rural areas and was found in very disproportionate numbers to the

letters that Towler analysed. Towler gives no direct indication as to the sociographic characteristics. The only indirect suggestion is a tendency to be frustrated with the Church for its lack of teaching on spiritual matters. Religious affiliation is similar to that of the whole sample with under a third attending church regularly.

The second type where there is variable similarity between Towler's description and those of this study is that of theism. The similarity lies in the findings of greater belief in the afterlife and a willingness to 'trust in God' rather than know the details regarding life after death. However, the details regarding life after death are also better understood than in the whole sample, something Towler indicates is not typical of this type. The other area of divergence centres around the Trinity. There was evidence of a greater willingness to support notions of 'Jesus as an example' rather than a 'Christ that all must receive'. Such a finding suggests that the less divine aspects of the Jesus Christ are more acceptable in theism. However, the level of adherence to Christ and renewing by the Holy Spirit is higher in the theism sub-sample than in the sample as a whole.

In sociographic terms the notion of the theism type being made up of those who appreciate nature as God's creation is given some support by the increased proportion of the working class: this social class contains the majority of those who are employed on the land. Towler suggests a 'sense of unease' with the church, attendance levels in the sub-sample being very similar to the whole sample with the

historical attendance of parents very low.

The type which demonstrated the most limited compatibility when compared with the belief structure described by Towler is exemplarism. The exemplarist statement received strong support which enabled a detailed comparison with the characteristics Towler ascribes to these groups. The major difference is the retention of belief in other aspects of the Trinity, something which this sub-sample has in common with theism. In both cases Towler presents an argument for both types which states that the central figure in each is upheld at the expense of the two other aspects of the Trinity.

Other characteristics in the exemplarism sub-sample which are contrary to those Towler suggests are high levels of spiritual experience and belief in life after death. The sociographic features of this sub-sample would also appear to be at odds with Towler's description. He describes exemplarists as being 'unchurched' yet over half of the sub-sample attend church on either a regular or occasional basis. Religious affiliation in the sub-sample is high with the number of Anglicans high. Towler also suggests that the beliefs in this group are generated in 'pubs and clubs' yet most are female and many are retired.

In summary, both the religious and sociographic construction of this group show the least similarity of all five sub-samples with Towler's exemplarist type. It is interesting that the same sub-sample should show the least similarity on both issues. Moreover, the two sub-samples where there was

the most compatibility on religious beliefs, traditionalism and conversionism, also reflected similar sociographic features to those Towler which described. From this it is possible to conclude that either the methodology used suited some of the religious types more than others (an important part of this may relate to language) or that the construction of the types in this sample differs from of Towler's because of the different nature of the samples. The latter would mean that the types analysed here are variants of the ideal-type that Towler constructed.

The belief and sociographic characteristics of the five sub-samples have been compared with the five types that Towler defines. In the context of this study these five types constituted about half of the whole sample with most of the remaining respondents selecting one of two statements as being closest to their own beliefs. The beliefs and sociographic characteristics of those in these two groups were assessed and analysed in a similar manner to the other five groups.

The sub-sample's members who selected the statement 'we must search for the Truth throughout our lives' appear close to the sample as a whole in terms of their beliefs. However, they are more likely to have had a spiritual experience at some point in their lives but are less likely to believe in live after death. The written quotes contributed by those in this sub-sample commonly used feelings and experiences as a means of expressing their beliefs.

The sociography of the group is immediately different from

the five which preceded it, as males are more common than females, with those aged between 35 and 44 also high. The number of upper middle class members of society is high and its members tend not to attend church. They are members of the Church of England but have no strong sense of belonging.

The second sub-sample is made up of those respondents who selected the statement 'we only live once so let's make the most of it'. This group is characterised by the highest level of rejection of religious statements from all the sub-samples studies here. Agreement that science explains everything is high but there is no greater acceptance of the fact that 'all religious people are either hypocrites or fanatics'. The religious uncertainty in this group is shown through the high number of 'unsure' responses to a number of the statements and other questions of belief. The 'unsure' category shows an understanding of the question but an inability to agree or disagree.

This sub-sample is also male but younger, aged between 18 and 34. The number of working class present is the highest of all the sub-samples. There is also little feeling of belonging in a religious sense, although they are affiliated to the Church of England. Attendance of church services is rare with most attending *rites of passage* services only.

The second, more specific, finding of this thesis is that Towler is correct in his concern that young, working class males were under-represented in his data. The numbers with these characteristics are high in the sub-sample corresponding with the statement 'we only live once so let's

make the most of it' and are largely absent from the five sub-samples that corresponded to Towler's religious types. However, he also might have considered the lack of young to middle-aged, upper to middle class males as well. These were largely absent from the five sub-samples but present in the 'we must search for the Truth' sub-sample. This group, unlike the other group to fall outside Towler's five types, are not 'poor letter writers' as he suggests of the young, working class males. They are likely to be accustomed to writing letters but did not write to John Robinson, the author of *Honest to God*, perhaps because they were not motivated by what they heard and read. If, as Chapter 8 suggests, they are close to Wilson's definition of Hedonism (Wilson 1985) they may have welcomed the contribution made by John Robinson in broadening their 'choice' or just not been interested. If true, the need for writing is lost as the book represents John Robinson's interpretation of a relationship with God and he has a right to that view. For those in this group the contribution has been made, noted and assimilated as part of the 'Search for Truth'.

The presence of these two groups does not invalidate the work that Towler undertook. Indeed, findings of this thesis saw a strong compatibility between two of the religious types (traditionalism and conversionism), similarities between a further two (gnosticism and theism) and little in common for one type (exemplarism). The sociographic features of those in each of the groups, with the exception of exemplarism, can be seen to supplement the work of Towler.

However, the presence of the two additional groups does call into question Towler's assertion that his work identified the whole spectrum of conventional Christian religiosity. The findings of this study suggest that there are two other types which should be added to the original five. In general, they may not be as religious as the other five types in their beliefs and participation. However, some of those in each of the two sub-samples are regular attenders, agree with the specifically religious statements and belief in life after death. In this sense they are as religious as any of those in the whole sample. Consequently, they form part of the conventional Christian religious picture.

Therefore, it is suggested that one group represent a Hedonism type who, under their right to choose are 'searching for the Truth' in a broad religious sense. They place a high emphasis on feelings and experience and are, in terms of general aspects of religious belief, hard to distinguish from the whole sample but are slightly 'detached' in terms of affiliation and attendance. The other group of largely young, working class males which Towler suspected was absent from his data are also detached in terms of affiliation and attendance. The religious uncertainty in this group suggests that they may be agnostic or transitional in terms of their beliefs. What this study has achieved in relation to Towler's work is to deepen the understanding of the five identified types and to broaden the spectrum of the ideal types he created by including those who were absent from the data which Towler used.

The final question to answer is; what does this study reveal for the sociology of religion? It would appear to challenge the current position on an important issue within the discipline, namely the relative importance of age and gender. The EVSSG in both of its surveys concluded that age was a greater influence on attendance than gender (Abrams et al 1985 and Barker et al 1992). Bruce also suggests that age is more important in the structure of beliefs than gender (Bruce 1995). This study does not support that. Females are shown to be more likely to attend church on a Sunday in every age group. Females are disproportionately higher in each of the five sub-samples formed for comparison with Towler's five types. They are also more likely to have had a religious experience and to believe in life after death.

The importance of formulating questions relating to church attendance and religious affiliation, in such a way that the respondents' actual sense of belonging and participation are revealed, is confirmed. The responses from this study to questions of religious affiliation are shown to be divergent from those where the respondents are asked what religion or denomination they enter on a form (Forster 1989). More importantly, the detailed analysis in Appendix V confirmed the tendency for respondents in personal surveys to exaggerate their response to questions on church attendance. The attendance variable in this study is derived from a number of questions relating to the attendance of various types of services. The result are findings which compare more closely to other specialised attendance studies (Macourt 1976) and clergy-based calculations (Brierley 1991)

rather than the findings of social surveys (Barker 1992).

There is support for suggestions that less time spent in church increases the level of unconventional belief (Abercrombie et al 1970, Davie 1994). The data used show a wide range of occasional attendance with significant numbers attending church only for *rites of passage* services or those associated with particular Festivals such as Christmas and Harvest Festival. The sample is also predominantly Anglican with almost all of them having been baptised and just over half confirmed. The inverted correlation between religious participation and unconventional belief showed itself in several ways. First, the two new types that have been proposed both have lower levels of attendance and higher levels of unconventional belief than the others examined. Unconventional belief is also found to be weakest within the two types where attendance is strongest, traditionalism and conversionism. Superstition did not form a major part of this thesis but it is interesting to note that belief in an unlucky day, for example, increased among those who did not attend services in church. Therefore, the relationship between unconventional belief and religious practice as presented by Abercrombie et al (1970) and Davie (1994) is supported along with the existence of "common religion" (Davie 1994:77).

This thesis has shown that *The Need for Certainty* received reasonably wide coverage and fairly intensive reviews but has not been used extensively within the sociology of religion. Some of its use has been as a comment on resistance to secularisation or as affirming the

characteristics of a particular religious view. There is one example of Towler's 'unique' type of analysis being revisited through the analysis of letters written to the former Bishop of Durham, David Jenkins. Effective use was also made of Towler's work in describing internal pluralism within mainstream Christian denominations. However, the use of Towler's work in *The Need for Certainty* has been limited and variable and this suggests one of two possible conclusions. Perhaps the typological approach used by Towler has had a greater impact than the citations suggest, through the implicit influence of his work on the concerns of sociologists who have now ceased referring to his work. Conversely, his work on mainstream Christianity has not been examined with any intellectual energy and thus the concept of distinctive types of conventional religiosity has been lost. Whatever the case, this study has continued the first steps taken by Towler and found that there is much to be explored.

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Appendices

Appendix I

***Criteria against which Parishioner Survey
Parishes were Checked***

All the parishes in each of the benefices chosen for the clergy interviews were initially assessed for settlement size and pattern, the urban areas and larger small country towns already having been excluded for their lack of rurality. A list of potential parishes was then devised made up of those thought suitable for the interviewing of the rural populace. These initial selections were based on differing populations, settlement patterns (dispersed, nucleated or linear), area of the parish and the general location.

The initial selections were then matched against two key criteria: type of benefice organisation (of which the parish was a part) and the population of the parish itself. Four other criteria were considered to attempt to eliminate bias. One reason for making their less important centred around them being characteristics of the Anglican incumbent. Ministers of other denominations in that area were not assessed in this manner and since the survey was of the general population it seemed unfair to select criteria applying to one denomination. The four additional criteria were: length of incumbency, whether incumbent was resident in the parish or not, churchmanship of incumbent and age of incumbent. These data were derived from the postal questionnaire of all incumbents and in the case of the incumbent's place of residence from the Diocesan Handbooks. Each of the six criteria are assessed and compared with the data gathered from the postal survey of incumbents.

Type of benefice

This criterion was roughly divided into three types of

organisation: single parish benefice, multi-parish benefice and team ministry. Whilst the majority of benefices within the Church of England comprises single parishes, multi-parish benefices are far more common in rural areas. At least one single parish benefice was chosen in each diocese and the size of the multi-parish benefices was aimed at reflecting the structure of the diocese. Team ministries (defined as areas which formerly comprised a number of benefices and are now served by a staff of clergy) were represented where they occurred and were appropriately situated.

Table A1.1 shows the distribution of type of benefice organisation for the selected parishes in the general population survey for each of the five dioceses.

Table A1.1 Benefice Organisation for Selected Parishes by Diocese

Type of benefice	Glos n	Truro n	S'well n	Lincoln n	Durham n	Total n	%
Single	1	1	1	1	2	6	24
Two	1	1	1	1	2	6	24
Three	2	-	-	1	-	3	12
Four	-	1	-	-	1	2	8
Five	1	-	1	-	-	2	8
Six	-	-	1	-	-	1	4
Eleven	-	-	-	1	-	1	4
Teams	-	2	1	1	-	4	16
Total	5	5	5	5	5	25	100

In total, single parish benefices accounted for a quarter (24%) of the total sample. When compared to the dioceses as a whole and more specifically to the rural areas, this proportion is low. The main reason behind this was the need to incorporate the different types of parochial organisation

within the dioceses. Durham is the diocese with least multi-parish benefices while Lincoln has the greatest number and this is reflected in the selections made. Team ministries, though more common in urban areas, did appear in the rural districts of the dioceses, especially in Truro where two parishes within team ministries were selected.

Population of parish

This key criterion was used to implement a bias towards the smaller rural communities whilst recognising the need to represent a wide range of population levels. In the selection of the benefices for the clergy interviews, areas were excluded if they were considered too urban or if the clergy had classified the benefice as urban in the postal questionnaire. Thus the methodology concerning the rural populace created a second bias towards the parishes with smaller populations. The obvious consequence was that the populations of these parishes were in no way representative of the diocese as a whole. This criterion ensured the representation of the types of rural community within each diocese.

With five parishes to be selected in each study area the priority of the selection was to cover the **range of rurality** rather than being representative of it. Since the rurality in each of the diocese varies from the sparsely populated Lincoln diocese to the generally more densely populated Durham diocese this seemed the most logical solution. Thus the bias towards smaller communities is increased and this should be kept in mind when applying the findings to the whole study area.

Each of the possible parishes was divided into the following population categories: 0 to 199, 200 to 499, 500 to 999 and 1000 & over. The general ground rule was to select one parish within each of the categories, with the fifth selection aiming to cover useful comparisons for other variables or particular situations that were relevant to that Diocese.

Table A1.2 Population of Parish by Diocese

Population	Glos n	Truro n	S'well n	Lincoln n	Durham n	Total n	%
0 - 199	1	2	1	1	-	5	20
200 - 499	2	-	2	1	1	6	24
500 - 999	1	2	1	1	1	6	24
1000 & up	1	1	1	2	3	8	32
Total	5	5	5	5	5	25	100

Table A1.2 shows that the ground rule to select one parish within each of the categories was largely adhered too. Exceptions were made as with the example of Durham which was shown to be the most urban of the dioceses and the most industrial in rural areas. Therefore no parish was selected in the smallest of the categories. The selections were biased because this diocese includes a number of united parishes resulting in one multi-community parish. The largest single parish population for any of the selected parishes was approximately 4,000, though the majority of parishes in the largest category was between 1,500 and 2,000.

Length of Incumbency

The first of the lesser criteria used to check the proposed

sample involved information gathered from the postal questionnaire, is the length of the current incumbency. This had been divided into four categories: less than a year to two years, more than two years to five years, more than five years to ten years and more than ten years.

The issue of interregna, the period of time when a benefice is without an incumbent, was considered important so that the perceptions of the rural populace perception could be obtained. However, this presented a number of difficulties. First, there was the possibility that the position would be filled before the interviews were carried out. Second, obtaining any necessary information would become that much more difficult as the incumbent was to be used as the initial contact. Last, it would mean that the data from that parish would not be able to be compared with information gathered from the clergy interview or postal survey of the Project. As a result interregna were not chosen but special emphasis was added to the length of incumbency.

With the decision not to select current interregna a guideline was established on the number of short-term occupancies, that is where an interregnum had most recently been initiated. It was accepted as a base line that at least one of the selected parishes would have an incumbent who had been in position for under five years. Where possible two such parishes were selected, one of which should be in the first category, 'less than a year to two years'. This ensured that within a reasonable memory span some information could be gathered on the effect of an

interregnum on the church in that community.

Table A1.3 Length of Present Incumbency by Diocese

Length of incumbency	Glos n	Truro n	S'well n	Lincoln n	Durham n	Total n	%
<1-2 years	1	1	1	2	-	5	20
>2-5 years	1	1	1	-	3	6	24
>5-10 years	1	2	2	1	2	8	32
>10 years	2	1	1	2	-	6	24
Total	5	5	5	5	5	25	100

Table A1.3 shows the breakdown of the sample selection by the duration of the incumbency. The general rule of selection ensured that 11 (44%) of the parishes came from the first two categories. Information from the postal questionnaire did give rise to diocesan variations; for example, Gloucester was found to have clergy with the longest incumbencies and this informed the selections.

Residency of Incumbent

The decision to include this criterion stemmed from using parishes as the sample units rather than benefices. Consequently, a whole sample would either be in the parish in which the incumbent was living or in a neighbouring parish without a 'resident' vicar. The importance of clergy residence is partly explained by historical context. The policy at the turn of the century within the Church of England for having one vicar to one parish is a belief which some incumbents have found extant among their parishioners and was stated as such in the problems section of the postal questionnaire. Recent research by Francis and Lankshear (1992) also indicates that the commitment from those where the incumbent resides is higher.

Table A1.4 Incumbent's Place of Residence by Diocese

Incumbent is ...	Glos n	Truro n	S'well n	Lincoln n	Durham n	Total n	%
Resident	3	3	2	2	3	13	52
Non-resident	2	2	3	3	2	12	48
Total	5	5	5	5	5	25	100

By interviewing people within rural parishes where the incumbent was resident and others where they were not, provided the best opportunity for projecting if this longing for the resident incumbent was evident at grassroots. As a guideline at least two of the five parishes in each diocese should be ones in which the incumbent was not resident. The comparison may not be significant in terms of numerical involvement but the views of communities, where the incumbent is either resident or non-resident, can be compared with the incumbent's thoughts on this issue.

Churchmanship of Incumbent

Whilst not a key selection criteria it was felt that the sample should be checked against the churchmanship of the incumbent to ensure that the parishes were roughly balanced when compared to the diocese as a whole. The issue of churchmanship was one which was dealt within the postal questionnaire where the incumbents were asked to place themselves in the following categories: Conservative Evangelical, Open Evangelical, Central, Modern Catholic and Traditional Catholic. It was recognised that the churchmanship of the incumbent does not necessarily affect the types of service that occur in that parish.

Table A1.5 Churchmanship of Incumbency by Diocese

Churchmanship	Glos n	Truro n	S'well n	Lincoln n	Durham n	Total n	%
Conservative							
Evangelical	-	1	1	-	1	3	12
Open Evangelical	-	1	1	-	-	2	8
Central	2	-	2	3	1	8	32
Modern Catholic	1	1	1	-	1	4	16
Traditional							
Catholic	2	2	-	1	1	6	24
Unknown	-	-	-	1	1	2	8
Total	5	5	5	5	5	25	100

Table A1.5 shows that the total evangelical proportion was 20%, spread between three of the dioceses. The postal questionnaire had shown a high number of evangelical clergy to be present in Southwell. The catholic sample represented 40% of the whole, due particularly to the number of catholic clergy in Truro and Durham. The single most common type of churchmanship, central, appeared most frequently in Gloucester and Lincoln.

Age of Incumbent

The last selection criterion relates to the age of the incumbent and like the previous three this provided a check rather than means of key selection. The age categories used were as follows: 30 to 39, 40 to 49, 50 to 59 and over 59.

Table A1.6 Age of Incumbent by Diocese

Age of incumbent	Glos n	Truro n	S'well n	Lincoln n	Durham n	Total n	%
30 - 39	-	1	1	-	-	2	8
40 - 49	-	1	1	-	4	6	24
50 - 59	2	1	3	2	1	9	36
60 +	3	2	-	3	-	8	32
Total	5	5	5	5	5	25	100

The Table A1.6 shows that over two-thirds of the sample (68%) were in parishes where the clergy were 50 years old or over. This is generally greater than the mean for the dioceses but reflects the higher incidence of older clergy in rural areas, particularly in Gloucester.

The information required for all six criteria was gathered from the postal questionnaire and assembled by simple statistical analysis for each study area. In parishes where the incumbent had not replied to the postal questionnaire it was possible to obtain information on five of the criteria from Crockfords. The only exception was the churchmanship of the incumbent, which would remain unknown.

Appendix II

Covering letter to sample



Rural Church Project



July 24th 1989

Dear Madam,

In 1987 the Church of England decided to take a close look at rural life today to see how country churches might better respond to the needs of rural areas. The Archbishops' Commission on Rural Areas was set up to look at these issues. We are undertaking a survey for the Commission to listen to the views of people living in rural areas about the work of the church and its clergy. We are also interested to find out how people feel about religion in England today.

We have chosen a random sample of residents in your parish from the electoral registers and your name appears on the list. Members of our research team will be in your area during the next few days and one of them will be calling to see you. We would be most grateful if you could spare about half an hour to answer a questionnaire. Your answers will, of course, be treated in the strictest confidence.

Yours faithfully,

Dr C Watkins

Project Directors:

Rev. Dr. Douglas Davies

Department of Theology,
University of Nottingham NG7 2RD

☎ 0602 484848 Ext. 2467

Dr. Charles Watkins
Dr. Michael Winter

Centre for Rural Studies, Royal Agricultural College,
 Cirencester, Gloucester GL7 6JS

☎ 0285 652531

Appendix III
Interview Questionnaire

b) Has anyone else representing the church visited you at your home?

YES Who was this?
NO

If YES, how often?

for what purposes? church business/meetings ...
socially ...
spiritual ...
health ...
other ...

c) In your opinion is it important for someone from the church to visit people in the parish?

YES ... NO ... DK ...

If YES, who from the church would be suitable?

d) Do you think that it is important for new arrivals in the parish to be visited by the vicar?

YES ... NO ... DK ...

5 a) Should the church be a place where you can "get to know people", especially if you are new to the area?

YES ... Why?
NO ...
DK ...

b) Does the Church in your parish exist for :
(prompt for 'in practice')

everybody in the parish ...
for Christians only ...
for Anglicans only ...
for churchgoers only ...
other

c) In general, what do you consider the job of a vicar to be?

6 a) What are the most important needs or problems in the parish?
(eg. economic, political, social or environmental)

b) Is your (the parish) vicar involved in any of these matters?

YES ... NO ... DK ...

If YES, in what way?

7 a) How important is it for an individual parish to have a vicar of its own?

very important	...	unimportant	...
important	...	don't know	...

b) If very important or important who should fund this?

8 a) How important do you think it is for a parish to have a church building of its own?

very important	...	Why?
important	...	
unimportant	...	
don't know	...	

b) Do you think churches should be locked during the day?

YES	...	Why?
NO	...	
DK	...	

c) Should a parish church be closed if the numbers attending it became very small?

YES ... Why?
NO ...
DK ...

If YES, what number do you consider to be small?

d) Are religious services diminished in any way if they are held in a hall or a school and not in church?

YES ... NO ... DK ...

Why?

C General questions about Clergymen

Now turning to clergymen in general and not specifically those of the Church of England.

9 a) In general do you consider that a clergyman's age is important in a rural parish?

YES ... Why?
NO ...
DK ...

b) Is it important for a rural clergyman to have a rural background?

YES ... Why?
NO ...
DK ...

10 a) Is it important for a clergyman to be married or not?

YES ... Why?
NO ...
Doesn't matter ...
Don't Know ...

b) If a clergyman is married what role should the spouse play
i) in the church?

ii) in the parish?

c) Is it acceptable for the spouse to have their own career?

YES ... Why?
NO ...
DK ...

11 a) Would you ever approach a clergyman for assistance of any sort?

YES ... NO ... DK ...

b) SHOW PROMPT CARD A ask:

Would you turn to a clergyman if : (answer Y/N to each)

Question:	YES	NO	DK
i) seriously ill
ii) advice/guidance
iii) relationship
iv) marr/bapt/conf
v) financial
vi) bereavement
vii) Other (specify)
.....			

c) Have you ever approached a clergyman for assistance of any sort?

YES ... NO ... DK ...

If YES, what was the nature of the assistance?

D Attitudes to Religion.

12 SHOW PROMPT CARD B ask:

a) Thinking about your OWN outlook on religion could you say whether you AGREE or DISAGREE with each of the following statements, or if you are UNSURE about them?

WHERE	1 = AGREE	2 = UNSURE	3 = DISAGREE	
	1	2	3	DK
Question:				
i) God is creator
ii) faith handed down
iii) person & Christ
iv) be all right
v) Jesus as example
vi) other world near
vii) search for Truth
viii) science explains
ix) live once
x) hypocrites
xi) Holy Spirit
xii) Born Again

b) Which one BEST fits your outlook on religion?

13 a) Have you ever had any experiences which you think are religious in some way?

YES ... NO ... DK ...

If YES or DK, could you outline your most significant experience?

b) Have you ever spoken to anyone about these experience(s)?
YES ... Who was it? (prompt parent, friend, vicar)
NO ...
DK ...

14 a) When you die would you prefer to be:

- Buried ...
- Cremated ...
- Other ...
- Don't mind ...
- Don't know ...

If BURIED, any preference as to:

- Local church ...
- Cemetery ...
- Other (specify)

If CREMATED, where would you like your ashes placed?

15 a) Do you believe that there is life after death?

YES ... NO ... DK ...

b) SHOW PROMPT CARD C ask:

The card lists some statements describing life after death please state whether you AGREE or DISAGREE with each of them or if you are UNSURE about them?

	WHERE 1 = AGREE 2 = UNSURE 3 = DISAGREE			
Question:	1	2	3	DK
i) nothing happens
ii) souls pass
iii) bodies await
iv) come back
v) trust in God
vi) other
(specify).....				

16 a) Do you think that funerals should generally be conducted by clergy?

YES ... Why?
NO ...
DK ...

b) In the future should undertakers or crematorium officers also be allowed to conduct funerals?

YES ... Why?
NO ...
DK ...

17 a) Do you believe in ghosts?

YES ... NO ... DK ...

b) Do you think Friday 13th. is an unlucky day?

YES ... NO ... DK ...

c) What would you think if someone asked a priest to exorcise a house they had moved into?

E Opinions & Behaviour

18 a) Turning to more general opinions and behaviour, over the past year have you looked around any churches or religious buildings?

YES ... Go to b)
NO ... Go to Q19

Other Comments:

b) What are your reasons for visiting churches and religious buildings?

architectural ...
historical ...
spiritual ...
gen. interest ...
other (specify)

19 a) Have you at any time attended church more, or less, frequently than you do now?

- more frequently ...
- about the same ...
- less frequently ...

b) Are there any main events/happenings in your life that have influenced your attendance at church?

c) Why do you go to church?
OR Why do you think people attend church?
(Underline which one is asked)

20 a) Did/Do your parents regularly attend church/
chapel or religious meetings? YES ...
NO ...
DK ...

If YES, did you attend church with them
when you were young? YES ...
NO ...
DK ...

b) Did you attend any sort of Sunday
school when you were young? YES ...
NO ...
DK ...

c) Do you think it is important for children to go to
church/sunday school?

YES ... Why?
NO ...
DK ...

21 a) Are there joint or ecumenical services with other denominations in the parish?

YES ... NO ... DK ...
{__ Go to f) __}

b) Have you attended any of these joint services?

YES ... NO ... DK ...
{__ Go to e) __}

c) How often do they occur?

d) What form do they take?

e) What do you think of them? (prompt for type & principle)

f) If there were moves to start joint/ecumenical services
would you approve of them? Go to Q22.

YES ... Why?
NO ...
DEPENDS ...
DK ...

22 SHOW PROMPT CARD D ask:

a) Are you currently involved in the ORGANISATION of any parish/village function or event? (prompt- church or non-church event)

b) Do you ATTEND any parish/village function or event? (prompt- church or non-church event)

c) Is there a parish magazine available in your area?

YES ... Views on it?
NO ...
DK ...

d) Do you hold any positions of responsibility in the community?

- JP ...
- School Governor ...
- Dist/County Councillor ...
- Parish Councillor ...
- Chairman of committee ... (specify)
- PTA ...
- Other ... (specify)

B Services attended/available

23 a) Now turning to more specific church services have you attended any of the following services in the last year?

	YES	NO	DK
i) Weddings, baptisms, funerals
ii) Christmas
iii) Easter
iv) Harvest Festival
v) Remembrance Sunday

b) Have you attended any other church service or any religious meeting in the last 6 months?

YES ... NO ... DK ...

If YES, when was the last one you attended?
 , and what was it?

If NO to ALL of a) & b) AND NON-ANGLICAN Go to Q43
 If NO to ALL of a) & b) AND ANGLICAN Go to Q24

c) On average how often do you attend a regular Sunday service at church?

- once a week or more ... }
- < once a week to once a month ... } ATTENDERS
- < once a month to 3 times a year ... }
- < 3 times a year ... } NON-
- don't attend Sunday service ... } ATTENDERS.

ALL NON-ATTENDERS - NON-ANGLICANS GO TO Q43
ANGLICANS GO TO Q24

b) Would you rather have a part-time Minister chosen from within your parish/congregation or a full-time Minister who would be responsible for a group of parishes?

preference
reasons

ASK ONLY IF BENEFICE IS MULTI-PARISH

26 a) Is your parish linked with any neighbouring parishes?

YES ... NO ... DK ...
(Go to Q28)

b) Which parishes is yours linked with?

c) Has the grouping together of the parishes had any effect on your involvement with the Church?

YES ... NO ... DK ... Not Present ...
Go to d) or f)

If YES, how has it changed?

ASK d) & e) TO ATTENDERS ONLY.

d) Do you attend services in the other churches within the group?

YES ... NO ... DK ...

If YES, on what occasions?

e) Do people from the other parishes attend services at your parish church?

YES ... NO ... DK ...

If YES, on what occasions?

ASK ALL ANGLICANS IN MULTIPARISH

- f) Is there any cooperation between the parishes?
(prompts -festivals, fetes , sports teams, clubs etc)

ASK ONLY IF BENEFICE IS A TEAM OR GROUP MINISTRY

- 27 a) Is your parish linked with any neighbouring parishes?

YES ... NO ... DK ...
(Go to Q28)

- b) Which parishes are you linked with?

- c) What sort of cooperation takes place?

- d) How does it work? (prompt -views on these arrangements?)

Attitudes/Views concerning Church of England:

- 28 a) In relation to the Church of England, what exactly is it that you feel you belong to?

- b) Have you been Baptised? YES ... NO ... DK ...

If YES, was it as an Infant

or as an Adult

- c) Have you been Confirmed? YES ... NO ... DK ...

If YES, at what age were you confirmed?

29 a) Would the ordination of women as priests affect your view of the Church of England in any way?

YES ... NO ... DK ... UNDECIDED ...

If YES, would the effect be POSITIVE ... or NEGATIVE ...

, and would you:

- Stay & become more committed ...
- Stay & become less committed ...
- Stay with same commitment ...
- Leave for another denomination ...
- Other
- Don't know ...

b) Would you take communion from a woman priest?

YES ... Why?
NO ...
DK ...

c) Would you be married by a woman priest?

YES ... Why?
NO ...
DK ...

30 Should the Church involve itself in the following issues?

	YES	NO	DK
politics
the environment
other (specify)

comments

31 Should Bishops try to interpret the Christian faith in modern ways?

32 Should the church building be used in other ways apart from church services?

YES ... NO ... DK ...

If YES, in what other ways?

If NO, why?

33 Should divorced people be allowed to:

a) be blessed in church. YES ... NO ... DK ...

Why?

b) remarry in church. YES ... NO ... DK ...

Why?

c) Should clergy be allowed to continue in the ministry if they become divorced?

YES ... Why?

NO ...

DK ...

d) Do you think the Church should allow divorced people to become priests?

YES ... Why?

NO ...

DK ...

34 a) In recent years it has been suggested that other people in the parish should conduct jobs traditionally done by the vicar. What are your views on this?

b) Would you be happy for the vicar to allow other people to:

	YES	NO	DK
visit newcomers/the sick & elderly
give sermons
lead the prayers
take a service (not communion)
administer the chalice
read the lessons
assist in parish admin./finance

c) Would you personally be prepared to:
(Do.= Do already)

	Do.	YES	NO	DK
visit newcomers/the sick & elderly
give sermons
lead the prayers
take a service (not communion)
administer the chalice
read the lessons
assist in parish admin./finance

NON-ATTENDING ANGLICANS GO TO Q43 (SOCIO-ECONOMIC SECTION)

ATTENDING ANGLICANS CONTINUE

ATTENDING NON-ANGLICANS REJOIN

35 SHOW PROMPT CARD E ask:

a) Are you involved in helping with services in any of the following ways?

SHOW PROMPT CARD E ask:

b) Are you involved in any form of leadership/position of responsibility in the church?

36 SHOW PROMPT CARD F ask:

a) Over the last 6 months which of these have OCCURRED in your Sunday services? (Tick ONLY if YES)
and

Of those which OCCUR :

b) which do you particularly LIKE?

c) which do you DISLIKE?
and

d) If any of these DO NOT occur, which would you LIKE to see introduced?

	a)	b)	c)	d)
Question:				
i) minister only
ii) congreg prayers
iii) lay - lessons
iv) lay - sermons
v) silence
vi) prayers -sick
vii) prayers -dead
viii) music group
ix) choir worship
x) shaking hands
xi) tongues
xii) drama -adults
xiii) drama -children
xiv) singing psalms
xv) healing
xvi) lay service
xvii) coffee

ASK ONLY ANGLICANS Q37 & Q38

37 a) Which type of service do you most like going to?
(morn. prayer, matins, early said or parish communion, evensong or family service)

b) In general which form of service do you prefer?

prompt : BCP ... No pref. ...
 ASB ... DK ...
 Other (specify)

If ASB, do you prefer Rite A ...
 or Rite B ...
 or No Pref. ...
 or Don't Know ...

38 a) Do you have Family Services at your Church?

YES ... NO ... DK ...
{ _____ Go to c) _____ }

b) What do you think of them? (type & principle)

Go to d)

c) If Family Services were introduced would you be in favour of them?

YES ... Why?
NO ...
DK ...

d) What are your views on children being present at Church?
(prompt -age, duration of stay, participation)

ASK ALL ATTENDERS

39 a) When attending a communion service do you take Communion?

YES, always ... } Go to c)
YES, sometimes ... }
NO ... Go to b)
DON'T ATTEND ... Go to d)

b) Could you explain why?

SHOW PROMPT CARD C ask:

c) What does the Communion service mean to you.
(answering YES/NO to each)

	YES	NO	DK
Question:			
i) one with God
ii) one with others
iii) loved ones
iv) Jesus and cross
v) one with self
vi) other
(specify)			

d) Do you think that Communion should be held every Sunday in your Church?

YES ... NO ... DK ...

Why?

40 a) In general do you think that sermons at your church adequately cover :

	YES	NO	DK
current national issues
local affairs
morality
strengthening your faith
understanding of the Bible
questioning & doubt of faith
other (specify)
.....			

b) What do you think of the general standard of the sermons you hear at your church?

41 a) Do you attend any mid-week church services?

YES NO DK

If YES, what time(s)

what day(s)

& what type(s)

b) Do you attend any midweek religious meetings or discussion groups?

YES ... NO ... DK ...

If YES, what are they?

c) How do you get to church generally?

own car	...
family car	...
lift in other car	...
bicycle	...
motor bicycle	...
walk	...
other (specify)	.....

If LIFT, who provides it?

d) Is getting to church a problem?

42 How do you find out about the time and place of services?

	Reg.	Other (church)
by - going to church
- parish newsletter/mag
- word of mouth
- tradition
- church noticeboard
- other

Is this method satisfactory? YES ... NO ...

If NO, Why not?

I Socio-economic and attitudinal data.

FOR ALL RESPONDENTS

Finally some general questions about yourself and your household.

43 Is your house owner/occupied? YES
NO
DK

If NO, is it rented? YES NO DK
, is it a council ... or private ... rental?

44 Number of adults in the household (18 & > yrs old)
Number of children in the household (<18 yrs old)

45 How old are you?

16-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65-74 75-84 85-94 95+
... ..

46 Are you : single
married
other

47 Are you in : F.T. employment) go to Q48
P.T. employment)

Housewife Go to Q49 a)
F.T. education b)
Retired c)
Unemployed c)

48 What is your occupation?

Where do you work? (place)

Go to Q50

NOTE

OCCUPATIONS CATEGORIES

To make this information effective TWO peices of data are required.

A. ECONOMIC SECTOR

eg. Civil Servant, Engineering or Printing

B. FUNCTION

Standardised Census Occupational Categories

1. Self-employed and Higher Grade Salaried Professionals.
2. Employers and Proprietors.
3. Administration and Managers.
4. Lower-grade Salaried Professionals and Technicians
5. Inspectors, Supervisors and Foremen.
6. Clerical Workers.
7. Sales Personnel and Shop Assistants.
8. Skilled Manual Workers (including Self-employed Artisans).
9. Semi-skilled Manual Workers.
10. Unskilled Manual Workers.

49 a) If you are a HOUSEWIFE what is your spouse's occupation?

b) If you are in F.T. EDUCATION what is your parent's occupation?

c) If you are RETIRED or UNEMPLOYED what was your previous occupation?

50 Does the household have a car?

NO		...
YES	- 1	...
	- 2	...
	- 3 or more	...

J GENERAL COMMENTS

51 Have you any general comments you would like to make about the subjects covered in this interview?

Thank you very much indeed for your help; your answers will be of great assistance to our survey. We are asking about 500 people these questions in 5 different areas of England.

Notes

Day :

Date :

Interviewer :

Interview Number :

Time Start :

Time Finish :

Site Description:

Q11 PROMPT CARD A

1. Someone close to you was seriously ill.
2. You needed spiritual advice/guidance.
3. You had problems within a relationship.
4. You were to be married/baptised/confirmed.
(apart from organised sessions)
5. You were in financial difficulties.
6. You suffered a bereavement
7. Other. (please specify)

Q12 PROMPT CARD B

1. God is the creator of everything.
2. We must keep the faith handed down to us .
3. Each person must receive Christ into their lives.
4. Everything will be all right in the end.
5. We must follow Jesus as an example of how to live.
6. The other world is near to this one.
7. We must search for the Truth throughout our lives.
8. Science explains every thing we need to know.
9. We only live once so lets make the most of it.
10. Nearly all religious people are either hypocrites
or fanatics.
11. We need renewing by the Holy Spirit.
12. Each person must be 'Born Again'.

Q15 PROMPT CARD C

1. Nothing happens, we come to an end.
2. Our souls pass to another world.
3. Our bodies await a resurrection.
4. We come back as something/one else.
5. Trust in God, all in His hands.
6. Other. (please specify)

Q22 PROMPT CARD D

Shows / Fetes
Youth Clubs
Charity Events
Parish Council
Village Hall
Sports Teams
School Events
Garden Club
Social Events (eg. Whist drives)
Other. (please specify)

Q35 PROMPT CARD E

a) Helping/Participating in services.

sidesman	choir/music group
reading lessons	reading/leading prayers
servers	chalice
coffee	giving out hymn books/etc.
other (please specify)	

b) Leadership/Position of Responsibility in the Church.

church warden	bible study/house group leader
youth club	sunday school
lay reader	NS Minister
parochial church council	other (please specify)

Q36 PROMPT CARD F

1. The minister conducting the whole service by himself.
2. The congregation leading the prayers.
3. Laypeople reading the lessons.
4. Laypeople giving sermons (layreaders).
5. Definite periods for silent prayer and thought
6. Prayers for sick people
7. Prayers for dead people themselves.
8. Singing led by guitars/music group.
9. Choir leading the worship/singing.
10. Shaking hands, exchange of the peace.
11. Speaking in tongues.
12. Drama/dance by adults.
13. Drama/dance by children.
14. Congregation singing the psalms/canticles.
15. Definite periods for healing/blessing.
16. Layreaders conducting the service.
17. Serving of coffee after the service.

Q9 PROMPT CARD G

- i) Make you feel at one with God.
- ii) Make you feel at one with other people.
- iii) Give you a sense of presence of dead loved ones.
- iv) Make you realise what Jesus did for you on the Cross.
- v) Make you feel at one with yourself.
- vi) Other. (please specify)

Q22 PROMPT CARD H

flower arranging
brass polishing
bell ringing
maintainance of clock
fund raising
heating on, off
church transport
schools

cleaning church
grass cutting in churchyard
embroidery, kneelers
church fete and socials
unlocking church
bookstall
church magazine
other (please specify)

Appendix IV

Detailed examination of the sample

This appendix supplements Chapter 3 and examines in greater detail the sociographic characteristics of the 341 respondents. The sample is divided between the five study areas as follows: 70 interviews in Gloucester, 66 in Truro, 68 in both Southwell and Lincoln and 69 in Durham. Two other sources have been used in the chapter to provide additional data for comparative purposes. First, where it is available and/or applicable, statistics produced by the government's Central Statistical Office (CSO) have been used. All national figures are for England unless otherwise stated and are taken from Volume 24 of *Regional Trends* (CSO 1989). Second, data from another survey of rural residents conducted in 1986 in three villages in Devon and Cornwall are used. In this survey, the Access to Justice in Rural Britain Project (AJRBP), 355 interviews were carried out using a sample randomly selected from the civil electoral register (Watkins et al, 1986). Before assessing the characteristics of the sample attention is drawn to various aspects of the analysis.

Analysis

Throughout this thesis several independent and derived variables have been used in the analysis. The calculation and deduction of social class is an important one for any social science research and consequently the process of classification used in this thesis requires the most explanation¹. The following passage is taken from Davies et

1. The following classification follows the version developed for the Rural Church Project by a Project Director and the author for the purposes of analysis. Each respondent was independently classified twice to reduce bias.

al (1990), the book resulting from the Rural Church Project, and outlines the use of the Goldthorpe schema and the one area where it was adapted.

An important variable in any kind of social survey analysis is some kind of measure of socio-economic or class position in society. At its most basic this can refer merely to occupational categories graded primarily according to their income earning capacity. However classifications usually carry other connotations as well. In the sociological literature class position is usually seen as reflecting both market and work situations, in other words both income and economic security, and the location within systems of authority and power (Goldthorpe, 1980).

Our classification broadly follows the schema adopted by Goldthorpe, although we have adapted it in a few key ways primarily in an attempt to cater more adequately for the position of women in the class structure. It should be added, before outlining the classification, that although every attempt was made in the interviews to obtain the necessary indications of work and market position, this was not a survey of economics and work. Our data on class allowed a rule of thumb classification to be made to assist intra-sample analysis. It is not a definitive statement of the class composition of rural localities.

Six classes were identified:

1) All higher-grade professional and managerial occupations; higher-grade administrators; large proprietors. "What Class 1 positions have in common is that they afford their incumbents incomes which are high, generally secure, and likely to rise steadily over their lifetimes; and that they are positions which typically involve the exercise of authority, ... or at least ones which offer considerable autonomy and freedom from control by others" (Goldthorpe, p.40). Thus this group would include those large-scale owners of business, who might traditionally, have been seen as the 'upper' class alongside senior 'upper-middle' class members, such as lawyers, top civil servants and senior managers.

2) Lower-grade professionals; higher-grade technicians; lower-grade administrators; small-scale managers. Typically "these positions guarantee income levels that rank directly below those of Class 1, and also carry 'staff' status and conditions of employment" (Goldthorpe, p.40). This group might be termed the 'middle' class and is likely to consist of those whose educational attainments are close, if not equal in some instances, to those of Class 1. A classroom teacher would be located in Class 2, whereas a headteacher (of all but the smallest school) would be in Class 1. A doctor would be in Class 1 and a senior nurse in Class 2.

3) Small proprietors, especially farmers; self-employed artisans; and all other own-account workers apart from the professionals and large business owners of Class 1. Incomes in this group will be variable but we can expect those in this class to own from small to quite large amounts of business capital. For want of a better expression in the English vocabulary we refer to this group as the 'petty bourgeoisie'. With the increase in self-employment status among some working class groups, for example farm workers, we were careful to allocate in this group only genuine own-account workers with a high degree of autonomy and business financial control to this group. 'Pseudo' self employed workers we were careful to allocate to their appropriate working class category.

4) Lower-grade technicians whose work is to some extent of a manual character and supervisors/foremen. This was a small group in our sample and it is possible that some of Class 6 should have been allocated to this group. This is a working class group with close connections to the manual working class proper. They are separated from it only in so much as they are representatives of a "blue-collar elite" (Goldthorpe, p.41) in terms of income and supervisory function.

5) Routine non-manual workers in clerical, administrative, retail and commercial sectors. Although Goldthorpe tends to treat such workers as intermediate between 2 and 6, our feeling is that in our case they are really to be located alongside the manual working class in terms of income, security of employment, and work control. Indeed incomes, for both male and female workers in this group, are often below those of manual workers. Female workers in shops and offices were strongly represented in this group in our sample, and in many ways we see this as the female sector of the working class.

6) Routine manual skilled and unskilled workers. These workers "sell their labour power in more or less discrete amounts (whether measured by output or time) in return for wages; ... they are, via the labour contract, placed in an entirely subordinate role, subject to the authority of their employer or his agents" (Goldthorpe, pp.41-2)

The allocation of a class position is relatively straightforward for those in work. It is less easy for those not currently employed. Moreover this problem raises a 'hornets' nest' in current sociological debate surrounding the allocation of women to class positions. We are very conscious of the criticisms that have been made of class classifications which determine the class position of women entirely according to the husband's occupation, criticisms that are rooted not just in feminist sensibility but also in empirical work on the experience of women themselves (Abbott and Sapsford 1987). Accordingly we have, where possible, allocated a class location to women on the basis of their own job

rather than that of their husband. In the case of retired women we have referred back to their own previous occupation. Only in the case of housewives with no outside work have we relied on a location based on the husband's occupation. (Davies et al 1990:22-24)

Characteristics of the Sample

Two basic social characteristics of the respondent themselves, gender and age, are examined in the breakdown according to gender shown in Table A4.1. When compared with the AJRBP sample of randomly selected rural parishioners, which also sampled adults aged over 18, the figures match closely those of the sample used in this thesis. However, the national CSO figures show a smaller variation between gender largely because they cover urban and rural areas as well as all age groups.

Table A4.1 Gender of Sample compared with other Sources

Gender	Total Sample		AJRBP Sample	National CSO*
	n	%	%	%
Male	159	47	46	49
Female	182	53	54	51
Total	341	100	100	100

* Nb. The CSO figure is for all ages, whereas the other samples are for those aged over 18.

Gender divisions over the five study areas are small with Gloucester and Southwell having the highest proportion of females and Truro the most males. Table A4.2 shows the gender structure of the sample in relation to age. It can be seen that the proportion of females to males widens gradually over the first three age groups. The number of men aged between 55 and 64 then rises, that of women falling to reverse the ratio. It might be suggested that

the younger males, who are most likely to be working and therefore absent from home in the day, are slightly under-represented. The increase for those approaching retirement may be explained by the males taking early retirement and by the females remaining or returning to full or part-time work. In the oldest age group the numbers are level which is perhaps surprising as women traditionally outlive men.

Table A4.2 Gender by Age Group

Gender	18 - 34		35 - 44		45 - 54		55 - 64		65 +		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Male	36	44	31	41	25	40	32	60	35	51	159	47
Female	45	56	44	59	38	60	21	40	34	49	182	53
Total	81	100	75	100	63	100	53	100	69	100	341	100

Turning to the variations between the age groups of the sample, the right hand column of Table A4.3 looks at the breakdown for the whole sample. The figure of a fifth (20%) for those aged 65 and over is higher than national figures, although it is not possible to compare rigidly these figures with those from CSO. According to their figures 16% of the population over 14 years of age are past retirement age (60 for women and 65 for men) (CSO 1989). In the AJRBP survey, which also used different age group categories, 23% were 70 years old or more. That survey was conducted in Devon and Cornwall and this compares closely with the figure of 26% in the Truro study area. At the other end of the scale 24% of the sample are aged between 18 and 34 compared to 27% of the AJRBP sample aged between 18 and 40.

Table A4.3 Age Group by Study Area

Age Group	Glos		Truro		S'well		Lincoln		Durham		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
18-34	11	16	13	20	11	16	17	25	29	42	81	24
35-44	13	19	12	18	27	40	16	23	7	11	75	22
45-54	22	31	12	18	8	12	12	18	9	13	63	18
55-64	10	14	12	18	10	15	9	13	12	17	53	16
65+	14	20	17	26	12	17	14	21	12	17	69	20
Total	70	100	66	100	68	100	68	100	69	100	341	100

Variations by age within the study areas are quite marked. In Durham, for example, 42% of the sample are aged under 34 compared to only 16% in Gloucester and Southwell. Forty per cent of the Southwell sample are aged between 35 and 44 compared to only 11% of the Durham sample. Gloucester are well represented by the 45-54 age group (31%) especially when compared to Southwell and Durham. It is in the first two age groups that the greatest variation occurs with the figures being much more even in the two oldest groups. Table A4.4 shows the average age of the 319 respondents who gave their exact age for each of the study areas.

Table A4.4 Average Age of Respondents by Diocese

Diocese		Total Sample
Gloucester	(n=55)	50.3
Truro	(n=66)	52.0
Southwell	(n=65)	48.3
Lincoln	(n=65)	47.0
Durham	(n=68)	45.0
Total Mean	(n=319)	48.4

Overall, Gloucester and Truro, two dioceses chosen in part to represent rural areas which have experienced high levels of immigration (often of retired people), have higher

average ages than the other study areas. Durham, the most industrial area, has the lowest average age.

The marital status of the majority of the sample, nearly three quarters (74%), is married. Interestingly, the number of separated and divorced people in the sample is very low. The question was asked in such a way that the respondent was at liberty to classify themselves.

Table A4.5 Marital Status by Age Group

Marital status	18 - 34		35 - 44		45 - 54		55 - 64		65 +		Total n
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Single	35	43	5	7	3	5	2	4	5	7	50
Married	42	52	61	81	57	92	47	90	45	66	252
Div/Sep.	4	5	7	9	2	3	2	4	-	-	15
Widowed	-	-	2	3	-	-	1	2	18	27	21
Total	81	100	75	100	62	100	52	100	68	100	338

Whilst there is very little variation according to the gender of the respondent, Table A4.5 shows the relationship by age. The vast majority of single people are in the youngest group; the number of married respondents rises to over 80% in the next three groups before falling to 66% in the oldest group. This fall is explained by the high number of widowed respondents. The low number of divorced or separated respondents may be due to the nature of the question, as a proportion of both single and married people are in fact either separated or divorced. However, the low number of divorced and separated among those aged over 45 may indicate another reason, namely the tendency for re-marriage after divorce.

The next two tables show the size of the household in which the respondent lived in terms of the number of adults and children. The average size of household, including both adults and children, is 2.88, compared to 2.58 for England as a whole in 1986 (CSO 1989). The most common number of adults in the household is two, 65% of the whole sample, reinforcing the concept of a nuclear family. A further fifth (20%) lived in households with three adults leaving less than ten per cent of the sample living on their own.

Table A4.6 Household Size, Adults by Age Group

No. of Adults	18 - 34		35 - 44		45 - 54		55 - 64		65 +		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1	2	2	4	5	2	3	3	6	17	24	28	8
2	49	61	57	76	36	57	34	64	46	67	222	65
3	18	23	10	14	18	29	14	26	4	6	64	20
4	10	13	3	4	5	8	1	2	2	3	21	6
5 +	1	1	1	1	2	3	1	2	-	-	5	1
Total	80	100	75	100	63	100	53	100	69	100	340	100

As might be expected the most likely age of those living on their own matched that of retirement, 24% of the 65 and over age group. Over three quarters (76%) of the 35-44 age group lived in households with two adults. The larger households are those of the youngest age group where 36% have 3 or 4 adults and the 45-54 age group where the combined percentage lay at 37%. Seemingly, this would represent the interviewing either of parents who still have children aged over 18 years living at home or young adults aged over 18 but still living at home.

Table A4.7 Household Size, Children by Age Group

No. of Children	18 - 34		35 - 44		45 - 54		55 - 64		65 +		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
0	39	49	27	36	42	68	48	92	67	98	223	66
1	16	20	11	15	11	18	3	6	1	1	42	12
2	15	19	20	27	9	14	1	2	1	1	46	14
3	9	11	13	17	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	7
4 +	1	1	4	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	1
Total	80	100	75	100	63	100	53	100	69	100	338	100

Taking the whole sample together nearly two thirds (66%) live in households where there are no children. Just about half (49%) of the youngest age group have no children in the household compared to two thirds (68%) of the 'middle aged' group. Roughly a fifth (20%) of those aged between 18 and 54 have either one or two children in the household.

Detailed questions regarding the occupation of the respondent were asked in order to create a meaningful social class classification derived from Goldthorpe's methodology (1980). The first table shows the basic occupational breakdown of the sample when matched against gender.

Table A4.8 Occupational Status by Gender

Occupation	Male		Female		Total Sample	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Full-time employment	107	68	50	28	157	46
Part-time employment	7	4	40	22	47	14
Housewife	1	1	46	25	47	14
Retired	37	23	42	23	79	23
Other	7	4	4	2	11	3
Total	159	100	182	100	341	100

Overall nearly half (46%) of the sample are in full-time employment suggesting that these members of the community

were not excluded from the survey because they were unavailable for interviewing during the day. However, this hides great variation with gender as 68% of the males are classified as being in full-time employment compared to only 28% of the females. Indeed the male sample is either in full-time employment or retired, 91% of the those interviewed. The females in the sample are divided equally between four categories. Half of the them are involved in some type of work, either full (28%) or part-time (22%). Only 25% are classified as 'housewives' with the feminine assumption to this term correct in all but one case. The retired proportion of the sample is identical for each gender. The respondents in the alternative category represent the unemployed and those in full-time education.

These figures are not strictly comparable to any nationally available figures, nor do the AJRBP figures lend themselves to easy comparison. In the case of AJRBP 37% of the sample (which, it will be recalled, was drawn from Devon and Cornwall) were retired, a much higher proportion than the above figure (23%). The proportion of housewives is identical in the two samples.

Table A4.9 Occupational Status by Age Group

Occupation	18 - 34		35 - 44		45 - 54		55 - 64		65 +		Total n
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
FT empl.	47	59	49	66	34	55	25	47	2	3	157
PT empl.	14	17	12	16	16	25	2	4	3	4	47
Housewife	14	17	13	17	12	19	6	11	2	3	47
Retired	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	32	62	90	79
Other	6	7	1	1	1	1	3	6	-	-	11
Total	81	100	75	100	63	100	53	100	69	100	341

Only five respondents in the oldest age group are engaged in any sort of employment with the vast majority (90%) retired. Not surprisingly all the retired are aged over 55 with 32% of the 55-64 age group retired compared to 47% in full-time employment. Part-time employment is most likely if the respondent is aged under 55. Within the five study areas Southwell has the highest number in full-time employment, 54%, compared to only 41% in Lincoln. Housewives and retired respondents are most common in Truro.

The six-fold social class classification, derived from the full occupational data, is based on Goldthorpe's schema (1980) where: social classes 1 and 2 are defined as upper or middle class groups in professional and managerial occupations. Class 3 is the group of small business owners or self-employed proprietors, the petty bourgeoisie. Classes 4, 5 and 6 comprise different groupings within the working class, from technician/foreman in 4, through non-manual in 5 to manual workers in 6. Table A4.10 shows the general breakdown of social class according to gender.

Table A4.10 Social Class by Gender

Social class	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Class 1	23	15	19	11	42	13
Class 2	13	8	35	19	48	14
Class 3	46	30	31	17	77	23
Class 4	4	3	3	2	7	2
Class 5	6	4	44	24	50	15
Class 6	63	40	48	27	111	33
Total	155	100	180	100	335	100

Overall a third (33%) of the sample is classified in Class 6, manual workers, with a further 15% involved in non-manual

work. The proportion of petty bourgeoisie is high at nearly a quarter (23%) with the combined upper and middle class proportion 27%. As commented on previously, female respondents were classified according to their own occupational position rather than their husbands where possible. This may partly explain the larger number of women in Class 5 (non-manual workers including areas such as clerical work) whereas most manual class men are in the unskilled category. Males are more numerous in Class 3, covering farmers and other self-employed proprietors. Numbers in the top two classes are roughly even when combined although women are more likely to be in the second group. These represent lower managerial positions of high qualification and moderate or low remuneration.

Table 3.11 Social Class by Diocese

Social Class	Glos		Truro		S'well		Lincoln		Durham		Total n
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Class 1	14	20	11	17	8	12	3	5	6	9	42
Class 2	14	20	5	7	11	16	6	9	12	18	48
Class 3	12	18	23	35	18	27	14	21	10	15	77
Class 4	1	1	-	-	1	1	3	5	2	3	7
Class 5	11	16	10	15	10	15	11	17	8	12	50
Class 6	17	25	17	26	20	29	28	43	29	43	111
Total	69	100	66	100	68	100	65	100	67	100	335

The variation in social class between the five study areas supports the original selections of quite distinct types of rural area. For example, in Gloucester the higher classes are well represented with the two upper/middle class groups comprising 40% of the sample, compared to about a quarter in the other areas and only 14% in Lincoln. Manual workers make up the bulk of the sample from Lincoln and Durham, 43% in

both cases. The incidence of petty bourgeoisie is highest in Truro (35%), perhaps expressing the high level of farming combined with other small businesses, including those in the tourist sector. The sample generally contained more in the petty bourgeoisie class than national figures would suggest which is a reflection of the agricultural and small businesses being dominant in rural areas (CSO 1989).

An attempt was also made at estimating the proportion of the sample still employed in agriculture or other land based occupations, such as forestry or gardening. Overall just under 20% of the sample are employed in agriculture or other land-based occupation. Nine per cent are farmers, four per cent farm workers and six per cent hold other land-based jobs. When compared with national statistics these figures are high, CSO stating that, nationally, two per cent of the population are involved in agriculture (CSO 1989).

Nearly a quarter (24%) of the males in the sample is connected with the land via employment, 13% as farmers and seven per cent as farm workers. This compares with 16% of the females. Of these eight per cent are directly involved with agriculture. However, they are more likely than men to be employed in other land-based industries, eight per cent to four per cent. Within the study areas 14% of the Truro respondents are farmers compared to only four per cent in Gloucester. Farm workers are most common in Lincoln, ten per cent, and nearly absent in Durham and Gloucester. Surprisingly, Southwell has highest proportion with 28%, 12% of these involved in land-based industry other than farming. By far the lowest figure is Gloucester with ten per cent.

The relationship between social class and age is explored in the next table. The professional class shows a steady increase with age: 17% of those aged over 55 are in this class. The managerial and lower grade professional category, Class 2, is higher among the younger age group with 25% of the 35-44 group placed here compared to eight per cent of the 45-54 group. When combining Classes 1 and 2 those in the oldest group and the 35-44 year old group come out highest possibly representing the wealthy retired and younger professional commuter.

Table A4.12 Social Class by Age Group

Social class	18 - 34		35 - 44		45 - 54		55 - 64		65 +		Total n
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Class 1	5	6	9	12	8	13	9	17	11	17	42
Class 2	10	13	19	25	5	8	5	10	9	13	48
Class 3	16	20	16	21	14	22	18	35	13	20	77
Class 4	3	4	2	3	1	2	1	2	-	-	7
Class 5	18	23	10	14	11	17	6	11	5	8	50
Class 6	27	34	19	25	24	38	13	25	28	42	111
Total	79	100	75	100	63	100	52	100	66	100	335

The petty bourgeoisie represented the most even group with at least a 20% of each age group placed here, though it is highest in the 55-64 group (35%). Fifty seven per cent of the young are placed in either Class 5 or 6 compared to only 36% of the 55-64 year olds. This may represent the higher number of working women in clerical type work who are characteristically younger. The percentage of working class is also high (50%) among the retired group, 65 and over.

Matching the respondent's social class to their occupational status shows that a fifth (20%) of those classified as

retired are in Class 1 with a further 15% in Class 2. A large proportion of those in part-time employment is situated in Class 5 (36%) representing manual cleric workers, most often women.

Other indicators of the socio-economic position that were collected from the sample were ownership of a car and type of housing that the respondent resides in. Though not strong indicators in their own right they do add to context. The overall picture for car ownership shows that ten per cent of the sample do not own one with the majority of households (41%) only owning one car. In the light of reduced public services in rural areas the ten per cent without a car represent a significant minority. By comparison 19% of households in the AJRBP study have no car. National figures for 1987 recorded 331 cars per thousand head of population (CSO 1989). In rural areas this figure is almost certainly higher and rough calculations on this sample indicate a figure of over 500 cars per thousand head of population.

Table A4.13 Number of Cars per Household by Age Group

No. of cars	18 - 34		35 - 44		45 - 54		55 - 64		65 +		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
None	5	6	2	3	1	2	2	4	23	33	33	10
1	26	32	24	32	22	35	34	64	33	48	139	41
2	34	42	41	55	25	39	14	26	12	18	126	37
3 +	16	20	8	10	15	26	3	6	1	1	43	12
Total	81	100	75	100	63	100	53	100	69	100	341	100

Table A4.13 shows that the vast majority of those without a car are aged 65 and over. Single car households are characteristic of the 55-64 age group. Multiple car

households tend to be those in the youngest or middle age group (45-54) matching the larger adult households shown earlier in the sociography where parents and offspring have transport.

There is relatively little variation between the study areas. A higher proportion of the households in Lincoln and Durham (15% respectively) have no car. Conversely, a fifth (20%) of the Gloucester sample has three cars in the household compared to only three per cent in Truro. With social class the expected correlations appeared. Manual workers are the most likely not to have a car compared to none of the professional and managerial respondents.

There is little variation in the type of property ownership of the household in which the respondent lived with either gender and age group. The split between owning and renting is 70:30 in favour of owner-occupiers. The young are slightly more likely to rent than other age groups. However, the figures are possibly distorted due to the low availability of rented properties in some rural areas. Those who do rent are slightly more likely to do so from the local council than private individuals.

There is more variation between the study areas with 81% of the Gloucester sample living in owner occupier households compared to only 59% in Truro and 62% in Lincoln. Private renting is more common than council renting in Truro, 23% compared to 11% whereas the reverse is true in Lincoln, 21% to 10%. The lowest proportion of private lettings occurred in Durham, the most industrial of the study areas.

The final characteristic to complete the socio-economic picture of the sample refers to the duration of the respondent's residence in the sample parish. Table A4.14 shows the length of residence according to gender. Over a quarter (28%) of the sample has moved to the parish within the past five years, suggesting a mobile population. In contrast 21% stated that they have always lived in the same parish, indeed, 41% of the sample have lived in the same parish for either their whole lives or over twenty years.

Table A4.14 Length of Residence in Parish by Gender

Years in parish	Male		Female		Total Sample	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
1 - 5	43	27	53	29	96	28
6 - 10	17	11	38	21	55	16
11 - 20	19	12	30	17	49	15
21 +	36	22	33	18	69	20
Always	44	28	28	15	72	21
Total	159	100	182	100	341	100

Whereas, the most recent arrivals in the parish could be equally male or female, more men tended to have permanently lived in the same parish (28%), perhaps reflecting a tendency for women to move to the male on marriage. This is supported by relatively few males having lived in the same parish for between six and 20 years (23%). This is the much higher for women (38%). The relationship by age group is perhaps more clearly defined, as is shown in the next table.

Table 3.15 Length of Residence in Parish by Age Group

Years in Parish	18 - 34		35 - 44		45 - 54		55 - 64		65 +		Total n
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
1 - 5	35	43	26	35	17	27	12	23	6	9	96
6 - 10	14	17	21	28	10	16	4	8	6	9	55
11 - 20	5	6	14	19	10	16	5	9	15	21	49
21 +	3	4	5	6	19	30	18	34	24	35	69
Always	24	30	9	12	7	11	14	26	18	26	72
Total	81	100	75	100	63	100	53	100	69	100	341

Those who have moved most recently to the parish are least likely to be over 65 and most likely to be under 34. The high number of young recently moving into the parish is initially surprising when the higher cost of housing is considered. However, as the economic and demographic data have shown there is a centralising of power and activity into urban areas which makes rural areas attractive for those, often the young, who prosper from it (Newby 1990). A large number of the youngest group who have always lived in the parish (30%) are presumably those who are still living at home with their parents. Those living in the same parish for 21 years or more are mainly aged over 45; indeed, they are the largest group in the three older age groups. A feature of the two oldest groups is the number who have always lived in the parish or have done so for over twenty years, 50% of the 55-64 group and 51% of the 65 and over.

There is little variation between the study areas. However, Durham has the least mobile sample with 39% stating that they have always been resident in the parish, compared to only ten per cent of the Southwell sample. In terms of the occupational status of respondents, those who are retired

are the least likely to have recently moved to the parish: 14% compared to 33% of the full-time employed and 36% of housewives. Furthermore, 76% of the retired group have been resident for over 11 years but only 25% have always lived in the parish. This would suggest that retired people are mobile but when they do move into a community they tend to stay. The last table in this chapter looks at the relationship between length of residence and the social class of the respondent.

Table A4.16 Length of Residence in Parish by Class

Years in parish	Social Class											
	1		2		3		4		5		6	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1 - 5	16	38	18	38	23	30	4	57	14	28	19	17
6 - 10	9	22	12	25	9	12	-	-	10	20	15	14
11 - 20	8	19	10	21	12	15	-	-	9	18	10	9
21 +	8	19	3	6	20	26	2	29	9	18	25	22
Always	1	2	5	10	13	17	1	14	8	16	42	38
Total (335)	42	100	48	100	77	100	7	100	50	100	111	100

If one overlooks the deviation of Class 4, due to the small numbers in this group, this table reveals some characteristic variations regarding social mobility. In the professional and managerial groups only six of the 90 respondents claimed to have always lived in the parish. Well over half of each group, 60% in Class 1 and 63% of Class 2, have moved to the area in the past ten years. This compares with only 31% of Class 6 moving into the parish in the same time scale. The diverse group of the petty bourgeoisie is most likely to have recently moved or been resident for over 20 years. Aspects of the tourism industry and self-employment allow a certain amount of mobility but

the longer parish residents are quite probably those involved in agriculture. The non-manual working class is evenly distributed but with over a quarter moving into the communities in the last five years. In striking contrast to the mobility of the professional and managerial classes, 38% of the manual group have always lived in the parish, perhaps representing the indigenous and land-based rural working class.

Appendix V

Response to six questions relating to church attendance

As part of the interview survey, all the respondents were asked for details on a series of questions centred around church services attended within the last year. The following paragraph describes and explains each of the six questions relating to church attendance in the order set out by the questionnaire.

The first part dealt with specific church services which were classified into five groups. Weddings, baptisms and funerals were all covered in the first group, for the reason that attendance is governed by obligation, invitation or a sense of duty rather than a voluntary decision. For a positive response to be recorded the interviewee could have attended any one of the three types of service in the past year. The next four groups dealt with individual services, namely Christmas, Easter, Harvest Festival and Remembrance Sunday. In the case of Christmas and Easter the question refers to the 'period of', rather than a specific service, thus attendance of the church carol concert or a Good Friday service would be recorded as a positive attendance. The attendance referred only to the individual and covered a time period of one year with positive, negative and uncertain responses recorded.

The attendance of other church services formed the basis of the second and third parts. Initially the respondents were asked if they had 'attended any other church service or religious meeting' within the last 6 months. Attendance of any of the specific services covered in the five groups in the first part did not qualify for a positive response in this part of the question. Having ascertained whether a

respondent had attended another service in the last six months, those confirming this to be the case were prompted for further information regarding the date and type of the last service they attended. The word 'prompted' is used as this was the intention of this question; data which would enable a check to be run against the response to the next part of this question on average attendance. The fact that it precedes the question on the average attendance of regular Sunday services is deliberate. Previous work has found a tendency for the responses on past attendance to be higher than the actual figure due to the social desirability of the activity (Argyle 1958, Macourt 1976 and Bruce 1995). By placing the question referring to the last attendance immediately before the request for average attendance, the ability to examine the extent of this tendency remains.

Further progress in this question hinged on the response to the preceding parts. Where the respondent gave negative replies to all the specific services and to attendance of other services within the past six months then no further questions regarding attendance were asked. For those to whom this did not apply the question of attendance at regular Sunday services was raised. Once again, it was stipulated that the calculation of average attendance could not include attendance of the specified church services. Thus the resulting responses referred to 'ordinary' church services held on a Sunday. The responses were placed into five mutually exclusive categories:

- once a week or more
- less than once a week to once a month
- less than once a month to three times a year
- less than three times a year
- don't attend a Sunday service.

Those recorded in the first three categories, attending regular Sunday services three times a year or more were grouped as 'attenders'. Those within this group were subsequently asked for information on the services that occurred, along with their participation and preferences, but the issue of attendance remained central.

Evidence which hinges around the frequency of attendance enables a study based on an individual's activity. However, this alone does not permit any assessment of how that individual feels about attendance or what they receive from it. What these data are able to tell us is the individual's degree of commitment, in terms of activity, within the rural populace over and above the sense of belonging.

Sunday Services

Having examined the attendance questions in the order that they appeared in the questionnaire, the resulting data will now be analysed in reverse order so that the mainstay of religious practice, the ordinary Sunday service, is analysed first. Thus the table below shows the average attendance of Sunday services with regard to the whole of the sample.

Table A5.1 Average Attendance of Sunday services

Attend Sunday service	Total Sample	
	n	%
1 a week or more	25	7
< 1 a week-1 a month	29	9
< 1 a month-3x a year	24	7
< 3x a year	38	11
Not attend	222	66
Total	338	100

In total this question yielded 338 usable responses of which two thirds (66%) stated that they did not attend regular Sunday services at church. Looking at the whole sample, of the third who said that they did attend such services, only seven per cent attended at least weekly. Nine per cent stated that on average they went to church monthly or more and a further seven per cent less than monthly but more than three times a year. Thus the combined figure which represented the division of attender and non-attender showed that nearly a quarter (23%) of the rural populace fell into the category of 'attender'.

Table A5.2 Average Attendance - Comparison of Different Surveys

Attend Sunday service	Total Sample %	Hinings Clun %	Harrison Rural %	Overall %	Forster CEstate %
1 a week or more	7	20	11	15	5
< 1/week-1/month	9	21	na	7	2
< 1/month-3x/year	7	)	na	15)
< 3x/year	11	) 12	na	)	) 22
Not attend	66	47	na	) 64	66
Total (%)	100	100	-	101	95

As with previous tables Table A5.2 is compared with four other studies of peoples' religiosity. The table shows

great variation on the level of attendance with the greatest figure for weekly attendance (20%) four times that of the lowest (five per cent). The high attendance figure results from a study of two rural parishes in the Clun valley (Hinings 1968). Hinings admitted the figures he collected were very high when compared with national figures, his comparative source being Martin (1967) who stated that on average 15% of the nation attended church weekly. Even taking the lower figure of 15% the survey shows a decline in weekly church going of a half. In the Gallup survey commissioned by the Bible Society (Harrison 1983) the figures are higher for both the rural (11%) and overall (15%) samples. The question asked was 'about how often do you attend a place of worship of any kind?' with responses being placed in categories which were not mutually exclusive and only separated out the *rites of passage* services. The indistinct nature of the categories and the vagueness of the question lend themselves not merely to an approximate response but one susceptible to being 'rounded up'. This is precisely what the attendance question devised by the Rural Church Project wanted to avoid.

The data on churchgoing in the urban council estate are more comparable, though fewer, than the response from rural parishes. In this case the question specified the exclusion of wedding and funeral services from the estimated attendance: not the case in either of the first two studies. The number stating that they did not attend was identical in each study at two thirds. However, doubt can be cast on this similarity by a closer study of the question. In Forster's work the respondents were asked if they ever go to

church apart from times such as weddings and funerals. Those giving a positive response were then asked how often they attended. As with the Bible Society study the categories were general and not mutually exclusive. The 'less often' category, where the largest variation occurs, has no specified time limit. The vagueness of the boundaries between the categories can only serve to accentuate an inaccurate response, perhaps mirroring the social desirability of church attendance. By contrast the Rural Church Project respondents were only asked the frequency question if they had confirmed attendance at a church service in the past year.

A breakdown of the respondents who do not attend Sunday services is not without its own problems but it would appear that inaccurate responses have not been encouraged. This claim can be attested further by comparing the above findings with those of the question inquiring whether the respondent had been to a church service or religious meeting within the last six months. The initial results are shown below in Table A5.3.

Table A5.3 Attendance of Religious Service or Meeting in Last Six Months

Attendance at service in last six months	Total Sample	
	n	%
YES, has attended	105	31
NO, has not attended	231	68
Refused	5	2
Total	341	100

The table shows that over the previous six months nearly one third of the community had attended church and that this

attendance was not related to a festival or rites of passage service. These data would seem to lend considerable support to the data regarding average attendance of Sunday services. Using the figures from Table A5.1, those attending Sunday services three times a year or more amounted to 23% of the sample. It would be fair to assume that about half of the 11% who stated that they did attend Sunday services, but only once or twice a year, had been in the last six months. Thus a figure close to the 31% found in the above table is reached.

Those who stated that they had attended a service in the last six months were asked when this was. The responses were categorised according to the structure below:

- less than a week ago
- a week to less than a month ago
- one month to less than three months ago
- three months to six months ago.

The results for those respondents who stated that they had attended a service in the last six months are shown in Table A5.4. The resemblance of this table to that of average attendance is quite striking. The categories were devised so that they were, as far as possible, directly comparable. If the first three categories of each table are added together the total is 23% in both cases. The individual variation was never more than two per cent thus supporting as far as possible the accuracy of the data.

Table A5.4 Last Attendance of Religious Service or Meeting

Last attendance at service or meeting	Sub-Sample	
	n	%
< one week ago	30	9
Week - < month ago	28	8
Month - < 3 months ago	21	6
3 - 6 months ago	13	4
Don't know	3	1
Refused	10	3
Sub total	105	31

Having giving some methodological weight to the accuracy of the respondent's attendance frequency figures, the next two tables assess the sample for variations within gender and age. Looking first at age there is a striking difference in this are between males and females. This is not surprising as it has been long recognised that women are more frequent attenders of church services (Argyle 1958).

Table A5.5 Average Attendance of Sunday Services by Gender

Attend Sunday service	Male		Female		Total Sample	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
1 a week or more	8	5	17	9	25	7
< 1/week-1/month	9	6	20	11	29	9
< 1/month-3x/year	6	4	18	10	24	7
< 3x/year	16	10	22	12	38	11
Not attend	117	75	105	58	222	66
Total	156	100	182	100	338	100

For the first three categories of attendance the proportion of females is approximately double that of males. It is the cumulative total of these categories that formed the 'attender' sub-sample within the survey, the figure for females being 30% exactly double that of males (15%). Consequently, three quarters (75%) of the males had not

attended an ordinary Sunday service over the previous year compared to only 58% of women.

Returning to data collected by the EVSSG, the evidence suggests that age shows more variation than gender when related to attendance (Harding et al 1986). The table below shows the frequency of attending Sunday services by age. The suggested trend in the EVSSG is one of high attendance among older members gradually decreasing to a lower level among the young.

Table A5.6 Average Attendance of Sunday Services by Age Groups

Attend Sunday service	18 - 34		35 - 44		45 - 54		55 - 64		65 +		Total n
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
1/week +	3	4	4	5	9	15	3	6	6	9	25
<1/wk-1/mth	5	6	8	11	5	8	5	9	6	9	29
<1/mth-3/yr	7	9	10	13	4	6	2	4	1	2	24
<3x/year	12	15	7	9	6	9	6	11	7	10	38
Not attend	53	66	46	62	39	62	37	70	47	70	222
Total	80	100	75	100	63	100	53	100	67	100	338

Such a trend is not immediately apparent in Table A5.6. Whilst the youngest group have the lowest weekly rate of attendance, the figures rise to 15% among the 45-54 group before falling to six and nine per cent among the 55-64's and 65 or more groups respectively. The cumulative figures used to calculate the proportion of attenders follows much the same pattern. Nineteen per cent of the youngest group were classed as attenders, rising to 29% in the next two groups. This falls back to 19% among those between 55 and 64 years of age and 20% of those aged 65 and over. The number not attending an ordinary Sunday service was

remarkably even throughout the sample not rising above 70% and falling below 62%. The relationship between age and gender is examined in more detail Chapter 5, pages 69-70.

Special Services

The next section moves away from a yearly average to examine the attendance of specified services over the past year.

The services on which data were gathered are:

- weddings, baptisms or funerals
- services over the Christmas period
- services over the Easter period
- Harvest Festival
- Remembrance Sunday.

Table A5.7 shows the baseline response of the rural populace to all five types of service. A small number did not offer a response or were too unsure and these two categories have been amalgamated.

The striking feature of the table is the two levels between the attendance of weddings, baptisms and funerals and the Church festivals. Attendance of services connected with rites of passage stands at 70% but a major consideration is that this is largely by invitation or sense of duty. The opposite response of less than a third (29%) therefore applies to people who declined such invitations or did not have the opportunity to attend.

Table A5.7 Attendance at Specific Services

Attend service	Wedding etc		Christ- mas		Easter		Harvest Festival		Remembr Sunday	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
YES	238	70	133	39	83	24	105	31	67	20
NO	98	29	204	60	254	74	232	68	269	79
Refused/DK	5	1	4	1	4	1	4	1	5	1
Total	341	100	341	100	341	100	341	100	341	100

When one turns to the services centred on Festivals and Remembrance the attendance rate falls to between a fifth and two fifths. Entering church for one of these services is far more likely to be a personal decision for the respondent rather than by invitation. The figures show that two fifths (39%) of the rural populace attended a service over the Christmas period. Harvest festival is the next most attended service with just under a third (31%) responding in a positive manner. It may be worth noting here that Harvest festival is, for most churches, a single service on a particular Sunday, whereas the survey's definition of Christmas and Easter as 'the period of' means that there would be a number of services that would qualify for a positive response. The attendance at Easter was 24% and for the Remembrance service 20% of the sample.

Two other studies (Harrison 1983 and Forster 1989) collected data on the attendance at Christmas, Easter and, in the case of Forster, Harvest festival. Before comparing the data it is important to turn an eye towards the method behind the question. In Forster's work questions referring to Festivals were linked to the general churchgoing question. Those not going to ordinary services were, unfortunately,

not asked specifically about attendance at festivals. The questions posed in the Bible Society study parallel the Rural Church Project questions, although they again precede the average attendance question. Table A5.8 compares the figures for each of the three specific services. The initials used in the table refer to the relevant study, 'TS' for Total Sample, 'BS' for Bible Society and 'For' for Forster.

Table A5.8 Attendance at Special Service - Comparison of Different Surveys

Attend service	Christmas			Easter			Harvest	
	TS %	BS %	For %	TS %	BS %	For %	TS %	For %
YES	39	38	16	25	28	8	31	5
NO	60	61	79	74	72	86	68	88
Refused/DK	1	1	5	1	-	6	1	7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

The table shows that the Bible Society figures compare very closely to those of surveyed rural populace in the case of Christmas and Easter. That study also concluded that there was no striking difference between the various housing areas. If this is the case then the figures from the study centred around a council estate should be fairly similar. In reality the comparative figures are less than half of those for Christmas and about a third of the Easter attendance. In the case of Harvest Festival the attendance in the rural communities was six times that of the council estate. It is unfortunate that the Bible Society study did not collect data on this service as no comparison can be made between their housing types. Harvest Festival has, over the last one hundred and fifty years, developed strong

roots in rural areas (Obelkevich 1976) largely due to the central Harvest theme of food complementing the role that agriculture has played in the economy of rural communities.

Even when accepting the possible difference in the data caused by the structuring of Forster's questions, the claim by the Bible Society that 'it is ... important ... for the churches to note that Christmas and Easter have the same 'pull'' (Harrison 1983) wherever they occur seems somewhat inaccurate. The evidence from this study and Forster's work would seem to show that attendance varies according to location.

Further examination is possible by testing the data from the specific services against the population of the sample parishes. Using Christmas for a comparison, 57% of the very small parishes (0-199) attended compared to 46% of the largest (2000+). The largest variation occurred at Harvest festival with 51% of the smallest parishes attending compared to 37% of the largest. The link between the size of population as shown here is a weak one but note must be taken that this variation occurs within a range of rural parishes. However weak one considers this link to be, it lends more support to a variation of attendance in accordance with locality as well as regionally, a point that Harrison acknowledges.

The attendance of the sample at special services is now examined by a number of attributes beginning with the gender of the sample. The table shows only the positive responses, as in every case the negative response will be the remainder

of the sample.

Table A5.9 Positive Attendance at Specific Services by Gender (Positive Responses)

Gender	Wedding etc		Christ-mas		Easter		Harvest Festival		Remembr Sunday	
	n	%	n.	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Male	107	69	40	26	23	15	37	24	22	14
Female	131	72	93	51	60	33	68	38	45	25

The table shows that in instances of weddings, baptism and funerals the attendance of males is almost equal to that of females. The explanation is, presumably, that both are as likely to receive an invitation or feel obliged to attend such a service as the other. In all the other cases women were significantly more likely to attend than men. In three cases, Christmas, Easter and Remembrance Sunday, the difference was approximately double. The only exception is Harvest festival, where the male attendance is two thirds that of the women. Explanations for this can only be tentative at this stage but there is definitely a picture comparable to that of Sunday service attendance. In the Bible Society study a similar gender gap was found. In the case of Christmas 30% of men attend compared to 45% of women, at Easter a fifth of men and 36% of women. In contrast, Forster found no significant difference between the genders for any of the three specific services. The reason for this was not made clear by Forster, perhaps surprisingly, since the weight of evidence is that there is a difference between the participation levels of men and women. One reason may be the localised nature of the study area opening itself up to unique peculiarities.

Age has long been associated with changing levels of many forms of religious observance and the table below looks at its relation to the attendance of specific services.

Table A5.10 Actual Attendance at Specific Services by Age Group (Positive Responses)

Age groups	Wedding etc		Christ-mas		Easter		Harvest Festival		Remembr Sunday	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
18 - 34	61	75	29	36	13	16	18	22	13	16
35 - 44	46	62	37	50	23	31	29	39	12	16
45 - 54	56	89	30	48	23	36	24	38	17	27
55 - 64	39	74	19	36	11	21	15	28	12	23
65 +	36	55	18	27	13	19	19	28	13	19

Taking the response to the wedding-type services first the figures could be explained in the following way. The youngest group are those most likely to utilise the initial rites of passage and subsequently their associates would too. In the second group many people are married with growing children and this may reduce invitations as well as inhibiting attendance of such events. In the third and fourth groups the children themselves are getting married and in addition parents would be advancing in years. On reaching retirement old age gradually prevents attendance to all but the most important occasions.

Turning to the other services the pattern over Christmas, Easter and Harvest festival appears to be similar.

Attendance is low in the first group then increases by a third to a half in the next two groups. The presence of children, especially in the case of Christmas attendance, may account for some of this increase. Attendance then falls as age increases to a level comparable with the

youngest age group. To some extent this is explained by decreasing mobility but the theory of increasing religiosity with age does not seem to be supported by the attendance of major Christian festivals like Easter and Christmas.

A historical context may aid the explanation of the curve relating to Remembrance attendance. This differs from the other services in that the rise occurs in the third and fourth groups rather than the second and third. Those in these two age groups would have been young children and teenagers at the start of the second World War and the resulting impact of those years ensures that period of their life is not forgotten. Using the ideas presented above in the case of Remembrance services it would appear that there are generational differences, thus as the individual travels through life their observance remains unchanged. The case for the other services is harder to support and relevant historical evidence is hard to find and relates more to the average attendance rather than specific services.

When attendance at specific services is matched against the length of residence in the parish, rites of passage services are evenly spread throughout the groups, with the longer term residents slightly higher presumably due to local invitations. The general picture in the other services is an increase in attendance from those new to the area to residents of twenty years standing or more. At that point the attendance of those who have always lived with that parish is seen to fall to a level two thirds to a half of the previous group.