

PRAYER  
AS  
MISSION

SOUL OF  
BRITAIN

The two most important observations we can make about our society and people's attitudes to the Bible's message are:

- Church attendances are continuing to decline
- People increasingly see themselves as 'spiritual but not religious'

*David Hay and Kate Hunt*

- General sense of spiritual openness
- Sitting loose to beliefs
- Timidity when talking about spirituality
- Generic god rather than Christian God
- 'something there'

- Self-constructed theologies
- Suffering is a bigger problem than science
- Negative attitude to church generally but positive from experience
- Need to reconstruct the language of spirituality

	1987	2000
A patterning of events	29%	55%
Awareness of the presence of God	27%	38%
Awareness of prayer being answered	25%	37%
Awareness of a sacred presence in nature	16%	29%
Awareness of the presence of the dead	18%	25%
Awareness of an evil presence	12%	25%
<b>CUMULATIVE TOTAL</b>	<b>(48%)*</b>	<b>76%</b>

\*This includes totals for respondents to two additional questions asked in 1987 about 'a presence not called God' (22%) and 'awareness that all things are One' (5%), i.e. the total of 76% for the year 2000 is quite likely to be relatively speaking an underestimate.

# BEYOND THE FRINGE

- no matter how anti-religious or non-spiritual people are they still have big questions
- clear disconnect between questions people have and their understanding of the Church.
- tension in respondents' moral / existential universes – people they most admire are self-sacrificial

- disaffection with society and general sense that neither I nor the government can do much to improve the situation
- ubiquity of awe as a response to life
- broad spectrum of after-death beliefs and no sense of Christian resurrection
- overwhelming sense of belief in design

- secularisation of much spiritual language (eg magic, angels, miracles)
- commonness of personal 'comfort' as a benefit of prayer
- ability to associate Jesus with God but without any implications

# GENERATION Y SPIRITUALITY

For English youth, god is generally seen as benevolent, if somewhat domesticated. He is more likely to offer comfort than punishment.... God is someone to pray to, something to hold on to.

That said, on the whole, the god young people believe in is not a god of awesome power who created the world and performs miracles.

*Spirituality of Generation Y*

Do you believe in God?

Yes.

Do you believe in a God who can change  
the course of events on earth?

No, just the ordinary one

*Grace Davie*

Devoid of any real sacred status, this 'God'  
does not demand to be the source of ultimate  
meaning and hope for young people. Belief  
in God is an optional matter, a consumer  
choice. If belief works for you, fine; if not,  
drop it.

*Spirituality of Generation Y*

These results do not lead us to think many young people are involved in a great deal of spiritual searching (of the transformative type), either inside or outside of institutional religion. Although young people may be willing, even intrigued, to talk about spiritual topics when asked, there appears to be little real evidence of an ongoing 'spiritual quest'.

*Spirituality of Generation Y*

In this respect, we believe we found a coherent narrative that underpins our young people's world view. In essence, it states: *'This world, and all life in it, is meaningful as it is'.*

In other words, there is no need to posit ultimate significance elsewhere beyond the immediate experience of everyday life. .

*Spirituality of Generation Y*

If youth workers are looking for a felt need, a 'God-shaped hole' that follows Christian contours, they will be disappointed.

*Spirituality of Generation Y*

Much has been written and theorised about the changing spiritual landscape in late modern societies: the rise of alternative spiritualities, the increasing popularity of the New Age, the attraction of Eastern religions, the development of eclectic 'mix and match' spiritualities and the emergence of nature religions and Neo-Paganism.

*The Spirit of Generation Y (Australia)*

This study did not find that Gen Y are a generation of spiritual seekers; less than one-fifth of Gen Y have a 'mix and match' spirituality, while few are seriously exploring alternatives like Buddhism or Wicca.

*The Spirit of Generation Y (Australia)*

SPIRITUAL  
SEARCHERS

Sociologically, these are the very people who, thirty years ago, would have been pillars of the churches. They are movers and shakers in their local communities. They are the ones who organize campaigns and petitions, usually through single-issue pressure groups and networks of an informal kind.

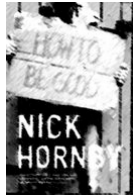
John Drane, *The MacDonalidization of the Church*

They have a suspicion of organized bureaucracy, which means they will rarely run for election to local councils. For similar reasons, such people are unlikely to be attracted to the church which, as they see it, has become a place with too much religion and too little spirituality.

*John Drane, The MacDonalidization of the Church*

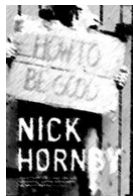
- They are motivated by a desire for self-fulfillment.
- They are most baby-boomers, some younger people, a few older people.
- There are the 'movers and shakers' in their local communities
- They are suspicious of institutions.
- They see spirituality as an all-embracing reality that can give meaning to the whole of life.

- They see the Church as irrelevant.
- They are open-minded but intolerant of conservatism.
- They will tend to create their own spirituality and value system, using whatever materials they can find.
- They learn by experimentation.
- They value intuition and emotion (what feels right) over discipline and reason.



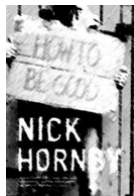
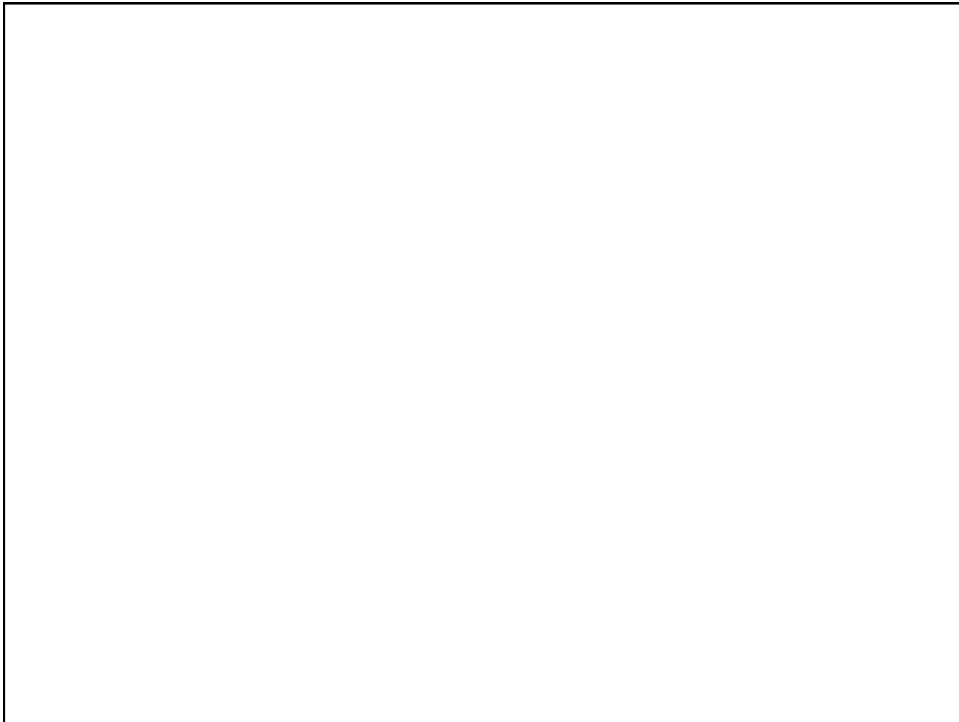
What alarms me is just how easy it is to remember things I've done wrong, as if they're floating on the surface of my consciousness all the time and I can simply skim them off with a spoon. I'm a doctor – I'm a good person and yet there's all this stuff.

*How to be good - Nick Hornby*



When I look at my sins (and if I think they're sins then they are sins) I can see the appeal of born-again Christianity. I suspect that it is not the Christianity that is so alluring; it's the rebirth. Because who wouldn't wish to start all over again?

*How to be good - Nick Hornby*



It feels  
a long way from God.  
It feels sad, exhausted, defeated.



*How to be good - Nick Hornby*



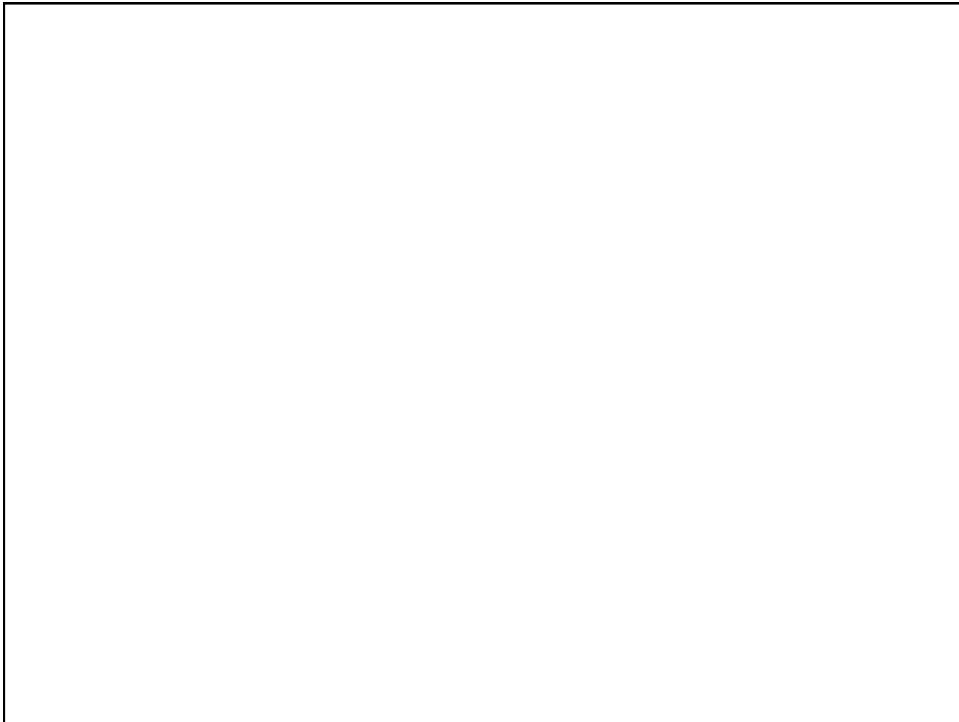
Mostly we are children of the 50s, whose views and outlook were formed in the '60s and '70s, and who grew up thinking that the world would be a better place, but found that in most ways it isn't.

*Grumpy Old Men - Stuart Prebble*



We stood at the dawning of the Age of Aquarius and sang 'Let the sun shine in.' We really did think that 'What we need is a great big melting pot.' Heaven knows, we even thought that 'in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make.' Of course, it was twaddle, but we didn't know that then.

*Grumpy Old Men - Stuart Prebble*



SPIRITUAL  
DIRECTION

The task of the spiritual director is to be positioned, like a campfire in the wilderness, welcoming sojourners from all corners of life to stop, relax and yarn for a while. A place where tired bodies and spirits are warmed by the fire and refreshed. A friendly atmosphere where stories of the road are shared amongst travellers.

The job of the spiritual director is to keep the fire burning because one never knows when a traveller will come to sit. It doesn't matter where on the journey the traveller has been exploring, or how long they have been walking, if they come in peace to sit on a log by the campfire, they are welcome.

*Simon Brown from 'Mission and the Art of Spiritual Direction'*

## **Spiritual Direction**

- Known, open and available

The Spirit of our Mission God, who is working in the lives of our neighbours, will eventually seek out the Spirit within the director. Conversations will spark and direction begins albeit very tenuous and unstructured at the beginning. The director may well be a servant of the local community and considered to be a friend of the many.

*Simon Brown from 'Mission and the Art of Spiritual Direction'*

The truth is, Christian spiritual directors have no idea who God is drawing out of darkness into the light. If we are not careful we can miss the signs of God's grace in the lives of teenage witches, New Age neighbours or drunken rugby fans. People with crystals in their windows or heroin in their veins are not exempt from the grace of God. Their experience of the 'Mysterious Other' is valid and their stories are valuable.

*Simon Brown from 'Mission and the Art of Spiritual Direction'*

## **Spiritual Direction**

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- Known, open and available
- Devoid of Christian jargon

A spiritual director in the secular context will necessarily be involved in deconstructing religious language and reconstructing it in mutually accessible language.

*Simon Brown from 'Mission and the Art of Spiritual Direction'*

## **Spiritual Direction**

- Known, open and available
- Devoid of Christian jargon

## **Spiritual Direction**

- Known, open and available
- Devoid of Christian jargon
- Sees the Spirit at work in the world

When working with people in a secular context one must start with what the directee considers authoritative. For example they might have a history of Judaism or Buddhism. Or they might have their world view contained in the writings of Wicca or Ghandi. Some people have no known spiritual connection to any group, tradition or philosophy. Whatever the Bible is to these people it is not authoritative.

*Simon Brown from 'Mission and the Art of Spiritual Direction'*

God is active in the 'Gentile' world. It is His intention to redeem it. He invites us, as spiritual directors, to participate in that redemptive process.

*Simon Brown from 'Mission and the Art of Spiritual Direction'*

Leslie Newbigin once observed that the Church has tended to make mission a burden rather than a joy, to make it part of the law rather than part of the gospel. A major reason for that is that mission has been regarded as an essentially human activity, for which we need to enlist divine help through intense prayer, whereas a more faithfully biblical understanding would see mission as a divine activity that invites human collaboration.

If God is the initiator of mission, who knows where that might lead us, and what the outcome might be? A greater recognition of the many diverse ways in which God works in people's lives, and a willingness to embrace what God is doing, offers a way of doing mission that will certainly be scary but probably transformational, for Christians as well as for others.

*John Drane – After MacDonaldization*

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- Known, open and available
- Devoid of Christian jargon
- Sees the Spirit at work in the world
- Makes use of verbal prayer

For people who have never had someone pray for them before the experience can be truly profound and healing.

*Simon Brown from 'Mission and the Art of Spiritual Direction'*

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## **Spiritual Direction**

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- Devoid of Christian jargon
- Sees the Spirit at work in the world
- Makes use of verbal prayer
- Shares stories

All stories are equally valid and acceptable.  
Christianity and the occult sit side by side in  
spiritual direction.

*Simon Brown from 'Mission and the Art of Spiritual Direction'*

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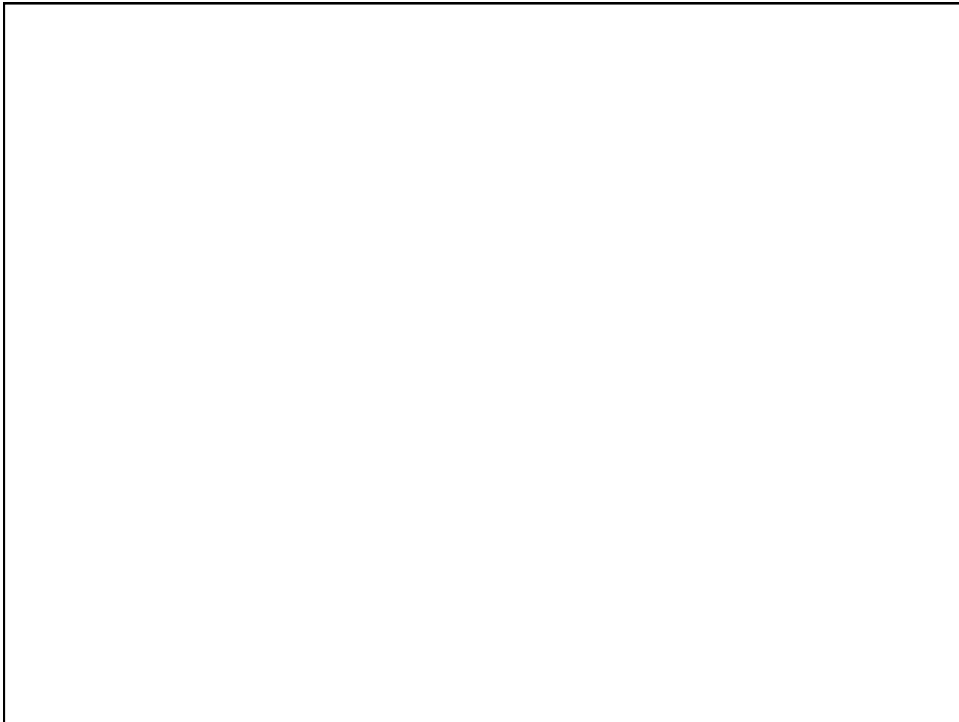
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- Known, open and available
- Devoid of Christian jargon
- Sees the Spirit at work in the world
- Makes use of verbal prayer
- Shares stories
- Avoids absolutes

Gene Veith Jr records four activities this emerging culture consider to be major sins in a post-modern society:

- Dogmatism
- Intolerance
- Being judgmental
- Trying to force your values onto someone else

*Simon Brown from 'Mission and the Art of Spiritual Direction'*



DEALING WITH  
ANXIETY

There is a Buddhist practice that can help us locate that 'parking space' for anxiety. It involves softening our eyes. When we are anxious our eyes become hard and they also look hard, hence the expressions 'Stop eyeballing me' or 'Get out of my face'. When we soften our eyes we increase the likelihood of responding calmly rather than reacting with our cold-blooded reptile brain.

Buddhists recommend that softening the eyes becomes part of the discipline of prayerfulness. It is part of the quietening that helps us to be more open to God and to each other.

*Ann Morisy – Bothered and Bewildered*

Play and laughter, combined with prayer and singing, are the most effective antidotes to anxiety, helping to shift us from the reptile brain that so easily fizzes with anxiety and is the locus of cold-blooded behaviour.

*Ann Morisy – Bothered and Bewildered*

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