

# *UK Church 21st Century Challenges*

*A talk by*

*Gary Auker*

*to*

*Springfield Park Baptist Church*

*on*

*Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

# *UK Church 21st Century Challenges*

- The UK church's biggest challenge in 21<sup>st</sup> century is :

## **CREDIBILITY**

of it's key claims in the eyes of the British public.

- Church credibility shakers in public's eyes in recent years

# UK Church 21st Century Challenges

- Harold Camping “predicted” End of the World based on his study of scripture would take place on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2011
- On 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2011 Camping said a “Spiritual” judgement had taken place but the final physical End of World would be on 21<sup>st</sup> Oct 2011.
- Harold Camping’s other erroneous claims for End of the World 21<sup>st</sup> May 1988 , & 7<sup>th</sup> September 1994.
- For someone who claims to have studied the Bible his obsession with predicting the End of the World disagrees with what Jesus had to say.

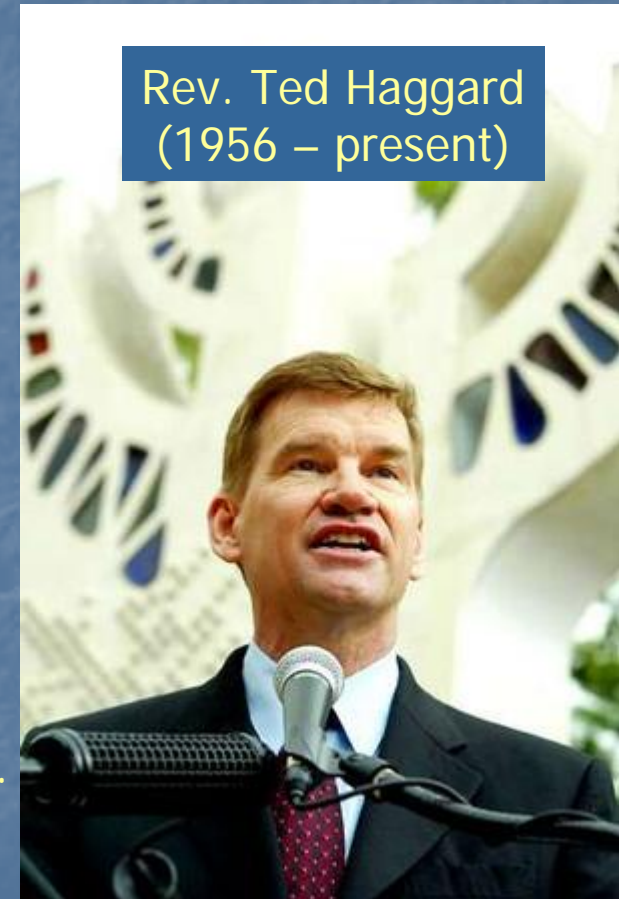


US Christian Broadcaster  
Harold Camping

**Matthew 24:36** “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”

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- Founder of NEW LIFE CHURCH in Colorado Springs with a congregation of 10,000 & Leader of US National Association of Evangelicals (2003 -2006)
- In the past Haggard had preached against homosexual marriage.
- Pastor Ted Haggard resigned in 2006 when accused of buying drugs from a man who claimed he'd had homosexual sex with him for 3 years.
- Ted Haggard later admitted he had purchased drugs & been "sexually immoral" with the man on one occasion.
- The lesson from all of this is to follow Christ and not Christian Leaders, otherwise you MAY be disappointed.



Rev. Ted Haggard  
(1956 – present)

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**Perceived lack of Church**

**credibility effect**

**on Church attendance**

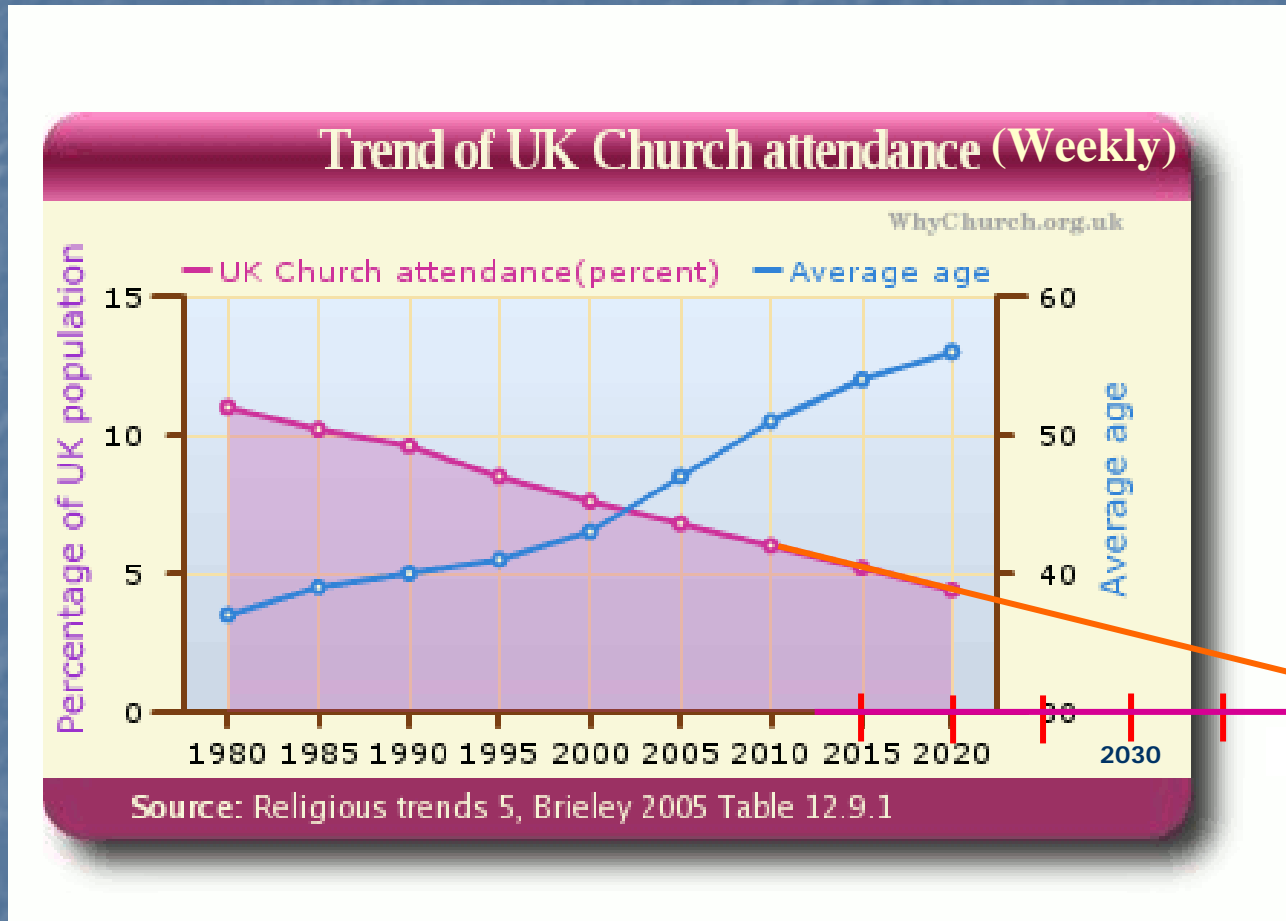
**over recent decades**

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European Social Survey (2002) on Church Attendance at least once per month



# UK Church 21st Century Challenges



Based on the rate of decline up to 2005 AD UK Church attendance is predicted to disappear by

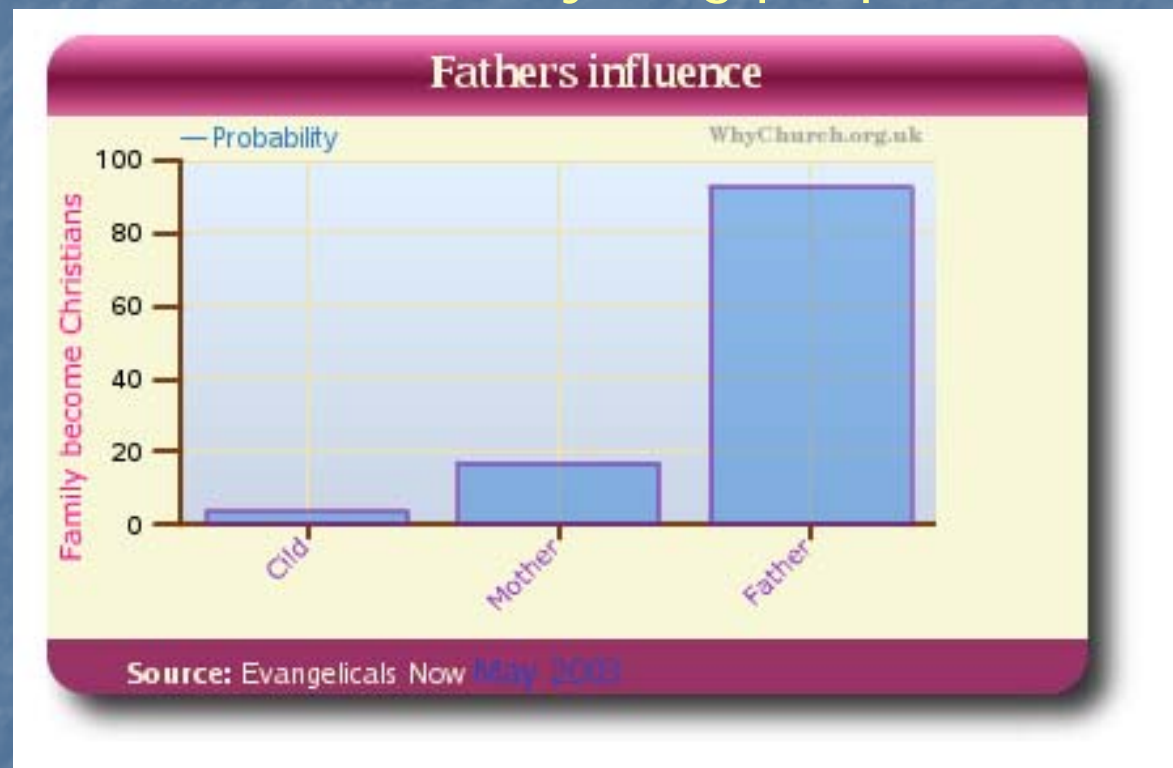
**2047 AD**

If things don't change most of the Church attendance in UK after 2050 AD will be from immigrant communities settling in the UK.

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Church in the UK is one that fails to attract four people groups:

- Christians
- men
- young people
- the poor



If the UK church fails to attract Fathers it will usually fail to attract and keep their children into adulthood irrespective of the Mother's church attendance.



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SOME GOOD NEWS – rate of church attendance decline slowing  
with some areas showing a slight increase

- The long term decline in weekly Mass attendance in the Roman Catholic church in England and Wales ended in 2005 and the figures have been broadly stable since. In 2008 there were 918,844 attending Mass, an increase from 915,556 the year before.
- The Church of England has seen fairly steady attendance over the last ten years, with 1.67m attending services each month in 2008, compared with 1.71m in 2001.
- The Baptist Union of Great Britain has seen attendance rise from 148,835 a week in 2002 to 153,714 in 2008, with particular growth in the contact with young people aged 13 to 18 – up from 34,095 in 2002 to 41,392 in 2008.

Ref: Guardian 11 Sep 2010

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- Main growth of the church in 21<sup>st</sup> century will be in countries like China & India, and NOT Europe & America.



More people go to church on Sunday in China than in the whole of Europe

CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY PROMOTES ATHEISM IN SCHOOLS BUT UNDERTAKES "TO PROTECT AND RESPECT RELIGION UNTIL SUCH TIME AS RELIGION ITSELF WILL DISAPPEAR".



The Chinese Communist Party's belief that religion will disappear may be more accurate if applied to the UK rather than China in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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## CHURCH DECLINE IN BRITAIN & WESTERN CIVILISATION

People living in the “WEST” that is Western Europe & including but to a lesser extent North America have become increasingly sceptical about the Christian view of GOD being a loving caring GOD involved with his Creation.

### WHY ?

**It's worth looking back to try and explain possible causes to the increase scepticism to the Church's teachings before we look forward to 21<sup>st</sup> century.**

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- **WESTERN CIVILISATION** has increasingly moved towards decision making based on verifiable evidence, and away from superstition, political ideology, and faith based views.
- This evidence based approach is summed up in the Royal Society's (founded in 1660) motto : '**Nullius in verba**' which roughly translates as '**take nobody's word for it**'.



Founding Fellows like Sir Christopher Wren took to withstand the domination of authority (political or religious) and to verify all statements by an appeal to facts determined by experiment.



- In the intervening 350 years this evidence based approach has been increasingly adopted by the legal, & medical professions as well as business & governments. All now need to provide evidence of why they took the decisions they did.

**Were does this leave the Church whose beliefs are based on Faith not verifiable evidence ?**

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- Religious persecution during 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries sewed the seeds of Scepticism of Religion in Europe
- Baruch Spinoza was a Jewish Philosopher living in Holland where the Jews had settled following religious persecution from the Church in Portugal in 1536. He challenged the authenticity of the Hebrew Bible (OT) and the nature of God.
- In the 18<sup>th</sup> century a major event took place that would shake both political & religious establishments.



Baruch Spinoza  
1632 – 1677 AD

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Lisbon, Portugal 1755 AD Earthquake & Tsunami



- Up to 100,000 people died on All Saints Day holiday Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> November 1755 AD, destroying almost every important church in the city. GOD's churches crumbled WHY ?
- Apart from the physical damage it sent political & religious "shockwaves" throughout Europe. It energised leading thinkers of the Enlightenment to find new ways to understand the World without referring to the Bible as the only authority.

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- The French Revolution 1789 AD – challenged the view that the King's absolute authority to rule came from God.



King Louis XVI  
of France

Reign: 1754 – 1791 AD

He was executed for high  
treason in 1793 AD.



The storming of the Bastille, 14 July 1789 AD

# *UK Church 21st Century Challenges*

Do you trust a leader

who has

BELIEF

or

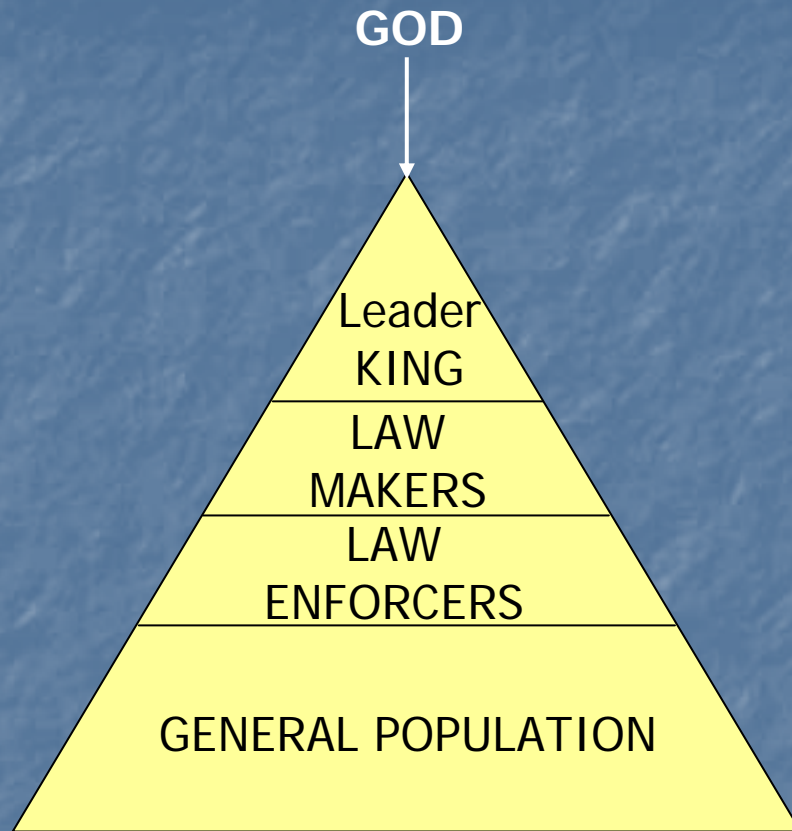
EVIDENCE



- The UK public are increasingly sceptical of Leaders motives, particularly if they cannot support their views with verifiable evidence but resort to " I believe it's right" pleading.
- PM Tony Blair's "belief", Iraq had Weapons of Mass Destruction & that justified going to War against Iraq was not supported by the evidence & it cost him politically.
- Blair was uncomfortable when asked, in an interview with Jerry Paxman, if he prayed with George W. Bush before going to War against Iraq.

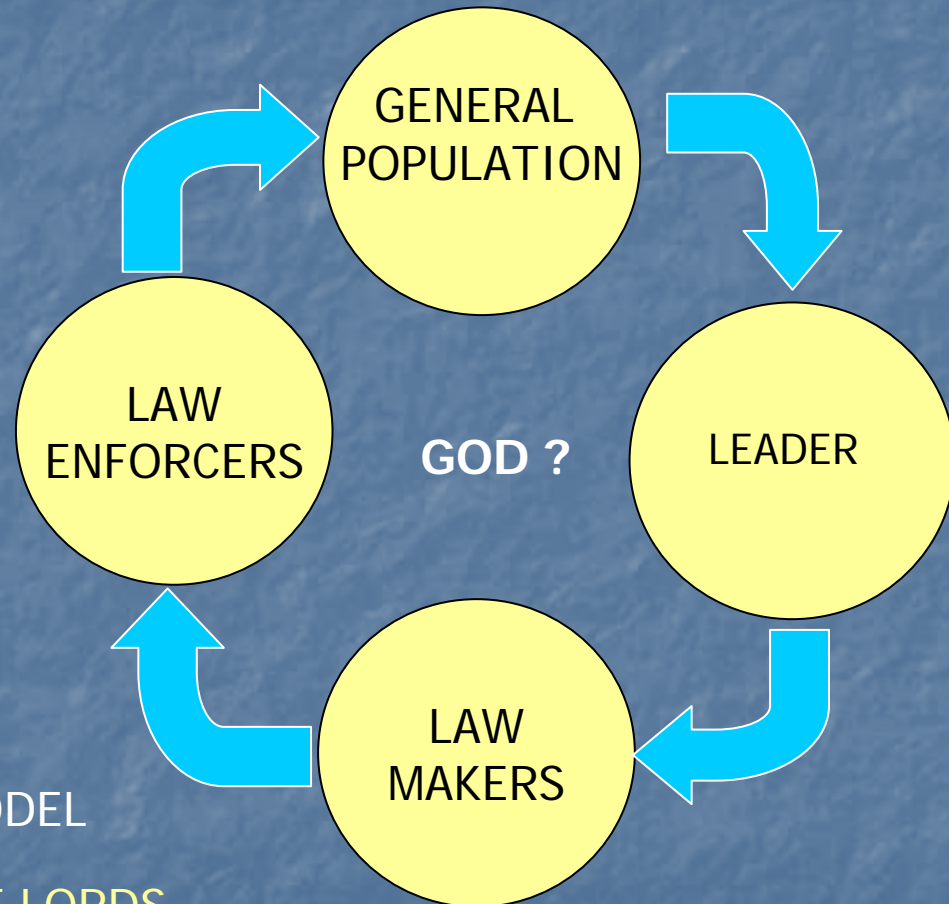


# UK Church 21st Century Challenges



TRADITIONAL SEDENTARY SOCIETY MODEL

WESTERN DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY MODEL



Rev 19:16 KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS

- Whilst the term **King of Kings** makes sense in a traditional society it's becoming less meaningful in a modern Western Democratic Society.

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**Some key areas where the  
Church is or may be  
challenged  
in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.**

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## Christian views seen as unlawful

CHRISTIAN OWNERS OF A HOTEL WHO IN 2008 REFUSED TO ALLOW A HOMOSEXUAL COUPLE A DOUBLE ROOM ACTED UNLAWFULLY, A JUDGE HAS RULED.



Chymorvah Hotel, near Penzance

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**Homosexuality:**

**Is it wilful SIN**

**or**

**the way a person is born ?**

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Before condemning homosexuality based on scripture

## **Leviticus 18:22**

**22 "Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable. "**

## **Romans 1:27**

**27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another.**

**Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.**

Its worth looking at church's attitude to other issues & comparing them with scripture

Ask yourself the question is it right for a divorced man to re-marry ?

**What would Jesus say ?**

## **Mark 10 : 11**

**<sup>11</sup> He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her.**

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**HOMOSEXUALITY** : Is it a SIN or a Biological predisposition ?

At present the evidence is inconclusive, though this may change.

Current research focusing on possible Biological causes:

- Twin studies
- Chromosomal linkages
- Epigenetics studies
- Birth order
- Pheromone studies
- Studies of brain structure

**CHURCH** view on Homosexuality is equally inconclusive :

Against

Pentecostal  
Church

Eastern  
Orthodox

Roman Catholic

Accept

United Church of Canada  
German Lutheran

Methodists

Church of Iceland,  
Holland, Denmark

# *UK Church 21st Century Challenges*

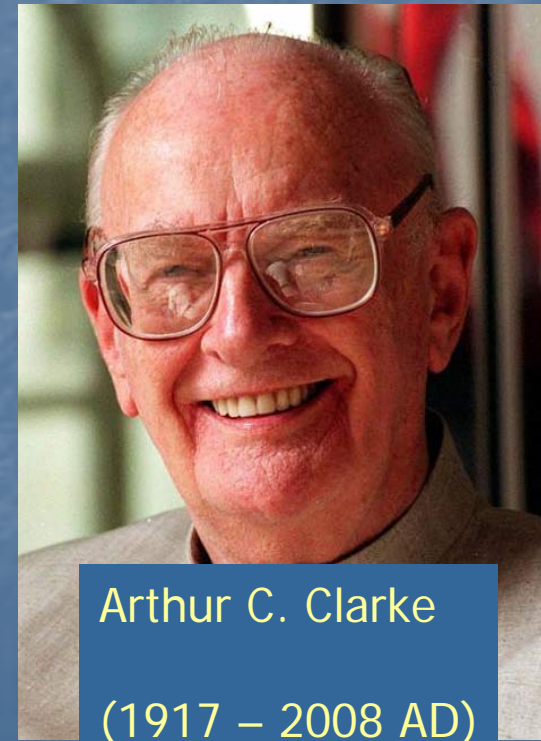
What does the rest of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have in store ?

- No one knows for sure but I think the author of "2001 A Space Odyssey" Arthur C. Clarke made one of the most thought provoking statements about the future of technological advance.

*"Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."*

*"Profiles of The Future", 1961  
(Clarke's third law)*

- Note that Clarke did not believe in magic, but he was making the point that if you took today's technology like a Car & were able to show it to someone in the 17<sup>th</sup> century you would probably end up being burnt at the stake for using magic.
- Similarly if someone came from the future & showed their technology to us today it would seem to us like magic.



Arthur C. Clarke

(1917 – 2008 AD)

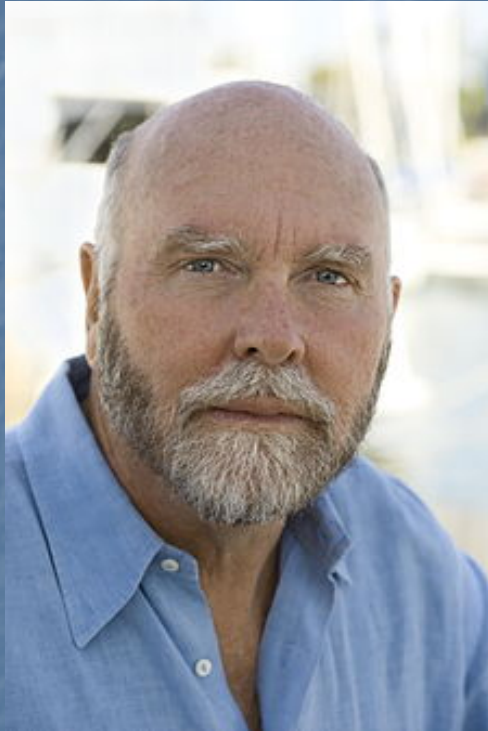
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Manmade Synthetic Life from chemicals

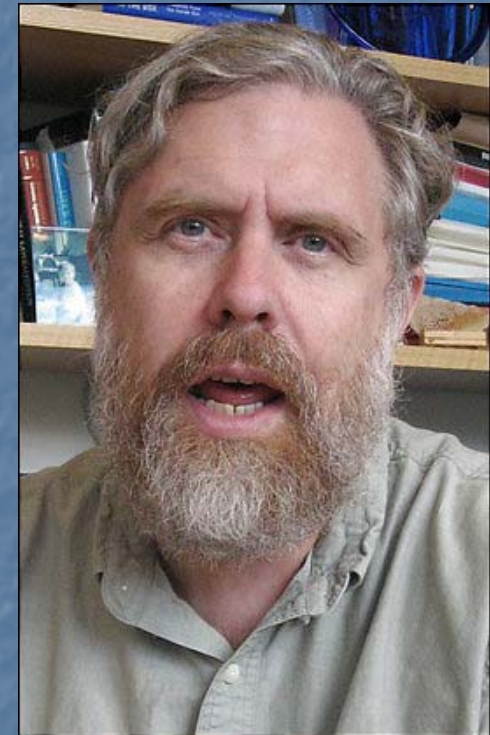


# *UK Church 21st Century Challenges*

- Manmade Synthetic Life from chemicals



Will the concept of a “life force” or Soul become redundant if it can be demonstrated that life can be created from chemistry alone ?



Dr. Craig Venter (1946 – present)  
Decoded part of Human Genome & created  
1<sup>st</sup> synthetic instruction manual for a living cell

Prof. George Church  
Harvard Medical School  
(1954 – present)

In 2010 Craig Venter took the halfway step & put a totally man made genome into a bacterial donor cell. George Church is tipped to make the 1<sup>st</sup> living cell from chemicals.

# *UK Church 21st Century Challenges*

What happens to our Souls

after all signs of

Life in our body have apparently

ceased ?

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- Hypo-thermic surgery & cryogenic storage



KETIL SINGSTAD

Rescue team digging Anna out of the ice in 1999

She had been under the ice for about 80 minutes.

She slid down a steep, icy gully and ended up submerged head first in a hole in the ice in a mostly frozen stream. Only her skis and Telemark boots and bindings protruded from the thick, opaque ice.

Her body temperature was just 13.7 C. No one had ever been that cold for that long and survived.



COURTESY ANNA BÅGENHOLM

Anna Bågenholm  
1970- present

ECG [electrocardiogram], was connected her to, there is a completely flat line. Like you could have drawn it with a ruler.

No signs of life whatsoever. And the decision was made.

We will not declare her dead until she is warm and dead."

Anna Bågenholm made a near full recovery after her accident in 1999.

Later this century it may be possible to "cheat death" in Cryogenic storage until a cure is found. This raises the question were does the Soul go during this time ?

# *UK Church 21st Century Challenges*

**Church adapting**

**to**

**21<sup>st</sup> Century Challenges**

# *UK Church 21st Century Challenges*

## Evangelising the West in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

### DON'T

- be a Bible basher, over spiritualise
- deny the evidence in the real world that contradicts your interpretation of scripture.
- show favouritism to Christians above non Christians
- make friends but move on if they don't become Christians
- chase after worldly wealth, power & status by what you own

### DO

- be yourself, be real, show compassion
- accept things that can be shown to be a credible explanation of the world.
- speak & act against injustice & inequality
- make friends with people because you care for them & not as just a means to evangelise.
- PRAY & live your life to show Christ makes a difference to you & those around you.

# *UK Church 21st Century Challenges*

*Thank you for listening.*

*Are there any questions about this*

*talk you would like to ask ?*

# *UK Church 21st Century Challenges*

## BACK-UP SLIDES

# *UK Church 21st Century Challenges*

## Peoples views on Origin of Homosexuality

<b>Date</b>	<b>Born with</b>	<b>Upbringing / Environment</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>
1977-JUN	13%	56%	14%	3%	14%
1982-JUN	17	52	13	2	16
1989-OCT	19	48	12	2	19
1996-NOV	31	40	13	3	13
1998-JUN	31	47	6	3	13
1999-FEB	34	44	13	1	8
2001-MAY	40	39	9	3	9
2002-MAY	40	36	12	4	8
2003-MAY	38	44	11	2	5
2006-MAR	38	44	13	not an option	5
2007-MAY	42	35	not an option	not an option	23