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Implicit religion, Anglican cathedrals, and spiritual wellbeing: The impact of carol services

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Authors:
Leslie J. Francis[1,2,3]
Ursula McKenna[2,3]
Francis Stewart[3,4]

Affiliations:
[1]Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research (CEDAR), University of Warwick, Coventry, United Kingdom

[2]World Religions and Education Research Unit, Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln, United Kingdom

[3]Department of New Testament Studies and Related Literature, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

[4]The Edward Bailey Centre for the Study of Implicit Religion, Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln, United Kingdom

Corresponding author:
Leslie Francis,
leslie.francis@warwick.ac.uk

Rooted in the field of cathedral studies, this paper draws into dialogue three bodies of knowledge: Edward Bailey's notion of implicit religion that, among other things, highlights the continuing traction of the Christian tradition and Christian practice within secular societies; David Walker's notion of the multiple ways through which in secular societies people may relate to the Christian tradition as embodied within the Anglican Church and John Fisher's notion of spiritual wellbeing as conceptualised in relational terms. Against this conceptual background, this paper draws on data provided by 1234 participants attending one of the Christmas Eve carol services in Liverpool Cathedral to explore the perceived impact of attendance on the spiritual health of people who do not believe in God and yet feel that Liverpool Cathedral is their cathedral, and it is this sense of belonging that brings them back at Christmas time.

Contribution: Situated within the science of cathedral studies, this paper links in an original way three fields of discourse: Edward Bailey's notion of implicit religion, David Walker's notion of the four ways of belonging to God facilitated by the Anglican Church and John Fisher's conceptualisation and operationalisation of the notion of spiritual wellbeing. The hypothesis developed from this original integration of theoretical perspectives is then tested empirically on data provided by 404 participants at carol services who do not believe in God.

Keywords: implicit religion; cathedral studies; spiritual wellbeing; ways of belonging; empirical theology; psychological type.

Introduction

The science of cathedral studies, as introduced and exemplified by Francis (ed. 2015), is located broadly within the field of empirical theology (Cartledge 1999; Francis & Village 2015; Van der Ven 1993). Empirical theology takes as its starting point matters of central concern to theological or ecclesiological debate, and addresses those matters with theories and methods developed within the social sciences. Cathedrals themselves pose matters of theological and ecclesiastical concern that are ripe for framing within social scientific theories and for addressing by social scientific methods. The kind of questions addressed in Francis' initial collection of essays included: mapping cathedral engagement with young people (Edwards & ap Siôn 2015); exploring the social capital generation within cathedral congregations (Francis & Williams 2015a); identifying the motivational styles of cathedral congregations in terms of intrinsic, extrinsic, and quest religious orientation (Francis & Williams 2015b); comparing the profiles of cathedral and parish church congregations (Lankshear, Francis & Ipgrave 2015); studying the ordinary prayer content and style displayed on the cathedral prayer board (ap Siôn 2015); discovering the impact on ordinary visitors through analysis of visitors' books (Burton 2015); encountering the variety of cathedral visitors (Francis, Robbins & Annis 2015) and listening to the distinctive voices of members of cathedral friends associations (Muskett 2015).

Within the range of empirical research that properly falls within the domain of cathedral studies, a significant body of research has begun to emerge from studies concerned with participants attending carol services in cathedrals and greater churches. Phillips (2010) reported on an exploration of the Christmas story and its meaning as told by members of the congregation at the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols held at York Minister on Christmas Eve 2007. Murphy (2016) reported on eight qualitative interviews with people who attended the Christmas Eve Carol Service at Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon in 2015.

Muskett (2017) presented a narrative case study exploring the 6-day Christmas Tree Festival in St Wulfram's Church, Grantham in 2015. This festival featured a large artificial skating rink in the centre of the nave, as well as 105 Christmas trees in the side aisles and chancel, decorated by local businesses, charities, church groups and individuals. Coleman, Bowman and Sepp (2019) explored how Christmas presents both an opportunity and a challenge for cathedrals, drawing on data from an interdisciplinary study of four English cathedrals: Canterbury, Durham, York (all Anglican), and Westminster (Roman Catholic).

Working within a quantitative tradition, in a series of papers, Walker (2012a, 2012b, 2013a, 2013b, 2015) reported on detailed surveys conducted at carol services held in Worcester Cathedral and in Lichfield Cathedral. In the first of these papers, Walker (2012a) employed religious orientation theory (Francis 2007) and reported on the higher level of quest religious orientation among those attending cathedral carol services, compared with those attending regular Sunday services in parish churches. In the second of these papers, Walker (2012b) employed psychological type theory (Francis 2005) and reported on the higher proportion of thinking types attending cathedral carol services, compared with those attending regular Sunday services. In the third paper, Walker (2013) gave close attention to the views of occasional churchgoers and identified their distinctive theological position. In the fourth paper, Walker (2015) identified clear demographic differences among those attending cathedral carol services and ordinary Sunday congregations, including a higher proportion of men and a higher proportion of younger people. The research tradition established by Walker in Worcester cathedral and in Lichfield Cathedral has been extended to Bangor Cathedral by Francis, Edwards and ap Siôn (2021) and to Liverpool Cathedral by Francis and Jones (2020), Francis, Jones & McKenna (2020, 2021a, 2021b), and Pike (2022).

It is within this context of the developing science of cathedral studies that the present paper poses a specific research aim regarding the impact of cathedral carol services on those who attend claiming not to believe in God. This question is refined by drawing on three bodies of knowledge, each of which both clarifies the conceptualisation of the question and poses a mechanism for addressing it within a social scientific frame of reference. These three bodies of knowledge will be introduced in turn: Edward Bailey's notion of implicit religion, David Walker's notion of ways of belonging and John Fisher's notion of spiritual wellbeing.

Implicit religion

Bailey's conceptualisation of implicit religion provides a heuristic tool for interrogating the presence of phenomena within secular societies that behave in ways analogous to explicit religion. For Bailey, implicit religion may be characterised by (but is not limited to) three key qualities (Francis, L.J., Flere, S., Klanjšek, R., Williams, E. and Robbins, M. 2013):

> Implicit religion displays *commitment*; it is something to which individuals feel committed. Implicit religion provides *integrating foci*; it is something that draws together the identity of an individual (or a group) and in doing so furnishes meaning and generates purpose. Implicit religion displays *intensive concerns with extensive effects*; it is something that helps to shape a worldview and carries implications for the way in which life is lived. (p. 953)

Intentionally, Bailey's account of implicit religion is a multi-faceted and broad construct that explores the persistence in contemporary societies of religious, spiritual and secular worldviews in ways either continuous with or discontinuous from the conventional practice of Christianity (Bailey 1997, 1998, ed. 2002).

The present study is rooted in the stream of research that explores forms of implicit religion continuous with the conventional practice of Christianity. This stream of research is in line with the third example of implicit religion that Bailey cited in his foundational book, *Implicit Religion in Contemporary Society* (Bailey 1997). The second example, 'The implicit religion of a public house' (pp. 129–192) stood outside the frame of traditional Christian expression, while the third example, 'The implicit religion of a residential parish' (pp. 193–262) clearly stood inside the frame of traditional Christian expression.

While Bailey's qualitative method of observation research differentiated these two streams by his choice of location, a quantitative tradition has conceptualised different belief structures that may capture the essence of these two streams. Belief systems that may capture implicit religion in ways discontinuous with traditional Christian expression include notions like belief in luck (Francis, Robbins & Williams 2006), new age beliefs (Kemp 2001) and belief in science (Francis, Astley, & McKenna, 2018). Belief systems that may capture implicit religion in ways continuous with traditional Christian expression include notions like 'You don't have to go to church to be a Christian' (Francis 2013a, 2013b; Walker 2013b; Walker, Francis & Robbins 2010) and beliefs in traditional Christian rites of passage at the times of birth, marriage and death (Francis & Penny 2016; Penny & Francis 2015).

The focus of the present study is on the people who attend Christmas carol services in a cathedral but who are clear that they do not believe in God. The question then is this: To what are they committed when they come, and how might they conceptualise that commitment? It is to David Walker's conceptualisation of ways of belonging that we need to turn to seek an answer to this question.

Ways of belonging

Walker's conceptualisation of multiple ways of belonging to God through the Church of England recognises that Churches and Sects function differently. Sects tend to build strong

boundaries between those who belong and those who do not. You know who belongs to Sects because they need to attend on a regular basis and contribute their membership fee. Churches tend to support porous boundaries and to be much less certain about differentiating between those who belong and those who do not. Walker's model of multiple ways in which people may belong to the Church of England was developed initially in a series of theoretical and empirical studies (Walker 2006, 2009, 2010a, 2010b) and then was summarised in his book *God's Belongers* (Walker 2017). This model distinguishes among four ways of belonging that Walker characterises as belonging through activities, belonging through events, belonging through people and belonging through places.

Walker characterises his first way of belonging as 'belonging through church activities'. Church activities take place on a regular and frequent basis. Participants are expected to engage with church activities, not just on some occasions, but with the whole series. Sunday services, home fellowship groups and regular functions for children and young people are all activities that require significant investment of time and energy. Such people are committed to attending week in and week out, and it is this commitment that engenders a sense of belonging.

Walker characterises his second way of belonging as 'belonging through events'. Church events embrace several different categories. Major Christian festivals, including Christmas, Harvest Thanksgiving and Remembrance Sunday, offer a recurring pattern through the calendar. The occasional offices, including baptisms, marriages and funerals, address particularly poignant points in the life cycle. Church-related public events, including summer fêtes, harvest suppers and other social activities, offer engagements with wider networks into local communities. Such people are committed to attending occasional events, and it is this commitment that engenders a sense of belonging.

Walker characterises his third way of belonging as 'belonging through relationships' or through connections with people. Each local church has associated with it key individuals who are recognised as representing the face of the church more broadly within the communities with which they interact. Some of these key people hold a formal office, as priest, reader, churchwarden or member of a local ministry team. Others are recognised simply for being there and for doing things. Such people are committed to these relationships, and it is this commitment that engenders a sense of belonging.

Walker characterises his fourth way of belonging as 'belonging through place'. While chapels may feel like private property belonging to the key holders, the unlocked door of the parish church or the cathedral may feel invitational, and the threshold easier to cross into the hallowed space. The churchyard affirms the way in which that space belongs both to those interred there and to those who revere their memory. Walker argues that there are many ways in which individuals may feel connected with a specific church or cathedral. Such people are committed to that place, and it is this commitment that engenders a sense of belonging.

Now in light of Walker's analysis of the four ways of belonging, it is reasonable to conceptualise those people who do not believe in God but who attend Christmas carol services in a cathedral as possible event belongers (i.e. as committed to attending carol services) and as possible place belongers (i.e. as committed, in this case, to attending Liverpool Cathedral). But how do we distinguish these event belongers and place belongers from casual visitors or curious tourists? The survey to which we will turn shortly, administered in Liverpool Cathedral at the two Christmas Eve carol services in 2019 helps us here, because it asked participants about their motivation for attendance, and one of the options was that they came last year. It is reasonable to identify such returners as displaying commitment both to the event (event belongers) and to the place (place belongers).

Spiritual wellbeing

The third body of knowledge on which this study builds is John Fisher's notion of spiritual wellbeing. Wellbeing is a multidimensional construct and embraces the three areas of physical wellbeing, psychological wellbeing and spiritual wellbeing. Spiritual wellbeing, like the notion of spirituality itself, is a contested construct open to various interpretations. The strength of Fisher's conceptualisation of spiritual wellbeing is threefold. Fisher differentiates four components or domains of spiritual wellbeing which he defines as the personal domain, the communal domain, the environmental domain and the transcendental domain. Fisher roots each domain in relational and affective terms. Fisher offers a range of well-tested instruments to operationalise this construct, that have now been tested across international studies.

In his foundation study, Fisher (1998) develops his understanding of these four domains of spiritual wellbeing in the following ways. The personal domain concerns the ways in which individuals relate to and evaluate their inner selves. It is concerned with meaning, purpose and values in life. In the personal domain, the human spirit creates self-awareness, relating to self-worth and identity. The communal domain concerns the quality and depth of inter-personal relationships, between self and others, relating to morality and culture. In the communal domain, the human spirit generates love, justice, hope and faith in humanity. The environmental domain concerns not only care and nurture for the physical and biological aspects of the world around us, but also a sense of awe and wonder. In the environmental domain, the human spirit nurtures, at least for some, the experience of unity or connectedness with the environment. The transcendental domain concerns the relationship of the self with something or someone beyond the human level, with a transcendent other, whether this be known as ultimate concern, cosmic force, transcendent reality or God. In the

transcendent domain, the human spirit nurtures a sense of trust and faith in, and a sense of adoration and worship for, the source of mystery at the heart of the universe.

Fisher's main attempt to operationalise his four-domain model of spiritual health is through the Spiritual Health and Life-Orientation Measure (SHALOM; Fisher 1999, 2010, 2016). Gomez and Fisher (2003) demonstrated that SHALOM showed good reliability (Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and variance extracted), and validity (construct, concurrent, discriminant, predictive and factorial independence from personality).

Subsequent studies have examined the psychometric properties of SHALOM from a range of perspectives, including studies reported by Gomez and Fisher (2005a), Gomez and Fisher (2005b) and by Hall, Reise and Haviland (2007). Other operationalisations of Fisher's four-domain model of spiritual health include the Spiritual Health in Four Domains Index (SH4DI; Fisher, Francis & Johnson 2000), Feeling Good, Living Life (Fisher 2004), and the Junior Spiritual Health Scales (JSHS; Francis, Lankshear & Eccles 2021). The survey administered in Liverpool Cathedral at the two Christmas Eve carol services in 2019 included a measure designed to capture Fisher's notion of spiritual wellbeing.

Research question

The initial broad aim of the present study, set within the context of the developing science of cathedral studies, was to explore the impact of attending cathedral carol services on those who attend claiming not to believe in God. Now in light of the three bodies of knowledge (concerning Edward Bailey's notion of implicit religion, David Walker's notion of ways of belonging and John Fisher's notion of spiritual wellbeing), this initial broad aim can now be reconceptualised as a much more specific research question and specific research hypothesis.

David Walker's notion of ways of belonging has helped us to differentiate between two groups of attendees among those who claim not to believe in God, casual attendees and more intentional attendees, that is to say those who attend with a sense of belonging through attachment to event, or of belonging through attachment to place. Edward Bailey's notion of implicit religion encourages us to conceptualise belonging through place and belonging through events as an expression of implicit religion and we may expect this form of implicit religion to generate some of the same consequences as explicit religion. This leads to the first research hypothesis that those participants among the unbelievers who have identified their motivation in attending as a consequence of attending last year will report a higher impact of attending on their sense of spiritual wellbeing. John Fisher's notion of spiritual wellbeing (as differentiating between four distinct areas, namely the personal domain, the communal domain, the environmental domain and the transcendental domain), leads to the second research hypothesis that this perceived higher level of impact on spiritual wellbeing among

unbelievers will relate to the personal domain, the communal domain and the environmental domain, but not to the transcendental domain. For these people we cannot expect the sense of enhanced spiritual wellbeing to extend to feeling better about their relationship with God – when they do not believe.

In operationalising these two research hypotheses, it is important to include in the research design key control variables that may relate to individual differences in spiritual wellbeing as recorded on Fisher-related variables, namely personal factors (sex and age), psychological factors and religious belief. Following the earlier work by Francis, Fisher and Annis (2015), the psychological factors taken into account are those proposed by psychological type theory, rooted in the work of Jung (1971). While the present analyses were operationalised among a subset of participants who did not affirm belief in God, the strength of rejection of this belief ranged from uncertain, through disagree, to disagree strongly. The strength of rejection may itself be an important indicator.

Method
Procedure

When people came into Liverpool Cathedral for the Christmas Eve Carol Services, the welcomers gave them a copy of the service and a white envelope containing the questionnaire and a pen. The welcomers invited participants to complete the first part of the questionnaire while they were waiting for the service to start. This invitation was reinforced by the video screens organised around the cathedral to relay the service. Participants were invited to complete the second part of the questionnaire towards the end of the service during a 5-min organ improvisation on 'In the bleak mid-winter'. At the close of the service, 1234 questionnaires were returned with full demographic data, of which 874 had also completed part two of the questionnaire.

Instrument

From the first part of the questionnaire the following variables were employed in the present study (cf. Table 1; Table 2).

Motivation for attending the service was categorised as dummy variables: came last year, friends invited me, cathedral website, social media, cathedral Christmas leaflet and local news.

Psychological type was assessed by the Francis Psychological Type Scales (FPTS) (Francis 2005; Francis, Laycock & Brewster 2017). This is a 40-item instrument comprising four sets of 10 forced-choice items related to each of the four

TABLE 1: Sex as a variable in the questionnaire.

Sex	Category code
Male	1
Female	2
Other	3

TABLE 2: Age as a variable in the questionnaire

Age	Category code
19-years and younger	1
20-29 years	2
30-39 years	3
40-49 years	4
50-59 years	5
60-69 years	6
70-80 years	7
80-years and over	8

components of psychological type: orientation (extraversion or introversion), perceiving process (sensing or intuition), judging process (thinking or feeling) and attitude towards the outer world (judging or perceiving). Recent studies have demonstrated that this instrument functions well in church-related contexts. For example, Francis, Craig and Hall (2008) reported alpha coefficients of 0.83 for the EI scale, 0.76 for the SN scale, 0.73 for the TF scale and 0.79 for the JP scale. Participants were asked for each pair of characteristics to check the:

> [B]ox next to that characteristic which is closer to the real you, even if you feel both characteristics apply to you. Tick the characteristics that reflect the real you, even if other people see you differently.

Belief in God was assessed by the item 'I believe in God', rated on a five-point Likert scale: agree strongly (5), agree (4), not certain (3), disagree (2), disagree strongly (1).

From the second part of the questionnaire, the following variable was employed.

Perceived impact on spiritual wellbeing was assessed by the prompt, 'Attending the service today in Liverpool Cathedral has helped me …' followed by 16 items reflecting the four domains within Fisher's conceptualisation of spiritual wellbeing. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale: agree strongly (5), agree (4), not certain (3), disagree (2), disagree strongly (1).

Analysis

The present analysis was conducted on the subset of participants who self-identified as not believing in God (rating the question as uncertain, disagree or strongly disagree) and who had completed full data for the psychological type scales in part one of the questionnaire and for the Fisher spiritual wellbeing measure in the second part of the questionnaire. Within this category there were complete data from 404 participants.

Participants

Of the 404 participants included in the present analysis, 181 were male and 223 were female; 27 were under the age of 20, 69 in their twenties, 75 in their thirties, 65 in their forties, 91 in their fifties, 58 in their sixties, 17 in their seventies and two were aged 80 and over. The majority described their present or most recent work as professional or semi-professional (83%).

TABLE 3: Perceived impact of attendance on spiritual wellbeing.

Variables	Yes %
Self	
Reflect on my personal wellbeing	61
Feel better about myself	54
Open my eyes to the good in myself	46
Connect better with my inner self	50
Others	
Reflect on my relationship with other people	62
Feel better about my relationships with other people	50
Open my eyes to the good in other people	58
Connect better with other people close to me	50
World	
Reflect on my relationship with the world	53
Feel better about my relationship with the world	45
Open my eyes to the good in the world	50
Connect better with the natural world	35
God	
Reflect on my relationship with God	31
Feel better about my relationship with God	21
Open my eyes to the good in God	31
Connect better with God	19

Note: $N = 404$.
Yes % is the sum of the agree and agree strongly responses.

They described themselves as attending church fewer than six times a year (87%), compared with just 8% who described themselves as attending at least six times a year and a further 5% as attending at least once a month. In terms of religious affiliation, 43% self-assigned as none, 54% as Christian and 2% as other. Just over one-third (35%) had attended last year. While this subsection of the participants had been selected because they had not affirmed belief in God, the strength of rejection of this belief varied with 50% responding not certain, 24% disagreeing and 26% disagreeing strongly with the item 'I believe in God'.

Results and discussion

The first step in exploring these data concerned an assessment of the overall perceived impact of attending the carol service on the spiritual wellbeing of the 404 participants who did not affirm belief in God. The data presented in Table 3 suggest that around half of these participants felt that attending the service had impacted their wellbeing within the personal, communal and environmental domains. In terms of the personal domain, attending the service had helped them to reflect on their personal wellbeing (61%), to feel better about themselves (54%), to connect better with their inner self (50%) and to open their eyes to the good within themselves (46%). In terms of the communal domain, attending the service had helped them to reflect on their relationships with other people (62%), to open their eyes to the good in other people (58%), to feel better about their relationships with other people (50%) and to connect better with other people close to them (50%). In terms of the environmental domain, attending the service had helped them to reflect on their relationship with the world (53%), to open their eyes to the good in the world (50%), to feel better about their relationship with the world (45%) and to connect better with the natural world (35%).

Although none of the participants included in the analysis affirmed belief in God, attending the service in the cathedral had caused up to a third of them to perceive impact in the transcendental domain. Their attendance had helped them to reflect on their relationship with God (31%), to open their eyes to the good in God (31%), to feel better about their relationship with God (21%) and to connect better with God (19%).

The second step in exploring these data concerned examining the psychometric properties of the eight scales. The data presented in Table 4 demonstrate the four spiritual wellbeing scales all recorded a good level of internal consistency reliability (Cronbach 1951). The four psychological type scales recorded satisfactory levels, although the intuition scale was less strong than the others.

The third step concerned exploring the bivariate correlations between the eight predictor variables and the three spiritual wellbeing scales. The data presented in Table 5 suggest that both the intensity of unbelief and the commitment expressed by having attended last year as well as this year are both significant predictors of individual differences in spiritual wellbeing. These associations now need to be clarified within multivariate models.

The fourth and final step in exploring these data employs multiple regression analysis to explore the cumulative effect of the predictor variables on the four spiritual wellbeing scales. The regression models presented in Table 6 were constructed in four steps. Step 1 entered the personal factors (sex and age); step 2 entered the psychological factors (extraversion, intuition, feeling and judging); step 3 entered the strength of unbelief in God and step 4 entered attendance the previous year (our proxy measure for implicit religion). Three features of these models merit commentary. Firstly, spiritual wellbeing across the personal, communal and environmental domains is higher among intuitive types than among sensing types. This is consistent with the thesis advanced by Ross (1992, 2012) that the perceiving process is central to individual differences in spirituality, with intuitive types showing great propensity for spirituality. Secondly, the intensity with which unbelief is held is a strong predictor of individual differences across all four domains of spiritual wellbeing, with agnostics reporting higher spiritual health

scores than atheists. Thirdly, in addition to the effect of strength of unbelief, individuals who displayed commitment to the event and to the location by coming back showed a higher impact on spiritual wellbeing across the personal, communal and environmental domains, but not the transcendental domain. It is this finding that is consistent with the hypothesis that commitment to event belonging and commitment to place belonging function as a form of implicit religion generating effects similar to those generated by explicit religion.

Conclusion

The initial broad aim of the present study, set within the context of the developing science of cathedral studies, was to explore the impact of attending the Christmas Eve carol services in Liverpool Cathedral on those who attend claiming not to believe in God. This broad aim was refined by drawing on three bodies of knowledge. Drawing on John Fisher's notion of spiritual wellbeing, impact was conceptualised and operationalised as the perceived effect of attendance on four domains of spiritual wellbeing rooted in relational and affective terms. Drawing on David Walker's model of belonging to God through the Church of England, those who attended claiming not to believe in God were seen to comprise two distinct groups: casual attendees and more intentional attendees, that is to say those who attend with a sense of belonging through attachment to the event or of belonging through attachment to the place. Drawing on Edward Bailey's notion of implicit religion, Walker's notion of commitment to events or commitment to place was reconceptualised as an expression of implicit religion.

Against this background, the research question was sharpened to assess the impact of explicit religion and implicit religion on individual differences across the four domains of spiritual wellbeing among attendees claiming not to believe in God.

TABLE 4: Scale properties.

Variables	alpha	Mean	SD
Psychological type			
Extraversion	0.77	5.08	2.75
Intuition	0.63	4.16	2.21
Feeling	0.72	5.02	2.65
Judging	0.77	6.61	2.62
Spiritual wellbeing			
Self	0.85	13.29	3.34
Others	0.86	13.39	3.33
World	0.90	12.80	3.46
God	0.92	11.06	3.65

SD, standard deviation.

TABLE 5: Correlations with four domains of spiritual wellbeing.

Variables	Self r	Others r	World r	God r
Sex	0.07	0.06	0.08	0.09
Age	0.03	-0.03	-0.04	-0.10
Extraversion	0.04	0.01	0.02	0.02
Intuition	0.16**	0.14*	0.18**	0.07
Feeling	0.15*	0.01	0.15**	0.11*

Note: *, $p < 0.05$; **, $p < 0.01$; ***, $p < 0.001$.

TABLE 6: Regression models on four domains of spiritual wellbeing.

Variables	Self β	Others β	World β	God β
Sex	0.01	-0.01	-0.02	-0.03
Age	0.06	-0.06	-0.03	-0.12*
Extraversion	0.02	0.00	0.00	-0.01
Intuition	0.19**	0.16**	0.18**	0.05
Feeling	0.13*	0.11	0.14*	0.09
Judging	0.10	0.09	0.08	0.01
Unbelief	0.24***	0.27***	0.30***	0.55***
Came last year	0.17**	0.21***	0.15**	0.07

Note: *, $p < 0.05$; **, $p < 0.01$; ***, $p < 001$.

The indicator of explicit religion was operationalised as strength of rejection of belief in God. Among those who did not affirm belief in God, 50% reported as agnostic (not certain), 24% as atheist (disagree) and 26% as convinced atheist (disagree strongly). The indicator of implicit religion was operationalised as a *commitment* to attending the carol service in Liverpool Cathedral, as evidenced by attendance 2 years running. Two main findings emerged from the regression models. Firstly, strength of rejection of belief in God had a statistically significant effect across all four domains of spiritual wellbeing, suggesting that agnostics reported a greater impact than atheists as a consequence of attending the carol service on personal wellbeing, communal wellbeing, environmental wellbeing and transcendental wellbeing. Moreover, the greatest impact was on transcendental wellbeing, that is to say on how they felt about their relationship with God. Secondly, the sense of belonging with the place and with the event had a statistically significant effect across three of the four domains of spiritual wellbeing, suggesting that those who expressed commitment in this way reported a greater impact on personal wellbeing, communal wellbeing and environmental wellbeing. However, in this case there was no significant impact on transcendental wellbeing. Three main conclusions emerge from these findings.

First, these data confirm the value of Fisher's four domain model of spiritual wellbeing by demonstrating how, within the context of explicit religion, the transcendental domain functions differently from the other three domains. This is consistent with the critique of the model offered recently by Francis, Lankshear, and Eccles (2021). While in some contexts it may be valid to amalgamate the four domains into one total score, doing so may disguise variation within the domains and also be potentially misleading.

Secondly, these data support Walker's theory that the notion of belonging through events and through place carries empirical correlates of spiritual significance. People who feel connected with Liverpool Cathedral and who feel connected with the carol service in such a way that they return year on year do indeed derive more spiritual benefit from their attendance than those who appear to be more casual attenders.

Thirdly, these data support the view that Edward Bailey's notion of implicit religion provides a useful or valid lens through which to view and to evaluate Walker's event belongers and place belongers. For these people, their sense of belonging seems to carry the quality of commitment that has the *same* effect as explicit religious belief across three of the domains of spiritual wellbeing. That this does not extend to the fourth domain, the transcendental domain, among the present population is consistent with the view that the population was specifically selected because they did not profess belief in God.

Together these three conclusions carry implications both for future research and for cathedral ministry. In terms of future research, the present study was limited by a relatively simplistic indicator for belonging through events and through place. Future research should develop more effective attitudinal indicators differentiating among Walker's four ways of belonging and ensure that these indicators are suitable for reflection through Bailey's lens of implicit religion. In terms of cathedral ministry, the present study highlights the potential for placing value on event belongers and place belongers. Future strategy should consider developing virtual networks through which such people can express, affirm and develop their sense of belonging with the Cathedral in a way that could enable belonging through events and belonging through place to be augmented by belonging through people. Such connectivity may be reflected in enhanced spiritual wellbeing among participants and enhanced financial wellbeing for the Cathedral.

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