BRITAIN DOESN'T WANT TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE

Posted on July 1, 2009 by Eddie

Category: Church: World

The Independent reports an interesting survey which was carried out on behalf of the Centre for Biblical Literacy at St. John's Durham.

> *The public is widely ignorant of the stories and people who provide the basis of Christianity, a survey has found, despite 75 per cent of respondents owning a copy of the Bible.*
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> *The National Biblical Literacy Survey found that as few as 10 per cent of people understood the main characters in the Bible and their relevance.*
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> *Figures such as Abraham and Joseph were a source of puzzlement and it was rare to find anyone who could name the Ten Commandments.*
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> *Many stories considered to be central to the Christian message were a mystery to most. As few as 7 per cent of respondents knew the story of Whitsun and only 15 per cent were familiar with the stories associated with Advent.*

From a cultural point of view, it is surprising that so few people have an understanding of one of the basic texts which underlies so much of our literature, art and society.Â On a missional note, the temptation is to say that the church needs to get back to simply explaining and promoting the message of the Bible so that people can once again learn the stories which have slipped out of folk memory.Â But if you think that way, it is worth reading down to some of the comments on the article. Here is one example:

> *The modern bible is a fraud put together by medieval clerical bigots. They ruthlessly removed the books of the so-called "apocrypha" (their term) because they didn't like the content. Christianity is simply a system of moral blackmail to hold the population in check, to work them into the grave for the profit of the landowners... and tell them that "God" wants all this and their "riches will be in heaven".*

And there is much more of the same sort of thing. Of course commentators on a blog (even this one) are a self-selecting group and can't be held to be fully representative of the population. However, I do believe that they are indicative of a slice of the opinion-formers in our society. What this article and the response indicates is that Britain is not so much apathetic to the Bible, but it is becoming increasingly hostile to it. You can see this in the immediate hostile response to Pmphilips plea for serious debate. I've commented on the growing antipathy to Christianity here and here.

A missional approach to life in Britain must take on board this growing hostility to the faith.

If you missed the link above, the Indy article is here.