CHRISTIAN NAMES

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Category: Observations

Apparently, the Pope is very worried about the current fad for giving children modern and fanciful names. According to the Daily Telegraph:

> *The Pope has warned parents against giving children celebrity-inspired names and urged them to turn to the Bible for inspiration instead.*

I must admit, that I'm all for children having reletively traditional names. Children can be pretty cruel and kids with unusual names make easy targets for playground bullying. However, I'm far from convinced by the reasoning that the Pope gives for wanting to maintain Christian names:

> *"Every baptised child acquires the character of the son of God, beginning with their Christian name, an unmistakable sign that the Holy Spirit causes man to be born anew in the womb of the Church." He added that a name was an "indelible seal" that set children off on a lifelong "journey of religious faith".*

I've got to admit that I haven't a clue in what way having a so-called Christian name helps a child to acquire the character of the Son of God. Scripture doesn't have a great deal to say about our names - other than that God knows them and that we will be given a new one in eternity. I also know plenty of people who have Bible names, but whose lives have been far from a "lifelong journey of religious faith". I do think names are important. They are more than just labels by which we identify people (I discussed this with regard to the name of God here), but it does seem that the Pope has somewhat overstated his case here. The thing about Christian names is not so much that they impart grace (much less Godly character) to the child, but they are something of an indication of the background into which the children are borne. Where parents have a live Christian faith, they are likely to choose a Biblical name for their children and they will do their best to bring them up to love and respect God. But the name is the result of something deeper, not the cause. People could switch to giving their children 'Christian names' but it wouldn't make the people or the kids Christians any more than being called Edwin makes me the King of Northumbria (the link will explain the picture at the top of this post).Â What we need is to encourage parents to engage with the Gospel and to come to a living relationship with Christ, not to give their kids traditional names. In the end it counts for nothing if our kids all have good Biblical names, if as a people we don't have faith in Christ.