

Bible Society Newswatch 27 August 2010

This week in the world press:

Catholic Church denies Claudy bomb cover-up
African bishops accuse West of disobeying God
Susan Boyle delighted to sing for the Pope
Drug couple confess to killing 'born-again Christian'
Chinese government supports church growth
Emmerdale actor says faith is vital to his life

This week in the Church press:

RE sees 'relentless' rise in popularity
Aid workers warn of 'second wave' of Pakistan deaths
Care for terminally ill varies according to doctors' beliefs

Culture watch:

C of E believes BBC should have a religion editor

This week in the world press:

Catholic Church denies Claudy bomb cover-up

An official report has implicated the Roman Catholic Church in a conspiracy with the police and Government to protect a terrorist suspect. But Cardinal Sean Brady says the Church did not move the suspect, a priest, from Northern Ireland to the Republic to avoid British criminal jurisdiction. Father James Chesney is alleged to have been involved in the triple car bomb attack in Claudy, committed at the height of the conflict in 1972. The report, by Northern Ireland's Police Ombudsman, accuses the Church of colluding with the authorities because they were worried that revealing Father Chesney's alleged IRA activity would escalate the violence into civil war. Cardinal Brady claims the transfer of Chesney did not prevent police investigating the case, but Ulster Unionist Sir Reg Empey said the Cardinal's response was 'entirely inadequate'.

Sources: The Times (24/8); Daily Telegraph (24/8, 26/8); UTV News (24/8)

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/article2699706.ece>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/northernireland/7961872/Claudy-bombing-Catholic-Church-denies-cover-up-over-IRA-bomb-attack.html>

<http://www.u.tv/News/Church-denies-Claudy-cover-up/fa4eae0f-32b5-442d-9622-ff6535dbdd45>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/northernireland/7963918/Church-accused-of-lacking-moral-authority-over-Claudy-bombing.html>

African bishops accuse West of disobeying God

According to bishops at an African conference, the western Anglican church has abandoned biblical teaching. At the Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa, Reverend Ian Ernest of Mauritius said 'the West is lacking obedience to the word of God'. The conference host and Archbishop of Uganda, Henry Luke Orombi, said that 'homosexuality is incompatible with the word of God' and added that the African leaders would share their opinions with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, at the event. Some African bishops think the head of the Anglican Communion has been too tolerant on homosexual issues. Dr Williams spoke at the opening of the conference on Tuesday about the need to 'love and attend to... humanity in all its diversity'.

Source: Daily Nation (24/8)

<http://www.nation.co.ke/News/africa/African%20bishops%20say%20Anglicans%20in%20West%20strayed%20from%20God/-/1066/995948/-/6q5wyx/-/>

Susan Boyle delighted to sing for the Pope

Britain's Got Talent star Susan Boyle has spoken of her joy at being invited to perform for the Pope when he visits Scotland next month. Boyle says she is 'humbled and honoured' to be singing at the open-air Mass at Bellahouston Park in Glasgow on 16 September. She will sing three times: her big hit 'I Dreamed a Dream', the hymn 'How Great Thou Art', and a farewell song to Benedict XVI as he leaves for England. The Scottish singer, who will be joined by an 800-voice choir, says singing for the pontiff is 'something I've always dreamed of' and 'I can't really put into words my happiness.' She acknowledges that her faith is 'the backbone' of her life and she prays every day.

Sources: BBC (25/8); Daily Telegraph (25/8)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-11079362>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/religion/the-pope/7963107/Susan-Boyle-to-sing-for-Pope.html>

Drug couple confess to killing 'born-again Christian'

A man and a woman from Peterhead have pleaded guilty to culpable homicide of a man described by Aberdeen's Press and Journal as a 'born-again Christian'. Drug addicts Mark Junor and Elaine Young, who fatally stabbed Martyn Stewart in his home last November, had both been previously convicted of assault. At the High Court in Aberdeen, the prosecutor said Junor had 'some form of personality disorder'. Mr Stewart had joined a Peterhead church, Kairos Christian Outreach Centre, in search of help to defeat his own drug addiction and start a new life. The church's pastor said he attended regularly, became a member in 2008 and had been baptised.

Source: The Press and Journal (25/8)

<http://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/Article.aspx/1885543?UserKey=#ixzz0xbnR15vf>

Chinese government supports church growth

Chinese communism has been responsible for some of the worst state oppression of Christians known in the modern world, yet today's China is pumping millions of dollars into church building programmes. In a BBC interview, the director general of the State Administration for Religious Affairs admitted there were at least 20 million Protestants worshipping in state churches. He called the growth 'unprecedented' and explained why he is supporting the building of both Protestant and Catholic state-sanctioned seminaries: 'We hope they can train qualified clergy members so that their religions can enjoy better development.' Yet he stated that 'the Chinese Communist Party believes there is no God'. Professor Xhuo Xinping of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences believes Christianity can find even more acceptance if churches get involved in social service.

Source: BBC News (24/8)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-11020947>

Emmerdale actor says faith is vital to his life

Emmerdale character Carl King is a womanising murderer, but actor Tom Lister is a committed Christian and family man. Yet Lister sees no conflict between his TV role and his real life, and says of his faith: 'I couldn't live without it. It's the most important part of my life.' Lister, 32, is a married father-of-two and leads a worship band at his Yorkshire church. The actor finds playing a villain 'interesting' and believes he's in TV for a reason. He says the Church needs to 'move with the times' to keep young people, without losing

'the fundamentals of Christianity'. In the precarious world of acting, he believes his faith has kept him 'really grounded'.

Source: Daily Record (21/8)

<http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/showbiz/celebrity-interviews/2010/08/21/i-may-play-a-killer-and-a-womaniser-but-my-faith-as-a-christian-keeps-me-grounded-says-emmerdale-s-to-m-lister-86908-22503310/>

This week in the Church press:

RE sees 'relentless' rise in popularity

Schoolchildren are choosing to study religion in ever greater numbers, says the Church of England. The number of kids taking the Religious Education GCSE has risen for the twelfth year in a row, and there has been a similar surge in Religious Studies A-Level and AS-Level courses. RE has broken into the top ten subjects, judged by the number of candidates, and its popularity is rising faster than history and maths. The Church of England's Head of School Improvement, Nick McKemey, says that 'young people are clamouring for a deeper understanding of religious perspectives'. Revd Janina Ainsworth, the Church's Chief Education Officer, points out that the success of religious courses belies humanist claims that religion is irrelevant to young people.

Sources: Christian Today (24/8); Church Times (27/8)

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/more.students.taking.religious.education.gcse/26567.htm>

<http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=99551>

Aid workers warn of 'second wave' of Pakistan deaths

A Christian charity official working in Pakistan has warned that the death toll from the aftermath of the floods could far exceed the initial fatalities if more aid does not arrive soon. Dorothy Blane, Country Director for Concern Worldwide in Pakistan, says: 'The world is only now waking up to the alarm that the humanitarian community has been sounding for more than three weeks about the scale of the emergency.' Blane says 'the deficient and delayed response is starting to exact its cost.' She adds that children are already dying, and 'if we don't act quickly, many, many more will die'. The charity Church

World Service has also described the international response as 'far from adequate', and Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela have urged the world to give more.

Sources: ASSIST News (24/8); Church Times (27/8)

<http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2010/s10080111.htm>

<http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=99555>

Care for terminally ill varies according to doctors' beliefs

The Journal for Medical Ethics reports that atheist doctors are more likely to assist a patient to die than believers. The research, carried out by the London University, also found that non-religious doctors were much more willing to talk with a patient about end-of-life options. The survey of around 4,000 doctors follows new advice from the General Medical Council that states that patients can refuse treatment to prolong their life. Though it is against the law for doctors to deliberately shorten life, they may give pain-killers that have the side-effect of quickening the dying process. Atheist doctors are 40 per cent more likely to use this 'deep sedation' than medics with religious beliefs. The Christian Medical Fellowship's Dr Andrew Ferguson says that all doctors should offer the same treatments.

Sources: Premier Radio (26/8); BBC News (26/8)

<http://www.premier.org.uk/news/current/atheist%20doctors%20more%20likely%20to%20help%20ill%20patients%20die.aspx>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-11083891>

Culture watch:

C of E believes BBC should have a religion editor

While appreciating the quality of the BBC's religious programming, a Church of England spokesman questions why the broadcaster does not have a specialist on religion. The Bishop of Manchester, Nigel McCulloch, says a senior correspondent could bring 'greater depth' to religious coverage, and wonders why the BBC has editors for the arts, science and business but not for religion. The Bishop's comments echo the words of Radio 4 presenter Roger Bolton who has also called for the appointment of a religion editor. McCulloch, the Church's most senior PR official, made the point in a submission to the BBC Trust's consultation on Radio 3, Radio 4 and Radio 7. The move follows

criticism of the BBC at the Church's Synod, when clerics claimed that religious and moral coverage was being 'marginalised.'

Sources: The Guardian (23/8); Daily Telegraph (24/8); Ekklesia (24/8)

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2010/aug/23/bbc-religion-editor-church-of-england>
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/religion/7960684/Church-of-England-calls-for-BBC-to-appoint-religion-editor.html>
<http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/12923>

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