



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Religious leaders reject Bible



The majority of leading public figures including church leaders and politicians do not believe in the Biblical version of the Creation, according to a survey. A study by BBC Radio 4's Today programme provided a snapshot view of the state of Christian faith at the end of the 20th Century, and revealed that the majority doubt the Virgin Birth.

Questionnaires were sent to 1,000 public figures including religious leaders, leading politicians, newspaper editors, scientists and head teachers. Some of the questions asked were: Do you believe in the act of Creation? Do you believe in the virgin birth? Do you believe Adam and Eve existed? Do you believe in a place called Heaven? Are all the Ten Commandments applicable today?

Not surprisingly perhaps, the most sceptical responses came from scientists with only one believing in the act of Creation and the majority answering "No" to nearly all the questions. Politicians also seem unconvinced by many traditional Christian teachings with less than one quarter believing that Adam and Eve existed.

"UNION OF HERETICS!"

The most revealing answers, however, came from members of the clergy. Up to 50 Anglican "priests" are in the Sea of Faith network in the UK. Although it has about 700 members in the UK, it draws on several denominations and also other religions. It claims it has up to 50 vicars and some Roman Catholic priests in its membership, as well as rank and file church members. But what binds the members together is that they share the view that religion is a "human creation". Some of its members go further and believe that God is also a human creation - a metaphor for human values such as love and forgiveness. In other words, some of them believe there is no such thing as God in the traditional sense of an independent being. The organisation has attracted nicknames such as "Godless vicars" and "atheist priests".

It is some years since David Jenkins, then Bishop of Durham, hit the headlines for saying he did not believe in the physical resurrection of Christ, or the virgin birth. But the bishop was not alone in thinking things which Church authorities find unpalatable.