



arcvoice

A Report from Australian Reforming Catholics Inc.
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Editorial

My personal experience of dealing over these last 20 years with doctrinal power is this:

- It is cruel and merciless.
- It forgets nothing,
- Forgives nothing,
- It exacts a price for everything.

Leonardo Boff

To my companions on the journey of hope, 1992

Quoted by John Collins at the ARC Conference

On Saturday 13 September our one-day Conference and first Annual General Meeting as an Incorporated Association took place under the experienced leadership of John Buggy and Rob Brian respectively. At the last moment both the facilitator, Julie McCrossin, and the chair of the AGM, Sr Veronica Brady, had to stay home for health reasons.

John N. Collins PhD travelled from Melbourne to give a superb lecture on the development of the confession of faith, the Creed in Early Christianity. I use the word 'superb' because John displayed great knowledge and insight which he shared with us in clear language in both the lecture itself and as member of the panel which discussed the subject after the interval.

Kerry Gonzales, who was one of the panellists, presents us with an inspiring commentary on the present state of the Church under a regime that is turning the clock back to the pre-Vatican II age instead of forward *Towards a New Creed in a New Age*. As the Body of Christ, the People of God, **We are Church**, and – I dare to say – is personified by Kerry!

The paraliturgy after lunch consisted of spontaneously presented prayers and thoughts by participants, which later assisted them to express their concerns about the state of the Church, but also to make proposals for ways and means of healing.

The election of members of the Secretariat ran smoothly and we can proudly show a necessary increase in their number. In addition, some volunteers (Maureen Brian, Maureen Couch and Norma Piper) formed a small standby committee for specific tasks such as assisting in the organisation of conferences, general meetings, distribution of *arcvoices*, forming of local groups and so on. See back page for names of members of the Secretariat and Standby Committee.

I encourage the formation of local groups, to keep in touch with other members and with the Secretariat. Please advise us of changes of name, address, phone and email. Keep your membership up-to-date each 1st July.

Jim Taverne

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A New Creed for a New Age

Kerry Gonzalez

For many years I have had serious concerns about the Catholic Church and the ways it operates, at both a local and Roman level. I have often spoken out about my concerns, putting me into conflict with Church authority. Yet, for a long time I continued to be an active member of my local parish and the wider Church. Ultimately, however, it was the 'creed' that was my undoing. There came a time when I could no longer say the words. I could not, in good faith, profess things that I had probably never believed. Such words are quite distant from the faith that I do proclaim. Of course I knew them by heart but, when I consciously chose to mean what I was saying, I couldn't do it. As often happens when you go down such a path, I found that there were too many parts of the Mass that I could not meaningfully participate in, and that coupled with my constant anger about all sorts of issues meant that I had to step back and reassess my faith journey.

Recently I attended the Australian Reforming Catholics (ARC) conference entitled 'Towards a New Creed for a New Age'. The keynote speaker was John Neill Collins PhD who gave a very interesting session on the historical notion of a 'creed' and how it had changed over time.

One of the things that stuck in my mind was the understanding that the first use of a creed was for baptism, where the adult being baptised acknowledged the beliefs that had led them to seek baptism. Over time, however, this acknowledgement of belief became a 'Rule of Faith' and ultimately a measure of determining suitability for inclusion in the Catholic community. Even today in many instances it is being used as a way for individuals to prove their faith (<http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/articles/a0000372.shtml>), in this instance conformity to Church dogma.

The creed should never have been used as a weapon to support hierarchical power and, according to Leonardo Boff, the use of this power bears little resemblance to the example of Jesus:

My personal experience of dealing over the last 20 years with doctrinal power is this: it is cruel and merciless; it forgets nothing; forgives nothing; it exacts a price for everything (Leonardo Boff – 1992).

Also of interest was the Church's use of the Greek word 'haireisis' or 'heresy' meaning a 'school of thought or preferred doctrine'. It seems that historically heretics were a valued part of the community, who helped the group to understand more about themselves and what they believed in. Today of course, the word heretic is used often by the Church, but not in a positive way. The term places the person outside the community, with the understanding that their

beliefs are at best confused, more likely wrong. Not only that, however, as they need to be kept apart so that they don't taint the orthodox members of the community.

There was also, at the conference, a strong feeling that we, the body of Christ, no longer had a real stake in the church – that it has been taken from us. Moving forward for many people evoked a need to reclaim the church that we form an integral part of. Yet, I'm not sure what this really means. As a baptised adult Catholic the best I can say is that I am, as a result of that baptism, able to accept and evidence the rights and responsibilities inherent in being a follower of the teachings of Jesus Christ. I believe that I am an integral part of the 'Body of Christ', but I don't believe or feel that I am 'the Church'. I understand the thinking behind the belief, but I don't really want to be a part of the Church as it currently exists. In theory the laity have, along with the clergy and all the baptised, always been the Church. Yet, apart from a few heady years after VaticanII, I can't really think of any instances in modern times where there has been any reality behind the idea. So, given that we have never had any power base to work from, I don't see how we can really reclaim something that we have never had.

To have a Catholic Church 'by the people, for the people' would require a seismic shift that I cannot imagine in any lifetime. Certainly there are small gains that may be achievable, over time and at great cost, but the real attitudinal change required to re-make the Church in ways that include and encourage the vast majority of the baptised seems too unlikely and distant for me to even contemplate.

When you look around at the many groups seeking change within the Catholic Church, it is obvious that most of us are no longer twenty-somethings out to change the world. Rather we are experienced, committed, heretical Catholics seeking more meaningfully to live out our baptism in a challenging world – within the Church if we can, but also very meaningfully outside the structures if necessary.

Often we are labelled as 'Cafeteria Catholics' – people who pick and choose from the menu, rather than accepting all the 'truths' as told to us by the Church (hierarchy in this context). Yet the same accusation can be levelled at the Church itself. For in the very skewed relationship between the Church and the people of God, the church only wants people to take what they allow to be taken and only allows us to give what they allow to be given. The Church does not want me in all my giftedness and fragility – they don't want who I really am and what I have to contribute – rather the Church only wants me on its own terms, regardless of who I am and what I bring to the table. Under those circumstances how can I ever be anything more than a bum on a pew?

There is no doubt that, as a Church and as individuals, we do need to be able to articulate a creed. Such a creed helps us to define ourselves and provides guidance for us on the journey. Yet such a creed needs to be a strong reflection of where we have come from, where we are now and what we strive for. A creed should never be imposed or used as a tool of judgment or exclusion. As people of God our human frailty means that we will often not live up to our individual or community beliefs, but as God's children we trust that we will always be accepted and nurtured at each and every point in our journey. I believe that Jesus confirms this for us all.

So while I may not be able to say many of the words of the official creed, I can still say, with a depth of faith born of and borne by experience, that I do believe.

This belief allows me to find solace and sustenance from a variety of sources, both within and outside the Church, and one of my current ones is:

May the road be free for the journey,
 May it lead where it promised it would,
 May the stars that gave ancient bearings
 Be seen, still be understood
 May every aircraft fly safely,
 May every traveller be found,
 May sailors in crossing the ocean
 Not hear the cries of the drowned
 May gardens be wild, like jungles,
 May nature never be tamed,
 May dangers create of us heroes,
 May fears always have names,
 May the mountains stand to remind us,
 Of what it mean to be young
 May we be outlived by our daughters,
 May we be outlived by our sons
 May the bombs rust away in the bunkers,
 And the doomsday clock not be rewound
 May the solitary scientists, working
 Remember the holes in the ground
 May the knife remain in the holder,
 May the bullet stay in the gun,
 May those who live in the shadows
 Be seen by those in the sun

John Marsden, *Prayer for the 21st century*



Mark Raue and Louise Crawford



John Buggy



The Panel: John Collins, Kerry Gonzales, Peter Meury and Marnie Kennedy

Reports to the Annual General Meeting

Secretariat's Report

Since our last Conference in 2006 we have continued to have regular meetings of the Secretariat. Unfortunately since 2006 four valuable members – Michael Gravener, Kerry Gonzales and Therese and Gerrard O'Neill – found it necessary to resign from the Secretariat. However, we are very pleased to have two new members: Donella Johnson from Canberra and John Hiller from Fremantle.

Our membership is currently 240. They include a number of religious who participate in our conferences.

Following previous discussion, Bishop David Walker invited John Buggy, as spokesperson for ARC, to address the Curia Leaders Workshop in the Diocese of Broken Bay in May 2007. John presented a very thought-provoking and inspiring paper entitled, 'Understanding Disaffected Catholics' designed to help the Diocesan planners address the issue of falling Church attendance.

In May 2007 we were disappointed at not being able to obtain John Dominic Crossan to speak with us during a conference we were trying to organise for last October.

On 8 June 2007 as representative of ARC, John Buggy wrote a very powerful letter to *The West Australian* newspaper about the seriousness of the Stem Cell Research debate and the audacity of Cardinal Pell and Archbishop Hickey in Perth to speak out as if representing the whole Catholic Church in Australia. Cardinal Pell is not the head of the Catholic Church in Australia, as wrongly stated in much of the media, nor is he head of the Australian Conference of Bishops.

On 24 July 2007, under the NSW Association Incorporation Act 1984, we became Incorporated, indicating a certain level of maturity.

On 6 August last year we were honoured to have a visit from Fr Pat Connor SVD, a Divine Word Missionary from Bordertown New Jersey, USA. As well as being a member of ARC, he is a member of ARCC (Association of the Rights of Catholics in the Church). It was interesting to discuss the similarities of our ventures.

Through the wonderful World-Wide-Web, we are in constant dialogue with like-minded groups in the USA, London, Holland and Germany. We also continue to walk together with the various groups in Australia who are as concerned as we are about the future of our Church.

In February this year our spokesperson, John Buggy, was invited to speak at the dinner meeting of the Pittwater Branch of the Catenian Association (Association of Professional Catholic men). John spoke about the aim and importance of ARC and the issues it addresses. This talk also created interest in ARC and resulted in us gaining some new members.

Following the contact with Bishop Walker (the Bishop of Broken Bay Diocese) there has been ongoing discussion with the intention of working on the concept of a joint conference continuing the ideas of 'A New Creed for a New Age' and exploring the possibility of inviting Cardinal Kasper in 2009.

Bishop Robinson was invited to meet with us but preferred not to just yet. His book *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church* had only just been published and he was busy promoting it and its ideas. He did not rule out speaking with us, but preferred not to be seen as aligned with any groups.

Through our regular, reliable and wonderful Editor, Margaret Knowlden, we continue to publish our enlightening magazine *Arcvoice*. Each quarter there are 400 copies printed. We know from the feedback and the discussion it promotes just how valuable *Arcvoice* is to our fellow like-minded believers.

Meanwhile we remain committed Catholics seeking change in our Church to ensure a viable future.

Barbara Brannan

Editor's Report

My first issue of the newsletter was No 3 in March 2002. Six years later we are just coming up to No. 29, so it has been quite a long journey. But it is one which has given me great 'job satisfaction' and some times a sense of surprise that the right articles do seem to come out of the ether (or wherever) to continue to fill up the twelve pages, despite occasional moments of panic and last-minute juggling of text.

I am always in debt to regular contributors like Ted Lambert and Kerry Gonzales as well as sources such as *OnLine Catholics* (before its demise), *Catholica* and *Cathnews*. But am always appreciative when articles come in from elsewhere. I particularly welcome 'Letters to the Editor' and wish there were more of these!

My thanks go to our brilliant cartoonist, Alan Holroyd, who is so generous with his special talent and can always be relied on to come up with an appropriate illustration when asked.

Also, and most importantly, I must thank my proof-readers – Lynne Green, Jim Taverne and Rob Brian – whose perceptive, beady eyes have often saved this editor from embarrassing bloomers!

Finally, an editor does need feedback (even negative criticism) to make sure she is on the right path. On this point, I was very gratified and touched to read the comments from members about *ARCvoice* in our recent survey, published in No.27. They certainly made me feel the journey and my contribution have all been worthwhile.

Margaret Knowlden

International Observations

Jim Taverne

A few days ago I received the September 2008 issue of *MV-NU* from the Mariëburgvereniging in The Netherlands. They are celebrating their 25th Anniversary next month and the theme of their Symposium on 18 October is: **“Believe that it is possible”** (or that we can do it). The question is asked: What is Mariëburg? What type of group are you when you want to draw into it people with problems in another association – The Roman Church – which they don’t want to leave? The problems concern a total lack of openness. Are you yourself a church, an opposing movement, a source of spiritual life or a group of casual individuals? We know now very well and definitely that WE ARE THE CHURCH; we are responsible for our Church. If I believe that the Spirit is in me; I have no fear and can exercise my responsibility.

In the same envelope was (what the author calls) a ‘brochure’ from André Lascaris OP. It is in fact a booklet of 34 pages titled *Farewell to the Council?* Lascaris describes in lapidary language the Second Vatican Council which for millions was a hopeful and dynamic development, but for others an historical fact that much better should not have happened at all. Archbishop Lefèbre even initiated a schism in the Church but his movement back to the good old days is now enjoying steps towards reconciliation with the Vatican under (in Lascaris’ terms) the ‘archconservative’ Pope Benedict XVI.

Vatican II began as an open forum to a total of 2500 participants (Vatican I had 642 and Nicea 220) and basically everything was open for discussion and decision. But the sabotage by powerful members of the Roman Curia (Lascaris mentions Cardinal Alfredo Octaviani as an example) helped the new stream silt up. Pope Paul VI seemed to fear a movement towards greater say of bishops, priests and laity in the affairs of the Church, thus diminishing the Papal Power. According to Lascaris, Pope Paul’s decision to promulgate the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* was a sign that the Pope wanted to show his strength as the unique decision-maker in the Catholic Church.

Pope John Paul II, whose fear of communism had an enormous influence on his thoughts and deeds, set the clock further back, notwithstanding his encyclicals such as *Ut Unum Sint* and *Fides et Ratio* and his world-wide visibility. The Catechism of the Catholic Church of 1993 is no real modernisation in Catholic religious education. The Code of Canon Law of 1983 reads still like a list of ‘dos and don’ts’.

Lascaris writes about the difference between obedience (pre-Vatican II and 40 years post-Vatican II) and loyalty. Nowadays clergy of all ranks and other employees of the Church have to swear a solemn oath of fidelity/obedience. This means blind obedience to instructions from above (i.e. the Pope). Loyalty is more the voluntary acceptance of convincing authority.

On 19 September *Wir sind Kirche (We are Church)* in München published a letter to the Autumn General Meeting of the German Bishops Conference with, as a heading, the question: **How long will the Bishops refuse to participate in an intra Church dialogue about subjects of deep concern?** The letter mentioned the guidelines for the treatment of both those clergy who committed sex abuse and of their victims. The letter points out that the guidelines were determined six years ago with the introduction of the Cypress help telephone line, but still need the support and cooperation from the bishops for proper execution and controls.

On 25 September *Wir sind Kirche* distributed news on the **Future Forum** of the Archdiocese of München and Freising. The theme is **Give the Faith a Future**.

The seven topics are:

1. The role of the laity in the evangelisation participation in pastoral aspects of the sacraments, pastoral services in the community and responsibility for the message of the Church;
2. Reorientation in the spirituality in the Catholic Church;
3. Reorganisation of pastoral care by inclusion of the laity in the work of visitation and other pastoral activities;
4. Inclusion of as many people as possible by the formulation of decisions concerning alterations in the life of the community;
5. Urgent preparations for reforms in liturgy of Eucharist and other Sacramental celebrations;
6. The Future Forum must not only prepare agenda for meetings but also where possible take decisions;
7. The Future Forum must also offer a place to representatives of other Reform groups.

In an issue of *RENEW* there is a quote from Bernard Haring: “To the extent that any priest, deacon, or pastorally trained person clings to worldly privilege, titles, and honours, or maintains an air of false superiority, everything that can be said about the ‘dignity’ of the ordained priesthood and the priesthood of the people becomes insipid, misleading, and totally false”. (1996)

This made me think of the magazine *War Cry* which many years ago was sold each Wednesday at Turrumurra Station. One day, close to Christmas, there was an illustration showing a donkey on one of Rome’s hills with a young man standing next to it and a young woman sitting on it with a baby in her arms. They were looking at the arrivals of chauffeur-driven limousines from which mitred prelates stepped out when the vehicles stopped in front of St Peter’s. The young man said to his wife: “That was much different in our time!” □

Feed Us Our Daily Bread

Vacy Vlazna

A metaphor for our *daily bread* is spiritual sustenance and the Saturday/Sunday homily in the Mass should be providing us with food for thought and action on God's will throughout the week.

On the Ninth Sunday of the Year 2008 I attended the Church of Our Lady of Dolours, Chatswood, and the parishioners and I were presented with a feast of spiritual nourishment by the regular visiting priest, Fr Claude Mostowik MSC.

Jesus commanded the first pastor, Peter, 'Feed my sheep'. In that spirit, Fr Claude fed us with wholesome bread leavened with social justice, rising to highlight our spiritual responsibilities globally and locally. The Gospel reading was Matthew 25 in which Jesus distinguishes between false piety prone to misinterpretations of God's Word and simply following the example of Christ; between faithfulness built on sand or embedded in the rock foundation of God's will. The homily opened uncompromisingly with the example of the deviant piousness spouted by Christian leaders of a just war inherent in the propaganda of the historic Crusades and present Iraq crusade. *In recent months especially we hear, in the USA, many veterans from the war in Iraq are coming to believe that the 'crusade' they were engaged in defied any semblance of humanity and they define it as a crime.*

As promulgated by Old Testament prophets, Fr Claude clearly defined God's Will (our rock) as 'establishing truth and justice'. On the other hand, he said:

We build on sand when we forget to show compassion towards the poor; when we put more trust in our possessions rather than in our relationships; when more value is placed on a balanced budget rather than on services to those who are vulnerable in society; when we put nationalism above acceptance of the stranger; when we pray for our soldiers with little regard for the destruction of our enemies; when we are complacent about the millions in the emerging countries who still are affected by AIDS or other infectious diseases and who receive little or no adequate medication; when we continue to pollute our atmosphere whilst our Pacific neighbours bear the cost.

In contrast to those who conspicuously cry 'Lord, Lord', Fr Claude, by citing Catherine Deveny's article in *The Age* 'To Everyday Heroes, Just Keep Going', urged us to illuminate our world with compassion by recognising the hidden heroism all around us and within us.

Because we do not share, few of us know the battles other people are fighting and how difficult they find life – and even fewer know the courage and the hope that pushes them through the day. They might live by five-minute increments – from one coffee to the next, from one mood swing to the next, from one wave of pain to the next. All they do is just keep going. The challenge for us is: 'Be kind – for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.' Pain is all around us. Broken hearts are all around us. The gospel reminds us that we have one life and the call is to make the most of it. It's time to come out for those who are overwhelmed by emotional pain, physical pain, exhaustion and insomnia. For parents up with babies night after night, people caring for the sick and disabled round the clock and for those whose lives have been ripped apart at the seams. Let's cheer them on from the sidelines: 'You bloody legend! You're a hero! Just. Keep. Going. You are amazing. You're doing a great job. Just Keep Going.'

I left that Mass laden with spiritual insights, inspiration and challenges that emboldened me to be true to the demands of love, truth and justice. Such protein-enriched wisdom at Mass is, in my experience, rare. To double-check I attended the evening Mass at my local church and was saddened that the flock was fed on a meagre diet of platitudes. I imagined how wonderfully different the following week, for that matter the world, would be if the souls of all parishioners were nourished robustly and courageously.

VACY VLAZNA received her PhD from Macquarie University for her thesis "God and the Imagination are One: A study of the Mystic Experience in the Poetry of Wallace Stevens". She was convenor of Australia-East Timor Association and East Timor Justice Lobby and served in East Timor with UNAMET during the referendum and later returned for two years with UNTAET re-establishing the university, introducing civic education, and as District Field Officer in Same, Manufahi. She was the human rights advisor to GAM during the second round of the Aceh peace talks in Helsinki in 2005 and is presently coordinator of Justice for Palestine Matters.

Celibacy

The unworkable policy of celibacy began in the 12th century as a way to stop married priests from passing on property to their children instead of to the church. It has done great damage.

A clerical elite that is anti-sex, anti-birth control, misogynist and homophobic, and will not let priests have partners, is in a crisis of its own making. When the party is over, the rot will still be there. To many inside the church, making celibacy optional has become a matter of urgency.

Quote from Adele Horin:

'Celibacy's stain will remain when the party is over'

An unquotable quote

Cardinal George Pell to the Redfern Community:

We are not here for Social Justice. We are here to save souls!

Trinitarian Intelligibility

Part 2 - continued from arcvoice No. 28

Jennifer Anne Herrick

'The Trinity is a matter of five notions or properties, four relations, three persons, two processions, one substance or nature, and no understanding.'

So in avoiding tritheism, fear of modalism reared its head. Between the two lies an intelligibility gulf which has led Walter Kasper to conclude that there is no choice but to retain the traditional language of the church and interpret it. Therein lies the rub. Interpreting it. It is the contention of many at the end of the 20th century that redefining 'person' in relational terms provides the interpretation required for intelligible trinitarian language. Indeed there is wide agreement that the alternatives offered by Barth and Rahner failed to recognise a development in the concept of person that had been occurring during the twentieth century, a development away from that of the self-conscious subject and towards that of 'being-in-relation'. With this development, Leonardo Boff, a Portuguese Roman Catholic liberationist theologian, has discerned that the category of person, so decisive for trinitarian doctrine, has come to acquire a depth of meaning impossible in earlier centuries. Indeed Elizabeth Johnson finds that personalist and postmodern philosophy insists on the qualification that the autonomous person is relational through and through.

Johnson believes that what is slowly coming to light is a new construal of the notion of the person. This notion is neither a self-encapsulated ego nor a diffuse self denied. It is, rather, selfhood on the model of relational autonomy. There is no question, as American Episcopalian theologian David Cunningham declares, that the concept of person as an isolated individual consciousness, theoretically detachable from the rest of the world, has been called into question. Personhood cannot be divorced from relation. This is a claim substantiated, at the end of the 20th century, in a wide variety of humanistic disciplines from sociology and psychology to history and literature, as well as theology. Theologically, however, it is the need to balance notions of the personal God and the 'persons' of the Trinity that makes the task of intelligibility, and thus inter-religious dialogue, great indeed.

In response to this task, one recently emerged relational model of person sees the three 'persons' in terms of communion. Jürgen Moltmann considers that the idea has become established that the triune God is a single

communion or fellowship formed by the three divine persons themselves. It is the combination of individuality and relationality in the concept of person that allows for an idea of God as communion. As Leonardo Boff puts it: 'Only persons can be in communion.'



This idea has come to be seen as offering intelligibility to language struggling to reconcile 'three in one'.

Such an idea is not entirely new as sixth century John Damascene's profound doctrine of *perichoresis*, understood today as the three 'persons' co-inhering or inter-penetrating, provides testimony. Yet this concept has not been strongly developed in the West. For Moltmann this reflects a typically Western bias which supposes that social relationships and society are less primal than the person. For Moltmann and others, the doctrine of *perichoresis* links together in a brilliant way the threeness and the unity, without reducing the threeness to the unity, or dissolving the unity in the threeness. Yet, in the early 21st century, not all theologians agree with Moltmann's enthusiasm nor his conclusion. Up and coming American Roman Catholic Matthew Levering rejects the contemporary movement towards 'trinitarian ontology', with its effort to avoid reification, i.e. avoiding viewing the essence of God as a reified fourth entity in the Trinity. It has in fact led, in his view, to a conflation of God's unity and distinction of Person. Drawing on Aquinas, Levering contends that, through biblical revelation, we have indeed come to know the relational communion that is the subsisting person's yet God's *being* is not a communion, because being is not what relates in God. Here Levering provides a challenge to scholarly theologians who have gone before him in the recent past. His view points to the difficulties that beset those who seek to escape the use of metaphysical language in the interests of linguistic intelligibility, doctrinal relevance and improved inter-religious dialogue.

In seeking intelligibility for language of the Christian trinitarian God, Elizabeth Johnson adds an essential qualifier. It is one of which we must not lose sight and offers some small relief to the difficulties of finding the 'right' kind of language to use. She reminds us that 'person refers to God only indirectly, metaphorically'. What this means is that, if language of the Christian trinitarian God is to be intelligible with a redefinition of the traditional static notion of person by a dynamic relational model, then this is so only if understood as metaphor and as rooted in the biblical narrative.

These moves to overturn past philosophical systems in an effort to make trinitarian language intelligible can be better understood by attending to the hermeneutical philosophy

of language of the recently deceased, theologically aware, philosopher Paul Ricoeur. Ricoeur speaks of the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader which comes out of a fusion of horizons. In the recent search for trinitarian intelligibility the category of relationality has provided such a point of intersection between the postmodern and early Christian worlds. For new life has been breathed into the ancient relational concept of *perichoresis*. As 'person' is interpreted perichoretically within post-classical categories, an ancient concept takes on postmodern life. An ancient symbol has been brought to a postmodern arena.

For Ricoeur, it is through a fusion of horizons that the meaning of the text finds a new audience in a new setting, and possibly innovation in meaning. He understands that metaphorical and narrative statements, taken in hand by reading, aim at refiguring reality. Refiguration, to Ricoeur, constitutes an active reorganisation of our being-in-the-world. It is performed by the reader following the invitation of the text.

Recent trinitarian theologians have been engaged in just such active reorganisation of Christian being-in-the-world. Reorganisation is at the invitation of the textual metaphor of Trinity. The invitation is one of intelligibility. In the search, theologians have rediscovered ancient meaning, uncovered concealed meaning, and brought about new meaning, to the



notion of person within the trinitarian metaphor. This enables a transformation of vision; a transformation of vision of the world, of reality, of God. For the significance of how God is viewed impacts on how humanity views itself and vice versa. Elizabeth Johnson explains. In asking what is the right way to speak about God, she points out that the way a community shapes language about God implicitly represents what it takes to be the highest good, the profoundest truth. This language, in turn, shapes the identity and praxis of the community.

For Christians, the development of the doctrine of the Trinity has both reflected and dictated how Christians view themselves and others. To the extent that Christians have taken seriously the 'three in one' then the nature of their society, both secular and church, is influenced by communitarian concerns. To the extent that Christians have rested with a pre-trinitarian or non-trinitarian monotheistic perception of God, then predominantly hierarchical and patriarchal shapes of society and church abound. This in turn affects not only the Christian self-view but view of, and dialogue with, others.

Intelligibility of trinitarian language then has far reaching import. I conclude with the words of Elizabeth Johnson:

For too long, this symbol has been imprisoned in misunderstandings. It is time to set it free to sing again.

Catholic Press of America Awards June 2008

Third Place (Education)

From Sand to Solid Ground by Michael Morwood
The Crossroad Publishing Co.,
New York, N.Y.

Michael Morwood is a former Catholic priest from Australia with more than 30 years experience in adult faith formation. Morwood gently challenges adult Christians (and especially Catholics) to re-imagine their understanding of God from an 'elsewhere' God to an 'everywhere' God. This shift of paradigm leads to a rethinking of many traditional beliefs including the atoning purpose of Christ's death and resurrection, the uniqueness (or exclusiveness) of Christianity among other faiths and other controversial topics, which have often gotten theologians into trouble. The work responds to the need of contemporary Christians to understand their faith in a new way which respects their secular world-view and enables them to believe in Christ and believe in themselves and our place in the universe.

Morwood's style is direct and challenging yet compassionate and reassuring. Christians who are looking for a 21st century handle for their faith will be rewarded by their effort to read this important work.

Educate the Women!

Holy Cross College, Woollahra, opened its gates for the education of young women in 1908, in the spirit of Catherine McAuley, Foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, who firmly believed that nothing was more productive of good to society than the careful instruction of women:

"... for wherever a good woman presides, peace and good order are generally to be found".

While Holy Cross College gates closed in 2001, thousands of ex-students continue its spirit with them into their lives – *into their homes, amongst their friends and into their many spheres of activity* – contributing so significantly to the good of our society.

*Quote from Holy Cross Centenary Celebrations
13.9.08*

Pharaoh's Daughters

Safety is the most dangerous of all spiritual paths

Annie March

I've always loved Pharaoh's daughter. Her act of civil disobedience in rescuing the child Moses from the bulrushes transformed a culture. The work of non-violent social change has shaped my adult life. The web of peace, social justice, human rights and particularly environmental issues is a yeasty, feisty dwelling place. It's exciting to see the same groundswell begin to enliven the Catholic Church.

I've long had the feeling there was a major task in store for me, a work I was born to do. Given my background, I assumed it would be something in the field of conservation, like stopping the arms trade or the clear-felling of Tasmania's old-growth forests. Instead, I seem to have drawn the Pope. I know, with bone-deep clarity, that I am called to be part of the struggle for radical change in the Church. Why else, in hindsight, would a long-time deep dark greenie and feminist and Quaker have converted to Catholicism in her forty-eighth year, to the amazement and disbelief of almost everyone who knew her?

The Church encompasses both what I most love and what gives me most pain. On the one hand, the sacramental beauty, the waters of life, the pearl beyond price. On the other, sexism institutionally affirmed; scripture which can sanction in sacred space racial hatred, religious intolerance, endemic violence and war; the Eucharist misused as a tool of political control; and a wholly unChrist-like abuse of and kowtowing to authority.

Sooner or later the Church, like the Berlin Wall, must fall down. No institution so locked into caste, sexism, paranoia and oligarchy can or may survive. The Church preaches crucifixion and resurrection, death and rebirth as central tenets of everything except itself. It endlessly recycles past glories and dead prophets while gagging current dissent. Its politic of suppression aligns it with bullies and juntas everywhere. It's worse than juntas because it doesn't just betray humankind, it betrays Christ.

Revelation in the past is easy. What's not easy is engagement in the ferment, muddle and anguish of today. If the Church is unable to embody now the selfsame values it celebrates in its liturgy – prophecy, *metanoia*, liberation, radical challenge to cultural, political and religious orthodoxy – then what's the point? Has Christ's Church become an instrument for massaging the status quo? Is the very concept of 'Catholic justice' an oxymoron?

I can see only one possible response. I cannot leave the Church. I cannot stay and, by my silence, collude. Therefore I must be part of the costly, stubborn, risky, radical work of change. And it must be loving change. The minute we lose the loving, we've failed. I come back, as so often, to Gandhi's concept of *satyagraha* meaning truth-force, perfect autonomy

and perfect compassion: *I will not violate you, I will not be violated by you.*

There is a lovely Sanskrit word *tirtha*, meaning a ford, a crossing place, the point at which a pilgrimage begins. I listen with all my senses to discern my particular *tirtha*. If we are building a new house of God, which brick is mine to lay? Out of the ravel of issues, I have discerned my starting point. I am to explore the places in the Church's policies, teachings and liturgy where I personally feel demeaned; and I am to ask an urgent question inspired by that remarkable twelfth century abess, Hildegard of Bingen: *How do we love all the species of all children for all time?* Bill McDonough.⁽¹⁾

I'm neither theologian nor scholar. I'm a middle-ageing woman confronting the possibility of ecocide, of the imminent destruction – through human ignorance and arrogance – of the planet we are covenanted to care for. To be willing to change, to choose to bequeath my children's children a whole, healed, holy Earth, means a radical unveiling of the beliefs and structures that have brought us to this brink. And that particularly means religious beliefs, which so powerfully form and inform our culture. In what way do the structures and policies of the Catholic Church – of which I'm a member and therefore accountable for its actions in my name – underpin ecocide, fundamentalism and war?

It shocks me to realise how habituated I've become to violation. Once I was so alive to every diminishment that I would walk out of the Mass rather than collude in what felt like another massive act of injustice. For a time I orchestrated – belly-laughing – a guerrilla campaign that involved putting cartoons, graffiti and dissenting articles on Church doors and noticeboards.

Yet now, unless someone sticks a pin in me, I by and large no longer see or feel the wrongness. Luckily I have many heretical friends (*beresy* in its Greek root means the act of making a choice, a set of principles) who keep me honest. Here are some of the pinpricks I've heard whispered (why do we whisper?) in the pews:

Exclusive language is blasphemous. (An eighty-three year old religious sister.)

That reading is so offensive.

World Youth Day makes me cringe.

What right have we got to be missionaries?

I feel as if someone's poured a bucket of dirty water over me. Like pornography. (In response to a liturgy based on sinless, sexless Mary.)

Bollocks to a God of power and might.

I can truthfully say about ten percent of the Creed, so I don't. Since I won't collude in the concept of an all-male deity, my responses, my prayers now include as a matter of

course she/her/mother/sister/daughter/queen; I don't speak loudly, but nor do I whisper. The language of baptism and confirmation make me squirm. My daughter, who married a Catholic, wept when she first read the liturgy she was expected to submit to.

I'm particularly grateful to my son, whose work is in social justice and human rights, therefore in the painful, necessary deconstruction of the lies of history. Some years ago now he came to the Easter Vigil with me. He's not a Catholic, and hadn't been to a Mass before. He was awed by the ritual and the ancient beautiful ceremonies; spent the homily working out how to do a traverse of St Joseph's beautifully rafted ceiling; and was appalled by the stories – Genesis 1, The Red Sea Crossing, Abraham and Isaac and the Passover. The only woman who appears is Eve, whose fault it all is. Abraham and Isaac is about child abuse, and upholds the kind of fundamentalist mindset behind 'honour killings', or parents who force their sons into being martyrs and suicide bombers. The God who gloats over the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea is the same God who drives war by dehumanising and demonising 'the other'. The Passover glosses over the slaughter of the Egyptian firstborn, a murderous, xenophobic act on a continuum with George W. Bush justifying rendition and torture because they save American lives. The great, the courageous quest of the children of Israel for liberation, for the Promised Land, is also a story of the kind of ethnic cleansing and ecological vandalism being perpetrated even as I write by the Janjaweed militias in Darfur. Let us by all means learn from these stories as history. But I cannot, will not, say 'Thanks be to God' for them. Why are the pornographic fantasies of Hosea and Ezekiel part of our sacred texts? What about Lot offering his daughters to the mob to be gang-raped, then later raping them himself?⁽²⁾

We can no longer afford such a God. He is crucifying life-kind. *Power not as fear, but as trust, as eleutheros, freedom-giving.*

One Easter I was walking along the Organpipes Track on Mount Wellington with a woman, a cradle Catholic, who had just left the Church. The turning point for her had come during an ordination in St Mary's Cathedral in Hobart. She had been watching all the priests of the diocese process up the aisle, and been shocked to realise that the word in her mind was *poncing*. I said I'd used the same word to describe a perfectly pleasant bishop at a Good Friday celebration. 'Poncing' is a strong, unpleasant term. It means flaunting, conspicuous dressing and sexual exploitation. Yet I think it names accurately part of the wrongness at the core of the Church.

The Church rides on the backs of women. It maintains its power by stripping us of ours, and feeds off a corrupt co-dependency of male dominance and female submission. Its appalling sexism is on the same spectrum as the sexual fundamentalism of groups like the Taliban. Its exclusively male language, imagery and story not only blaspheme, but are as offensive as if I, a white woman, were to address an audience of my black sisters in a way that obliterated their blackness. Sexism is as obscene as racism.

I consider the Vatican's teaching on contraception a crime against humanity. Every minute a woman dies as a consequence of pregnancy or childbirth, the baby invariably dies as well, and her other children under five are unlikely to survive. Four million babies die every year before they are a month old. Three million are stillborn. In sub-Saharan Africa a woman has a one-in-thirteen chance of dying in childbirth. Two million women have untreated fistulae; vaginal rupture during childbirth leads to urinary and faecal incontinence, and ostracism. Imagine giving birth in appalling circumstances a child you didn't want in the first place. The Old Testament sanctions rape in warfare.⁽³⁾ Over-population is a major driver of ecocide. How dare an elderly male celibate caste usurp women's moral and sexual choices, our human rights? I am accountable.

An article in the Guardian described the Arabic media as *reverent, conformist...controlled and rigorously censored...the same old propaganda...dominated by fawning accounts of the activities of president, monarch or emir.*⁽⁴⁾ That sounds so like the diocesan Catholic press, it's not funny. One of the ways repressive regimes maintain their grip is by controlling the media. When the Church abuses power by stifling freedom of speech, it aligns itself with the politics of oppression and violence. How can the Church and its media have any credibility when they behave like those very dictatorships whose redemption they pray for? Who owns the media? The bishops or the people? Why can't we openly and freely debate in our press issues like divorce, abortion, stem cells and the priesthood of women?

I sometimes feel as ashamed to be a Catholic as I felt being an Australian over issues like the *Tampa* or the invasion of Iraq. The Church doesn't speak for me when it uses the sacraments, the Eucharist, Christ's body, as a tool of political control; when a cardinal attempts to subvert democratic process in NSW; when hundreds of baptisms are declared invalid in Queensland because they were celebrated using inclusive language; when Pope Benedict claims Copernicus was given a fair trial by the Inquisition, or that the indigenous peoples of South America had actually been silently praying for the arrival of the conquistadores and the priests who accompanied them. Praying for genocide?

Why do we collude? Why do we allow ourselves to be so disrespected? How do we not truckle and snool? How do we challenge the smug, the arrogant assumption that we're all toeing the party line, that we're all part of an amorphous, homogenous lump called 'Catholics'? Dissent is integral to justice. So is truth. If the Vatican knew what was being said in the pews, it would choke on its porridge.

The twelfth century abbess, Hildegard of Bingen, and her nuns once prevented Church authorities exhuming the body of a heretic buried in consecrated ground by sitting on his grave.

As we work for radical change, as we stick our necks out, some of us are inevitably going to get into trouble. People who unveil violence inevitably absorb some of it. How do we support women and men who, because of their actions

or their 'speaking truth to power', rouse the ire of the institutional Church? Priests and religious who are bullied into 'obedience'? Employees – pastoral workers, health professionals, journalists, educators – who risk their jobs if they speak out? The ten-per-cent of us who are lesbian or gay, the many of us who have remarried and who are perpetually excluded from the Eucharist? I think we have to give serious consideration to the possibility of non-violent protest as part of our journey.

In India, women of the Chipko movement encircle trees, protecting them from loggers with their own bodies. Greenpeace zodiacs sail between the whalers and the whales. Anti-globalisation protestors face riot police and tear gas to demonstrate against corporate hegemony. Burmese and Tibetan monks risk their lives to challenge unjust regimes.

When are words no longer enough? At what point does respect become collusion? And when that happens, how do we enact Gandhi's first principle of non-violence: non-cooperation with anything humiliating? It seems to me that part of my response might well be civil disobedience – peaceful, creative resistance to injustice, lovingly standing my ground, fighting sacramentally. What if we publicly refused communion in solidarity with anyone who was unjustly turned away? Or stayed with them at the altar in peaceful protest for days, weeks, months? Or – even better – shared our Hosts with them? What would happen if women simply withdrew their labour from the Church?

How can I not speak truth to Pharaoh? How can I not stand alongside his nameless, compassionate daughter? If I

do nothing, if I do not speak, I cannot look Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi in the eye, or Ken Saro-Wiwa executed in Nigeria for challenging the military dictatorship and the Shell Oil company, or the women of Afghanistan as they throw off their burqas. Or Christ. It's all the same struggle, the same web.

*They came for the Jews, and I am not a Jew so I did nothing.
They came for the homosexuals, and I am not a homosexual so I did nothing.
They came for the Gypsies and I am not a Gypsy so I did nothing.
Then they came for me.*⁽⁵⁾

References

1. McDonough, William. *Redesign*. Resurgence, September-October 2001.
2. Ezekiel 23, Hosea 2, Genesis 19.
3. Numbers 31, Deuteronomy 20, Judges 21 are some of many examples.
4. Guardian. May 2001.
5. (S. America) Martin Niemoller's original quote (Congressional Record 14 Oct 1968) runs: 'When Hitler attacked the Jews I was not a Jew, therefore I was not concerned. And when Hitler attacked the Catholics, I was not a Catholic, and therefore I was not concerned. And when Hitler attacked the unions and Industrialists, I was not a member of the unions and I was not concerned. Then Hitler attacked me and the Protestant Church and there was nobody left to be concerned.'

References for pregnancy-related deaths: State of the World's Mothers 2006/ www.savethechildren.org/ Fistula Foundation.

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Language and Creed

Ted Lambert

T*winkle, twinkle little star ... Up above the world so high ...* Beautiful, evocative, poetic, redolent of childhood. But, sadly, so out of date! Once upon a time the earth (which was flat) was the 'world' and everything else was 'up'. It has not been so for a long time now. The error preserved in the poetry probably does children no harm before their education begins to update this outdated cosmology. But what of otherwise-functioning adults who (choose to) remain in the dark ages? 'He ascended into Heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father'. Parrot once a week on Sundays. Heaven is 'up there' as a place and the male figure of God is on a throne with Jesus seated in the place of honour at God's right hand.

For me there is no excuse for continuing as adults to mouth these untruths. The metaphor is past its use-by date. Our male authorities remind us every few years that we have no way out, the Creed is defined and infallible. Antiquity and adherence to the Ptolemaic cosmos and monarchic social structures remain the guarantee of revealed truth. I find it useless to seek to insist that most adult Catholics do not believe the images they so seriously proclaim. Maybe they don't, but why keep doing it? It might be scary to challenge the authorities, but let's do it anyway, in the name of our adult faith.

Because language is the problem, language is part of the solution. Let us speak up, say what we think, communicate with the authorities. The Nicene Fathers may have believed what they imposed from restricted knowledge. We no longer do because our vision has been expanded by new revelations from God. Where God is in the Universe is much less certain now than it was to the Nicene Fathers. But we in the parishes know God is certainly not on a throne up there. Say so, out loud! □

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