



arcvoice

A Report from Australian Reforming Catholics Inc.
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Editorial

The well known Jesuit and lawyer, Father Frank Brennan, stated in a recent interview that he did not believe in miracles ('Good Weekend' May 28 – an insert in *The Sydney Morning Herald*). He did not elaborate further, but he was refreshing in his candour about this and other matters. I am assuming that he was using the word 'miracle' as an event that is outside the natural order of the world, something for which we could have no explanation rather than just something astonishing which we don't quite expect.

Surely there must be many priests and bishops who also do not believe in miracles but who seemingly are afraid either of reprisal from authorities or the logical inconsistencies that they would have to confront in their preaching and pastoral practice. What would they then say about Jesus walking on water, calming the storm, or raising people from the dead? How would they explain their position to a parishioner who is fervently praying for a miracle cure? How do they reconcile their non-belief with the many saints who have been canonised in recent years on the back of so many miracles? How do they explain their different stance when it seems that the Pope himself places such importance on miracles? Is it just too hard?

This is another example of where the opportunity to educate and help people to grow in their spirituality is often avoided. For decades the most eminent scripture scholars and theologians have accepted that the 'miracles' that Jesus performed can be explained in a manner that is not outside the natural order of the world. The people Jesus 'raised' were not dead and the cures attributed to him were mostly of psychosomatic disorders that are cured in a similar way today and in a variety of other ways as well. Certainly Jesus' empathy and presence was a powerful factor in achieving the healing, but it was not miraculous. Every day we learn more about science and medicine that we had no explanations for in the past. For example, there is every expectation that we will discover in the near future why the development of some cancers that would usually lead to death can sometimes be arrested or reversed by particular natural processes within some people. That would eliminate a lot of so called previous miracles.

Yet we do not have much effective preaching that assists people to move beyond the miracle and simply pray for courage and acceptance in the face of adversity. We should always be grateful that we have some clergy who are brave enough to be open about the science and knowledge that is available to inform us. Otherwise the Catholic Church, through omission, will become more and more a primitive religion that fails to satisfy the yearnings for truth within an increasingly educated world.

John Buggy

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Catholics to come home to where?

This is an edited version of Father Eric Hodgens' article
"Catholics need more than ads to come home"
Sydney Morning Herald, 28.1.2011

Peter Meury

In December 2009, a TV advertising program was launched in Chicago USA which featured well-produced ads inviting Catholics who have given up the church to come back and try again. This has been augmented by a special website:

www.catholicscomehome.org

It is obviously liked by active and traditional Catholics, but it appears that Mass attendance figures overall have not increased. One of our own Archbishops now intends to adopt these programs in Australia.

Are the Bishops realising that such programs will hardly work unless policies that have caused Catholics to leave are changed or unless the Bishops stop initiating new policies producing further alienation? Let's consider these policies:

- are the Bishops telling remarried divorcees that they are now welcome to Holy Communion? This has repelled thousands of very good Catholics from the church;
- are practising homosexuals welcomed to Mass and Communion?
- will women be given equal status in church ministry?
- will the policy that all contraception is wrong be abandoned?
- is approval given for couples seeking IVF if this is their choice?
- are the Bishops going to admit that criminalising abortion is bad public policy even if you think it is morally wrong?
- will Bishops be open to reasonable debate about the morality of issues including abortion in today's World?

Most involved priests and laity are open on all or most of these matters!

What might also work is abandoning the constant preoccupation with sexual morality and getting back to the main issues proclaiming a gospel of life, peace, forgiveness, love and welcome.

Moreover, paedophilia continues to repel. It is a well-known fact that the Bishops did not see the extent and toxicity of the problem, otherwise they would have become completely open and transparent about it, and done whatever it took to fix it. This disillusion will continue to repel until transparency in policy and accountable action is evident. Sadly, it goes against the Bishops' monarchical grain, and Canon Law still appears to favour some secrecy and finally the Bishop's right to rule unaccountably.

One of the Leaders who protected offenders was the Boston Cardinal Bernard Law who still holds high office in Rome. Moreover, the Church has not expelled from the priesthood any bishop who offended either in

action or by covering up. The archbishop of Dublin had some offending bishops resign, but Rome undermined him by refusing the resignations.

Sadly the last Pope John Paul II protected the paedophile Father Marcial Maciel Degollado, founder of the Legionaries of Christ. Can such

contempt convert the alienated?

The latest is the introduction of a defective new English translation of the liturgy. Most Catholics *in-the-know* realise this as an act of power politics. Rome has won the battle with the bishops of the English-speaking World by emasculating the International Commission for English in the Liturgy (ICEL). They appointed a new Committee with only clergy participants called *vox clara* (means clear voice!) and its head is one of our own Archbishops! Do they know how many priests and people are alienated by this? This may well have the same effect on mass attendance as *Humanae vitae*, the 1968 encyclical condemning contraception.

The most ancient bureaucracy in the world appears unaware that it has fossilised many of its habits into values. The bishops do not appear to be able to come to terms with new values in the 21st Century!



John Paul II used the celebrity approach of ‘touring pope’ to attract Catholics, but this appears to have failed to produce come-backs, even in his native Poland. He then put his effort into promoting the new movements – Opus Dei, Legionaries of Christ, Heralds of the Gospel, The Neocatechumenate Way, etc. – but they alienate more than they attract. World Youth Days are successful extravaganzas but with no long-term pulling power and few results of young converts.

At the end of one of his early trips to Australia, Pope John Paul II extended an emotional plea to lapsed Catholics ‘Come back! Did any? The Television *Catholics*

Come Home program will no doubt experience a similar fate.

Jesus often used parables to illustrate his message as is Jewish tradition. He may no doubt now say that in deep water, if you can’t swim, you drown. It is therefore a good idea to learn to swim. Therefore as a consequence: get the basics right and forget moralising, but simply proclaim the Gospel!

Peter Meury is a member of the ARC Secretariat, passionately promoting Change in the Church, Ecumenism and Interfaith dialogue.

Religion may affect brain changes

Leesha Mckenny

Religious Affairs Editor

Sydney Morning Herald, May 23, 2011

FAITH can open your mind but it can also cause your brain to shrink at a different rate, research suggests.

Researchers at Duke University Medical Centre in the US claim to have discovered a correlation between religious practices and changes in the brains of older adults.

The study, published in the open-access science journal, *Public Library of Science ONE*, asked 268 people aged 58 to 84 about their religious group, spiritual

practices and life-changing religious experiences. Changes in the volume of their hippocampus, the region of the brain associated with learning and memory, were tracked using MRI scans, over two to eight years.

Protestants who did not identify themselves as born-again were found to have less atrophy in the hippocampus region than did born-again Protestants, Catholics or those with no religious affiliation. Frequency of worship was not found to have a bearing on results, while participants who said they had undergone a religious experience were found to have more atrophy than those who did not.

Although the brain tends to shrink with age, atrophy in the hippocampus has been linked with depression and Alzheimer’s disease.

The study authors Amy Owen and David Hayward said the changes were not explained by other factors that affect hippocampal atrophy, such as age, education, depression or brain size. □



The following paper was given by Lloyd Geering
at the Conference

Jesus – Better Known and Bible Better Read

organised by the Centre for Progressive Religious Thought
and held on 19 March 2011 at Beecroft, NSW

‘Excavating Jesus’

Focussing on 220 years of New Testament Studies on Jesus of Nazareth

Lloyd Geering

[Emeritus Professor of Religious Studies at Victoria University of Wellington]

Christian Rationalists (1750-1850):

Reimarus (1694-1768) wrote a 4000-page manuscript, subjecting the whole biblical tradition to historical, rational examination. Lessing published extracts. He realised that the four Gospels could not be reconciled. He concluded Christianity was based on a hoax: the disciples stole the body and then announced that he had risen from the dead!

David Strauss (1808-1874), *The life of Jesus Critically Examined* (1835): rejected both orthodox and rationalists by using Hegel’s dialectic. Thought doesn’t stand still, it progresses: thesis, antithesis, synthesis. Marx applied this dialectic. Strauss applied it to our understanding of Christianity. Thesis (Orthodox) – Antithesis (Rationalist) – Synthesis (Recognised myth). Albert Schweitzer called this book one of most perfect things in learned literature. Stephen Neill called it ‘a turning point in the history of the Christian faith’.

Evangelists were not eye-witnesses, but recorders of oral tradition. They reflected the first-century world view. What was that view? They told their stories to reflect their world view. Strauss described the presence of myth in oral tradition. Hence they speak of angels, heaven (sky), underworld, Virgin Birth, miracles, Resurrection, Ascension. But Strauss acknowledges the value of myth. Myths could arise by drawing on OT themes and using imagination for they searched the SS to find meaning. Massacres of infants at birth at time of Moses / Massacre of infants at birth of Jesus. Moses received the Law on Mt Sinai / Jesus taught from a mountain (Sermon on the Mount). When Moses came down from Sinai his face shone. Jesus was transfigured on the mountain.

Johannes Weiss (1863-1914), *Preaching of Jesus concerning the Kingdom of God* (1892): This is as important as Strauss’ *Life of Jesus*. Jesus did not establish the Kingdom but proclaimed its future coming after the imminent Day of Judgment. So there arose a conviction that they were living in the last days.

William Wrede (1895-1907): *The Messianic Secret in the Gospels*, 1901. It was only after his death that Jesus was recognised as the Messiah. It was a suppressed secret. Jesus never claimed to be Messiah. This later dogma was inserted as the ‘secret’, thus hiding the real Jesus. The Gospel of Mark belongs to the history of dogma.

The Second Great Turning Point.

Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965): *The Quest to Discover the Historical Jesus*. The quest to recover the historical Jesus had failed. Even if recoverable, we could not relate to him. Jesus was a man of his own time. Jesus was an eschatological prophet. He died as a disillusioned man. What is important is the legacy he left behind. Schweitzer did not become a disillusioned man. After this study he studied medicine and worked as a missionary in Africa, financing his own mission by giving organ recitals back in Germany.

Rudolph Bultmann (1884-1976): the greatest of the most sceptical of the scholars. The oral tradition can be traced back no further than the communities transmitting it. Only one thing is certain: Jesus lived and died. We can never know anything for certain about Jesus.

Second Quest

James M Robinson (1924-): *A New Quest for the Historical Jesus* (1959). The first quest was based on a false view of history – the chronicle mode of isolating ‘facts’. History does not consist of this. History selects bits in order to make a story. Every history is also an interpretation. It is a history by somebody. The evangelists did the same thing. There is a subjective element in every story we receive from the past. All historiography contains interpretation.

Third Quest:

The Jesus Seminar.

Westar Institute founded in 1985 by Robert Funk. A colloquy of scholars, independent of church and university. Committed to a new quest. Uses only historical methods. It does not confine itself to the NT Canon.

The Complete Gospels, 1992

The Five Gospels: What did Jesus really say? 1993

John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L Reed, *Excavating Jesus - Beneath the Stone, Behind the Texts*, 2001.

Christian doctrine developed layer by layer after the death of Jesus. We remove the layers of later tradition in the reverse order to recover the knowledge of the original Jesus.

The Dogmatic Phase:

Nicene Creed (381)

The Pseudo-Pauline Phase:

Colossians 1:15-20 (Post-Pauline)

Instead of being told: 'God became man', we find it being said: 'Man became God'. On this issue Paul is ambivalent.

Philippians: 2:5-11: Paul referred to Christ (Jesus) in a confusing variety of ways. None of them can be taken literally. 'Christ died for our sins', 'Christ rose from the dead', 'Church is the Body of Christ', 'Believers are 'in Christ', 'Christ will come down from heaven'.

During these early phases: For Paul 'Christ' = the proper name of the Son of God. In the Jewish messianic phase, Christ means the expected deliverer to be sent by God. 'Jesus is the Messiah'

Jewish messianic phase:

Before Paul, Jesus was simply acclaimed as Messiah. But when did Jesus come to be the Messiah (or Christ)?

1. At creation – The Word became flesh
2. At his birth – 'Unto you is born this day...
3. At his baptism – You are my beloved Son
4. At his death – 'This Man was the Son of God'
5. At his resurrection – 'God has made him Christ'

When we come to ground zero in time (0-30 AD), what do we find? There is no extant evidence from that time. The successive phases lead to the negative conclusion:

He was not a divine saviour.

Jesus never claimed to be divine

Jesus never claimed to be the messiah

Jesus was not an eschatological prophet

Jesus was not a miracle worker

Jesus never taught people to depend on him

the Christ rôle was mainly created by God

Jesus was a Galilean peasant. Perhaps we would not even find him attractive. Anyway we have only his foot-prints and voice-prints.

Foot-prints

- Jesus was born to Mary and Joseph
- Jesus became a follower of John the Baptist
- Jesus abandoned John's eschatology and asceticism
- Jesus became a healer and itinerant teacher
- Jesus attracted the socially disadvantaged
- Jesus responded to the needs of the oppressed
- Jesus incurred the wrath of the priests
- Jesus aroused the fear of the Romans
- Jesus was executed by the Romans for sedition

Voice-prints

- Jesus was a teacher, with a sense of humour
- Jesus taught in aphorisms and parables
- Jesus became the master of the parable genre
- His style aligns him with the sages of Israel
- Jesus did **not** teach about himself
- Jesus challenged more than he comforted
- Jesus taught about the Kingdom of God
- Jesus pioneered a revolution of the heart
- Are these enough?

The teaching of Jesus was so powerful it survived his tragic death which sparked off the rise of Christianity. The Good Samaritan and The Prodigal Son will outlive the images of the medieval Christ. Ironically, the evolving orthodox Christology prevented the most original saying of Jesus:

'Love your enemies!'

Summary of Addresses at the CPRT Conference

Jesus – Better Known and Bible Better Read Rev. Dr Greg Jenks

These two sessions expand on the keynote address by Greg to the 2010 Common Dreams 2 Conference in Melbourne, 'Imagining a future for the Bible'.

Taking the Bible Seriously but not Literally

The first session reflects on the place of the Bible in our public life and in our churches in 2011. We reflect on these questions four hundred years after the Authorised Version, commonly but mistakenly described as the King James Bible. We find ourselves in a faraway Antipodean land not even imagined by James and his puritan advisors. Can the English Bible they produced in 1611 still speak to Australians in 2011? Do we finesse the words to generate a new translation, or do we change the ways in which people approach this ancient text? How do we take the Bible seriously without taking it literally?

Reclaiming the Bible for 21C Religious Progressives

Can the Bible be saved from its friends? Is it so much a prisoner of traditional Christian practice that it can no longer speak to the needs of religious progressives?

This session looks at ways to reclaim the Bible from the Evangelicals (who press it into service of their own beliefs), the lectionaries (who dice it into sound bites to serve liturgical needs), and the academics (who have dissected the Bible to within a mm of its life).

Why would a religious progressive bother to read this book, and how might that be done with integrity?

Additional resources for further study:

There is seemingly no end to books about the Bible. Some key titles to consider if you are wishing to do some further reading in this area would be:

Karen Armstrong, 'The Bible: A Biography', *Atlantic Monthly*, 2007.

Marcus J. Borg, *Reading the Bible again for the First Time: Taking the Bible seriously but not literally*. HarperSanFrancisco, 2001

Robert Kugler & Patrick Hartin, *Introduction to the Bible*. Eerdmans, 2009.

Steven L. McKenzie, *How to Read the Bible: History, Prophecy, Literature*. Why modern readers need to know the difference and what it means for faith today. Oxford University Press, 2009.

John Shelby Spong: Keep an eye out for his forthcoming book on the Bible. The working title is not known yet, but the book is due to appear later this year.

For further details about these titles, as well as links to other recommended texts and online resources, see the dedicated web site:

Greg Jenks, *The Once and Future Bible*:
<http://www.onceandfuturebible.com>

Quotable Quotes

The harsh reality facing many Catholics alive in Australia right now is that when they die in the next 10, 20 or 30 years time, their families will simply not be able to find a priest to provide them with the last rites. There will not be enough priests available across large parts of the continent, or they will be so stretched providing the last rites or pastoral care to others, that the families will have to 'make do' with the services provided inhouse by funeral directors or they will increasingly have to rely on government licensed funeral and marriage celebrants. Regular participation in the other core sacraments, including the Eucharist, particularly in the remote and regional dioceses will become a rarer and rarer event.

The Wilkinson Report

Across the Western world 86% of the baptised have abandoned regular participation and probably about half or two-thirds of those still participating have half a leg out the door and are tempted to join those who have already left. *Catholica*

The Church: My religious faith has remained rock solid, but there are times when I feel really cheated off with the institutional church, which sometimes treats its lay members and non-members in a too-patronising fashion.

Frank Brennan SJ - *The Good Weekend* 30/5/11

The Power of One Bishop

Gideon Goosen

The early forced retirement (April 2011) of the Catholic Bishop of Toowoomba, William Morris, raises again the use of power in the Catholic hierarchy, and more especially, the Vatican bureaucracy. There is seldom any discussion of the use and misuse of power in the church because the topic sounds too secular and inappropriate. In that way the existing unjust practices are protected from scrutiny and possible change. Even at the local level of church, the use and abuse of power in the context of ministries, ordained and lay, is never discussed. This is even more urgent as lay people take on ministries because the only model they often have (from either the secular or church context) is a distorted and exploitative one.

At the top end of the church the Vatican bureaucracy operates a very successful model. It is able to control bishops because they are beholden to the pope for their appointment and, should they misbehave, they could lose their job. For a career bishop this is a fate worse than death. Local conservative opinion can be used against the bishop if it pleases the Roman bureaucracy to use it (such as with the third rite of penance), or ignore it if they wish. Local bishops are inclined to relish their supremacy in their own diocese, so they often prefer not to act with all the other bishops nationally or internationally because they would then have to give up some of their independence. For example, I am sure many bishops world-wide would like to discuss ordaining married men, allowing ex-priests back into the ministry (if mutually agreeable) and ordaining women. But, generally speaking, they do not raise their voices for a variety of reasons: they might lose their job; they will never be promoted to archbishop; they might be accused of disloyalty. In other words, they remain silent out of fear.

The use of the idea of loyalty or obedience to the Pope is one which is well exploited by the Roman bureaucracy to defend its power. It was used against Luther with well-known results. I recall a local bishop, on being consecrated a bishop, declared in an enthusiastic expression of Roman fealty, that his first loyalty was to the 'church'. Interestingly, he did not say to, 'Jesus Christ' and the 'gospel', but to the 'church'. This is a total misuse of what loyalty to the church should mean. It should mean loyalty to the gospel through loyalty to the church.

The lack of a collaborative stance by bishops is disappointing. It is bit like supermarket customers who feel they are being exploited. If they were united they could bring their opinion to bear on the owners of the supermarkets. But they do not unite. So too with the bishops. They prefer to be supreme in their own diocese

and act alone and not unite with other bishops. (Witness all the local Catholic newspapers, instead of one, good national one in Australia! The bishops will not give up their own diocesan newspaper for a good, high-quality national one.) The optimum occasion to act together is during an Ecumenical Council – and that is why the bureaucracy tried to divert Pope John XXIII from holding Vatican II.

I am not preaching sedition. All Bishop Morris wanted was open discussion on issues which any thinking Catholic knows needs to be discussed. What needs to change is the bureaucracy in Rome. This Pope, as Cardinal Ratzinger, twice publicly said women need to be in decision-making positions in Rome. So far nothing has changed. What has happened to his proposed changes to the bureaucracy? The bishops need to speak up as a group and insist on open discussion while remaining loyal to the gospel and Rome. The power of one bishop will not achieve change (unless he is bishop of Rome – and even then he could be stymied by the bureaucrats).

Gideon Goosen has taught theology for many years and is the author of a number of books and scholarly articles in theological journals. His latest book is *Spacetime and Theology in Dialogue*.

(Marquette University, 2008)

Comments from a Catholic priest (name withheld):

Bishop Bill Morris of Toowoomba was a great pastoral man and much loved by the people and the clergy of the Diocese. I found him to be a leader with great integrity.

During the past five years I have shared with Bill a number of conversations about the situation. He was always very open with his clergy. The process used in the 'investigation' was not open and transparent and Bill was denied access to the report written about himself and the Diocese. He always maintained this was unjust and the process was unjust. Bill was subjected to criticism from a small number of self appointed church watchdogs who see it as their calling to report as much as they can to sympathetic authorities. I have witnessed what I would call 'vitriol' from some of these people in Toowoomba who display a brand of Christianity that did not appear to me to match that to which we are called to by Jesus in the Gospel.

At every Eucharist, educational gathering, gatherings of young people and church people, Bill always preached Christ. Always! Whatever Bill's views about how the people of God might be able to participate in the Eucharist in the future when priests are so few – he always preached Christ.

There is a great sadness in the Diocese of Toowoomba today and I have been contacted by many people wanting to express their dismay and also their support for one they loved very much as their own. □

Wither to?

Peter Kennedy

In light of the recent AGM meeting I thought it might be an opportunity to state clearly what my understanding of this community is. I believe that the nature of our community is very simple. It is an intentional liturgical community – nothing more and nothing less.

By intentional I mean people make a decision to come and be part of the community. We are not a parish demarcated by boundaries. In fact we are not even a parish in this Archdiocese. We are not recognised as part of the Catholic Archdiocese, which is why some people made a decision not to come to the TLC building. Moreover we are a community on the edge. Without the generosity of the TLC building we might not exist.

What this community St Mary's-in-Exile offers and what the leadership of this community offers is a spirituality which is enunciated every Sunday through a liturgy of word, music and a liturgy of the Eucharist. In my opinion it is as simple as that and as difficult as that. community creating and sustaining community.

And the important point I want to make here is that the spirituality that is offered is a Christian spirituality that is essentially about a practical concern for those who find themselves on the margins of society. It's about the reign of God.

It's also a spirituality which is not focussed on creeds and dogmas and the necessity of brokers (priests, bishops, pope, etc) but one that encourages you to claim your birthright here and now – to embrace life as it is in all its magnificence and horror, with its wondrous multiplicity of life forms and with its tragedies and sufferings and discover that at the heart of life, I use that word heart deliberately, to discover the essential oneness of all life – then compassion naturally emerges for those who are homeless or marginalised in any way. That sense we are separated from each other and from all other life forms is the cause of suffering.

This is an authentic Christian vision. In today's gospel we see the conflict between the vision of John the Baptist and the vision of Jesus – the Kingdom (reign of God).

John's understanding of the reign of God begins with repentance from sin through the ritual of cleansing of baptism. John Dominic Crossan suggests that for John the Baptist, once there was a critical mass of purified people God would not delay. 'God's Great clean-up of the World' was imminent – and it was going to be violent. Those who did not repent and be baptised would be thrown into a fire that would never go out. This vision of John the Baptist is still very much at the centre of literalist Christianity.

The vision of Jesus is very different. For Jesus the reign of God was already present. for Jesus the world belonged to God – and God as the householder/parent was typically concerned that all God's children had access to a sufficient amount of this world's resources. So apparently the reign of God is already here. But there is this obvious disparity – the haves and the have nots. In order for the reign of God to be fulfilled, this disparity between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' must be addressed, not by God, but by us. We have to collaborate and advocate for a just society or otherwise the vision of God and Jesus – the reign of God on earth is thwarted.

And lastly this vision, unlike the vision of John, must be non-violent. We are invited to advocate on behalf of those on the margins of society but non-violently and in so doing resist the violent normalcy of our world. 'Forgive your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute you.'

This, says Dominic Crossan, is the subversive vision to which Jesus gave every ounce of his life, to the point of death itself. That no greater love can any of us know than that which leaves a river of justice carving out a better world for those relegated to the outside.

While St Mary's-in-Exile has nothing in the way of structures we are fortunately embedded with Micah Projects that 15 years ago came out of the concerns of this community – this inner city community. Helen Styles last week in her homily kept making the point that this community was very important to Micah Projects inviting us to continue to be involved with them. Last Wednesday at the turning of the first sod for the Common Ground Project in Hope Street for which Micah Projects is the service provider, both Kevin Rudd (Federal Minister and Local Member) and Karen Struthers (State Minister for Department of communities) were fulsome in praise of the work of Micah in helping to house the homeless.

While many of us in one way or another are involved with Micah Projects, many people in this community work professionally in those same areas of need and many others work as volunteers in any number of places whose focus is on the marginalised. In my opinion this community needs the minimum of governance structures.

Because we are no longer part of the catholic archdiocese we had to set up a company to comply with the legal prescriptions of company law. But we don't need to make it overly complex.

We are above all, a community of faith, a people of like-mind supporting one another in our quest to make sense of this life, here and now, not in some fantasy world after death. There may well be life after death,

but it is totally impossible for you and me to have any concept of that life. 'I have come to give you life in all its fullness.' So it must be our concern that that fullness be extended to all – that reign of justice and peace. If you want peace, work for justice for all.

Diarmuid O'Murchu in his book *Catching Up With Jesus* writes that when we travel down that road, as Jesus did, perhaps the most painful martyrdom will not be the shedding of our blood, but in the misunderstanding, criticism, ridicule and rejection we will experience at the hands of our very own – family, friends, communities, country, church. Authentic Christian discipleship is not for the faint hearted – rather it is often a lonely and isolated road, the less travelled road. But one which in the end, I imagine, you do not regret.

Fr Peter Kennedy was the subject of the Compass TV program on Sunday 31 May 2011. This article was printed in *St Mary's Matters* - 30 May 2011

The Church of Christ

The church of Christ must be

An inviting church

A church with open doors

A warming motherly church

A church of all generations

A church of the dead, the living and the unborn

A church of those before us, those with us and those after us

A church of understanding and sympathy, thinking with us, sharing our joy and sorrow.

A church that laughs with the people and cries with the people

A church that is not foreign and does not act that way

A human church, a church for us

A church that like her mother can wait for her children

A church who looks for her children and follows them

A church that visits the people where they are, at work or at play,

At the factory gate and at the football stadium, and within the four walls of the home

A church of those in the shadow, of those who weep, of those who grieve

A church of the worthy, but also the unworthy, of the saints and of the sinners.

Cardinal Franz König, December, 2002

Commentary on The Nicene Creed Context

Ted Lambert

The centre and focal point of God's revelation to the Creation is not Rome nor a male Pope nor a College of Bishops but EUCHARIST, which makes present again to every age the Saving Death of our very God made human, in our image and likeness. This mystery is almost impossible to comprehend. How God could love enough to embrace creation at its own level points the way of true love. Perhaps the prince and the peasant girl is as close an image as we can get. Anyway, this is the substance of our Faith. We believe that God, who is love, becomes our food of life so we can become love.

Somewhere along the way, fairly early in fact, we went wrong. Our intransigence is almost equal to God's munificence. Hopefully, not quite. We decided to explain the mystery. So we formulated a Creed for ourselves. We tried to define God in terms of our language. Sixteen centuries later, as we have learnt more about Creation, we are stuck with our words.

... *the Father Almighty*

The use of 'Father' for God is a patriarchal language bias which has invaded human mental imagery for the whole of Christian history. Human beings must image or picture their ideas, or they cannot get hold of them. To image God as male is to conceive God as male. This male conception is not only erroneous but it has erroneous consequences. First among these is the belittling of women. Men are in God's image, women are not. This in itself is a grave injustice, not only to women but also to God who made women in the Divine likeness. The only just solution is to cease using 'Father' for God. There are a thousand alternatives, beginning with 'Creator'.

The use of 'Almighty' for God is a patriarchal hangover. Might is not a virtue, it is most often a vice. We do not sing God's praises by using this word. 'All-Loving' is part of the definition of God. A very easy change to make.

... *one Lord Jesus Christ*

A patriarchal hangover. All lords in history have been tyrants; that is they usurped their power over others. God made each of us free, Jesus treated his neighbours as free. Human society (also among Arab people) is beginning to learn this but the Church in its language is lagging far behind this divine truth. Our bishops are still designated lords. While our Creed upholds in its language this outdated social structure we will suffer under tyranny. Women especially.

... *the only Son of God*

Jesus as God is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. As human he is the son of Mary. To name him the 'Son of God' is to mix the metaphors. 'Son of God' perpetuates the same male bias that 'Father' does and issues in the same errors and injustices. Men suffer big heads and women suffer belittling. God-given equality for men and women is thus patriarchally dismantled. 'Child of God' is non-gendered and places Jesus, in language terms, as the first among equals. We are all children of God.

With all due respect to the Nicene fathers I could wonder why they did not leave well alone! They began trying to explain the Trinity. There are no images of the Trinity, except Jesus. As the second Person of the Trinity Jesus was not begotten, only humans are begotten. If they were trying to say the second Person was not made they were stating the obvious because the Second Person is God, therefore not made. As is the Third Person. But here they got into an argument that goes on to this day. The Second Person was 'begotten' but the Third Person 'proceeds'. The Eastern Churches disagree – why wouldn't they? I suggest that all of this be omitted from the Creed recited today: 'We believe in one God Jesus, the only Child of God, through whom all things were made'. All that stuff in the middle we in the pews cannot believe because we don't understand it, if indeed anyone can.

... *for us and for our salvation he came down from heaven*

Here we begin to run into erroneous cosmology. It is now so wrong it must be corrected. Heaven is not a place 'up there'. When God entered our world by taking flesh through Mary, the issue being the man Jesus who is also God, it was not from up there. If a place must be identified it was from within Mary.

What we call the Incarnation is not a divine trip through space. It was a divine ACT, God acted to become one with Mary's flesh. This tells us something about God, who is Love. The space trip recounted in the words of the creed might excite us as children. Let us grow up.

... *and was made man*

This may be literally true, but in our historical circumstances it is tainted with male bias. 'Man' has been too pumped up already. Why not '*and was made human*'? It would indicate that God took flesh with all of us and not just the pompous half.

The other articles of the Creed I have no trouble with. Only the sexist and cosmological errors we now recognise as such.

TED LAMBERT was a founding member of ARC.
He has now retired..

Sexuality and The Role of Sisyphus

Gideon Goosen

One of the most divisive issues facing the World Council of Churches is homosexuality. The Catholic Church also has this issue but it forms part of the cluster of issues that centre around sexuality and marriage. I am thinking of divorce and remarriage, contraception, sex outside marriage, artificial reproductive technologies, and homosexuality. We all know what the traditional teaching is.

Both Cardinal Kasper and the present Pope, when Cardinal Ratzinger, have spoken about the need to reconsider the issue of divorced Catholics and a second marriage. Through their pastoral work, they felt the existing approach of the Catholic Church was inadequate. Simply saying to divorced people who have remarried, that they cannot receive the sacraments and that the Church had nothing to offer them, was not good enough, they thought. This revision has not yet happened.

The traditional teaching of the Catholic Church on sexuality has been under scrutiny for some time by Catholic authors. There have been a number of books investigating other approaches: John McNeil, *Church and the Homosexual* (1976), Anthony Cosmic, *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought* (1977), and Philip Keane, *Sexual Morality: A Catholic Perspective* (1977). More recently we have a book by Todd Salzman and Michael G. Lawler, *The Sexual Person: Toward a Renewed Catholic Anthropology* (2008). This latter book, published by Georgetown University Press, Washington D.C.) is closely and thoroughly argued but well worth the effort.

Without going into detail, it might be said that Salzman and Lawler take into account *human experience* in their search for a new sexual anthropology in contrast to the *magisterium* which has always been suspicious of human experience. The authors are revisionists, that is, they are looking to revise the Catholic position (which Vatican II encouraged with its abandoning of the hierarchy of aims of marriage). In fact, so strong is the revisionist position that most Catholic moral theologians today are revisionists. The *magisterium's* rôle is looking more and more like the Greek mythological king, Sisyphus, whose punishment was to push a huge boulder up the mountain. □

Book Review

Patricia Madigan, *Women and Fundamentalism in Islam and Catholicism: Negotiating Modernity in a Globalized World*, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011.

A feminist look at the Fruits of Catholics and Muslims Dialogue

Gideon Goosen

This is a timely book on the issue of women and fundamentalism written by Trish Madigan, a Sydney-based Dominican sister who has done great work for ecumenism and interfaith dialogue in Australia and particularly in Sydney.

Australia does not have an academic institute specifically focussed on higher degrees in *ecumenics and interfaith dialogue*. In the past many Australians went overseas to find this kind of research and the opportunity for a master's or doctorate. Trish Madigan was one such student who went to study in Dublin for a master's degree and then completed that with a doctorate at Sydney University which is now published as *Women and Fundamentalism in Islam and Catholicism*.

The reader will find Chapter Six particularly interesting. It discusses the interviews of both Catholic and Muslim women whom Madigan interviewed and asked questions about what they found empowering and disempowering in their religious tradition. Their feedback is pertinent, although we might be able to guess what the Catholic women had to say. But the book is more than this. It embraces a wide range of issues such as the dynamics of Catholic and Islamic fundamentalism (this section will be new to most Christians) and how economics, gender and patriarchy are interrelated.

This book is best obtained online through Amazon or directly from Peter Lang International and unfortunately quite expensive at US\$75.



Have your say!

ARCvoice is a report of news, opinion and reflection on the renewal and reform currently experienced in the Catholic Church

Your contributions, letters, articles or comments are most welcome

The opinions expressed do not necessarily represent those of the Editor or of ARC

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