



arcvoice

A Report from Australian Reforming Catholics Inc.
June 2012 Issue No. 44

Editorial

I doubt if there has been a time that I can remember when there have been so many issues that people have concerns about regarding our Church. Not only did we have a sizeable group of our members who attended the discussion day on 31st March but the range of issues that they presented as important to them was so diverse that it was impossible to deal with any of them adequately in the few hours we spent together. (See the list on Page 2 of this edition). At best, all we could do was to list and clarify them, allowing the participants the opportunity to express their conviction and feeling about them.

But it must not be left there. Although it was a somewhat rare occasion when we have the chance to speak openly to one another, we need to explore the issues further, both for our own edification and for the possibility that strategies may emerge to deal with some of them.

A second discussion day has been arranged for Saturday July 14th and we will choose just three issues from the list to enable us to take our discussion forward in a manner that allows us to deal with them adequately. Other issues we will hold over for future discussions. The choice of issues depends on who intends to come and therefore it is only right that you should choose as a participant in the discussion.

You are very much encouraged to attend and to help us to prepare for this I ask you to choose three issues from the list on page two and place them in your order of priority. E-mail your preferences to me jbuggy@ozemail.com.au or phone me on 9451 8393. These responses will determine the agenda of the afternoon. The discussion will take place as previously at the Dougherty Centre, 7 Victor St Chatswood, from 1.00-4.00 p.m. Please make your choice and come along and enjoy the stimulating company of like-minded Christian people. Refreshments will be provided.

John Buggy

Dates for your Diary:

Saturday 14 July: 1:00-4.00pm

ARC Discussion Day

Saturday 8 September: 9.00am-4.00pm

ARC Annual General Meeting*

Both meetings are held at:

Dougherty Centre

7 Victor Street, Chatswood

*See full details on Page 9

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Issues of Concern in the Church

A group of some forty members of ARC met at the Dougherty Centre in Chatswood NSW on 31 March 2012 to discuss the issues in the Church that were of concern to them. The following issues were raised. There will be follow-up discussion on Saturday 14 July 2012 from 1:00 – 4:00 pm and we hope that many members will attend.

1. Church Structures

- 1.1 The Church of Jesus v the institutional Church.
- 1.2 Lack of transparency and honesty – even corruption – in the institutional Church.
- 1.3 Abuse of power in the Church.
- 1.4 Clericalism
- 1.5 Too much dependence on the institutional church.
- 1.6 What is Eucharist about?
- 1.7 Need to go back to basics.
- 1.8 Clerical “tyranny”.
- 1.9 Unjust treatment of Bishop Bill Morris.
- 1.10 How can we make Vatican II real?
- 1.11 The Church has lost its way; our faith is living.
- 1.12 The Church’s desire for it to be “a clean and nice” Church – go back to essentials.
- 1.13 Foreign priests; conservatism in the Church.
- 1.14 Lack of English-speaking priests.
- 1.15 The future of the Church.
- 1.16 Concern for the Church – How can we make the Church more user-friendly? Young people are leaving.
- 1.17 Deplorable status of women! They should be ordained.
- 1.18 Need for equality in the Church.
- 1.19 Church should not be in too cosy a relationship with government.

2. Liturgy

- 2.1 The “new translation”!
- 2.2 Latinised language in the Mass.
- 2.3 Acceptance and inclusion – centrality of our Eucharistic nature.
- 2.4 Dwindling number of clergy – implication for Eucharist.
- 2.5 How can a disaffected Catholic continue to go to Mass and not be a “had-it” Catholic?
- 2.6 Loss of beautiful ‘old’ hymns.

3. Adult Education

- 3.1 Catholic schools system: what is being taught?
- 3.2 “New Evangelisation” is scary! The Church only attracts the young who agree! The clerical Church misses the point. Go back to the original evangelisation.
- 3.3 Small group education of adults.
- 3.4 Enthusiasm in the Church!
- 3.5 Rid ourselves of the influence of the Vatican.
- 3.6 How to reach the middle class spiritually poor? “Don’t be afraid!”
- 3.7 Perpetuation of faulty theology – of closing people’s minds. We must not be afraid to say that things can be otherwise.
- 3.8 Many clergy talk nonsense.
- 3.9 What is happening in ARC?
- 3.10 ARC is a “listening” group.

4. Scripture

- 4.1 We have been left ignorant of the truth of the Gospels.
- 4.2 Myth: There are too many people who think that the metaphors of our religion are facts.

5. Sexual Ethics

- 5.1 A new sexual ethic required (Geoff Robinson).
- 5.2 Bishops’ campaign against gay/lesbian “marriage”.
- 5.3 Sexual abuse of children – need for an inquiry.

6. The Church and Beyond

- 6.1 Inclusiveness; more than the Catholic Church. Search for what is common in other religious traditions and expression; Church should embrace good secular influences and good healing; embrace science where it is prophetic.

“... the Pope and his bishops ... are convinced – just as the 17th century church was certain it could make the heliocentric universe go away by threatening to torture Galileo – that by reminding Catholic women that men wear the ecclesiastical pants, they can whip the ladies back in line and stanch Catholicism’s female exodus.

The long-term result of that delusion could be catastrophic for Catholicism. Driving out dissenters won’t purify the church, as Catholic conservatives so tiresomely insist; it will simply petrify it. Incredibly, the church leaders reading Hildegard of Bingen nine centuries ago understood that better than the hierarchy watching Sister Farley does today.’ (<http://ideas.time.com>)

Starting afresh from Christ

Letter from ARC Secretariat to the Australian Bishops

We wish to congratulate the Australian Bishops Conference on its statement in the letter of 22nd May 2012: 'Like the disciples at the first Pentecost, we commit ourselves to start afresh from Christ'. It is thoroughly in harmony with the slogan of Vatican II, '*ad fontes*'.

It does have a number of implications that impact directly on the Bishops Conference itself, ones that cannot be addressed by other members of the Church.

There is great concern worldwide about the ever-increasing power of the Curia and the Pope. This is quite contrary to the direction desired by your predecessors at Vatican II. Of direct relevance to Australian bishops is the acceptance of the Curia's power to determine the agenda of regional bishops' meetings at Rome – absolutely contrary to Vatican II. This has resulted, *inter alia*, in the failure of the bishops to support Bishop William Morris in his arbitrary removal from power – a move that has been condemned eloquently by others in the Australian Church. Likewise, Bishop Geoffrey Robinson is out of favour for articulating a view shared by the majority of Catholics, but you have not supported him.

In many Australian dioceses there are Church members who bypass diocesan procedures and complain directly to Rome about perceived deviations from authorised activities. It is likely that Bishop Morris' dismissal was initiated by this. We are aware that many

priests live in dread of being reported in this manner. Why can you not protect those under your care more effectively? Does this not undermine your own authority? If you presented a majority front to Rome, do you think you would all be dismissed?

There are many issues that the majority of Catholics still practising regularly wish to see addressed: for example, establishment of a priesthood not constrained by restrictions on gender or marital status; a review of aspects of family planning regulations; acceptance of a failure of diocesan bishops and the Vatican to handle sexual abuse by priests in a proper manner. If you are true leaders of your local flock and not merely mouthpieces of a Vatican determined to micromanage the Church centrally, surely you must address issues such as these.

Clearly, there are many issues for the whole church to 'start afresh from Christ', and we look forward to hearing of these refreshing changes. However issues such as these that we have mentioned, which can be addressed only by you are of fundamental importance in healing a rift that has developed between senior hierarchy and the rest of the church, and may perhaps aid in returning disillusioned non-practising Catholics (the second largest religion in the USA) to return to active church participation.

We look forward to your response to us.

ARC Secretariat

'Good & Bad Religion'

by Peter Vardy

In his book, Peter Vardy argues that, although celebrity atheists attack religion as the source of all evil, it has to be recognised that religion has been misused for evil ends both in the past and today.

However religion had also been responsible for some of the most monumental human achievements in music, literature, art and architecture as well as inspiring men and women to lives of self-sacrificial compassion and love. There is a need, therefore, to distinguish between good and bad religion. This was not to claim that some religions are good and some bad but that, within each religion, there are examples of bad religion at work and these need to be challenged and resisted.

Criteria are needed, therefore, to challenge bad religion and these criteria included justice, humility, lack of abuse of authority, the compatibility of science and religion, and the idea that religion at its best should call human beings to fulfil their full potential. When these criteria are not met then religion can become dangerous and needs to be challenged from within.

Peter Vardy was one of the speakers at the public seminar entitled 'Good and Bad Religion' in The Crypt of St Patrick's Church, The Rocks, NSW, May 12, 2012. The theme of the seminar was taken from Peter Vardy's book of the same title (SCM Press, 2010).

Worth Saving from the Fire

Jackie Wall

I was asked to write an article on good news in the Catholic Church – a hopeless task you might say. As the news about the persecution of the nuns in America by Vatican officials and the investigation of the Girl Guides by the American Bishops surfaced I despaired of finding any material for a ‘good news’ article.

But this is focussing on the institutional, hierarchical, patriarchal church and the Church is much more than this. Since Vatican II we have become familiar with the idea that the Church is more than the hierarchy in Rome. The Church is the People of God – all of us following Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus the Christ.

There is good news out there. There are good priests who struggle to care for their parishioners against almost overwhelming difficulties. There are many dedicated people who follow Jesus’ teaching: to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, nurse the sick and visit those in prison and teach children about the Jesus they follow. There are theologians who have been silenced and lost their livelihood because they refuse to deny what they believe to be the truth. There are those who have lost their lives fighting for justice for the oppressed. These are the Church.

There is a website called *Following Jesus* (www.followingjesus.org) and the introduction to this website is arresting – a visual listing of sayings of Jesus. As I watched it I thought, this is the Good News; this is what the Church should be about. The titles rolled on: ‘Love God with all your heart, being, understanding and strength; Love your neighbour as yourself; Pray for those who persecute you; Do good to your enemies; Do not condemn; Do not judge; Forgive; Treat others as you would want them to treat you; Hunger for justice; Be pure in heart; Be leaven; Be salt; Be light; Be compassionate; Be servant of all; Feed the hungry; Clothe the naked; Visit the sick and prisoners; Deny self-interest and self-centredness; Do not worry; Take nothing on the journey; Seek the Kingdom of peace and justice; Seek and you will find; Knock and it shall

be opened; The Kingdom is within you and all around you; Follow me.’

The familiar words of the Gospel, the words of Jesus inviting us to follow him: this is the good news.

Towards the end of his book *The Pope’s War* Matthew Fox has a chapter on what is worth saving from the burning building and lists 15 ‘useful and perennial archetypes’. These include ‘Do this in Memory of Me’ and he talks about more than the Eucharist. He talks about the stories and teachings of Jesus and remembering, praying, breaking bread and taking communion together: eating in the divine presence. Compassion: ‘Be You Compassionate as Your Creator in Heaven is Compassionate’ – Jesus teaches that God is love and that we should love our neighbour as ourselves; Justice: ‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after justice for they shall be satisfied’ – Jesus stands in the prophetic tradition of Israel that is passionate about Justice; Wisdom sets up her Tent and dwells among us – Jesus as Wisdom incarnate; The Cosmic Christ – the sacredness of all creation, the divine image in all things. There are many things worth saving.

Why do I stay in a Church that silences the prophetic voices of its theologians, that denies and covers up the sins of its priests who abuse children, that persecutes its dedicated religious sisters because they follow their conscience? I refuse (so far at least) to walk away from my Church – not mine by birth, I am not a ‘cradle’ Catholic.

I fought a long battle all through my teenage years to join the Catholic Church and I am not going to walk away now, though I grieve for what the institutional church has become. I ‘defect in place’ to use Miriam Therese Winter’s phrase. Walking away only gives more power to those who to dominate and control.

JACKIE WALL obtained her BTh. at Manly in 1979 and was a member of Women-Church and MOW. She is currently a member of WATAC and ARC.

About Church renewal Congar said: “It was a question of liberating the Gospel from more or less outmoded sociological, pastoral, and liturgical forms so as to give it the best possible chance of success in a world calling for new forms, new expressions, and new structures.” Yves Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2011, p.2.

On holiest of days, Pope slams women's ordination supporters

Response from Erin Saiz Hanna, Executive Director
Women's Ordination Conference
Washington DC

Today, Roman Catholics globally joined together for the feast of Holy Thursday, to commemorate the Last Supper of Jesus the Christ and welcome the Easter Triduum, the holiest days for Catholics. It was during the Last Supper that Jesus gave those gathered a new commandment – to “love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another”.

While during these holy days we would presume to hear Pope Benedict XVI echoing Jesus' call for love and inclusion, instead the Pope put forth a message of fear, intimidation, and oppression. In his homily earlier today, he denounced “disobedience” within the church and strongly reprimanded priests who support women's ordination.

The Women's Ordination Conference (WOC) is discouraged that the Pope would use this sacred time in our religious tradition to attack his fellow priests, who in good conscience, support women's full inclusion in

the Roman Catholic Church. It is not these priests who are disobedient, it is the hierarchy who have lost touch with the people of God.

Out of fear of the growing numbers of ordained women and the overwhelming support they receive, the Vatican is trying to preserve what little power they have left by attempting to extinguish the widespread call for women's equality in the church. It will not work.

More than 63 percent of U.S. Catholics, and millions of Catholics worldwide, support the ordination of women. The Vatican's own Pontifical Biblical Commission found in 1976 that there is no scriptural reason to prohibit the ordination of women. The Bible describes how women were prominent leaders in Jesus' ministry and early Christianity. In all four gospels, Mary Magdalene was the primary witness to the central event of Christianity – Christ's resurrection.

It is long overdue for the Vatican to listen to its own research, its own theologians and its own people who say that women are equally created in the image of God and are called to serve as priests in a renewed and inclusive Roman Catholic Church.

Women's Ordination Conference, founded in 1975 and based in Washington DC, is the oldest and largest national organisation working for the ordination of women as priests, deacons, and bishops into an inclusive and accountable Roman Catholic Church. WOC also promotes new perspectives on ordination that call for less separation between the clergy and laity.



Letter to the Editor

In my view it is the Pope who is disobedient in failing to listen to the voice of the faithful, the *sensus fidelium*. This old man can cry all he wants – the push for the ordination of women, and married men, will not go away. It is a great pity that the Church may have to implode first before something new can arise from the ashes.

Rob Brian

A Brief History of Celibacy in the Catholic Church

First Century: Peter, the first pope, and the apostles that Jesus chose were, for the most part, married men. The New Testament implies that women presided at eucharistic meals in the early church.

Second and Third Century: Age of Gnosticism: light and spirit are good, darkness and material things are evil. A person cannot be married and be perfect. However, most priests were married.

Fourth Century:

306 Council of Elvira, Spain, decree #43: a priest who sleeps with his wife the night before Mass will lose his job.

325 Council of Nicea: decreed that after ordination a priest could not marry. Proclaimed the Nicene Creed.

352 Council of Laodicea: women are not to be ordained. This suggests that before this time there was ordination of women.

385 Pope Siricius left his wife in order to become pope. Decreed that priests may no longer sleep with their wives.

Fifth Century:

401 St. Augustine wrote: 'Nothing is so powerful in drawing the spirit of a man downwards as the caresses of a woman.'

Sixth Century:

567 2nd Council of Tours: any cleric found in bed with his wife would be excommunicated for a year and reduced to the lay state.

580 Pope Pelagius II: his policy was not to bother married priests as long as they did not hand over church property to wives or children.

590-604 Pope Gregory 'the Great' said that all sexual desire is sinful in itself (meaning that sexual desire is intrinsically evil?).

Seventh Century:

France: documents show that the majority of priest were married.

Eighth Century:

St. Boniface reported to the pope that in Germany almost no bishop or priest was celibate.

Ninth Century

836-Council of Aix-la-Chapelle openly admitted that abortions and infanticide took place in convents and monasteries to cover up activities of uncelibate clerics. St. Ulrich, a holy bishop, argued from scripture and commonsense that the only way to purify the church from the worst excesses of celibacy was to permit priests to marry.

Eleventh Century:

1045 Benedict IX dispensed himself from celibacy and resigned in order to marry.

1074 Pope Gregory VII said anyone to be ordained must first pledge celibacy: 'priests [must] first escape from the clutches of their wives.'

1095 Pope Urban II had priests' wives sold into slavery, children were abandoned.

Twelfth Century:

1123 Pope Callistus II: First Lateran Council decreed that clerical marriages were invalid.

1139 Pope Innocent II: Second Lateran Council confirmed the previous Council's decree.

Fourteenth Century:

Bishop Pelagio complains that women are still ordained and hearing confessions.

Fifteenth Century:

Transition; 50% of priests are married and accepted by the people.

Sixteenth Century:

1545-63 Council of Trent states that celibacy and virginity are superior to marriage.

1517 Martin Luther.

1530 Henry VIII.

Seventeenth Century:

Inquisition. Galileo. Newton.

Eighteenth Century:

1776 American Declaration of Independence.

1789 French Revolution.

Nineteenth Century:

1804 Napoleon.

1882 Darwin.

1847 Marx, Communist Manifesto.

1858 Freud.

1869 First Vatican Council; infallibility of pope.

Twentieth Century:

1930 Pope Pius XI: sex can be good and holy.

1951 Pope Pius XII: married Lutheran pastor ordained Catholic priest in Germany.

1962 Pope John XXIII: Vatican Council II; vernacular; marriage is equal to virginity.

1966 Pope Paul VI: celibacy dispensations.

1970s Ludmilla Javorova and several other Czech women ordained to serve needs of women imprisoned by Communists.

1978 Pope John Paul II: puts a freeze on dispensations.

1983 New Canon Law.

1980 Married Anglican/Episcopal pastors are ordained as Catholic priests in the U.S.; also in Canada and England in 1994.

Gregory XIII 1572-1585 1 son

History sources:

Oxford Dictionary of Popes; H.C. Lea *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy in the Christian Church* 1957; E. Schillebeeckx *The Church with a Human Face* 1985; J. McSorley *Outline History of the Church by Centuries* 1957; F.A.Foy (Ed.) *1990 Catholic Almanac* 1989; D.L. Carmody *The Double Cross - Ordination, Abortion and Catholic Feminism* 1986; P.K. Jewtt *The Ordination of Women* 1980; A.F. Ide *God's Girls - Ordination of Women in the Early Christian & Gnostic Churches* 1986; E. Schüssler Fiorenza *In Memory of Her* 1984; P. DeRosa *Vicars of Christ* 1988.

Popes who were married:

St. Peter, Apostle

St. Felix III 483-492 (2 children)

St. Hormidas 514-523 (1 son)

St. Silverus (Antonia) 536-537

Hadrian II 867-872 (1 daughter)

Clement IV 1265-1268 (2 daughters)

Felix V 1439-1449 (1 son)

Myths and Facts:

Myth: All priests take a vow of celibacy.

Fact: Most priests do not take a vow. It is a promise made before the bishop.

Myth: Celibacy is not the reason for the vocation shortage.

Fact: A 1983 survey of Protestant churches shows a surplus of clergy; the Catholic church alone has a shortage.

Popes who were the sons of other popes, other clergy:

Name of Pope	Papacy	Son of
St. Damascus I	366-348	St. Lorenzo, priest
St. Innocent I	401-417	Anastasius I
Boniface	418-422	son of a priest
St. Felix	483-492	son of a priest
Anastasius II	496-498	son of a priest
St. Agapitus I	535-536	Gordiaous, priest
St. Silverus	536-537	St. Homidas, pope
Deusdedit	882-884	son of a priest
Boniface VI	896-896	Hadrian, bishop
John XI	931-935	Pope Sergius III
John XV	989-996	Leo, priest

Myth: Clerical celibacy has been the norm since the Second Lateran Council in 1139.

Fact: Priests and even popes still continued to marry and have children for several hundred years after that date. In fact, the Eastern Catholic Church still has married priests. In the Latin Church, one may be a married priest if:

- one is a Protestant pastor first; or
- if one is a life-long Catholic but promises never again to have sexual relations with one's wife.

Myth: The vocation shortage is due to materialism and lack of faith.

Fact: Research (1985 Lilly endowment): "There is no evidence to support loss of faith for less vocations ...youth volunteer and campus ministry is rising."

Popes who had illegitimate children after 1139:

Innocent VIII	1484-1492	several children
Alexander VI	1492-1503	several children
Julius	1503-1513	3 daughters
Paul III	1534-1549	3 sons, 1 daughter
Pius IV	1559-1565	3 sons

We believe that priests should be allowed to marry and that women have an equal right to have their call to ordination tested along with male candidates. We believe celibacy is a gift of the Spirit, as is the call to marriage and the single life. Gifts cannot be mandated, so it is from a deep respect for the gift of celibacy that we request that it be made optional and not forced upon those who do not feel called in this way.



Christianity in Evolution: An Exploration

Jack Mahoney

Georgetown University Press, 2011
208 pages
ISBN: 9781589017696

In Jack Mahoney SJ's *Bioethics and Belief*, he described theology as 'making faith-sense of experience and experience-sense of faith'. That has been an inspiration to me ever since I read it. As he notes himself in the attractive Introduction to his *Christianity in Evolution*, it was the same insight which motivated him to undertake this new, major work:

Because our common human experience is being faced with a major advance in our scientific understanding of human origins, intellectual integrity invites us to place that experience alongside our past and present religious beliefs, and in the process to hope to cast light on both... The dialectical activity of submitting experience to the bar of belief and of submitting belief to the bar of experience is today a requirement of every believer on pain of leaving their experience unanchored and their belief unsubstantiated. (p.xiii)

Christianity in Evolution is remarkable for the extensive reading and research needed to give substance to the author's line of argument and for the courage he displays in challenging us, in the light of evolutionary truths, to look again at some of the ways our faith has been expressed. Attempting to do theology with integrity in an evolutionary context leads Mahoney to a number of conclusions which many readers may find disturbing, to put it mildly! Yet he does not pull his punches, arguing, 'that trying to preserve the traditional beliefs in original sin, the fall of humanity, and the death of Jesus as an expiatory sacrifice to appease an offended God, whether these beliefs are maintained in their traditional form or are subjected to various modernizing attempts to make them more acceptable, serves only to strain the belief of believers and the credulity of non-believers.' (p.xii)

Nevertheless, Mahoney is not trying to disturb but to strengthen people's faith. In fact, it could be argued that the line of thought he is exploring could open out completely new vistas to whatever is meant by 'the new evangelisation'. If we believe, with Benedict XVI, that at the heart of each of us is a deep yearning to discover

the full meaning of who we are as human persons, Mahoney is suggesting that the only thing that will satisfy that hunger is an understanding of the truths of our faith which is at home with the truths of evolution. He stresses this with regard to the riches that evolution can bring to our understanding of the central doctrine of the Incarnation, helping us to see Jesus as the summit of creation.

In the evolutionary approach, the creative energy of divine being is viewed as entirely immanent within all non-divine being, welling up within it like a spring of water in the process impelling non-created being to transcend itself progressively in a variety of ways in the course of the onward evolutionary march of God's creative purpose. So much so that it is possible to consider that in one instance the divine presence and immanence in creative being reached such a peak of intensity that God actually became a human being, Jesus of Nazareth. (p.117)

He carries this approach to the Incarnation through to offer an interpretation of Christ's death and resurrection, too, suggesting that evolutionary theology:

proposes that the motive for the Word becoming flesh was not to save humanity from any inherited congenital sinfulness; it was for Christ to lead and conduct the human species through the common evolutionary fate of individual extinction to a new level of living with God. Nor was this done by the offering of Christ as an expiatory sacrifice to placate an injured God; it was achieved by Christ's freely confronting death and winning through to a new phase of existence to be imparted to his fellow humans in their evolutionary destiny to share fully in the life of God. (pp.14-15)

Mahoney suggests that more traditional understandings of Original Sin, the Fall, Atonement, Justification and similar concepts no longer sit comfortably in an evolutionary context. His own position on sin in this context is very helpful: 'Sin emerges as humanity's yielding to evolutionary selfishness and declining to accept the invitation to self-transcendence: it is a refusal to transcend oneself in the interests of others.' (p.43) Put like that, it makes sense of Paul VI's claim that 'the world is sick' (*Populorum Progressio*, §66) and his diagnosis of its sickness as 'the lack of brotherhood among individuals and peoples'. I also liked Mahoney's comment: 'What people in today's culture need most is not the recovery of a sense of sin but the acquiring of a sense of purpose in their lives.' (p.66)

I appreciated particularly the author's thoughts about sharing in the life of the Trinity (found in his rather

heavy second chapter), which echoed my own deep convictions. However, I found difficulty with his use of the word 'altruism' for that inner life of the Trinity. It is too bland and abstract; it sounds like a philosophical theory rather than the red hot centre of the whole of creation, let alone the inner life of the Trinity. I'm sure the 'love' family of vocabulary could offer a richer and more appropriate word.

I also felt a sense of unease about Mahoney suggesting, 'the possibility that belief in hell need not continue to be maintained in an evolutionary theology if those who are not destined to enter with Christ into the new phase of risen existence will not be condemned to everlasting suffering but rather will be allowed to cease to exist at death' (p.147-148). While I can see the attractiveness of that suggestion on one level, somehow

I find Julian of Norwich's, 'All will be well and all manner of things will be well', more in tune with a God of love and compassion!

This book will certainly arouse a lot of discussion and there will plenty of questions raised by some of the positions Mahoney adopts. Despite that, I believe that this is a very important contribution to the development of theology in our evolutionary age.

The reviewer, Fr Kevin Kelly, is a retired parish priest and emeritus Research Fellow in Moral Theology at Liverpool Hope University. This review was published originally by *Thinking Faith*, the online journal of the British Jesuits at www.thinkingfaith.org It is reprinted with their permission.

ARC

Annual General Meeting

Portraits of Jesus

You enjoyed his scholarship and amiable personality at our Conscience Seminar several years ago and now you have the chance to spend a whole morning with him again. Father Michael Fallon MSC will attend our AGM on September 8th and share with us his insights into Jesus in the Gospels. Michael will present Jesus as a series of portraits by Mark, Matthew, Luke and John and give us a chance to explore the differences in the way each evangelist painted a picture of Jesus. Michael sees these differences as complementary, much in the same way as we might expect different artists to paint different portraits of Jesus for the Archibald Prize.

How do you see Jesus? Teacher, prophet, revolutionary, or whatever? Come to listen, question and contribute to a stimulating presentation and discussion that will most likely have you thinking and re-thinking long after the event. For those of you who have booked and look forward to the lectures to be given by John Dominic Crossan on the Power of Parable in the week before our AGM, (please see enclosed brochure). this meeting with Michael will give you additional stimulation in your thinking about the person of Jesus as Michael will present a different viewpoint.

Please mark this in your diary now:

ARC Annual General Meeting
Dougherty Centre, 7 Victor Street, Chatswood
Saturday 8th September, 9.00 a.m. – 4.00 p.m.

(Five minute's walk from Chatswood Station
 or parking opposite the venue in Westfield car park)

John Buggy

The Elephant in the Room – Ministry: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

By Michael Kelly SJ

<http://eurekastreet.com.au/uploads/file/12/elephant.pdf>

(full text also available from ARCVoice Editor)

Viewed overall, the state of the Church is not too encouraging. In the space of a single generation, the deepening dearth of priests will lead to the collapse of the entire structure of parish administration, and I cannot see sufficient courage or creativity among those who have assumed responsibility for running the Church as an institution to find some real alternatives or at least to systematically prepare the community of believers for a situation in which they will soon have to live their faith without support of many things that the Church has regarded for centuries as essential and matter of course. We must not allow ourselves to be drawn into the murky waters of cynicism, passivity, and bitterness. However, nor must we don the rosy spectacles of illusory optimism.

Tomas Halik,

Czech priest and author of

Night of the Confessor: Christian Faith in an Age of Uncertainty

Starting his talk with this quotation from Tomas Halik, Michael Kelly ends with these prophetic words:

And what do these challenges suggest? Firstly, they say that the challenges we face are great. But secondly, we need to recognise that the resources are many. I wouldn't for the life of me propose that Church authority outline a structure aligned on the triple-tier priesthood we have now – deacon/priest/bishop – as the answer to the challenge of the times.

There are already in the Australian Church thousands of theologically-educated lay people able to grasp and respond to these challenges. There are now hundreds of trained spiritual guides able to guide and assist people in their journey of faith. A fact of Catholic life today is that families more readily identify with the schools their children attend than they do with the geographic parishes to which they may nominally belong.

Today, leadership of the Catholic community rests more in the hands of school principals, religious education coordinators and lay chaplains and pastoral workers than it does in the hands of the declining number of ageing clergy. But these suggestions are only a start. I'm sure you would have other roles and responsibilities that you could name as points of growth for the building up of the Church.

When Bill Clinton beat the one term President George Herbert Bush in 1992, his recurrent theme and reference point in the campaign, you may remember, was 'The economy stupid'. The answer to what I've been saying might well be **'the laity stupid'**. Despite various efforts to thwart it, the Spirit seems to be creating a whole new Church, one that does actually embody and enable what Vatican II hoped for – a Church of the laity. The only question that remains is when, if ever, will the powers-that-be in this situation actually wake up to what's happened to the Church in places where the faith was planted many moons ago and authorise the movement of the Spirit already much at work?

And when that happens, let's hope the provision and availability of the Eucharist is addressed. Until then, the matter of ministry will remain the elephant in the middle of the room. □

Letter to *The Tablet*

Above Vatican II?

If Fr Niklaus Pfluger were correct when he claims 'that Pope Benedict is so interested in a canonical solution for the [SSPX] fraternity that he is ready to conclude an agreement even if it does not recognise controversial Vatican II texts or the New Mass' (*The Church in the World, 19 May*), we would then have a Pope who places himself above the Vatican Council, rather than subject to its teachings. Would this not place the Pope in schism with the Catholic Church? And would an absolute monarchy not have turned into a tyrannical dictatorship? While one can perhaps understand the Pope's desire to bring back the *Lefebvrist*s into the Church, one must continue to wonder why he treated a well-loved bishop like bishop Bill Morris of Toowoomba so harshly and unjustly, thus alienating far more people from the Church.

Rob Brian

Dover Heights NSW

Don't tell the Cathedral

- but its time for a change

Will Day

SMH May 28, 2012

Extract only - full text available from ARCvoice editor

WHEN my aunt was dying in hospital in the late 1990s, she asked to see a priest. The hospital's Catholic chaplain was away sick, so I knocked on the door of a nearby, inner suburban presbytery. The kind priest who answered was unable to help me himself but he made a couple of useful suggestions. As I thanked him and turned to leave he added, 'But whatever you do, don't go near the cathedral'. The implication was that my aunt deserved tender compassion, not judgmental nonsense: it was the late 1990s, Archbishop George Pell was in charge at the cathedral and had become emblematic of a type of Catholicism many Australian Catholics wanted nothing to do with.

In the years since then, I have had more to do with the Catholic Church than at any time since my schooldays. I have found myself involved, in various ways, with Catholic educational institutions, retreat centres, religious orders and suburban parishes. In these realms I have encountered unusual kindness and wisdom; philosophical, social and artistic innovation; considered intelligence; and an astute awareness of the nature and travails of the human condition. I have discovered profound methods of healing and of psychological and spiritual sustenance.

It stopped me in my tracks recently when I realised that most of those varied Catholic environments had wanted to distance themselves from central church authorities, or had indicated that aspects of what goes on in their place (the caring, innovative, daring, human work) would probably not be approved of by those authorities. The comment that rang in my ears was: *"We have to be a bit careful."*

The messy, reprehensible 'Catholic Church' we have seen depicted in media reports over recent years – the church that struggles to conceal its horrible abuses, possibly practises systemic deceit, squanders great sums of money, discriminates blatantly against women, calls homosexual people 'disordered', and treats its dissenting workers like witless children (all presumably in the name of God) – is as representative of the larger body of the contemporary Catholic Church in Australia as *News of the World* was of quality journalism.

Regrettably, the depictions of the church in the popular media seldom distinguish between unhealthy aspects of an increasingly marginalised patriarchal authority, and the vast and varied, largely wholesome body of the church.

Will Day is a Melbourne writer for *The Sydney Morning Herald*

Money Matters

Gideon Goosen

When we think about reform, issues of how money is gathered and spent comes up. There was an enviable time in the early Church when the community owned nothing, when there were no church buildings, no assets. I am thinking of the time before Constantine. I hear you saying we cannot go back there; we cannot re-create the church of 100 AD today in our parishes. While that is true, we can reform some things.

We get a very good insight into the early Christian Church from the book, *God is Red*, by Liao Yiwu (HarperCollinsPublishers 2011). The author is a well-known atheist author and dissident who wanted to find out more about Christianity in China as they were a persecuted minority as are dissident writers today. There are some fascinating stories of Chinese individuals in this book, stories of extraordinary courage, of Christian commitment, of betrayal but also of Christian missionaries who were 'saints' as St Paul would say. Those missionaries who were able to bring western medicine with them came close to the gospel stories of Jesus healing and curing the sick. The subtitle, "the Secret Story of How Christianity Survived and Flourished in Communist China" gives you the big picture, pre- and post-Mao.

One of the things that struck me about these Chinese Christians was the simplicity of their Christian lives. They possessed nothing. If they had a church it was confiscated by the Communist government. Like the early Christians they were often physically tortured by the government. What they did have was witness value. The way they lived their lives and treated others, the way they came together in houses to hold services, was the only asset they had.

Contrast that with the Church today in the West where possessions and assets are enormous. Those dioceses in the States that have been declared bankrupt (through compensation pay-outs for sexual abuse) have been forced perhaps to re-think their priorities. One of the big areas for reform must surely be the way we collect and use money as a Church community. There must be transparency and accountability on every level, there must be co-responsibility (laity and clergy), and parish and diocesan budgets should be agreed upon. Having read the book one is compelled to think of how the acquisition of wealth and possessions (from medieval times) in the Christian Church has diverted us from our true mission.

Gideon Goosen is a theologian and author. His latest book is *Hyphenated Christians* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011)

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

Please send material to:

The Editor
ARCvoice

32 Awatea Road
ST IVES CHASE NSW 2075

OR (preferably) email: knowlden@optusnet.com.au

(NB: Change of email address)

Tel: 02 9449 7275 Fax 02 9449 5017

ARC Secretariat

Barbara Brannan 02 9451 7130
barbarabrannan@mac.com

Rob Brian 02 9371 8519 rbrian@vtown.com.au

John Buggy Spokesperson 02 9451 8393
jbuggy@ozemail.com.au

Alan Clague 07 3374 1889 clague@aapt.net.au

Amanda Jordan 0419 605 428
australisaj@optusnet.com.au

Margaret Knowlden Editor 02 9449 7275
knowlden@optusnet.com.au

Peter Meury 02 4390 9208 petermeury@bigpond.com

Jim Taverne 02 9449 2923 jagota@ozemail.com.au

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