



arcvoice

A Report from Australian Reforming Catholics
September 2004
Issue No. 13

Message from the Secretariat

The brochure for ARC Campfire 2004 has suggested pondering the word, **word**. What does its use at the beginning of John's gospel mean? At the very least it draws attention to the importance of the meaning of words.

There are two other words which could well be pondered because they have deeply layered meanings. The first is **I Am**, the name of god given to Moses (quite forcefully and deliberately) at the burning bush [Ex.3:13-15]. The other is **person**, the word used for a human individual.

It is significant that the translators of the Old Testament have avoided using **I Am** in English and instead used 'Yahweh', a word which evokes no response either emotional or intellectual. As an exercise try using **I Am** wherever you might normally use 'God' or 'Our Father' and see what happens! At the very least you might wonder that God's name was so given in Exodus. At the most some deep insights might be achieved into the meaning of life.

Person is derived from the fact that Greek drama was delivered by actors projecting their voices through a mask which served the purpose of being both a megaphone and a character identifier. The fact that the word came to mean an individual would seem to indicate that human beings instinctively knew that we present to the world only a mask of ourselves. The real self is known only by **I Am**. Which is curious when one reflects that the word, 'person', is used in the context of the Trinity. Should its use here be revisited?

If these words move you, dear reader, then you might accept that they be the subject of conversation!

Conversation is the usual way we humans interact with each other. We can talk to each other with great respect and we don't have to come to any conclusion. The next time we talk on the subject we might find that we are taking a slightly different line because we have been thinking about it in the meantime. That is how our thinking becomes clearer, by talking about whatever is on our minds. We are all free to talk and ask questions on any topic. We all have intelligence and a sense of morality written on our hearts.

Come to ARC Campfire 2004 and let the conversation begin! Enrich your lives and that of the Church by thinking through in what way the Church should reform itself.

Barbara Campbell

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ARC Campfire 2004

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Why Celibacy?

Kerry White

He said there was a view that they (celibacy provisions)... were originally introduced so church property would remain in the church, and not be inherited by a priest's children or spouses. ' (Attributed to Bishop Pat Power in a front page news article of the Brisbane Courier Mail, 26 August 2002)

How often have you read or heard that view? Each time I do, I need to bite my tongue at such a distortion of history. Confronting our past honestly is a vital step if we are to move forward. Let us visit that past.

In ancient times the Eastern and Western churches of the first ten centuries never thought of making celibacy a condition of entering the ministry: both married and unmarried men were welcome as ministers. From the end of the fourth century, church law contained something new: a *lex continentiae*. This was a liturgical law forbidding sexual intercourse in the night before communicating at the Eucharist. Previously this had long been observed as a custom. However from the end of the fourth century the Western churches – but not the Eastern churches – began to celebrate the Eucharist daily. So in practice this abstinence became a permanent condition for married priests. A law to this effect became necessary for the first time, so there was canonical legislation accordingly.

What we have then is not a law of celibacy, but a law of abstinence connected with ritual purity, focused above all on the Eucharist. Despite this obligation to abstinence, married priests were forbidden to send away their wives. Under Canon Law the priest had an obligation not only to abstinence but also to living together with his wife.

In the first ten centuries, many Christians, against their inclination, were called upon by the community to preside at the Eucharist. Once complete abstinence was enjoined on priests in the west, we can see to what degree this extra burden left many priests in deplorable situations. Ancient Councils bear abundant witness to this.

Thus the origin of the law of abstinence for married priests unmistakably lies in Rome at the end of the fourth century. The critical question is how this could be acceptable to Christians when Jesus and the New Testament writers revoked the ritual precepts of the Old Testament and declared them void?

Their acceptance can only be understood in the light of the general cultural climate of antiquity, above all in areas around the Mediterranean. This Hellenistic area was influenced by Eastern thought where laws of purity for pagan priests were prominent. Levitical laws of ritual purity mirror those prescriptions. *Anyone who approaches the altar must not have enjoyed the pleasures of Venus the night before.* This rule can be found in Catholic liturgical books.

For the Stoics, who were wide-spread at the time, the ideal was 'equanimity', so intercourse was called a 'little epilepsy' because it robbed people of their senses and therefore not 'in accord with reason'. Neo-Platonic dualism also played a part. Porphyry, a neo-platonic pagan, wrote a book called *On Abstinence* which enjoyed great popularity at the time. There were, too, Christian churches which regarded sexual abstinence as a baptismal obligation and therefore binding on all Christians. Clearly they were children of their age.

Although the official church constantly and emphatically defended marriage as being good and holy and a gift by God at creation, pressure from its pagan neighbours led it to be more reserved about what was referred to as 'the use of marriage'. This was only permissible for the purpose of procreation and even then any pleasure associated with it was regarded as being not quite right.

Here we find an antiquated anthropology and an ancient view of sexuality. *Omnis coitus immundus* was the way in which St. Jerome, biblical scholar and Doctor of the church (c.347-420) expressed the then universal view of pagans and Christians: *All sexual intercourse is impure.*

In the twelfth century the Second Lateran Council turned the ritual law of abstinence into a law of celibacy: 'So that the *lex continentiae*, and the purity which is well pleasing to God, may extend among the clergy and those who are ordained, we decree ...'

Sanctions and economic penalties had failed to enforce the ritual law of abstinence. The church authorities, aware of this, resorted to the most drastic means of all. Marriage was made a bar to priesthood, so that only the unmarried could become priests and a priest's marriage was not just unlawful, it was invalid.

Historically other motives also played a role in this medieval law of celibacy, such as the acquisition of control over the clergy and the confiscation of the goods of priests' sons. Once the law was established, it began to function in the struggle for power and property, but this has nothing to do with why it came into being. The ritual law of abstinence is the only decisive and determinative element in ecclesiastical legislation. *One does not approach the altar and the consecrated vessels with soiled hands.* So went the pagan view, but now it had been taken over by Christians.

It is a fact that all church documents down to and including the encyclical *Sacra Virginitas* of Pius XII (1954) always refer to the Levitical laws of purity in connection with priestly celibacy. The main passages quoted are: Exodus 19.15; I Samuel 21.4-6; Leviticus 15.16f; 22.1-7.

So we reach the Second Vatican Council, where two things are stated clearly in the Decree on *The Life and Mission of Priests* (7 December 1965, Chap. 3 Sect. 2):

First: why a person should embrace a celibate way of life is *for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven* (Matthew 19.12). Clearly celibacy is a charism freely chosen by the few. There is no mention of ritual purity.

Second: 'It is true that perfect and perpetual continence is not demanded of the priesthood by its nature. This is clear from the practice of the primitive church and the tradition of the Eastern Churches'.

Why then did the Council maintain the current discipline? These are the arguments presented for it:

- Priests are consecrated in a new and excellent way to Christ
- They cling with undivided heart and dedicate themselves more freely to the service of God and man
- They are less encumbered in their service
- They become fitted for a broader acceptance of fatherhood in Christ
- They are living signs of the world to come, in which children of the resurrection shall neither marry nor take wives.

In a dream I walked with God through the deep places of creation; past walls that receded and gates that opened, through hall after hall of silence, darkness and refreshment – the dwelling place of souls acquainted with light and warmth – until, around me, was an infinity in to which we all flowed together and lived anew, like the rings made by raindrops falling upon wide expanses of calm, dark waters.

Dag Hammarskjöld

Quoted at the *Epiphany* AGM. 1 Dec 2002

Consider those arguments in sequence:

1. Surely it is ordination that consecrates to Christ (and doesn't marriage do that also?)
2. Close association with ministers of other Christian churches has been a revelation of what undivided heart and dedication mean, and has highlighted how selfish celibates can be.
3. The support given by wives and children of those ministers enables them to be more effective ministers – the very opposite of an encumbrance.
5. Let's leave the tortured logic of the convinced celibate aside. A man sees one model of fatherhood when he is a child in a family. As a parent he comes to know through experience, usually a shared experience, the life-giving, nurturing, guiding, loving, forgiving facets of parenthood – in sharp contrast to any single (i.e. celibate) experience. Expressed in terms of 1 Timothy 3-5: *How can any man who does not understand how to manage his own family have responsibility for the church of God?*

In one sentence, the Decree gives its official comment on history: 'For these reasons, based on the mystery of Christ and his mission, celibacy, which at first was recommended to priests, was afterwards in the Latin Church imposed by law on all who were to be promoted to Holy Orders ...'

This avoidance of the reality of history fetters the future of ministry in the Church. That church., as Bishop Pat Power said elsewhere, 'would be a more human, humble, less clerical., a more open church, a more inclusive (and therefore more catholic) church, when it finds unity within diversity, and embraces the whole of its tradition and truly reflects the person and teachings of Jesus'.

First published in *Epiphany's Cross Reference Journal*
February 1003



Press Release

from International Movement We Are Church (IMWAC)

25 August 2004

on the occasion of the launch of the Internet Publication of

Father Eric Doyle's articles on the Ordination of Women

Exactly 20 years after his untimely death, on the 25th of August, Husetop Centre will launch the Internet publication of Fr. Eric Doyle's articles on the ordination of women. Fr. Doyle, OFM, was a well known English theologian and writer, appointed as adviser to the Holy See who dared to challenge the official view favoured by the Roman Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The story surrounding his work demonstrates that the policy of suppressing critical voices, that still characterises the Vatican Congregation for Doctrine, already started in the 1970's.

Fr. Doyle had been appointed by the Holy See to represent the Catholic Church at crucial meetings of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Consultation in the 1970s, at a time when the Vatican had not yet taken its final stand against the ordination of women. It was a time when theological storms assailed the Vatican walls.

The Bishops' Synod of 1971 had asked for a reconsideration of women in the ministries. In response Rome established the 'Special Commission on the Function of Women in Society and the Church' and it requested the International Biblical Commission to study women's ministries from a scriptural point of view.

In 1975 results were coming in, and they alarmed the conservative leadership of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The Biblical Commission decided that there were no scriptural objections to ordaining women – the report was promptly suppressed (though its contents

were leaked). A strong section of the 'Special Commission' clamoured for more recognition for women in the Church – this report too was not published. Donald Coggan, the Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote to Pope Paul VI indicating the intention of the Anglican Church to ordain women.

In that same crucial year Fr. Doyle and the French scripture scholar Hervi Legrand represented the Catholic Church at a 'Working Group on the Ordination of Women' set up by ARCIC, which met in Assisi. To Rome's horror, clear from correspondence with Roman dignitaries, both Catholic scholars expressed their considered opinions in favour of the ordination of women. Predictably, Rome tried to suppress the Assisi report, but in vain. It was published by ARCIC.

Rome responded vigorously. Rejecting all advice of various international bodies of scholars, Pope Paul VI and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, inexplicably decided against admitting women to the ordained ministries. The Archbishop of Canterbury was informed that the Catholic Church would never admit women to the ministries. And the notorious document *Inter Insigniores* announced the same decision to Catholic bishops.

Fr. Eric Doyle continued to argue for the ordination of women, in spite of the Vatican's opposition. His essays and articles on this topic, including his Assisi paper which has never been published before and a full assessment of his involvement and work, can be accessed from:

<http://www.womenpriests.org/theology/doyle.htm>.

Fr. Doyle sadly died of cancer on 25 August 1984 at the age of 46.

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Language and Culture

Ted Lambert

We restrict and limit the transcendent God when we limit our references to God as being exclusive to the male gender. By the over-emphasis of God as male, the church limits our concept of who/what God is and therefore of how we can relate to God' (*Woman and Man – One in Christ Jesus* p 203). 'Language not only enshrines an attitude or a vision but also educates to one'. (Ted Lambert). 'Awareness gives the possibility of self-possession. Self-possession measures our capacity for happiness.' (Ted Lambert). 'If you know these things you are blessed if you do them. (John 13,17)

Christianity needs to become aware of its shrines and, when it seems they have feet of clay, search in the Spirit for a new truer vision.

'Almighty' is a word emblematic of power, hierarchy, monarchy, naked force. It establishes a context of different classes of persons, the strong and the weak. It is redolent with violence. It is a secular word that, historically, has achieved a religious use – 'Almighty God'. Its continued frequent use will imperil our future culture as it has our past.

'All-loving' is a word which at once bespeaks the true nature of God as revealed in Christ. Its frequent use would begin the reform of our culture, give it an ideal to strive for, begin to soften our innate violence. Our enshrined mindset would begin to change so that equality (justice?) would become the greater part.

'Father' is a good word enshrining a beautiful reality in human nature. It is a co-relative of 'Mother' and also of 'Child', 'Son', 'Daughter'. It can also enshrine a defective social system called 'Patriarchy', and historically has been made to do so. Its millennial use for God has had the mischance of enshrining God as *the essential Patriarch*. And God's Church as an incurably patriarchal institution. These insulting parodies will, in my judgment, only be reformed now by a prolonged period of not using 'Father' for God or in church structure. 'Mother' would only repeat the error in a different gender.

'Parent' is the only word I can think of which will repair our culture and vision. It is a strictly non-gendered word which successfully attributes our origin in God and our relationship with God. It can be supplemented with a whole list of other words such as 'Maker', 'Love', 'Truth', 'Beauty', 'Harmony' and hundreds more – use your religious imagination. But 'Father' or the reactive 'Mother' will only engender a male or a female God. Our imaginations work that way.

'King' and 'Kingdom' are shrines with feet of clay and should be replaced with words symbolising a truer and fresher vision. Vatican II has prophetically called 'People' into currency. 'Lord' is tainted with its past. 'Leader' is one word which passes the test for me. 'God' is actually, in English, a word of neuter gender.

'He', 'Him', 'His' used of God can often simply be changed in situ by 'Who' or 'Whose', again suitably non-gendered. The infuriating Nicene Creed can be made much more friendly by making this substitution. From a decade of such personal usage I believe I begin to experience a sort of cleansing of my mind from inappropriate maleness in God.

'Our Parent, you are our Home. Hallowed be your name. Your People come. Your Love be done among us as it is among You. Give us this day ...' God's 'Love' and God's 'Will' are one and the same. But, in our enshrined culture, 'Will' reminds me too much of Nietzsche (and Hitler) and the 'shalt not' formulation of the Commandments. The Green Penny Catechism used the word 'Love' only once, and that in the context of Mortal Sin being a denial of it! How much of the guilt and fear of 20th century Catholicism sprang from the language which shaped the culture?

Too hard? Too much too fast? It has already begun. Most parishes have altered the words of hymns to lessen male-mania in the language. Pope, Cardinals, Bishops have, as yet, done nothing. But the people in parishes sense the wrong. It is they who will conscientise those around them, make them aware of the male-naming anomaly. As awareness spreads and the people own the problem the desire to reform the culture will arise. The final effect of exchanging the false shrines for new truer vision will be the increase of our happiness as children and worshippers of God. Let us stop the mindless repetition now and consciously shape our language to express the truth – God is not male. Male-God language insults God, impoverishes women and puffs up the males among us.

Not satisfied that language moulds and changes culture for better or for worse? *Quarterly Essay* Issue 12, 'Made in England', by David Malouf, Black Inc. \$12-95 makes a telling case for the power of language over a culture. Briefly, David Malouf illustrates effects on England, its American colonies and the Australian colonies of the sort and style of English the three countries inherited. The omissions and emphases in the direct quotations below taken from Pages 46 and 47 are mine. Written permission has been obtained from David Malouf and Black Inc. (publishers of *Quarterly Essay*) to use these texts.

‘Australia was founded at a particular turning point in the evolution of English. And the form of English we inherited has been a strong shaping influence on what happened here, and on the way it happened.’

‘The American colonies, founded in the first decade of the previous century, inherited a different English altogether. Passionately evangelical and utopian, deeply imbued with the religious fanaticism and radical violence of the time, this was the language of the Diggers, Levellers, English Separatists and other religious dissenters of the early seventeenth century who left England to found a new society what would be free, as they saw it, of authoritarian government by Church or Crown. It was far removed from the cool dispassionate English in which, a hundred and eighty years later, in the 1780’s, a Parliamentary committee argued the pros and cons of a new colony in the Pacific. This was the language of the English and Scottish Enlightenment: sober, unemphatic, good-humoured, a very sociable and moderate language, modern in a way that even we would recognise, and supremely rational and down to earth. What had happened to change the language so radically in the hundred and eighty years?’

‘Elizabethan and Jacobean language, like the society it expressed, had been violent, and violently abusive. writings are marked by an extraordinary level of invective and vituperation Quarrelling and the language of quarrelling were at the heart of the sectarian violence which led to the Civil War (in England – Ted) What had to be reformed in the aftermath of the War was not simply factional politics and a tradition of angry dissention but the language through which these were encouraged and spread. English had to be purged of all those forms of violent expression that had led men to violent action. The language itself was to be disarmed. Irony would replace vituperation; good humour, a middle tone and balance of syntactical structure would ensure that proper weighting of pros and cons that would make extremist language so crass ... as to have no place in polite company. Moderate language would produce moderation. The next rebellion was, as we know, “Bloodless”?’

David Malouf attributes the eventual change in the English language which safe-guarded Australian society from the violence of Civil Wars experienced in England and America to the influence of Shakespeare on the English language. For further explanation refer to his Essay.

Vatican II in Metalwork

Frank Purcell

It’s a long walk to the Sistine Chapel in Rome. The chapel might be right next to the main door of St. Peter’s, but the entrance is through the Vatican Museum hundreds of metres away. The corridors to the Chapel seem endless.

Walls lined with cupboards and sculptures gradually give way to the religious art of the Renaissance. Finally, the Borgia Apartments presenting a wide range of contemporary religious art, gifts to the Pope from artists around the world.

It was a very hot September morning two years ago when my wife and I made our visit to the Chapel. By the time we got to the Borgia Apartments, we were no longer interested in looking at exhibits. All we wanted to do was make it to the chapel, find a seat if possible, and take in the beauty of Michaelangelo’s frescoes.

As we passed through one room, I caught sight of a metalwork design depicting the Second Vatican Council. Something about it made me want to stop, but the press of people behind, and the urge to get to the Sistine Chapel, prevailed. We moved on, but I suddenly realised that the exhibit was disturbing me. I wanted to go back and make sure that I had seen what I thought I had seen, but it was too late. I have been pondering what I think I saw ever since.

The metal work depicted the Second Vatican Council in three panels: one showed the Pope on his throne; the second showed the Bishops in a circle within St. Peter’s; the third showed the laity in a circle. It didn’t show the links between the groups. I wanted to see the Pope surrounded by the Bishops, each in turn surrounded by the laity of his diocese.

According to the Council, the Pope, in union with the Bishops, expresses the belief of the Church. He talks to and listens to the Bishops in determining what is the faith of the Church. The Bishops in turn know the belief of their communities by teaching, guiding, talking with and listening to their communities.

Bishop Grech’s move to strengthen the role of Pastoral Councils and to develop its own newspaper in the Sandhurst Diocese reflects such an understanding of the Church. The diocese now has a wonderful opportunity to foster that growth in adult faith and Christian action which is essential if the Church community is to show forth the presence of the Risen Christ in its words and actions. That has become a major challenge in this era of secularisation and scientific technology.

As long as there is openness and respect, serious discussion and guidance, the talking and listening will lead to a confident, Christ-like community united in its love of the Father, through Jesus and the inspiration of His Spirit.

The Catholic Church - A Short History

Hans Kung

published by Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2001

Reviewed by Bill Crowley

This small compact book is a magnificent overview of the two millennia history of Catholic Church written by, in the words of the UK *The Independent on Sunday*, 'one of the most prominent of the Church's "movers and shakers" in the second half of the 20th Century'. In the Sixties, Hans Kung was one of the best known of the young theological advisers to the Church's revolutionary Second Vatican Council.

This book is written from a committed liberal, progressive theological/historical point of view but, as Kung points out in his Introduction, he is convinced that personal commitment and matter-of-fact objectivity can as well be combined in a history of the Church as they can be in the history of a nation. As Hans Kung writes - 'So while some Catholic theologians are busy writing Church history in a triumphalist view, anti-Catholic "criminologists" eager for scandal are exploiting it in order to put down the Catholic Church by any means possible'. He goes on to say that neither an idealising and romanticised history of the Church (does this label apply to a book I saw on the bookshelves recently *The Power and Glory of the Catholic Church* by the American, Howard Croker III?) nor one filled with hatred and denunciation can be taken seriously.

The blueprint for this 'warts and all' book is laid down very clearly in the excellent introduction and the book follows this intention clearly and spiritedly in the eight chapters from the very earliest Church to the present day. Father Kung writes as follows:

'Although this short history of the Catholic Church seeks to convey facts, above all it is intended to provide orientation in three respects.

- ◆ First, basic information about the tremendously dramatic and complex historical development of the Catholic Church: not about all the countless currents and the leading personalities of different eras or territories, but about the main lines of development, dominant structures and influential figures.
- ◆ Secondly, a critical historical stocktaking of twenty centuries of the Catholic Church. Of course there will be no petty condemnation and quibbling, but for all the chronological narrative, time and again there will be objective analysis and criticism to indicate how and why the Catholic Church has become what it is today.
- ◆ Thirdly, a concrete challenge to introduce reform in the direction of what the Catholic Church is, and could be. There will certainly not be extrapolations and prognoses of the future, which no one can give,

but there will be realistic perspectives offering hope for a church which, I am convinced, still has a future in the third millennium – provided that it fundamentally renews itself, in keeping both with the gospel and the age.'

I found the last two chapters particularly absorbing, written with an incisive, critical 'elan'. Chapter 7 - 'The Catholic Church versus Modernity' covers the period from the 18th Century Enlightenment to the first half of the 20th Century. Chapter 7 provides a fitting background and context for the Second Vatican Council which provides one of the main topics for the final Chapter 8, titled 'The Catholic Church - Present and Future'. Vatican II and its aftermath and, in fact, all the topics treated throughout the book show Hans Kung at his theologian-cum-historian best where he subjects the personages and events of Catholic Church history to the test of how they 'face up to the original Christian message, the gospel, indeed to Jesus Christ himself. Without such a reference a Christian Church would have neither identity nor relevance. All Catholic institutions, dogmas, legal rulings and ceremonies are subject to the criterion whether in this sense, they are 'Christian' or at least not 'anti-Christian.' (Kung)

Despite his often radical criticism of the Church, Hans Kung shows himself as one buoyed up by a faith in the Church not as an institution, since the Church continually fails, 'but in Jesus Christ, his personal and cause, which remains the prime motif in the Church's tradition, liturgy and theology. For all the decadence of the Church, Jesus Christ has never been lost. The name of Jesus Christ is something like the "golden thread" in the tapestry of Church history. Though often the tapestry is torn and grubby, so that the thread is constantly worked in again.' (Kung)

This is certainly a book to be savoured and reflected on.



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 (maximum length: articles 700 words, letters 100 words)

The opinions expressed do not necessarily represent those of the Editor (Margaret Knowlden) nor of ARC

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Eremos Institute Bookshop is a good resource for many of the books mentioned in our publication. They often stock titles (or are able to get them in for you) such as *Rome Has Spoken* and John Wijngaards' *No Women in Holy Orders*.

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