

The Resurrection is NOT a Man-Made Myth

Edited from Cardinal Newman Catechist Centre Newsletters; n. 60 of 7th October and n. 61, of 28th October, 1988; and n. 181 of April, 2004

“I have advised Dr Coffey to align his teaching with that of the Magisterium of the Church, which is that the physical remains of Jesus, placed in the tomb after his death, were raised in His resurrection. Hence, the empty tomb,” Thus stated Cardinal Clancy in *The Catholic Weekly* of 28th September, 1988 (p. 9 on its lower right hand corner).

WHAT did Dr. Coffey actually teach ?

Presumably the opposite of the passage above ? Yes, this is confirmed from his published work, of which the extracts below are pertinent, though without any attempt to summarize his argumentation for them.

↓ THE DEMYTHOLOGIZER'S 1980 ERRORS ↓

IN 1979, Dr Coffey's book, *Grace: the Gift of the Holy Spirit*, was published as n. 2 in the *Faith and Culture* series, organ of the Catholic Institute of Sydney at St. Patrick's College, Manly.

In it, he asserted that at Mass the bread and wine cannot change into the body and blood of Christ since, after his death, they no longer exist. His exact words were:-

First, if it is no longer possible simply to deny that the assertion of a physical (bodily) resurrection of Jesus could be a culture determined expression of the truth that through death he was granted the full stature and efficacy of the Son of God in human existence, we must reckon with the possibility that the body and blood into which the bread and wine are believed to be changed no longer exist as such. (pp. 190-191).

HIS TEACHING about the resurrection was expressed in a duplicated article in the Manly College library, and was later published as *The Resurrection of Jesus and Catholic Orthodoxy*, pp. 99-116 in *Studies in Faith and Culture*, 1980.

His article begins with an explanation of the new process for treating both Scripture and Dogma: It is called by Bultmann *demythologization*; and by Schillebeeckx, *hermeneusis* and updating; and by Coffey himself, interpretation, explanation, relativization of language and transcultural interpretation (pp. 100-101). Hermeneusis is exegesis (= scriptural interpretation) plus theology, (pp. 109-110).

He continues: "Hermeneusis of dogma has as yet no established history in Catholic theology. It is only just beginning in the field of Scripture. Hence it must be admitted that there is no 'tradition' for the way Schillebeeckx and others are theologizing about the resurrection, though that is no argument against what they are doing. But if they are approaching the resurrection (and the ascension and the virgin birth) in this way, clearly it will only be a matter of time before they get around to dogmas modelled on these biblical teachings, e.g. the assumption of Our Lady. As dogmas like this constitute a stumbling-block to ecumenism, it is plain that in the hermeneusis of dogma we shall have a powerful instrument for ecumenical progress." (p. 101).

"This essay will argue that Schillebeeckx's theology of the resurrection is a Catholic one, even if it is new to most Catholics." (p. 102)

"Attempting to reconstruct what happened historically, Schillebeeckx makes the following suggestion. Some indeterminate time after the death of Jesus, Peter was the first who, through the action of grace, came to see that Jesus was the Christ. He then re-assembled the disciples and explained to them what he had experienced. Over a period of time, in which they

discussed the matter among themselves, their doubts were gradually overcome, and through Peter's testimony they too became the recipients of God's grace active in Jesus: they too saw Jesus, in the sense that they realized that he was the Christ. This provides the sense in which Peter can be said to be the rock, and in which he can be said to have turned again and strengthened his brethren." (p. 105).

"There is no statement in Mark that the tomb is empty, nor need there be, as eschatological resurrection has nothing to do with corpses." (p. 105)

"Analysis reveals that the original tomb story was the Jerusalem community's way of appropriating the teaching of the resurrection." (p. 106)

"Traces of guide's patter are to be discerned in the gospel accounts. The original story is what Schillebeeckx calls an 'aetiological cult-legend', i.e. a non-historical explanation gradually formed by the community to shed light on its practice of visiting the tomb and celebrating a liturgy there." (p. 106)

"This study has shown that what we call the resurrection recedes, not totally beyond our powers of conceptualization, but certainly beyond our easy reach. It cannot be pegged down in space and time as an event taking place at the tomb of Jesus three days after his death." (p. 106)

"The emptiness of the tomb has nothing to do with the resurrection as such." (p. 107)

"The exegetical part of Schillebeeckx's position on the resurrection, therefore, despite its (to some) novel and surprising character, does not fall within the competence of the magisterium. It is subject, for acceptance, modification or rejection, only to the judgement of the scholarly community." (p. 110)

"The resurrection is an event of grace not involving in any way the corpse of Jesus." (p. 111).

"This coming to completion, which has to be understood in terms of grace as well as nature, does not require or even allow the re-involvement of a corpse." (p. 114)

"An important conclusion, not drawn by Schillebeeckx, concerns the non-miraculous character of the resurrection. Anyone familiar with current fundamental theology [Editor: fundamental theology is introductory, dealing with Revelation and the Church] will know that the opinion that the resurrection is a miracle with probative apologetical value for the truth of Christianity was given up long before the new theology of the resurrection appeared." (p.114)

He concludes: "Even if (or when) the scholarly community and the magisterium have come to accept a hermeneusis of the resurrection like that of Schillebeeckx, a daunting pastoral problem will remain. However, it must not be assumed that official acceptance of such a position will result in widespread loss of faith. It is a matter of being equal to the task of developing in good time a correct and appropriate catechesis. For many people the information would bring a sense of relief at no longer having to keep their religious knowledge in a separate compartment from their secular knowledge."

↑ DEMYTHOLOGIZER'S 1980 ERRORS ↑

NOTE: On the pretensions of some modern theologians and their exaggerated esteem for 'modern man' – see *Sociologist Fallen Among the Secular Theologians* by David Martin, CNCC Newsletter n. 161, pp. 8ff (ask for a copy).

MAGISTERIAL CORRECTION for Australia came 14 years too late. Thus far, no damaged products of this teaching have been “recalled”, though the false teaching has ceased.

In an official statement of the Archdiocese of Sydney, *The Catholic Weekly* of 28th September, 1988 announced in a *funereal black box*, that the Resurrection of Christ really happened:

THEOLOGY OF THE RESURRECTION

His Eminence, Cardinal Clancy
has released the following statement

It is widely known that some of the theological views of the Reverend Dr David Coffey, of the Catholic Institute of Sydney, have been subject to study by Church authorities. These authorities include the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith; Dr Coffey has himself taken part in the discussions. The views in question concern the nature of the bodily resurrection of Christ. The matter is complex, comprising philosophical, exegetical, and theological elements.

The issues being now sufficiently clarified, I have advised Dr Coffey to align his teaching with that of the Magisterium of the Church, which is that the physical remains of Jesus, placed in the tomb after his death, were raised in His resurrection. Hence, the empty tomb. This, Dr Coffey has readily undertaken to do.

Pope John Paul II has said that “the Magisterium and theology ought to remain in a dialogue which will be fruitful for both and for the service of the ecclesial community” (at Salamanca, November 1, 1982). This is the context in which the present case should be seen. It should be added that Dr Coffey continues to dialogue privately with a prominent theologian who has the confidence of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

I wish to pay tribute to Dr Coffey as a gifted theologian, a devout priest, and a loyal son of the Church. I am grateful to him for his total co-operation in the study of his theology of the Resurrection and for his ready acquiescence in the decision that has been reached. The Church may expect to profit much from Dr Coffey's continuing dedication to theological study.

END OF QUOTATION in which bold emphasis was added

FATHER TIERNEY'S COMMENTS

THE THEORY of a non-physical resurrection, taught as a fact rather than a hypothesis, was based on argumentation which went roughly like this:

↓ EVERY STATEMENT IN THIS SHADY BOX IS FALSE ↓

Modern science cannot accept the possibility of miracles.

Therefore modern man cannot be expected to believe in miracles.

Therefore the accounts of miracles in the scriptures are myths, stories made up a long time after the actual events, to convey a message.

The real message of the Scriptures is known by demythologization.

The only miracles that actually happened were exorcisms and miracles of healing, phenomena capable of psychosomatic explanation.

The Virginal Conception of Christ by Our Lady, the Resurrection of Our Lord's dead body, the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Risen Lord, the bodily Assumption of Our Lady, the general resurrection on the Last Day, are all subject to demythologization.

↑ EVERY STATEMENT IN THIS SHADY BOX IS FALSE ↑

The declaration of the Church's Magisterium by Cardinal Clancy, and the recantation by Dr. Coffey, must now be followed up by a “recall” of all the damaged students – akin to the recall of all a manufacturer's defective motor cars – to ensure they believe the Church's teaching.

Those damaged include graduates of seminaries, Catholic Teachers' Colleges, adult education centres and Catholic schools.

Restitution is our duty of repairing the damage done to those we have injured under Commandments, 5th, 7th & 8th for spiritual murder, theft and falsehood. For those who will not make this restitution there must be, not revenge, but retribution. God is not mocked.

HERE END quotes from NEWSLETTERS nn. 60 & 61
and we continue with an upgrade of n. 181 of April 2004.

- Teaching seminarians a demythologized Resurrection was 14 years old when the 1988 corrective was issued.
- The secret history of interventions to Rome prior to Cardinal Clancy's statement has not yet come to light.
- Demythologizing the Resurrection has ceased in the Sydney seminary, but elsewhere “constant vigilance and eternal suspicion” may still be necessary.
- The apostles were the witnesses to the resurrection and our bishops are successors of the apostles.
- Therefore bishops must be witnesses to the resurrection and must insist on it or die in martyrdom for it.
- See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* n. 643 (in the context of nn. 639, 647).

Father James Tierney

Resurrection Errors Righted

Demythologizing the Demythologizers

IN THE ABSENCE of any episcopal response to these errors, 22 priests met at Brighton-Le-Sands late in 1980 to fight for the Resurrection. This meeting led, through many tortuous paths and much opprobrium, to the Black Box victory on page 2.

Well, that's what was said and that's what was done, yet the full history from 1974 through 1980 to 1988 and for several years after has yet to be told by those who know it best

The highest reaches of human thought are philosophy and theology. Yet what a muddle some philosophers and theologians make of them. How tragic for their students !

J.R.R. Tolkien, the greatare defender of fairy tales, refused to have Christ's Resurrection reduced to a fairy tale,. If you like *The Lord of the Rings*, read the author's own explanation of what fantasy tries to do. While he was groping with its plot, he delivered a learned paper on fairy stories, published later in *Tree and Leaf*, (Unwin Books). Some pertinent quotes were in Newsletter n. 179, pp. 3-4, or see www.cardinalnewman.com.au for *Handouts* nn. 60, 66, 97, 150.

PREVIOUS NEWSLETTERS provided Papal teaching on the miraculous nature of Our Lord's Resurrection: and refutations of the teachings of demythologizers: see nn. 37/1-4, 44/1-2, as well as n. 60/9, and a mention in 60/4.

The heretical reduction of the Virginity of Our Lady and the Resurrection of Our Lord to "non-miraculous stories with a message" was going on for over 14 years in some seminaries, adult education lectures and Catholic schools. These errors should have been rooted out and in their place the seeds of truth carefully planted and nurtured -- but they weren't, despite desperate appeals to two cardinal Archbishops of Sydney.

CNCC Newsletter n. 61 page 9 has some catechetical aspects of the miracles in the Apostles' Creed, namely the miracles of creation, incarnation and resurrection.

[That refers to a single sheet, *Catechetics Family* n. 1 titled **The Apostles' Creed, Something for Everyone**, and is still available on request as the first in a four part series from 1984]

Sing "Alleluia" - He really is risen !

TRENDY THEOLOGY by Fr. John O'Neill

Tune of *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*

TRENDY THEOLOGY will lead you all to hell:
It's opposed to Revelation and the Truth it cannot tell;
And brainy boys in seminaries fall underneath the spell
And can't tell what's right from wrong.

CHORUS

Glory, glory we can't reach you !
Stories only we shall teach you !
Don't be definite we beseech you !
Let clear confusion reign !

[Repeat chorus after each verse]

2. Interpreting the Holy Writ we have the fun of Cork:
They say he got up from the dead but that's just idle talk:
"Twas made up by "Community" to make the tourists gawk --
"His bones are still in Palestine."

3. The only consolation in the trendy train of thought
Is: it isn't going anywhere, its passengers are caught
In carriages all stuffy as they're shunted back and forth,
And they don't stay aboard too long.

4. Now Catholics, all be ready -- there's a job ahead of you;
Re-educating trendies when we haul them from the stew;
And, though they have the nicest jobs we're many, they are few --
Their hour is come and gone.

CHRISTMAS with the DEMYTHOLOGIZERS

A parody on

Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate by Rudolf Bultmann, 1953,
by Anglican theologian, The Rev. Dr. E.L. Mascall
in his *Pi in the High*, 1959

HARK the herald angels sing:
"Bultmann is the latest thing!"

(Or they would if he had not
Demythologiz'd the lot.)
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Glad to existentialize!
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and Science reconciled.

2. Lo, the ancient myths disperse.
Hence, three-storied universe!
Let three-decker pulpits stay:
Bultmann has a lot to say,
Since Kerygma still survives
When the myths have lost their lives.
Hark, the herald angels sing:
"Bultmann shot us on the wing !"

3. Dr. Farrar we detect
Somewhat lacking in respect,
Launching, with his puckish arts,
Tiny well-directed darts;
While Herr Luther's lumpish sons
Overload their massive guns,
Blowing, when the barrel splits,
Bultmann -- and themselves -- to bits.

4. Let us with gladsome mind
Leave the ancient world behind.
Modern man, rejoice with us!
We have read Copernicus.
While the herald angels sing:
'Bultmann ist ein gutes Ding !'
We respond in simple trust:
Demythologize or bust !

Father James Tierney