

Toetrede

Liturgie van die Lig

Tourists in Barcelona like to visit the unfinished cathedral, La Sagrada Família (The Holy Family), now a UNESCO World Heritage site. Antoni Gaudi began work on it in 1883, but at his death in 1926, less than a quarter of the project was complete. Gaudi took this matter philosophically when he remarked shortly before his death: 'My Client is not in a hurry.' Other architects have played their part since then. Their efforts of course have sometimes been criticised by their colleagues. Mid-point in construction of this extraordinary work was reached in 2010, and completion is planned perhaps for the centenary of the architect's death.

This remarkable undertaking has much to teach us. Firstly, Gaudi is right about God's leisurely style! God seems not to be in a hurry about a completion date for the epic that is world history. But like the cathedral, enough of the divine design is available to enable us to have some image of the final masterpiece. Secondly, whereas only approved architects are allowed to leave their mark on the cathedral in Barcelona, each of us - every inhabitant of this planet, every member of the Sacred Space community - is invited to contribute to the shaping of God's project for humankind. Strangely God trusts us not to make a total mess of it!

Thirdly, to an outsider - and to many insiders also - Christian belief can seem an enormous jumble of disconnected facts, rather like the rocks on the building site in Barcelona. It helps to know that the keyword to Christian faith is relationships! God wants to be in an intimate relationship with us, and works hard at it. The concept of relationships offers a dynamic viewpoint which illuminates every aspect of Christian life. As the poet Hopkins says: 'I greet him the days I meet him, and bless when I understand.' (SacredS)

Woorddiens

Lesing 1: Markus 1:14-20 (1953)

¹⁴ EN nadat Johannes oorgelewer was, het Jesus in Galiléa gekom en die evangelie van die koninkryk van God verkondig

¹⁵ en gesê: Die tyd is vervul en die koninkryk van God het naby gekom; bekeer julle en glo die evangelie.

¹⁶ En terwyl Hy langs die see van Galiléa loop, sien Hy Simon en Andréas, sy broer, besig om 'n net in die see uit te gooi; want hulle was vissers.

¹⁷ En Jesus sê vir hulle: Kom agter My aan, en Ek sal maak dat julle vissers van mense word.

¹⁸ En dadelik het hulle hul nette laat staan en Hom gevolg.

¹⁹ En toe Hy daarvandaan 'n bietjie verder gaan, sien Hy Jakobus, die seun van Sebedéüs, en Johannes, sy broer, wat besig was om die nette in die skuit heel te maak.

²⁰ En dadelik het Hy hulle geroep, en hulle het hul vader Sebedéüs met die gehuurde mense in die skuit laat staan en Hom gevolg.

Broodjies vir die Pad

The Gospel reading describes Jesus' inaugural message. "The realm of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news." Divine intimacy challenges us to change. In changing our ways, we open the door to hearing the good news. We believe ourselves into transformed actions and we act our way into transformed beliefs....

In the Epiphany season of divine revealing, we challenged to ask: Where do we need to be transformed? What changes do we and our institutions need to make to be faithful to God? We can change and in our changing, we are responding to God and enable God to do new and innovating things in our lives and the world. (PaF)



I want to speculate about what Christianity might actually evolve into if Christians had the courage to do things like Steve Jobs did, that is, not to let what is be the limits of what can be. What would be different, for example, if we were able to free the Christ experience from the first century interpretation of that experience as we now have it in the New Testament? Why do we continue to pretend that a first century interpretation is somehow going to embody truth for all ages? What would Christianity look like if we were willing to separate the Christ experience from the fourth century's interpretation of that experience as presently found in the creeds? Why do we continue to pretend that fourth century words are adequate to be the bearers of ultimate truth for all time? Recently I had a letter from a friend who wanted to start a book study group in her Methodist Church in Mississippi to be a meeting place for those who wanted to explore the edges of Christianity. They wanted to read some of the boundary-breaking theologians. Her request was denied by her current minister. It was his job, he said, to "defend the faith not to question it."

How can either the scriptures or the creeds be studied in any meaningful way if the assumption is that they are, in their present forms, identified with unchanging reality? That dated attitude precludes the possibility of any different thinking from that of the first century in regard to the scriptures or the fourth century in regard to the creeds. The world's knowledge has, however, increased exponentially from that which marked the minds of people in New Testament times or those at the time the creeds were formed. No one today, for example, believes that demon possession is the cause of either mental illness or epilepsy, that Jesus could literally ascend into the sky of a three-tiered universe in which the planet earth was the center or that everything not understood in life had to be explained by an appeal to a supernatural miracle. Modern Christian scholars no longer even debate the traditional claims made through a literal reciting of the creeds that the virgin birth is about biology or that the resurrection is about the physical resuscitation of a deceased body back into the life of this world. If the only choices we have

in dealing with either scripture or creed is to believe these words literally or not at all, then the future is bleak indeed. We can either become “true believing fundamentalists” (and they come in both Protestant and Catholic varieties), or we can give up Christianity altogether as an ancient, but now irrelevant superstition and take our places as citizens of “the secular city.” If we choose the former then we will watch Protestants protect themselves from change by claiming an inerrant Bible and Roman Catholics protect themselves from change by claiming an infallible Pope. Both claims are preludes to death and both are today widely regarded as absurd. If the latter alternative is adopted then the dying of Christianity will continue, but at accelerating speed until the Christian God takes a place in the museums of human antiquity along side other deceased deities like Baal, Marduk and the gods of the Olympus....

...The fact is, however, that traditional Christians seem to know of no other way to talk about God and have made no effort to “think different” in the 500 or so years since Copernicus first challenged our three-tiered mentality and construct. Is it any wonder that modern people who come to worship services have a glazed-over look before much time inside church has passed? How would we worship, however, if we dared to “think different” or “accept uncertainty?” Yet as obvious as this question is, anyone who asks it inside church walls on a Sunday morning would be considered quite controversial, even radical! Someone will surely charge that person with being an atheist!...

...The gap between the knowledge by which we live and the faith we continue to practice is vast. Our unwillingness to part with these woefully inadequate concepts continues primarily because we know no others and we fear the bottomless pit of nothingness far more than we are embarrassed by continuing to parrot unbelievable mantras as if they were still capable of being held by any thinking citizen of the 21st century. No one appears willing or eager to “think different” or to “accept uncertainty.”

There is no chance that human thought is going to turn away from the demonstrated wisdom of Copernicus, Galileo or Isaac Newton. If there is no other way to envision the holy, the God of yesterday will simply die. That is why it is so imperative that those of us who love the Christian faith be willing to “think different” and “accept uncertainty.”

How can we learn to think as Christians outside the theological boxes of antiquity? It begins I believe by dismissing “theism” as an adequate definition of God and to recognize that the opposite of theism is not “atheism.” Can we do that? Will people still experience God in the definitions that emerge beyond theism? Time alone will tell, but for now just let these questions resonate. To them we will return. (John Shelby Spong)

Brood vir die Pad

Asof die buffels van die gees iets slegs ruik

deur Wilhelm Jordaan

Tog ironies dat die aankondiging oor die sluiting van Boekhuis se deure saamgeval het met 'n bespreking

van Ivan Vladislavic se boek *The Loss Library and Other Unfinished Stories!*

Dié geleentheid was die laaste byeenkoms van Boekhuis se wydgewaardeerde Saterdagstemme/Saturday Voices. Vir my het *The Loss Library* se tema van verlore gaan nou 'n metafoor geword vir 'n skrikwekkende kulturele verlies: Die toemaak van 'n “huis vir boeke” wat 'n beskermheer van die oop gesprek was.

Dit is 'n “verlies” wat sienderoë gebeur onder aanslag van die finansiële towerspreuk van ons tyd: Wat nie goeie sakesin maak nie, het nie bestaansreg nie. Wins word so die naam van die god wat die hande laat vry en die oë laat blink.

Dit herinner aan 'n soortgelyke intellektuele bankrotskap wat universiteite al jare lank teister – ook onder die druk van “goeie sakesin”.

Dit was die gebruik dat groot departemente met baie studente die kleiner departemente deur kruis-subsidie help staande bly. En ook sorg dat kleiner vakgebiede soos die tale (klassiek en modern), geskiedenis, klassieke kultuur en filosofie bly ontwikkel weens hul algemeen vormende waarde; die “Bildung” van Duits.

Die owerheid se onderwysfilosofie en finansieringsbeleid, tesame met universiteite se toepassing daarvan, maak kruis-subsidie moeilik. Só dat verskeie kleiner vakke sedert die laat 1990's afgeskakel is; of gestadig kwyn; of so aangepas is onder die druk van “praktiese relevansie” dat hul vormende waarde onbenullig is.

Wat algaande verlore gaan, is die eeue oue tweeledige taak van die universiteit – om nie net jong mense vir werk op te lei nie, maar ook om hulle te begelei tot volronde mense met opbouende samelewingswaardes.

Sonder dié soort “geletterdheid van die gees” word mens en samelewing – soos Opperman dit beskryf in sy gedig “Vuurbees” – 'n “buffel van die metafisika” wat sonder waardes bestaan, of enkele opportunistiese waardes verheilig ten koste van ander wat die gees voed.

Vandag nog herinner ek my aan 'n raadsvergadering jare gelede by 'n bekende universiteit – toe dié “verbuffeling” onstuitbare momentum gekry het. Daar is pleitend én hard gepraat oor die behoud van “klein vakke”.

Telkens het 'n gesiene grootbaas uit die sakewêreld snedig, asof hy iets slegs ruik, sy groot vraag gevra: Is daar getalle wat die bestaan van dié vakke regverdig?

En met 'n meerderwaardige glimlaggie het hy ons handjiewol protesteerders die markplein se Sus-en-Daan-lessie voorgelees: “In my wêreld geld net een reël: Wat nie geld maak nie, word toegemaak.”

Niemand betwis die nut van 'n goeie sakesin nie, maar 'n skeefgetrekte sakenorm versteur oplaas die noodsaaklike waarde-ewewig en plaas 'n samelewing op 'n pad van geestelike armoede.

Wegsending

Liefdegawes

Mededelings

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