

**“The Church as the communion of the whole world.” Thus spoke St. Augustine, from whom more later.**

The dualistic mind becomes most problematic in the world of religion. It is a stupid assumption that people not of *my* religion do not know God or that God does not care for them. Yet much of our world is trapped at this level of thinking. It tells me that religion has not been doing its job very well. It has been building boundaries more than bridges, and in this global age, this is becoming quite dangerous.

Some time ago I came across this saying of St. Augustine, who wrote in the fourth century, “The church consists of the communion of the whole world.” Wherever there is communion, that’s the church. Wherever there is love, that’s where God is. If you are rightly connected with life and love, you are in the church.

Many denominations, and many Catholics, disagree with that statement. It is believed that all must belong to *our* tribe, *our* group, and have to be baptized in *our* religion. I understand this level of consciousness. We were all there at one time. ... Ken Wilber says, “We begin elitist, but if we stay on the journey, we always become egalitarian. Always!”

**Adapted from [Experiencing the Naked Now \(webcast\)](#) by Fr. Richard Rohr.**

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**Tony Equale examines some frightening, and challenging, statistics.**

### **Army Suicide**

In a study directed by Gen. Peter W. Chiarelli, the Vice Chief of Staff of the US Army, published this week with the title, *Army: Health Promotion, Risk Reduction, Suicide Prevention, Report 2010*, the alarming rate of suicides and attempted suicides in the US army was acknowledged and an analysis offered. Currently, the army is suffering the highest number of suicides since 1980, and the suicide rate of army personnel has surpassed that of the general population.

In an interview with NPR on July 29, 2010, while acknowledging that “a decade of war was one of the stressors” involved, Chiarelli cited the high rates of prescription drug use as a potential correlate. At the start of the study in 2009 he insisted that while 1/3 of the cases were of those currently deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan, and 1/3 were of those not deployed but with a “history of deployment,” that fully 1/3 were of those never deployed. Ironically the rate seems to be the lowest among those who have deployed 2 or 3 times. He mentioned family conflicts, low pay and the normal pressures of military life as contributing factors. He said he felt that the soldiers lacked “resilience” (without defining what he meant by that) and that it was possible to “teach resiliency.”

I would offer a personal reflection on this.

Killing people except for self-defense is instinctively abhorrent to human beings. The very nature of a mechanized military, however, depends upon having the capability to kill people *on orders* and not only when motivated by circumstances that obviously require self-defense. A soldier's training, therefore, inevitably attempts to achieve a *personal psychological transformation* where the normal inhibitions against violence are suppressed, and a kind of mindless reflex is elicited driven by other motivations ... like fear of the commanding officer, or an adolescent's need to prove his "manhood."

It would seem to me that once deployed to a foreign conflict like Afghanistan, those not thoroughly brainwashed by military training would quickly come to see that the natives are living in their own homes with no intention of bothering anyone, ... that they themselves, in fact, are the invaders. Self-defense, if it applies, refers to high-altitude geo-political realities that have little to do with the people they are killing. The ability to fight under these circumstances is reduced to defending against the self-induced dangers created by our own uninvited presence. It doesn't take long for a perceptive young man to realize that a roadside bomb is more plausibly resistance to a perceived invasion from us, than the work of some committed Al Qaida operative intent on the destruction of the United States.

Perhaps such realizations do not directly cause a suicide ... but they create a *sense of meaninglessness* that generates a "catastrophic lowering of self-esteem," i.e., a *depression* that implies turning against oneself. It sets the stage.

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**Daniel O'Rourke's newspaper column usually appears in the Observer, Dunkirk, NY on the second and fourth Thursday each month. Dan is a married Catholic priest.**

### **Fear -- don't be manipulated by it**

What are you afraid of? Flying in airplanes? Dogs? Aging? Guns? In some reductionist way, all fears can be reduced to a fear of death or losing someone we love. The deepest, most persistent fears, for most of us, are for those we love.

According to "Psychology Today," "Fear is a vital response to physical and emotional danger -- if we couldn't feel it, we couldn't protect ourselves from legitimate threats. But often we fear situations that are in no way life-or-death ..." and therefore limit and torture ourselves for no good reason. It was the Actress Faye Dunaway who graphically reminded us, "Fear is a pair of handcuffs on your soul." To live fully both personally and politically we have to escape from those handcuffs. For fear robs us of our ability to think clearly and act rationally.

Psychologists have studied these exaggerated fears at great length. They call them phobias -- and give them fancy names from the Latin and Greek: aerophobia - fear of flying, cynophobia - fear of dogs, dipsophobia - fear of drinking, and a more common variety, claustrophobia - fear of small places.

Psychologists also tell us, "Exposing ourselves to our personal demons is the best way to move past them." Their treatment is systematic desensitization. Little by little therapists carefully expose us to bits of our irrational fears until eventually we can face and overcome them. Or as the American Poet John Berryman tells us, "We must travel in the direction of our fear." We have to face our fear in order to master it.

Irrational fear is a reality. We know it. Psychologists know it. Politicians know it and manipulate it -- and us -- to their own ends. Listen to what Bishop John Shelby Spong has to say on such manipulation. He begins by speaking of the Tea Party Movement, but his point is much broader.

"The Tea Party Movement is a manifestation of the great fear and anxiety that, today, accompanies Western politics everywhere. This anxiety is also present in Greece, France, Germany and Iceland, but since they did not have the Boston Tea Party in their national history they do not call it that. It was born in the economic crisis that rocked this country [and Europe] in the last year of the Bush Administration, when the politics of greed finally brought Wall Street to its knees. It was fed by the healthcare debate, when lobbyists were paid to frighten the American public with distortions, half-truths and absolute lies in an attempt to prevent the profits of healthcare companies, trial lawyers, drug manufacturers and private medical practitioners from being compromised."

Politicians also manipulate us by our fear of foreigners -- mostly Mexicans and Muslims. (Although most Muslims in this country are citizens like us and not foreigners at all. In this case it is a fear of terror and terrorism that politicians manipulate.) Psychologists call fear of foreigners "xenophobia" -- an abnormal fear of foreign people, foreign customs and foreign culture. The best way to overcome that, of course, is to meet the feared foreigner. We would soon realize that underneath the accidental differences they are human beings with the same needs and struggles as our own.

... Psychologists have their gradual exposure therapies to help us overcome fear -- and they work. Ultimately, however, our response to fear is spiritual. The fear of death and the diminishment of aging demand a spiritual response. Scripture scholars tell us the concept most frequently preached by Jesus was not to fear. Yet even Jesus feared death in the Garden of Gethsemane. And how did he react? He prayed for the ability to face it (Mt.26: 38-40).

... Be aware of your irrational fears. Do not fear them. Face them honestly -- and for God's sake don't be manipulated by them. Don't let the politicians or advertisers scare you.

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**Matt J. Rossano, Professor and Department Head of Psychology, Southeastern Louisiana University, writes about St. Augustine. The full article can be found at <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/matt-j-rossano/augustine-of-hippo-a-role b 659195.html>**

### **Augustine of Hippo: A Role Model for Intelligent Faith**

The tug of war between religion and science was settled 1,600 years ago by a North African Bishop. As always, those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat its worst mistakes.

The path to sainthood was a meandering one for Aurelius Augustinus Hipponensis (Augustine of Hippo). Born in 354 in Tagaste, a city in what was then Roman North Africa (now Souk Ahras, Algeria ), Augustine was the product of a "mixed" marriage: a devoutly Christian mother and an incorrigibly promiscuous pagan father. After some youthful hooliganism and sexual adventurism (probably exaggerated), Augustine settled in with a concubine and began searching for the truth. He preferred Latin over Greek, Cicero and Virgil to Aristotle . He was smart -- a cocky, snot-nosed kind of smart that irritated his elders. To his mother's distress, he found the Christian scriptures far too humble to be of much value. His intellect wandered along with his romantic interests, ranging over Manichaeism, skepticism and Platonism, but nothing satisfied. Then to Milan and a mentor, Ambrose , who could challenge and chastise with equal aplomb. Finally a voice -- "take and read" -- and Christianity claimed her most formidable intellectual prize.

As with most converts, Augustine took passionately to the new faith but the passion was tempered by an outsider's critical eye. For him, Christianity could not be just a simple, comforting faith -- too boring! Instead, it must be the culmination of man's unceasing search for wisdom. Now the cleric-scholar, Augustine wrote voluminously, becoming the leading intellect of his age and earning the respect of even modern-day atheist philosophers. Bertrand Russell , who did not think much of Aquinas , held Augustine in high regard. In our time, some religious folks have chosen a distinctly anti-intellectualist route. Creationists, "intelligent-designers," and Biblical literalists seem hell-bent on wearing ignorance as a badge of piety. History repeats itself. In Augustine 's time, the great issue was not religion and science or religion and evolution, but Christianity and the corpus of classical learning. With the Roman Empire crumbling, increasingly it was left to the Christian Church to either incorporate or abandon the great Classical intellectual tradition. Centuries before Augustine , some church fathers had already chosen ignorance. Tertullian famously proclaimed: "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem , the Academy with the Church? ... We have no need for curiosity since Jesus Christ , nor for inquiry since the Evangel."

Augustine would have none of this. With fist-pounding certainty he argued that reason was as critical to faith as revelation. Alarmed by his stance, a fellow Bishop, Consentius, wrote to remind Augustine that "God is not to be sought after by reason but followed through authority." Setting collegiality aside, Augustine 's response was unusually blunt: You say that truth is to be grasped more by faith than by reason ... Heaven forbid that God should hate in us that by which he made us superior to the animals! Heaven forbid that we should believe in such a way as not to accept or seek reasons, since we could not believe if we did not have rational souls.

**Have we heard this message today, or is it still a matter of, "I don't have to give reasons; I have the truth!"**

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**George Wynn writes to encourage support of the School of the America's Watch, which has just lost its Maryknoll funding. Read why and find out how to help.**

School of the America's (SOA) Watch continues its great work in pursuing Justice and Non-Violence under Roy Bourgeois, MM. Now, Maryknoll and the church powers are pulling out and undermining social Justice and Truth. Roy B. MM. and many others will continue to be attacked and targeted by the controlling power within the church. You must conform to those powers or be excluded from the organization, the institutional church. Sadly, Maryknoll has caved in to those powers. I admired, through the years, and supported Maryknoll and many of their great missionaries. They were creative, prophetic witnesses to Christ and His Gospel. They pursued Justice and Truth. Now, Maryknoll put aside those acts of Justice and Truth by stopping their financial support to SOA Watch. Church power has spoken and retaliation and suppression are inserted. Remember, Lord Acton, "Power Corrupts; Absolute Power Corrupts Absolutely." The rights of the people are being silenced by the power of the Papacy.

The church tries to hide the issue. Yet, women ordained in priestly ministry and US military training in violence on foreign soil are the issues and the hidden clandestine church does not want discussion, debate or even openness to an important contribution by the People of God. The Papacy/Episcopacy fear discussion of open dialogue and Women's Rights in the church. Whatever happened to the Spirit of Vatican II and the pursuit of Justice and Truth? Whatever happened to dialogue and the pursuit of Truth? Imagine ordering an American Catholic not to discuss human rights, the dignity of women and freedom from violence! Does that mean we cannot discuss the Gospel or the teaching of Jesus Christ? Whatever happened to Liberation Theology? "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." To SOA and Roy Bourgeois, MM, "Do your thing, Move On." We follow Jesus Christ and His Gospel of Truth and Justice. It will set us free".

P.S. You may contribute, if you wish, at the School of the America's Watch Web site <http://www.soaw.org/>

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**John Hooper, writing for The Guardian, wrote the following.**

### **The Vatican : a very Italian institution**

Not the least interesting thing aspect of the exposure of the double life of some gay Catholic priests in Rome is the way it was handled by the Italian media. *Panorama*, the news magazine that carried out the investigation, tipped off the rest of the press last Thursday afternoon. Italy's biggest news agency, Ansa, carried a brief dispatch on the magazine's exclusive at 5.32 pm. By 7 o'clock it was number six on its "billboard" of the day's top stories.

Yet not a single national newspaper picked up on *Panorama's* story. It was only the following day – by which time the Rome diocese had responded with a statement berating the magazine for "defaming all priests" – that the Italian press felt able to run "balanced" reports leading with the diocese's advice to gay priests to "come out" – and get out. Why this reluctance? Some will doubtless argue that the report, accompanied by photographs of half-naked priests, one still wearing his dog collar, was pure smut. I disagree. It went to the heart of the paradox, let us call it, that underlies many of the Catholic church's current problems. While condemning gay sex as disordered and at the same time insisting on celibacy in an age in which heterosexual clerics can no longer get away with the hypocrisy of "housekeepers", the Vatican is gradually creating a predominantly gay priesthood in all but the developing world. The most reliable estimate suggested that up to half of US Catholic priests are homosexual.

... since January, Europe has been swept by clerical sex abuse scandals involving Catholic priests and bishops. The impression given in the Italian media has been that they have solely affected the German-speaking world and a few other countries like Holland and Norway . In fact, cases of clerics accused of molesting or raping children have surfaced repeatedly in Italy and been systematically ignored. In 2005, a former abbot in Arezzo in Tuscany confessed to molesting 38 children. In 2008, a priest was convicted by a court in Ferrara of abusing children as young as three. He was sentenced to six years and 10 months. Right now, the parish priest of a Rome suburb is on trial in a case involving seven alleged victims. None of this has excited more than passing interest, let alone raised questions about the responsibilities of the priests' superiors. In at least one of case, the accused is known to have been confirmed in his post after the first claims against him were made.

I mention all this not so much to make a point about the media as about the Vatican and the Italian church. It has frequently been remarked that the Catholic hierarchy from the pope

downwards seemed not to realise the gravity of what happened this year until it was too late. Its initial reaction to the scandals was to denounce them as part of a conspiracy. But, seen from Rome, this is not at all surprising. Wrapped in the dense, comforting cotton wool of Italian media respect, the Vatican just does not feel or hear the outrage that has been generated.

... This in turn is a reflection of how little the Vatican has been internationalised even though it is now 32 years since the last Italian pope.

The curia manages a vast, international organisation. Yet it still manned to a disproportionate extent by Italians with Italian – and, to an even greater extent, Roman – sensibilities and priorities. Sooner or later, that is surely going to have to change.

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While creating husbands, God promised women that good and ideal husbands would be found in all corners of the world.....  
And then God made the earth round.

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**Rory Fitzgerald is an Irish journalist who writes for *Politics Daily*, where the full text of the following article can be found.**

### **Sinéad O'Connor: An Unlikely Prophet for a Scandalized Church**

They say that God has a sense of humor. Some might be surprised, or even amused, by the idea that Sinéad O'Connor is now a powerful voice for renewal in the scandal-hit Catholic Church.

Although she is often imagined to be hostile to Catholicism, she in fact holds a deep affection for the faith:

"I think the essence of Catholicism is beautiful. . . . What I would love to see is for Catholicism to survive this, so that true Catholicism can shine."

In the early 1990s the stark, ethereal beauty of her voice enchanted the world, catapulting her to fame. But she came crashing down after a 1992 performance on "Saturday Night Live" where, in protest against the Catholic Church's handling of child abuse, she tore up a large photo of Pope John Paul II, and threw the pieces at the camera, telling the audience to "fight the real enemy!"

Overnight, she became a hate figure for many Catholics: Her albums were ceremonially crushed by bulldozers, and she was booed off the stage in Madison Square Garden. What then seemed like outrageous claims of a widespread Church cover-up of child abuse have now been borne out by a litany of reports from around the world. A contrite Facebook group,

"apologize to Sinéad O'Connor NOW" has even been set up by some who once dismissed her.

Speaking from her home near Dublin, she breaks off occasionally to comfort her kids, taking care of a million small things, like any busy mother of four. She remains very active as a musician, but says her primary occupation is not singer, songwriter or campaigner, but mother. Now 43, she seems more comfortable in her own skin than ever before. She speaks softly, with a wry Dublin wit. After becoming suicidal in her early 30s, she was belatedly diagnosed with bipolar disorder. The treatments worked, and she recovered her happiness and her creativity.

In recent years she has released a number of acclaimed albums and has collaborated with artists like U2 and Peter Gabriel. She has also recorded Christian sacred music with the monks at Glenstal Abbey. In 1999 she hit the headlines when she was ordained a priest, Mother Mary Bernadette, in the Latin Tridentine Church, a breakaway Catholic sect. Sinéad O'Connor has emerged as a respected critic of the Catholic Church's handling of child abuse. Although forthright in her views, she often speaks in a sympathetic register which few would have anticipated.

"The love and curiosity I have about religion come from Catholicism. I am very interested in the idea of the saints; everything about it; I mean, it's beautiful," she said.

When she was growing up in the 1970s, she says, "Ireland was a very religious place; it was a theocracy in fact. I was a lucky person in that I never sponged up anything but the good of Catholicism...My feeling about ordinary priests and nuns is that they're great. I've never met anything but loving priests and nuns. I've been communicating with quite a lot of them lately, and they themselves are very upset about how they have been brought in to disrepute by the behavior of the hierarchy. The poor priests are afraid to walk down the road with a child. It's appalling."

She speaks with warmth and insight into Christianity and the Catholic tradition in which she was raised; for good and, as she also recognizes, for ill.

She knows Ireland's Catholic institutions from the inside: As a troubled 15-year-old girl, she was committed to the Grianán Training Centre for shoplifting and truancy. This was one of the now infamous Magdalene Laundries. She vividly recalls the experience of a 17-year-old friend who became pregnant while at the laundry:

"We all looked after her during the pregnancy, we were all really excited, and the baby was born, a beautiful boy. I always remember him, so white, with black, black hair; a really lovely baby. When she came back with the baby, she was thrilled. She had the cubicle next to mine, and she would poke her head over the top in the morning and would talk about all the

plans she had for herself and her son. And then one morning we woke up to hear her screaming. What had happened was, without any warning, the nuns had come to take her baby. They literally tore the baby out of her arms. She was screaming and begging, all the rest of us were screaming and begging. I'll never forget the screams of the woman. And they literally pulled the child out of her arms, and that was that. She never heard anything more about where the child went, what happened, nothing."

Yet she also recalls that one of the nuns in the Grianán centre gave the teenage Sinead O'Connor her first guitar. "I wasn't treated badly in there...[but] I grew up in a very abusive household, where I was abused very severely by my mother. So the whole idea of child abuse is something that I would identify strongly with."

When O'Connor speaks about the church scandals it is with the eloquent anger of a betrayed family member, which is precisely how many Catholics feel in the wake of the revelations of widespread and longstanding sexual and physical abuse of children by clergy. The abuses in Ireland were detailed in government investigations released last year. The revelations of a cover up, in turn, touched off a European-wide cascade of allegations that have threatened to overwhelm Pope Benedict XVI and the Vatican.

Her longstanding passion about this issue means that O'Connor is not about to give the pope or the hierarchy a pass: She would like to see "a regime change, so that we get to have a say in who becomes pope," and she would like to see "more transparency, like any other 21st century organization. The attitude shouldn't be 'we work for them;' it should be 'they work for us'."

... "I do think that, to an extent, if women had been more involved in the organization, [the abuse scandal] might not have happened," she said. "Do you remember when John Paul II was close to death and he had just had a tracheotomy? I always remember seeing him on TV...in the window of St Peter's one day doing his blessings, and he had this tube in his throat. Apparently he was having a problem with the tube and he started to fiddle with it. And instead of a person coming to help him, what actually happened is just unbelievable, and it says an awful lot about the organization: a long stick was poked toward him and the stick poked the tube back in to place. Now if women had been there, a woman would have put her arm around him and said 'are you all right?' "

... She says one of her favorite saints is Joan of Arc, the French heroine who was burned at the stake in the 1400s and was eventually canonized in the 1900s: "How you get to be a saint is you speak out against the church: they murder you, and then centuries later they make you a saint."

Her advice for the Catholic hierarchy is: "go back to Isaiah, which says, 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow.' But not until you tell the truth and you wish to be healed."

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**Bill Donohue, Ph.D., the President of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, recently contributed the following article to the *Washington Post's* "On Faith" site.**

**Catholic Church's issue is homosexuality, not pedophilia**

Anthony Stevens-Arroyo says I am wrong to challenge elite opinion on the subject of priestly sexual abuse. The conventional wisdom maintains there is a pedophilia crisis in the Catholic Church; I maintain it has been a homosexual crisis all along. The evidence is all on my side, though there is a reluctance to let the data drive the conclusion. But that is a function of politics, not scholarship.

Alfred Kinsey was the first to identify a correlation between homosexuality and the sexual abuse of minors. In 1948, he found that 37 percent of all male homosexuals admitted to having sex with children under 17 years old. More recently, in organs such as the Archives of Sexual Behavior, the Journal of Sex Research, the Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy and Pediatrics, it has been established that homosexuals are disproportionately represented among child molesters.

Correlation is not causation; it is an association. So to say that there is a correlation between homosexual orientation and the sexual abuse of minors is not to say that being a homosexual makes one a molester. Indeed, as I have said many times, most gay priests are not molesters, but most of the molesters have been gay. In other words, although sexual orientation does not cause sexual abuse, the fact that there is a relationship between homosexuality and the sexual abuse of minors cannot be ignored in dealing with this problem.

... I have said before, and I will say it again, that I am opposed to any policy that unequivocally bars homosexual men from the priesthood. But, knowing the data, it would be foolish not to screen more closely for homosexually active men entering the priesthood. That is exactly what the Vatican is doing. ...

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**Michael O'Malley wrote the following report for *The Plain Dealer*, with additional material from Robert L. Smith.**

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- A Catholic bishop, acting on what he believes to be good for his entire diocese, can close any parish, even if the parish is financially stable and has a solid, active membership, the Vatican has ruled.

The decision by the Vatican's highest court of law does not bode well for local churches that have already been closed by Bishop Richard Lennon, but have appeals pending in a Vatican court.

"This is very significant," said Peter Borre, a Catholic activist in Boston who represents 10 churches in that city in their appeals to Rome. "The message is: 'No parish is safe.'"

Cleveland diocese spokesman Robert Tayek said Monday that no one at the diocese had seen the Vatican ruling and had no comment.

The ruling, made public late last week when it was translated from the original Latin, came on the heels of the Vatican denying the appeals of all 10 Boston churches, which began that process six years ago.

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**John wrote the following letter to Bishop John Shelby Spong. I am grateful to Peter for passing this along.**

For some time now, I have been reading your weekly essays and I have read many of your books. Your understanding of the Bible and your insight into it are remarkable. I am challenged by your thoughts. However, I read a lot about what you no longer believe, but what do you believe? Regarding Jesus, I would like to see, in a page or less, what your basic belief really is. Do you believe in any of the basic doctrines that we have been taught since childhood?

Dear John,

The way you phrase your question is a familiar one that I have heard many times. I do not, however, believe I can answer it without unpacking it. It is a regular criticism made by fundamentalists and the issue is not that I have staked out a new position, but that it is not consistent with what they were taught and so they hear only the negativity. For example, I have written a 300-page book on the birth narratives of the New Testament ([\*Born of a Woman\*](#)) that reveals quite clearly that I do not believe that these stories of stars, angels, wise men, shepherds and virgin mothers are literal. Yes, I can say that in one page. The bulk of the book is, however, an analysis of what these stories meant, why they were formed, what their background sources were and what the message is that we must be prepared to hear in these stories. About 95% of this book is an attempt to say what the birth stories of Jesus are really about. Yet, I still hear people like you say to me "you don't believe in the Virgin Birth, but you never say what you do believe." I do not plead guilty to that charge. I believe that is an expression of something present in the threatened defensiveness of my would-be critic that he or she cannot admit. I want to say: "Just what part of my elaborate explanation are you incapable of grasping?"

The same thing is true about the resurrection. I have written a 350-page book ([Resurrection: Myth or Reality](#)) on what I think is behind the Easter narratives. I do not think these narratives have anything to do with a resuscitated physical body. When Fundamentalists cannot hear that, they only hear a challenge to their own limited belief system and so they experience it as negative. That is when I get a letter from them asking me to state in one page or less what "I do believe."

You ask specifically about Jesus. I respond that in my book, [Jesus for the Non-Religious](#), I spelled out in intimate detail what I believe about Jesus and what the Jesus story is about. I went into the miracle stories, the differences in the gospel accounts and the role the Hebrew Scriptures played in the developing Jesus story and I concluded that book with the deepest affirmation of why I believe in Jesus and call him Lord that I know how to write. So when you request a statement about what I really believe about Jesus, I have to assume that you haven't, you can't or you won't hear what I have written.

The real problem with fundamentalism is that it narrows the brain to the only options that fundamentalists understand. When any discussion goes beyond those limits, they hear only negativity and so they begin to press for a more positive statement, i.e., one that confirms their childish Sunday school images.

So I do not think your question is really about me so much as it is an insight into where you are. I, therefore, cannot answer it in a way that would be satisfactory to you — so I cannot respond to it.

I recognize that this sounds harsh and that is not what I intend, but I have reached the point where I no longer desire to affirm ignorance as if it is a form of piety and I see no virtue in trying to respond to a question that reveals no ability on the part of the questioner to listen.

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**Please forward your articles and your comments to [tony@tonyercolano.com](mailto:tony@tonyercolano.com).**