

# THOMAS H GROOME, A MODERNIST HERETIC

## Answer to Groome's 'response' to the criticism of his theology by Eamonn Keane in *A Generation Betrayed*— Part I

Thomas H. Groome, Professor of Theology and Religious Education at Boston College, Massachusetts, a Jesuit run university, is the author of various works to do with religious education, notably, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (San Francisco, 1980), *Sharing Faith* (New York, 1991), and *Language for a 'Catholic' Church* (Kansas City, 1991). He is, arguably, responsible for more damage to the faith of our children and young people than any other man living.

In 2002, Groome's works were subjected to studied criticism by Mr Eamonn Keane, an Australian Catholic teacher, in his book *A Generation Betrayed* (Hatherleigh Press, New York, 2002) and in a booklet which is a synopsis of that work, *Crisis in Religious Education* (ARRE, Sydney, 2003). Groome has now offered a 27 page response to Keane's extensive criticism on the Boston College website in a paper he has entitled *Truth Betrayed*. While nominally a Catholic, Groome is in fact a Modernist heretic.

### Modernism

Modernism consists in the substitution for the supernatural and objective in religion of the natural and subjective.

The Catholic believes that God, Who utterly transcends or surpasses every created or creatable thing, whether material or spiritual, became man in Jesus Christ. The Modernist believes that there is no reality beyond the natural observable world; that all assertion of the supernatural is merely the result of internal feelings (religious sentiment); that Jesus Christ was merely a man like you or me, albeit a man of extraordinary character; that the dogmatic assertion that he was God is an invention (or a gloss) which was contrived, or thought up, amongst the early Christians in the centuries following his death. For the Modernist, God is not something outside ourselves, utterly independent of us, utterly beyond our ability to know (transcendent), to whom at the end of our lives we will have to give an account. He is something subjective and immediately present to us (immanent), which each of us can attain by means of this religious sentiment.

### The Modernist Modus Operandi

How does the Modernist work? Here is a summary of his method of procedure taken from Pius X's encyclical, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*<sup>1</sup>.

- He insists (whilever he remains within the body of the faithful) that he is a faithful Catholic.
- He is devious.

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<sup>1</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> September 1907

- He does not say the things the Church says in quite the way that the Church says them and, if he does use the Church's words, he means something different to what the Church means.
- He uses the language of subjectivism which, with its imprecision and its ambivalence, is an apt vehicle to confuse the hearer.
- He has no difficulty holding two contrary intellectual positions at the same time.
- His intent, whether knowingly or not, is to confuse his hearers, to make them believe that he is a faithful Catholic while leading them to a different, and non-Catholic, position.
- In the face of criticism he expresses himself as hurt, or as misunderstood.

To understand Modernism and its multitude of deceits thoroughly, one must read Pius X's encyclical and read also that Pope's condemnations of the various Modernist positions on teaching and revelation in his Decree *Lamentabili*<sup>2</sup>.

### **Modernists**

There are two sorts of Modernist, the latent and the patent. George Tyrrell S J [1861-1909], Modernism's earliest 'saint', must ever be the paradigm of both. Tyrrell kept his radical views hidden at first, disguising what he was saying under Catholic appearances. Later, when the Church's theologians could see where he was going, he became outspoken, and his heresy, patent. All the efforts in charity of Herbert Cardinal Vaughan, Archbishop of Westminster, to move him to return to the Catholic fold having failed, his condemnation and excommunication became a necessity for the protection of the body of the faithful.<sup>3</sup>

Much the worst sort of Modernist is the latent Modernist, the one who pretends to be a Catholic, though he is not, and remains within the body of the faithful. Typical of these was the Jesuit, Teilhard de Chardin, whose gobbledegook blend of theology, history and science was absorbed via his proscribed writings by millions who lacked the education and the training to think critically. Another, and far more dangerous Modernist, was the late, much praised, scripture scholar, Fr Raymond E Brown S S. Brown was the worst of heretics, one who poisoned the faith for millions while bishops and theologians heaped praise upon him. Here is an instance of Brown's scriptural analysis reproduced in a publication of Sydney's Catholic Adult Education Centre—

[A]s the early Christians reflected on Jesus' life, the great 'moments' of that life (the resurrection, the baptism, and eventually the conception) became key occasions for clarifying who he was: the Messiah or anointed King of the House of David and the

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<sup>2</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1907

<sup>3</sup> This medicinal remedy is the best way to treat any heretic as it is the best way to assist the Catholic faithful to deal with his heresy—best for the heretic for it makes it plain that the Church of God opposes him and his ideas; best for the Catholic community because it identifies and isolates the virus. With the lamentable decision of John XXIII in October 1962 to abdicate the Church's authority to discipline the erroneous among the Church's members, the Church's executive has seemingly lost the will to apply this remedy other than spasmodically. Cf. *Failure of the Executive Power* at <http://www.superflumina.org/executivefailure.html>

unique Son of God through the Holy Spirit. It is because the Infancy stories were very effective in conveying the message that Jesus is both Son of God and Son of David that they were readily included in the written Gospels.<sup>4</sup>

Consider the implications that flow from these elements in this paragraph: (i) the use of the word 'moments' in inverted commas; (ii) the statement that the early Christian 'reflected on' Jesus' life; (iii) the absence of initial capitals for the Resurrection and the Baptism of Our Lord; (iv) the use of 'the conception' instead of 'the Incarnation'; (v) the use of 'eventually' in the same phrase; (vi) the expression 'key occasions for clarifying who he was'; (vii) the use of the word 'stories'; (viii) the argument that 'because these stories were very effective in conveying a message' they were included in the Gospels.

Brown used these verbal techniques deliberately to cast doubt on the authenticity of what is contained in the Gospels, to imply that they do not represent the truth about Jesus Christ, to assert that they were concocted by later 'believers', and to deny that Christ was conceived miraculously and that He rose from the dead. *Yet nowhere does he say any of these things explicitly!* The Modernist is devious.

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### **"Truth Betrayed"**

In his response to Eamonn Keane's *A Generation Betrayed*, Groome alleges—

Eamonn Keane has committed calumny against my good name as a Catholic scholar and catechist, spreading false judgments against me.<sup>5</sup>

Let us see how his allegations stack up.

**Calumny** (slander) is harm to the reputation of another caused by making remarks of him contrary to the truth, thus giving occasion for false judgements about him. It is contrary to the eighth commandment. **Detraction**, in contrast, is harm to the reputation of another by making remarks of him which are true, thus giving occasion for true judgements about him, but which remarks are made without objectively valid reason. A man is entitled to his reputation even if he has been a sinner in the past. Disclosure of past sins is licit only if there is adequate reason.

Now, Groome does not allege that Keane is guilty of detraction, that is, of disclosing *the truth about him* to all the world without adequate reason, but of *telling lies about him*. He divides Keane's alleged calumny into the following four categories—*misrepresentations, manipulations, false accusations* and *false implications* (which he calls implications of guilt by association). We will deal with each in turn.

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<sup>4</sup> INFORM, Sydney, n. 31, November 1992.

<sup>5</sup> *Truth Betrayed: Calumny Against Thomas Groome by Eamonn Keane*, in pdf format at <http://www.bc.edu/schools/gsas/irepm/meta-elements/pdf/truthbetrayed.pdf>, p. 1

Groome divides Keane's alleged *misrepresentations* of his position into three: misrepresentations on revelation, on hermeneutics and on the Church's infallibility.

### *Alleged misrepresentations on revelation*

Groome correctly says that Keane alleges that he repudiates the Catholic understanding of Divine Revelation<sup>6</sup>. Keane says more than this. He says that Groome (and Dr Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza whom Groome quotes extensively) repudiates the role of the Magisterium in interpreting revelation authoritatively. Groome quotes in his defence his reliance on the 'theology of revelation' of Avery Dulles S J, 'now a Cardinal'. Dulles' 'models' interpretations of various aspects of theology, less concerned with theology than with the idiosyncratic views of various classes of theologians, evidence the incursion of subjectivism into the Divine study.<sup>7</sup> A good argument can be made that they have not so much assisted as confused theological analysis. If Groome has used Dulles' analyses to formulate his defective understanding of Revelation, this does not assist him. Keane's criticism of him is justified, and constitutes no lie.

Groome asserts—

From his caricature of my position, Mr Keane proceeds to claim that I reject all doctrines of Christian faith and that I encourage others to do the same through a shared praxis approach to religious education...

Keane does not 'caricature' his position at all. He engages in a studied analysis of Groome's work and the influences upon him—anti-Catholic influences derived from Marxism and Liberation theology—and Groome's Modernist approach to the Catholic faith. Groome's approach to Revelation is as flawed as one would expect from one who shares Fiorenza's view that the measure of theology is the worldly standard of academia and not God's Holy Church.<sup>8</sup>

The next 'misrepresentation' Groome alleges against Keane arises out of Keane's refusal to admit a subjective influence in Divine Revelation caused by the human agents used by God. Groome cites Pius XII's encyclical, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, as if this supported his subjectivist position. He condemns Keane for holding that all scripture is inerrant, when this is precisely the Church's position. Groome's stand here is not a Catholic, but a Modernist position.

Groome condemns Keane for holding a static notion of doctrine and quotes Vatican II as if it lent support for the contrary. He asserts a 'need to interpret scripture in the context of each time and place.' This, too, is a Modernist position.

Groome's allegations of 'misrepresentation' here amount to nothing more than that Keane will not grant Groome's Modernist positions as Catholic ones.

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<sup>6</sup> *A Generation Betrayed*, Hatherleigh Press, New York, 2002, p. 13

<sup>7</sup> *Models of The Church*, Dublin, 1976; *Models of Revelation*, New York, 1983.

<sup>8</sup> See Keane's summaries of the influences on Groome in *A Generation Betrayed* at pp. 234-5 and his conclusion that Groome's catechetical method is fatally flawed.

### *Alleged misrepresentations on hermeneutics*

The word *hermeneutics*, derived from the Greek and beloved of academics, means 'the science of interpretation', though it has taken on a more loaded meaning in recent times. Groome says that he uses three means of interpretation—he calls them the 'hermeneutics of retrieval, of suspicion and of commitment'. He asserts that Keane has misrepresented his method of interpreting the faith as limited to one only of these three—

Keane repeatedly charges me of encouraging only a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' towards Catholic faith... If I had proposed only a hermeneutics of suspicion toward Christian faith, Mr Keane would have cause for concern.

We have pointed out elsewhere Groome's preoccupation with the Hegelian/Marxist dialectic, the threefold analysis of action into thesis, antithesis and synthesis.<sup>9</sup> This trinity—*retrieval, suspicion and commitment*—is yet another instance of the same. The third of the trinity is always a blend of the other two.<sup>10</sup> It does not matter what the other two 'hermeneutics'—that of retrieval and that of commitment—may be. The inevitable result of involving in the trio the factor of suspicion infects the result. The synthesis, 'commitment', is rooted in suspicion. In *Sharing Faith* Groome spells out the operation of the three terms explicitly—

The meaning and import of the texts are to be discerned by a threefold schema of activities: (a) to recognize and affirm the truths of the text; (b) to question or refuse the limitations and/or errors in its dominant interpretations, and, (c) as appropriate, to reformulate or construct new horizons of meaning and ethic beyond how it is currently understood and lived.<sup>11</sup>

With justice, then, Keane says—

Under the weight of Groome's 'hermeneutic of suspicion', practically everything the Church teaches becomes contingent matter subject to neverending and contradictory reinterpretations.<sup>12</sup>

He is justified in his charge against Groome. There is no misrepresentation; no lie; no calumny.

### *Alleged misrepresentation on the Church's infallibility*

This allegation is hardly worth addressing for two reasons. In the first place Groome does not address any specific 'misrepresentation' by Keane of his views. In the second, it is clear that Groome's own view of the Church's teaching is so far removed

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<sup>9</sup> Cf *Questions for Catholic Parents in Parramatta* at <http://www.superflumina.org/groome.html>

<sup>10</sup> At root the dialectical analysis is subjectivist. In other words, there is no objective reality corresponding to the categories related. They are only constructions of the subjectivist's (in this case, Groome's) mind.

<sup>11</sup> *Sharing Faith, A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry*, San Francisco, 1991, p. 230.

<sup>12</sup> *A Generation Betrayed*, op. cit., p. 237

from what the Church herself teaches that he condemns himself out of his own mouth.

He interprets *Lumen Gentium* to suit his own idiosyncratic view of the Church's authority which is that the Pope cannot bind the faithful except when he is speaking *ex cathedra* or when he speaks in union with the whole Church—as if the Church was some sort of democratic institution. Here he repeats an error he teaches in *Educating For Life* (at p. 240). He reads down *Lumen Gentium* 25, asserting that the provision—[R]eligious submission of will and of mind must be shown in a special way to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*—is somehow qualified by the Vatican Fathers' commentary—Th[e] infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed His Church to be endowed in defining a doctrine of faith and morals extends as far as the deposit of Divine Revelation...

This misrepresentation of the Church's teaching on infallibility leads Groome to deny that the Pope's *motu proprio* *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* is infallible despite the fact that it fulfils the requirements of *Pastor Aeternus*. Moreover, he ignores the fact that when the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued its *Responsum ad Dubium* of 28<sup>th</sup> October 1995 concerning the teaching contained in *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* it confirmed that that teaching was part of the deposit of faith and had been set forth infallibly. Scorning the assertion that any utterance of the CDF could bind the faithful, he ignores the fact that that ruling was published—and expressed to be so published—with the explicit approval of the Pope. But this attitude is consistent with his denial that the Pope can bind unless he speaks in union with the whole Church. He quotes the questionable Dulles again as his authority for the following proposition—

The moderates at Vatican I managed to get many restrictions written into the text and into the explanations given to it on the council floor. As a result, the celebrated definition of papal infallibility really commits one to very little.<sup>13</sup>

In attacking Groome on this question, Keane does not misrepresent the Church's teaching. He does not misrepresent Groome's interpretation of the Church's teaching. There are no lies. There is no calumny.

There follows a list of ten other alleged 'misrepresentations' which cover Keane's analyses of the influences upon Groome of various modern philosophers and dissenting theologians. In the course of this Groome denies his own Marxism, again praises Dulles and defends his own methodology by showing how he gives guidelines for teachers faced with a student in dissent. There is nothing here which could be said to depart from legitimate comment on Groome's teachings and the influences they manifest. Groome asserts that his curricula were all reviewed by the appointed committee of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops and 'deemed in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church'. He does not say whether those curricula reflected the dissenting views expressed in his works.

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<sup>13</sup> *Truth Betrayed*, p. 7 (quoting Dulles in *The Resilient Church* [New York, 1977] at p. 127)

### *Manipulations*

Groome now complains that Keane takes and twists [something that can be found in my writings] to mean something I did not mean at all. So Keane takes my call for more than male metaphors for God into a denial of the dogma of the Blessed Trinity. This is what Keane says—

[W]hen, following Groome's advice, teachers replace the revelation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit with the vague trinitarianism of Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier; or when they teach children to address the First Person of the Holy Trinity as 'Father/Mother', they thereby discount the truth they are obliged to pass on to Catholic children.<sup>14</sup>

Keane is right: the conclusion he draws is reasonable.

Groome's next complaint: [M]y call for opening holy orders to women he turns into a denial of the "divine origin" of priesthood, which implies denial of the divinity of Jesus Christ. This is not manipulation but the drawing of a logical conclusion. Groome *does* deny the divinity of Christ as is shown elsewhere in this Answer. His attitude to 'opening holy orders to women' is of a piece with this denial. He denies that Christ's Divine authority resides with His Church when it ruled definitively on the subject in *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*. He denies the infallibility of Jesus Christ when he revealed to all mankind that God was their loving Father—not their 'Father/Mother', or some other being of perverted androgynous character. Groome is driven not by fidelity to the Son of God, but by Feminist (and Marxist) ideology. He knows better than Christ and His Church!

There is not room to deal with all the 'manipulations' Groome alleges against Keane. The following must suffice.

1. "Christian Story"—Groome says that Keane fails to do justice to his use of this term he has invented, (in fact, adopted from his fellow Modernists<sup>15</sup>) 'to represent the totality of Christian faith (sic) ...' or of another term he uses in association with it, the word "Vision". The Catholic Church has given Thomas Groome no authority to impose his subjective categories on its teaching and practice, let alone given him a license to distort them. The categories exist nowhere but in his mind and the minds of fellow Modernists. He cannot complain when Keane criticises him for his distortions. Keane is right when he says that Groome's approach is not committed to encouraging people to live their faith. Indeed, that understates the evil for what Groome is encouraging people to do is to live another faith, the Modernist faith, which, with its 'hermeneutic of suspicion', destroys belief and leads to atheism.

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<sup>14</sup> *A Generation Betrayed*, p. 309

<sup>15</sup> We have remarked elsewhere the penchant of Modernists to use the word 'story'. Cf. *Questions for Catholic Parents in Parramatta* at <http://www.superflumina.org/groome.html>

2. Groome objects to Keane's statement—For Groome, 'yesterday's truth' becomes something to be contradicted [by] 'today's truth'.<sup>16</sup>—alleging that Keane makes it appear that he is quoting him, which he is not. The footnote shows clearly that the quoted material in this passage is taken from the *Principles of Catholic Theology* by Cardinal Ratzinger. Keane's use of these quotes is to the point for he highlights Groome's Modernism. The assertion that truth is not constant is a Modernist claim.
  
3. Groome complains that Keane again misquotes him when he asserts: Groome has left himself little option but to adopt the Marxist concept of 'praxis' which demands 'putting praxis above knowledge' with the result that 'praxis' comes to be equated with 'light'.<sup>17</sup> Again, the footnote to the text shows that Keane is quoting Cardinal Ratzinger, not Groome. And again the analysis is to the point. Groome's Marxism is the vehicle by which his Modernism expresses itself.
  
4. Groome complains about the following quote by Keane—Both Groome and Fiorenza have a long history of dissent from the teaching of the Church's magisterium<sup>18</sup>—not so as to deny what is asserted, be it noted, but to complain about the way he has used footnotes! He is wrong again, but what on earth do technicalities matter when such a serious allegation is made! The issue is not whether Keane is a good technician in writing a paper, it is whether Groome is, or is not, a heretic!
  
5. Groome complains further—

Mr Keane manipulates what I write... about Reconciliation to the point of implying that I oppose this valuable sacrament to Catholic life. He pretends to summarize as follows: 'Groome asserts that the Catholic doctrine which ordinarily requires private confession of sins to a priest for purposes of absolution is expressive of a lack of awareness of the social dimension of sin'... He endnotes [*Christian Religious Education*] 93 as his source. This is manipulation by citing only half of what I say there...

If Keane cites only half of what Groome says, Groome returns the compliment for he cites only half of what Keane says and in doing so misleads his readers as to what Keane is addressing. Here is the full text showing that Keane's criticism is directed not so much at Groome, as at the authors of the Parramatta Catholic Education curriculum document.

*Sharing Our Story* [the curriculum document of the Parramatta Diocese derived from Groome's texts] presented the three rites of the Sacrament of Penance in such a way as might easily suggest that the practice of either rite can be valid for any situation. That *Sharing Our Story* should have presented such an incompetent catechesis on sin and sacramental penance is not surprising since

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<sup>16</sup> *A Generation Betrayed*, p. 237

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p. 239

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3



Groome asserts that the Catholic doctrine which ordinarily requires private confession of sins to a priest for purposes of absolution is expressive of a lack of awareness of the social dimension of sin.<sup>19</sup>

At worst there is a lacuna in Keane's argument here. He does not show why Groome's pre-occupation with 'social sin' should encourage his followers (the Parramatta Diocesan Catholic Education Office) to present 'such an incompetent catechesis on sin and sacramental penance'.

But in asserting his support for the 'valuable sacrament' of Penance, Groome hides his real agenda which is that the end of Christian activity is not the Kingdom of God, but the Marxist preoccupation with an earthly human freedom. This is why he is so keen on 'social sin'. Listen to what he has to say in the paragraphs in this book *Sharing Faith* which precede the material quoted above:

The oppressive influence of religion... as Marx saw it, was that it not only gave people some spark of hope in a hopeless situation but also caused them to accept their condition as inevitable, irremediable, the will of a God outside of history. As a result, it became an opium which deadened the awareness of people, preventing them from refusing the injustice of their situation. In fact religion for Marx was no more than an expression of unjust and self-negating social conditions...[pp. 89-90]

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Since the marriage of throne and altar with Constantine, Christians have as often been on the side of oppressive powers... as we have been critics of them. The historically conditioned nature of our theology, the blinding influence of our social context, and our fear of being *personae non grata* with the establishment have often distracted us from the critique that is the constant calling of people who claim to live under the Word... There has emerged... a growing awareness that sin is not only personal and salvation is not simply for later... [W]hat has increased markedly in recent times is consciousness of the task an expanded understanding of sin and salvation poses for the Church's whole mission to the world... [pp. 91-2]

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Christians, because of their faith in Jesus Christ and their response to the Kingdom of which he is the effective agent, have an unavoidable obligation to play a concerted part in humankind's quest for freedom... But if we are to be agents of a freedom that begins within history, then we need an expanded notion of the meaning of sin and of salvation made possible by the grace of God in Jesus Christ... [pp. 92-3]<sup>20</sup>

The influence of Marxism and of Liberation Theology on Groome's thought in these passages is patent. They confirm Keane's criticisms of the influence

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 262

<sup>20</sup> He repeats an argument which appears in his *Christian Religious Education* (San Francisco, 1980), pp. 92-3, 'Personal sins and their consequences... accumulate... [T]he accumulation becomes congealed and institutionalised into social structures and arrangements that are sinful, structures that oppress, exploit or discriminate (sexism, racism, uncontrolled capitalism, totalitarian socialism, etc)...'

upon him of the various dissident theologians whose influence he is so diligent in this 'response' to diminish. Groome's adherence to the ideology of Feminism (including his insistence that the Church should allow the ordination of women) is also derived from Marxism, since Feminism is nothing but Marxism applied and shares its confrontationalism, its assertions of injustice and an idiosyncratic world view in which it tries to reinvent history to conform with its perverted vision.

His position is more explicit in a footnote (n. 44) on p. 229 of the same text—

"Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza writes: 'If we claim that oppressive patriarchal texts are the Word of God then we proclaim God as a God of oppression and dehumanization' (*Stone*, p. xii). But as we reject interpretations of texts used to legitimate patriarchal oppression, we must also decry interpretations of Story/Vision that legitimate racism, ageism, militarism, anti-Semitism, destruction of the environment, economic oppression, and all the other forms of social sinfulness that continue to bedevil our lives, societies, and churches. Why? Because such injustices are contrary to God's reign; using the Story/Vision for their legitimation is to say that God is an oppressor. Blasphemy!"<sup>21</sup>

God becomes a Marxist ideologue!

In condemning this Liberation Theology (and Marxist) idea of 'social sin', Pope John Paul II, in *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*<sup>22</sup>, referred specifically to the CDF's Instruction, *Libertatis Nuntius*, of 6<sup>th</sup> August 1984<sup>23</sup>. The CDF's text includes the following—

New Testament revelation teaches us that sin is the greatest evil, since it strikes man in the heart of his personality. The first liberation, to which all others must make reference, is that from sin. Unquestionably, it is to stress the radical character of the deliverance brought by Christ and offered to all, be they politically free or slaves, that the New Testament does not require some change in the political or social condition as a prerequisite for entrance into this freedom. However, the *Letter to Philemon* shows that the new freedom procured by the grace of Christ should necessarily have effects on the social level. Consequently, the full ambit of sin, whose first effect is to introduce disorder into the relationship between God and man, cannot be restricted to "social sin". The truth is that only a correct doctrine of sin will permit us to insist on the gravity of its social effects.<sup>24</sup>

6. At page 13 of *Truth Betrayed*, Groome says—Mr Keane claims that I've tried to 'expunge from the liturgy certain references to God the Father' [*A Generation Betrayed*, p. 164] and refers to my little book *Language for a 'Catholic' Church*, 62-64. He then

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<sup>21</sup> The reference, *Stone*, is to Schussler Fiorenza's *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge Of Feminist Biblical Interpretation*, Boston (Beacon Press), 1984.

<sup>22</sup> Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Reconciliation and Penance in the mission of the Church today, 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 1984.

<sup>23</sup> Instruction on certain aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'.

<sup>24</sup> *Libertatis Nuntius*, Part IV, nn. 12-14

justifies himself by referring to what he does in this ‘little book’ while ignoring the basic charge, that he has tried to expunge from the liturgy certain references to God the Father—an allegation which is true—on the basis that Keane ‘chose to... manipulate what I said to make a false claim against me’. Keane has not made a false claim against him, nor has he manipulated what he said. Groome admits that he tries to pervert the liturgy by introducing into it Feminist categories. Keane has rightly exposed him for this falsity and for the errors on which it is based.

This ends the alleged *manipulations*. Groome goes on in his paper to deal with Keane’s alleged *false accusations* and *false implications*. We will deal with those criticisms in the second part of this Answer to Groome’s ‘response’. This part will conclude with something which is more important.

### **Groome’s Asserted Orthodoxy**

On page 14 of his paper Groome says this—

A reader of Mr Keane’s book will come away with the impression that I deny all the central dogmas and doctrines of Catholic faith. Let me be clear here as I am in my many books and essays: *I now hold and have always held fully orthodox positions on all the central matters of Catholic faith and morals*. The fact that I favour the ordination of women, more expansive language for God, and so on, does not place me in any kind of heresy... [emphasis in original]

On the following page, page 15, he says this—

I have never denied the full divinity and full humanity of Jesus Christ.

Is he speaking the truth when he makes these assertions? He is not. Contrary to the teaching of the Catholic Church, Groome holds—

- that Christ was not fully God as well as fully man;
- that Sacred Scripture is not inerrant;
- that the Pope is not the direct successor of St Peter;
- that the Pope does not have absolute authority to bind the Church;
- that Catholic doctrine is not fixed;
- that no statement of faith can be guaranteed free from error;
- that the Catholic Church should ordain women (and that the Church has not infallibly pronounced that the Church has no authority to do so);
- that Christ did not consecrate his apostles priests;
- that the priesthood is not passed on by ordination;
- that the priest has no distinctive character rendering him unique;
- that the priest has no unique power to confect the Eucharist;
- that any powers the priest may have are given him by the community; and
- that the bishops are not the direct successors of the Apostles.

Here, taken from his works, is the evidence for each of these propositions.

i. **That Christ was not fully God as well as fully man**

In *Truth Betrayed* p. 20, Groome berates Keane for teaching, consistently with the Church, “that from the first moment of existence [Christ] knew in his human mind that he was true God”. Then he goes on to say: This would mean that Jesus—even as a baby in the crib at Bethlehem or playing with friends as a five year old in Nazareth—consciously knew of his divinity and possessed the fullness of divine wisdom about all eternal truths. This smacks of Monophysitism to me.

The Holy Office, by Decree dated 5<sup>th</sup> June 1918, ruled *inter alia* that the proposition could not be safely taught which denies that the soul of Christ was ignorant of nothing, and denies that from the beginning he knew all things in the Word, past, present and future. Nor, the ruling provided, could it be safely taught that the knowledge of Christ was limited.<sup>25</sup> The extent of Christ’s human knowledge is dealt with comprehensively in Sheehan’s *Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine*<sup>26</sup>. In *Mystici Corporis*, Pius XII taught this—

[T]he most loving knowledge with which the divine Redeemer has pursued us from the first moment of His Incarnation completely exceeds all the searchings of the human heart; for by means of that blessed vision, which He enjoyed as soon as He was received into the womb of the Mother of God, He has forever and continuously had present to Him all the members of the mystical Body, and embraced them with His saving love...

What Groome calls ‘divinity’ is entirely different from what the Church means by ‘Divinity’ which is what the word itself means.

ii. **That Sacred Scripture is not inerrant**

In *Educating For Life* at p. 242, Groome says: Scripture and tradition are to be continually reinterpreted in light of changing circumstances and contemporary consciousness. In *Truth Betrayed* at p. 19 Groome sneers at Keane’s ‘ultra-conservative theological positions’ and says: So... all dogmas are static and all of scripture is inerrant... These positions are Mr Keane’s to take... The problem emerges when he uses them as *the* measure of orthodox Catholic faith and proclaims in ‘dissent’ anyone who does not agree with his own extreme opinions.

Groome is ignorant of the fact that the position he condemns is not just Keane’s position, but the position of the Catholic Church. All of Scripture is inerrant and, saving the principle of St Vincent of Lerins concerning the development of doctrine, all dogma is certain and unchanging.

iii. **That the Pope is not the direct successor of St Peter**

In *Sharing Faith*, p. 314, Groome says: ‘The traditional Catholic assertion that there is a direct historical line of succession between the present pope and Peter, presumed to be the first bishop of Rome must... be nuanced... [I]n the light of New Testament scholarship, we cannot presume a line of direct succession between pope and Peter’

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<sup>25</sup> DS 3646

<sup>26</sup> Fourth edition revised and edited by Fr P. M Joseph, (St Austin Press, London, 2001) pp. 380-1

since ‘the function of bishop as we might recognise it today did not begin until the second century.’

The Fathers of the Vatican Council (Vatican I) defined as follows—

If anyone... says that it is not from the institution of Christ the Lord Himself, or by divine right that the blessed Peter has perpetual successors in the primacy over the universal Church, or that the Roman Pontiff is not the successor of blessed Peter in the same primacy—let him be anathema.<sup>27</sup>

iv. **That the Pope does not have absolute authority to bind the Church**

In *Educating For Life*, p. 240, Groome says: In mainstream Catholic understanding of papal magisterium... the pope, as bishop of Rome, must teach in consultation and collegiality with the bishops of the world and represent the consensus of faith of the whole Church, in fidelity to Scripture and Tradition.

The Fathers of the Vatican Council (Vatican I) defined as follows—

If anyone says that the Roman Pontiff has... not the full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the universal Church, not only in things which pertain to faith and morals, but also in those which pertain to the discipline and government of the Church spread over the whole world; or that he possesses only the more important parts, but not the whole plenitude of this supreme power; or that this power of his is not ordinary and immediate, or over the churches altogether and individually, and over the pastors and the faithful altogether and individually—let him be anathema.<sup>28</sup>

Groome repeats his error in *Truth Betrayed*, p. 24, when he tries to defend his position on the ‘ordination’ of women. The extent of his error is seen in that context in vii below.

v. **That Catholic doctrine is not fixed**

See quote in ii above.

vi. **That no statement of faith can be guaranteed free from error**

In his book *Educating For Life*, (Crossroads, 2001) Groome says this (at p. 142): A dialectical outlook requires bringing a healthy scepticism to the world, with special alert for sin and suffering. Such a ‘critical consciousness’ seems theologically appropriate to Catholic tradition, given how much untruth is in every statement of faith... In *Sharing Faith* (at p. 232-3) Groome says: Religious educators should approach the faith tradition with a healthy suspicion and, as educators, help people to recognise that ‘much that has been proudly told must be confessed as sin; and much that has been obscured and silenced must be given voice.’

vii. **That the Catholic Church should ordain women**

In *Sharing Faith*, p. 328, Groome says: Confining ordained ministry to men is rightly challenged as the creation of a patriarchal culture and without biblical

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<sup>27</sup> DS 3058

<sup>28</sup> DS 3064

warrant. ... It seems that the exclusion of women from ordained ministry is the result of a patriarchal mind-set and culture and is not of Christian faith. The injustice of excluding women from priesthood debilitates the church's sacramentality in the world; it is a countersign to God's reign. In the same text, in footnote 114, (which appears at p. 518) Groome goes on: I am convinced that the exclusion of women from ordination... functions as a legitimating sign for patriarchy and sexism—thus doing spiritual and moral harm in society'.

In *Truth Betrayed*, pp. 23-4, Groome says: Mr Keane claims that the denial of ordination to women is an infallible aspect of Catholic faith... I claim that this has not been clearly taught as infallible... I take seriously the *Responsum ad Dubium* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith from October 1995 which stated that 'the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women' and that this is 'to be held definitively' and 'as belonging to the deposit of faith.' But to claim that this verifies the infallibility of the Church's position, one must hold that a Roman congregation, not assisted by the charism of infallibility and therefore not protected from error, has determined that the pope, in the exercise of his ordinary papal magisterium which is also not protected from error, has determined that the whole college of bishops, while dispersed throughout the world, are in agreement that this teaching and therefore must be accepted as *de fide*.

Groome's first error is his refusal to accept that *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* was an infallible pronouncement of the Pope. The second is his failure to understand that the *Responsum ad Dubium* of the CDF, which was issued with the express approval of the Pope, did not render *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* infallible *ex post facto* but only served to draw to the attention of sceptical theologians and their hangers-on its infallible character. His third, and most fundamental error, is his refusal to acknowledge that the Pope does not need the authority of the rest of the world's bishops to make an infallible pronouncement. Given these flaws in his analysis, his gratuitous assertion '[S]hould the Catholic Church ever explicitly state its position on women's ordination as infallible, and the conditions for infallibility are fulfilled, then I will submit' (*Truth Betrayed*, pp. 23-4) must be seen for what it is, pure humbug.

viii. **That Christ did not consecrate his apostles priests**

In *Sharing Faith*, p. 314, he quotes Raymond Brown, with approval, to the following effect: "The affirmation that all the bishops of the early Christian church could trace their appointments or ordinations to the apostles is simply without proof." Later on the same page Groome says: As already noted, the function of bishop as we might recognise it today, did not begin until the second century. Equating apostle with bishop (and indeed apostle with sacerdotal function, see note 27) is not in the first century; nowhere in the New Testament is Peter referred to as a bishop... His footnote 27 quotes with approval one Kenan B. Osborne in his text, *Priesthood*, p. 79, as follows: "In spite of the long tradition of this view, contemporary scholars find no basis for such an interpretation. In other words, Jesus did not ordain the apostles (disciples) at this final supper to be 'priests', giving them thereby the power to celebrate the eucharist."

The Council of Trent defined as follows—

If anyone says that by these words: 'Do this for a commemoration of me' [Lk 22: 19; 1 Cor. 11: 24] Christ did not make the apostles priests, or did not ordain that they and other priests might offer His own body and blood—let him be anathema.<sup>29</sup>

ix. **That the priesthood is not passed on by ordination**

See the quote in viii above.

x. **That the priest has no distinctive character rendering him unique**

In *Sharing Faith*, p. 310, Groome quotes, with approval, Raymond Brown as saying, inter alia: "How one got the right to preside [at the Eucharist] and whether it endured beyond a single instance we do not know." He goes on to say: Brown is proposing, and his thesis now seems generally accepted, that the first Christians did not see the confecting of Eucharist as a personal and ontological power invested in one person who rendered Eucharist for the community. Instead, through the presence of the Holy Spirit, the 'sacramental powers' resided in the whole community and in its enacting of the sacred symbols that made manifest God's saving presence; the community chose certain people to preside at divine worship for the sake of 'holy order'... Power to celebrate the Eucharist did not lead to community leadership, but rather leadership led to presiding at Eucharist...

Later, on p. 324, Groome says this: Vatican II claimed there is a difference not only 'in degree' but 'in essence' between the common priesthood of all and ordained priesthood. Though this reflects the present 'mind of the church' (historical circumstances and critical scholarship may yet nuance it), commentators have made too much of the Council's distinction...

The Council of Trent defined as follows—

If anyone says that there is not in the New Testament a visible and external priesthood, or that there is no power of consecrating and offering the true body and blood of the Lord...—let him be anathema.<sup>30</sup>

If anyone says that order or sacred ordination is not truly and properly a sacrament instituted by Christ the Lord, or that it is some human contrivance devised by men unskilled in ecclesiastical matters, or that it is only a certain rite for selecting ministers of the word of God and of the sacraments—let him be anathema.<sup>31</sup>

xi. **That the priest has no unique power to confect the Eucharist**

See the quotes in ix and x above.

xii. **That any powers the priest may have are given him by the community**

See the quotes in x above.

xiii. **That the bishops are not the direct successors of the Apostles**

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<sup>29</sup> DS 1752, Canon 2 on the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

<sup>30</sup> DS 1771

<sup>31</sup> DS 1773

See the quotes in viii above. In *Truth Betrayed*, p. 19, he says—Mr Keane takes positions with which no competent Catholic scholar—left right or center—would agree; the present state of scholarship would not warrant. For example, Mr Keane says that the bishops today are the direct ‘successors of the Apostles’... As Vatican II taught, ‘this sacred synod teaches that by divine institution bishops have succeeded to the place of the apostles as shepherds of the Church’ (Constitution on the Church, #20, Abbott 40; note the careful language).

It is hard to know whether to take Groome seriously. The selectiveness of his quotations from the Council Fathers to suit his own agenda is contradicted when what the Fathers said is placed in context. Thus, the very opening words of the same paragraph of *Lumen Gentium* 20 are these: [The] divine mission, entrusted by Christ to the apostles, will last until the end of the world (Mt. 28: 20), since the gospel which was to be handed down by them is for all time the source of all life for the Church. For this reason the apostles took care to appoint successors in this hierarchically structured society. But all this ignores the Definition of the Council of Trent—

If anyone says that the bishops who are chosen by the authority of the Roman Pontiff are not true and legitimate bishops, but a human invention—let him be anathema.<sup>32</sup>

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This is what St Thomas Aquinas says about one who picks and chooses what he will believe from among the Church’s teachings—

[H]e who adheres to the teaching of the Church as to an infallible rule, assents to whatever the Church teaches. It is otherwise if he holds what he chooses to hold of the things taught by the Church and rejects what he chooses to reject, for he no longer adheres to the teaching of the Church as to an infallible rule, but to his own will... It is clear that such a heretic with regard to one article has no faith in the other articles, but only a kind of opinion in accordance with his own will.<sup>33</sup>

Thomas Groome maintains that he is orthodox. What he means by ‘orthodox’ and what the Church means by that word are two different things. His teaching method, reflecting his erroneous views and borrowing the methodology of Marxism, is destructive of the Catholic faith in all who fall under its influence. Eamonn Keane’s criticism of Groome’s views and of his catechetical methodology was timely and essential.

We will see in part two of this Answer to Groome’s ‘response’ to Eamonn Keane’s criticisms just how well he fares with the balance of his paper.

Michael Baker  
8<sup>th</sup> August 2006

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<sup>32</sup> DS 1778

<sup>33</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 5, a. 3; cf. II-II, q. 11, a. 1



*St Dominic*

*Bl. Mary of the Cross (Mother Mary MacKillop, Foundress of the Australian teaching order of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart)*