

## The Message of Cardijn as Compared with the Reality Search Analysis and its Spinoff

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So much has been written about Cardinal Cardijn and his “See Judge Act” (Jocist) approach to Christianity. It is difficult to pinpoint something in order to compare his approach with the RealitySearch.com.au analysis of the gospels and one of its spinoffs.

However, the tension between Cardijn and Cardinal Suenens as outlined in <https://theleaven.com.au/8-suenens-vs-cardijn/> may be a place to start. The site says

For Cardijn, the answer lay in his challenge to the Church to go beyond its traditional parish-based structures, beyond the boundaries of the Catholic community and to reach out to all people

The site also tells of how Cardinal Suenens pointed out three difficulties he had with a Cardijn manuscript before an imprimatur was provided for this manuscript, just before the Vatican Council of the 1960's.

The language used by Suenens in making these objections is fairly hard to understand. However, a description of these appears to be as follows:

Firstly, Suenens had difficulty in accepting that Catholic Action can be specialized. Secondly, he saw laity action as supporting and prolonging sacerdotal (priestly) action. Thirdly he had difficulty with the Cardijn's approach of “humanizing” before “christianising”.

It appears Suenens did not see “Catholic Action” by the laity as specifically church action. He also saw the role of laity to be secondary and even subservient to that of the clergy. Their role was mainly seen as evangelizing, that is, getting people into the pews of the Church. One could argue he had a “pyramid” understanding of Church. Also, Suenens did not appear to see the work of the laity in functioning in and improving the world as being, specifically, “Christian”.

When one considers and compares the debate discussed on the above site with the gospel analysis in [www.realitysearch.com.au](http://www.realitysearch.com.au) the question about laity versus clergy is largely bypassed. This is because with the analysis there provides a focus on the way that the gospel message was structured into the gospels and in Acts. The overall structure of the texts was set out before the development of the Church.

The semiotic analysis of the gospels in [realitysearch.com.au](http://realitysearch.com.au) is a sociological one. It demonstrates how the gospels set out the social structures of two quite differing societies. On their own, each of these social types is quite different from the social structure of the Catholic Church. Thus in the texts, the social structure of Judaism is compared and distinguished from the social structure of a society based upon Greek philosophy, that is, Hellenism.

It was these two societies and their distinctive world views that Jesus Christ himself and the gospel writers who followed him, were living in and trying to understand and analyse themselves.

They were dealing with the good and bad points of these on a daily basis. Jesus Christ, through his life and preaching formed a hybrid of the two.

The RealitySearch analysis attempts to understand how the gospel writers understood and contributed to, the construction of the social hybrid of Christianity. In doing this, as stated above, the analysis reaches into the era before a laity versus clergy tension. Yet arguably it may provide some answers here. For instance, the analysis shows how the writers saw the first of these society types is largely based on the sense of time and law. The second is largely based on the sense of place and order. This has ramifications for the implication that a "cosmic" dialectic would be going on when these two societies were brought together.

A major "spin off" of the analysis has been two books and a Part One set of powerpoint/video workshops about basic morality. The title of these is "Is Christian Morality Unique? – Money, Power and Relationship"

This 'spin off' from the analysis was triggered when it was observed that the structure of the Acts of the Apostles (called in the analysis "Launch the Society") appears to highlight a Church Council that took place around 50 CE. The outcome of this Council – caused by conflict about whether or not Gentile converts should become circumcised Jews first of all, appears to be summed up with these words "Avoid blood, fornication and strangling". The Council said that this was all the Followers of Jesus had to do. To some extent the mandate "avoid blood, fornication and strangling" appears to echo the rules that were set out in the book of Leviticus some centuries before. Pagan visitors to Palestine were required to follow these rules in order to fit in with the Jewish population. However, in the context of the 1st, when the dominance of the Roman Empire and its culture had "bull dozed" the known world, the wider social context was different. Under Roman rule there was

institutionalized violence and cruelty (cf. the gladiators). There was institutionalized fornication in the form of temple worship. There was institutionalized injustice e.g. in terms of taxes and slavery. In such a context the three edicts set out by the Church Council could be understood as requirements to "avoid cruelty as such, avoid unmarried sex and avoid unjust business practices." In other words, instead of having to observe a myriad of Jewish regulations, the Council "raised the bar" of the three key Jewish Commandments, that is "Thou shalt not kill, commit adultery or steal".

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If one takes a closer look at the Gospels and the writings of St Paul, it appears that in a similar way and in each of these books there is a "raising of the bar" of the three basic social commandments. This "pattern" is pointed out in the workshops about "Money Power and Relationships". It is shown here how, from the beginning, there has been an on-going pressure within Christianity to constantly "raise the bar" of the Commandments and the social situations that the Commandments encompass. Arguably this pressure was (and is) because of the existence of the idealism of Hellenism (cf. Greek philosophy) within Christianity. This has existed since the teachings of Jesus and has continued on over the centuries. Thus the existence of Christianity within Western societies has provided a dialectic tension that has spurred on improvement and development up to the present time.

How has this worked out in practice? If we look at the basic functions and industries of our society they are largely based on the three key social commandments listed above. That is, the "Thou shalt not kill" commandment of Judaism has been developed into the industries of education, health, defence etc. The Commandment of "Thou shalt not commit adultery" has been developed into the

range of laws and social service supports for families etc. The Commandment of “Thou shalt not steal” has been developed into the Christian (and Hellenistic) influence of “raising the bar” in the industries of our own, present society goes on. This understanding of what Christianity is doing surely fits in with the Cardijn mandate of moving beyond the boundaries of the parish and into the world. Cardijn urged Christians to “see, judge and act” in order to improve the world, including the world of work. In terms of Christianity constantly improving on the observance of Commandments the process of “humanizing” the world would not come before “Christianising” as suggested by Suenens in the above site. Rather, the two are the same!

As already stated, the dialectical tension that exists between the Judaic and Hellenistic roots of Christianity continue on. But given this situation, we can wonder about where this dynamic leaves the clergy and the institutionalized church. Do these have any role at all?

It appears from the three points made above by Cardinal Suenens about Cardijn’s position, that at the start of the 1960’s Suenens was wondering much the same thing. Perhaps he would be wondering this even more so, at the present time after the Catholic drop off in church attendance and the drop off in vocations to the priesthood and religious life. One could also wonder if there has been a similar “drop off” in parish support for the Cardijn’s movement of the YCW for reasons that are much the same.

However, consider. If we go back to the way in which the gospel writers organized their material, according to the semiotic, sociological analysis outlined in [www.realitysearch.com.au](http://www.realitysearch.com.au), we find that the writers were quite conscious they were setting out the structure of a hybrid society. Also, at the base of their texts, there is an on-going and deliberate interplay of words that relate to

time and place. As already stated this link-in with time and place gives the interplay between the two societies a cosmic dimension.

However, in order to explore whether or not the writers were really giving this cosmic dimension to the interplay between Judaism and Hellenism, questions firstly need to be asked. Is Judaism a society heavily based upon the sense of time? Is Hellenism a society heavily based upon the sense of place?

Indeed, Judaism and Jewish law provides evidence of a keen sense of history, law and time. Over the centuries Jews have been known as “the people of the book”. They constantly refer back to their belief that God “broke” into history in order to make them his chosen people. On the other hand, the Greeks, with their myths and pantheon of gods did not appear to be so concerned about the historicity of their past. Rather Greek stress on rationalism as reflected in their architecture, mathematics, logic etc shows that they were certainly concerned about order. Later, in the 1st the Roman Empire, with its adoption of Greek philosophy, tried to extend this sense of order into more and more places. And, prior to the Romans, Alexander the Great, a pupil of Aristotle, had (also) set out to conquer the known world. Place was important to them.

### **In this sense there is a cosmic resonance in the interactions between Judaism and Hellenism**

In this sense there is a cosmic resonance in the interactions between Judaism and Hellenism as set out in the gospel. But how do the gospel writers “highlight” their realization of such a cosmic dimension.

In gospel of Mark, the first gospel of 70 CE, Mark uses two concentric circles of places to provide a description of how a law-based

society relies on authority and an order-based society needs a sense of direction.

Later on, Matthew and Luke in about 85 CE use the gospel of Mark to write their own gospels. Matthew writes for and from a Jewish Christian community. In doing this he begins nearly all of his paragraphs with a statement of time made or implied. Luke on the other hand writes for and from a Gentile Christian community. His lengthy Section B sets out a description of an order-based society. The paragraphs here begin by naming a place and all the places are set out in matching, parallel lines.

Later on, in about 100 CE, John also uses two lines of parallel places in order to set out his description of the “Living Authority” and then to set out his description of the “Living Word”

By using statements about time and place in the organization of their paragraphs, the gospel writers show they were keenly aware of the interplay between time and place. This interplay was at the base of the dialectical tension between the Judaic roots of Christianity and its Hellenistic roots.

One can rightly ask “How is this relevant to the role of the clergy and local parish at the present time?”

As stated, the interplay between time and place recalls the cosmic dimensions of our world. But they also recall the cosmic dimension of the incarnation. In the first century CE, if God was to enter our world through the incarnation and then continue to do so through the celebration of the Eucharist it need to happen in terms of time and place. At the cosmic level, time and place are all we have.

If we take a closer look at the celebration of the Eucharist, especially in terms of the gospel of John (and the analysis) we find that the Mass is a celebration of the Living Word (cf. the readings and homily) and a

celebration of the Living Authority (cf the transubstantiation). The two are brought into a dialectical tension within the ritual of the Mass. In this sense the Eucharist is a focusing of what goes on within Christianity as a whole.

In order to try to explain this, one can call on the teachings of the philosopher Gadamar who was faced with having to live through the war in Nazi Germany. Gadamar said that all language is interconnected and in this sense, language as such, is a “subject”. He also referred to the “anonymous will” of people (also acting as subject) that shapes history over time.

The Church teaches that the Mass, through the agency of the priest, re-enacts the incarnation. It focusses the existence and promotion of the Living Word and the Living Authority as the “laity” promote these in everyday life. It makes sense that if people are committed to finding and speaking the truth and they are also committed to doing the will of God, then it makes sense that they should routinely (and even ritually) re-commit themselves to this calling in regular attendance at Mass.

Through the action of the Mass and the representation of the people by the priest, the people present re-connect with the Living Word and the Living Authority that exist within their own lives. That is, through the ritual of the Mass the people endorse their own efforts to find and express the living word of truth. They endorse the authority that they exercise in trying to carry out the will of God. In doing so they join with others who have gone before them and have carried out the will of God throughout the ages.

In such a model of Church the priest does have a role. This would not be in a pyramid model of church but rather in the “spiritual body” as described by St Paul. All participants would be equal because all would be sharing in the same life force. All would be responding to an on-going urge towards evolution.