

# CHILD OF THE FUTURE

by Harry Fielding

Hey there you! Yes, I'm talking to you, the Child of the Future who is reading this article. You're probably sick of hearing the old cliché, "Today is the first day of the rest of your life." Well, I've got news for you. It's true! You are a Child of the Future. The past is dead (although not forgotten) and each day you have the chance, as a resurrected child of the present, to make the decisions that will bring about the kind of future that so many yearn for – the creation that Christians all over the world call the Kingdom of God (but which I prefer to call the kindom of God). Each of us is called, every day to demonstrate that "kindom" in action: In this sense we are each co-creators with God and related (kin) to all of God's creation.<sup>1</sup>

The Easter story gives each of us a chance to reflect upon the meaning of life. It is a chance to take some time out and reflect on who we are and who we want to be. As the Desiderata expresses it: "GO PLACIDLY amid the noise and the haste and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons." The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ is not just a story about an event that took place in the distant past – it embodies an eternal principle that is at the centre of life itself. I like to call this the "Easter Principle." We are each called, like Jesus, to die and be reborn (resurrected if you will) every moment of our lives. That is why we celebrate, on a regular basis, the sacrament of communion. We remember not only the death and resurrection of Jesus as we partake of the emblems, but also our own death and resurrection. We each affirm that we are a Child of the Future as we stretch out our hands to receive and eat the bread and drink the wine.

As we approach the Easter season, there are many comparisons that can be drawn with the situation of the "Jesus Jews" (not yet called "Christians") to the situation in which we find ourselves today. In the immediate aftermath of the crucifixion, the disciples must have been frightened and perhaps even frustrated and angry. But eventually they overcame this fear and began to recognise it was up to them to live out the eternal "Easter Principle" to bring about

the transformed state of life that is the "Kingdom" of which Jesus so frequently spoke. There is considerable evidence to suggest that many were expecting the return of Jesus and his kindom to happen in their own lifetimes. But like the Easter story, the kindom is not a one-off event, but is a central theme and principle enacted in the present to help create the future that God has yearned for since the beginning of time.

Anthropologists and sociologists tell us that the mythological tales found in all cultures point to the deepest truths and values that a society holds. Far from being "untrue superstition" as many in contemporary society define mythology, these stories contain profound human reflection on the nature of life and its deepest meanings. Mythology is replete with stories of gods becoming human, being put to death and rising from the grave in transformed fashion. What does the life and death of Christ have to say about our human condition, eternal truths and how we are to live? How do we define God, without confining that which is beyond description? We are being somewhat naïve if we simplify God to our own image with human attributes and feelings and ignore deeper mystery and contemplation. In these troubled times we need to do some serious soul-searching at both the individual and societal level to see "what matters most" in the age in which we live.

Around 100 years ago, Australia suffered profoundly under the global epidemic known as the "Spanish Flu." Proportionately the effects of that pandemic were far greater than the current effect of Covid 19 on our society. But the world lived through those troubled times and emerged with a new sense of hope. That has been oft-times true in human history, from the stories from ancient Egypt to the horrors of two world wars and conflicts in Vietnam and the Middle East in the lifetime of many who are reading this article. Hope is the essence of the Easter message. What is important, for me, is the "Easter Principle" of hope in the midst of despair that was lived out in the life and death of Jesus. His life points to the eternal essence or spirit that is at the centre of all living things, that many of us call "God" and others the "Divine" or the "Holy" or

the "ineffable." It is the spiritual and eternal principles that Jesus lived by that are important for our time. In a shrinking global world, we need to recognise our connectedness and our interdependence upon each other. This is perhaps what Jesus was trying to emphasize when he said that the "Lord is one" and that the two greatest commandments are to love God with all our heart and soul and to love our neighbour as ourselves (Mark 12:29-32). Despair, hopelessness and even death are not the final answers.

In the stories about Jesus we find the ultimate model for all humanity: we are called to become as Jesus was. Death (or Covid 19) shall not conquer us if we live in what theologian Paul Tillich called the "eternal now" which proclaims that eternal life is a state of being as well as a state of becoming. In these troubled times we need to embrace our inmost spiritual essence and say YES to life. We are called to die to conventional wisdom and belief and to be reborn as compassionate spiritual manifestations of the Divine that is at the core of our being. We are connected together in love. We are called not to defend our beliefs, but to live them in a world that still needs to be redeemed. For me, that is what Easter is all about.

Let me conclude with a challenge to my readers – the final stanza of a poem that I wrote more years ago than I care to remember:

Child of the Future,  
The present needs you  
Desperately.  
So many die unloved  
And unloving;  
So many lonely souls  
Cry out for comfort:  
THERE IS NO OTHER TIME, BUT NOW

<sup>1</sup> I first used the term "Sacred Kindom" in an essay in my book "About Time" published in 2003. Some bible translations use the term "reign of God" rather than "kingdom". Other translations include "Kingdom of Heaven" and "Kingdom of Light". Sometimes the references are used to denote a "future kingdom" and sometimes in an existential sense in the present age.

