

# FROM BIBLICAL STORY TO BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION – A CRITICAL TRANSITION

By

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

January 2011

Melbourne College of Divinity

## ABSTRACT

The intention of this thesis is to address the transition from the primary school child's understanding of bible stories to an understanding of scripture at a level commensurate with the adolescent's developing capacity for critical thinking and formal operational thought. The impetus for the study comes from experience in teaching religious education in the Catholic secondary school where students' questions indicate that a literalist interpretation presents difficulties well into adolescence.

Classroom religious education is seen as *education for faith*. The approach to the teaching of scripture is critical engagement with the biblical text which draws on contemporary biblical scholarship and takes cognisance of the nature of the text and the characteristics of religious language and biblical genres. An examination of official Catholic Church documents reveals that these approaches are consistent with the post-Vatican II pronouncements on education and on the interpretation of scripture.

The approach taken is informed by structural developmental theory which provides insights into the cognitive capacity of the student and the cognitive demands of the biblical text. The educative task is to provide a supportive learning environment and a pedagogy which develops students' skills in recognising and comprehending religious metaphor and in applying these skills to an understanding of religious myth and parable. Although the particular context is the Catholic Christian secondary school, the study is relevant to other Christian educational settings, including adult education. Critical interpretation of scripture is seen as an essential foundation for a critically conscious and committed adult faith and Christian praxis.

## STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby certify that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution and affirm that to the best of my knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This Thesis is dedicated to the memory of my parents,

Francis KELLEHER

and

Alice KELLEHER (*nee* McCarthy)

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I should like to acknowledge the on-going patience, encouragement and generosity of my Supervisor, Dr Maryanne Confoy, rsc, throughout the course of this thesis. Her erudition opened up exciting new areas of research to be explored, her wise counsel ensured that the exploration did not lose sight of the specific issues which are the subject of this thesis.

I should also like to acknowledge the assistance and courtesy of the staff of the MCD Libraries, especially those at the Dalton McCaughey Library, Parkville.

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