

“ Freedom of Religion, belief Inquiry “

Subsequent Submission from David Price (2)

In my submission, on Issue 3 , which is :-

“ the relationship between the freedom of religion or belief and other human rights , and the implications of constraints on the freedom of religion or belief for the enjoyment of other universal human rights “

I said :-

The basic right of **ANY** human being comes from their being a human being . They do **NOT need any Act of Parliament** or regulation to bestow the right to life on them.

In the 2015 “ **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES** “ report of the Australian Human Rights Commission, it is pointed out that for every right, there is a corresponding responsibility ; they are inseparable and must be exercised in Unison .

Given the abuses of the human rights detailed in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse , and the number of people, both abusers and abused, involved the need for religious organizations to be held legally accountable has become imperative .

There should be no difference between personal faith and belief and the practices of the organizations that are formed to provide the administrative and legal framework for those who seek to live out in their daily such faith and belief . Sadly, the Royal Commission has clearly identified that in granting rights to religious organizations they have not seen themselves as having any corresponding responsibilities.

NO belief **system** has been perfected, because systems are run by people, whose discernment is always going to be at risk of being corrupted by the influence of ego, politics, ideological perspectives, fear, emotions, resistance to change and manipulation of connections .

Belief systems do not exist if they are only on a sheet or paper or in the digital universe . They need people to implement and follow the practices that make up the system ; this leads to institutions being created and then developed, to enable infrastructure to be set up .

However , this criticism can be levied at any organization that has become rich and powerful and sees only actions that increase wealth or power as being worthwhile. “ How will being socially responsible increase dividends ?” can be answered in economic value, but it would rarely appear on any Board or Management Agenda paper .

May I suggest two possible ways of restoring the moral capital of religions and of politicians : -

(1) by establishing a TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION Council, where abusers and abused could each be reconciled.

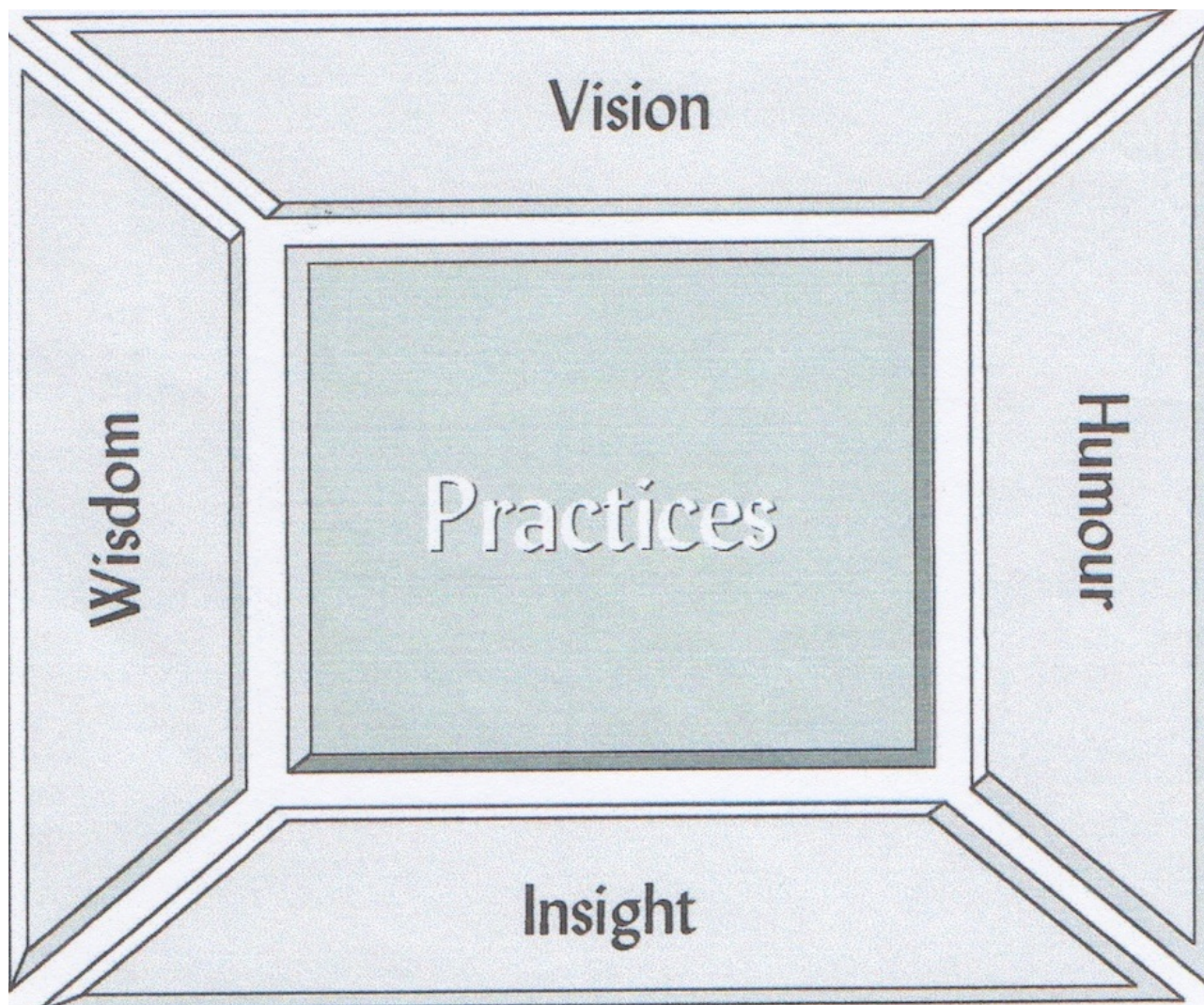
I do not for a moment see this as easy, particularly for the abused to forgive themselves, but unless we confront as a nation and as individuals the horrors uncovered, we will be unable to move on .

(2) by considering a form of Moral Compass, that could support this process .

My suggested Moral Compass is offered as a place to start the healing and reconciliation and is as follows :-

DEVELOPING A MORAL COMPASS

This compass has a different North, South, East and West - instead it has Vision, Humour, Insight and Wisdom :-



Each of these new reference points informs the practices at the centre of the compass ; they either let light into the centre or they plunge the centre into darkness.

At present, there are major impediments to allowing the adoption of such a Compass , the adoption of which by society at large, would allow any individual to believe in what they will.

What are these major impediments ?

- political games personship , focused on short term party centered goals, jockeying for power and influence , ego centric individuals pushing their own views of how the world should work
- religious powerhouses using their money and power to protect themselves from unwanted scrutiny
- subversion of checks and balances, to allow practices that would otherwise be challenged.

This has resulted in rejection of the established order, allowing those who scream loudest and can mobilize crowds to silence any one who dares to challenge them.

What would need to change if such a moral compass was to become a cultural norm ?

Let us look at each of the new reference points in turn : -

VISION

There needs to be a national discussion on the role of the established religious powerhouses in society .

Is there a sound public policy reason why they should continue to enjoy subsidies from the taxpayer, why they should be exempt , in practice, from many laws and regulations ?

If there was a respectful discussion on this, then the political will might just be found to enable this to be reflected at the legislation level .

This should be accompanied by another discussion on : -

Should the State accept that any human being automatically receives certain human rights upon birth and these rights cannot be arbitrarily revoked because it suits a political purpose at the time this is done. ?

The social, political and legislative environments would then provide a climate for people to decide for themselves whether to practice a system of belief and they should be free to move from one belief system to another without the loss of family, home or life.

HUMOUR

There are many forms of humour ; whatever form is chosen, it helps carry out the tasks in our lives, by becoming the balancing factor, causing us to laugh at our selves , to cheer us up, to encourage us . Laughter is known to have positive health effects on all of us, regardless of any beliefs we may have and people without any sense of humour, lack the beneficial balancing role that humour and laughter provide.

Humour is needed to keep us humble, sane and fun to be with .

Life without the ability to laugh, to point out absurdities, would mean the end of tolerance and reduce existence to a very mean level .

Finally , we have a conscience to act as a canary ; if our moral compass becomes warped our conscience will have been warning us of this.

Killing off our conscience is a sure way to warp and destroy our moral compass and send us off into the darkness of self - absorption.

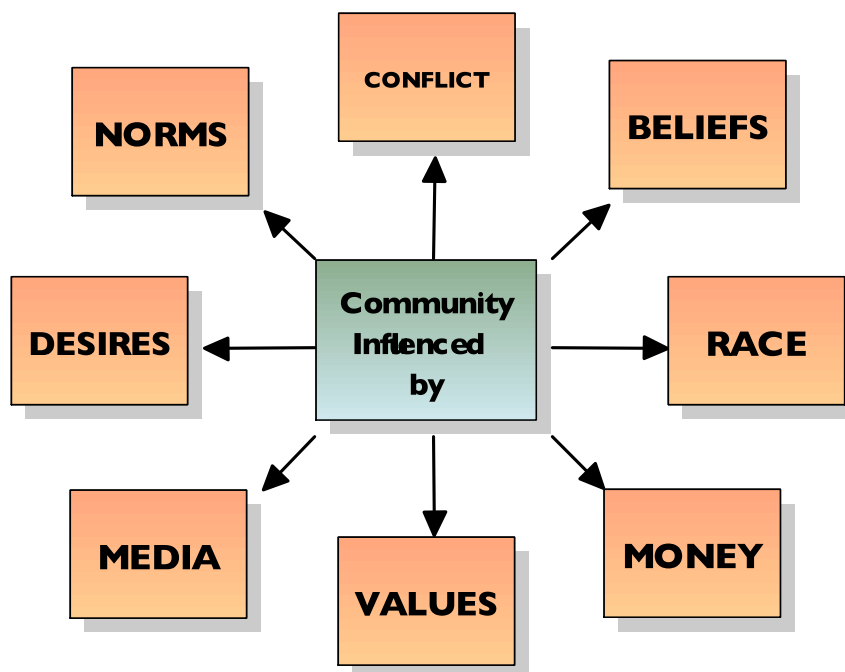
INSIGHT

This comes from an integrated community : -

What is a community ?

Is it a physical place , is it a shared approach or a common belief system, or something else entirely ?

Whatever form it takes, it brings people together, into a common space. The degree to which people are connected and committed to this common space, whether a physical or virtual space, will determine the strength and durability of the community . Competing influences are :-



Where there is voluntary membership AND where people who do not embrace the values of a particular community are respected and not forced to join , there will be less friction than within those communities where outsiders are shunned and repressed.

Common bonds are race, culture, customs, values and religious beliefs . Culture and customs can become barriers to adapting to new technologies and ways of living. The challenge is to embrace the new contexts without necessarily giving up the core values that have sustained the community in the past.

WISDOM

Wisdom resides in any community or group of people ; it gains value when principles such as these are acted upon : -

- relationship building requires visiting each other
- relationship building requires learning about the history of the other
- relationship building requires an appreciation of the other
- relationship requires telling the truth to each other
- relationship building requires living out and putting into practice our expressed values and beliefs
- relationship building requires a clear understanding of our enemies
- relationship building helps us to overcome fear of the other
- relationship building requires interfaith solidarity, standing with each other to support each other.

Change is dangerous but Civil society depends for its existence on the absence of manipulation, power plays, self -interest and corruption. Without change, mutual respect, trust and celebration of differences will diminish and then disappear altogether.

***** **END OF SUBMISSION** *****

