MELANESIAN JOURNAL
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Cover design by Br Jeff Daly CP, and John Kua

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EDITORIAL
SIGNS OF THE TIMES

From its biblical origins (Matt 16:3-4), the term "signs of the times" might seem to refer to the approaching end of the world. Some people would prefer that sense of the term. However, today the term "signs of the times" is often used to mean any authentic signs of God's purpose and presence in our age. The Second Vatican Council mentioned specifically the ecumenical movement, the recognition of freedom of religion, and the growing solidarity of all peoples as "signs of the times". Now, 30 years after the Council, we might well consider what are the signs of God's purpose in our age.

In His day, Jesus accused some of the religious leaders of failing to read the "signs of the times", especially the sign of God's love and judgment in relation to the kingdom of God. For us, too, the "signs of the times" help bring to mind the importance of being alert for new developments. How is God speaking through the Spirit in our day? In what way is God challenging us through the events of our contemporary history?

Papua New Guinea has been going through a time of crisis, politically, economically, and spiritually. Surely, God has not abandoned the people at this time. If that is so, then how can we interpret the events of history, in the light of the gospel?

God continues God's saving presence, through the Spirit working in the world, with its grief and anxiety, its joy and hope. So, we look, not so much for signs from heaven, or from the past, but, rather, for God's presence in the challenges of the here and now. The theology of the "signs of the times" can be of assistance here. On the one hand, the gospel must be shared in ways that respond to the problems people face, and the questions they are asking. On the other hand, people should come to a deeper realisation that life and love, peace and violence, justice and freedom, are faith issues. Faith commitment means witnessing to Christ in the ambiguities of daily life. The Word must shed light on the changing realities of today, so that we can be challenged to respond as Christian

communities. With the eyes of faith, we can find, in these worldly events, the signs of God's promises coming to fulfilment.

The papers published in this volume illustrate some attempts to reflect, in the light of faith, on the contemporary context in Papua New Guinea. Though many of the papers treat "secular" matters, the writers have attempted to relate these events to God's design for the world, and in so doing they point to a dimension that might otherwise be overlooked.

James Downey questions whether the Melanesian experience of the supernatural is being taken sufficiently into account in theological reflection today. Failure to integrate that worldview and Christian faith can easily lead to dualistic thinking, or a form of religious schizophrenia. He argues that proper attention to the Melanesian worldview, with its belief in spiritual powers, may lead to a creative encounter with the Christian message, and, perhaps, the rehabilitation of neglected aspects of Christian doctrine – as he shows with examples from Paul's letter to the Colossians.

Catherine Nongkas addresses the issue of the influence of the mass media on the spiritual lives of young people in PNG. The media offer great educational possibilities, yet they can also create obstacles to healthy spiritual development. So, it is important to have education programmes to help people develop critical skills for evaluating the values presented by the media. Nongkas maintains that progress will be made, only when there is a collective effort, with participation of government, churches, and communities throughout the nation.

In his paper, John Koran points out some Christian moral principles relevant to the situation in Bougainville. Plans for peace will come to nothing unless human dignity can be restored. Thus, Christians must look for structures that will promote human values, and basic human rights, for the people of Bougainville. Koran holds that the only true peace is God's gift of peace, which is based on love. The source of that love is to be found in the Word of God, and in listening to people of good will.

Bruno Junalien, writing before the "Sandline" affair, sees a widening gap between the "haves" and "have-nots" in Papua New Guinea. He is

concerned that this may develop into a class structure, which will block many people from equal access to the resources of the country. He says that one must get away from the formula: material expansion equals progress. Economic and social marginalisation are contrary to Christian principles, and so the church has a political responsibility to bring this issue before the public and the government of the nation.

Bill Kuglame tackles an issue that is very relevant to the present situation in PNG – elections. He is concerned with voter responsibility. Through elections, people freely choose and empower a person to represent them in the national parliament. But, unfortunately these days, the election resembles a "gold-rush", and the custom of the "hand-out" is perverting the electoral process. Kuglame holds that the state and church cannot function independently of each other. Thus, the church must speak the truth, and help educate people to recognise their dignity, as free and intelligent persons.

Finally, Philip Gibbs presents a report on a theological conference that was held in Aotearoa, New Zealand, to commemorate 50 years of the Faculty of Theology at Otago University, and also, sadly, to mark the department's dissolution. Delegates from Melanesia included Vasi Gadiki, Secretary of MATS, and Samuel and Judith Vusi of Vanuatu. It was not a conference of grand academic papers, but rather a forum for "conversation" about key theological issues in the Oceanic region. Delegates left convinced that there are rich sources for theology in Oceania. Thus, it is important for theologians to be in touch with the pulse of society beyond the churches.

<div align="right">Philip Gibbs SVD, Bomana.</div>

BAPTISM AND THE ELEMENTAL SPIRITS OF THE UNIVERSE

James Downey

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Introduction

The pages that follow will be concerned with a topic, which has already received considerable attention: the Melanesian belief in the spirit world. More particularly, we shall explore how this belief might be reflected in a corresponding theology of baptism.

Firstly (I), the problem will be stated in terms of the interior conflict facing the recent convert. An attempt will then be made (II) to understand the problem, in the light of two key anthropological categories. A theological response (III), in terms of a two-fold model, will then be proposed. Finally (IV), attention will be focused on an appropriate theology of baptism as a response to the problem.

I.   Schizophrenia of the Spirit

"It is impossible to use electric light and the wireless, and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of miracles."[1]

It is no longer unfashionable to have reservations about this statement. Melanesian Christians, among others, though citizens of the modern age, do not experience any such conflict. They find little difficulty in accepting the world of the New Testament. Indeed, it seems clear that one of the reasons for this is that their traditional experience of the supernatural in

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[1] Rudolph Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology*, Philadelphia PA: Fortress Press, 1952, p. 5.

their daily lives very much reflects what Bultmann dismisses as the New Testament world of miracles.

It is perhaps ironic that this vivid experience of the supernatural, which they share with the New Testament, may bring with it a problem of another kind. Speaking of African Christianity, Desmond Tutu has spoken of "a split in the African soul" resulting in "a form of religious schizophrenia".[2] He is referring to the fact that, not only has there been a failure to integrate their traditional worldview with Christianity, but there appears to be a conflict between the two. Hence, the split in the soul of the Christian, for whom the traditional worldview continues to remain central to his or her experience.

It would appear that a similar situation exists in Melanesia. One author describes it, perhaps less dramatically, in terms of a spiritual vacuum.[3] Alternatively, it has been described as a superficial adherence to Christianity, which fails to penetrate to the deeper levels, a compartmentalisation, or, indeed, a conflict situation within the newly-converted Christian.[4] The evidence for this personal dualism has, in recent times, been too widely documented to need recounting here.

If the symptoms of this religious schizophrenia are widely recognised, so, too, is one of its causes. In this regard, recent criticism has pointed the finger at earlier missionary strategy. While acknowledging the complexity of the issues involved, it is a criticism, which seems justified.

When confronted with an unfamiliar worldview, and with practices, which were too easily categorised as "primitive" or "superstitious", the missionary response was probably inevitable. In the opinion of one author (though her

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[2] Desmond Tutu, "Whither African Theology", in *Christianity in Independent Africa*, Edward Fasholè-Luke, et al, eds, London UK: Rex Collings, 1978, p. 366.
[3] Wendy Flannery, "Mediation of the Sacred", in Wendy Flannery, ed., *Religious Movements in Melanesia Today (3), Point* 4 (1984), p. 147.
[4] Darrell Whiteman, "Melanesian Religions: An Overview", in Ennio Mantovani, ed., *An Introduction to Melanesian Religions, Point* 6 (1984), p. 114; Gernot Fugmann, "Magic: A Pastoral Response", in Ennio Mantovani, ed., *An Introduction to Melanesian Religions, Point* 6 (1984), p. 213.

remarks are confined to witchcraft), the missionary reacted in one of two ways. One reaction was based on the assumption that the beliefs in question were unfounded, and, therefore, should be ignored. Alternatively, it was assumed that they were demonic, and, therefore, required deliverance.[5]

In either event, there was no effort at theological engagement with the beliefs in question. Indeed, any such engagement would have been thought to be a contradiction in terms. Conversion meant the substitution of the Christian way for the traditional.

In practice, of course, it was not, nor could it have been, quite so simple. The new Christian was certainly an authentic believer. But the traditional mentality did not simply disappear. This was particularly evident at times of crisis, when it very definitely resurfaced. Officially, this was not supposed to happen. Indeed, the new Christian, himself, or part of him, shared the official view. This was a recipe for the religious schizophrenia, already referred to.

II.   Conflicting Worldviews

The crisis, it has been suggested, is the result of conflicting worldviews. Since this is not always recognised – indeed, failure to recognise it is part of the problem – a closer examination of the matter seems indicated. We shall, therefore, following the categories developed by Mantovani, distinguish between two worldviews, the theistic and the biocosmic. It is to be hoped that the distinction will serve as a useful hermeneutical tool for further theological reflection.

One might say that the theistic, symbolic system is vertical. That is to say, the transcendent God is visualised, in relationship with the individual items of creation, including the human individual. "That reality, who is called God, gives the rules of behaviour and punishes transgressions. God enters

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[5] J. B. Kailing, "A New Solution to the African Christian Problem", in *Missiology* 22 (1994), p. 496; cf. Fugmann, "Magic", p. 214.

into every aspect of life. He is very near though He is in heaven, i.e., He is totally different from the creature."[6]

By contrast, the biocosmic, symbolic system is horizontal, in the sense that the individual is part of "life", which permeates everything. Reality is viewed in a more-holistic manner.[7] It is, consequently, less fragmented, and compartmentalised, with no clear boundaries, for example, between the physical and the spiritual.[8] Life is experienced, less as personal, but with more of a communal dimension, which ensures a sense of unity, not only with others, but also with ancestors, and the land itself.[9]

It is, therefore, clearly important that the two systems not be confused, for example, by interpreting one system in terms of another.[10] And yet, the cultural-evolution school of anthropology routinely dismissed alternative worldviews as "primitive", or "aboriginal", precisely because they had canonised one worldview, which then became the standard. There is considerable irony in the fact that many missionaries, ideologically opposed to evolution, readily embraced, and put into practice, the philosophy of the cultural-evolution school.[11]

In this climate of cultural imperialism, it is easy to see how the reality of the spiritual and psychic world was dismissed,[12] how, in Freud's view, "spirits and demons were nothing but the projection of primitive man's emotional impulses", and how witchcraft was reduced to "a trait of primitive people, which will disappear with Westernisation".[13]

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[6] Ennio Mantovani, "What is Religion", in Ennio Mantovani, ed., *An Introduction to Melanesian Religions, Point* 6 (1984), p. 32.

[7] Gernot Fugmann, "Salvation in Melanesian Religions", in Ennio Mantovani, ed., *An Introduction to Melanesian Religions, Point* 6 (1984), p. 282.

[8] Whiteman, "Melanesian Religions: An Overview", p. 88.

[9] Mantovani, "What is Religion", p. 33; Fugmann, "Salvation", pp. 283f.

[10] Ennio Mantovani, "Ritual in Melanesia", in Ennio Mantovani, ed., *An Introduction to Melanesian Religions, Point* 6 (1984), pp. 169-194.

[11] W. R. Shenk, "The Role of Theory in Mission Studies", in *Missiology* 24 (1966), p. 38.

[12] H. Hill, "Witchcraft and the Gospel: Insights from Africa", in *Missiology* 24 (1996), pp. 323-344.

[13] Ibid., p. 328, which is also the source of the Freud quotation.

It is true that the climate may have changed for the better. If contemporary academic literature is anything to go by, it is a view, which has been discredited. But there remains the inherent danger, when faced with an unfamiliar reality, to interpret it in terms of one's own worldview. For instance, the pig festival, when interpreted in terms of the theistic, symbolic system, is seen "in terms of sacrifices to ancestors, and so, in terms of idolatry".[14] When interpreted in terms of the biocosmic, symbolic system, however, it emerges in a very different light. "From a theological point of view, the pig festival can be understood as a statement of faith that the whole cosmos utterly depends on something, which is not of the cosmos, but, without which, the cosmos cannot exist. That something, I call 'life', a life that is not only biological, but spiritual as well."[15]

To say that the two symbolic ways are different, does not mean, however, that they are contradictory. They are simply two ways, with different emphases, and different perspectives. For instance, by contrast with the theistic worldview, God may appear to have receded into the background in the biocosmic, symbolic system. In fact, however, it is rather a question of a different perspective.

Of the many areas, where this difference in perspective needs to be taken into account, one might mention that of salvation. Clearly, according to the theistic worldview, salvation is tied up with the relationship between the Transcendent and the individual, and, in particular, with the matter of sin. The biocosmic worldview sees the matter in very different categories. "The salvific experience of any individual is intrinsically interwoven with that of the cosmic community, to which he or she belongs. Such a cosmic community embraces the living and the dead, all things visible and invisible, beings, deities, and various powers in the cosmos. This cosmic community understands the experience of life as being interrelated to such an extent that it affects the whole tribal cosmic world. So, actions of one member have a bearing on the others."[16]

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[14] Mantovani, "Ritual", p. 162.
[15] Ibid., pp. 161f.
[16] Fugmann, "Salvation", pp. 282f.

In particular, the biocosmic concept of salvation is tied up with the spirit world, and with people's relationship to it. It seems clear that, in the spirits, lies the key towards establishing a correct cosmic relationship. There are various hazards in the way of maintaining the right relationship, in that the spirits can be, sometimes unwittingly, offended.[17] In the face of such hazards, the symbolic ritual system, so typical of the biocosmic worldview, has emerged.

A theology of salvation, defined in terms of the more theoretic concept of sin, reflects a particular worldview, and, as such, is a valid theology. But it is not thereby universally valid. Indeed, its exclusive focus on sin, possibly in overly intellectual terms,[18] means that it has not yet learned to dialogue successfully with the biocosmic worldview.

III.   A Model for Interaction

The distinction between the theistic and biocosmic worldviews serves as a useful scientific tool to highlight the missionary problem. In particular, it suggests the occupational hazard of a form of cultural imperialism, even in evangelisation, which, in turn, can result in a schizophrenia of the spirit, on the part of the potential Christian convert.

From a missionary point of view, therefore, it is not a question of supplanting traditional culture with the Christian religion. For one thing, this would reflect a failure to appreciate the inherent God-given value of all cultures. For another, it fails to recognise the extent to which the "Christian message" is itself enculturated. And, from a practical point of view, it simply does not work. It may be that both the missionary and the converted thought there had been a successful transplant. But it is becoming increasingly clear that the traditional way of thinking has merely been driven underground. This is not a salutary process. What should have been a health-giving exercise has ended in a festering of the wound, resulting in the religious schizophrenia of which Tutu speaks. The missionary enterprise has, therefore, defeated its own purpose.

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[17] Mary MacDonald, "Symbolism and Myth", in Ennio Mantovani, ed., *An Introduction to Melanesian Religions, Point* 6 (1984), pp. 123-146; Fugmann, "Salvation", p. 285.
[18] See Whiteman, "Melanesian Religions: An Overview", pp. 96f.

If the cultural evolution model of mission is, by its nature, doomed to failure, there arises the obligation of finding a more-adequate approach. Specifically, it becomes imperative to explain how the two worldviews might interact in an evangelical context. Obviously, one is not here concerned with laying down the ground rules. It is rather a question of finding a model of interaction, which respects both worldviews. Two such models will be considered.

1.　The Incarnation Model

The Christological image of the incarnation might serve as a useful model. It serves to convey the profound relationship, which should exist between two worldviews, by suggesting the incarnation of Christianity in the local culture. By definition, incarnation can only take place in terms of the symbolic system of the receiver. Thus, a positive affirmation of the local culture is not just a matter of good manners, but is essential to the missionary strategy.

This is perhaps easier said than done. Cultural imperialism can be difficult to resist. History is replete with examples of accusations of magic, which turn out to be nothing more than name-calling on the part of the accuser. This is equally true of the time of Jesus[19] as it is of our own day.[20] It is tempting to dismiss unfamiliar practices, whether it be the cult of the dead in medieval Christianity, or ancestor veneration in Africa or Melanesia, as the resort to sorcery or superstition. Conversely, it is equally tempting to canonise a particular cultural expression of the faith. For example, it is easy to assume that the Hellenistic or Thomistic expression of Christianity is "traditional", in the sense of being of the essence of the faith.

Both temptations will have to be resisted, if the message is to be incarnated. Each practice must be seen in its wider context. For example, witchcraft, admittedly a complex phenomenon, is also a phenomenon with a positive social dimension. It reflects a recognition of the spiritual and the

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[19] J. M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition*, London UK: SCM Press, 1974, pp. 1-4.

[20] Ennio Mantovani, "Comparative Analysis of Cultures and Religions", in Ennio Mantovani, ed., *An Introduction to Melanesian Religions, Point* 6 (1984), p. 78.

supernatural, which has been lost in many Western cultures. It respects the reality of the unconscious, in a way not always appreciated, perhaps, even by the church?[21] In a word, it represents a more-holistic approach, from which much can be learned.

One could go on. But even these few random examples illustrate what a fertile ground there may be for the incarnation of the Christian message. It shows how self-defeating it would be for the missionary church to ignore this fact. Indeed, it shows further, that the encounter should be an enriching one for the donor church.

Though the point may appear self-evident, and it is given wide recognition at the academic level, it would seem to be a point that still needs to be made. For instance, one finds the following, apparently absolute, statements in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC): "All forms of divination are to be rejected" (2116), "All practices of magic or sorcery, by which one attempts to tame occult powers, so as to place them at one's service, and have a supernatural power over others – even if this were for the sake of restoring their health – are gravely contrary to the virtue of religion" (2117). It is true that, by its nature, a catechism has its limitations. It is also true that, even within these limitations, CCC does achieve a certain level of perspicacity.[22] For all that, one would have hoped for a more-graduated treatment of the issues involved. It would be regrettable if such statements were seen, as they well could be, as a rejection of a particular worldview.

Unless the imperialist temptation is resisted, a form of docetism is the result. There is only the appearance of an incarnation, but there is no meaningful immersion into the local culture. There may, of course, be indications to the contrary, in the form of different expressions of the receiving culture. These are merely cosmetic. They convey the impression that a true incarnation has occurred, when, in fact, the change has been merely superficial. In a word, this is a form of docetism.

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[21] Hill, "Witchcraft and the Gospel", p. 334.
[22] For instance, art 2117 deals more subtly with "Spiritism", and "so-called traditional cures".

2.   The Paschal Mystery Model

It would, of course, be naive to conclude that a positive affirmation of a particular worldview is equivalent to an acceptance of everything therein. There are sufficient documented examples of syncretism[23] to suggest that this represents a danger.

It goes without saying that no culture or worldview is without its defects, which need transformation. The incarnation of the Word was not an end in itself. Rather, it found its culmination in the paschal mystery, whereby the person, incarnated in a particular time and culture, was transformed at the resurrection.

The Christian engagement with the local culture, therefore, must be a creative embrace. This is not the same as an unqualified acceptance. There is a sense, in which something new emerges from the encounter. This new element, while being consistent with biblical and Christian tradition, need not necessarily have been articulated there. Its emergence results from, and requires a creative encounter with, another culture.

In this, there is both a caution and a challenge. On the one hand, there is a danger of simply reacting against the alleged imperialism of earlier missionary practice. This can be reflected in a romantic view of traditional culture, and an idealisation of its qualities. It may take the form of cataloguing the parallels between biblical and Melanesian cultures.

Obviously, such comparisons are not only useful, but essential to the theological process. But, similarity between two cultures is no guarantee that there will be an encounter. On the contrary, it may lead to a sense of complacency, which does justice to neither. But no culture is static, much less perfect. The accusation that there is an element of this romanticism in some recent literature is probably not entirely without foundation.

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[23] See Mantovani, "Celebrations", p. 164, n. 2, for a careful definition of "syncretism", a word, which should be used with care.

A romantic idealisation of the local culture is the mirror image of the old cultural imperialism. It is to focus exclusively on the incarnation, and to forget the transformation of the paschal mystery. Herein lies the challenge.

Needless to say, it is only the concrete situation, which will determine how the challenge should be met. But, it is possible, at least by way of illustration, to take an example.

IV. A Case Study

The backdrop for the present discussion has been the Melanesian belief in the world of the supernatural. Because of the emotive terminology, which is necessarily used to describe the various manifestations of that belief (witchcraft, sorcery, etc.), it is difficult to discuss it dispassionately. But, it can, at least, be said that the simple solutions are not solutions. It is as futile to reject such beliefs as "superstitious" as it is to accept them *tout court*. The issue is, how to harness these beliefs in the service of an authentic Christianity.

The sacrament of baptism may serve as an example. This may, at first sight, appear surprising, for it is by no means clear, from current thinking on baptism, how it is relevant to the matter of belief in a spirit world. For example, CCC, which, no doubt, reflects common teaching on baptism, gives the traditional list of the effects of baptism (1262-1274), namely, the forgiveness of sins, "a new creature" (member of Christ, and temple of the Spirit), incorporation into the church, sacramental bond of unity of Christians, and finally an "indelible spiritual mark".

In this context, the Melanesian concept of sin is of some interest. It has been said that the primary concern of the Melanesian is, not the reality of sin, and the threat of its ultimate consequences, but the potential threat from the world of the spirits.[24] It is obvious that, in such a society, a theology of baptism, which highlights its redemptive role, by the conquest of sin, and neglects its cosmic role, runs the risk of being irrelevant.

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[24] Flannery, "Mediation of the Sacred", p.147; Ennio Mantovani, "Celebrations of Cosmic Renewal", in Ennio Mantovani, ed., *An Introduction to Melanesian Religions, Point* 6 (1984), p. 151; Fugmann, "Salvation", pp. 281-282, 289.

Indeed, it can be counterproductive. For when the sacramental ritual is considered to be irrelevant to the person's innermost concerns, there is the risk of the spiritual schizophrenia alluded to at the outset.

It is only fair to acknowledge that CCC 1237 does refer to this part of the baptismal liturgy, noting that "Baptism signifies liberation from sin, and from its instigator the devil". But, it needs to be pointed out that the catechism makes the point, as part of its description of the baptismal rite, but not when it deals with the effects of the sacrament. Secondly, and more importantly, one notes that the baptismal exorcisms and liberation from the devil are mentioned, exclusively, in the context of sin: since the devil is the "instigator" of sin, liberation from sin means liberation from the evil power.

Now, it may well be that the sacrament of baptism does not lend itself to addressing the Melanesian need of liberation from the perceived threat from the spirit world. It would appear, however, that, not only does baptism so lend itself: but this aspect of baptism is, in fact, to be found in Christian tradition.

In other words, the CCC summary of the effects of baptism is not a complete traditional list. For it seems clear that, from earliest times, baptism was also seen as a participation in Christ's victory over the spirits and powers.

Though the relevant theological literature does not do it justice, there is considerable evidence for this dimension of baptism. It is reflected in the baptismal liturgy, not only in the renunciation of Satan, but also in the exorcism(s), which were part of the ritual. Furthermore, there is a solid New Testament basis for this particular emphasis. Some of the evidence has been examined elsewhere.[25] For our present purposes, however, it may be more pertinent to confine ourselves to a single example, namely the letter to the Colossians.

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[25] J. Downey and E. Perdu, "Witchcraft, Baptism, and the Role of Theology", in S. O. Abogunrin, G. L. Lasebikan, and C. O. Oshun, eds, *Christian Presence and West African Response Through the Years*, Ibadan: WAATI, 1984, pp. 130-152; J. Downey, "1 Cor 15:29 and the Theology of Baptism", in *Euntes Docete* 38 (1985), pp. 23-35.

There is wide agreement among NT scholars that the letter to the Colossians was written to address a problem in the local church, which is generally identified as the Colossian error.

The error in question is concerned with what are variously called the elemental spirits of the universe (2:20), angels (2:18), rulers and authorities (2:10, 15). It is not easy to determine the precise nature of these beings. But, it is clear that they occupied a position somewhere between God and humanity. They are "in-between powers".[26] They were thought of as containing, in some way, the fullness of the Godhead (cf. 1:19; 2:9), and had part in creation (cf. 1:15-17). They exercised some authority over the earth, and human destiny was in their hands.

The result was that human beings had to establish the correct relationship with them, which the Colossians thought to achieve by the "worship of angels" (2:18), the observance of festivals, new moons, and sabbaths (2:16), and certain forms of asceticism, in the matter of food, and drink, and, possibly, celibacy (2:16, 21). For the rest, one can only speculate, but it is probable that they hoped to gain a form of esoteric knowledge, by which the initiate could control the elemental spirits.

It needs to be noted that the error, which the author wishes to correct, did not involve a denial of Christ, or of the Christian faith. Rather, it was some form of syncretism, in which belief in Christ was combined with belief in, and worship of, the powers.

How the Colossians rationalised this position is another question, which is of only relative importance, and need not concern us. More importantly, are the reasons, which made such a rationalisation necessary. One answer, which is consistent with the evidence of the text, is summed up by Lohse: "For the forgiveness of sins, conferred in baptism, did not seem to provide adequate security against the cosmic principalities and powers of fate."[27]

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[26] D. Greenlee, "Territorial Spirits Reconsidered", in *Missiology* 22 (1994), p. 510.
[27] F. Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, Philadelphia PA: Fortress Press, 1971, p. 130.

If this is the case, the syncretism, which was the Colossian error, consisted not in their relying on baptism for the forgiveness of sin, but in having resort to "the worship of angels" (2:18) to maintain a right relationship with the elemental powers.

The letter to the Colossians represents a response to this syncretism. This response is of interest, not only because of what it says, but also because of what it does not say. Nowhere in the letter does the author deny the existence of the powers, in which the Colossians placed so much store. On the contrary, the reality of these powers seems to be taken for granted by the author, throughout his response. To this extent, one could conclude that he shared the beliefs of his flock.

What he did not share, however, was the means used by the Colossians to cope with the threat from the powers. The burden of the author's message is that Christ has been victorious over these powers. He visualises Christ as having subjugated them, and as having celebrated His victory with a triumphal procession, in which He leads them captive behind him (2:15). This, however, is not a purely personal victory. It is one, in which the Christian participates. He is, thereby, freed from the oppressive influence, which the powers had hitherto exercised over him. Consequently, those other means, which the Colossian Christian had used to ensure his liberation, become a superfluous anomaly (2:15-19).

More specifically, this participation in Christ's victory comes about through baptism. While there are numerous baptismal allusions in Col 1, this point is most explicitly made in 2:12-15. Baptism is typically defined as a new life in Christ, and the forgiveness of sin (2:12-13). This is brought about, first of all, by the cancellation of the bond, which "stood against us" (2:14), and, secondly, by the subjugation of the powers (2:15). The point is summed up with what looks like a baptismal formula: "with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the universe" (2:20).

It is revealing to compare 2:12-15 with another Pauline baptismal text, Rom 6:2-10. Both Romans and Colossians make the same basic point: the Christian shares in Christ's victory through baptism. But there is also a difference: it is only Colossians, which mentions victory over the powers in

this context. The explanation is self-evident: the question of the powers was a Colossian, but not a Roman, problem. What is of interest, however, is that the Colossian problem has become the catalyst, which was instrumental in adding a new dimension to the Pauline theology of baptism.

This development of doctrine takes place, because the author, as has been already noted, accepts, and possibly shares, the Colossian belief in the "in-between spirits". To have recourse to the more-technical terminology employed earlier, the author accepts the worldview of the Colossians, but brings it face to face with the Christian message. The encounter has been a creative one, in that, from the incarnation of the message, a theology of baptism emerges, which, though consistent with the traditional theology, has now a new dimension.

It is of considerable interest that not all commentators agree that Paul accepted the worldview of the Colossians. One author, ironically writing on a missiological rather than a biblical topic, considers that the "in-between spirits" "are not recognised ontologically".[28] This looks very much like special pleading. For one thing, the text does not lend itself to this conclusion. Furthermore, it appears as if the author is reading his own thinking (i.e., worldview) into the author of Colossians, who conveniently believes in Satan and demons, but not in territorial spirits. The author of Colossians begins to look suspiciously like a 20th-century Western conservative Christian. This is tantamount – to return to the more technical terminology – to the substitution of one worldview for another. One can be grateful that the author of Colossians was more creative.

Conclusion

Colossians has been dealt with at some length. This is partly because it represents part of the New Testament basis for a dimension of baptism, which is relevant to the present discussion. But it also serves as an example of how, from the earliest times, Christian tradition has adapted itself, in a creative way, to a new cultural context.

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[28] Greenlee, "Territorial Spirits Reconsidered", p. 510.

The point, in any case, is that one element of the baptismal ritual and theology, namely the biocosmic dimension, has, over the centuries, fallen from service. There is nothing unusual or reprehensible about this. In a society, such as that described by Bultmann, whose worldview finds no place for the existence of spiritual beings, either of good or evil, such a development is perfectly natural. Indeed, it reflects a positive encounter between that particular worldview and Christian belief.

By the same token, however, other cultures will need a different emphasis. A culture, for whom the existence, and power for good or ill, of spirit beings is a vivid reality, seeks reassurance, in the face of these realities. Traditionally, such reassurance was found in ways, which were often too easily discussed as "superstitious". The validity of the search needs to be recognised, in a creative meeting with the Christian faith. This may result in a new development, though, in the present instance, there is a solution to hand, which involves the rehabilitation of a traditional Christian doctrine.

But, whether it is the rehabilitation of traditional teaching, or the development of new insights, the crucial point is that a particular need is being addressed.

This suggestion may, or may not, be correct. It is merely meant to serve as a paradigm for what should emerge from the creative encounter of a particular culture with the Christian message. As with any encounter, the results will be less than clinical, the edges will be frayed. It may be that some of the missionaries were correct in detecting "heterodox" practices. But they were wrong to take the clinical solution. Any attempt at contextualisation should be reconciled to a process of trial and error, with some wrong turnings on the way. What is important is that the process has begun, and remains a living reality.

It should come as no surprise that the challenge may be painful. That is the occupational hazard of any form of growth. But, then, the paschal mystery was also a journey in pain. What is important is that the pain should not be a pretext for inactivity, or for the simple solutions, either of cultural imperialism, or romanticism.

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THE IMPACT OF THE MASS MEDIA ON THE SPIRITUALITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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Introduction

As we reflect on the theme "signs of the times", there are, perhaps, a lot of things that come to mind. One of the most obvious signs of our times is media technology. My own reflections in this paper will focus specifically on the impact of the mass media on the spirituality of young people in Papua New Guinea. Throughout this paper, I will highlight both positive and negative influences of the mass media on youth, and conclude with some proposals on how education – religious education, and other related disciplines – can help address the problems we are facing in our society. Furthermore, it is my firm conviction that this must be a collective effort, and a responsibility of the government, the churches, and the communities throughout the nation, to build a better, healthier, and more-peaceful society.

The mass media, especially film and television, enable rapid communication for people throughout Papua New Guinea. The media offer great possibilities for expanding knowledge, understanding, ideas, and information, for the development of society, as well as for entertainment. But, while they can help spiritual development, especially through up-to-date information, they can create problems for the spirituality of young people. This is the issue being explored here.

The Impact of the Communication Media on Young People

Mass communication media in Papua New Guinea are a concern for leaders, as well as educators, because of the influence they have on individuals and society as a whole. The media can be a powerful instrument in bringing ideas, experiences, and even cultures, into people's lives, with which they may, otherwise, not have contact. The mass media can, therefore, be an influential agent of change, especially on youth.

One example of this change is the way the media inform young people of the changing fashions in Western cultures. For example, the media bring to young people of Papua New Guinea the latest fashions in clothes, shoes, caps, music, hair styles, and the type of language that is circulating among the youth in countries, such as, the United States of America and Australia. Young people are informed about the latest developments in youth culture around the world. Like all agents of change, the mass media have both positive and negative influences.

Positive Influences

Through the media, Papua New Guinea has become part of the global village. Some of the positive values presented by the media are:

- General education;
- Agriculture;
- Health education;
- Entertainment;
- Developing political awareness; and
- Raising public awareness of social issues.

Some of the positive effects of media programmes in Papua New Guinea are the avenues they open. They make available for Papua New Guineans a whole new world, with which they have no direct contact. The media have expanded their knowledge of other countries, and other parts of their own country. Through the media, new information and ideas are received, and are available about people and events globally. The other prominent role

for the media, especially television, is entertainment. As in Western countries, television provides relatively unlimited home entertainment.

The media play a role in the establishment and maintenance of national unity in Papua New Guinea. Through the media, different tribes/clans, who were once enemies have better knowledge and understanding of each other. Gemo considers that the greatest weapon against prejudice and distrust is information.[1] He believes that the media are needed for a democratic system of government. In addition, the ordinary people need to be informed about what is happening in the government, so that there is more opportunity for shared decision-making, and criticism of government policies, to ensure a better government for the nation. The problem is that ordinary people do not always have access to the media. When they do, they are probably not informed enough to be interested because of the biases that come through the different programmes.

Negative Influences

Some of the negative influences of the mass media in Papua New Guinea appear to be:

- Instead of promoting the flow of communication throughout the nation, the mass media actually limit it. The media are predominantly in English. Therefore, a relatively small percentage of the population is reached. Also, the print media cannot be used by the illiterate in the community. Electronic media – radio, television, audio, and video cassettes – are dependent on a supply of electricity, and the use of costly equipment. Broadcast media are limited in range, and television is virtually restricted to main towns and cities.

- The mass media is a one-way means of communication. Opportunities are there to get messages broadcast on radio or television, or to write letters to the editors of newspapers, but this becomes costly for ordinary, rural people. It is not likely

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[1] O. Gemo, "The Impact of Communication Media", in *Catalyst* 21-2 (1991), p. 191.

that many people could use this channel of feedback effectively.

● There is difficulty in gathering information from around the country. Perhaps some of the contributing factors to this are: the distances, the remoteness of certain areas of the country, lack of money and education. As a result, certain areas are better represented in the media, while, for others, the mass media seems almost non-existent.

● Influential people, such as, politicians are heard and read about frequently in the media, while the ordinary people tend to listen. As yet, they do not seem to have much opportunity to be heard beyond their own immediate family and local community contexts.

● The impact of Western values by the media brings about a different set of values, which society cannot authenticate.

● Another negative effect of mass media is their contribution to the widening of gaps between people in the country – the rich and poor, educated and uneducated, urban and rural, young and old. Those who have access to the media are better off than those without it. This can aggravate social divisions in the country, and become a cause of friction.

The Media and the Transmission or Values

Most of the media entertainment available in Papua New Guinea is foreign, both in origin and content. Generally, a foreign culture is presented uncritically, with all its assumptions and values. This may be presented in a powerful film or programme on the television. Messages picked up subconsciously from such programmes could vary, according to the population who watch the programme.

For example, programmes such as *Home and Away*, *The Bold and the Beautiful*, *The Young and the Restless*, *Days of our Lives*, and *Melrose Place* could have different effects on the old and the young. From such

programmes, images of life and moral messages can be absorbed in an uncritical way. For example, messages like: it is acceptable to be dishonest, if it gets you what you want; one of the best ways to succeed in life is to be violent; the most important thing in life is to enjoy yourself; sex before marriage is normal; faithfulness to a marriage partner does not really matter; people who are different are stupid. Many of the messages are alien to the traditional values of Melanesian culture, and of Christianity. Moreover, in a time of rapid change, when there is uncertainty and ambiguity about values and beliefs, and about moral authority in the church and community, then people are more prone to absorbing presumed values in television entertainment in a relatively uncritical way. Because viewers can be easily enthralled with a good story, they are relatively incapable of standing back and developing a critical analysis of the meanings and values embedded in the stories. Therefore, the more people become passive viewers of television programmes, the quicker and easier foreign values and assumptions can become assimilated. As the underlying values change so do the culture, and people's behaviour. It seems that traditional Melanesian values, like responsibility and the traditional moral code, are being quickly eroded. They are being replaced by values from television's view of the world.

The media, especially television, could also help create a growing moral insensitivity in people, through continuous exposure to scenes of brutality or immorality – especially when this comes across as integral parts of stories presented as entertainment. It could help make people more indifferent to the suffering and needs of others.

The Media and the Creation of Wants
The functioning of the mass media is dependent on the advertising industry. Advertising can serve a useful purpose in the following ways:

- providing information about products on the market;
- letting people know about products that may be useful;

- giving people a choice between different products; and

- helping promote businesses.

However, advertising also creates problems, by creating wants in people. Advertisers do this by playing on people's basic needs, such as the need for love, security, happiness, etc. By suggesting ways, in which these needs can be satisfied, advertising creates a desire for things that are not needed. For example, drinking alcohol is proposed as a way of temporarily forgetting worries and problems; a flashy car can be a way to gain prestige; money is proposed as a key to freedom; down to the more mundane, that "coke" is needed to enjoy life.

Advertising can deliberately set out to manipulate people, and create new wants in them. So, when these new wants undermine good values, and Christian principles, they can be damaging to people, and their traditional culture.

In an extreme form, the creation of new wants by the media, through advertising, can be socially devastating. It can help create a big gap between expectations and reality. For example, people may become prepared to kill in order to get what they want; this is now not just an isolated occurrence in PNG. Similarly, uncritical consumption of consumerist values from the media can contribute to growing greed and corruption; people can be motivated to take drastic steps to acquire what goods they think they need to enjoy life. In one sense, consumer-oriented advertising is a form of materialist propaganda that needs to be called into question.

In turn, if the above mechanisms for media influence are actually occurring, then it appears that advertising in the mass media could be a contributing factor to the increasing crime-rate in the towns and cities. Traditionally, there were no "haves" and "have-nots" in society. Everyone was cared for, and had what they needed. There was not so much competition between people, and most people were on the same social and material plane; their goods and property needs were simple and realistic, and, in the main, these needs were satisfied. However, media advertising is probably influential,

because it is powerful and attractive in its presentation. It tends to target feelings and basic instincts, to get a response.

Changing Social Behaviour as a Result of Media Influence

Studies in the Pacific[2] have shown marked changes in the way of life, and interaction, between people after the introduction of television or videos. Similar changes have been noted in other cultures. Before the introduction of television, people spent much of their leisure time in talking, telling stories, visiting friends, singing, dancing, and doing craft-work. People had and made time for each other. After the introduction of television, many of these activities have been drastically reduced. Since Melanesian culture arises out of people's interaction with each other, then the culture is likely to change, if the interaction is severely reduced or changed. Some of the things, which are prized in Melanesian culture, are on the verge of extinction. The oral traditions of the culture may no longer be passed on, as story-telling is being replaced by TV-watching.

Education and the Impact of the Media

Media education needs to help students become familiar with the function of the media in society, and to develop critical skills in analysing and evaluating the influence of the media on the community.

Providing information about the media can be the best weapon to equip young people, and old, for that matter, for combating problems that arise from the influence of mass media – particularly the erosion of traditional culture. The giving of critical information need not necessarily be limited to schools. Other organisations, like the churches, the government, and social welfare groups, can also assist in the task of informing and educating people about the advantages and disadvantages of the media, and of how to appraise its often subconscious influence. It is important that, in education, both the positive and negative aspects are treated objectively.

Schools should provide media education for their youth, through the curriculum. Media questions should not be restricted just to the religious education curriculum, but they could also be built into other subject areas,

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[2] Gemo, "The Impact of Communication Media", pp. 191-198.

such as science, social science, personal development and guidance. Media education should help provide youth with knowledge and skills, to be critical viewers of what is presented in the media. Part of this education includes the knowledge of how the media function. This may mean, in practical terms, visiting the radio station, printing press, or television station, near the school. It may mean even seeing, or being part of, the production and distribution of movies and videos. To be a critical and active viewer and reader of the media, means that a person calls into question what is presented. Examples of such questions would be: what message is this particular programme giving? Who is this programme targeting? What do I think about it? Is this in line with my set of values regarding life? Etc.

Analysis and Evaluation of the Values Promoted in the Media: Development of Critical Skills[3]

The development of critical skills includes:

- analysing content;

- distinguishing fact from fiction;

- becoming aware of the values, both promoted, or implied, by particular programmes, presentations, and advertisements, noting the play on emotions; and

- raising critical consciousness of the content of song lyrics, creation of atmosphere, and the images and models of success and happiness that are proposed or implied.

Consideration must be given to the positive values and problems created where types of music ("rock" and "folk") tend to create a distinct youth sub-culture. For example, global awareness of human need, through "Band Aid"; potential for the exploitation of youth.

The development of such critical skills will hopefully assist in evaluating the influence of the media on the people and the community. There needs

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[3] Cf. Unda Oceania, *Mass Media Education for Youth in the South Pacific*, Suva Fiji: Unda Oceania, 1983.

to be a collective responsibility in monitoring the quality of media programmes. It is not the sole role of a censorship board, but the community and the individual also share in that role in monitoring the influence of the media. This shared responsibility would be possible through good media education.

Teachers need a practical awareness of the influences that surround the world of youth. They need to be a step ahead of their students, if they are to be of help to them. As regards the media, one task is to watch the television shows that young people watch, listen to their music, and be in touch with their world. The school needs to give special attention to the challenges that young people are facing, and help them, assisting them to become critical media viewers and listeners. The school is incapable of solving all their problems. However, the school should be able to guide them, so that they learn something about how to deal with the problems they face, now, and later on, in life, by applying the principles and practices that are hopefully demonstrated in religious education, and other related disciplines.

Conclusion

In summary, the impact of the media has the potential to benefit people, and, at the same time, poses dangers, in terms of widening gaps between people, loss of important values, and destruction of culture. To combat the negative effects of the media, the most important weapon is education – media-awareness education. This means learning about what the media do, and how they develop their presentations; and learning to be critical of the media, while, at the same time, being aware of their own values.

Making people aware, and giving them the tools to critically assess the dangers of the media, and helping them to make the most of what is good in the media, is a long-term project. The churches can help in this by initiating media-education programmes. Initially, this can be done through normal pastoral work, and the teaching and preaching of the churches. It can also be done through articles and items submitted to the media.

In the longer term, the churches can pressure the government and the education authorities to introduce media awareness education in the school

curricula. When working with youth, the churches can include media education in their programmes. Dangers cannot be removed. The dangers are more pervasive than censorship can deal with. What could be done is to try to equip people, through education, to deal intelligently with the media.

The proposal here is that people be helped, through religious education and other related disciplines or subjects, to become critical viewers of the media. They need to be aware of the positive and negative effects of the media, so that they can be critical of what they listen to and watch. Being critical of the values the media present means awareness of one's own personal values, acceptance of what is good from foreign cultures, and holding on to what is good from the local culture. This is not an easy task, in a time of rapid change.

The people of Papua New Guinea, especially youth, need to be more critical of the media, and what the media present. Young people need to challenge the systems responsible for media programs, so the government, and the community, can become more aware of their needs.

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GOD'S GIFT OF PEACE TO BOUGAINVILLE

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Introduction

The vocation of Christians is to seek God's guidance in all the seasons of their lives. Whether one is at peace, or in a state of crisis, that relationship with God continues. In His farewell discourse to the disciples in John 13-18, Jesus shares the gift of peace with them: "Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace which the world cannot give, this is my gift to you" (John 14:27).

If Christians have to look for a solution to the current crisis in Bougainville, they need to listen to the voice of God speaking to them. We do this through searching the Word of God, and also listening to the wisdom revealed, and shared, by the people of good will in the world. This requires a certain consciousness, and an understanding of the sources of the current crisis.

History

The Bougainville crisis came to a head in April 1988, when the landowners became very active, and very destructive of the huge Panguna copper and gold mine, which started its work in the 1960s. In its very beginnings, Francis Ona emerged as a leader of this localised conflict. What then began as a Landowners Association conflict with the Panguna Mine soon spread almost throughout the whole of the North Solomon Province, as a rebellion against the national government of Papua New Guinea in 1989.

There would be numerous reasons for this conflict, but the obvious root causes of this problem have political, socio-economic, and strong traditional, and cultural, implications. Unfortunately, the pain, suffering, and struggle for identity, autonomy, and compensation have resulted in the lack of understanding of land rights.

One could rightly claim that the traditional values and customs, regarding land, were ignored in the initial mining agreement, which did not include the landowners, and other Bougainvillean leaders. The traditional landowners defended their land, which is their birthright and heritage, the land of their ancestors.[1] Land means everything to the people of Bougainville. It is handed down from generation to generation. Land means security, heritage, and a source of materials required for housing, food, and traditional medicine.

The landowners, themselves, expressed their disappointment by stating that:

> Our land is being polluted, our water is being polluted, the air we breathe is being polluted with dangerous chemicals that are slowly killing us, and destroying our land for future generations. Better that we die fighting than to be slowly poisoned.[2]

The future prediction of the conflict had already been made a few years earlier, in 1969, by Professor Gre Dening, who warned those involved:

> There will be inevitable trouble in Bougainville if the people are being forcibly asked to accept a legal system of land tenure, for which they have no cultural preparations. . . . Economic pragmatism might be a valid political argument, but it is no solution, of itself, to the problem of people, who have been pushed to the edge of some social abyss, and are being asked to leap blindly into the 20th century.[3]

The crisis came to the point where the mine had to be closed by May 15, 1989. The closure of the mine meant a loss of K10 million per week. The Papua New Guinea currency was devalued by 10% in an attempt to help export-crop producers (cocoa, coffee, copra, palm oil) gain stability. In Bougainville, local businesses were affected, and companies had to transfer to other provinces to continue operations.

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[1] G. Kemelfied, ABC Radio interview: "Background briefing", July, 1990. Tape recording.
[2] Diocesan Priests' Statement from Diocesan Priests of Bougainville Diocese, Kieta (August 1, 1989), p. 3.
[3] B. Standish, "Bougainville: Undermining the State in Papua New Guinea", in *Pacific Research* (November, 1989), p. 4.

The effort to solve the crisis has gone through several phases. Attempts to reach a solution came with several peace talks. In 1990, on July 29 and August 5, the *Endeavour Accord* was signed between the Papua New Guinea government and the Bougainvillean interim government. The agreement reached was for the restoration of services. In the following year, 1991, from January 17-24, peace talks between the national government of Papua New Guinea and the Bougainville interim government in Honiara resulted in the *Honiara Declaration*, which also agreed on the restoration of services on the Island of Bougainville. Two years later, in September 1994, was the declaration of the cease-fire agreement, and then later, in October, was the Arawa Peace Conference in Arawa. A month later was the signing of the *Mirigini Charter for a New Bougainville*, paving the way for establishing of a Bougainville transitional government. In December 1995, there was a further meeting in Cairns: the "Cairns Peace Talks". There were many more efforts made by the national government of Papua New Guinea, and the Bougainville transitional government, to seek for a solution to the crisis.

The Fundamental Principles under Discussion

As we return to the Word of God: from John's gospel, on the gift of peace, Jesus Himself assures us that He is the Way to achieving this peace. Peace is a term that points to the many aspects of the human person. If we long for God's gift of peace for Bougainville, we are, in fact, seeking for the restoration of the dignity of the person.

1. The Restoration and Maintaining of Human Dignity

God's gift of peace to Bougainville calls for the full recognition of the dignity of the person. The principle implies that, because of his or her dignity, and personal basic rights, the human person comes before all ideologies and structures. The human person is at the centre, and becomes the norm, of all socio-economic political structures and institutions. It leads to concern about all types of socio-economic political structures, which promote human dignity, or protect basic human rights. This would mean that Christians have to make a commitment to the search for structures and institutions that would promote human dignity, and protect the basic human rights, of the people of Bougainville.

2.   A Certain Understanding of Person[4]

The urgency for Christians to maintain the human dignity of persons, who are in oppressive situations, arises from a proper understanding of "person". The word refers to the distinct selfhood of the individual, something that is unique, and incommunicable. It also refers to the person, who is the subject of rights and duties, and who is, therefore, an end, and never a means. Finally, it refers to the person, who can meaningfully experience, and influence, the environmental abilities that are consequent on consciousness and moral sense.

To speak of the dignity of the human person is to speak of the worth or value of the concrete, existing human being. Human beings have a value, or a worth, qualitatively different from that of anything else in the world. This dignity is inalienable, in the sense that it can never be lost, and that it is never permissible to merely use a human being to attain some end or purpose.

3.   Elements that both Reveal and Point to Deeper Levels of Human Personhood

God's gift of peace to Bougainville leads us to a humble appreciation of the deeper revelation of human personhood. A proper understanding of it assists us in the realisation of the brotherly and sisterly concern we have for others.

As we search deeper into a profound understanding of human personhood, we soon discover that, to be a person, is to be someone worthy of respect and protection of a unique kind, qualitatively different from the real respect that is owed to the natural world, and to the varied forms of life that populate it. A person, therefore, has rights, which are to be respected and protected, because of his or her personal dignity, and all rights aim at the protection, and preservation, of this dignity.

Furthermore, to be a person is to be one, who is morally responsible, to be one, who experiences an absolute demand, in the sense that the demand is not conditioned on our desire to obtain some particular goal or other, and is,

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[4] Judith A. Dwyer, ed., *The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought*, Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1994, p. 724.

therefore, not under our control or disposition. The moral demand is one we must acknowledge, and ignore only at the risk of rejecting our very humanity.

Morality and moral responsibility deal with the question, "What must I do to act rightly and well?" And this question is related to human dignity, in two distinct, but closely related, ways. Firstly, the human person is one, who should act in a morally good way. To be a person, is to be claimed by values that impose an obligation. And, secondly, moral obligation is the summons to acknowledge the concrete dignity of human persons, and, in this sense, human dignity is the criterion and norm of all moral activity.

Finally, another element in human dignity is freedom, and this points to a still-deeper level of the mystery of human dignity. Only one, who is free, can be morally responsible. Moral responsibility, therefore, implies the possibility of moral irresponsibility, and both are possible, because an answer has to be given to a claim, or a demand, that has been made on us.

The Fundamental Basic Human Rights[5]

God's gift of peace to Bougainville further calls for an understanding of basic human rights. Each Christian has that responsibility to work towards the restoration and respect of basic human rights. It would mean that, with God's help and assistance, Christians will assist all peoples of good will to search for, and build, a better society, which has better a social structure, better economic structure, better political structure, better social services, and a better ecological consciousness.

If Christians recognise the presence of God in our society, then they will not fail to pray, and also demand, the restoration and respect of human rights to the people of Bougainville. It is not something that is added on to our responsibility, rather, it should become part of our mission as faithful Christians.

Therefore, Christians need to emphasise the fact that each person has the right to life, to bodily integrity, and to the means, which are necessary, and

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[5] See Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (On the Development of Peoples) (1967), #14-21.

suitable, for the proper development of life. These means are primarily: food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and necessary social services. Therefore, each person also has the right to security, in cases of sickness, inability to work, widowhood, old age, unemployment, or in any other case, in which he/she is deprived of the means of subsistence, through no fault of his/her own.

Each person maintains the right of respect for his/her person, to his/her good reputation, to freedom in searching for truth, and in expressing, and communicating, his/her opinions, and should be free to develop, to the maximum, his/her artistic abilities. It means that he/she has the right to correct and truthful information about public events.

As Christians offer the gift of God's peace to Bougainville, they must seek for that society, which will make possible for each person, his/her right to share in the benefits of culture, and, therefore, the right to a basic education, or to technical or professional training, in keeping with the stage of educational development within that society. And, furthermore, to ensure, and enable, persons, on the basis of their merit, to go on to higher studies, so that, as far as possible, they may occupy posts, and take on responsibilities, in accordance with their natural gifts, and the skills they have acquired.

The rights, mentioned already, are some of the rights of the human person. These would include: the right of religion, the right to choose, freely, one's state in life, economic rights, rights of assembly and association, rights to emigrate and immigrate, and political rights.

The Nature of the Peace Offered to Us[6]

The nature of the peace that God gives to us, and that which we would want to share with the people of Bougainville, needs to be understood more thoroughly.

Peace is not merely the absence of war. Nor can it be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies. Nor is it brought about by dictatorship. Instead, it is rightly and appropriately called "an

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[6] See Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* (The Church in the Modern World), #78-90.

enterprise of justice" (Is 32:7). Peace results from that harmony built into human society by its divine Founder, and is actualised by people, as they thirst after ever-greater justice.

This peace cannot be obtained on earth, unless personal values are safeguarded, and people freely, and trustingly, share with one another the riches of their inner spirits and their talents. A firm determination to respect other men, and women, and peoples, and their dignity, as well as the studied practice of brotherhood and sisterhood, are absolutely necessary for the establishment of peace. Hence, peace is likewise the fruit of love, which goes beyond what justice can provide.

Earthly peace, which arises from love of neighbour, symbolises, and results from, the peace of Christ, who comes forth from God the Father. For by His cross the incarnate Son, the Prince of Peace, reconciled all men with God.

Conclusion
If Christians have to look for a solution to the current Bougainville crisis, then they need to ceaselessly continue to be in constant dialogue with the Lord in prayer, and in seeking wisdom from other persons.

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THE EMERGENCE OF CLASS STRUCTURE IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA: A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

Bruno Junalien

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Papua New Guinea, as a nation, has achieved a lot over a period of 21 years. Well before independence, Germany, Britain, and Australia also did much for us, when we were under their rule. Government administrators and missionaries did well in their respective tasks and duties. I have not travelled out of Papua New Guinea, yet I hear the rumour that Papua New Guinea is the fastest-developing nation in the Pacific region. I am inclined to believe this, having witnessed the ever-increasing amount of raw materials being exported, and the changes that our capital city, Port Moresby, has been going through recently. Surely government bodies, and the private sector (under the direction of our constitution, I presume), are doing a lot to develop Papua New Guinea.

In our villages, people are receiving most basic services, but there are occasional development deals, which often break down after a few years. Should we blame the government? This is the collective opinion shared by the people. Could it be the people's own fault? Is it the colonialist, who did this to us, and we have no power over our destiny since independence? These are common questions, asked today by nearly all Papua New Guineans, from the so-called grassroots (a term for people with few material possessions), the average person, those of the upper class, and even some prominent politicians. No one seems to know the answers.

The fundamental question of where we are heading has many dimensions. The reasons behind the question are truly varied. My concern here is that there is a dangerous trend appearing amid the tremendous development

buzzing around us, day in and day out, in Port Moresby, and in some other major centres of Papua New Guinea: namely, the emergence of social-class divisions. Social-class structures are an inevitable part of a capitalist society. Yet, the question of where we are heading needs to be addressed, lest these emerging divisions end up as a class struggle.

Investors still have confidence in Papua New Guinea, as witnessed in the constant influx of foreign companies coming into the country to help lift our economy from "pre-civilisation" to the "post-modern" era. We have ups and downs, for we are human, and not infallible, or immune to mistake, crime, and sin. Compared with many countries, Papua New Guinea is doing very well. Most people here are happy, and have their needs fulfilled, for God has blessed us abundantly. This is a brief summary of the situation in Papua New Guinea, as I see it.

Our Traditional Culture

It is a well-known fact that traditional Melanesian society revolved around family groupings, usually called "clans" today. In some areas, these clans are further linked together to form tribes. Even though each individual had his/her own tasks and aspirations, the interest of the group, for the benefit of all, was of greater importance. Specific tasks were vital for the upkeep of all members of the group. No one complained, for all knew the sources of command, and the purposes it served. Of course, there were functional divisions as to who did what and why. These differences helped to enhance the order and survival of the group. Their philosophy was: doing something for you is helping myself. Their investments were not in material wealth and goods, as such, but in each other. As we read in scripture, "Do unto others as you would like done unto you".

The patriarchal society of the Old Testament (Gen 18:1-8) has similarities with traditional Melanesian societies, where social inequalities were hardly possible. For whatever was valuable and available, whatever hardships were encountered, was shared. However, under the reign of King Solomon (about 10th-century BC), Israelite society grew considerably, gaining momentum, and a name for itself among the Middle-East nations. The price for the development was high (1 Kings 9:15-25). Classes emerged. Those who became wealthy were tempted to

become richer, without paying attention to the poor, among whom they lived. Coupled with the growth of the rich, poverty also developed.

In Melanesia, the chief's position as leader was sometimes manipulative, but was, to a larger degree, functional. What belonged to the chief, for the benefit of all, was utilised to preserve and strengthen the bonds of the clan. There was private property, but for the good of all. Poverty was non-existent. The system worked, mainly because clan populations were small, and we had a different system of economy, where every person was valuable and needed. There were no profit-oriented ventures, in the modern understanding of the term "profit".

Traditional bonds in immediate family units, clans, and tribes are still evident in villages, but are breaking down at a faster rate than expected. The causes are many, but the most obvious factors are population growth, and the struggle for economic and material advancement. Sharing is still a normal part of village life, but it is no longer as spontaneous as it used to be. These changes are to be expected, and are also unconsciously accepted as normal, given the form of societal structure the people are moving towards today. How can one give beyond the nuclear family unit, when they have their own needs and ambitions to fulfil. To ask whether the neighbouring friends or relatives would be in greater need of what I have, is a question rarely asked nowadays.

Obviously, we are experiencing development along the Western route, so to speak. It is harder to maintain "Melanesian traditional culture". The options open to us are either to retain ancestral institutions and convictions and renounce progress, or admit outside influences, and reject tradition, with all its human richness. We can only go forward by adapting to the outside world, yet does it also mean we have to sacrifice our traditional humanitarian values, especially the genuine concern for the common welfare of all, regardless of the status and category of a person? Even trying to hold on to a bit of tradition does not guarantee that the moral, spiritual, religious, and social support of the past will be retained. In most cases, it usually gives way to the development of new cultures.

Lihir Island society, in New Ireland Province, serves as an example here. The older generation generally seems to remain attached to rigid traditional norms and values, while the young sometimes become rebellious, and are driven further and further from tradition. Is it that young people regard the traditional methods and values as useless barriers from the past, preventing development and progress? Or is it that the older people are scared, and, therefore, resist change in a society, where change is inevitable?

The elders now have limited power, compared with before. The dominant agent, in regard to power these days, is money. Money has become the norm for power. Money should not be the measuring rod for power, but, practically, it is the case today. On Lihir, most young people earn fortnightly wages at the mine, which is operating on the island. One cannot object to what they are doing, for they have every right to work. However, they have money, which gives them power and security, but which makes them become arrogant, and ignorant of the traditions of the older generation.

While at home, during a Monday Community Assembly, which still occurs in my area, older people became frustrated, because they were duly elected as committee members, responsible for order in the community, yet their younger counterparts did not seem to pay any attention to them. Their advice is often not heeded by the younger generation. So, some young men were elected to be village committees that day, to see if the younger generation will listen to their own kind. I see this as a small attempt on the part the of the older people to adapt to a form of governing, with which they, themselves, are not familiar, but which, for the sake of the community, has to be done.

Can There be a Better Life for all?

Material progress and expansion worked well for the developed (first) world in the past. Can it also be true for Papua New Guinea? Though Papua New Guinea is far from being an industrial nation, we still appear to be adopting the view that having more wealth equals progress. The genuine concern for the country to have more wealth, to effectively carry out its numerous functions is not being questioned. The query, however,

only concerns the method of achieving material progress. At what cost is the quest for material betterment? Who are the victims of the process? Generally, it is our rural population and the so-called grassroots who suffer. The formula "material expansion = progress" is not working well for us in Papua New Guinea. Rather, it is leading us into countless difficulties.

We have only to look at the history of what has happened, in recent decades, in Latin America, some African states, and parts of Asia. Many followed the same channels of progress we are following, and then collapsed. Their history could repeat itself for Papua New Guinea, if we continue to develop in the present fashion, without learning from their mistakes. They had relied too much on exporting non-renewable raw materials, and there was nothing solid for the economy to fall back on when these were exhausted. We could also suffer if, as is becoming evident today, there is inequality, because wealth is not redistributed justly.

The media, for the last four years, has publicised reports describing the state of our economy in Papua New Guinea. There are accusations, and a lot of rumours, about ambiguous deals dominated by outside interests. How much of these reports is correct cannot be determined here, but, if even part is true, then the situation adds to the burden of the ordinary citizen. The worst hit are the marginalised, low-income earners in urban areas, and the bulk of our population in the rural areas, often referred to as the "grassroots".

Parents of poor families struggle very hard to meet the ever-increasing cost of education and medical treatment, which are among the most-essential services necessary for human survival. It is becoming evident that the lower stratum of society does not receive the same treatment as that given to the higher stratum of Papua New Guinea. God blessed this land with plenty, yet we are experiencing the emergence of all kinds of poverty, including material poverty, which produces class struggle – a disease that threatens the survival of PNG. To remove poverty altogether would not be realistic, but, at least, there should be attempts, not only by

Christian churches, but more so the government, to minimise, or alleviate, human miseries, in whatever ways possible.

With dissatisfied land and resource owners, and with criminal activities on the rise, people living in cities, towns, and even in the villages, have become fearful for their lives. The government is planning a major crackdown on criminal activities, with more firepower, and night vision equipment for the police force, to capture, or kill, those who disturb society. Is this all the government can do? Is it the best solution? What caused these "raskols" to behave in the manner they do in the first place? Do they enjoy committing crimes, and getting chased by the police and being killed mercilessly? Would they rather be dead than alive? Surely not. Then, why become a criminal at all? Our leaders seem to be saying that, "as long as the majority of the population are happy, all will be well". But, for how long will the bulk be happy, in the face of deteriorating security, and the rising cost of living? Can this trend then be defined as progress?

In our striving for material well-being we are also witnessing a widening gap between classes of people in Papua New Guinea. Ethnic violence is sometimes given as the cause of civil disorder in Rwanda, Bosnia, and our own backyard in Bougainville. Ethnic violence, however, is only the "tip of the iceberg". The deep-seated evil of material inequality is the real cause of division among people. Normally, such violence takes the form of a fight for recognition, aimed at overcoming seemingly oppressive structures, which have created mistrust, and lack of confidence in the leaders, who are often seen as part of the wealthy strata of society.

Every human is entitled to a decent living standard. By nature, the marginalised in society are often limited. They lack education and health, which would enable them to become creative members of society. Where do they fit in our society? Should they be mere recipients without participation? With these multi-dimensional problems pressing at Papua New Guinea's doorstep, where do we go from here? There is no one single answer, but the gap must not be allowed to grow bigger with each passing day. Our society is already fragmented by different languages, cultural traditions, and geographical landmarks, yet we have achieved

unity. It would not be right to be divided, through material expansion. The capitalist economic system we have adopted is good, but with it comes class divisions. We need to face this, and, if necessary, change our way of thinking and acting.

We are encountering the hard, cold reality of modern economics, which creates divisions. Someone may be starving outside your door, while you have a surplus. The materially-rich advance rapidly in business, while the poor develop slowly, or sink deeper into the depths of poverty, making them seemingly to be non-existent human beings. Is the dignity of a person the birthright of the rich only?

Do we have Solutions to these Problems?

How can we move away from the imbalance fuelled by an expansionist drive for more material development? If Papua New Guinea continues to grow in a quantitative sense, while producing greater output of non-renewable, natural resources, will there be enough wealth to go around? Will the wealth trickle down to those in need? Our energies should be directed, not to quantity, but toward the quality of people's lives. Changes in outlook are necessary. The current society demands a change in most areas, and we will have to wait and see if this happens.

Some hold the view that speaking of class structure in a society like Papua New Guinea, where it is not yet a pressing issue, will actually lead to promoting it. It is better, however, to raise awareness, than to remain silent. To acknowledge the reality of an emerging class society may lead to finding options to minimise the danger. The real conflict will come later, if nothing is done to treat the cause of the problem.

The fields of politics and society are always tricky and challenging, and people who struggle for social justice can be tempted to become hateful. A true struggle for equality must abstain from hatred. It should be based on Christian love, in working towards solidarity, as the gospels tell us. In the past, religion has been an influential factor in achieving success. Without the values, rooted in the religious heritage, and the commitment religion gives to human solidarity, the cause for minimising social class structures will be futile. There is a need for mutual recognition and

acceptance of persons as they are, as created in the likeness and image of God, and, therefore, worthy of respect and dignity.

Where Does God Fit In?

Karl Marx tried to remove class structures, but did it the wrong way, by suppressing the rights of people, and, thereby, inflicting greater damage. However, his ideas had many positive implications. His *Manifesto* supports both industrialisation and agriculture, and a gradual abolishment of distinctions between town and country. This was a very good idea, but its implementation was another thing. The quest for a classless society is not restricted to Marxism alone. In the area of theology, there are movements, such as, Liberation Theology and Black Theology, which strive for a similar cause.

Papua New Guinea's Constitution is based on Christian principles. Our National Anthem thanks God for our land of freedom and plenty. In fact, Papua New Guinea is said to be a Christian nation. In capitalist societies, there is a tendency towards an individualistic piety, and a purely vertical form of religion, where one's life is between oneself and God. There is little concern for class equality, or for material equality, with one's neighbour. In communism, secular religion is the ideal. There is a controlled effort for the common good, but no acknowledgment of a transcendent God. However, poverty is not only material, but also spiritual, and psychological. A rich person may be spiritually poor, while a materially-poor person can be spiritually rich.

Jesus says to the materially-rich man, "You lack one thing; go sell what you own and give the money to the poor . . . then come follow Me" (Mark 10:21). The man went away sad for he was wealthy and lacked concern for his neighbour. We all are in need of one thing or another. Only God is rich in every sense of the word. The rich are preoccupied with increasing their power and possessions. We see an example in the story of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21). Jesus Himself said, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the Kingdom of God . . . It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:23-25).

Jesus' mission was to proclaim the good news of salvation to the poor (Luke 4:16-19). "You know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that by His poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor 8:9). There is a link between being aware of God and material poverty. Even though Jesus was concerned for the poor, for they needed Him most, He was a man for all. Jesus did not condemn the rich for being rich. He was not class conscious. In fact, He felt quite at ease with a number of wealthy friends (Mark 2:15). Jesus spoke out against some of the rich, because they were satisfied, and did not feel any need for God, or for anyone else.

A classless society does not mean equality in everything, for God has created us different, with different talents. Rather, God wants us to share with one another, and to be aware of our ethical and moral obligations towards one another. As St Paul writes to the Corinthians (1 Cor 12:12-26), in the body each part grows together, even though each part fulfils a different function. There has to be a cure for the part of the body that hurts, or else the whole body may suffer or die. Our Christian faith teaches us to disregard class barriers, and to care for the outcasts of society, yet few have the courage to implement these teachings. Some Christians, though, are brave enough to continue this effort, even in the face of escalating costs.

The Christian Dimension

God wills that our relationships should be marked by openness, love, and sharing. But, alienated from God, people find themselves alone, poor, afraid, and, therefore, aggressive. The story of Abel, and his blood brother Cain (Gen 4:1-16), illustrates the alienation between man and man, resulting, initially, from humankind's separation from God. Nearly 2,700 years ago, the prophet Amos spoke against the accumulation of wealth by a few. The message has not been received, and so must echo again for us here in Papua New Guinea today.

One has only to look in the gospels to see what Jesus had to say about social discrimination. The reflection on Jesus' life and actions in the gospels, brings us in contact with His deep concern for the oppressed and marginalised. Was Jesus' situation so different from our time? Does

anyone have any real concern for the marginalised people here in Papua New Guinea? The Catholic church, in its social encyclicals, has always called on the world to improve the social order, so that people can share, and live together in peace.

In Papua New Guinea, churches, and some NGOs, are involved in trying to lessen the structural oppression in the most remote areas of the country. The churches are trying to ensure that no one is left behind, in terms of basic services. Extraordinary services include Boys' Town in Wewak, the Cheshire Home, the juvenile centre at Hohola, the Mount Sion Centre for the Blind at Goroka, the Salvation Army refuge centre at Badili, and the Sheltered Workshop at 3-Mile. The church tries to care for the unclean, the despised, and those unable to realise their own dreams in life. What is the government policy for the destitute? What are we going to do with the ever-increasing number of unemployed and unemployable?

The church is charged with the responsibility to speak out in defence of human dignity. Thus, in Papua New Guinea, the church has a political function as well. As Jesus condemned poverty, oppression, and social division, so we must do the same. To know that it exists, and let it go on, as if nothing evil is happening, would mean an intentional neglect of the mission given to us by Christ. Poverty is not part of God's plan for salvation. The scandal of division and poverty comes as a result of sin (Gen 2-11).

The Triune God is not only to be worshipped, but also to be emulated in the coequality of the Father, Son, and Spirit. The Trinity offers us a model for brotherhood and sisterhood in Papua New Guinea society. The goal of our time should be equality, despite all differences. God perceives everyone as equally human, with no one meriting better treatment than the other. Unlike the momentary relief doled out by politicians during election time, Jesus gave lasting hope, by reminding people of their dignity as persons, and their worth as God's own children.

Conclusion
The forces, which have enabled people to make progress in civilisation, are also the very forces, which restrain people from achieving their full

potential. We all want progress, politically, spiritually, economically, and socially, but it must be a prosperity with peace, and without class divisions. In our country today, most people do not have the opportunity to advance, and, if they have, they still cannot use it, due to limitations beyond their control, whether it be education, health, geographical boundaries, or just sheer ignorance. Also, as human beings, we have our limitations, and participate in antisocial behaviour, which only impedes true progress, and adds to our social ills.

I am not thinking of a dreamland, where all is well. That would be wishful thinking – a heaven on earth. I am concerned to raise an awareness of what awaits Papua New Guinea, if action is not taken to limit the emerging system of inequality and class division. I see the churches as striving to be involved in this task, but where is the government and the private sector on this issue? Are these bodies interested only in the privileged sectors of society?

Jesus showed Himself to be a man for others, always ready to welcome anyone that needed rest. Jesus' own public ministry was so often filled with privation that He had nowhere to lay His head (Matt 8:20). He spent time with all kinds of people, but more so with the sick, the marginalised, the deprived (Matt 4:23-33; Luke 12:22-25), not because He loved poverty, but because He was their Saviour. They had nothing, but they were capable of, and ready to receive, everything from God.

Jesus has gone, physically, but His Spirit remains in Christians, who have become sons and daughters of God. We are to carry out His mission to share what we have, and what we are, in opening ourselves to God, and to neighbour. We are to give, in love, as Jesus did for us. As St Paul says, "If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body to be burned, but DO NOT HAVE LOVE, I gain nothing" (1 Cor 13:3).

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ELECTION: PROFANATION OF THE HUMAN POWER OF CHOICE

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[The footnotes in the printed version were incorrect – running from 7 to 18, instead of 1 to 12. This has now been corrected. —Revising ed.]

Introduction

Elections are not part of traditional Melanesian culture. These days, there is a blending of elements – the old and the new. And this includes elections, as a way of deciding leadership, by people's own choice. The power of choice influences the whole framework of society, from non-formal groupings within communities to intercommunity groups, for example, women's groups, prayer groups, school boards, and youth groups. There are also governing and service bodies at village level, such as village courts, local government councils, provincial governments, and, of course, the national government – which is the principal focus of this paper.

The importance of national elections rests on the fact that, when one votes, one acts according to the rights, intelligence, dignity, and liberty, endowed in the human person. These dimensions of the human person identify our humanity. They do not come to us by accident. Both the Bible and natural wisdom show us that the human person is made by God, and has received the capacity to make choices. Election is a political matter pertaining to civil state, civil good, and order, but its essence lies in our choice, and our task to "subdue and have dominion over" (Gen 1:28).

The Papua New Guinea Constitution is based on democracy, and safeguards the rights and the dignity of every citizen. Every citizen of voting age has the right and duty to vote for public officials. According to the Constitution, the good of the nation is directly entrusted to its citizens. They are to choose the representatives who will form the government. Those elected to the

Parliament must perform in clear conscience, since they are empowered by the people, and they should have the sense of obligation and duty to act for the people's future well-being.

The instability in government, and the rapidly-deteriorating situation in Papua New Guinea, in all dimensions of society (social, economic, and political) are partially, or directly, to do with the kind of members of Parliament (MPs) elected by the people. "A good and efficient government can be achieved, if only worthy and able candidates are appointed for public office, and the unqualified are removed from it."[1] People have to accept that, if they did not act responsibly in their right to elect someone to represent them, then they are, in some ways, responsible for the mistakes, ignorance, misconduct, and failure in performance of their MP, and so it makes no sense to lament the fact. People have to think twice before looking past themselves, and pointing a finger at the MPs, whom the people themselves chose.[2] This paper is concerned with the issue of voter responsibility, and human dignity.

Choice: An Inherent Faculty of the Human Person

> Endowed with intelligence and freedom [every man] is responsible for his fulfilment. . . . By the unaided effort of his own intelligence, and his will, each man can grow in humanity, can enhance his personal worth, can become more a person.[3]

Human beings are born with certain specific human qualities. Aristotle defines a human being as "an animal, distinguished from other animals, by his gift of speech, and power of moral judgment".[4] Whether or not we are aware of it, we are continually making choices, from the most ordinary, to the most

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[1] K. H. Peschke, *Christian Ethics*, vol. 2, Alcester UK: C Goodliffe Neale, 1986, p. 266.

[2] In a letter to the editor of *The National*, Bertha Somare writes, "Ultimately, we voters have only ourselves to blame, when we elect individuals who abuse their positions. We often know the character of these people we voted for. It is not necessarily the office that corrupts the person. These elected people bring with them into office their own can of worms that we as voters have helped to open." *The National*, May 12, 1997, p. 15.

[3] Pope Paul VI, encyclical letter, *Populorum Progressio* (On the Development of Peoples), #15.

[4] *Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol 14, p. 685.11; Pope Leo XIII, encyclical letter, *Sapientiae Christianae* (The Chief Duties of Christians as Citizens) (1890), #2 and #6.

complex decisive choices. It is fascinating to consider the sorts of choices people make: whether or not to smile, to sit, or stand, or lie down, to eat, or to bear with hunger, to eat this, or that, to get out of bed, or remain, to watch a documentary, or the news, to take a stroll, or a bus ride. Major choices, at one or another time, are inevitable: paying an outstanding bill, lest the power be cut off, opting for an apprenticeship, or going to college, pursuing one career or another, getting a divorce, or starting anew, taking part in a tribal fight, or excusing oneself, getting married to a colleague, or to the village girl marked by one's parents, selling off assets, or putting more energy and commitment into the business, and all the rest.

An election, by definition, is an act of choice. An election is an occasion that calls for, or requires, a high level of choice at the political level. Politically, an election connotes "democracy"; an ideology that enjoys favourable opinion, as it is one based on freedom, liberty, rights, and human dignity.

Papua New Guinea is a democratic state. The Five National Goals in the preamble of the Constitution refer to "equal participation of its citizens", and state that "Christian teachings and principles be the norm for managing its affairs, decisions and policies". These are a reminder to the state, and Papua New Guinea's people, that the inalienable rights and freedom of the people must not be suppressed, but must be preserved at all costs. An election is a constitutive and integral part of life in Papua New Guinea, as an independent democratic state. It is an election that allows us to have a democratic form of government. Absence of elections would mean forms of government other than democracy, like a dictatorship, totalitarianism, or some form of communism.

The principle of an election is that people choose a representative from among themselves, by their own discreet judgment and choice. In this way, they empower the chosen one with their own power, and entrust that representative with their dignity and welfare. In other words, the government, in principle, is really the power and reign of the people, through their chosen representatives. K. H. Peschke says it clearly, "The form of government . . . the constitutional structure of the state, the leaders and parties in power, derive their authority from the people." Papua New Guinea elections occur once every five years, except for extraordinary cases. The point of interest

here is not to dwell on the rosy concept of an election, as a distinctive and important aspect of democracy, but rather to look at the reality, and the actual experience, of an election.

State and Religion

> If we would judge aright, the supernatural love for the church, and the natural love of our own country, proceed from the same eternal principle, since God Himself is their Author, and originating Cause. . . . If then, a civil government strives after external advantages merely, . . . if administering public affairs is wont to put God aside, and show no solicitude for the upholding of moral law; it deflects woefully from its right course [and should be accounted] as a deceitful imitation and make-believe of civil organisation.[5]

The "state" stands for the secular-political environment, which people share with other individuals. In "religion" one comes to terms, in some depth, with the yearnings and urges of one's inner self, and, thus, tends to have regard for transcendent realities. These two entities affect and mould the well-being and livelihood of every person.

The state and religion ought to work together. Papua New Guinea is a good example, because both the government and the churches provide basic services, especially in the areas of health and education. However, recently, relations have become strained, with the lack of financial support for church-run health services.[6]

History shows that religion and politics are often not on good terms. Some learned people would argue that they are incompatible. Karl Marx, for instance, defined religion as an "opiate" for people who cannot work, or think for themselves. In our time, the tension is there implicitly. A recent Catholic Bishops' Conference released a strong statement, stating that priests, clergy, or the religious should avoid any direct involvement in politics.

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Leaders, including the opposition leader, have been urging the national government to release funds for all government- and church-run health centres and hospitals, to ensure that people have access to health care, *The National*, May 12, 1997, p. 3.

While the relationship between religion and politics is being debated, in truth politics cannot be isolated from religion. The state (with whatever political system it employs) is generally about creating, or building, a better society. The state's vision for the welfare of its citizens, and the society in general, means that the state and religion are concerned fundamentally with the same thing. The state and the church (we speak, precisely, of the church, not religion) are essentially "counterparts", so that one cannot function independently of the other. K. H. Peschke writes, "The necessity of the state, and of state authority, has, ultimately, its source in God Himself, who created man as a political and social being."[7] Peschke also notes that the traditional understanding of the state and church was (and still is, but in a more refined way) that they are, or can be, "perfect societies" in themselves, because they possess all the means necessary for the attainment of their needs and ends. Yet, neither of them can forget the human person. Both exist to serve humanity.

The age-old attitude of separating religious concerns from those of the state has to be reversed. An election is a state-political matter, which must not be avoided, nor reduced, simply to something secular, because the consequences of an election affect people, as a whole.

An election is a privilege, and the rights and obligations of being part of the political life of the state should not be suppressed. The act of electing involves the total person. As pastors and shepherds of believing people, the Catholic bishops of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands have challenged the citizens of both countries.

> It is the time for us all to cooperate fully to ensure that we have healthy and useful general national elections. If we put our hearts and minds together, we can expect to vote in, and enjoy having a strong and responsible government.[8]

The concern of the Bishops should be the concern of all Papua New Guineans. Unless the people avoid past mistakes, and temptations, and choose someone

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[7] Peschke, *Christian Ethics*, vol 2, p. 262.
[8] Catholic Bishops' Conference of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, *Commission for Peace, Justice and Development: Discussed Issues 1990-1991*, p. 28.

for whom they are, and what they can do, then the desire for a responsible government will be in vain, and matters will become worse.[9] The people need to be cautiously mindful of the kind of leader, or representative, they vote for at the elections. It is not simply something to get over with, for it is here, in an election, that the future is determined. Not only that, participating in elections, as thinking and sensible people, means that people are doing justice to the state, to the future government, and to themselves, and their children.

Overlapping of Two Cultures: Modern and Traditional

In traditional society, leadership would either be ascribed, or inherited, in the chief-oriented cultures; or, in other cultures, leadership would be achieved, or attained, through personal merit, and, importantly, with the approval, and consent, of the people. The tribal communities were isolated from each other, and were autonomous, so leadership was an essential, binding force. A tribe or clan would be weak, unstable, and disorganised without good leadership.

In modern society, much is being lost or changed. Communities are no longer isolated, as they used to be, and leadership functions in society with a much wider scope. It is high time that people came to grips with the modern notion of elections. Some people take elections lightly, because they consider that elections are not Melanesian, that many of the traditional qualities and values are absent, and anyone, by right of the Constitution, can run for election. It is obvious, though, that people are starting to realise that running for election is becoming a game for the "haves". Sadly, leadership qualities and virtues do not really seem to matter any more. Moreover, although issues can be debated at great length, it does not always have an effect on the election result.

The so-called "campaign time" is an essential part of the election. It is within that time that the candidates make themselves known: their aspirations, their goals, and whatever else they have in mind to do if they are elected. For the people, it is time to listen, and watch, and to make their judgments on the candidates, so that they can elect a candidate, who can well represent them in

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[9] The Governor of the National Capital District, Bill Skate, said recently, "The leadership in this country needs a change. . . . You voters must choose carefully so that the right person gets in to ensure that real services are delivered", *The National*, May 13, 1997, p. 4.

the Parliament. In Papua New Guinea, the campaign time has tended to become a kind of "gold-rush fever". Many people abandon their normal daily tasks to exploit the situation, in whatever way they can. It is not a secret that the well-meant time allotted for campaigning has become a time of abuse and manipulation. People tend to perceive the campaign time as an opportunity for the "hand-out" of goods and money. Thus, the handout is now almost a custom in Papua New Guinea, even outside of campaign time. It is not a good custom, and should be done away with, to allow real democracy to prevail, so that people can be free, when it comes to voting. Unfortunately, the free handouts, which occur, particularly in government circles, are becoming common through all levels of Papua New Guinea society today.

In many cases, both the candidate and the voter are responsible for perverting the purpose of an election, according to the Constitution. The unconstitutional aspects, and sinister practices, that have crept into the elections, have no other cause than people themselves. There is a risk that the whole purpose of elections will be lost. Perhaps Martin Luther was right to say that humankind is fundamentally sinful and corrupt. Some things are designed for a common good, yet people are inclined to find ways to suit themselves.

Dignity and Folly of Human Life

Though humankind is a creature of God, the human being is imperfect, and subject to sin. This may be a limitation, but we possess free will and intelligence, so as to manage our lives for good or evil. This is a risky business. "Man can organise the world, apart from God, but, without God, man can organise it, in the end, only to man's – his own – detriment."[10]

When people's participation in an election is thwarted by external influences and constraints, civil society regards it as abuse. Humanity shares in the light of the divine mind, and rightly affirms that, by one's intellect, one surpasses the world of mere things.[11] In partaking in an election, if the choice of the candidate is narrowed to selfish motives, or outside constraints, then, from the

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[10] Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, #42.
[11] Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* (The Church and the Modern World), #15.

perspective of our very humanity, it could be termed an indignity, or profanation, and to incorporate some elements of idolatry as well.

People's erroneous mentality, regarding an election, should not be left to prevail unheeded, and thus adversely affect the situation. I suggest that people must be educated to recognise their inviolable worthiness, and to appreciate themselves as they truly are, as free and intelligent human beings.[12]

Conclusion

Freedom makes sense when it is lived as a "responsibility", as opposed to abuse and manipulation. From Genesis, we learn that humankind is God's masterpiece among created things. God not only created humanity in His own likeness, but breathed into humanity His own life. This great dignity brings with it special responsibilities: responsibilities to self, to others, and to all creatures. In an election, one is exercising an important degree of responsibility, rooted in human freedom.

St Paul warned the Ephesians:

> We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro, and blown about, by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But, speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into Him, who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love (Eph 4:14-16).

Paul's words apply equally to ourselves. Christians in Papua New Guinea must take a stand, and be part of the solution to the present problems. People cannot risk continuing to make the same mistakes, as the consequences would be tragic. As the upheavals and crises in Papua New Guinea in recent times are becoming worse, people are developing a greater awareness that something has to change. Not only the constitutionally-just order, but also the

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[12] Aristotle said, "Man, when perfected, is the best of animals, but when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all, and he is equipped, at birth, with arms of intelligence and wit, moral qualities, which he may use for the worse ends", *Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol 14, p. 686.

overall good of the society, needs to be restored. As Paul says, above, we must speak the truth with love, for that is the opposite of trickery and deceit. When people take an election seriously, and participate in it, accordingly, as free and intelligent persons, and, more importantly, as Christians, then some kind of conversion will occur. Only then can we be certain of the change of government that we hope for.

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CONFERENCE REPORT: DOING THEOLOGY IN OCEANIA: PARTNERS IN CONVERSATION

Otago University, Aotearoa-New Zealand, November 17-21, 1996

Philip Gibbs

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With over 150 participants from Aotearoa-New Zealand, Australia, and the islands of the Pacific, including Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea, the conference provided many different, stimulating points of view. It was not a conference dominated by tedious academic papers, but, rather, an interweaving of creative presentations from participants, grouped according to culture.

Imagine 10 people from the Pacific, but now resident in New Zealand, sitting around a fine mat and talking about the mat for an hour. Where does the mat come from? Who does it belong to? Why is it valuable? Gradually, one learns that the mat is a metaphor for life in the Pacific Island community. It represents the tradition of the Islands, and figures in many important life events. Then feelings emerged. The intricate time-consuming task of weaving the mat is a job for women. Does the mat then shore up a tradition that relegates women to the "back house"? A younger member in the group wished he could rip up the mat and dispose of it. After a break, the Pacific Islanders were joined by the rest of the conference participants. What sort of mat did we want to weave? Should we add to the old mat, or weave something completely new? What were the cultural and religious strands that we could utilise for the task? Was it our mat, or did it belong to God? Are we, ourselves, the strands? After another hour the conversation had to be cut short.

This is just one example of the sort of reflection behind contextual theology. In a globally-marketised world, it is important to establish networks of conversation between local cultures. In that case, what is special and unique about the way we do theology in Oceania? As partners in conversation, we shared about our situation, and our theology in relation to it. Who does theology? Where, When, Why, How?

The people of the land (Maori) pointed out the effects of urbanisation on Maori language and spirituality. Mrs Hanna Maxwell, of Hokianga, spoke about the promotion of Maori Studies, Maori Spirituality, and Maori Theology. Developments are slow, but she believes in celebrating small victories.

From Melanesia, Vasi Gadiki, Secretary of MATS, Samuel and Judith Vusi, of Vanuatu, and Philip Gibbs, from the Holy Spirit Seminary, presented the situation in Melanesia. Philip Gibbs noted some of the cultural and historical differences between Papua New Guinea and New Zealand. The relatively short period of colonialism, experienced by many in the PNG Highlands, meant that there was not the same cultural alienation as with many other indigenous peoples. Gibbs went on to give examples from the more-formal theology done in the seminary setting, to the theology found in prayer, dance, and song, coming from rural Christian communities. In this setting, people encounter a tension between continuity and discontinuity with traditional religion, and also a tension between a this-worldly and another-worldly spirituality.

Samuel and Judith Vusi, from Vanuatu, spoke about their varied experience of a missionary presence in Vanuatu. One should be grateful for the missionaries' positive contribution, and go beyond the negative experiences. Judith spoke about her experience as a Melanesian woman. Brandishing a knife, Vasi Gadiki illustrated how it was necessary to cut away those elements of cultural tradition that are not in harmony with the good news.

Ann Pattel-Gray illustrated the marginalisation experienced by Aboriginal people in Australia. She insisted on identity, rather than experience, as the starting point for Aboriginal theology. Does everyone have a "fair go",

when racial identity determines privilege? Using the image of Simon of Cyrene being forced to carry Jesus' cross, she said that black people have been forced to carry the cross for the sins of the white colonisers and missionaries, and that it was time for white people to carry the cross, as a symbol of repentance and transformation. Who of those at the conference was prepared to come and take up that cross?

Course participants from Maohi (Tahiti), Niue, Samoa, Tonga, and Fiji dramatically illustrated the contribution of Oceanic theology. It is not merely "pacific", with connotations of smallness and dependence. Their theology was to come from the ocean as well as the land. At birth, the placenta would be either burned, or thrown into the sea. At death, the bones would be interred in the earth, or set adrift on a canoe. "You don't own the land, the land owns you." When you are born, the land nurtures you, and, when you die, you go back to it. To affirm this, is to affirm that God is the originator and owner of the land. Throughout the pre-Christian era, until today, when the Maohi talk about God, they look to the land, rather than to heaven, as it is now common practice in Christianity. Land assured the presence and the dwelling place of God, Taaroa, or Yahweh. So, to love the land is to love God the land owner. The loud birthing cries evoke a God, who is in hard labour, doing everything to bring forth justice the fruit of her love. In our world today, we are all partners in the birthing process, sharing in the labour of liberating life for a better future. This includes the pain and risk of motherhood, and the labour to bring forth justice. This must be the basis of the church, and the basis of opposition to evils, such as nuclear testing in the Pacific. We cry out in pain, but the cry comes first from God.

Besides birth, others contributed reflections on marriage, death, and hospitality. Lisa Meo gave a reflection on inclusiveness in Pacific culture. Jesus' blood was given on the cross to include us all in the household of God. Participants were reminded that, behind the beautiful stories about marriage and hospitality, there is often also a story of pain and struggle. For example, women are struggling to claim back relationships that have been lost during the past 150 years. In some countries, formerly, the woman, by virtue of her special relationship with the land, was said to be in

a covenant relationship with God, but now (male) ministers have taken on that role.

It was a challenge for the pakeha New Zealanders, after such powerful presentations. Jenny Lawson chose the metaphor of "home", and gave us glimpses of the on-going struggle to find a new home in a new land. Home is a relationship, not a place. Whose home is it anyway? Chris Nicholls helped us search for an ecclesiology that would address the community beyond the church. He chose the medium of music, which can give voice to hopes, and give expression to the inexpressible. Discussion afterwards had to face tough questions like: For which specific communities is my theology intended? What are the sources for doing theology in Aotearoa-New Zealand? It comes down to such fundamental questions as "Who are we?"

Before the final service, we were reminded that this conference was a celebration of 50 years of the Faculty of Theology at Otago, but that it was also a "wake". As one commentator put it, the Faculty of Theology has been "savaged" by the University. From next year, the Faculty of Theology will be transformed into a Department of Theology and Religious Studies. In the past, the Faculty has been known for the role it played in the theology of New Zealand. Now, on its dissolution, it was creating a forum, where people could discuss key theological issues for this Oceanic region.

A meeting, such as the conference, allowed space for voices, which are often silenced in contemporary power plays. Surely it was not a simple matter. To bring such diverse groups into conversation requires politics of patience and trust. There can be surprises and disappointments. Some would have liked the Maori representatives to have had more impact in the conversation. But such a conversation pursues a method, which is not easily managed, for, in open conversation, the content is not presumed. We were reminded how we must reverence each other, even though, at times, it might feel as though we are walking on fields of eggshells. It was obvious at this conference that theology can be done differently. People have different ideas about the theological enterprise itself. Most are agreed that one has to go beyond shoring up the church. But then, what are the basic

questions for theology? Do they have to do with God talk, or lived faith, or ultimate questions (who are we?), or the "soul" of society, or with the paschal experience of suffering and vindication? The final service, with its rite of reconciliation, and the presentation of symbols from the past, and hope for the future, left one with a sense of expectation for further developments in Oceania.

The conference had its share of theological-political rhetoric. However, it was able to go beyond that, to focus on lived reality. This is essential, if one is to "do" theology. The questions were many, often leading to further questions about the nature of the theological enterprise. Often, it seemed as though we were only beginning. It will be necessary to continue. How will this happen, when the faculty has been dissolved? The greetings were still ringing in our ears, and we were already at the closing ceremony. More conferences of this type are needed. But, also, we need the on-going work of scholars and researchers, with courses on contextual theology in the theological colleges of the region.

Possibly, the conference raised more questions than it answered. This is the nature of a conference, based on conversation, rather than precooked papers. However, at some stage, the conversation must go beyond the questions, to involvement in the theological task, in specific contexts. We have such varied experiences. We have to work more on discovering metaphors that can carry theological meaning. We need to be in touch with the pulse of society, beyond the churches, and the communities influenced by our colleges. Thus, the dialogue must continue using every means possible. Traditional sources of theology have their place. But, those attending this conference, couldn't but be impressed by the rich diversity of theological sources in Oceania.

BOOK REVIEW

Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c1400-c1580*, **Princeton NJ: Yale University Press, 1992, 654 pages.**

Popular piety in pre-Reformation England makes for interesting reading. The following examples are not untypical: Rogationtide processions to banish evil spirits from the parish, the reading of special gospel texts at various points, to ensure the fertility of the land, the lighting of candles, gospel passages as written charms, the cult of the saints, and the use of relics (St Dorothy's comb, St Edmund's nail clippings), etc. And then there were indulgences. The case of Roger Legh (d.1506) was but one of the more bizarre examples. To ensure intercession for his soul, he had arranged that whoever prayed at his tomb gained a pardon of 26,000 years and 26 days!

Clearly, the Reformation was an event, whose time had come. That is certainly the conventional view. The medieval church was about to collapse under the weight of superstition and corruption, and the time was ripe for reform.

Not so, claims Duffy, in his acclaimed book on the subject. The author cautions against judging such matters by modern standards. "To a 20th-century eye, this is clearly a form of sympathetic magic" (p. 286). Duffy addresses the issues involved in a much more-graduated manner.

On the one hand, he readily concedes both the danger, and the fact, of excesses. "That is not to suggest that all such invocations remained within the bounds, even of 15th-century orthodoxy" (p. 283). But that is not a justification for the summary dismissal of such devotional practices.

On the contrary, they should be seen, and judged, in terms of their wider context. Duffy does not discuss the possible non-Christian origins of some such practices. But he insists that, in their current form, they were nothing more than traditional orthodox teaching, finding expression in terms of popular piety. Applying his thesis to the popular incantations, which could

be so easily dismissed as pagan, Duffy says: "My point is simply that the rhetoric and rationale at work, in such incantations, cannot sensibly be called pagan, instead, they represent the appropriation, and adaptation, to lay needs, and anxieties of a range of sacred gestures and prayers, along lines essentially faithful to the pattern established within the liturgy itself. This is not paganism, but lay Christianity" (p. 283).

The second part of Duffy's work is devoted to the Tudor reforms, which he subjects to some trenchant criticism. Basically, his thesis is that the Reformation does not live up to its name. By failing to take into account the vitality of contemporary religion, the reformers ended up suppressing legitimate expressions of belief, and thereby undermined what they set out to reform.

Others may judge the historical validity of Duffy's thesis. But *The Stripping* makes a profound theological point, and serves as an object lesson for anyone engaged in the work of contextualisation. It serves as a criticism of the iconoclasm of much of past-missionary strategy. It serves as a caution against the too-facile use of words like "superstition", "paganism", etc. And it serves as a challenge to the missionary, to ensure that the planting of the seed of the gospel does not involve the supplanting of indigenous beliefs.

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