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IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

The Melanesian Association of Theological Schools is pleased to announce that the new Executive Editor of the **Melanesian Journal of Theology** is

> Fr **Christopher Garland**, B.A., Cert.Ed., Ph.D., of Newton College, Popondetta.

All editorial correspondence, manuscripts and book reviews should now be sent to him at

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MATS thanks Fr Christopher for agreeing to contribute to its work in this important way and wishes him well with his new responsibilities.

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GUEST EDITORIAL

RELIGIOUS STUDIES AT TERTIARY LEVEL

*(A condensed version of this editorial was published in **The Times of Papua New Guinea.**)*

No sooner was the decision taken, now a good quarter of a century ago, to found a university in what was then the Territory of Papua New Guinea, than the question of religious studies arose. Missions and churches were anxious to provide appropriate religious information and atmosphere to students, most of whom had a Christian background, from their villages and earlier schooling. It soon became clear that this idea would run into insuperable obstacles. Australia was paying the bill. Naturally, to Australian academics, was given the task of determining the main outlines of the project, and the strictly secular character of Australian universities excluded any "intrusion" of religion into academia. Lengthy discussions took place, and papers were submitted. The issue was so important that, perhaps for the first time, official representatives of different churches sat together to plan a common strategy, but to no avail. The University of Papua New Guinea never developed a centre for theology.

Fortunately, religion has not been absent from the university. Facilities are provided for chaplains, and, especially through the enthusiastic work of men like Carl Loeliger and Garry Trompf, valuable research took place in the field of religious movements. Numerous articles and other publications provide an incredible amount of information on what has happened, and is happening, in the area that was their main interest. If this work is not somehow continued Papua New Guinea will lose track of important aspects of its own history. The Melanesian Institute in Goroka also must get credit for its contribution to this research. But all of that does not answer the needs seen by the churches in the 1960s, and seen by many today.

It would not be difficult to make a case for a Faculty of Divinity. "University" comes from the medieval ideal of a **universitas studiorum**, a centre where all scholarly work finds a home, and is

promoted; a place where research in all fields meets and interacts. If literature and history are open to scholarly and objective study, why not religion? Nothing would seem to be less in accordance with the openness of the scholarly mind than **a priori** excluding from the universality of our interest something so important to many people. Major universities in Great Britain, the United States, or the European continent, would not dream of doing away with their faculties of theology. Now that Papua New Guinea no longer has to follow the Australian model, one could argue that the time has come for a genuine Faculty of Divinity.

However, from the proposition that it is appropriate for a university to have a Faculty of Divinity, it does not follow that the University of Papua New Guinea should now go in that direction. Papua New Guinea has limited resources and many needs. Already a substantial part of the money available for education goes into tertiary institution, and the present government is even trying to reduce that part. We cannot do everything: it is a matter of weighing the costs of doing a thing here, and its importance for related areas of study, against the cost of sending students overseas. Apart from continuing research into religious movements and developments in Melanesia itself, what is there that can be done better here than elsewhere? Moreover, how big is the demand? How many students would, in fact, do graduate work here? The complaint has been made – and not without good grounds – that the churches are more enthusiastic in defending the need for religious studies than in sponsoring students for it. Until "market research" shows that sufficient students are going to come forward, it may be wiser to concentrate on what we can do well, and on what is more urgently needed.

In any case, would a graduate school of divinity answer our needs? First of all, what were, and what are, our needs? I would submit that the main need is for tertiary students to be able to gain, in religious matters, the level of insight and understanding they have in their own professional field. And this is a genuine need. Unfortunately, it is not rare to meet with sincerely religious, qualified people, of diploma and degree level, whose understanding of religion, their own and others', is of about grade four standard. And they are the first ones to regret it. Such people often express a desire to bring their

religious knowledge up to the level of their professional competence. And this can only be done if opportunities are provided on the same scholarly level, and in the same environment.

In some ways, this is not a typically Papua New Guinean problem. The level of specialisation required in many disciplines today easily leads to forming groups of specialists, who find it difficult to communicate with people in other disciplines. They see the world from only one angle, have a language of their own, and can barely imagine that other fields of study, using other methods and criteria, can be worth listening to. As Ricoeur has put it, they are no longer each others' contemporaries. One only has to think of nuclear physics and genetic engineering. More and more people today are beginning to discern here a major threat to civilisation: a world broken up into water-tight compartments of non-communication. The very thing a "university of studies" was designed to avoid.

In a few countries, solutions are sought in inter-disciplinary collaboration, or through so-called "inter-faculties". Students in the positive sciences have to do a few units of their choice in fields such as religion, philosophy, or ethics. Students in these areas have to do units in the science faculties. Or, philosophy and religion, themselves, become an "inter-faculty".

A solution suited to Papua New Guinea conditions may lie in a sort of institute or foundation, independent of, but loosely linked to, the university, to provide regular series of lectures on contemporary bible knowledge, ecumenical theology, and the achievements of inter-church dialogues, ethics, non-Christian religions, etc. Such an institute could function with only a moderate endowment built up from contributions by the churches, a public subscription, and perhaps a grant of an ecumenical agency. If should be controlled by a board, on which, with spokesmen for the churches, the university is represented, to ensure scholarly professionalism, with students' representatives, so as to make programs responsive to their needs.

One could object that the chaplains can take care of this matter, but their role is primarily a different one. Unless a thing of this sort is properly institutionalised, it will depend on personalities, and their

personal initiative. There is no assurance of continuity, no guarantee of quality.

At a later stage, if the institute proves viable, and of adequate standard, it could administer assessments. Eventually the university could consider giving credits for courses successfully followed, as is done in the case of other institutes today.

In October 1986, the Programme on Theological Education (PTE) of the World Council of Churches sponsored a high-level consultation in Geneva on theological education in the Pacific. While the consultation was mainly concerned with upgrading the Pacific Theological College in Suva, consulters expressed the need for a comprehensive vision of theological education in the entire area, i.e., including Melanesia. Another round of discussions on religious studies and theology is therefore probably imminent. I suggest that something like the institute mentioned above is worth considering as an alternative to campaigning in favour of a full graduate program that has little chance of success, and that promotes something, for which the need may be more symbolic than real.

Jan Snijders, Holy Spirit Seminary, Bomana.

THE RELIGIOUS STUDIES SAGA IN MELANESIA

Some Historical Background

John D'Arcy May

Paper read at a consultation on tertiary-level religious education in Melanesia, Goroka 2-5 April 1987.

As the Mandated Territories of Papua and New Guinea groped their way towards self-government, and eventual independence, in the early 1960s, it began to dawn on both the Administration and the churches that education standards were woefully inadequate.[1] Far-sighted people could already see that the need was going to be particularly urgent in the field of higher education, which did not then exist in the Territory. In a submission to the Honourable Paul Hasluck, Minister for Territories, in December 1962, the National Missionary Council of Australia (NMCA) drew the Administration's attention to the discrepancy between the number of pupils in schools run by the missions (170,120) and the Administration (20,396), and to the role of the churches in laying the foundations for academic standards in higher education. But the submission is mainly concerned with the religious and moral content of such education, and it proposes that the future university should include "halls of residence", on the model of British and Australian university colleges, to be run by the churches on a co-operative basis, in conjunction with a "faculty for religious studies", which would not only serve the churches' needs, but would open up the study of religion to any student. It was anticipated that courses would be offered in Biblical Literature, Semitic Studies, Comparative

[1] A memorandum, with neither date nor author's name, but probably stemming from London Missionary Society circles about the time of the emergence of the Papua Ekalesia in 1962,and in preparation for the Study Conference of the Continuation Committee of the Samoa Conference in Lae, 1963, highlights "accelerated political development", and mounting pressure from the more-aggressive post-war missions, as the Administration assumed more of the responsibility the churches had previously borne for education. It stresses co-operation among the churches, and training and research as the key needs of the future.

Religion, Theology, Christian Ethics, and History of the Christian Religion.[2]

In this paper, I should like to reconstruct, from documents in the archives of the Melanesian Council of Churches (MCC), the struggle to establish, first a faculty of theology, and, when that failed, lectureships in religious studies at the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG), drawing out the implications of these largely-fruitless efforts for the present deplorable state of higher religious education in Melanesia.

1. The Losing Battle for Theology at UPNG (1962-1972)

In the early 1960s, there were several initiatives to bring the various mission bodies and churches closer together, in order to present a united Christian front to the Administration.[3] The "Christian Council of Papua and New Guinea", meeting at Kwato Mission, 12 October 1962, resolved:

> That this meeting is of the opinion that the one Theological College proposed at Suva would not meet the needs of the whole South Pacific area, but that a College will be needed at Port Moresby also.[4]

Meanwhile, the "New Guinea Continuation Committee of the Samoa Conference" (NGCC), inspired by a Pacific-wide mission conference held in Western Samoa in 1961 under WCC auspices, met at the Lutheran Mission, Lae, 5-6 October 1962. Its secretary, Dr Ian Maddocks, of the Papuan Medical College, reported on the recommendations of the National Missionary Council of Australia, but the meeting went beyond these to resolve:

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[2] A report compiled by Revd Frank Engel, NMCA secretary, summarises a discussion on "The Churches and Education in Papua New Guinea", 15 July 1963, emphasising that "A partnership between church and state has existed actively since 1945."

[3] These initiatives eventually culminated in the founding of MCC in 1965; see John D'Arcy May, "Whatever Happened to the Melanesian Council of Churches? A Study in Ecumenical Organisation", **MJT** 1 (1985) 139-157, esp. 139-142.

[4] At a meeting in Suva, Fiji, 10-15 September 1962, detailed plans had been drawn up for a "United Theological College in the South Pacific", which became the present Pacific Theological College.

> There should be a Faculty of Theology in any and all of the universities of Papua New Guinea, and this must remain our ultimate aim.[5]

The Revd Frank Engel, general secretary of NMCA, accepted this, but reminded Maddocks that the "establishment of a united hall (or halls) of residence" remained a priority.[6] In a letter accompanying copies of the NMCA recommendations to the Minister for Territories, Engel expressed the hope that all concerned would "appreciate the need for speed in view of the pressure under which things are moving in the Territory".[7]

This sense of urgency led Maddocks and Engel to meet and correspond tirelessly with church leaders and members of the Interim Council of the future university over the next few years. Towards the end of 1966, Engel was still proposing to Maddocks: "The immediate and crucial matter is getting theological studies established in the University itself, even in the limited way proposed, so that it is in there from the start, and can grow with the University".[8] How right he was! But the same letter contains ominous signs that the task had become more difficult in the intervening years: "I am disturbed to hear rumours that the churches have gone cold on a Department of Religious Studies". As a preface to "Proposals for Higher Religious Education in the Territory University", circulated about this time, to rally the churches in the face of this growing indifference, the Currie Report on higher education is cited"

> The Commission . . . would be anxious to give the religious approach its due place; but it feels unable to put forward any very definite recommendations on the subject, primarily because it has not received from the Christian Missions any really clear consensus of opinion – except in very general ethical terms – of what is needed. (6.54)

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[5] The NGCC had received detailed reports on theological education from all over the Pacific, stemming from a consultation held in Suva, 7-13 May 1961.
[6] Engel to Maddocks, 1 November 1962.
[7] Engel, circular letter, 17 December 1962.
[8] Engel to Maddocks, 12 October 1966.

> . . . there should certainly be some place for religious, specifically Christian, studies in the university; but that place cannot well be determined until the Missions have worked out more precisely what their real desiderata are. (6.71)[9]

In a letter to Maddocks, Prof. P. H. Karmel, chairman of the university's Interim Council, warned discreetly:

> There are a number of important issues to be resolved in relation to the academic teaching of religion, and it seems preferable to examine these further before a Board of Religious Studies is established. If the Board were established before these issues are resolved, there could be certain difficulties.[10]

Circulating this to his colleagues, on what had, by now, become the "Inter-church Committee for Liaison with the University" (ICCLU), Maddocks commented:

> I may be unduly sensitive on this point, but I feel that deeper than the purely academic antagonism to Religious Studies, there was, for some members of the Council, the feeling that one of the tasks of a University in Papua and New Guinea is to redress the over-emphasis on religion which has been going on now in New Guinea for so long.

At a meeting of the ICCLU, 11 June 1966, "The reluctance of the Interim Council to discuss the matter of religious studies was noted"

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[9] A hand-written note at the foot of a page of this document, probably by Maddocks, reports Engel as suggesting that the churches initially propose religious subjects as part of the Arts course; "Indicate that **later** will ask for a degree course. Don't frighten them – if all the students are theology students they'll scare." This advice undercuts the proclaimed intention of going all-out for a theology faculty, and was, perhaps, a fatal hesitation at a decisive moment. In an undated response to the "Proposals", the then Evangelical Lutheran Church of New Guinea/Lutheran Mission stated: "We would not be opposed to the establishment of a Department of Theology within the University if the other churches and missions in the Territories of Papua and New Guinea desire such a department. However, we believe that such a Department of Theology would not take care of our responsibilities to supply higher theological training within ELCONG." The Lutherans declared themselves ready to co-operate in providing a lecturer for a Department of Religion, and tutors for Residential Colleges.

[10] Karmel to Maddocks, 21 February 1966.

and discussed. Those concerned were beginning to realise that there was a certain lack of enthusiasm, possibly on both sides, because of doubts about whether religious studies was a respectable academic discipline.

Engel had anticipated these doubts, and he was doing his utmost to dispel them. He was in touch with those, especially the Revd Davis McCaughey, Master of Ormond College in the University of Melbourne, who were exploring the possibility of setting up departments of theology at Melbourne and Monash Universities,[11] but, while welcoming this new development on the traditionally secularist Australian scene, he warned that "it is quite unwarranted to erect, within the Territory, a university which is 'Australian', rather than one which is built into the ancient and modern history and traditions of the peoples of New Guinea". In the same letter, he makes the important point that "the secular nature of a modern university" implies "secularity of control", not manipulation of the curriculum in such a way as to exclude the study of religion.[12] Responding to the minutes of the inaugural meeting of MCC, 23-24 June 1965, he declares himself "a little worried that the proposal for an Institute of Higher Theological Education seems to be an alternative to the Department of Religious Studies. . . . I hope you think very carefully about this."[13] Here, too, there was much wisdom in his warnings.

After holding consultations in Rabaul, Madang, and Port Moresby in 1965, which involved members of the Australian Council of Churches, the Melanesian Council of Churches, the Roman Catholic church, and the Evangelical Alliance,[14] the ICCLU finally proposed the setting up of a Board of Religious Affairs and Education for the University, on which "all Christian missions and churches should be

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[11] Letters from McCaughey to the Vice-Chancellor of Monash, 15 November 1965, and to Maddocks, 31 January 1966, and a proposal for a Department of Theology in the University of Melbourne, dated 1959, are extant.

[12] Engel to Maddocks, 5 May 1966.

[13] Engel to Maddocks, 12 October 1966.

[14] It is worth noting that the Unevangelised Fields Mission, the Churches of Christ Mission, the Baptist Union, and Christian Mission in Many Lands gave their assent to these proposals. In his letter of 23 April 1987, granting permission to publish his memorandum (section no. 16), Frank Engel wrote: "I have rarely, if ever, experienced a meeting that moved so smoothly and rapidly and harmoniously."

represented, either directly or indirectly". Somewhat surprisingly, in the light of previous discussions, the churches agreed "that we do not wish to establish or run Residential Colleges, either denominationally or together", but "In anticipation of degree courses beginning in 1967, we urge the establishment of a Department of Religious Studies in that year. We recognise a difference between training for the ministry and university theological training. We do not expect the University to train our clergy"; rather, religious subjects should be offered to the general student.[15] In support of this, but going considerably beyond it, Engel sent detailed and cogently-argued submissions on the practicality and academic necessity of including the study of theology and religion in the new university, right from the start.[16] In his accompanying letter to the ICCLU, however, Engel warned that some members of the Interim Council "would sooner avoid the issue, and so be free to spend the money on something else",[17] and this is indeed what happened: departments of political science and philosophy were given preference.[18]

What finally emerged from all these efforts was even more discouraging. There was to be no United Theological Institute or Faculty of Theology, no Department of Religious Studies, no church-run Residential College, not even a university chapel; and the eventual solution has proved as unviable as most of these would have been.

2. The Rise and Fall of Religious Studies at UPNG (1972-1987)

A minute from the Vice-Chancellor of the newly-created University of Papua New Guinea, Dr John Gunther, to the Interim Council, communicated to Maddocks in March 1967, mentions his

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[15] Memorandum, Port Moresby, 5 February 1966.

[16] Frank G. Engel, "A Case for a Department of Religious Studies in the University of Papua New Guinea", an historical document, which still deserves close study and is, therefore, published for the first time in this issue of **MJT**, pp. 22; see also "A Practical Consideration Relating to the Establishment of a Department of Religious Studies in the University of Papua New Guinea" by Engel, and a document with neither name nor date, probably a year or two earlier, entitled "The Missions and a Papua New Guinea University".

[17] Engel to ICCLU, 12 October 1966.

[18] Dr John Gunther, Vice-Chancellor of UPNG, to Maddocks, 31 March 1967.

discussions with Dr Charles Forman of Yale University on the subject of religious education in the Pacific. From these, it is already clear that what the university was really thinking of was the appointment of a lecturer in religious studies to an appropriate department, such as philosophy or social anthropology. Both Maddocks and Fr Pat Murphy SVD, President of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools, founded in 1969, had carried on a lengthy correspondence with the Theological Education Fund of WCC, and this, too, tended more and more in the direction of funding lectureships rather than founding institutions. Dr Shoki Coe had represented TEF at a meeting of the "Interim Council of the Union Theological Institute" (one of several metamorphoses of ICCLU), 11 May 1970, at which he stated that "TEF is prepared to act as a catalyst in getting the project going".[19] This was taken to mean that TEF was prepared to commit funds, which was confirmed at a subsequent meeting with Dr James Bergquist, director of TEF, in 1972. In notes on a conversation he had with Dr Bergquist the next day, 27 February 1972, Patrick Murphy sums up: "The shift away from the Union Theological Institute to lectureships does away with the need to create a new centre, with new buildings, involving capital costs. . . . It is recognised that there are certain risks involved, and that there is a call for faith in the face of a now-or-never opportunity". In other words: the lectureships were a last-ditch stand to save a deteriorating situation.

Looked at from another point of view, however, that of the university in its secular setting, "the two lectureships were the first to be established in any Australasian university, an important development, partly affecting the subsequent situation in the south".[20] In 1970, Dr Vincent Van Nuffell became lecturer in comparative religion with the department of anthropology. In 1972, the two lecturers funded by TEF and the local churches, Dr Garry Trompf and Dr Carl Loeliger, joined the history department to lecture in religious

[19] Quoted by Bishop David Hand at a later meeting of the "Inter-Church Committee for Religious Studies within UPNG" (yet another metamorphosis of ICCLU!), 26 February 1972, with Dr James Bergquist, Director of TEF. Frank Engel writes (23 April 1987) that he was instrumental in arranging for Dr Charles Forman of Yale, and Dr Van Dusen, President of Union Theological Seminary New York, to speak to Dr Gunther about religious studies in 1967.

[20] Report by Garry W. Trompf on "The Condition of Religious Studies at the University of Papua New Guinea", 1985.

studies. By the end of 1973, the three lecturers were able to report considerable progress, their courses having attracted students, modest in numbers, but outstanding in ability.[21] Van Nuffell's courses on world religions proved least attractive to Papua New Guinea students.[22] But when the contracts of Trompf and Loeliger came up for renewal at the end of 1974, the "Churches' Council for University Religious Studies" (as ICCLU had, by then, become) expressed great satisfaction with the way they had adapted their courses to the needs of their Papua New Guinean students, and urged continuation of the lectureships, with Trompf's to be funded internally by the university, and Loeliger's by the churches.[23] This is, in fact, what happened; and Trompf and Loeliger went on to become two of the most-noted authorities on Melanesian religion, and its relation to Christianity.

When Trompf left in 1977, followed by Loeliger in 1982, though both returned for shorter period to "hold the fort", Trompf as Professor of History in 1983-1985, and Loeliger in 1984, the localisation of their positions by John Kadiba and John Waiko proved to be only temporary.[24] In the meantime, the basis for having religious studies taught at UPNG, and at Goroka Teachers' College, was undermined by two circulars from the government Department of Education in 1976. The one concerning primary education did not mention religious instruction, and the one on secondary schools stated laconically: "religious studies is deleted".[25] This contravened both the 1967 Agreed Syllabus and the 1970 Education Ordinance, and the ensuing outcry led to submissions by the churches, a motion introduced into parliament by Mr Martin ToVadek on 23 November 1976, and meetings of the

[21] Some of the names of students listed for these courses are of interest, in the light of later developments: Pedi Anis, William ToKilala, Joshua Daimoi, Wellington Jojoga, Utula Samana; in his report, Trompf mentions many more, and lists their publications.

[22] Van Nuffell is said to have lectured on subjects such as Egyptian religion "without reference to the situation in PNG" (Fr Kees vander Geest SVD, commenting on a Memorandum on Tertiary Religious Education in PNG, 17 August 1986). This did not go down well with the Melanesian students, and perhaps helps to explain the churches' reservations about "comparative religion".

[23] Aide-memoire, 20 April 1974, under the name of Fr Pat Murphy SVD, as Secretary of CCURS.

[24] Further details of these moves will be found in Trompf, "The Condition of Religious Studies . . ."

[25] Reported in a history paper by Peter Bolger, "Who Will Control Religious Education in Papua New Guinea?" October 1977, p. 6.

Churches' Education Council with the secretary of the Education Department, Mr A. Tololo.[26] But the incident was symptomatic of an attitude prejudicial towards the teaching of religion in government institutions, and, within the university, this led to religious studies' having to be constantly on the defensive, "because European academics, with a personal antipathy toward religion, are prone to use it as a 'spittle pit' ", in Trompf's characteristically colourful phrase. He goes on: "The discipline's teachers have been branded 'missionaries', even though they have preserved the highest canons of social scientific analysis, and adopt the historical and phenomenological approach to materials.".[27]

This insistence on scientific standards, however, draws criticism of a different kind from representatives of the churches:

> Has the Religious Studies section of UPNG been pushed into a narrow historical and phenomenological refuge by what Paul Ricoeur calls the terrorism of the positivists? If, contrary to what is the case in great universities all over the world, there is no adequate place for theology in the university of this country, then that university has become the hostage of narrow-minded academics, who are insensitive to the profound religious and Christian concerns of the large majority of Papua New Guineans. . . . Again, the question must be asked whether too high a price has been paid for being in the university at all. . . . The narrowing of its field of interest by abandoning proper theological work, and the limiting of its audience to foundation courses (apart from those who take on RS as a subject).[28]

These pointed comments shed a clear light on the dilemma facing us today, but, in a rather disconcerting way, they also bring us full circle to the debates on the churches' proper role in education, which characterised the early 1960s. At an ICCLU meeting held at St

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[26] Cf. Bolger, "Who Will Control . . . ?", p. 7-8.

[27] Trompf, "The Condition . . .", p. 7-8

[28] Dr Jan Snijders SM, then Dean of Studies, and lecturer in philosophy at Holy Spirit Seminary, in a comment on Trompf's report presented to MCC, 10 December 1985, p. 2. He sums up: "The RS section could not develop into a sort of graduate school for theologians unless it becomes frankly theological. In which case, it would acquire an entirely new attraction for the churches."

Joseph's School, Boroko, 11 June 1966, a Mr Dunstone saw the task as "to train people for the logical and proper teaching of religion", and he averred "that if the university decided that the best man for such a position was an atheist, we must be prepared to accept an atheist". He was answered by a Mr Brewer, who said: "As the old New Guinea order crumbles, theological questions are going to come up. Only the university offers a place to sort them out, and offers a chance to give some theological lead to a new society. If the university bows out of this, it leaves the field open to warring sects." Both positions are as true today as they were then. But how can they be reconciled?

3. Theology or Religious Studies: What Do We Want?

We must begin be questioning the "or" in the heading of this section, for nothing is so unfruitful as false dichotomies, which lead us astray by suggesting contradictions that are only apparent. It is easy to make the "subjective", "committed" study of the religious tradition one was brought up in, or to which one has converted, appear incompatible with the "objective", "neutral" study of other people's traditions, and the assumption that this must be so has played a disproportionate role in the debates we have just surveyed. In Melanesia, the alleged opposition between theology and religious studies has been reinforced by the conviction, instilled in many Melanesians, whether educated or not, by missionaries and theology lecturers, whether intentionally or not: that you can be **either** Melanesian **or** Christian, but not both.[29]

Both "doing theology" and "studying religion" can, and should, be done ecumenically, using dialogue, not as a missionary method, or a spare-time activity, but as a technique for understanding both oneself and others. Every religious tradition develops its own techniques of self-interpretation and identity-maintenance, and dialogue must shift from the level of mere comparison and exchange of information to this more self-reflective level, which Christians would call "theological", and which more generally would be called "hermeneutical". In the case of societies based on tribal kinship patterns, such as those of Melanesia,

[29] This was emphasised by a theology lecturer of many years' experience in PNG, Dr John Strelan, formerly of Martin Luther Seminary, in a recent letter to the author, 16 October 1986.

"religion" is not immediately differentiated from "culture", so those coming from other contexts in which religion is institutionalised, and relies on literatures and systems of abstract thought, must develop further techniques for interpreting myth and ritual as media of consensus-formation and religious expression.[30] To think of "world religions" as autonomous entities, and of "Christianity", or "the gospel", as superior to all others, because absolute, with regard to history, and uncontaminated by cultures, is a serious distortion of both theology and the study of religion.[31]

Frank Engel's memorandum of 1966 may be dated in some respects, but basically he was right: there can be no possible objection, whether in principle, or by precedent, to theology – so long as it is truly ecumenical in the sense outlined above – taking its place alongside other subjects in the "secular" university; indeed, where this is the case,

[30] Some of the issues involved in doing this are discussed by John D'Arcy May, "Consensus in Religion: An Essay in Fundamental Ecumenics", **Journal of Ecumenical Studies** 17 (1980) 407-431.

[31] Cf. John D'Arcy May, "Essence – Identity – Liberation: Three Ways of Looking at Christianity", **Religious Traditions** 6 (1984) 30-41, and the sensitive treatment of the methodological issued by Robert B. Crotty, **Religious Studies in a Tertiary Secular Institution**, Salisbury College of Advanced Education Occasional Paper No. 12 March 1976.

it is to the mutual benefit of the university, the churches, and society.[32] It is a matter of priorities and values – and of the will to implement them. The religious studies saga in Melanesia is, thus, not merely a dispute over formalities among a few academics and church people, but a symptom of the way the newly-independent nations of this part of the Pacific are developing.

[32] There are, of course, genuine differences between the roles of the seminaries and the university in religious education, and they are conveniently summarised in a communication from MATS dated 1972: 1. The academic vs. the situational approach to theology; 2. The Western vs. the Third World setting for advanced studies; 3. Degree- vs. non-degree-oriented study. The pastoral training of ministers or priests does not make the same demands on academic prowess as the professional study of theology and religion. A useful discussion of these issues will be found in the proceedings of a MATS-TEF consultation, **Theological Education in Melanesia Today** (Goroka: The Melanesian Institute, **Point** No. 1, 1976), attended by Dr James Bergquist.

A CASE FOR A DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Frank G. Engel

This paper was written in 1966 in support of proposals to establish a department of theology and religious studies in the University of Papua New Guinea; see previous article. It is published here for the first time with Revd Engel's permission.

A case for a Department of Religious Studies in a modern university rests fundamentally on the fact that theology is a legitimate academic discipline. It is so because it consists of a definite body of knowledge, which is studied with the scholarly skills and methods appropriate to a university.

In this paper, the term is used to include biblical studies, church history, the development of Christian doctrine, and comparative religion. Each of these is a clearly-defined field of work, with plenty of material for exact study and historical investigation. "They can all be studied in a divinity faculty, with the same vigour or finesse as these, or analogous, studies are carried on in other arts faculties; they require the cultivation of a wide variety of skills and types of insight; and there is no intrinsic reason why they should not be studied with the same freedom from bias and dogmatic assumptions."[1] Indeed, as Sir Walter Moberly pointed out in **Crisis in the University**,[2] "By any ordinary standard of academic eminence, Lightfoot, Westcott and Hort, or Driver and Sanday, or Hoskyns and Dodd, or overseas such men as Barth and Brunner, Dibelius and Berdyaev, Maritain and Niebuh, can challenge comparison with any. Also, to the main point at issue, which is the credibility of the Christian faith, they have devoted a considerably higher quantity and quality of attention than have most of

[1] A. R. Vidler, **Crisis in the Humanities** (London: Penguin Books, 1964) 85.
[2] W. Moberly, **Crisis in the University** (London: SCM Press, 1949) 288.

their critics. We conclude that theology is a legitimate subject of university study. And, if legitimate, it is also imperative. . . ."

Daniel Jenkins, writing in Britain in 1946, went so far as to say that "the deliberate exclusion of theology from the curriculum of some universities is a mark of spiritual provincialism, which, to that extent, detracts from the title of these institutions to be considered as forms of the **universitas."**[3]

It should also be made clear, at once, that there is no place for the view that theology should be present in the university to counteract the evil influences of some other departments. As Mr W. Ginnane has said firmly, "if **this** is the vision that is had of theology (i.e., one of directing, admonishing, judging, and rectifying the other disciplines) then it is quite impossible that it should be a discipline in the university, as we now understand it."[4]

In addition to the fundamental reason that theology is a creditable academic discipline, the case for a department of religious studies in the University of Papua New Guinea rests on some particular considerations, which arise from within the Territory itself. These are discussed in the first section of this paper. They are followed by a section called "Some General Considerations". In it, two of the main objections to the inclusion of theology, and two problems connected with its admission, are discussed.

1. Some Considerations Applying to Papua New Guinea

Various reasons for the inclusion of religious studies in the University were put before the Commission on Higher Education in Papua New Guinea. The Commission included the following reasons in its Report:

1) In a rather special sense, Papua and New Guinea is "a Christian country". This derives from the fact that its history since effective European contact has been, from the

[3] D. Jenkins, **The Place of a Faculty of Theology in the University of Today** (London: SCM Press, 1946) 14.
[4] W. Ginnane, **The Morpeth Papers**, 21.

indigenous point of view, largely a Christian history. . . . (6.55)

2) Although half the population is still animist, . . . the fact remains that, so far as any world outlook has replaced the old tribal cosmogonies, so far as there has been any coherent reintegration of beliefs, it has been in Christian terms. (6.55)

3) . . . Western civilisation and culture have been presented largely, even mainly, under Christian auspices. (6.55)

4) . . . until now, the formative intellectual influences on most educated Papuans and New Guineans have been received in schools with a strongly avowed Christian bias. (6.57)[5]

5) And, indeed, the insistence of indigenous leaders that theirs is, and should, remain a Christian country is most striking. (6.57)

6) The Missions represent the only sizeable body of informed opinion on education, apart from the Administration, and the ministry of the church is an important and influential calling for indigenous people. (3.26)

The Commission, therefore, concluded that "a university which allowed no place for religious studies would be seriously incomplete in a Territory context; though it would be a disservice to the people were such studies conceived of in narrowly-sectarian, or unduly dogmatic, terms" (6.57).

The Commission went on to say it believed "that both clauses in the preceding sentence would be endorsed by all the major Missions"

[5] As at March 1965, missions were still responsible for two-thirds of the students enrolled: of the 201,069 children enrolled in primary, technical, and secondary schools, 134,381 were in mission schools, compared with 66,688 in administration schools. In addition, missions had 55,000 others in "exempted" primary schools. The comparable figures for 1963, as in the Commission's report, are: missions 110,450; administration 40,600; and 68,700 in "exempted" schools.

(6.58). This has, subsequently, been shown to be the case, by the consultation of seven churches and missions, in June 1965, at Port Moresby. These were in order of size, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Anglican, Papua Ekalesia, Baptist, and The Salvation Army. Together, their adherents number just over half the population of the Territory. Together, they set up the Inter-church Committee for Liaison with the University. And together, they agreed on the subjects which might be included in the curriculum of the university. This was in response to the invitation of the Commission on Higher Education to clarify their position.

The Commission had said: "To sum up: in the Commission's view, there should certainly be some place for religious, specifically Christian, studies in the University; but that place cannot well be determined until the Missions have worked out more precisely what their real desiderata are" (6.71).

The Inter-church Consultation proposed:

1. that there be a Department of Religious Studies.

2. that the Head of the Department be appointed by the University; but that his acceptability to the churches and Missions should be ascertained by reference to a permanent advisory body, as suggested by the Commission in 6.70. The Consultation, taking up that suggestion, proposed that this body be a statutory university authority, with a majority of University representatives, and with representation, direct or indirect, of all Christian churches and missions; and that it be called the Board of Religious Affairs and Education.

3. that the difference between professional training for the ministry, and university theological studies, be recognised, and the university be concerned only with the latter.

4. that the initial aim of the Department of Religious Studies be to provide subjects for general students of any Faculty.

5. that the four subjects suggested in the Commission's Report be included in the courses offered by the Department of Religious Studies, viz.:

    a) Biblical Studies

    b) Church History

    c) History of Theology, and Scholastic Philosophy, as alternatives

    d) Comparative Religion

6. that it also be part of the task of the Department of Religious Studies to plan courses for students in theology; and to conduct examinations, both external and internal, as the Department sees the need, and in consultation with the Board of Religious Affairs and Education.

It will be noted that the subjects were named, and not described in detail, as that would be the prerogative of the Department. The names bear a fairly generally accepted connotation within theological circles. The question of whether biblical studies would include biblical languages was left open.

No attempt was made to set down how soon, or in what order, the above proposals should be implemented, or when or whether the Department might develop into a Faculty. The Department and the University Council would have to decide these matters, in the light of practical possibilities and the future development of the University. It was nevertheless hoped that a Department would be established soon.

2. Some General Considerations

The discussion in Papua New Guinea is but part of a discussion going on in many countries. In some places, notably the United Kingdom, the discussion has resulted in departments and faculties of theology being established in several modern universities. Of 26

universities in the United Kingdom and Eire, 12 have faculties of theology, 9 have departments and only 5 have neither. There are 216 full-time theological teachers in these universities, of whom 72 are professors.[6]

It is interesting, and significant, that the Report of the Higher Education Mission to the South Pacific, in recommending the establishment of the University of the South Pacific, included theology as one of the initial departments, and recommended that the initial staffing include a senior lecturer and one lecturer in theology (Paragraphs 176, 177).

At the present time, discussion is going on in Sydney, Melbourne, and elsewhere, in regard to theological studies, while Queensland already has a Faculty and Sydney has a Board of Studies in Divinity. In 1966, the Australian Society for Theological Studies was established "to promote the interests of theology within the academic world, through the goodwill and interest of academics".

While these facts prove nothing in relation to Papua New Guinea, they indicate that the proposal for a Department of Religious Studies is not such an unusual or special case as might be thought. The natural tendency of Australian academics to consider the matter purely against the historical background and assumptions of Australian secular universities can, in fact, be misleading.

3. Some Difficulties

There remain, however, some intellectual difficulties about the admission of religious studies into a modern university. These cannot be ignored.

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[6] Details of the universities and subjects can be seen in Appendices I, III, and IV of **The Morpeth Papers**. Appendix I also lists faculties in Canada, USA, South Africa, and New Zealand. In addition to those in that list, there are departments in several African universities in which English is the language used. These include the Universities of Ghana, Nigeria, Ibadan, Ife, East Africa (at both Nairobi and Makerere), and Basutoland (or Lesotho), and the University Colleges of Sierra Leone and Rhodesia (see **Director: Theological Schools in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, and the South Pacific,** issued by the Theological Education Fund, New York).

In the case of Manchester University, there was a serious discussion prior to the institution of the Faculty of Theology in 1902.[7] In Australia, two important papers were published in **Melbourne Studies in Education 1963**,[8] by E. J. Stormon, Rector, St. Thomas More College, WA and J. D. McCaughey, Master, Ormond College, Melbourne. They write, respectively, on "Inadequacies in the Concept of Neutrality" and "Tradition and Freedom in Education". An even more recent contribution is **The Morpeth Papers** on theology and tertiary education, referred to above, which were read at the Bishop of Newcastle's Conference on Theological Education, 1966. The contributors include both Roman Catholics and Protestants, as in the case in the Melbourne Studies.

Similarly, in 1964, there was published by Darton, Longman & Todd, London, **Theology and the University: An Ecumenical Investigation,** edited by John Coulson. Initiated by Roman Catholics, it consists of papers given by Anglicans, Free Churchmen, and Roman Catholics at an ecumenical symposium under the auspices of Downside Abbey. It begins: "theology can choose; it can remain dead and neglected, or take the pressure of the times and live: but if it chooses life it has need of three things: a university setting, lay participation, and the ecumenical dialogue".

The Editor goes on to describe the book as "not a manifesto, but the testing of a hypothesis before a tribunal of expert witnesses", and cautions against wrenching passages "out of their context for purposes of polemic". While heeding this, it can be said that the papers on "The Existing Practice in British Universities", and the final one on "Proposals for the Teaching of Theology in an English University", contain much material relevant to the Papua New Guinea discussion. It may be useful to quote three main principles enunciated and applied in the final paper:

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[7] More recently, the present occupant of a Manchester Chair, Professor Gordon Rupp, has contributed a relevant essay in **Christianity in Education**, the Hibbert Lectures for 1965, published by Allen & Unwin.

[8] E. L. French, ed., **Melbourne Studies in Education 1963** (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1963).

1. There must be a combination of teaching and research: this is the basis of English university studies, and theology should be no exception.

2. In teaching theology, lectures should be combined with seminar discussion: this is essential for theology, because it is concerned both with what is given in divine revelation, and with what is found in human experience. This has some bearing on the complex problem of collaboration in teaching between the clerical and lay sections of the Christian community.

3. The whole faculty must be ecumenical in spirit: not simply because this is demanded by circumstances, but because the divided Christian communities are not self-sufficient: each needs the others.[9]

To come, then, to some of the difficulties. There are at least four which require attention. These can be expressed in four questions:

1. Would not the introduction of religious studies betray the secular nature of the University?

2. Is theology a proper object of academic study?

3. Would not a department of religious studies become simply a centre of Christian propaganda?

4. Is there any real possibility of Roman Catholics and Protestants accepting each other as colleagues in such a department, and allowing a Catholic to teach Protestants, and vice versa?

Let us consider each of these.

1. The Secular nature of the University. This is a treasured achievement and characteristic of Australian universities. It has its

[9] Laurence Bright OP, **Theology in the University**, 269.

roots in the sectarian jealousies and controversies of the 19th century, when the Universities of Sydney and Melbourne were founded. Dr R. L. Sharwood, Warden of Trinity College, Melbourne, has recently discussed the controversy in Melbourne, in 1910, over a proposal for a School of Theology.[10] He writes:

> The central propositions of all these arguments (against the proposal) are, I think, fairly clear: that systematic theological studies would necessarily involve dogmatic teaching in matters of religious belief, and such dogmatic teaching would at once raise sectarian quarrels. Both propositions, if true, would certainly warrant the conclusion that theology had no place in a University. While one may concede the second, however, one must reject the first. Theological studies **may** be linked with dogmatic instruction in matter of religious belief, and in many seminaries probably are, but this is not of necessity. Objective theological scholarship was an established fact in numerous overseas universities long before these Melbourne debates of 1910. It was even well-entrenched at the University of London, the very institution which had been taken as the model of a secular university by the founders of Melbourne and Sydney – an irony which the memorialists were not slow to underline.
>
> Another subsidiary argument, which lurked in these debates, was that it was improper for a university to have anything to do with the professional training of ministers of religion. Again, it was not an argument which can survive examination. In the first place, the University had shown no reluctance to train for other professions. In the second place, the argument wrongly assumed that theological studies must be sectarian and dogmatic. And, finally, the University was already, in any case, assisting in the professional training of ministers of religion through its other Faculties, notably Arts, and thus (to adopt the language of the counter-memorial) applying a portion of the public revenue, and engaging the resources of a public agency, to forward the attainment of an end connected with religion.[11]

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[10] R. L. Sharwood, **The Morpeth Papers**, 5 ff.
[11] **Op. cit.,** 6-7.

Dr Sharwood goes on to point out an unfortunate consequence of the refusal of Australian universities to admit theology. "Thus if Australian Theology has acquired that character which universities and governments have most feared and disliked – if it is, overall, sectarian and seminarial, and second-rate – this is, in a large part, because the policy of universities and governments has allowed it to be no other. It has never really had a chance. It has been caught at this point in a vicious circle."[12]

A main stumbling block in Melbourne in 1910 was that the Roman Catholic church did not desire any change. The fear of sectarianism was, therefore, heightened. Today, this is no longer relevant, either in Australia or in Papua New Guinea, owing to the changed relationships between the Roman Catholic and other churches. Even prior to the new ecumenical spirit engendered by the Second Vatican Council, there was growing co-operation, as, for example, in Queensland, which led to the introduction of religious studies there as far back as 1940.

It is proper that a university insist on an ecumenical approach to theological studies. Such insistence can now be met by the churches, and they do so, not simply out of deference to university authority, but out of Christian conviction. "Ecumenism springs from something deeper than the mere wish to get together; it springs from the realisation that no man, no church, possesses the fullness of theological truth, or ever will: that fullness resides in the mind of Christ, who is Lord of all, and, in this life, our share of it is only partial. . . ."[13]

There, nevertheless, remains the ingrained reluctance of many Australian university leaders to depart from the strictly secular nature of the university. With respect, however, it must be suggested that such a view is not soundly based. Being an inherited view, arising from historical controversy, it rarely leads to serious consideration as to what it is that confers on a university a secular nature. In fact, a university is secular, not because of the subjects it teaches or does not teach. It is secular not because it has no relations of any kind with religious bodies and institutions. It is secular because its authority and control is

[12] **Op. cit.,** 8.
[13] L. Bright, **Theology in the University**, 277 ff.

secular. It is not the content of its curriculum, but the nature of its constitutional authority, and of its controlling body, which make it a secular institution, and guarantee its continuing secularity. Even the presence of a few ecclesiastical leaders on a university council in no way alters the secular control of the institution, in so far as they are there primarily as university men or community leaders. Alteration would only occur if they were there as official representatives of churches, with sufficient power to introduce religious domination. Secularity means, in essence, freedom from religious control, and it is this which makes a university a free community. Granted this, not even a complete faculty of theology can threaten the secular nature of the university.

2. Is theology a proper object of academic study? It is often assumed, in academic circles, that theology is not a proper object of study in a university. This assumption rests on one or more of several bases. It is, in part, a legacy of the sectarian controversies of the 19th century, which led academics to believe that theology was not one but many. Consequently, and correctly, it was felt that a university could not choose between a Catholic and a Protestant theology, or between various Protestant ones.

The assumption also rests on memories of the science and religion controversy of last century. It is assumed that theology is antiscientific and obscurantist, because some clerics took such attitudes to Darwin.

Again, there is often ignorance of the extent and quality of the exact and careful literary and historical criticism of biblical literature in the last 100 years, or of the intellectual integrity and stature of the leading theologians of Europe, Britain, and America, of whom there have been an unusual number in this century, most of whom have worked from within universities.

Of more importance, as an objection, is the view that theology is primarily a matter of religious belief. It is, therefore, a personal matter, in which individuals are free to become involved, and about which they are free to differ. It is, consequently, an appropriate subject for debate in a university philosophical club, or for study in one of the student

religious societies, but not in a university course; for it is a collection of personal opinions and convictions, and not an object for academic study.

This view rests on a misunderstanding of the difference between personal religious belief and theological study. The difference is put succinctly by Mr W. Ginnane, of the Philosophy Department of the Australian National University: "Doctrines may be **de fide**, i.e., a person may commit himself to, assent to, a certain doctrine as a matter of faith, and his church may require this of him. But, when we talk about **theology**, we talk not so much about doctrines being adhered to as a matter of faith, but rather about analyses, the drawing of conclusions, the testing of hypotheses, and so on. And this is a human activity subject to canons of criticism."[14]

Earlier in the same paper, Mr Ginnane stated that theology today has three characteristics, which entitle it to be properly at a university. It has an agreed subject matter; it embodies an agreed public notion of testability, i.e., it has commonly useable, and interchangeable, procedures of analysis and verification; it has an agreed and defensible set of standards of excellence of performance.[15]

This opinion could be substantiated by reference to the 60 years' experience of theology as a faculty by the University of Manchester, or by examination of the published theological writings of such scholars as Charles Raven of Cambridge, Karl Barth of Basel, Jacques Maritain of Princeton, and Nicholas Berdyaev, to name only some of the better-known names of the Anglican, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, and Russian Orthodox traditions in the first part of this century. Significantly, one has to stop to think before stating their church affiliation, because modern theology has been an international and ecumenical activity for a century or more. The influence of each of these on the others has not been slight. No modern theologian can work within the limits of his own denominational tradition. As in philosophy, so in theology, there are differences of opinion, and schools of thought, but these are schools of a single discipline. "One sees no

[14] W. Ginnane, "Theology in the University", **The Morpeth Papers**, 25; cf. R. L. Sharwood, as quoted above (n. 10).
[15] **Op. cit.,** 24.

reason why the dialogue between theologians of different traditions, which is taking place in the larger world, should not be reproduced in small within the university. It has not proved impossible elsewhere, and there is no reason to think it would be impossible here."[16]

Another objection to the admission of theology into a university is that this would involve a departure from the neutrality and objectivity which have long been cherished by Australian universities. The fact is, however, that the adequacies of both of these concepts is now seriously disputed. For example, in writing of the nature of the university today, Professor David P. Derham says:

> The matters for enquiry, and the questions for debate, include many which do not respond to neutrality. Men will not be neutral in treating of them, and they should not be asked to pretend neutrality. That they should be as objective in the assessment of the materials with which they work as their self-discipline permits, goes without saying when the purpose is rational enquiry.[17]

In the same volume, Dr J. D. McCaughey takes "the view that objectivity in any form of education is logically and psychologically impossible; and that an attitude of neutrality is equally so, but, in addition, is dangerous, in that it does not foster the virtue of tolerance. Neutrality is, in fact, the opposite of freedom, with which it is so often confused."[18]

Or again, if, as Professor Derham states, "neutrality has meant, in the main, not taking sides on issues which, at any given time, are likely to divide the community in passionate partisanship", then, today, theology is hardly to be numbered amongst such issues, both because of the indifference to it in society, and the ecumenical approach to it in the churches.

The chief issue should no longer be the exclusion of theology, but the re-thinking of the concepts and possibilities of neutrality and

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[16] E. J. Stormon, **Melbourne Studies in Education 1963**, 60.
[17] D. P. Derham, **Melbourne Studies in Education 1963,** 21.
[18] **Op. cit.,** 62.

objectivity in a modern university. Dr McCaughey makes an important contribution towards this in his paper "Tradition and Freedom in Education",[19] in which he shows that it is tradition and freedom which should be primary concerns, rather than objectivity and neutrality.

In doing so, he asserts that theology can meet the conditions which Professor Michael Polanyi, in **Science, Faith, and Society**, states to be necessary for the continued existence of a community of science. These are:

1. The acceptance by its members of one tradition of learning, and of a community of trust between the scholars concerned;

2. The nature of authority within the scientific tradition as not a specific central one which demands obedience, but a general one, which requires the free acceptance of its existence;

3. The recognition of the temporary character of the opinions expressed;

4. A commitment to science alone.

Dr McCaughey, within the limits of his paper, tests the case for introducing theology into a university against these "conditions".

Of the first of these, he comments: "The same is true of Christian theology. After a period of apparent and acute division, we see theology today, across divisions of history and confession, acknowledging one tradition of learning, and a high degree of trust between scholars concerned. . . . Anyone can test this for himself by an hour or two spent browsing in scholarly journals. . . ."

Of the second, he writes: "Whatever the historic and dogmatic differences between Roman Catholicism and any of the Protestant churches on the question of authority, in matters of scholarship and

[19] In **Melbourne Studies in Education 1963**.

learning, events of recent years have shown that the consensus of scholarly opinion is an immensely strong force, making for a kind of general authority among Roman scholars in a manner in which we are all familiar with in our various branches of study. At all events, I as a Protestant can see no more objection to a Roman Catholic teaching theology in a university than I can to a Roman Catholic teaching history or philosophy; and the university is enriched by the presence of both. What the university ought to ask of prospective theologians is not whether they are Protestant or Roman Catholic, but whether they know their stuff. The quality and integrity of their scholarship can be tested by their peers in precisely the same way as the quality and integrity of the work of a historian or philosopher."[20]

Of the third, the temporary character of opinions, he states: ". . . this acknowledgment is a fundamental assumption of modern theology. The misunderstanding, current still among liberal rationalists, that theology is a discipline in which you know the answers before you have begun to ask the question, could easily be removed by taking a little trouble." He gives several examples, e.g., Karl Barth's study of Protestant theology in the 19th century "From Rousseau to Ritschl"; and "the perennially fascinating question of the historical Jesus, and His relation to the faith of the church: a question to which every generation of historians brings its own methods, tools, and presuppositions."[21]

Of the fourth commitment, he writes: "Certainly commitment must be to the truth, and that commitment must be absolute. . . . There is at least something in the tradition, in which we all share, to strengthen resolve, and to warn us against the difficulty of this commitment."[22]

The important question, then, is not whether theology is fit to be seen in a modern university, but whether the university is free enough to admit theology. It is not a question of being for neutrality, but being "in regard to all fundamental questions, **for freedom.** Freedom is far more uncomfortable than neutrality; it makes it necessary for men to

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[20] **Op. cit.,** 77.
[21] Op. cit., 78.
[22] **Loc. cit.**

learn tolerance. Australia is not a tolerant society, and will not become so until it rids itself of its timidity in relation to freedom. On everything, from the paternalism of the censorship, to the edginess of educational authorities in relation to politics and religion, our society regularly evades the issue of freedom."[23] Australians establishing a university in another culture need to be particularly sensitive to this kind of judgment.

One reason why new universities have included theology is that they are based on the principle of pluralism, and, therefore, welcome a diversity of thought, and are committed to the tolerance that makes such diversity possible. Such tolerance need not mean the negativism of co-existence, but the vitality of inter-discipline discussion. Such universities should, therefore, be seriously concerned to stimulate thought about basic human questions. However, "it is not for a pluralist university to impose, or to endorse, a single set of answers, whether Christian or otherwise, to those questions, but it ought publicly to recognise their importance, and to see to it that students are given the opportunity to think them as honestly and openly and deeply as possible."[24] A department of religious studies could be a useful addition to the means by which a university fosters such thinking about fundamental human issues.

3. A Centre of Christian Propaganda? The danger of a department or faculty becoming "propagandist" or "doctrinaire" is not confined to religious studies or theology. The history of Australia's secular universities is not devoid of examples in the fields of philosophy, political science, and English literature. The obvious instances are the appointment of Professor Stout alongside Professor John Anderson, the two chairs of English in Sydney, the controversy in Federal parliament over Professor C. P. Fitzgerald's appointment to the ANU, and the recent Knopfelmacher case. Such instances are not arguments for the exclusion of these disciplines from a new university. They are simply hazards that may occur, and are matters to be dealt with by a university, in the light of its secular, pluralist nature – and in terms of the personalities involved.

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[23] **Op. cit.,** 80.

[24] A. R. Vidler, **Crisis in the Humanities,** 90.

From what has been said, above, about theology as an object of academic study, it should be clear that a department of religious studies would be concerned with serious academic work of university quality, done within the limits of the nature of the university itself. Further, such a department, even more than others, would be very sensitive to the danger of over-stepping the limits imposed upon it, whether in the areas of study, research, discussion, or general protocol.

More fundamentally, the recognition of the difference between personal faith and theological study means that the department would be concerned with scholarly work in relation to the Bible, church history, and the growth of Christian theology. "There is no intrinsic reason why they should not be studied with the same freedom from bias and dogmatic assumption" as in other faculties.[25] Further, they are basically historical and linguistic studies. In fact, so true is this, that few theological colleges, if any, can be regarded as hot-beds of propaganda!

Dr Vidler, who is Dean of King's College, Cambridge, and a lecturer in Divinity in that University, states the necessary conditions which would guard against a misuse of position. "The maintenance of a faculty (of Christian theology) . . . is acceptable in a pluralist university only on certain conditions: (1) that the Christian acknowledge that there would be equal justification for a faculty of, say, Jewish or Islamic theology, if it were needed or endowed; (2) that the members of the faculty are not required to submit to any religious or ecclesiastical tests, but are appointed only on the ground of their academic qualifications; (3) that the university is satisfied that the faculty has the same standards of scholarly objectivity as are demanded in other faculties; and (4) that the faculty advertises its Christian assumptions by calling itself, e.g., "The Faculty of Christian Theology".

It should, however, be noted that Dr Vidler is writing in post-Christian England, in which Christianity is virtually a minority religion. This is not the case in Papua New Guinea. It is, therefore, more natural and reasonable to consider a department of religious studies being

[25] Vidler, **op. cit.,** 85.

established chiefly for the study of Christianity. The question "why Christian studies?" then needs to be considered against the fact of a large Christian community. A footnote by Dr McCaughey is relevant here:

> If the question be asked, "Why, if religion is to be studied in our universities, should it be under the guise of Christian theology?" I would answer along the following lines. First, there is no reason why other religions should not be studied also; and, in fact, they are – to some degree – in departments of anthropology, by other social scientists, and in such departments of Indian, Oriental Studies, and so on, as exist.
>
> But second, there is a place for a department or faculty of Christian theology, because that is our traditional context for such studies. The analogy with law takes us some distance. No law faculty begins with the study of comparative law. It begins with the tradition in which we stand. But, just as it would be wrong for a faculty of law in Australia to ignore the context into which the traditional (British, European, Western) concepts and practices of law have been placed in a South-East Asian and Pacific environment, so it would be wrong for theology to be taught and studied in Australia without regard to other religions in our environment. The starting point, and the main weight of our studies, still rightly rests within the tradition we have inherited from Europe, with its own scholarly method and body of knowledge. Similarly, departments of philosophy still take as their proper tradition to which to introduce the next generation of Australians, all that is represented by Plato and Aristotle, Berkeley, Locke, Kant, and Hume. As for modern studies, it might be suggested that sometimes the teaching of philosophy has been too narrowly British; but, be that as it may, few would suggest that the proper way to teach philosophy in Australia would be to ignore such a traditional context and concentrate on a comparative study of Asian philosophies. An acquaintance with Christian theology can no longer be regarded as an essential part of the equipment of an educated man; but then, in a day of specialisation, what can be regarded as essential for the individual, Christian theology, as a critical and disciplined study,

must still be regarded as an essential discipline in the educating community."[26]

4. Will Roman Catholics and Protestants Accept Each Other? It has already been shown, above, that they will, and they do in an increasing number of universities and places. It may, however, be argued that this is impossible, or too difficult, in a "missionary" situation, such as Papua New Guinea. Not to do so, however, will be to raise a shield against the winds that are bringing new life and co-operation to the universities and churches everywhere, and from which the Territory cannot itself be protected indefinitely. Not to do so, will also mean placing Christian theology permanently in an intellectual ghetto.

Certain practical considerations need to be borne in mind:

a) There will, almost certainly, be both Roman Catholics and Protestants on the staff of other departments, sharing in the teaching of philosophy, history, etc. Differences in point of view and interpretation will have to be respected and handled on a mutually-acceptable basis in such departments. Why not also in the Department of Religious Studies?

b) The University will, itself, be responsible for appointing the staff, and will not be likely to overlook the importance of appointing persons prepared to accept and co-operate with those of a different theological position. There is risk involved here, as in any appointment; but the existence of risk is not an argument for abstaining from action. This is true both for the University and for the churches.

c) There is no escape from the truth of the maxim that the proof of the trustworthy is to be found only in the act of trusting.

[26] McCaughey, **Melbourne Studies in Education 1963b,** 75-76.

d) The consensus of the majority of the larger churches should be a sufficient basis on which to go ahead. The unwillingness of a minority should not be a bar in the Territory, any more than elsewhere.

Two Conclusions

If the main argument presented here is pressed to its conclusion, it follows that the University was every right, and, indeed, something bordering on an obligation, to provide for religious studies, whether or not the churches and missions go along with the proposal. Basically, it is a question of the nature and role of the university **qua** university in a pluralistic age. On the other hand, the conclusion for churches and missions is, surely, that the risks are not as great as they appear, and that, unless they are taken, the future of Christianity amongst the educated leaders of the Territory of tomorrow will be seriously jeopardised. They will, in any case, have little time or respect for a Christianity that was afraid of open discussion and candid encounter within the university.

TERTIARY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN A CHANGING CONTEXT

Two Case Studies

TERTIARY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN RELATION TO THE MELANESIAN INSTITUTE

Gernot Fugmann

I. Introduction – Basic Thoughts on Tertiary Religious Education in PNG

The Melanesian Institute goes out from the self-evident presupposition that academic reflections on religion and theology in Melanesia are necessary, quite simply because religion is an integral part of traditional life and culture. This is conceptualised in the preamble of the constitution, and anyone who has gained insights into the worldview of Melanesian people will readily acknowledge that this religious outlook on life is still vibrant and essential among a majority of the people. Much of what is happening within society is, therefore, interpreted from within this traditional religious framework. To elicit such interpretations, and bring them to the surface by research, has been one of the main objectives of the work done at the Melanesian Institute. It is our opinion that the churches and the scholars need to enter into a dialogue with this religious epistemology on the local level. We think such noted Melanesian philosophers and leaders as Narokobi and Momis have expressed what anthropologists such as Lawrence, Burridge, or Strathern have shown in their studies, namely, that the religious debate on the local level is vital for the identity and dignity of the Melanesian people. By recognising this debate, and entering into a dialogue with it, the churches and the scholars acknowledge the nobility of the religious traditions still important to the Melanesian peoples.

For a long time, the churches have been labelled as being insensitive to this traditional heritage. This has certainly been the case, perhaps more frequently in the past, when some missions and

missionaries have made every effort to obliterate traditional religion for the sake of implanting something totally new. In the meantime, churches and missionaries have learnt a lesson, quite often the hard way, by having to deal with resurgent religious movements and nativistic phenomena among people thought to have been thoroughly "Christianised". Consequently, churches have taken this challenge seriously, and it is part of their response that the Melanesian Institute was founded, and actively sponsored. So, now we are trying to address precisely such topics, relating them to issues of the wider society, as it changes, and it taken up by the dynamic of development and culture clash.

In discussing the future of theological education and religious studies, it might also be time for the churches to throw back the ball to academics asking if they are really giving due respect to the religious and ethical questions which evolve from the discussions of the people at local and national levels. The confusion is great, and the law and order problem might only be the tip of the iceberg yet to become manifest. We are not suggesting that the churches have come up with an ideal way of taking up these issues; we do, however, need to recognise what is at stake. Without such academic and theological dialogue, important aspects of history, traditional philosophy, and law are in danger of being lost, and an identity gap will emerge within society. In our opinion, this is already the case, as tertiary students are trained to be mere technocrats, without the slightest reflections on ethical issues and national values. It would be unfair to state that tertiary academic institutions were totally devoid of such reflections, especially if the influence and work of scholars, such as Garry Trompf, are considered. He was, however, never able to realise his vision of a religious department in the UPNG, running up against barriers of ideological prejudice.

Churches should demand religious and ethical reflection in dialogue with Melanesian tradition on the tertiary level. This reflection needs to be a serious academic challenge for its own sake. Where are the critical voices which remind the churches of their genuine task? In the European and American tradition, they come from the tertiary academic institutions, from prophetic voices such as Niebuhr, Kaesemann, Kung, or Boff. The religious and theological reflection on

the tertiary level is ultimately to the advantage of church and society, because that is the place where people dare to think new theological thoughts, and have insights based on interdisciplinary studies, and not weighed down by restricted and myopic denominational views. Young scholars need to be exposed to such ethical and religious themes, the basic precondition for any kind of Melanesian Theology to develop and flourish. They need the historical perspective of how humanity has dealt with ideologies and philosophies, and the open debate of how they relate to their own tradition. This is part of an ongoing global academic discussion, which should not exclude Melanesian academics from examining the interrelatedness of religion, philosophy, history, law, medicine, and technology. The 1986 Waigani Seminar on Ethics of Development has, for instance, made it sufficiently clear that the whole realm of ethics in society is getting more complicated as technology and development are becoming complex. These are fields being explored all over the world. They are fields in which both the churches and the academics need to stimulate and challenge each other. Or, we might ask, what contribution Melanesia has to make in the global discussion of contextualisation or liberation theology? Where is the specifically Melanesian contribution, based on its past religious experience? The seminaries are hardly the place where such reflections are fomented, because they are justifiably and primarily interested in equipping students with a solid pastoral education.

Let me conclude this plea for a tertiary theological or religious studies programme by stating that the Melanesian Institute would certainly welcome and support any concrete steps undertaken in that direction. For the sake of the churches, the academic world, and our own Institute, we believe that such a religious studies programme, in whatever way it might be implemented, will be to the advantage and benefit of all.

II. The Melanesian Institute in the Context of Theological Education

Although an associate member of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools, the Melanesian Institute is not involved in basic

theological education towards the ministry within the churches. This is not its mandate.

Originally founded, in order to cater for the need of expatriate missionaries to gain a deeper appreciation and knowledge of the people, the culture and the religion in Melanesia, the Melanesian Institute has since developed this teaching assignment, and has undertaken basic research at the request of the member churches. Both teaching and research, therefore, determine the agenda of what is done at the Institute, which also includes the publication programme. As a part of the background research for the orientation courses, the Institute has, consequently, always been involved in the ongoing dialogue between traditional religion and the Christian message, as it comes into society in the wake of modernity. The study of religious movements as phenomena of Melanesian epistemology is part of this research, and has received international acclaim. More recently, the MI has again taken up the whole issue of how modernity is influencing and changing traditional values and worldviews. The research project on marriage and family life is a case study in this area. In the near future, the MI hopes that it will be able to present the results of this study, enabling the churches to form a clear picture of the change which is taking place. Hopefully, they will then be able to come to conclusions as to how the churches can respond theologically and pastorally.

The Melanesian Institute staff also consider it to be a vital part of the Institute's role to understand itself as a forum, where an open dialogue can take place between scholars, leaders of churches, and society. Here, new avenues of research are tested, issues of social concern are debated, or people are brought together when consultations are called for.

It is within this framework of research, teaching, and consultation that the Melanesian Institute could understand its role, both with regard to the seminaries, and in relation to a tertiary religious education programme. The Melanesian Institute is more than interested in communicating the results of its research to the pastoral and theological curriculum of ministerial and religious education. In some instances, this is already being done through the use of MI publications as text books.

To conclude, let me become concrete by offering co-operation in three areas.

1. As mentioned above, the Melanesian Institute has always understood itself as a consultative forum, where various people, parties, churches interested in a specific topic, can come together for discussions. The ecumenical profile of the Institute has predestined it to have a denominationally-neutral image, open to dialogue, and conducive to overcoming barriers and gaps. As such, the Melanesian Institute is willing to facilitate further discussions between the seminaries, churches, the MCC, and, if necessary, with the relevant people of UPNG.

2. As of next year, the Melanesian Institute is offering a tutoring programme for post-graduate scholars, both of the seminaries and the university. If, for instance, a student is scheduled to go overseas for further studies to do an MA or a PhD, the Melanesian Institute is willing to negotiate devotion of time, tutoring, and supervision to assist the students in their research preparations. With our new study centre, the Institute has the facilities available, and, as of next year, a staff member will be set aside for this programme. This is a programme we are eager to get under way in co-operation with the seminaries, their respective churches, and the University. Because of the ecumenical context, and the ongoing research, we find that the Melanesian Institute is ideally suited to help prospective Melanesian scholars.

3. As of this year, we plan to set up a publication programme for outstanding student theses from the seminaries of MATS. Each year, we plan to ask the major seminaries to submit one significant thesis to a special screening and evaluation committee, which will then nominate one of the theses submitted to be published. In consultation with MATS, the Melanesian Institute will set up such a committee, which will then set standards and the criteria, according to which, the theses of the students will be

submitted and judged. We are hopeful that this publication programme will promote the quality of theological reflection, and give an incentive to those students who are the potential teachers of tomorrow.

We hope that the co-operation, which we are offering, will serve the interest of the churches, and certainly want to see it linked to the overall efforts in connection with tertiary religious education in Melanesia. From the Melanesian Institute's point of view, we see the setting up of a tertiary religious education programme as vital and stimulative, both for the churches and society. It will promote ecumenical dialogue, invigorate theological and religious reflection, challenge those areas of society which need an ethical discussion, and relate to the worldwide theological debate.

CURRICULUM REFORM AT NEWTON THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

A Discussion Paper Prepared by the Faculty

Newton Theological College opened at its present site at Jonita, 8 km from Popondetta, in 1981. A rural site had been chosen in preference to one proposed at Port Moresby, so that the students could make their own gardens. It was expected that most students would be ordained to serve in rural parishes, and so would need to keep in touch with village life. The site, and the need to make gardens, are major constraints upon the curriculum: they both encourage fellow-feeling with village life, and impede contact with town life, and with facilities such as twenty-four-hour electricity.

The College recruits from all the Anglican dioceses, but, in recent years, most students have come from the diocese of Popondetta (Oro Province), with one or two, at most, from each of Aipo Rongo (the Highlands), New Britain, Port Moresby, and Dogura. The majority of students therefore speak Orokaivan or Ewe Ge. At present, we have nine students in the "final year", and 11 in the second year; there are 13 married students and seven single, and the families of married students live with them on site. There are five lecturers: three, including the

Principal, Fr Walter Siba, from Melanesia, and two from England. At present, the subjects taught include Doctrine, Liturgy, Philosophy, Psychology, Spirituality, OT books, OT History, OT Theology, NT Theology, Life and Work of St Paul, Pastoral Studies, Ministry Today, Homiletics, Contextualisation, Church History, Missiology, and Christian Ethics. Among subjects usually covered in the first year are World Religions, with special reference to Islam in Indonesia, Sects, and Melanesian Religion. The staff are already beginning to co-operate more over teaching their separate subjects, in order to prepare for a more-integrated approach.

During 1986, the staff felt the need to examine and develop the curriculum. After various special meetings, at which ideas were discussed and agreed upon, recommendations were put forward to the College Council, which met on 8th November, 1986, as follows:

a) The selection procedure for College entrants, with special reference to levels of academic ability and motivation.

b) The need for a well-thought-out curriculum, with a clearly-stated theological and educational rationale.

c) A fresh look at the students' "pastoral year", due to the fact that, in 1987, the church would be unable to provide suitable placements for students.

d) The need for post-ordination training.

Underlying such recommendations, was the desire for greater professionalism in theological education. There was a felt need for a more-structured programme, with a firm theoretical base.

The College Council were pleased with the requests for curriculum reform, and promised that co-operation and encouragement would be given. They decided that there should be no first-year intake of students for 1987 so that the staff could have more time to do such work. They also realised that change in theological education cannot happen without having consequences for the way in which the church, as a whole, operates. In recognition of the link between education and

church structures, the Council spent some time discussing the suitability of "base Christian communities", as a useful ecclesiological model for the Anglican church in Papua New Guinea. The idea of a deacons' year was given a favourable response by the bishops, but no decisions were made: Two bishops recommended that a foundation year of spiritual formation could be of great benefit. They also suggested that the College course might be improved by being extended by up to two or three more years. To sum up: whilst not strictly addressing themselves to each of the suggestions made by the staff, the episcopate did give their approval, and pledge their support, for the project of curriculum reform.

It became clear from the College Council meeting that an effective methodology of curriculum reform was of the utmost importance, if anything of positive value was to be achieved. The staff of Newton College were pleased to receive a committed response from the Council, and even more pleased by various statements made by the Archbishop on other matter, which suggested that such co-operation would be generous. An example of a generous attitude was the pastoral letter preparing for an open forum at the beginning of the last Provincial Synod, in which Archbishop George Ambo urged his people to see the necessary dialogue, which needs to be conducted between tradition, present experience, and personal appropriation of the faith. He urged people to come together to express their views on such issues as priestly formation, and the liturgy, so that they could come to a common mind. This type of healthy openness was seen by the staff at Newton College as essential for curriculum reform: it could only be helpful.

In his last pastoral letter of 24 February, 1987, Archbishop George Ambo talked about the "present state of the Anglican church" and "the necessity of . . . critically . . . examining . . . its weaknesses and failures . . . in order to improve what is done". He said that the Anglican church is in a "critical stage", and that "we must see with new eyes" the structures and ways of governing the church. He made it clear that the Anglican church has great financial problems, and that its staff are paid very low allowances, which "made him feel ashamed". He saw this as a problem, which "must not go on for ever", and must be "solved". In these ways, the Archbishop challenged every member of

the Anglican church to share responsibility for their own future, by their thinking, and by their giving, at a level that would provide for the material needs of the sort of church they thought it was God's will they should be. So, the discussion of curriculum reform at Newton College is related to the thinking of the whole Anglican church about what changes are appropriate and practicable in a critical stage of its life.

Since the College Council meeting, at least two important things have happened, which let the staff to realise that there must be even closer co-operation with the episcopate, if the curriculum reform is to be achieved. It was also realised that our expectations for reform must be modified, and that we must not try to do too much too soon. Firstly, we received a letter from one bishop outlining his wishes for priestly formation at Newton College, but these did not correspond at all well with the expectations of the staff. Secondly, a lengthy written request by the staff for controlled and specified reforms in College liturgical life was, after a year, completely rejected by the episcopate. There had been no consultation with the bishops before such requests had been made known to them, and so they had no way of knowing the thinking behind the requests. If there had been prior consultation, the bishops might not have rejected them in the same way.

In 1987, the staff met again to discuss the curriculum, this time in the light of the Mercado report on "Forming Ministries in Melanesia".[1] Important issues raised in this meeting included:

a) The need to take into account the cultural backgrounds, and the ability, of the students.

b) Do we help students to become culturally flexible and adaptable so that they can work in different areas of Papua New Guinea?

c) The need for experts to assist in the process of curriculum reform.

[1] A study of three major MATS seminaries, analysing their degree of "enculturation" in staffing, life-style, and curriculum, their "maturity", and their "programme", privately printed by the author, Fr Leonardo Mercado SVD.

d) The need for staff training in various effective methods of teaching.

e) Should we provide theological education for change: both rural and urban?

f) How can we use "experience" in theological education?

g) What type of higher theological education is required?

h) It was thought that such education should respect Melanesian traditions of "knowing", and not slavishly follow Western patterns of "academic" education.

i) There is need for ecumenical co-operation in theological education.

After this, a meeting was held between the staff of Newton College and priests of the Parish of the Resurrection, in which the College is situated. This was held to discover a better definition of the appropriate relationship between the College and its immediate neighbours. It still remains a problem to be solved. The meeting brought out into the open the serious lack of an organised course in pastoral work. Five of the present final-year students have had no pastoral experience, and, at the moment, no firm plans have been made to provide them with any before ordination. There has, at best, been talk of their working for a year as lay assistants in the parishes to which they will eventually be ordained. The problem appears to be two-fold: the lack of enough competent parish priests, with whom to place the students, and the lack of suitable accommodation for married students, some of whom have large families.

On 16th March, 1987, a students' open forum discussed the curriculum development project, and made many helpful suggestions. Their main concern was with the "hidden curriculum", a topic which came up again when they had another open forum to discuss College rules on alcohol. They made it clear that the College ought to give more attention to this aspect of curriculum reform. They were also concerned about the lack of any well-defined guidelines regarding

evaluation of student progress, about the multiplicity of subjects, with consequent heavy workload, and about the great difficulty experienced trying to cope with the difficult language of most theological textbooks, since English is a second language for all the students. They also suggested that some subjects, such as spirituality, pastoral studies, and homiletics might be shared by staff, so that the students gained from the varied practical experience of the teachers.

At a follow-up staff meeting, issues such as the meaning of "success" and "failure", and the relevance of "standards" and "evaluation", were discussed. On the one hand, there is a need to find out how effective is the teaching being offered to the students, and how their needs can be recognised and met; on the other, the students themselves talk a lot about diplomas, as if such badges of "success" were an end in themselves, and not a means to assessing appropriate deployment of differing, but equally valuable, pastoral and ministerial skills. The staff agreed on the need to relate the formation given in the College with the future ministry of the students within the church, so that the College was not seen as just another institutional means of self-advancement. The staff went on to try to formulate realistic practical aims for both this year and next year. These involved proposals for tightening up, and improving, selection procedures; the provision of a preliminary foundation year, during which student, who would have much to offer the church but who could not meet basic academic requirements, could be offered alternative forms of training and service; the importance of sorting out what is taught, by whom, when and how; and the absolutely essential requirements of setting up a well-structured pastoral experience programme.

A new selection procedure is in the process of being set up; letters have been sent out to all bishops and prospective candidates, explaining the new requirements. It is only a beginning – but a start has to be made somewhere. All bishops have also been sent a letter asking for their views about curriculum development, and the progress made so far. Their replies are awaited, and it is hoped that the new College Council meeting will spend time discussing the practical proposals. In a few weeks' time, the staff will meet again to exchange with each other their proposed syllabuses for the areas in which they teach. This will enable them to see how much overlap there is, how far multiplication of

subjects can be avoided, what new areas need to be covered, how much time needs to be given to each unit of work, how all the units can be arranged into a coherent and dynamic whole, and how different methods of teaching can be used to suit different subjects.

ECUMENICAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE PACIFIC

Vasi Gadiki

This paper was read at the Annual General Meeting of the Melanesian Council of Churches in Port Moresby, 4th February, 1987.

I was asked to say a few words on ecumenical relationships in the Pacific, but was not so sure about my ability to present a reasonable account. There was not much time for me to understand the achievement of the inter-denominational co-operation of the Christian churches during the last 30 years in the Pacific. Although, up to the late 1950s, there was vigorous competition for membership and space among the churches, one should not deny the fact that the attitude continues to survive today, even in the midst of our attempts to understand and relate to one another. I have not been long enough in the PCC office to present a fair assessment of the churches' achievements since their participation in ecumenical relations during the 1960s. However, Dr C. Forman has compiled a short, clear summary of church co-operation in the Pacific during the last twenty-five years. The attempt is not to present a critique, however, but to mention a few events, which may assist our understanding of the past, for future development.

Gospel to the World

The Western and American missionaries, coming to the shores of the islands of the Pacific, were influenced by several events during the 18th century. The revival of Christian faith, the search to extend their kingdoms, the formation of missionary societies, interest in lay participation for support and involvement in the propagation of the faith from 1815 onwards, hastened the spread of the Christian faith to the world. The desire to preach the gospel in areas of the world where it had never been preached before, created the urge for the formation of a whole range of missionary societies; the Baptist Missionary Society (1792), the London Missionary Society (1795), the Church Missionary

Society (1799), the British and Foreign Bible Society (1804) and the Methodist Missionary Society (1813).[1] These Protestant Missions were denominational, while the Roman Catholic groups were religious orders.

The Catholic church, during this period in the missionary enterprise, has been highly professional, mainly of interest to the religious orders, and, in very large measure, dependent on the favour and financial support of the rulers.[2] The Roman Catholic church during 1830 in India faced extreme foreignness. The leadership was always in the hands of the missionaries, whilst the Protestant missions were training the indigenous to participate in the mission of the church. However, there was a gradual change of missionary approach in the Catholic church, until the ecumenical council, Vatican II, resolved the emphasis on the importance of the local church.[3]

Although the Protestant missions began training to involve the indigenous people in the mission of the church soon after their arrival in the many lands, they were unprepared to hand over leadership functions to the nationals. The Protestant missions penetrated the Pacific region before the Roman Catholic missions. However, the former was not able to reach all islands at that early stage. The Marists Mission began work in New Caledonia during 1843, and Woodlark Island in 1883. The Protestant missions were already established in Tahiti, Samoa, Fiji, and several of the small islands, like Tonga, Wallis, Futuna, Gilbert and Ellice. The Roman Catholics entered comparatively late, and inevitably, in a great many cases, their work consisted not of preaching the gospel to the heathen, but of attempting to detach baptised Christians from the churches to which they belonged.[4]

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[1] Alec R Vidler, **The Church in an Age of Revolution** (London: Penguin Books 1965) 249.

[2] Stephen Neill, **A History of Christian Church Missions** (London: Penguin Books, 1964) 399.

[3] P. F. Finau and J. Garrett, "The Future of Religions Religions" in A. Afeaki, R. Crocombe, and John McCaren (ed) **Religious Co-operation in the Pacific** (Suva: University of the South Pacific) 182.

[4] Neill, 418.

The rivalry for membership and land was characteristic of all mission societies, both Catholic and Protestant. The rivals began considering and attempting co-operation in the 1960s, through the influence of the World Ecumenical Movement.

Ecumenical Movement in the World

There were ecumenical movements as early as the 16th century; however, it is generally agreed, that the movement, as it is now known, dates from the International Missionary Conference that was held at Edinburgh in 1910.[5]

The Continuation Committee, appointed by the Conference, launched the **International Review of Missions.** The next international meeting was organised by "Life and Work", which was held at Stockholm in 1925. This meeting brought together into personal relations the church leaders who had been in hostile camps during the war, and were still suspicious of one another.

The next is the "Faith and Order" Conference, initiated by Charles Harold Brent, who invited representatives of all Christian communions throughout the world, which confess our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour.[6] The Conference was held at Lausanne in 1927. The Roman Catholic church did not attend, but the Orthodox churches of the East were represented. The representatives were the best quality of the churches.

The next Missionary Conference, held in Jerusalem in 1928, was different because the new independent churches from India, China, and Africa were represented. They were no longer the object of missionary work from the West, but were partners in the mission of the church.[7]

There were discussions for the possibility of church reunion between the Anglicans and the Catholics by the time of the Lambeth Conference of 1920, at Malines in Belgium, and the three branches of

[5] Vidler, 259.
[6] Vidler, **ibid**.
[7] Vidler, 261.

Methodism in England were united in 1932. In Canada, four groups of churches were united in 1935.

The need for reunion came through the growing awareness that the church of Christ meant to be one, and to join together to collaborate with friendly governments, and to withstand the hostile ones.

During 1937, "Faith and Order" met in Edinburgh, and "Life and Work" at Oxford. The two meetings resolved to appoint a Continuation Committee of a World Council of Churches.

The Missionary Conference held at Tambaram, near Madras, had half its delegates from the younger churches. This conference emphasised the need to raise the standard of training for Christian leadership everywhere, and especially in the younger churches.[8] More than half of the representatives of the younger churches and the missions were the missionaries. The younger churches' participation in ecumenical relations was not a desire of the national leaders, nor the lay people of the church. The influence was usually from the missionaries, whose thoughts were influenced by the world missionary personal gatherings, as well as their awareness that the different denominations, or missionary societies, were duplicating one another, in many of their projects, for the same people in the same area.

The methods of evangelism, such as education, health care, and economic and political development, were divorced from proclaiming the gospel, to show the people that the church was all sorts of power, but had little spiritual power. In the past, and today, we can no longer say "In the Name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk". The gospel was brought to us, but hospitals were opened, and modern scientific medicine is used to do what the early church accomplished largely by miracles.[9] In health care, much assistance was provided to the people, but the connection of the healings to the gospel was hardly evident. It is possible that the missionary societies, in participating in education and economic development, were to encourage and develop leadership

[8] **Ibid**., 265.
[9] J. Herbert Kane, **Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective** (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1976) 312.

in order to be able to be self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-administrating.

The inauguration of the World Council of Churches in 1948, in Amsterdam, had the intention to foster the movement towards Christian unity everywhere. It incorporated the separate activities of "Life and Work" and of "Faith and Order", which encouraged ecumenical movements in almost all parts of the world, including the Pacific. The International Missionary Council, however, remained distinct, because its membership was based, not on churches, but on missionary societies, and regional Christian Councils. The second Assembly of the World Council of Churches was held at Evanston, Illinois, in 1954.

The move to foster ecumenical relationships in the Pacific was through the efforts of International Missionary Council Conferences. The Council met in India in 1938, where the concept of an organisation in the region was expressed. There were other organisations who expressed the concern to foster ecumenical relations in the Pacific, e.g., London Missionary Society (1943), and Australian Methodist Missionary Society (1955).

Ecumenical Movement in the Pacific

During 1957, C. Stuart Craig, then the General Secretary of the London Missionary Society, wrote to the Pacific missions and churches expressing the desire for a Pacific churches' gathering.[10] The response was most discouraging. One church accepted the concept, however, and Craig wrote to the International Missionary Council, a world body, to arrange for a gathering. Ronald K. Orchard organised the meeting. The meeting was held at Malua in Apia, Western Samoa, in 1961. The International Missionary Council was represented by Lesslie Newbigin and Ronald Orchard, and the World Council of Churches was represented by Hans-Rudi Weber, who led the Bible studies. The International Missionary Council was absorbed into the World Council of Churches soon after the Malua meeting, and became the Division of

[10] Charles W. Forman, **The Voice of Many Waters: The Story of the Life and Ministry of the Pacific Conference of Churches in the Last 25 Years** (Suva: Lotu Pasifika Productions, 1986).

World Mission and Evangelism (DWME). The unit of the World Council of Churches programme during 1982 produced a document called: **Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation**.

At Malua, a Continuation Committee was appointed to plan and develop a constitution for the organisation. Another group was appointed to meet to discuss the prospect of developing a Regional Theological College. The group went to Suva and met at Dudley High School, as the host of the Methodist church in Fiji. The Continuation Committee resolved, in 1962, for a permanent structure to be properly constituted. On May 27, 1966, at Lifou in New Caledonia,[11] the Pacific Conference of Churches came into being, but the Papua New Guinea churches decided not to be members, and the Melanesian Council of Churches, which was formed in 1964, and was inaugurated on June 23, 1965, decided not to join at an early stage of its development. The Methodist church in the Solomons became a member at the Lifou Assembly.

When the United church in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands came into being during 1968, from the Methodist church in Papua New Guinea, and Papua Ekalesia, who decided to stay out of the Pacific Conference of Churches, it resolved to apply for membership, and was accepted during the 1971 Assembly at Davuilevu Theological College, Fiji. The United church in Papua New Guinea invited the Pacific Conference of Churches to hold its Third Assembly in Papua New Guinea. The PCC third Assembly was held at the University of Papua New Guinea during 1976.

The PCC area was so vast that, before 1976, there was a proposal to establish a PCC half in Papua New Guinea, and the other half in Fiji, since the Melanesian churches seemed to have very little to do with PCC. It was thought that the Melanesian Council of Churches, when established, would be able to carry out functions similar to those the PCC was doing for Papua New Guinea, however MCC decided to apply for membership.

[11] **Ibid.,** 6.

The Melanesian Council of Churches became member of PCC during 1981, at the Tonga Assembly. Melanesian participation has been minimal since the establishment of PCC. The Anglican Diocese of the Solomons withdrew its membership during 1981, saying they are still members through the Solomon Islands Christian Association. The Catholic church, through the Bishops Conference CEPAC of Polynesia and Micronesia, became members of PCC during the 1976 Assembly, excluding Paua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. During the 1986 Assembly, the Catholics requested more representation, since the laity have no participation in ecumenical relations.

The Australian and New Zealand churches applied for membership, but were rejected on the grounds that the colonial times concept of boy-master relations needed to die out completely before their membership may be considered. The decision was wise, but, at the same time, unchristian, for it was based on the assumption that the white domination in leadership was a threat to the encouragement of Pacific Islanders' leadership. The other organisations PTC, SPATS, and MATS, also requested membership in PCC but were rejected. Melanesian churches who are members in PCC, after the 1986 Assembly in Apia, after 25 years of ecumenical relationships in the Pacific are:

1. Melanesian Council of Churches
2. Solomon Islands Christian Association
3. United church in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands
4. Vanuatu Presbyterian church
5. Anglican Diocese of Vanuatu
6. Evangelical church of New Caledonia
7. Nauru Protestant church
8. Churches of Christ in Vanuatu (NCC)

The Pacific Conference of Churches is one of the many regional bodies in the Pacific which have different objectives. However, PCC, as a regional body, was intended to foster church reunion through ecumenical co-operation. The Pacific Theological College was established in 1966, and the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools, and the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools, were

established in 1969. Efforts are being made to revive the **Pacific Journal of Theology** by SPATS during 1986.

SPATS was not able to function when the World Council of Churches redefined the function of the Theological Education Fund (TEF), and established the Programme for Theological Education (PTE), because almost the total support came from TEF. The MATS continued to function, and continues to produce the **Melanesian Journal of Theology**. SPATS faded out, but was revived during 1985 by the Pacific Conference of Churches, and organised theological education and development consultations. SPATS is now able to hold the biennial Assemblies, Executive Minutes, Accreditation Committee meetings, and we have funds available to hold a study institute during this year. PCC has requested SPATS and MATS to draw up accreditation standards for BD degrees awarded in the South Pacific Region.

After the 1981 PCC Assembly, the Executive Committee decided to abolish all the programmes: Church and Society, Family Life, Communications, Information Officer, Women's Work, Research Centre. The staff then was reduced to the General Secretary and the Treasurer. The only programme that dodged the axe was the Lotu Pasifika Productions, which has much independence, and was operated by a Board of Directors.

The Executive Committee of PCC, soon after the cutting down, decided to create several more programmes, because they recovered from the huge over-spending after the 1981 Assembly. During 1984, the Executive resolved to advertise for the following positions:

1. Secretary for Justice and Development
2. Secretary for Mission and Unity

The latter position was filled during 1986, while the former is yet to be filled. At the 1986 Assembly, there was a strong call from the women and the youth to create desks for them. The Executive has yet to make a decision.

There are several points we need to note in relation to the achievement of the ecumenical movement in the Pacific. The mainline churches of the Protestants and the Catholic church, who were hostile to each other before the 1960s are moving closer to each other through the many meetings, consultations, and workshops. The traditional tensions are being slackened from both sides, however, both are facing a new wave of opposition from the new religious movements, Pentecostal churches, and the para-church organisations.

The churches, together, are able to raise their voices regarding their concerns for decolonisation, nuclear-free Pacific, tourism, multi-national corporations, West Irian refugees, East Timor, and many other social issues affecting the lives of the people in the Pacific.

Governments of many island nations often listen to the church, where they have a united voice as national bodies, but may be unable to listen to the individual churches in relation to the social issues affecting the lives of the people of the nation.

In theological education, the regional institutions, the Pacific Theological College for the Protestants, and the Pacific Regional Seminary for the Catholics, are centres for the peoples of many Pacific nations to gather for study, and learn to understand and accept each other, as people, and the leaders of other churches. However, many Papua New Guinea churches, both Protestant and Catholic (except the Anglican church), do not use the two regional institutions to train their clergy. The Catholic church, at times, send their students to PRS, but, in most cases, the students are trained at Bomana.

The sharing of human resources in the region among the Protestant church was mainly from the Polynesian nations to Melanesia and Micronesia, but the major funding of their movements was in the hands of the New Zealand and the Australian Mission Boards. In several cases, the Polynesians serving in Melanesia ended up settling in New Zealand or Australia, for they were unable to readjust back to their own culture and society. It seems correct to maintain that, so far, no Protestant Melanesians are serving the churches in Polynesia or Micronesia.

The basic reason could be that there is no mission board in the Pacific Conference of Churches to monitor the sharing of human resources throughout the region, even though the desire for such a project was expressed during the 1981 PCC Assembly in Tonga. The Micronesian churches expressed a need for assistance in theological education because of lack of personnel. They most probably would need assistance from Melanesia and Polynesia until they are able to meet their needs. The sharing of material resources has been the project of the World Council of Churches. The project requests have been screened by the Pacific Advisory Group, composed of Pacific Island leaders, however, it seems that several churches are not aware of its existence. The lack of PAG information by the churches was the result of the inability of the members, PCC and MCC, in relaying the information to those who need to know the existence of PAG.

The churches in the Pacific participate in ecumenical relations through the encouragement of the World Church organisations. In the Pacific, during the last twenty-five years, the expatriate experts among us and our church leaders encouraged our churches' participation in ecumenical relations, but the laity, or the whole people of God, are in complete ignorance of the endeavours to foster church reunion. Church union is often achieved when the theologians and the heads of the churches are satisfied with the common agreement on the basic doctrines, structure, and the forms of liturgy. In most cases, the whole people of God do not share the divisions maintained by the experts. We need to encourage lay participation in the ecumenical discussions. That is the future of ecumenical relations in the Pacific or Papua New Guinea.

Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation, produced by the World Council of Churches during 1982, has two major sections:

1. The call to mission, proclamation, and witness.[12] The document reminds us that the divisions of Christians are a scandal, an impediment to the witness of the church. The Old Testament people were looking forward to the day of

[12] **Mission and Evangelism – An Ecumenical Affirmation.**

people when God's justice will prevail. When Jesus came into the world, He said to His disciples "As the Father sent Me, even so I send you." He gave them power and authority and sent them out. The early church worked to fulfil the will and the purpose of God. The Lord Jesus, before sending the disciples, showed them the life and the attitude God expects from His servants.

The mission of the church was to show the love of God to the world. The starting point was to be Christ, and Christ crucified, who is a stumbling block to the Jews, and folly to Gentiles, but salvation to those who call upon His name, and serve His purpose in the world.

2. Ecumenical convictions.

In the ecumenical discussions, the Christian churches, although diverse in their forms and practices, have learned to recognise each other as participants in the one worldwide missionary movement. They all believe in the following aspects as the most-important basis and function of the mission of the world today.

The message must be proclaimed for people to hear, in order to be converted to become members in the church of God universal. The preacher and the hearer need to be obedient to the commands of God.

The gospel message was never meant just for the religious, or the spiritual, life of the person, but for his or her total life. The concept of secular and religious, holy and profane, Tapu and Noa, is no longer a separate issue of debate, for the total life of man has been recognised as being religious.

The basic purpose of the ecumenical movement in the world is to foster unity in God's mission in the church. The churches' proclamation of one God, one church, one body of Christ, becomes a reality to those within and outside. The divisions among the churches

are continuing to multiply. The unity we are looking for is not uniformity, but the multiple expression of a common faith and a common mission.

The mission of the church is the mission intended, and shown by, Christ, in His ministry and teachings. The gospel of Christ is understood and proclaimed according to the patterns set out by Jesus in the world.

The gospel was aimed at the poor, who find themselves marginalised, second-class citizens, unable to control their own destiny, and unable to understand what is happening around them.

The mission of the church is to proclaim the gospel to the whole world, even among those who profess other faiths. All people are to be given the opportunity to accept or reject the gospel, after it has been proclaimed to them.

Conclusion

In the Pacific, the effort to participate in ecumenical relations was not initiated by the churches, or the peoples of the Pacific nations. We are being influenced, encouraged, and guided by the ecumenical movement worldwide. Since the 60s, our church leaders have participated as part of the total ripples of the waves. We have now come to a stage where we cannot just tag along, but must develop concrete plans for ecumenical relations in our own region. I do not exclude the Catholics, because Vatican II's decision for lay participation, or the emphasis on the local church, in development and growth, will assist close ecumenical relations in the Pacific.

MCC is far ahead of many nations in Catholic and Protestant participation in ecumenical relations, but the Catholic church in Papua New Guinea needs to involve the laity, or the whole people of God, in MCC support and growth.

MCC is one of the several national councils of churches in the Pacific, so that we belong to a wider fellowship of Christian churches.

What has been, and is going to be, the MCC's contribution in co-operation with PCC to fulfil the will and the purpose of God in the South Pacific and beyond? It is important for us to remind ourselves that we are commanded to begin proclaiming the gospel in Jerusalem, and then to Judea, and to Samaria, and then to the ends of the world, as a united body or church of God.

DOCUMENTATION

Submission on the Study of Theology and Religion at UPNG to the Melanesian Council of Churches by a Consultation at Goroka, 2-5 April, 1987

Endorsed by MCC Executive, 7 April

In response to the recent request by university authorities for a statement from MCC on the future of theological and religious studies at UPNG, a representative consultation met at Goroka to formulate recommendations on this matter for consideration by the churches and the university.

Historically, the university embodies the mediaeval ideal of the **universitas studiorum,** a centre where all scholarly work finds a home and is promoted, a place where research in all fields meets and interacts.

In the case of Papua New Guinea, the "noble traditions of our ancestors", and the "Christian principles that are now ours" are affirmed in the constitution. It is, therefore, a matter of considerable regret to the churches of Papua New Guinea that the study of religion has been allowed to lapse at the university. Students are thus deprived of the opportunity to reflect on the ethical and religious dimensions of Melanesian society, and its integral human development.

This consultation, representing churches, seminaries, and other tertiary institutions, wishes to affirm that the study of theology and religion is unquestionably an integral part of the responsibility of a national university.

Nearly 25 years ago, the churches urged the establishment of a Faculty of Theology at UPNG. The presence of theology seems to us indispensable, if graduates are to have a comprehensive education, whatever their field of specialisation. We therefore propose the establishment of a full Department of Theology and Religious Studies at UPNG.

We recommend that this should take place in the following stages:

1. Establishment of a Lectureship in Religious Studies (1989)

This position would be funded by the churches for up to five years. The lecturer's initial contract would be for three years, with the possibility of a further term. We recommend a national salary scale plus allowances. Any distinction between national and expatriate in the matter of salary would only arise out of the constraints of an expatriate's situation, e.g., the need for his or her children to remain in another system of schooling.

The MCC should establish a competent committee, including representation of the university chaplains, to ensure clear understanding between church and university authorities.

This committee would have the task of implementing certain minimum conditions to apply to candidates for the lectureship, especially that they should be open to religious and theological enquiry. The committee would ensure that the churches are involved with the history department in the drafting of the advertisement and the short-listing of candidates. The eventual appointment by the University Staffing Committee must have the approval of the MCC Liaison Committee.

The courses, which would have to be ready for submission by May 1988, would be of such a nature as to help people of one religious background, e.g., Melanesian, to explain themselves to people of another religious background within the context of the shared search for truth. They should measure up to the strictest academic criteria. The history department would consult the MCC Liaison Committee on course content.

It is recommended that the appointee would preferably have a Ph.D. with Third World teaching experience, and specialised training in theological and religious studies. He or she should be aware of the theological questions raised by the study of religion.

2. The Creation of a Department of Theology and Religious Studies (1994)

In the light of the expected growth of interest in the courses in theology and religious studies, and in view of the need to develop postgraduate programmes, a separate department will be created. The staffing of such a department will require a professor and several lecturers, some of whom would be part-time or of visiting status. In co-operation with the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools, as well as with other university departments, many courses offered by the new department would be inter-disciplinary in nature.

As part of the guarantee of supplying sufficient numbers of students to justify the existence of such a department, suitably qualified students from MATS colleges maybe enrolled for certain courses or semesters. The proposed starting date is 1994.

3. Master's Programme in Theology and Religious Studies (1999)

A long-term aim of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies will be to offer a Master's Programme, which will be both ecumenical and inter-disciplinary. The staff of the Melanesian Institute may assist in tutoring researchers, and an ecumenical residence may be established by 1999.

It will be the purpose of the MCC Liaison Committee, in consultation with the university, to monitor the implementation of these proposals. The churches accept their part of the responsibility for funding each stage of this project.

Participants

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Fr Christopher Garland (Newton College, Popondetta)

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DISCUSSION

A PROPOSAL FOR CONSTRUCTING MELANESIAN THEOLOGY

Leonardo N. Mercado

I have just conducted a survey on Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran seminaries in Papua New Guinea. The survey inquired about the state of enculturation, the maturity of the seminarians, and the study program. Enculturation may be looked at from three levels: the staff, the life style, and the study program. The expatriates outnumber the local staff members in the three groups mentioned above. Furthermore, the life style is Western in varying degrees. Likewise, the study program, which is copied from seminaries abroad, is not enculturated, although there are attempts to insert a few subjects towards enculturation. The staff members and seminarians of the three groups all clamoured for materials in Melanesian theology, spirituality, philosophy – in short, Melanesian thought. The overburdened staff feel that constructing Melanesian theology is far beyond their capacity.

If the graduates of the country's seminaries are Westernised, what gospel will they spread later? They also preach a Western Christ, and will be unwitting tools of a continuing Western religious colonialism. This is exactly the challenge. Even American theological journals are now concerned about producing an American theology, a move away from the European domination of theology.

What is the present state of theology? Scholars have finally realised that the theologies written by Western theologians are not universal, but local, theologies. By this, we mean a unity in faith, but a pluralism of theologies. This growing realisation began in the 1950s in parts of Africa and Asia. Schreiter assigns three reasons for this shift.[1] The first reason is that there were not ready traditional answers for the

[1] In this paper we shall be following Robert J. Schreiter, **Constructing Local Theologies** (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books/London: SCM Press, 1985), reviewed in **MJT** 1 (1985) 211-213. All page references are to this book.

questions being asked. Examples are the complex questions which missionaries ask on the problems of Melanesian marriages. Secondly, "old answers were being urged upon cultures and regions with new questions" (p. 3). Thirdly, "the realities of the new questions and old answers pointed to a concern that recurred in churches around the world: **a new kind of Christian identity** was emerging, apart from much of the theological reflection of historical Christianity" (p. 3). Thus, liberation theology emerged from Latin America. African and Asian theologians are doing their respective theologies. But what is the state of theology in Melanesia? From my impression, much of the cry is "let us do Melanesian theology", but little action has been done.

The Proposal

To develop Melanesian theology is a giant task. It needs a joint effort. I am proposing that both the Melanesian Institute (MI) and the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools (MATS) join hands to answer this task. In particular, the proposal has a long-term goal and a short-term goal. The long-term goal is that there be a regular conference like the Waigani Seminar, held annually by the University of Papua New Guinea. If a conference on Melanesian theology is convened regularly, and its proceedings published, the fruits will be a growing literature, which can be used by the future and present ministers and educators. But, before that long-term proposal be attained, first the short-term proposal has to be realised. What is that? I suggest a seminar on methodology. We agree that Melanesian theology is best done by local theologians. But they need the tools. In the old days, it took several days for the local people to chop a tree with their stone axes. But the introduction of steel axes made them chop trees much more quickly. In other words, a methodology on how to do Melanesian theology will hasten the construction of Melanesian theology.

Let us give more details about the seminar on methodology.

Who may be invited to this seminar? This brings us to the topic of the local theologian. According to Schreiter, both outsiders and insiders are needed. An expatriate can challenge and enrich the local

community. Thus, expatriates contributed in the development of liberation theology in Latin America. Aside from the professional theologian, the community must also be considered. We know that the writers of the New Testament were influenced by the local theologies of their respective communities. In recent times, a shining example is the village of Solentiname in Nicaragua. "The community is a key source of theology's development and expression, but to call it a theologian in the narrow sense of authorship is inaccurate" (p. 17). Likewise, prophets and poets may also be local theologians. The prophet judges the theology developed by the community, but the poet captures those symbols and metaphors which best give the expression of the community's theology. I suggest the seminar be limited to around a dozen such theologians mentioned above. These participants are asked to write their papers on methodology, and illustrate it with a common topic.

What is that common topic? Since this is an ecumenical conference, the topic must be a non-controversial one, that is, one with doctrinal consensus. The topic may be Christ, the local community, and so forth. Furthermore, I suggest that the topic be not so obvious. For example, there is quite a literature on the meaning of Melanesian salvation, which is quite akin to the biblical concept. If the tree is to be known by its fruit, then the theological attempts in using the methodologies of the participants will likewise show.

The participants may also be asked to make explicit what model and approach they follow. Allow me to expand this statement by again following Schreiter.

Models of Theology

I will make some summaries of Schreiter, and comment on his ideas. Schreiter says there are three models of theology: (1) translation models, (2) adaptation models, and (3) contextual models. Let us go over each one.

1. Translation Models

This model follows a two-step procedure: (1) the Christian message, and (2) its translation into new situations. In liturgy, this will mean keeping the essentials, and allowing the accidental to vary from place to place. This is also the place of the "dynamic equivalence" method of bible translation. For example, in a place where people do not know sheep, the equivalent sacrificial animal is to be used. Thus, in Papua New Guinea, "Pig of God" was suggested as the dynamic equivalent of "Lamb of God".

What are the good points of this area? It can be done by expatriates. It has been the most-common model used in catechetics and liturgy. Theological categories (e.g., grace, salvation, the concept of God) can be adapted to local languages. It presupposes only one model, which can be adapted in other cultures.

What are the weaknesses? Let us begin with an example. In Western countries, the church bell has been the instrument for calling people to church services. Expatriate missionaries tried to adapt it by using the drum. But the similarity ends there. Local people may associate the drum with erotic dances. Hence, the drum has another set of meanings. The weakness, then, is a positivist understanding of culture. More attention is given to the surface patterns of culture instead of its deeper meanings. Secondly, the translation models go against the principle of incarnation, which accepts what is good in the culture. Incarnation is a two-way traffic: it gives and it also receives. But the translation models presuppose only a one-way traffic. One example is the eucharist. Schreiter writes (pp. 8-9):

> do bread and wine constitute essentials (kernel) or accidentals (husk) in the celebration of the eucharist? Different Christian groups are answering this question in different ways. If one takes one line of analysis, the Lord Jesus Christ took the staples of His culture and sanctified them; we, in turn, should do the same with the staples in the respective cultures. Many Protestant denominations have followed this line. On the other hand, the eucharist is the prime symbol of Christian unity; hence the elements that make that union possible should be the same

everywhere . . . How is one to decide? And equally important, who is to decide?

2. Adaptation Models

Whereas expatriates did the work in the translation models, the locals do the work in the adaptation models. The locals, who have been trained in Western schools, come back to adapt theology in their own cultures. Thus Placide Tempel used Neo-Thomistic philosophy as a framework in developing his Bantu philosophy in 1944.

Strengths: (1) it has local authenticity; (2) it has respectability in Western circles.

Weaknesses: (1) it "presumes a method in theology, whereby an articulated philosophical foundation forms . . . the basis . . . for a systematic theology. . . . It has difficulty explaining the role of the local communities in theological process" (p. 10). Although the adaptation models take culture more seriously than the translation models, still the former "often will try to force cultural data into foreign categories" (p. 10).

According to Schreiter, a variation of the adaptation model is the planting of the seed of faith, and allowing it to interact with the native soil. This is the model presented by Pope Paul VI. What are its strengths? It takes seriously the local culture with its own categories. It also respects the apostolic tradition, and the tradition of the local culture. What are its weaknesses? Schreiter says the ideal circumstances are rarely present, because of rapid culture change. Modern communications are shrinking the world into a global village.

3. Contextual Models

Models under this type recognise culture change. There are two types: (1) ethnographic approaches, such as Black Power in the United States, theology of women, the drive to create supra-tribal families in nations with diverse peoples; (2) liberation approaches. The liberation

approaches are associated with Latin America, where Christians are undergoing political, economic, and social oppression. Whereas the ethnographic approaches look for issues of identity and continuity, the liberation approaches concentrate on social change and discontinuity.

Like the previous models, the contextual models also have their strengths and weaknesses. The strength of the ethnographic approach is its starting with the needs of the people (and not by questions imposed by other Christian churches). Its weakness: (1) the project is often not carried out beyond the first steps; (2) it can be a conservative force in situations where change is needed; (3) it "can become prey to a cultural romanticism, unable to see the sin in its own historical experience" (p. 14); (4) since this model requires cultural analysis, it can only be done by experts. Hence communities are excluded from this form of theologising.

The liberation approach also has its weaknesses. It uses the Marxist model of social analysis, which has not yet been resolved. Furthermore, it is simplistic, in seeing issues as either just or unjust, black or white, without possible colours in between.

So, for the exposition of Schreiter's thoughts on theological models. Although I agree with much of what he says, I have a few misgivings. In the case of the adaptation models, Schreiter mentions how Placide Tempel, who was trained in Europe, used Neo-Thomism in writing his Bantu philosophy. While this accusation may be true on the individual basis, it is not true on the non-individual basis. We may compare the role of the theologian with that of the grammarian. The people who speak a language certainly know its syntax and grammar, but it requires a grammarian to make explicit the grammar in print. Every people group has its worldview, which contains the people's philosophy, categories, and implied theology. If a theologian makes explicit the people's implied philosophy and theology, the result is quite different from the individual basis, as in the case of Placide Tempel. Whether or not the non-individual approach be considered as ethnographic under the contextual category is not clear – if one is to follow Schreiter.

Schreiter says Pope Paul VI's approach of planting the seed of faith and allowing it to interact with the native soil is weak, because the ideal circumstances of culture are rare, and because of culture change. Culture is never static, because it changes. But, in spite of change, there is cultural continuity. Furthermore, the history of dogma, beginning from apostolic times, shows how Western theologies were produced, because of this interaction between faith and culture.

Schreiter speaks of the either-or disjunction between the theologian, or expert, and the community. This need not be the case in the analogy of the grammarian, and the people who speak the language.

In the proposed seminar, the participants should be aware then of what theological model they follow. Aside from the model, they should also be clear about the approach, which we shall explain further.

Approaches to Local Theology

According to Schreiter, there are four possible approaches to local theology: (1) theology as variation on a sacred text; (2) theology as wisdom; (3) theology as sure knowledge; and (4) theology as praxis. Let us go over each approach, and see which approach may be the most profitable for Melanesia.

(1) **Theology as variation on a sacred text.** In medieval times, theology primarily consisted of commentaries on the Bible. The homily, or sermon, may also be a type of such commentary. Another variation is the narrative or story. "Retelling of biblical stories subtly weaves together biblical and contemporary narratives to open the semantic possibilities of the biblical text" (p. 82). A third form is the anthology. The florilegium (a compilation of short texts from the Fathers and other authorities), the catena (a chronological chain of commentaries on a single biblical text), the philokalia (a collection of texts of a single author) – all bring together discrete units of texts from authors, for a stated purpose (p. 82). Schreiter says cultures with a strong oral focus will find this type of approach quite appropriate. Many of the people in Melanesia are illiterate, because it has an oral culture. Schreiter says, further, that "proverbs, old stories, and the like,

are, therefore, legitimate vehicles for the developing of local theologies" (p. 84).

(2) **Theology as wisdom.** This approach is concerned with the meaning of texts, and with experience. It wants to unite the world and God. It is characterised by the images of ascent and descent, or that of a journey. Examples of this kind of approach are the works of Pseudo-Dionysius, Johannes Scotus Erigena, St Augustine, Clement of Alexandria, Teresa of Avila – to mention a few. Schreiter says this kind of approach "will be a likely development in those cultures that have maintained their important rites of passage. It provides a way to bring together the wisdom of the ancestors, with the wisdom of Christ, the first ancestor of faith"(p. 87). Since initiation rites are still vigorous in Melanesia, this approach to theology may also be tried.

(3) **Theology as sure knowledge**. This approach has predominated and overshadowed the other approaches. Thomas Aquinas, Calvin, Karl Barth, and others used this approach. The audience of the theology of this approach is the classroom of the universities and of seminaries. This approach uses human reason, the social and natural sciences, in arriving at sure knowledge. This is the locus of the classical definition of theology as faith in search for understanding (**fides quaerens intellectum**).

(4) **Theology as praxis**. This approach maintains that both reflection and action are essential in its dialectic. The purpose of the dialectic is to "disentangle true consciousness from false consciousness" (p. 92), in its concerns for oppressed Christians. It is the approach of liberation theology.

Is this approach useful in Melanesia? Liberation theology is done where there is oppression, which is usually economic in nature. Poverty, in my opinion, is not yet critical in Melanesia. But liberation theology may be used in other forms of oppression. In Papua New Guinea, women are only second-class, and often oppressed by men.

The four approaches have their merits. All may be used in Melanesia. Hence, we suggest that they all be tried in the proposed seminar in the construction of Melanesia theology.

ORDAINED AND UNORDAINED MINISTERS

Leslie Boseto

The following discussion paper was prepared by Bishop Leslie Boseto of Munda, Solomon Islands, for participants at the 1984 Synod of the United church.

Introduction

In our 1983 Synod, the following resolution was passed:

> "That we ask the Bishop to draw up clear guidelines on the relationship between lay and ordained ministry, and that the draft be circulated to circuits for comments, which should be sent to the Bishop, to be compiled for next Synod."

Let me, first of all, say here that I have not been able to prepare draft guidelines for circuits to comment on before this Synod. Secondly, I want to say that, even if I had prepared guidelines, without understanding the whole question of "Ordained and Unordained Ministries" of the whole church, probably the guidelines can easily become a barrier and legal code that we must fulfil. And, if we cannot fulfil them, then the result can be that we create isolationism. This means that we isolate ourselves from one another, and will never reach relationships at a deeper level of acceptance of growth.

1. We are all Ministers

1.1 The word "minister" is from the word "ministry", which translates the Greek work "diakonos", meaning "one who serves".

1.2 The New Testament speaks of the "laos", the people of God, and it refers to the **whole church**. "For Christ is like a single body",

Romans 12:4-5. Lay people only apply to "non-professional or non-clerical" in special areas of knowledge or orders.

1.3 The church is a "gathered" community of faithful individuals. When Peter the apostle calls the people who are touched by God's Holy Spirit, he says: "**Each one** of you must turn away from his sins . . ." (Acts 2:37-39). Again, in his letter, 1 Peter 2:5, he says: "come as living stones, and let yourselves be used in building the spiritual temple, where you will serve as holy priests – to offer spiritual and acceptable sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ."

Note: "Priest" means an ordained minister of the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches; in church structure, one above deacon, and below bishop, with authority to administer sacraments, and pronounce absolution.

1.4 There are many ministries for all people of God, but ordained ministers are ordained for the ministry of administering sacraments and preaching the pure words of God. Therefore, the ordained minister, by virtue of his training and experience, does have a particular expertise. But there are other areas where the expertise rests with the laity, and where the ordained minister is a lay person.

QUESTION:

1. If we are all ministers (ones who serve), how do you see this with regard to the question of the authority of the church?

2. One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church

The above is a very fundamental statement. I want to give a very brief explanation of each of the above words.

2.1 **One church:** This refers to the unity of the Body. The church is likened to the Body of Christ. It is not one organisation, but one organism (1 Corinthians 12:12).

2.2 **Holy church:** The word "holy" here is not to be understood from pagan uses of the word. Holiness means being set apart from and for. The church is holy because it is set apart by God in Jesus Christ for proclaiming the wonderful works of God (1 Peter 2:9-10).

2.3 **Catholic church:** Catholic means "according to the whole". It means that every person within the Body of Christ, the church, must be a gifted person. The gifts of the Spirit are distributed among the whole community, and every person is given a place – women, men, children.

Revd Dr Ian Frazer says: "Catholic implies everybody sharing, everybody building up, and being built up, specialists in scholarship, and specialists in living brought together." Another word often used for the word catholic is "universal". The church can only be catholic, or universal, when everyone is touched by the gospel, and is functioning for the sake of the same gospel. Jesus said to His disciples that they must wait to be filled before witnessing (Acts 1:8).

2.4 **Apostolic church:** Apostolic means "sent out". To be apostolic is to be ready to leave where we are when we know this is the truthful thing to do, knowing that God will be with us in our pilgrimage. It is to be on the move – never static or stationary. When we hear the term "apostolic community", it refers not so much to the established community but to a moving, dynamic, and militant community, because every person is on the move for the sake of the gospel of peace, justice, unity, reconciliation, forgiveness, and so forth. Let us also note here that apostolic community must also be Pentecostal community.

2.5 **Church:** The church is "ecclesia", a public meeting place for all to gather, a believing community. M. M. Thomas has said: "The church should never be defined by its boundaries so that fences

can be erected around it. It must be defined by its centre, Jesus Christ."

QUESTION:

1. How do you see "specialists in scholarship and specialists in living brought together" in their work?

3. Ordained Ministers and Unordained Ministers for Christ's Ministries

3.1 From the traditional point of view of the gospel, ordination is usually interpreted so as to continue, and to insure within the Christian community, a sign of Christ's presence.

3.2 Roman Catholic and Anglican churches have three levels of ordained ministries, namely priest, bishop, and deacon. The office of priest is a continuing reminder to us of Christ our intercessor. The office of bishop is a reminder to us of the servanthood of Christ, i.e., to feed the hungry, to heal the sick, to set free the oppressed, etc.

3.3 Our United church has a tradition of believing there is only one order of the ordained ministry. We only induct our bishops, and dedicate or induct again, the other church leaders. We believe that the ordained minister is expected to fill the threefold office of Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King. This threefold office can be acknowledged as follows:

(a) To preach the word as a prophet.
(b) To administer the sacraments as a priest.
(c) To give orderly discipline as a king.

3.4 The above functions belong to the whole church, and should be shared with every gifted person. Read Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 27-30.

QUESTIONS:

1. What are your comments on "ordination is usually interpreted so as to continue, and to insure within the Christian community, a sign of Christ's presence"?

2. Read the Biblical references in 3.4 above, and make a list of different gifts, and how these were to be shared.

4. The Ministry of the Church is the Ministry of Christ

4.1 Those who allow Christ to live in them become His ministers. Ministry is an act undertaken in the name of Christ (Luke 10:17). This means we cannot make a minister of Christ.

4.2 Although the minds of the professors of theology, Old Testament and New Testament are important, they cannot give us, or make a mind of Christ, for us. This is a matter of "whoever believes in Me, streams of life-giving water will pour out from his heart" (John 7:38).

4.3 It is the work of the Holy Spirit alone to make "us capable of serving the new covenant, which consists, not of a written law, but of the Spirit. The written law brings death, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Corinthians 3:6).

4.4 The starting point of the relationship between ordained and unordained ministers is Christ. This was the experience of Peter with Cornelius (Acts 10:34), and also Paul's experience (Galatians 3:28).

QUESTION:

1. How can ordained ministers and laity (all people of God) share more of their faith?

5. We must enable or equip one another

5.1 Jesus was an enabler. Jesus' life, words, and approach were enabling His followers. The phrase, "And He began to teach them", recurs again and again. "Jesus appointed a further 72, and sent them on ahead in pairs to every town and place He was going to visit Himself" (Luke 10:1).

5.2 The task of the church's ministry is to equip one another, so that all might live as Christ's servants in the world (Ephesians 4:11-14).

5.3 As the laos – the people of God, ordained, and not ordained – we have been sent into the world to exercise ministry according to the gifts given us by the Spirit. The task of the whole congregation, therefore, is to enable these gifts to be put to use. We must be good managers of these gifts. Read 1 Corinthians 12:6-7, Hebrews 8:10-11, 1 Peter 4:7-11.

QUESTION:

1. The ministry of enablement starts from a personal renewal of individuals. How can you see this being done?

BOOK REVIEWS

WRIGHT, Cliff, and FUGUI, Leslie, eds., **Christ in South Pacific Cultures: Articles by South Pacific Islanders about the Relationship of Traditional Culture to Christian Faith** (Suva: Lotu Pasifika Publications, 1985), iii + 117 pp., Paperback.

This useful book has arisen out of a number of workshops throughout the Pacific during 1978-1983. These were funded by the Australian Council of Churches, with the support of the Pacific Council of Churches, and were facilitated by Cliff Wright, one of the book's co-editors. The result is a miscellany of practical theological statements, arresting poetry, and interspersed suggestions for local workshops, which might be held, with this book as a study guide.

The major contributors are almost all Melanesians. To this extent, the collection compares with **Living Theology in Melanesia**, the Reader recently put together by John May (Melanesian Institute, 1985). One piece is shared in common between the two volumes, namely Bernard Narokobi's account of the death of his mother, but two obvious differences lie in the greater proportion of Solomonese input to the Wright-Fugui production (ca. 60%), with one Fijian article as well, and in the newer collection's less academic, more-obviously practical dress. Virtually all the contributions are limited to half a dozen pages or under, making it more useful for in-service workshops for ministers, for those seeking stimulation in the exercise of pastoral care, and all sorts of other local get-togetherness (p. 9).

Considering my own editorship of black theologies in the southwest Pacific (**The Gospel is Not Western,** Orbis, 1987), I could lament that the book belies its own name by representing too limited a number of "South Pacific cultures" – with voices from only five national regions being ventilated. It is a pity we hear nothing from Micronesia (about which Wright has edited another book), and so little from Polynesia. Considering my own difficulties in obtaining contributors from the "hotbeds" of New Caledonia and West Papua, I can understand why writers from these places do not figure, yet perhaps more should be made in the book of the great diversity of human needs

in the Pacific, and the sharp differences between certain socio-political contexts. We are also left with too much of an impression, perhaps, that the development of South Pacific indigenous theology is limited to the "mainline churches", when its existence in other quarters required some recognition. In the Solomons, for instance, one of the ablest up-and-coming theological writers, Michael Mailiau, belongs to the South Seas Evangelical church.

One strong and valuable point in the Wright/Fugui volume is that it is not just a collection for showing what indigenous theologies look like, but centres around a theme – that of "issues" arising "from traditional beliefs and practices that need attention in relation to Christian faith" (p. 6). As many as 51 fascinating issues were singled out for inspection, and most of them are touched on in some way or another in the articles. The tradition/Christianity interaction was a perfect binding principle, one which was also suggested to me by the (Anglican) Australian Board of Mission for the Coorparoo Conference in 1981, which laid the basis for **The Gospel is Not Western**. Wright and Fugui, however, working under a Council of Churches mandate, have felt it pressing on them to cultivate theologies which produce authentically indigenous Christianity and avoid syncretism (p. 8). I remember how, in contrast, the ABM representative to the Coorparoo Conference, Fr Fred Wandmaker, a man experienced in Aboriginal affairs, succeeded in convincing us that no such pre-imposed evaluation should in any sense colour what took place. Listening was to be paramount. To the extent that the Wright/Fugui volume has responded to the interests of a funding body, then, it is less "independent" in quality, and has less "maverick" material than some might like, but has the advantage of being structured to suit the rapidly-growing numbers who want the down-to-earth, straightforward, and stable mainstream Christian orientation that if offers.

Significant in the book are: the Solomonese Anglican priest, Leslie Fugui, to be honoured as the first co-editor of such a theological book, and as creator or four pieces within it, one crucial among them being on sacrifice; Sir John Guise, former Governor General of Papua New Guinea, who asks searching questions as to whether the Christian faith is so deep-rooted in his own nation; John Pratt, United church bishop of the Western Solomons, exploring the relationship between

tradition and Christianity in any area where ecclesial separatism has occurred with The Christian Fellowship church of the Holy Mama; John Kadiba, the first Melanesian to be appointed to a teaching position in a tertiary institution outside his own country (Nungalinga College, Northern Territory), handling the whole issue of healing in tradition and Jesus' ministry very sensitively; Sevati Tuwere, the energetic Fijian theologian, and Principal of the Pacific Theological College, with some colourful pages on his encounter with a sorcerer; as well as the inimitable Narokobi, and several others, including Foreword writer, the former United church Moderator, Leslie Boseto.

Boseto and Narokobi have already contributed to May's Reader; Kadiba, Tuwere, and Narokobi (again) also have articles in the Orbis volume. Thus we are beginning to see the preliminary blossoming of Melanesian theology with a veritable "set" of active thinkers and writers. I suspect they are more active than publishing opportunities allow for. Some of the pieces – those of Pratt and Tuwere, for example, and a poem by Kadiba – were in unpublished circulation before the Wright/Fugui volume appeared. One could understand, with the pressure to get their messages across, if these writers' individual creations appear in more than one place. That there are now three symposia of this kind, and the **Melanesian Journal of Theology** as well (!), is all to the good, to provide outlet for energies which do not look likely to suffer depletion in the future.

Garry Trompf, Dept. of Religious Studies, University of Sydney.

LOELIGER, Carl, and TROMPF, Garry, eds., **New Religious Movements in Melanesia** (Suva: University of the South Pacific/Port Moresby: University of Papua New Guinea, 1985) xvii + 188 pp.

This book is a welcome addition to the already extensive literature on religious movements in Melanesia. It is welcome for two main reasons: most of the contributors are Melanesians, who have observed the movements they describe at first hand, and, in some cases, provide original source material, to which the editors rightly ascribe documentary value; and most are not content with the stock image of

the "cargo cult" as an explanatory category. The book is enhanced by including examples from New Guinea, Papua, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Fiji, virtually the entire geographical area of Melanesia. It also contains finely-drawn maps and some photographs.

Some of the movements described certainly contain "cargoist" elements. The movement associated with Geno Gerega in the Hula area of Papua led people to neglect their families and gardens (111), and Geno himself could claim: "I received power from God to obtain the new Western kind of wealth for my generation in my community" (113). The Kopani "cargo religion" on Bougainville, no doubt influenced by the presence of the copper mine, forbade its adherents "to engage in any sort of development projects" (36). Yet Anthony Maburau describes his uncle, Irakau of Manam Island, as an initiator of economic activity, who "was unwittingly the object of cargoist expectation" (15), while Norlie Niskaram sees cargoism in New Ireland "to be an expression of unequal and irrational allocation of resources" (88).

If any of the prophetic figures portrayed here shows signs of the psychopathological traits often so carelessly attributed to "cargo cultists", it is perhaps Sekaia Loaniceva, founder of the Congregation of the Poor in Fiji, who, after a series of visions, exercised a ministry of healing, and prophesied that, by 1991, Fiji would be "head of the world" (182). Most of them show evidence of genuine spirituality, often touched off by evangelical preaching, e.g., by students of Christian Leaders' Training College among the Kyaka Enga (50), or by contact with Adventist churches, as in the case of Christopher England Kwaisulia's relationship with the Seventh-day Adventists (126). Others, such as Mareva Namo, were "among the first to reflect on contact with the whitemen's way of life" (96); or to demand, with England, that the church "must be absolutely indigenous" (126); or, with his companion Sisimia, that it become "a form of religion within which Melanesians would be at home and at ease" (146).

These, and many other aspirations reported in this book, are still well worth listening to by those involved in both evangelisation and development. The editors have succeeded in assembling a range of case studies, which show the variety and complexity of religious

movements in Melanesia today, from indigenous cults to spiritual revivals, often leavened by Christian teachings on the Second Coming and the Holy Spirit. The book is highly recommended for use in courses on Melanesian religion and theology.

John D'Arcy May, The Melanesian Institute, Goroka.

BOFF, Leonardo, **Ecclesiogenesis: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church** (Maryknoll New York: Orbis Books, 1986) US$9.95.

Ecclesiogenesis is an exciting, but ultimately unsatisfying, book. It is exciting, because it tells of the new understanding of the church that lies behind the birth of base Christian communities in Brazil, and elsewhere in South America, but it is unsatisfying because it fails to consider objections to this new vision of the church, or to give a systematic reflection on the theological issues at stake. Like too many contemporary publications, the volume under review is a collection of papers originally written separately. It is far from being a fully-developed ecclesiology.

Boff argues that the universal church is rendered visible in the local ecclesial community. As a community of faith, united to Christ, believers are the presence of universal church. In other words, the base communities of South America can claim to be the church in its fullness. Ministry does not give the right to rule over the church. It is not the bishops and priests who call the church into being, but the Holy Spirit, who gives each person gifts to use in building up the common life of the body of Christ. There is equality between all Christians, with the ordained ministers having the function of serving their brothers and sisters and of preserving the church's unity.

The advantage of Boff's model of the church is that it understands the importance of lay participation, and gets away from the old division between clerical producers and lay consumers. The weakness is that it all too easily leads to parochialism, or to control over the local Christian community by certain dominating personalities, who lack an adequate theological formation. The base community

needs to be linked to the wider body of Christ. How does Boff envisage this relationship?

The discussion of the political aspects of the gospel follows a pattern familiar from the works of other South American theologians of liberation. Capitalism is criticised (with good reason, given the suffering it has brought to countries like Chile), but there is no assessment of the weaknesses of Marxism. What would Boff say to the people of Ethiopia, who were forced to starve as a result of their Marxist government's land reform and resettlement programme from 1984-1985? In many parts of Africa, so-called socialist governments are forcing down agricultural prices (and so depressing production) in order to provide cheap food for the towns, and so prevent rioting and discontent.

Perhaps most disappointing of all is Boff's discussion of whether lay people can celebrate the Eucharist for the base communities. His conclusion appears to be that they can, since it is the one who presides over the community who should stand at the altar, whether he/she is ordained or not, but then we are told that the use of lay celebrants would represent an extraordinary state of affairs, and that the services in which they take part should be called "the Lord's Supper", not the Mass! To be honest, I find this an extraordinary argument that appears to want things both ways. It may have been devised with an eye to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, but the result is confused, and likely to satisfy no one.

The case for confining the celebration of the Eucharist to ordained ministers is not that only they have the special power that enables them to confect the body and blood of Christ, but that, in this way, the unity of the church is symbolised and maintained. Given the shortage of vocations to the priesthood, the Catholic church in South America clearly has a crisis on its hands, but the way to solve it is not to invent a new service half-way between an agape and a Eucharist. If the obstacle of compulsory celibacy could be overcome, a better solution could be found.

A final paper puts the case for the ordination of women. Boff is all for equality between men and women, but he also recognises that a

genuine liberation for women would set them free to be truly feminine. In the light of this, he does get as far as wondering whether women should be encouraged to function as priests in the way that men have traditionally done so. Might there not be an argument here for saying that women and men are called upon to exercise fundamentally different, but complementary, roles in the church? This is not a line of inquiry that Boff pursues. For most of the time he repeats that familiar case for the ordination of women to the priesthood.

To end on a positive note, I liked Boff's stress on the priest as a **representative** who acts to make visible the priestly ministry of Christ. It is Christ who baptises, absolves, and consecrates, but He does so through the mediation of the ordained minister, who has been given the authority to celebrate publicly in the name of Christ and of the Christian community. If this position is taken seriously, it must surely lead us to see that the ministry does not spring from among believers, but is, in fact, Christ's gift to His church.

Paul Richardson, Anglican Bishop of Aipo Rongo, Lae.

COOK, Guiliermo, **The Expectation of the Poor: Latin American Basic Ecclesial Communities in Protestant Perspective** (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1985 – American Society of Missiology Series No. 9) US$13.95, 316 pp.

This book provides rich information on the situation in Latin America: oppressed Christians, who seek to understand and respond to their concrete problems in the light of scriptures. The author takes a firm stand. The study is a challenge to Cook himself, to Protestantism, to the Roman Catholic church, and for Mission. Cook calls himself an evangelical of very conservative stock (5). He sees the Communidades Ecclesiais de Base (CEB) as a new reality. Keywords of this reality are poverty, alienation, marginalisation, oppression. "The poor are refusing to give up their own future. This is why I called the CEB 'the Expectation of the Poor' " (7). The CEB are a challenge to Protestantism: "Protestantism is a creative protest", called the Protestant Principle (Foreword xiii). He sees a similarity with "the

revolt of CEB against institutional fossilisation – the systemic rigidity and theological sterility that gripped the Catholic church for more than a millennium-and-a-half of its history" (3). The Catholic Communidades are a "Protestant" phenomenon. But, ironically, the Protestant churches are not "Protestant" any more, because they have become institutionalised. The priesthood of all believers has become a theoretical doctrine, and, unlike, a church of the poor, they are a middle-class prosperous establishment. "The Saviour that was proclaimed . . . by Protestants . . . was not, in every case, the suffering servant of scripture" (204). Therefore, the CEB are more "Protestant" than Protestant churches, and Protestant CEB have been institutionalised. "The spirit of prophetic criticism against every kind of absolutism . . . implicit in the 'Protestant Principle' is evident in the ethos of the Communidades" (236). "We seem to be passing the Catholic church – or a certain segment of it – but in the wrong direction" (8). "We are passing each other in the night" (235).

CEB offer a challenge to the Catholic church, and the Roman See, at the level of sociology, ecclesiology, theology, and mission. At the moment of writing, Leonardo Boff had been silenced. By now, he is speaking and publishing again. It is just a symptom of the church's struggle to clear her mind and take a stand: "What do we do with the 'option for the poor'?" It is a term used by the Vatican Council, which is to be translated into practice. Medellin, Puebla, Pope's visits, documents of the Congregation for the Sacred Doctrine, show a development of give-and-take, prophetic charism, and institutional cautiousness. "The Vatican is prepared to keep the charism of CEB within institutional bounds" (Introduction xiv).

Critically: "The ambiguity of the Puebla document must be understood in the light of the power struggle within the Latin American Conference of Bishops – and a change in the Vatican" (241).

The challenge for mission comes back to the "annunciation-denunciation dyad". "The proclamation of the gospel, in word and action, is both announcement of salvation and liberation in Jesus Christ, and denunciation of the structures that oppress and alienate humanity. It is both re-evangelisation of the masses of nominal Christians, and prophetic confrontation with oppressive powers" (106).

The commitment of the author himself is felt all through, and clearly expressed on the last page: "My prayer is that the **communidades de base** in Latin America continue to be the hope of the church and the expectation of the poor – but from within, not as a separate ecclesiastical institution, as a partisan political movement, not as a mere appendage to a traditional church. Ecclesiastical schism, degeneration into a mere political movement of institutionalisation, would spell the end of one of the most-significant ecclesial movements and social forces in the twentieth century" (251).

Tony Krol SVD, Catholic church, Wabag.

TABBERNEE, William, ed., **Australian Churches' Response to Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry** (Sydney: Australian Council of Churches, no date) 87 pp.

This inexpensively-produced booklet should be of the greatest interest to those who are studying the World Council of Churches' Lima text on baptism, eucharist, and ministry (BEM) in Melanesia. Of the Australian churches, whose official responses are collected here, almost all have close links with counterparts in Melanesia: the Anglican church of Australia; the Australian Episcopal Conference of the Roman Catholic church; the Baptist Union of Australia; the Canonical Orthodox churches in Australia; the Churches of Christ in Australia; the Lutheran church of Australia; the Salvation Army; the Society of Friends (Quakers); and the Uniting church in Australia.

The editor's introduction gives a brief, but clear, survey of the criticisms each church felt obliged to make of the document, and of the ways each felt challenged by it to rethink its position. Here (9), and in his conclusion (85), Tabbernee emphasises the step that must be taken from "comparative" to "ecumenical" ecclesiology, if the document is to be appreciated properly (the response of the Churches of Christ formulates its approach in these terms (39)). In practice, however, a good number of the churches represented here still insist on doggedly asserting their cherished confessional positions in the face of the convergence suggested by BEM, before going on to admit – some

grudgingly, some with the joy of discovery – that they might, indeed, be able to develop, in doctrine and life, while still remaining true to these positions. But, diverse as they are, and lacking the structures for reception and response, as some of them do (e.g., the Orthodox and the Baptists), all participate willingly and conscientiously in the process on what are essentially equal terms. This, in itself, is an ecumenical advance, whose consequence are still incalculable, even if the Catholic church still protests that the "centre of gravity" of Christ's church "lies in herself, and is a present reality" (22), and the Salvation Army and the Quakers feel that their particular Christian witness is "ignored" by the theology of BEM.

Among the issues emerging from these responses, which might be further discussed in Melanesia, are the relative merits of infants' and believers' baptism, and the question of re-baptism; the status of Spirit baptism with regard of water baptism; the necessity of "outward forms", such as formal ordination to ministry; the meaning and necessity of the "apostolic faith"; the different churches' possibilities of receiving and responding to the document; and the markedly different ways the churches use the Bible, some assuming the existence of a "pure" gospel, while others take account of history and tradition. The diversity revealed in this range of responses is indeed bewildering; yet the underlying concern for unity is equally apparent and – even more important at this stage – all the churches show that they are ready to experiment with new formulations and possibilities for convergence. The booklet may be obtained from ACC, PO Box C199 Clarence Street, Sydney NSW 2000.

John D'Arcy May, The Melanesian Institute, Goroka.

LAK, Yeow Choo, ed., **Doing Theology and People's Movements in Asia,** No. 3 (Singapore: The Association for Theological Education in South East Asia, 1986) 259 pp.

This book is a collection of papers presented at the 1985 theological seminar-workshop held in Kyoto, Japan. If theology is commonly defined as faith in search of understanding (**fides quaerens**

intellectum), then doing theology is reflecting within faith, and expressing that reflection. According to the editor, doing theology begins with people. Hence it "is quite a radical department from the traditional way of theologising, which begins with books, not people" (1). It means bracketing-off the European theological tradition and viewing the Asian situation from the biblical perspective. In short, a "leap from Israel to Asia" (192).

Most of the contributors reflect about the oppressive situations of their respective people (Burma, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Philippines), which the authors consider as the dynamic equivalent of the Jewish Egyptian slavery in the Old Testament. Since a major theme is liberation, Exodus is often quoted. If the situation of Asian women is oppressive, there are three contributions (one poem and two articles) on women's liberation. However, not all the articles deal with people's movements in Asia, as indicated in the book's title. It has an article on recovering theological meanings, another on the search for humanhood, some broader biblical commentaries, a bibliographical survey on Asian people movements.

If one were to read the various papers in the light of Robert J. Schreiter's **Constructing Local Theologies** (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1985), most of the writers use the contextual (liberation) model. Only one article uses the ethnographic approach, which is about the Numai tribe of Papua New Guinea. The majority of the writers use, in varying degrees, the methodology of theology, as variation on a sacred text, that is, reflecting on particular Asian situations as the dynamic equivalent of Israel's liberation. Some articles may also use theology as praxis. The article on Japanese Christology is one of the few contributions using theology as sure knowledge. Of the twenty contributors, only two are non-Asians. It shows that doing theology is for both locals and expatriates. The book includes a few poems, because poets, too, can be local theologians.

Since the conference was sponsored by the Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA) and the Tao Fong Shan Ecumenical Centre, it is understandable why the big majority of the contributors are Protestants. Two Catholic priests are included in the collection.

The quality of scholarship in the book varies from an outline to articles with erudite footnotes. In spite of the limited talent pool of Asian churches (1), the construction of local theologies is a giant task which has to be encouraged. ATESEA is, therefore, commended for encouraging young Asian theologians to write in the regular seminar-workshops. If Asian theologians continue in their efforts, they will eventually gain more expertise and confidence like their counterparts in Africa and Latin America.

Doing theology in future conferences should use other methodologies. For example, theology as wisdom may be used effectively, since wisdom is akin to the Asian mystique. I suggest future books of the series follow the standard reference for editing, **The Manual of Style** (University of Chicago).

Leonardo N. Mercado SVD, Catholic Mission Wurup.

FERNANDO, Antony, with Leonard Swidler, **Buddhism Made Plain: An Introduction for Christians and Jews** (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1985) ref. ed. Paperback, US$9.95, 138 pp.

There are a number of books that present Buddhism in relation to Christianity, and a few that mention Judaism in a comparative context. The present volume represents an effort to present Buddhism in a way that takes into account readers whose thought patterns on religion have been moulded from birth by Christian and Judaic ideas. The authors are well qualified for this task. Antony Fernando has been deeply involved in the academic study of both Buddhism and Christianity, and has spent long period in Christian seminaries and Buddhist monasteries acquiring a practical knowledge of these religions.

In general, the study gives a thorough and accurate presentation of Theravada doctrine and philosophy. This is laid out under the traditional rubrics and schemas, such as the “Four Noble Truths”, “Eight-fold Path”, and Department Origination (**pratityasamupada**). The presentation of these is enhanced by focusing on how these doctrines impinge on the human condition. One point worthy of

mention, though, is that the analysis of suffering downplays the significance of ignorance, and the view of substantial selfhood as the root of cause of human problems. In Buddhism, suffering is caused by desire and attachment, but these, in turn, are based in ignorance. The study is also weak in its presentation of the doctrine of karma, since it fails to specify that karma is **volitional** action. Further, karma is not a law: it is a psycho-dynamic principle. The account of the doctrine of non-self (**anatta**) is distinctly Theravada, and relative to other interpretations is somewhat extreme. There is, however, useful comparative material on attitudes to egoism in Christianity and Judaism. The significance of meditation is mentioned, but should have been highlighted more since this is a major practical difference between the Semitic traditions and Buddhism. The study is correct in emphasising that Buddhism is a system of human transformation, and in describing nirvana as a state of being, which is in the world, and predicated by personal freedom and altruistic qualities, such as kindness, gentleness, compassion, and equanimity.

The greatest weakness of the study is its restriction to the Theravada tradition of Buddhism, since the most fruitful comparisons and dialogues occur between Christianity and the Mahayana traditions of Buddhism, particularly Zen and Tibetan Buddhism. Another reason why the lack of mention of these Mahayana traditions is a serious omission is because they are more vital in the west than the Sri Lanka and Thai traditions. Given that there are good pragmatic reasons for making the framework of comparison Buddhism, as it appears in the West, the Mahayana traditions should clearly be discussed. For similar reasons, one can question why the authors strive for maximum fidelity to the original scriptural traditions of Buddhism, since much that is of relevance in the contemporary context derives from later innovations and developments. It would, for example, have been illuminating to refer to the thought of contemporary Buddhists, such as Buddhadasa Thera, with whom Fernando has studied.

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CRAGG, Kenneth, **The Call of the Minaret** (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books/Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1985, 2nd rev. ed.) x + 358 pp US$13.95.

To have a completely new edition, after 30 years of Kenneth Cragg's classic Christian interpretation of Islam, is indeed a great gift, not least in Melanesia, where, under the shadow of Muslim neighbours, the presence of Islam is slowly but surely beginning to be felt in Papua New Guinea, as it has long been felt in Fiji. Both missionaries and Melanesians may be expected to react defensively, even with hostility, to this new presence: the missionaries, because they have had the Pacific field to themselves in the conviction that Christianity is the superior religion; the Melanesians, because of their age-old and deep-seated suspicion of outsiders. A careful reading of Cragg's book, at this early stage, might be just the right antidote to prevent another evangelistic disaster of the kind that has unhappily been so frequent elsewhere.

"Come yet to prayer, come to your true well-being. God is most great, Muhammad is his Apostle. There is none save God" – **la ilaha illa Allah:** the muezzin's call from the minaret of mosques large and small is addressed not only to that one-sixth of the world's population – 835 million people – who embrace the faith of Muhammad, but to all men and women, including Christians. Every word in it, taken separately, is familiar to us, yet its cadences are alien. How are we to react? Can we afford to ignore the call?

Cragg unfolds the meaning of the muezzin's call, phrase by phrase, with admirable sympathy, but he also explains its implications for the echoing call of the Christian evangelist, who offers "the restoration to Muslims of the Christ whom they have missed" (220). The muezzin's call, he interprets as a summons to acknowledge the sovereign unity (**tauhid**) of God, and his revelation, together with the necessity and excellence of prayer (**salat**, embracing fasting, devotion, and the pilgrimage to Mecca) and good works (**falah**, implying the well-ordered social and political life, which flows from Islamic law). The call-within-the-call, addressed to Christians, is an invitation to meet, understand, and participate in Islam; to help Muslims retrieve the Christ, who is obscured for them by mountains of prejudice and ignorance, learning in the process to interpret the Christian scriptures in

their true relationship to the Qur'an; and finally – impossible as it may seem – to share hope and faith without mutual enmity and cultural alienation.

Out of the richness of the book one can only highlight certain insights, which may have a particular relevance to our situation in Melanesia. It is law, not metaphysics (42), or theology (51), which gives Islam its distinctive cohesiveness, even to the extent of "a general tendency toward authoritarianism, and away from intellectualism" (191-192). This applies equally to worship and to right social order: "The law that defines the one also establishes the other. . . . This is the ultimate meaning of law in Islam, and of Islam as law" (129). There is, thus, no such thing as a "higher" revelation, which may be re-interpreted contextually without regard for the literal meaning of the Qur'an, and the particularities of everyday life: "The basis of human conduct and organisation is revelation" (130). Counterbalancing this juridical fundamentalism is the principle of enterprise and initiative (**ijtihad**) in adapting the law to new situations, which issues in consensus (**ijma'**), the conviction "that truth is safe with the community" (132), possibly "a principle of development in Islam, whereby a new attitude, or a new requirement, can gather the force of law, and, hence, the sanction of "revelatory" status, through its acceptance, in general, by those who believe" (133). But what a far cry from the Christian dialectic of Law and Gospel, the freedom with which Christ has set us free!

Muhammad's decision to defeat his opponents on the battlefield, and impose his new faith by force is the very contrary of Christ's decision to submit to the cross (cf. 85, 271). Indeed, the Qur'an explicitly denies the reality of the crucifixion (Surah 4.158, cf. 265 ff.). The result is that Islam is the supremely politicised religion. "Muhammad founded a state; he did not merely launch a religion . . . . We should, perhaps, say he launched a religion in founding a state" (146). Coupled with Muslims' total misunderstanding of the relationship between Father and Son in the Trinity, which, for them, is tantamount to polytheism, and a profanation of the divine unity and purity (cf. 262, 275 ff., 289), and the complete inaccessibility of Islam to everything that is implied by Christology, the obstacles thus presented to evangelisation may be imagined.

Yet Islam stands firmly within the Judaeo-Christian tradition: "Islam belongs to the Western side of any East-West division of human history" (174). Christianity and Islam have a "duty to each other" (167). It is one of the triumphs of Cragg's book that his judicious, yet uncompromising, approach to mission gives us an inkling of how the barriers to understanding and conversion could, in fact, be torn down. Cragg's long experience in Muslim countries makes him utterly realistic in this respect: given the presuppositions of Islamic society, and the cultural sanctions against those who voluntarily leave it, there will be no mass conversions; "success" will not be measured by "church growth" statistics (cf. 304-305), for ". . . the progress or the contagion of the kingdom of heaven is 'soul by soul'. We cannot institutionalise the world into God's kingdom" (246). The supreme test of the mission to Muslims is to engender mutual respect between two separate, but related, religious identities, each of which strongly resists absorption into the pop culture of our emerging global civilisation (cf. 194).

In envisaging a Christian **islam** or submission to God in Christ, which Muslims could understand and share (cf. 264), and in doing so with such exquisite sensibility – and, be it added, in an English style of a purity and scope that are seldom seen nowadays – Cragg has bequeathed a precious heritage to all missionaries. It is the actual meeting of minds and hearts, often dearly won, not the number of conversions, that counts. His parting advice is pertinent to missionaries everywhere: "Those who contemplate mission to Islam should remember to think before they start to count" (313).

John D'Arcy May, The Melanesian Institute, Goroka.

SWIDLER, Leonard, ed., **Religious Liberty and Human Rights in Nations and Religions** (Philadelphia PA: Ecumenical Press/New York NY: Hippocrene Books, 1986) US$9.95, 255 pp.

It would be easy to pass over a book like the above in a developing country with the excuse that the subject matter is "Western" and hence irrelevant. On closer inspection, however, things are not

quite so simple. With regard to religious liberty, there has already been a threat to legislate against Christian and other "sects" entering Papua New Guinea, with the result that the whole question of religious liberty, as guaranteed by the constitution, and as decreed by the Second Vatican Council was raised in this journal (**MJT** 2 (1986) 77-106). Politicians and church workers have already had to face human rights issues in the cases of refugees from Irian Jaya, and the growing number of squatters on the outskirts of Papua New Guinea's towns. And diplomats are dealing with Asian countries, whose concepts in these areas are influenced by Muslim and Buddhist, rather than Christian, traditions. It is, thus, not so inappropriate, as it might appear at first glance, to recommend a book in which representatives of Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions discuss these issues both within and between their religious communities.

In her keynote address to the conference from which the book originated, Prof. Elizabeth Odio-Benito, of Costa Rica, revealed that not many countries are willing to engage in self-criticism on human rights' matters, let alone submit their records to thorough analysis. According to Franklin H. Littell, even the USA, the traditional home of religious liberty, does not have a flawless record. Reports on countries as diverse as Yugoslavia, Egypt, the Sudan, the USSR, and Korea confirm these findings. Littell's thesis that full religious liberty is more than mere toleration of minorities (14, 16), and is "indivisible" (19), is valuable.

It is when it moves into the area of religious liberty and human rights in the different religious traditions that the book becomes particularly interesting for theologians. The chapter on Christianity, by Charles Curran, concentrates on the Roman Catholic church's reluctance to embrace the full implications of these principles, despite their promulgation by the Second Vatican Council; his own recent condemnation by the Vatican gives a sad irony to his criticisms of judicial process in his own church. The book breaks new ground, not only by presenting Muslim viewpoints on religious liberty in Islam, and the possibility of dialogue between Muslims and Hindus, but, in adding a Buddhist response to the Muslim position, as well as an exposition of the radically-different Buddhist approach by Masao Abe. The inability, even of enlightened Muslims, to conceive of an act of free choice with

regard to Islam itself, is completely inadmissible in the Buddhist context. Most Christians will probably find that they have hardly begun to reflect on such questions.

An honest analysis of traditional ways of justifying the caste system in Hinduism, and a report on Tubingen University's interfaith human rights project round off a volume that is full of surprises for those who are seriously interested in the religious foundations of ethics in multicultural and interreligious contexts.

John D'Arcy May, The Melanesian Institute, Goroka.

RECENT THESES

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INTRODUCING OUR NEW EDITOR

Christopher Garland is an Anglican priest. Born and educated in England, he received his Ph.D. from Exeter University in 1972 for a thesis on disputes between the established church and the rigorist Christian fringe groups in the early church. Trained for the Anglican ministry at Queen's Theological College, Birmingham, he taught religious education, and was assistant priest in the parish of Rochester before coming to Papua New Guinea in 1985. He lectures in Church History and Melanesian Religion at Newton Theological College, Popondetta.