Vol 2, No 2 October 1986

MELANESIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

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JOURNAL OF MELANESIAN ASSOCIATION OF THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS

K3.00

ISSN 0256-856X

Registered at the G.P.O., Port Moresby for transmission through the post as a qualified periodical.

The **Melanesian Journal of Theology** aims to stimulate the writing of theology by Melanesians for Melanesians. It is an organ for the regular discussion of theological topics at a scholarly level by staff and students of the member schools of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools (MATS), though contributions from non-members and non-Melanesians will be considered.

The **Melanesian Journal of Theology** is ecumenical, and it is committed to the dialogue of Christian faith with Melanesian cultures. The Editors will consider for publication all manuscripts of scholarly standard on matters of concern to Melanesian Christians, and of general theological interest. Manuscripts should be typed, double-spaced, and in duplicate.

The **Melanesian Journal of Theology** appears twice yearly, in April and October.

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES	DEVELOPING COUNTRIES	DEVELOPED COUNTRIES
Annual subscription	PNG K5.00	US $7.50
Single issue	PNG K3.00	US $5.00
Students per issue	PNG K2.00	
MATS membership (incl. annual subscription)	PNG K10.00	

(Airmail charges supplied on request)

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Journal of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools

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Cover design by Br Jeff Daly CP and John Kua

ISSN 0256-856X Volume 2, Number 2, October 1986

PNG K3.00

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EDITORIAL

The Melanesian Spirit in Theology

It is part of our editorial policy to make use of **MJT** in intensifying our links with our Asian and Australian neighbours.

From a setting, both similar to, and different from, Melanesia, Don Carrington of Nungalinya College, Darwin (MATS's most-distant member), sends a paper on ministry, composed with the speech rhythms and thought patters of his Australian Aborigine students in mind. Is it possible for the speech and spirit of Melanesia to be reflected in the way we retell the gospel story and write theology? This could be a challenge to local theologians. Fr Martin Wilson MSC, founder of the Nelen Yubu Missiological Unit on Melville Island, near Darwin, and editor of our companion journal **Nelen Yubu**, contributes a review of a book on understandings of Aboriginal religion. John Kadiba, the first melanesian to teach at Nungalinya, also reviews a book on Aboriginal Christianity.

Turning to the Melanesian scene, we are providentially able to publish together an article by a Southern Highlands Christian, and one by a Southern Highlands missionary, on the encounter between Christian faith and Melanesian religion in that culturally-rich region. Mogola Kamiali has written his paper straight from the heart, yet out of an intimate knowledge of missionary history, while Ossie Fountain shares with us the profound reflections of a missionary temporarily (we hope) retired from the field after a very personal Christian encounter with Melanesian religion. Are these efforts to set the record straight, and map out the development of faith after first contact, evidence of an emerging Melanesian spirit in our theology? Once again, we encourage readers' reactions.

In an important sequel to the paper on "The Law and the Sects" by Fr Theo Aerts MSC in **MJT** 2/1, 77-106, his colleague, Fr Jan Snijders SM, sketches the outlines of a much-needed "religious map" of Papua New Guinea. Taken together, these articles should be of immense value to those

who trying to develop an ecumenical policy on the difficult problem of sectarianism.

Finally, as editors inevitably do from time to time, we must offer some apologies. Firstly, for the late appearance of the last issue of **MJT** due to teething problems with The Melanesian Institute's new word processor, together with heartfelt thanks to Ms Gretchen Mueller of Kristen Pres, Madang, who squeezed in the typesetting of **MJT**, despite other commitments, because, as she said, "I believe in it." That little testimony makes all the hassles worthwhile! Secondly, for a slight price rise, which will affect mainly our overseas subscribers, effective in 1987. We hope these readers will appreciate that, in paying a little extra, they are helping to make **MJT** more financially independent of grants from donor agencies, and also to make it more affordable for Melanesian subscribers.

In our next issue, the theme for the 1987 MATS Study Institute will be announced; there will be a report on the Waigani Seminar, which discussed "The Ethics of Development"; and MATS's own anthology, with contributions from our member schools, **Living Theology in Melanesia: a Reader**, will be reviewed.

We wish our readers many blessings during the Christmas season and in the New Year.

John D'Arcy May
Executive Editor.

SOME NEW TESTAMENT STORIES ABOUT JESUS, WHICH POINT TO A NEW STYLE OF MINISTRY

Don Carrington

The fully-recorded mature decision that Jesus Himself makes about His style of ministry is when He chooses to be baptised by John in the Jordan. Albert Nolan, in his book **Jesus before Christianity**, sees this as a deliberate choice from among a number of possible options.[1] Jesus chooses John as the prophet who is making the most sense at that time. And in identifying Himself with John, Jesus opens up some options and turns away from other "so-called successful ways of coping", away from other "programs for transformation in Israel". From the time of His baptism, Jesus begins to choose the direction He will go, and the methods He will adopt in His ministerial vocation.

With deliberate intent, Jesus begins His public ministry with a public act of solidarity with the people. John's preaching is typical of the prophets of old in that he calls upon all of Israel to act. John calls all of the people to repentance, and Jesus decides to go down to the river with the crowds. In the language of some Latin-American theologians, this is Jesus' first conscious act of identification with those on the "underside" of history.[2]

> Jesus goes down into the muddy, dirty waters.
> He deliberately joins the mob
> solidarity
> in repentance and faith
> with crowds who are already
> moving, confessing, repenting, turning . . .
>
> Jesus goes down into Jordan
> in a decisive act
> this young man is making a genuine move
> an act of repentance (metanoia!)
> aware that nothing in His young life
> may ever be the same again
> aware that in the providence of God

this is a watershed
old things are passing away.
Child of Bethlehem . . . .
His is a thoroughgoing washing (Zech. 13:1, Jer. 4:14)
a young life
drowned . . . .

radical repentance means
turning from
old ways
from a familiar world
from a world of death. . . .

In real repentance
there is no going back
old values must die. . . .[3]

In John's baptism of repentance, Jesus' choices are radically open. As a young, "budding" theologian, and as one who is gifted with the first glimpses of an alternative vision, it is to be expected that He might turn away from Galilee. He would not need to rationalise all that much to justify turning His back on the "old country" and its people and to turn towards Jerusalem as the arena where bigger and better things happen. If it is possible for readers of the gospels to surrender hindsight, enter imaginatively into the decisive moments of His life and share some of the anticipation of those close to Him we will realise that He has given precious little indication so far, except that He insisted that John baptise Him as he did other people.

Looking a little further, we see that it is a matter of historical choice that Jesus has identified himself with John and some of the other successful rabbinical schools of the day. This is a second indicator. And having appreciated that this decision has been at some cost to a bright young man's future as a theologian/scribe, we might reasonably expect Him to stay on and join with John's movement. If we carry our anticipatory line of reasoning further, we would expect that Jesus will now join with John to strengthen the team, to add his voice to John's cry, and call many others to come out to this special place, and to participate in this special ceremony in

the sacred river Jordan. But Jesus is guided in taking other more surprising initiatives.

> A dove is the sign of
> new beginnings
> after the flood.
> A new world is possible
> and is being realised.
> God is pleased
> John's prophetic message of justice
> is now taken forward
> up from the river
> into the land
> Jesus embodies
> a new and living way
> truly called "Gospel". . . .
> When we compare Jesus and John
> we have two outstanding prophets.
> John preaches a lot.
> Which side are you on?
> Change direction and
> be baptised.
>
> Jesus goes further
> He does not demand that people come out to Him
> He does not camp out by Jordan
> He travels around the countryside
> in Galilee
> reaching out to people. . . .
>
> His is a recreative ministry
> of compassion
> to heal
> to resurrect
> to set people free.[4]

Jesus goes beyond Jordan into the wilderness. Withstanding temptation, the second clear decision of His ministry is to go back into Galilee. This is a positive theological initiative. It is not a step back towards familiarity and the security of His past. Again, with deliberate

intent, He takes His identification with common people a step beyond the ceremonial of an isolated baptismal act.

Jesus begins a unique ministry of unparalleled identification with those who reputedly "know nothing". New initiatives, characterised by an unexpected gospel praxis, which contrasts significantly with John's fiery preaching from his somewhat isolated rural pulpit.

In fact Jesus' style of ministry, or praxis, is so radically different from the usual prophetic role, that John himself becomes confused as to what are reasonable expectations. Is Jesus on the wrong track? Is what He is doing bound to be misdirected and ineffectual? From prison, John sends some of his disciples to convey this disquiet to Jesus. And Jesus' answer to John's probing is informative. His words, in a definitive way, reveal His early methodological focus on praxis:

> "Go back and tell John what you are hearing and seeing,
> the blind can see
> the lame can walk
> those who suffer from dreaded skin diseases are made clean
> the deaf hear
> the dead are brought back to life
> and the good news is preached to the poor." (Matt.11:4, 5)

Preaching is notably the last item on the list. It could be argued that, in the early months of His ministry, Jesus is so busy "doing" and "being" the human actualisation of the kingdom that radical action takes preference over reflection, theologising, and preaching. This is so, at least until conflict and polarisation begin, and Jesus' protagonists insistently engage Him in theological and theoretical word battles.

In the early months, this young man has a compassionate commitment to a unique theological praxis, which is unmistakable in its involvement with the ordinary people of the land.

Robert McAfee Brown, a contemporary American theologian, describes vocational learning as an experience of "creative dislocation". The terms he uses in his autobiographical reflection in the **Journeys in**

Faith series are helpful when applied to an inquiry into Jesus' historical ministry. Brown records his own learning under the heading of "The Gift of Disturbing Discoveries".

The first three in the list are as follows:

1. First Disturbing Discovery:
   Who we listen to determines what we hear.

2. Second Disturbing Discovery:
   Where we stand determines what we see.

3. Third Disturbing Discovery:
   What we do determines who we are.[5]

These perceptual discoveries disturb, because they also provoke other questions, which are sometimes overlooked in studies of Jesus' activities. Questions such as:

Where did Jesus choose to stand?
Could He have stood elsewhere?
Could He have chosen to work with other people?
What did Jesus see happening to His people?
Did Jesus experience "multiple rejection" typical of relations with other Galileans?
To whom did Jesus listen, and what did He hear?
What did Jesus respond to the question: What can be done?

So much of the quest for the historical Jesus has operated out of one particular mind-set, which reflects a kind of anxiety about expectations similar to that experienced by John in prison. Its focus is upon words in isolation, "Are you the one?" But that person's anxiety to get an answer to personal questions may be built on a mistaken presupposition that "we are who we say we are", uncritically assuming that what a person says about himself or herself determines what that person does.

But that doesn't work so well for me any more. It implies that there is an easy transition from thought to action: work out a worldview,

> and then "apply it". That becomes a nifty rationalisation of the status quo. People say they are for love – and find it possible to build B52s and fly them against defenceless peasants. People say that they believe in sacrifice, and worry their heads off about retirement-benefit programs. We find it too easy to say who we are, engage in actions that are the exact contrary, and not even be aware that we have a problem. The opposite route is more accurate. Our self-definitions are not constructed in our heads, they are forged by our deeds. The payoff is not a consistent theory, but a committed life.[6]

Jesus began differently from the other preachers and teachers of His time. For Jesus, "what we do determines who we are". We are not defined by rhetoric, but by identification, by solidarity, by where we choose to locate ourselves with people who are crying out to God in their distress.

Jesus did not baptise. Instead, He went out to seek and to serve the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Here we have a second decision – a second praxiological clue to the mind of Jesus. He did not feel called to bring everyone to a baptism of repentance in the river Jordan. He decided that something else was necessary, something that had to do with the poor, the sinners, the sick – the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

One gospel story, which, perhaps in a paradigmatic way, characterises Jesus' early ministry, is recorded in Luke 7:36-50.[7] This story is about relationships. It shows the inclusive way in which Jesus related to both sinners and Pharisees. The story also shows the way in which Jesus' affirmative action sharply points up the separatist mentality of the respectable people, and highlights their frustrated expectations concerning the way they think that Jesus ought to act.

Jesus is having dinner at the house of Simon the Pharisee when a sinful woman touches him. A key verse is, "If this man were really a prophet, He would know what kind of sinful life she leads. . . ." (Luke 7:39)

> These are the Pharisee's thoughts
> and their values.
> Actually this woman

“gate-crashed” his party.
Pharisees were separatists
and kept sinners out!

On their books, prophets were also expected
to keep holy
and not to allow sinners
to come near.
Personal pollution
right on meal time!

But Jesus does not reject this woman
He accepts her.
He breaks through the barriers of custom
with love and compassion
for a woman
whom everyone knows is a sinner.

Both by His words to Simon
and by his non-verbal personal acceptance of her
Jesus has made possible
new relationships.

This man had allowed her to touch Him
Jesus had touched her
He had not rejected her
He had not punished or scolded her with harsh words
He had not treated her as unclean!

Like the father in the prodigal son story
He has no qualifications,
no “ifs”
no “maybe’s”
like that father, He says in love and acceptance
Come home.
Your sins are forgiven!

For the woman
in one simple gesture
she had been totally freed from her past.
This was grace and

it was free!
The poor and the sinners
found the company of Jesus
a liberating experience
His presence and attitudes
made them feel accepted
renewed
as if a whole new way of living
had already begun.
It was not necessary to fear evil spirits
or evil men
or storms on the lake. . . .
They did not need to worry about
how they would be clothed, what they were to eat,
or about falling sick again from those kinds of anxieties.
More than this
those who were most alienated
Jesus seemed to find equally acceptable.
Heavy "debtors"
both suffer more
and are more gratefully loving
when cancellation of debts is possible.[8]

Jesus, with initial, non-verbal, affirmative action, accepted this woman. He dares to be demonstrative, showing firstly by non-verbal action, and secondly, by spoken word (cf. vv. 44-48), that this woman is a person of worth. Jesus asserts that she, who is obviously a sinner, has shown great love. And Jesus has the audacity, not only to praise one of the common people, but also to make fairly-pointed comparisons:

"You gave me no water for my feet". (v. 44)

No doubt these words caused more than a little embarrassment, even public shame, for Simon the Pharisee. Moreover, it is hard to imagine that Jesus was naively unaware of the ferment of societal confrontation, which was being highlighted in what He was saying and doing. The house may have been precipitously close to an uproar as Jesus adds insult to injury by declaring in such a context:

"Your sins are forgiven.

You are saved (by faith).
Go in peace!"[9]

In this story, therefore, as in numerous other events, what begins as a response of identification, solidarity, and compassion, becomes also the affirmation of a creative, theological alternative, "the kingdom of God is among you", with a challenge to those in power, which disturbs and discomforts.

Dorothee Soelle is one of the few contemporary theologians who have appreciated the creativity of Jesus' initiatives. Soelle speaks of the "phantasy of Jesus". Now "phantasy" is perhaps a term which commonly calls forth many misleading, even ghostly associations, but Soelle's use of the words is grounded in solid socio-historical analysis. There is also a consistent etymology in which "phantasy" is defined positively as meaning visionary, imaginative alternatives. Jesus, in liberating His own "phantasy", points the way for others, whereas a loss of "phantasy" is a loss of world possibilities:

> This limited awareness of reality plays a remarkable, as well as a fatal, role in the attitudes, which many took towards Jesus. Fisherman are fishermen, and belong at their nets – he who disturbs this order, and makes wandering preachers out of uneducated fishermen, is unrealistic. Illnesses, especially those of a chronic nature, where there is no acute danger to life, can be dealt with during the week. He who is concerned about others on the Sabbath, instead of keeping the religious commandments concerning God and the holiday rest, bursts established boundaries. He who tolerates, or even favours, foreigners and people of a different faith has removed the boundaries of the national religious consciousness – his soaring phantasy really acknowledges but a single principle: the creation and propagation of well-being.[10]

Thus Soelle, in one succinct chapter focusing on Jesus' "phantasy", begins to name and identify some of the characteristics of Jesus' ministry, which are at the centre of this enquiry. The concluding paragraph of Soelle's chapter on "The Phantasy of Jesus" bears directly upon the issue being explored in "Theology by the people".

Jesus, by doing some “phantastic” thinking and acting, really does open the way for a new theology by the people. He is primarily setting out to create theologians of faith by liberating the phantasy of the people with whom He is working. It is not that he sets out to rewrite “the rules of the game”, but, rather, that he challenges us to discover, in every context, those possibilities which release creativity in other people, so that they, too, may develop “enveloped faith”, and become theologians for others.

There is a saying which has become a banner in some churches; it reads:

Love is like a basket with five loaves and two fishes
It’s never enough until you start to give it away.

Love is for giving away. Love selfishly held, with no sharing or giving, goes sour and rancid. The very nature of love is to give itself to another. Another “common-sense saying”, often quoted, says, “love is caught not taught”.

Both of the above injunctions regarding “love” point to significant dynamics and complexities in understanding Jesus’ ministry. There is so much expectation-shattering originality characterising this man called Jesus, that the great temptation is to focus on Jesus alone, making Him the “prima donna”; making His sayings, His originality, and His person, the subject of study and adoration. So to do, is to neglect the relational historical dimensions of His originality and spontaneity, and to focus only on personal abilities, which leads to an all too-logical conclusion that this man was unique, without discovering the divine dynamic and potentiality being communicated to humankind as never before.

Creativity, and the ability to theologise, is like love in so far as the activities of a solitary “prima donna” inevitably sour, decay, and die. In particular, elitist, self-seeking “theologies” often must be judged as worse than useless, because they have become the rationale which legitimates domination and exploitation in the name of God.

Jesus’ originality and spontaneity was innovative, because it was both radically open to YAWEH, the God of Moses, the God of Freedom,

and open to people who are crying out in their lostness. His originality is constantly being given away and constantly challenging head-on the self-seeking religious "status quo" based on the conservative law and the temple establishment.

The complexities that face Christian theologians who follow Jesus' lead with "love and faith" do not end with a religious demand to give "gifts". Traditional pietism has understood its task for centuries as anxiously pursuing the necessity for Christian charity in all things. Most traditional religion of this kind, at least on the surface, abhors "self-seeking love". Many groups, however, have failed to grasp the nettle of the relational challenges, which Christ initiates by calling forth creativity and faith in plain, ordinary people. As a result, so much pious activity has degenerated in some kind of "packaged religion", which assumes that the pagan is hungry for religion, but is otherwise a passive consumer of someone else's "love gifts".

In theological education in third-world situations, problems erupt when an eager Western theologian, from the storehouse of his riches, attempts to give religious gifts to "poor" people. There are at least two problems in this process. Firstly, what is given to the recipients often resembles lifeless commodities, long frozen, or, in some other way, moribund, yet still carrying the label "love". If there is some problem, the immediate temptation is to assume that it is because of a technological breakdown in production, and so recall the defective products. A great deal of time and effort in Christian mission history has been spent doing and redoing the packaging.

But, no matter what the quality of the ministerial "gift", the second problem, that of dehumanisation, remains, i.e., what does this "giving" process do to the recipient?

Recipients of ministry are condemned to perpetual consumerism. In religion, they are relegated to being dehumanised sponges, soaking up charity from elsewhere. In fact, misplaced charity produces its own dehumanised, debilitating dependency, with even worse forms of impoverishment to come, as whole peoples have their basis for self-support and subsistence taken from them in the space of a decade of so. History

provides countless examples of this kind of systematic impoverishment, where whole countries are currently being squeezed onto a process of under-development.

Some people suffer an under-development process, where the basic subsistence skills of the people are being lost in the space of one generation in an urban ghetto. But the real question at issue here is: Is there a parallel impoverishment going on in our "theologising"? Have we misinterpreted the nature, purpose, and process Jesus intends, turning from a development of originality and spontaneity to an abortive religious productivity, which, in its "process", destroys the potentialities of people by relegating them to the role of being passive consumer drones?

Passive consumerism is not the dynamics of the "good news" process that is recorded in the gospels, as Jesus relates to the people. When people encounter Jesus, they find themselves liberated, and their God-given capacities are enhanced.

> Of all the men who ever lived, I consider Jesus of Nazareth the most conscious of His identity. And I am of the opinion that the strength of His phantasy must be understood as rising out of the strength of this joyous self-realisation. Phantasy has always been in love with fulfilment. It conceives of some new possibility, and repeatedly bursts the boundaries which limit men, setting free those who have submitted to these boundaries, which have, thereby, been endlessly maintained. In the portrayal of the gospels, Jesus appears as a man who infected His surroundings with happiness and hope, who passed on His power, who gave away everything that was His.[11]

Maybe Soelle has it right here, but her words still fall into the traps mentioned above, precisely because Jesus' self-realisation finds fulfilment in the fulfilment of other people, especially the poor. Without the self-realisation of others, dare we say that Jesus has not yet reached His own self-realisation? He gave away everything that was His . . . in order to be filled again. . . . Again, the metaphor tends to be stretched to breaking point, or is perhaps wrongly conceived, when we speak of "filling and emptying". Our very words tend to come as "packages", which deny the integrated relationships which we are seeking. The "phantasy" and style of

ministry, which we are seeking, wants to break out of the captivity of "haves" and "have-nots" to a dynamic which affirms self-realisation without, at the same time, taking from anybody else.

These tensions are seen in a comparison between the traditional "Have faith in Jesus", which is commonly placed in contradistinction to "Have faith in yourself", as if the two are mutually exclusive. But Jesus consistently says to people who have sought cures, "Your faith has healed you". This is a surprising saying, which immediately separates Him from the other doctors, physicians, exorcists, wonder-workers, and holy men of His time.

> The doctor may think he heals the sick.
> The wonder-worker usually does some magic.
> But Jesus says, "If you are to be healed,
> YOU must have faith."

His words about faith are truly surprising. He says you do not need magic, you need faith: "Your faith will make you well".

> Many doctors and healers in Jesus' country believed that God could heal. But Jesus said, "Everything is possible for any one who has faith." (Mark 9:23)

> If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed nothing will be impossible for you . . . you could say to this mountain move from here to here, and it would move. (Matthew 17:20)

> Jesus relied on the power of people's faith!

Faith for Jesus is an almighty power, a power that can do the impossible and liberate people. The person who has faith receives God's power. The person who has faith, in a way, becomes like God (or like Jesus). At this point, again our language is close to the point of breakdown, bordering on the blasphemous. Part of the problem may, in fact, be that the English language has a very individualistic understanding of the "possessive", i.e., what is mine is mine, must be mine, and not anyone else's. . . . Yet the phantasy of faith in Christ's understanding goes way

beyond the individualistic possession of an attribute, and becomes a rational entity through which God stimulates one's originality and spontaneity. This, in turn, must be "originality and creativity" for others, stimulating their faith and creativity also. Phantasy is not for self-aggrandisement.

Faith was an attitude people caught when they had contact with Jesus, who lived like a free man of faith. By faith, people were encouraged to break out of their bondage. By faith, people began to help themselves. This is an assertiveness beyond the usual religious condemnation that puts sinners in their place for all time. It is a fantastic assertiveness, for here is one willing to say, "but I say unto you. . . . You can help yourselves."

By faith you can stand up!
It can be done!
You can do it!

Into a community of numbed fatalism, Jesus brought hope and faith. People, who had lived for a long time without hope, saw the impossible begin to happen, people who were paralysed began to move, other people were healed, evil spirits were cast out, and lepers were cleansed. The miracles of liberation had begun to take place. Faith was people power, and enabled people to do the "impossible". "A new humanity working together with God in recreating all things." This is a faith that responds with God in establishing the new age.

The antithesis, or opposite, of spontaneity is paralysis. Another paradigmatic story in the gospels, where Jesus focuses on initiative, is found in John 5:1-18. This is the story of the pool of Bethzatha.

Imagine the setting, with that ragged mob of cripples all camped around, waiting for a miracle. People expected miracles at that sacred place, for it was said that, every now and then, an angel of the Lord went down and stirred up the water. And, it was said, that the first sick person to get into the water, after it had been stirred, would be healed of whatever disease. The trick was to get as close to the water as possible, and jump in first. The trouble was that there could only be one first.

A cry might
start a rush
everybody pushing and shoving
over 50 people in together
makes a big splash
anyone healed?
Now for that wet and dripping return to our places.
How many times
must we do this?
Lord how long?

The day this happened was a Sabbath, so the Jewish authorities told the man who has been healed, “this is our Sabbath, and it is against our law to carry your mat”. (John 5:10)

Now angels do not work
on the Sabbath.
For six days you shall watch the pool
but on the Sabbath
do not expect waves or even ripples
relax
no anxiety today
no hope either today
do your laundry
allow visitors
tomorrow at the earliest.
Jesus came
on an off day
from over the hill
at the back not up from the water!
What really happens is that
a visitor to this place of miracles
walks up to a long-term resident
and asks, what on the face of it
seems a simple, even stupid, question:

“Do you want to get well?” (John 5:6).

I have been here for 38 years, that’s a long time
Do you know how many times
I have gotten wet and had to crawl back?

THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS.
And he asks me
“Do you want get well?”
Who amongst us
is comfortable in their paralysis?
After 38 years
it’s possible to develop a coping style
make some friends
see more than rumours of angels.

Do you ever ask yourself?
amidst your present religious activities,
Is there any other way?

If you do, then
get up!

Pick up your bed and walk.
You can do it!

Faith is communicated in this situation.
Face-to-face with Jesus
this man gets up
uses muscles
not used for 38 years or more.
He moves at a time
when there are no angels
on a day when the law says
paralysis is better than carrying a bed.
“Listen, you are well now, stop sinning
or something worse will happen to you.”

How many steps did this lame man take before he stumbled,
and straightaway “told the authorities”?
He puts the finger on Jesus.
Whether naively or not, he betrays Him to a powerful group
who are against the One who healed him?

This story does not have a happy ending.
We could say that our friend remains “crippled”
because he prefers to side with conservative authorities

remaining dependent on their ways.
These same authorities are “crippled”
paralysed by their interpretation of the Sabbath laws
when God’s salvation is being realised elsewhere
right before their very eyes.

John, who wrote the gospel, has not missed the irony here.
The very one who is healed at this time
fails to see that the authorities
are against liberation
and against Jesus, who embodies God’s active liberation.
This betrayal
sadly focuses on oppressors
powerful cripples
who themselves are in need of liberation.[12]

In the gospels, Jesus turns and says, apparently to the most unlikely persons, “Your faith is the only qualification you need to exercise initiative and creativity. Come follow me!”

His is not a call to dependency. Jesus is not saying, “have faith in my faith, I have enough for both”. As if the son of Mary will painlessly transform the world, and other persons can “hang around to sample the cream on the cake” which Jesus has created.

On the contrary, Jesus’ “disturbing discovery” is that “the way” leads into problematic areas, where so much of conventional strategy is useless, and that “participatory faith”, i.e., “actively exercising God-given skills of creativity”, opens the only categories that will enable one to reflect upon what is liberating in a new context.

To begin such a journey, passively dependent, is to make dropping-out a foregone conclusion. Indeed, there is much to suggest that mistakenly passive passengers are in danger of “changing to the wrong train before leaving the station”. Which may be just as well, as “someone else’s faith is no preparation at all to be a follower of Jesus”.

In terms of creativity, it is a strange paradox that Jesus would have failed if He had begun to “do theology” in such a way that “people’s

theology" was made redundant. If Jesus had, in the crisis caused by wrong expectations, chosen to be a charismatic leader, who surged ahead of the people, and presented them with a "fait accompli" . . . then overall failure would certainly have been His lot. Unless, of course, He called upon "readily-available legions of angels", and, in that eventuality, we still would have no hope available to us as mere humans, except to wait for Him to come and do it for us again.

What Jesus did succeed in doing was energising and enabling a small group of ordinary people, disciples who were prepared to act and to think according to new categories. He succeeded in showing, by personal paradigm, a style of creative struggle that maintained creativity in and through extreme conflict with powerful people. He continually affirmed others, and could not be put down himself.

Notes

1. Albert Nolan, **Jesus before Christianity**, Darton, Longman & Todd, 17ff.

2. Right now in our history, people are being subjected to tremendous pressures, and to systematic cultural genocide, by an aggressively powerful, modernising, dehumanising civilisation, and its representatives. When we approach these people sensitively and gently, we discover that the **"am ha aretz"**, the "people of the land", are again in crisis in today's world. It is fascinating to discover that scholars, who are doing research in our country, Australia, find the coping styles of the people fit precisely those used by first-century Jews, struggling to cope with the Empire. I refer especially to Rolf Gerritsen's paper of August 1981, written for the North Australian research unit of the Australian National University, entitled **Thoughts on Camelot. From Herodians and Zealots to the Contemporary Politics of Remote Aboriginal Settlements in the Northern Territory.** What is significant here, is the way in which a social anthropologist chooses New Testament imagery to describe sociological phenomena.

3. See "Jesus' Countrymen". This is one of my earlier attempts to express these issues in blank verse in August, 1982, p. 66.

4. Ibid., 67.

5. Robert McAfee Brown, **Creative Dislocation: The Movement of Grace**, Abingdon Press, 1980, 105-110.

6. Brown, ibid., 109.

7. The gospel writer, Luke, positions this story directly following John the Baptist's probing from prison, when his expectations were not being met.

8. This attempt at blank verse was prepared for the Aboriginal people in North Australia to raise deep theological issues with people who have limited literacy facility in English.

9. The message of forgiveness, and the way in which these utterances of Jesus cut across the religious sanctions that kept sinners in bondage, is one of the crucial dynamics in the prophetic challenge that Jesus brought to the heart of traditional Judaism. What is transparently obvious is that such declarations of forgiveness challenge and subvert the whole edifice of legalism upon which Pharisaism is built. Cf. "Jesus' Countrymen", **The Bondage of Sinners**, 76 ff. Walter Brueggemen, **Prophetic Imagination**, Philadelphia PA: Fortress Press, 1978, writes:

"His readiness to forgive sin (Mark 2:1-11), which evoked amazement (v.12), also appeared to be blasphemy, that is to say, a threat to the present religious sanctions. At one level, the danger is that Jesus stood in the role of God (v. 7), and, therefore, claimed too much, but we should not miss the radical criticism of society contained in the act. Hannah Arendt had discerned that this was Jesus' most endangering action, because, if a society does not have an apparatus of forgiveness, then its members are fated to live forever with the consequence of any violation. Thus, the refusal to forgive sin (or the management of the machinery of forgiveness), amounts to enormous social control. While the claim of Jesus may have been religiously staggering, its threat to the forms of accept social control, was even greater.

10. See Dorothee Soelle, **Beyond Mere Obedience**, Minneapolis MN: Augsburg Publishing, 1970, 64-65.

11. Soelle, ibid., 70-71.

12. Verses 15 and 16 are an interesting counter to an overly-romantic interpretation of this story. The reality that is in opposition to Jesus is mobilising. The writer of John's Gospel develops, in more detail, this kind of interchange in John chapter 9. If we take these two incidents together, I am inclined to favour an interpretation that Jesus' betrayal by these beneficiaries of His kindness arises, in these early days, from their "naivete".

Certainly, in chapter 9, the man who faces the inquisition becomes cheeky and aggressively for Jesus, and against the authorities. The writer may, in fact, have intended readers to experience some progression from the sad collaboration in chapter 5 to a more anti-authoritarian stance in chapter 9. However, in this Bethzatha story, it would seem to be introducing uncalled-for paranoia into the interpretative process to posit betrayal by this man, who had waited 38 years for some miracle. It is, therefore, doubtful that what we have here is a case of "quisling betrayal", as if the man were reporting "underground Zealot

activity on the Sabbath to the authorities", especially since the report comes from one who has benefited so much.

In a later period, Jesus, of necessity, becomes more cautious about who is told of the group activities. Yet, even in situations of later conflict, the "Son of man", at no point, engages in the binary opposition of the "we versus they" variety. On the contrary, Jesus' ministry, in both word and action, dissolves binary barriers, and in a unifying way, moves towards recreation and the kingdom of God's alternative reality.

MISSIONARY ATTITUDES

A Subjective and Objective Analysis

Mogola Kamiali

Introduction

All Melanesian countries, like Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, or Vanuatu, and Irian Jaya, are part of worldwide Christianity. We claim ourselves to be Christians, and certainly we are. This influence, that made us Christian, came about historically during the 18th and 19th centuries, of mission endeavour on the part of the older Christendom. Missionaries have imported Christianity "wrapped" in their ideologies, cultural technologies, scientific cosmologies, and personal idiosyncrasies.

In this essay, I am focusing my attention on those powerful factors, and I hope to show how these elements have exerted influence upon Melanesians, both positively and negatively, and how the people have reacted to the foreign impact. This is done, firstly, by evaluating factors that "shaped" missionaries in their homelands before taking up their missionary posts in Melanesia. After this, we shall then follow them to the mission fields, and observe carefully how they influenced Melanesians. Finally, the essay will examine Melanesian reactions and responses.

One of the intentions of this essay has been to "refute" the unsustainable prejudices and criticisms levelled against missionaries by national elites of Melanesia, which suggests that "missionaries have ruined and abolished our cultures". This view, often perceived from the negative side, has ignored the beneficial contributions and service rendered by missionaries. Although I agree that this negative bias had some elements of truth in it, it does not account for all that missionaries did, or aimed to do in the missionary fields. Equally as important as the first view, just stated, is that we, young and old alike, have exaggerated missionary benevolence, saying, "Everything they did and said was all good, and there is no evil

about them". This ignores the fact that missionaries are human beings, and were able to make mistakes.

The missions covered within this paper are the London Missionary Society (LMS), the Methodists, the Baptists, the Anglicans, and the Presbyterians. The areas covered in this paper are Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Irian Jaya. I concede that this paper is not exhaustive, but a hotch-potch survey. Some of the experiences cited are bewildering, and not easy to come to terms with. Some may dislike the exposition of them, but these are realities we need to know as part of our history of Christian development.

The Shaping of Missionaries at Home

Any human being is a by-product of a society. She/he is also the building block of her/his own society, so she/he gives and takes, as a member of her or his society. Because of these interactions, before considering missionary attitudes abroad, it is proper that, first of all, we must investigate, as clearly as possible, some significant factors which influenced the missionaries at home in their own society. The great Missionary Movement, which reached Melanesian shores during the 18th and 19th centuries, was to fulfil the commission of Jesus the Christ, "To preach the gospel to mankind and baptise them in His name, and help them to believe in God" (Matt. 28:19, 20; Lk. 24:47; Acts 1:8). The early Apostles and Christian communities were absolutely convinced that this was their foremost obligation.

Centuries later, many people had the same obedience and faithfulness to that imperative of Jesus the Christ. The Protestant communities in England were challenged and motivated by optimistic and outspoken men like William Carey, in 1792 (who later became a Baptist pioneer to India), John Scutcliffe, c.1784, and many other zealous, missionary-minded people, to go out into the world, being the "great tidings" and Christianise heathens.[1]

While the commission was spelt out, these mission communities were conservatively preoccupied with their "theology of hell-fire", and

total depravity of the unchristianised and uncivilised people (in this instance the Pacific Islanders). This was basically a continuation of Augustinian doctrine,[2] which still persists in some Christian communities today. However, from the end of the 18th century onwards, this theological orientation was radically declining, as liberal theological understanding emerged with the proclamation of the "Fatherhood of God" and the "Brotherhood of all men". Protestants were possibly persuaded to adopt this liberal theology by the influence of the development of anthropology as a scientific discipline, which called on all Europeans, particularly the missionaries, to have unbiased, perceptive, and accommodative views when approaching the various uncivilised peoples of the world, rather than condemning native cultures as evil. Such an appeal was a new and positive trend towards attributing human dignity and integrity to natives, and the conservation of their cultural and religious institutions.

Early mission beliefs and anthropological developments emphasised European racial, cultural, economic, and religious superiority over black or coloured peoples, in particular Melanesians. (Does not the word "Melanesia" include the meaning "dark" or "black", connoting some derogatory ideas, apart from its anthropological implication?) European anthropology is not without bias. In later periods, as anthropology began to advance, it fundamentally penetrated the mentality of the missionaries, altering their rigid theological course to make it more flexible towards indigenous peoples. Thus, the missionaries were shaped and moulded by the contemporary intellectual developments of anthropology. This especially liberated the Protestant churches, mission boards, and missionaries from their theological, social, and psychological imprisonments. Behind the developments of this social science, there were many thinkers of erudition, but, among them, were these three great figures. The first was Herbert Spencer, who penetrated and diluted civilised minds with his "Theory of superorganic evolution", popularly known as "Survival of the fittest" in England. Charles Darwin launched his "Theory of evolution" in **The Origin of Species**, based on the principle of natural selection and adaptation, also in England (1829). Across the Atlantic Ocean, in America, Lewis Morgan (a Presbyterian minister) released his "Theory of Cultural Evolution", with its three stages of progression from "savagery to barbarism, and from barbarism to civilisation" in 1877.[3]

These advancements of the social sciences contributed positively, yet simultaneously had devastating effects on relationships between the races and cultures of humankind. Firstly, they brought out into the open the racial, cultural, economic, and political gaps between whites and blacks, the strong and the weak. These prejudices permeated into all sectors of European life and institutions. Moreover, they changed men's understanding of the world, man, and God. Especially, Darwin's theory of evolution, which led to vigorous attacks on Christianity, stated that the world and man evolved within a very long space of time to become what they are today. This seemed to do away with the Biblical concept of creation, and to consider the story of creation as an illusion. This view still persists in many universities of our day. The theory of evolution was translated into the field of social science, which elevated the authority, status, and dignity of whites in the world. This, in turn, contributed towards the enslavement of the black man, as the white man's material commodity, and tool.

The concept of slavery is not new; it is as old as man himself and civilisation. But the recruitment of blacks from Africa to the American continent, from the Pacific Islands to Latin America and Australia, was basically for economic reasons. Black man was taken out and alienated by white man from his home, family, and country, to become a tool, a commodity to be sold by white masters to other white masters. The belief in the great commission, the theology of hellfire and total depravity of man, and the theory of evolution, were certainly the influential ideas or marks which the white people projected on the black people. The whites claimed that black man was the last of the human species to be evolved, still stagnant, and at the bottom of the evolutionary scale. They appraised that whites pioneered civilisation. Likewise, they believed themselves to be the "strongest" and the fittest to survive the bitter struggles of evolution, while the blacks were the weakest, the unfittest, who would eventually perish from the evolutionary ladder when progress reached its culmination.

In this way, blacks were considered "sub-human". If the blacks have not reached the stage of being fully developed human beings, they were closer to animals, and could thus be used and manipulated at will as impersonal tools and objects for the economic advantage of the whites. That is why slavery reigned from the 16th to early 18th centuries. When

the movement for the abolition of slavery reached its height with the emancipation of the slaves in North America (initiated from England), in the Southern states there were approximately 45,000 planters (whites who possessed black slaves). Those who supported the cause of slavery remarked: “Slavery is in support of the law of nature for the strong to rule the weak.”[4]

This is not the whole or the only cause of the slavery movement during the 16th to the 18th centuries, but was the basis of the intellectual reasoning of that age. Slavery was properly exploited for its agricultural and economic advantages. Whatever their profession, whether religious or secular, whatever their cultural background and political differences, anybody who was white was a higher creature than the black. Missionaries were not exempted from these current sentiments. They became part and parcel of the missionary mentality and personality. They went to the mission fields with a corresponding aloofness. When they entered the mission fields, they exhibited the same superiority complex against the “dirty” and “naked savages”, as they saw them in the field.

Negative Missionary Attitudes

Despite the missionaries’ fidelity to the Great Commission, their racial, cultural, technological, moral, and religious ethno-centrism reflected on the indigenous people of Melanesia. This most-embarrassing, and at times horrifying, episode is found in the historical mission literature. The Christian message of God’s equal love of all men was obscured and coloured by their biased attitudes, which over-rode the central objectives of their lives. Out in the field, missionaries conceived that Melanesian backwardness was equated with sinfulness. Sinfulness was seen as related, if not, indeed, equivalent, to their social, cultural, technological, and religious inferiority. The theological fact that sinfulness had stained the whole human race in the very “essence” of its existence was simply evaded, perhaps unconsciously or ignorantly. Otherwise, whites would have realised their oneness with Melanesians.

Filthiness and nakedness were seen as explicit manifestations of Melanesian darkness and paganism. But the increasingly stinging sins of

human nature, flourishing in the missionaries' backyards at home, were overlooked in the name of "Christendom".

On the basis of the above insights into the missionaries' attitude, let us ask further questions. If these are the facts, how did the missionaries really interact with local populations in the mission fields? According to reliable historical analysis and evidence, the negative actions and attitudes, transmitted to the local people, appear to outweigh the positive aspects, but later we will draw another picture showing that it was impossible to do things in another way.

If Melanesians were the first missionaries to a foreign land, would they not follow a similar way when endeavouring to bring the gospel to the heathen? An objective analysis is just as vital as a subjective one. We are evaluating facts, just as we would evaluate any missionary or historical events in any time or place.

Yet, we cannot evade understanding missionary attitudes and experiences merely out of emotions, such as pity and respect. Therefore, we must allow facts to speak for themselves. The missionaries, no doubt, believed themselves to be the "most advanced", the "know-alls". Upon such premises, their missionary adventure was possibly a "rescue-party operation", or a "state-of-emergency operation", an attempt to save the "lost tribe" and the "dying race". This attitude is exemplified in the life and activity of their pioneer missionary, C. W. Abel, whose policy has been summarised thus: "The remnant must be gathered into mission stations . . . and trained to become as Europeans, who had learnt to survive and multiply."[5]

In fact, he saw nothing good in the local culture and religion. What would you conserve from the local institutions, where everything was contaminated by darkness and sin? Nothing, except the people, who were precious souls for the vacant heaven. As far as possible, he sought every opportunity to eradicate the native way of life. He established a rehabilitation centre – a new social, cultural, religious, and economic institution, alien and contrary to the traditional patterns – in 1920, and, in that year, he predicted an accelerated rate of depopulation. "He predicted that, unless the rate of decline were arrested, there would be nothing left of

the British Pacific empire in 100 years' time but a few aboriginal names attached to the bays and headlands of the islands."[6]

Prompted by this circumstance of rapid depopulation, he began bargaining, stealing, and snatching children, in order to rescue them before they perished and went to eternal fire.

The result of his rehabilitation programme permitted the disintegration of the traditional society and its order, and the reformation of the natives situated them in a totally-alien culture and society. He maintained his mission with the imposition of his inflexible and harsh discipline towards the regenerated. This new setting heightened discrimination between male and female, the convert and the non-convert, in order to distinguish between Christians and non-Christians. The poor natives imitated his actions and heeded his words in a mechanical motion, without understanding their philosophy and implications.

Similar characteristics of thought were depicted a little earlier in the life, service, and convictions of John George Paton, another British Presbyterian missionary in the New Hebrides. John G. Paton was a contemporary among the British missionaries, who believed in the darkness and heathenism of the Pacific Islanders.[7]

When with the people, he felt their nudity was a mark of heathenism, while covered bodies like himself were Christian. (I hope God was, and is not, naked?)[8] After some time of settlement, he never seemed to indicate in his personality any evidence of change. Being in the field, should mark some changes at least, but this never happened at all. When writing to his Home Mission Board in Scotland, he described how the natives were enveloped in all the superstition and wickedness of heathenism; how all the men and children went in a state of nudity, the older and younger women wearing grass skirts or leaf aprons like Eve in the Garden of Eden. He regarded the people as being exceedingly ignorant, vicious, and bigoted, and almost devoid of natural affection.[9]

One can read similar sentiments on page after page of his classical autobiography, **John G. Paton, Missionary to the New Hebrides.** He offered real service, but not without disservice to the helpless natives.

Through him, if at all, was there going to be any regeneration; it was the poor superstitious natives, who had to repent from paganism, and enter into Christianity by becoming total foreigners in their homeland. But not John G. Paton; he was an enlightened child, redeemed already. He does not need to be born again, because he was born again already. Heaven's room was pre-vacated for him, without an iota of doubt.

Within the same vicinity, the typical missionary is said to have refused to eat with the natives, and even let them enter his house, nor could he deal socially with them,[10] although they were genetically not inferior to him. From the east to the west, from the islands to the mountains, from the valley to the seas, similar stories flow one after the other. Missionaries saw our ancestors, or even our parents, only through their pitiless and scornful eyes. On one occasion in Dutch New Guinea (now Irian Jaya), speaking angrily to the people of their unceasing tribal warfare which butchered countless people, Mel Maynard, an American Baptist Missionary, shouted:

> "You men, rotten through and through! God is angry with your sins, your killing, and your pride in victory! If you don't stop it, God will cut you down."[11]

God was always on the side of missionaries, even in their sins, but not with natives. He was a white God. If the primitives wanted the white God, they had to be socio-culturally, and religiously, "circumcised". Others were very paternalistic, while, at the same time, they helped the natives to be themselves. In the name of protection from outside alienation and intrusion, they became another form of alienation.[12] A very clear example of this was Revd J. F. Goldie, an Australian Methodist. He is called "Commander in Chief" by Ronald G. Williams in his book on the United Church, because of his paternalistic attitude.

The native bigmen and chiefs were treated as the most important people by the laws of the local societies, yet Goldie (and missionaries everywhere) subordinated them to the rank of little children. The white missionaries became superior, and took over the chief's position and status. It was a pity the chiefs sold their pride and dignity to cunning missionaries, who did not consider them worthy. Along the Papuan coast, John Henry Holmes, a British missionary, viewed the native religions as nothing but

total misunderstanding of human religious faculties.[13] He considered the Eravo system and the Herehe system, and other cultured elements of the Elema people, to be saturated with dirt and filth.[14] Polygamy, a popular institution of marriage in Melanesia, was considered to be an "unbridled animal passion".[15]

So far, most of the missionaries saw it this way because they kept their "social distance", and viewed things as foreigners. They had not entered deeply into the very existence of the natives. Others were ignorant and uninterested. Why waste time on superstitions, animism, and fetish religions, which are of no value at all? Therefore, they began to teach the natives moral norms and moral codes, like the ten commandments, imported from Europe. Yet Albert M. Kiki's book, **Ten Thousand Years in a Life Time**, would claim that the ten commandments were already in existence among his people, before missionaries put their foot on our land. If carefully studied, such moral codes could be found all over Melanesia. But the missionaries had no time for this.

Without any doubt, most like-minded missionaries anticipated the time when all local institutions and designs of life would be completely demolished. Whenever there was a complete discarding of their own cultures and religion by natives, signified by destroying of idols, this was a vivid expression to the missionaries, an authentic symbol of inward conversion.

Colonial Attitudes

Can we easily dismiss the issues like this? What about the government officials, planters, and traders who forcibly exploited the Melanesians for their political and economic gain? It is therefore fitting to make mention of them here in passing.

Psychologically, at an ideological and philosophical level, the government officers, planters, and traders shared the same mentality of the "superior race" in the midst of the Melanesians and the black people as a whole. The planters and traders exploited the natives at will for raw goods, whenever they could find any:

> "Many Europeans believed that Pacific Islanders would die out completely. Some deliberately introduced communicable disease to accelerate the process. At other places, guns were introduced to tribal warfare to hasten depopulation."[16]

These economic animals took our ancestors away as slaves. Government officers were political puppets of their imperial governments. They, too, had a negative outlook on our people. The civil service structures they developed were carbon copies of the ones established at home. Such set-ups highlighted dichotomy between "primitives" and "civilised" people in the field. So, in order to develop the natives, they attempted to reproduce, among primitive people, their own ethnocentric patterns of civilisation.[17] And that is where we are today. This ideology has survived, even to this day, in the language of First World, Second World, Third World, and Fourth World.

Government workers, at some points, cooperated and worked closely with the missionaries. They saw the utility of Christianity, in order to achieve their political ends, which were to ban the people from all inhuman activities, like cannibalism, widow strangulation, tribal warfare, and thence to establish law and order, promote peace, unity, stability, freedom, and congregate the diversified tribes, clans, and families, to build a strong national community, superintended by one centralised political body. In doing this work, both government and mission carried the burdens together. But, in doing other things, especially the condemnation of people's traditional cultural way of life, the government did its best to conserve them, though they were sometimes ignorant. The great Governor of British New Guinea, and friendly supporter of missions, William Macgregor, worked well with missionaries. The Government Anthropologist, F. E. Williams, helped the colonial government understand the local people and their culture. He made careful surveys of various cultural groups of the Papuan Region.

In his paper, **Sentiments and leading ideas in native society, Report No. 2, Port Moresby 1932**, he discussed which cultural practices should be conserved. They are outlined as follows. (He identified 12 in all.):

1. Native conservation: The attachment to tradition.

2. Corporate self-respect: Pride in culture.

3. Individual self-respect: Self-display.

4. Loyalty to the group: Clannishness.

5. Intra-group sentiment: The sympathetic sanction.

6. The sense of shame.

7. Sentiment towards relative by marriage.

8. Respect for seniority.

Many government officials, together with anthropologists, did their best to preserve Melanesian cultures. In other situations, government officials and missionaries were against each other, but there were times and places where they happened to be working together.

Moreover, another fostering of colonial white superiority was depicted very well by the barricading of the Papuan population from entering Port Moresby town in the 19th century by the white community. Natives were squashed up in the barracks for accommodation. They were not even allowed in the town. Many colonialists considered black people as "half-devil and half-animals", as is well portrayed by Amirah Inglis in her book, **Not a white woman safe**. She discussed the relationships between Europeans and Melanesians between the 1920s and 1930s.

Sir Hubert Murray, the Governor of Papua, even passed racist and sexist ordinances in 1926, to keep the natives away from raping or attempting to rape white women. Intermarriage between black man and white woman was prohibited.

Relationships in the white world, especially between missionaries, planters, and traders could be devastating. Planters and traders fearlessly drained out much that was of value to Melanesians, and missionaries, with

their uttermost strength, battled against this exploitation. Christianity and its bearers, in working for justice, became barriers to economic expansion. We see these disputes between them clearly in the "Kanaka labour trade" in the 19th and early 20th century, which exiled masses of Melanesians as slaves to Australia and Fiji. To the planters and traders, the application of the word "Kanaka", meant "uncivilised primitives". Therefore, they tried to depopulate the locals with bullets and diseases, and accommodated them in ghetto-type houses. They were sold as commodities, and made into "human tools for human beings".

If Melanesians were of any value, their worth was only in their economic utility, just like a horse or a water buffalo. The poor Melanesians never knew that they were deceived and seduced, when they were raided and hunted out by the whites, who sailed them away to distant lands. They were carried away, as our hunters carry wild possums and cassowaries, pressed and caged nicely, at the bottom of the ships. When Melanesians were offered steel axes, knives, calico, etc., they were blinded, not seeing that, by the same token, they were hooked as fish were hooked by bait on the line. These attitudes, prejudices, and clouded assumptions, which led to maltreatment and subjugation of them below the dignity of human beings, were based on, and ignited by, one and the same ideological principle: racism, white supremacy, and superiority over and against Melanesians.

This ideology grew up strongly from the 17th to the 19th century, and today, though under cover, it is inevitably still operative in whites, who are actively at work in missions, the government, and in private employment in Melanesia. In response to this past treatment, the indignation felt by indigenous elites against colonial masters, whether government officers, or missionaries, traders, or planters, is evident in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, and Irian Jaya, today. Has there never been any criticism coming from educated Melanesians? There has been, though criticism has been narrowly confined to missionaries over the destruction of local cultures.

Yet many more Melanesians, who don't find any outlet to release their repressed antagonism against whites, battle conscientiously within the depths of their being. There is no reason why we young Melanesians repress and suppress so much of these anti-colonialist feelings; we should

express them. But many educated Melanesians simply overlooked them, and became "neo-colonialists" in turn, black masters of our own people. They inherited white ideology and lifestyle, and did away with the pregnant Melanesian ideology and lifestyle.

One final remark: what most colonial servants intended to do was to set up their empire in our land, that is, another Britain in Papua, another Germany in New Guinea, another France in New Caledonia, another Britain in the Solomons, and another Indonesia in West Irian. They said: we will protect you from outside intrusion, but they were highlighting their political prestige in colonialism. They protected the natives, so that traders and planters could drain out our natural resources, and deprive our people. They beat and whipped, killed, and hanged our people. This side of the story is simply overlooked by those who are such enthusiastic critics. I beg them to say something in this area, too.

Positive Attitudes of Missionaries

Although the history of Christianisation in Melanesia seems to present so much repugnance and disgust, we must assert out appreciation and recognition of the important and beneficial service of missionaries to Melanesians, even to the point of generously giving of their lives. Many missionaries, from the inception of the Missionary Era, possessed human integrity, respect (beside their biased notions), and genuine sentiments for the local people and their cultures. Their undoubted commitment to God, and their love for the locals, is clearly depicted in their selflessly giving up their lives to be eaten by Melanesians, to be killed by malaria, and the like.

Like Job in the Old Testament, for many, this meant losing their children, wives, husbands, their closest kin, and their glory and gold for the sake of the gospel. They loved God by loving man and vice-versa. There is no other way, except loving God and loving man; the missionaries held these together. Would they have laid down their lives for Melanesians if they hated them? Certainly not. They laid down their lives because their love for the Melanesian people was so great. That love overrode their selfishness, and helped them to forget self for others. The love in them was not a human invention, discovered in logic, or ideologies, derived from an

ethnocentric love. It was theocentric love. Human-centred love would have been exhausted, and died out. But, because their love came from, and was based on, theocentric love, it never faded away in the process of history, because the **theos** is the source of love, whence all love radiates and emanates to the whole universe. He was there throughout, supplying all their needs, inspiring and challenging their short-sightedness, and enlightening dim visions, to do greater things than could be done on human grounds.

Despite their aloofness, receptive missionaries found wisdom and learnt humanism in an unindividualistic communal life of sharing, and they cherished spiritual truths and values in the midst of diverse peoples' religious and cultural institutions. When they did this, sooner or later they discovered that local traditional religions taught them a greater sense of spiritual vitality and awe than perhaps their own form of Christianity. Local religions weren't merely a product of superstitions and devilish quests. This is true, although missionaries felt quite antagonistic, in the beginning of their work with local culture and their religions. But, by the 1970s, John Henry Holmes could write that

> "the Papuan was a 'religious being', whose beliefs united him with the missionary in a 'religion, which inculcated a belief in spirits, established an order of life mystically bound to the mind and will of the spirits, and an unshakable assurance of the immortality of the soul' ".[18]

What made him alter his previous anti-culture position? Where and when did he begin to be interested in the local people? Actually, it was in the year 1898, while ministering to the Elma people of the Gulf Delta. During this time, things began to be different from before. He was firstly motivated by his endeavour to learn the local language. This effort led him to master six vernacular dialects in that region. This monumental effort helped thrust through the existing linguistic impediments, which existed between himself and the indigenous population.

His vernacular fluency helped him to communicate effectively. He was able to penetrate into the thought patterns, sentiments, beliefs, and the very secrets of the people. Through his in-depth interaction and dialogue,

he soon discovered the purpose, meaning, and significance their social, cultural, economic, political, and religious institutions and ceremonies held for them.

Often, at nightfall, he sat by the campfire with the old men from the villages and heard them reiterate their myths, legends, and folklore to young initiates. In addition to his acquisition of the language, he read James Chalmers' book, **Pioneering in New Guinea.** In this book, James Chalmers particularised a reference to the local belief in the one "Supreme God" among other relative sub-gods and deities. This insight enhanced in Holmes a zeal for a thorough re-examination of, and patient dealing with, the people's traditional religious beliefs, rather than despising them as merely polysaturated with superstition. Following his reading of Chalmers' book, he eventually preached a sermon to his congregation, on the evening of that same day, on Acts 17:23, Paul's famous sermon at Athens.

Furthermore, it was not long before he became a student (not in the formal sense) of ethnography. He collected raw ethnographical data for publication in the **Journal of Anthropology** in Britain. The arrival and assistance of Charles Gabriel and Alfred Haddon, who were both outspoken in favour of anthropology at that time, gave him a phenomenological perspective on local religions and cultures. This influence made it impossible for him to cling to his former beliefs and attitudes. He was compelled to begin the work of "culture-conservation". He took the lead, and encouraged people to use traditional arts and artefacts to ornament church buildings. He introduced the Eravo houses on the mission stations (which he had outrightly hated before), where village men came and chatted, smoked, and chewed betel nut (as they had previously done outside the church). And incentives were given, by allowing the people to perform traditional cultural dances on the mission stations.

Besides these efforts, he was a chief defender of the Papuan religion, and of people and their culture. This is well portrayed in his published works. He was a remarkable apologist for the Papuans.

Many other missionaries, even if they did not compromise their principles, had a positive perception of the people. They not only penetrated, by way of study, but became "immersed" within the depths of

the local mentality, and participated in the ceremonies of their social institutions. Practical involvement added weight to missionary enthusiasm. For one, William Bromilow identified himself with the local people and their culture, and, in so doing, sternly challenged his colleagues to win the friendship of the people, as he was doing, rather than remaining foreigners. On these principles, he propagated a policy, with the purpose of eradicating the foreigners' biased accusations against the human integrity and dignity of the local people. He accepted and valued the people as they were. He kept on appealing, throughout his service, that the natives were as other men, that their customs must be as respected and honoured as anybody's.[19] To him, neither the foreigner, nor the locals, were any better or any worse than the other. Both were sinful before the judgment, and were forgiven equally. Two main factors helped him to have this view of his missionary activity. 1: He was not new as a missionary, as he had been a missionary for ten years in Fiji, prior to this appointment in the Milne Bay district. From Fiji, he took with him a wealth of experience badly needed in Papua. He brought with him Fijian ideas, social habits, and words (e.g., **Lotu** for church in Fiji, **Marama** for Ma'am = mother, etc.). 2: Immediately after his arrival, he began to acquire the Dobuan language. The Dobuan language was valuable, as it gave him access and understanding, and even enabled him to penetrate into the mysteries of the Dobuan society.[20]

Gradually, he became an authority on the Papuans and their culture. As John Henry Holmes had, he discovered their mythical history, their patterns of morality, their aspirations, and setbacks. The Dobuans did not regard him as a missionary: he was called a "Dobuan". He neither blamed nor condemned the natives. He was a great man, the great **Saragigi** – the man with the removable teeth![21] The objective of his missionary work was aimed at the "reformation" of man in his social setting, and in "destruction and reconstruction"; to transform man from within, and not from without, seeking to redeem, but not to abolish.[22] His most far-reaching contribution was his translation of the Bible into the Dobuan language.

In discussing Bromilow of the Methodists, the Anglicans come to mind immediately. It is impossible to pass on without mentioning great figures like Bishop G. A. Selwyn, the founder of the Melanesian Mission, Bishop Patteson, the first Bishop of Melanesia in the Solomon Islands, and Bishop Stone-Wigg of New Guinea. Bishop Selwyn, from the initial stage

of his mission, had an approach, which was unique amongst the missions. He developed a skilful programme to Christianise unchristian Melanesians from within their cultural context, and not from without. His philosophy of missionisation is rightly "extractionist", as identified by Darrell Whiteman.[23] He extracted from the Melanesian communities young men with potential, converted them, and took them away to be educated in Auckland, and later the Loyalty Islands, hoping that, after their learning of Christianity and European culture, they would return to their homes and evangelise their fellowmen. But this missionary principle failed eventually, as the scholars, after their return, found it difficult to evangelise, being a minority. Most of them lapsed back to the traditional way of life.

However unsuccessful was his method of evangelism, his non-destructive and perceptive recognition of Melanesian culture is self-evident. Prudently, he learnt, from past destructive missionary operations in the Polynesian and Micronesian Islands, not to repeat the same mistakes. With great energy, effort, and commitment, he respected the people and their culture. He did not subordinate their culture, or inferiorise the people's lifestyles, following the popular notion of the day, because, as he stated:

> I have been looking for a "savage", in the English sense of the word, and have never yet met with one. And I come to understand the languages of these Islanders, or to converse with those who know them, I find them to be men of like feelings with ourselves; influenced mainly by the same arguments, guided by a sense of right and wrong; deliberate in council, even more than ourselves; clear in defining, and tenacious in maintaining their right; often wrong in their premises, but generally reasoning rightly upon such grounds as they have. Ferocity is no more part of the nature of a "savage" than it was natural for the French people, in the highest pitch of civilisation, to shed blood like water.[24]

He shared that sympathetic philosophy of Bromilow. Melanesians were not entirely destined to be doomed, as held by other missionaries. Bishop T. C. Patteson rightly fitted into the pattern of Bishop Selwyn. He was committed to the idea that:

> the Melanesians must be evangelised by the Melanesians, and the notion that Christianity was a "universal religion", and, as such, was not culture-bound. He believed that its basic doctrines were applicable to all cultures, but that the formal application of these doctrines would vary from one cultural context to another. To force an "English Christianity" upon Melanesians, he asserted, was "a great mistake".[25]

Again and again, he strongly emphasised a tolerant approach to the conversion of the unchristian Melanesians. He saw, in the traditional religions, a spark of potential faith, from which Christianity should begin. Traditional religions were not merely pagan superstitions. But as he said:

> We must fasten on that, and not rudely destroy the superstition, lest, with it, we destroy the principle of faith in things and beings unseen. I often think that to shake man's faith in his old belief, however wrong it may be, before one can substitute something true and right, is, to say the least, a dangerous experiment.[26]

Both Selwyn and Patteson had firmly separated Christianity from civilisation, whereas other missionaries lumped the two together without distinction. They were concerned to teach the basic elements of Christian tenets, and leave the rest to the people themselves to decide. They avoided the tendency to insist on conformity to external influences. Their vision was that Melanesians must, of necessity, become Melanesians, and not Europeans or Polynesians. They upheld trust and confidence in the Melanesians as being as intelligent and capable as anybody when they were given sound education. Their real appreciation of, and sensitive approach to, Melanesian culture does not mean that they accepted cannibalism, and other inhuman traits, in the same way as they did other customs. Certainly, they would condemn, but not without preliminary investigation of the practice. The missionary principle, or methodology, of these two men has been the guidepost in the investigation of the Melanesians in the Solomon Islands.

Moreover, the Anglican missionaries in New Guinea appeared to have followed not identical, but similar, principles in their initial, and later missionary, endeavour. This is well portrayed in the life of Bishop Stone-

Wigg. He was sensitive and empathetic to Melanesians and their traditional culture. His attitude was flexible, and he concentrated on reforming the local social conditions, and helping them to face up to treacherous Western influences, which were already on the way. This does not imply that he was not concerned with external influences, but it does mean that he was not religiously conservative and parochial in seeking immediate conversion from heathenism. Instead of regarding the struggle to plant the church in stubborn soil as a battle between good and evil, these Anglican missionaries looked for a foundation in traditional, society which could be used as a basis for Christianity.[27]

In all his dealings, Stone-Wigg did not want to abolish the local culture. Instead, he tried to consecrate the traditional village life into the church, whose theology would not be elaborate, but would issue in genuine Christian life.[28] In his view, the only difference between the Melanesian Christian and the non-Christian Melanesian should be religion, but, as far as the social cultural life was concerned, they would not differ.

Other evangelical missionaries have criticised him for being reluctant to change the traditional socio-religious order of the people. This criticism never persuaded him to change his outlook and method of mission. It could be said of Bishop Stone-Wigg's missionary operations in Papua that he always maintained his confidence, in respect for, and recognition of, the Papuans as people of a noble race, equal with all in the human race.

Now, we shall go on to the Methodist mission, which went to the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea, and used similar missionary methods. The combined Methodist Overseas Mission (MOM) of Australia and New Zealand had been an Island Mission, with many years of missionary work. With the wealth of experience gained, it was better equipped not to repeat the same mistakes. These people first learnt the languages, which bridged the communication gap. Most missionaries, such as Revd Gordon Young, R. Barnes, John Hutton, and Bill Griffiths, got to know the locals well through fluent Huli and Angal Heneg. They translated portions of the scripture, and introduced education at the earliest opportunity. They lived on local food, and participated in feasts and encouraged Mali dances. Three of them, Bill Griffiths, George Buckle, and John Hutton, joined in the Mali in 1964 at Hoyabia. The honour they

received on that day from the Huli people was far more than any Huli could ever have received. The memory of the sight of them is not forgotten by the Huli. These missionaries told the people it was good, and so people should be happy to dance. This dance is practised, even today, in the church. The Catholics have also Christianised the dance, and they dance in December every year to celebrate Christmas, just near the pulpit, while United Church Christians dance in tune to mark the Christian calendar year.

Another contribution the missionaries made, which had a positive effect, was the utilisation of traditional chant tunes with the incorporation of Christian biblical, theological, and catechetical words and meanings. These chant tunes were the only form of hymn singing in Huli up until 1970.[29] They also adopted, and Christianised, the Mendi chants in like manner. In Mendi, this is the only form of hymn singing in the church today. Furthermore, they encouraged the continuation of pig feasting (or nogo hendere) in the church to conclude the Mali. This was done in the early stages. They adopted the Huli's supreme God, Datagaliwabe, and Christianised Him. They have contributed positively, although their evangelical tendency was demonstrated, to some extent, with the abolishment of some cultural traits, i.e., of certain traditional gods, bachelor initiation rites, etc.

The Baptist Mission, which appeared in the Huli area about the same time, condemned almost all the vital cultural traditions of the people. The Mali, traditional chants, funeral feasts, or anything that was Huli in origin, was contaminated with heathenism. This was the inclination of the Seventh-day Adventists, too. And they criticised the United Church and Catholic Church as still being heathen.

Generally, the paramount contribution of all missionaries remains their efforts and attitudes with regard to local cultural phenomena of dehumanisation. All missionaries, despite denominational differences and barriers, basically risked their lives voluntarily in dangerous situations. The indigenous practices of cannibalism, infanticide, widow strangulation, inter-clan warfare, and murder were greatly reduced by the message of the gospel of Christ Jesus, although the practices seem to be still alive in some corners today.

It is inconceivable how these cruel activities could have been stopped without the missionary efforts together with the gospel. They did their work with sweat, tears, hunger, and thirst, with much pain and suffering, even unto death. They were ready to die for the people they loved. They preferred "costly grace" to "cheap grace". Their love and concern was unselfish. They knew this was the only way out, and they set their self-giving in service of another as an example for Melanesian Christians.

How can a Melanesian respond to these examples of life and service? How can a Melanesian express, in language, this love of missionaries, even to die and risk their lives for the people they loved? The missionaries brought to the dying, the sick, the hungry, the thirsty, and the lost the message of eternal love, peace, and comfort, together with material supplies. They identified themselves with the people by eating, drinking, and living with them.

Simultaneously, we must give credit to the government, too, because it contributed as much as the missionaries. For both church and state participated in the pacification, bringing peace, unity, and development of the Melanesian people. The church used the "word" (gospel), and the state used "words" (law) yet, more often, sword and whip. The state appraised the work of the missionaries, but nowhere have missionaries ever been given a compliment for their close cooperation with it.

One factor contributing to the positive missionary approach to Melanesians was the declining emphasis on the "theology of hellfire", and "total depravity" of the people. Missionaries began emphasising the theology of the "Fatherhood of God towards all men" and the "Brotherhood of all men in Christ".

The second factor of missionary receptivity towards Melanesians was their observation of past missionary experience, where mistakes were made. Those who went to new mission fields learnt not to repeat the same errors.

The third factor, was the influence of educational background. Those who had a broad education were more liberal, while those who had a limited background, were of the rigid conservative style.

These changes were largely due to changes occurring in England, America, and Europe, when anthropology, and the study of comparative religion, were strongly recommended to Christian missions, and their training establishments, by anthropologists. However, changes to individuals, while in the mission fields, inevitably took place without the influence of their sponsors. Changes mark the end of one era and the beginning of another era. This was true in Melanesia. Many bad cultural practices had to be abandoned and replaced by new ones. The end of the traditional view and order of society meant the emergence of a new social order and cosmos. This was clear in the introduction of mission stations, which operated as new societies in the midst of Melanesian societies, but away from the local society and its setting, despite efforts that have been made to be closer to the traditional societal model.

To these mission stations, victims of all types of human suffering – run-away slaves, orphans, children of chiefs and ordinary people, boys and girls, friends and enemies – all flooded in search of refuge. They lived, worked, ate, and drank together, but this would have been impossible in the old order. These places served as a base for the extension of Christianity. It was at these places that many new and good things were introduced and taught. The mission stations served as a catalyst to bring about a new society, a new people, and a new community.

For example, let us look at C. W. Abel. He was noted for his work on what his opponents called his "hothouses", especially the Kwato mission. He was the first promoter of "racial brotherhood". He tried to bring whites and blacks together as equals. He taught his students to dance the European foxtrot and waltz, and later they were found to be dancing with the families of the white missionaries. A visitor, who was there, marvelled at the sight of white and black in harmony.[30] Amirah Inglis talks of the cricket match between Abel's boys and the white communities in Port Moresby and Samarai.[31] The Moresby cricket test match was the first black and white sport ever played in the history of Papua. Abel's aim was "consciousness-raising", instilling pride and human dignity. He challenged the white world of superiority and aloofness with a simple message of "racial brotherhood". He tried to bring whites and blacks together as brothers. This effort was his contribution towards the abolition of racism.

John G. Paton, although he always kept natives under his thumb, fought bitterly against the European slave trade. He persuaded the British Government in Australia and England to take tough measures to ban the human alienators. Paton, and many other Christian missionaries, either evangelical or liberal, defended the rights of the natives to hold their land, sea, and all other natural resources, free from foreign exploitation. Missionaries, when consulting on land issues, represented the helpless natives. If they did not, who would? This is to mention but a few things – to show the valuable contributions rendered by missionaries. They may have been at odds at one end, yet right at the other. Humans they were, and not perfect, with trials, ignorance, prejudices, tolerance, good efforts, successes, and defeats; they tried to make out of their lives the best they could.

Local Estimations of the Missionaries

Up till now, the discussion has been centred very much on the missionaries, as against the local culture and people. Now we have reached a point where we will have to give some account of the Melanesian interpretation of the white missionaries. Generally, it is both bewildering, and amazing, to see their views of missionaries, even though some had been living with them for many years. Melanesian notions in regard to missionaries, whether recent or long-time residents in Melanesia, remain similar, despite geographical distance, and differing socio-cultural and religious backgrounds. Broadly, most Melanesians held the view that missionaries were supernatural beings, angelic beings, re-incarnations, or, at least, mysterious and uncommon creatures.

For instance, the patron of Kwato Mission, Charles Abel, was neatly constructed into a mythical figure, because he was conceived to have a personality, which had characteristics of a super-human, above that of local magicians. He was viewed as having power over nature, i.e., he could stop the wind, cause death, sickness, and famine on the land. He was an occult leader.

Not far from where Abel was, the Dobuans identified Bromilow as incredible, because of his "removable teeth". For fun, sometimes

Bromilow took out his teeth and placed them again in his mouth. This was something which caused wonder and amazement. To the natives, who had no idea of false teeth, it was something beyond any explanation. After his long absence during the war, he returned from Australia. Immediately the people saw him as a mythical ancestor, who was returning to them after his death. He was also reckoned as the chief of their society, replacing the old ones.

Many others who write on this subject, do not state the reasons why the local people perceived the missionaries as they did. However, the assumption seems to be that the kinds of interpretation give by the natives about the missionaries reflect some pre-existing order of explaining things. None of the books used here produced any evidence to support this view. Here is an example to illustrate this point.

When people died, it was thought that they changed into new cultures again. They obtained new pigmentation, and became new, just like the snakes. On the basis of this background, the Manu Mau people of Papua thought the first missionaries were angelic, or heavenly, beings, as they saw their white clothes, which were also shining bright. They saw the angelic beings as the re-incarnations of their dead ancestors.[32]

Take another incident. When the Huli people of Southern Highlands saw the missionaries, they thought of them as Honabi or Kekeali. The Hulis believed that, under the ground of the sacred worship centres, Honabi used to reside. Honabi was believed to have white skin and white clothes. This fitted in well with the advent of the white man with white clothes. To the Huli, the missionaries (or anybody European) are Honabi. Honabi means white, and it is used even today. It is not an invented or introduced word.

Conclusion

Missionary activity was motivated by the Commission of Jesus Christ, and by the constant renewal and challenges of Christian communities, particularly in the civilised countries. From one point of view, this was the predominant influence on missionaries, however, as a

by-product of their societies, in their missionary operations, they carried with them their cultural traits and biases. Their views and attitudes were very much influenced by their own backgrounds.

In their lives and service, both positive and negative sides coexisted. On the negative side, they thought that every local person and his culture was primitive, heathen, lost out of the evolutionary progression, just a diminishing remnant.

On the positive side, many identified themselves with the heart of the cultural and religious life of the people. They lived, ate, drank, and participated joyfully in the local way of life. They became one among the natives, and no longer remained as foreigners. Some did not even spare their own lives, but gave themselves entirely, withholding nothing. They brought the gospel to Melanesia, not the easiest way, but the hardest way. They took seriously Christ's words: "The road that leads through the open gate leads to destruction and vanity, but the road that leads through the narrow gate leads to life." (Matt. 7:13-14)

So, through the narrow gate, missionaries brought the gospel, and Melanesians have found life, life in abundance. Yet, despite the gospel that has been brought, and the immeasurable services rendered to Melanesians, many misunderstand and overlook the missionaries, and what they gave us. Especially, young elites of Melanesia, severely criticise the church and the missionaries. This issue was raised earlier in the introduction of this paper. Their misunderstanding and criticism falls into three different categories. One is those university-educated groups, who are alienated by the secularisation of the Western world. They may, or may not, have any religious affiliation with religion, and its presence in Melanesia is conceived of as a religious imperialism, or they say the coming of Christianity and its missionaries has broken down our cultures and replaced them with foreign ones. The good things done by missionaries are simply taken for granted.

Secondly, there are the theologically-educated elites. These groups see that Christianity did destroy much of the Melanesian cultures, stating that Christianity came "wrapped in a Western cultural form". Therefore, they want to unparcel it, and allow Melanesian culture to accommodate

Christianity, rather than continuing the cultural circumcision. They say we must not follow early missionary models of destroying culture. Theirs is a positive criticism.

Thirdly, there are individuals, or movements of people, who criticise Christianity outrightly as a foreign religion. Their advocacy is an attempt towards revitalisation of indigenous religions. They understand Christianity as one religion amongst others, like Islam, Hinduism, etc. So, the traditional indigenous religions should be given proper honour and acceptance, such as we give to other religions.

All in all, in what took place, we see both good and bad things. We can, therefore, no longer only criticise or praise them, but we can do both, because they did what they could. They produced good things together with the bad ones. They have created goodness, but not without evil deeds. A seed must die in order to grow and bear new fruit, and so some parts of our culture have been ruined that good ones may spring forth to life. The missionaries were humans, as much as we are, that is, fallible and not otherwise. We have learnt from their mistakes. Had they had better knowledge, as we do today, they could have done better. They lived in their time, and we live in our time. Let the past judge itself, and so, today, as tomorrow will be judged by itself. But this does not mean that we must abstain from criticising them; we have to, in order to improve and better understand reality, as it ought to be.

Notes

1. Cf. John Briggs, "The English Baptists", **Lion Handbook History of Christianity**, eds. T. Dowley, et al., Sydney: ANZEA Books, 1977.

2. Cf. Charles W. Forman, "Foreign Missionaries in the Pacific Islands during the Twentieth Century", Mission, Church and Sect in **Oceania**, eds. J. A. Boutilier, D. T. Hughes, S. W. Tiffany (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1978) 35-63.

3. William Tokilala, Lecture Notes on "Social Change", 1983.

4. D. B. Davies, **Slavery in Southern America**, nd.

5. David Wetherell, “Monument to a Missionary: C. W. Abel and the Keveri of Papua”, **Journal of Pacific History** 8 (1973) 30-48; 31.

6. Ibid., 33.

7. See, for example, R. E. Reid, “John Henry Holmes in Papua”, **Journal of Pacific History** 13 (1978) 173-187.

8. Paton’s views are reflected throughout John G. Paton, **Missionary to the New Hebrides: An Autobiography**, 2 Vols. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1890), e.g., Vol. 1, 108.

9. Ibid., 116.

10. Forman, op. cit., 43.

11. Shirley Horne, **An Hour to the Stone Age** (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973) 11-13, 68-121.

12. Esau Tuza, “Cultural Suppression? Not Quite”, **Catalyst** 7 (1977) 106-126; 109 ff.

13. Cf. Reid, op. cit., 184.

14. Reid, op. cit., 175-176.

15. Reid, op. cit., 184.

16. Sione Latukefu, “The Christian Presence: Plus and Minus”, **Tides of Change**, ed. Vaughan Hinton, 1981, 10-12.

17. Cf. Amirah Inglis, **“Not a White Woman Safe”: Sexual Anxiety and Politics in Port Moresby, 1920-1934** (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974).

18. Reid, op. cit., 173.

19. R. G. Williams, **The United Church in Papua, New Guinea, and Solomon Islands: The Development of an Indigenous Church** (Rabaul: Trinity Press, 1972) 190-193, 247-248.

20. John Garrett, **To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania** (Geneva/Suva: World Council of Churches/Institute of Pacific Studies, 1982) 233.

21. Ibid.

22. Williams, op. cit., 191.

23. Darrell L. Whiteman, **Melanesians and Missionaries: an Ethnohistorical Study of Social and Religious Change in the Southwest Pacific** (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1983) 99 ff., 147 ff.

24. Whiteman, op. cit., 111.

25. Whiteman, op. cit., 117.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Garrett, op. cit., 248.

29. Williams, op. cit., 288 ff.

30. Wetherell, op. cit., 31, 35-36.

31. Inglis, op. cit., 92-93.

32. Tom Araki, a student friend, provided this piece of information.

THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE OF THE KOROBA HULI

Ossie Fountain

Introduction

Phenomenologists of religion have paid inadequate attention to the study of religious change. In attempting to explore the variety of religious forms, and account for their origins and development, students of religion have, by and large, so strongly emphasised respect and sensitivity for the various religious traditions that they have felt reticent, it seems, to examine the dynamics of the confrontation and challenge of competing religious systems. Furthermore, they have almost universally been critical of advocates of religious change, who have worked cross-culturally, believing that the missionary enterprise, itself, is based on a fundamental disrespect for the religious beliefs of others.

This paper, then, is, in part, an investigation into an example of religious change and its dynamics. Through we will frequently refer to documentary sources, it is grounded in personal experience, both as a research student, and, more recently, as a cross-cultural missionary advocate within Melanesia over the past twenty-two years. The subject matter is provocative, but I hope that, by the end, we may have some clues as to how so-called "exclusivist" beliefs may mesh with respect for the religious traditions of others.

Theoretical Framework

I propose to examine the religious experience over the past 30 years or so of the Koroba Huli. Our sketch must, of necessity, be in broad strokes, but we attempt more than mere description. We will focus our discussion within two major theoretical frameworks – those of W. Cantwell Smith,[1] and of Harold Turner.[2] Their perspectives will give us insight into the specific situation we will examine.

Professor Cantwell Smith's approach has been to distinguish between the "cumulative tradition", and "faith" in any religious system. He defines faith as "an inner religious experience, or involvement, of a particular person; the impingement on him of the transcendent, putative, or real". By "cumulative tradition", he means "the entire mass of overt objective data that constitute the historical deposit, as it were, of the past religious life of the community in question . . . anything that can be transmitted from one person, one generation, to another, and that an historian can observe".[3]

The strength of Cantwell Smith's approach lies in his careful analysis of a variety of cumulative traditions, though he has little to say about primal religions. His discussion allows us to see and respect the distinctiveness and variety, both between and within each religious system.

For the purposes of our study, we must distinguish four main "traditions". These are: the Huli primal religious tradition, the Western secular tradition, as brought and advocated by Australian government, and expatriate business, personnel, and two major Christian traditions – the Christian Brethren churches, whose missionary arm is known as Christian Missions in Many Lands, and the Roman Catholic church, whose mission in the Southern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea is entrusted to the Capuchin Franciscan Order (OFM Cap). One other minor tradition was that of the Seventh-day Adventists, who entered the valley a little later than the other two Christian missions.

One weakness of Cantwell Smith's analysis is his failure to put significant content into the term "faith". In his book, **The Meaning and End of Religion**, he describes the "expressions of faith" in art, community, and its social institutions, character, ritual, and morality, and so forth,[4] but, in fact, these are indistinguishable from what he already as "cumulative tradition".

To be able to make use of Cantwell Smith, I believe we must attempt to put content into the category of "faith". As a minimum definition, I want to suggest that faith, as distinguished from the expressions of that faith, is allegiance, loyalty, or devotion to the supernatural beings, who have

manifested themselves to the religious person. In this allegiance, we may focus on two particular features, namely, the direction to certain specific supernatural beings, and the strength of the allegiance.[5]

Once this minimum content of faith, as an attitude or commitment on the part of the devotee (which, in primal and Christian traditions, is recognised as entering into a relationship with those supernatural beings) is accepted, it immediately illuminates the situation of religious conversion. I hope to show that religious conversion can take place on two levels. It can be on the level of "cumulative tradition", that is, the replacing of one set of rituals, insights, and theology, by another, with the same basic content of the "faith" unchanged. Or, alternatively, conversion can occur on the level of "faith", and, therefore, involves a shift of allegiance and loyalties from certain supernatural beings to others.

Furthermore, different missionary advocates use alternative approaches. Some seek a shift in the area of cumulative tradition, as a primary goal, believing that, given time, a shift in faith will occur later. Others seek a change in the faith orientation of people as primary, allowing that changes in cumulative tradition will follow. This latter is much the more difficult approach, since a faith shift is at a much-deeper level of personality than a cumulative tradition shift. Our study will elucidate these alternatives.

The second framework we will use is that of Professor Harold Turner. Turner has specialised in the study of the development of new religious movements in the interface between Christianity and primal religions. In the process, he has provided us with valuable insights into the definition of primal religions, and the dynamics of religious change. In his article "Primal Religions and Their Study"[6], Turner has provided us with a six-feature typology of primal religions,[7] which will serve as a useful basis to analyse the religious life of the Koroba Huli. Turner admits that the model, on which this typology is based, might be written off by some as "too Christian", but he goes on to make the important statement that "any model has to be capable of at least including, and doing justice, to the Christian religion".[8]

I want to develop Turner's definition to show that the Christian tradition also has important primal elements to it – as do probably all "universal" religions – and that these provide a basis for understanding the elements of continuity of "faith" in the conversion process, as seen from the point of view of the Huli themselves. It was precisely because the Christian faith confronted them in meaningful terms that they accepted it.

In the phenomenological study of religion, much attention has been paid to the philosophical, doctrinal, and ethical aspects of the religious systems examined. Relatively little attention, however, seems to have been given to the primal elements, which display concern for, and interaction with, nature, power, and the spirit world. Yet, it is these elements which are often the most significant to the participants in the religious conversion process.

Within these two frameworks, our aim will be to examine the dynamics of this process of religious change. I hope we will be able to see that the primary actors and decision-makers are not the missionary advocates – although they are frequently given both the credit and the blame![9] The significant culture-formers are the receptors themselves. It was the Huli convert, themselves, who deliberately decided to adopt the Christian faith, and to reformulate it as meaningful to themselves. In fact, I believe they took the Christian faith more seriously, and more radically, than the advocates expected. They made reformulations, which were sometimes resisted, or even rejected, by the advocates,[10] but which were consistent with the Huli worldview, which arose out of the foundation of traditional religious beliefs.

The Koroba Huli

The Koroba Huli are located in the north-western portion of the roughly triangular-shaped Huli language area, and comprise about 10,000 people. Centred in the Nagia valley, it also includes the south-eastern headwaters of the Paru River, and intervening limestone country both north and south. The Tagari River forms a significant boundary on the east, and to the west, the mission stations of Tanggi and Pori lie just beyond the boundary in the Duna (Yuna) language area, where there is considerable

bilingualism. Since our study focuses largely on the Christian Brethren denomination, we will disregard the Fugwa and Levani valleys to the west and south-west of Koroba, since a comity agreement between the Brethren and the Wesleyan missions is still happily observed today.

The Koroba Huli are subsistence agriculturalist, based on sweet potatoes (**Ipomoea batatas**), and living in a dispersed settlement pattern between altitudes of 1,500 and 2,300 metres. They have a clan-structured society, with a cognatic descent system.[11]

The Tari valley, east of Koroba, is the centre of the Huli language area. The Tari Huli, in the early years of contact, called any people, living west of the Tagari River, "Duna", despite the fact that the Koroba peoples speak Huli with only very minor vocabulary and dialectal differences from the Tari Huli.[12] As a result of this confusion of terminolog, the Koroba District was originally called the Duna Sub-district, and Glasse[13] frequently refers to the Duna in his description to the religious beliefs of the Tari Huli, when it would be more accurate refer to the Koroba Huli (or even the Burani Huli, since Burani was an important source of magical stones and **gamu** objects for the Tari Huli, and others).

The religious experience of the Koroba Huli can be divided into the following phases:

1. **Pre-1961: Huli Primal Religion and the Western Contact Period.**

   (Initial contact by government patrols led by European officers took place in 1954, and a patrol post was established in 1955)

2. **1961-1963: Confrontation and Conversion: a Shift in Faith**

   (Missionaries and other Europeans were allowed to enter the Koroba Valley in 1961; first group movement to Christianity 1963)

3. 1964-1974: Reformulation of the Cumulative Tradition: Phase 1

(Primal and Christian cumulative tradition combine, but are dominated by missionary models)

4. 1975-1976: Revival: The "Primalisation" of Christianity

(An indigenous revival begins among the Koroba Huli, and spreads out from there)

5. 1976-1985: Reformulation of the Cumulative Tradition: Phase 2

(The cumulative tradition is dominated by indigenous models)

By dividing up the 30-year period in this way, the Koroba Huli religious experience can be seen to have undergone two phases of emerging tension. The first of these, was in confrontation with the Western secular system in the latter half of the 1950s; the second was the decade 1964-1974, when missionary models were introduced into the emerging church life. Each of these periods was followed by a "crisis experience", when a significant restructuring at the level of "faith" took place, and this resulted in a reformulation of the cumulative tradition in the following period.

Let us now examine these five phases in more detail.

1. Pre-1961: Huli Primal Religion and the Western Contact Period

For information on the pre-1961 period, besides personal conversations of the writer with the Koroba Huli themselves, we rely on the descriptions of R. M. Glasse,[14] an anthropologist, who researched the Huli in the Hoiebia area of the central Tari Basin, and James Sinclair,[15] the first resident government officer in the Koroba area. Glasse was not only the first, but, in many respects, the most important of the anthropologists who have studied in the Huli area. His description is accurate for the Koroba

Huli in its broad outlines. However, certain variations, some quite significant, will lead us to modify his analysis. The variations can be accounted for, partly by the distinctive local features of the religious life of the Koroba Huli, partly by the fact that the Huli orthography had not been standardised at the time of Glasse's study, and partly, it would seem, by inaccuracies in the recording and interpreting of detail.[16]

Glasse describes[17] four main concepts underlying Huli religious behaviour – **dinini, dama, gamu**, and **Datagaliwabe**. Only three of these, however, are "spiritual beings", that is **dinini, dama**, and **Datagaliwabe**. **Gamu** refers broadly to the aspects of magic, sorcery, and ritual. It is, therefore, the means by which power can be obtained, whether that power is from personal or impersonal resources. **Gamu** can be used for a wide variety of purposes, including divination, retaliation, placation, protection, and oblation. This distinction between the spiritual beings, and the means, is important for our discussion later.

Dinini is the "immaterial essence of human personality, which survives bodily death, and persists indefinitely thereafter as a ghost".[18] It is also a person's **dinini** that leaves the body during sleep, and causes one to dream.

On the death of the body, the Huli seem somewhat vague about what happens to a person's **dinini**. Certainly, warriors killed in battle, and perhaps other good people, departed to a place Glasse calls **Dalugeli**. The more common term is **Dahulianda** (the residents of it being called **Dahuliali**).[19] The alternative commonly-believed place of the departed is **Humbirinanda** (Glasse: **Humbinianda**). At death, informants have told me they have seen a light, like a small flame, moving from the grave site to the south-east. This is the departing **dinini** on its journey to **Humbirinanda**. Glasse reports this place as being down a black hole,[20] a "hot, waterless place". In description to the writer, informants have described it as a place of shadows, of half-life, and drowsiness (rather more like the Hebrew concept of Sheol than the more furnace-like Hades).

Until such time as the **dinini** of the deceased departs, it remains near the grave of the departed, and may wreak vengeance on the person who has caused death or broken taboos, as the following incident reveals.

My wife and I, with Professor Charles Kraft, were attending the burial of a young Gunu village man in 1983. The man had been subject to epileptic fits, and had died while eating, presumably death by choking (i.e., an unusual death). Another young man came up to us while we were watching, and explaining the process of burial to Professor Kraft, he said, "We are all being very careful not to criticise the grave-house maker, or say anything bad about what he is doing. If anyone does so, someone else will die."

The **dinini** of the departed also continue also continue to take an interest in the affairs of their immediate family and clan. The traditional antagonism between male and female in the community is reflected in beliefs about the **dinini**, for male **dinini** are benevolent and protective about the affairs of their descendants. However, with the exception of the **dinini** of one's mother, female **dinini** are covetous and malicious, and liable to attack their relatives. For this reason, suicide by women, still not uncommon, is the ultimate form of retribution against a husband in an estranged marriage; men hardly ever commit suicide.

The more distant and ancestor is, especially a male ancestor, the more powerful he becomes. Long-dead ancestors, however, are no longer thought of as **dinini**, but as **damagali** (Glasse: **dama agali duo**). It is perhaps significant for our later discussion that the first Europeans that came to Koroba were known as **damagali**.

Dama are referred to by Glasse as deities. At a recent seminar on Christianity and Southern Highland cultures, Huli representatives considered **dama** to include both "divinities" and "spirits", and referred to them collectively as "clan spirits".[21] However, it seems fair to distinguish between localised **dama** (Pidgin "masalai") and non-localised beings, who are associated with creation myths, such as the myth of the female deity, Honabe, who was seduced by Timbu, and subsequently gave birth to Korimogo, Heyolabe (Glasse: Helabe), Piandela, Ni (= the sun), and Hela (Glasse: Helahuli).[22] Many Huli regard all of these as very powerful beings, but Heyolabe as being the most-dangerously evil of them all.

The Huli generally agree that Hela bore four sons, Huli, Duna, Duguba, and Obena, and descendants of these latter three are the main

tribal groups with whom the Huli established trading links (i.e., between the Huli and the Duna, the Porgera Enga (Obena) to the north, and the Bosavi people to the south (Duguba).

Datagaliwabe must be regarded as a distinctive "high god". He is the guardian of community mores, and, according to Glasse, is solely concerned with breaches of kinship rules,[23] although many Huli nowadays seem to interpret his guardianship more widely than this. He tends to be thought of as a great person, living astride the mountains, and almost omniscient in his knowledge. He was never placated with pigs, as sacrificed to lesser **dama**, nor is the term **dama** applied to him.

These then, are beings, to whom the Huli give allegiance and loyalty. If we use Cantwell Smith's framework, and apply it to the Huli, the beings we have described are the objects of Huli "faith". They are the spiritual realities, to whom they relate. However, all forms of **gamu** must be placed in the category of cumulative tradition, since they are the expressions of that faith, and the ritual acts and objects, which can be transmitted from one person to another.[24]

Turning now to Harold Turner's analysis, we find that he lists six features of primal religions. As we shall see, these are all applicable to Huli religion.

1. Kinship with Nature

Although the Huli are not strongly totemic,[25] their kinship with nature can be seen in "the way the environment is used realistically and unsentimentally, but with profound respect and reverence, and without exploitation".[26] A good example of this respect is Gayalu's description of the Gebeanda.[27]

2. Human Weakness

This is the sense that "man is finite, weak, and impure, or sinful, and stands in need of a power not his own".[28] Many Huli have related to me

the burdensome sense of obligation, and even bondage, they experienced in the demanding round of placation of the various **dama**, who seemed to cause so many of the ills and injuries of life – sickness, death, infertility, drought or flood, defeat in battle, sorcery, and so on.

3. Man is Not Alone

We have already described the other beings, many so much more powerful than himself, that the Huli believed inhabited the universe alone with him.

4. Relations with Transcendent Powers

Through the rituals of **gamu**, the Huli entered into relationship with the transcendent power who guarded him, interceded for him, strengthened and endowed him with skill in battle, in oratory, in mediation, and supplied him with wealth and fertility.

5. Man's After-life

Again, our description of Huli beliefs about a person's **dinini** show that he has a strong belief in the continuation of life after death, and of the "living dead", who maintain relations with the "living living" for their well-being.

6. The Physical as Sacramental of the Spiritual

The Huli, like other primal peoples, believed that the physical was a vehicle of spiritual power. Finger bones of deceased relatives, for example, could be used for divination. Charms and magical rituals were employed for a variety of ends.

In addition, even in the social sphere, the pattern of human relationships, for example, the relationships between men and women, are

replicated in the realm of the spirit world – **dama** have the male or female characteristics that are expected of them in the physical world.

I have taken the time to describe, in some detail, Huli religion, so that we can see more clearly the factors that brought about religious change, once the Europeans arrived.

Contact with European Political Power

The coming of government authority, under the Australian administration, to Koroba has been graphically described by Sinclair.[29] In **Wigmen of Papua**, Sinclair displays a typically colonial administrative mix of paternalism and cynicism toward Huli relations with the government. He describes the Koroba Huli as "proud, independent, emotional, infuriating, loveable people",[30] and as "perhaps the most vital, mercurial people I have ever known".[31] Even so, his description reveals something of the underlying tensions in this initial period of contact. The reserve and suspicion about motives, the displays of power (the administration was forced to use arms three times in defence, once killing a man, and losing one of its own), and the disruption to normal living by the demand of establishing a government post, and the building of roads, were part of these tensions.

For our purposes, however, three important features of this contact period must be noted.

1. The contrast in religious outlook

Turner's six-fold characterisation, which we have applied to the Huli, provides us with the basis for seeing the extent of this contrast.

(a) Kinship with nature. The government officers arrived with seemingly supernatural power. The bore sharp and efficient, even deadly, weapons (steel axes and rifles); they communicated with unseen beings by radio; they came amply supplied with valuable items of wealth. But, even more

outstandingly, these **damagali**, "ancestor" men", white with age [?], planted no gardens, built no houses (that work was done largely by locals and "native" police). Indeed, they did no "real work". Furthermore, with complete immunity, they accepted food from either men or women (unheard of before), and with seeming abandon, ordered the felling of trees, and the digging and levelling of land for roads.

(b) **Human weakness.** This, the Huli felt, but not, apparently, the European government officer, for the white man represented the epitome of power.

(c) **Man is not alone.** The white man came very largely devoid of the concept of the existence of supernatural beings. He might, and did, pour contempt on "time-wasting rituals", such as the two-year long initiation. The Koroba Huli blame the government, and their demand for labour, as being the main cause for the abandonment of initiation ceremonies. For secular government officers, man was indeed alone in the world, and vested with "all power".

(d) **Relations with transcendent powers.** Despite the potential for misunderstanding about the government officers, and their activities with such things as radios to feed cargo cult ideas, these did not develop. Space forbids us to speculate why. Perhaps the characteristic Huli outlook of independence, combined with the flurry of activity in developing one of the last parts of the country to be "pacified", were factors. The point we wish to make here is that few of the government officers, it would seem, had much sympathy with the primal religious need to maintain such relationships with spiritual beings, as Huli people felt.

(e) **Man's afterlife.** The this-worldly concerns of government did not leave much room for concern with the afterlife either. The government forced changes in local burial procedures, as traditional practices were labelled unhygienic. On the other

hand, if Huli people speculated on the nature of Europeans, they never saw them die, and rarely saw one sick.

(f) **The physical as sacramental of the spiritual.** If the coming of the external government authority involved a practical denial of the category of the spiritual, it follows that the physical was not treated as sacramental either.

Thus we are led to see, not merely that the contrast in life-style is striking, but that the far-more profound contrast of basic outlook on life is even more significant. In this regard, Theodoor Ahrens says:

> Many Westerners do not share such notions about power as a concealed dimension of reality. They do not see flames on graves. They are not aware of the power potential of a particular stone, nor do they feel the threat of a **ples masalai,** let alone expect to receive a message from it. They would rather describe such sensations as irrational or hallucinatory. Their notion of power is not based on epiphanies and religious rites, but on economic and technological strength, as well as scientific knowledge, which may help an individual or a group to force their will on other individuals or groups. Westerners have not learned to conceptualise the world around them in terms of personal relationships and obligations.[32]

2. The undermining of the Huli worldview

In another paper, I have elaborated my conviction that:

> the pattern of contact in Papua New Guinea, where the government came in first, and pacified an area, before allowing the missionaries to come in, plus the various events that accompanied the entry of missionaries, including the coming of a whole range of goods from the outside world, led to the shattering of old beliefs, securities, and worldview. This experience was so intense psychologically, that it forced the community to look for a new integrating force and worldview, that would help them comprehend the bewildering changes going on around them. This was provided for them in

Christianity. I believe it was this factor, which led, more than anything else, to the widespread adoption of the Christian faith.[33]

With regard to the Koroba Huli, I do not believe the worldview was anything like totally destroyed, but certainly doubts about the efficacy of the spiritual beings, believed in up to this point, must have been raised.

3. The power encounter of pacification

Thirdly, Ahrens has pointed out that "administration officials, traders, and planters, . . . unlike the local people, did not interpret the colonial situation as a power encounter to be described in religious terms".[34] However, I believe it is valid, especially from the Koroba Huli point of view, to see it as just that. The European administration came with a strong determination to see that its authority (power) would succeed, and that fighting would be stopped, and a new order be ushered in.

It is my contention that the disruption of those early years of contact was a power encounter, which had two profound effects. Firstly, it predisposed the community towards making a major shift at the level of "faith", not merely in "cumulative tradition". Secondly, it exposed the community, and in the long run, strongly attracted a considerable proportion of the youth in it, to an alternative worldview – that life can be lived within a secularised world, especially outside one's own community. But this came later, and is not part of our study at present.

2. 1961-1963: CONFRONTATION AND CONVERSION: A SHIFT IN FAITH

In 1961, the Koroba valley was "de-restricted", and missionaries and traders were allowed to enter. For an intimate description of the dynamics of the situation, I have access to the **New Guinea Diary** of Mr K. W. Liddle,[35] pioneer missionary with Christian Missions in Many Lands (the missionary arm of the Christian Brethren churches).

Kay Liddle was not merely a pioneer, evangelising and trekking first in the Lumi area (1952-1953), then in Green River (1954-1961), and finally, at Koroba (1961-1970). He was a missionary who, although holding firm evangelical convictions, was culturally sensitive, adaptable in methods, and with a deep concern about personal relationships. He worked with missionary colleagues, some of whom were less sensitive to culture, and less widely read, and all of whom came from staunchly-independent ecclesiastical backgrounds. Yet he was, to a very large extent, the man who developed mission policy, held the team together, and had a listening ear, and a serving attitude, to his national brothers and sisters.

In 1961, Liddle and Ivor Pethybridge moved into the Koroba area. Their mission had been invited to take over the mission station at Guala, commenced by national pastors of the Methodist Overseas Mission, who, at that time, did not have expatriate staff to move to Guala. Then followed two years of strenuous effort, firstly, in building residences, undertaking language study, and commencing literacy and medical work, but also long hours of trekking or motor-cycling over roughly-formed roads, engaged in preaching to the various clans in the valley.

On de-restriction, several missions moved into the area at the same time. We need concern ourselves with only three: C.M.M.L., the Roman Catholic Mission, and the Seventh-day Adventists. In the initial stages, there was strong competition to stake out parishes among the different missions. However, because of the clan structure of Huli society, the strong personal leadership patterns, and group decision-making process, the pattern that emerged allowed, to a considerable extent, both the Catholics and the Brethren to restrict their activities to particular parts of the district. Few clans were split between the two denominations. In the final analysis, the Christian Brethren comprised about 50-55% of the people, the Roman Catholics about 40-45%, and the SDAs, who came in a little later, up to 5%.

The missionaries, from whatever mission, came with considerable personal prestige and power: prestige, because they were people from the outside, and yet clearly distinct from government; and power, represented in their apparent material wealth, and access to communications systems and transport. Thus, in some respects, they were like the government

personnel, and yet, they were different. Certainly they were different in methods, since their influence depended on the power of persuasion (in that respect they were like the Huli, who relied heavily on oratory rather than arms), whereas the government officers could demand compliance by the rule of law and the threat of imprisonment.

Despite their status, however, the missionaries did not come as representatives of "major world religions". If they had, this would have meant little to the Huli anyway. They came rather as individuals; their national and international structures were largely unseen. By the Huli, they were evaluated on the basis of their personal qualities, and their message was interpreted in the light of the Huli's own conceptions.

Differing Missionary Methods

No detailed analysis of the methods of evangelism in the Koroba area at this initial stage, particularly of the Roman Catholic missionary advocates, is available to the writer. What can be gleaned from the diary of Liddle must be evaluated with caution. Even so, significant differences between the methods of Liddle and the Brethren, and the Catholic mission seem discernable.

Both missionary groups aimed for a shift in "faith" rather than merely replacing a primal "cumulative tradition" with a Christian one. It was in the means of achieving this goal that they primarily differed. It seems possible that the Catholic missionaries placed emphasis on the replacement of traditional Huli rituals with Christian ceremonies for such things as the protection of gardens from malicious **dama**, or for personal health and safety. An example observed by the writer is the placement of crosses in gardens to symbolise the protection of God's Spirit there against the **gamu** of enemies. No doubt, the missionaries would employ catechetical instruction later to ensure that the Christian ritual accompanied intelligent comprehension. Of course, the growth of the garden would witness to, and strengthen, the faith allegiance of the convert.

This was not the approach of the Christian Brethren. Certainly, they had a cluster of rituals of their own; it is interesting that the literal

translations of the names the Huli gave to the two denominational groups was "the shut eyes" (Brethren) and "the open eyes" (Catholics)! But the Brethren were concerned to explain to potential converts the basic doctrines on which an intelligent faith shift must rest. Liddle records that this emphasis on teaching was a difference perceived by the Huli people between the two groups.

However, even more than this, was the concern that a faith shift would involve a meaningful "power encounter". This meaningful "power encounter" came about in 1963. It centred on the family of one of the most influential fight leaders in the valley, Elara Alendo. Elara narrated the experience to me in the following way:

> "When the missionaries, came many people gathered for church services, because they wanted to hear what they had to say. But I was not involved. I remained outside when the people went into church. I was determined to follow the way of the **dama (damanga mana).**[36]
>
> "Then, one day, one of my children became sick, so I sacrificed pigs to the **dama**, first to one, and then another, but my child did not get better. Soon he died. Then one of my wives got sick, so I sacrificed pigs again, but she did not get better. So I went to the missionary and said, "Liddle, I want you to pray to your God for my wife, because she is sick."
>
> "Mr Liddle said to me, "Elara, you follow the way of the **dama**. You go and sacrifice to them. I worship the Great Spirit of Jesus. If you want His help, you must give up the way of the **dama,** and follow the way of God's Spirit" (**Ngode Dinininaga mana).**
>
> "So I went away, and thought about it very much. I sacrificed to the **dama,** but still my wife did not get better. Then I went back to Liddle, and said, "I am ready to follow your God's Great Spirit, but please pray for my wife." So Liddle agreed to pray for her. We prayed together, and my wife got better. Then I knew God's Spirit was more powerful than the **dama**. So I talked to my people, and we

all agreed that we would give up the way of the **dama** and follow Jesus.

"In order to do this, we agreed to have a big feast to mark the end of the old way, and the beginning of the new one. Up till that time no-one had ever killed pigs without pouring out the blood to the **dama**. If anyone did that, they would get sick and die. But I persuaded my people that we would have a feast, and we would not offer the blood to the spirits. So we had a very large feast of over 150 pigs. All the people were watching me. They said, "If Elara gets sick or dies, we will know that God's Spirit is not strong enough to protect him from the anger of the **dama**." But I did not get sick, so at that time, all the people in this valley became Christians.

"Even though the missionaries did not want us to do so, we burned our **gamu** things at this time. The missionaries tried to stop us, but we knew we had to do this."

Liddle, in a personal communication, adds the following detail:

"Elara subsequently became ill at a pig feast near Fugwa, and was carried to Guala on a stretcher, and thought to have "pig bel". The Christians gathered and we prayed for him, and arranged for a government plane to take him to Mendi hospital. They found nothing wrong with him. He recovered, and his healing was attributed to God, in answer to prayer, and that confirmed Elara's and the people's faith."

This is a very significant story, for a number of reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates that the significant actors in religious change are not the missionary advocates, but the receptors of the message. In the African context, Professor Lamin Sanneh of Harvard has recently argued a similar case very cogently.[37]

Secondly, it demonstrates that religious change took place as a power encounter. Indeed, the message itself was understood in the framework of indigenous Huli concepts (access to power, through the mediation of a person rightly related to the supernatural being). Further, it met the need of

the receptors, not in terms of, say, eternal life but on the level of consciousness of personal and corporate (family) wholeness, that is, salvation, seen as physical well-being.

In fact, if we evaluate again Turner's criteria of primal religions, we can see that the message brought by the Christina advocates was consistent with these six phenomena.

We should note, also, that terminology used for the basic concepts of the message of he advocates was meaningful within the Huli frame of reference, and was, therefore, conducive to change at the level of faith, rather than merely cumulative tradition.

Examples of this are:

God's Spirit being referred to as **Dinini**
Satan being referred to as the chief of malicious **dama**
heaven being referred to as **dahulianda**
angels being referred to a **dahuliali**
prayer being referred to as **Ngodehondo bi la** (to talk to God), rather than **bi pupu wia** (to whisper spells, or call to the spirits).

Some early missionaries, I believe, misunderstood the true significance of **Datagaliwabe** (some felt **Datagaliwabe** was thought to be like a gnome or elf, resident in the rafters of houses – a view no Koroba Huli has substantiated to me). They, therefore, chose the non-content transliteration **Ngode** for God. But there is no doubt that Huli Christians reworked this and other concepts within their own framework, so that **Ngode** was identified with **Datagaliwabe,**[38] and in the Huli New Testament,[39] **Dama Heyolabe** was adopted as the name for Satan, instead of the non-content term **Dama Tadani**.

A third deduction from Elara's story, is that conversion involved a basic change on the level of faith – seen as a change in allegiance – rather than in the cumulative tradition followed later, as we shall see.

The change in faith was seen as a change of loyalties from one set of beings (**damanaga mana**) to another (**Ngodenaga mana**). The effect of

this change was to open the developing culture to tremendous plasticity. New rituals would be necessary for the new loyalty.

It is, therefore, to the great credit of Liddle, and the other missionaries, that the church practice that developed was not more Western than it became. The missionaries felt oppressed by the dependence of the new converts on the advocates for instruction and guidance. They were determined from the beginning to make the Huli Christian Brethren congregations independent from their formation.[39]

Fourthly, the decision-making process, leading up to the point of conversion, followed traditional lines. The "big man", (**agali homogo**) Elara, had a personal experience of spiritual power, and his influence led to a group response, which was definitive. This pattern was repeated in other clan areas. Furthermore, most of the "big men" were polygynists, but they were allowed entry into church membership without the necessity of becoming monogamous. Later, a number of them were appointed as church elders (the highest office in the Brethren).[40]

3. 1964-1974: REFORMATION OF THE CUMULATIVE TRADITION: PHASE 1

We have already referred to the openness to reworking of the cumulative tradition that the faith shift of conversion produced. Liddle's diary, newsletters, and a particularly interesting document entitled "Special Conference Held at Koroba – May 31-June 3" (no year), are our main sources for this period.

A period of intensive teaching, involving strenuous trekking to various chapels, daily instruction classes for selected Huli "preachers", and literacy programmes, followed conversion. In teaching, basic Bible stories, Christian doctrine, and instruction in church order, were given.

Group conversion was followed by a period of intensive small-group instruction and counselling for those desiring baptism. For those who demonstrated, by changed behaviour (i.e., a personal "power encounter") that they were now Christians, this instruction led to baptism, communion,

and church membership. The training of pastors began in 1967, using the Unevangelised Fields Mission Bible School at Tari.

The appointment of elders was delayed until the early 1970s, after Liddle had left. He, and others, were hesitant about apparently abandoning biblical teaching on monogamy (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:6) for mature, but polygynous, men, or the appointment of younger, less-responsible men. Instead, the matter was delayed, and the "big men", who had become Christians, were accepted informally as the effective spiritual leaders of the congregations.

The Conference Report, mentioned above, is a fascinating document. It covered general principles and guidelines adopted by the Brethren, and guidelines for baptism, communion, church government, ministry, inter-church (i.e., inter-congregational) fellowship and cooperation, worship and services, and church discipline.

Here, the general principles are of particular interest. They agreed that:

1. there was no rigid church pattern "to be followed in every age and culture", but that New Testament teaching regarding the church should be applied to the Huli-Duna situation

2. agreement on broad patterns of church order and conduct would be beneficial

3. "national brethren" should share in the adoption of this pattern

4. the church should not be over-organised, to the stifling of the Spirit

5. the church should be "indigenous", self-governing, self-propagating, and self-supporting, and not under the domination and direction of the foreign missionary

6. cultural factors should be taken into consideration in applying New Testament teaching to this situation.

Nine cultural factors were spelled out as being important: the corporate nature of Huli-Duna society, leadership patterns, the place of women, different standards of modesty and dress, local marriage customs, legalistic outlook, local patterns of discipline, reliance on the European, and avoidance of paternalism, and attitudes to the spirit world and their effect on every aspect of daily life.

To a very considerable extent, then, the missionary advocates attempted to be both sensitive to local culture and religion, and to free national Christians to have a large share in structuring church life in a way compatible with local culture. Even so, church patterns reflected strongly the Western traditions the missionaries brought. Perhaps, one could hardly expect it to be otherwise. The congregational structure, liturgical patterns, and hymnology, for example, were heavily indebted to Western models. The advocates were frequently asked, "In your country, how do you do such and such . . . ?" Fortunately, most were also often reluctant to answer!

In this period, then, a cumulative tradition developed, despite the missionary concern that it be otherwise, which was not fully in harmony with the primal religious faith of the Huli Christians. It is my belief that this was a major factor, which progressively built up tension within the emerging congregations, and which contributed to the eruption of the 1975-1976 revival movement.

4. 1975-1976: REVIVAL: THE "PRIMALISATION" OF CHRISTIANITY

A variety of factors also contributed to triggering revival phenomena, which emerged in 1975. Some of these can be deduced from published documentary sources.[41] Much of what is recorded here is from personal observation.

Factors triggering the Koroba revival

1. On the national level, Papua New Guinea was going through the process of becoming an independent nation. The

government was laying stress on the ability of Melanesians to run their own affairs. Self-government in 1974 was followed by Independence in 1975.

2. A pattern of revival phenomena was beginning to emerge in different parts of Melanesia: in the Solomon Islands among the South Seas Evangelical Church; among the Enga Baptists and among the United Church in the Mendi area; and the Evangelical Church of Papua (related to the Asia Pacific Christian Mission) in the Komo and Kutube areas.

   There was little evidence of direct stimulation of the Koroba revival by these other movements, though reports must have filtered through. The only clear exception to this was the visit of two Solomon Islands SSEC pastors, who came to conduct meetings for several days at Guala in 1973. Key church leaders spent time questioning them about their experience.

   When revival did break out, the Koroba Christians did relate their experiences to these others, as they had heard of them, both positively and negatively. Even so, as Whiteman states,[42] every revival takes on the distinctive forms of the local culture.

3. The visit of Maori evangelist, John Komene, in 1974, sparked interest. Here was a non-European, who preached with charisma, and in meaningful terms.

4. The departure of Kay Liddle in 1970, ushered in a new era of independency. The churches were freed from the “mana” of their founding missionary.

5. An upsurge in church life took place in the months prior to the overt commencement of the revival. An increasing number of individual conversions and baptisms over the previous two years reflected an increasing desire to “come close to God”. One congregation started daily evening prayer meetings. A small group of men, who became key leaders in the revival,

held regular late-night Bible studies with their missionary, which proved to be very significant to them.

6. The construction of their own Bible School building with their own financial resources, by national Christians themselves, drew all the congregations of Brethren in the valley together into a single project. It was the opening of this Bible School that triggered the overt manifestation of revival in July 1975.

7. Before and during the revival, Bible stories were paralleled with Huli legends, to the extent that some became convinced that their ancestors had somehow received the biblical message before even the missionaries came, which resulted in many questions about church history.

The revival phenomena included night meetings every night of the week. Previously, all church meetings were held in the daytime. These meetings assumed a free-flowing liturgical structure, involving singing, corporate prayer, Bible teaching, prophecies, glossolalia, visions, and dreams. They continued for several hours, occasionally much of the night.

A new spirit of unity characterised the community. Land disputes, and court hearings about land, ceased for a time. Mass turnouts at public baptisms took place, with crowds from different congregations converging, singing, and waving bunches of flowers and branches. A new hymnology emerged, with tunes following traditional tone patterns. Someone would be "given" a new song in a dream, and share it with the congregation the next day. It would be learned, and then shared with other congregations, and, thus, spread through the revival area. Healings occurred, a few quite dramatic.

Women, young people, and old illiterate men discovered new roles in church life. There was a great joy in the community, and the revival became known by the Huli word for joy, **turu**.

Interestingly, the missionary advocates were largely on the sidelines of this creative wave, and rather critical of it. They came from a strongly non-charismatic denominational background, and were apprehensive.

Their security and financial support depended on acceptance “back home”. As well as this, they were frequently involved in counselling cases of excess, and the government officers blamed them for allowing these excesses, fearing a cargo cult was developing. This tended to reinforce a negative outlook.

In terms of Cantwell Smith’s framework, the revival was, in part at least, a shift or restructuring at the faith level. Formally, the object of faith remained the same. But the emphasis placed on the Holy Spirit was new. There was a change in terminology from referring to God in the singular to referring to the Godhead in the plural. Of course, for a number of individuals, they did “discover” God at this time.

The revival also uncovered the fact that many Christians had resorted back to the use of charms and magical objects for success in such things as land disputes, health, and other problem areas. Perhaps the new faith had left a void in this area. Here again, some restructuring of faith took place.

The most significant aspect of the revival was the discovery, on a widespread scale, of the conviction that God talks directly to Huli Christians. He not only speaks the Huli language (which the majority of missionaries failed to learn adequately), but He can by-pass the missionary altogether. Further, He speaks in Huli forms: by dreams, visions, prophecies, and special insight. No longer do non-literate Huli have to depend on missionaries and pastors to read God’s word and interpret it to them. God can speak directly to them. He also speaks to Huli needs in terms of the good life: salvation now, and power for living.

A particular emphasis (deliberately under-played by the missionaries in the past), was the doctrine of the second coming of Christ. But, even here, biblical teaching was seen to parallel a number of “last days” prophecies that the ancestors had spoken about.

The revival, then, was a time of rapid religious development and elaboration, whereby the cumulative traditions of the Christian faith were restructured and brought into line with their underlying beliefs, as perceived by the Huli Christians. This involved a release of tensions that

had built up between Huli "faith", and its expressions, drawn largely from Western sources.

Bearing in mind Turner's typology of primal religions, the revival can be seen as a "primalisation" of Huli religious experience. It is a return to the consciousness of the presence of, and involvement with, supernatural beings. Man becomes conscious of is weakness and dependence, but enjoys the release of forgiveness and nearness to God. Thus it is a re-entering into relationship with these beings, and the experience of their power. Further, the manifestations of the revival, the ways it expressed itself, were all indigenous to the Huli culture in pre-Christian times. Divination, glossolalia, trance, visions, dreams, were all parts of traditional culture, although, clearly, there were new accretions, such as the role of women in the revival.

5. 1976-1985: REFORMATION OF THE CUMULATIVE TRADITION: PHASE 2

When my wife and I returned to Koroba, from leave in mid-1976, the revival was subsiding. A common saying was, "The Holy Spirit has left us." Whiteman has pointed out[43] that all revival phenomena do, in fact, eventually pass away. In fact, while he claims that "religious movements are a normal, healthy sign that a society is dynamic and alive",[44] he also shows that a revitalisation movement begins with a steady state, passes through periods of increased individual stress, cultural distortion, revitalisation, routinisation, and finally back to a new steady state.[45]

Although, at Koroba, the widespread euphoria had gone, the new "steady state" was different from before. Energies were able to be channelled into new directions. Huli Christians undertook evangelisation tours of other rural and distant urban areas. The Huli New Testament was completed, and beautifully dedicated in an ecumenical service. Huli Christians became more confidently independent and outspoken about missionary policies.

Two other interesting developments occurred in the post-revival phase. A marked division occurred between many Bible School-trained,

literate pastors and some older, non-literate church members, who actively sought to revive and continue to reproduce the phenomena of revival, even when the "joy" had largely gone. The current name for the revival had quietly changed from **turu** (joy) to **gini** (play), unconsciously marking a significant shift. The literate pastors had had, by and large, a "watch-dog" function, even during the revival, to see that what was done and said was "in line" with scripture. Even so, the split was not so marked as to divide the denomination, although it had the potential to do so. Much energy was expended in maintaining unity.

Finally, at the end of 1984, the Fountains left, and were not replaced by other missionary staff. The national Christians, while sad, were determined that things would not be allowed to slip back, and recent reports indicate that revival phenomena are increasing again, along with other signs of progress. One may surmise that the prospect of the departure of their missionaries again increased the tension felt in the religious community, and a new revitalisation cycle may have begun.

CONCLUSION

We have seen how Cantwell Smith's distinction between "faith" and the "cumulative tradition" can be helpfully applied to a dynamic religious situation like that of the Koroba Huli, providing we are prepared to do what Cantwell Smith seemed reluctant to do, namely, to put content into the term "faith". This content has perhaps two aspects: direction and strength (or devotion). That is, faith, seen as allegiance or loyalty to supernatural beings, has direction toward these beings. A "faith shift" is a redirection to alternative beings. "Faith" also increases or decreases in strength of devotion, and the restructuring of faith in the Koroba revival can be seen to be of this latter form, rather than redirecting it.

We are also helped to understand the expressions of that "faith" in the "cumulative tradition" of the dynamic situation of the Koroba Huli. We have seen that, when the "cumulative tradition" becomes in tension with the "faith" it expresses, it becomes unsatisfying and, as tension mounts, a revitalisation movement, in either its "conversion" or "revival" form, is generated.

NOTES

1. W. Cantwell Smith, **The Meaning and End of Religion,** London: SPCK, 1978

2. H. W. Turner, "Primal Religions and Their Study" in V. C. Hayes (ed.) **Australian Essays in World Religions,** AASR, 1977, pp. 27-37.

3. W. C. Smith, pp. 156-157.

4. Ibid., pp. 152ff.

5. Because this is a definition using personal terms, it will not be satisfactory for some religious systems. For these, we may have to substitute terms such as "states" or "orders of existence" for the term "being". However, these alternatives are unsatisfactory for the primal/Christian situation we are here examining, in that they are too impersonal for these religious systems.

6. Turner, op.cit.

7. Ibid., p. 30-32.

8. Ibid., p. 29.

9. See the argument of Lamin Sanneh, "Christian Mission in the Pluralist Milieu: The African Experience", **Missiology** 12, 4, 421-433.

10. Examples from Koroba are: (1) the burning of **gamu** objects; (2) the permanent excommunication of Christians who became polygynous; (3) the strong corporate fellowship among the Koroba Brethren churches, which seemed to cut across local church autonomy.

11. R. M. Glasse, **The Huli of Papua,** Canberra: ANU Press, 1962.

12. James Sinclair, **Wigmen of Papua**, Milton: Jacaranda Press, 1973, pp. 51-52

13. R. M. Glasse, "The Huli of the Southern Highlands", in Lawrence and Meggitt (eds.) **Gods, Ghosts and Men in Melanesia,** pp. 27-49.

14. Ibid.

15. Sinclair, **Wigmen of Papua**, ibid., **Behind the Ranges**, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1966

16. The writer was able to verify and compare much religious material during the eight years he was a member of the Huli New Testament Checking Committee, which met regularly, and included Huli checkers and informants from the whole Huli area.

17. **Gods, Ghosts and Men in Melanesia**, pp. 29-37.

18. Ibid., p. 31.

19. Perhaps Glasse has confused this term, and slightly amended **Dahulial** to read **Dalugeli;** alternatively it is a local Hoiebia variation.

20. Ibid., p. 31.

21. B. Collins (ed.), **"Not to Destroy . . . But to Fulfil**, United Church Highlands Region, 1983.

22. Glasse, p. 33.

23. Ibid., p. 37.

24. I disagree with Glasse in his use of the term **mana** in reference to myths: **Mana** are mores, teachings, and obligations; myths should be called **mamali te** in Huli.

25. A Koroba man counted for me his generations of ancestors. He knew 11 generations, but the 11th was a totemic animal.

26. Turner, p. 30.

27. Benjamin S. Gayalu, The Gebeanda: A Sacred Cave Ritual", in N. C. Habel (ed.), **Powers, Plumes and Piglets,** AASR, 1979, pp. 19-24.

28. Turner, p 31.

29. See note 15.

30. Sinclair, **Wigmen of Papua**, p. 51.

31. Ibid., p. 57

32. T. Ahrens, "Concepts of Power in a Melanesian and Biblical Perspective" in **Christ in Melanesia,** Point, 1977, Goroka: The Melanesian Institute, p. 63.

33. O. C. Fountain, "The Christian Faith and the Melanesian Economy", Paper presented to the APCM Conference, Tari, 1977 (mimeographed).

34. Ahrens, p. 71-72.

35. K. W. Liddle, **New Guinea Diary, October 1961-October 1965**, unpublished account.

36. See note 24.

37. Lamin Sanneh, refer note 9.

38. B. Collins, **Not to Destroy . . . But to Fulfil”**, p. 9.

39. Report on “Special Conference Held at Koroba”, p. 1.

40. O. C. Fountain, “Polygyny and the Church”, **Missiology** 2, 1, pp. 111-120.

41. Aruru Matiabe, “Revival Movements ‘Beyond the Ranges’: Southern Highlands Province”, Goroka: The Melanesian Institute, 1980; John Barr, “Ecstatic Phenomena and ‘Holy Spirit Movements’ in Melanesia”, **Oceania** 54, 2, pp. 109-132.

42. D. Whiteman, “The Cultural Dynamics of Religious Movements” in W. Flannery, ed., **Religious Movements in Melanesia Today (3)**, Point No. 4, p. 59.

43. Ibid., p. 59.

44. Ibid., p. 57.

45. Ibid., p. 60-64.

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DOCUMENTATION

Towards a Religious Map of Papua New Guinea

The most important document on Papua New Guinea, i.e., the country's Constitution, calls Papua New Guinea a Christian country.[1] This means, first of all, that Christian principles have played a significant role in formulating the fundamental options and orientations of the Constitution. And this was possible, only because a very large proportion of Papua New Guineans consider themselves Christians. In that sense, too, Papua New Guinea is a Christian country.

How large, exactly, is this proportion? And, in that specific sense of the word, how "Christian" is the population of Papua New Guinea? A recent publication in Germany gave an estimate of 68% Christian and 32% non-Christians/animists.[2] This is a very different figure from what would seem to follow from the census data given below for 1980.

Inevitably, the Christianity of Papua New Guinea reflects the divisions among Christians in the rest of the world. The same article gives the following:

790,000	Roman Catholic Church	25%
550,000	Evangelical Lutheran Church	18%
60,000	Gutnius Lutheran Church	2%
210,000	United Church	7%
80,000	Baptist Church	2.5%
160,000	Anglican Church	5%
360,000	Evangelical Groups	11.5%
990,000	Non-Christians/animists	32%

Naturally these figures intend to give no more than a very rough idea of the situation. Even so, the question can be asked how close they get to the actual situation.

A hand-out, **Religion in Papua New Guinea: A Brief Introduction**, by Carl Loeliger, for the courses Religion in Melanesia (16.101) and Religion and Culture (16.136), at the University of Papua New Guinea, October, 1978, gives the following figures, with the warning that they are approximate, based on information from the churches, and probably "conservative":

Roman Catholic Church	670,000
Evangelical Lutheran Church	476,000
Gutnius Lutheran Church	45,000
United Church	250,000
Anglican Church	150,000
Seventh-day Adventist	50,000
Evangelical Alliance (including ± 20,000 Baptists)	136,000
Salvation Army	1,500
Jehovah's Witnesses (including 1,500 active field workers)	6,000
Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is	6,000

Small churches and missions, it is said, are not mentioned.[3]

The figures, given above, are quoted mainly to illustrate the need for a more-accurate religious map of Papua New Guinea. People involved in planning and policy-making could easily be led into rather strange decisions were they to assume, for instance, that 32% of the Papua New Guinea people are still non-Christians!

The 1980 census asked the following question: "Do you belong to a church? Write name of the church, or 'NO' ". Unfortunately, this question was contained only in the form reserved to urban areas. For the rural areas, an attempt was made later on to fill in the blanks by testing "stratified clusters". The question was addressed to citizens only, and to persons of ten years or more. The results were extrapolated over the whole population (10 years and over, citizens only), which led to the following figures:[4]

Anglicans	82,303	3.9%
Baptists	49,359	2.3%
Roman Catholics	718,352	34.55%
Evangelical Alliance	186,465	8.9%
Evangelical Lutheran	504,871	24.2%
Gutnius Lutheran	44,102	2.1%
Jehovah Witnesses	6,159	0.3%
Salvation Army	1,058	0.05%
Seventh-day Adventists	96,498	4.6%
United Church	272,469	13.1%
Other Mission and Faith	43,121	2.0%
No religion	54,744	2.6%
Not stated	7,046	0.3%
Not asked	12,581	0.6%
TOTAL	2,079,128	

Extrapolating data from "stratified clusters" naturally gives only approximate results, with the special risk of inflating the figures for the large churches, and getting figures for the smaller groups that are too low.[5] Still, a great deal can be learned from them.

The first question we can ask is: where are the non-Christians, or, more precisely in Papua New Guinea, those who retain traditional religions? A Papua New Guinean would not refer to a traditional religion as a "church", so people adhering to them may either have answered "No" to the question as it was asked, or said "no religion", or not have stated anything at all. Even so, that would not add up to a full 5%. The conclusion must be that about 95% of Papua New Guinea citizens describe themselves as adhering to one Christian church or another. This does not mean that these people are always "formal" members, i.e., that they have gone through the steps by which the churches themselves would count them as "members", e.g., baptism. And such people may well still practise traditional religions at the same time as they consider themselves in some way "adherents" of this or that church. Nevertheless, there is this basic option for a Christian church. Clearly, the future task of the churches lies, not in expansion, but in consolidation.

As far as the relative "strength" of individual churches is concerned, it should not be impossible to check the census figures against information from the churches themselves, as Loeliger did in 1978. I shall try to do so here, for the Catholic church only.

In each case, one must take into account the criteria of the churches for membership. Catholic church figures would include children under ten years of age, but only those baptised. They would also include non-citizens. If we now extend the 34.55% census figure over the whole citizen population of 2,978,057,[6] on the assumption that children under ten in Catholic families are baptised, we get 1,058,699. And, if we take it over the total population, including non-citizens,[7] assuming the percentage of Catholics among them is the same as among citizens, 34.55% of 3,010,727 would amount to 1,070,313.

In actual fact, internal church figures are much lower. For 1980, the year of the census, the number was given as 878,709, i.e., 29.18% of the whole population, as known from the census.[8] For 1983, the figure given is 974,501, i.e., 30.3% of the total population that could be estimated for that year.[9] Why the difference of more than four percent?

First of all, we must take into account, as already indicated, that the extrapolations of the census figures would tend to favour the larger groups. On the other hand, church figures are often very approximate themselves, which shows if we see how some figures are given in neat thousands or even tens of thousands.[10] Finally, census figures could well include people who can be expected gradually to become full members of the churches. It seems, therefore, that church figures can safely be rounded off upwards to meet census figures, and these, in the case of the major churches, have to be taken down a few notches. For the Catholic component of the Papua New Guinea population, an estimate of 31% to 32% seems reasonable.[11]

For anyone trying to work out a religious map of Papua New Guinea, these are fairly safe figures to start with: no more than 5% non-Christians, and 31/32% Roman Catholics. Perhaps other churches will be prepared to adjust their own estimates and census figures to fill in the other blank areas, until such time as another census simply asks people everywhere about their religious affiliation. The fact that less than one percent actually did

not answer, or was not asked (and that can have had many reasons), shows that people in Papua New Guinea have no objections to the question being included, as may be the case elsewhere. Perhaps, if the next census decides to ask the question, an appropriate way can be found to allow people, who retain their traditional religions, to express their adherence freely, without embarrassment.

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NOTES

1. Literally: ". . . pass on to those who come after us our noble traditions and the Christian principles that are ours now . . .": Preamble to the Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea.

2. **Bulletin of German Pacific Society**, G 123, F. Steinbauer (ed.), May 1985, page 10.

3. No attempt is made to "quantify" traditional religions. Loeliger points out, and I think rightly, that traditional religions are not likely to disappear, but will probably live on as a pervasive force, channelling the interpretation and understanding of Christianity, as well as being influenced by it. Cf. pp. 1 and 8.

4. These figures were given to me by M. L. Bakker of the National Statistical Office, Port Moresby, with permission to use them, pending publication of a monograph on the subject.

5. Oral communication of M. L. Bakker.

6. Census figures are taken from **1980 National Population Census: A Pre-release: Summary of Final Figure**, National Statistical Office, nd.

7. Non-citizens were only 32,670 out of 3,010,727, i.e., 1.08%, in 1980.

8. Church figures are taken from **Annuario Pontificio**, published each year by the Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Figures are presumed always to be the ones of the preceding year.

9. Using the projections given in: **Population Projections for the Citizen Population of Papua New Guinea for the period 1980-2015**, M. L. Bakker, study presented to the

Seminar on Population Growth and its Implications, 24 May, 1985. National Statistical Office, Port Moresby.

10. Cf. **Paper prepared for the visit of Pope John Paul II to Papua New Guinea 7-10 May, 1984.** Available from Government Printing Office, p. 27.

11. Using projections mentioned in Note 9, the more likely estimates for 1985 are 3,312,100 (no change in fertility and mortality), or 3,328,710 (slight drop in both continuing as in 1970s). The number of Catholics (citizens only) would then be between 1,026,751 (= 31% of lower projection) and 1,065,187 (= 32% of higher figure).

REPORT

Management and Accountability in Theological Education

ATESEA Workshop, Singapore, July 10-17, 1985

At the invitation of the Executive Secretary of ATESEA, Dr Yeow Choo Lak, I had the privilege of participating in the Workshop on "Management and Accountability in Theological Education", and the General Assembly of ATESEA.

The workshop addressed itself to the issues of managing theological education, with a well-defined but broad view of accountability, taking into account the ethical and theological grounds for accountability. This was covered in two phases, through topics ranging from "Asian View of Management", "Cultural Hindrances", "Holistic Management", "Decision Making", Strategic Planning", to "Integrated Fund-raising Programme".

The first phase of presentation was made by three lay Christian business professionals, Timothy Ang, Khor Tong Keng, and Wee Chow Hou, who spoke separately, but followed the topic in an integrated, interesting, and teachable manner. All was done with the needs and views of Christian and theological institutions in mind.

A "contemplative concept of management" was pinpointed as a significantly Asian principle and concept of management. Here a difference is drawn between "work" ethos and "self" ethos. Much good management/stewardship involves "self-discipline". It is getting the right things done, and not just getting a job done, that counts. A proper approach to management in the Asian context (Melanesia?) is by way of compromise, where there is also a greater sense of accountability – perhaps the kind of accountability where there is less corruption and deceit.

Critical human realities in management/stewardship are identified as envy, self-pride (emperor's complex), vested interest, impatience, and

hastiness. Environmental, organisational, and time realities, as well as cultural realities, are also important considerations.

It was emphasised again and again that unless Asians become financially independent, they are not free. This is quite true to say also of Melanesians. Unless Melanesians are financially independent, there is no real freedom. But freedom, to me here, is the freedom to be creative. The issue of financial independence is rightly coupled with the issue of contextual priorities rather than being burdened by inherited structures from which we are constantly dependent.

Defining identity, and establishing priorities, is important for effective management. It also involves establishing resources. How far is MATS in this direction, and what is the projection for the future?

The second phase of the workshop was theological presentations, and reflections on the meaning of accountability in theological education. What are our reasons for being, developing, managing, and directing theological education? It was noted, with a certain regret, that, at one time, the church offered the best in education. Is government overtaking the churches in offering the "best substitute"? If we have a purpose to be in education, be it theological training, or liberal arts, it is to offer the best, and attract the best. Government can never offer the best as a substitute for the churches. This is part of our concern in management and accountability.

Perhaps the highlight of theological reflections was presented in "The Spirit and the Tao of Theological Education in Asia", by C. S. Song, the keynote address given by the Presbyterian scholar from Taiwan (to appear in next issue of **MJT**).

Song raised some eyebrows. In replying to his responder, Revd Sientje Merentek-Abram, a female theologian from Indonesia, he referred to Jesus as being syncretistic. Revd Merentek-Abram was concerned that, in speaking of accountability to Asian histories, religions, and contexts, there is danger of syncretism. It was an appropriate concern.

As one listened to the speaker, there were traces of emotional overtones in trying to speak of Asianness over against Westernness in

theology, perhaps a sign of a person who truly feels about Asian contexts of church and theology. Song made some very important observations.

Theology, he said, is like an art. As an art, it requires creativity. A good artist needs to be creative rather than imitate the form. He challenged Asians involved in theological education to generate new dignity in theological vocation. How to go about it involves creativity, distinct form, beauty, and unusual perception. He described Jesus as the most-independent thinker and creative theologian.

The paper concluded that Asian theology has not yet become a creative art. It called for effort in management of theological education and training to be artistic in style and context. In short, it was a call for reformation in church and theology in Asia. Song was careful to add that, to be creative and artistic, is not the final aim of theology, but that we are accountable to God, and being guided by the Spirit. This should be the beginning and end of theological education, management, reformation, and accountability.

My overall observation of the Workshop and General Assembly is that there is a lot to be learnt from ATESEA. The programme offered by the South-East Asian Graduate School of Theology is worth exploration by MATS. In this connection, may I reiterate the 1981 Mats Executive proposal to initiate masters-level studies in South-east Asia. The schools that look promising are the Trinity Theological College in Singapore, and Lutheran Seminaries in Hong Kong.

Included in the Workshop and Assembly of ATESEA, were visits to Trinity Theological College, in Singapore, run by major Protestant churches in Singapore, the South-East Asia Adventist Seminary, also in Singapore; and the Seminary Theolji Malaysia, in Kuala Lumpur, run by the Anglican, Lutheran, and Methodist churches in Malaysia. Ecumenical partnership in these schools is a visible reality in Asia. This, again, gives us reasons for a closer working relationship and sharing between MATS and ATESEA. Mutual invitations to Workshops and Study Institutes have begun, and must be encouraged to continue, while other areas of sharing should be explored.

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BOOK REVIEWS

An Introduction to Ministry in Melanesia, edited by Brian Schwarz, Point Series No.7 (Goroka: The Melanesian Institute, 1985) 304 pp.

An Introduction to Ministry in Melanesia is the third in a series of "Handbooks for Church Workers" produced by The Melanesian Institute, following book one, **An Introduction to Melanesian Cultures,** and book two, **An Introduction to Melanesian Religions**.

The editor, Brian Schwarz, in his introduction, points out the transitional historical situation of the contemporary churches in Papua New Guinea (PNG): ". . . the missionary era is over, the mission of God remains" (viii). Herein lies the challenge of ministry in Melanesia today. The aim of helping church workers to understand and meet this challenge is approached by identifying the holistic needs of the people, and by confronting the reality of ministry, as we find it today, with a vision of ministry for the future of God's people in this country. The vision is described in partial and realistic goals, some closer at hand, others further down the road. The "road" itself is the subject of study; concrete ways and means of attaining, or approaching, these goals.

This volume gathers 14 articles written by 11 experienced "ministers" in their respective fields. Therefore, the book never loses touch with the historical reality of the church, even in its highly-reflective parts. It meets the standard of a handbook for church workers by being both comprehensive and clearly understandable.

1. The Role of the Church in Society (Gernot Fugmann)

It is shown how, in the religious, social, economic, and political dimensions of life, the church, on a local and national level, needs to assert its prophetic role to participate in determining the goals of change and development.

2. The Acts of the Apostles in PNG and the Solomon Islands (Rufus Pech)

This paper describes the complex historical processes of the "missionary era" of this region, with its decisive events, people, dates, concepts, and movements.

3. Fundamental Issues for a Theology in Melanesia (Gernot Fugmann)

This article invites Melanesians to a theological dialogue with their religious heritage. The major issues arising from the tension between traditional religious concepts and biblical positions are spelled out clearly, and referred to the pastoral level of the church worker.

4. Contextualisation and the Church in Melanesia (Brian Schwarz)

This chapter serves as an introduction to "contextualisation", which is the vital process of the gospel growing intimately into the cultural, social, political environment of a people. It illustrates ways in which this growth can be promoted.

5. The Challenge of Christ to Traditional Marriage (Ennio Mantovani)

The author here deals with "the interaction between Christianity and traditional values and ethics, especially as they are applied to marriage" (122), the key question being whether this action is a witness for Christ, and an expression of love and care for others.

6. Community and Ministry (Mary MacDonald)

"This paper is concerned with the pastoral care, which the Christian communities offer to their members, and all those with whom they have

contact" (141). The author makes a strong plea for the ministry, which belongs to the whole community. Only in relation to all its members, including the ordained clergy, can they understand their partial ministry.

7. Basic Christian Communities (Lester Knoll)

The author subtitles his paper, "A strategy for facilitating the internalisation of faith convictions". He does this by examining the approach of Basic Christian Communities, with examples of this model in the Southern Highlands, showing that Christian growth in faith must begin with personal responsibility and group conviction.

8. Ministry in the Urban Context (Brian Schwarz)

"This chapter aims at helping church workers develop a more-positive attitude towards ministry in urban Melanesia" (166). Aspects of urban life, relevant to ministry, are shown. It is suggested that existing or emerging communities be used as a basis for urban ministry.

9. Ministries in an Urban Settlement (Henk Janssen)

An experienced urban parish priest presents a case study of the development of ministries in an urban settlement in Lae, Morobe Province. It is shown how various ministries may develop through a process of learning, participation, and sharing of responsibilities on a basic community level.

10. Faith, if it has not Works, is Dead (Lynn Giddings)

The author makes a spirited and touching plea for integrated human development, through the light of the gospel gaining influence in the economic, social, political, and spiritual fields of life. The paper is highly critical of many aspects of the status quo, but can also point towards some

convincing avenues of ministry, and, most of all, inspire church workers with a vision of a faith that has works.

11. Serving through Education (Michael Olsson)

This article demonstrates how the present school system in PNG, patterned after Western models, is in urgent need of reform, by redefining community-related needs, integrating formal and non-formal eduction, encouraging cultural maintenance, and generally through increased community participation.

12. Take up your Bed and Walk (Brian Schwarz)

The church is here defined as a healed and healing community. The challenge is that people, rather than being passive recipients of health care, learn to become responsible participants in caring for themselves and their sick, both medically and pastorally.

13. Ministry for Development (Reinhard Tietze)

Development is seen as a reflection of God's ministry to His people. He cares for their total needs in life. The emphasis here is placed on rural development, where a vast majority of people live, and have their future. A Holistic Rural Development Programme is introduced, which attempts to meet people at their level of learning, and in their needs of whole-life development.

14. Ministry in Politics (Father John Momis)

This article is based on an interview of the editor with the priest and politician, the only indigenous author in this volume. He strongly affirms his personal conviction and vocation of putting a greater emphasis on the Christian ministry within the "political arena". The author's line of

reasoning raises a number of questions, which would need clarification in further defining the relationship between church and state in Melanesia.

15. Summing up: The Church in Melanesia (Ennio Mantovani)

This conclusion of the three-volume series focuses on the identity of the church worker, who is seen as having the role of an animator or enabler within the community, so that, ultimately, all believers may share in Christ's ministry. Independence and full authority is attributed to the local church, which must grow toward maturity. The process of "enculturation" of the gospel requires an open, anxiety-free dialogue with deeply-ingrained Melanesian traditions.

I find the topics and sequence of articles well chosen. In a wide spectrum of actually-practised ministries, all church workers should be able to find their place, and their challenge, within this volume. I would have liked to add two areas of ministry, which, I feel, are in need of special attention in our present situation:

1. In a grossly male-dominated church, a topic on the ministry **of women** and **to women** might have been an act of courage and of encouragement for many sisters.

2. The ministry of training for **ministries** is crucial in any church for the formation of its workers and their service. Perhaps this topic is a major project in itself: to survey, and critically evaluate, the field of church training institutions and programmes.

There is a **common underlying philosophy in the concept of ministry,** as it is represented in the whole variety of topics and authors:

1. The enterprise of this series of volumes is, in itself, a genuinely **ecumenical** feat. Therefore, these articles breathe an ecumenical spirit of mutual respect, a willingness to dialogue, and to cooperate.

2. Ministry is seen as being essentially **community-oriented**, it is a God-given responsibility, which belongs to the whole community, aiming at a broadly-based participation of all individual charismas.

3. All ministry is necessarily holistic in nature, including and integrating the social, economic, political, and spiritual aspects of life, both of the individual person, and the whole community.

4. The churches' ministry has a **prophetic** dimension, wherein it critically, and responsibly, accompanies the secular powers and authorities in charting and implementing the course of development.

Again, I would like to point out two aspects of ministry, which are definitely included in this concept of ministry, and, yet, I feel, are in need of a special focus of attention in an introduction to ministry in Melanesia:

1. The justifiably strong and repeated emphasis on the community, and the whole body of members, must not lose sight of the single, unique member, and the dimension of a very personal ministry of **pastoral care to the individual's needs**. Many case studies could show how ministry to community needs is intimately tied to key individuals, and the success of a ministry to the whole body is dependent on a parallel ministry to the individual member.
2. My second concern has to do with the well-known fact that many a programme, which looks fine on paper, simply does not work in reality, because of failure through isolation. Where there is no functioning **process of on-going accompaniment, consultation, supervision,** offering regular support and confrontation, facilitating continuous correction, learning, and growth, "things" will deteriorate. It seems to be a law of nature, and we need to take heed of this in our ministry, that isolation means stagnation and deterioration, for this fate may befall us all, the village aid, or motivator, as well as the missionary, pastor, teacher, principal, bishop; it can be

> found in well-financed and staffed programmes, even in defensive, confessionally-sectarian churches.

There is a deep spiritual and practical truth in the symbol of the body, which encompasses all our ministry, a living organism with the continuous circulation of life-giving blood, enabling and necessitating communication and coordination among individual parts, all bound together, and linked to one ultimate centre. In our language of faith, this is Christ, "who is the Head" (Eph. 4:15, 16). Ministry may be understood within this symbol of the living body of Christ, which is His church. Its practical consequences are as real as the whole body's need for a well-functioning circulation of blood. This is the true meaning of ecumenism or catholicity, a very real need at the local Melanesian level, and the universal level of Christ's church.

I would like to conclude this review, and whole-hearted recommendation with, two distinct personal feelings I had while reading this book. At one point, it felt frightening to realise that a future lack of development, or wrong development, in this country could, in part, be the responsibility of the churches, because of their unique insights, resources, and influence on a broad basis. And, as I closed the last page of this book, I had the feeling, which I often have when pondering many of the burning issues of our times: the facts have all been laid before us, no-one can say, I had no way of hearing the call. The only question is, to what extent we have the personal will, and the structural freedom, to follow the call.

"The call to serve is clear. The needs are urgent. The question now is how we will respond." (Michael Olsson, 242)

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SWAIN, Tony: **Interpreting Aboriginal Religion: An Historical Account.** Adelaide: Australian Association for the Study of Religions, 1985; Special Studies in Religions, No. 5., pp. 156 + x.

The book is a helpful, compact account of the historical evolution of anthropological theory on religion, in relation to the study of Aborigines, and their culture, by European and white Australian scholars. In fact, as is pointed out in chapter two (on the period 1925-1970), the line of English ethnological and anthropological societies and institutes sprang from the Aborigines Protection Society, which, itself, resulted, in 1838, from a Parliamentary Select Committee, inquiring into the treatment of native inhabitants of British settlements, after Quaker and Evangelical philanthropists had succeeded in securing the abolition of slavery in 1833.

The book's main value is that it provides a compact, reasoned account of attitudes towards Aboriginal religion, from the time of first contact up to the present. For instance, by relating the early writers in this field to the rationalist European cultural and philosophic fashion of their time, he makes intelligible, that extraordinary early denial, even by church ministers, of the very existence of "religion" among the Aborigines.

The book does a good job in covering so vast and complex a field in little over a 150 pages. It is pretty obvious that the last pages (pp. 123-134), covering scholars of recent times (Levi Strauss, Stanner, Elkin, and Eliade), were tacked on to a dissertation, so as to give it a contemporary relevance as a published book. While one could wish for a more careful presentation of the thought of a rich thinker like Stanner, in view of the limitations of space, and the usefulness of the book, it would be churlish of me to complain about specific points.

I would, however, like to make two remarks. I would have thought Kenelm Burridge's (1973) **Encountering Aborigines: Anthropology and the Australian Aboriginal** could have been more acknowledged (cf. p. ix). I would see the two books as complementary: Swain's is more a chronicle of scholars, Burridge's an essay in intellectual interpretation (so, in fact, closer to the meaning of Swain's somewhat misleading title!).

Secondly, it is a pity Swain has paid no attention to E. A. Worms' major essay **Australische Eingeborenen-Religionen** (1969). Certainly, Swain had to restrict his coverage for practical reasons. On p. 102, he explains that he has selected only the theories that link the earlier chapters of his book with "present-day thinking on aboriginal religion". Worms' essay certainly does this. The lack of an English translation has resulted in its almost total neglect. Nelen Yubu hopes to remedy this defect in the near future.

Finally, Swain's book carries a useful bibliography of main works (pp. 141-156) – though I wonder why Stanner's (1979) **White Man Got No Dreaming** was omitted, and, of course, E. A. Worms' 1968 essay (and French translation, 1972).

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(Reprinted with permission from Nelen Yubu No. 23, p. 33).

AHRENS, Theodoor: **Unterwegs nach der verlorenen Heimat. Studien zur Identitaetsproblematik in Melanesien** (Erlangen: Verlag der Evang.-Luth. Mission, 1986 = Erlanger Monographien aus Mission und Oekumene, Bd. 4) 280 pp.

*It is not usual for **MJT** to review books in languages other than English or Tok Pisin, but, in view of Dr Theo Ahrens' long association with Papua New Guinea as a Lutheran missionary, then as the first non-Catholic staff member of the Melanesian Institute, and, for a number of years, as the Melanesia Secretary of the North Elbian Mission Centre, Hamburg, we thought there were grounds for making an exception, especially as the substance of Part II of his book appeared as " 'The Flower Fair as Thorns as Well': Nativistic Millennialism in Melanesia as a Pastoral and Missiological Issue" in **Missiology**, Vol. XIII No. 1, January 1985, pp. 61-80, and his discussion with Andrew Strathern on Pentecostalism was reproduced in the previous issue of **MJT**, Vol. 2 No. 1, April 1986, pp. 8-12.*

One often hears the suspicion, sometimes voiced as an assertion, that indigenous Melanesian ways of thinking are still operative under the surface of Christian forms and phrases. One of the strengths of Ahrens' book is that, by adducing case studies, and developing what he calls a "hermeneutic key" or "religious decoder" (141) to analyse them, he shows how Melanesian thought forms continue to operate as Melanesian Christians struggle towards a new identity. With all due respect, he also unmasks some of the misunderstandings, which arose when the missionaries of former times, even the redoubtable Christian Keysser, tried to interpret the reactions of their Melanesian converts.

His sketch of the social and theological background of the 19th-century missionaries (94 ff.), is particularly helpful in throwing light on these misunderstandings, while, on the side of the Melanesians, a statement, he attributes to Peter Lawrence, provides the key to understanding many of the problems still faced by the churches today: Melanesians ascribed to religion, in the world of the whites, the same function their own rituals had in theirs, namely, to provide the basis for social and political success (101). It was not so much the content of the gospel, as the spectacle of the whites' way of life, which, for them, was the true kago ("cargo"), the symbol of salvation (45), and the advent of the whites confronted them for the first time with the real possibility that tomorrow could be fundamentally different from today, with the concept of the future (100).

One of Ahrens' main aims is to push further our understanding of cargo cults. He insists on their religious significance, disagreeing with Peter Worsley and Bryan Wilson, who tend to reduce them to proto-political protest movements (40). He also disagrees with John Barr, that the Holy Spirit movements of recent years have introduced a qualitatively new era in indigenous Melanesian Christianity (139). Rather, he sees "nativistic millennialism" and "thaumaturgical Holy Spirit movements" (i.e., cargoist expectations, with roots in Melanesian culture, and Pentecostal groups, which emphasise faith healing and speaking in tongues) as interacting in the single basic context of Melanesian religiosity. It is in this same context that he concludes his book by examining case studies of a wide range of Melanesian intellectuals, as they search for a new/old Melanesian identity (Ignatius Kilage, Turo Raapoto, Malama Meleisea,

Peter Kenilorea, Bernard Narokobi, 193 ff.). What impresses about these analyses is Ahrens' many-sidedness: ever wary of simplifications, he suggests that even the Pentecostalism and biblical fundamentalism, introduced by expatriate evangelists, has a role as "catalyst and innovator" in the formation of Melanesian identity (46, 191, and the interview with Andrew Strathern in the Appendix), and that there may be unexpected variations in Melanesians' experiences and statements, of their own identity.

Another strength of the book is that, although he is engaged in constructing a systematic framework for theology in Melanesia, Ahrens takes village people's religion very seriously in that framework. This is evident in his concern to understand how myths function in Melanesian societies (29 ff.), in his analysis of the tension between **lo** (social harmony) and **kros** (social disruption, 34 ff.), and in his recognition that the inevitable syncretism of religion at this level, if it is faced up to and worked through, will pave the way for the ecumenical relevance of Melanesian theology (46). Investigating the polarity between village and town, in the search for Melanesian identity, he makes the useful clarification that, whereas in "modern" societies, with their Reformation and Enlightenment heritage, an identity is sought, which transcends the network of prescribed social roles, in "traditional" societies, identity is inseparably bound up with participating in these roles (62, 180-181).

It is not surprising, given the incomplete understanding of Melanesia, on the part of Westerners, and the Melanesians' difficulty in articulating their own understanding of themselves in Western terms, that ambiguities remain in Ahrens' analysis of what he well calls "the implicit, almost unconscious, dialogue with tradition, carried on by the individual Christian, in the conduct of his or her daily life" (47). On the one hand, he sheds light on the "hidden agenda" of Melanesians, as they feel their way into the Christian context, and he is fully aware that this agenda will form the basis of any genuinely Melanesian theology. On the other hand, however, he insists that it was not just a tactical, but a theological, error to present Christ as a new "culture hero", exemplifying a new "life style", replacing **Kilibob** and **Manub** in the framework of the biblical story of creation. Christ is the Saviour, the New Adam, the initiator of faith, and He should be presented as no less than this (58 ff., 128 ff.). Can Melanesian identity survive such a

challenge? What is the function of imported Pentecostalism, and indigenous Holy Spirit movement, in this encounter between Christ and culture? Are they able to absorb the enormous tension implicit in Ahrens' approach, or are they merely a temporary respite in the continuing search for a resolution?

For the present reviewer's Roman Catholic sensibility, it is the undercurrent of fundamentalism, which tends to accompany Pentecostalist phenomena – though not by any theological necessity – and which may have functional equivalents in aspects of Melanesian culture, that presents the real impediment to the emergence of a social identity, both Melanesian and Christian. Though Ahrens takes this reviewer gently to task for overemphasising this danger (192), his thoughtful and stimulating book opens up new areas of research, to which a number of lines of approach are possible. His theological standpoint will doubtless be confronted by those of others with different confessional backgrounds, or different evaluations of Melanesian culture as a medium of revelation, but his methodological insights will be of value to all investigators in the field.

One bibliographical slip will need to be corrected in future editions: Bernard Narokobi's recent book **Life and Leadership in Melanesia** is not a new edition of his well-known **The Melanesian Way** – though such an edition exists in the same format – but an entirely new collection of essays, which, we hope, will be followed by many more.

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THOMSON, David: **Bora is like Church: Aboriginal Initiation Ceremonies and the Christian Church at Lockhart River, Queensland.** (Sydney: Australian Board of Missions, 1985) 2nd revd edn, 48 pp. A$4.00

Bora is like Church, 1982 (revised and reset edition, 1985), is an anthropological and theological study of Aboriginal initiation ceremonies and the Christian church at Lockhart River in Queensland. This book has been published by the Australian Board of Missions, 91 Bathurst Street,

Sydney 2000. The book has 29 black-and-white photographs. David Thomson is on the staff of Nungalinya College, Darwin.

This book is interesting, informative, and gives very helpful anthropological background on the Lockhart people, and their ceremonies. It also provides enlightening theological insights. The book should be read by people from outside, who work in the Aboriginal churches, and those who are engaged in doing and teaching theology in the Aboriginal context. The writer, in fact, states in the Foreword to the revised edition that the original impetus for writing the book "came from the need to provide a basic explanation of the Bora to 'outsiders' living at Lockhart River, who can too easily judge their limited view of **Bora** practices by the standards of their own cultural assumptions". Although the book deals with one Aboriginal society, there are useful anthropological and theological insights, which can be applied to other Aboriginal communities.

The book is in two parts. The first part outlines important features of Aboriginal society at Lockhart River, and of the initiation ceremonies called **Bor**a, which still take place today. The author describes the different aspects of the initiation ceremonies, and their effects on the individual initiates, and on the life of the group. The **Bora** ceremonies are seen as "sacramental"; with the "inner effects of strengthening and stabilising community life in the present". Through the ceremonies, the strength of the society, which is established by human ancestry, is transmitted. These initiation ceremonies have continued at irregular intervals through the period of contact with Europeans. There is fresh concern among the Lockhart people that these ceremonies should not be lost. The writer states that the renewal of the ceremonies "is not an attempt to return to the past, but to value their roots in the past, as a source of confidence and direction in meeting the present, and what the future may bring". The **Bora** initiation ceremonies are seen as expressions of the Lockhart River people's past roots, which endorse their life and humanity today, and which counteract the destructive effects of social change.

In the second part of the book, the writer discusses the link between the **Bora** ceremonies and the Christian church, as they have existed and interacted side-by-side. The author writes to show, and this is his main thesis in this part, that the initiation ceremonies do not conflict with the

Christian faith. The two should be able to exist in parallel, and "interact in meaningful ways", without merging or syncretising. **Bora is Like Church** is a common way in which the parallels are expressed. The Lockhart River people have readily understood "much of the sacramental life of the church, because of its functional similarity to what they have experienced in their ceremonies". Noting that church ceremonies have been presented with "a predominantly European mould", the writer suggests ways in which the church ceremonies can become more in line with Aboriginal-style ceremonies. There is also need for church ceremonies and activities to become more flexible and informal, and for them to centre on where people are – "at home, under a tree, on the beach, at the stock camp, out camping, etc.". This part of the book also examines the ways in which Aboriginal theology has emerged at Lockhart River, and ways to encourage this theology to develop. "Fundamental to this theology is the valid place of Aboriginal culture and ceremony in their lives, and the common affirmation, by both **Bora** and church, of Aboriginal identity and consciousness."

Like the Melanesians, the Aborigines have diverse languages, with different social organisations and customs. The writer rightly points out that Aboriginal society differs considerably from place to place, and that his study does not necessarily apply to other Aboriginal communities. He also draws attention to the complex nature of the Aboriginal cultures, and states that "patient listening and learning from Aborigines is needed, rather than preconceived plans and solutions". This is an important and necessary qualification for those of us who come from outside to work with the Aborigines.

The writer is aware that, like Aboriginal cosmology, in the traditional Melanesian worldview there is no great distinction between the secular and sacred: life is viewed and lived out holistically. But the author has noted that the inner view of nature, contained in the Lockhart **Boras** is not Melanesian, although there are similarities. It should also be noted that traditional Melanesian religions are complex, and involved more than animistic beliefs, as the author perhaps seems to imply. However, the writer has made this distinction, having in mind a small group of Melanesian Brothers (Anglicans, who have come to work at Lockhart River. It is possible for these religious Melanesians, coming from a

background “where nature is seen to be imbued with spiritual powers”, to quickly conclude that **Bora** worship is animistic and is anti-Christian.

David Thompson’s book is a timely work. I make this observation for four reasons. Firstly, as I have already noted, it should be read by people coming to work from outside with the Aboriginal churches. Secondly, Aboriginal Christians are working and searching to develop their own theology, and Aboriginal Christianity, and the insights the book provides are valuable for the Aboriginal Christians. Thirdly, there are Christians from outside who have said that Aboriginal Christians should regard their culture as evil. It is heartening that the book affirms the positive side of Aboriginal culture and ceremonies. Finally, this book should give help and guidance to those Aboriginal Christians who are seeking to distinguish any negative elements of their ceremonies from the positive ones, in the light of their Christian faith.

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CONTRIBUTORS

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Mogola Kamiali is a pastor of the United Church of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. He received the B.Th. from Rarongo Theological College, and is now serving at Mendi in his home province, Southern Highlands. While at Rarongo, he was student representative on the MATS executive. Although largely cut off from academic resources, he intends to continue writing.

Ossie Fountain was born in India, of missionary parents. He was educated in New Zealand, and first came to Papua New Guinea in 1964 to do research for an M.A. thesis in geography, entitled **Wulukum: Land, Livelihood, and Change in a New Guinea Village,** and presented to Victoria University of Wellington. In 1974, he obtained a Diploma in Theology from London. He returned to Papua New Guinea in 1967 to teach and run leadership-training programmes, based at Koroba, Southern Highlands, from 1971. He worked with a number of mission organisations, and published extensively in the area of marriage and family life in Melanesia. He returned to New Zealand in 1984.

Jan Snijders SM was, until recently, Dean of Studies at Holy Spirit Seminary, Bomana, where he teaches philosophy. He comes from the Netherlands, and has had many years' experience in Melanesia.

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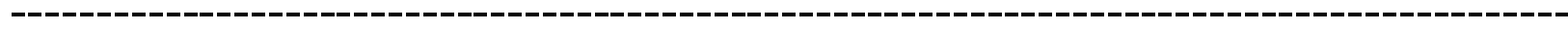

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