Vol 21, No 1 2005

MELANESIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

Contextualisation and Globalisation in the Bible-Training Ministry of the Christian Brethren Churches of Papua New Guinea (Part 4 of 4)
Ossie Fountain

Grass Roots in Paradise: Contextual Theology for Papua New Guinea
Philip Gibbs

Hope of Living
Mary McCarthy

Prostitutes Talk of God
Soane Malia Pulotu

A Theological Reflection on the Suffering of Innocent AIDS Victims
Justin Ain Soongie

Journal of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools

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Subscription prices include airmail. We do not offer surface-mail prices.
Some back issues are available.

All Bible quotations are from the New International Version (NIV)

unless otherwise noted.

ISSN 0256-856X Volume 21, Number 1 2005

This periodical is indexed in the *ATLA Religion Database*, published by the American Theological Library Association, 250 S. Wacker Drive, 16th Flr, Chicago IL 60606, Email: atla@atla.com, www: http://www.atla.com/

This journal is abstracted in *Religious and Theological Abstracts*, 121 South College Street (PO Box 215), Myerstown, PA 17067 USA

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MELANESIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

Journal of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools

The *Melanesian Journal of Theology* aims to stimulate the writing of theology in Melanesia. It is an organ for the regular discussion of theological topics at 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 are welcome.

The *Melanesian Journal of Theology* is committed to the dialogue of Christian faith within Melanesian cultures. The Editorial Team will consider for publication all manuscripts of scholarly standard on matters of concern to Melanesian Christians, and of general theological interest.

The opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent the views of the Editor, Editorial Team, or the member colleges of MATS. All articles have been edited to meet the requirements of the journal.

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

Contents

EDITORIAL

Ossie Fountain concludes his series of four articles analysing Christian Brethren church Bible training in Papua New Guinea. In this article, Ossie focuses on educational methodology, and concludes that CBC Bible Schools have not adequately contextualised global learning methods for the environment in Papua New Guinea. He offers recommendations, based on evaluations of several global and contextual educational methodologies. Ossie's broad understanding of Melanesians, and his in-depth research on learning, shines throughout the article.

We are living in a world of personal dramas and concerns. Problems that invade our lives, and our neighbour's, raise questions. Theologians, Roman Catholic, or otherwise, are called upon to find solutions, as seen in the following thought-provoking articles.

Philip Gibbs defines contextual theology as establishing a link between daily life and God's Word. Does preaching from the pulpit relate to important life issues in Papua New Guinea, such as politics, AIDS, the economy, and abuse of women? Philip gives four steps towards doing contextual theology: determining the issue, relating it to faith, dialoguing with God's Word and church teaching, and calling for a response. His article is a clear reminder to us all that our faith must have feet (James 1:27).

AIDS is a growing epidemic in Papua New Guinea. How can a loving God allow suffering? How do we respond to someone dying of AIDS? Mary McCarthy, in an article that will move you to compassion, addresses such questions. She opens the article with poems by Maura Elaripe Mea, who has AIDS, and has lost two babies to AIDS.

An evangelical perspective on Mary's article: We may solve the problem of human suffering by looking at it as a participatory element in Christ's suffering. However, we must not forget the fact that Christ's suffering is substitutionary, once for all, and complete, and that He suffered as the federal head of humanity, the "second Adam". Besides, He did not die innocently: His death was a knowing death. "Jesus knew that the Father had

put all things under His power, and that He had come from God, and was returning to God" (John 13:3). Any attempt to add to the salvific value of Christ's suffering with our suffering would only rob the eternality of its dimensions and significance. Mary's attempt to see a parallel in human suffering with the suffering of the Saviour, foretold in scriptures, in the Servant Song does not give much consolation. However, what we gain from this article is the fact that the scriptures are not alien to common human problems of sin, pain, and suffering. One cannot avoid bringing the salvific work of Christ on the cross into the temporal world of comparisons, in order that we may justifiably relate to it with our own dramas of suffering. But, in doing so, we miss the purpose of Christ's incarnation and suffering, and His Lordship. However, to emulate the Saviour in our existential suffering is good: it transforms our goals, our purposes in life. Mary's article shows that the need for pastoral care of AIDS patients, in the light of the mercy of God, is a practical reality in Papua New Guinea.

Soane Malia Pulotu addresses prostitution in Papua New Guinea, describing it is as "silent suffering". Through interviews with several active prostitutes, he describes what drives these women to prostitution, and asks questions, such as, "Why is there evil?" and "Who is God for the prostitutes?" Focusing in on Jesus' response in Luke 7:50 and John 8:11, he reminds us that God loves, and suffered, for prostitutes, too.

Justin Ain Soongie writes on suffering, specifically the suffering of AIDS patients. He concludes that, just as Christ innocently suffered, we must help AIDS patients accept their suffering. However, Justin argues it is more than acceptance of their suffering, it is a realisation that they still have a life to live, and can make a positive impact on the world. The article is a call to pastors to shepherd, lovingly, those with AIDS.

Not everyone will agree with the conclusions reached by the authors. However, we hope that, as you grapple with the issues, the thoughts of the authors will help you grow in your understanding of what God's Word says to your life and culture.

Doug Hanson.

CONTEXTUALISATION AND GLOBALISATION IN THE BIBLE TRAINING MINISTRY OF THE CHRISTIAN BRETHREN CHURCHES OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA (PART 4 OF 4)

Ossie Fountain

Ossie (MA, MTh, Dip.Tchg,) and his wife, Jenny, are from New Zealand, and have been mission partners with the Christian Brethren churches in Papua New Guinea since 2000, working as Bible School advisors and trainers. They were missionaries in PNG from 1967 to 1984, spending most of their time in church leadership training roles. This series of articles is adapted from Ossie's Master of Theology thesis that he completed in 2000.

PART 4: EDUCATIONAL METHODOLOGY

This series of articles has endeavoured to analyse the theological education of the Bible schools of the Christian Brethren churches of PNG, using the concepts of globalisation and contextualisation. In previous articles, we looked at the issues of curriculum and the communication of theology. In this article, we address some issues of educational methodology.

The question, "How do we teach what we teach?" alerts us to a number of factors influencing the decisions about educational methodology. It is impossible, in the confines of this article to adequately treat all the factors involved in good learning methodology in theological education. We will, therefore, restrict ourselves to certain key issues.

At the risk of simplifying complex issues, we discuss them under the headings "global" or "contextual", on the basis of their principal orientation. Three sets of global issues are raised – theological orientation, models in theological education, and theories of educational practice. Theological orientation is focused on the impact of the Brethren denominational tradition. We then review models of theological education – schooling, extension, and

apprenticeship. Since each of these models has strengths and weaknesses on its own, we propose a multi-model approach. Global theories of educational practice are then raised. We outline a Christian response to secular theories that allows us to incorporate insights from such theories, but embraces overall Christian commitments. Brian Hill's curriculum model for teaching in the church appears to do this. However, a broad Christian perspective must be modified by the special insights from "andragogy",[1] and learning in cross-cultural contexts.

Contextuality necessitates examining Melanesian socio-cultural environments for educational methods. We address the issue of the orality-literality contrast, and then outline three examples of Melanesian learning situations: how skills for daily living are learned, initiation as an extractive "rite of passage", involving special learning for entry into adulthood, and the transfer of land rights from father to son (a time of heightened awareness and intensive learning). These learning situations offer insights into three learning contexts, relevant for theological education, in terms of parental modelling, extractive and intensive learning in context. From these, we draw out a summary of important contextual implications for the CBC Bible schools.

We then ask whether the Brethren commitment to a scriptural basis for life offers a distinctive approach for educational methodology, looking at Jesus' teaching methods, from both global and contextual perspectives. The article concludes by discussing the balance between global and contextual orientations in Bible school educational methods.

A. GLOBAL ASPECTS OF LEARNING

The impact of global factors on educational methodology has been immense. Theorising about teaching methods has emerged as a separate discipline within the Western tradition.[2] The emergence of different options, and debate between them, is part of the training offered to most teachers within the formal, state-recognised Western educational system. The fact is that, with

[1] Andragogy is the study of how adults learn.

[2] See, for example, Kenneth O. Gangel, and Warren S. Benson, *Christian Education: Its History and Philosophy*, Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1983.

theological education generally, and denominational Bible schools, like those of the CBC, in particular, thinking about educational methodology is frequently by-passed, or caught up in the assumptions made about content, rather than methodology of Christian communication. This is partly because theological education is outside the formal educational system. There are few criteria, by which teaching ability is measured, or what good teaching practice is. Many teachers rely on their own observations, and on the experience of others. Others, sometimes, make the rather dubious assumption that, because someone is a good platform preacher, or Sunday School teacher, they will make a good Bible school teacher. Some missionaries, and probably even national teachers, assume that because they "feel called" by God to undertake this ministry, they are, therefore, well equipped (perhaps by the Holy Spirit) to do so. Sadly, that is not the case.

Good teaching methods emerge from a complex of interactions, involving individual personality, awareness of the range of educational alternatives in theory and practical techniques, and training and experience in the educational process. Cross-cultural factors also impact methodology. In a new context, for example, teachers rapidly become aware that some techniques that have worked well in previous contexts are less effective in the new one. Similarly, the level of maturity of the student clientele impacts effectiveness. A good primary school teacher is not automatically competent to teach adults.

The Western Bible school model, as a means for equipping Christians, and training leaders within the CBC, has provided an environment for adopting Western educational methods as well. Study of traditional teaching-learning techniques, with a view of learning from them, is rarely undertaken.[3] As a result, the dominant methods of teaching are derived from the West, and, as a result, are implicitly global.

[3] The PNG Association of Bible Colleges discussed the issue in 1978, when Revd Walter Hotchkin produced a paper on traditional Huli teaching methods. See also Kevin G. Hovey, *Before All Else Fails . . . Read the Instructions*, Brisbane Qld: Harvest Publications, 1986, pp. 209-225.

1. Theological Orientation and the Impact of a Denominational Tradition

To what extent should theological orientation influence teaching methods? Some would answer "everything". Certainly, a Christian approach would ground educational methods in foundational Christian doctrines, such as, the Trinitarian nature of God, as Russell Thorp has sought to demonstrate.[4] Beyond that, denominational traditions influence the way people teach.[5]

The broadly-Western tradition of theological education, as a form of "schooling", has influenced the approach missionaries have taken in establishing Bible schools, and making curriculum choices. Educational methodology has been equally influenced, reinforced by the personal educational experience of missionary teachers, whether or not they themselves attended a Bible school or theological college as part of their training for missionary service.[6]

One aspect of the Western influence is the impact of denominational tradition. Richard T. Hughes and William B. Adrian brought together a series of essays that draw out (in an American context) the contribution of a range of denominational traditions in "Christian higher education".[7] Using this broad term to include university as well as theological colleges, Hughes and Adrian have collected essays relating to both the broad theologies and the experience of specific institutions, covering Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Mennonite, Evangelical/Interdenominational, Wesleyan/Holiness, Baptist, and Restorationist traditions. While none of these specifically includes the Brethren tradition, several can be seen to be theologically and experientially similar enough to be of interest for our purposes. In particular, the

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[4] Russell Thorp, "The Doctrine of the Trinity and Christian Education", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 14-2 (1998), pp. 28-44.

[5] Richard T. Hughes, and William B. Adrian, eds, *Models for Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Success in the Twenty-first Century*, Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997.

[6] Several of the key expatriate leaders in the formation and running of CBC Bible Schools did not, themselves, undertake formal Bible training before coming to Papua New Guinea. It seems fair to say that those with teacher training have been generally more alert to issues of educational methodology.

[7] Hughes and Adrian, eds, *Models for Christian Higher Education*.

Evangelical/Interdenominational,[8] Baptist,[9] and Restorationist (i.e., the Church of Christ)[10] traditions bear important similarities.

For example, Harold Heie cites biblicism,[11] conversionism, and evangelistic activism as the distinctive features of the evangelical tradition, but he points to a number of ways in which these should be deepened and enlarged to make a more effective contribution to higher education.[12]

Another significant contribution to educational methodologies is by Harold W. Burgess.[13] Although his discussion focuses on the broader field of religious education, rather than theological education, Burgess argues for a significant relationship between historical and contemporary models of religious education and educational practice, as informed by these models. Burgess devotes a chapter to the "Evangelical/Kerygmatic"[14] model, and

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[8] Harold Heie, "What can the Evangelical/Interdenominational Tradition Contribute to Christian Higher Education?", in *Models for Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Survival and Success in the Twenty-first Century*, Richard T. Hughes, and William B. Adrian, eds, Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997, pp. 245-260.

[9] Bill J. Leonard, "What can the Baptist Tradition Contribute to Christian Higher Education?", in *Models for Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Survival and Success in the Twenty-first Century*, Richard T. Hughes, and William B. Adrian, eds, Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997, pp. 367-382.

[10] Richard T. Hughes, "What can the Church of Christ Tradition Contribute to Christian Higher Education?", in *Models for Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Survival and Success in the Twenty-first Century*, Richard T. Hughes, and William B. Adrian, eds, Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997, pp. 402-411.

[11] For Heie, "biblicism" views the Bible "as the primary vehicle for God's revelation of the nature of Christian faith and practice".

[12] Heie, "What can the Evangelical/Interdenominational Tradition Contribute?", pp. 247-251. He faults evangelicals for undervaluing other sources of knowledge about Christian faith and living, especially if the Bible is viewed as the sole source; for, sometimes, an intuitionist epistemology, which undervalues serious study of theology; and for a too-narrow view of the meaning and significance of the biblical record involved in a literal hermeneutic.

[13] Harold W. Burgess, *Models of Religious Education: Theory and Practice in Historical and Contemporary Perspective*, Wheaton IL: Victor Books, 1996.

[14] Burgess groups together the Evangelical/Protestant and the Kerygmatic (Roman Catholic) traditions under one heading, because of the similarity he sees in their approaches in the relationship of theology to educational methodology.

another to the "social science" one. In each, he overviews some representative educational theorists,[15] and then outlines the respective model, under five headings: aim, content, teacher (including here teaching methods), learner, and environment.

Several significant aspects of the evangelical ("proclamation") model emerge. With regard to *aim*, Burgess states that, for evangelicals, "Aim is not a working construct, to be changed, as experience or culture dictates; it is ultimately determined by divine purposes." This aim focuses on a desire to transmit the content of the Bible to others. Evangelicals also recognise a supernatural element, facilitating an encounter between the learner and God, through communicating a divine message, the role of knowledge in shaping a godly life, bringing people to a conversion experience, and growth to Christian maturity. Burgess believes that the role of "aim", in measuring student progress, has received "scant attention" by evangelicals, and offers two reasons for this: "(1) that aims, rooted in divine purposes, are difficult to translate into meaningful phenomena, which are subject to measurement; and (2) that stated aims often lack here-and-now specificity".[16]

In relation to *content*, Burgess notes that "teaching method is often subservient to the message (or content)".[17] Evangelicals are very content-focused, affirming that "the Bible is the textbook for Christian teaching",[18] or "[t]hat it is 'the only basis of an adequate curriculum, in true Christian education' ".[19] While Christ is the central theme, faithful transmission of a verbally-accurate saving message is critically important. Subject matter is arranged so that this message is clearly transmitted. Not only are teaching

[15] The evangelical theorists he selects are: Frank E. Gaebelein (1907-1983), Lois E. Bar (1907-), Clarence H. Benson (1879-1954), Charles Burton Eavey (1889-1974), Harold Carlton Mason (1888-1964), Herbert W. Byrne (1917-), Kenneth O. Gangel (1935-), Roy B. Zuck (1932-), James DeForrest Murch (1892-1972), Lawrence O. Richards (1931-), Donald M. Joy (1928-), Findley B. Edge (1916-), Robert Pazmino (1948-).

[16] Burgess, *Models of Religious Education*, pp. 161-166.

[17] Ibid., p. 166.

[18] Ibid., p. 167, referring to C. B. Eavey, *Principles of Teaching for Christian Teachers*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1968, p. 13.

[19] Ibid., p. 167, quoting Roy B. Zuck, *The Holy Spirit in Your Teaching*, Wheaton IL: Scripture Press, 1963, p. 99.

methods subject to content, but, for the learner, "[t]he core educational process is a supernatural one".[20]

Significantly, for our purposes, Burgess highlights that the environment "as a usable construct in day-to-day practice" is largely ignored by evangelicals, because Christian schools "attempt to ameliorate an environment that is generally perceived to be unfriendly to Christian values".[21] He claims that evangelicals view the typical Christian school environment as the learners' opportunity to tighten their grasp upon the Christian message, so that they will be enabled to "live the Christian life" when they "go out into the world", since the Christian is not at home in the world.[22]

Despite the specific reference here, by Burgess, to Christian schools, and Christian education, rather than Bible schools, and theological education, his evaluation seems to coincide with some views of the latter.[23] If so, such perceptions place the Bible schools of CBC, and their educational methods, very firmly at the global end of the spectrum. The emphasis on cognitive understanding of the contents of the Bible is a global evangelical concern. The Bible, viewed as the primary text, and focus of the curriculum, as we have earlier shown, is viewed as global. Theologically, other elements, such as the Christocentric focus, the role of the Holy Spirit, the requirement for (a prior) conversion and growth to personal Christian maturity, are also global in the evangelical view of the Bible schools' communication task. When this is combined with the subordinate significance of the learner, in relation to

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[20] Ibid., pp. 169-172, 180.

[21] Ibid., p. 183.

[22] Ibid., pp. 182-183. This would seem too narrow a view for some evangelical establishments.

[23] For example, the Sydney NSW, Emmaus Bible College distinctives are:
"The Emmaus combination of a solid core of Bible teaching, Christian doctrine and a range of elective studies will help equip you, whatever the direction your future life and service may be.
All Emmaus programmes are strongly Bible based and Christ centred.
All faculty are committed to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and the authority of the Bible.
As a College, we are committed to following the example of the Lord Jesus who, on the Emmaus road, 'explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning Himself' (Luke 24:27)." Emmaus Bible College, *Student Handbook 1999-2000*, Epping NSW: Emmaus Bible College, nd, p. 9.

content, and with a generally negative view of the social, cultural, and physical world, local contextual factors also become less significant.

There are other elements of a globalised, educational methodology. Brethren, along with other evangelicals, have put high value on the role of preaching, understood as verbal communication of the message, particularly in the monologue style of the preached sermon.[24] The lecture form of teaching, in CBC Bible schools, appears to derive from the dominance of the evangelical "preaching" model. However, this is probably less of a conscious process than assimilation or imitation of others.

Producing duplicated lecture (or blackboard) notes to supplement the lecture method is also often felt necessary. The written form is more permanent, and, for literates, a means for later study and revision. It relies less on memory, but this is both an advantage and a disadvantage in the oral context of Melanesia.

A crucial issue of educational methodology in theological education is the balance of Burgess' five factors, which can be reduced to whether the focus is on the communication of content, or on the learning process of the learner. If the faithful transmission of the Bible and its message is the focus, then primary attention is on content. Since that content is often viewed as being "received" from others, the teacher easily becomes the source and standard for understanding this content. When that happens, in cross-cultural contexts, not only the text is seen as global, but also the understanding of the teacher.

If, however, the focus is on the learner, in his or her context, including background, insights, needs, growth, and the learning process, these issues tend to refocus the content of the curriculum, and creative options about educational methodologies open up. Learner-centred education is much more focused on the context end of the spectrum.

[24] Brethren frequently quote Rom 10:14, "And how can they hear without someone preaching to them" in support of the monologue sermon, with v. 15 as placing this in a missionary context.

2. Global Models in Theological Education

Before we discuss learning, in relation to context, it is important to look at "global" models of theological education. Three, in particular, seem relevant to the CBC Bible school scene – the schooling, extension, and apprenticeship models.

(a) *The schooling model.* The schooling model emerged as the dominant one in the Western world for formal education. It is based on a building, suitably divided into teaching rooms of appropriate size, with a selected group of more-or-less homogenous students.[25] Classes of students are taught by qualified teachers, for specified periods of time. The schooling model assumes that, when a student has completed one level of education, they will progress to the next higher level.

The schooling model is essentially extractive and formal.[26] Students are removed from other community and family settings, and given specialised training in preselected subjects in a classroom-based format. Even where there are electives, and personalised programmes of study, there are limits to the range of options in both content and learning mode. Frequently, tests and examinations, in which students demonstrate their knowledge or skill, in relatively standardised ways, measure success.

Certain strategies and methods operate effectively under the schooling model. The teacher is the professional guide of student learning, and the learning process is content-focused. While teachers' personal

[25] This may be by age, as in primary or secondary school, by educational attainment, as in a university, or by future occupational objective, as in a professional training college. Bible schools are in the latter category.

[26] Describing the schooling model as extractive is not intended pejoratively. We use it to distinguish a mode of education that has strengths and weaknesses. It is similar to some traditional Melanesian modes of learning, including initiation (see below). It is extractive, in the sense that, for fixed periods of time, it removes students for the specific task of "learning" from the cycle of traditional activities that would otherwise occupy them in roles related to their status and social relationships within the wider community.

styles affect class dynamics, this model is broadly teacher-centred and driven.

Writing a number of years ago for Christian teachers in an Indian context, Herbert Hoefer helpfully compared options, within the schooling model.[27] He distinguished, within this model, a "factory-type school, and a "laboratory"-type school. The factory treats all students in similar fashion, and is organised to produce the desired results. Set subjects, timetables, and order are important issues. The teacher functions as a factory supervisor. The "laboratory" considers each student as unique, but the school as a cooperative and exploratory venture. Individuality, creativity, and cooperation are important issues. The teacher focuses on the learning and growth of the students. Both the factory and the laboratory are thoroughly within the schooling model, but represent wide variations in teaching style.

The schooling model is so thoroughly a product of Western education, including theological education, that, when missionaries established Bible schools for leadership training in receptor countries, the schooling model was adopted almost without question as the right way to train indigenous leadership. A weakness of this model, for Brethren Bible training, is that it implicitly assumes completion of the course will provide automatic entry into church leadership roles. Brethren disavowal of a clergy-laity distinction, creates tensions for the trained Bible school student.[28]

(b) *The extension model.* The extension model emerged in the two-thirds world, in theological education settings, as a result of frustration with the slowness of seminaries to provide adequate numbers of potential

[27] Henry Hoefer, *Teacher as Parent*, Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1976, pp. 59-75.

[28] Considerable effort, during student selection, training, and graduation, is taken to stress that completion does not automatically lead to church "employment". The model tends to contradict this.

leaders, with the skills they needed for Christian ministry for a rapidly-growing church.[29]

By developing courses, based on programmed self-study manuals, and weekly or fortnightly group meetings of students with a tutor, it became possible to provide basic ministry-related knowledge far beyond the location of the central training institution. Theological Education by Extension (TEE),[30] therefore, provided in-service training for a large number of practising leaders, without the academic knowledge and professional qualifications of seminary-trained leaders. In countries, with mushrooming church growth, it complemented this growth, by providing an alternative avenue for leadership training.

The extension model is less formal than the schooling one, offering opportunity to a wider range of clients than the formal application and acceptance procedures of the institutional Bible school or seminary. Extension offers in-service training, in contrast to pre-service training, in the schooling model. It, therefore, overcomes problems in the schooling model that provides large amounts of unapplied knowledge, and somewhat contrived skills training.[31] Extension is able to relate manual-based instruction to concurrent ministry experience, and the attraction of the weekly tutorial to enhance motivation. A weakness is that this ministry experience is not usually monitored in a formal, credit-worthy way.

The extension model changes the focus from the teacher to the manual. The manual replaces the teacher, as the source of information, and moves the process of interaction from interpersonal dialogue to a more

[29] Virgil Gerber, ed., *Discipling Through Theological Education by Extension*, Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1980; C. Rene Padilla, ed., *New Alternatives in Theological Education*, Oxford UK: Regnum Books, 1988.

[30] Theological Education by Extension is increasingly being termed Distance Theological Education (DTE).

[31] For example, preaching classes, as a method of training in preaching, with a captive student audience, is structured to suit the schooling model, and is, therefore, dissimilar to the "live" setting of the Sunday congregation.

literary student-manual one. An advantage is that this process is less extractive. The student is not removed from the daily-life situation of ministry, and, although the study facilities are often less than desirable, and the time allocations have to be built around the pressures of ministry and family, the student learns the disciplines of continuing education, and time allocation, in ordinary life. By contrast, the schooling model is weaker in the transfer of skills from classroom to later life. Strength lies in the cost factors. Accessibility, for relatively low cost, is an asset of the extension model. It is, therefore, appropriate for the two-thirds world. But there are weaknesses. It may deprive the student of some research skills, such as effective use of library resources, because answers are implicit in the manual, and reinforced by it. It is also weaker in developing listening skills.

The learning dynamics are moved from the large classroom, and teacher-student interaction, to the small-group tutorial. The seminary can, of course, also utilise this dynamic, but the extension model is crucially dependent on it. The tutorial not only increases motivation to continue studying, it reinforces the bridging of learning to ministry, and of student to institution. Tutor training is an essential ingredient of the extension model.

A further weakness, perhaps, is that training is necessarily spread out over a long period of time. Unless high value is placed on the ministry aspects of training, completion of academic credit may take a number of years. It is a feature of the extension model, having grown up alongside the "schooling" model, that it regularly has to substantiate its equivalence to seminary training, rather than *vice versa*.

Finally, a major weakness of the extension model is its heavy dependence on literary skills of reading, comprehension, and writing. In some places, like rural Papua New Guinea, where literary skills are much less significant than oral ones, the requirement to learn, by interacting with a written text, may limit successful leadership

training.[32] TEE is not an option for the current less-literate leadership of the CBC churches, although Pidgin TEE opens a window of opportunity for some of these leaders.

(c) *The apprenticeship model.* A third model, which appears to have relevance for CBC church leadership training, is the apprenticeship model. This was the principal method Jesus used. It has been significant, in the history of ministry training, in several different denominations. As a model in theological education, it has often operated at the informal level. An experienced minister, preacher, or Bible teacher "recruits" one or more, generally younger, but certainly less experienced, "students" to mentor and train into ministry.[33]

The apprenticeship model is frequently "whole of life", and may not be for a specified period. The students eat, sleep, pray, and study with their leader. The leader shares his/her life, character, goals, ministry, and disciplines with the trainee, and encourages them to adopt similar roles. More than either of the other models, the apprenticeship model is student- and relationship-oriented. Although some of the learning may take place in class settings, and the content of studies may be book-oriented, this model is essentially mobile, and action-oriented.

[32] Leadership training may be limited in this model by its heavy emphasis on this particular learning method. It may skew it by assuming that church leadership involves mastery of this particular set of skills over other equally important ones in the affective and relational domains.

[33] The Wesleyan-Methodists in America used an apprenticeship model for their early ministerial training. Among the New Zealand Brethren, Peter Lineham, in *There We Found Brethren*, Palmerston North NZ: GPH Society, 1977, pp. 121-124, records the use of Bible carriages (later termed Bible vans), for evangelistic tours into the outback by two men at a time. Where these involved a more-senior man and a less-experienced one, informal apprenticeship training seems to have occurred. Lineham records that a number of these men became overseas missionaries. Commencing in the late 1970s, Mr Malcolm Barrow engaged in formal mentoring of some NZ Assembly Bible School male graduates, sharing his home with them, and mentoring them into ministry.

Learning takes place in any location, at any time, and as the "teachable moment" arises. Flexibility is one of its strengths.[34]

This model focuses on character formation, and skills development. It is student-centred. Book-oriented learning may need to be consciously built into the process, if academic credit is to be achieved by this method.[35] On the other hand, this method is strong on empowerment for ministry. As a follow-on from pre-service training, or built around an internship-style process, this model comes into its own.

There are dangers and weaknesses in the apprenticeship model, too. The teacher, if unaware of his or her weaknesses, may well pass them on to students. Dangerous emotional dependencies, and interpersonal rivalries may develop, thereby affecting intrachurch politics. There are cross-cultural issues, as well, for missionaries to be aware of, when engaging in this approach. It may be more effective, when mentor and "apprentice" are both from a similar culture, but this should not be interpreted to mean that it is inappropriate cross-culturally.

Historically, all three methods have been employed in Bible training within the CBC. While the bulk of training has employed the schooling model, there has been a significant upsurge in the extension model in recent years, using graduates of CLTC, and the services of CLTC's DTE.[36] The apprenticeship model has featured informally in the ministries of a number of missionaries, who have seen the leadership potential of individual Papua New Guinean Christians, for example, a group of elders in an urban or rural Christian centre

[34] Jesus seems to have employed the apprenticeship model as His primary method of training. For missionaries, committed to modelling their practice on the New Testament as far as possible, CBC missionaries should find this method, or a modification of it, very attractive.

[35] Academic credit is valuable in cases where comparability of learning outcomes is required for cross-credit purposes.

[36] Distance Theological Education. See Jenny Fountain, *To Teach Others Also* (MS), pp. 191-192.

location, or of the staff of a Bible school. Such missionaries have had regular and intensive contact with these key Papua New Guineans, and have built into their lives the confidence that they can lead, teach, or serve God as well as, or better than, the missionary himself or herself. The inspiration and motivation, thus engendered, has continued on in the ministry of such people, long after the missionary has left.

(d) *A multi-model approach.* The discussion, thus far, has contrasted three "models", to highlight their strengths and weaknesses. In practice, these models can be combined, to offset weaknesses that have been noted.

Thought needs to be given as to how the CBC can draw on the strengths of all three models. Each can be integrated into theological training, for the Brethren, but this requires careful study of each model, the range of potential leaders, and the structures already in place. For example, Bible schools, as they exist now, are useful for young people, who have been through the national school system. But there are others, who have not attended schools, or whose literacy skills have slipped since they left. The potential of these leaders can be harnessed by combining all three methods. Key ministries, and specific skills, can be developed by internships, apprenticeships, short courses, and personal mentoring. TEE courses could be available to Bible school teachers, to facilitate lesson preparation. Mentoring will involve other church leaders cooperating with Bible schools.

Having looked at the impact of a global, denominational tradition, and global models of theological education, we now describe more-specific theories of the learning process that are also offered as applicable to all human learning, and, therefore, global in nature.

3. Global Theories of the Learning Process

Some theoretical frameworks for the learning process are implicitly global, attempting to explain the learning process by universal and theoretical categories. A number of these emerge from largely scientific and secular approaches to education. Lynn Gannett distinguishes three major groups of

theories – *behaviourism*, with Ivan Pavlov, John B. Watson, E. L. Thorndike, and B. F. Skinner, as its main theorists; *cognitive learning*, using a developmental model, as promoted by Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg; and *scientific humanism*, with John Dewey, Abraham Maslow, and Carl Rogers adding major contributions to this theoretical base.[37]

(a) *A Christian philosophy of education.* Although some would argue otherwise, a biblical approach to educational methodology should not over-react against appropriate methods, even if they have been developed by secularists. The Christian perspective should acknowledge that all creation is under the dominion of a loving and caring God. He rules over the whole world, whether human beings acknowledge this rule or not. Such a Christian viewpoint denies a sacred-secular division that restricts teaching and learning methods to a limited number of environments or techniques.

For example, Christians may agree with Skinner that external stimuli do promote learning in human beings, and trigger behavioural change. What they deny is that this is the only, or even the principal, form of learning motivation. And further, they understand that a learning process, resulting from external stimuli, may still be ordained by this benevolent God, who Himself became human in Jesus Christ, and "learned obedience by what He suffered".[38]

Secular theories prove inadequate, and lop-sided, from the perspective of the theological and Christian educator, who poses the question, "Is there a distinctively Christian philosophy of education?"[39] Brian Hill, a leading theorist on Christian education, distinguishes *secularism* from *secularisation.* In secularism, "man is made the measure of all

[37] Lynn Gannett, "Teaching for Learning", in *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future*, Clark, Johnson, and Sloat, eds, pp. 108-113. Compare Kenneth O. Gangel and Warren S. Benson, *Christian Education: Its History and Philosophy*, Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1983.

[38] Heb 5:8 (NRSV).

[39] Gannett, "Teaching for Learning", pp. 113f.

things . . . a life-stance . . . hostile to traditional religion".[40] Secularisation, he explains, is "a social process, which has been accelerating since at least the rise of science in the 17th century".[41] Hill further states that "secularisation does not involve the creation of an alternative anti-religious canopy, but the removal of all such canopies from public institutions".[42] He welcomes secularisation, not as the privatisation of religion, but as "arguably, a better environment, in which to evangelise, on behalf of the gospel of Christ, than one, in which compulsion of one sort or another . . . pushes people into apparent conformity with a Christian life-stance".[43] Hill admits there is both a bright and a dark side to secularisation. It can be both a threat and an opportunity for Christians.

Hill faults the term "Christian education" as a misnomer, when applied to either a particular form of religious education, or an aspect of the church's specific teaching ministry. He is, therefore, at odds with American usage, as exemplified in Clark, Johnson, and Sloat's *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future*. Instead, he develops a framework for the teaching ministry of the church, involving two principal elements. These are *teaching for commitment,* highlighting the primary objective of the church's teaching ministry,[44] and, *the curriculum process.*[45] In the latter, Hill takes the concepts of

[40] Brian V. Hill, *The Greening of Christian Education*, Homebush West NSW: Lancer Books, 1985, p. 61.

[41] Ibid., p. 61.

[42] Ibid., p. 62.

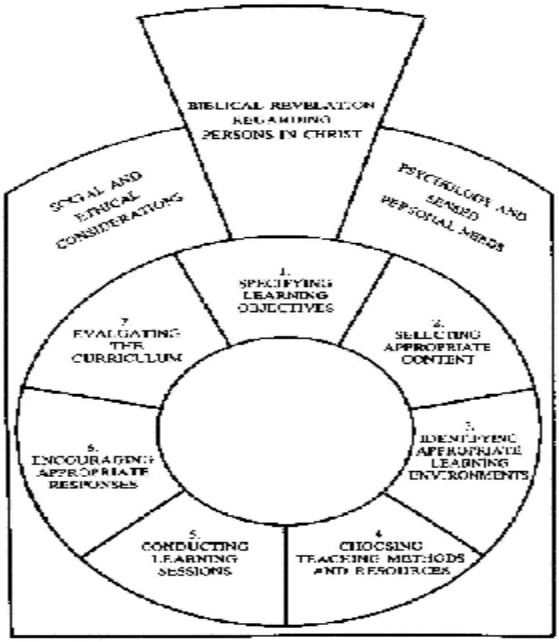
[43] Ibid., p. 62.

[44] For Hill, "teaching for commitment" includes both teaching, aimed at helping people change commitment from a self-centred lifestyle to a Christ-centred lifestyle (evangelism), and teaching to continue and strengthen that commitment (nurture). Both tasks, if they can be justifiably separated, are undertaken by communities of committed believers (i.e., churches) and are part of Christian education. Hill, *The Greening*, pp. 85-92.

[45] By using the term "the curriculum process", Hill appears to imply both the process of curriculum *implementation*, in terms of the teaching-learning process, and curriculum *modification* and *development*, as the teaching-learning process, reflects on the adequacy of the curriculum being implemented.

planning, presenting, and *evaluating*, to outline a manageable seven-step continuous procedure, summarised in Figure 1.[46]

Figure 1: Hill's Curriculum Model for Teaching in the Church[47]



The model offers a global approach, which accommodates three important contextual factors – the local cultural and social context ("social and ethical considerations"), the specifically Christian and ecclesiastical ideological commitments of the schools ("biblical revelation regarding persons in Christ"), and the matrix of factors involved in corporate life, and individual personal maturity and goals ("psychology and sensed personal needs"). It does not isolate Christian or theological education from using the range of techniques and methods, developed in other situations, including so-called "secular" ones, but brings them under the scrutiny of a broadly Christian perspective.

[46] Hill, *The Greening*, p. 100.

[47] Ibid., p. 100. (Used with permission.)

The importance of this, or a similar, model for Bible schools is great. By adopting its procedure, on-going evaluation of the educational process can take place, and prevent the repetition of ineffective strategies.

However, implementation of an educational methodology, like Hill's, needs to be complemented in at least two ways, to make it applicable to the CBC Bible school context. Firstly, Malcolm Knowles identifies methods appropriate to *adult* education. Secondly, James E. Plueddemann's contrast between "high-context" and "low-context" learning orientations has implications for cross-cultural and non-Western educational settings.

(b) *Andragogy:* Malcolm Knowles distinguished "andragogy", the teaching of adults, from "pedagogy", the teaching of children, setting out some distinctive features of adult education.[48] Four assumptions in Knowles' thought about how adults learn have been summarised by Perry Downs.[49]

1. Their "self-concept changes from being a dependent person to be more *self-directed*". Adults, therefore, come with a consciousness of their own learning agenda. They desire to participate in curriculum formation, and they require less direction in the learning process.

2. "[A]dults are accumulating a growing *reservoir of experiences* and insights that serve as a rich resource for learning." They have, therefore, more to contribute in group participation, and they personally process new learning in light of that experience.

[48] Malcolm S. Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy*, revd edn, Chicago IL: Follett Publishing, 1980.

[49] Perry G. Downs, "Adults: An Introduction", in *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future*, Robert E. Clark, Lin Johnson, and Allyn K. Sloat, eds, Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1991, pp. 263-273.

3. "[A]n adult's desire to learn will be oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of *social roles."* They tend to know why they are learning, and desire to apply it to the challenges of life, at the stage at which they are. Social roles bring changing tasks, and these, in turn, "serve to set the learning agenda for adults".

4. "[A]n adult's perspective on the use of knowledge changes from postponed application to *immediate application*." They want to know how, what they are learning, will enable them to resolve their problems. Functional usefulness is important.[50]

The way adults learn has important implications for theological education. Unfortunately, some Bible teachers neglect these differences, perhaps more in cross-cultural settings, where there is an in-built difficulty in communication. In addition, evangelicals are perhaps more focused on imparting knowledge of scripture than effective adult learning.

A transmission orientation fails to harness the experience of adult learners that, in turn, enhances their learning. It risks misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the content, being imparted, because it fails to develop an interactive style that promotes dialogue, feedback, and group reinforcement. Interactive discussion assists the teacher and the learner alike to identify misconceptions and hidden agendas.

(c) *Learning in cross-cultural contexts.* Following ideas developed by Edward T. Hall,[51] James Plueddemann categorised people and cultures into "high-context" and "low-context" orientations.[52] In doing so,

[50] Downs, "Adults: An Introduction", p. 267.

[51] Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture*, Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1977.

[52] James E. Plueddemann, "World Christian Education", in *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future*, Robert E. Clark, Lin Johnson, and Allyn K. Sloat, eds, Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1991, pp. 355ff.

Plueddemann built on his studies about the effects of schooling on thinking in Nigeria, and comparing those learning processes of African and American college students. He pointed out that, while there are "important similarities within all cultures, there are also important differences within each culture."[53] He noted that people, with several years of schooling, think in similar ways, while people within one culture differ in thinking patterns, depending on whether they had formal schooling or not.[54]

" 'High-context' people", as Plueddemann identifies them, "pay special attention to the concrete world around them". Both the physical and interpersonal environments communicate "subtle, but significant", messages for them. Such people tend to be more "person-oriented", and are sensitive to the feelings of others. "Low-context" people, however, "pay special attention to words, ideas, and abstract concepts".[55] Their orientation is more towards *what* people are saying than *who* said it.

Plueddemann is careful to explain that such differences are not only between cultures, but are also contrasts between individual orientations. This suggests that culture is not the only, or even the primary, factor in determining learning styles. He hypothesises that such factors as rural or urban living, industrial/business, or agricultural/subsistence, lifestyles, and the amount of schooling, may determine their orientation. He also offers the important insight that no person is totally low-context or high-context, but each person falls "along a continuum between very high-context and very low-context orientations".[56]

Plueddemann's analysis seems to play down the process of acculturation, involved in formal schooling, and in urbanisation and

[53] Plueddemann, "World Christian Education", p. 354.

[54] A globalising impact of formal education (reflecting the influence of the skills of literacy) may be implicit in Plueddemann's study here.

[55] Plueddemann, "World Christian Education", p. 355.

[56] Ibid., p. 357.

industrialisation, in the wider society. The introduction of formal education, alongside processes of modernisation, dramatically affects traditional cultures, providing an overlay[57] of a global, Western culture. The problem for theological education, and its teaching methods, is how to develop a balance between a contextual traditional culture and a modern one. Plueddemann's high-context/low-context dichotomy may yet prove to be a Western/non-Western division under a global guise. The changing Melanesian context presents the CBC Bible school teacher with a significant challenge to discern what balance to draw between high-context (i.e., the indigenous, local culture) and low-context (global) methodologies.

A significant insight of Plueddemann's, for our purposes, is a comparison of learning environments.

> Academic schedules are rather abstract concepts, divorced from the unfolding present situation. Training schools that emphasise course schedules, tight syllabi, and the amount of time to be spent on each subject, would tend toward the low-context end of the continuum. Teachers that emphasise authority and relationship building, without particular attention to schedule or agenda, would tend toward the high-context end of the continuum.[58]

Plueddemann made an extensive comparison between high-context and low-context teaching and learning styles in diagram form.[59] His generalised summary oversimplifies a number of issues, but his discussion highlights many of the tensions involved in cross-cultural ministry, and is especially relevant to Bible schools, like the ones we are examining. He offers some valuable suggestions for assisting

[57] "Overlay" may be too simplistic a word for what is a complex process of adjustment, but the urban immigrant quickly learns to move between the two culture worlds of town and rural areas, gradually becoming more adjusted to act appropriately in the former.

[58] Plueddemann, "World Christian Education", p. 357.

[59] Ibid., pp. 358-360.

learning, in both high-, low- and mixed-context environments. These become relevant, when we look at contextual factors.

B. CONTEXTUAL ASPECTS OF LEARNING

How far should Bible schools accommodate local cultural expectations and patterns of learning? Can the CBC Bible schools operate successfully on a Western model, using Western approaches, and imported teaching methods? Given that Melanesia has developed a "schooling" model of formal education, should CBC Bible schools accommodate to this? Or are there more appropriate approaches to theological education in Melanesia?

We will focus on two issues: the impact of the orality-literality[60] spectrum on CBC approaches to Bible training, and the lessons from traditional Melanesian teaching-learning styles.

1. Orality and Literality in Melanesian Learning

In a previous paper, we emphasised some aspects of the contrast between oral and literate cultures.[61] We also described the cultural change that was involved in the strong missionary emphasis on learning to read, so that indigenous church members, and their leaders, could read the Bible for themselves.[62] The impact of literacy, and formal education, has been considerable. Younger adults and school-age children became literate more easily, and, with readier access to the Bible, they tended to threaten traditional leadership.[63] Kevin Hovey's experimental approach to training

[60] "Literality" seems a more satisfactory term than "literacy", in contrast to "orality". Literacy relates to the mechanics of reading, rather than the wider range of worldview impacts we refer to here.

[61] Ossie Fountain, "Evaluating Theological Education in an Oral Culture", post-graduate seminar paper, M.Th, Auckland NZ: BCNZ, 1998.

[62] Ibid., pp. 8, 9. See also Jenny Fountain, "Literacy and Establishing Churches in Melanesia".

[63] The fact that women became better readers than many men did, at least among the Huli, allowed women to set up quite strong alternative Bible study and welfare groups. This also sometimes threatened traditional male leadership.

non-literate church leaders is an example of the contrasting methods required in such societies, compared with literate ones.[64]

The orality-literality spectrum suggests that differences in learning styles must be met by appropriate teaching styles. In addition, Bible school students in Melanesia must be able to learn skills, at both ends of the spectrum. They need competencies, related to the literate heritage of Christianity, such as the ability to understand and interpret biblical literature, as well as church history. They must also be effective in tasks related to ministry in the modern world, insofar as their ministry is among those who have been acculturated into that world. But they must equally participate, communicate, and minister effectively in the oral culture of the large majority of the Melanesian population.[65]

With growing diversity in literacy levels in PNG, compounded by diversities, resulting from formal education, urbanisation, and globalising influences, generally, Bible schools will need to become much more sensitive to appropriate educational methods for their respective students. This is a major contextualising task.

2. Melanesian Teaching/Learning Styles

Much of Melanesian learning, in pre-European times, took place informally, and in a parental-apprenticeship model. The following examples of this illustrate three categories of learning, with associated contexts.

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[64] Hovey, *Before All Else Fails*, pp. 209-225.

[65] Robert Schreiter makes a perceptive comment on the contrast between oral and literate cultures, when he states, "A heavy use of conceptuality presumes a literate culture, where the analytic paring of metaphors and symbols can be matched with a storage system (written texts) that allows for this clear, though (from an oral perspective) slightly impoverished, way of thinking. Oral modes of knowledge are not inferior to literate ones, but they are different. Oral modes are often more redolent of meaning, and more commendable to memory. Literate modes emphasise clarity and focus. Abstract nouns are the stock-in-trade of literate cultures and of academic theology." "Contextualisation from a World Perspective", in *Theological Education, 1993: Globalisation: Tracing the Journey, Charting the Course* 30, Supplement 1 (Autumn 1993), p. 64.

(a) *Informal learning in daily living.* Much of the action for the social roles of daily living is learned by children, informally. They accompany their parents, from a young age, throughout the day, and observe, then copy, both in play, and then, more seriously, the tasks of their same-gender parents. Girls, in particular, are informally taught such skills as planting, fishing, cooking, caring for the pigs, and making clothes. Boys may accompany their fathers in hunting or fishing, when they are deemed old enough. Thus, the skills of daily living are learned in the informal, parental apprenticeship pattern of the extended family. For this, explanation is minimal; performing the task, repeatedly, is essential.[66]

Personal and group identities are established, and group mores are reinforced by the telling and retelling of stories, histories, and memories. Here, the older people (and ritual specialists) serve as the guardians and transmitters of corporate culture. Morality is reinforced by dialogue and consensus.

Life crises are handled, as they arise. When a person in the village dies, the cause must be investigated, and the appropriate steps taken. Speeches are made at village meetings, and possible causes will be debated. The younger people listen, sometimes with trepidation, in case they have broken some taboo, and may be accused of offending some spirit. When an offence is identified, an appropriate punishment, compensation, or ritual of appeasement may be agreed upon.

(b) *Initiation: focused preparation for adulthood.* Two particular "rites of passage" are of interest. The first is the process of initiation. Though initiation of girls was common in the past, it

[66] Margaret Mead, *Growing up in New Guinea: A Study of Adolescence and Sex in Primitive Societies*, Harmondsworth UK: Penguin Books, 1942; see also Margaret Mead, *New Lives for Old: Cultural Transformation in Manus, 1928-1953*, New York NY: William Morrow, 1966. Although Mead's overall thesis has been extensively criticised, her observations of social behaviour seem accurate in this regard.

often involved a much more individual series of rituals, since it frequently focused on the girl's first menstruation. For boys, the age-range of initiation was much more flexible, and less related to puberty. It was a more-corporate event. Among the Huli, it sometimes extended to two years of, more or less, continuous exclusion from village and family life, especially segregation from women. An elaborate series of rituals were undergone to test manliness, perseverance, prowess, and to provide protection from magic, especially those associated with women, intercourse, and childbirth. Initiates lived with, and were taught by, male cult specialist bachelors, who also instructed the boys in tribal lore, morality, and male cult secrets. Knowledge of this kind was kept special and secret. Knowledge is power; its power is jeopardised by publication.[67]

Initiation served a number of valuable educational functions. At least one, with implications for CBC Bible school training, is that entry into another phase of life, or greater responsibility, involves learning, discipline, and experience.

(c) *Land-rights transfer*. Another important "rite of passage" occurred, for young men, as they grew up. Triggered perhaps by a father's increasing age, sickness, or frailty, a Huli father would take his eldest son for one or more walks through the land, occupied by him and his ancestors. He would point out the landmarks, the planted trees, and boundary markers, and use the opportunity to relate the history of land occupation,

[67] Initiation virtually disappeared in the colonial period, under at least four influences – the demands of government officers for additional labour on roads, airstrips, and government buildings; the requirements of coastal plantations for labour; the missionary influence, especially when involvement raised conflicts with attendance at church services, and accommodation between the Christian gospel and the spirit world; and the opportunity for formal education. However, although a two-year labour contract on coastal plantations for Sepik men in earlier years was, in practice, a "rite of passage" to marriageable status, none of these alternatives, nor the rite of Christian baptism/confirmation, took the place of the multi-functional initiation. The interest in several parts of PNG in reviving initiation tends to reinforce the point.

distribution, and dispute. In the process, the heir was made aware of his responsibility to carry the knowledge of clan history that accompanied the right to occupy the land.

This individual event was also reinforced by the frequent land disputes and compensation demands. Such disputes are public affairs. Younger male members listen to their seniors, as they dispute the claims of others, and establish their rival histories.[68]

It is thus significant, for this article, that, whereas initiation ceremonies reinforce an extraction model for special learning, this is balanced by significant learning also taking place in land-rights transfer, where the memory is triggered, and repeatedly reinforced, by the natural phenomena of the land.

3. Contextual Factors in CBC Bible School Methodology

What can CBC Bible schools learn from contextual factors in the teaching-learning process? There is not space for a comprehensive statement, but some important issues are worth noting.

(a) High value is placed on the apprenticeship model, rather than the schooling model. Apprenticeship is focused on passing on life-skills. Basic Christian disciplines, and even more so, specialised ministries, should be communicated by demonstration and modelling, rather than, exclusively, in classroom theory.

(b) Knowledge is power. Creating an atmosphere of heightened awareness, with attention to memorability, memorising key Bible passages, names and events, and their significance, and communicating a sense of achievement are important. Leaders know more than their followers do. For evangelism, one could argue that the Good News of salvation needs to be treated as

[68] Laurence Goldman has done the Huli a valuable service by making an extensive study of dispute procedures, and other forms of communication. Laurence Goldman, *Talk Never Dies: The Language of Huli Disputes*, London UK: Tavistock, 1983.

truly good news. Perhaps it should be shared in an impressively "sacred" atmosphere. In this regard, retreats and one-to-one, or small-group studies, may be more significant than "open-air" evangelism.

(c) If attending Bible school is, in any sense, an initiation into leadership or ministry roles, then attention to the principles behind initiation need to be considered.

(d) Significant learning should take place outside the classroom. The range of possible settings for learning should be increased. The garden, village, daily life, and travelling, all create teaching events that can be captured for significant teaching moments.

(e) More attention needs to be given to mentoring and internship possibilities than have been used in the past, in CBC Bible schools.

(f) Corporate and cooperative learning, and methods appropriate to fostering this, are to be encouraged, rather than the more competitive and individualistic approaches, common in the West.

(g) Some important aspects of Christian theology, attitudes, relationships, and skills are best learned in Melanesia, it would seem, by a combination of extraction and situational learning.

C. BIBLICALLY-BASED EDUCATIONAL METHODS

We have observed that a distinctive insight in Brethren theology is the conviction that all of life is to be based on the Bible, including ecclesiology. We build on this conviction, by asking whether there is a distinctively biblical basis for educational methodology. In particular, was Jesus a model teacher? Global and contextual approaches produce contrasting deductions in answering this question.

A global approach was taken by Warren Benson.[69] In discussing Christ as the master teacher, he explained a number of ways, in which Christian educators could discover both principles and specific strategies of teaching, from the teaching ministry of Jesus.[70] But, in developing his theme, Benson is forced to concede that there are ways in which Jesus' teaching ministry is not a model. For one thing, as the second person of the Trinity, He was unique. Then, Benson claims that Jesus is "the quintessential teacher. Being God in human flesh He had no weakness as a pedagogue."[71] However, Benson finds it difficult to distinguish Jesus, as a teacher, from Jesus, as a discipler. Modern definitions of the teaching task do not match those implied in the ministry of Jesus. Jesus used a discipling model of teaching, inappropriate for the context Benson has in mind. To that extent, Jesus is not a globally-valid model of teaching. It seems open to serious question whether more than illustrated principles can be drawn from the teaching ministry of Jesus, by such a global approach.

An alternative would be to view Jesus' teaching ministry from a contextual perspective. This viewpoint argues that Jesus was a highly-contextual teacher.[72] He passed through all the phases of growth to maturity. He spoke His native tongue with a Galilean accent; experienced the range of human emotions, and the gamut of human appetites, and social relationships. But, as a communicator of truth from God, He adopted the role of an itinerant teacher, using the discipling model. He called disciples, and patiently taught them, suffering their ignorance, misconceptions, and desertion, as well as rejoicing in, and affirming, their successes. His methodology was so

[69] Warren S. Benson, "Christ the Master Teacher", in *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future*, Robert E. Clark, Lin Johnson, and Allyn K. Sloat, eds, Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1991, pp. 87-104.

[70] Benson lists, from a PhD dissertation by Charles H. Nichols, five visual methods, 12 verbal methods, and six "methods with students", in the ministry of Jesus. "Christ the Master Teacher", pp. 100-101.

[71] Benson, "Christ the Master Teacher", p. 89.

[72] A strong basis for a contextual understanding of Jesus' ministry derives from an adequate understanding of the incarnation, drawn from the whole New Testament corpus, but see especially John 1:14; Phil 2:6-8; Heb 4:15; 5:7f; 1 John 1:1f.

contextual as to be unremarkable,[73] even though the content of His words and actions were provocative and impressive.

Jesus' teaching style was occasional, invitational, aphoristic, and dialogical. If His longer speeches, as recorded in the gospels, have not undergone editorial conflation, even in these, He was memorable, and yet flexible, as to topical content.

His mobility led to a simple, dependent lifestyle. He often sat to teach in typical "rabbi" fashion. His accompanying healing and exorcist ministry was unobtrusive, subject-focused, pastoral, and sensitive. His healing and teaching were mutually supportive, and His concern holistic.

However, He was not so contextual as to be insipid. Far from it, His approach retained His confrontational challenge to His disciples and others, at many significant points, so that they asked questions about His being and purpose. Their reactions ranged from attraction to incredulity, alarm, and even amazement. His actions and words frequently broke through the cultural horizons, derived from traditional interpretations of scripture, and through cultural norms, when His disciples needed to develop new vision.

The balance Jesus retained, both as teacher and guide of committed disciples, between contextual conformity, and breaking of traditional norms, emerged from a continual dialogue with His Father, in prayerful dependence (e.g., John 5:30, 36-38), and identification, and interaction with the corpus of revealed scripture (e.g., John 5:39-47).

We can conclude, then, that, if Jesus was so contextual in His teaching style as to be profoundly challenging in His message and purpose, although not in His methodology, His message bearers must also conform to the demands of communicating His message, by a similar contextuality in their teaching methods. The purpose of this contextuality, however, is to increase the impact of the message they are called to communicate. For Bible school

[73] But see Matt 7:28, 29. When people were amazed, it was the content of His teaching, not His method, that amazed them.

teachers to emulate Jesus' teaching methodology, a high level of sensitivity to the Melanesian context is demanded.

CONCLUSION

Successful educational methodology in CBC Bible schools will involve a balance between both global and contextual factors. Our search for global influences has alerted us to their combined impact coming from the West. Although some Western assumptions are counter-productive to good teaching and learning in the Melanesian context, some influences are desirable, and to be embraced. These include insights coming from an evangelical theology, from denominational history and identity, sensitivity to high- and low-context methods, and alertness to the significant potential in adult learners.

We have also been alerted to the need to sift global assumptions through the sieve of Melanesian cultural perspectives, *and* a thoroughly-Christian educational philosophy. Although traditional teaching and learning processes have some relevance, Papua New Guinea is undergoing rapid acculturation, and increasing diversity of needs. Educational styles, suited to urban situations, may be very different from those that work in rural contexts. Contextuality emphasises diversity. Urbanised contexts, while comparatively more impacted by global forces, will combine these in unique Melanesian ways, requiring sensitivity to appropriate methods there as well.[74]

This study raises the crucial importance of discernment in Bible school educational methodology. A graduate, who merely mimics his teachers, whether expatriate or national, will not be effective in motivating and broadening the experience of his or her students. Bible school teacher-training to an adequate level is an urgent need.

Broadly, global methodologies seem to have been inadequately adapted to the Melanesian environment. There is a need to redress this imbalance.

[74] Because this series of articles has focused on rural Melanesian Bible schools, educational methods, required for urban contexts, have not been treated in depth.

GRASS ROOTS IN PARADISE: CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY FOR PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Philip Gibbs

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Given the opportunity to listen to preaching in Christian churches in Papua New Guinea (PNG), I often ask: How is the preacher sharing an experience of faith that people in the congregation can identify with? Could this sermon have been delivered equally well in Sydney or Chicago, or is it addressing the specific PNG context? Admittedly, a good sermon can have universal appeal, but if it could be delivered in a modern Western context, with little or no change, then, most likely, it is strong on universal themes, and weak on points for a relevant living theology for PNG. The Sunday sermon is a privileged chance to reflect on people's life experience in the light of the Word. Yet, so often, it is a missed opportunity. There are many in PNG who have studied theology, but not many who are good at doing contextual theology.

Sr Keiti Ann Kanongata'a, referring to the Pacific context, says that when the word of God starts, not from the pulpit, but, rather, from the common streets, over-populated villages, noisy market places, and the like, "then there is hope of us making a connection between heaven and earth. The word preached at the pulpit will then be expounded with the same authority, power, dynamic, and compassion that Jesus had, and made

effective, when He in His time and culture communicated the reign of God."[1]

In PNG, the bird of paradise dwells high in the forests, and flies proudly in the sky as an emblem on the national flag. Yet, for the general populace, at the "grass roots", the search for security, the effort to find school fees, the strain of meeting community obligations, and the like, seem far removed from any form of "paradise". Can the gospel bring hope as a gift (grace) that inspires and motivates people in their struggle for life in the face of death-dealing forces? Recently, I went to view a bird of paradise, known to be held at the Botanical Gardens in Port Moresby. On enquiry, I was informed that thieves had stolen the *Raggiana* bird of paradise! Is this not symbolic of the PNG experience? How can Christian faith restore lost dignity?

Helping to establish a connection between daily life and the divine – grass roots' realities and paradise – is the task of contextual theology. This paper aims to show the importance of a contextual theology for PNG, and to provide practical suggestions for how to go about it.

CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY

Contextual theology takes into account two things: "the faith experience of the past that is recorded in scriptures and kept alive, preserved, defended – and perhaps even neglected or suppressed – in tradition", and "the experience of the present, the context".[2] The context includes experiences that allow people to experience, or prevent people from experiencing, God in their lives (wonderment, tragedy), cultural realities, social location (male or female, rich or poor, etc.), and social change. Theological reflection, today, needs to take all these factors into account, in order to arrive at a genuine, relevant interpretation of the Good News.

[1] Keiti Ann Kanongata'a, "Why Contextual?", in *The Pacific Journal of Theology* Series II, 27 (2002), pp. 27-28.

[2] Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, revd edn, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2002, p. 5.

The opportunity, offered by contextual theology, is found in its taking culture, history, and human thought forms, along with scripture and tradition, as valid sources for theological reflection. By contrast, there have been efforts, through the ages, to consider scripture as the Word of God, in such a direct sense that it does not require interpretation in its original context. Others have claimed a universal or supratemporal theology (*theologia perennis*). However, the four different gospels are witnesses of the contextual nature of the Word, and all theology is somehow contextual, for there is no text without a context. Claims to universalism often merely conceal that theology's gender, class, denominational, or cultural bias. Yet, some fear that, if one admits a link between truth and history, then there is danger of falling into relativism, in which there are only interpretations of interpretations. The risk of relativism exists, but it should not deter us from facing issues of culture, change, and human thought.

Neil Darragh points out the importance of understanding how the various "sources" of theological reflection interact.[3] For example, in what sense is scripture normative for Christian theology, and how can scripture engage with local culture? A literalist approach to scripture will be more critical of those aspects of culture that appear to conflict with scriptural texts. On the other hand, is it right to pay less attention to issues of globalisation and economic liberalism, because they do not seem to have scriptural equivalents? When it comes to traditional creeds, how is the cultural gap that exists between 4th-century Hellenism and contemporary Melanesian culture to be addressed? Moreover, must theology take the form of lines of words on paper, or can it be expressed in dance, song, or carving? Even if taken in literary form, does it necessarily have to follow scientific method, or can it also be presented in the form of stories or personal witness? The basic issue lies in the way theological reflection engages with present-day PNG experience.

[3] Neil Darragh, "Contextual Method in Theology: Learning from the Case of Aotearoa, New Zealand", in *Pacifica* 16 (2003), p. 49.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In the past 30 years, there have been attempts, in various parts of the world, to include experience in theological reflection. In Latin America, attention to the social and political struggle from dependence and poverty resulted in a form of theology, in which "liberation" became the fundamental hermeneutical key for understanding the Christian message. In the different context of Asia, religious pluralism remains a constant challenge to a contextual theology. In Africa, theologies have developed that focus on ethnic and cultural dimensions of life on that continent.

Closer to home, in the Pacific, there has been renewed attention to developing a genuine Pacific contextual theology. In 2001, the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools (SPATS) organised a conference in Fiji, at which basic questions on contextual theology were addressed. Ilaitia Sevati Tuwere, responding to the question, "What is contextual theology?", noted the importance of a relevant living theology that would "grow in the native soil".[4] Benefiting from the insights of Tongan writer, Epeli Hauofa, he noted how Oceania is not simply made up of little insignificant islands, but is, in fact, a "sea of islands", in which people are learning to work out their own destiny, and to be subjects of their own history. This will involve interpreting the gospel, and the Christian tradition, in relation to the needs of Oceania. In responding to the question, "Why contextual?", Sr Keiti Ann noted how, through the colonial experience, some people in Oceania have been "raped of their cultural honour", so that now there is need for a theology that "will uplift us from our powerlessness to our God-given dignity".[5] Moreover, some nations in Oceania need a theology, which will question social structures that concentrate power in a few on top of a pyramid, giving birth to various forms of oppression, division, discrimination, corruption, and violence.[6] Too often, theology has been used by those in power in the dominant culture to legitimise their vested interests. A truly contextual theology,

[4] Ilaitia S. Tuwere, "What is Contextual Theology: A View from Oceania", in *The Pacific Journal of Theology* Series II, 27 (2002), p. 8.

[5] Kanongata'a , "Why Contextual?", p. 25.

[6] Ibid., p. 22.

which listens to common people, would critically penetrate the foundations of unjust social structures.

In November 2001, Pope John Paul II sent a post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation (*Ecclesia in Oceania*) to the Catholic church in Oceania. One might ask to what degree the document reflects a contextual theology for Oceania? What ways does the document speak to the churches in Oceania about how to walk the way of Jesus, tell His truth and live His life? There are pearls to be found in the document, if one digs deeply enough.[7] However, the frequent references to the Oceanic context in the document do not necessarily make it good contextual reflection. The document's lukewarm reception in Oceania indicates that it may have been fulfilling the need of Roman authorities to produce a document more than the need for the church in Oceania to hear a relevant and inspirational message.

CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY FOR PAPUA NEW GUINEA

It has been noted already that all theology is contextual. Thus, theology, written in PNG, is contextual, but whether it is legitimate, relevant, and well done is another matter. Journals, such as the *Melanesian Journal of Theology*, *Catalyst*, and *Point* are published regularly. *Point* 8, *Living Theology in Melanesia: A Reader*, was a good effort for its time, but what developments have there been in the two decades since that publication? Many articles in the above-mentioned publications make good attempts at entering into a faith-culture dialogue, including those by Caspar ToVaninara, Dick Avi, Br Silas, Arnold Orowae, and Simeon Namunu.[8] Contributions by Bruno Junalien and Bill Kuglame engage present-day

[7] Philip Gibbs, "Pearls in the Deep: Enculturation and *Ecclesia in Oceania*", in *Sedos Bulletin* 36-1/2 (2004), pp. 32-40.

[8] Caspar ToVaninara, "Melanesian Stepping Stones for the Preaching of the Kingdom", in *Living Theology in Melanesia: A Reader, Point* 8, John D'Arcy May, ed., (1985), pp. 132-171; Dick Avi, "Contextualisation in Melanesia", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 4-1 (1988), pp. 7-22; Br Silas, "Solving the Problem of the Pigs", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 8-1 (1992), pp. 59-64; Arnold Orowae, "Interpretation of a Myth in the Christian Context", in *Catalyst* 23-2 (1993), pp. 8-32; Simeon Namunu "Christian Worship and Melanesian Vision of the Cosmos", in *Catalyst* 26-2 (1996), pp. 79-95.

experience in a form that is closer to contextual theology.[9] Solomon Islander, Henry Paroi, touches on the contextual theme of "decolonising" theology in a Melanesian context, starting with a renewed theological appreciation of land.[10]

A good contextual theology for Papua New Guinea would normally meet the following criteria.[11]

1. The method is inductive, starting with issues in the contemporary Papua New Guinea context, and the implications for people in that context.
2. Those doing theological reflection are firstly the people of God in communities. Trained theologians can help systematise the ideas raised in the community.
3. The principal locus or source for theological reflection is life experience. The life experience of the marginalised and dependent at the "bottom" of society ("grass roots") is an important viewpoint for some forms of contextual theology.
4. The explicit theological dimension emerges in addressing issues from the perspective of Christian faith, including the faith witness found in the Bible and church teaching.
5. It is not an exercise in theory, oriented merely to understanding, but involves a faith commitment leading to transformation.

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[9] Bruno Junalien, "The Emergence of Class Structure in Papua New Guinea", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 12-2 (1996), pp. 41-52; Bill Kuglame, "Election: Profanation of the Human Power of Choice", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 12-2 (1996), pp. 53-61.

[10] Henry Paroi, "Decolonising Theology: Doing Theology in Melanesian Context", in *Catalyst* 31-1 (2001), pp. 19-38.

[11] Some of these points are found in Joseph Estermann, "Like a Rainbow or a Bunch of Flowers: Contextual theologies in a globalised world", in *Pacific Journal of Theology*, Series II, 30 (2003), p. 12.

Contextual theology, as outlined above, may be complemented by "enculturation", though the latter tends to focus more on traditional culture, and issues of cultural identity, than contemporary life experience. We might learn from the words of African theologian, Jean-Marc Ela, "How is it possible to study the people's culture without becoming uneasy about the marginalisation of those masses, whose folkways have become the object of anthropological research? . . . We cannot be satisfied with reflection on faith and culture that is limited to the study of beliefs and rites."[12]

In the following sections, I will explain four steps for a method of doing contextual theology in Papua New Guinea. Other approaches might focus more on oral sources. However, the method set out below is one approach, which the writer has found to stimulate reflection, and to produce texts that can be shared and critiqued by a wider readership.

STEP ONE: THE ISSUE

The first step is to settle on a relevant issue. The possibilities are boundless. One might ask: What appears in the newspapers, particularly editorials and feature articles? What is aired in the news on TV and the radio (especially radio talkback shows)? What are people talking about on the roadside or in the market place? In 2002, in class at the Catholic Theological Institute (CTI), Bomana, the leading four topics listed were:

- Politics/elections
- HIV/AIDS
- Globalisation, and the economic crisis
- Violence against women

These four topics became the focus for our theological reflection.

Sir Brian Barnes, Catholic Archbishop of Port Moresby, may be heard on the Karai National Radio service most Sunday evenings in "Katolik Insight". In just 20 minutes, speaking in Pidgin, Bishop Barnes provides a

[12] Jean-Marc Ela, *My Faith as an African*, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1988, p. 173.

faith perspective on relevant issues of the day. The program reaches a wide audience. There is a story told of another bishop visiting people in his diocese. When it came to 7.10 on Sunday evening, people asked if the good bishop would pause for a while, so they could listen to Bishop Brian on the radio! The appendix to this paper lists the topics addressed on "Katolik Insight" over the past four years. They might not be topics to be found in the index of a theological dictionary. Moreover, because they are contextual, some topics will be meaningless for people unfamiliar with PNG. Yet they are important issues of the day, and surely relevant topics for contextualised theological reflection.

Having chosen a topic, it is necessary to take a critical stance. How is one to sift the unfounded gossip from factual data? Are there reliable statistics available for comparison? Could the person or organisation providing the data have a conscious or unconscious bias? What is not being said about the issue, and why?

PNG today is an uncertain paradise. Life expectancy at birth in PNG is only 54 (lowest in Oceania). The infant mortality ratio is 73 per 1000 live births (highest in Oceania). The maternal mortality ratio is 370 per 100,000 births (highest in Oceania after Solomon Islands).[13] As of June, 2003, there had been 7,587 people diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.[14] However the National Consensus Workshop held in January, 2000, estimated a total number of HIV-infected persons in PNG was in the range of 10,000 to 15,000, or even 20,000. In a 2003 report, prepared by Transparency International on perceptions of the level of corruption in countries, PNG was ranked 118/133 alongside Libya and Kyrgyzstan. Such facts and figures would appear to be more relevant to Sociology than Theology, but those doing Contextual Theology cannot base their work on rumour. It requires interdisciplinary skills and attention to factual data.

[13] Papua New Guinea National Health Plan 2001-2010, vol 1.

[14] PNG National AIDS Council Secretariat and Department of Health HIV/AIDS Quarterly Report, June 2003.

STEP TWO: THE FAITH QUESTION

This step, in which one formulates the faith question, is fundamental for contextual theology. It has been said that, if I am hungry, that is a practical question, or an issue of justice, but if my brother or sister is hungry, that is a faith issue. Doing contextual theology requires learning to formulate faith questions about contemporary issues. Some church groups, including the PNG Catholic Bishops' Conference, are strong on the social analysis in step one, but often fail to follow through with an insightful theological analysis.[15] After exploring our needs, and the needs of society, it is helpful to enquire about them from a faith perspective. Faith questions include the following:

- Where is God in this situation?
- How can the Christian message challenge this situation?
- Is X life-giving or death dealing? ("I have come that you might have life.")[16]
- Does X build up or destroy human dignity (made in the image and likeness of God)?
- What personal, social, or structural sin must be confronted for X to reflect God's grace?
- What has X to do with the gospel/good news?
- What does X tell us about divine mercy or goodness?
- Where can one find Christ in this situation?
- What is the appropriate Christian response to this situation?
- How can one present the gospel in a meaningful way in this situation?
- How could this situation contribute more effectively to establishing the kingdom of God?

[15] For example: the 2001 Catholic Bishops Conference (CBC) statement on corruption: http://www.exkiap.net/articles/miscellaneous/cbc_corruption_statement.htm.

[16] "X" represents a contemporary issue, but not any specific issue.

- Does X contribute to the integrity of creation?
- What is X doing to the community (the body of Christ)?
- What is the quality of relationship with God, other people, and the rest of created reality?
- Does X somehow reflect the paschal mystery of life and death?
- Does this situation tell us something of what God is doing in our history?
- What Christian values would help transform this situation for the better?
- What might be God's will/plan/design for this situation?

For example, if one would take the issue of the economy, one might raise faith questions about the need for a common vision, if the economy is to serve all people more fairly. What sort of moral vision will lead to economic justice in PNG? If one would be dealing with the issue of violence, relevant faith questions would include: What does it mean for this situation if *shalom* ultimately is a gift from God? Does the statement in John 10:10, "I have come that you might have life", refer to a peace that we can achieve by ourselves? Are there hidden non-physical forms of violence that run contrary to the Christian love ethic? What resources do the churches in PNG have for peacemaking, the pursuit of justice, and the prospects of reconciliation? In the area of politics, faith questions might include: What are the implications of the servant model of leadership shown by Jesus? Is the Spirit of God present in government decisions that are made in the interests of the common good of the people?

For those of us sharing a common faith in a world redeemed by Christ, there is no end to the questions one can pose about seemingly very "worldly" issues. Some questions will demand openness and courage, for they may upset those who prefer to feel secure in their faith. Church members may come to realise that they are, in fact, participating in structures inherited from a colonial or ecclesial past, which are now oppressive, or, at best, dysfunctional. Nonetheless, the depth and honesty

of the faith question(s) posed are crucial for the theological reflection to follow.

STEP THREE: DIALOGUE WITH SCRIPTURE AND CHURCH TEACHING

Faith experiences of the past have been recorded in scriptures, and passed on through apostolic and church tradition. There are different ways of introducing scripture, at this point, depending on how one understands scripture as the word of God. For some Christians, the word of God is found exclusively and literally in the Bible. For others the word is God's general message to humanity. Other meanings include the word in the person of Jesus, or the spoken message of divine emissaries, particularly prophets. It can also refer to the events of salvific history (Hebrew: דָּבָר *dābār*). Despite the plurality of meanings, most theologians agree that scripture needs to be interpreted, in the sense that we must try, through exegesis, to retrieve the meaning of the scriptural text, in its original context, so as to bridge the geographical, temporal, and cultural distance, and find how the text can be meaningful in new contexts in the life of the Christian community today. The fundamental question is: How can scripture engage with life and culture in any given setting?

Dialogue with Scripture

A concordance may help at this point, but it brings with it the danger of parallelism – employing a translation model – in which words are compared at a superficial level. Sound scripture study, with the aid of biblical commentaries, will yield more helpful results because we are dealing with deeper meanings, such as, values or theological themes that elude shallow comparisons. For example, consider the issue of poverty. Rather than just look for texts about poverty and riches in the Bible, one could achieve a better understanding by noting that men and women, made in God's image are the summit of creation. As such, every human being possesses an inalienable dignity that stamps human existence prior to any division into races or nations, and prior to human labour and human achievement. The laws of God's covenant with humanity show a special concern for the vulnerable members of the community: widows, orphans, strangers, and the poor. When people forgot the covenant, and began to serve idols, God sent prophets to call people back to a just life. There are

many other relevant sections in the Bible, including the challenge of discipleship presented in the gospels. Particularly in the gospel of Luke, Jesus takes the side of the poor, and warns of the dangers of wealth (Luke 6:24 – sermon on the plain; Luke 14:12-14 – inviting the poor as guests; Luke 18:18-30 – the rich young man). The terms used for the poor, while primarily describing lack of material goods, also suggest dependence and powerlessness.

Reading Scripture "Against the Grain"

The dialogue with scripture in contextual theology often requires us to read biblical texts in ways that look beyond the layers of culturally- and historically-conditioned interpretations found in biblical tradition. For example, Barbara Reid asks why commentators focus on the sinfulness of the woman who showed great love in anointing Jesus' feet (Luke 7:36-50), and, what is more, why she should be identified as a prostitute.[17] Reid goes on to show how the woman pouring out the expensive ointment, because of love, could prefigure Jesus' pouring out His precious lifeblood on behalf of those He loves (Luke 22:20), and points to a number of thematic connections to the death of Jesus. To understand the story this way is to read Luke "against the grain". If the person in the story were seen as a prostitute, then most Christian women would find it hard to identify with her. But, if the woman at Jesus' feet is perceived as being in the stance of a servant – the stance which Jesus instructs His disciples to take at the Last Supper (Luke 22:26-27), then the story conveys a very different message. Reid asks "whether corrective lenses are needed in looking at the text, in order to release its full potential for conveying the liberating word of God".[18]

Reading scripture in contextual theology sometimes means reading "against the grain" in order to give space for local communities to reread the text

[17] Barbara Reid, " 'Do you see this woman?': A Liberative Look at Luke 7:36-50 and Strategies for Reading Other Lukan Stories Against the Grain", in Amy-Jill Levine, ed., *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, Sheffield UK: Sheffield University Press, 2002, pp. 106-120. Reid notes how commentators do not discuss what might be the type of sins Simon Peter has committed when he says he is a "sinful man" (Luke 5:7).

[18] Ibid., p. 119.

from their perspective. Ennio Mantovani gives the example from the cure of the ten lepers (Luke 17:12-19). In PNG, where gratitude is expressed primarily through a visible gift, rather than mere words, one might expect Jesus to condemn the lack of true gratitude in the leper who came back, simply to say thanks, instead of looking for a gift to give Him in the future.[19]

In a short but revealing article, Br Silas has tried to make sense of the "problem" of Jesus sending demons into a herd of pigs, which then rushed to their deaths (Mark 5:1-20).[20] In PNG, where the pig is highly valued, the story has been used by some to show that pigs, and, therefore, traditional cultural values, are fundamentally corrupt. However, common sense compels one to ask what is wrong with this interpretation. Br Silas tells the story of a local man, who solved the problem by speculating that perhaps there was an old type of pig, which Jesus had sent to their deaths, and that Jesus had introduced a new kind of pig, which eventually became the mainstay of Highland village life. The interpretation has wider implications, for it suggests that pigs are not only good to eat, but may even be the first-born of the "new creation". If so, before missionaries arrived, Jesus had begun to transform village life, replacing sin with a new redeemed creation. Thus, the Christian should seek to live faithfully at the heart of the community; confident that, at its heart, God's healing and redemption are to be found. Surely the gospel writers did not intend the text to be read against the grain in this way, nor does the exegesis fit the norms of classical biblical scholarship. Yet, this speculative, and highly specific interpretation, "works" in terms of reconciling contradictions, and bringing this man into a deeper understanding of his relationship to the community, and to God.

Different Ways of Interpreting Scripture

The academic contextual theologian could ask what hermeneutic people in their communities use in interpreting scripture. For example, in PNG,

[19] Ennio Mantovani: "Traditional and Present-day Melanesian Values and Ethics", in *Occasional Papers of the Melanesian Institute 7*, Goroka PNG: Melanesian Institute, 1991, p. 25.

[20] Silas, "Solving the Problem of the Pigs", pp. 59-64.

where rural people tend to have a premodern worldview, historical consciousness differs from the modern scientific viewpoint, and people are less concerned with what God accomplished 2,000 years ago in Jesus, and more interested in what God is doing in our day, or what God will do, particularly in reference to the book of Revelation. People in PNG often focus on the word through an "apocalyptic" filter, not unlike some of the early Christian communities of the 1st century AD. How does this fit with the manner of looking at the word in modern church teaching, seen more in terms of personalist theology, where God's word, incarnated in Jesus, creates a new life-giving relationship between God and humankind? We have to look for meeting points between the personalist approach of modern and postmodern teaching and the premodern apocalyptic stance of people at the grassroots. Talking with older women in the Highlands, several spoke of how they anticipated that Jesus would soon appear, and that they were looking forward to this, because then they could "marry" Jesus. Such sentiments go against the grain of mainstream theology, but open up new possibilities for dialogue leading to contextual theology.

Dialogue with Church Teaching

In addition to the dialogue with scripture, there is also the opportunity to dialogue with the rich tradition of church teaching, from Apostolic times until today. People doing contextual theology in PNG might well benefit from the commentaries of the early church fathers, documents from international gatherings, such as the Second Vatican Council, or meetings of the World Council of Churches, such as the 1983 assembly, devoted to issues of gospel and culture. In particular, there are creative contextual theologies coming from many third-world countries today that could stimulate ideas for people in PNG. Papua New Guinean theologians have yet to make a significant contribution to the work of the Ecumenical Association of Third-World Theologians (EATWOT). There are also sources within PNG itself, including the combined resources of the many theological colleges and Bible schools, and pastoral documents from Bishops' Conferences. However, these resources are also a cause for concern. To what degree are the courses in the theological schools taking theology, developed elsewhere, and applying it to PNG, without critical engagement with the PNG experience? How does PNG life and history

play a part in the interpretation of scripture? What is the effect of having to still deal with the legacy of early mission attitudes?

Some schools of theology refer to two forms of teaching or "magisteria" – the pastoral magisterium of the bishops, and the academic magisterium of the theologians. In contextual theology, it is helpful to ask how much theological reflection finds a source in the faith experience of the church in grass roots communities – what Aloysius Pieris calls the "third magisterium".[21] There, at the grass roots, faith-filled people are writing a "fifth gospel" with their lives.[22] Their spirituality usually reflects their needs: something to live on (food), something to live by (work), something to live in (shelter), something to live for (human dignity).[23] Contextual theology will emerge, not through attempts to adapt theology to their needs, but by asking how people's needs can provide the basis for telling God's story, together with their own.

Third Magisterium: Election Awareness

Anticipating that the 2002 PNG national elections would be marred by irregularities, including bribery and multiple voting, the Catholic church in the Enga Province formed a Diocesan Political Awareness Team to go around the province with a Christian message on electoral politics. Analysis of their presentations shows that the team customarily combined political education with Christian values and Enga symbolism.

For example, on the topic of the value of one's vote, they argued as follows,

> Your vote is very precious. Your vote is your life, which includes your house, garden, animals, land, water, trees, bush, services, religion, your family, your children's future, and everything that you need when you are alive. . . . A river does not flow from nowhere.

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[21] Aloysius Pieris, "An Asian paradigm: interreligious dialogue and theology of religions", in *The Month* (April 1993), p. 130.

[22] The expression "Fifth gospel" is used by Joseph G. Healey in "Our Stories as Fifth Gospels", in *AFER* 30 (1988), pp. 151-166.

[23] Pieris, "An Asian paradigm", p. 131.

> No! A small creek comes from a mountain, and flows through many stones to develop into a river. The mountain and the stones are the sources of the river. Likewise, God is the source of the power of your vote. In the first chapter of Genesis, we read how God created man and woman, and gave them power. They were given the power to identify and name everything. They were told to be fertile, multiply, live all over the earth, and bring it under their control. From this reference, we now know that our vote or power comes directly from God. No one on earth has given that power to you. Our decision must be according to God's will, for God gave us that power to look after ourselves, and everything around us.[24]

One sees in the above argument a transition from the necessities of life to the familiar image of a mountain stream, and then to a biblical image from Genesis. There is little necessary connection between the creation account and the power of one's vote. However, by using inductive reasoning, and, in particular, moving from a familiar natural image to the well-known biblical passage, the team was able to provide religious support, giving credibility to their argument that one's vote is important.

Again, on the topic of multiple voting, they started their argument with the Enga saying, "*Akali kumalamo yuu mendai laeyokenge*" (A man dies only once). Then they continued, saying,

> You don't have a spare life. Your one and only life represents one vote, and thus you cast your vote once. When God created us, God did not breathe into us several times, so that we might do something many times, using the same power. No. God breathed into us only once. That means you have only one life, and, therefore, you vote only once.

In this argument, we see the progression from a well-known Enga saying to the ultimate value of life, supported by an argument from the creation story that legitimates their principal point that people should refrain from multiple voting. Biblical commentaries would not be concerned about how

[24] From typed notes by Political Awareness Team Member, Philip Maso.

many times Yahweh breathed life into humans. However, the Enga team's linking of one breath of life to one vote was both imaginative, and most probably convincing to their listeners.

The above arguments would hardly pass in a public meeting in Sydney or Wellington. However, the examples given illustrate how PNG people often integrate faith and experience, such as political realities, at a grass roots level. This linking of God's story and their own provides a window of opportunity for developing contextual theology. It is worth noting that the examples are of oral discourse, which has been transcribed only for the purpose of sharing the ideas with a wider audience. The oral medium supports the point at the beginning of this paper – that perhaps the most common form of contextual theology in PNG today will be found in Christian preaching.

STEP FOUR: CHRISTIAN COMMITMENT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Contextual theology, done well, requires creativity, intellectual capacity, and also faith commitment. Reflection calls for a response. While the academically-trained theologian may assist in locating scriptural or theological resources, the primary subject of this form of theology is the community in which people can inspire and correct one another. Thus, people in grass roots communities are not just the object of theology, but – more importantly – the ones who discover God as their source of life. This is happening in many of the dynamic, faith-filled Christian communities in PNG, but it still needs to be well documented, hence the following example from Tonga. Sr Keiti Ann tells the story of a group of 58 Tongan women wanting to theologise about whether to allow a casino to be established in Tonga or not. She describes the process:

> As we worked along discovering more and more about the possible good and evil effects of having a casino in Tonga, the women started to feel excited, emotional, worried, and finally "fired up" about the issue. For two weeks, the women put their heart and soul into the project. They prayed a daily novena. They met to collect facts, to reflect, and to discuss the pros and cons, to discern the reality of the issue – its possible impact on our society, especially the families, the

> socio-economic, and cultural situation. The final stage of the process was the ultimate question. "Where is God in all this?" Using the process learned at the "Theologising Course", the women searched the Bible and traditions and practices of the church for theological responses to the question. The formulation of statements was a moment of wonder for the women. To synthesise all their work and findings to one-page statements was, in itself, a fantastic achievement. It became obvious to the women that the casino would be more a cause of evil than a source of income for Tonga. The women then took a decision to make the assignment real, and have it presented to the Parliament as a petition not to have a law passed to allow the casino to be established in Tonga.[25]

Their action resulted in the casino being dropped from the agenda of the Parliament of Tonga. The above example illustrates well the praxis method being proposed here. Praxis is reflection, plus practice. Reflection on a faith question calls for a faith response. The women in Tonga were responding to the faith question, "Where is God in all this?" Their result was not only "knowing" the truth, but also following through "doing" the truth. PNG theologians could contribute greatly to contextual theology, through documenting ways committed individuals and communities at the grass roots are "doing" the truth and helping to transform their society.

CONCLUSION

Contextualisation is necessary and desirable if we are to narrow the gap between faith and life. The alternative is an irrelevant, or meaningless, theology. However, there are also risks in trying to do contextual theology. One must find a fitting balance between the local and the global, lest the local community become isolated from the wider body of Christ. One has to avoid any overemphasis on "culture" and "cultural values", which would leave little opening for the challenge of the gospel. There is also the danger of an unhealthy syncretism, where the Christian message loses its identity. This is a matter to be faced realistically, aware of the fact that Christianity has a long history of absorbing elements from various cultures.

[25] Kanongata'a, "Why Contextual?", pp. 34-35.

To avoid problems, we might well keep in mind the following guidelines:

1. Grass roots Christian communities are part of the wider church community, and should value ecclesial and doctrinal unity (not uniformity), keeping in mind that true catholicity is found in openness to the diversity of particular situations.

2. We must never forget that the scriptures, and church teaching, remain as a standard by which to compare attempts at doing contextual theology, keeping in mind that all theological statements require some degree of interpretation.

3. We should keep in mind the importance of the *consensus fidelium*, in which "God's people, from the bishops to the last believing lay person, express their universal agreement in matters of faith and morals".[26] This principle is based on the belief in the Holy Spirit working through the faith community.

Birds of paradise have a varied feather fashion, ranging from radiant colours to drab browns. They put on displays high in the trees, but also on the ground. Before demonstrating their colourful plumage, males of the *Magnificent* bird of paradise come to the ground to ritually clear twigs from the forest floor, using their beaks. They also remove leaves from overhanging branches so that the sunlight can shine on their iridescent feathers. The appearance and behaviour of the bird of paradise are symbolic of the diversity of life in Papua New Guinea. Contextual theology seeks to engage that diversity, which has been concealed long enough in the forest cover of theology from elsewhere. It is time to clear space for the light of the gospel, to allow committed Christians in PNG to show their true colours.

[26] Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, p. 12.

APPENDIX

Topics addressed in "Katolik Insight"

Year 2000
New Year
Peace
Poker machines
Lent/Tarangu Appeal
Lent/Repentance
Public service
National day for women
Violence
Easter message
Crime: *bikhet pasin*
Abortion
New resolve for a new PNG
Sharing responsibility for state of the nation
Respecting life
Firearms
Street vendors
Self-help: roads
Drug and Alcohol Abuse Centre
Decriminalising prostitution?
Independence: PNG
Hand-out mentality
Environment: beach clean-ups
Muslim mosque
Murders in Port Moresby
Privatisation
School subsidies
Settlements
Integrity of political parties
National Provident Fund
Youth development centres/raskals
AIDS
Rights of the child
Public service
Christmas message
Domestic violence/holy family/New Year

Year 2001
Land compensation
Infrastructure: roads
Mt Lamington: 50-year anniversary
Schools
Unity
Corruption
Pay cut for politicians
HIV/AIDS
Lent/Tarangu Appeal
West Papua
Disciplinary forces
Bougainville: peace
Settlements and crime
Health services
Easter message
Wages for leaders
Youth
Domestic violence
Corruption
AIDS
Family
"No" to violence
Violence in sport
Poker machines
Student protest: UPNG
Blessed Peter ToRot
Privatisation
Tsunami anniversary: Aitape
Bougainville: centenary of Catholic church
Fr Fabian Thom OFM
Problems: caused by men
Commitment
New bishop for Alotau
Independence day
Terrorist attack in USA
Asylum seekers
Burning of schools
Raping women
Free education?

Advent
Leaders' wages
Elections
Christmas
Peace

Year 2002
Firearms
West Papuan border crossers
Schools: free education?
Elections: electoral roll
Shortage of medicine
Priests in politics
Leadership tribunals
Qualities of leaders
Elections: guns
Federation of Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Oceania
Catholic men: fathers, leaders
HIV/AIDS
New government
Review of 2002 elections
Burning down of schools
Southern Highlands Province
Pay cuts for parliamentarians
Independence day
Poker machines
Public Accounts Committee
Keeping Port Moresby/PNG clean
Likely closure of schools
Bali bombing
AIDS
Violence
Freedom of religion
Diabetes
Agriculture: strength of PNG
Cutting allowances of politicians
Advent
Firearms
Settlements
Christmas

Year 2003
New Year: peace
Paying school fees
General Assembly of Catholic church in PNG
Corruption in Public Service
Repair of roads
Iraq
Employment and training
Schools
West Papuan border crossers
Freedom of speech
Care of the sick
Lent
Women and schools
Control of the media
Easter
Port Moresby fun park
Highlands Highway
Media freedom
Priests
Goals
Horse-racing machines
Water: necessary for life
Launching of General Assembly of Catholic church
Killing of sorcerers
Pay-back
Raping of women
Urbanisation
Joint declaration (by Catholics, Anglicans, and Lutherans [in PNG]) revalidation of each other's baptism
One gender "marriages"
Moral recovery
Independence Day
WHP: leading the way (re: roads)
Decriminalise prostitution?
Agriculture: a priority
Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II
Discipline in schools
Corruption
The police

Freedom of media
Budget 2004-05-18 Advent
Prostitution: decriminalise?
Christmas
Peace

Year 2004
Madang evictions
Teachers' leave fares
School fees
Training priests
Commissioning of teachers/dedication of public servants
Taxes
Roads
Posin, *sanguma* (sorcery)
Lent/Tarangu Appeal
Enhanced Cooperation Program: Australia/PNG
Generation system: national high schools
Charging prostitutes?/AIDS
Water and disasters
Palm (Passion) Sunday
Easter
Election of Governor-general
Sir Anthony Siaguru
Vote of no confidence
Mothers' Day

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HOPE OF LIVING

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"Hope of Living" is the title of the poem that begins the collection of poems by Maura Elaripe Mea, published under the title *Positive Reflections* in Port Moresby in 2001.[1] Maura describes her poems as personal reflections, dedicated to all people living with HIV/AIDS, and she appeals to people, all over the world, and especially people in Papua New Guinea, not to discriminate against people living with HIV and AIDS.

In this paper, I will argue for the hidden potential of Maura's poetry, and of the creative contributions of others like her. She, herself, has experienced very real suffering in a society, which traditionally rejects illness.[2] But she has discovered hope for living, and her reflections are a challenge, and a strong statement of hope, which can inspire all of us. They are an expression of her desire to speak out and to share the hope and joy she has found. The experience of personal suffering that is the raw

[1] Available from Maino Peer Power Support Group, PO Box 6031, Boroko NCD Papua New Guinea, or pwhapng@hotmail.com.

[2] See Ennio Mantovani, "Traditional values and ethics", in Darrell L. Whiteman, ed., *An Introduction to Melanesian Cultures*, *Point* 5, Goroka PNG: Melanesian Institute, 1984, pp. 195-212. Mantovani proposes that "Life" is the most important value in Melanesian culture. "Life" is not only biological existence; it is health, wealth, well-being. Earlier, he gives an example of the rejection of a young woman suffering from epilepsy, and quotes a leader in the community, who, in response to a suggestion that the community might help her, replies angrily, "Let her die. We do not get anything from her. Can she get married? No. Let her rot." Without community support, shortly afterwards, the woman dies by drowning in the midst of an epileptic fit (p. 195).

material of her poetry arises from her experience of living with HIV in Port Moresby today. However, the method I will adopt, and the theme – that God's word can be seen and understood in new ways, through the hope found in her poetry – do, I think, have universal significance. This will, I hope, illustrate the idea that the church in Melanesia will only truly be the church of Jesus Christ when it has made its own unique contribution to the wider church, and that contribution has been joyfully received.[3]

DO I HAVE A HOPE OF LIVING?

Maura begins this moving collection of reflections with *Hope of Living*:

> Sitting on my platform;
> in front of my house
> I tend to question myself . . .
> Where am I heading to?
> Do I have a hope of living?
>
> All sorts of negative thoughts
> crowd my mind
> giving my eyes a hazy view.
> But down within me, there seems to be a
> little flame burning
> encouraging me, and urging me
> to carry on with my life.
> I strive and persevere,
> struggling to be recognised and accepted
> as a productive citizen,
> I look at this life as an opportunity,
>
> an opportunity to leave the world
> a better place than when I came into it.
> AIDS is not going to steal that opportunity
> away from me.
> That's what gives me the courage to go on.

[3] Cf. John Paul II. Address to the Aboriginal Australian community, Alice Springs, January, 1986. www.catholic.org.au. Accessed March 8, 2003.

I am living my life positively,
and I will continue to contribute my bit
in this struggle against AIDS
that is my hope of living.

Maura is fortunate. Her family accepts and supports her. Their love has been an important part of her story. She has lived for many years in a settlement, but one that was established many years ago. It is not far from public transport, shops, and hospital. She has a home, and can find a place to reflect on her life. She questions herself, where am I going? And, more importantly, do I have a hope of living? For many others in the city, who also live with HIV, there is no hope of living, or so it seems. They have experienced painful rejection. They are homeless, and barely survive, living on the city streets. For food, they rely on the kindness of others. For shelter, they gather with vendors at the city's all-night betel nut markets, and sleep during the daylight hours.

There is another very significant relationship in Maura's life, and she describes it in her poem *Bundle of Joy*. The death of her babies was a terrible tragedy; however, she, somehow, entered so deeply into the experience that she could allow even this event to transform her life, and enable her to share the tragedy and the triumph. This poem, she tells us, is dedicated "to all babies who have died of AIDS, especially my two babies".

I gaze down lovingly
at the pinkish little bundle
in front of me,
looking up innocently
into my eyes.
I take her hand into mine
and wonder
"Will you make it to the end?"

As the days turn to weeks
I love my bundle of joy
more and more.
I smile and
she smiles back . . .
reminding me
that to live is to love.
I felt so guilty
seeing you suffer.
It was hard work
bringing you into this world,
but much harder for me
when you're infected
and struggling to keep this life
that rightly belongs to you.

My bundle of joy,
I will remember
your courage . . .
that last look
you had in your eyes
before you left me.

It's your way
of telling me
to be brave and
to carry on with my life.

I miss you
and some day I will hold
my bundle of joy
forever.

Maura's two babies, with their innocent smiles, bring her inestimable joy. Her love for her children is deep and unconditional. Maura knew the precious gift these children were to her. She deeply respected their human

dignity and right to life. But she knew, too, that their lives would be cruelly cut short by AIDS.

Coping with the tragedy of losing two babies in 1997 and in 1999, Maura committed herself to educating her family, and as many communities as she could, about the HIV virus and AIDS. HIV does not kill, she tells people. It is discrimination that kills, and she speaks as one who knows well the suffering AIDS can bring, but also the transformation that is possible, and its hope for living.

LIFE-GIVING OR DEATH-DEALING?

Is HIV/AIDS life-giving or death-dealing? This is one theological question Maura's poetry suggests, and which I would like to make a focus of this paper. For Maura, HIV/AIDS is life-giving. Already, in her first poem, she expresses the mystery of suffering, death, and transformation, as she experienced it. We see how she entered that mystery, and lives it. We come to understand, in a new way, the mystery of Christ's suffering, death, and rising to new life, so as to send us a new Spirit. We begin to understand what Jesus means when He assures us, "I have come in order that you might have life – life in all its fullness"(John 10:10).

The loving community, to which Maura belongs, and her own deep love for her babies, are but a shadow of God's infinite love for all humanity. God's unconditional love reaches out to each one, and will not abandon anyone who seeks comfort and rest. There is one text that readily springs to Maura's mind when asked about the source of her strength. It is the challenge Moses gave to all Israel: "I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live"(Deut 30:19). For her, this means struggling to be recognised and accepted as a person of worth, as a person who can make a valued contribution to the community. She puts it simply. It is the determination "to leave the world a better place than when I came into it". In spite of the very real threat that AIDS could rob her of this opportunity, she continues the struggle. She believes there is a God who is listening to her cry for help, who will give her strength in every crisis. Her prayers are answered, and, with courage renewed, she goes on.

A second theological question, which arose for me one day recently, when I faced the tragic death from AIDS of a young policeman was: how can I present the gospel in a meaningful way in this situation? But, firstly, what can happen when we bring Maura's story into dialogue with our Christian faith?

DIALOGUE

Maura tells us that sometimes all sorts of negative thoughts crowd her mind, preventing her from seeing what might lie ahead. But, in spite of these, she can say, "deep down within me, there seems to be a little flame burning, encouraging and urging me to carry on with my life". She makes a deliberate choice that is life giving for herself, and for those whose lives she shares. "I strive and persevere, struggling. . . . I look at this life as an opportunity."

This poem, born out of an experience of suffering, may find an echo in what we call the Servant Songs of Deutero-Isaiah. They were written in a time of disaster. The people were in Babylon in exile. Initially, they look to an outsider, Cyrus, for help, for liberation. But, then, there is the realisation that Israel cannot look to anyone, other than their God, to bring them liberation. Israel must turn inwards, and draw life from her own resources. Israel is in great suffering, and the major question, which the prophet brings to these songs, is, "Israel, what does your suffering mean?" So the songs speak of an ideal Servant, a mediator.

The servant comes among the people in their suffering. "He does not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street" (Is 42:2). He comes modestly, quietly, inviting, not demanding, and never insisting. He comes, sure of whom he is, and he is going to invite others to respond. He is very careful. "The broken reed he does not break, and the dimly burning wick he does not quench" (Is 42:3). The reed is one that is already broken – an image of the poor. This reed has just about died. The dimly burning wick is an image of the helpless. As the gardener knows well, it is very difficult to bring an already broken reed back to life, and it is easy to kill it completely. And the dimly burning wick, the very small flame, which is very close to going out, requires great care and constant attention to bring

it back. It calls for hands that will wrap a shield around it, letting the air in gently, letting it gather strength in its own time. If we expect too much, too quickly, we can quench the flame completely.

The chosen servant is equipped, and given a specific task. God points and designates him in the words, "I bestow my spirit upon him. He is to bring forth justice to the nations" (Is 42:1b). The task is no more than suggested, but it focuses on justice. There are further echoes in the following verses. "He brings forth justice in truth", and "till he establishes justice in the earth" (Is 42:3c, 4b). Maura's story of her coming to see herself as a messenger, or, at least, as one who is called to break new ground, and perhaps become a light to her "nation" of citizens, who live with HIV/AIDS, reveals an echo of the Servant Song. She has no intention of crying aloud in the street. Instead, using poetry, and sharing her story at every available opportunity, she will speak words of comfort, encouragement, and of challenge. For those, to whom she is sent, bringing forth justice is not to mean death for those already under sentence of death. Maura's message brings justice in such a way that her actions contradict the harsh law, which would have the broken and the dimly burning perish. The message, instead, brings comfort and life, just at the point when death is threatening. The message, in fact, effects a change of attitude on the rest of the world, too.

The Servant Song continues, again, using the same images: "He does not burn dimly, nor is he broken, till he establishes justice in the earth" (Is 42:4). These lines allude to the same actions as in the previous verse, but these promise the Servant, himself, that he will not burn dimly, or be broken, before he has completed his task. Here, there is the suggestion that the Servant's task is to involve him in suffering. Maura expresses the conviction that "a little fire burning" will provide the courage she needs, and will keep urging her to carry on with her life, nurturing hope in herself and in others. There is an expectancy of help and of deliverance implied in the Servant Song, when it speaks of "waiting". Many living with HIV/AIDS are waiting today, yet hardly daring to expect help or deliverance, for a justice that could restore human dignity, a little comfort and hope for living.

Those who are already under sentence of death will have a mediator, who completes his mission, by way of action. The Servant's task also points to one, who mediates by way of a word of truth. The mission of the Servant finds echoes in the mission to which Maura feels herself called, which she describes as living positively, and which challenges the society in which she lives.

For her, love is the key. When she speaks, in another poem, of her family, she declares: "Oh my family, how I love you all. Through good times and bad times, poverty and suffering, you are always for us." And, of her "ignorant, carefree, and loving" husband, she wants everyone to know. "You are the love of my life . . . always standing up for me. You are always my mouthpiece. When I am sick, you are there. When I am down, you pull me up." Prolonging life, rejoicing in what each new day brings, is ever so important. Both Maura and her husband, Max, know this.

Maura is one with the many PNG women whose life is hard. Her poetry expresses her painful awareness of the indignity she has suffered. She sings her lament "Woman, you are the beast of burden; you fetch water buckets one after the other." And, as if this were not enough, she adds, "(Woman) you are abused, beaten, insulted." It would be so natural to allow bitterness to take root in such soil, but it does not. Maura, and so many of her "sisters", have penetrated this mystery of suffering. "(Woman) you never retaliate." And why? "Your heart is full of love for your little ones."

With a smile, Maura can say: "When you give love away it comes back to you." Again, from her family, she receives love. "When we told you our HIV status, you were devastated and sad, but then we educated you on positive living, coping, and caring." And the love came back again. "You encouraged us, stood for us, and supported us all through. We will always love you." Even under stress, there is a determination in Maura to deepen the precious relationship she has with her husband: "No matter what HIV may do to us, I will always look to you, the love of my life forever." Both have experienced that, when you give love away, it comes back to you. Acceptance by family and community has enabled Maura and Max to look

at life in a new, positive way. Friends have given strong support. Out of this experience, has come the conviction, God has a plan for us.

In *Bundle of Joy*, we cannot escape the question of how a loving God can allow the innocent to suffer. Through no fault of her own, Maura has been visited by a virus, for which there is no known cure, and which will bring her great suffering and premature death. The pain is so much more as she describes poignantly: "I gaze down lovingly at the pinkish little bundle in front of me; looking up innocently into my eyes. I take her hand into mine and wonder, 'Will you make it to the end?' " This picture brings feelings of guilt as Maura waits and watches helplessly, seeing her two babies suffer, and finally be overcome by AIDS. "It was hard work, bringing you into this world, but much harder for me when you're infected, and struggling to keep this life that rightly belongs to you."

There is more in the Servant Songs that might help us to find meaning in suffering, when we are confronted with the suffering of an innocent victim. Particularly moving is the fourth Servant Song (Is 52:13-53:12). In this song, the prophet presents an image of the sufferings of the Servant with realism as sharp as if we were seeing it with our own eyes. Usually, when we speak of suffering, it is restricted, only an incident in the life of a healthy person. But, here, there is a distinct difference. The experience described here is an entire life span, with suffering stamped on it. At the beginning, the prophet tells us, "he grew up" and at the end, "he was buried". This man of sorrows is growing up parched, and without strength. "He grew up . . . like a young plant; and like a root out of dry ground. He had no form or comeliness that should have made us give heed to him; there was no beauty that should have made us desire him; his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance" (Is 53:2). Lack of beauty means that no one will pay any regard to him. However, the prophet has more, "He was despised and rejected . . . a man of sorrows, and humiliated by sickness. He was like one before whom [people] hide their faces, despised – we esteemed him not" (Is 53:3).

Here, as in the psalms of lamentation, suffering is accompanied by being despised and rejected.[4] Hiding of the face speaks of wretchedness. The Servant's suffering isolates him in the community; he is despised, and held in loathing. As a result, he has no positive significance for the community. And this echoes the rejection of Maura, the young Melanesian woman mentioned at the beginning, and her desire, more than anything else, to make a positive contribution "to leave the world a better place".

When we look at Maura's poetry, we find different themes – each of which tells us something that is a key to understanding the Christian mystery of dying and rising. The poem *Bundle of Joy* is truly a key to this mystery. Maura gazes lovingly at her baby, as she lies at peace in her lap. The child looks innocently into her mother's eyes. Maura holds her little girl's hand, and wonders what the future holds for this little one.

As time passes, her love for the child grows stronger. Mother and child enter into a deeper, and more intimate, relationship. Maura is learning how it feels to be bound so intimately to another, and how rich life can be. She treasures her precious gift.

But the child suffers as a result of the virus coursing through the blood vessels of her small and delicate body. A pervading guilt invades the peace. Maura remembers her labour pains. It was hard work to bring this small one into this world. But it is much harder, by far, to know that her tiny infant's life is threatened.

Later, her bundle of joy gone, Maura remembers the courage of her baby. Courage expressed in the eyes of this little one, looking innocently and trustingly into the eyes of her mother. For Maura, the message is clear. Do not be afraid. Be brave. Carry on with your life. The pain finds no relief. There is deep lament in the simple expression addressed to her

[4] This close affinity with the language of the psalms has an important consequence. See C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-60*, London UK: SCM Press, 1969, p. 262. This way of speaking of suffering in general terms is like the psalms, and those who bring their suffering to God in lament.

much-loved daughter, "I miss you." In the midst of suffering too deep to express, there is hope. "Some day, I will hold my bundle of joy forever."

As Maura gazes lovingly at her child, dreams of a happy future life might flash through her mind. Maura has a husband, who cares deeply for her. They have two beautiful children. They may have once dreamed of a home, of a community, of supportive friends. But now, Maura knows that her dream will not happen, and she dreams again, but on a different scale. Her expectations change. In losing her baby, she loses a part of herself, and a new self comes into being. For Maura, a resurrection has just occurred. Her baby is dead, but she, Maura, is still alive, not in the same way as she was alive before her baby died, but with a new life, which she, in faith, begins to move into with some strength. She learns that, if she can be open to receive the spirit of who she truly is, she can be happy. Her happiness does not depend upon somebody outside of her – even this treasured child, so tragically lost, but upon being at peace with what is inside her. The Christian mystery of suffering is the mystery of how we, after undergoing the experience of death, receive new life, and a new spirit. Jesus, in both His teaching and in His life, showed us a clear way of how this should happen.

The Hebrew scriptures recount a similar story of the death of a child – king David's illegitimate son (2 Sam 12:15-24). Immediately upon hearing that his son had died, David got up off the ground, removed his sackcloth, washed away the ashes, went to the temple, prayed, returned home, ate well, and slept with his wife, who then conceived a son, whom he named Solomon. David's friends were disturbed by the abruptness of his end to mourning, and challenged him. But David explained: I prayed, hoping that God would heal him. Now he is dead, there is nothing I can do to bring him back to life. I am still alive, and I must go on living, and I must create new life.

Today, Maura is able to travel to places far away from home to share her story, with an inner peace and strength. As scripture tells us, the Holy Spirit is a Spirit given to each of us, in a most particular way, for the particular situation that each of us must face (1 Cor 12). Receiving the

Spirit is very personal for Maura. She receives the Spirit for a mother, who has lost her bundle of joy.

In Maura's story, we see the meaning of the words: "unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies it yields a rich harvest" (John 12:24). In order to attain a fuller life and spirit, we must constantly be letting go of our present life and spirit. The Christian mystery is a process of transformation. In it, we are given both new life and a new spirit. The process begins with suffering and death. Then new life is given. Time is needed to grieve the old and adjust to the new life. During this time, we must truly let go of the old life. Finally, a new spirit is given for the life we are now living. We see all this in Jesus' own passing over from death to life.

We learn, especially in His death and resurrection, that there are clear and distinct steps in His passing over from death to life. Firstly, on Good Friday, Jesus dies – we witness the loss of life. Then, on Easter Sunday, Jesus is given new life. During the following 40 days, there is time for readjustment to the new life, and the letting go and grieving for the old. Next, Jesus ascends, thus letting go of the old, and letting its blessing effect change. There is refusal to cling to the old. Finally, at Pentecost, there is the gift of a new Spirit for the new life that Jesus is already living.

In Maura, we see a woman who can name the deaths of her two babies. She can cry, and grieve, and sing of them. This enables her to claim a new birth in her own life. She surely grieves for all she has lost, and slowly, painfully she begins to adjust to her new reality. She feels again the depth of guilt, and she lets it go. As she lets it go, the blessing of inner strength and courage to be true to her new calling descends as a blessing. She accepts the spirit of her new life, permeated with hope for a future, in which she will hold her child forever.

For Maura, this cycle is not something she has lived only once. As she lives with HIV, and suffers the weakness and susceptibility to illness that it brings in its wake, she knows what it means to die many deaths. The maturity, the peace and happiness, so evident in Maura, is the fruit of her entering deeply into this mystery of dying and rising to new life.

By entering deeply into the Christian mystery of dying and rising to new life, by constantly naming the daily deaths, which come with illness, discouragement, fear, and anxiety, Maura can claim the new relationship, which is given her by her husband Max, even as she grieves what has died, lets it go, and then is open to receive the spirit of the relationship she is now living. God is always giving us something richer – a deeper life and fuller spirit.

There is much in Maura's attitude to suffering that can challenge all of us. There is no passivity. There is a willingness to face the dreadful reality, not to hide from it. There is much we do not know about her initial reaction to the news of her husband's, and her own, HIV status, and the resulting suffering. "What a blow!" is all she can say. It would be understandable if she spoke of shock, disbelief, fear, shame. In such a state, all available energy would be needed just to survive each day.

This suffering is unmerited, caused by human insensitivity, intentional at times, and deeply personal, yet social. Maura feels her suffering in solidarity with others, and, in these words, voices the anguish: "The household machine is what you are, WHO RESPECTS YOU. . . . Your man comes home drunk and crazy, demanding his needs to be met. You give in out of fear, not love. Was that why you were created? Then you find out later that you are the innocent victim of HIV/AIDS. What a blow!" And, reaching out to so many of her "sisters", Maura concludes, "How my heart goes out to you, because you are still a WOMAN." There is strength in solidarity with others.

The Christian scriptures are rich with illustrations of lamentations, which express the experience of crying from "out of the depths". Jesus cried out in anguish from the cross, in the words of the psalm: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?" (Mark 15:34, cf. Ps 22). There is deep acknowledgment of suffering and loss, rather than despair or infidelity,

here. It is a suffering and loss that is empowering. It is not passive, but is a precursor to action.[5]

Confronted by the harsh reality, Maura sets about educating herself. "AIDS, AIDS, AIDS, who are you? What are you? Where do you come from? And where are you leading us to?" She searches newspapers, magazines, tunes in to the radio, only to face confusion. "I search high and low. I crawl and weep, trying my best. Who are you?" The question haunts her, till, at last, she can find a name. "You are a killer disease . . . ready to destroy families and cultures." Then, she turns to the educating of her family. There is no apathy, no passive acceptance of this suffering. Personal and social change for the better, leaving the world "a better place" than when she came into it, is Maura's mission. It is part of Christ's ongoing redemptive work, the bringing about of the reign of God, here and now, as well as hereafter.

There are times when the suffering faced must simply be endured. The experience of time spent in hospital "scares the living daylights" out of Maura. She sits up and pretends to look calm, but deep down, she confesses that she is frightened and worried, asking "Will I make it?" In the midst of cries of pain, and witnessing a patient die, Maura can actively endure her own pain, and still find the strength to reach out, searching for a way to help others.

Here is human solidarity amid suffering. She is made in God's image; she can claim respect and dignity as "the early morning bird and the evening star". God enters into, and shares, all human suffering. In a special way, those, like Maura, who suffer injustice, remain indelibly etched in God's memory, and ought to be inscribed in human memory. In the living memory of Jesus Christ, there is hope, even in the face of deep human suffering.

[5] Theologians, like Johannes Metz and Jurgen Moltmann, join with Jon Sobrino and Leonardo Boff in proposing the "dangerous memory of suffering" as the proper starting point for praxis, the interaction of theology, or faith, with lived experience.

THE GOSPEL OF LIFE

When I walked into the hospital's laying-out room one Friday morning, recently, I saw a body carefully wrapped for burial, lying on a steel hospital trolley. Having read the name of this young man on the morgue tag tied to the body, with the time of his death, and the ward number where he had died, I stood silently. Suddenly, three young men entered the room, came over to the body, read the name, and were overwhelmed with feelings of shock and grief. Each seemed to experience his grief in his own particular and personal way. His head cupped in his hands, one young man could only stand close to the body of his friend and weep. The other two moved away, one to a corner of the room, the other pacing back and forth aimlessly around the room.

I stepped back. Earlier the dead man's sister-in-law told me he was just 29 years old, and in his final year at university. He was a policeman, and living in the police barracks, with his girlfriend and their little daughter. The father, too, had stood by the body of his son earlier, and told me how he had just flown from the provincial town, where he is a health worker. He wanted to be with his son. His wife was still at home. The police would arrange to fly the body back to the province, where the family would bury him in the village. It seemed the dead man had a wife in the village. Someone told me he had refused to eat for several weeks. He had suffered from oral thrush, and found it very difficult to swallow, the social worker later explained. "When diagnosed HIV positive", someone else observed, "he didn't want to live. He gave up the fight."

As I stepped aside, I caught sight of a police truck full of men – some uniformed, others not, one carrying a very large gun, which hung from his shoulder. It was not the ordinary police uniform, but the "rapid response" unit, popularly called the "riot squad". They, too, were visibly moved, and the man in charge went about organising the transfer of the body in a quiet, respectful way. I introduced myself to him. I felt I wanted to offer to pray with them, gathered there around the body of their friend and colleague.

How could I present the gospel in a meaningful way in this situation? What could I pray that might find an echo in the hearts of these men of the

police force? This question was not easy to answer. The thought that came to me was: Jesus died. Let us remember that Jesus died, and how He died, and who was there when He died.

I thought of Luke's story of the death of Jesus. It tells us that the sun stopped shining, and darkness covered the whole country . . . and the curtain hanging in the Temple was torn in two. Jesus cried out, "Father! In your hands I place my spirit!" The army officer saw what had happened, and he praised God, saying, "Certainly He was a good man!" When the people . . . saw what happened, they all went back home, beating their breasts in sorrow. All those who knew Jesus personally . . . stood at a distance to watch (Luke 23:44-49).

When I offered to pray, there was a readiness, even an eagerness, to stop, and to pray. All became quiet and still as the men surrounded the body, eyes gently lowered. As I greeted those present, and offered them my sympathy, I acknowledged the sorrow, so obvious at the death of this young policeman, and I said, "The Lord is with us here, and comforts us with His word." We prayed the traditional Christian prayers for the dead, commending this young man (N) to God's mercy and goodness. Our prayer asked a loving God to hear our prayers for this son, whom "You have called from this life to yourself. Grant him light, happiness, and peace . . . guard him from all harm, and raise him up. Pardon his sins and give him eternal life in your Kingdom. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen." The prayer ended, I stepped back, and the men carried their friend, and placed his body in the police vehicle, and drove away.

My own reflections continued. What is the appropriate Christian response when someone dies of AIDS? It is to pray in a similar way to the way we pray for each person who dies. It is to pray in a way that is sensitive to the way this person died. I think it is to pray in a way that will truly comfort those gathered around the body – family and workmates. It is to pray in a way that does not minimise the tragedy of what we are witnessing, or the pain or the threat to the well-being of each and all of us. It is to pray in a way that expresses the Christian mystery of death, and rising to new life.

Where can we find Christ in this situation? We find Christ in the one who has just died. Christ has gone before us in death. Christ has also gone before us in His rising to new life. We find Christ, too, in the grieving community. They are left devastated by the tragedy. The death of a young man, on whom many pinned their hopes, threatens the community, individually, and as a whole. It severely challenges their hope for the future. It exposes a new vulnerability.

How does one present the gospel in a meaningful way? I think we try to be open to the leading of the Spirit in choosing a story that parallels the experience of the mourners. The story may be a familiar one, but as we listen to the word of God in this situation, here and now, it speaks to us in a way, which it may never have spoken to us before.

Does AIDS reflect the Easter mystery of life and death? This young man's death surely reflects the Easter mystery of dying and rising. The death, and its finality, is very real. The loss and grief, too, are real. Yet there are seeds of hope.

How can the infected and affected reflect God's grace? As I announced the reading from the gospel, one young policeman lunged forward, and beautifully, and with deep respect, signed the dead man with the sign of the cross on his head, his lips, and his heart. This was a deeply-moving ritual, and performed quite spontaneously, and with reverence. It was an expression of the grace of God at work in the heart of this man. The very spontaneous movement of all in the room, when the suggestion of prayer was made, was, too, an expression of the grace of God at work in all present.

For a long time, the Catholic church has been deeply concerned about the AIDS crisis in PNG. This concern has led to practical consequences. In April 2001, the Catholic Bishops endorsed the objectives formulated by the National Catholic AIDS Board.[6] The final objective states simply "that in

[6] "Statement on AIDS". Catholic Bishops Conference of PNG/SI. Annual General Meeting, Goroka PNG, April 27, 2001, p. 2 at http:\\www.catholicpng.org.pg/press/cbc%20stm%20AIDS.html. Accessed September 1, 2002.

all our efforts, the compassionate Jesus, who said, 'what you did to these the least of My (people), you did to Me', be our model and inspiration."

This commitment to caring means a commitment to people infected with the HIV virus, and to the family, and wider community, who are affected. It means working to prevent the stigmatisation and unjust treatment of those who suffer from AIDS. It is not AIDS that kills, but discrimination against those living with HIV, Maura reminds us. Working together with all diocesan groups and agencies, such as, family life, education, health, youth and women's offices, will provide HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention programmes, training in counselling, counselling and support services for AIDS patients, their families and communities. The bishops remind us that HIV/AIDS thrives, and spreads rapidly, in an atmosphere of ignorance, silence, and denial.

In response to the challenge of HIV/AIDS in Africa, the World Council of Churches' statement and plan of action in November, 2001, highlights the barrier created by shame. It begins with a story, told by a young woman:

> When my cousin was dying of AIDS, he found it easy to tell his family and friends about HIV/AIDS. In his final days, we gathered the family together to say goodbye, and discussed with Mathunya the plans for his funeral. We asked him what he wanted to happen at the service, and he said, "I want you to tell them the truth that I died of AIDS." So we planned a service that could celebrate his life, and educate those who came to the funeral, especially the young people.
>
> At his funeral, my grandmother walked to the front of the church, and laid her hand on her grandson's coffin, and said, "My grandson no longer has to suffer with AIDS." Then, with her hand still on his coffin, she turned to the pulpit, and said to the preacher, who was about to preach to the people gathered in the church, "Now talk to them freely about this disease. To us it is not a shame."[7]

[7] Global consultation on the ecumenical response to the challenge of HIV/AIDS in Africa, Nairobi Kenya, November 25-28, 2001, p. 2 at http://www.wcc-

As I prayed over the body of the young policeman, I made no mention of the fact that he had died of AIDS. I mused on the possibility of visiting these same young men in their workplace over the coming week, and offering each the opportunity to share what this experience meant to them. It seemed impossible for me, and I began to think of others who might be available. As it happened, I did meet them again, the following week. There had been a funeral service in the morning, and a very large crowd of family and friends were waiting in the airport departure lounge to board the flight, which would take them and the young man's body to their home province for burial. I was told a little about the service. The pastor had not felt able to "talk to them freely about this disease". Instead he said that it does not matter how we die; what is important is that we turn back to God. To many of us, AIDS is still a shame.

There is confession in the face of a world living with HIV/AIDS, where God's children are dying of AIDS. "As people of faith, we have done much, and yet there is much we have avoided. We confess our silence. We confess that sometimes our words and deeds have been harmful, and have denied the dignity of each person. We preach the good news 'that all may have life', and yet we fear that we have contributed to death. It is time to speak the truth. It is time to speak only out of love. It is time to overcome fatigue and denial. And it is time to live in hope."[8] I was painfully aware of my own silence, my fear to speak the truth.

CONCLUSION

The very poor, especially women and children, are the most vulnerable to the HIV virus. AIDS is unique as a new disease, but, as a form of human suffering, it can teach us how to approach other tragedies. What we say about AIDS, within the context of theology, may have implications beyond AIDS, and possibly even for theology. The Catholic church, in a concerted call for compassion, has singled out AIDS, among all diseases.[9] More than

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coe.org/wcc/news/press/01/
hiv-aids-plan.html. Accessed September 1, 2002.

[8] Ibid.

[9] See, e.g., John Paul II, "Pope Addresses Vatican AIDS Conference", in *Origins* 19 (November 30, 1989), pp. 434-436; National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Called to

any disease, AIDS links sexuality, disease, guilt, shame, suffering, and death, in ways that grow more complex, when we place them in the context of the complex realities of poverty, race, gender, class, culture, and religion. AIDS asks not only for the church's pastoral response, but also for our theological attention, in order to find meaning within the context of faith.

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PROSTITUTES TALK OF GOD

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Smoke presupposes fire, and, for many, prostitution presupposes immorality. In this paper, I would like to present the result of research I did on prostitution in the Papua New Guinean (PNG) context. As a future minister of the word of God, attempting to make a difference in the lives of the people, I purposely picked this topic to help me come to know, and to understand, God's presence in our own real surroundings. Indeed, the primary aim of this work is to address theological questions, such as, where God is in relation to us, in the context of prostitution. In doing so, I may appear to be justifying prostitution, but, in reality, I want to end the practice. I am trying to address the dignity of the women concerned.

To respect the privacy of the women I interviewed, and those who helped me in this research, I will substitute other names for their real names. I would also like to stress that I am neither defending prostitution, nor condemning the women. What I am interested in are theological questions like, why is there evil? Where is God in this situation? Who is God to the prostitutes? What is Christ's attitude toward prostitution? How do others see prostitution? These questions are intended to promote discussion, and to invoke the Spirit, to unveil God to us, as the God we encounter in our own human experience, rather than the God, as written about by Jewish, Australian, New Yorker, or Thai theologians.

WHY IS THERE EVIL?

If God is all good, omnipotent, and love *in esse*, then why does evil exist? That is a philosophical question. In fact, evil is our doing. It is the "child" or "creature" parented by us. God created the world, and saw that everything was good. God is the sower, who sowed wheat, but someone else has sown

weeds (Matt 12:25). God entrusted this good world to us for our use, as we journey towards Him. Under our care, disorder or evil enters. From a simple argument between brothers, to traumatic killing, we have a long continuum of pain. The TV brings world hunger into our living rooms. Continued bloodshed in the conflict between Israel and Palestine keeps the Middle East in turmoil. Reports of the immoral behaviour of Catholic priests in America, and elsewhere, paralyse our faith. These give us a dramatic picture of the way our society, and our world of today, are crowded with human failings and sufferings.

To be more contextual, or focused, we can look at our situation, here in Papua New Guinea, and see many things that are sad, horrible, and detrimental. There is so much personal suffering and hidden pain around us, indeed in many of us. If we look at our own backyard, we find homelessness, poverty, and hunger. Rape and rascal activities appear almost daily in the pages of the newspapers. The economic crisis and political lobbying unveil corruption in our human society. The economic situation is so bad that prostitution, or the sale of sex, is employed by some women to make ends meet. Society condemns prostitution, as destroying human dignity, causing problems in family life, and leading to such issues as abortion, divorce, and sicknesses. For these and other reasons, the church condemns prostitution.

SILENT SUFFERING

Prostitution, indeed, is an obvious example of silent suffering. Prostitutes often see themselves as evil, immoral, and engaging in an illegal activity. They remain silent, and in hiding, in a land that claims to be Christian. Prostitutes are most often women, and these women are seeking love, help, acceptance, understanding, and support, but find none. These are women, driven by such circumstances as poverty and rejection, to sell their bodies to men. But where is the relationship? Is love possible? Is there any justice? Did God create women to become prostitutes? The answer is “no”, so why prostitution?

DEFINITION OF PROSTITUTION

After encountering and interviewing several prostitutes, I understand prostitution as:

> Prostitution is the unfree, chosen activity of a person, which entails offering oneself as a commodity for sexual activity. It is an act, which the person performs, to draw out good from evil. The end justifies the means, so to speak, as dictated by the choice between sadness and joy, poverty and wealth, and even death and life.

What the prostitutes shared, and how they define themselves as prostitutes, helped me to categorise them into these three groups:

1. *Professional prostitutes*: This group is well organised. They are very neat, and they do not stand beside the roads, nor go to brothels. They are the ones who supply the hotels, restaurants, businessmen, and politicians. They provide sex for a very high price. Most of them consume expensive alcohol. Providing good service for their customers is very vital. They are very strict with their safety (condom is a must).

2. *"Money talks" prostitutes*: This group is also an organised one, but, unlike the first, these prostitutes are present, almost anywhere in the town. They have a particular waiting place for picking up, which only they and their customers know. They are also in some secret brothels (two in 3-Mile and two in Waigani) not counting the nightclubs. They are available for sex, for any amount of money, but not less than K20. Sometimes they only have sex with men, in order to get alcohol or drugs. The famous expression of this group is "No money, no in".

3. *Student prostitutes*: This is hard to believe, but is a reality. At some of the places, mentioned above, you will find many students involved in sex for money. Some do it every day, because their parents do not check whether or not they are at school. Some do it during the weekend. The desire to avoid

> catching diseases makes this group very popular with men, as the young age of these girls leads men to think that they are "safe".

The three reasons, given by women I have spoken to, for becoming prostitutes are:

1. Money – the very obvious main reason.
2. Emergency shelter, or a home.
3. Alcohol or drugs.

REASONS FOR BEING A PROSTITUTE

Engaging in prostitution is not a free choice for most prostitutes. Rather, the situation decided their fate for them. Eight out of 10 prostitutes interviewed expressed bitterly that they did not freely choose to live such a life. According to Emily, "I have no other choice; my boyfriend left me unaided, with a child. I tried my luck at all sorts of jobs, but every door, or opportunity, closed in my face. . . . I often ask, what is wrong with me, everything turned upside down on me? Whom do I have to blame? Myself? My parents, school teachers, boyfriend . . . ah, maybe God?"[1]

Tania's stepfather raped her more than five times on different occasions. Trying to reveal the truth to her mother, resulted in anger and frustration, and being forced to leave the house. "No one listened to me, or believed me. Even the very one, who bore me in her womb, rejected me. My friends turned away, and gossiped about me. I was a good girl, but now I find no meaning in life. I do not deserve to be a prostitute, but what else can I do? Is there any justice out there?"[2]

[1] From an interview of Emily (fictitious name) at 3-Mile brothel on June 22, 2002.

[2] This is from an account of Tania's life story, as I interviewed her at Boroko (3-Mile brothel) on June 22, 2002.

Jennifer,[3] a student prostitute, aged 16 says, "At first, I was really afraid. I still remember the first time I had sex with a 50-year-old man. . . . Honestly, I did not enjoy what I was doing, but I was proud that, at least, I could give myself in order for my family to survive."

For Martina, prostitution is a fast way of getting money. "What do you get from your job after a fortnight – K150 or K200? This is not money. I do not want to spend all my time working for this amount. Doing this work (prostitution), I can earn at least K200 a night."[4]

WHERE IS GOD IN THIS SITUATION?

Listening to these women, I was deeply touched, and moved, to hear about their experiences. I encountered women, who ended up in a world they do not deserve, a world where they do not belong, a world not of their choice, or making. If we have a human heart, we can hear an inner voice inside our being crying out, "Where is justice? Is there any love? Is a lasting relationship possible?" From the deepest level of these questions arises the very fundamental question, "Where is God in this situation?"

Examining the history, or the life experiences of these women, makes it even more difficult for me to see God in their struggles and sufferings. How can I find God in a woman, who was raped by the one who was supposed to show her the love of God? Can I see God in the boyfriend, who left behind a mother with an unaided child? Can I see God in a mother, who sells her daughter for the sake of money? Absolutely not! It is impossible.

However, seeing this problem through the eyes of faith, one can clearly see that God was and is always with them in their struggles and sufferings. God suffered together with Jennifer trying to decide whether to lose her dignity, for the sake of her brothers and sister. Together with Emily, He was abused by the ones He loved and trusted. Together with Tania, He was rejected by

[3] Jennifer's father left her mother with one sister and three brothers while they were very young. She is still at school, but her mother forced her to become a prostitute, in order to help the family.

[4] Martina is a mother of three children. Her husband has died, and now she wants to be a prostitute full-time.

His own people. This reminds us of the silent suffering of Job, yet God was very much with him. Here we must keep in mind that God is closer to the sinner, sick, poor, and orphan than the righteous. "I have come to call not the righteous, but the sinners" (Matt 9:12). Society does not listen to the cries of a woman, who is hungry, or who has people to feed, but, once such a woman turns to prostitution as a problem solver, society is very quick in its condemnation.

JESUS CHRIST AND PROSTITUTION

For all Christians, Jesus Christ is, and remains, their hero. He is the perfect example of love and forgiveness. He is the lamb of sacrifice. His deeds and words are ever remembered and treasured.

Some men and women, inspired by the life of Christ, take vows of celibacy, obedience, and poverty, and endeavour to follow His footsteps on earth. Christ becomes their model. These men and women are respected and admired for their courage and commitment to live for Christ, by serving His people. Can we see this in the life of the prostitutes? The popular answer is "no", but some prostitutes see themselves as followers of Christ. This may be unbelievable, but, to understand this, one has to think from the situation of a prostitute, and not that of a theologian or scholar.

Out of love, God sent His only Son as the sacrifice to pay for our sin. Out of love, Jesus died a very shameful death. What about the woman, who, out of her love for her son, or daughter, or family, becomes a prostitute? She loses her dignity, is judged as evil, and is rejected by society, yet she sacrifices herself for the sake of others.

Hanging half-naked on the cross is a very cruel death. This dehumanises the person. In this way, Jesus "lost" His dignity for our sake. Are there any parallels between Jesus, half-naked on a cross, and the shame of a prostitute? Prostitution is probably the last thing that any woman could wish for. One of the women interviewed, observed, "This is something, which I can't publicly admit. It is not like saying to someone I am a clerk, or driver, or a government minister, because, by saying that you are a prostitute, you no

longer are assured of a place in society."[5] Jennifer puts it like this, "I am not proud of being a prostitute, but I am proud that I am able to save my brothers and sister. Just like Jesus, who offered His hands and feet for the nails, His face for the crown of thorns, and His side for the lance, I offer my whole self, because of my love for my family."

Jesus did not condemn the sinful woman, who anointed His feet. He knew she had suffered a lot, and He said to her, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Luke 7:50). To the woman, caught in adultery, He said, "I do not condemn you either. Go, but do not sin again" (John 8:11). We need to remember that Jesus took with Him a thief to paradise, while Mary Magdalene (a former prostitute?) went around as the first witness to spread the news of the resurrection.

WHO IS GOD FOR THE PROSTITUTES?

When we try to describe the God we believe in, much of what we say is the mere echoing of what we have been taught. Very few describe God from our own personal encounter or experience of God. It is interesting, and perhaps surprising, that the prostitutes, in recounting their personal experiences, saw God in a very real way.

Most of the prostitutes said that God, for them, is the God who is understanding and accepting of them, despite their sin. "I know that many people do not approve of our source of income, or of what we have become, but God understands, and accepts us, as we are. You men . . . are like animals, all you want from us is our body (the hole in someone's body), just for pleasure, and not for love."[6] For them, God is the one they desire to be united with one day. God is the only one who can restore their dignity. Here, some see God as their only "love", the one they "trust", and the one with whom they do have a lasting relationship. They even see God as their protector, "I always pray that God will protect me from any disease or

[5] Taken from an interview with Tania.

[6] This account is from an interview with Annie (a pick-up prostitute). Interview at a Port Moresby Secondary School, on June 6, 2002.

danger."[7] We read in the letter to the Hebrews that "God loved us with so much love that He was generous with His mercy."

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper is not meant to encourage prostitutes in doing what we all know as something immoral. My intention is that this paper should help us in our exploration and search for a better understanding of God in our own context. In other words, this should help us to describe God in our own words and world.

Who is God for us, in the situation in which we find ourselves, is the key issue behind this paper. Who God is for a bishop, priest, or a theological student is different from who God is to a mechanic, pilot, or doctor. In this way, prostitutes also see and understand God in a different way, according to their own experiences, and personal encounters, in the situation they are in.

Actually doing theology in our own context is not an easy task. Sometimes, we think that only foreign theologians give us the truth about God. This is wrong, and is one of the major obstacles for Melanesians doing theology in Melanesia.

In theological reflection, we must not limit God, because God is greater than what one can ever say or think. God cannot be limited by any definition or formula. God should be spoken of from the richness of each and everyone's experience, and from the context of every culture. God is not only for the Jews, or Australians, or Americans, or for Rome to theologise about, and categorise for others. God is for the entire, created world. God is the universal God, and we, as creatures of the universe, must try to contribute to the ultimate goal of our being, that is, to be with God – a God of mercy and compassion.

[7] Ibid.

A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE SUFFERING OF INNOCENT AIDS VICTIMS

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INTRODUCTION

Almost every day, hundreds of innocent lives fall victim, either at the hands of others, or due to natural disasters. Historical events, such as the havoc of Hiroshima,[1] the holocaust,[2] and the bubonic plague,[3] are examples of calamities that have resulted in the loss of millions of innocent lives, leaving countless others to suffer. But, the most dangerous, I think, is the AIDS epidemic, which is currently increasing at an alarming rate, and is threatening the world population. It is more dangerous, because, even with modern scientific research and technology, a cure has not yet been discovered, and the deadly virus is spreading rapidly and unchecked.

Globally, more than 25 to 30 million people are infected with HIV, and the figure is multiplying dramatically.[4] According to Dr Clement Malau, of the PNG National AIDS Council, almost 100 Papua New Guineans contract the AIDS virus every month.[5] Unfortunately, more than half of these are

[1] The atomic bomb that the US dropped on Hiroshima during the Second World War in 1945 killed some 200,000 people. Stanley Weinstein, "Hiroshima", in *Kodasha Encyclopedia of Japan* 3 (1983), p. 149.

[2] During the Second World War, some six million European Jews died in the concentration camps of the Nazis. Stuard Berg Flexner, et al, eds, *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, 2nd edn, unabridged, New York NY: Random House, 1987, p. 912.

[3] The bubonic plague, known as the Black Death, of the 14th century killed almost a quarter of the population [Ibid., p. 217].

[4] Lawrence Hammar, "AIDS, STDs, and Sex Work in Papua New Guinea", in *Modern Papua New Guinea*, Tamakushi: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1998, p. 257.

[5] *Post-Courier*, June 5, 2002, p. 29.

innocent victims. They are either mothers, who are victimised by unfaithful husbands, or *vice versa*, children by infected parents, women by rapists, and youngsters from promiscuous, premarital sex. How can the innocents bear the injustice done to them? This is the principal issue I intend to address in this paper.

My reflection begins with the image in a media advertisement of the campaign against AIDS. I acknowledge that there are innocent husbands, who are victimised by unfaithful wives, but, for this particular paper, my focus is on mothers and children. When televised on EMTV, the victim mother reveals in a low, sad voice,

> I never thought AIDS would affect my family.
> I was always faithful to my husband, but he got the virus.
> It was only when I gave birth that I found out, I got the AIDS virus . . .
> and now my baby has it, too.[6]

In this simple, but highly emotional, statement, she expresses her innocence, and the intensity of her suffering.

THE NATURE OF SUFFERING

Suffering is an experience of physical, mental, and/or psychological pain, which results from a disorder in one's life, that poses a threat to one's very existence. Furthermore, "Suffering is something, which is still wider than sickness, more complex, and, at the same time, still more deeply rooted in humanity itself."[7] When innocent people are victimised by HIV/AIDS, they understandably undergo a time of intense suffering.

Although suffering from HIV/AIDS is universal, each individual experience differs. In addition to the associated illnesses, and the inevitable deprivation of life, men often experience suffering, in terms of loss of their job, strength, fame, prestige, and the like, which are more external, whereas women will be

[6] This particular advertisement appears frequently, both on EMTV, and in PNG newspapers.

[7] John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, Editrice Vaticana (1983), p. 7.

more likely to experience inner suffering, such as that of the woman in the media advertisement: "and now my baby has it, too". Their suffering comes from within, ranging from loss of dignity, to severe depression, as a result of betrayal of love, and loss in a relationship.

PAIN OF BETRAYAL

A woman enters marriage with the hope of a good and lasting relationship with her husband, and of them being able to raise a happy family. However, the unfaithfulness of the husband poses a threat to the well-being of the mother, and thus jeopardises her hope for a better future.

On realising the unfaithfulness of her husband, she will feel rejected, perhaps concluding that he no longer loves her, otherwise he would not have gone to other women, thus ending up with the AIDS virus. As a result, her self-esteem is jeopardised. She feels useless, and neglected by the person she is committed to share her life with.

The pain of betrayal is a bitter experience, especially if one's best friend has betrayed you. The mother in the advertisement declares that she was always faithful to her husband, but it was he who got the virus, and victimised her. This is outright betrayal. For the love and faithfulness that she offered him all the years, she is "rewarded" with the deadly virus. It is the worst form of betrayal imaginable. It is like Judas handing over Jesus to those who would crucify him. Innocent people, who have been, or are being, victimised, are in this situation, experiencing extreme suffering, brought upon them by unfaithful partners.

DEPRESSION FROM REJECTION

In addition, our Papua New Guinean society, being more patriarchal, accuses such innocent mothers, and denies them social contact. Even their families, in fear of contracting the virus, and/or out of shame, frequently refuse to offer any help. Hence, they feel like outcasts and aliens in their own family and society. All these factors further intensify their suffering.

Such rejection can be unbearable, especially when they are innocent. How can they live positively in a society that rejects them? There have been

several AIDS-related suicides, because the suffering of rejection was too much for them. I have been told by a witness, of a young girl from Minj, in Western Highlands Province, who locked herself in, and burnt down the house, because the people accused her, and even her own family rejected her, for bringing shame upon them.[8] This is just one example of many similar unpublicised incidents happening in our society today.

Rejection is also true for infants, who are born with the virus. In cases where their parents are sick or dying with AIDS, and are unable to care for them, many relatives seem to ignore the infected babies. They see them as useless. I have seen some such children being looked after by the Charity Sisters in Port Moresby.

DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

Every human person has a right to life. We plan for our future with bright hopes and dreams, but not everyone lives long enough to achieve these goals, because they die young, due to natural causes, or at the hands of other people. Like many other victims, the mother in the advertisement knows that she and her baby will not live long enough to actualise their plans and dreams in life. Knowing that her death is inevitable, she experiences a thorn in the flesh. What is more painful, as a mother, is the thought of her other children, who will have to struggle through life as orphans, without their mother. Who will love and care for them? In societies, like those in Melanesia, where family ties are quite strong, dying mothers can be assured that their relatives will care for their children. Even then, for a mother to die young, leaving her children orphans, would be more painful than if one had no children.

Unlike the suffering of those involved in accidents, or other calamities, that causes instant death, and where the duration of pain is short, such mothers, who are victimised with the HIV/AIDS virus, experience a prolonged suffering. They live, knowing that death is imminent. How would such a mother possibly cope with life? Such suffering is a nightmare.

[8] Personal communication, Br Paul Walua from Mt Hagen.

In order to assist victims, humanitarian measures have been taken, worldwide. Medical specialists work around the clock to help people live longer, while social workers and psychotherapists volunteer to offer specialised counselling, with the hope of restoring lost self-esteem. The results are quite commendable, but, with a cure yet to be discovered, suffering persists. The only hope for many is to look to God. Some ask, hoping for some sort of miracle, but to no avail.

Where is the loving God (John 3:16) that Christianity preaches about? What kind of a God lets the innocent suffer unjustly? Such questions linger in the troubled minds of many victims. For them, life seems to become an experience of "hell". They discover the fact that "The world we live in often seems very far from the one promised us by faith. Our experiences of evil, and suffering, injustice, and death, seem to contradict the good news." [9] To all sentiments, what would be the proper Christian response?

DIFFERENT RESPONSES

1. FUNDAMENTALIST APPROACH

People respond differently to the issue, according to their diverse attitudes. Some respond in a fundamentalist way, believing that AIDS is a punishment from God. In Wabag town, a preacher once said that, because the world is full of evil, with licentious sexual practices, God has sent AIDS to eliminate this evil generation, just as he did to Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:12-29). Some even go to the extreme of interpreting the illness as one of the seven bowls of God's wrath, given in the book of Revelation (16:1-21). They condemn all people, who have the virus, and classify them as sinners. This trend of thought is still in the minds of many, though it is not as widespread as it was a few years ago.

The converse of thinking that AIDS affects sinners is to think that good people will not catch the virus, even if they have sexual relations with infected persons, or engage in other means of contracting the virus, such as blood transfusion, tattooing, etc.[10] In that case, what about the many

[9] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #164.

[10] Movement leaders have been heard preaching this in some Catholic churches.

innocent mothers and children, who are being infected everywhere, which is the subject matter of my concern here? This fundamentalist response to the situation is unChristian and inhuman.

On the contrary, there are some, who rely on miracles. These people assure the victims of God's healing power, and pray for the victims, encouraging them to repent, and to believe that God will heal them. Of course, miraculous healings are possible through God's divine grace and mercy.[11] But even the most intense prayers do not always obtain the healing of all illnesses.

2. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Some people take a middle course, trying to be neither judgmental nor to rely entirely on divine intervention. I prefer to call this the humanitarian approach. Here, people play the role of the good Samaritan. They sympathise with the victims, and give humanitarian aid, as a means of comforting them. Some even offer them the love and concern denied by the victims' own families and community. By caring for the sick, they fulfil the mission Jesus entrusts to every Christian. But, does our sympathy heal their deepest hurts? Is their fundamental problem, the question of their innocent suffering, solved by our love and concern? Maybe, to certain extent, it is, but sympathy does not eradicate the root cause, nor does it give any better coping strategy. In fact, it could make them feel even more helpless and dependent. I don't argue that this approach is wrong. However, my question is whether it is sufficient to address the problem at stake.

While, on the one hand, people who have contracted the HIV virus might be relieved to be helped, on the other hand, they might feel unhappy to be regarded as a handicap in their family and society, when they feel that they can still live a normal life. Here, I refer to those who are HIV positive, but still strong and well enough to look after themselves and their family for some time – like the mother on the media advertisement. I doubt if they would be comfortable to be addressed as HIV/AIDS victims, since our

[11] At Teremanda village, near Wabag, an interdenominational group of about seven to ten women usually go to pray for AIDS victims. I personally witnessed one full-blown AIDS victim, who was miraculously healed through them in 2001.

society tends to portray such a negative image of those who are tested and found to be positive.

If love and concern, in the form of material support, cannot completely liberate them from the misery of suffering, then what else would be a better means? At this point, what really matters is to venture deeper into the mystery of suffering.

3. JESUS THE MODEL

The suffering of the innocent is part of the issue of the problem of evil. It is a mystery that many find difficult to understand – like Job in the Old Testament, who could not comprehend why, innocent though he was, he had to suffer unjustly. The only solution lies in the suffering of Jesus. We have to approach the question of the origin of evil through our faith in the One who conquered evil.

Although He was innocent, Jesus experienced the same kind of betrayal from Judas, rejection from His own people, and even felt totally abandoned by His Father, as indicated by his utterance of Ps 22:1, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me." The innocent victims can be assured that, even if the world is against them, and that God seems to be far away, at least they can be assured that Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, went through that experience. There is no guarantee, but perhaps this will make some sense to the innocent AIDS victims, who are suffering from betrayal, and rejection, and are in danger of abandoning their faith. Even then, they might still wonder why Jesus suffered, and why we have to follow suit?

Jesus did not suffer for nothing. His suffering had redemptive significance. Foreseeing our salvation, He willingly accepted suffering, and eventually, death. Similarly, in order for one to accept suffering, one needs to unveil its salvific dimension, in the light of Jesus' suffering.

SALVIFIC DIMENSION OF SUFFERING

In May, 2001, I attended a youth rally in Goroka. During one of the sessions, a woman named Margaret was invited to give a talk on AIDS.[12] During the session, she raised the same sentiments as the victim mother on the media advertisement. However, she added further,

> At first, I was frustrated with my husband for giving me the virus . . . but I forgave him. And now, I am not ashamed any more, but, instead, am happy to come out and be actively involved in the campaign against AIDS. I want to share my experience with many others, so that they can prevent themselves from getting AIDS.[13]

Here is a concrete example of an innocent mother, who has found meaning in her suffering, through the light of Christ's redemptive suffering. Furthermore, a person not only discovers the salvific meaning of his/her suffering, but above all, he/she becomes a complete new person, and has a new calling in life, as we see in the example of Margaret.

One victim revealed this during an interview, "AIDS is a real blessing for me, because it has made me confront and resolve issues, which, otherwise, I wouldn't have to face."[14]

Like Margaret, or the mother on the media advertisement, some others also come to perceive their suffering as life giving, not only for themselves, but also for the whole community. Max and Maura Mea are a young couple, who are both HIV positive, but are actively involved in the campaign against AIDS. Max says, "People, who are HIV positive, can contribute a lot to

[12] Margaret is an innocent AIDS victim, whose husband died some years ago. She is a mother from Ialibu, SHP, and is currently actively involved in the campaign against AIDS. She goes to many different places to share her experience of living positively with the virus.

[13] From Margaret's speech on AIDS to youths at The 5th Highlands Regional Catholic Youth Rally in Goroka, May 2001.

[14] Steve Pizaro, "The Church has AIDS", in *Compass* 25-1 (1991), p. 33.

PNG by sharing their experiences of the disease, and by educating others about its dangers."[15]

The fact that these people are now ready to share their experience of living with HIV/AIDS is a positive sign that they have overcome their suffering, by discovering a new life within their very suffering – a life free from depression and sense of uselessness, to reach out to love others. This discovery is possible only by uniting one's own suffering with that of Christ.[16]

Additionally, the lives of innocent children, like the baby in the media advertisement, have a special message for us. With no voice uttered, they pronounce to the world that human life is on the brink of extinction, since the prime means of transmitting the virus is through the very means of procreation.

In this way, "Suffering . . . acquires a new meaning; it becomes a participation in the saving work of Jesus."[17] Paul exclaimed, "I am now rejoicing in my suffering for your sake, and, in my flesh, I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions, for the sake of His body, that is the church" (Col 1:24).

In practice, to live positively with AIDS is not easy, yet some have accepted it in a positive way. Many more are still suffering, and, each day, the number increases. To be judgmental, and ignore them, is unChristian and inhuman. Longing for divine intervention cannot be relied upon. Mere sympathy, and a show of solidarity with the suffering, are good, but do not eradicate the problem. What then is the best way to relate to them?

CONCLUSION

If some people have reached the stage of living positively with the HIV/AIDS virus, then there is the chance that others, who are suffering with the same virus, can do likewise. It is the prime responsibility of everyone in society to assist the victims, in the best possible way for them to come to this stage.

[15] "Hope for Living", in *The National: The Weekender*, Friday, May 31, 2002, p. 4.
[16] John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, p. 61.
[17] *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* #1521.

This can be achieved by helping them to realise their usefulness in the community, and the life-giving aspect of their suffering. It can only be possible if we can clearly show how God can be present in the midst of their suffering, and even in death.

Counsellors, religious personnel, and all Christian faithful have a very important role in this – to help them accept their suffering, in the light of Christ's innocent suffering, and to live positively with it. This will surely make a great difference in their lives. Their positive living could also be life giving for others.

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