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MELANESIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

**THE SPIRIT AND THE TAO OF THEOLOGICAL
EDUCATION IN ASIA**

Choan-Seng Song

**COPING WITH NUCLEAR EXILE
A Kiribati Community in the Solomon Islands**

Erona Tarakabu

GOD AS THE SOURCE OF WEALTH

Garry Trompf

**REPORT
The Ethics of Development**

**DOCUMENTATION
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Response**

**SPECIAL REVIEW
Living Theology in Melanesia: A Reader**

BOOK REVIEWS – RECENT THESES – INDEX

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EDITORIAL

A Time of Transition

To say that the newly-independent nations of the Pacific are in a stage of transition is to state the obvious. What is not so obvious are the implications this experience of transition has for cultural identity and theological reflection. The transition has both economic and religious dimensions, but these are usually studied separately. Several contributions to this issue of **MJT** try to correlate them. An excerpt from the B.D. thesis of **Erona Tarakabu** gives a first-hand account of the pressures faced by his people from the Gilbert Islands (now Kiribati), when nuclear testing forced them to emigrate to the Solomon Islands, with their more-economically active and religiously-plural society. **Garry Trompf**, in a stimulating paper, examines the subtle influences of the cash economy and consumer society on religious thinking. And a report on the Waigani Seminar, with the theme “The Ethics of Development”, suggests that we have hardly begun to come to grips with the moral and religious dimensions of development.

The Executive of MATS has proposed that the Association’s eighth Study Institute, to be held in Lae late September or early October, take as its theme either “Appropriate Theology of Liberation for Melanesia” or “Theology by the People: a Force for Justice, Development, and Peace?” Whichever topic is finally chosen, both express an underlying concern to bring the religious experience and Christian faith of Melanesians to bear on the problems of transition posed by independence and development.

Recalling the theme of our last issue on “The Melanesian Spirit in Theology”, we are privileged to present a paper by the distinguished Taiwanese theologian **Choan-Seng Song**, and to review one of his recent books. We hope that both will be an inspiring example to Melanesian theologians who are searching for the “spirit”, which will become their medium for expressing the work of the Spirit in Melanesia. They should receive further encouragement from a special

review of the MATS anthology of theological writing from Melanesia by **Garry Trompf**.

Another aspect of transition is the movement of Christian churches towards greater unity. A group of local churches has participated in this movement by producing a Melanesian response to the World Council of Churches' Lima Document on Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry, which is published here for the first time. Two recent books on BEM are reviewed as a further incentive to use this document as a basis for ecumenical dialogue.

We are pleased to welcome Fr Christopher Garland of Newton College, Popondetta, as the new Anglican representative on our editorial board. At the same time, we record with sorrow that Revd Roger Jordahl of Martin Luther Seminary has been forced to return to the United States by ill health, and Fr Theo Aerts has been recalled to Europe for the same reason. We wish them both a speedy recovery. As a final variation on the theme of transition, I have to announce that I will be relinquishing the editorship of **MJT** later this year, as I have been appointed Director of the Irish School of Ecumenics in Dublin, Republic of Ireland, from 1 September. I should like to take this opportunity of thanking my colleagues in MATS, and at the Melanesian Institute, for the help and encouragement they have given in launching **MJT**, and to the printing department of the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Ukarumpa, for consistently turning the finished journal into a quality product. Over and above all this, however, it is the ecumenical experience of working closely with Melanesian Christians of various confessional backgrounds for which I am most deeply grateful. May God continue to bless their collaboration in developing a truly indigenous and ecumenical theology for Melanesia.

John D'Arcy May
Executive Editor.

THE SPIRIT AND THE TAO OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN ASIA

Choan-Seng Song

*The following article was read as the keynote address at a workshop on “Management and Accountability in Theological Education”, held in Singapore, July 15-17, 1985, and hosted by the Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA). It was brought to our attention by Revd Kasek Kautil, Secretary/Treasurer of MATS, who attended the workshop (see his Report, **MJT** 2 (1986) 215-218. We are grateful to Dr Song, and to Dr Yeow Choo Lak, Executive Secretary of ATESEA, for permission to reproduce this stimulating paper.*

Chuang-tsu was a great Taoist philosopher of China in the third century BC. A mystic, he spiced his philosophical discourse with profound witticism and marvellous humour, that could only have come from his keen observation of the natural world, and the human society around him. Here is one of his most-insightful masterpieces that may help illuminate the main concern of this Assembly: Management and Accountability in Theological Education.

Prince Wen Hui’s cook was carving up an ox. Every touch of his hand, every heave of his shoulder, every step of his foot, every thrust of his knee, with the slicing and parting of the flesh, and the zinging of the knife – all were in perfect rhythm, just like the Dance of the Mulberry Grove, or a part in the Ching Shou symphony.

Prince Wen remarked, “How wonderfully you have mastered your art.”

The cook laid down his knife and said, “What your servant really cares for is Tao, which goes beyond mere art. When I first began to cut up oxen, I saw nothing but oxen. After three years of practising, I no longer saw the ox as a whole. I now work with my spirit, not with my

eyes. My senses stop functioning and my spirit takes over. I follow the natural grain, letting the knife find its way through the many hidden openings, taking advantage of what is there, never touching a ligament or tendon, much less a main joint.

“A good cook changes his knife once a year because he cuts, while a mediocre cook has to change his every month because he hacks. I have had this knife of mine for 19 years, and have cut up thousands of oxen with it, and yet the edge is as if it were fresh from the grindstone. There are spaces between the joints. The blade of the knife has no thickness. That which has no thickness has plenty of room to pass through these spaces. Therefore, after 19 years, my blade is as sharp as ever. However when I come to a difficulty, I size up the joint, look carefully, keep my eyes on what I am doing, and work slowly. Then with a very slight movement of the knife, I cut the whole ox wide open. It falls apart like a clod of earth crumbling to the ground. I stand there with the knife in my hand, looking about me with a feeling of accomplishment and delight. Then I wipe the knife clean and put it away.”¹

“Well done!” said the Prince. “From the words of my cook, I have learned the secret of growth.”

What a feat! What consummation of skill! **Lu huò ch’ùn ch’in**, in Chinese, literally meaning “the stove fire for concocting the elixir of life begins to give a pure glow”! Chuang-tsu would laugh at us if we envy the cook. A liberated mystic like him would consider envy – any sort of envy – as immaturity of the spirit, hindering the attainment of Tao. Still, the imagery of the act of the body perfected into the art of the spirit commands our admiration. It also invites those of us engaged in theological education, and seeking to improve, if not to perfect, the art of management and accountability in relation to time and resources, to see if we have something to learn from that imagery.

1. Chuang-tsu, **Inner Chapters**, trans. Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English (London: Wildwood House, 1974) p. 55.

To Break the Status Quo

The word “art” has come to mean, for us, specific things, such as, painting, music, sculpture, drama, or dance. Theology is, then, not an art; it neither sings, nor dances. And the management of it, from curriculum-making to allocation of faculty housing, is anything but an art; it is a mundane business that can turn into serious contention from time to time. As to accountability, it is more a matter of political sagacity than artistic flair; it is the ability to maintain a balanced budget, and to keep the board, the faculty, and students more or less happy, despite uncertainty and worries. To quote the parody of Hans Hoekendjik, the Dutch missiologist: “Now these three things remain: faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of these is – the status quo.”

The status quo is one of the last things the world, including the Christian church, and theology, can be proud of. On the contrary, the status quo conjures up all sorts of horrible realities and imageries of those realities. The status quo in politics in Asia today carries out a cold-blooded assassination of an opposition leader by the military, in broad daylight, even before he sets foot on the tarmac of the airport at his homecoming. It imprisons rival politicians before a general election is held to ensure the victory of those in power. It holds a nation in a state of perpetual siege, under constant police surveillance. And it keeps citizens captive to the state ideology fabricated by the rulers to justify their insatiable appetite for power.

The status quo in economy means the laissez-faire policy that enables the rich and the powerful to fix the rules of competition, and the conditions of labour. It supports the exploitative commercial and industrial practices imposed on the industrially less-developed nations for the profit of the industrialised nations. It perpetuates the tragic division of the world into the wealthy north and the impoverished south. It creates an inhuman situation, in which the poorest pine away at the starvation level, with 1,240 calories a day, while the richest stuff

themselves with 4,290 calories in one country, and in another, the poor with 940 calories daily, and the rich with 3,150 calories.²

The status quo in the military culture, that today dominates superpower politics between East and West, has produced thousands of nuclear warheads that could annihilate our Mother Earth with a nuclear winter of ultimate horror. It is supported by the belief that the ideological conflicts between the two superpowers are unresolvable, except through superiority in the nuclear technology that now threatens the world with “star wars”. “A cold winter of the soul” is already here,³ putting into question the value and meaning of life, and the purpose and destiny of creation.

The status quo that perpetuates abuse of political power, economic exploitation, or a nuclear arms race, justified by ideological conflicts, brings devastating results to the quality of human life, and casts a dark shadow over the future of the world. But, thank God, there are movements to counteract political authoritarianism, to redress economic injustice, or to fight the demonic forces of military culture. This prompts us to ask whether church and theology are also bedevilled by their own status quo, and play, willy-nilly, a part in the perpetuation of the status quo that despises human dignity, corrupts human relationships, obscures the meaning of history, and clouds the vision of life. This is a soul-searching question on all levels of the life and work of the church, including theological education. This is also a very personal question that demands an answer from each one of us in the quietness of our soul.

To break the status quo that discredits the church, immobilises theological education, and reduces theology to traditional stereotypes and clichés, what has to be done? To give more moral exhortation? But do we not have enough of it, Sunday after Sunday, from the pulpit? To lay more stress on Christian discipleship? But, has it not always

2. The countries referred to are Brazil and India. Cf. Susan George, **How the Other Half Dies – the Real Problems for World Hunger** (London: Penguin Books, 1977), pp. 40-41.

3. John E. Mark, “Look Inside, Look Outside, Nuclear Winter Is Here”, **International Herald Tribune**, February 25, 1985, p. 6.

been a central part of our theological training? To meditate more deeply on how to imitate Christ? But, have we not done enough to cultivate the cult of imitation? Or to convince ourselves and others that grace cannot be had at the expense of the law? But, is it not the case that, at the end of the day, we realise that grace, dignified with law, and law blessed with grace, still elude us?

It is evident that we need something different from all these familiar approaches to change the stalemate in the church, to overcome stagnation in theology, and to break the status quo of theological education. For those of us engaged in theology, and responsible for theological education in Asia, time is overdue to strike out on a new theological path, to remould the contents of theological education, and to generate new dignity in theological vocation. How do we go about it, then? Perhaps we can learn from Chuang-tsu's cook – the cook who perfected the profession of carving up oxen into an art, and brought beauty, elegance, and dignity into it. If even such a secular profession can be perfected into a divine art, then, why not the vocation of interpreting, proclaiming, and practising the Word of God?

Mastering the Art of Doing Theology

Prince Wen, watching his cook carve up an ox, exclaimed: “How wonderfully you have mastered your art!” How suggestive is the word “art” used by Prince Wen! He did not say, “How wonderfully the cook mastered his profession.” It was not a profession, he saw. It did not occur to him to say what a wonderful butcher the cook was. For what he saw was not a butcher, but an artist. Chuang-tsu's description of the cook at work explains it all: “Every touch of his hand, every heave of his shoulder, every step of his food, every thrust of his knee . . . all were in perfect rhythm, just like the dance of the Mulberry Grove, or a part in the Ching Shou symphony.” If this is not art, what is it, then?

We must grasp a deeper meaning of the word “art” here. Art is “creative work, making and doing of things that display form, beauty,

and unusual perception”.⁴ Something that can be called art has to be, in the first place, creative. Imitation is not art; for it is not creative. It presupposes the creativeness of others, not the imitator himself/herself. How much imitation we have done in our churches, from church order and polity to liturgical formula! And how much imitation we have made in theology, from Bible exegesis to theological curriculum! As to repetition, of course there is no modicum of creativeness required for it. In theology, we have become masters of repetition. We repeat what has been said by others in totally different situations. We repeat those abstruse theological formulations that presuppose entirely foreign contexts. In short, we have imitated and repeated “venerable” traditions of “the fathers and brothers” of the church. (I said fathers and brothers advisedly!). This has stifled our independent thinking. It has deprived us of theological creativeness. We have taken independent thinking for deviation from truth. We have been timid about theological creativeness, as if it will do us mischief, and lead us astray.

Not so with Jesus. He was and remains a most-independent thinker and creative theologian. “You have learned that our forebears were told . . . but what I tell you is this . . .”, he said, over and over, to his tradition-bound religious opponents. They must have been outraged. A tremendously creative power made His ministry entirely different from what people knew. “What is this?”, they said, dumbfounded on the one hand, and excited on the other. “A new kind of teaching! He speaks with authority” (Mark 1:27). Jesus did not imitate what others had done. Nor did He repeat what had been said before. His life and ministry were marked with irrepressible creativity and irresistible originality. Of course, we are not Jesus. But, surely, we can afford to share a little of His creativity, and to be inspired by His originality.

Art, when creative, takes distinctive forms. This is the next point we must consider. Everything has a form. It is by a particular form that things are recognised and identified. But not everything that has

4. See **Webster’s New World Dictionary** (New York/Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1970), under the word “art”.

form can be called artistic. For a thing to be truly artistic, be it dance, music, a piece of literature, and, in our case, doing theology, it has to have a form that distinguishes itself from other forms. It must have a form that breaks forms. It must be articulated in a form that is freed from forms. It must become embodied in a form that transcends forms. It must create a form that surpasses forms. It is the form of that cook carving up an ox. Each and every movement of his is in perfect rhythm. It is a form without form. It is a form beyond form.

In contrast, our churches are too formalised, too much encrusted in forms, too much conscious of forms. The burden of the forms inherited from the past, and from elsewhere, is heavy. There is no wonder, no astonishment, no expectation, no surprise. Art is not art when it has none of these qualities. It is mimicking, not arting. Our theology, too, has no distinctive form. It has not acquired a form freed from inherited forms. It has not created a form that is in rhythm with the prophetic form found in the Bible. It has not built a form in tune with the symphony God must have been playing in Asia since the beginning of the creation. Our theology has not yet become a creative art.

Not so with Jesus. His lifestyle was scandalously distinctive. As a rabbi, he dared to be friend of gentiles, and those Jews who made themselves as gentiles, that is, tax collectors and sinners, people excluded from God's salvation by the religious authorities. His form of teaching was startlingly different. He taught everywhere, in the fields, at the marketplaces, as well as in the synagogue. And He taught everyone, children, as well as adults, women, as well as men. And the form of His ministry had no precedent. His was the ministry that empowered the poor and the powerless, comforted the sorrowful, and brought the forgiveness of God to those tormented by sin and illness. Here was a great artist, who created a form that rendered all other forms formless.

Art, if creative and distinctive in form, must be beautiful. Art is not art if it does not exude beauty. Beauty here does not mean sensual beauty. It is beauty that is informed by truth, carries voices from the depths of the human heart, and reflects the light that shines out of

God's work of love in creation and in human community. "One thing I seek," says a psalmist, is "to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord!" There is so little of that in our church, and in our theology. Our church has a morbid fear of the wrath of the Lord. Our theology is obsessed with God's anger. But, perceiving God too much as wrathful, reflects a pathological captivity to sin, and leads to legal settlement with God in penance. Sinning even becomes a pervert pleasure. But God is more beautiful than wrathful. God's beauty is the beauty of love. It is the beauty of justice. It is also the beauty of freedom. It is this love, justice, and freedom, in all its beauty, that Jesus imparted to that woman who anointed His head with costly oil, and wet His feet with her tears, when he said to her: "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Luke 7:50).

Art, creative, distinctive in form, and beautiful, has to have unusual perception. Without it, no creative art can be born. Lacking it, art will have no distinctive form. And devoid of it, art gets divorced from beauty. It becomes banal, routine, superficial, and corrupt. It is not art any more. But, when unusual perception is applied to what you do, you become an artist. If ox-carving in Chuang-tsu's story could become an art, then why not the doing of theology? If that cook could train himself to be an artist, then why not us theologians? The key question is whether we have developed the power of unusual perception, and brought it to bear on our vocation – preparing lectures, teaching in the classroom, making budgets, or improving seminary facilities.

Jesus was endowed with power of unusual perception. That power enabled Him to link God's love with birds of the air and lilies in the field. It made Him most decisive about priorities: refraining from any action on the Sabbath, as prescribed in the law, or healing a sick person, despite the law? It gave Him the insight to know that the poor, and not the rich, the powerless, and not the powerful, those who suffer and shed tears, and not those who laugh at the expense of others, are the bearers of God's kingdom. How unusual His power of perception into the reality of things seen and unseen! With that power, Jesus saw through the hypocrisy and corruption practised by the religious leaders of His day. "Alas for you, lawyers and Pharisees, hypocrites!", Jesus

was reported to have addressed the religious leaders, held by people in fear and awe. “You clean the outside of cup and dish, which you filled inside by robbery and self-indulgence” (Matt. 23:25). That power of unusual perception exposed the evil parts of human nature, disclosed the dark secrets behind religious piety, and revealed as lies the traditions taught as truth. Jesus’ messianic ministry is unthinkable without this power of unusual perception. If we are to be part of Jesus’ messianic ministry, do we not also have to be equipped with power of unusual perception?

Management of theological education can be made into an art, manifesting creativeness. To be creative takes courage. It questions, from time to time, the familiar patterns that have exhausted their usefulness. To be creative demands openness. It opens us to new ways and possibilities, such as using a word processor instead of a manual typewriter, switching from abacus to computer. But openness requires us not to become enslaved to those gadgets of this technological age, but to be above them. After all, the machine is made for human beings, not human beings for the machine. Unless the use of modern technology, in managing theological education, becomes a human art, we are just part of the world that dehumanises humanity with its mindless manipulation of the human mind and spirit through ever-expanding technological devices.

Our theological effort and training, too, have to become artistic in content and in style. Essential to this is the cultivation of power of unusual perception in our own study, in the classroom, and in the life we live in a particular community. We must compel ourselves to develop a critical attitude towards theological systems bequeathed to us from the past, from that of Augustine to those of Barth and Bultmann. We must keep our theological mind alert and clear in relation to what is happening around us, be it militarisation of space, or genetic engineering. And, above all, we should become theologically sensitive and creative towards the cultural, religious, and historical world of Asia with which we share our life and destiny.

Then, it will not be too much to expect that, one day, someone may be moved to say to us: “How wonderfully you have mastered the

art of management of theological education and theological training!” Most of what we do will be more or less in perfect rhythm, just like the Dance of the Mulberry Grove, or a part of the Ching Chou symphony. There will be little waste of our time, energy, and other resources. The gifts entrusted to each one of us by God will develop and flourish, too.

The Spirit Takes Over

But, to create art, to be artistic in what we are and do in Christian discipleship and theological education, is not our final aim. Nor was it the final aim of Prince Wen’s cook. Hearing Prince Wen’s praise, he replied: “What your servant really cares for is Tao, which goes beyond art.” The Tao of ox-carving! Did Prince Wen understand what it meant? I wonder. Impressed by the way the cook carved an ox, he exclaimed that it was an art. But, perhaps he did not see Tao beyond the art. He did not realise that the cook’s heart, mind, and soul was on Tao, that is the source of truth, Tao that is the origin of life, Tao that is the goal of creation. When one cares for such Tao, what one does goes beyond art. When one serves such Tao, one becomes free from short-sighted gain. And when one is accountable towards it, one knows how to set priorities for one’s life and work. Tao is the transcendent power present in the mundane realities of this world. Constrained by it, the cook ceases to be a mere cook, carrying out his daily routine. Inspired by it, he finds his job turning into a vocation. Compelled by it, he discovers even such a menial task as ox-carving becomes an act of meditation, a service of a deeply-religious nature, and a self-discipline, without which no enlightenment can be attained. In this cook, we are confronted with an enlightened person, whose vocation is to serve Tao, and whose purpose in life is to manifest Tao through his vocation. He says to Prince Wen: “When I first began to cut up oxen, I saw nothing but oxen. After three years of practising, I no longer saw the ox as a whole. I now work with my spirit, not with my eyes. My senses stop functioning, and my spirit takes over.”

This is a very revealing statement. Enlightenment may be awesome in its lofty ideal, and abysmal in its impact, but it all begins, in the case of Chuang-tsu’s cook, with a most this-worldly practice of

ox-carving. How many of us can say a similar sort of thing in relation to our theological efforts, management of theological education, and accountability in our theological vocation? In our theological efforts, there is persistence in dualism – heaven and earth do not meet in our theological cogitation; biblical disciplines and theological systematisation are miles apart, one from the other; ethicists get, at most, a polite nod from systematic theologians; and practical theology includes everything under the sun that finds no entry into other theological disciplines. The fact of the matter is that heaven and earth meet in Jesus, the Word-become-flesh, that the biblical and theological disciplines are twin sisters, that ethical issues challenge and demand change in traditional formulations of the Christian faith, and that those things tucked away into practical theology, such as, preaching, liturgy, church polity, counselling, and so on, have to be theological interactions between God and humanity, within a volatile human community. Out theological enlightenment has to take seriously the earth, ethical concerns, and those “practical” matters that regulate, condition, and shape our life in the community called church, and in a wider human community.

And what about management of theological education, from entrance examinations to faculty sessions, from fund-raising to board meetings, from campus life to field work? Have we not resigned ourselves to them, as necessary evils that take much of our time and energy? Have they not become excuses for using the same lecture notes year after year? Have they not come to be designated as “administration”, with which most of us have formed a love-and-hate relationship? And, as we all know by experience, the term “administration” is anything but a neutral word. It means power – power that both builds and destroys. It signifies authority – authority that is self-affirming, by affirming others, and authority that is authoritarian, by rejecting others. It comes with certain privileges – privileges that are shared, and privileges that are self-centred. Administration, like the engine of a car, has to be the source of energy in the advancement of the academic pursuit of a theological community, and the deepening of the spiritual life of the faculty and students. But it can turn into a storm centre that devours the creative energy of the seminary community.

As to accountability to human and material resources, have we not been more diffusive than concentrated about them? Do we not often lack the imagination, the will, and the power to design and carry out plans that would avoid needless duplications, and strengthen the witness and ministry of the church in the world that increasingly overwhelms the church with its enormous human and material resources? Adverse effects of this on our theological enterprise are obvious. Survival of our institution becomes our overriding concern. It takes us away from in-depth theological efforts. It can blunt the cutting edge of our theological witness, directed both to the church and to the world. It may even restrict academic freedom, and mute the prophetic voice in deference to “administrative concerns”. In my view, a hard and critical look at our accountability to the limited resources of theological education is urgently called for now, on both the national, and the regional, level. Development of theology, pertinent to Asia, and challenging to the churches in the rest of the world in the coming decade, has to begin with such an examination.

There is another kind of accountability I would like to stress here. It is our theological accountability towards the histories, cultures, and religions of Asia. These histories are ours. These cultures are ours. These religions are also ours – ours in the sense that they are integral parts of the cultures and histories that constitute our Asianness. But, as Christians and theologians, we have been less accountable toward these histories, cultures, and religions than toward the histories and cultures of the West, which Christianity helped to shape over many centuries. Our non-accountability towards those things that are our very own is due, first, to our aversion to them, taught us by missionary theology and practice. It is, then, fostered by lack of positive treatment of them in the theological writings of our Western theological teachers, from whom we learned how to do theology. But, then comes the realisation that we cannot simply wish them away on the strength of the faith and theology formulated in totally different cultural and historical settings. It is then that courses, such as comparative religions, and history of our own countries, are hastily added to the increasingly crowded theological curriculum. We apply comparative method to the objects of our study, with the assumption that no fundamental rethinking of Christianity, and what it represents, will be required.

But, such assumption is called into question today. The reason is simple. Theological explorations into the cultures, religions, and histories of Asia will force us to read the Bible from different perspectives, and lead us to new insights. Those explorations will deepen and broaden our experience of God the creator. They will liberate us from Christological delimitation on the historicity of Jesus, and enable us to encounter Jesus as the Christ in the suffering humanity of Asia. They will also set us free from our presumption to keep the Spirit within the captivity of the church and its history. They may make us more careful in asserting that the church, as we know it, is the only sphere where God's saving love is available. And they are bound to make room in our mission theology and practice for other people – persons who are in the struggle with us to fight injustice, resist oppression, counteract demonic powers of destruction, and find fulfilment of life and destiny in the Power that loves, heals, renews, and gives eternal life.

What a formidable accountability! And what a challenging accountability! It is formidable because, in many ways, we have to do our theology **de novo**, but exciting because there will be fresh awareness of God's redeeming presence in Asia, and new discoveries of theological truths, which awareness of God's presence brings to us. It is my belief that history beckons us **now** to a theological turning point in Asia – a turning point that brings about a reformation of faith and theology. This is precisely what the Reformation in 16th-century Europe was about. “During the four centuries, from the deaths of Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure in 1274 to the births of Johann Sebastian Bach and George Frederick Handel in 1685,” observes Pelikan, the American historian of Christian doctrine, at the outset of his book **Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300-1700)**, “Western Christianity experienced fundamental and far-reaching changes in the interpretation – indeed, in the very definition – of church and dogma. Most of the changes were connected, in one way or another, with the

Reformation of the 16th century. . . .”⁵ An observation such as this provokes us and challenges us.

If there had to be a theological reformation in the 16th century in the very heart of “Christian” Europe, why should there be no theological reformation in Asia today, where the Christian faith has been taught and practised in almost total neglect, ignorance, and even rejection of the histories, cultures, and religions of Asia? To put it the other way round: how could there be no theological reformation in Asia, or to use Pelikan’s words, how could there be no “fundamental and far-reaching changes in the interpretation – indeed, in the very definition – of church and dogma”, when Asian Christians and theologians begin to wrestle with their theological accountability towards the histories, cultures, and religions of Asia? Surely, this is an awesome, and yet exciting, accountability from which those of us engaged in doing theology today in Asia cannot shy away any more. And when we realise that this is what we owe to the future generations of Christians and theologians in Asia, and, perhaps, even to those in other parts of the world, that accountability becomes our calling, our vocation, our responsibility at this time in history, when God seems intent on making radical rearrangements of historical, cultural, and religious forces in the world. The doing of theology in the historical **Kairos** such as this is no longer just a matter of the brain, or an effort of the body. It is a matter of the spirit – the spiritual power to perceive, to discern, and to penetrate the works, the ways, and the thoughts of God, in and through the life and history of men, women, and children, with whom we share a common destiny. Chuang-tsu’s cook was right when he said this about his ox-carving: “I now work with my spirit, not with my eyes . . . my spirit takes over.”

5. Jaroslav Pelikan, **Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300-1700)**, vol. 4 in *The Christian Tradition, a History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985) p. 1.

The Tao of Theological Education

The spirit takes over! This must be the secret of theological education, its management and accountability, from endless committee meetings to a theological reformation. But this is not the end of the journey. As a matter of fact, this should be the beginning of it. Theological education, with all its complexities and accountabilities, should be a matter of the spirit, at the beginning, and all the way through. The Tao of theological education is the Tao of the spirits, the Tao of coming to grips with the spiritual power, with which one fights the principalities and powers in heaven, and on earth, in human community, and in us all as individual human persons.

Here again, the cook in Chuang-tsu's story has some illuminating things to say. He refers to the blade of his knife, the tool of his profession, saying that it "has no thickness". Then he goes on to make a most revealing remark: "That which has no thickness has plenty of room to pass through the spaces" between the joints of the ox he carves. What are we to make of the remark?

That which has no thickness has plenty of room to pass through the spaces between an ox's joints! This is not a profound theory. Nor is it a tentative hypothesis. It is a fact based on actual experience. The cook can prove it. In fact, he showed Prince Wen the knife he had been using for 19 years, the edge of which was "as if it were fresh from the grindstone". This is all the more amazing because, according to him, "a good cook changes his knife one a year because he cuts, while a mediocre cook has to change his every month because he hacks". Their knives are too thick. They have to cut and hack, making a mess of the ox they carve, and destroying their knives. But Chuang-tsu's cook neither cuts nor hacks. His knife has no thickness. It finds space in the ox's joints, where there is no space, and passes through it. Then an incredible thing happens. The ox simply "falls apart like a clod of earth crumbling to the ground". The picture is so vivid and dynamic that it moves us. There is no waste of time and energy. No injustice is done to his profession. He transforms the occupation of ox-carving into the Tao of ox-carving. "I stand there," he says, "with the knife in my hand, looking about me with a feeling of accomplishment and delight." How

many of us are blessed with this feeling of inner composure, and this sense of fulfilment in our efforts of theological education?

The trouble with most of us is that our theological knife is too thick. It cuts and hacks, but seldom passes through its object without much resistance. It is so thick that it cannot find or create space where there is no space. Our theological knife, the tool of our vocation, is thick with the ideas, concepts, and systems that have accumulated for centuries. In our theological classroom, little effort has been made to understand the internal cultural and socio-political dynamics that played no small part in their formation. We have not been successful in passing through the joints of the theological corpus we carve, revealing its internal structure. In my view, a real appreciation of the enormous body of theological learning will not be gained until we are able to open it up and take a close look at its internal structure, built as much on cultural realities, and philosophical speculations, as on the faith it professes.

* * * * *

We will not, then, apply, without much theological discretion, traditional concepts and norms to things Asian. We must test our theological knife, divested of difficult theological jargon, with our own past, present, and future that make Asia – Asia born out of God’s creating love, and sustained by God’s saving love. We may then be surprised that our theological knife finds theological space in the life and history of people in Asia – the discovery that used to be beyond our theological imagination. To our even greater surprise, we may realise that our theological knife creates theological space in a space completely controlled and dominated by a militant ideology, and an autocratic political system. Expanding that theological space becomes a vocation of many Christians and theologians. In short, our urgent theological task in Asia today is to find and create theological space in the life of men, women, and children in Asia – the life shaped and conditioned by their cultural heritages, religious beliefs, and historical upheavals, the life inseparable from immense sufferings brought about by natural calamities, and demonic socio-political forces.

This, I believe, is our theological mandate today, and in the decades to come. Needless to say, the management and accountability of theological education, in terms of time, energy, and resources, have to be determined by it. In fulfilment of that mandate, we need to ask ourselves, as individual institutions, and as a regional body, what kind of faculty we should be building in the coming years. How should we create a theological training programme that would give a solid grounding to the students in the development of creative theological imagination? How should we redesign our theological curriculum predicated on that mandate? What would be the challenges that mandate poses for the mission and ministry of the church?

These questions are not exhaustive, but they are some root-questions. They inspire our theological mind to dare a leap from the stereotyped past to the bewildering present, and to an unknown future. They challenge our seminary community to explore new ways of interpreting the gospel. They force us to think through the historical implications of some basic propositions of the Christian faith. They enable us to rekindle our theological vision from time to time, and sustain our theological school as a dynamic searching community in the service of God's truths for the church, and in the world. And it is questions such as these, derived from that theological mandate, that will restore to us the vocational integrity of the theological profession, and enable the meaning and purpose of theological education to be renewed and revitalised. Management and accountability of theological education will no longer consist merely of tedious routines, in which personal ambitions and misguided interests clash with each other. Theological education will become an art. No, more than an art. It becomes the Tao that commands the best of ourselves, the best of our theological community, and the best of our churches, to give witness to it.

Doing theology, in its diverse and rich dimensions, brought under the operation called theological education, is a matter of the spirit. It is an act prompted by the Spirit of God. It is in turn a response of our spirit to the prompting of God's Spirit. The doing of theology that becomes enfleshed in theological education is, then, the confession of our faith, the confessing of that faith through our

seminary community, and through our church. It is an act of confession, giving witness to God's Tao in Asia, as well as in the whole of creation, in the life and history of the nations and peoples of Asia, as well as in the life and history of the whole human community. If this is how we do theology, and carry out theological education in Asia, then our sisters and brothers in the Christian faith, and other faiths, may be moved to say to us, just as Prince Wen was moved to say to his cook: "From what you are doing in theology and theological education, we have learned the secret of God's Tao with the life and destiny of humanity". This must be our highest goal, deepest commitment, and noblest vision, of doing theology, and engaging ourselves in theological education here in Asia, today and tomorrow.

COPING WITH NUCLEAR EXILE

Educational, Economic and Religious Influences on a Kiribati Community in the Solomon Islands

Erona Tarakabu

In the early 1960s, a nuclear device known as “Starfish” was exploded high in the atmosphere. Due to the resulting contamination, the people of the Phoenix Islands (part of the former Gilbert Islands, now Kiribati) had to be resettled on the island of Wagina, off the south-east tip of Choiseul in the Solomon Islands. This sad story is a parable for Pacific peoples entering the nuclear age.

The author, himself a member of this group, which he refers to as “the Gilbertese”, asked his people, with the aid of a detailed questionnaire, to what extent Western education and Christian faith have helped them to cope with this experience of exile. The results formed the basis of a B.D. presented to Rarongo Theological College in October 1985. Using the techniques of “local” or “oral history”, the thesis examines the impact of educational, economic and religious forces from the people’s point of view. Space permits us to reproduce, with some omissions, only the concluding chapter, in which the author makes a stirring appeal to his people not to abandon their faith, despite the pressures of an unfamiliar environment.

I. The Impact of Education, Economics and Religious Pluralism

Our diagnosis of the current forces existing within the Gilbertese community at Wagina confirms that we are sharing with the developed countries the rapid and feverish developments in scientific and technological knowledge, and the effects of vast social, economical, political, educational, and religious change – some would rather say “upheaval”. Even though the term “development and change” is what everyone talks about, the majority tend to skip the conflict, interruption,

and destructive aspects of these developments. The present impact of the forces acting on them has raised concern by the village people, particularly those who have been oppressed, and those who may not have been more privileged than the others in terms of education, employment, money, material goods, and someone to support them. From their experiences, we are able to see some of the areas which have called the attention of every Christian to the need for apologetics in our Melanesian context.

In actual fact, the concern, work, and task is already too large for us to cover in our Christian apologetic approach. Our theological concern here is crystal clear, but who is to initiate this Christian defence? It is not the selected few, the clergy, or any other church taskmaster or taskmistress, but it is a call, both to the individual Christian and the community of faith.¹

I feel and believe that any Christian, serious in his/her faith, should feel free to say that there is something wrong in our present educational system, economic system, the belief and teaching of other religious movements, and many more. Then, we have to present what we, as Christians, believe should be the way to tackle their impact. We ought to show how to live among these present forces, and make others recognise that everything is God's blessing to us – our possessions, money, education, and our all

II. Some Suggested Sources to Combat the Impact of the Existing Forces

It is, therefore, my plea to all Christians on Wagina, the Roman Catholics, and the United church members, to work with solidarity, using whatever resources are available, together with their faith. Resources could be the Bible, which is already in the Gilbertese language, plus their Christian faith experience.

1. The community of faith I mean here is that as understood in the Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA). The members are the United church of the Solomon Islands, the Church of Melanesia, the Roman Catholic church, and the South Seas Evangelical church (SSEC).

As Christians, we need to present the reliability and authenticity of the Bible. It has a lot to say to the kind of situation we are now in. This, we shall see, as we deal with the problems of education, economics, and religious pluralism in subsequent paragraphs. If we want to present the Christian faith experience, we are saying that there is something unique about this experience, which we can share, explain, or revive for our confused and troubled villagers.

Changes and development over the two thousand years of the history of Christianity are vast, and there is no way we can compare that to Christianity in the Gilbertese society, which is just over 132 years old. Remember that our apologetic is addressed to a community of Catholics and Protestants, therefore, I shall not attempt a discussion on any exposition of Christian doctrine. I shall only try to point out similarities and differences between these two denominations, which deserve the characteristic of the name “Christian”. I will use these to combat the impact of the forces at work.

Other possible resources for our defence would be the different disciplines within the church, for example, theology, biblical studies, Christian education, church history, and so forth; and the different church organisations, such as, the Sunday school, youth fellowship groups, the women’s fellowship in the United church, and for the Catholics, the different Orders with specific responsibilities. They certainly all have important roles to play in our Christian apologetics.

To carry out these tasks, we need people. They need not be Christians, because I believe every person has the image of God,² and is accountable to do the best for his Creator, for his fellowman, and for himself/herself. We also know and believe that God uses all peoples for his purpose.³ There are many educated and experienced men and women with Western- or European-oriented knowledge and skill, who will become very useful in giving us help against these forces.

2. So God created human beings, making them to be like Himself. Genesis 1:27.

3. God, in Old Testament times, used different heathen nations to punish, or to teach, His chosen people, the Jews. For example, Nebuchadnezzar, ruling the Israelites in Babylonia; the Philistines, conquering and defeating King Saul, etc.

The above-mentioned resources are the basis of our apologetics to the Gilbertese community, facing the impact of the current forces discussed in this article. These resources can be outlined in three main approaches, with which we could present the Christian apologetics:

- 1) Christ was, and still is, the centre, and key factor, for apologetics. We could say He was the greatest apologist who ever lived. His whole ministry reflected the apologetic concerns of His time, which are still relevant to our time.
- 2) People's faith experiences, that is, people of the past, in Bible days, and right down through history, until our time. People and their faith experiences have presented the uniqueness of the Christian faith, and are still relevant for us today.
- 3) The third thing here is the Bible, in which we find the historical account of Christ and great men and women of the faith. I believe that the statement, "The Bible, in which we find the historical account of . . .", clarifies the reliability and the authenticity of the Bible, a point I feel most essential in Christian apologetics.

As we present our Christian apologetics, we shall follow the order of education, economic system, and religious pluralism. However, where there is a connection between them, a discussion on the relevant sections shall be dealt with to avoid repetition of ideas in our apologetics approach.

III. Apologetics in a Gilbertese Community within the Melanesian Context

1. Education and Traditional Culture

Is the present educational system designed to meet the meaning and purpose of human life? What conflicting views do the people have

about what human nature really is? When a person asks himself/herself these kinds of questions in relation to education, the economic system, the religious life, etc., the answer should not come into conflict with his/her Christian faith and moral life. However, evidence shows that Western formal education has caused much conflict, and has drawn more and more people away from the Christian faith.

As Christians, we believe in a God who creates, and who is the source of all things, including knowledge. This is why the writer of Proverbs says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge . . .” (Prov.1:7). If God is the source of all knowledge, then there is no such thing as true knowledge, apart from God. Let me give my own experience. I was at Goldie College from 1966 to 1968, and at King George VI Secondary School from 1969 to 1973. In both these schools, from primary education to secondary, “Bible Knowledge”, as it was called, was taught, but only to meet the requirements of the Education Department, in order to qualify students for the “Standard Seven Certificate” and the “Cambridge School Certificate”. I can well remember that there were no emphases on learning about how one sees God in one’s life, or, what one might call today, man’s spiritual formation in the Bible lessons we were taught, rather we were expected to learn and know as much as possible from the texts given, in order to enable us to answer all the examination questions, and get a pass or credit as a result. Therefore, religious subjects may be taught, but only taught to fulfil academic requirements, not in a way to motivate the learner to give reverence to the Lord as the overall giver of knowledge.

The education system does not teach our people to live as God wants us to live; rather it teaches and encourages the people to be self-centred, materialistic, and alienated from their faith in God. Are we becoming like those whom the writer of Proverbs calls “fools (who) despise wisdom and instruction?” (Prov. 1:7b, RSV). I don’t want to call someone a fool, but the Bible has so much truth in calling people fools, when there is moral corruption in the individual, and in the society, when we despise wisdom and instruction.

To the educated Gilbertese students and workers, it is my plea that we use all our wisdom in building and transforming our custom

and culture, instead of condemning it just because we think we have received Western formal education. Do not try to deny your rightful identity as Gilbertese only because you have acquired knowledge of the West.

Let us not forget that God was already at work among our people, even before the arrival of the first missionaries. The people knew how to love and care for one another, to share and support each other with goods, ideas, etc. Did not these reflect the nature of God? Therefore, to condemn our culture can mean losing some of the very important things which Christianity today tries to promote. We can encourage our people to renounce those aspects of culture which do no good, but harm, to the people. Let us also ensure that magic practice, worship of spirits, and their ancestral spirits, etc., cannot be equalised with Christian principles, otherwise we would fall into syncretism.

To the elders, and the simple village man and woman, it is my earnest entreaty that we should not be so conservative in our outlook, but to conserve only those traditional and cultural aspects, which still have values in our present time. People should be encouraged, firstly, to accept, and, secondly, to innovate ideas, methods, ways of life, and so forth, which will bring peace, development, and benefit to our people.

To everyone, that is, to our new generations in the process of acquiring formal Western education, those who have taken up employment after hard years of studies, and, finally, to our elders and leaders of each kinship group, I would agree with them in their assumption that “formal Western education results in the process of (deculturalisation) acculturation”,⁴ that so much of culture is changing. “These changes are seen as being both universal, and in one direction, the dichotomy of traditional and modern.”⁵ I, therefore, would like to ask them all to avoid the fallacies of either being too conservative or too radical. They need to come to some kind of concession, which

4. Sheldon G. Weeks, **If Education is the Answer, What is the Question?** University of Papua New Guinea: 1976:6, on an imposition of Western formal education, which does away with traditional and cultural values of our society.

5. Sheldon G. Weeks: UPNG: 1976:6.

should offer and build a fabric acceptable to, and consistent with, everyone in the society. What I have been trying to say here, in order to settle the conflict between the elders and the youth, is to call for a method to bridge this gap.

- a) A process of selectivity is essential; that the elders evaluate the customs, and carefully select those that will fit in today's context. Likewise, the wage employees, students, and anyone in the radical sphere, should select, from the modern ideologies and methodologies, those that would best suit our Gilbertese context.
- b) The selection of modern and traditional values needs to be constructive in the way that these values are incorporated into the educational system. This is particularly relevant at the primary level, where the school is located within the society. For the wider Gilbertese community, seminars, and forums, and any other forms of communication on this issue, should be addressed so that people get acquainted with its truth and importance.

When we acknowledge the giver of all knowledge, then we are also reminded how to use that knowledge. Our knowledge is very much responsible for what we do, say, or think, and, therefore, Jesus reminded us in many ways how we should live with our fellow men and women. One of the great sayings He made was, "Do for others what you want them to do for you . . ." (Matt. 7:12, TEV). Our Lord does not expect us to hurt one another, for one cannot wilfully harm oneself unless one is abnormal. He wants us to love, and do good to each other. The apostle Paul says the same thing in his letter to the Colossians, when he talks about the old life and the new. He says, "Everything you do or say, then, should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, as you give thanks through Him to God the Father (Col. 3:17, TEV).

One very important area I feel we should look into is the way in which more and more educated Gilbertese are trying to contrast science with the Christian faith, and saying that science is rational, while

religion or faith in God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and everything that is associated with them, is irrational. Remember the gap between the elders and the educated, as far as education is concerned, and the advance of scientific knowledge.

I know how my educated Gilbertese friends can be very dangerous to the faith of uneducated Gilbertese on Wagina, whether old, middle-aged, or youth. Some of the educated Gilbertese have been caught up with the modern scientific mentality that if you can't prove something scientifically, then it is not true.

I also know of some high-school students and university students, who, by trying to prove to their uneducated Gilbertese the rationality of science, and its superiority over religion, have tried to explain scientifically how a cloud is formed until it comes back to the earth as rain. Or, they would demonstrate some very simple experiment to explain scientifically why kerosene floats on water, and a few other things they could demonstrate before their people, who did not have the slightest clue why certain things happen, behave, or react, under certain circumstances.

Others may not give direct scientific arguments, but indirectly do so, by raising intellectual questions, which would lead to a scientific explanation. My uncle Tim was a minister among our people at Wagina in the mid-60s. He shared with me how, one day, one of the village men asked him a question during a meal, which they normally had after the morning worship service. He said to uncle:

“Minister, I have a problem. Can you really prove to me that God exists? Have you seen him? I can't, and this is why I don't believe in any religion. Unless you prove that the God you worship on Sundays, Wednesday (a communal night service), and on any other time of the day, does exist, I will not come again and waste my time attending worship services, prayer meetings, and any church activities.” My uncle replied:

“Tell me, do you know who your grandfather was?”

“Yes,” the man replied.

“Do you know his name?”

“Yes I do, I saw him when I was a boy.”

The minister continued, “What about your great-grandfather?”

“I did not see him, but I heard of him.”

“But do you believe he once existed?”

“Of course!” the man replied.

“What about your great-great-grandfather, and your great-great-great-great-grandfather. Do you know any of them?”

“Yes.”

“Do you believe that they once existed?”

“Oh yes! I believe they did live several hundred years ago – that is why I am here with you today, otherwise I wouldn’t have been here.”

The minister said again, “How can you really prove your great-grandparent lived a long time ago, when you did not see any of them?”

The man was quiet, and Tim concluded the discussion, “My friend, who knows, it could be that your great-great-great-grandfather and mine were brothers, and the offspring of Adam, whom God created. You see, that is why I believe in God, even though I could not see him. I believe He made me, my father, and my ancestors, and the very first man to live on this earth.”

Remember, then, that science cannot always prove everything. It has its own areas where its principles are only applicable within itself,

but not to other spheres of life. As Christians, we believe that science is God's gift, and, therefore, it cannot question our beliefs in God, nor should science be looked at as a god, which man may take as above all else. God remains supreme, and above everything else. We need God to comfort us in our times of sorrow and despair, or to help us console those who are disappointed, or sad, or those who need peace, happiness, etc. God alone provides us these and many more, but not science. However, we also acknowledge that God provides for our other needs through the gifts he has given us, but this does not mean that God Himself cannot do or provide beyond what He has provided through His gifts. Take for instance medical science. It is God's gift to heal the sick, but this does not stop God from healing. He is the give of this gift, and, therefore, He is above that knowledge of healing. There are, in fact, numerous accounts of God's healings experienced when medical science has failed in healing. This proves God's greatness above all that we know and understand, and, if that is so, then our belief and faith in Him is not in vain, but a meritorious experience.

May I also remind the Gilbertese scientists that "there is no such thing as the scientific method in general".⁶ There is a scientific method in physics, psychology, archaeology, and so on, and each has its unique methods and applications. The Christian religion and theology have been the result of intensive study ". . . by means of modern scientific methods in theological faculties (in) universities, and in our theological colleges. It is therefore as 'scientific' in its method as is the study of chemistry or biology today."⁷

This means that religion, or to be more specific, the Christian faith, should not come into conflict with science. They support each other, and are for the good of mankind. To give due respect to science and religion is to give reverence to God, from whom all knowledge derives. He will enlighten and broaden our limited knowledge in all "sciences".

6. Alan Richardson, **Science, History and Faith**, Oxford University Press, 1950:74.

7. Alan Richardson: 1950:23.

Leaving education aside, I would like us to refer to what we have seen happening with the economic life of the people. The custom of sharing goods was not always possible, as it used to be, and, again, people complained. The general comment was “our custom has been distorted by the modern systems, otherwise we would not have such problems.”⁸ In relation to this claim, I, for one, feel that many of my people have not been able to relate our culture to their Christian faith. In most cases, it seems that our culture dominates our faith.

Apparently, neither the educated, nor the culturist, Gilbertese was able to interpret the relationship between culture and Christ, or, if some educated have culture, they have not allowed themselves to speak out.

Let us try briefly to explain what might not have been known about culture and Christ. Culture is the total activity of man, and the total result of that activity. Culture is the artificial and secondary environment, which man imposes on the natural. It is, therefore, something and anything that man creates within his environment. The roads he makes, the garden he clears, plants, and harvests, the songs he sings, the clothes he wears, the government he forms, his education, economics, religion, and we can go on and on. The New Testament binds, or says, one word to cover all these, and that is, “The World”. We have also said that none of these things is static. Culture changes because there is always that desire for a better living, whether spiritual, secular, or whatever you might want to call it.

Now, let us see the relation between Christ and culture, or Christianity and civilisation. It has always been a problem from the beginning. Christ’s coming into His own culture brought so much change that He was hated, rejected and even killed, as we all know. Let us see some of the examples of conflict and change Jesus brought. He twisted the judicial system, for example, the law said, “stone to death the adulterer”, Christ said, “forgive”. He offered and taught forgiveness.

8. Research at home. It was the general opinion of the public, particularly the elders.

God's wisdom was revealed by the old ones, Christ said by the babies. All these which Christ did and taught were challenging to His own culture. He, therefore, was always at the focal point, or centre, of tension or conflict among His own people and followers, who were so used to their culture. Why was Christ doing this? Christ was single-minded, so that His teaching and preaching were directed to God and His Kingdom. He did not teach culture, or come to create a civilisation. He came to transform the world.

Loyalty to culture and loyalty to Christ cannot come in harmony, but, if Christ was born and lived in culture, then there must be a way to harmonise things. The Bible says in Genesis that Adam and Eve were to develop a garden. In other words, God has made man, and given him a culture mandate, because we have said that anything which is man-made, is cultural, therefore, for man to develop the garden means that God cannot oppose culture, but encourages man to develop what He has created. However, God does not create culture itself, that is man's own work, and also it does not mean that Christ is totally opposed to culture. He is the Lord of any culture. We can say that He is the best of our ancestors, the topmost in culture. Evidence in this belief was when the gospel was first brought. There were some who immediately accepted him. There were those who, for the first time, heard stories about His birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, and accepted Him as their Lord and God. Today, we see Him as the completion of our culture, the perfection of our culture, the fulfilment of our culture, the One expected of our culture, and the best of ethics in our culture.

Christ experienced in culture does not mean that Christ and culture are identical; they are distinct from each other. Thus, if we want to allow the cultural institutions to come into harmony with Christian belief, then we must see that it does not weaken Christian belief. What I am saying here is that Christ in culture can be synthesised. How? It is man's responsibility to develop and produce good habits and good customs, for example, do not steal, do not kill, etc. However, these are all given by the Supreme Being, God. Over and above these laws, there is a transcendent law from God, for example, believe, have hope, leave your family, sell to the poor, and so forth. These are God's laws or gifts, which we, in culture, do not make

or produce. In this sense, God is above culture. Anything of our culture, that is what we have, use, make, do, and so forth, must look beyond, so that they find their complete fullness from the transcendent law, or the giver and provider and maker of all things in this universe.

I am not trying to claim that I understand Christ and culture thoroughly. When we try to understand God and culture, we must always remember that we cannot possibly know and understand fully, because of our sinful nature.

When we submit ourselves to the Lord, listening to His word from the Bible, listening to preachers, and pondering on the messages, observing the lives of those whom He has touched and changed, then we can see another important fact why Christ was in culture, firstly in this physical body, and now through the Holy Spirit. The important fact is that Christ transforms. In Matthew's gospel (5:21-43) we have a record of Jesus transforming the teaching about the law. Repeatedly, Jesus says, "You have heard that it was said. . . . But now I tell you. . . ." St John's gospel generally gives a picture of Christ transforming culture.

Christ, therefore, lives in culture so that He can transform culture. This is also what we mean when we say that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer. Christ redeems the whole of man. He changes the spirit of man, his inner being, personality, etc. He heals, He comforts, He teaches, etc., thus transforming culture. Why does God do this? The reason is because the law (in the Old Testament) alone cannot eradicate sin, which has been deeply rooted within man. Christ, therefore, needs to live in the midst of culture to transform it. Thus God created the world and did not leave it behind. He is still creating and re-creating within the world, culture, and so forth. He created the world, but later came to live and die, that is transforming.

There may be wars, killings, confusions, conflicts, and so on, but evil cannot ultimately win because God is present in the history of man transforming. That is hope in the midst of human problems. Remember, all the world leaders, like Hitler, who have not been able to completely to achieve their selfish ends. God in His power would not

let human evil power distort completely His creation, rather history and culture will always be transformed to give glory to the Lord God Almighty.

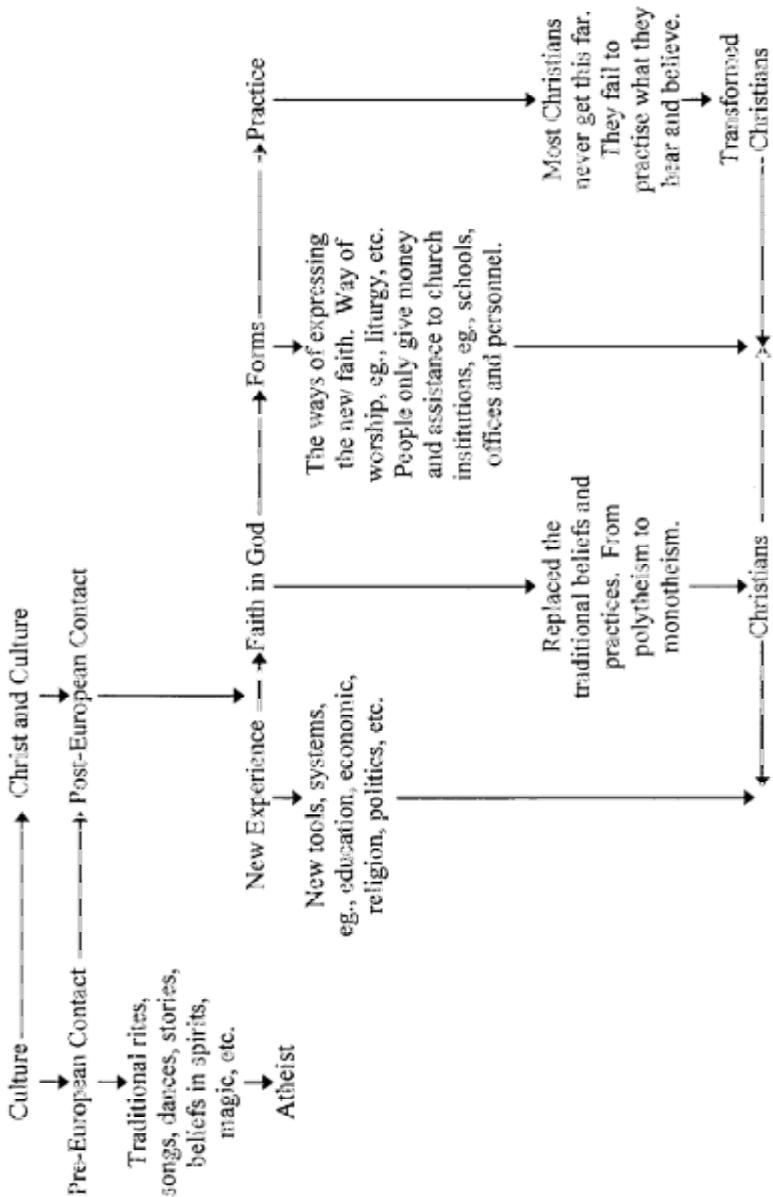
Do not destroy cultures, traditional and modern, but give Christ, who is the Lord of all culture, the chance to transform them. Any Christian, from any culture, who does not accept transformation from God is not a realistic Christian. God is the one who can transform our lives. Transformation takes place within us in our cultural situation. Just as God used Christ to transform culture, so are we used as agents of God to transform our customs, education, economic system., religious life, and the whole of our culture. Transformation does not take place in heaven or after death, rather it starts here with us. He is the one who can change from within. This is what we call “conversion”, and when conversion takes place, then transformation follows on.

There are values within any culture that could be used for its transformation, but that does not mean that value, by itself, could bring about transformation within its context. Christ, who is the giver, provider, sustainer, and Lord of all spheres of life, is the only means whereby the existing values could be used to bring about transformation. Christ, however, expects us to bring him closer to these areas, which need transformation. When we bring Christ within the different areas of culture, the education system, the economic system, traditional norms, etc., then people can see, and we, too, can see better what is lacking, and then bring about that transformation. Unless a culture is brought under Christ, there is no way that transformation will take place.

When the gospel is preached or presented in church worship, particularly on Sundays, at homes, in family devotions, at fellowship groups, such as youth fellowship groups, men’s fellowship groups, women’s fellowship groups, bible study groups, and within the different orders, such as, in the Roman Catholic church, it brings about transformation of what is already known, understood, attained, and experienced.

Although we hope for a perfected transformation of every culture taking place in God's appointed time, first this has to be seen and experienced with us here in this world, and at this life. Thanks to God our Father, for He has already subdued the powers of evil. We see this in the coming and ministry of Jesus, where the sick are being dealt with, evil is being dealt with, injustice is being dealt with, the dead are being dealt with, and the immoral are being dealt with. All these show that the Kingdom of God has already come. We can call God's Kingdom the only perfect and completely transformed culture, from which every culture awaits its final and perfect change.

Christ is intolerant. He does not allow anything else to happen except God, and what God expects from us. We shall find this very difficult, as we are unable to live without being part of culture. We saw that Christ had conflict and tension with His culture. We, therefore, will continually be in conflict in our lives for Christ while living within our own culture, because, when Christ comes, or is presented, you would expect a change. He seems rather too drastic and radical.



If we take our minds back, and skim through the history of the Gilbertese in the period between pre-European contact and the post-independence era, we find that there has been so much change affecting both the secular and the spiritual life of the people. What we need now is transformation. Let us see where we began, where change and conflict came in, and where we probably have failed.

As far as the Gilbertese on Wagina are concerned, I see that the current forces are encouraging people to limit their Christian practical life to the church institutions. They would give money or any other form of help to church hospitals, church headquarters, church fellowship groups, or organisations, etc., but not to any other group of people, except for government income tax. Some have already withdrawn from the church to remain by themselves, and continue to look for new experiences. Eventually, they will become atheists like our ancestors, and start all over again.

This cannot be a Christian experience, for someone who has decided to accept and follow Christ never goes back to live the past experiences, but keeps following Christ, which is an onward process of trying to attain the fullness of His stature. This is what Christ meant in following Him, to live for Him, and to be his disciple when he says, “Anyone who starts to plough, and then keeps looking back, is of no use to the Kingdom of God” (Luke 19:62). One may not necessarily return to his or her past, but if his/her heart is in the past, thinking wistfully of the old experiences, then that is not a true Christian experience.

Let us therefore look into other possible ways of helping ourselves. Within the next few decades, there would be no one who has not received formal education on Wagina, and, therefore, we will have more intellectuals than at present. This means that, if we cannot handle the changes, conflicts, and problems caused by our educated elites at present, we will certainly have more problems in the future. Literacy has made some Gilbertese question the authority of the scriptures, and the tradition of the churches. What do we say to this problem, and how can we defend the authenticity of the Bible, which we claim to be God’s word, the Book of Books, and the book of life?

It is my hope that some of my educated friends who have questioned, or are beginning to question, the reliability of the Bible, the book in which the Christian faith is rooted, may come to realise that the Bible really is inspired by the Holy Spirit to make it relevant to our context, even though it was written more than two thousand years ago. People should not be misled by the clever intellectuals who write and speak convincingly, eroding the foundations of the faith. They (the non-Christians) have not been able to provide substantial grounds on which they are attacking the Christian faith. People need to be firm in their faith. Our ancestors were right in accepting Christianity, and, therefore, we have to follow them, so that we may be able to continue transforming our culture, our knowledge, the way in which we relate to these worldly things, and how we could relate to others we live with or come into contact with anywhere.

2. Economics and Development

We stated that, in economics, there was exploitation, individualism, materialism, alcoholism, alienation from parents, and the society, etc., because of the present economic system. What then does Christianity have to contribute to these corruptions?

Christ is the key to any freedom. I said “freedom” here, because most of these things can really make people oppressed. During the ten days I spent on Wagina, there were signs that some were getting more and more preoccupied with what the economic system has offered. Self-interest seems to be the prime concern, and faith seems to be secondary. One evening, we also discussed some problems of the economic system. There was heated argument among the villagers because some were very defensive, saying that there was nothing wrong with the economic system, while others were trying to point out the destruction it brings to society and to the individual. The majority of those who were for the argument were those who were better off in terms of money and material goods. Those who were against the economic system, if we like, we may call the “have nots”. So we can say that each person giving an argument for or against the economic system is only doing it for his/her own defence.

What could be the root of all these problems? I personally feel that the root cause of these problems is “money”.

Let us now look at Jesus’ attitude towards money dealers. We find in the gospels of Matthew 21:12, Mark 11:15, and John 2:15, the account of Jesus when he entered the temple and found that people were selling and buying. He was so furious that He chased the people and the animals out with a whip and overturned the tables of the money-changers. Never was Jesus heard to have been so angry as in this situation. Would He have chased the people if they had done something else, or only those who were involved with trading?

We shall now look at another prominent character of the New Testament, Paul. What does Paul say? “For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pang” (1 Tim. 6:10).

The Christian community is different from any other community. It has to be differentiated from the rest. This can only be so when the Christian completely lives in the way Christ and the Apostles expect us to live. There is a danger when we live a very pious kind of life, because people may call us religious fanatics. But can we completely live in the way Christ and the Apostles expect us to live? The things that can distract us away from Jesus are worldly possessions. The craving for these worldly possessions makes one’s sight grow dim. He or she may not be able to hear the voice of God who, through His Spirit, speaks to us, reminding us what we should and should not do. But when these worldly things have taken control over us, they are like voices that penetrate so much into our body, mind, and soul that we will not be able to hear, know, and understand the Master’s voice.

How, then, can we relate with these worldly goods or possessions? Are we supposed to discard them? No, Christ does not forbid us. Our requirements must be met by God’s creation – food, drink, money, clothes, etc. However, they may not be used for accumulation. They are to be used. Remember what happened in the

desert to those who wanted more manna (Ex. 16:15-21), and what Christ said about possessions in Matthew 6:19-20.

We have to depend daily on God, through what He gives and provides, not building our dependence on the things He has created. The moment we depend on these worldly possessions, our discipleship, that is, our call to obey and follow the Lord, is cut off, and dependence on God is broken. But why does God want us to depend on Him daily? The answer is because He wants us to have a daily communication with Him, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:21).

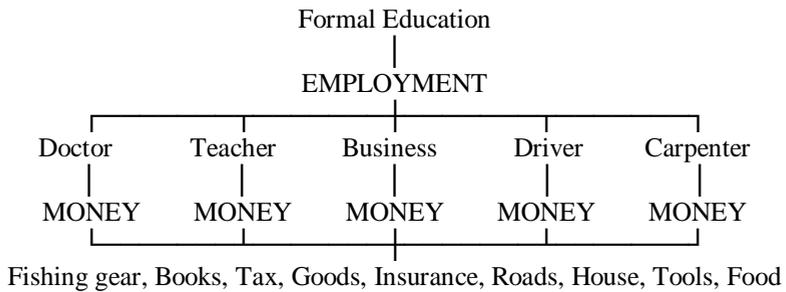
Now, where do we draw the line? How much can we use, possess, or accumulate? How can I relate myself and my worldly possessions with loving God, and be submissive and dependent on Him? It does not depend on how much I earn or save, rather it depends on how I look at my treasure, and the way it prevents me from loving God above all else. My love for God should be foremost in my mind, that no treasure or worldly possessions should prevent me from loving Him with all my heart, mind, and soul. No one can serve two masters: he will be faithful to one, and unfaithful to the other. These worldly things can make us see them as our means of security, but they cannot guarantee our security. God is to be our real security. Note that we have no right to blame God’s gifts, such as money, and other forms of wealth, but we must be aware that these have the capacity to draw us away from God. And the moment we draw away from God, then, we will not be called disciples of Christ, for a disciple is someone who follows and obeys the Lord’s will. There is no discipleship without following the way and the teaching of the Lord.

When we recognise God’s providence, all His blessings come in as well: “Everything else shall be added unto you.” Do not be mistaken and think that we shall receive an increase of income as soon as we recognise and rely on God’s providence. I know that some have come to interpret “God’s blessings” in terms of money, and other forms of wealth. It does not really matter whether we are rich or poor. What is essential in our discipleship of Jesus Christ is our attitude to worldly

possessions. It all depends on the heart of the person. From his/her heart, he/she can know, and people can recognise who he/she really is.

Our discussion on the question of economics among the Gilbertese in the Solomons reflects to us that people not only need better things, such as tools, houses, or better services from trade stores, health clinics, or more money, and other things, but people showed that they wanted development. Apparently their craving for development has caused them all sorts of problems, as we have seen. The main reason, I see here, is because of the wrong concept of development they have. Development is also understood as belonging to the whites, and therefore to develop is to be educated, like the white man, live in the white man’s house, that is, with tin-roof houses, eat the white man’s food, have plenty of money, own a radio, outboard engine, etc., which are said to have been made by the “white man”.⁹ That is development as far as the Gilbertese is concerned. The diagram below will probably help us see this concept of development.

Gilbertese Concept of Development



To this kind of development mentality we could say that it is from a purely economic angle. It is synonymous with economic growth, especially Western-oriented. However, while the Gilbertese at Wagina are caught up with the force of economic development, what is the church’s understanding of development, which we should present in

9. The “white man” here refers to English, Australians, New Zealanders, Americans, including Chinese and Japanese, from whom the Gilbertese assume all imported goods are made and imported.

order to give a fuller meaning and understanding to the people's aspirations for development? We are to help them to see development in a wider perspective – a development that includes the totality of a person. Man/woman needs to develop mentally, physically, and spiritually.

In the creation story we are told:

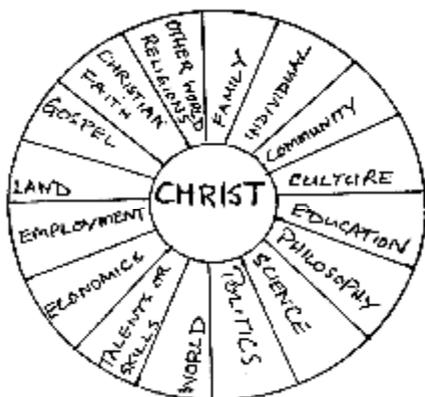
“Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so (Gen. 1:28-30, RSV).

This looks like a total physical development, which God has given man. It includes land, sea, and all that is in them, and even the birds of the air. The New Testament gives us different but interesting pictures. It tells us of the disadvantages and dangers of development, and also directs us to think of developing spiritual values.

“Do not store up riches for yourselves here on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and robbers break in and steal. Instead, store up riches for yourselves in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and robbers cannot break in and steal” (Matt. 6:19-20, 19:16; 23, TEV).

The church should direct people to the kind of development which Jesus was talking about when He said, “I have come in order that you might have life – life in all its fullness” (John 10:10, TEV). It seems that nothing good that is related to life is left out. They all have to be developed in such a way that people collectively should enjoy the richness of life.

Everything is interrelated, and all should help, support, and encourage one another to reach their aims in, or to experience, life – life in all its fullness. The diagram below will try to illustrate the wholeness and fullness of life, with Jesus in the centre as the giver of real and true life.



Have we ever thought of relating our development to the other aspects of life, as shown above, plus other areas of life? Do we see them as different and independent, and, therefore, we should not help in their development?

In our economic development, does everyone benefit, or is there an equal distribution of possessions and material goods? Think of the early church, as recorded in Acts. The writer says:

All the believers continued together in close fellowship, and shared their belongings with one another. They would sell their property and possessions, and distribute the money among all, according to what each one needed. Day after day they met as a group in the Temple, and they had their meals together in their homes, eating with glad and humble hearts, praising God, and enjoying the good will of all the people. And every day, the Lord added to their group those who were being saved (Acts 2:44-47, TEV).

In what ways can we relate to and differentiate ourselves from the believers as in Acts? How can we relate ourselves with the government, as far as lands are concerned, so that we could bring about development in the community, and to the nation as a whole? Think of the community, the nation, education, science, and so forth; how much connection do we have with all these areas, which are a part of our existence? We need to raise all these kinds of questions so that we can see how we are developing, what we are developing, for whom we are developing, and how far are we developing, or to what extent are we developing.

Before we move on to our next concern, I would like briefly to point out one area which I feel is more neglected, but which should be the basis upon which everything else is built and developed to its fullness. This is our spiritual development.

Bishop Leslie Boseto, whom I met at Wagina (18/4/85), was running a conference, which reflects the wholeness of the gospel for spiritual development. The theme of his conference, which he has also been conducting in many other Solomon Islands societies, was “The Whole Gospel for the Whole Person and People of the Whole World Through the Whole Church”. In his conclusion of the study, Boseto says:

This concept of the whole gospel for the whole person/people of the whole world through the whole church is to help us to see that God’s concern is the totality of our individual and communal existence. When we talk about total human development we are talking about the concern of the whole gospel for our whole community of the whole world. The church – the Body of Christ – must be an undivided church – the Body of Christ – in order to be a credible witness of the whole gospel through the undivided Body (whole church) of Jesus Christ.¹⁰

I was very pleased that Boseto’s study was presented just at the right time, a few days before I finished interviewing people, and

10. Leslie Boseto, 1985.

holding discussions with them, when they began to see problems and dangers in education, economics, and religious pluralism. The study should certainly help them to redirect some of their development plans and strategies in order to achieve a more wholesome and holistic view of life. Just as people can become obsessed by the desire for money and worldly possessions, they can also become slaves in regard to their religious affiliations.

3. Mission and Religious Pluralism

I would like us now to look at the problems of religious pluralism and see what is the best thing we can offer to bring peace and harmony where there is conflict and think of other solutions to problems caused by the presence of religious movements.

It is rather unfortunate that some of our people have turned to non-Christian sources for the fulfilment of their spiritual needs, and, in doing so, conflict, tension, confusion, etc., has arisen between families, communities, and the two Christian churches – the Roman Catholics and the United church. Have the Christian churches on Wagina lost their power or ability to continue to live and grow together? There is a possibility that our Christian churches have lost, or are slowly losing, their spiritual vitality, which keeps and binds us together in fellowship with our Lord and our fellowman. Thus, instead of attracting those who are spiritually hungry to their spheres of influence, our churches become obstacles, and repel such people.

There are several ways in which we could provide help to our people to defend the faith and hope in us. Looking at the sects and religions that are currently moving from one village to another, from island to island, town to town, from one city to the other, and from one nation or country to another, I know that they (the religious movements) are all missionary movements. We shall therefore examine our missionary role or responsibilities to cope with these non-Christian religious movements.

What is our place as missionaries among today's religious pluralistic movements? Are we to be closed, insulated within ourselves, or are we to be related with them, and open ourselves to them? How far can we be open? We have a mission because we belong to Christ. Those of us (Christians) who have experienced the work of salvation through Christ, have a solid ground to stand on and be prepared for mission. According to Paul, Christian mission is for the whole creation to the secular and sacred, to flesh and spirit. In other words, the mission is for the totality of mankind (Col. 1:15-20).

This mission is not an individual thing, but for the whole body of Christ – the church. God does not ask for a solicitor or helper, what He needs is a witness. Simply, someone to witness to His salvation, which he has offered in and through Christ alone. We are not only to look at the Bible as the history and record of God's revelation and salvation. We are not only to look at the (Christian) church, but also to look outside the Bible and the church, because God's salvation act was realised before the Bible was canonised, and the church came into function. This means that our understanding of God's mission is limitless.

If God's mission is limitless, we cannot ignore the truth of its universality. **The mission's universal nature is that He works for the whole world in different ways and religions.**

Seeing them this way, we cannot adopt an attitude of competition and ignorance towards different beliefs or religions. Rather, we need to adopt an attitude of cooperation and sympathy in relation to their influences. We have to recognise that the other person is a person like ourselves. We need to respect him/her, even if he/she belongs to one of the sects or religions different from Christianity. Note that some of these movements do not do away with some of the basic beliefs and understandings we hold, such as belief in one God, the promotion of love, peace, unity, and so forth. However, we need to recognise that some only give emphasis to some particular areas of religious truths. For instance, the Pentecostals, who accepted the gospel, put too much emphasis on the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the Baha'is emphasise the oneness of religion.

If God's mission is seen working and participating in these other religions and sects, then we have to join forces with such religions. We need not become members of them, rather we must discern and look at them closely in order clearly to distinguish what they believe, teach, and preach. We must see the other person, such as a Baha'i, in an empathetic way. This should be the criterion by which we could be missionaries to these religions and sects.

Remember that God is working in all areas of life – culture, politics, economics, education, religion, and so forth, not only in the United church or the Roman Catholic church.

There are dangers, and, therefore, we should be very careful with our method of approach. One thing we must possess is “empathy”, and then, with discernment, we could be missionaries to other religions and sects.

The missionary task, as presented by Luke, is to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to recover sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, and to announce that the time has come when the Lord will save His people (Luke 4:18-21). Luke also reminds us that it is possible to be spectators only and not to be involved in the actual witnessing (Luke 8:19). In this case, we have to be very careful, too, or else we become judges, or military men, instead of missionaries. Luke 4:18 ff reminds us that we cannot fix Christ with a series of events and say “that is Christ”, or “there is Christ”. Christ is the **logos**, the Word. He is before Abraham was.

Our commitment and loyalty to Christ, and understanding of his Kingdom, together with our pledge of the Holy Spirit's guidance, are basic to our way of approach to other religions. Apparently, the church has no mission. It is God's mission, in which we are only co-workers, we are no more than fellow-workers. The Trinity is involved in this mission because God creates the world, then sends his Son, who offers and makes redemption available. Through the Son, everyone now shares the Sonship of God. The Son is also a sender, reflecting that missionary activity. He sends the 12 disciples to preach and make disciples (see Luke 10:1-20 and Mark 6:7-13).

However, there is no mission for the 12 without the experience of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 13:1-2). The Holy Spirit consecrates, anoints, and sends like the Father and the Son, therefore, there is no mission unless the Holy Spirit sends. One has to have that inspiration in order to be bold in his/her witness as a missionary. He (the Holy Spirit) helps to explain things about Christ's salvation, God's purpose for each individual, and God's love for the whole world.

For Gilbertese, Christians firstly need to be sure of their salvation, and, secondly, to experience the power of the Holy Spirit in their life. If these did not take place, then they are either afraid to share their faith, or not so sure what to say when members of other sects or religions approach them. A good witness is someone who is sure he or she has submitted his or her life to Jesus as Lord, who will give and provide him or her the power and the helper through the Holy Spirit (John 16:7, TEV).

For the Gilbertese, this is only the beginning of a further and wider contact yet to come with other religions of the world. Keep in mind that you (Gilbertese) shall meet people who hold that their beliefs are correct, who probably think they are better than the Catholic or the United churches' beliefs and practices. We need to be reminded of Peter's words:

But in your hearts **reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared** to make a defence to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet **do it with gentleness and reverence, and keep your conscience clear**, so that, when you are abused, those who revile your good behaviour in Christ may be put to shame. (1 Peter 3:15-16, RSV).¹¹

Let the words of Peter be the cornerstone of our mission, dialogue, encounter, witness, and evangelism to these different religions. Just as Christ was central in encountering the other forces, He is also to be seen as the only example of a mediator between his

11. Note the emphasised words are the key words to anyone who calls us to account for the belief and hope that we have.

church and the other religions. Let us believe in God's Word and act upon His promises. "The Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen (us) and keep (us) from the evil one" (2 Thess. 3:3). It is the evil one who tries to create as many divisions as there can be. Our aim is not to defend the faith to show how good and perfect we are, but, to defend the Christian faith, is to defend the Christian faith from being divided into many sects".¹²

May this concern about the corruption of the Christian faith caused by the forces of this world be one of the Christian's priorities to pursue a study that will probe into their corruptive nature, so that an ever ready, dynamic, and inspiring defence will meet the needs of our people today. We need to elucidate the people's concept about these existing forces so that harmony and peace are experienced within their cultures, and to stimulate and renew their obscured and tainted faith experiences to a deeper level of Christian commitment and witness.

12. Discussion with Leslie Boseto, Wagina, 18/4/85.

REPORT

THE ETHICS OF DEVELOPMENT

**17th Waigani Seminar,
University of Papua New Guinea,
7-12 September, 1986**

The Waigani Seminars have made a significant contribution to Papua New Guinea's path to independence, and its subsequent development since their inception in 1968. At the time of the tenth anniversary of independence, which was celebrated on 16 September 1985, the country was going through what Fr John Momis (then Deputy Prime Minister and now Deputy Leader of the Opposition) called "post-independence depression", a crisis of confidence fuelled by revelations of rampant crime and corruption. People were beginning to ask whether the values, both traditional and Christian, enshrined in the preamble to Papua New Guinea's constitution had not been sacrificed on the altar of development.

The Melanesian Institute, maintained by the four major churches (Roman Catholic, Evangelical Lutheran, Anglican, and United), for research into the dialogue between Melanesian traditions and Christianity, was thinking along these lines in planning a seminar to be offered to Melanesian leaders. Sensing this mood, Professor Garry Trompf (then Professor of History at UPNG, now Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Sydney) proposed that the next Waigani Seminar concentrate on the ethical implications of development, and that the Melanesian Institute seminar in November 1985 prepare the ground for it by treating a similar topic (the papers read at this seminar have been published in the Institute's **Point** Series No. 9 as **Ethics and Development in Papua New Guinea**, ed. by Gernot Fugmann).

The response to this suggestion was enthusiastic, and led to a stimulating and many-sided Waigani Seminar. The topic, "The Ethics

of Development”, was divided into five sections covering Communication, Society, Economics, Environment, and Politics. International authorities in each of these fields were invited to give keynote addresses and take part in workshops with local academics and leaders. In this report, I cannot hope to include more than a fraction of what was said, though I shall begin by trying to summarise some important insights into the present situation of Papua New Guinea (I). I shall concentrate on the three main approaches to development ethics, which became apparent at the seminar (II), and I shall conclude by drawing together some of their implications for both ecumenical theology and religious studies (III).

I. The Situation: Papua New Guinea Comes of Age

Speeches by two very different political leaders served to set the parameters of *realpolitik*, within which discussion at the seminar moved. The youthful President of Kiribati (pop. 64,000, land area 700 sq km, Mr Ieremia Tabai, flung down a challenge to his Papua New Guinean hosts in his opening address. He said he was puzzled to have been invited to speak on ethics simply because his tiny country was negotiating a fishing deal with the Soviet Union, “because I believe there are no deep ethical questions involved”. For him, the ethical issue is undue dependence on powerful nations, whatever their ideological stamp, “including our traditional friends”. The contrast with Papua New Guinea’s aid relationship to Australia was apparent when the Australian Foreign Minister, Mr Bill Hayden, delivered a major policy speech designed to justify substantial reductions in that aid, not only because of the recent fall in value of the Australian dollar against the Papua New Guinea kina, but also in the light of a reassessment of the role of aid in development. Noting that “Australia still provides 85 per cent of PNG’s total aid receipts – and 26 per cent of its total budget revenue”, he asked: “Has this huge transfer and budget support, in fact, been a distorting influence on the development of PNG?”

UPNG economist Dr Roman Grynberg maintained, in a background paper, that the present coalition government under Prime Minister Paias Wingti and Finance Minister Sir Julius Chan is the first

since independence in which economic policy is guided by a discernible ideology. He identified this ideology as a free market, supply side, even **laissez-faire** approach, in most, though not all, areas. In a workshop presentation on transfer pricing (the practice by which transnational corporations avoid making profits in countries where taxation is high), Grynberg followed this up by documenting extensive malpractice in Papua New Guinea's timber industry, ranging from the government's disregard for world prices when setting its minimum export price, thus forfeiting millions of kina in excise, and aiding and abetting the transnationals in avoiding unwanted profits, to the bribing of timber inspectors by companies so that high-quality logs are exported under inferior classifications. The ethic of individualism, promoted by the present government, he implied, provides no answer to such economic exploitation.

The shadow side of supply-side economics was revealed when Sr John Paul Chao (anthropologist at the Melanesian Institute, Goroka) gave a detailed description of the powerlessness and destitution of settlement dwellers on the outskirts of Port Moresby. In common with such squatters throughout the Third World, they hate the police, mistrust the government, and are cynical about the churches, seeking their salvation in the only security they know: their traditional kinship bonds. Those who accompanied Sr John Paul on a field trip to the settlement were moved by the dignity with which the community leaders received the group and tried to explain their needs in halting English, but, personally, I was shaken to see, for the first time, hopelessness and defeat etched deep in the faces of Papua New Guineans.

The predominant impression left by the various workshops, however, was positive and hopeful. A team of medical researchers reported how traditional institutions, such as the men's house and the menstrual hut, are falling into disuse as villagers move closer to the huge Ok Tedi mining complex, causing the birthrate to double in one year; but, at the invitation of the company, the situation is being monitored and remedial policies elaborated. A Mt Hagen businesswoman recounted with verve and charm how she and her group have achieved success in a male-dominated society. Mr Tony Power

(Office of Economic Services, East Sepik Provincial Government, Wewak) showed how customary land tenure, far from being the chief obstacle to development, as is frequently thought, can, in fact, provide a basis for development acceptable to Melanesians if clan ownership of common land and shares in businesses is recognised. Ms Jean Kekedo, of the Ombudsman Commission, gave a spirited defence of her fight against corruption, and Mr Tony Deklin, of the UPNG Law Department, insisted that moral values provide the criteria for law-making, and not the other way round. Yet, underlying the debates on these and many other issues, such as, care of the environment, education policy, decentralisation of political power, freedom of the press, the introduction of television, and the status of women, were the more fundamental questions of development ethics, to which we must now turn.

II. The Remedies: Utilitarian, Humanitarian, or Religious?

I propose to hack three paths through the jungle of ethical presuppositions and ideological assumptions, beneath which the participants' ethical commitments were often concealed like mangrove roots in the shadows of more exotic growths. Not all contributors will be happy at being discovered along the particular path which led me to their basic positions, but the paths do not stop there: they are meant to lead us out of the ideological jungle into the sunlight of clearer ethical discernment.

(1) “Development” is not the solution, but the problem – and “ethics” is not a solution to the problem posed by development

Professor Serge Latouche (University of Lille, France) led the attack by maintaining that “development” is neither a universal value, nor value-neutral, but a code name for Westernisation. Despite the endorsement of development as a basic human right, and, correspondingly, a duty of governments, by the UN, and as “the new name for peace” (Pope Paul VI), the need to “moralise” development

by stipulating that it must be “integral” and “human” is symptomatic of a basic contradiction. The idea of development, which goes back to that of “progress”, as understood by Condorcet, and the Enlightenment, implies a thoroughly utilitarian and materialistic ethic.

Plausible as this intellectual demolition of development may seem in the salons of Paris, however, it rather overshoots the mark when addressed to Pacific Islanders, for whom development, in some shape or form, is a matter of sheer survival. This is not to deny that, in its capitalist form, it is, at the same time, a threat to their survival. It occurred to me that Latouche’s thesis would make an excellent basis for a statement of the present French policy towards Kanaky (New Caledonia).

A more useful approach was that of Professor Gavin Kitching (North London Polytechnic), who uncovered some of the puzzles and paradoxes involved in applying ethic devised for individual morality to the behaviour of collectivities, such as transnational corporations, governments, and social institutions. The chains of cause and effect, interposed between intentions and outcomes, can make it virtually impossible to allocate responsibility or blame. Marx, realising this, yet moved by moral outrage in the face of capitalist exploitation, concluded that the economic system itself must be changed. Kitching, noting that, in practice, a utilitarian ethic predominates, and that this is only too compatible with the clan-based ethic of tribal peoples, concluded that “ethics is not an illuminating way of thinking about development”. Politics, which is interested in outcomes rather than intentions, is our only recourse. But does not “the concept of a good society”, which, for Kitching, would be implied by such politics, itself entail an ethical value system, based on some form of social consensus and its institutionalisation? Background papers by Fr Ennio Mantovani (The Melanesian Institute) on the rationale behind clan-based systems, and by Professor Max Charlesworth (Deakin University, Australia) on the way pluralism in Western societies dissociates institutions from a moral/religious consensus, are necessary complements to Kitching’s provocative, but ultimately unsatisfying, thesis.

Some participants were disappointed that Professor Brian Brogan (Director, Institute of National Affairs, Port Moresby) steadfastly refused to be drawn into a discussion of the moral responsibility of the economist. His stimulating review of the history of economics as a discipline, issuing in its new openness to empirical research, did not lead him to concede that the economist has any responsibility for defining goals and setting priorities. Yet, as Gavin Kitching insisted in his rejoinder, the concept of “cost” inevitably involves social, and, therefore, moral aspects. Economic thinking apparently continues to suffer under a theoretical deficit in this respect. A perceptive background paper by Dr Peter Sack (Law Department, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University) suggests one possible approach to making good this deficit. Taking a hard look at “development;” in practice, Sack concludes that it is “no longer primarily an economic but a political and ideological enterprise”, which “is not and cannot be aimed at raising the quality of life in the villages”, but “is necessary to pay for a salaried, but economically unproductive, and essentially urban (public and private), service industry”. This analysis was born out by Professor Cranford Pratt (University of Toronto) in his account of decolonisation and independence in African countries. Sack’s counter-strategy to the kind of pseudo-development that leads to what Pratt called “fictitious states” does not involve “making the process of ‘development’ ethically accountable” but “political and social reforms, rather than economic reforms”, in which “constitutional law must be the target rather than the instrument of reform”.

Perhaps, because of the twin influences of traditional Melanesian ethics, which tends to allocate personal causes to what Westerners would call “natural” events, and Christian moral preaching on Melanesian societies, none of the above positions emerged as completely convincing at the seminar, though their critique of the concept of development was certainly valuable.

(2) Development can be humanised if only traditional values are allowed to play a part in it

Denis Goulet (O'Neill Professor of Education for Justice, Notre Dame University, USA) argued vigorously for the indispensability of traditional values in the development process, for otherwise, people have no means of preserving identity and cultural integrity while undergoing social change, and are bereft of "criteria for accepting or rejecting the outside influences brought to bear upon them". Goulet also offered a critique of development, but, unlike previous speakers, he concentrated on its ethical deficiencies rather than placing it beyond the pale of ethics altogether. He stressed the paradox that values, whether ethical, cultural, or religious, only have this humanising effect on development when they are regarded non-instrumentally, i.e., are not exploited to shore up preconceived ideologies in a utilitarian way. He was well aware, however, that traditional values inevitably enter into unpredictable hybrid forms when intermingled with non-indigenous values introduced from outside, that value conflicts may result, and that change agents must perform the difficult feat of being selective without being manipulative in assessing the relevance of traditional values for development. Goulet's conclusion was that "to build development from tradition is the very opposite of a reactionary position".

Goulet's more abstract argumentation was nicely complemented by the very down-to-earth presentation of Fr F. X. Hezel (Micronesian Seminar, Truk, Caroline Islands). It was based on years of experience in dealing with the social problems caused by modernisation in small traditional communities, especially as it affects the kin group, the extended family and the relationship of the sexes. Despite the appalling problems that result, Fr Hazel's conviction that such societies "are capable of healing themselves" was much appreciated.

We were also offered fascinating case studies of traditional values at work. Dr Peter Eaton (Faculty of Law, UPNG) maintained that there is in Melanesia a traditional "land ethic", based on the Melanesian worldview which, if reinforced, would make conservation and wildlife management feasible. But Dr Brian Allen (Department of Human Geography, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian

National University), whose sympathy for, and empathy with, rural Melanesia are above reproach, did not feel able to affirm that there was anything in traditional culture that could be regarded as the equivalent of a “conservation ethic”, thus giving the lie to the idyllic descriptions of “Melanesians in communion with nature” one so frequently encounters. These were extremely thought-provoking contributions, and I think it could fairly be said that the values-in-development approach, if it did not predominate in the public lectures, pervaded most of the discussions at the seminar.

(3) Integral human development presupposes both economic and spiritual liberation, but such all-embracing liberation is ultimately conceivable only if it is supported by religious convictions

Of the three positions outlined, this one was the most sketchily represented at the seminar. It came to light most clearly, perhaps, in the panel convened by the Melanesian Institute (Goroka) of Melanesian church leaders and professionals (politicians and public servants, though invited, were conspicuous by their absence) on the integration of Melanesian, Christian, and “modern” values in practical life. Although unsystematic, these responses were impressive in their insistence on the need to marry prophetic vision to lived example, and translate both into the terms of the planning and lawmaking processes. Revd Esau Tuza (Department of History, UPNG) shrewdly put his finger on the role of power in ethical decision-making, while Fr Cherubim Dambui, a Catholic priest and former provincial premier, said that unless laws are informed by ethical values, they will never serve to combat slavery to “the cult of grabbing”. He hinted that Papua New Guinea has been made “over-Christian” by generations of missionaries, without much discernible result in the area of social justice, but Kumalau Tawali (Christian Leaders’ Training College, Banz) called for a “divine ethics” based on the truth of Jesus, if Papua New Guinea is to get beyond the choice between tyranny and anarchy. Both the structures of society and the human heart must change if Papua New Guinea is not to “survive by lying”. The Melanesian Institute is to be congratulated on organising this panel as an original solution to the problem of presenting the complex interactions of

Christian principles with the values prevalent in present-day Melanesian societies. Yet it leaves us at the very beginning of the daunting theoretical task of sorting out just what the interrelationships are.

III. Conclusion: Towards the Development of Ethics

During discussion of a workshop paper by Damien Arabagali, a Southern Highlander, on the effects of development on the total environment, both ecological and cultural, of his people, Garry Trompf suggested that a dialogue between Melanesians and Christians could help to avoid some of the culture conflicts which marred their relationship in the past. Apart from background papers by Gernot Fugmann (Director, The Melanesian Institute) on the role of the church in Melanesian society, and Ron Engel (Meadville Theological School, Lombard College, Chicago), who advocated “a readiness to expand the multi-faith dialogue on human rights to include environment values”, what is, for me, the crucial issue in development ethics, never got another mention. Is this because many still regard it as a token of academic respectability to trot out the old saw about “the missions destroying culture” and leave it at that?

In an address, which, in its specificity and frankness, was one of the highlights of the seminar, Professor Ron Crocombe (University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji), himself avowedly non-religious, saw, in the hope engendered by religious faiths, so long as they avoid the facile solutions offered by fundamentalism, one of the few positive signs pointing to a better Pacific in the twenty-first century. He concluded by calling for “the development of ethics”. My point is that the two belong together. If this hint had been taken up, the seminar could have achieved more far-reaching results.

Sensible discussion of the issues involved first has to deal with what has become a virtual dogma in Western philosophical circles, the logical autonomy of ethics. The available logical options may be set out as follows:

- (a) The action (x) is good because God wills it.
- (b) God wills the action (x) because it is good.
- (c) The action (x) is good.

While options (a), (b) and (c) do not correspond neatly to positions (3), (2) and (1), as outlined above, those who adhere to position (1), and many of those who advocate position (2), would agree that the judgment expressed by (c) is sufficient to ground an ethic. Proponents of (3), on the other hand, would be divided about adopting option (a) or (b).

Whether or not it can be argued successfully that ethics can be consistent, independently of religious beliefs, in the type of society found everywhere in Melanesia, in which the religious attitude is not the mind-set of a cognitive minority, but permeates just about everything that people do, feel, and think, the whole enterprise begins to appear rather pointless. Whence else would ethical injunctions draw the force of conviction necessary for them to be socially effective, if not from myths and symbols, which might fairly be described as “religious”? If this be so, is not the really interesting problem today that of the possible conflicts and complementarities of such religious symbol systems in grounding an ethic adequate to our needs?

For the moral and spiritual needs engendered by the process of development are, on closer scrutiny, indeed daunting. Gavin Kitching did useful groundwork here by pointing out the ethical inconsistencies implicit in the behaviour of collectivities, such as corporate actions with both good and bad outcomes, irrespective of the intentions of those who initiated them. But social change, as such, has profound ethical implications, which were barely touched on in the seminar. And what of the relationships to nature implied in the ethics of different cultures and religions, not to mention the whole problematic of ethical decisions, which affect the genetic constitution of human nature and identity, and hence the well-being of future generations? We are indeed only at the beginning of our labours in all these areas.

But, in pointing to these, and a host of other issues, the 17th Waigani Seminar did an inestimable service to all who are interested in the future of Pacific Island nations, not least to those Christians who are struggling to frame theologies that are both indigenous and ecumenical.

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DOCUMENTATION

BAPTISM, EUCHARIST, AND MINISTRY

A MELANESIAN RESPONSE

Introduction

1. The member churches of the Melanesian Council of Churches are grateful to the World Council of Churches for presenting the document on Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry (BEM) to them for study and response. They acknowledge that this document is the result of over 50 years of effort by the Commission on Faith and Order. This commission now includes theologians from virtually every Christian tradition, including the Roman Catholic church, and many representatives of Third World churches. Our churches in Melanesia feel that they can be part of the movement towards greater unity among Christians by responding to BEM. They recognise that the BEM document does not yet represent full agreement (“consensus”) among the churches, but it is the closest they have ever come to an expression of their common faith (“convergence”).

2. This response to BEM was prepared almost entirely by a discussion group of the Eastern Highlands Churches’ Council meeting at the Melanesian Institute in Goroka, Papua New Guinea. It was possibly the most-representative group of its kind ever to be convened in Melanesia. (See Appendix I for details of the group’s composition.) This statement was drafted for submission to the Melanesian Council of Churches as the basis of its official response to the Commission on Faith and Order, while leaving each member church free to make its own individual response.

3. As Christians in Melanesia, we confess that we still have much to learn about what our brothers and sisters in other denominations believe, and how they practise their faith. Nevertheless, we are also aware that BEM calls us to go beyond simply comparing our beliefs and practices with those of others. It calls each church to

“recognise in this text the faith of the church through the ages” (p. x). Though there have been dialogues between individual churches here in the past (“bilateral”, such as Anglican-Roman Catholic, and United-Evangelical Lutheran), we are now asked to take the further step of responding to BEM together (“multilateral”), reflecting, as we do so, on the consequences of BEM for further dialogue, and the guidance it can give us in our Melanesian context.

4. We must also confess that many of the theological problems addressed in BEM seem foreign to us, since they arise out of the history of Christianity in Europe, and thus do not appear relevant to our Melanesian concerns. However, we realise that missionaries, in bringing us the Christian faith, also brought divisions, which separate Christians throughout the world. In doing our part to help heal these divisions, we hope to grow in communion with our partner churches overseas, and with Christians in other developing countries, whose problems are similar to ours.

5. Here are some of the particular concerns we have in mind when we study BEM:

- the struggle to express our faith in Melanesian ways, finding the right relationship between the teachings of our churches and the customs and traditions of our people;
- our need for a firm Christian basis on which to work together in solving the problems of development faced by newly-independent nations;
- the tensions caused by the inability of some churches and missions to recognise the faith and baptism of others.

We now present our response to BEM in the prayerful hope that it will make a small contribution towards the eventual reception of a common expression of the apostolic faith by all churches.

I. BAPTISM

6. Melanesians deeply appreciate the significance of initiation. There is no such thing as self-initiation; rather, elders, or those with authority to act on behalf of the community, perform the rites which often symbolise death and rebirth, from which children emerge as adults, and full members of the community.

7. In Melanesia, the community always includes the recent dead, the spirits, and the ancestors. People regard it as necessary for the well-being of the community to communicate with the spirits of the dead, and of nature. Though this wider concept of community corresponds to certain Christian traditions, e.g., prayer for the dead, veneration of the saints, petitions for good health, fruitful harvests, and safety on journeys, we do not find the notion of incorporation into this wider community explicitly mentioned in the section on baptism. Nevertheless, we rejoice to see baptism described as incorporation into the Body of Christ (B 1, 6), and initiation into the community of faith (B 12).

8. Some of our churches, especially those from Baptist and Pentecostal traditions, are unable to admit that infant baptism is scriptural (cf. B 11). They insist that the rebirth and renewal, that are an essential part of baptism (cf. B 2), demand a true repentance, such as can only be experienced by adults. Lutherans, on the other hand, regard this as setting conditions for God's grace, and making faith into a human work. The document characterises baptism as being related to "life-long growth into Christ" (B 9), and "a response of faith made within the believing community" (B [12]). It affirms that "The Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of people before, in, and after their baptism" (B 5). This helps us to see how those Christian communities, which pledge to nurture the faith of the baptised, make the Christian initiation of the very young more acceptable, while at the same time taking on a grave responsibility. Indiscriminate baptism of infants (cf. B [21] [b]), and a too-easy reliance on godparents, can weaken this responsibility. For Catholics and Anglicans, the renewal of baptismal vows at Easter (cf. B [14] [c]), and, for Lutherans, the importance given to confirmation (B 14), serve to emphasise this responsibility.

9. We find that most of our churches do, indeed, have “equivalent alternatives” (B [12]) to both infant and believers’ baptism in their processes of Christian initiation regarded as a whole. Where Pentecostals or Baptists would baptise a repentant adult, Catholics would offer the sacrament of penance; both are intended as the seal of repentance. Whereas the older traditions do not hesitate to baptise infants, others dedicate them to God in the presence of the community. In many churches, confirmation emphasises the continual working of the Holy Spirit given in baptism.

10. The statement that “Christians are immersed in the liberating death of Christ, where their sins are buried, where the “Old Adam” is crucified with Christ, and where the power of sin is broken” (B 3), is a clear affirmation that baptism is the firm foundation of our unity in Christ. It is “a call to the churches to overcome their divisions, and visibly manifest their fellowship” (B 6). Though “re-baptism” is frequently practised in Melanesia, we are striving to clear away the misunderstandings on which it is based (B 13). There is, perhaps, no greater hindrance, in our context, to the realisation of our unity in Christ. Our disagreements about baptism cause us to neglect our “common responsibility, here and now, to bear witness together to the gospel of Christ” (B 10), for we see the proclamation of the Word as an integral part of baptism itself.

II. EUCHARIST

11. Whereas the term “Eucharist” is current in the Catholic and Anglican churches, Lutherans speak about the “Lord’s Supper”, while the United church prefers “Holy Communion”. But there is general agreement among us that this celebration is indeed “the central act of the church’s worship” (E 1).

12. There are Melanesian equivalents for the idea of “sacrifice”, e.g., in the **dema** myth, where a life is taken in order that new life may continue to appear. However, the idea of a unique sacrifice, which is all-sufficient, and cannot be repeated (cf. E 8), is a challenge to Melanesian thinking, which is closely bound to the cycles

of nature. The elements of bread and wine, too, are unfamiliar and cause both material and symbolic difficulties, whereas coconut milk or **kaukau** (sweet potato) are traditionally significant, and may be more readily available. Some churches approve of the use of such substances as elements (cf. E [13], [29]). There may be cultural equivalents to the eucharist as a rite of reconciliation, such as the **kava** ceremony of Fiji.

13. The eucharist as a “memorial”, in the form of a common meal, which is “a proclamation and a celebration of the work of God” (3) is more readily understood throughout Melanesia. We, thus, welcome the document’s insistence that the eucharist is “the memorial of the crucified and risen Christ” (E 5), i.e., sacrifice and memorial belong together. In Melanesia, the shared meal is the supreme sign of fellowship and reconciliation, even with former enemies. For the Pentecostal churches, forgiveness and healing are an integral part of the celebration of communion. In our different ways, we are thus able to appreciate that “The eucharistic celebration demands reconciliation and sharing among all those regarded as brothers and sisters in the one family of God, and is a constant challenge in search of appropriate relationships in social, economic, and political life” (E 20). Whether our people are caught up in tribal fighting, or in the struggle to achieve social justice in the course of economic and political development, the eucharist as “the sacrament of the unique sacrifice of Christ, who ever lives to make intercession for us”, and as “the memorial of all that God has done for the salvation of the world” (E 8), can be of the greatest significance to them.

14. “The church confesses Christ’s real, living, and active presence in the eucharist” (E 13), but our churches interpret this presence in different ways. The United church has no doctrine of the eucharist as a sacrifice, and it considers the event of the celebration as a whole to be the memorial. For Lutherans, the body and blood of Christ are present “in, with, and under” the elements of bread and wine, but He is more truly represented in the eucharistic event itself. Anglicans and Catholics come closest to the terminology of the document in regarding the eucharist as the sacramental representation of the perfect sacrifice of Christ. Yet for all of us, communion with Christ, as

communities, and in the context of the celebration, is the true meaning of the eucharist.

III. MINISTRY

15. Under certain circumstances, the United church can invite lay people to preside at the communion service, and some Lutherans consider it possible to allow this, but Catholics and Anglicans do not (cf. E 29). The United church makes least of the distinctions between ordained and lay, men and women, in the church's ministries; the Catholic church makes most of them; and the others come somewhere in between. Yet, we can all agree that each Christian community has a right to the eucharist, and that, at least in times of need, it is possible in most of our churches for lay people designated, if not formally "ordained", by the community, to preside at the eucharistic celebration (cf. M 14, [14]).

16. We find that we have greater difficulties with each other's forms of ministry than with either baptism or eucharist. While the Salvation Army has neither sacraments, nor an ordained ministry, and for traditions, such as the Baptist and the Church of Christ, the whole atmosphere of such discussions about ordination and ministry is strange, for Catholics, Anglicans, and Lutherans the possibility of real unity stands or falls on the issues treated here. We are grateful for the opportunity given by BEM to gain insights into one another's understandings of ministry.

17. The document's stress on ministry, as the calling of the whole people of God, in the context of the priesthood of all believers (cf. M 4, 12), makes it easier for us to face up to the differences which separate us in the area of ordained ministry, and to include appropriate Melanesian forms of authority and service in our discussions. In the Lutheran church, "elders", whose role can approximate quite closely to that of traditional leaders, function as "pastors", and carry out specialised ministries. There is a special rite for bestowing the position of elder. They lead the congregation collectively, and they still have a say in deciding who should proceed to theological training and

ordination. In the Catholic church, specialised ministries, which recognise the charisms of lay men and women, have developed greatly in recent times, from “catechist” (roughly equivalent to Lutheran “evangelists”), to counselling, educational, and even judicial roles. Churches in the Pentecostal tradition explicitly strive for “multiple leadership”, exercising an authority, which is neither autocratic nor democratic (cf. M 16). The United church pastor has authority over the laity, but can be checked by the community. There is a danger, however, that traditional Melanesian forms of leadership can become confused with Christian, e.g., in rivalry between lay elders and ordained pastors.

18. Regarding ordination, we are not, at present, able to resolve our differences on whether it is primarily the community’s recognition or approval of a gift or calling already received (cf. M 6, 15, 44), or the actual bestowal of a gift or “charism”, even to the extent of being a sacrament, in which a special grace is received (cf. M 7c, 39, 42). For some of our churches, ordination is no more than a “commissioning” of people who have already proved themselves in preaching and service. For all of us, however, it is “an action by God and the community, by which the ordained are strengthened by the Spirit for their task, and are upheld by the acknowledgment and prayers of the congregation” (M 40). On the other hand, we all need to deepen our understanding of the gifts of the Spirit, or charisms (cf. M 5, 32), and to see the ordained ministry as one of them.

19. Some of our churches have great difficulties with the traditional threefold structure of ordained ministries as those of bishops, priests, and deacons. In some churches, the ministry of **episcopate**, or “oversight”, is also carried out by persons designated as “Moderator” or “President”, including those who “relate the Christian community in their area to the wider church, and the universal church to their community” (M 29; cf. M 21, 22). Only Catholics and Anglicans speak of “presbyters”, (cf. M 30) or ordained ministers, as “priests”; all others prefer the term “pastor”. Most have difficulty in seeing any difference between the work done by catechists and evangelists, and the role ascribed to the special office of deacon (cf. M [31]). In our Melanesian situation, which is all too often characterised by Christian sectarianism

and tribal disputes, we agree that “a ministry of **episkope** is necessary to express and safeguard the unity of the body”, and we observe with pride that “this ministry of unity” (M 23) is often exercised by evangelists and pastors, whether lay or ordained, at great personal risk.

20. In view of the particular status of women in Melanesian cultures, it may be premature to raise the issue of ordaining women here at present. Some churches, which ordain women in overseas countries, do not yet contemplate doing so in Melanesia, with the exception of the United church and the Salvation Army. However, our churches have made it possible for Melanesian women to discover and make use of their special gifts, and we must carefully consider the effect of denying ordination to women on the further development of Melanesian cultures (cf. M [18]).

21. Our discussion of ministry has confronted us with the perennial question: “What is the church?” Does it depend on a “continuity of the Word” alone, or is “continuity in the apostolic tradition” (M 35) essential to it as well? Does “the apostolic tradition of the whole church” necessarily include “the succession of the apostolic ministry” (M [34])? If it does not, how can we be sure that we can recognise one another’s ministries (cf. M 52)? If we regard ordination as a special gift of the Spirit, can it be resigned or revoked (cf. M 48)? What is the ultimate source of authority in the church (cf. M 15), and how do ministers, whether ordained or lay, men or women, participate in it (cf. M [13])? These are some of the questions which our study of BEM has forced us to reconsider in our Melanesian context.

Conclusion

22. In conclusion, we would like to suggest the following practical steps by which our churches can continue to respond to BEM:

1. Study the BEM text itself, or this Melanesian response to it in seminary courses and parish discussion groups, where possible, in ecumenical fellowship with other churches.

2. Draw on experience gained in coming to grips with BEM when dealing with Christian groups who are causing difficulties.
3. In all relationships with other churches, try to identify the faith we have in common rather than concentrating on differences.
4. Worship together, wherever occasion allows, either by offering one another the hospitality of the Lord's table, or by using the Lima liturgy inspired by BEM.
5. Reopen both bilateral and multilateral dialogues among our churches, in order to enable as many as possible "to prepare an official response to this text at the highest appropriate level of authority" (p. x), and thus prepare the ground for real consensus (cf. p. ix) and our common attainment of "the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, in order that the world might believe" (p. viii, from WCC By-laws).

Appendix I: The Study Groups

The Melanesian Council of Churches, at its Annual General Meeting in Popondetta, 12-16 February 1984, formed a Committee on Theology and Melanesian Life, with the express purpose of helping the churches respond to BEM. This committee met to consider the document in Port Moresby on 10.4.1985 (on baptism), but, because of organisational difficulties, it was not able to meet again.

The Eastern Highlands Churches' Council formed a discussion group, which met at the Melanesian Institute, Goroka, on 9.5.1985, 27.6.1985 (on baptism); 15.8.1985, 17.10.1985 (on eucharist); 21.11.1985, 6.2.1986, 13.3.1986, 1.5.1986, and 24.7.1986 (on ministry). A draft response was revised on 16.10 and 20.10.1986.

Though not all the churches listed below attended all 12 meetings, most were represented at all of them:

The Anglican church of Papua New Guinea (9)

The Catholic church of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands (12)
The United church of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands (10)
The Evangelical Lutheran church of Papua New Guinea (11)
The International Church of the Foursquare Gospel (7)
The Christian Life Centre (2)
The Salvation Army (2)
The Goroka Baptist church (1)
The Church of Christ (4)

Average attendance at the meetings was 12, with the proportion of male to female 10:2, or ordained to lay 8:4, and of expatriates to nationals 9:3.

Appendix II: Further Reading

All references in this Statement of Response are to **Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry** (Geneva: WCC, 1982 = Faith and Order Paper No. 111), with paragraphs numbered according to the three sections: “B”, “E”, and “M”, and commentary paragraphs in brackets.

The following books are helpful in studying and using BEM:

KINNAMON, Michael, **Why It Matters: A Popular Introduction to the Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry Text** (Geneva: WCC, 1985) 72 pp.

LAZARETH, William H., **Growing Together in Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry: A Study Guide** (Geneva: WCC, 1982 = Faith and Order Paper No. 114) 107 pp.

THURIAN, Max, ed., **Churches Respond to BEM: Official Responses to the “Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry” Text**, Vol. 1 (Geneva WCC, 1983 = Faith and Order Paper No. 116) 246 pp.

These books, and other materials useful for study groups, including the BEM text itself, can be obtained from the Australian Council of Churches, 199 Clarence Street, Sydney NSW 2000 Australia.

(The Annual General Meeting of the Melanesian Council of Churches, Port Moresby, 3-5.02.1987, recommended this text to the member churches for study and discussion.)

GOD AS THE SOURCE OF WEALTH

Garry W. Trompf

There are no primal (or so-called “primitive”) societies which fail to celebrate their material blessings. When the animals are plentiful; when the tubers grow fat in the ground, or the maize tall and strong in the field; when the women are pregnant, and the men vital in war or negotiation, a small people has the elbow-room to be confident. It is a guarantee of self-respect if one has beasts and harvests good enough to meet one’s round of obligations, or answer the needs of a feast, and it is the fruit of a group’s identity that its members delight, shame, or frighten, out-bargain, or satisfy, its natural competitors.

Wealth in primal society is group wealth. There are undeniably individuals, families, or castes more noticeably well-off, and “primitive capitalism” can indeed exist, so that, among the Tolai of New Britain, for example, it is harder for a native rope to pass through the eye of a bone needle than for a poor man – a man who has failed to accumulate shell-money – to enter the paradise of spirits.¹ A “bigman”, however, to take the straightforward New Guinea-highland expression for leadership as axial, is only big if he is generous, if his wealth is accessible to willing debtors, or his prestige enhanced by magnanimity. A little society, with allowance for selfish littleness of spirit, especially in its management and institutions, would easily fall prey to discord and extinction by unneighbourly enemies.

Wealth in primal societies is not a purely human achievement. It is rejoiced in, not only because the labourers or looters have ably carried out their tasks, but also because the gods and ancestors have been supportive, or at least permissive. If so much of the ritual or magic documented in modern ethnographies has been in pursuit of fecundity, this is because **homo economicus**, in traditional society, sees

1. Cf., e.g., C.G. ToVaninara, “Tambu: Traditional Sacred Wealth”, in N. Habel (ed.), **Powers, Plumes, and Piglets; Phenomena of Melanesian Religion**, Adelaide, 1979, pp. 33 ff.; S. Epstein, **Capitalism, Primitive, and Modern**, Canberra, 1968.

himself as the recipient of extra-human magnanimities, and he is grateful to more than himself or his fellows. “Man” is “the toolmaker”, as Kenneth Oakley reminds us,² but primal men and women are far less the manufacturers than they are the husbanders, and their abundance – in litters and harvests – seems generated for them rather than by them. Thus, reciprocities cannot stop short at bargains and mutual offering between the living, but issue in vital relationships with deities and the dead.

The historian of religion will immediately recognise that such beliefs in the supra-human bases of material prosperity have been of fundamental importance at the dawn of so-called civilisation, and hence have left an indelible effect on the documented, or greater, traditions, not only on the host of small and less-familiar cultures around the world today. “O Agni”, runs an ancient Indian Vedic hymn, “bring us wealth secure, vast wealth in horses and kine.”³ “Praise the Lord”, sings the psalmist of the Bible, because the generous godfearer has “wealth and riches . . . in his house”.⁴ As the Caesar Maximin has it inscribed (in one of the last official apologies for paganism before the first Christian Roman Emperor Constantine), “who can be so senseless . . . as not to perceive that it is by the benevolent care of the gods that the earth does not refuse the seeds committed to it, nor disappoint the cultivators?”⁵ Individual greed, and lack of liberality, were certainly disdained – an excess and imbalance, according to the ancient Greek Theognis, or deserving the judgment of God, as Job avers⁶ – but material blessings, seen to involve the group, or a whole ethnos, were the welcome results of heavenly grace. It is this sense of divine goodness, of God’s role as the ultimate author of prosperity, which has been inherited by the world’s most populous religions, including Islam and Christianity. The early Indian Brahmins, the Buddha, the Christ, and the Prophet Muhammad may have been admired for their “right livelihood”, admittedly, but, among the multitude who came following after them, wealth was a nation’s pride, and the faithful must needs lift

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2. Oakley, **Man the Toolmaker**, London, 1956 edn.
 3. **Rg-Veda**, X: 156, 153, cf. 1, 140, 13; VI: 1, 11-13; VIII: 23, 27 ff, 39, 10.
 4. Psalm 112:3; cf. 119:14, yet by contrast, 37:16, 49:6, etc.
 5. In Eusebius, **Ecclesiastica Historia**, IX, xiii, 8.
 6. Theognis, 129-130, 145-150, Job 20:15, 36:19 (NEB).

their prayers to God for ever having “turned dearth and scarcity into . . . plenty” and “bounty”.⁷

The question now arises as to whether we have all entered into a techno-dominated age, in which such “history is bunk” – into Henry Ford’s presaged tomorrow-land of mass-produced “Cargo”.⁸ An answer can no longer be expected from the debate between modernists and conservatives, between those holding that the world has “come of age” (and must forget its old-hat prayers to the bearded Provider-in-the-sky) and those still happily giving thanks to the One who blesses us with banks of patented, hybridised seeds, and reams of computer print-outs. No. The issue can only be addressed properly if we take into account the new dimensions to prosperity and wealth since the second Industrial Revolution (1880s on). Karl Marx rightly perceived the implications of factory-produced commodities, both for the worker (who no longer saw the fruit of his labour), and for the world (since capital could batter down every bastion of socio-economic traditionalism).⁹ Yet he had no idea of the extraordinary processes of mass production to come, nor how the new “fetishes” – the tins, bottles, utensils, cigarettes, radios, shorts, and singlets – would litter the global village as a man-propelled surrogate for wind-blown spores.

The “democratisation of treasure”, of course, is incomplete. There are cargo-hungry countries, which know a minimum of real hunger, and genuinely-hungry countries, which still want much more Cargo than packets or tins of processed food. In the midst of riches, moreover, there are enclaves of the Third World. The material Kingdom of Heaven has come to some, and not to others; indeed, it

7. The allusions are to **The Book of Common Prayer** (1662), s.v. “Thanksgivings for Plenty”.

8. In this paper, “cargo” means European-style goods (which are now internationally marketed and mass-produced, however, by such non-Western offshoots of colonial enterprise as Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Japan). “Cargo” bears an upper case C when a symbolic value or surplus meaning over and above the goods themselves is being denoted. For the quotation, Henry Ford, from the witness box, in the Ford vs. Chicago Tribune libel suit, July, 1919. Cf. Ford, **The Great Today and Greater Future**, Sydney, 1926 edn.

9. I allude here to Marx-Engels, **The Manifesto of the Communist Party**, trans. reprod. in C. W. Mills, ed., **The Marxists**, New York, 1962, p.50.

could even be said that those peoples who are without look to the ones who possess as the new gods. Which of the old gods was expected to bestow such riches and harness such power? Could the Greek god Hermes have devised a giant supermarket, and Zeus (or even Yahweh!) thrown a thunderbolt as impressive as the atom bomb at Hiroshima? Yet the ways of the new gods are as typically unpredictable and inscrutable as the old; one always wishes more from them than they are prepared to offer, and they do not solve the problem of evil.

I exaggerate to make the point: for those whose consciousness remains rootedly primal (and I think here specifically of the tribesmen and peasants in Africa, South Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific), Cargo comes as blessing, along with rain and good harvests – as a gift of the divine or the spirit-world. And, despite all the incongruities one may encounter, the sensitive phenomenologist will hopefully deter us from deriding the “naïve and knowing” souls of pre-modernity, who try making religious sense of the new consumerism.¹⁰ A multiplicity of images may arise before our eyes here. The latest addition to the Hindu pantheon in India is Santoshi Mata, the by-now twenty-year-old Cargo deity to whom one prays for refrigerators and transistors; in the Kyoto supermarkets of Japan, around the corner from the whole range of soya sauces and tinned bean shoots, one is just as likely to find a traditional shamaness, who will consult your dead relatives and consider your future fortune for a fee; it is typical in Abu Dhabi on the Persian Gulf for the faithful to bow towards Mecca, or dance at marriage feasts wearing Western-style sports jackets over their white **galabiyya**; the African Ogun, an age-old Yoruba **orisha**, or deity of iron in Nigeria, has become the special god of motor vehicles, as important for their acquisition as their safety; while, in Melanesia, women have died of blood poisoning for wearing opened tin cans as priceless armlets, and the ceremonial dancers have replaced some of their decorative feathers for coloured cardboard.¹¹

10. The quoted phrase is from the impressionist painter Camille Pissarro.

11. On India and Japan, I rely on the oral testimonies of (the late) Professor A. L. Basham (Australian National University) and Dr A. Snodgrass (University of Sydney) respectively. On Abu Dhabi, e.g., “Middle East”, Four Corners, 6th October, 1973 (PNR-940), ABC Television. On Ogun, N. Q. King, **African Religions**, New York, 1970, p. 21. On Melanesia, see Trompf, “Doesn’t Colonialism make you Mad?” in S.

It is with the so-called “cargo cults” of Melanesia, of course, that we find the hope and despair of non-industrial consciousness in its sharpest focus. In the highlands of Papua New Guinea and Irian Jaya, in fact, indigenous “stone-age” peoples have first encountered and fled from the whites as beings from outer space, for as von Daniken-like astronauts, geologists have dropped into a jungle clearing by helicopter and hewn out specimens with tools mysteriously harder than rock, like “moonrakers”.¹² Such extraordinary and very particular situations provide a useful paradigm for recognising the general truth that, in certain, hitherto more obscure, corners of the world, “primitives” and “moderns” have only recently discovered each other, at a time when humanity has attained to the very pinnacles of technological achievement. Accordingly, and not without good reason, peoples who have long looked to their deities and spirits for material survival now turn to the God of the missionaries as Lord of the new wealth. They have even expected Jesus to return with calicoes, bags of rice, and motorbikes, to perfect the material salvation for which their societies have so constantly striven.¹³ Those of us who have seen (or been taught!) that commodities are prepared in factories, and not by prayers and magic, will smile knowingly, and perhaps sense the poignancy of it all; yet, who is to dispute that these new beliefs are sincerely held? And who disprove, as the Sepik philosopher, Bernard Narokobi, wonders, that God and the ancestors are indeed at work, at least preparing the ingredients of the Cargo under the ground?¹⁴

In the cargo cult, and the cargo thinking of primal societies, however, the denizens of the First World (and even much of the Second) will be able to see an image of their weaknesses – if they try. Today’s successful urban dwellers have become used to a standard of

Latukefu, ed., **Colonial Administrations and Development in Papua New Guinea**, Canberra, 1986 (in press), coupled with Fieldnotes, Wahgi, Port Moresby, 1976.

12. Oral testimony from the geologist, Dr Peter Lowenstein, after his 1975 expedition to the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea. Cf. E. von Daniken, **Chariot of the Gods?**, London, 1971.

13. Cf. G. Shepperson, “Nyasaland and the Millennium”, in S. Thrupp, ed., **Millennial Dreams in Action**, New York, 1980, p. 157.

14. B. Narokobi, “Who Shall Take up Peli’s Challenge?” in **Point**, 1 (1974), pp. 93 ff.

living beyond the wildest dreams of their distant ancestors. Yet, as they look around their kitchens, filled, as they are, increasingly, with stainless steel and whirling mix-mastery, of their living-rooms, lined with fine porcelain and stereo systems, all of which appendages are not the produce of their hands, they are left without psychological surety as to where plastic, artificial, inessentials sit in relation to the perennial search for deeper meanings. This is why the “cargo cult” is usually so alien and absurd to the white, or to the rich; for them mass-produced commodities, along with the money used to procure them, present themselves, above all, as tokens of worldliness, and not of spiritual integration. One cannot deny that the First World, with its religious pluralism, has witnessed many and varied attempts at hallowing its indigestible wealth, and technological extravaganza, with varying degrees of sanctity. The neo-Calvinist assumption that wealth is a sign of God’s reward for the saved is still prevalent, even if He offers such unlikely prizes as double-door garages and blue-tiled swimming pools. The Western gospel of success still sows the seeds of Chryslers, catamarans, and Crystal Cathedrals.¹⁵ Toward the bottom end of the social scale, I have come across those young Western followers of Japan’s new religion Namu-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, who sit before their altars chanting Om for the purpose of procuring the television set and other appliances they simply cannot afford.¹⁶ And I marvel at that bejewelled, starry-eyed, black American Reverend “Ike”, who, from New York’s old Loews picture palace, preaches the gospel of “green power” to depressed Americans, who apparently need the motivation to make lots of money.¹⁷ As for the national level, affluence can be a heaven-sent instrument of leadership – of somehow taking the rest of humanity with you to the moon (even though most of the earth does not have a decent water supply), or of heeding the crusade against godless communism (with a built-up of arms, which never seems to account for the massive and growing contingents of godfearers on the inside of the Iron Curtain).

15. For background, M. Rischin, ed., **The American Gospel of Success**, Chicago, 1965; J. J. Clark and R. H. Woodward, eds., **Success in America**, Belmont, 1968; L. Chenowath, **The American Dream of Success**, North Scituate, 1974.

16. Trompf, Fieldnotes in Santa Cruz, California, 1975.

17. See esp. Trompf, **Religion and Money: Some Aspects**, (Charles Strong Junior Scholar Lecturer 1), Adelaide, 1980, pp.10 ff.

The relative discrepancies between the possessors and the dispossessed in the contemporary world are so great, however, the revolutionary jump from old, pre-twentieth-century standards of individual, group, and national wealth is such an enormous one, and the whole symbology of the prosperity in the hands of richer nations, multi-nationals, and even private individuals, so foreign to the archetypes of symbiosis from the past, that it is now no longer justifiable, nor advisable, to celebrate and render thanks to God as the source of wealth. Perhaps one should qualify this as an assertion, accounting for the spiritual struggles of the undeveloped, underprivileged, and the truly generous, but it can hardly be qualified as a warning. Even were the latter-day wealth to be distributed more evenly among classes and peoples, which, at the moment, looks far from possible, the further internationalisation of consumerism would simply complete its rampant sabotage of the world's cultural diversity, and tend to enslave us all in a hollow stereotype. Some members of humankind have exceeded their **moira** (fate) and become like the gods, with more power to determine the fates of others than ever the Erinyes had.¹⁸ Such is the **hybris** (offence), however, that perhaps only the Great War, which the new wealth bears within its own womb, will bring about its due **nemesis** (revenge).¹⁹ For modern wealth, even at its best, is a very mixed blessing; in general, as Winston Churchill said of war, a "necessary evil"; and at worst, the harbinger of great disaster.

If the secularists intend to use this wedge we drive between God and wealth as a lever to sanction an untrammelled materialism, then let them be assured that I have no intention myself of dispensing with God, our only safeguard against impulsive selfishness, and the ablest

18. In archaic Greek religion, **Moir**a was life's portion or lot decreed for the individual, and in Homer's **Iliad**, xxiv, 49, etc., we find the goddess of Fate and Death by that name. The Erinyes are avenging deities or **numina**, who punish evildoers, e.g., enactors of homicide, Homer, **Iliad**, ix, 571.

19. **Hybris** in Greek religion and ethics was wanton violence, insolence, and sheer arrogance, showing no regard for the human position or **moira**. See esp. Herodotus, **Historiae**, viii, 77, and, in general, R. Payne **Hubris; a study in pride**, New York, 1960. **Nemesis**, especially in Attic tragedy, is the Greek goddess of retribution; cf. also Herodotus, **loc. cit.**

subverter of Mammon. Consider, in any case, how, within long-term history of humankind, the contemporary pursuit of boom and luxury, even if now in apparent detachment from a recognisable religious system, may, in fact, be the covert resurgence of the primal prosperity cults which more mature faiths once set out to curb. However, it is not only ostensibly “non-religious” dreams of opulence which should make us wary, but still more recent developments, in which cargoism or a “cargo cult” mentality is transplanted from its more understandable Third-World matrix into the heartlands of **consumerismo** themselves.

With Korea’s Sun Myung Moon preaching in the United States of America, for example, we have a man who is preaching that science should be developed to the utmost degree. If, in the minds of various Melanesians (whose cosmoi have admittedly been confined by their atomised societies), God or Jesus will not come to them empty-handed at the last, Sun Moon cannot imagine the Messiah returning, except to a “natural world” “subdued . . . through highly-developed science”, and “an extremely pleasant social environment on earth”.²⁰ A millennialism coupled with such “cargo cult science”, to borrow Richard Feynman’s phrase,²¹ embraces the El Dorado of the twentieth century too unquestioningly. It accepts, with perfect consistency, the war we all should never want, born, as that great conflict will be (should we be unable to avoid it), out of economic inequalities, and the high-level technocracy which perpetuates them. Sun Moon hardly forgets to remind us about generosity, yet he celebrates God as the source of wealth, as one who can well afford to, while his followers bask in the sumptuousness of the milieu he creates, cherishing it as a foretaste of the Kingdom on Earth, itself.²² His system of thought produces just the kind of theology in which **both** Third-World **dreamers** of great American-like opulence, **and** the energy-consuming, money-driven, First-World **realisers** of the Cargo dream, can turn up at the same party

20. Sun Moon, **The Divine Principle**, New York, 1977 edn., p. 102, cf. pp. 104, 424, 530.

21. R. P. Feynman, “Cargo Cult Science”, in **Engineering and Science**, 37/7 (1974), pp. 10 ff.

22. Sun Moon, op. cit., esp. ch.3, sect. 4, cf., **Unification Thought**, New York, 1973, esp. 79, on a more metaphysical plane. I also rely on field notes among the Unificationists on Maui Island, Hawaii, 1981.

– the same extravagant banquet that leaves the sore-ridden Lazarus at the gate (cf. Lk. 16:19-20). Unfortunately, Sun Moon is not eating this expensive cake alone.²³

There is a warning, written out of the events of the twentieth century, however, that only the poor deserve blessing, and the rich are to fall under judgment for having indulged in their consolations. God is the bestower of good gifts, both material and spiritual, this much I will affirm positively (and leave open for further amplification), yet I would suggest a new negative theology for our time, that God is no longer the source of wealth, and, I suspect, does not want to be. Along the same train of thought, dumping God for wealth, because the two do not go together is, I suspect, changing the “true weakness” of one God for the false strength of another (cf. 1 Cor. 1:25), yet we all learn, at one time or another, that even the hardest diamond only lasts as long as each mortal frame, and very easily falls from its deceptively stable setting down the kitchen sink.²⁴

This is the bitter pill of the gospel, which the luckier “whiteman” has to swallow if he would avert both hells of nuclear holocaust and spiritual desolation. Now, if there are Melanesians who are asking, “Who then **can** be saved?” (because it is largely the whites who have pioneered the spreading of the gospel, and because it is natural for a Melanesian to see the **kaikai**²⁵ of religion in **visible** and material well-being), they might have to pose some new questions, and try some new theology. All things are possible (cf. Mk. 10:26-27).

The challenge of this paper could well amount to this, in fact, that it is preferable for Melanesians to swallow the same bitter pill as preventive medicine (as if they have not been given enough to swallow!). And bitter this pill would be, for no developing country

23. I discuss other examples of American “cargoist” theology in Trompf, “The Cargo and the Millennium on both sides of the Pacific”, in Trompf, ed., **The Cargo and the Millennium: Trans-Oceanic Comparisons and Connections (Religion and Society)**, The Hague (forthcoming), ch. 1.

24. See also Matt. 6:19, 20, 33, etc., Lk. 6:21, 24, 1 Tim, 6:10, Jas 5:1 ff., etc.

25. I.e., as “results”, not just food, cf. Fugmann, “Salvation expressed in a Melanesian Context”, in **Point** (Special Issue), 1 (1977), pp. 122 ff. (for background).

likes conscience-stricken souls from its old colonial “master race” telling it that it should not be tempted by the manifold fruits of capital. But, I perceive that the warning against Western acquisitiveness, greed, injustice, economic individualism, and the love of money has already been sounded by black, indigenous theologians themselves, who have sensed how the gospel still compels, in spite, and not because, of the astounding material advantages of its expatriate ambassadors.²⁶ What these thinkers would make of my manifesto, mind you, that God does not want to be the source of a wealth that exceeds even what the Biblical poets and apocalypticists imagined to be in His divine treasury, I would dearly like to know.²⁷ It is not only myself, as a solitary, searching soul, which happens to throw down the gauntlet; it is the challenge of the twentieth century.

26. Note esp. Fr J. Momis, “The Christian Vision of a New Society”, in Trompf, ed., **The Gospel is not Western**, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1986, ch. 16, cf. Momis’ “Values for Involvement”, in J. D’A. May, ed., **Living Theology in Melanesia; a Reader (Point Series 8)**, Goroka: Melanesian Institute, 1986, pp. 78 ff. Cf. also U. Samana, “Thoughts of a Melanesian Christian Socialist”, in Trompf, ed., **op. cit.**, ch. 17, etc.

27. Cf., e.g., Ps 17:14, 135:7, 1 Enoch 17:1, etc.

SPECIAL REVIEW

May, John D'Arcy (ed.), **Living Theology in Melanesia: A Reader (Point Series No. 8)**, (Goroka: Melanesian Institute, 1986) xiv + 310 pp. paperback, K4.00.

This collection of materials is a must for all teachers and students in the seminaries or Christian training centres of Melanesia, indeed every church worker could do well to absorb its contents. The book puts together better-known theological statements by Melanesian thinkers, made over the last 12 years. Some very familiar names make their reappearance, and in articles which have already been accessible in **Catalyst**, and in the older format of **Point**. In other cases, there is some entirely new matter to enrich discussion, or pieces which have remained in a thesis or mimeographed form until their timely publication in this volume.

The anthology, apart from May's sensible and straightforward introduction, is prefaced by examples of "village theology". Following each other, in turn, we find a bevy of traditional prayers from various cultures arranged by Theo Aerts; a range of hymns (the vernacular ones being translated by Rufus Pech); a few old-style sermons by New Guinean Lutheran evangelists, put together from archives by Gerhard Reitz; an up-to-date manifesto of an independent church, that associated with the famous Paliau Maloat on Manus; and two more literary reflections on village life, one in a play first dramatised at Newton College, Popondetta, on the conversion of a sorcerer, and the other being Bernard Narokobi's deeply-moving account of his mother's last days, up until the moment of her death at Boronugoro village (in the East Sepik).

This first cluster of materials will appear somewhat disparate, if not lacking any obvious thematic unity. But the point of this part of the collection is obviously to show the different sorts of creative theological acts to be found away from the seminaries, or from their scholarship and studied systematisation. Countless things have been going on in the villages, and we are given touches and flavours of the

variety. I find myself lamenting that this section has not been spiced with some traditional proverbs (which remain of value to emergent Christian communities), and also with local sermons developed around the “Melanesianisation” of Western folk-tales. But I have only myself to blame here for not having the time and energy to follow through with my own suggestion to send John May a collage of proverbial or gnomic sayings; and it did not occur to me that some of the sermons I have recently been working on with Eckhart Otto and John Gough for the journal **Folklore** could sit very nicely with the **sasac** of sermon illustrations from the Lutheran records. What May gives us, however, will provide a pointer for a larger anthology of comparable, or related, village expressions. As a relative latecomer to the Melanesian scene, moreover, his translation of the makasol manifesto from Manus is excellent (marred only at one point by the wrong translation in n.l. of “Wing”, rather than “Wong”, for “me/mi i yet”, in the revamped theological “jargon” of the “Paliau movement”).

The second section of the collection is headed “The Melanesian Christian Experience”. Here we find two very well-known articles reproduced in a cluster of five essays. One is by former Deputy Prime Minister, Fr John Momis, on “Values for Involvement”, a piece from **Catalyst** going back to 1975, which might even be said to have laid the foundation stone of Papua New Guinea’s indigenous theological writing. Another is a second contribution by Narokobi, this one on Melanesian “Religious Experience”, hailing from the special 1977 number of **Point**. Narokobi’s conception of Melanesian religious sensibilities as non-compartmentalised, and as concerned with “life’s own total whole” (p. 70), helps explain why May has included articles in this section which have distinctly political implications. I mean, Momis’ essay, which reflects his characteristic call to work for social justice and a Christian society through political action, and a poignant, questioning statement about the West Papuan-Irian Jayan issue by the Principal of the Christian Leaders’ Training College (CLTC) of the Evangelical Alliance, Joshua Daimoi (who is a Baptist from the Sentani culture area). The other papers in this block – those by Leslie Boseto (former Moderator of the United church and a Solomonese), and Caspar ToVaninara (a Tolai MSC Father) – are more concerned to delineate

specific spiritual needs of Melanesians, which can be met by the gospel. Boseto's reflections have been fully published here for the first time.

In Part Three, there are three impressive comments on the issue of ecclesial localisation. Esau Tuza, a Choiseulese, who lectures in History and Religious Studies at UPNG, and strives to complete his doctorate at the University of Aberdeen, remains a United church minister, and, in what is the reproduction of his 1978 **Catalyst** manifesto, he challenges the United church to avoid concentrating high-level decision-making in expatriate hands, and thus to avoid the breeding of "an inferiority complex in national leaders" (p. 182). Two Catholic lay thinkers, Mark Kolandi and Louise Aitsi, express their dismay at the slow pace towards administrative and spiritual independence, and Aitsi's contribution is particularly significant for being the one female voice in the whole collection. Hers is a challenging, feminist-sounding statement, analysing ecclesial sexism, though stopping short of any clear suggestions about women's ministries.

The fourth and last section is obviously of great importance for the editor, since, under the heading of "Theology in Melanesia", we see three thinkers grapple exegetically and hermeneutically with the relationship between indigenous cultures and the biblical message. Two more Solomonese make their appearance, although the first, Joe Gaqurae, a veritable theological pioneer from the United church, sadly passed away only last year. Gaqurae's envisaging of a "Melanesian Christ" shows an awareness of black theology elsewhere, e.g., in the USA (p. 212). He has devoted his detailed analysis to possibilities presented for Melanesians in the Bible, and has tended to generalise about Melanesia as a mass of cultures. The last two articles, however, which are long ones, making up over a quarter of the whole **Reader**, provide a rich detailing of specific societies and their religions, first of the quite-recently contacted Kewa by the Southern Highlander, Simon Apea, and then of the fascinating Toabaita by the Malaitan Penuel Idusulia. In both these last items, in fact, we have large slices from dissertations, Apea's submitted to the Catholic Holy Spirit Seminary at Bomana, and Idusulia's to CLTC. That is a sign of the times: that more and more impressive theological research will be carried out in the

tertiary institutions of the region. From such thesis work, more written challenges and responses are born, thus providing John May with more confidence that floating **MJT** has been well worth his, and the editorial board's, effort. The **Reader** is certainly likely to stimulate, and I suggest all those who are exercising theological insights in the southwest Pacific should ponder its well-garnished treasures. And I look to students at UPNG, as much as to the seminaries, for worthwhile reaction, especially since three of the contributors (Daimoi, Tuza, and Aitsi) are university graduates in Religious Studies.

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BOOK REVIEWS

KINNAMON, Michael, **Why It Matters: A Popular Introduction to the Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry Text** (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1985) 72 pp.

THURIAN, Max (ed), **Churches Respond to BEM: Official Responses to the “Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry” Text**, Vol. 1 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1986 + Faith and Order Paper No. 129) 129 pp.

Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry, popularly known as “BEM” or “The Lima Document”, has been under discussion by churches worldwide (including the Roman Catholic church) since it was published by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches in 1982. The document marks a turning point in the ecumenical movement, inviting us to “recover an integrated vision of what ecumenism is all about” (Kinnamon, 4), i.e., to see the ecumenical movement whole again, firmly based on continual renewal and growing unity in the churches’ life of faith. BEM has engendered a new atmosphere of expectancy and confidence.

The two books under review are very timely in this auspicious new situation. Kinnamon’s popular introduction to BEM is actually overdue, for such a comprehensive, and clearly written, treatment of the background and the main issues would have been appreciated by many a discussion group struggling with the demanding BEM text. By now, however, it is clear to the Faith and Order staff that the process of responding to BEM will continue long after the 1985 deadline for official responses has passed. As our Eastern Highlands Churches’ Council study group in Goroka has found, the process is too important in itself to be constrained by deadlines!

Kinnamon explains, in simple and straightforward language, how BEM fits into the wider ecumenical movement, and the work of Faith and Order. His glossary of technical terms used in the document is particularly helpful. He warns against confusing the “convergence”

achieved by BEM with the “consensus”, which would provide the basis for real unity, just as the “response” to this document is not yet the “reception” of it, which would, in itself, unite the churches. **How** churches respond will differ greatly from tradition to tradition, and the effort to do so will be an invaluable ecumenical exercise for many churches which lack a structured teaching authority. Kinnamon asks churches to use the document as a tool for ecumenism rather than a tactic for mission, if possible, in ecumenical groups, and with an eye to wider issues, such as the gospel in the face of different cultures and other faiths. The Lima Liturgy, helpfully reproduced in an Appendix, can assist in making the transition from doctrine to experience. Kinnamon’s little book is highly recommended for all who are interested in serious ecumenical dialogue.

For those, such as church leaders and seminary lecturers, who need more detailed and technical information on the process of responding to BEM, the volume edited by Max Thurian offers an initial selection from a wide range of responses. A comprehensive introduction draws out the theological riches of BEM in concentrated form.

The responses themselves afford a foretaste of the main trends that may be expected to emerge. Most of the churches represented are able to “recognise in this text the faith of the church through the ages” (BEM Preface), though the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland states: “We do not find this form of question particularly meaningful or significant.” In general, one could say: the more “reformed” the tradition, the more “catholic” the document is found to be. For some, such as Baptists and Disciples, the language of BEM is a difficulty in itself, and, together with some of the Reformed churches, they find it hard to accept the central role given the sacraments by BEM.

The most difficult section for virtually all respondents is Ministry, particularly the threefold structure of deacon-priest-bishop, with its hierarchical implications (Disciples, Baptists, North Elbian Lutherans). Many Protestant churches are not convinced that such matters even have to do with the “essence”, as opposed to the

“interests”, of the church (North Elbian Lutherans), and they attach correspondingly less importance to the question of apostolic succession.

From the perspective of our ecumenical situation in Melanesia, the responses to the section on Baptism are probably the most relevant, stressing the role of faith, and God’s action in Christ, the status of infants’ vs. believers’ baptism, and the problem of re-baptism. The New Zealand Methodists, and the Cameroon Presbyterians, mention explicitly the need to see BEM in very different cultural contexts.

For those at present engaged in trying to formulate a Melanesian response to BEM, both these books will be invaluable resources.

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

MILINGO, E., *The World in Between: Christian Healing and the Struggle for Spiritual Survival* (London: Hurst/Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1984) 138 pp.

For those who have now known of this controversial charismatic African prelate, Milingo, the former Archbishop of Lusaka, the introduction by Mona MacMillan presents an investigative profile of the events, and Milingo’s own personal history; his early childhood and education, which led Milingo through seminary to the priesthood; Milingo’s eventual appointment to the See of Lusaka in 1969, and the trials by ordeal of mind faced by the Archbishop in subsequent years, till Milingo’s resignation in 1982. These trials I am apt to call “trial by ordeal” because of so much pain they caused Milingo morally and mentally, on account of the accusations levelled against him. These experiences are explained by Mona MacMillan in the epilogue.

There are four chapters in this book. The reader will be led by Milingo through the wilderness of the spiritual world that most of us rarely care to think of as reality. Beginning with the discovery of his powers of healing in chapter one, he expounds on the spiritual world theme in chapter two. Milingo has strong belief in the existence of the

evil spirits. In this chapter he outlines how to combat the forces of darkness.

At the same time, he firmly believes there are also good spirits; he often called on the angels and saints to assist him in his ministry of liberation, which he sometimes likes to call a “tug-of-war” (p. 68) against the evil spirits. Milingo differentiates between two evil spirits: the satanic spirits and the angered ancestral spirits, which still roam the world, with hateful revenge against their living relatives. Accordingly, there are also good spirits of the dead relatives, who are there to support the living, along with the angelic spirits.

Chapter three is given to exploring African spirituality. He asks for respect and recognition of African religious practices by the European missionaries, and to let the Africans decide which cultural religious rituals are the best to be adopted into the Christian liturgical ceremonies, as they are the best judges of their cultural significance.

Milingo cites a growing dissatisfaction among many Africans, because of the Christian churches not being able to meet physical and spiritual needs. There are already 4,000 (p. 76) independent African churches in South Africa. Some of them are given to the worship of satan . One of these is called “The Church of the Spirits” (p. 32). In his own Christian spirituality, Milingo himself draws heavily on St Paul’s example of devotion to Christ’s mission.

Milingo emphatically draws the attention of the reader to the compatibility of the African religious rituals and practices with those of the Christian rituals and ceremonies brought in by Christian missionaries (in chapter four, under the title of “Living in Christ”).

The book itself is not meant as a treatise of spirituality in any great depth, rather it is a collection of Milingo’s thoughts, experiences, and writings, put together nicely by Mona MacMillan.

Two thoughts came forcefully to my mind as I read through these chapters: firstly, a call to Western missionaries to respect the growing pains of the local church, by allowing the local clergy, and their own

people, to decide the best forms of worship with regard to the customary religious practices for the purpose of liturgical adaptation. This means, in any primitive pagan lands, due respect must be given to wholesome traditional religious beliefs and practices, so that the local people will be able to feel Christianity is a way of living, not something which is imported entirely from outside, which they wear, as clothes to church, so, after the Sunday service, these are discarded when they return home and they put on another garment for their own traditional worship. Christianity must be seen as their way of life, just as their own ancestral religious rituals are one and the same with their everyday life. The other point is the book is presented as evidence in self-defence to his accusers, the fellow priests, and the Vatican, that he was on God's side in what he did. And Mona MacMillan has expertly reiterated Milingo's intentions through her running commentaries throughout the book. It seems to me that the main criticism by Milingo's accusers arose from the misguided and misinformed generalisation, that, his fellow priests claimed, the cases of possession by evil spirits were not genuine, but only instances of emotional disturbance. What is more, the methods of exorcism employed by Milingo were not officially approved by Rome, and were evil.

This is a book for the local and the Western missionaries, priests, pastors, and Christian church workers.

Carl H. S. Elsolo,
The Melanesian Institute, Goroka.

SONG, Choan-Seng, **Theology from the Womb of Asia** (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1986) 241 pp.

It is refreshing to come across a book written in a genuinely Asian idiom, without apology, and with sureness of touch. This is especially helpful at a time when young theologians throughout the Pacific are beginning to ask how they could achieve the same thing in their own cultural contexts. Song believes that theology should begin with the experiences of the five senses, creating images which relate these experiences to faith. He complains that "poetry has been

abandoned by our theologians. There is no sun, moon, and stars in our theological books. That is why theology has become arid and dry. It has become largely a matter of the head. It has lost the heart – the heart that feels, embraces, and communicates” (12-13). He points out: “Ours is a culture shaped by the power of imaging, not by the capacity to conceptualise” (61). Whether this necessarily entails the rejection of logic, specialisation, and systematic thinking in theology, as Song seems to imply (cf. 26-27), is a question that needs further discussion. But Song’s programme of “imaging theology”, set out in ch. 5, offers a challenge to both Western and Asian/Pacific theologians.

Melanesian theologians will also be interested in the way Song quite unabashedly uses Asian stories as his medium of theological reflection. He compares Buddhist, Christian, and Jewish parables of the love of a father for his son (46 ff.), and he uses both Buddhist and Christian versions of the image of the mustard seed (137 ff., cf. 183). He introduces the Buddhist notion of **karma** (the effects of present wrongdoing on future generations or incarnations) to shed light on the story of the man born blind in John 9 (129 ff.), and he explores the implications of the Buddhist conception of suffering, the Noble Truth of **dukka**, in deepening our Christian understanding of compassion (135 ff.). He deplores the denial of the Buddha’s doctrine of non-violence in recent Asian wars, symbolised by the headless Buddha statues left behind by looters (146 ff.). Great as is his openness to the religious traditions of Asia, he is, nevertheless, forced to conclude that “a **theological** study of these religions has hardly begun” (152). Surely the same is true of Melanesian traditions.

It is impossible to summarise the richness of Song's treatment of imagination, passion, communion, and vision, the four headings under which the book is organised, as they bear on the contemporary tasks of peace, development, liberation, and justice. If Song's approach were as reflective as it is inspiring, the book would be more satisfying, because it would be more conscious of the interrelation of its many fragmentary insights. Can this be done without substituting Western formal logic for the logic of Asian – or Melanesian – images? I believe it can, and this is one of the main challenges facing the authors of contextual theologies.

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

WITVLIET, Theo, *A Place in the Sun: An Introduction to Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1985) 182 pp.

Liberation theology has found its appropriate historical context in Witvliet's book, translated from the Dutch (1984) by John Bowden. This book, of only 182 pages, is a fascinating recipe for liberation theologies in the so-called "Third World" countries. The book is very rich in a number of ways.

First, unlike too many theological works by theologians, who place too much emphasis on theological "assumptions", and let such assumptions dictate the meaning (indoctrination?) of the context, the author carefully selects and summons the historical situational contexts, and lets liberation theology speak from within the context: in Latin America, liberation theology speaks against economic and military oppression; in USA and South Africa, it speaks within the context of racism and apartheid, respectively; and in Asia, liberation theology speaks in the midst of many religions. The author's first chapter, "The Historical Context", where he provides "contact contexts" between the "West" and the "Third World", is particularly helpful as a historical background to the book as a whole.

Second, the book is simple enough to be read and understood by both the theologian and the laity. Although the book is carefully selective in its treatment of history and liberation theology in each region, and does not claim to be highly documented for academics, each of the seven chapters has a select bibliography at the end of the book, and this alone suggests quite convincingly that the author knows more than enough to make his own selections of the materials in each chapter.

Third, the book, though simply written, is quite perceptive, sympathetic, analytical, and critical in its treatment of both “European” and “Third World” theologies. While the author is well aware of the differences and opposing ideologies making up the “Western” and “Third World” theologies, and is generally successful in presenting liberation theology as arising in unique historical contexts, he is not blind to areas of further thought and reflection within the Third World settings. This gives the book its “favourable and advantageous position”, for it speaks both critically and sympathetically for all emerged and emerging historical contexts.

Although the “Oceanic” context is not covered by the book, we should be foolish to ignore it. As we are beginning to experience a capitalistic type of economic oppression in the name of “democracy”, where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer (Latin American context); where the West (whites?) dominates our religious and political choices through financial aid and military tactics (racism and apartheid?); where we are likely to relate more than ever to Indonesia and SE Asian countries, with their many religions (the Asian context); and the ever-increasing atheistic and secular attitudes, detrimental to our rich religious and cultural heritages, particularly noticeable in higher tertiary-level institutions of our country, I suggest that Witvliet’s book is a good antibiotic remedy for dosage! It indeed should assist the Pacific peoples’ thinking about mapping their liberation theologies for many more years to come. It is therefore highly recommended to the churches in Oceania.

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Erona Tarakabu is originally from the Phoenix Islands, a part of the former Gilbert Islands, now Kiribati. His people were forced to emigrate by atomic fallout in the early 60s. They settled on the island of Wagina, off the south-east tip of Choiseul, Solomon Islands. Erona's schooling was at Goldie College, 1966-1968, and King George VI Secondary School, 1969-1973. He studied for ministry in the United church of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands at Rarongo Theological College near Rabaul, graduating in 1985.

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