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MELANESIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

**EDITORIAL: WHAT ARE THE
DENOMINATIONAL RESTRAINTS UPON THE
CURRICULA OF THE THEOLOGICAL
COLLEGES?**

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BOOK REVIEW

CONTRIBUTORS

Journal of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools



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Editorial

What are the Denominational Restraints upon the Curricula of Theological Colleges?

The first three articles of this issue relate, directly, or indirectly, to the Study Institute on Curriculum Development, held by MATS in July, 1992. Review of the curriculum is an ongoing task for all colleges, as conditions change, and new staff bring new ideas, but, it so happened, that several colleges were engaged in a major curriculum review, and so, the topic of the Study Institute seemed an apposite one.

The talks of the Study Institute seemed to bring out the need for a person-centred curriculum, engaging the personal involvement of students and staff, in light of the personal needs of the laity to be served. Since persons become persons within social contexts, this naturally led to consideration of the need for contextualisation, and a small group at the Study Institute discussed the issue, in the light of two papers given at the recent inaugural meeting of the World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutes. The paper on contextualisation, included in the *Journal*, was not given at the Study Institute, but was forwarded by one of the participants in the discussion there. It provides a fine appraisal of the riches of the religious context of Papua New Guinea, and of how the Bible, itself, is, at once, contextualised, yet provides tests of contextualisation.

Comparison of the curricula of different colleges raised the question of the denominational restraints upon them. The colleges have a duty to serve the denominations to which they belong, but they also have a duty to serve theological truth. One way to resolve this tension is for the colleges, bearing in mind their respective traditions, to discuss how far they could apply common academic standards to their distinct curricula, and even work to a common examination. A small group at the Study Institute discussed the question of curriculum convergence, and the question is to be pursued through the MATS Executive. It had been hoped that the recently-appointed lecturer in religious studies at the UPNG, who had been due to speak at the Study Institute, would be able to take up his offer to work with the theological colleges to facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications. However, his resignation delayed any use of the University lectureship in religious studies in such a coordination role. Nevertheless, Fr Theo Aerts worked to ensure that the programme of religious studies was maintained, with the help of temporary lecturers, and he came to the Study Institute to

explain how a problem had arisen over the failure to sign the memorandum of understanding between the University and the churches. The memorandum has now been signed, and the programme for religious studies has two lecturers for 1993, one Roman Catholic, and one Presbyterian, to reflect its ecumenical nature.

Philip Cass's paper shows how, in their desire to communicate the gospel, missionaries may outstrip their secular counterparts in contextualising, and getting close to the people, in the area of journalism, but it also shows the damage inflicted by denominational bickering. Philip Cass's article is an overview of a much longer work for an MA thesis, and he would welcome further information, which should be sent to him at the Rockhampton Campus of the University of Central Queensland, Australia 4702.

The final article comes from the prolific and scrupulously-scholarly typewriter of Fr Theo Aerts, and represents his response to one in a collection of articles by Professor Gary Trompf entitled: "Melanesian Religion".

The Editor continues to invite contributions from members of theological colleges in Papua New Guinea, and Melanesia, as a whole, and, indeed, from anyone interested in Melanesian theology.

A Theological Curriculum for the Whole Person

Professor Michael Horsburgh

Man cannot help but see himself as a traveller, and can change his mind only about the road he is taking. He cannot be aware of himself as a person, cannot know that he is alive, without looking back to a past, and forward to a future. Whoever can put to himself the question, What am I Again, man knows himself as one among others of his kind, as a member of society, as an heir, and as an ancestor; and so passes easily from seeing himself to seeing his kind as a traveller.¹

Introduction

It might be thought that this is a superfluous subject. How is it possible to teach anything other than the whole person? The teacher does not come into the classroom, and find a number of brains sitting on the desks, awaiting their daily input of knowledge. Students are not like computers, which receive whatever is given to them, and then regurgitate it at a later time. It is, of course, true that every teacher has, at one time or another, believed that the students have left their brains at home, and that, what appear to be whole people, are seriously defective in their intelligence. But that is only a perception, which expresses the inevitable frustrations of teaching. This subject is not a reference to the characteristics of students, however they may frustrate their teachers. This subject is a reference to the teachers themselves, and to the way in which they go about their work.

In dealing with it, I want to do a number of things. I want, first, to examine what we mean by the whole person, then I want to consider what the concept of the whole person might mean for the content of a curriculum, and what it might mean for the educational method of the curriculum.

All of this is to be considered in the context of a theological curriculum, which leads me to consider what qualifications I might bring to this task. I am not a theological educator. I teach in a school of social work, although I do teach a subject entitled “Christianity and social welfare”, which is the only one of its kind in schools of social work in Australia. What I am professionally, and what is relevant here, is that I educate for a

¹ John Plamenatz, *Man and Society*, vol 2, London UK: Longman, 1963, p. 409.

professional group. It may not be fashionable to speak of the products of theological education as a profession. Many might prefer the concept of “calling” or “vocation”. But your products and mine bear many similarities. Professionals are not educated only in techniques, neither do they pursue knowledge just for its own sake. Integral to preparation for a profession is an education, which changes the person, and which builds-in a set of values and practices, which are designed to counter some of the human person’s natural tendencies to self-aggrandisement and self-assertion. The product of professional education is a person, who primarily uses self as a conscious piece of technology. A professional cannot act at arm’s length. Such a person is not a technician, who performs to someone else’s commands, but a person, who brings goals and values to technical achievement. This task involves not only knowing, and not only doing, but also being. How this perception assists in setting goals for professional education, I have outlined a paper in the previous issue of the *Melanesian Journal of Theology*.²

I also suspect that, when we ask ourselves how successful our education is, we may concentrate too much on the immediate results, i.e., do our students pass the tests we set them, whatever they are? Perhaps, we should ask some longer-term questions. Some of those questions might be:

- Which parts of our teaching do our students, and former students, actually use?
- Which parts of our teaching do our graduates, themselves, seek to develop?
- How long can our teaching last? Will the context, in which it is to operate, change too quickly?

The answers to these important questions may be influenced by how well we relate our teaching to the whole person.

The Human Person

All Christian concepts of the human person start with creation. Humans are part of creation.³ They are made by God, and are intended for God’s purposes. Being a creature has certain implications. The first, is that it puts us in our place. Whatever the achievements of the human race may

² Michael Horsburgh, “Curriculum design at Newton College”, in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 8-1 (1992).

be, they do not place them above the rest of creation, except as God ordains. Humans are trustees, not the owners, of the world.

If humans are created, they are also created in the likeness of the image of God, as Gen 1:26f testifies. This a statement, of some considerable magnitude, for it gives a status to being human, which has the characteristics of divinity. Part of the meaning of divinity is an existence, in one's own right. God, after all, refers to no other being to justify His existence. Thus, if the human person is in the image of God, the human person has a being, which is inviolate. Each person is entitled to respect, on the basis of humanity itself.

If this seems to be too individualistic, we must also note that the God, in whose likeness humans are made, is a triune God. Whatever else this means, the doctrine of the Trinity states clearly that God is not a kind of introvert, in love with Himself, the ultimate egoist. It is not an accident that Christianity worships a deity, which it conceives of as a community, or a relationship. The Orthodox theologian, Kallistos Ware, puts it well, when he says:

The Christian God is not just a unit, but a union; not just a unity, but a community. There is, in God, something analogous to "society". He is not a single person, loving Himself alone, not a self-contained monad . . . God is personal . . . God is love. Now, both these notions imply sharing and reciprocity. A "person" is not the same as an "individual". Each becomes a real person only entering into relation with other persons.⁴

The doctrine of creation asserts that we are made in God's image, which must, therefore, imply a basic community of all persons thus created. Humanity is based on relationships, as God is. God participated directly in our society through the incarnation. Thus we are not only made in God's image, and have, as a consequence, a society of our own, but God also joined our society. If, also, the church represents the divine society, the

³ This section of the paper owes much to John R. Sachs SJ, *The Christian Vision of Humanity: Basic Christian Anthropology*, Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1991; and Margaret Rodgers, and Maxwell Thomas, eds, *A Theology of the Human Person*, North Blackburn Vic: Collins Dove, for the Anglican church of Australia, General Synod Doctrine Commission, 1992.

⁴ T. Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, London UK: Mowbray, 1979, pp. 33-34.

image of the renewed humanity, community pervades every part of our existence, both fallen and redeemed.

But this gives us, not only a strong view of society, as something central to our humanity itself, it endorses the whole material world in which we live. Richard Hooker noted the essential material element of our life in this way:

All men desire to lead, in this world, a happy life. That life is led most happily, wherein all virtue is exercised, without impediment or let. . . . True, it is, that the Kingdom of God must be the first thing in our purposes and desires. But, in as much as righteous life presupposes life, in as much as to live virtuously, it is impossible except we live, therefore, the first impediment, which, naturally, we endeavour to remove, is penury, and want of things, without which we cannot live. Unto life, many implements are necessary; more, if we seek (as all men naturally do) such a life as hath in it joy, comfort, delight, and pleasure.⁵

The life, which we live in our society, is not an unfortunate impediment, which we must endure. It is not only essential to our being, as I have already suggested, but it is a prerequisite to our enjoying anything at all.

There is, nevertheless, a tension between the individual and social aspects of the person. Western societies tend to approach the issue from the point of view of the individual, and then relegate the social to second place. Melanesian societies may tend to do it the other way around: to start with the social, and put the individual in second place. But, whichever way you do it, the part you place second, does not go away. Particularly, when things go wrong, this tension becomes apparent. Thus, we may see a Western society disregarding the social, and destroying the individual. We may also see a Melanesian society, unable to incorporate newly-educated, young individuals, and destroying its social fabric.

This brings us face to face with the flawed existence, which we actually live, as compared with the ideal I have set out. In our ordinary life, it is possible to observe many examples of humanity, which do not appear to have the dignity of the image of God. It is possible to observe individuals,

⁵ Richard Hooker, "The First Book, chapter 10:2", in *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, A. S. McGrade, ed., Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 88.

who not only are, themselves, less than godlike, but who treat others so. It is also possible to observe persons, who are cast out from their societies, who appear as lost, or wandering, souls. The depressed parts of all the towns in the world, here in PNG, as well as in more-industrialised countries, have such persons. Not only that, those persons, and many others, live in societies, which degrade and destroy them, instead of building and nurturing them. Such societies seem often to be at war with themselves, turning their energies to mutual destruction. This picture is also as familiar in PNG, as it is elsewhere.

This phenomenon we know in Christian terms as “sin or ‘the fall’ ”. It is characterised not just by the actual sins, which we commit separately or together, but by a fundamental turning away from God. It is seen in the claim to be able to determine the course of history itself. It is seen in the exploitation of the environment without any concern for other forms of life or indeed for our successors as humans. It is seen, in an apparently limitless capacity to turn everything inward, to turn everything towards the self, or the group. It is seen in the desire to be, not just made in the image of God, but to be gods ourselves. What we have, therefore, is a flawed humanity of potential, which needs to be redeemed, and turned to its proper purposes.

We should also note that some feminist theologians have proposed different forms of original sin for men and women. If the original sin of the man is rebellion, the active grasping of a separate identity, the original sin of women may be submission, the denial of the independence and dignity, which come from being a child of God. If this is so, the mutual exploitation of men and women is their joint original sin, as they, together, deny the very qualities of their creation.

All of the forgoing is set in universal, or general, terms. Such a doctrine of the human person applies to all humans, no matter where they are, or at what time.

The human persons we actually see are not like that. They come in all sizes and colours. They come as male and female. They come of different ages, and with different capacities. They come already formed by different cultures. One of the important functions of a doctrine of the human person is to transcend the many forms of the human person, and to emphasise what they have in common. For it is not always easy to see the common beneath the particular individual in front of us.

That this is a difficult enough task, may be seen everywhere in the world around us. Universal ideas about the human person have been taught to the people of Yugoslavia, by the Christian church, for hundreds of years, and by the communist party for about 50. None of that teaching seems capable of withstanding the terrible strength of ethnic division. Similar events are unfolding in the former Soviet Union. None of that should be unfamiliar in Melanesian society, where the strength of group ties is so obvious, and so pervasive, as to cast doubts on whether it has a general concept of the human person at all.⁶ If we take this seriously, we should see that the creation of a curriculum, based on the concept of the whole person is not an easy task. It must hold, in tension, the formal concept of the human person, and the infinite variety of the actual appearances of humans. It must juggle the persons themselves, and the social reality, of which they are a part.

But, before I embark on some reflection about that, I want to ask what may be, at first sight, an unnecessary question. Who are the human persons, to whom this curriculum is to relate? I began this paper by referring to students, but that was a throwaway line, which hid the reality of education. There are at least three groups of persons involved here. The students are an obvious part, but, in addition, we must include the teachers, and the ultimate consumers of the education, the parishioners, or others, touched by the ministry of our students.

Students are, of course, not just sponges, to soak up what is presented to them. But even the students are not as simple a group of persons as we might think. In those churches, where there are married clergy, students come with spouses and children. These share, if not the ministry itself, the consequences of being associated with it. The teachers are as much persons, as are the students, and the curriculum will need to take them seriously, too, not just as reservoirs of useful knowledge, but as persons who have a life, apart from teaching. Finally, the ultimate consumers must be present in their fullness, and not just as objects of the technical expertise of theological college graduates. In particular, they must be regarded as whole persons, not just as fodder for the organisational requirements of the institutional church.

⁶ [The text for this footnote is missing from the original article. –Revising ed.]

The Whole Persons

The Students

There may once have been a time, when theological students were relative novices in the world. This was particularly so in those colleges, which prepared students as religious, rather than secular, clergy. Such students often came straight from school to the novitiate, and were completely formed by the institution. But, I suspect, that this has never been the pattern in Melanesia. It is now almost universal for theological students to come to their training as already formed adults. Often, in churches, which allow it, they are married, with children.

This represents learning, and experience, of an important kind, which a curriculum, that deals with the whole person, must seek to use. But this is easier said than done. In my own experience, teaching in a course, which has encouraged mature-age students, the past experience of those students can be a two-edged sword. In many cases, it provides invaluable insight into real life issues, and a corrective to the often-precious theories of their teachers. But it can also be a dead weight, which has to be unlearned before real development can begin. I have found that this is particularly so when the experience is closely related to the area being studied. The point being made here is that it is not so much having the experience that counts. What counts, is the use that the person has made of that experience.

Experience is also very variable. Having naive students also means having relatively uniform students. Having experienced students means having a diversity of starting points. Ideally, this problem can be dealt with by allowing certain flexibility in the curriculum. It may mean starting students at different points, or giving some choice, through elective courses. This may mean individual course planning.

It is a characteristic of adults, that they are not expected to accept everything told to them by their superiors. As anyone, with an experience of children, knows, children so not actually accept everything told to them by their superiors, it is just that they are supposed to. But adults are not even supposed to do so. To treat persons as adults means to respect their questioning. This can often best be done, by setting students problems to solve. In this way, they can see for themselves how the various parts of their studies come together to make sense of a real situation. In this way, they can also bring their experiences to the assistance of their fellow students, and education becomes a collegial exercise.

But we cannot just assume that adult students are confident students. Although they may have considerable experience, they find themselves suddenly in the position of children. Their academic skills may be undeveloped, or in the distant past. At an older age, they must embark on a new way of thought, and learn new skills in reading and analysis. Thus, they may exhibit a high degree of anxiety. This may show up in a willingness to accept everything they are told, particularly if that is supported by cultural practice. But they may also show anxiety, by rebellion or anger.

An important part of all professional education is the use of the self. This applies particularly to clergy. Although they may administer objectively-valid sacraments, they cannot dissociate themselves from the liturgy. What they do, how they do it, how they perceive the effect they have on other people, are all parts of the effective use of the self. In pastoral care, the same is true. All the activity comes through the person of the priest or minister. A curriculum, which treats the whole person, cannot limit itself to a theoretical knowledge of how to perform ritual acts, or of what is important in pastoral relationships. It must expose the student to an actual encounter, on which the student can reflect, and, through which, the student can learn.

In my teaching Australia, I deal with questions of social policy. There are three concepts in social policy, which I think are relevant here. They are: discretion, accountability, and rationing. Discretion involves the making of a choice in the administration of a policy, for example, whether or not to grant a person a welfare payment. If we translate this to the life of the clergy, in their pastoral relationships, we might use this example. A priest knows a lot about what is happening in his parish. He has a duty towards his parishioners, and he might feel the need to speak to some of them about their behaviour, or about a problem, which he observes. He might equally decide not to speak, but to wait for a while and see what happens, before he acts. This is the use of discretion, or judgment.

People who exercise discretion are usually accountable to others for their actions. To call priests to this account is usually the function of the bishop. But, it is a feature of many situations, that accountability is very difficult to administer. This is particularly, the case when the superior is a long way off, or cannot easily check on what the inferior does. Thus, many professionals must be self-accountable. Clergy, and other "front-line" workers, are almost impossible to call to account, until something goes seriously wrong.

Rationing is the mechanism, by which scarce resources are distributed. A good example is the queue, perhaps, for a bed in a hospital, when there are too many patients. In such a queue, some patients get better by themselves, and do not need treatment; some die, and also do not need treatment; then you are left with the rest, who may be enough to fill the beds. Every priest has at least one scarce resource, his own time. It must be distributed in a disciplined way, and not just by force of habit.

All these activities, discretion, accountability, and rationing, demand a clear knowledge of oneself, and a capacity to evaluate one's own behaviour. If that is so, the curriculum, which reflects it, must have two characteristics. It must provide a direct opportunity for knowledge about, and reflection on, the self. It must also teach students how to recognise and solve problems.

The Teachers

One of the most difficult lessons to learn, is the use of authority. I start my consideration of teachers as whole persons by referring to this, because it is the point, at which the teacher's own anxieties, and lack of wholeness, will come through. Writing about university courses, where there are adult students, R. S. Usher, of the University of Southampton, notes that the role of teachers, in this context, is very different from the approach traditionally taken. Teachers tend to have a self-image of expertise in their subject areas. Thus, they are tempted to seek to transmit what they know to their students. But, if adult students need to have their own experience acknowledged, a more-experiential, and problem-centred, learning approach may be required.⁷

The image of expertise is a disadvantage to teachers in another way. It may lead to the assumption that the teachers are not also learners. They may, and should, learn much from their students, but they also need to acknowledge, and have acknowledged, their need for continuing education. I suspect that this is a particular difficulty in Melanesian, where distance and cost may be overwhelming problems. This seminar, itself, is an important part of the recognition of the wholeness of teachers. But there may be simpler, and less expensive, solutions to this problem. Learning does not depend on going to a place of learning. It ultimately depends on an inquiring mind, and the time to reflect and investigate. Over-full teaching

⁷ R. S. Usher, "Reflection and prior work experience: some problematic issues in relation to adult students in university studies", in *Studies in Higher Education* 11-3 (1986), pp. 245-256.

schedules, and excessive administrative demands, are ways in which the wholeness of teachers is constantly denied in teaching institutions.

The Consumers

The people, to whom the products of theological education minister, live in a complex and demanding world. In Melanesia, as elsewhere, one of the overwhelming characteristics of that world is the speed at which it is changing. Many people live in the modern world in a state of perpetual fear and confusion, as what was once familiar is now strange. Many young people have never known what the old stability was.

Of course, just as students are often teachers, and as teachers are often learners, both students and teachers are part of this world of change. It is not that they, alone of all God's creatures, stand apart from all this and look on.

One of the major aspects of this change is secularisation. Secularisation refers to the development of a way of life, in which the material is preferred to the spiritual. Questions of religion and faith are relegated to the realm of private opinion. They are what people do in their private life, not part of what they do in public. This process may not have proceeded so far in Melanesian societies, but, as urbanisation continues, it will increase. It is important, therefore, that clergy do not treat people as though their spiritual life was separate from their material. The essential unity of the human person must be fostered, not destroyed.

Neither is it permissible to treat people as objects. This is the way to exploitation and oppression. Human rights, and the development of people as a whole, are, thus, central concerns of a curriculum, which treats its ultimate consumers as whole persons.⁸

The Curriculum

We come, now, to the way in which all these considerations might be put together into a teaching program. To a certain extent, this discussion leads, not so much to conclusions about content, but about method. That method should have some central characteristics. They are:

- A sense of common purpose between staff and students;
- A degree of self-determination among the student body;

⁸ See "Congregation for Catholic Education", in *Guidelines for the Study and Teaching of the Church's Doctrine in the Formation of Priests*, Homebush NSW: St Paul Publications, 1989.

- Attention to problem-solving, not just book learning;
- Realistic contact, with practical experience in the church;
- Realistic contact with the secular world; and
- Opportunities for reflection and personal development.

None of this displaces the traditional content, although it opens the way for more social-science and pastoral studies.

It would be interesting to ask the graduates of the colleges represented here, which experiences most marked their development as clergy. I expect that they may not be the experiences of college. It possibly resides more in particular things that happened to them, the day they were told they were accepted as ordinands; or the day of their ordination. These are points when they feel changed. Theoretically, it is the college, which is supposed to do this; education is supposed to change people, but the reality may be different.⁹

Feeling different is both an advantage and a disadvantage. Each graduate must have a new identity. But the danger may lie in the double standard, implicitly promoted by the church. That is, priests must be better than the laity. Some have noted that,

“unlike other professionals, the priest is both provider and recipient of the church’s services”. Doctors . . . service health, but are not necessarily healthier than their clients, whereas the priest’s quest for greater, and more intense, spirituality is both public and personal, both for the pastor himself, and for his flock.¹⁰

If this is true, the treatment of the clergy, as less (more) than human, is being perpetuated.

But, I have now said enough to make it likely that I am not practising what I preach. I now pose you this problem. If what I have said is correct, what is the curriculum, which is designed for the whole person?

⁹ J. Gay, and J Wyatt, “Aspects of the role of the residential theological college in the initial education and training of the clergy of the Church of England”, in *Studies in Higher Education* 13-3 (1988), pp. 249-261.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

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Readiness For Theological Study A Framework for a Preliminary Year

Revd Alexander Scutt, Newton Theological College

Archbishop Robert Runcie, when he was principal of Cuddesdon Theological College, described the task of a theological college as being:

to think through a theological problem, relating it to the documents of the Christian faith, and to the coherent totality of Christian doctrine, and thus aiming at some relevant formulation in modern terms. The procedure in our study of ethics is first to awaken an awareness of the moral problems of men and women today, and the situations, which gave rise to them; then to consider the tools, which the Christian tradition has made available for handling ethical problems; and, finally, to use the tools in such a way that a piece of teaching, or counselling, or direction, can be given, which has not only been assimilated as the truth, but as the truth for the teacher or counsellor, as part of the basis of his own personal life.¹

What sort of priest do we need in the church in Melanesia today? What kind of personal and spiritual qualities must he possess? What sort of person comes to us for training, and what kind of educational processes must he undergo, in order effectively to meet the needs of the church in PNG and Melanesia today?

These were the questions we, the present staff at the Anglican seat of priestly formation, Newton College, faced early in 1991, as we sat down, with the help of a consultant, Professor Michael Horsburgh,² to discuss the curriculum at Newton College. This paper will attempt to outline these discussions. I first want to look at issues related to readiness for theological study, then, in the second part of the paper, give a brief background to the teaching situation at NTC, as currently practised, and then to give a background to the discussions we had, focusing particularly on the preliminary studies. Finally, I will outline the structure of the preliminary studies, as we hope to see it – starting in the 1993 academic year.

¹ W. Browning, *A Handbook of the Ministry*, London UK: Mowbray, 1985, p. 84.

² Associate Professor of Social Work and Social Policy, University of Sydney.

My hope is that, in so doing, it may assist theological colleges of other denominations, and in other parts of Melanesia, who may be undertaking similar processes, either now, or in the future. I make two comments at the outset: firstly, I will use the masculine gender throughout, with some diffidence, but recognising the reality in Melanesia today; secondly, my references will be to the Anglican tradition, where applicable, but recognising that, in most instances, this could apply more widely.

The Person on Entry to College

One of the first questions we faced, when looking at an appropriate curriculum, was to look at the kind of person we receive from the various selection processes. His educational background will have an important bearing on his ability to receive and process what he learns whilst in college, but, equally important, is his background in the Christian faith, and the kind of spiritual milieu, from which he comes. Most of our students come from villages, where there is still an extremely strong influence of traditional beliefs, even in those places, where Christianity has been in place for some time. It would be worth pausing to reflect on this.

Many doctrines, accepted, and taken for granted, in the church, took several hundred years to take shape. The idea that sins committed after baptism could not be forgiven is a good example. Nowadays this idea is so firmly rejected, that we hardly give it a second thought. We forget that it was a widespread belief for several centuries. The connection between Easter and baptism, and the ceremony of baptism taking place at the Christian Pasch, took 700 years to fully sever – to the church's disadvantage. The idea that those who were not baptised were under the influence of the devil, thus requiring exorcism during the rigorous training period before baptism, was also widespread. When we remember these examples, we can see how unrealistic it is to expect those, from villages, who come to us for study in the Christian faith, whose culture has had contact with it for less than a century, in, most cases, to be free of traditional influences and beliefs. Many of the men, coming to NTC, have only a rudimentary knowledge of what I would call basic Christian knowledge – and, by this, I mean an understanding of the basic doctrines of the church, the scriptures, the life and ministry of Christ, worship, spirituality, and prayer. We are, in every sense, starting at the ground floor. It is this background that will determine a man's true readiness for theological study.

Tad Guzie, the Roman Catholic scholar, in his book *Jesus and the Eucharist* – a text, as the name suggests, on eucharistic theology – talks of

three stages we go through, in the interpretation of the meaning of God, religion, and all the “concepts tied up with religion”.³ Guzie uses these three stages to assist in an understanding of eucharistic theology. I believe they can be more widely applied, and, in particular, can be applied to the human dynamics of readiness for theological study.

Guzie says:

In our growth as persons, our own personal past history feeds into, and shapes, what we are now, and what we have become. We might reject what we have done in the past, undergo a change of heart, follow a new course, but we never throw off the past.⁴

He goes on to remind us that,

if some important stage of personality development, whereby a child learns how to relate to others, is short-circuited in infancy, or adolescence, this will naturally affect how the person behaves as an adult. Everyone has short circuits of some kind, and the constant challenge of the adult is to understand what he has become.⁵

The primary task of the theological college, as Runcie says “to think through a theological problem . . . aiming at some relevant formulation in modern terms” can only be effective, if, in the process, the man is able to have some understanding of who he is, and what he has become. It will have a profound effect on his ability to manage study, and may, quite likely, undergo a profound change during the course of his college education. Some might say that, indeed, this is part of a college’s job – to induce such a change, whereby the person can make what must become, in Runcie’s terminology “the basis for his own personal life”. Guzie calls this “personal process”. It is to this that we now turn.

Guzie’s three stages of understanding the meaning of God, religion, and related concepts are:

- (1) Systemic control;
- (2) Idealisation;

³ T. Guzie, *Jesus and the Eucharist*, New York NY: Paulist Press, 1974, p. 129.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁵ *Ibid.*

(3) Personal process.⁶

By “systemic control”, we mean the consciousness of primitive man, that life is tied up with what goes on in the world of nature. God, man, and nature were indistinct and undifferentiated. Guzie talks of a “soul substance”⁷ forming a bond between man, animals, and crops. Man’s rituals renewed, and kept charged, the productivity, and fertility, of nature. Animals and plants shared the same sacred energy as man. So “systemic control” consists of keeping on the right side of God, and keeping a hostile, and largely unfriendly, and uncontrollable, force friendly. At this stage, religion is tied up with reward and punishment; the right prayer will get me what I want, whether it be good crops, a PMV, or a “ghetto-blasters”, bigger, better, and louder than my previous one. It is useful to remember that Christian festivals, such as Christmas and, most importantly, Easter, were celebrations held at times associated with pagan festivals, such as, the winter solstice, and the first fruits. It’s not as far below the surface as we would like to think, as St John Damascene points out.⁸

’Tis the spring of souls today;
Christ has burst His prison,
and from three days’
sleep in death, as a sun has risen:
all the winter of our sins,
long and dark, is flying
from His light, to whom we give
laud and praise undying.

This stage of “systemic control” is the one we go through as children, when we see parents as all-powerful figures, who mete out rewards for “good” behaviour, and punishment for “bad” behaviour. This is tied up with our childhood idea of God. Traditional village religious consciousness would have built within it this kind of systemic control. It is important to see it as an essential stage of religious consciousness for an individual and – as in PNG village life – for a society. It is also important to see these three stages as points along a continuum, from birth to death. Others have reflected on this kind of process, too – Fowler’s stages of faith being another more well-developed example.

⁶ Ibid., p. 129.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ St John Damascene, John Mason Neale, tran., in *Hymns: Ancient and Modern New Stand*, p. 163.

The second phase along this continuum is *religion as idealisation*. In this stage, the emphasis moves to man himself, and immortality becomes a primary religious preoccupation. This stage is exemplified in the mystery cults, based on the death and resurrection of a divine hero. The search for abundant life, and the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth are humanised in these cults.

Guzie says of this stage:

We have to go through a stage of identifying with heroes, and contemplating ideals, before we can make these ideals our own. This, of course, is a basic human truth. There is no way our inner strengths and resources can be tested in the fire of experience, unless we have realised, through idealisation, which strengths and resources make the battle worthwhile. One of the very important functions of religion, is to present an ideal, with which one can identify.⁹

So, in this stage, conception changes from God the enforcer, the punisher, the withholder, to the concept of God as love, and the imagery created around the risen Jesus: new Adam, new creation, new man, and so on. Worship is an important part of this experience. So is commitment. But it is commitment to an ideal, and not necessarily to engagement *in* the process itself. This brings us to stage three.

The third stage of *personal process* is what we do, when we make death and resurrection an interior part of our own histories, and not something carried through by someone else. It is the process of coming to a new attitude to suffering, conflict, and the unexpected. It is the process of Job: he emerges from his trials with fewer answers than before. It's the process of the people of Israel, as seen through the voice and visions of the prophet Ezekiel, seeing that the experience of exile is not just a punishment for sin, but an occasion for conversion, change and a new self-understanding. In this stage, we begin to move out from a purely personal relationship with the divine hero – Jesus, my personal Lord and Saviour – to seeing horizontally to my neighbour as well. Love of God, and love of neighbour, are tied up with each other. Perhaps, we could see this as the phase of the Good Samaritan.

⁹ Guzie, *Jesus and the Eucharist*, p. 136.

This is a stage, characterised by strong resistance. We all have marked resistance to moving into this stage. Guzie likens it to falling below a line drawn between the second and the third stages.¹⁰ It is the stage, whereby we see experientially, not just intellectually, the sense of life coming out of death. We are making the experience of Christ our own – to use Paul’s language of Romans 6: “baptised into His death”. In this stage, too, with Wesley,¹¹

bold, I approach the “eternal throne”, and claim the crown of Christ my own!

In places of theological education, we get people at all stages along this continuum, and, hardly surprisingly, those in the first two stages predominate. The man with a chronic foot condition asking for leave from college to consult his favourite witch doctor; the man who leaves before the first term is through, in the belief that a “bad spirit” is stopping him. Systemic control is strongly at work, with people coming from places where that kind of religious consciousness is present.

Then there are those at the second stage – those who are attracted by the emotionality, and “high” experiences, offered by many of the charismatically-oriented Christian groups. Some of our students come to us directly from a place, which has emphasised personal faith, and whose vocations have been nurtured in this kind of environment, and who may find, after a while, that Anglican worship becomes dull, uninspiring, and boring. They, once again, look to the “high experiences”, when Anglicanism does not provide sufficient stimulation to their consciousness of Jesus as personal Lord and Saviour. They prefer worship, which emphasises this personal relationship with Jesus, and the experiences implied by the rhetoric around “baptism in the Spirit”. They do not have sufficient grounding in the faith of the church as community to sustain them in one denomination, with admittedly-human foibles of dullness and institutionalisation.

The problem is, of course, that institutions cannot move people into the third stage of personal process, and many kinds of religious experiences, such as those characterised by the second stage, create a kind of insulation against moving on in faith. The rhetoric, the “party line”, is all important.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 140-141.

¹¹ Charles Wesley, in *The Australian Hymn Book*, Sydney NSW: Collins, 1977, p. 164.

Only people can move on, and only people can be ready to move on – institutions cannot do it for them. But, as theological colleges, our task must be aimed at encouraging people to move on from where they are to understand that resurrected life is not just some vague immortality after death, but the wholeness of life, that comes out of death, in any form. We must encourage our students to engage in religion, as personal process.

It would seem, from my own teaching and ministry in theological education, over the past two years, that most of our students – at least in the Anglican tradition – are at the second stage of religious consciousness, and that some are struggling with moving to the third stage. I express the view that people at the stage of “systematic control” are not ready to ask the deeper questions, implicit in stages two and three. These people will not be able to formulate, for the most part, the theological questions, and will, invariably, find theological study and reflection beyond their reach, in most cases. By coming to college, they are short circuiting what is an important part of growth and self-understanding. For them, theological study should be postponed, lest it become what Harry Williams calls “the spiritual equivalent of hormone treatment”. We must all grow at our own pace. Our selection processes can be more efficient if we keep these factors in mind.

Our curriculum structure must, however, reflect the reality that we are dealing with those who are in the first two phases of systemic control and idealisation. We should acknowledge that we, ourselves, as staff, are also engaged in the lifelong task of making death and resurrection a personal process, or, to use the language of the New Testament, “growing into the stature of the fullness of Christ”.

It is now time to turn to seeing this in practice, and the progress we, as the staff at Newton College, have made in our discussions on the preliminary year of theological education. I first want to look at our teaching situation, as it is currently practised.

The Teaching Situation at Newton College

Our current enrolment is 25 students, and we have five full-time staff: four are expatriate, and one, our Principal, Fr James Ayong, is a national. The college course consists of four years. The first two, and the last of which, are undertaken in the college itself. The length of this course is currently under review, as part of our curriculum discussion, as we offer courses only to diploma level at this time. Each student spends the third year attached to a parish, working under the supervision of the parish priest.

We have a minimum entry level of grade 10 in the PNG schooling system, but, for many, particularly our older students, it has been some time since they were in a formal learning environment. The differences in educational level, within the country, also has to be taken into account, as our intakes come from all of the five Anglican dioceses. Some students have had difficulty settling into such an environment once again. This, I suspect, is a difficulty faced in theological education universally.

The daily timetable, for each of the three years, consists in five periods of 50 minutes each, between the hours of 8.20 am and 1 pm. With some free periods, this amounts to some 70 periods per week. Each student has 23 class periods, and, with equal division among the five staff, there is a teaching load of about 12 hours per week each.

Thus, we have a large number of hours available for teaching, but few resources available for us to engage in more-progressive teaching methods, apart from lecturing, and small group work. This has been a strong feature in our discussions on the curriculum.

The simple fact is that, to date, there has been no curriculum, and thus little in the way of reflection and critical thought about what was to be taught, how, and when. It was evident to me, on taking up my appointment in February, 1991, that the subjects were there because they were there, and had always been there. For example, homiletics in the first year of a course, liturgical studies for two hours per week in each of the three years. An extreme example is the teaching of NT Greek. Opinions differ about its value, but in an environment, where English is the language of instruction, and of the church in general, and where the available translations of the scriptures into local languages has been done from English, one would have to ask whether Greek (or Hebrew, for that matter) has a valid place on a Melanesian theological curriculum. Added credence is given to this argument, when we see the overall standard of written and spoken English, which ranges from average to poor, in most cases. When it comes to reading aloud, the standard is almost uniformly poor, this is true, not only of English, but of Tok Pisin, as well. Thus, the view is expressed, that time would be better spent elsewhere.

This is, incidentally, not a view that Martin Luther would have agreed: for him, education, for girls, as well as boys, should centre around the sacred languages:

We will not long preserve the gospel without the languages. The languages are the sheath, in which the sword of the Spirit is contained.¹²

Or, as Robert Runcie once said to a student pleading exemption, “I’m afraid you’ve struck a Principal, who believes in the subject.”¹³

At Newton College, two periods a week, in each year, are spent on the following subjects: New Testament, Old Testament, church history, doctrine, ethics, pastoral studies, and liturgy. One hour per week is spent on Melanesian religion, homiletics, Greek, English, and Christian education. In addition, the students in the second and final years undertake teaching of religious instruction in the local Popondetta schools.

Each lecturer decides the content of each course, and the risk of overlap is significant. Where, for example, do theories about the eucharist fit? In liturgy or doctrine? We have put it in liturgy for the moment. Why? Because it seems that it has always been that way.

This, then, was the raw material, with which we tackled the question of curriculum planning, to put the teaching of the college on a more-solid, effective, and professional footing for the future.

Our Discussions on the Preliminary Studies

A taxonomy for professional education¹⁴ was used, which drew distinctions between personal characteristics, skills, and knowledge. It was used originally for engineering courses, and was of particular usefulness, because it included spiritual qualities, and was chosen with this in mind. It was given, as a blank sheet, to all six staff, and we filled them out individually.¹⁵

Under personal qualities: imagination, inventiveness, independence, and objectivity were listed. Attitudes and values considered important were: acceptance of difference, personal responsibility, and concern for social

¹² H. Bornkamm, *Luther in Mid-Career*, Philadelphia PA: Fortress Press, 1983, quoted in Browning, *Handbook of the Ministry*, p. 86.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 87.

¹⁴ Richard Carter, “A taxonomy of objectives for professional education”, *Studies in Higher Education* 10-2 (1985), pp. 117-134; and used by Michael Horsburgh, in “Report on Curriculum Discussions at Newton College, 1991”, privately circulated.

¹⁵ At the time of these discussions, we had six staff members at Newton College.

justice. Personality characteristics, listed in the collated results, were: resilience, courage, integrity, and industry. Spiritual qualities included: Christ-centred spirituality, and search for God. Skills included: reasoning, attention, critical thinking, leadership, ability to delegate, tact, and articulateness. Also listed, were action skills, such as “liturgical behaviour”, music, first aid, and maintenance of machinery.

The knowledge factor was divided into factual and experiential knowledge. This included standard items, such as Bible, and church history, as well as general knowledge.

Our decision to introduce preliminary studies came, about due to a number of factors:

- (a) The need to introduce material of a general educational kind.
- (b) The recognition of the educational level of the students, and that they arrive less-than-prepared for their studies.
- (c) The need to allow students and staff to examine a candidate’s suitability for continued theological study. Thus, completion of preliminary studies, is a requirement for continuation in the course.

These in turn lead to the issues:

- (a) The need to give preliminary studies sufficient interest and content to be of educational value, and also to whet the appetite of the student for what is to follow. This must be done in such a way as to avoid giving the student the impression that he “knows it all” on completion. This calls for careful planning.
- (b) The need to teach general and theological studies, in a way useful to adult students, applying the strict test of direct relevance.

These discussions have taken place throughout 1991 and 1992.

We had originally planned these preliminary studies to occupy the entire first year of the four-year course, but, as a result of further discussions in mid-1992, we made the recommendation that the college course comprise the following:

- An introductory component in semester 1 of year 1;
- A theology component in semester 2 of year 1, and in both semesters of years 2 and 4, making five semesters altogether for the theological component; and
- A pastoral component in year 3.

We also recommended that successful completion of the first semester of the first year be a requirement for continuation in the course.

The new curriculum is to commence for all students in 1993.

General approval was given to the contents of the report of the 1991 discussions, but some recommendations were not endorsed. This required that some aspects of the 1991 report needed rethinking. The most important, and most necessary, subjects in the introductory semester are English, study skills, and general knowledge. With a classroom load of 15 hours/week, the following areas are to be studied in the first year – the first semester of which is the introductory component:

Semester 1	Hours/Week	Semester 2	Hours/Week
History of Israel	2	OT	2
Life of Christ	2	NT	2
Anglican identity	2	Church history	2
		Doctrine	2
English	4	English	2
Study skills	2	Pastoral	2
Worship/Prayer	2	Homiletics	1
Human society	1	Communication	1
Current affairs	1	Spirituality	1

The second and fourth years of the course will be broken into modules of core and secondary units, with the classroom load reduced from the current 23 hours/week to 15 hours/week. Thus, the inclusion of a study-skills component in the preliminary semester is important, so as to prepare the students for more self-directed study.

Much of the success of this plan will depend on staffing, and the commitment of future staff. The problem of getting suitably qualified staff is neither unique nor new, and will continue to be a problem in the years to come. Ongoing success will also depend on the content being reviewed

regularly, in the light of the many rapid changes in Melanesian society. An example would be greater preparation for ministry in towns, as distinct from villages, where the Anglican church has traditionally been strongest, and where it has done its best work. Ministry in towns will call for skills in counselling, social needs, awareness, family life and health, and the needs of the unemployed. In the villages, the need for courage, and good Christian knowledge, is increasing, as the base established by the mainline churches is diminishing in favour of Pentecostal/fundamentalist groups in many areas. Defending orthodoxy is more important than ever before. All this must be reflected in the theological curriculum. "The study of theology", as one report on the subject said over 40 years ago, "is the systematic study of the gospel of God, in its manifold relevance to human knowledge, and to human life".¹⁶ That is true of Melanesia today.

The preliminary studies at Newton College have the aim of providing a bridge into full-time study, and to provide an environment for further testing of suitability for continued professional training. It aims to provide a balance between general knowledge, and aims to whet a student's appetite for further learning, and to provide necessary skills to enable that process. We, at Newton Theological College, believe that it will provide a greater balance in the overall theological curriculum.

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¹⁶ Browning, *Handbook of the Ministry*, p. 86.

Culture and the Bible

The Question of Contextualisation

*A Paper Presented at the SPABC
Biennial Conference – July 1-5, 1991*

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Introduction

Like many aspects of Christian experience, we cannot choose whether or not we shall contextualise. We can only choose whether we shall do so well, or poorly. We are so much part of our culture, and our world, and contextualisation is so much part of living as Christians in our culture for the sake of our world, that we are constantly involved in the contextualisation process. The word carries the same mixture of helpfulness and annoyance as many neologisms. But the activity is dear to the heart of every believer, whether we realise it or not.

What, Then, is Contextualisation?

In essence, contextualisation is all that is involved in faithfully applying the word of God, in a modern setting. In contextualisation, we go, with all our culturally-acquired assumptions, experience, and agenda, to the scriptures, with their different cultural backgrounds, presuppositions, and priorities. We hear for ourselves the same living message God intended for the first readers, so that we can then go to people, in yet another cultural setting, with yet another list of action priorities, and explain the biblical message, so that they receive it with the same impact as it held for the first readers.

The task is often described as us moving from within our cultural horizon to hear, with authenticity, the message God spoke within the cultural horizon of the biblical world, so we may go, in turn, to present the message, with equal authenticity, within the cultural horizon of another group of people.¹

¹ For standard evangelical discussions of the topic, see Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description*, Exeter UK: Paternoster Press, 1980; Donald A. Carson, ed., *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: the Problem of Contextualisation*, Exeter UK: Paternoster Press, 1984; David J. Hesselgrave, and Edward Rommen, *Contextualisation: Meanings, Methods, and Models*, Leicester UK: Apollos, 1989. For concise introductions, see C. Rene Padilla, "The Interpreted Word: Reflections on Contextual Hermeneutics", in *Themelios* 7-1 (September 1981), pp. 18-23; Martin Goldsmith, "Contextualisation of Theology", in *Themelios* 9-1 (September 1983), pp. 18-23; David J. Hesselgrave, "Contextualisation of Theology", in W. A. Elwood, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1984.

Contextualisation, then, is the task of re-presenting, in a new cultural context, the message of God, so that it speaks the same message, as originally given in the biblical context. It impinges on, and, in part, at least embraces, the tasks of biblical understanding (exegesis), interpretation (hermeneutics), translation and explanation (communication), and application (indigenisation and enculturation).

Culture, as we are using it, is:

An integrated system of beliefs . . . of values . . . of customs . . . and of institutions, which express these beliefs, values, and customs . . . which binds a society together, and gives it a sense of identity, dignity, security, and continuity.²

To appreciate the biblical scope of this subject, we also need to redefine two words, with modern meanings, different from their biblical meaning. “Gentiles”, in common parlance, often means “non-Christian” or “pagan”. We must reclaim its basic biblical meaning of “peoples of other (i.e., non-Jewish) cultures”. To read the New Testament with “peoples of other cultures” in place of “Gentiles” gives new urgency to the contextualisation task. The word “nations”, in the New Testament, is usually the same word as for “Gentiles”, in Greek, ἔθνη (*ethnē*). Again, we need to recapture the “peoples” meaning of “nations”, rather than assume the word has the modern political overtones.

I. Why Bother About Contextualisation?

Our introductory answer to this question is simple. The nature of God’s way of salvation demands it.

That the gospel is available equally for women and men of all cultures was startling news for first-century believers. We have lost this sense of surprise. Paul declares this is the unexpected “mystery” the Holy Spirit had forced upon the reluctant minds of the apostles (Eph 3:1-12). God had, of course, planned it all along. But, despite the many Old Testament allusions, hints, and outright statements, about it, this was a secret Jewish national aspirations gladly kept under wraps. For the “apostle to the peoples of other cultures”, however, this was the most radical treasure of the new covenant (Col 1:20-29; Eph 2:11-22). Paul wondered deeply that he should be entrusted to declare this new reality openly. It powerfully motivated his whole ministry (Eph 3:7-11; 1 Tim 2:3-7; 1 Thess 2:4-13; Rom 1:1-5). Central to the gospel age, then, is this unexpected news that

² Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation, *The Willowbank Report: Gospel and Culture*, Lausanne Occasional Papers 2, Wheaton IL: Lausanne Committee, 1980, p. 7.

God's word can be received fully by peoples of every different ethnic background (1 Thess 2:13). To grapple with that reality means contextualising.

As Paul concludes his great mission manifesto, this theme forms his climax (Rom 15:7.17). God's Christ locked Himself into serving one distinct cultural group – "the circumcision". To serve God's truth, this is essential. God's truth always operates in the real world of particular cultures – not in some Platonic "ideal" realm. Only thus, could God's long-standing purposes and promises be fulfilled. These promises, likewise, were firmly earthed in the culture history of the "fathers" of this same ethnic group (15:8). And yet, the whole purpose of this specific enculturation was to influence the universe. Only thus, could "the peoples of other cultures" discover, and respond, to God's mercy (15:9). The cultural particularity, focused on the needs and heritage of the Jews, became God's means of blessing all other cultures. Every strand of that culture's literature – law, history, poetry, and prophecy – is called on testify that this had always been God's intention (15:9-12). These are the classic ingredients of contextualisation. God chose to work out our salvation within the time-space realm of planet earth – therefore, we must exegete, interpret, communicate, and apply His word in the diverse languages of our globe.³

God's purposes for our age culminate in penetrating diverse cultures. The biblical message, the gospel, belongs to every culture. This gospel is eminently translatable into every culture. In fact, as we shall see, this great news is incompletely grasped, and lived, without this inter-cultural dimension. Contextualisation is an essential response to these realities of our faith. We shall consider:

- How to appreciate the *cultural factor* in contextualisation,
- How to appreciate the *biblical truth factor*,
- How to utilise the *interplay of these two factors*, in the task of contextualisation, and
- A model outlining *essential ingredients of adequate contextualisation* – the Letter to the Galatians.

II. The Cultural Factor in Contextualising

Our culture, from its trivial outer forms, to the attitudes underlying our worldview, is the first part of our contextualisation formula. The Christian

³ We have used Rom 15:7ff to make this point. We could have equally well used the only slightly different language of Gal 3:7-14, 22-29.

message takes cultural settings seriously. The following assumptions about culture should inform us, as we contextualise.

1. Christianity Accepts and Exalts Cultures

The scriptures trace the source of human cultures back to God Himself. Our distinctive capacities, as creatures made in the image of God, are the basic source of human culture. These cultural capacities, and God's original intention for them, antedate the fall (Gen 1:26-31; 2:15-25). As Lord of history, God Himself supervises the destinies and affairs of every ethnic group (Acts 17:24-28; 1 Sam 2:2-10; Jer 12:14-17). The New Testament age bursts into life with a spectacular celebration of praise from all the accessible cultures of the day (Acts 2:1-12). This gospel interest in the diverse settings of ethnic groups sets Christianity apart from other world religions.⁴

When God chose to reveal Himself in history. He gave human cultures an importance for eternity. God did not shout His message from the distance by some inter-galactic sonic boom. He came in person into an ordinary human setting – born of woman, born under the Law. Thereby, He gave dignity, and value, to our human scene – to human cultures.

Moreover, Jesus Christ tied proper understanding of His salvation to the particular culture into which He was born – that of a Jewish woman, living under Jewish law. Jesus told the Samaritan woman that she worshipped ignorantly, “for salvation is of the Jews”. This one culture is set apart from others. Its salvation-history is made normative, and authoritative, for defining all valid salvation experience (John 4:22; Acts 4:12). The incarnation made Jewish biblical culture of distinctive importance for all time.

But, as we have seen from Romans 15, that is not the end of the story. God's purpose is to exalt all cultures. The historical particularity, evident when Christ is born of a Jewish woman, is “in order that the peoples of other cultures may glorify God for His mercy” (Rom 15:9). Through this “mystery of the gospel”, God exalts cultural plurality *by way of* historical particularity. By showing so clearly, in the home of Nazareth, that one culture matters to Him, God makes a way to show, beyond the Cross and Pentecost, that every culture matters to Him. Our task in contextualisation is to give similar honour to all cultures.

⁴ Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, American Society of Missiology 13, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1990, makes this point in contrast with Islam.

2. Cultures are Always Integral to Experiencing and Understanding Truth

By honouring cultures in this way, God makes them indispensable for our understanding of His message.

We can never express truth in a purely “supra-cultural” form. It is fruitless to attempt to state the “supra-cultural” aspects of the gospel by isolating the divine kernel from the cultural husk. As soon as we express any aspect of God’s truth, we do so by cultural means – our thought patterns and language.

As Martin Goldsmith puts it:

All theology is contextual. It must be, for all of us interpret the Bible through the spectacles of our philosophical background. And we, then, express our beliefs within the framework of those terms. . . . All theology, throughout history, had been expressed within the context of current religious and philosophical movements. This contextualisation inevitably adds to, or subtracts from, the biblical revelation.⁵

God’s message always comes to us in the wrappings of a particular form.

Cross-cultural awareness and experience confirms and clarifies truth. Moving across a cultural barrier often opens our minds to fresh aspects of biblical meaning, previously unrealised. Take this list of “non-Western” cultural understandings we discovered in Melanesia:

- The involvement of the unseen forces in everyday life;
- The ancestors’ continuing involvement in tribal life;
- An understanding of time, and the future, quite different from Western ideas of history and lineal progress;
- The understanding of religion as the integrating factor for the whole of life – not a one-day-a-week ritual;
- Understanding personal value and righteousness, in terms of your value to the tribe, and of maintaining tribal obligations; and
- Spirit forces intervening directly in the natural world, so that you take no interest in secondary causes.

⁵ Goldsmith, “Contextualisation of Theology”, pp. 20-21.

These different views made us reread the scriptures, and find there, similar emphases, of which we had been only dimly aware in our own culture. The cultural journey also threw fresh light on various teachings we thought we knew well. For instance, look at this further list:

- Powers (Col 1:16-18);
- The continuity and interdependence between previous generations of believers and ourselves (Heb 11:39-40; 12:22-24);
- The present implications of our future hope;
- The communal nature, and intent, of virtually every ethical command in Paul's writings;
- The importance of a doctrine of work and manual labour for human dignity;
- The creation ordinances governing economic development and ecological concerns;
- The implications of all humans being made in the image of God for racial and "payback" (retaliation) issues;
- The interrelation of both the Word and the Spirit in a pre-literate society; and
- The importance of land and inheritance for God's people.

In Papua New Guinea, aspects of each of these biblical truths came alive, in ways our previous New Zealand Bible College training had never noticed. We need cross-cultural insights to adequately grasp aspects of God's word. As Rene Padilla puts it:

Every culture possesses positive elements, favourable to the understanding of the gospel. . . . Every culture makes possible a certain approach to the gospel that brings to light certain salient aspects that, in other cultures, may have remained less visible or even hidden. Seen from this perspective . . . cultural differences . . . serve as channels of expression of aspects of the truth of the gospel, aspects that a theology, tied down to the one particular culture can easily overlook.⁶

⁶ C. Rene Padilla, *The Contextualisation of the Gospel: a Learning in Dialogue Experience with C. Rene Padilla*, Abingto PA: Partnership in Mission, nd, pp. 4-5.

Then, too, sending messengers out *to cross cultural barriers in mission causes a “boomerang effect” for the sending community*. The missionary almost inevitably returns to the sending church with uncomfortable questions about the adequacy of that church’s grasp of truth. When Paul returned to Antioch with his “lessons from the frontier” of mission in Galatia, he had a newly-focused perception of the essence of the gospel. This caused a public confrontation with the monocultural teachers dominating the Antiochean church (Acts 14-15; Gal 2). The different roles of Antioch and Jerusalem, from this point in Acts, confirm that diverse cultural awareness is crucial for us to adequately transmit, or contextualise, the biblical message. Today, the churches of the West stand at a similar point. The focal centre of global Christianity is moving from its previous Western homelands to Africa, Asia, South America, and the Pacific.⁷ If we Western Christians fail to heed the questions asked, and criticisms made of us, by those on the new frontiers – questions about our affluence, our individualism, our rationalism, the unbiblical confidence we place in unclear families, etc. – then our candle may be removed from its lampstand, as happened in Jerusalem.

Cultural diversity is also essential in contextualisation, because it is only “with all the saints” that we discover the “length, breadth, height, and depth” of truth (Eph 3:17-19). Power to grasp the depths of biblical meaning is not available to isolated believers. We need each other to adequately understand scripture. And, if we need the ministry of others, for our spiritual perception in the local arena, it is equally true globally. As the Lausanne Covenant puts it, the Spirit:

illuminates the minds of God’s people in every culture to perceive (the scripture’s) truth, fresh through their own eyes, and thus discloses to the whole church ever more of the many-coloured wisdom of God. (paragraph 2)⁸

Therefore, we need both the “teaching and admonishing of one another” within our own cultural group, and the challenge, warning, and correction of insights into truth from other cultural backgrounds, if we are to grasp the fullness of God’s word. We need not despair.

since none of us can read the scriptures without cultural blinkers of some sort, the great advantage, the crowning excitement, which our own era of

⁷ Andrew Walls has most consistently explained and developed the implications of this in his various articles published in the 1980s.

⁸ The Lausanne Covenant, in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, J. D. Douglas, ed., Waco TX: Word Books, 1974.

church history has over all others, is the possibility that we may be able to read them together. Never before, has the church looked so much like the great multitude, whom no man can number, out of every nation, and tribe, and people, and tongue. Never before, therefore, had there been so much potentiality for mutual enrichment and self-criticism, as God causes yet more light and truth to break forth from His word.⁹

3. Culture is an Ever-present Limiting Factor in Adequate Contextualisation, Because:

Our cultural pre-suppositions are so all-pervasive, we seldom realise how much they determine all we do. It usually takes an extended cross-cultural exposure to reveal our own cultural biases. Recent analyses describe aspects of culture, which skew our perceptions of other cultures, and influence the way we read the scriptures.

Alan Tippett describes this cultural distortion of our perceptions by his “theory of parallax”.¹⁰ Our attitudes towards culture; our historical perspective; our involvement in promotion of a cause; the function of our activities; our professional standing; and our own personal perceptions of ourselves, all influence the way we perceive and respond to other cultures. Tippett shows how these can have either negative or positive influences. As we seek to pass on biblical truth, across the cultural horizon of our own society, then, we are liable to distort both the original intention of the scriptures, and the responses of those we serve, because of these usually unconscious attitudes, which govern our actions.

David Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen broaden the list of cultural factors affecting contextualisation in their “seven-dimension paradigm”.¹¹ For them, the influential aspects of culture include:

- Worldviews – ways of viewing the world.
- Cognitive processes – ways of thinking.
- Linguistic forms – ways of expressing ideas.
- Behavioural patterns – ways of acting.

⁹ Andrew F. Walls, “The Gospel as the Prisoner and Liberator of Culture”, in *Faith and Thought* 108-1/2 (1981), p. 51.

¹⁰ Alan R. Tippett, “Parallax in Missiology: to Use or Abuse”, in Darrell L. Whiteman, ed., *Missionaries, Anthropologists, and Cultural Change: Studies in Third World Societies* 25 (September 1983), pp. 91-151.

¹¹ Hesselgrave, and Rommen, *Contextualisation*, pp. 203-211.

- Communication media – ways of channelling the message.
- Social Structures – way of interacting.
- Motivational sources – ways of deciding.

Given such all-pervasive cultural influences, it is little wonder that *culture tends to narrow selectively, where scripture broadens and diversifies*.

For example, our culture pre-disposes us to particular modes of thought, where scriptural revelation comes through many such modes. As Westerners, we are assured about the vital importance of propositional teaching, for a clear grasp of biblical truth. As heirs of Greek thought, it could hardly be otherwise. But we are much less assured about the authoritative importance of allegory or parable. Historical narrative is acceptable to us, but with caution: we are not too happy about the way Paul, or the writer to Hebrews, used it in passages, like Gal 4:21-31, or Heb 4:1-11. Biography is permissible as revelation, for we quickly identify with David, or Joseph and his brothers. But Qoheleth's Wisdom, the singer's Love Song, and some of the Poetry- especially the imprecatory kind – leave us Westerners rather unhappy about the imprecision – to our minds – of their teachings.

But then, I had no answer when our Melanesian students asked why we did not teach Proverbs as tools for pre-evangelism *in their proverb-rich orally-literate society*. Well I remember being the only one in a Sepik congregation of 60, who needed an explanation of the Neo-Melanesian parable, following the communion in a Sepik service. Only a dumb European would not realise that the dramatic exhortation to prune the coffee trees that week was a reminder that the special offering was due next Sunday.

Only an international breadth of theological input will keep our contextualisation from the ever-present tendency for our culture to limit our perspective.¹²

¹² For an African comment on one of the many recent pleas for such non-Western input to theology, see Kwame Bediako, "The Holy Spirit, the Christian Gospel, and Religious Change: The African Evidence for a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism", in James Thrower, ed., *Essays in Religious Studies of Andrew Walls*, Aberdeen UK: Department of Religious Studies, University of Aberdeen, 1986, p. 45. Bediako is citing Charles Taber in the opening article, "Is There More than One Way to do Theology?" in Taber's sadly, short-lived journal, *Gospel in Context* 1-1 (January 1978), pp. 4-10.

4. Culture is Always Transformed by Proper Contextualisation

But, if culture inevitably influences our grasp of scripture, it is equally inevitable that scripture influences our cultures.

In Christ, our own cultural heritage is purified and fulfilled. “Christ among you” – you peoples of other cultures – this is the Christian hope of glory (Col 1:27). He alone is the “Messiah” – the answer to the deepest cultural longings – not just to the Jews, but to every people group (John 4:42; 12:32; 1 John 4:13-15). As “Son of Man”, Christ Jesus offers fulfilment for all human aspirations. Renewed members of every tribe, linguistic group, people, and culture will not only be present in the final glorious kingdom, they will each contribute something distinctive to its splendour (Rev 5:9-10; 7:9; 21:24).

Here and now, too, Christ transforms each culture He invades. He reproduces the pattern of the incarnation:

When God became man, Christ took flesh in a particular family, members of a particular nation, with the tradition of customs associated with that nation. All that was not evil, He sanctified. Wherever He is taken by men in any time and place, He takes that nationally, that society, that “culture”, and sanctifies all that is capable of sanctification by His presence.¹³

Not that this process takes place easily:

that society never existed, in East or West, ancient time, or modern, which could absorb the word of Christ painlessly into its system. Jesus, within Jewish culture, Paul, within Hellenistic culture, takes it for granted that there will be rubs and friction – not from the adoption of a new culture, but from the transformation of the mind towards that of Christ.¹⁴

Developing this refined cultural “mind”, is the focus of much of Paul’s instruction. We suggest it is also the real testing ground of effective contextualisation today (Rom 12:2ff; Phil 2:5ff; Eph 4:17-24).

There is also a distinctly-new aspect to the impact of the gospel upon a Christian’s culture. *In Christ, we receive, and participate, in a new “adoptive” cultural heritage.* God makes us heirs of Hebrew salvation-history through Christ. Again, Andrew Walls puts it lucidly:

¹³ Walls, “The Gospel as the Prisoner and Liberator of Culture”, p. 44.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

The Christian is given an adoptive past. He is linked to the people of God in all generations (like him, members of the faith family), and most strangely of all, to the whole history of Israel, the curious continuity of the race of the faithful from Abraham. . . . All Christians, of whatever nationality, are landed, by adoption with several millennia of someone else's history, with a whole set of ideas, concepts, and assumptions which do not necessarily square with the rest of their cultural inheritance; and the church in every land, of whatever race, and type of society, has this same adoptive past, by which it needs to interpret the fundamentals of the faith.¹⁵

Every cultural group, involved in contextualisation, thus has, in this biblical heritage, an abiding standard, and "reference point", to continually inform, and enrich, the process of cultural transformation.

But that does not make the Christian community merely backward looking or conservative. No. *In Christ, each culture is liberated, for global impact and destiny.* The process, Romans 15 described for the Jews, is repeated in every culture invaded by the gospel. Christ breaks in to fulfil the deepest longings of that particular culture, so that that culture, in turn, can make its contribution to the "blessing" of all nations. Nothing less can satisfy the implications of Jesus' parting words: "As the Father has sent Me, so send I you" (John 20:21). Every nation, in turn, receives a share in the global responsibility. And even spirit powers look on to learn from this expression of the unconfined wisdom of God (Eph 3:10).

Culture, then, looms large in making "fully known" God's Word (Col 1:25-29). So, we must grasp culture to grasp truth. We are entitled to utilise culture with enthusiasm, and with humility, as we approach the task of contextualisation. But there are other factors to keep in balance, too.

III. The Biblical Truth Factor in Contextualising

Our understanding of the nature of God's truth – as authoritative revelation, through the scriptures, by the Spirit – provides the other regulative, and dynamic, factor in adequate contextualisation.

1. God's Truth is Always Greater Than our Best Grasp of it

God Himself, His purposes in Creation, the human predicament, and Christ's work for our redemption, are all too great to be adequately expressed in

¹⁵ Ibid.

any one formulation. Our human minds cannot hold together, at one time, any more than a very small part of the whole truth.

Since God is One and Infinite, this is inevitable. By definition, God is beyond human grasp. He is the sum of all His attributes. Yet, we are obliged to consider only one aspect of His wholeness at a time. Human language, human experience, our restriction within the time/space continuum, let alone the impairment of our faculties by sin, all force us to take a piece-meal approach to knowing God. When contextualising, the danger is that we forget we are only human, and assume greater competence than we can attain. Henry Robert Reynolds, Principal of the Congregationalist Cheshunt College through the latter part of the 19th century, highlighted the inherent danger:

We must admit that every element of the glory of Christ is so absolute, so perfect in itself, so absorbing, so engrossing, so beneficent, that, if it beams of glances on the soul, it conveys the impression – which may turn out to be no other than an illusion – that it is the *whole* revelation, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all . . . [thus, we need to ask ourselves] . . . whether the one colour of the million-hued bow, or promise, in which (we) find so much, is the whole of the one, living Christ, and whether (we) have not much to learn . . . from those who are analogously led to believe that they, too, have, alas! The entire glory of God, beaming through another chink of the curtain, which conceals the Holiest of all.¹⁶

When contextualising, then, we must recognise *God's truth is always many-sided*. We too-quickly grasp one aspect of truth, which has impressed us as if it is the sum total of truth. The scriptures present every central doctrine in a range of ways.

At first glance, “Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures”, may seem self-evidently clear in its meaning. But the reality is so vast, that the scriptures give a wide range of explanations of the inherent meaning of both Christ's death and our sin. Scriptures offer at least the following explanations of the *work of Christ* in His death at Calvary: Christ's death shows His work as High Priest; reveals the love of God; gives an example for Christians to follow; redeems us; brings reconciliation, through His work as mediator; was a sacrifice for sin; justifies the believer; commences the new age of the new covenant; and gives us salvation.

¹⁶ Henry Robert Reynolds, “A Study in Heno-Christianity”, in *The Expositor*, 5th series, II (1895), pp. 321-341.

No one of these explanations is adequate in itself, but each is true, according to the scriptures. And this list is certainly not exhaustive!

Likewise, in the scriptures, pictorial words, with at least the following nine meanings, describe the nature of sin: missing the mark; iniquity or wrongdoing; lawlessness; transgression; evil or wickedness; desire, lust, or passion; disobedience; ungodliness; and trespass. And, of course, each of the Ten Commandments gives further specific illustrations of the nature of sin.

So we could go on with each central doctrine of the faith. At least 20 different names or titles are used to describe Satan's nature, in pictorial language.¹⁷ Consider the wide-ranging terminology used for other aspects of the doctrine of evil.¹⁸ Or, again, consider the various New Testament pictures of the church as the body, the bride, the branches of the vine, the army of God, the pilgrim people, the household or family of God, the living temple of God, the kingdom of priests, and so on.¹⁹

The "many-sided wisdom of God" (Eph 3:10) keeps the contextualiser humble, when offering each necessarily partial explanation of such huge themes.

A parallel impact comes from grasping the nature of *truth as "seed", which requires diverse "soils"*, in which to display its fullness. Building on Christ's common use of the metaphor (Matt 13:1-23, 31-32, etc.), Paul uses this imagery to highlight the way the message of grace had been contextualised among the Colossians of Asia, just as among other peoples around the then-known world (Col 1:5-6; 2:6).

This largesse in the nature of truth also means *the Spirit always had more light to break forth from the Word*. The living presence of the author of scripture, in the person of the Spirit of God, gives biblical truth a dynamic quality. The prophets, even in their heights of conscious inspiration, were aware of their own only-partial grasp of the depths of the divine message, birthed through their own

¹⁷ Cf. "Introductory Theology Notes", Banz PNG: CLTC, nd, pp 55-58.

¹⁸ Note these terms for "spirit beings", e.g., angels, demons, evil spirits, elemental spirits of the universe, spiritual hosts of wickedness; for the wide range of "other powers, which dominate humans": e.g., principalities and powers, authorities, thrones, rulers, world rulers of this present darkness; death, etc.; for the "teaching, which enslaves": e.g., doctrines of demons, the course of this world, philosophy, and empty deceit; and for "evil people who become the tools of the evil one": e.g., sorcerers, magicians, diviners, soothsayers, mediums, false prophets.

¹⁹ Cf. John M. Hitchen, "The Church is God's Agent for Evangelism", Papua New Guinea National Seminar on Evangelism paper, 1976, reprinted as *The Work of the Church*, Wewak PNG: Christian Books Melanesia, 1980.

frail experience (1 Pet 1:10-12). The Reformers, and their stepchildren, when they faltered in their consistency, were ready to give their lives for this insight about God's truth. Contextualisation challenges us to apply it again at the cultural frontier. For evangelicals, this aspect of the scriptures, as Spirit-breathed, plus our conviction of the abiding presence of the same active Spirit, brings a creativity to our humility, as we cross cultural divides, holding forth the word of life. We can never know what the Spirit may yet choose to bring out from this treasure store of His Word.

2. God's Truth is Universally Applicable, and can be Known in Truth in Every Culture

The wonder, for the New Testament writers, is that Christ belongs in every culture – His word is living and active within every culture. Lamin Sanneh highlighted one aspect of this truth, by stressing Christianity's "translatability":

Christianity is remarkable for the relative ease with which it enters living cultures. In becoming translatable it renders itself compatible with all cultures. It may be welcomed, or resisted, in its Western garb, but it is not itself uncongenial in other garb. Christianity broke free from its absolutised Judaic frame, and, through a radical pluralism, adopted the Hellenic culture.²⁰

And that pattern has continued, as the story of the Christian mission. Our Christian message rejoices in "a radical pluralism", in that every culture is equally acceptable to God, as the setting, in which His truth can be received and obeyed.

Another feature of the relevance of scripture, is the way its central ideas are explained. The bible uses what we can call "*trans-cultural word pictures*" to define almost all the central ideas of the faith. Each word-picture, Jesus uses in John's gospel to describe Himself, is part of the ordinary experience of peoples worldwide.²¹

This is also true of the key theological terms of the New Testament letters. "Redemption" is a common market place, or commerce, term; "justify" belongs to the worldwide experience of law-courts; "expiation and sacrifice" may not be universal, but the need for appeasement, to which they speak, is a universal human

²⁰ Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, p. 50.

²¹ Think, e.g., of: "bread", "door", "way", "light", "resurrection", "living water", and even "shepherd". These are either universal experiences, or refer to particulars, which have cultural equivalents around the world.

need, even when expressed in more sophisticated ways, such as “our search for serenity”!

Some specific theological words, or concepts, may not be found in each culture. But the background of ideas, or life experiences, of the great majority, are found universally. By using a range of “trans-cultural word pictures”, God has gathered together the many-sided truth of the facts of our salvation.

Every culture, then, offers a valid context for the authentic experience of truth. The constrictions of our humanity – particularly our sinful humanity – mean our understanding is, at best, partial. But it is nonetheless valid. By His gift of speech, and by our creation in His own likeness, God has made us capable of personal, intimate, and real, experience of Him.

By God’s gift of His self-revealing word, in forms and language we can understand, we can also distinguish truth, and true experience of Him, from counterfeit and error.

3. God’s Truth has been Definitively “Incarnated” in Culture

This is the other side of the fact that God exalts cultures. He links His truth, inseparably, to such human settings. We are not left to grope in the dark, or merely make “guesses about God”.²² *The distinctive, and authoritatively definitive, features of human salvation, and how to receive it, have been set out in the scriptures.* In the prophets, in the apostles, and, supremely, in Jesus Christ, God’s abiding truth has been distilled, and spelled out, in human terms for sinful, faltering women and men to see, read, and receive, in language and thought forms, which are too clear for us ever to claim ignorance again (Heb 1:1; 2:1-4).

The ultimate expression of truth, capable of comprehension by culture-bound humans, comes in Jesus Christ. The very glory of God shines from the face of Jesus for those, whose reason had been sufficiently healed by faith, to recognise Him (2 Cor 4:4-6). Thus, this *uniqueness of Christ* is set forth in His relationship to every aspect of culture, and reality, in central New Testament Christological passages. He, alone, lords it over the physical universe, the revelatory process, the needy realm of morally-corrupt creatures, the new order of salvaged rejects in the church, the universal control centre of the Majesty, and even over the spirit world of angelic beings, according to Heb 1:1-4 and Col 1:16-18. These declarations are non-negotiable. He, alone, is Lord, in this culturally and religiously pluralistic world (1 Cor 8:5-7). The uniqueness of His Person leads, necessarily, into the

²² William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible*, term for the confused ideas circulating at Colossae.

uniqueness of His gospel. Paul's clearest discourse on the issues at stake in contextualisation – the Galatian letter, to which we shall return – begins defiantly, and unashamedly, with the declaration that there is one, and only one, gospel – the gospel preached, and recorded, definitively by the apostles.

If that was the emphasis in one of Paul's earliest letters, the same conviction rings equally clearly in the last recorded writings of the apostle. Peter's authoritative provision for true understanding, after his death is his, and his fellow apostle's, testimony (1 John 2:18-27; 4:1-6). For Paul, too, the standard of truth is still "the preaching entrusted to me", and now entrusted to the next generation as a "good deposit", to be guarded and "continued in" (Tit 1:1-3; 2 Tim 1:13-14). In fact, Paul has at least the next three generations in mind, as he hands on this abiding reservoir of Spirit-protected teaching (2 Tim 1:14; 2:2). Here, then, is normative teaching for global contextualisation. *Ours is the task of recognising both the authoritative, and the exemplary, aspects of apostolic teaching.*

Truth deposited, and experienced, in this way, brings the difficult duty of *discerning between the abiding principle and its cultural form* of expression, as we relate it to modern contexts. There are no simple rules for such discernment. The point, at which, if at all, the principle of unfeigned, joyous love for fellow members of our Father's family is fittingly retained, as we move from "a holy kiss", to a "hearty handshake", or to a modern bear-hug, will continue to be hotly debated. We can only, in our two final sections, lay some basic foundations for such contextualisation.

IV. The Interplay of Culture and biblical Truth in Contextualising

The task of contextualisation, then, involves bringing together these two factors – culture and biblical truth. We suggest the following interrelationships, as inherent in faithful contextualisation.

1. Culture Identifies the Most-relevant Starting Points for Contextualising Biblical Truth

As we saw, above, when noting the many-sidedness of God's truth, God has not limited Himself to one "biblical analogy" (to use Wayne Dye's term),²³ or "redemptive analogy" (to use Richardson's term).²⁴ Rather, by the use of a range of "trans-cultural word-pictures" (my term) God declares the many-sided truth of

²³ Wayne Dye, *The Bible Translation Strategy*, chapter 9, Ukarumpa PNG: SIL, 1979.

²⁴ Don Richardson, *Peace Child*, Glendale CA: Regal Books, 1974, p. 329.

our salvation.²⁵ Therefore, *different aspects of truth suit different people-groups, and worldviews, as relevant starting points for an encounter with Christ and understanding truth.*

The life values, and basic assumptions, of a people mean that different terminology, explaining the gospel, will have varying appeal and challenge. Some biblical terms will have immediate relevance to the values and attitudes of one culture, while others, at first, will appear strangely foreign.

The word-pictures, explaining the Cross as victory over spirit forces (the redemption and victory word-groups), will provide an important point for initial evangelism, and a focal point for growth among people, who live in fear of spirit powers. Among a society, such as our New Zealand Maori, who emphasise the extended family, and its mutual obligations, the church, as the family of God, will provide a good starting point, in discussing the people of God.

Wayne Dye shows the importance of his insight, for focusing on relevant sins.²⁶ Don Richardson's *Peace Child* is a good example of how the trans-cultural word-pictures of reconciliation, and mediator, were already a traditional religious focal point among the Sawi people of Irian Jaya.²⁷

2. We Must Reach up to Biblical Fullness from the Culturally-relevant Starting Point in Contextualising Truth

Choosing the most-relevant explanations of each aspect of truth is the essential starting point in contextualisation. But, for Christian maturity, the contextualising must continue filling out the initial response, so as to grasp, and apply, a full range of biblical teaching.

In Western churches, the neglect of the atonement, as a victory over spirit powers, had left the churches open to the current inroads of the occult. A lack of emphasis on the church, as the pilgrim people of God, encourages the complacent materialism of nominal Christianity in the West.

²⁵ Charles H. Kraft deals, in part, with the same kind of idea in his threefold division of Bible teachings into the three levels of "Basic Ideals", "General Principles", and "Specific Cultural Forms". What I am calling trans-cultural word pictures fit into the first two of Kraft's categories, *Christianity and Culture: a Study in Dynamic biblical Theologising in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1979, pp. 139-143.

²⁶ Dye, *Bible Translation Strategy*.

²⁷ Richardson, *Peace Child*.

So, too, Papua New Guineans need to understand sin as rebellion and disobedience, not just broken relationships, if they are to have a firm faith in Christ.

This broadening of understanding is essential to avoid syncretism. When one aspect of biblical teaching is used predominantly, we can easily distort truth. The various word-pictures, explaining the atonement, listed above, are all necessary to correct possible misunderstandings, or distortions, of Christ's work on the Cross.

Effective contextualisation recognises that at different stages of growth in the church, different aspects of the one truth will need emphasis, to ensure ongoing growth. Common problems, such as legalism, seeking short cuts to holiness, or unwillingness to face the cost of discipleship, continue to challenge groups of Christians in every culture, at different times. Different aspects of biblical insight bring answers to each of these problems. Thus all are needed.

There is a balance, then, between choosing culturally-relevant initial steps into truth and insisting that all God's word is relevant for long-term growth.

3. In-depth Cultural Transformation is the Goal of any Adequate Contextualisation

We must contextualise, to the point of transforming worldviews. Harold W. Turner, building on Lesslie Newbigin's recent work, suggests that the Christian mission has seldom gone deep enough. Mission to the person – seeking personal conversion, and transformation, as disciples of Christ – has long been the subject of study and practice. We probably all conduct courses, emphasising aspects of contextualisation, aimed at personal growth. Recent decades have seen a resurgence of attention to mission at a second level – mission to society. This level of mission, as social service, or as social reform, has also been the focus of much study and praxis. But the third level, mission to the cultural base, the worldview level, remains largely untouched.²⁸ The challenge, in contextualising, is to transform worldviews in depth. To use the jargon – we aim to bring the limiting factors of the cultural horizon into conformity to the biblical horizon.

Harvie Conn, quoting Orlando Costas, sums it up well:

²⁸ Harold W. Turner, *Gospel and Cultures Trust Lecture Notes from 1990 Seminars*. Available from Gospel and Cultures Trust, 8a Peart View, Remuera, Auckland 5, New Zealand.

The ultimate test of any theological discourse, after all, is not only erudite precision, but also transformative power. “It is a question of whether or not theology can articulate the faith, in a way that is not only intellectually sound, but spiritually energising, and, therefore, capable of leading the people of God to be transformed in their way of life, and to commit themselves to God’s mission in the world.”²⁹

This is, of course, the Bible’s own standard. New Testament wisdom is a lifestyle (James 3:13-17). This kind of *biblical loyalty is the measure of validity and truth within every culture*. The goal is such a release from inadequate values, thought-forms, and goals, that the people of God work out, in their own setting, whatever the scriptures require of them. John Stott encapsulates it clearly in his recent definition of an evangelical:

The real hallmark of the evangelical is not only a present submission to what he or she believes the scripture teaches, it is a prior commitment to be submissive to what we may subsequently learn to be the teaching of scripture, whatever scripture may be found to teach.³⁰

This, then, is the basic task of contextualisation. Our illustrations have emphasised the cross-cultural aspect of the task. But, wherever we cross the divide to another cultural sub-group, the principles apply. Often, today, the divides are as deep and wide between generations in the same ethnic group, or between the socio-economic extremes in the same city, as between any two racial groups. Thus, to effectively bring the living message to those on the other side of any of these divides, we must:

- Discover the heart-beat of their cultural values, so as to identify the most-relevant aspects, word-pictures, and forms of scriptural instruction, to commence the transformation;
- Continue empathising with their culture, so as to lead them on to grasp an ever-widening range of biblical truth for themselves; and
- Work towards the goal of bringing their cultural worldview, and experience, into conformity with the biblical experience of wholeness of life in Christ, with all its ramifications of a transformed worldview, and daily life, in our global village.

²⁹ Harvie M. Conn, “Contextual Theologies: the Problem of Agendas”, in *Westminster Theological Journal* 52 (1990), p. 63; citing Orlando Costas, “Evangelical Theology in the Two-Thirds World”, in *TSF Bulletin* 9-1 (September-October 1985), pp. 7-13.

³⁰ John R. W. Stott, *EFAC Bulletin* 40 (Advent 1990), p. 3.

In conclusion, we turn to a series of New Testament checks to keep us on track in the process:

V. Galatians – a Model Outlining the Factors Involved in Adequate Contextualisation

Galatians is the letter in the New Testament, specifically dealing with the issue of contextualisation. The letter grapples with the classic contextualisation question: Is accepting the Jewish cultural/religious sign of circumcision essential, in addition to faith, as the basis for salvation? In other words, is one cultural expression of the gospel – as distinct from the truths of the gospel, itself – to be absolutised, as the universal norm? Paul's answer is unequivocal, each culture has direct access to salvation on the same basis of faith alone, without having to adopt any one set of cultural forms to enjoy it.

The contextualised answer to this question, for the Galatians, covers the whole letter. Paul outlines the issues at stake in all contextualisation. As we work through the letter's carefully-developed argument, the apostolic answer offers us a series of questions, to help us assess all our contextualising:

1. *Does the contextualising cling to the one-and-only apostolic message?* (Gal 1:1-2:11). The apostolic teaching of the gospel is upheld, as the unique and unchanging standard for every cultural setting. Apostolic authority must be upheld, and expressed in the contextualisation task.

2. *Does the contextualising pass the cultural-equity test?* (Gal 2:11-21). Valid contextualising leads to life-style consistency across cultural barriers. The aim is that our hearers will “act in the line with the gospel” (2:14). This practical goal offers an important test for all contextualisation: Do the suggested meanings, or principals, apply bi-culturally and multi-culturally, particularly in the area of social relations? If not, the contextualisation is not yet adequate. In the very process of particularising the message, we must always reflect its universal scope.

3. *Does the contextualisation uphold the continuity with the “adoptive heritage of faith?”* (Gal 3:1-18). Is the meaning, we are suggesting, as we contextualise, true to the already-received truth in our Abraham/Moses/Christ/Pentecost deposit of faith? Contextualisation takes place within the family of the faithful. It must, therefore, reflect the family heritage, even as it embraces the new family members, and all the disruption, any addition brings to the family.

4. *Does the contextualising give proper respect to the previous cultural heritage?* (Gal 3:19-4:7). In this section, Paul not only defines the limits of the

value of Jewish traditional religion. He does so, in such a way, as to retain a proper respect for its regulative role in society, and its preparatory role for the gospel (3:19-25). He, then, amazingly for a Jew, attributes the same two roles to the “*stoicheia*”, the “elemental spirits of the universe” (4:1-3). In these respects, at least, the apostle recognises the positive role of pre-Christian cultural values. All contextualisation should do the same. We are to understand, appreciate, and respect the preparatory role of, and recognise the quest, inherent within traditional religion, even as we present Christ as the Fulfiller of the “desires of the nations”. Kenneth Cragg highlights the importance of this, in these words, quoted by Bediako:

Christianity cannot address men, and ignore their gods: it may not act in the present, and disown the past. . . . In seeking men, for Christ’s sake, it is committed to the significance of all they are, in their birth, and tradition, both for good or ill. To obey a world-relevance is to incur a multi-religious world.³¹

5. *Does the contextualisation lead to reversion to previous cultural norms, or on onto life in Christ – as children not servants?* (Gal 3:25-29; 4:4-11; 4:21-31). In every culture, we run the risk of the contextualisation leading back into the bondage, or religious legalism, of either the sending, or the receiving, culture. Respect for the proper role of traditional religion is not the same as encouraging reversion to it. Effective contextualisation discerns this difference.

6. *Does the contextualisation enable freedom in Christ to permeate the new culture?* (Gal 5:1-15). The culture, even the dominant culture, of the bringer of the gospel, is not to be imposed on top of the new Christians’ own faith, in their own responsive love and service. This is the distinctively-Christian freedom.

7. *Does the contextualising allow the Spirit to transform the personal, social, and communal life of the new culture?* (Gal 5:16-6:10). Again, the real proof of the contextualisation is the depth of its transforming effect within the new culture. Life in the Spirit, seen in its social outworking, not some imposed shibboleth, or external ritual, is the test.

8. *Does the contextualisation glorify Christ crucified, and incorporate the hearer into the people of God – or does it focus on merely cultural religious rituals?* (Gal 6:11-18). Paul sharpens the focus, and the contextualisation issue, in his closing autograph. The issues of loyalty to the cross, and demonstrating the

³¹ Bediako, “The Holy Spirit”, citing Kenneth Cragg, *Christianity in World Perspective*, London UK: Lutterworth Press, 1968, p. 65.

new life of God's people, are the ultimate indications that the contextualising process has fulfilled its purpose.

Galatians, I suggest, offers an integrated set of tests for contextualisation:

- Apostolic loyalty.
- Cultural equity.
- Continuity with the heritage of faith.
- Respect for the cultural heritage.
- Not reversion, but new life.
- Freedom within the new culture.
- Transformation of the new culture.
- Honouring Christ, as God's new people.

This is no simplistic formula for answering every difficulty in the contextualising task. But it offers an overall framework of assessment for the process. Thereby, it also highlights the point of this paper: contextualisation is at the heart of knowing and sharing Christ Jesus as Lord. We cannot avoid it. We can choose whether to do it faithfully or poorly.

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Mission Journalism in German New Guinea Pioneering Mass Communication

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Introduction

The role of the mainstream churches in contemporary Papua New Guinea media is well known. What is often less well appreciated is that Kristen Pres, *Wantok*, and *The Time of Papua New Guinea* did not spring fresh from the developments of the post-war years, but are the lineal offspring of the hand-operated presses of the 19th-century missionaries.

On these unreliable and demanding machines, early Protestant and Catholic missionaries produced news sheets, tracts, and dictionaries. They did not print what we would call newspapers today, but, by mixing news of the outside world, with Bible stories and sermons, they filled, to a greater or lesser extent, the same function. That is to say, they told their readers about what was happening in the outside world, bringing them stories about things, which affected their lives, and the world they lived in. They were not the result of commercial enterprise, but a natural outgrowth of the desire of Christian missionaries to spread the gospel to the indigenes.

These publications were the beginning of a long tradition, in all the mainstream churches in Papua New Guinea, of using the press, as a tool of proselytisation and communication. They all shared a commitment to the apostleship of the press.

This use of the vernacular, strengthened the position of the church at the village level, and also reinforced that link, when vernacular newsletters, or news sheets, were produced by mission stations, or mission schools, for distribution in the area, where tok ples used, predominated.

As Litteral points out:

[Vernaculars] are the language of closest identity and intimacy – dominant in the home and the village. Vernaculars are the means of enculturation, and, as such, provide the greatest freedom of expression for daily life, from essential vocabulary, to expressive songs and oratory. Except for the work of the churches (my emphasis), vernaculars have been used little in the written form.¹

In choosing to communicate with their prospective parishioners in the vernacular, and to print material for them in the vernacular, the missionaries chose the most-powerful form of communication available to them.

The importance of learning, and using, the local language for evangelists, can be seen in this warning from the Sacred Heart Missionary, Andre Navarre, who wrote:

Until the missionary knows the language, he will be in an inferior position, and this will be detrimental to his ministry; the Protestant catechists, and even the least of his people, however ignorant, will have an advantage over him.²

The paper will examine the development of the missionary press, in three broad areas: the development of the press in each of three main missionary groups: the Lutheran, Catholic, and Methodist churches; the way the missionary press presented the outside world to its readers; the way the missionary press reflected the pastoral, and temporal, concerns of the missions, and the long-term effects of the missionary press on journalism in New Guinea, and on the use of the vernacular, as a means of mass communication.

Colonial History

There had been sporadic contact between the people of New Guinea and Europeans before the Deutsche Neu Guinea Compagnie begin its operations. Labour recruiters had cruised New Ireland waters, looking for people willing to sign-on for the Queensland cane fields, and American whalers had also anchored there. There were also some small, private plantations.

However, the first attempt at colonisation – if so cruel a fraud can be called that – occurred in 1882, when the Marquis De Rays, a bogus French

¹ Robert Litteral, “Language Policies in Melanesia”, in *Media Development* (1/1992), p. 14.

² Andre Navarre, *Handbook for Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Working Among the Natives of Papua New Guinea*, Sr Sheila Larkin, tran., from the second impression, published by the Catholic mission on Yule Island, 1896, Sydney NSW: Chevalier Press, 1987, p. 25.

nobleman, lured 1,000 French, Belgian, Spanish, and Italian settlers to the shores of New Ireland.

Less than 70 are said to have ever again seen their native lands. . . . By the turn of the century, only three of the thousands of individuals, who had come, remained in the archipelago.³

It was against this background of blackbirding, isolated settlement, and wholesale disaster, that German New Guinea began life in 1885, as a protectorate, administered by the Deutsche Neu Guinea Compagnie. For the next 14 years, it was administered as a private venture.

Despite pressure from commercial, and patriotic interests for overseas colonies, the expense and difficulty of undertaking such enterprises did not fit in well with Bismarck's view that the Second Reich should concentrate on internal development first.

German New Guinea consisted of the northern mainland of New Guinea, known as Kaiser Wilhelmsland, and the Bismarck Archipelago, consisting of Neu Hanover, Neu Mecklenburg (New Ireland), and Neu Pommern (New Britain). In 1886, the northern section of the Solomon Islands was added, but, in 1900, the border between German New Guinea and the British Solomons was changed in Britain's favour, and only Buka, Bougainville, and a few smaller islands remained German.⁴ The colony was administered by the Reich from 1899, apparently the result of the company's desire to cut costs. It had lost heavily in the protectorate, despite the optimistic tone of its annual reports.⁵

It may also have been the result of concern that, with British colonies adjacent in Papua and the Solomons, the protectorate would be better run by the government, than by a mercantile consortium. After the protectorate became a "proper" colony, German New Guinea began to expand. Germany bought the Palau, the Marianas, and the Carolines, from Spain, which had

³ Jinks, B., P. Biskup, P., and Nelson, H., eds, *Readings in New Guinea History*, Sydney NSW: Angus & Robertson, 1973, p. 13.

⁴ Peter Sack, and Dymphna Clark, eds, *German New Guinea: The Annual Reports*, Canberra ACT: Australian National University Press, 1979, p. x.

⁵ James Griffin, Hank Nelson, Stewart Firth, *Papua New Guinea: A Political History*, Richmond Vic: Heinemann Education, 1979, p. 39.

already lost the Philippines in the Spanish-American War. In 1906, the Marshall, Brown, and Providence Islands were also added.⁶

The colony faced tremendous problems. It was probably undercapitalised, and predictions about its success must now be seen as over-optimistic. The scandal of the Marquis De Rays expedition to New Ireland (Neu Mecklenburg), which occurred only three years before the Deutsche Neu Guinea Compagnie set up its headquarters in Rabaul, must still have been fresh in the minds of the public, and cannot have helped to bolster the confidence of investors in prospective immigrants.

The indigenes appear to have been largely hostile, except for those who sought German protection from their fiercer neighbours, seeing:

advantage in cooperation with the government, especially if the government helped them fight traditional enemies. Their cooperation was welcomed by the Germans, as evidence of “control”.⁷

Communications with the outside world, and within the colony, were all by sea, and were occasionally hazardous. New Guinea was notoriously unhealthy, and the climate, and the soil, seemed to mitigate all the colonists’ best hopes. Hopes of turning Kaiser Wilhelmsland into another Java were defeated by the high death rate among labourers, and the lack of colonist from Germany. Recruitment of native labour was difficult, despite the efforts of Governor Hahl (who, by the standards of his own time, was a progressive and enlightened man) to control the trade.

Ultimately, it was the plantations around Rabaul, plated by a more-cosmopolitan selection of colonists, which showed how the colony could have become economically self-sufficient.

It is ironic – and, from the German point of view, tragic – that, just as all the hard work was about to pay off, and planters in New Pommern could look forward to profitable copra harvests, the Great War broke out, and the colony was lost to Australia.

⁶ Sack, and Clark, *German New Guinea: The Annual Reports*, p. x.

⁷ [The text for this footnote is missing from the original article. –Revising ed.]

The Churches in German New Guinea

The missions in New Guinea followed the same pattern as elsewhere in the South Pacific, with a variety of Protestant groups competing with each other, and against the Catholics.

The Protestant church was represented in New Guinea by the Lutheran and Methodist missions. The Methodist missionaries were under the control of a missionary board in Australia, and their staff were largely islanders, under the direction of English-speaking Australians.

The Neuendettelsau Mission appears to have been the most successful of the Lutheran groups, and is subsequently the one to which I have paid most attention. The Rhenish Mission should, by rights, have spearheaded the work of the German missions in New Guinea, given the relationship between its head, Friedrich Fabbri, and Adolph von Hansemann, the force behind the Deutsche Neu Guinea Compagnie. However, Fabbri's obsession with using the Rhenish Mission to prepare the indigenes as a malleable taskforce for the company, seems to have undermined its pastoral work, and to have eventually undermined Fabbri's position with colonial interests in Germany.⁸ The Catholics in New Guinea, were, as we shall see, below, from two different orders, one French-speaking, the other German.

The Press in German New Guinea

The mission press filled a role in German New Guinea, that had not been met by the colonial or company authorities. According to Peter Sack and Dymphna Clark's bibliography of German New Guinea, it alone, of all the Kaiser's colonies, had no newspaper.

A few hundred kilometres to the east, Germans could read the *Samoanische Zeitung*. In China, residents of the German concession at Tsing Tao could read *Der Ostasiatische Lloyd*, which Sack and Clark describe as "the closest equivalent of a private, local German New Guinea newspaper".⁹

The Germans in New Guinea had to make do with these papers, arriving weeks, or months, late, and with copies of such publications as the *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, which dealt with the German empire, as a whole.

⁸ Moses, and Kennedy, *Germany in the Pacific and Far East*, pp. 313-341.

⁹ Peter Sack, ed., *German New Guinea: A Bibliography*, Canberra ACT: Australian National University Press, 1980p. 42.

Considering the uncertain state of the protectorate's finances, and the widely-spread immigrant population, it is not really surprising that there was no commercial newspaper.

At its greatest, the European population was only 1,427, and the settlers were spread right across New Guinea, from Dallmannhafen (now Wewak) to Kavieng, to Friedrich Wilhelmshafen (now Madang), and to Rabaul.¹⁰

There were two official publications for German New Guinea. The Deutsche Neu Guinea Compagnie published the *Nachrichten uber Kaiser Wilhelms-Land und de Bismark-Archipel*, "a combination of government gazette, and specialised journal", from 1885 to 1898.¹¹

After the imperial government took over the running of the colony, it was, for some years, without its own publication, but, in 1909, began printing the *Amtsblatt fur das Schutzgebiet (Deutsch) Neu Guinea* in Rabaul. Like the missions, the German administration trained indigenes as printers, in this case, students, under the guidance of their teacher, Paul Barschdorff.¹²

The honour of producing the first publication in New Guinea, that, in any way, resembles a newspaper, probably falls to the Lutheran Neuendettelsau Mission. It was not commercial, and, certainly, it was not entirely what we would consider a newspaper, but it fulfilled much-the-same function. The first edition of *Jaeng Ngajam* was printed in the Jabem language in 1907. It included, among its Bible stories and lessons, reports of missionary activities in other areas. If the purpose of a newspaper is to tell its readers about things they didn't know about, then, to this limited extent, *Jaeng Ngajam* was a newspaper.

There is, however, compelling evidence to suggest that the missionary vernacular press only came into its own with the Methodist *A Nilai Ra Lotu Tuna*, in 1909.

Why Publish?

The question, which immediately springs to mind is: why publish newspapers or newsletters at all? And why publish them in tok ples? The missionaries seem to have been driven by three main impulses. Firstly, the

¹⁰ Sack, and Clark, *German New Guinea: The Annual Reports*, p. 358.

¹¹ Sack, *German New Guinea: A Bibliography*, p. 7.

¹² Albert Hahl, *Governer in New Guinea*, Sack, Peter, and Clark, Dymphna, eds, Canberra ACT: Australian National University Press, 1980, p. 133.

power of the written word, is a permanent record of ideas and information. Once a language is written down, and codified, it is preserved indefinitely, even if it is no longer spoken. Once the Bible, or any work, is translated into the language, it becomes part of the language, and part of the culture. Secondly, the missionaries knew, from, often bitter, experience, that they had to be able to speak and preach in the local language, if they were to have any chance of success. This is certainly borne out in the instructions to Sacred Heart missionaries.¹³ Thirdly, a printing press was something of a status symbol among missionaries. While translating and publishing in local languages had very practical benefits, it also added a certain air of academic respectability to mission work.

Relations Between the Missions

Before turning to the work of individual missions in the printing field, it is necessary to understand something of the relations between the various missionary groups. It is logical to expect that these attitudes were reflected in the press, as much as in their daily lives. The missionaries came to German New Guinea with all the prejudices and preconceptions of their homelands. They also brought with them feuds that had developed elsewhere in the Pacific.

Before the beginning of missionary activity in New Guinea, strife had often occurred between competing missions in various parts of the South Pacific. The London Missionary Society (LMS), and the Methodists, were rivals in Samoa; the French Catholics, and the LMS, on Tahiti. Nineteenth-century Europe was afflicted by interdenominational hostility and strife, and European missionaries, who came to the South Pacific, brought, with them, the interdenominational attitudes, that were current in Europe.¹⁴

Such hostility obviously affected their attitudes towards each other, and the way their parishioners behaved. The belief among Pacific Islanders, converted to certain Protestant sects, that *"the pope ate babies"* is a case in point.¹⁵

¹³ Navarre, *Handbook for Missionaries of the Sacred Heart*, pp. 25-30.

¹⁴ Hermann Reiner, and Herwig Wagner, eds, *The Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea: the First Hundred Years: 1886-1986*, Adelaide SA: Lutheran Publishing, 1987, p. 329.

¹⁵ John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania*, Geneva Sw: WCC Publications, 1985, p. 91.

Relations between the missionary churches in German New Guinea were undeniably bad. The German administration tried to curb the bitter feuding, by dividing the territory into “areas of influence”; the idea being that the missionaries would tend to their own flocks, and not encroach on other missions’ fields. However, poaching was widespread, and the missionaries stirred up their newly-converted flocks to such an extent, that families and villagers were often split.

The official Lutheran history of its church in Papua New Guinea details decades of competition with the Catholic church, blaming the Romans for the failure of the “spheres of influence” policy on the Gazelle Peninsula. Even the Lutherans were kept apart, as when the ill-fated Rhenish Mission arrived in Finschhafen in 1887, and were told to find another base for their work, because Finschhafen belonged to the Neuendettelsau Mission. Evidence suggests that the relationship between the Catholic and Methodist missions was the worst possible.

It appears, from contemporary accounts, that the Methodist missions board saw the Pacific as its own fiefdom, and resented intrusion by any other group. There are terse comments in the mission’s centenary history about the necessity to compete in Samoa with the London Missionary Society, whose agents had been expected to stay out of the way.¹⁶

If competing for souls with the LMS was a problem, then the Catholic church presented as great a competitor as Satan himself. The conflict with the Catholics can be traced back to Fiji, where the small Catholic mission was regarded as an affront to Methodist domination. The Methodist English-language press, both in Australia and Fiji, was vituperative in its attack on a body it seems to have regarded as the Antichrist of the South Seas.

This animosity (reciprocated, it must be said, by the Catholics) was carried to German New Guinea. The English/tok ples dictionaries reflected this. The word for Catholic was the perjorative “Popey”, and “Romish” and “Popish” were the vilest adjectives.¹⁷

¹⁶ John Wear Burton, *The First Century: The Missionary Adventure of Australasian Methodism: 1855-1955*, Sydney NSW: Methodist Overseas Missions, 1955, p. 29.

¹⁷ *Methodist Church Overseas Mission Archives*, Meth Ch OM, Danks to Pearson, September 17, 1903.

Even the original name of the Methodist newspaper, *A Nilai Ra Lotu Tuna*, was suggestive of this hostility. In translation, it can be read as “Voice of the True Gospel”, or, more meaningfully, “Voice of the True Church”.

The animosity between the Methodist and Catholic missions in New Britain degenerated to a state, where fisticuffs broke out between lay people of different denominations, missionaries took each other to court to protest perceived slanders, and the Methodists complained that the Catholics were kidnapping children from villagers, to forcibly rear them in the church of Rome.¹⁸ One can only wonder how the local people reacted to the missionaries’ stories of Christ’s love and forgiveness.

The Neuendettelsau Lutheran Mission

The Neuendettelsau Mission was active in publishing church papers from the beginning of this century, all of them in ples tok. These were *Jaeng Ngajam* (1907), printed in Jabem, *Aakesing* (1911), printed in Kate, and *Krist Medain Total* (1909), in Graged. While these newsletters were devoted chiefly to tok ples translations of Bible stories, and explanations of Lutheran beliefs, they also carried information about the activities of missionaries in other areas of German New Guinea.

It was the missionaries, who attempted to create a feeling of solidarity among the widely-scattered congregations . . . by publishing a monthly or bi-monthly paper. . . . News from the newer (mission) areas was printed . . . and devotional articles, and biblical meditations, with a typical New Guinea touch were published.¹⁹

To this extent, they filled the role of newspapers, by informing their readers about events in areas, other than their own. The extent of their readership is difficult to assess, and it seems likely that the few literate indigenes would have read from the newsletters to other members of their congregation. Thus, these publications would have fulfilled an oral, as well as a written, role in the transmission of information.

The Methodists

As an evangelical movement, the Methodist church was filled with a desire to spread the Word to the Pacific. The Methodists’ work was facilitated

¹⁸ *Methodist Church Overseas Mission Archives*, Meth Ch OM, Fellman to Danks, December 3, 1909, April 7, 1910, May 6, 1910.

¹⁹ Reiner, and Wagner, *The Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea*, p. 447.

by their use of native catechists, sent with white supervisors, into new territories. The impact of the native catechists on new territories was profound, in temporal, as well as spiritual, areas. To German New Guinea, they brought the word *lotu*, which survives in Tok Pisin as the word for “church” or “gospel”. The introduction of new house-building techniques, and better methods of growing taro, are also attributed to the native catechists.²⁰ The Methodists’ work in German New Guinea began in 1875, when George Brown arrived in the Due of York Islands, with nine Pacific Islander preachers. The mission early produced a “copious vocabulary” of the local language, and, by 1885, had a printing press – a glorious name for a seemingly cantankerous hand-operated machine – at Kabakada.²¹

Apart from the privations experienced by all the early missionaries in New Guinea, the Methodists suffered from the added disadvantage of being unable to speak the official language of the colony: German. But, if they were not conversant in the official colonial tongue, they mastered the local tok ples as quickly as possible. To the Methodists, the local languages were the key to the propagation of the faith. They saw no point in trying to teach the locals English, and, thereby, wasting years of their work.

They prided themselves on being able to conduct simple conversations in a mixture of tok ples and Tok Pisin within a few months, not only because they could then talk to their prospective parishioners, but because they could then preach in a language that everybody understood.

What is more important, at least for the purpose of this paper, is that they saw great value in spreading the word of God in tracts, printed in the local languages. The Methodist church saw the printing press as a vital implement in its battle to win souls, and produced a number of publications. The press, originally “a boon to teachers”, was soon called on to produce a newspaper for the Methodist parishioners.²²

More than any other publication, the Methodist paper, *A Nilai Ra Lotu Tuna*, was closest to a traditional newspaper. First published in 1919, it carried news from other areas in the protectorate, and from outside New Guinea, apart from the usual Bible stories, and religious educational material. The

²⁰ Jinks, Biskup, and Nelson, *Readings in New Guinea History*, pp. 24-25.

²¹ F. G. Lewis, *Methodist Overseas Mission, New Guinea District: The First 60 Years*, Rabaul PNG: unpublished MS, 1959, p. 2.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

newsletter, which soon changed its name to *A Nilai Ra Dovot*, offered the indigenous people a world they had never known.

Among the events reported on were:

hurricanes in the Pacific Islands, Halley's Comet, the deaths of Edward VII, and Florence Nightingale, the Kaiser's birthday, the losses of ships by storms, and the sinking of the Titanic.²³

The Methodist newspaper played another very important role in training indigenous people as printers. Penias Vatongnasoi and Benjamin must have been among the very first local printers in New Guinea. Even more importantly, it provided an outlet for local writers.

At first, the material was all by Europeans and South Sea Islands missionaries, but, within two years, articles by local writers were included, and quickly took up a large part of each issue.²⁴

It is not too extreme to think that Papua New Guinea's first local journalists were among the writers of *A Nilai Ra Dovot*.

The Methodist church has an interesting connection with the first English commercial newspaper in New Guinea, the *Rabaul Times Courier*, which later merged with the Port Moresby *South Pacific Post* to form *The Post-Courier*.

Gordon Thomas, who was later editor of the paper, was in charge of the New Guinea Methodist press from 1911-1912, but left after a scandal involving himself and missionary, Sr Nichols. Sr Nichols, who had been involved in an earlier scandal, which had ended in the departure of the previous printer, a Fijian, left the mission and married Mr Thomas.²⁵

The Catholics

The Catholic church arrived in German New Guinea from two directions, with missionaries from two orders, and with the missionaries speaking two parent languages. This cannot have made their work easy,

²³ Neville Threlfall, *One Hundred Years in the Islands: The Methodist/United Church in the New Guinea Islands Region: 1875-1975*, Rabaul PNG: United Church, 1975, p. 87

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Methodist Church Overseas Mission (documents relating to these incidents are scattered across several volumes of the Methodist archives relating to 1911-1912).

especially since Catholic orders are often rivals, as much as two branches of the same firm can be.

The first entry into German New Guinea was made by French-speaking Sacred Heart missionaries, who established themselves in Rabaul in 1882. The second wave of Catholic missionaries came from the German Divine Word order, who chose, as their field, the mainland of New Guinea, then called Kaiser Wilhelmsland. They set up their first station on Tumleo, an island off the Sepik coast, near Aitape.²⁶

We know that the church had a number of printing presses. There was one on Tumleo Island, although the only evidence extant about the press is a photograph of the printing room showing Sr Cherubina Frings, who was in charge of the press, with a local girl, who may have been trained as a printer's devil.²⁷ The SVDs printed the Tok Pisin *Frend Bilong Mi*, although I have not yet been able to establish its first publication date.

Unfortunately, most of the church records on mainland New Guinea were destroyed during the Japanese invasion in 1942. No copies of early missionary newspapers survive in the church archives in Wewak.²⁸

The Sacred Heart missionaries established a printing press at Vunapope, on the Gazelle Peninsula, in New Britain. While its nature is unclear, it is known that the Sacred Heart Mission produced at least one publication there. In 1911, in a letter to the Proleganada Fidei in Rome, Archbishop Couppe wrote "*Nous faisons fidelement une seule publication*" (We faithfully keep one publication).²⁹ This may well have been the fortnightly *Talaiqu* – "My Friend".³⁰

The Sacred Heart missionaries also had a printing press at their station on Yule Island, in the Gulf of Papua. While not geographically part of this survey, material from the Yule Island press was circulated to the order's missionaries in German New Guinea. There is, therefore, a slim chance that

²⁶ Francis Mihalic, "It all began on Tumleo", in *Papua New Guinea Post-Courier*, August 25, 1971.

²⁷ Noel Gash, and June Whitaker, *A Pictorial History of Papua New Guinea*, Brisbane Qld: Robert Browne & Associates, 1989, plate 358.

²⁸ Kalisz, Bishop Raymund, correspondence with author, February 12, 1991.

²⁹ John Waldersee, unpublished MS, being prepared for publication by Fr John McMahon, archivist at the Sacred Heart Monastery in Kensington, Sydney.

³⁰ Theo Aerts, correspondence with author, May 15, 1992.

some publication, intended for use by the Sacred Heart fathers, or printed on their behalf, in New Britain, may have been produced at the Yule Island press.

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The Catholic Church and Economic Development in Papua

Fr Theo Aerts

Introduction

1. The Sources

The pre-history of the Catholic presence in the islands of Melanesia is rather well known from the voluminous research of Dr Ralph Wiltgen (1981), which covers the period up to 1850, and the earlier German work of Dr Reiner Jaspers (1972), which reaches up to 1855. However, the uninterrupted presence of the Catholic church in these island dates back only 100 years. The first half was treated in 1932-1935 by a collection of essays, *Pioniere der Sudsee*, edited by the German, Fr Joseph Hueskes, and concerned with the Rabaul Mission, and, further, by the French classic of Fr Andre Dupeyrat, *Papouasie: Histoire de la Mission 1885-1935*, dealing with the Yule Island mission. For the Marist Fathers, Hugh Laracy produced, in 1976, a slim volume on *Marists and Melanesians*, which treats the whole of the Solomon Islands archipelago. On the side of the Divine Word Fathers, there are partial studies by the Fathers Patrick Murphy, John Tschauder, Jaokob Noss, and, again, Ralph Wiltgen. These general works can be supplemented, especially for the Rabaul Mission, 1880-1900, by *Papers prepared for the visit of Pope John Paul II to Papua New Guinea* (1984), and by ten, or so, biographies, or by the collected letters of Bishops H. Verjus and A. de Boismenu, of Fathers Bourjade, Chabot, Genoechi MSC, Mazzuconi PIME, Morschheuser, Ross, and Schaefer SVD, and of Sisters Marie-Therese Noblet, and S. Bazin de Jessey AD. The latest Catholic Mission histories are by Fr Georges Delbos, *Cent ans chez les Papous* (1984), and by Ms Mary Taylor Huber, *The Bishops' Progress* (1988). Delbos' work is mainly on Papua, and has been translated into English as *The Mustard Seed: From A French Mission to a Papuan Church*; it also provides a rather full bibliography. To see the general context of Christianity in the Pacific, two overviews are available: Charles Forman's *Island Churches in the South Pacific*, and John Garrett's *To Live Among the Stars*, both published in 1982.

2. Coordinates in Catholic Mission History

It is not possible to treat past church life in Papua New Guinea as a unit, because the nation is still growing towards a greater cohesion and unity. For that reason, it is advisable to follow up the past decades, starting from the four

historical centres, from which Catholicism spread, and, in which it developed, more or less, its own life till after World War II. Actually, a 1913 plan to begin a fifth centre in the Wewak area, to be staffed by Picpus fathers, did not get off the ground, because of World War I, while the 1923-1931 establishment of a Central New Guinea circumscription did not change the fact that the whole of North-East New Guinea remained entrusted to the Divine Word Society. Any historical treatment of the Catholic church in Papua New Guinea has, therefore, to start from a fourfold beginning:

- In the north, there is New Britain, where the first MSC Fathers landed in 1882;
- In the South, there is Yule Island, or Papua, begun in 1885;
- In the west, there is North-east New Guinea, evangelised by the SVD Fathers since 1896, starting from Tumbleo Island; and
- In the east, we find the SM or Marist Fathers, who resumed their task in 1898, after having abandoned the area in 1851, because of heavy losses in personnel.

Their first attempt to take a foothold in Melanesia was followed by the short-lived initiative of the Milan Fathers (PIME Society), on Woodlark and Rooke Islands, which the Italians also abandoned after three years, because of hardships and deaths. Revd Giovanni Mazzucconi lost his life near Woodlark in 1855.

It has been said that, during uninterrupted decades, the work of evangelisation went on in an almost uneventful way, while a greater diversification and cross-fertilisation in the missionary enterprise came only after World War II, and, even more, after the Second Vatican Council, which ended in 1969. These changes went together with the breaking up of the old boundaries, and the influx of new men, with new ideas, who came to do their part in the evangelisation of the country. Monsignor Romolo Carboni, head of the Apostolic Delegation in Sydney, between the years 1953 and 1960, played an important part in “dividing, redividing, and subdividing” the ecclesiastical map of Papua New Guinea, and in welcoming newcomers to staff his creations. He alone erected, during his term of office, not less than seven new prefectures, or vicariates.

The first to be made independent were the Australian MSC Fathers, some of whom had worked together with the Yule Island Fathers, and who

became, in 1946, the only ones responsible for Samarai, in the Milne Bay district. Six years later, divisions began in the SVD missions. In 1952, the westernmost part of the country, around the third historical centre of Aitape, opposite Tumleo Island, became entrusted to the Australian Franciscan Friars (OFM), who, in turn, in 1963, left the border area with Indonesia to the Australian Passionists (CP). In 1957, the diocese of Rabaul, which, up to then, had staffed New Ireland and Manus, shared the latter two districts with the American MSC Fathers. The following years, more divisions occurred in Papua, with, in 1958, the establishment of the Mendi Prefecture, give into the American Capuchin Order (OFM Cap), and, in 1959, the transfer of the southern border area to the Canadian de Montfort Fathers (SMM). In that year, too, the old mission of Yule became a separate diocese, leaving its previous name, Port Moresby, to the new headquarters in the capital, now officially staffed by the Australian MSC Fathers. During the next year, three parts were separated from the diocese of Alexishafen: Mount Hagen and Goroka, both still cared for by the Divine Word Society, and Lae, taken into the care of the Dutch Marianhill Fathers (MHM). After ten more years, another division of Yule Island (now called the Diocese of Bereina) occurred, thus creating the new see of Kerema (1976). In 1966, the Catholic hierarchy was established, and the erstwhile “commission” given to religious societies ended. Local bishops became directly responsible for staffing their dioceses. In this context, diocesan priests of the Melbourne Archdiocese entered the scene at Kerema.

The latest new dioceses were made only in 1982, when Kundiawa was split off from Goroka, and Wabag from Mount Hagen, and these four dioceses, together with Mendi (which, up to then, came under Port Moresby), formed the new ecclesiastical province of Mount Hagen.

This complicated history explains, somehow, the different physiognomy of the various dioceses. Some have long-established churches, while others are of recent origin; some are internationally staffed – especially in the places originally entrusted to the Oceanic province of the Marists, and to the Society of the Divine Word, while others had a more-homogeneous staff, that is, of one particular country, or language, as was the rule for the MSC-staffed dioceses of the past, and for most of the new dioceses erected after World War II. However, after 1966, the principle of “one diocese – one congregation” had been abandoned, and one can see, nowadays, especially in Port Moresby, that all willing hands are welcomed to engage in apostolic works.

The natural watersheds of the last 100 years of mission history in the Pacific area are the world wars, both of which brought the missionary movement to a standstill. With these natural divisions, the history of the mission can be separated into three or four periods:

- The time of foundation till World War I;
- The expansion, in width and depth, between the two great wars; and
- The consolidation and structuring after the Second World War.

Since 1966, with the establishment of the Catholic hierarchy, the church has entered into yet another phase. For some time already, overseas recruitment has practically stopped, and increasing numbers of expatriate missionaries are going into retirement. A growing number of Papua New Guineans is getting ready to take over the challenges of the past. In fact, with Bishops Louis Vangeke and Benedict To Varpin in Bereina, Herman To Paivu and Peter Kurongku in Port Moresby, Gregory Singkai in Bougainville, and George To Bata as Auxiliary in Rabaul, some of the top positions have passed, already, into the hands of nationals, who, in other areas of church life, too, have begun to assert themselves.

In the following pages, we will limit ourselves to the ecclesiastical circumscription of the old British New Guinea (1899), later called Papua (1922), Port Moresby (1946), or Yule Island (1959), and presently named after the episcopal see of Bereina (1966).

All through this century of church life, the mission had pursued a double objective, to care for the people's souls and bodies, to evangelise, and to develop, or in the words of Bishop Navarre to Governor John Douglas, "to civilise, as well as to convert". The methods, however, and the emphasis, were not always the same, and we are lucky that successive leaders took care to spell out their guidelines, in numerous circulars and pastoral letters. We are fortunate, too, that the mission establishments used to keep track of events, through their station diaries. In more recent years, with the introduction of radio contact, the transfer of many responsibilities to non-mission agencies, and with the disappearance of parish chronicles, the written sources have become less traceable, but this might not affect, too negatively, our present point of investigation.

II. Priorities in Mission Policies in Papua

1. The Foundation Period: Navarre and Verjus

The initial period of Catholic evangelisation is marked by the figures of Andre Navarre and Henri Verjus, who have appeared, to some, as the modern Moses and Joshua, to guide the first MSC to this country.

Andre Navarre was ordained a priest in 1872, and worked in a parish for five years before joining the missionary society of Issoudun. He was responsible for the fact that the first team, after 13 months' travelling, finally set foot on Matupit Island, near Rabaul. He was a true leader, and a man of faith, showing determination to achieve the task set before him. This made him sometimes insensitive to the plight of others, but not always. He complained once, in Rome, that part of the subsidies granted for the mission was withheld to defray the expenses incurred during his illness. He knew that the misery and needs of his troops were much greater than his own. By giving his whole strength to the missionary cause, he shattered his health, and though bishop since 1887, he was forced to spend most of his time on Thursday Island, then part of his vast diocese, but a place away from the action on Yule, and on the mainland of Papua. This made him sometimes supercilious, and suspicious, in dealing with others. But he kept going, with or without the necessary assistance. On December 21, 1907, he gave the reins into the hands of Bishop de Boismenu, who had been his auxiliary for the previous eight years.

Henri Verjus was 24 years younger than Bishop Navarre, and arrived in the missions less than three years after him. The leader granted this modern Joshua the privilege of being first to enter Papua, which, for Verjus, was the "promised land". The Sacred Heart Society thus fulfilled, to the letter, the 1881 instructions, given by Rome, to enter new Guinea, from the beach head of Thursday Island, an ideal staging point along the way of the international sea routes between Europe and Australia. Already, during his secondary studies, Verjus had longed to become a saint, and a martyr, and the exemplary lives of the Curé d'Ars, who died in 1859, and that of the first martyr of Oceania, Peter Chanel, killed in 1841, positively inspired his high ideals. "To become a saint, or to die", was his favourite saying. A year after his ordination, he left for the missions, arriving at Yule Island on 1 July, 1885. He made the first explorations of the mainland among the Roro and Mekeo peoples, and was ordained a bishop at the age of 29. His initial appointment was for New Britain, but, because of the illness of Archbishop Navarre, the job was changed, to make him auxiliary bishop for British New Guinea. Three

years later, he died of exhaustion in Europe, where he had gone to restore his failing health. The secret of Verjus' missionary work lay in his vocation to be a victim soul. He wrote in his intimate diary (11 May, 1885): "Deep in my heart, I have the conviction that the first missionary to New Guinea must be crushed and destroyed, to assure the success of the mission. And, since I am good for nothing else, I really will be in my element." In due time, the text of Heb 9:22: "No blood shed, no remission of sins", pushed him ever further on his way of victim. He did not spare himself a bit, and when a village resisted grace, when catechumens were preparing for baptism, when a soul showed itself recalcitrant to God's call, he went to extremes "to supplement, in his flesh, the afflictions endured by Christ" (Col 1:24). For that reason, Verjus did not believe that either the Marists or Milan Fathers had failed; on the contrary, their sacrifice and martyr deaths were a proof of their success before God. In view of this goal, Verjus also founded "the Victims of the Sacred Heart of New Guinea", for whom he composed a manual. The common-sense man, Navarre, gave his approval to this enterprise, because he, too, believed in the ancient Christian adage that, "the blood of martyrs is the seed for Christians".

There is little doubt that Bishop Navarre believed that the method of apostolate used in European parishes would work equally well in New Guinea. He, therefore, would have to establish, firmly, some centres along the coast before reaching out to the mountains. The policy of the "spheres of influence" was partly responsible for the fact that, in due time, he did approve of an expansion into the Kuni and Fuyuge hills, as occurred with the foundation of Oba-Oba, (1900) and Popole (1905). Experience would also show that, in New Guinea, there were less pastors available than in Europe, and many more people to cater for. The essential material needs here were more demanding, and time consuming, while the hearers could not be expected to be as receptive as an already well-formed and age-old Christianity. Nevertheless, knowledge of the basic thrust of Navarre's guidelines for his missionaries, published in 1896, is necessary to understand the values and priorities of the MSC missionaries in Papua.

Nowadays, we are offended to hear people called "*mes chers sauvages*", as Navarre and Verjus did. We probably do not realise enough that, at that time, "savages" were the people who had been exalted by the French philosopher, J. J. Rousseau, for being naturally good, and still unspoiled, by the much taunted "education". The term has not the pejorative meaning attached to it later. This is also indicated by the attitudes and actions, called forth from those who worked here as missionaries. A first requirement is to respect the people, and to attempt to become one of them. Hence, the first

need, to learn the local language properly, and to be wary of interference with customs, social structures, and life-style in general. Navarre believed that, only through the vernacular, which revealed the people's souls, could true faith penetrate, and take roots. Such requirements led the fathers, of necessity, to specialise in linguistic and anthropological research, and not a few of them excelled in this, as can be seen in the printed results of their efforts. These range from prayer books, catechisms, and holy scripture, to articles in *Missions Catholiques*, and the *Annales d'Issoudun*, and in certain scientific journals (especially the studies of V. Egidi), as well as the composition of dictionaries and grammars for various local languages.

The mission certainly came with another culture, and it made a point of sifting carefully, to decide what, in the local customs, needed conversion, respecting, at the same time, such "stepping-stones" to the faith, as belief in spirits, and in the immortality of the soul. Again, it was imperative to find substitutes for what was deemed to be harmful in the local culture. To achieve this, the bishop encouraged the full use of local catechists. Bishop Navarre had tried already, in March, 1896, to have a catechist school opened in the vicinity of the Thursday Island headquarters, but he had to give up the venture in its second year because the governor, W. McGregor, would not agree to have Papuans trained outside their country. Navarre tried again between 1899 and 1902 at Mea-Era, but his second attempt, too, was not successful. Still, several Filipino men, recruited on Thursday Island, gave valuable service to the mission.

In Navarre's view, catechists were the go-between for the expatriate missionary and the local people. Their very presence helped, mightily, to "localise" the church, and to divest it of its foreign appearance. Catechists were also the men in the villages who guaranteed continuity of prayers and religious instruction. As a matter of fact, they had a definite role to play in the first mission schools. Besides the vernacular, they imparted the rudiments of English, the language of the civil administration, and, according to the bishop, the means to unify the country in the future.

2. The Period of Expansion: Bishop de Boismenu

If, in some regards, the first generation of Sacred Heart Missionaries came to New Guinea to give their lives for the sake of the gospel, the generation under the next bishop, Alain de Boismenu, was instructed to look after themselves better, so that they could work efficiently in the vineyard of the Lord. Where Verjus told a candidate for the missions that "the only true missionaries were those who were prepared to sacrifice themselves for the

salvation of souls”, Alain de Boismenu wrote: “Tell those who desire to come that they must have an iron constitution. . . . It is a sad mistake to think that holiness is everything.” Alain de Boismenu was well entitled to say this, because he, nobleman by birth, had been told that the rough Papuan life was beyond him; that he would last, at the most, two years. Without a doubt, they said, he was heading for failure when, eventually, he left France. Things turned out quite differently. Arriving early 1898, not yet 28 years old, he became, in his second year, religious superior of the mission and a coadjutor, with right to succession to Archbishop Navarre. From 1907 till 1945, he headed the Apostolic Vicariate of British New Guinea or Papua. After that, he lived for eight more years in retirement at Kubuna. He died in 1953, at the age of 83. Even though de Boismenu did not intend to make a drastic departure from the ideals held till his time, the quotation, given above, indicates a different spirit. More than that, nobody doubted the new bishop was not only a “perfect gentleman”, but a saint as well, and that he was not less convinced than others of the saving power of suffering and pain. The agonies undergone by the French mystic, whom he guided in Papua, Mother Marie-Therese Noblet AD, were, for him, the surest sign that, every so often, the devil had been defeated, and that a rich harvest of souls had been won for Christ.

Bishop de Boismenu noted, from the start, that, although the mission staff had done a remarkable job in exploring the country, and founding many stations, now the time had come to improve evangelisation proper, and to give more attention to the spiritual and moral needs of the religious missionaries. As things were, “they have neither common life, nor a real superior, or provincial, or visitor, (even though), from every point of view, (they live) a more difficult life than their confreres in civilised countries”.

In the first part of this term of office, between 1900 and 1926, Bishop de Boismenu engaged, especially, in deepening the faith. Part of this was to claim, for the Catholic church in New Guinea, “its entire share of freedom (to preach and to teach), recognised in the whole commonwealth, no more, no less”. While combating the spheres-of-influence policy, the Bishop took also steps to improve practical relations with other denominations. As to the internal apostolate, he insisted that the catholic teaching had to be progressive, and should aim at transforming conduct. To Father Fastre, who at the time, had begun the evangelisation of some mountain areas, he writes: “Don’t fear that I might reproach you for being too slow!” What the Bishop wanted was that more time and effort should be spent assessing the catechumens’ dispositions before they were to receive baptism, in order to build up a solid Christianity. At the same time, the Bishop did not neglect his mission

personnel: he restructured his vicariate in districts, each having a main centre, where some type of community life could flower, and from which the missionaries could visit the surrounding villages. Finally, to deepen Christian life, he founded two local congregations, one, in 1918, for the Sisters, the “Ancelles” and “Handmaids of Our Lord”, and a male society, in 1920, the “Little Brothers of Our Lord”. His pastoral letter of 1919 also launched the “Apostolic Vocations”, which found its expression in opening the Minor Seminary of Yule (1920), and in sending other candidates overseas. Joseph Taurino from Pari village (died 1922), and a young Kuni man, was to be Papua’s first priest and bishop: Louis Vangeke. In this whole programme, the Bishop put into practice stipulations of the new Code of Canon Law (1917). He was confirmed in this by an important apostolic letter, *Maximun Illu*, issued by Pope Benedict XV in 1919.

In a later period of office, marked by the encyclical of Pius XI, *Rerum Ecclesiae*, of 1926, which was echoed in de Boismenu’s pastoral letter “On the Propagation of the Faith”, of the same year, the radius of missionary activity was definitely widened. This move inaugurated a period of reaching out in all directions: to the west, among the Toaripi (1926), to the east, up to Samarai (1932), and further into the mountains, into the land of the Fuyuge and Tawade peoples (1973). The continuity with the first phase in Bishop de Boismenu’s apostolate was not abandoned, since he clearly stated that the efforts at material development, exemplified in big buildings, and wide roads, had to make way for the main concern of spiritual conquest. But, even then, opinions would differ regarding the tactics to be followed, some emphasising more the need of religious instruction (e.g., Fr Fastre), and others, the administration of the sacraments (e.g., Fr Norin). The Bishop had, therefore, to wage a battle on two fronts, prodding some not to delay the sacraments too long, and advising others not to be too eager in baptising people. He said to the first, “It is a 100 times better to lead a lot of mediocre souls to heaven through their repeated falls than to present a meagre elite, leaving the rest at the gate”. And to the second, “Measure the speed and extent of progress . . . by the likelihood of its being continued after you. . . . (Make) the baptism of individuals conditional to their chances of practising the faith, and of being faithful to it.” It was always a strong point of Bishop de Boismenu to consider a question from every possible angle, to weigh the pros and cons, and, thus, to steer a course between being too accommodating, on the one side, and too severe, on the other. Only a man of de Boismenu’s calibre could achieve this. His successor, Bishop Andre Sorin, when characterising the leaders, who gave their imprint on the Papuan church, has this to say: “Verjus laid the foundations, Navarre put the first stone, but de Boismenu is the real architect of the building.”

3. The Period of Consolidation: Sorin and His Successors

A house is not a home until people live in it, and make all kinds of adjustments and changes, which were not envisaged in the master plan. To do this, was the task for the third period of church growth in Papua, particularly with Bishops Andre Sorin and Eugene Klein, before Independence, and, with their local successors, Louis Vangeke and Benedict To Varpin, after 1976.

Andre Sorin, for some time, a collaborator of Bishop de Boismenu, was consecrated a bishop in 1946, and continued the expansion programme towards the Chirima and Kunimaipa Valleys, beyond the Vailala River, reaching Orokolo, and in the territory of the Kamea (or Kukukuku) people. At the same time, substantial parts of old British New Guinea went over into to the other hands. Samarai, an Apostolic Prefecture since 1946, got its own Vicar Apostolic in 1951; Mendi became independent in 1958; and Daru in 1959. Straight after the death of Bishop Sorin, Rome separated the historical centre of Yule Island from what, meanwhile, had grown into the natural centre of the country, Port Moresby (1959). In 1976, a last separation was made, the diocese of Kerema to be headed by Sir Virgil Copas, one time, the Archbishop of Port Moresby, and Administrator of Bereina.

Among the new initiatives of Bishop Sorin, one should note the employment, in 1974, of the first lay missionaries (the *Mouvement Laic Missionarie*), the more-professional organisation of health services (1948), and the upgrading of the school system to secondary level (1957). Being himself a fine musician, and an artist, the Bishop also fostered native Christian art, and introduced it to the liturgy (1948). His successor, in 1960, was Bishop Klein, who continued, as already indicated, the expansion policy of Sorin, and Sorin's particular concern with education, especially important in a country heading for political self-government and independence. Having been the business manager of Yule Island for seven years, prior to becoming bishop, Klein was the right man to see the mission becoming economically and financially independent. From then onwards, the stations had to support themselves, and several semi-commercial enterprises took shape, till that time came, when these ventures, too, were left to non-mission agencies. The question of local leadership was also one of the points, which received special attention in more recent years. Some initiatives, in this line, were the establishment, in 1974, of the Verius Catholic Council among the Roro people. It spread from there to the Mekeo and Kuni. A new formation centre for catechists was opened at Kubuna, in the same year, and the organisation of training sessions for permanent deacons was begun on Yule Island, between the years 1975 and 1978.

The diocese “lost”, in 1956, the formation house of the Handmaids of Our Lord, which was transferred from Kubuna to Nazareth, near Port Moresby. In its place, instead, it welcomed, in 1966, the novitiate of the OLSH Sisters. Since both congregations were becoming more localised, the significance of these events is much wider than the present topic of Bereina, and must be merely noted in passing. We have seen that, in the various periods of Papuan mission history, the emphasis of the apostolate has shifted more than once, but the constant factor seems to be the concern to introduce the acceptance of Christian values. Other things were usually done in a less-professional way, on a voluntary basis, out of necessity, or as a subsidiary to the main objective. The motives behind these other activities were not the motives of government officers, or businessmen, although, the effects say, respect for Western order, receptivity to white man’s domination, and his values, worship of a work ethic, and attention to hygiene, were often the same. Missionaries were not trained to be anthropologists and linguists, or builders and road engineers, or business managers and education officers; they became all these, and a few more things, out of necessity. Some of them – often the “export quality” within the overseas missionary societies – did quite well in their new, secondary capacities. It would seem that their not-too-technical approach, and their preference for grassroots development – using, for instance, makeshift means, and manual work, instead of advanced machinery, was most laudable. In no small way, it allowed the smooth integration of new values, and new technologies, into the traditional societies of Papua New Guinea.

With these introductory remarks, it is possible to concentrate on a few areas, in which the subsidiary role of the Catholic mission can be seen improving the economic development of the nation. We will treat, successively, the impact of the missionary activities on (1) food and agriculture, (2-3) building and road construction, and also (4) the formal introduction of a cash economy, before touching upon (5) education, and (6) health services.

III. Examples of Development Projects

1. Food and Agriculture

Food and shelter were the first requirements for survival. The first missionaries had bought their stores along, for food, with various manufactured goods, designed for barter, to pay for work, for locally-grown vegetables. But the supplies did not last, and the missionaries’ lives were soon threatened by scarcity and illness. What, in September, 1885, seemed like an expulsion, by a not-very-cooperative government, was, in fact, a providential

intervention to save the life of the first team of missionaries. Experiences of a famine were sure to recur. One recorded example dates from 1887, when Bishop Navarre wrote to Father Chevalier the famous words: “We shall go to the end.” The saving answer was found in the dispersion of the mission personnel over several villages on the Papuan mainland. Another case dates from 1892, when the bishop was about to wind up the whole missionary enterprise, because, as he wrote to one funding agency in France, “of necessity, the fight would soon cease, for lack of fighters”. Misery and penury were never far away, but this situation sharpened the inventiveness of Sisters, Brothers, and Fathers, in finding ways to live off the land. It was in these circumstances that the mission gardens of Mea-Era were started, labouring the fields with teams of horses – as on a European farm. However, the example did not catch on.

After this, a beginning was made with rice growing in Papua New Guinea. The name of the Italian Brother, Salvatore Gasbarra, (“Kala”), is connected with the initiative, and, it is known, that he obtained his seeds for red rice from the Philippines. It is not too sure when, and why, the idea took shape. Brother Kala arrived in 1885, but the Mekeo stations were mainly started between 1894 and 1897, while it took a few years before the people themselves began to imitate the rice growing started by the Fathers. The latter might have got the idea from their own experiences in northern Italy, or from the Filipino catechists – the so-called Manila boys – who worked with them, or just because they had repeatedly faced famine, and delays of supplies, needed to supplement the native diet with some inexpensive storable crop. Incidentally, Brother Kala is still remembered at Inawai for introducing there taros and sweet potatoes. For the Mekeos, the growing of rice created an opportunity to have a source of cash income, to buy extra food or clothing, and pay taxes – all factors, which contributed to joining the mission’s scheme. It might be of interest to quote here one page by Father Van Goethem, describing the beginnings of this proto-commercial venture:

For many years, only missionaries cultivated rice, and, as a rule, planted a couple of acres every year. The harvesting was a real pleasurable time, and every soul in the village would assist to get the crop in, and would help cutting and threshing and winnowing. We preserved the rice in its husk, in order to protect it from the weevil. Winnowing was generally done by the wind, in standing on an elevation, in the breeze, and pouring the rice out very slowly, so that the chaff might be blown away. But we learned, after a time, from a Filipino how to make fans, by plaiting thin strips of bamboo. We had to protect the rice from the

rats, who were eating through the bags, and so we used an old tank, or well-lined corner of the house. Whenever we required rice for our food, we undertook the husking. We used either mills or mortars for that purpose. Our mills were made of two blocks of hardwood, with grooved surfaces, the one block hanging over the other on a wooden pin, and being turned by hand, while the rice was poured in between, through a hole in the upper part. The mortars were dug-out logs, in which the rice was pounded with long, heavy sticks of hardwood. In both processes, in order to get the rice through unbroken, it has to be carefully dried in the sun for a day. The pounding method became very popular with the natives, who would clean two bags of rice a day in that way.

One year, Brother Salvatore succeeded in floating, among the natives, a rice-growing company, over which he presided. He directed the planting operations, the fencing –for the wild pigs are very keen on rice – the weeding, and, finally, the reaping, when he divided the crop among the shareholders, and gave them bags to store the rice in. The crop was so successful, and the natives found themselves having such an amount of rice, that they grew ambitious, and each native individually decided upon having his own field of rice, and doing better next year. Banquets were held, to which natives from other clans were invited, and were lavishly treated on the much-relished new food. Those, that had regaled their neighbours on a sumptuous feast of rice, had the right to expect a rice banquet in return, and made it incumbent on them to buy rice from the store of the trader, or to grow rice for themselves. Such was the origin of rice-growing in Papua.

The initiative of the Catholic mission was subsequently encouraged by the Native Plantation Ordinance of 1918, which aimed at making the territory self-supporting, as regards rice. In 1921, the Administration attracted the services of a Filipino agriculturist, Anastasio Buonsuccesso, and in 1931-1932, a patrol officer, A. A. Williams, was charged with supervising the Mekeo rice-growing industry. In this way, every able-bodied man was obliged to plant half-an-acre of rice. The result was that, in 1931-1932, 94 tons of rice were processed at the government rice mill in Port Moresby, and 112 tons in the following year. The Mekeos discovered that, working in family for only a few months, yielded as much cash as one year of work on a faraway plantation. In the years before the Second World War, the yield went up to 300-400 tons, but, during the hostilities, things became disorganised. The mission stepped in, once again, and bought, from the people, all the surplus rice, with which it supplied its several boarding schools. The people appreciated, very much that prompt payments were made for their goods, but, the intricacies of a cash

economy, they found very mysterious. It once happened in Mekeo, says Brother John Delabarre, the longtime storekeeper of Yule Island, the Major Thomson, the government officer of Kairuku, collected the school fees at the same time that he paid off the rice farmers. And when “the mission” ran out of cash, the paymaster borrowed from “the government”, later to be repaid by cheque. A rather confusing situation for people, who inquired from the brother: “How come? You give us the money. We give it to the government, and the government gives it back to you. . . . And we keep planting rice. . . .”

In the later 1940s, the mission, that is, Father D. Coltre, became instrumental in introducing, again, rice in the Western district, around Orokol, which was then processed at a government-owned rice mill at Iha. Not long after that, Father Michel Gasser started with rice at Terapo, and switched over to the wet variety, and also began using fertiliser, thus allowing a fourfold crop within one year. In due time, the Kukipi people started themselves a local cooperative, using the mission facilities of Terapo (Singh 28). However, none of these initiatives ever took off commercially.

The Mekeo rice project, too, had had its many ups and downs, and never really affected the huge rice import from overseas. Many uncontrollable factors played their part in this result, among others, the erratic nature of rainfall, and floods, which were too much for the industrial equipment to move, or not enough for the rice to grow. Nowadays, since the Hiritano Highway has overcome the problems of isolation and transport, the proposition has not become much more attractive either, because, with bananas and betel nuts, the Mekoes have more readily available means of cash income.

The many initiatives taken during the foundation years of the mission had, as an effect, that, between the two World Wars, most of the stations had become self-sufficient in growing fruit and vegetables, having fresh milk, and meat, making their own cheese, wine, and tobacco – the latter self-evident commodities for Frenchmen, who were used to them from childhood. Flour, sugar, salt, (and Kerosene), thus became the few items available in the private store, open only for the mission personnel. As a matter of fact, up to World War II, the diocesan authorities strictly adhered to the new Church Law of 1917, which forbade clerics “all direct and indirect commerce, either for one’s own benefit, or that of others” (*Codex Juris Canonici*, cn. 142 and 2380.), a regulation, which Rome made even more stringent in 1950. It was agreed that such a stand contributed to distinguish the Catholic missions from those run by the London Missionary Society. For many years, therefore, people and missionaries lived as if money had not yet been invented. The furthest

departure from the traditional barter system occurred when, at one stage, typewritten docketts were issued for foodstuffs received, which could be presented in the small mission store. It did not even take long before the first “counterfeit notes” were presented. Only the contact, during the war, with Australian and American soldiers, generalised the use of regular currency.

Even though this way of life on the missions, up to the 1940s, had no great impact upon the modernisation of village life, there were a few indirect spin-offs. These occurred, almost unnoticed, by way of example, given by the expatriate missionaries, and also with the acquired skills of those who had found employment with the mission.

The war situation aiding, together with requests made by the village people, and a permission granted by Rome, a change of official policy came about under E. Klein, at that time, business manager. In 1957, the new head of the mission, Bishop A. Sorin, drew up rather specific regulations. No store might be opened, without having obtained a regular trading licence, with a written permission, from the bishop. Their first aim was to supply goods to people, who were unable to obtain them, otherwise. The profit made would be moderate, that is, never exceeding 33 percent, and not for personal benefit, but, in the first place, to pay the wages of the mission workers. In the early 1960s, after the death of Bishop Sorin, regular retail stores were opened in the mountain areas.

Experience proved that this decentralisation system worked, to the financial benefit of the outstations. The result was seen in the new buildings, which were erected, in the construction of airfields, and in the maintenance of a mission plane. The establishment of mission stores also had its drawbacks, because the time given to ordering and selling goods, and to the keeping of books, could not be spent on more-specific pastoral tasks. When then, in the mid-1970s, the mountain people, themselves, began to open village stores, and also felt that the mission stores proved to be an unfair competition, the official stand was again reversed, and the majority of station-stores were closed, keeping, however, the service of a bulk store to supply the small, local business ventures.

2. Housing and Buildings

As foreigners, coming to a strange land, without knowing a thing about the language and the customs, it was unavoidable that the missionaries lived, for a while, on the ships that brought them, and, only when some accommodation was made available, did they settle ashore. Those, who came

first, were not builders by trade, and their housing neither matched the standards of the traditional houses, nor those of the Western trade, as can be seen from the early photographs and drawings. But things improved rapidly, and there are cases, where missionaries imported whole prefab houses, or, at least, the sawn timber to construct lasting dwellings. These are standing, still to this present day, some mission buildings, erected with first-class timber imported from Northern Queensland – some of the St Patrick's school buildings on Yule Island, one construction at Mainohana, or also the church of Inawi, and the pro-cathedral of Yule. The influence of the mission building teams soon affected, also, the village houses. Traditionally, the walls of the houses were made of long poles, which were tied together at the top, so that an ogival structure came about, with the roof descending to the ground. The new style was to use posts and columns, with a superimposed saddle roof. Later on, mission buildings were often clad with sheetmetal, and covered with corrugated iron. This method, too, was imitated, in the use of galvanised iron for the ordinary houses as well.

The regular set-up of a mission station comprised, as a rule, a centrally-located church, with, on one side, a Fathers' house, and, on the other side, a Sisters' convent. Often there was, in the village, a school, and frequently, also, a health centre.

The huge requirements for timber, soon led to the building of a mission sawmill. Trees not being available near the headquarters on Yule Island, they were cut at Nabuapaka, floated across Hall Sound, and further processed at a horse-powered sawmill near the mission workshops of Yule. History has it that, when the animals were exhausted, the men took over. In out-stations, men were, of course, the only force to rely on for pit-sawing, cutting, and dressing. In a second period, with Father Dubuy, at Ononge and Voitape, where an abundant water supply was readily at hand, the sawmills were worked by water-wheels, built against a steep slope, and, thus, needing a two-storey building to house them. Such a set-up, with turbine, still operates at Kerau. Yet, further improvements were in store, and, in the early 1950s, Father L. Gremaud organised a fundraising campaign, via the French Annals, for *Les scieries du Pere Louis*. With money thus collected, he bought, in Europe, a dozen or so second-hand sawmills, with laterally-placed power plants, and in which the lumber lorries were pulled, on the ground level of a one-storey shed. At this stage, local interest was aroused to improve private houses as well. As a rule, the people provided the logs, and the mission arranged the hauling and cutting. Of the sawn lumber, 50 percent went to the owners of the trees, and 50 percent to those who assured the final product. In

this way, Angabunga Mission, Muro plantation (Orokolo), and the centres of Beipa, Kosipe, Yongai, and Lese, had, for many years, a technically-uncomplicated, and financially-cheap, way of erecting permanent houses. Sawmilling, born out of necessity, was only a preparatory stage for housebuilding, geared to the immediate needs of a locality. Even if a particular brother or father had not been trained as a carpenter, before coming to New Guinea, he quickly learned to develop hidden talents, and the men employed soon learned the trade, and enjoyed the goods, or cash, which flowed from it. It even happened in Kosipe, with Brother George Tweedy, that the whole workforce of a sawmill was made up of women, since, at the time, most of the able-bodied men had gone to Port Moresby, in the hope of a better life.

3. Roads and Transport

The European missionaries came to Papua New Guinea, first of all to obey Christ's command "to go out, and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19). Therefore, travelling to a savage country, making contact with people of an unknown language, and deciding the best place for permanent centres, became an integral part of their missionary work. Their first steps were appreciated by the civil authorities of the time, such as Governor John Douglas, who, already in 1887, congratulated the French missionaries, because their explorations were "the most important ones ever done in New Guinea" (cf. Dupeyrat). He probably referred to H. Verjus's expeditions into the Roro and Mekeo areas, during the two preceding years. Fathers de Rijcke and Jullien followed his example in 1896-1898, in reaching out to Kuni land (map in Jullien), and many others are still remembered for their feats in the Papuan mountains, e.g., J. Dubuy, for his 1926 hikes out of Ononge, A. Maye, for going to the Yarima people around 1947, and the exploration of the team Delabarre-Michellod, and of Taphanel, in the early 1950s, to the then as-yet-restricted Southern Highlands – not forgetting the two months' long trek of J. Besson, and his horses, into the Kamea country, which some even compared with Hannibal crossing the Alps. In many cases, these trips brought the first white men into the New Guinea hinterland, and there is more than one instance, where the intruders were not well received, as happened in 1904, with Bishop de Boismenu, who went into the domain of one Baiva. This Fuyuge chief had sworn to revenge the death of his brother, fallen under British bullets, but he was impressed by the courage of the missionary, and did accept him in peace. It has happened, repeatedly, that the missionaries went, with the professed aim of stopping hostilities, and making friends. Bishop Verjus, in July, 1891, protected the life of a Mr Kowald, a government officer, based in Beipa, and was threatened by the people of Inawaia; the incident led

to the establishment of the new village, Jesu-Baibua, i.e., “the peace of Jesus”. A more recent example is linked with the foundation of Kamulai, under Fr Maye, referred to earlier.

After the first exploration, it was often necessary to open mission tracks, which allowed the carrying of supplies, and shortened the endless travelling time needed to visit outlying places. The benefits were not only positive, from the point view of the mission. Thus, around 1890, when Bishop Verjus discussed with Governor W. McGregor the project of opening a road between Pinupaka and Inawuni, the Governor encouraged him, because that would be “an enterprise of much use to the people, and an essential means of promoting civilisation and peace”. With the establishment of the *Pax Britannica*, hundreds of kilometres of roads were built. As early as 1921, the Governor, Hubert Murray, reported that French missionaries had supervised the construction of 175 kilometres of road between Aropokina, on the coast, and the Ononge mission, in the mountains. The surveying and supervision were done by missionaries, without remuneration, while the administration assisted in providing tools and payment for the labourers. These mission roads were, as a rule, eight feet wide, and had an easy slope of about five to eight percent, which made them suitable for mules and horses, later for some “prehistoric” tractors, and, finally, for motorbikes and four-wheel drives. The strict adherence to the principle of not exceeding a ten-percent gradient made it necessary to have long stretches of switchbacks in the mountainous the Goilala area. Tom Crotty, an engineer with the PNG Department of Public Works, said of these roads, that “their location, in retrospect, has generally been superb”. Where needed, wooden bridges were added, covered, usually, by thatched roofs, to preserve their timbers, a practice, recalling some Swiss examples, and, again, followed by *kiaps* in later years.

Several fathers and brothers became specialists in pegging out roads in a country, which they knew by heart, and their contribution to the development of the country has been, more than once, recognised, by seeing their names given to particular features in the landscape.

Father R. Fraix, of Kubuna, still recalls the plan of Father Dubuy (died 1952) to have the mission headquarters moved to the mainland, and a road built to connect with Port Moresby, whereas Fr P. Morant, of Kamulai, reckons that, in the Goilala area alone, the French-Swiss missionaries have built around 2,000 kilometres of roads. This kind of work had its spiritual side, too. It gave the missionaries the opportunity to mix freely with the people, learn their language, and prepare specific pastoral contacts for other occasions. For these

reasons, Father Dubuy once said, "If the work on the roads did not exist, one would have to invent it."

Since the Papuan mission started on the Island of Yule, transport by boat to the mainland, and to the economic and commercial centre of the country, Port Moresby, were part and parcel of its history. One old skipper, Brother Alexis Henkelman, has even written a book of memoirs about plying the Coral Sea. The use of boats, even though mainly designed to support the mission work, had indirect benefits for the people, too. One was the provision of transport for both passengers and cargo; the other was the opportunity for employment, given to local skippers, boat crews, deckhands, and tradesmen of all kinds. Under the expert guidance of men like Brothers Camille Fridez and Joseph Moriceau, the boats were not only kept in good shape, but, in some cases, built on the mission. In this way, the *Gemma*, which carried ten to 12 tonnes, was built in 1939. Others followed, including the *Camillo*, *Georges*, *Joseph*, *Moriso*, all built at the wharf on Yule, measuring up to 40 feet long, and able to transport 30 tonnes. The bigger boats of the mission, like the *Saint Andrew*, ordered as far back as 1899, and able to carry 60 tonnes, left the stocks at Thursday Island, where it was built by Japanese tradesmen.

When Father Dupeyrat wrote, in 1935, it was still deemed too early to start flying the Papuan mountains, an idea already contemplated by the World War One pilot, Leon Bourjade, who came in 1921, and who had to be dissuaded from bringing a plane along. Later, the old skipper, Alexis, too, longed to see the day of planes (Henkelman 39), and, under Bishop Sorin, a Swiss lay missionary, Pierre Comte, obtained the first flying licence, but the project was shelved when the Bishop died. Later, in 1965, two French MSC brothers started to learn to fly planes. After a fatal accident, the plan was shelved till 1967, when VH-MYI was bought, and flown, by the lay missionary, Evan Duggan. At the beginning, the outstations benefited very much from the regular airdrops executed above Bema, Kanabea, Kainteba, in the Gulf, and Fane, Yongai, Kamulai, in the Goilala mountains. With this, the role of the old "caravans" was taken over by modern technology. Then came the time of the airstrips, successors to the old roadworks. The first mission strip was built in Kerau, soon followed by Fane, Onone, Kosipe, and Yongai. It was often very hard to find a suitable spur to fit a mere 500 metres landing place. Hence, the airstrips in the mountains have only a single approach, and often use a mounting slope of several degrees to cut down on the length of the strip. One of the most recent airstrips, built at Ononge, which has not only a seven-percent gradient, but also an axis in the form of a dog's leg. It took the people about ten years to finish this project. With the local strips completed,

an opportunity was created for flying vegetables to the outstations and to the capital, Port Moresby, and for providing a passenger service to and from places, where commercial companies were not keen to open business, because of the limited opportunities. The wholly-owned mission plane later inspired the creation of “Elomair”, a privately-owned company, of which missionaries were shareholders, as well.

In 1982, after a plane crash, but also because, meanwhile, the road system had improved, and commercial planes became more regular in their services, the flying enterprise was abandoned altogether.

4. Cash Income

Communication, by land, sea, and air, was the normal means of visiting people. Another means of contact was, in a way, the very opposite: to bring the people to the roads, where they could benefit from various goods and services, especially access to the new money-based economy. The Yule Island mission is only one, among many others, which have resorted to resettling people, to achieve this goal. This happened, from the start, on Yule, itself. Ancient maps show that, around 1875, there were two villages at the northern end of Yule Island to be identified with the old Puauka and Haruapaka: these two villages provided the settlers of the future Delena and Poukama, established only around 1880, thus leaving only one Motu descent group on the island. Tsiria became, subsequently, the place of the biggest concentration of people.

A much more recent, and also more spectacular, achievement, in this line, is the establishment of the Kuni village, Bakoiudu (van Rijswijk 1967). Its origins go back to the early 1960s, when Father A.Boell was appointed to serve the Kuni people, and to foster, among them, social and economic development. Before his time, some attempts were made by the Kunis to grow coffee, around the Oba-Oba. When the missionary came to settle among them (1959), he soon noticed that, for this very scattered population, living on such a rugged terrain, there was not much hope of economic success. They would have to leave their homeland and resettle elsewhere, somewhere around Kubuna and Bakoidu in a rather undulating landscape, with better access to the existing roads, and to some foreign-owned plantations. Under Father Boell's instigation, with the help of the titular landholder, Faika Peto, and with the personal backing of Ken Brown ADO, they began, in 1961, building a new station, Bakoiudu. When Father Boell's assistant, Father Louis Vangeke, moved as well, there was no doubt left that the scheme would go ahead. The Kuni people left Oba-Oba. From an estimated 400 settlers in 1962, and 840 in

1964, the new centre grew approximately to 1,300 Kuni people in May, 1971, with about the same number living, either elsewhere in Kuni, or outside the tribal territory. The allocation of land was carried out on the principle of first-come-first served, with the added stipulation, that claims to land, thus obtained, would be validated, only by actual occupation and use. Through community efforts, the first houses were established, the first gardens planted, and, in 1963, with the help of a resident agricultural officer, a rubber plantation was started at Bakoiudu. As a matter of fact, the mission had some previous experience with rubber planting at the Ukua plantation, which was built up by the MSC brothers in the early 1940s, to support the mission enterprise. (This was sold in 1952, when the trees started producing, because there were no longer trained brothers to manage and supervise the operation.) In the Bakoiudu venture of the 1960s, the time was, at first, divided equally between work in the people's subsistence gardens, work on the rubber plantations, seen as a communal project, and voluntary labour, or road maintenance, or help given to establish the local aid post and school. Gradually, the company-mindedness waned, and interest was turned to more-restricted forms of cash-cropping. Rubber tapping, on the most advanced sections of the company block, started in February, 1968, and, although only eight tonnes of rubber were produced in the first year, prospects for the next ten years of production anticipated an estimated annual income of \$75,000 by 1978. This proved to be too optimistic. Meanwhile, the involvement of the Department of Agriculture, Stock, and Fisheries (DASF) became more pronounced, supplying, even in October, 1979, an expatriate project manager. Although the missionary kept in the background, his help was still substantial. He arranged, in late 1968, the purchase of a tractor, and tried to keep the collective effort going, whenever it was threatened by disagreements and secessionist tendencies. Opinions may differ whether, in all instances, the wisest course of action has been taken, but there is no doubt that, in this case, the church has contributed actively to introduce an isolated, law-abiding, but also neglected people to a modern cash economy, which is now largely in the people's own hands.

The rubber project in Bakoiudu, and, much earlier, the rice growers' company of Brother Kala in Mekeo, or, also, the setting-up of sawmills in the mountains were all small- or medium-size enterprises, which brought some cash to the people. But there have not been many other enterprises of the kind. The only ones with mentioning are the cattle projects. Since the 1950s, there had been, at Wanono, near Kubuna, a herd of up to 120 head, to provide the outstations with fresh meat. But then, Father Besson introduced the idea, also, in the mountain stations of Fane, Ononge, and Kainteba. Orokolo followed suit, but a start at Muro, in the 1960s, was without issue, because there were no

suitable pastures. At times, the mission bought back the animals for slaughtering, and organised a cattle drive to the abattoir of Port Moresby. In the early 1970s, Kamulai picked up the idea, and started a kind of local organisation for cattle owners. As a rule, the missionaries were not too much interested in “making big money”, but more in improving the diet. On one occasion, they were grateful for even the moral support the cows and goats gave to their evangelising. When Father A. Maye, in 1947, had the difficult assignment of settling among the Yarima, he brought some cattle with him. “The village constable, and the notables of the tribe, came to tell (him) that, with such beautiful ‘pigs’, (he) could no longer leave them.” The animals had made a greater impression than any missionary preacher could ever have achieved!

Plantations, as such, were never a big issue in the Yule Island mission, and that for several reasons. Geographically, the terrain is not as suitable as in many other parts of the country. There are many swampy areas. However, where there was suitable terrain (as proven by the existing plantations of, say, BP, and STC), there were legal hurdles. The British Administration, after 1900, did not allow the acquisition of freehold land in Papua, and it was not prepared to allow Catholics to get a foothold in an established LMS “sphere of influence”. Again, the French missionaries were never after large properties. They asked, in 1918, for half-a-dozen leases in Kuni and Fuyuge land, each measuring only five acres, (i.e., five times less than the 10-hectare properties Bishop L. Coupe applied for in the New Guinea islands, about the same period of time). Hence, most of the plantations of the mission came rather indirectly into its possession. At Kivori, there were 120 acres, and Obo 320 acres, which formerly belonged to J. Oberleuter. The copra produced in these places, and at Mea-Era, Araimiri, and Waima Taovia, was rather limited, compared with the expenses of schools and outstations. An interesting detail to note, which confirms the priorities of the missionaries, is that the Muro plantation, near Orokolo, was only acquired because it allowed entry to an area formerly reserved to non-Catholic missions. Like the cows in Yarima, the coconuts of Orokolo served the apostolate. In the recent years, some of the Papuan mission plantations have been returned to the government, which has sold them back to the people, e.g., at Mea-Era. This is just one more instance of mission involvement in economics, as a secondary concern only.

5. Schools and Education

We have already seen how seriously Navarre, Verjus, and de Boismenu viewed catechetical training. Not surprisingly, schools became an important part of the mission, the first elementary school beginning on Yule Island in

1891, and, subsequently, in the other areas following sufficient contact. Filipino catechists and European sisters were the mainstay of these developments, and Yule Island became the centre for the best achievements. From there, a press printed local legends in the “native tongues” (Navarre, among his many directives for teachers, having stressed the importance of teaching local language). Sometime in 1931, Governor Hubert Murray was greatly impressed, when the pupils of Inawaia school staged, before him, a play of Shakespeare. No wonder, then, that, in 1932, the official education report of the Territory of Papua acknowledged that Yule Island “pupils read, write, and speak English better than pupils in other schools elsewhere”, an accolade for the OLSH sisters teaching there. The government had formally relinquished its responsibility for schools to the mission as far back as 1907, but the Queensland Education Department subsidised “native children”, according to their levels of attainment, and sent both syllabi and inspectors.

By 1926, a technical school was established, and, during the 1920s, MSC brothers were teaching carpentry, sheetmetal work, and smithing, in various centres. Then 1926 also saw the commencement of a Catechists’ School at Kivori, first under Father Regler, and then Father Paul Sorin. Thus, the foundations for a seminary were laid, especially since the school, to be called St Paul’s Teachers’ Training College, was transferred to Bomana in 1936, to a site outside Port Moresby, very near what is, today, the Holy Spirit Seminary. The entrance level of the Bomana school was set at Standard V, and the teaching was no longer done in Roro (as earlier at Mea Era), but in English. This requirement automatically limited the intake of pupils to the schools of Yule Island, Inawaia, and later, also, Terapo. The war, however, interfered with all this educational work, with many boys being sent off to be carriers, and the catechists’ school was temporarily moved to Wanono, in Kune country. Still, two of St Paul’s ex-students, Guy Pioma and Ani Mange, were later to be called among the first permanent deacons in the diocese of Bereina.

After the war, mission schools gained in importance, not only on Yule Island itself, and in the coastal villages, but also in the mountains. Sister Terence Hogan, for instance, started in 1950, a school at Ononge, and, in order to make it a success, had to make innumerable trips on horseback to the surrounding villages, where she convinced the parents of the benefits of a primary education. Eventually, she managed that all children, big enough to walk, and not yet married, turned up for classes.

In due time, the step was taken towards secondary education. On Yule, where hundreds of pupils had been trained on the primary level, the mission began, around 1960, first extended primary, and then secondary, teaching. The de la Salle brothers took charge of the boys, the OLSH sisters of the girls. This training was soon supplemented by mixed teacher training as well. The boys' school was later transferred to Mainohana, near Bereina township.

As the country moved towards Independence, the cooperation between government and churches increased, thus leading to an integrated National Education System (1970), in which the church functioned as one of the many school agencies, providing buildings and facilities, but relying on the State to pay the wages of teachers, and other subsidies.

Under the heading of education, it would be remiss if we did not mention the more-scholarly activities of the missionaries themselves. Over and above the collection and translation of local traditions, and the translating of biblical materials and liturgies, were more-systematic intellectual endeavours, most notably, Fr Paul Fastre's account of (Western) Fuyughe manners and customs (*Moeurs et coutumes Fouyougheses*). This ethnography, which has since been translated, and privately published, formed the basis of many popular books on Papua by his colleague, Fr Andre Dupeyrat. The same Dupeyrat also published the first history of the mission in 1935, and various scholarly essays.

6. Health Services

In 1912, MSC Sister Gabriel (Marie Houdmont) arrived at Yule Island. Although not a trained nurse, she established a clinic at the Mekeo village of Inawaia by the end of this year, and, for over 30 years, the medical work of the Papuan mission in the Roro-Mekero area had much to do with her labours – in treating hundreds of sick children, people with skin lesions, yaws, ulcers, snake bites, etc. She was joined by various sisters, mainly French, who received some training in nursing and midwifery before coming to Papua, and whose pioneering efforts first led Hubert Murray to secure government subsidisation of mission medical work.

By 1935, a Foundling Hospital was erected at Kubuna (Kuni territory), babies being cared for by Revd Mother Solange, and a group of Papuan nuns (Handmaids of Our Lord, begun with Mother Marie-Therese Noblet). Further inland, at this time, among the Western Fuyughe (or Mafulu), one of the Papuan sisters was providing medical care, helping also to combat there the practice of infanticide, whereby a new-born child could be killed in favour of

rearing piglets on women's breasts (so crucial, for the people, were the great pig kills and feasts, called *gab*).

It should be remembered that, up to 1959, Bereina and Port Moresby formed only one diocese, and that several initiatives in the capital were initiated by the mission of Yule. This applies to the Bomana clinic of 1948, which, after two years, was transferred to Koki, or Badili, and became a first training place for local nurses. Less than 20 years later, nursing training began also at Beipa, where the adjoining hospital provided the opportunity for practical work. Before this time, Yule Island, itself, had its health care centre, whereas, in 1970, another hospital was started at Fane, in the Goilala District.

From the missionaries' "inside viewpoint", one must appreciate that neither education nor health were ever strictly divorced from spirituality, or, in other words, from the need, both to study the Bible and spiritual writings, to enrich the reflective life to the church, and to pray for the total well-being of the Mission and the world. By 1934, the closed monastery of the Carmelite Sisters was built, to fulfil some of these needs, after an appeal to France for a group of contemplative nuns had been launched by Bishop de Boismenu. (Later the monastery was moved to Yule Island, in 1946, and then to Bomana in 1973.) The Carmelites have maintained the largest and longest standing of the two Catholic monasteries in Melanesia. (The other being that of the Poor Clares nuns at Aitape, in West Sepik Province).

IV. Conclusion

The first objective of the missionaries was to obey the great commandment: "Go, baptise, and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19), or, as Father Chevalier expressed it, "To make Jesus' love known all over the world." After this, "Rome" entered the scene, to assign a specific mission field, and, subsequently, to support the enterprise by various mission encyclicals and other directives, sometimes, also, with money.

The difficulties of the task did not cool the enthusiasm of the mission workers, most of them volunteers, who did not hesitate to risk their health, and lives, for a good cause. No doubt, elements of contemporary theology, and, in particular, of 19th-century French spirituality, contributed to support their general outlook, and determine the priorities in their work. Bishop de Boismenu, who for half a century directed the enterprise, and was characterised by his solid realism in tackling an oversize task, was, nevertheless, a very "spiritual" man, who once said: "L'ennemi, c'est le material!"

1. Some since Characteristics of Mission Projects

Material needs could not be ignored, and not a negligible part of the missionary effort was spent on socio-economic improvements. Our previous overview did show some characteristic aspects.

- i. Mere material development was never the first aim, but was engaged in, when called for by evangelisation proper, and was also abandoned, when other agencies took over the responsibility. Outstanding examples, are the part taken by the mission in providing educational and health services, and, more recently, in improving roads and transportation. In other words, the church played only a subsidiary role, and did not try to build up any exclusive position outside of her own specific field of action. An additional sign of this non-profit orientation, is the concern for activities in linguistic, anthropological, and related areas, by individual missionaries.
- ii. The fields, which received first attention, were those related to men's essential, or basic, needs, such as food and shelter, and also security. If the introduction of new crops initially served the survival of the missionary enterprise itself, it soon achieved, also, a better diet for the local people. The second characteristic is also shown in the introduction of village stores, where meat, and fish, and salt were some of the basic commodities offered. As to the role in the "pacification" of the country, there was more than one example that relevant moves followed the requests of civil authorities, one of the latest being in the Kunimaipa area, in the late 1940s.
- iii. The manner of introducing new ways often showed an unspoken respect for the social realities of the people. Hence, the resettlement schemes, and the various cooperative started, endeavoured to retain the natural ties of the population. So did the ventures involving family work. Since the preservation of traditional ways and procedures greatly contributes to continuity in society, we may also refer here on the methods, which were close to traditional village technology (e.g., in the early rice production, and in other labour-intensive enterprises). There were definite restraints on introducing expensive equipment in favour of fostering self-help (e.g., from pit sawing to waterwheel-powered sawmills). There is even the case of rebuilding, plank by

plank, a ship from “Steamships”, which the firm considered uneconomical to repair by its own means. Self-help, therefore, featured very prominently in upgrading material conditions.

2. Sources of Income

Whichever way one views the missionary enterprise, and, particularly, its involvement in material improvements, finances were needed. Self-help and “tightening the belt” could go only some distance, and they stopped. So one may well ask: “Where did the money come from?”

- i. The missionaries belonged to a sending society, bound to a common life. Therefore, all gifts made in the home country, whether they resulted from articles and appeals in the mission magazines, or were given to individuals, on occasion of, or in view of, their pastoral ministry, were funnelled into the training of new candidates, the sending out of fresh staff, and into subsidising the overseas mission work proper. The latter also received some yearly grants from “Rome”. On the spot, the sum of all this income was administered by a kind of gentlemen’s agreement at the headquarters between the Bishop and the religious superior. From here, allowances were paid out to the mission stations, according to their respective importance. For example, Oba-Oba received, in the early 1950s, £50 per priest, and £25 per sister, thus making the yearly living allowance for four people £150. Voluntary work, and a token payment to local labourers, were the rule, while the government assisted in providing tools and equipment for ventures of direct public utility. Since, for a long time, home leave was granted only sparingly, say after ten years, and, even then, most of the time was spent in the society’s houses in Europe, the possibility for private actions was rather limited, although some missionaries squeezed in talks and conferences to interested Catholics. Father Dubuy, for instance, managed to return from leave, in 1930, with 16 tons of materials and equipment.
- ii. A major development occurred in the late 1950s, when the mission authorities decided to stop financing the operations, and to allow the stations to become self-supporting. The fathers could keep the contributions they received for their apostolic ministry (e.g., mass stipends), and they were permitted to engage in small business. The success of, say, the Bakoiudu resettlement scheme,

and the building of its rubber factory, were all paid for in this way, namely, by selling rice and root crops, grown in the mission gardens, to the schools and other institutions at Yule Island and Kubuna. The venture had, at some stage, a yearly turnover of K500.000. Once also, the Australian "Project Compassion" contributed 20 tons of corrugated iron for covering the roofs of the newly-built village.

- iii. Funding by overseas national, or international, agencies is a rather recent development. But, here, the French missionaries were not in a position comparable to that of, say, their German counterparts. The funds available to the French *Secours Catholique* are simply of a different magnitude to the money obtained via a national church tax. In addition, the psychological and emotional ties of France were rather geared to the country's old colonial territories, especially in nearby Africa, and not towards a British/Australian-administered Papua. Fortunately, there were Swiss and Spanish fathers, and, especially, the Australian, and even Belgian, sisters, who were able to contact their home countries to obtain funds, while "Rome" also regularly showed its generosity, especially towards the promotion of the school system.
- iv. Right now, the problems are changing once again. Many functions in the socio-economic field are being taken over by the government. The basic infrastructure of the nation is of such a nature that it calls for less initiatives, while the increasing age of the foreign missionaries naturally slows down the number of new ventures to be started. At the same time, national staff are filling the positions, and they might have different priorities from generations of the past. Hence, a natural disengagement in material projects, and a new search to make the priorities chosen more visible.

One has the definite impression that, as sons and daughters of this country, the full-time church workers of today are better supported locally than the "rich" missionaries from abroad. Yet, the national church personnel cannot fall back easily on friends and benefactors from overseas, when, e.g., they would need another teacher's house, or a replacement for a written-off car, not to mention the more sophisticated needs for audio-visual teaching of adults, or the necessary office equipment for publishing a local newsletter.

Hence, new questions are being raised. “Who is setting the priorities? Who is willing to pay for them?” And we hear counter-questions. “Is this or that project really a need, or rather, a luxury? Is it serving an elite group, or helping the group? Is it not more a pastoral project than a socio-economic venture?” Are the norms of accountability, indeed, appropriate, or defective, in one direction, or the other?

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Book Review

Ludwig Bertsch, *Laien als Gemeindeführer: Ein afrikanisches Modell: Texte der Erzdiözese Kinshasa vorgestellt und kommentiert.* Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder, 1990 (Theologie der Dritten Welt, Bd. 14), 232 pp., (ISBN 3451218755).

This book zeroes in on the contribution made by lay people to the life of religious communities, as realised in the church in Africa, more particularly at Kinshasa (Zaire). The approach chosen is totally based upon ecclesiastical documents, such as those issued by Rome, in the Second Vatican Council, and in the Code of Canon Law of 1983, and also on the insights of the Catholic Bishops in Zaire, over the last 30 years.

It is maintained that the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist turn everybody into an apostle, and into one who had the coresponsibility to pass on the faith he (or she) received. Such an active faith calls, in each one's heart, for a never-ceasing conversion, while it operates also in the circle of those known to him. The basis is, therefore, that the Spirit of God is active in every baptised person. They, thus, share in the prophetic, priestly, and kingly roles of Christ Himself. As to the Zairean, in particular, there is also a strong need to be part of what happens around him, to belong to it.

The Bishops of this land have had the strength to ask fundamental questions about the traditional methods of their pastoral work, in order to become more effective in the future. Eventually, the whole stress was put on the obedience, in faith, to the person of Christ. This emphasis creates groups of people who, through their daily activity, show that they, too, are loving, caring people. The respect for the rules and regulations of the ecclesiastical institute are not waived, although obedience to the authorities is no longer the first guiding principle. The type of people, here formed, are men and women, who live together (in a "quartier"), rejoice together at a birth, are sorry together, when one dies, or when they feel the pinch of poverty, but, also who, celebrate together at the eucharist.

The "mokambi" is the leader of such a group. There are some 20 of them in a given parish. Hence, the whole parish is a community of communities, in which the priest is mainly delegated to confer the sacraments. This means that the church, as such, is no longer the business of bishops, and priests, or missionaries. Instead, it is the task, and challenge, for every

baptised person, who respects his or her neighbour, the world around, and God. One hears, often, about a shortage of priestly vocations. However, where there is a broad basis of lay people, vocations are bound to flourish.

This book is intended for missionaries – and that is every Christian – and encourages missionaries to try out new ways, in a different culture, after this “African model”.

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