

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| EDITORIAL | 2 |
| DR STANNER, ANTHROPOLOGIST; AN APPRECIATION | |
| John Leary MSC | 3 |
| THE CHURCH IN A MULTI-CULTURAL SOCIETY | |
| Archbishop T.S. Williams | 6 |
| STATUS OF ABORIGINAL WOMEN VIS-A-VIS STATUS OF ABORIGINAL MEN | |
| Ann Moir-Bussy FDNSC | 17 |
| DALY RIVER CENTRE REPORT | |
| John Leary MSC Mary McGowan FDNSC | 24 |
| PRIESTS IN ABORIGINAL MINISTRY: CUNNAMULLA MEETING | |
| Martin Wilson MSC | 26 |
| TOWARDS A PROPER AND UNDERSTANDING HEALTH-CARE DELIVERY TO THE ABORIGINES | |
| Anthony R. Peile SAC | 28 |
| JOSE COMBLIN: <i>THE MEANING OF MISSION</i> | |
| Martin Wilson MSC | 30 |

EDITORIAL

IN PREPARING EACH NUMBER of *Nelen Yubu* we generally do not attempt to organise the articles around a set topic. We use the papers that have become available. Sometimes a bit of juggling between issues enables the achievement of a sort of common theme.

One previous number almost entirely by chance was written about West Australian concerns or by authors living in West Australia.

This issue (No. 10) is looking at aspects of Aboriginal communities over various sections of the boundary fence that defines the black/white interface. Archbishop Williams is looking over the cultural section: it is novel to stand within Australia and see Australian views, good and bad, mirrored in a New Zealand frame. Or if his is seen as a statement from Mission Headquarters, the others could be reports from various local sections of some typical mission-station: Sister Ann Moir-Bussy from the school, Fr Anthony Peile from the hospital, and me from the presbytery. The picture will be completed next issue by a reprint of Rev. B.A. Clarke's observations on the social implications of government funding: it could be the report from the Administration Office.

When the last issue was already at the printer's we heard the news of the death of Professor W.E.H. Stanner. Fr John Leary, who knew him at Port Keats has written a short appreciation. His life has enriched our own: the lives, thoughts and works of so very many of us. We commend him to the care of the *Mysterium Tremendum* whom he honoured dutifully and very much as such throughout his life.

Martin J. Wilson MSC
Editor

DOCTOR STANNER, ANTHROPOLOGIST. AN APPRECIATION

JOHN LEARY MSC

WHEN I FIRST WENT TO DALY RIVER at the beginning of 1955, the name of Doctor Stanner often surfaced in my conversations with local Aborigines. They spoke of him with respect and as some sort of unique person who knew more about them than any other white man. They spoke also of his toughness when it came to living in the bush and mixing with them at that level; his untiring interest in following their long ceremonies; his prudence and silence with outsiders, when it was a question of the deeper and more secret things of ceremony and law. He was a man they could trust, who could understand and sympathise. Knowing the settlement history of Daly River, these attitudes towards a white man came as a definite shock. It was a history, on the part of whites, of widespread harsh treatment and self-interested manipulations. The white man was ineradicably suspect. I would often hear young children playing at night attempt to frighten one another by saying with widespread malevolence — 'Watch out, Whitefeller!' Stanner had made a break through more than twenty years earlier when things were at their toughest.

I remember the shock I received when I first met Stanner. His neat appearance, his rounded, polished accent, his serious manner, his painstaking care for detail all seemed to shatter the picture I had somehow built up of the tough, tenacious bushman. This impression of some sort of incongruity between the scholarly man and his rugged surroundings remained with me over the years. It just did not seem that he should belong, yet belong he most certainly did. I now believe the explanation of this incongruity goes far towards explaining Stanner. He was a man profoundly dedicated to his work, and his work over the period I knew him, was bound to the people of the Daly River area. His interest was primarily these people. He so often did it the hard way not out of some sort of professional pride or curiosity but because of his genuine interest in and concern for these people. The people responded not to his professionalism but to the man. When I arrived at Port Keats in the late fifties he was commonly known as 'Tjangari'. They had given him the name of one of their skin groups. In latter years when he was unable to make his visits, so often would I hear the widespread and concerned enquiry — 'How is Tjangari? He is getting old man now, is he sick? Is he well? Will he come back again?' In some way he had become part of them.

Fr John Leary MSC, presently at Milikapiti (Garden Point, Melville Is.) has worked in the NT since the early 1950s. While stationed in the Port Keats/Daly area he came to know Doctor Stanner with the perceptiveness he shows in this commemorative note. In his turn Stanner summed him up well as 'the most quietly stubborn man I have met'.

Stanner loved his long stays with the people in the bush. I recall his work at a cave called 'Yarra' some distance from Port Keats. It had several paintings on its walls but what interested Stanner most was its earthen floor. He decided to take up residence there and excavate. This he painstakingly did over several months with a group of old men who knew the area and its stories and would talk and reminisce while Stanner laboured. I used to go out regularly to visit him, renew his water supply and observe progress. All the levels were clearly marked and the corresponding samples of carbon, flints etc. packaged. It was a hot, desolate place. His rations were very basic. Despite all, he was at home with the Aboriginal past as told by his companions and the ancient materials of the cave.

On another occasion he took a long walk with several old men to inspect a cave called Kiringjingin some twenty miles south of the Fitzmaurice River. It was in this cave that he photographed the painting of Kunmanggur which has been reproduced on the letter-head of the National Aboriginal Affairs Department. Supplies were limited to what they could carry. I told him that if he was not back after four weeks I would come looking for him. This I had to do. On arrival at Kumul, the rock crossing on the Fitzmaurice, one of the men with me spotted smoke some miles further downstream and informed me that it was Stanner and his men returning home. He was at Port Keats to greet me when I arrived and remarked jokingly that he was thinking of going out to look for me. The trip had taken a lot out of him. He was very haggard and almost two stone lighter, but full of the things he had seen with his own eyes and through the eyes and memories of the old men with him.

Stanner's approach to the people was neither patronising nor domineering, but genuinely natural, arising out of respect for his own culture and theirs. He was no armchair anthropologist. He worked with and among the people. He believed in living with them, 'sitting down with them', accepting their conditions for months on end. At Port Keats, with the people's approval, he built his own little primitive house in one of the camps so that they could have access to him and he to them. He approached his subject as one might approach a mystery, realising there were hidden depths an outsider found difficult even to realise, let alone attempt to explain. He saw great merit in just being there. The technicalities of his trade could be simply applied, the factual elements could be easily discovered even at a distance, but the deeper things, the things that could not be tabulated, the things in the realm of spirit and motivation and identity, these were more to be absorbed than consciously studied, to be known more by intuition than by intellectual process. I remember Stanner remarking often on the hidden depths in the Aboriginal character, the great silences that cloaked the important, his tendency to speak least about the things he thought most about. I do believe Stanner listened a lot to the silences so as to absorb, in some way, what he could of these important things and point to where the truth might be. I think this approach is often reflected in Stanner's writings and even in his refusal to write extensively. He was a man who believed in the truth and not in conjecture. I remember seeing his massive notes and wondering why he did not publish more. I finally got round to asking him why he did not write more. He was slow to reply but his eventual answer revealed that he thought he had more work to do on his notes. He thought perhaps he had depended too much on too few informants. He would like to widen his range of informants and do more cross-checking. His respect for the truth made him thorough to the extreme.

When it came to open investigation, he was completely relaxed and long waiting. He actually gave the impression that he was not waiting for answers. His casual, apparently unconcerned question, was disarming and opened the way to sincere response. He never pressurised an answer. He was prepared to wait. In fact I sometimes thought that he was not only being unscientific but wasting his time. I know now the truth of his approach.

Though in polished English, the layman may at times find Stanner's writings laboured and somewhat abstruse. I remember once asking him for an explanation of the kinship system at Port Keats. With the aid of stones and pebbles of varying sizes he gave the simplest and clearest of explanations. I still remember his questioning look when I half innocently asked, 'Why don't you write as simply as you speak?' He was forever conscious of the danger as an anthropologist of imposing on people and treating them simply as objects of study. I remember an occasion when the area had suffered a rash of anthropologists, I cynically remarked that it was my secret ambition to train an Aborigine to go south to study anthropologists! Stanner looked apprehensive and then jokingly thanked me when I told him I would exclude him. He was indeed an anthropologist with a difference and it was his treatment of people that made the difference. It opened the way for him to know the Aboriginal people at the level of their deepest values, namely in the area of religion. Stanner has made a lasting and very valuable contribution to Aboriginal anthropology in general, but more particularly has he made a profound contribution in the field of Aboriginal religion. He has also left behind him, in the hearts of the people he worked so closely with and for, a love and appreciation that will remain. He has become one of those 'important things' they will speak least about because they think most about. Vale Tjangari.

THE CHURCH IN A MULTI-CULTURAL SOCIETY

T.S. WILLIAMS

Archbishop of Wellington, New Zealand

While in New Zealand in 1980 Pat Dodson MSC was impressed by an address given by the Archbishop of Wellington, and commended it to me for Nelen Yubu.

Archbishop Williams gladly consented to the publication of his address, but was amused by the request, as he considers he got the gist of his paper from Australian sources, the Social Justice statements of 1977 and 1978. A double case of prophet but not in one's own country?

Editor

Personal Background

I HAVE TO BEGIN with the confession that I was not aware of New Zealand as a multi-cultural society until I was forty years old. Looking back, I don't know how I could have been so blind. I have thought about it, and realise now that through my years of schooling I was not aware of any cultural differences at any stage between myself and my friends and fellow-pupils. At secondary school I knew more Chinese than I knew Maori. Later, as a member of the YCW, I remember that we did grapple with the problem of why we were not attracting to our membership Maori youth, but I think our attempts to reason it out were rather superficial, and the understanding of New Zealand as a multi-cultural society did not hit home.

It really was not until I went to Samoa that I came to realise what having contact with another culture meant. Even though I had been in other countries before – in Italy for four years and in Ireland for two – the impact of cross-cultural contact was not experienced deeply. In Ireland this could have been due to finding myself very much at home in a Catholic culture – a culture in which the New Zealand Catholic sub-culture has been firmly rooted. In Italy, we students tended to buffer ourselves against cross-cultural contact by establishing a kind of seminary sub-culture of our own.

In Samoa my experience was very different. The way of life itself was completely new to me. If I was to be any use at all as a priest, I simply had to face up to the challenge of becoming

part of it. I can remember one occasion vividly. It occurred later in my five-year stay in Western Samoa. I was celebrating a feast-day mass. The people had done wonders with our vast church, packed to capacity with a 900-strong congregation. They had decorated it beautifully with leaves and fernery and with magnificent tropical flowers. *Ie tonga* (fine-mats) adorned the altar and reading-stand. Tapa cloth and colourful mats carpeted the sanctuary. Magnificent lei patterns had been stencilled on to the huge backdrop which set off the altar. I processed into the church preceded by altar-servers dressed in robes decorated with traditional patterns, and accompanied by a guard-of-honour of matai (chiefs) in traditional costume. Tulafale (talking-chiefs) with orator's staff and fly-whisk read the scriptures. In the midst of all these, and many other cultural expressions with which the people honoured the occasion, I was the only alien presence. I felt my being different and not belonging very strongly. That feeling I had to submerge, since I had come to realise how much a genuine inculturation of the Church's liturgy meant to the people.

I was delighted when, on my return to New Zealand, Cardinal Delargey appointed me to Holy Family Parish in Porirua East. The kind of setting provided by that parish suited me fine. I was especially delighted to be in a place where one foot at least was where I belonged and felt secure, even if the other foot was sometimes in the Maori community, at other times in the Samoan or Tokelauan communities, and at other times again in the Cook Island Maori community. I had discovered anew just how important it is to have a *turangawaewae*, a place to stand firm, even if only with one foot.

Multi-cultural Diocese

The topic for tonight is "The Church in a Multi-cultural Society". Let me speak first of the diocese, the local Church. The Archdiocese of Wellington is certainly multi-cultural in its membership. The total population of the area covered by the Archdiocese is approximately 525,000 (according to the 1976 census). In the census table on "Ethnic Groups" we find that of the 525,000, some 460,000 are European, and about 33,000 are Maori, 12,000 Polynesian other than Maori, and about 18,000 are of other ethnic origins. 88,000 of the 525,000 declared themselves on census night to be Catholics. Of those 88,000, about 76,000 are European, 8,000 Maori, 3,000 other Polynesian, and about 1,000 belonging to other ethnic groups. Those figures indicate that the dominant culture is European – to which seven out of every eight belong, and in which there are a number of sub-cultures – and alongside that dominant culture there are the Maori culture, a number of Pacific Islands cultures, and other cultures less prominent but equally real. For the purposes of this talk, I will confine myself to speaking of the dominant culture and the Polynesian cultures.

How did this intermingling of peoples come about? This is not the place for any historical detail. The fact is that many peoples have come to this country as part of that movement of peoples which has largely taken place during the past four centuries. The pace of that movement has been uneven, but there is no doubt that it accelerated tremendously in the years following World War II. It came about for a number of reasons: the search for better material well-being, for greater freedom, for access to education; an escape from disasters of different kinds; as part of the international movements associated with trade and diplomacy. Whatever the reasons, we are called to reflect as Christians upon this movement of peoples. Our Church calls us to recognise the signs of the times and to interpret them in the light of the gospel.

Christian Election

The Sacred Congregation for Bishops in 1969 published an "Instruction on the pastoral care of people who migrate". In that document there was clear recognition that progress in the

unification of peoples can be greatly advanced by the present movements and migrations. Migration can favour and promote mutual understanding and co-operation on the part of all, and give witness to the unity of the human family.

When we reflect on migration, we can think in biblical terms, and our minds readily go back to the great story of the Exodus. The oppression of the Chosen People when they were slaves in Egypt led to the Exodus. It was a tremendously significant event, and remained significant in the history and traditions of the people. The memory of their suffering and of God's compassion in setting them free became the motive for their own generous treatment and welcome they offered to strangers in their midst. The words put on the lips of God in the Book of Deuteronomy (10:18-19) express their attitude: "Love the stranger then, for you were yourselves strangers in the land of Egypt." The Jews recognised that the stranger should be able to become a citizen, sharing fully in the life of the new land and of the people of which they had become a part. In the Book of the prophet Ezekiel (47:21-22) we read: "You are to share out this land among yourselves, between the tribes of Israel. You are to divide it into inheritances for yourselves and the aliens settled among you who have begotten children with you, since you are to treat them as citizens of Israel." These Old Testament expressions of solidarity have been reflected in our own day. Since Vatican II there have been some fine documents relating to pastoral care of migrant and itinerant peoples. Here are some quotations:

In the Church there neither are nor can be strangers or guests. All the baptised are members of the one People of God, and those who have not had the grace of baptism or who have in one way or another forgotten it must still be considered pastorally within the perspective of this mysterious reality.

So while the Church draws its members from this continent or that, no difference of any kind can be allowed to create tremors. Migration puts this elementary principle to the test in a singular fashion.

The human and Christian attitude towards migrants is expressed in the first place by a warm welcome, which is the keystone to overcoming the inevitable difficulties, preventing misunderstandings and solving difficulties.

No one can be considered a stranger or just a guest, or in any way on the fringe of things.

'Reflections on the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples', June 1, 1978

So the Church calls us to recognise our essential unity and equality, even though there may be at the same time a great diversity, an enriching diversity, of cultural inheritance. To look upon diversity as some kind of defect betrays an immature and ultimately damaging attitude. Two further quotations, not from the Church documents this time, make the point accurately:

To have the courage of one's diversity is a sign of wholeness in individuals and in civilisation.

Erik Erikson

One of the fundamental principles of democracy is the right to dissent. One of the fundamental principles of culture as I see it, is the right to be different.

Pino Bosi

Both common sense and Christian conviction point to the truth of the following passages taken from the 1977 Social Justice statement of the Catholic Bishops of Australia:

All cultural groups, not excluding those originating from English-speaking countries, have their own lifestyle, their own standards and expectations about what is to be regarded as normal, correct, right, good, just and beautiful. This cultural heritage must be respected.

All aspects of a culture are learned. Once a person has learned his culture, he cannot go through the process again. He is capable however of becoming a full member of another society by mastering some basic skills and attitudes . . .

Since the learning of a new culture can never be fully achieved, retention of ethnic customs, or distinctive ways of behaving, is essential to the psychological and social well-being of individuals and groups. Other ethnic groups, including the dominant one, have the serious obligation to respect and to develop appreciation for such ethnic differences.

Assimilation v. Integration

In many policy-making areas, there has been a movement away from the concept of ASSIMILATION to one of INTEGRATION as the basis of the dominant society – minority group relationship. Assimilation meant that migrants or minority cultural groups were expected to become ‘just like us’ as quickly as possible. The concept of integration recognises the value of different cultures and urges individuals and groups to retain and develop their culture, while at the same time participating fully at all levels in New Zealand society.

Assimilation is a policy to which the whole Catholic philosophy of the development of peoples is implacably opposed. It can be described as psychological and cultural totalitarianism, or cultural genocide. It is the antithesis of the right to self-determination.

This right follows from the fact that each person is unique, and created to the image and likeness of God. Each then reflects God’s beauty, intelligence, power, freedom and love. We are all called to be free, autonomous, self-determining, masters of our own destinies, responsible for our own decisions. At the same time we are social beings, and personal self-determination can be fully achieved only in harmony with the social self-determination of groups to which we belong.

Let’s take an example from across the Tasman of the assimilation approach as applied to an Australian minority group:

The policy of assimilation aims at ensuring that all Aborigines and part-Aborigines will attain the same manner of living as other Australians and live as members of a single Australian community enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties as other Australians.

*Report on Conference of Federal and
State Government Representatives, Darwin, July 1963*

Now contrast that statement with one made by Pope Paul VI to the Aborigines of Australia, made in Sydney on December 2, 1970:

The Church proclaims that you, like all other ethnic minorities, have all human and civic rights – in every way the equal of those in the majority. You have likewise certain duties and obligations by reason of the common good; these necessitate the harmonising of your activities in a spirit of brotherhood and collaboration for the benefit of the society to which you belong. In this regard, however, it must be clear – and we would like to stress it – that the common good can never be used legitimately as a pretext to harm the positive values of your particular way of life. Society itself is enriched by the presence of different cultural and ethnic elements. For us the values which you represent are precious . . .

While the government has officially rejected the policy of assimilation, many institutions through which government policy is implemented, and others which impinge upon the lives of

Maori and Pacific Islands peoples have not changed, and continue to apply assimilationist pressures. A NZ government inter-departmental committee has reflected this situation:

Although an admittedly multi-cultural society, New Zealand retains long-standing legal, educational and other mono-cultural social systems which, unless modified, could become increasingly inadequate and inappropriate for present-day needs. It is suggested that there should be a conscious awareness of New Zealand as a multi-cultural society when any policies are being formulated. Such policies – whether population policies or any other – should emphasise that every individual's needs must be equally recognised by, and that every individual is equal in membership of, the larger society. The activities of the larger society should have the flexibility to accommodate individual customs, living styles and methods of work. Thus, an underlying assumption must be that every New Zealander – whether New Zealand born or settler – is the product of a unique cultural heritage which is valued and worthy of maintenance. All individuals need to be able to move freely within their own culture as well as in society as a whole with a real sense of belonging in both. In summary, policies which relate to our multi-cultural society need to be grounded in mutual respect, including a respect for each individual's cultural heritage.

*NZ Population Policy Guidelines,
Inter-departmental Committee on Population Questions,
September 19, 1975*

To that statement we can give wholehearted support. It accords wholly with the Catholic philosophy of the development of peoples and with human rights. In terms of our philosophy, we seek genuine integration based on a policy of cultural pluralism involving:

- accepting cultural differences;
- regarding such differences as important for the total well-being of society;
- the areas of necessary uniformity not being too strictly defined;
- freedom for both groups and individuals to modify their life style, especially at the more intimate levels;
- accepting a certain amount of tension between groups, or within groups, which is normal in even the most loving and united families and communities.

We seek to disprove the belief many New Zealanders have that loyalty to our country calls for uniformity in all aspects of social behaviour including language and cultural heritage.

The greatness of a people is conditioned by vitality and quality of life, by plurality rather than uniformity. Vitality depends upon diversity, new ideas, approaches, sensitivities.

Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice statement, 1977

It is worth keeping in mind that no one had a more universal mission than Jesus. Though Jesus expressed himself only through contemporary Jewish cultural patterns and social structures, he was able to reach out to all men. His love for his own people was vividly manifested when he wept over Jerusalem. Yet he did not hesitate to associate with the Samaritan woman despite the prejudice of his people.

The Catholic Church and Pastoral Care of Minorities

The history of the Catholic Church's assistance to minority groups in this country is extremely complex, and it is not possible to outline it here. However, it is worth making some brief comment.

There have been outstanding men and women who have devoted themselves to the Maori

people and championed their cause. Mother Mary Aubert is *the* valiant woman. Among priests there were men of the stamp of Father Comte who founded the Mission in Otaki 136 years ago . . . Father Lampila who worked among the Maori peoples of Hawkes Bay and the Wanganui River in the 1850s and the 1860s . . . men in the earlier decades of this century like Fathers Riordan and Venning . . . men recently gone to their reward, like Brother John (Eugene Provost) . . . men still amongst us who gave their hearts to the Maori nearly half a century ago, and still live out their commitment – such men as Fathers Jim Durning, Frank Wall, Ike Gupwell and Dan Fouhy.

Unhappily, over and over again it happened that pastors working among and with the Maori people were called from their task to minister to rapidly increasing European communities: Father Reignier in Napier, Father Lampila in Wanganui and Father Lepretre in Wairoa provide some examples.

For those who served the Maori people, there was often little understanding of their apostolate on the part of others, and consequently they suffered isolation and frustration.

Other groups fared better, especially in the post-World War II years. The Church committed personnel and other resources to the pastoral assistance of refugee and migrant groups. For many years now there have been chaplaincies of different kinds: for Polish, Hungarian, Croatian, Dutch, Cook Island Maori, Samoan, Tongan and other communities.

Then, too, the Church's understanding of evangelisation has developed considerably over the last twenty years. It is now seen much more clearly as encompassing an openness and respect for all religions and cultures.

The Australian Bishops commented in their 1977 Social Justice statement:

In the light of that understanding (of evangelisation), and with the benefit of hindsight, it can be acknowledged that the Church, often unwittingly, has sometimes allowed its missionary effort to be so wedded to the expansion of colonialism as to have acted as its agent. Rather than seeking to embody the Gospel message in the culture of the people, it has only too often helped stifle integral cultures, including their religious content, through the imposition of a Europeanised Christianity.

We here in New Zealand could, I think, make those words our own. But we see much more clearly now where the challenge lies. The following quotation points a direction:

The Church therefore has this exhortation for her sons: prudently and lovingly, through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, and in witness of Christian faith and life, acknowledge, preserve and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these people as well as the values in their society and culture.

Vatican II, 'Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions', n.3

And so also this quotation:

Peoples are engaged with all their energy in the effort and struggle to overcome everything which condemns them to remain on the margin of life: famine, chronic disease, illiteracy, poverty, injustices in international relations and especially in commercial exchanges, situations of economic and cultural neo-colonialism sometimes as cruel as the old political colonialism. The Church, as the Bishops (at the 1974 Synod) repeated, has the duty to proclaim the liberation of millions of human beings, many of whom are her own children – the duty of assisting the birth of this liberation, of giving witness to it, of ensuring that it is complete. This is not foreign

to evangelisation.

*Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelisation
in the Modern World, 1975, n.30*

One further quotation! Ten years ago, Pope Paul VI spoke to the Aborigines of Australia (December 2, 1970) in these words:

... We know that you have a lifestyle proper to your own ethnic genius or culture – a culture which the Church respects and which she does not ask you in any way to renounce.

Had the Holy Father come to New Zealand instead of to Australia, and spoken to our Maori or Polish or Cook Islands people, I'm certain he would have used those same words.

Challenges of the 80s

As we move into the 1980s, many challenges face us. All is not well in our multi-cultural society! In particular, we need to examine the quality and the nature of the pastoral care we provide for minority cultural groups.

I would like to refer to three elements in pastoral care that deserve attention:

- providing pastoral care in the language of the people served;
- providing pastoral care through basic communities; and
- providing pastoral care through lay ministries.

In regard to providing pastoral care in the language of the community, the mind of the Church has been made abundantly clear in 'The Instruction on the Pastoral Care of People who Migrate' and in subsequent documents.

Migrating people carry with them their own mentality, their own language, their own culture and their own religion. All of these things are parts of a certain spiritual heritage of opinions, traditions, and culture which will perdure outside the homeland. Let it be highly prized everywhere.

... Not least in its right to consideration is the mother tongue of emigrant people, by which they express their mentality, thoughts, culture and spiritual life.

... Ordinaries of places are not to refuse to admit the use of the immigrants' own language in the Sacred Liturgy, no matter what country they come from.

... provision should be made for the faithful of different language groups, either through priests or parishes of the same language, or through an episcopal vicar well versed in the language, and, if need be, endowed with the episcopal dignity ...

A solution to more adequate pastoral care could well be found in the building of *base ecclesial communities* described by Pope Paul VI in the Apostolic Exhortation 'On Evangelisation in the Modern World'. In section 58 of that document, the Pope points out:

... they (base ecclesial communities) spring from the desire and quest for a more human dimension such as larger ecclesial communities can only offer with difficulty, especially in the big modern cities which lend themselves to life in the mass and to anonymity ... Or again their aim may be to bring together, for the purpose of listening to and meditating upon the Word, for the Sacraments and the bond of agape, groups of people who are linked by age, culture, civil status or social situation.

Basic ecclesial communities do not constitute an alternative to the parish structure. Rather they should be the living cells of the parish. We have tended in the past to regard the family as the fundamental unit. The basic ecclesial community comes between the family and the parish

for the benefit of both. It caters for the enormous diversity, including cultural variation, of modern society. Properly established, base ecclesial communities can enrich in tremendous measure parish life, strengthen the faith and identity of cultural groups, and at the same time deepen the sense of belonging and contributing to parish and local Church.

Lay ministries can also add an additional and effective dimension in pastoral care. Expansion and diversification of ministries has already contributed in a remarkable way in the parish where I served from early 1976 until my becoming bishop last year (Holy Family Parish, Porirua East). A group of nine Samoan and Tokelauan catechists, all married men, were trained for that ministry; and later a group of three Cook Island couples were trained for the same ministry. The first full year of their work in the parish was 1979. Some statistics illustrate their impact on the parish: as compared with 1978, infant baptisms were up from eighty-six to 120, adult conversions up from fifteen to thirty-five, and mass attendance up from 908 to 1,052. Although the communities served by the catechists made up only a quarter of the parish population, they supplied more than half the first communicants and confirmation candidates. Partnership between the priestly ministry and lay ministries enables a practical response to increasing diversity, makes possible a clear witness to the Church's respect for spiritual and cultural heritage, and facilitates the formation and functioning of base ecclesial communities. That the establishment of lay ministries is fully in accord with the mind of the Church is clearly shown in the following extract from Pope Paul's 'On Evangelisation in the Modern World', n.73:

It is certain that, side-by-side with the ordained ministries, whereby certain people are appointed pastors and consecrate themselves in a special way to the service of the community, the Church recognises the place of non-ordained ministries . . . These ministries apparently new but closely tied up with the Church's living experience down the centuries . . . are valuable for the establishment, life and growth of the Church, and for her capacity to influence her surroundings and to reach those who are remote from her.

I wish to draw attention to further points. The first concerns land, and the second our education system.

Land

We in New Zealand who do not yet understand, have to strive to understand – really understand, in so far as we can – what *land* means to the Maori. It is difficult for us who see land as a transferable asset, a possession to be bought and sold, like car or boat, TV or toaster, as something subject to commercial speculation, to comprehend what land means to others.

I go outside New Zealand, although I need not, for expressions of what land can mean in the living tradition and cultural heritage of peoples:

The limitations of my land are clear to me. The area of my existence, where I derive my existence from, is clear to me and clear to those who belong in my group. Land provides for my physical needs and my spiritual needs. New stories are sung from contemplation of the land. Stories are handed down from spirit men of the past who have deposited the riches at various places, the sacred places. These places are not simply geographically beautiful: they are holy places, places that are even more holy than shrines. They are not commercialised, they are sacred. The greatest respect is shown to them. They are used for the regeneration of history, the regeneration of our people, the continuation of our life: because that's where we begin and that's where we return.

Father Pat Dodson MSC

When we took what we call 'land', we took what to them meant hearth, home, the source and locus of life, and everlastingness of spirit. At the same time it left each local band bereft of an essential constant that made their plan and code of living unintelligible. Particular pieces of territory, each a homeland, formed part of a set of constants without which no affiliation of any person to any other person, no link in the whole network of relationships, no part of the complex structure of social groups any longer had all its co-ordinates. What I describe as 'homelessness' then, means that the Aborigines faced a kind of vertigo in living. They had no stable base of life; every personal affiliation was lamed; every group structure was put out of kilter; no social network had a point of fixture left.

W.E.H. Stanner, 'After the Dreaming'

Our Maori people surely feel kinship with peoples in other nations whose land is threatened for one reason or another – usually industrial development. In other countries the Church has proclaimed and fought for the just demands of the indigenous peoples: the Bontok people of the Philippines threatened by the Chico River Dam System; the Amazonian Indians in Brazil by bauxite mining companies; the Canadian Inuit (Eskimos) and Dene and Metis (Indians) by exploiters of the resources of natural gas, oil and minerals; the Africans of Namibia by uranium miners.

Can we as a Church not arrive at a true understanding of the issues that arise in our own country, and support our Maori people in their efforts to protect their land and have restored that which is truly sacred?

Silence on the part of the Christian community in the face of violation in land rights is not neutrality; it is acquiescence in injustice.

Education System

The second point concerns our *education system*. We have to keep a very close eye on what happens in our schools. In the past our education system was wholly assimilationist, designed to fit all into the dominant society.

The Synod of Bishops in 1971 (*Justice in the World*) warned of what can happen:

The school and the communications media, which are often obstructed by the established order, allow the formation only of the man desired by that order, that is to say, man in its image, not a new man but a copy of man as he is.

(The following notes draw heavily on the material presented by the Australian Catholic Bishops in the Social Justice statement, 1977.)

The schoolroom and the playgrounds in New Zealand form the first and main meeting place for New Zealand children of various backgrounds . . . for this reason the New Zealand school must be the first point of concern in the combatting of prejudice, the elimination of discrimination and the building of amity and unity in the society.

Of all major institutions, the school system is probably the most faithful expression of the dominant values and aspirations of a society. Unless special care is taken, the system, by its very structure and curriculum, is more likely to perpetuate than to eliminate prejudice and discrimination.

Language is the root of a child's personal identity and vehicle for cultural expression. It is also an educational resource which the New Zealand educational system can ill afford to lose.

In this age of national interdependence, the mono-cultural mono-lingual young New Zealander who cannot benefit from the rich cultural environment around him is also deprived. The development of an education system appropriate for a multi-cultural society is an urgent priority in New Zealand education. If it is a national priority, it goes without saying that it is equally a priority in the Catholic education system.

Since children are so vulnerable, considerable sensitivity to other cultures is required of teachers so that pupils whose mother tongue is not English may not be seriously disadvantaged. Too often it happens that the children of migrant parents face the dual trauma of acquiring a foreign language rapidly and at the same time abandoning a hitherto developing mother tongue as functionally useless. To expose children to such culture conflict is a grave injustice. Such conflict can give rise to loss of identity, linguistic blocks, tensions in family life following from the alienation of the child's affection, and the risk of educational and social isolation which could turn to delinquency.

It is, of course, essential that children acquire a good command of English. But ideally they should be able to learn their maternal language with equal facility, and receive instruction about the country and culture of origin of their parents, for the children belong to a group whose right to exist and whose cultural values must be formally recognised.

What is true for language and culture is even more true for religious faith and knowledge. Any sound catechetical system accepts that the religious formation given in school must build upon the religious culture of the home. This involves not only learning prayers and hymns in one's mother tongue, but also the basic religious instruction. It is quite unjust if the practices of the parents are ignored or ridiculed, even when this is done in ignorance. Once the children have learned to pray in their mother tongue, they must learn to pray in English also, so that they can join the wider community in worship. Let's not worry over such diversity. It brings home to the children the rich variety which exists within the unity of Catholicism.

Our Task as Church

In conclusion, then: *We are* a multi-cultural society; we are *challenged* by the diversity of cultures which New Zealanders live; and we, peoples of different cultures, *are* in a relationship one with another. If the peoples of minority cultures do not feel hope and love from members of the Christian community, then we are being unfaithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There is an immediate challenge to the Catholic community, and to the bodies and institutions which form part of the structures of the Church:

- We have to ensure that we do all possible to support minority groups in their efforts to retain and develop their cultures and attain full recognition of their rights.
- We have to make a stand against people or organisations which would deny those rights, whether the stand is popular or not.
- In our contact and relationships with those of other cultures, we have to permeate those relationships with sensitivity and respect for the dignity of the person. All such contacts are opportunities for growth and understanding.
- *Parishes* have a special responsibility, where they have members of different cultures, to counter prejudice and discrimination. At the same time, they should make allowances for a degree of voluntary separation on the part of those not yet 'at home' with the ways of the parish and its celebrations, structures and established activities.
- Our *religious communities and schools*, too, have special responsibilities in that they have greater opportunities for countering ignorance and prejudice and indifference through the

part they play in the life of the parish and through their frequent contact with families.
– *All of us* are called to self-examination, to do our utmost to overcome ignorance or apathy, prejudice or racist attitudes, intolerance of insensitivity, and to challenge those things in the lives of others.

– *All of us* need to play our part in rooting out the myths often voiced among us:

That ‘they’ should become ‘just like us’

Since the overwhelming majority of New Zealanders come from families who have been in this country for at most three or four generations, this is arrogant. It is also narrow-minded, since it suggests that ‘we’ should not be open to the insights and values of other cultures.

That ethnic clubs, associations, newspapers etc., harm the cause of successful integration
Rather, they cushion the blow of a totally new environment and facilitate the changes which have to occur in the lives of the more recent migrants.

That New Zealand is a homogeneous society

This has not been the case for over a century and a half. It would perhaps have been true had the first European migrants to New Zealand not refused to be assimilated into the Maori population of the time.

That migrants are ‘lucky to be here’

We are also lucky to have them. The benefits of immigration (social, cultural and economic) flow in both directions.

That ‘once a migrant, always a migrant’

Protracted characterisation of overseas-born New Zealanders as ‘migrants’ serves to reinforce a ‘them’ and ‘us’ attitude which needs to be strongly challenged. We are ALL New Zealanders.

All of us, then, are called to acknowledge and welcome the enrichment and contribution to society and Church by the presence of diverse cultures.

We pray for the coming of the Kingdom of God – a kingdom of justice, love and peace.

Let’s not stop at the praying!

In supporting warmly and wholeheartedly the aspirations of our Maori and migrant peoples from other lands, we are bringing into being that for which we pray.

STATUS OF ABORIGINAL WOMEN VIS-A-VIS STATUS OF ABORIGINAL MEN

A. MOIR-BUSSY FDNSC

A GREATER UNDERSTANDING of the status of Aboriginal women within their society and in relation to men has been contributed largely through the work of several female anthropologists (Kaberry, 1939; Goodale, 1971; Berndt, 1974; Hamilton, 1974; Hiatt, 1974; Barwick, 1974; White, 1974 and Bell, 1980). Male anthropologists tended to enlarge the men's image either to the exclusion or detriment of women's status. The result was a rather simplified formulation.

Men are sacred, women are profane. Women are best suited to mundane, menial domestic tasks; if they come into any contact with the realm of the sacred, the effects are likely to be highly polluting and dangerous. Their intentions good or bad have no bearing on these repercussions. Women are just naturally outside the dimension of the sacred and are *naturally* hostile to it.¹

It was Kaberry in her book *Aboriginal Women – Sacred and Profane*, who attempted to show the balance of the two. Other authors have affirmed a partnership showing that women are essentially independent and neither submissive nor dominant, taking into account the individuality of persons. In discussing aspects of the woman's traditional status in the family, economically, politically and in the realm of ritual and myth, I wish also to look comparatively at that status and either its loss or new formed status within the various roles women play now through contact with modern society. In looking at the diverse aspects of her life it is important to keep in mind the links that bind each aspect together, links of kinship and of marriage, of age and of experience and temperament. All these determine the reactions of both men and women as individuals to the various situations of life and therefore their status and role.

Partnership in Economy

Men and women co-operate in making the best use of their energy and natural resources.²

The women's role in most tribes is generally that of forager – gathering nuts, yams, fruits and small animals. The men were the hunters of larger game, birds and fish. Berndt noted that

Sr Ann Moir-Bussy FDNSC, Deputy-Principal at St Therese's School, Nguui (Bathurst Is., NT), wrote this essay as an assignment in an anthropology course at Darwin Community College.

often the men's hunting activity was more uncertain than the women's food gathering, and therefore she contributed overall more to the food supply.³ Kaberry also claims

she always manages to bring in something, and hence the family is dependent on her efforts to a greater extent than those of her husband.⁴

This division of labour called for a very real co-operation between man and wife. The woman was essentially independent in her economic role, or in the way she carried it out, but there was an interdependence with her husband because meat was also needed – the Aboriginal people are not vegetarians.

Goodale in her studies among the Tiwi people has made special reference to this sexual division of labour in its relation to a classification of the physical environment in terms of gender.⁵ She notes

Ground, dirt, land, sand, beach, reef, island are all masculine in gender, yet within them are those items considered exclusively appropriate for women to extract. Conversely, the sea, clear sky, wind, tidal sandbank, mangrove swamp are feminine in gender and are the regions in which that which is hunted exclusively by males is to be found.⁶

This point is worthy of note because as Goodale goes on to say women are also held responsible for

rooted resources back into the ground which is in itself considered masculine and which incubates and transforms the part into a new whole.⁷

and further that

women are responsible for the maintenance of all food resources in symbolic and culturally significant actions.⁸

In considering a woman's economic status in relation to her position in the society, it seems that she traditionally held a very significant place, not necessarily dominant to that of men, but certainly not submissive. Her role is highly individualised and she had to rely on her own knowledge, skills and capacities. Kaberry⁹ notes that such knowledge and skill helped to make her an eligible marriage partner. Her husband needed to co-operate with her for if she deserted he would lose not only a sexual partner but also a means of subsistence. Woman could use her economic skill to enforce justice and good treatment. In this way she had a slight advantage over her husband. Modern society has brought about changes in this labour division and partnership. I will discuss some of these after looking at other aspects of woman's traditional status.

Partnership in Marital Relations

Kaberry points out that from her birth woman's position is

defined in regard to the totemic system and local organisation of the tribe . . . and that she is brought into contact with individuals who stand in a kinship relationship, and whose attitudes are largely determined by this.¹⁰

As a young girl her status as a marriage promise gave her importance in the family. At puberty her status was enhanced as she underwent certain rituals which brought her into womanhood.¹¹ Introduction to marriage was gradual and responsibilities were assumed slowly. She gained companionship and as she assumed her economic role an increase in status. Bearing successfully and rearing many children increased her status, particularly if she gave birth to female children as a man could use them to fulfil his debts as promises to future sons-in-law. Male children were always regarded importantly at birth too, so again we see a complementarity in attitude.

Labour, as we have seen was shared. Though she lived in her husband's country she continued from time to time to visit her own country. This maintained good relationship ties between the groups. She is again a partner with her husband, for trade can thus remain open and probably beneficial while there are good relationships. Her authority within marriage is as Kaberry says

defined not only in terms of his privileges on the one hand, but also by hers on the other — in short, by those reciprocal rights and duties that are recognised to be inherent in marriage.¹²

Generally speaking she has an authority over the land on which she forages. She

regards it as her own because she has inherited the right to live and forage for food within its boundaries.¹³

She has full responsibility for educating her young children in the secrets of this land, teaching them all they need to know regarding foods, waterholes, tracks and sacred places. She also introduces her young ones to their kinship and skin groups and acquaints them with their roles and obligations towards each other. As *mother* and *educator* then, her status is very important. An Arunta woman affirmed this for me last year saying, 'I am boss of everything to do with my children, my husband is boss of any decisions to do with his land'.¹⁴

Mutual fidelity in sex was demanded and sexual rights were jealously guarded. This is not to say that there were exceptions where individuals were concerned when lovers came on the scene. The kinship institution was of assistance in maintaining co-operative partnership as regards keeping sexual rules and avoiding taboos.

In the field of art and craft it was generally held that men had a superior skill, but women also had the opportunity to exercise initiative, making fighting sticks and digging sticks, dilly bags, string, paper bark 'swags' and necklaces.¹⁵ The men's goods were the ones used in trade with their affinal kin and as their resources diminished this disadvantaged them in respect to the goods of the woman.

Finally, as a woman became older, her authority and status increased for alongside her husband she carefully passed on traditions. Her children would have married into other bands and inter-tribal meetings were opportunities for her to increase her knowledge of myths. With their husbands they became stabilising forces in the community and made possible the continuity of tribal life.¹⁶ This of course depended on the assertiveness of the individual woman.

The tidal wave of change has engulfed much of woman's activity and status in this sphere as in the economic sphere and so I will also look at this later when discussing the effects of change.

Partnership in Politics

It was considered that traditionally most Aboriginal tribes were patriarchal,¹⁷ and that women's roles were subordinate in political activities as well as other spheres. If politics are considered in the terms of marriage arrangements, then according to Meggitt, and Hart and Pilling as quoted by White¹⁸ the man had authority, but it was very much influenced by woman's power. White emphasises though that

Seniority as well as individual personality plays a large part in determining women's power, which increases with age.^{18a}

White claims a *junior* partner relationship, but it is somewhat paradoxical as *partner* indicates co-operation, complementarity and equality of a kind. However White affirms the junior status

position because she claims women do not take positive combined action to alter the position with their husbands. As Berndt also says

Traditionally, they were not in the habit of consistently co-ordinating their activities on a group basis against men.¹⁹

She also makes the point that political ideology in the Aboriginal world view found its main stress in religion as an all pervasive framework.²⁰ She notes

The way they used the past reflected the conflicts and problems of the present and their hopes about the future.²¹

In an earlier writing (Berndt, 1969) the author emphasises how taboos and their various penalties were introduced from the people's belief of precepts and way of living being handed down by Ancestral Beings. Because of this, recognised codes of behaviour grew up and were enforced particularly by the older men. But women held a powerful weapon in ridicule, 'shaming people into compliance'. When we look at modern contact and the introduction of white law we will see how the balance and partnership of men and women in politics has been broken.

Partnership in Myth and Ritual

In approaching myth and ritual we come to the sacred dimension in the status of Aboriginal women, and it emerges from the human activities most intimately associated with the biological functions of the female. According to Kaberry, this is namely childbirth and menstruation.²² Their ceremonies have not the same spectacular effects as those of the men but this does not make them less essential or important. Kaberry refutes authors such as Dr Roheim²³ who states that religion is only a vehicle for woman's fears and anxieties. Based on her experiences in the Kimberleys she notes that men and women share a religion in common, sometimes as partners in ceremonial and ritual, sometimes as observers and sometimes only in knowledge and approval. Just as men have their 'secret ceremonies' so too the women have occasions when men are excluded from their rites. Such ceremonies were not by any means competitive. Women had their own spiritual heritage of totems, beliefs and spirit centres. These beliefs were acted out in their own ceremonies of pre-puberty rites, menstruation, birth and black magic.²⁴ Further modern authors²⁵ remind us that both Kaberry and Goodale

describe their crucially important economic role and show that these determine the nature of their spiritual roles, refuting the male view that women are excluded from the sacred state. For Australian totemic ceremonies reflect the total social organisation that the women and men have evolved in their struggle to adapt to a precarious environment.

Women apparently held an important role in historic mythology versus the seemingly insignificant role in traditional religious practices. The Tiwi claim Mudungkala as the Creator of their islands.²⁶ There are also many references to the Fertility Mother in other tribes.²⁷ In her same book, Berndt refers to the theory that women were traditional owners of ritual and lost it only through the trickery of men.²⁸ And once again the partnership of men and women in ritual is emphasised by Berndt

Women, whose role in their traditional religion is supporting and submissive, have helped to maintain what is seen as a pre-established pattern – not only through their complementary ritual acts, but also in their role as providers of sacred food.²⁹

Status or Loss of Status Today

Contacts with other cultures and introduction of modern society has brought about many changes in social organisation, in environment, in roles and hence in status of men and women in Aboriginal society. Until recently I believed that the women's role had remained substantially intact and even strengthened as she still bears and rears children, provides the home and a social rallying point. Hamilton indicates that within their belief system men and women could not function without each other, both were equally necessary to survival.³⁰ Modern economics operates on wage systems, pensions, endowment, all paid at regular intervals. It is geared to the nuclear family as the consumption unit.³¹ What happens to the Aboriginal mother who was used to a *daily* subsistence and who *shared* all she brought home?

A whole host of problems arise when we consider the fact that young girls are not marrying so young, are better educated, are gaining employment in modern society and receiving large sums of money on a regular basis. The mother, still bearing children is unable to provide economic subsistence as previously, and the endowment received in no way stretches over her large family. The husband generally regards his economic savings as his own – or in many cases does not gain employment for his education is not sufficient. Larger or smaller groups of women are often seen gambling in the settlements or camps – is this one means she uses to maintain her income and to achieve an economic independence? Her self image as an economic independent person is crumbling. Her status as food provider in the eyes of her husband is not fully understood. The balance in partnership does not seem to be working out.

We then turn to her motherhood and education role. Health departments have taken over at birth and succeed so well that her family increases at a rate she can no longer cope with. Education is taken over to a large extent by schools. Children are acquiring rapidly a knowledge through media and magazines that their mothers didn't have. The skills mothers are able to pass on don't seem as relevant. Her status as mother/educator is not so strong. Generally, the men still hold the repository of myth and ritual and the education that comes through initiation. But the men too are finding it more and more difficult to pass this on in the traditional way. Both men and women are inhibited in their roles and status through their loss of land and sacred rites.

Hamilton quotes a further loss in the breakdown of traditional marriage patterns.³² Here we have the new phenomenon in the teenage girl – a non-traditional anomalous group. The girls now remain at school, many become well educated and are able to take up important positions in modern society, thus gaining an increased status in white man's eyes. At the same time their fantasy vision of life is encouraged by TV, films, magazines and the erotic stimuli they gain from this only encourages further breakdown of the traditional marriage promise system. It does seem that their increased status through prominent positions in modern society must eventually be of benefit in assisting towards an integration of their traditional society.

On the other hand, what of the men? Their status in white man's eyes has not increased as rapidly. Could it be that the frustration they experience, the jealousy, the desire to equalise things could be some of the reasons for the boy's and men's exploitation of the girls and women and for their addiction to alcohol? As Dianne Bell says, women

are no longer protected by the web of relationships which in the past ensured they were not abused in marriage.³³

This does not deny that there were aggressive men and jealous women whose combined efforts resulted in abuse in traditional society. Today, many of the young girls are in areas close to large white areas and have sought an escape in marriage to a white man. The picture does not

look promising and keeping in mind women's traditional status as compared to the menfolk, the loss at times seems to be more devastating for them than for the men.

Conclusion

The sacred and profane status of Aboriginal women has gained recognition particularly through the works of Phyllis Kaberry, Goodale and the other female anthropologists mentioned. As Bell has stated

there is a delicate balance between male assertions of authority and the solidarity and independence enjoyed by the women. These tensions are given form in separate ritual worlds of men and women.³⁴

I have argued that in the sacred and profane status of the women there has been an emphasis on partnership and co-operation, on independent interdependence and complementarity. Their individual status rested, like that of men, on their personal knowledge, their position, their age, their rights and their assertiveness.

Loss of land, new law, culture contact and change have resulted in loss of status for both men and women. Women's economic and ritual roles have been dramatically altered. A few have found a substitute status in white men's eyes. Generally, it seems that settlement living, new laws, employment, is geared to males. Young teenage girls form a worrying and anomalous group for older women. In some ways their education may be the strengthening bonds that renew the women's status, for their knowledge of white men's ways may enable them to assist their families to adapt. It would seem that this could only happen, though, if initially the young girls were steeped in their own traditional history and customs for they cannot draw the two things together if they lack knowledge of one or the other. If the boys can maintain and respect their traditional knowledge and improve their modern education; if marriages were more carefully planned, there may be some renewed strength in partnership and co-operation again.

Women's status and men's status is a balance of the sacred and profane, shared through a co-operative and complementary partnership, with sometimes one and sometimes the other coming to the fore. Some questions that come to mind are:

- Is our present system of education providing enough space or scope for both men and women to regain their identity and their shared heritage and partnership?
- Will the women be able to find a way to use the power or status they have achieved in modern society to draw the men back into a partnership role?
- Are they able to draw on their spiritual heritage and beliefs to again work together?

It would seem that unless they can renew and maintain the delicate balance between their roles and continue to express this through ritual and social form, then their society will continue to disintegrate.

FOOTNOTES

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|---|--|----|--|
| 1 | Berndt, 1978, p.8 | 9 | Kaberry, 1939, p.36 |
| 2 | Berndt, 1969, p.47 | 10 | Ibid., p.61 |
| 3 | Berndt, 1964, p.119 | 11 | Berndt, 1969, p.58 |
| 4 | Kaberry, 1939, p.25 | 12 | Kaberry, 1939, p.143 |
| 5 | Goodale, 1980, p.1 (Unpublished paper) | 13 | Ibid., p.10 |
| 6 | Ibid., p.7 | 14 | Personal statement of Arunta woman, 1980 |
| 7 | Ibid., p.8 | 15 | Kaberry, 1939, p.184 |
| 8 | Ibid. | 16 | Ibid., p.162 |

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| 17 Barwick, 1978, p.52 | 26 Mountford, 1958, p.23 |
| 18 White, 1978, p.37 | 27 Berndt, 1970, p.117 |
| 18a Ibid. | 28 Ibid., p.120 |
| 19 Berndt, 1978, p.81 | 29 Ibid., p.148 |
| 20 Ibid., p.4 | 30 Hamilton, 1975, p.170 |
| 21 Ibid., p.119 | 31 Ibid., p.174 |
| 22 Kaberry, 1939, p.184 | 32 Ibid., p.176 |
| 23 Ibid., p.188 | 33 Bell, 1980, p.17 |
| 24 Ibid., p.234 | 34 Ibid., p.16 |
| 25 Leavitt, Sykes & Weatherford, 1975, p.114 | |

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DALY RIVER CENTRE REPORT

FR JOHN LEARY MSC

SR MARY McGOWAN FDNSC

SANTA TERESA – 14-20 JUNE 1981

Participants

Kathleen Wallace, Margaret Mary Turner, Veronica Turner, Nancy Lynch, Jean Alice, May Ryan, Rosie Gorey, Steven Kurnan, Amelia Turner, Lena Cavanagh, Isobelle Golder, Cecilia Ronson, Myra Lynch.

Introduction

The group comprised seven women and one man living in a town situation in Alice Springs and five women living on the mission at Santa Teresa.

On Sunday evening they were introduced to the programme for the forthcoming week. A quiet week to think and pray – to discuss in groups about different topics. They were asked to be open with each other in the group: to listen, help and encourage one another. Each day would begin with quiet prayer to God on one's own, sitting somewhere on the river bank. Later they would be asked to draw their experience in some form, e.g. symbols, and then share with the group. In the afternoon they could form themselves into groups for discussion.

Prayer Themes

God our Father – all around us, in creation – loves us, cares for us, as he cared for ancestors for thousands of years – his Spirit in us.

Moses, called by God – needing God's help in his weakness.

Jesus, talking with his Father.

Topics for Discussion

1. Show by some kind of drawing – your country – your relatives, especially those for whom you are responsible.
2. What makes you, as an Aborigine, different from a Chinese or Japanese or European? What are the good things you have in your culture that white people have not?
3. What are the priorities in the list you have made?
4. Education; Discipline; Health; Employment.

5. Problems – Town – Santa Teresa.
6. How to solve problems.

Group Discussion Points

- a) Things which make us different – skin, language, features, different ideas, e.g. teaching young children, they should learn hunting skills, language, stories.
 - skills – hunting, finding food and water;
 - customs – laws, men and women's dances; marrying right skin;
 - music;
 - painting – everything has its meaning – each drawing of the country around, each marking.
 - life-style – Aboriginal people tend to move around, while Europeans stay in one place.
- b) Priorities. Learning (teaching) young children – hunting – dreamtime stories – language – painting, taken from the country around them.
- c) School often stops children from wanting to be Aboriginal. Sometimes they say, 'That's finished, there's new way now'.

We want to tell Brothers, Sisters, Fathers things about our culture, explain situation, so they can pass it on to government bodies, e.g. moving from a house after a death.
- d) Town House – Can mothers with children stay there, as there is an urgent need for some kind of hostel for young mothers with babies in hospital.

The group made a decision to hold a meeting at Santa Teresa, to let the Council hear what they have to say. They also suggested that the Home-makers. place would be a good place to meet regularly.

When asked why they wanted Mass in the camp rather than the church, they replied 'Because the people are there'.

Conclusion

Apart from one man, the group consisted of women. This was unfortunate as we like to see the men well represented. However, there were good reasons why the right men could not be there.

The members of the group were mature, well balanced with a great deal of self-confidence. They were frank and honest in group discussion. It soon became apparent that problems and approaches to their solution were different in the two places, i.e. Alice and Santa.

Disciplinary problems at Santa would be greatly helped in their solution by the establishment of a strong council. Steps had been initiated to establish such a council.

It was thought that the main place for Aboriginal formation, consciousness, language, solidarity, education, was the home and family circle. Emphasis was placed on getting people to become much more aware of this and actually doing more about it. Despite difficulties caused by living in Alice Springs, the group from there showed definite indications they were thinking and making strong approaches towards coping with the situation.

It is of course difficult to estimate how the various members fared in their attempts at quiet prayer each morning, but they definitely tried. If resultant drawings indicated anything, the end of the week found a lot of them more at home with a God, not a long way off, but everywhere about them and within them.

PRIESTS IN ABORIGINAL MINISTRY: CUNNAMULLA MEETING

M.J. WILSON MSC

CUNNAMULLA 28 SEPTEMBER-2 OCTOBER

AT THE END of September some of the priests involved in the Aboriginal ministry in the eastern states had an informal get-together 'to chew the fat'. They gathered for a week at the shearers quarters on 'Coonberry Plains' station some forty miles south of Cunnamulla, midway from anywhere. About a third of Cunnamulla's population is Aboriginal, and the parish priest, Fr Jack Peard, makes sure they are well within his pastoral concern.

There were nine priests present at the meeting. The core members were (working north) Peter Dorfield (Wagga), Graham Carter (Wilcannia), Stephen Nolan (Kempsey), Barry Bell (Moree), Dick Buckhorn (Boggabilla), Jack Peard (Cunnamulla) and Don O'Brien (Mt Isa). Also present for a couple of days were Fr Tony Pearson (Adelaide) and his travelling companion Robbie Walker. A special invitee was Fr Pat Dodson, who invited me to go along with him. As he was prevented from going, I went along on my own. Fr Pat Dodson's absence was unfortunate as he had been expected to be the input man; also the Townsville priests involved in Aboriginal ministry decided against the expense of the trip when they heard that he would not be present.

A number of other people, Aboriginal and otherwise, attended for all or most of the time: Peter and Edna Thompson and young Yeena and Warlpa (Wilcannia), Lou Ariotti (Brisbane), Lila Watson (Brisbane).

There was no pre-arranged programme. If discussions started in the kitchen (as they were likely to do), they went on in the kitchen – or on the verandah, or around a campfire at night.

Of special value from my own point of view was the interaction between a person like myself from the 'institutional' missions and men in a more or less unstructured parochial situation. We should see each other as complementary but in the past we have tended to misrepresent and discount the function of the opposite group. If one might express the difference in attitude exaggeratedly in terms of polar opposites: we mission people have tended to look askance at the easterners and southerners as social activists, and they have envisaged us as institutional puppets and government agents. It is useful to realise that under different forms and with a variety of tensions and limiting factors we are all endeavouring to exercise a common priestly ministry for people who fit all too exactly into the category of those who are both a social inconvenience and a special concern of the gospel, the poor, that is, those who are at the bottom of a system of oppression exercised deliberately or unwittingly or whatever by

the rich and powerful. It was particularly instructive to listen to an analysis of the social (and environmental) effects of capital-intensive cotton growing in the northern part of New South Wales – and of the effect on church programmes as advised by parochial and diocesan finance committees whose lay members would normally be successful participants in the very system causing the damage.

It was easy in style. Whatever the situation may have been in the past, one felt oneself to be in the presence of a group of men who have learnt to live easily in situations of challenge where support from peers and superiors would cover a wide range from positive comprehension to puzzlement and negative criticism.

Let's hope there will be more meetings like this!

TOWARDS A PROPER AND UNDERSTANDING HEALTH-CARE DELIVERY TO THE ABORIGINES

ANTHONY R. PEILE SAC

Fr Anthony Peile SAC is presently engaged in catechetical work and linguistic research in the Gugadja language at Balgo Mission, WA. He was ordained in 1956, and has worked in WA from 1967 on – at Wandering, Tardun, Derby, Beagle Bay, Halls Creek and since 1973 at Balgo. Of recent years his research has been specially involved with ethno-taxonomy and medical anthropology. He has published some ten papers in this field since 1972 both in Australia and overseas (USA, Germany). He is at present preparing a book on Gugadja ethno-physiology, Good Spirits Cold and Dry: the ethno physiology of a western desert tribe.

The journal paper was written for a Sydney-based medical journal.

MANY DOCTORS STRESS the fact that there is a wide area of misunderstanding of sickness and medical terms between trained medical personnel and the ordinary lay person. If this creates such difficulties in health-care delivery in our western society, how many more difficulties do the physiological concepts of the Aborigines bring about? How do they regard health? How do they consider the body to function? What role does each part of the body play? What are the folklore treatments for sickness? What parts of the body are regarded as 'rubbish' parts, as of no use in the body? Some research has been done into the plants used as traditional remedies, but little has been done on basic physiological terms and concepts. The writer is engaged in this area of research in order that those involved in health-care delivery can gain some understanding of the Aborigines' view of health and sickness and enable them to bring western scientific medicine to the Aborigines in a form that is related to their culture and patterns of thought. One elderly Gugadja man once described to the writer a plant which is still used medicinally, as 'good medicine, good dry'. He was referring to *wanda-gabi-gabi* – *Melothria maderaspatana* (L.) Cogn. which is used as a bush-medicine to treat wounds, burns and abrasions. Good health consists in 'coldness' and 'dryness' in the body. So what produces 'coldness' in

the body, be it a traditional medicine or a modern antibiotic, would also be described in these terms by tribally-orientated Aborigines in the western desert areas of Australia.

Some writers maintain that the Aborigines should revert to traditional remedies for sickness. They maintain that western medicine is an interference in the customs and practices of Aboriginal culture. The very fact that the people are sick and are coming for or have medical attention brought to them indicates that the people find themselves in a situation where survival is put before adherence to cultural norms. Those involved in health-care delivery must therefore have a knowledge of the patients' culture, to realise and understand the cultural problems and conflicts involved. There must be a compromise between the demands of modern medical practice and hygiene and their traditional life-style with its own folklore remedies. The traditional Aboriginal medical concepts and practices were functional for maintaining their continued existence in relation to their environment. This medicine, however, is inadequate in the face of the rapid cultural evolution as is experienced in western contact and modernisation. However, for minor complaints and emergency first-aid treatment, traditional first-aid treatment might be used. For example, the desert Aborigines consider smoke in the ear will force a fly or insect stuck in there to come out, running a distance will alleviate vomiting, rubbing the front of the throat by another person's hands will cause a large bit of meat stuck there to descend into the gullet and rubbing with spittle will make insect bites better.

Some consider the traditional healer or tribal doctor should play a greater part in Aboriginal health-care delivery. This idea is based on a false notion of the tribal doctor. He is the one who has contact with dreamtime and therefore could alleviate the spiritual cause of sickness. He was mainly consulted when a person's sickness was of a mysterious nature and could not be cured by folklore medicines, a knowledge of which every Aborigine had, although some women were more knowledgeable in this respect than many men or women. The tribal doctors do have a role to play in modern health-care delivery in that they perform acts and ritual which give the sick inspiration, restoration of confidence and psychological comfort. He works through the strength of his personality and has control through the use of his power over the evil spirit, called 'ginyu' in Gugadja. This evil spirit causes disease and death. It manifests itself as one or many large cats or dogs and bites people in their dreams. The tribal doctor has control over an area which is not one of prime concern to the 'white-fellow' doctor and performs a role for the tribally-orientated Aborigines something akin to the psychologist in a western hospital.

To conclude this paper I would like to point out the role the medical anthropologist and the linguist have to play in health-care delivery, as they can understand the culture of the people and can co-operate with medical personnel in translating and expressing in an Aboriginal way of thinking their diagnostic enquiries. They can also assist in educating the people in hygiene and health education. The way this assistance can be given may be illustrated by the writer who translated for the older people at Balgo the questions put to them by members of the National Trachoma Programme on their visit to the Mission during 1977. The people were asked which way the large 'E' on the optical chart was pointing. I asked the people in Gugadja whether the 'feet' and 'hands' of the white man's 'mili-mili' (book or paper – a corruption of the English word 'mail') pointed, east or west, not to the right or to the left. Of course the eye-test could have been more efficiently carried out had the optical chart showed illustrations of a kangaroo hopping in different directions.

REVIEW ARTICLE

JOSE COMBLIN: *THE MEANING OF MISSION*

M.J. WILSON MSC

JOSE COMBLIN IS a Belgian theologian and social critic who has worked in Latin America since 1958. He was expelled from Brazil after teaching theology for seven years at the Theological Institute in Recife. He now teaches at the Catholic University of Chile, at Talca, and professes also at the Catholic University of Louvain.

His book, *The Meaning of Mission*, is an English translation edited in 1977 by Orbis Books Maryknoll (paperback 1978) of 'Atualidade da Teologia da Missão' which appeared in *Revista Eclesiastica Brasileira* 1972-73.

The book attempts to outline a theology of mission, something that would pass beyond the little developed and partial stage of 'missiology' as being a version of general ecclesiology applied to the special field of 'foreign' missions. It would attempt to state a theology of the mission that is central to the Church and would be equally applicable to the work of evangelisation done among 'pagan' nations as to the Church's work in the neo-pagan countries of Christendom.

This review article aims to collect together the main trends of Comblin's thesis and note their application to the Church's 'mission' work in northern Australia. For a complete and ordered presentation of his ideas the reader is simply advised to get a copy of the book itself (\$8.95 from Chevalier Press).

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Comblin sees the mission of the Church as being no more and no less than a continuation of the mission of Jesus Christ himself. Jesus stressed repeatedly that he was 'sent' and that he 'came'. In his turn he sent out others: apostles are 'those sent' (*apostoloi*). He was sent into the world and sent them likewise into the world. 'World' does not mean something abstract like the spatio-temporal continuum: it means men and women. In particular it means men and women in need of being saved. One might add the theological gloss that this means everybody. However, in Jesus' own mind it seemed to mean particularly those whose condition is manifestly such: the people very conscious of their need or easily able to be convinced of it, being publicly

accounted sinners and outcasts. 'I have come to call, not the self-righteous, but sinners' (Mark 9:13). It means the socially disreputable, the people of little account – in general, the 'poor'. In the bible the poor are antiposed to the rich and powerful, who have become such precisely by exploiting others and so making them 'poor'. The poor are the victims of injustice. The 'world' in the sense in which men and women refuse to accept Jesus' saving message are those who are the manipulators and beneficiaries of the systems of injustice and exploitation, who precisely by being such feel no need of being saved from injustice. The 'sin' of the world that Jesus comes to take away is every system, individual or social, that oppresses others. The means of doing so is the sublime and simple message that people should love one another, not use or oppress them. Thus those who are saved will be persons who have been set free, liberated, either from being victims of systems of oppression or from the 'sin' of being manipulators of the system.

It is very misleading to say that the gospel, Jesus' message, is not 'social' or 'political'. It is quite true in the sense that he did not propose to replace one system of social or political injustice by some other particular social or political system. All systems are in fact ambiguous. Social and political revolutions in history are generally processes of replacing one system of oppression by another differently oppressive system – military leaders being replaced by landed gentry, then by the merchant class, then by manipulators of the workers – and the 'poor' remain at the bottom of the heap all the time, with various accretions and losses. In large communities there has to be some system of regulation. If all individual men and women were free in themselves and loved one another, the political and social system they lived by would be a just one. But the fact is that because of the 'sin' of the world, i.e. structured injustice, political and social systems are always unjust to varying extents. As such they are opposed to Christ's message, which therefore in a very true though negative sense is both social and political. For this reason political systems that are manifestly unjust and exploitative of the 'poor' quite logically treat Christ's followers as criminals in the eyes of the state.

There is an awkward dialectic involved in the historical process of evangelisation (cf. pp.134ff). To the extent that it is successful, it starts to fail! A missionary comes to a 'pagan' people. They hear Christ's message and begin fitting it into their cultural system. To the extent that it becomes acculturated, it becomes part of a socio-political system that is more or less unjust – because of the fact of the 'sin' of the world, every system oppresses one or other class of persons. By being part, however uncomfortably, of an unjust system the evangelising church starts to fail from proposing and living Christ's message in its true form. Thus Christianity, having been outlawed by the Roman state, won over the emperor and the invading nations. Christendom was formed, and the Church quite quickly fell away from success into disgrace and disrepute, and these days we are living with the neo-paganism of the so-called 'post-christian era'.

In fact, Comblin maintains, Jesus did not come to start a new 'religion' in the sense of a pre-determined socio-religious structure. His message was addressed to the hearts of individual men and women: he told them that the kingdom of God was within them. He did propose the rudiments of a system of *service*, modelled on his own behaviour, as a practical expression of the love of one another that he enjoined. The world in Jesus' time was divided on the one hand into his own people, the members of the synagogue, and on the other the 'pagans' with their systems of institutionalised mythologies. His followers (as Paul expounded his message) were to be free of the oppression of the Judaic law: Jesus did not found a new synagogue. The mythologies of the pagans, as human figments, were to fade away before Jesus who came to bring light to the world, as mists do before the rising sun. From the very beginning Jesus' followers, the Church,

have had to struggle against the backward drag of becoming institutionalised into a new synagogue, a new form of control, that is, oppression over people who, being saved by Christ's Spirit, are henceforth free with the freedom of the children of God. Likewise, Comblin proposes (p.62) we are still not quite removed from the influence of the early pagan mythologies, e.g. in saying that we were saved by the *sacrifice* of Christ's death, whereas it is the *risen* Christ who brings salvation. And he finds the feudal notion of his death as *satisfaction* a 'frankly horrible rationalisation'. More importantly, he sees the dynamic whereby the Church becomes assimilated into one specific cultural system as a return to paganism, where religion is subject to ordinary human authority and the Spirit has been tamed and shackled.

The Church, as the collection of the followers of Jesus, is an ongoing reality because of the work of Christ's Spirit. He is the Spirit of love who has been poured into our hearts, making us free, sons of God, co-heirs with Christ . . . The Spirit impels men and women to accept Christ's message and to try to live by its precept of love. When the Church by the push and pull of social forces starts to become diverted from its real nature either by becoming identified with secular structures (return to 'paganism') or by withdrawing into itself as an elitist and separatist ghetto no longer evangelising the world (regression to synagogue), then the Spirit calls it back to its main state and task. The Spirit does this through the 'signs of the times'. This phrase has become widely used especially since Vatican II. (Vatican II itself would be one of the main signs of our times.)

Comblin understands the 'signs of the times' as words and deeds of men and women performed under the influence of the Spirit. As a call to the Church, they must come from the enlivening principle of the Church, the Spirit. They cannot be mere physical events: these are neutral in significance. As signs they mark the end of an era, they indicate a time of transition and they signalise the way the Church should move afresh. The people with such sign value deliver the Spirit and summons to the Church and 'make present the activity of Jesus in a period of transition similar to the one in which he himself lived' (p.111). They are not necessarily christians themselves (p.47).

In summary form (pp.114-5) Comblin proposes that people in the world today are doing three sorts of things that look like being significant for the Church as Christendom is petering out: they are looking for a new christian community in a new world; they are choosing poverty as a call for a just society and protest against oppression; and the common Christian, without Orders or religious profession, is becoming the model of christian living.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Comblin's book is not long: 142 pages. There is obviously more in it than I have been able to express in a couple of pages. One may feel like questioning a statement or phrase here and there, but one gets the overall impression of an insight that is substantially valid. It makes sense of so much that is happening.

What does such a book have to say to those of us working on an Aboriginal 'mission' in the NT?

Firstly, in carrying Christ's message to Aboriginal people we are certainly carrying it to people he himself would have gone to. They are victims of oppression by the powerful in that they were dispossessed of most of their land by force, were reduced to about a quarter of their numbers overall and quite wiped out in places, are living as marginalised people in many parts of Australia, as the 'poor' in the precise biblical sense of the term.

Secondly, our recent attempts at restitution have generally been made in terms of inducting them into the societal structures of oppression that are the bane of Western society. Capitalism and plutocracy are surely structures as warped by the 'sin' of the world as any others. Their traditional structure had its own forms of violence and oppression: at the same time, while avoiding a false romanticism, one should remember significant incidents like the group in the Kimberleys when first told of Christ's Sermon on the Mount approved of it as a description of their own traditional ideal (cf. Mary Durack, *The Rock and the Sand*, 1969:64).

Thirdly, Comblin sees the problem of the Church in the West as being basically different from that of the Church amongst such people as the Australian Aborigines. In the West the Church has lost the power of outreach to others. The Church was being 'maintained by biological reproduction'. 'Conversions were no longer taking place, except among peoples who had followed animist religions and were now looking for a more universal religion. (They were ready for christianity, as it were, and no real mission effort was necessary in many instances.)' (p.122) – On the one hand, as part of their enforced adaptation to the powers in the land, the Aboriginal people were more or less forced to give at least external assent to christianity. Which means that the missionary approach was in a significant way too easy and may often have failed really to present its essential challenge to the Aboriginal peoples in response to which they would become genuinely christian. – On the other hand, recent-day encouragement of cultural revival and the actual re-establishment of traditional ceremonies in an atmosphere of protest at past cultural destruction mean an obstruction to the proper presentation of the challenge essential to christianity. Christianity is deformed, Comblin proposes, if it is simply integrated into a specific cultural system, and to the extent that it is. The word of the Spirit cannot be subjugated to a purely human system. The big effort in the Church today is at contextualisation, adaptation. But Christianity is properly adapted to a culture, not when it has become a part of the system but when it can challenge that culture from within, in its own terms. When we white missionaries present to Aborigines the gospel appeal to conversion from the 'sin' of personal and social injustice, it is too easily the case that we are inviting them to rebirth and renewal from our western forms of injustice, not from theirs. So, once more we miss. Moreover, how can a religion that is stressing its separatist, esoteric character be open to christian influence in the first place or respond to its universalist and liberating direction in consequence? This is quite a problem for us today in the north.

Fourthly, Comblin insists that the transmission of Christ's message is a work of the Spirit. One does not need to be under the influence of Christ's Spirit to undertake many of the works that absorb most of our missionary effort, e.g. administering the affairs of a community, establishing and running good schools and hospitals (cf. pp.42-3). One must be attentive to the Spirit and the 'signs of the times' to make sure we have not been diverted by good works from the proper task of presenting Christ's message. – Raymond Pannikar, as reported in *Sedos* September 1981, 81/No.13, pp.253-5, likewise underlines the need of discernment in continuing to run as Church agencies works of education, medical care and social uplift that may have started as (quite proper for the Church) 'direct methods of apostolate' but have now become (improper) 'indirect methods', from which the Church should withdraw so as to redirect its efforts towards areas where salvation is more directly at risk, e.g. towards the struggle for human justice in its various forms, economic, racial, religious etc.

Fifthly, because Christ's work will carry on and the Spirit will not fail to be operative, we should not let frustration destroy our hope or lose faith just because we feel lost before the problems. The Spirit *will* speak in a clear way through the 'signs of the times', that is, through other people, charismatic persons like the prophets of Israel, who will probably not be 'experts'

(cf. p.48 – all the same Comblin considers Thomas Aquinas was one in his own time, p.112) and need not even be christians but people like Jesus' 'Samaritan' or a Roman centurion (cf. p.47).

So today, in our work on the Aboriginal 'missions' it must be worth our while to look around for some signs the Spirit may be speaking through, remembering Comblin's suggestions of three classes of contemporary sign people recorded above.

M.J. WILSON MSC

NELEN YUBU MISSIOLOGICAL UNUT

1982

In 1982 NYMU will shift from Santa Teresa in the Centre to Darwin. It will be based in a house rented for its use in the proximity of Nungalinya College, that is, in or near Casuarina. It will work in close association with the Anglican and Uniting Churches in their joint enterprise, Nungalinya College.

Nungalinya College has already sent out to Catholic parishes and missions in the NT advance notices of the Orientation Course that will be run by the College in association with NYMU May 31 – July 16 1982. Enrolment forms will be available in the New Year.

Other special courses, workshops etc. will be arranged according to need and opportunity as the year goes on.

The Director of NYMU will be in Kiribati (Gilbert Islands) during January 1982 for a mission conference on the theme of inculturation and a diocesan retreat.

Any correspondence up to late January may be sent to the Secretary at her southern residence (4/17 Jersey Ave, Leura NSW 2781). Until other arrangements are made, the NYMU postal address in Darwin will be: PO Box 547, Darwin, NT 5794.

The *Nelen Yubu* staff wishes a happy Christmas to all readers. I am sure all well-wishers of NYMU will commend our new ecumenical direction to God's provident care. One presumes that in view of his Son's prayer for unity (John ch.17) he will be very much on side with the venture.

M.J. WILSON MSC
Director,
Nelen Yubu Missiological Unit