

Editorial

We salute the Pallottines on the centenary of their apostolic endeavours in Australia. In this context we introduce Sr Brigida Nailon's very readable account on page 37; also Peter Bindon's brief overview of their work in 'A Century of Effort' pages 25–36.

Fr Frank Fletcher msc continues with Chapter 2 of his book in progress on Aboriginal spirituality. He is looking for a way that would enable him as a 'Western christian' of the modern age to respond to the inner dynamism of a primal religion like Aboriginal spirituality. He is looking for a *bridge* between the two. He finds the first half of the bridge in Plato—whom he calls 'perhaps the greatest Greek philosopher' [my Aristotelian soul, or maybe mind, shudders]. The second half is St Augustine. Heady stuff. Worth contemplating.

Like Frank, Dan O'Donovan also is writing chapters that will appear in a book on Christianity – Aboriginal spirituality on the very practical level of contemplative prayer life, *dadirri*. He looks at that ideal Christian, Francis of Assisi.

I am particularly delighted to be able to publish Little Sister Michèle's practical personal illustration of the way people living at the very interface between the daily culturally formatted way of life and Christianity lived in a simple pure form are the real theologians. A bead design can say volumes—volumes that the people would never read in any case.

Martin Wilson msc

Editor

Congratulations to Brother Eddie Bennett msc for being awarded the Order of Australia Medal (General Division) in the recent Queen's Birthday Honours List.

'For service to religion and to the community of the Northern Territory through the Catholic Church, particularly the communities of Melville Island and Alice Springs.'

Bible Stories Are Stories of Place

Little Sister Michèle¹

Editor: I shall quote from Little Sister Michèle's covering letter to me to give the setting for her presentation of the bible story:

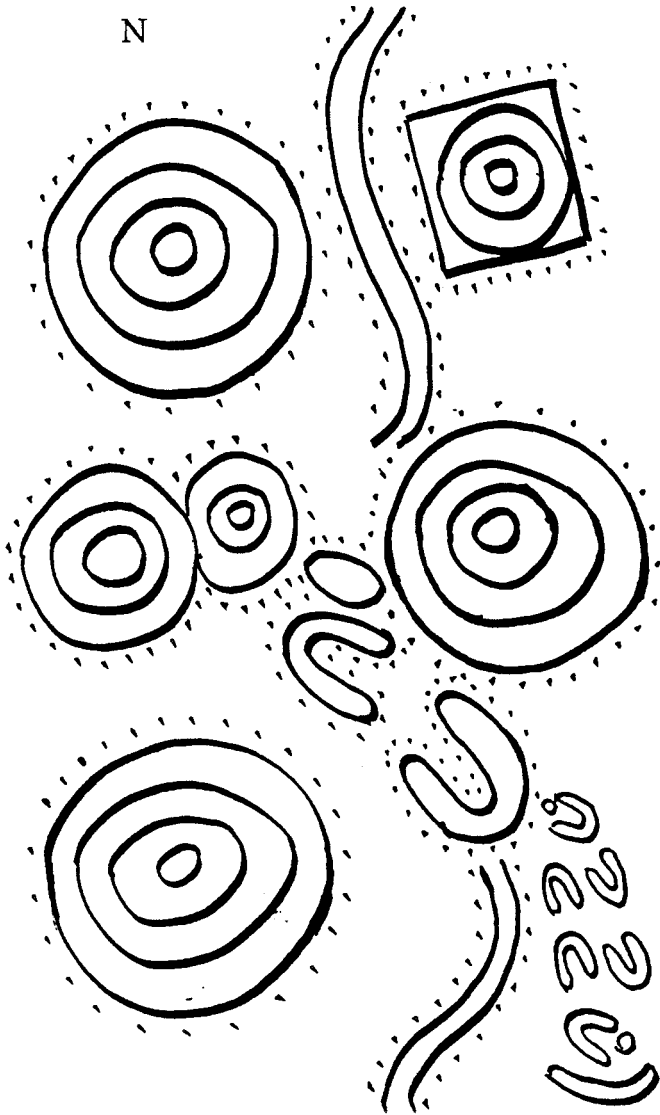
I've always had in mind that you invited us to write things from here for *Nelen Yubu* with lots of kind encouragements.

So on the off chance that it might be interesting, I've written up my version of "Jesus Meets the Woman at the Well". It started when I tried out making a picture of it the Warlpiri way. I had to put together for myself the network of story lines that intersect at Jacob's Well. I've written everything I found, though when I 'read' my picture to friends and neighbours here I tell a few details one time, then a few details the next time they ask to hear the story. And I must say I haven't yet story-told the obscure parts, like the events from the book of Judges or II Kings. But I thought people who read your magazine might like completeness, which has been part of the delight for me too.

From people around, I've had a lot of delighted response looking at the picture, and people looking at it for a long time. There's no problem to anybody's mind that I've done a dreaming I had the right to, one that 'belongs' to me. I also used a medium nobody else has tried yet, bead-weaving, which makes people say 'Oh, pretty,' but hasn't yet made anybody ask, Show me how to do that. Though it's only been a few weeks.

I SAT DOWN THE OTHER DAY to make a picture of Jesus Meets the Woman at the Well, using iconography like the Warlpiri painters around me use. Bible stories are always stories of place, but I'd chosen this one because the sacred sites of the place are also part of the plot of the story. So, if you'll come along with me, I'll tell the story the way it comes out if you get your story line more from place than from time. It has turned out a delight for me, who started out taking for granted that Word transmits the Sacred and am gradually learning from Aboriginal people that Place does too.

¹ Michèle Cruvant is a Little Sister of Jesus and lives with her companions Magali and Claire at Yuendumu on the Tanamari Road in the NT. She has been there for twelve years.



The woman of Sychar comes to her village well. To her west are the twin Sacred Peaks but at the moment they cast no shadow, for noon is glaring down. Ebal is northwards, Gerizim southwards, and between them in their foothills the site of the Sacred Oak Tree. For the old name of this place is Shechem. When Abraham reached that sacred oak already tended by the local Canaanite people, he saw a vision of God who confirmed to him that he had well and truly arrived in the land God had called him away from his home to promise him. Abraham was at the geographical centre of the Promised Land when he reached here. And for the first time in that land that was mysteriously to be his, he built an altar and offered a sacrifice to the God who had revealed himself to him.

Jacob, the third generation to live in Canaan, often camped at Shechem. He even bought and paid for a piece of land in this plain below the Hivite hill city, the very place where this well stands, for Jacob was the one who had it dug. He had meant to bequeath it to his favourite son Joseph. But Joseph was cut off when still a teenager, not cut off from life itself, as it turned out, but cut off from any career in his own land. All he kept was his hope to be buried here, and when Israel came out of Egypt 400 years after they had taken refuge under Joseph's administration there, they brought his mortal remains and built a tomb for him. You can see the tomb from here still now.

The woman gets her daily water from this sacred well, in the lee of the great ceremony mountains Ebal and Gerizim. As the tribes returned to their land from Egypt and the 40 years of purification in the great deserts southwest, Joshua called a halt here. They had already halted just west of the Jordan, at the gateway to their country, to renew the covenant of circumcision. Here at the centre they renewed the covenant of Law and promised to keep renewing it with a ceremony for all the tribes. Six tribes to stand before Mt Gerizim, chanting the blessings on the conduct God desires, six tribes to stand before Mt Ebal chanting the curses on the actions God hates.

If this were a creation story, perhaps the mountains would be said to spring up precisely because the Hebrews arrived at this spot. But we are told they came knowing the peaks would be here. Moses from the other side of the Jordan had directed them to this place out of the memories of their country passed down in the generations since Abraham, Isaac and

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Jacob. We are telling another layer of the holy stories here, not a creation story but a revelation story. The spirit in this sacred place is the remembrance of what God wants people to do. Both the returning Hebrews and the local Hivites consecrated the Sacred Tree to 'the Lord of the Covenant'.

Joshua set up a stone on Mt Ebal with the whole Law painted on it. Or perhaps he set it up on Mt Gerizim, which is what the people say who have lived here continuously till the time of our woman now coming to draw water. Then it would be the people of the Jerusalem tradition who wrote it down differently, maybe to discredit local memory. Every reforming king in Jerusalem in the 400 year monarchy of Judah tried to downplay—if not destroy—all sacred places but the one. A kind of theological symbol, 'One God, one nation, one sanctuary'. And of course some political implications. Since the exiles returned from Babylon, that doctrine has been still more rigorously promoted. And the people who kept devotion to this place have been more rigorously despised.

Joshua came back and set up a second stone here, at the end of his life when all the tribes were settled each in their place in the country. He set it up under the Sacred Oak, then had the Law read from start to finish to the people. 'Will you obey these commandments of God for all time?' he asked them. 'Most certainly', they proclaimed. 'This rock has heard you say it', he said, 'and will accuse you when you slide away.'

This is the place where a woman now advances towards the well and towards a stranger sitting on its rim. It is ground holy with the intersecting lines of revelation stories, and holy again for another reason. It is holy with the blood that has been shed here, from the time of that first massacre when Jacob's sons Simon and Levi tricked the son of the local ruler Shechem was the prince's name—who wanted to marry their sister. 'All you need to do is be circumcised by our Law,' they told him, 'you and your people.' And the next day while they were still in pain, Simon and Levi slaughtered them all. Their blood is in the ground, crying out to God, as blood does, and the blood of all the other killings remembered here. Maybe the tug of these bloodstains had something to do with it when Shechem was named among the Cities of Refuge, where a person who had killed someone else could take refuge from the

vengeance party and the cycle of violence would be broken. Not that City of Refuge didn't become a title of irony sometimes. In the days of Gideon's Shechemite son and successor, the vicious Abimelech, for example. The faction rebelling against him took refuge in the very precinct of the Sacred Oak. Abimelech had his forces burn the sanctuary down with everyone still inside and announced, 'No blood has flowed.'

Shechem could have the title City of Division if it claimed. It was here that the tribes of the North broke with Solomon's heavy-handed son Rehoboam and went their own way. That division is also central to the plot of the story of the woman at the well we're telling now. And you my audience who know the continuations for 2000 further years, know this place by the name of Nablus which was very likely in the news from the Intifada you heard most recently. Joseph's tomb received a bomb just two years ago.

The woman of Sychar approaches her well and the stranger sitting there. The man is clearly tired, clearly coming from the south, coming, it is easy to guess, from Jerusalem at the end of the Passover pilgrimage season. She guesses too that he considers himself superior, he a man and she a woman, he of the orthodox observers and she of the heretics. He ought to have maintained the haughty silence of his separated dignity, but he tells her he is thirsty. She suddenly feels she has a certain edge. This is her country, her village well, she is among her own sacred places, and besides she is the one with the bucket.

Shall I tell the story the Aboriginal way? Skip some parts and give you the pleasure of thinking: Yes, this is one of my stories, I know this story. I know Jesus will tell the woman he can give water of much greater power than mere drinking water and that in their battle of words he will suddenly melt her heart by making her feel known through and through.

Maybe she has been waiting for many years hugging to herself the question she asks next till the moment when someone might have a new way of solving it. Maybe it occurs to her on the spur of the moment to ask. Which sacred places are valid? The ones you mob claim or the ones I've always been told? The national ones or the local ones? The mainstream? or the minority?

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Just two chapters before this Jesus was there at the rival sacred mountain in Jerusalem, bitterly offended to see the house of prayer looking like a den of thieves. At that time he talked of 'temple' with a new and mysterious meaning. He used the word to mean his own personal inner life, just the same way now his talk has transformed the meaning of 'water'. And when the disciples, who are at present missing out on this whole conversation because they've gone off to the shop to get them all something for lunch, come back, Jesus will want to give 'food' another meaning too.

What are we to gather from Jesus' answer, 'Neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem, but in spirit and in truth'? Is he going one step further than all the Jewish reforms till now and saying 'No sacred sites at all'? He certainly has reason to worry about the potential for corruption a sacred site carries, when there are some people who get their social status and their living from it. And he might well be heartbroken about the mutual exclusion the woman's question implies, with devotion to one site or another used to define the outsiders and the insiders. But what about our need for roots? What about our reverence for sacred memory and sacred transmission?

It is more likely, though, that Jesus is telling us something like this. Where Spirit and Truth are in those that stand at a sacred place, yes, it is a sacred place. It is more likely he was opening our eyes to a new level of meaning for all the humble 'things' of our experience, water and food and thirst and harvest and place of worship. From the inside, it must come from the inside, from the sincerity of the human heart. It is a point Jesus seems to keep coming back to.

Bible stories too are stories of place. They are True Stories, therefore, which leave their spiritual power in the earth to attest to the events that happened there. But Jesus has told the woman of Sychar something more. The spiritual power also makes its home inside you. Then everywhere you go you bring the sacred, and should you go about without that inner spirit nothing will be sacred or true on your path.

IS THERE A BRIDGE?

Frank Fletcher msc¹

Jaded clerics whose faith has long ebbed away discover a profound spirituality in Aboriginal religious beliefs.

Ron Brunton, Institute of Public Affairs²

White man got no dreaming,

him go 'nother way

White man, him go different

Him go road belong himself.

Muta, traditional Aboriginal man,
Wadeye, Northern Territory³

IS THERE ANY BRIDGE between the spiritual heritage of the indigenous people and modern western Christianity? Or, are they simply opposed to one another? This is the fundamental issue to be faced at the beginning of this project.

Brunton's words about the jaded clerics drip with irony. For him those clerics who believe they have discovered religious genius in the indigenous mythic religion must have lost their Christian faith!

I stand with the poor clerics. I have not lost Christian faith whilst I do believe there is a genius we need to discover in the Aboriginal heritage. Further, I would wager that Brunton's mockery itself derives from his dwelling within a myth of the modern west.

The statement of the bewildered Muta to Professor Stanner, a prince among anthropologists, comes from a viewpoint directly opposite to that

¹ This is Chapter 2 of Frank's book in preparation *Jesus and the Dreaming*, the first chapter of which appeared in the previous *Nelen Yubu*, #77:1-10.

² Ron Brunton, anthropologist, *The Australian*, April 2001.

³ W E H Stanner, *White Man Got No Dreaming: Essays 1938-1973*. Australian University Press, Canberra, 1979. Frontispiece.

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of the modern west. To this traditional man, in the first half of the 20th century, western Christians' lack of a mythic dreaming appeared to disregard the whole ground of existence and meaning. His final sentence is telling: *him* (white man) *go road belong himself*. Muta, understandably, had not perceived that the fundamental structure within his dreaming could fit with the experiencing of Christian faith.

The relationship of the mythic dreaming to Christianity cannot be adequately treated by setting out a summary of indigenous beliefs and contrasting this with a summary of relevant Christian beliefs. One must proceed, rather, by seeking for the structure within consciousness both of ourselves as modern Christians and of the descendants of the primal people. To this purpose let me relate something that began for me over thirty years ago.

In 1971 I spent about a week on an island off the coast of Eastern Papua, living with the resident missionary, an MSC confrere. I had not long returned from studies overseas where I had managed to visit a number of places in North America, Europe and Asia. My confrere urged me to go into the mission school and talk to the children of my travels. 'They know only this island', he said. 'Tell them of your visit to all these places on the map. Bring it alive for them.' So I ventured into the classroom and told the wondering children of my great journeys. They listened politely. However, at the end there was excitement on one side of the room. A few of them were whispering together. Then one girl raised her hand shyly. I welcomed this. 'You have a question. Wonderful. What is it?' The girl said, 'We are thinking: who are your ancestors?' I was not ready for this question; but from the quickening within the group I knew it was important. Yet I felt bowled out. I replied that I had no mythic ancestors. They kept looking at me. So I offered a vague account of how my grandparents' families came to Australia. I saw their interest fading. There was no sacred drama, no 'opening of existence'.

Alone afterwards I felt a surprising anxiety. My first line of reflection was dismissive. Ancestor stories are just imagination, neither rational nor real. Faith in Christ has replaced all myths. Then came an unsettling question: if it is simply unreal, why are you feeling 'empty' as if something lost is touching you?

Years later I started to look at primal myths and I was struck by the animal and cosmic presences in them. The mixture of the primeval and the aesthetic made me wonder how early did myths develop? Did they begin back in the evolution of the human animal from *homo habilis* of 2.6 million years ago or only from modern *homo sapiens* of upwards of 60,000 years ago? Our species emerged into consciousness as participating almost nakedly in the uncertain life of the earth, exposed to its seasons and to its wild creatures. Indigenous cultures worldwide share a sense of participation within the land. Their souls are attuned, in a way we have largely lost, to the spontaneities of earth life. They found in themselves a capacity to sense the rhythms of the land. With clap sticks and drums they found a rhythmic beat. Along with dances, chants and cries the beat of sticks would have roused the subconscious. Together with their aeons of solitude within the land, the rousing of the subconscious soul in ceremony evoked a receptivity to mystery. They moved instinctively from surface appearances to ascend to a spirit world. To this higher spirit world they attributed their origins, their ancestral beings. Initiations and ceremonies taught the young to make this ascent to the dreaming world. The genius of the primal people was in this ascent. The primal myths brought the rhythms of their land and the spirit world together, often with great wisdom.

The scholar of primal religion, Mircea Eliade, notes the deep reverence of primal people for the sacred, that is, for the 'otherness' of the spirit world. Eliade insisted that the ancestral spirits, in their journeys which shaped the land, constituted what was *really real*. The sacred was the really real. All else was to be seen in its numinous light. Meaning was attained by a 'repeating' of the sacred ancestral deeds in ceremony and in law. This 'repeating' through symbolisms was the beginning of the sacramentalism at the heart of Christian life especially in its older traditions, the Orthodox and the Catholic.

Reverence for the sacred in the patterns of the ancestral spirits within the land fitted well with the primal situation of living within the land. It tended to conserve that situation. However, the human relationship with the land changed with the onset of the agricultural revolution, 12,000 years ago. Crops were cultivated, towns and, later, states grew up. The

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mythic participatory consciousness did not disappear but it came into tension with the changing situations of history.

A notable modification was that of the Hebrews. Their God Yahweh came to be understood as world transcendent and personal. Their prophets asserted that ancestral spirits within the land were not compatible with the worship of the transcendent Yahweh. A noted scholar of this period, Eric Voegelin, lauded Israel's achievement in its biblical presentation of ancestral figures such as Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and Moses. Whatever their mythic qualities, the Hebrew patriarchs were portrayed in the scriptures as thoroughly human beings. They were not to be looked-back-to as the only *really real*, but were presented as models for those who had to face the changing fortunes of history in partnership with the Divine.

Plato—the first half of the Bridge

The tension between the conservative tendency of the mythic dreaming and the drawing toward a form of existence adjusting to the changeable fortunes of history was also noted in post-primal Greece. There arose among its people the desire to be subjects of their own history rather than subservient to the gods. Interestingly, this demand had first to emerge in mythic form.

In the period prior to the philosopher Socrates (born 469BC), the Greek myths personified the changing attitudes in their post primal inner life. One such myth was that of Prometheus. He was a member of the Titan family, primordial spirit beings of gigantic size and strength. He was quite a lawless figure, unwilling to stay within accepted boundaries. This Titan was the maker of human beings whom he shaped out of clay. For their sake he surged up Mt Olympus to the seat of the gods to steal the sacred fire and bring it down to earth. For this disrespect towards the sacred, Zeus, the father of the gods, had Prometheus chained to a rock where his liver was daily gnawed by a vulture.

Myths, it is commonly said, are the dreams of a people. As with dreams, the mythic story is not literally true. There were no such beings as Titans, no Prometheus and so on. Is it, then, merely unreal? On the contrary, it is powerfully real. It portrayed the drastic change in the inner

life of the Greeks. The brilliance of its images shake us even now: for instance, the stealing of fire from the gods and bringing it down to earth, into the power of humans. In the myth, too, we feel the participatory power of its symbols. The Greek mind felt itself drawn to take part in the passionate action of the ancestral figure whilst, at the same time, facing the terror of what this heroic *hubris* might entail.

The fire of the gods might also symbolise the Greek discovery of *NOUS* which began the human project of self-realisation. The Greek word, *NOUS* [*νοῦς*], whilst usually translated as mind, did not understand it as Reason in the 18th century rationalistic meaning. *NOUS* signified the deep human desire, firstly, to know the what, how and why of everything; secondly, to find the direction for a worthwhile and moral life; thirdly to live in accord with the divine as the world-transcendent measure of human life.

The Greeks, by coming to awareness of the *NOUS* as three-fold desire, took possession of the drive to transcendence which is the spirit of the human subject. What do we mean by transcendence? One contemporary example of transcendence is the drive to send people and instruments into space, to explore the moon and the other planets. It is the human drive not to remain mentally bound down in one's present situation. This *élan* toward transcendence helps us to understand the work of the Greek philosopher Plato. He likened the fragmentariness of the human world to a shadowy cave. The drive to transcendence lifted his mind toward the fullness of intellectual light that is not present in this finite world. To be intelligible the finite good has to be illuminated by the Idea of the infinite and perfect Good. The infinite and perfect Ideas must dwell in a transcendent realm. Human understanding participates in a partial way in the light of this transcendent realm.

I want to suggest that this ascent of Plato to the light of a higher realm is relevant to our understanding of primal religion. To the question posed at the beginning: is there a bridge between the primal spirituality and western Christianity? I would propose that Plato, perhaps the greatest Greek philosopher, offers us the first half of the bridge. In

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support of this position I would appeal to Mircea Eliade in his *Cosmos and History*.⁴

Speaking of the primal religion's ascent from this world to the spirit world, Eliade wrote: 'it could be said that this "primitive" ontology has a Platonic structure...Plato could be regarded as the outstanding philosopher of the "primitive mentality" that is, as the thinker who succeeded in giving philosophic currency and validity to the modes of life and behaviour of archaic humanity. Obviously this in no way lessens the originality of his philosophic genius; for his great title to our admiration remains his effort to justify this vision of archaic humanity theoretically...'

If we accept Eliade's judgment on the structural kinship between Plato's philosophy of ascent and the primal spirituality of ascent, then the Greek discovery of *NOUS* or mind does not mean a total opposition to the primal, as is commonly thought. Of course, there is a tension between the two. Let me suggest that it is a tension of complementarity rather than of sheer contradiction.

St Augustine—the second half of the Bridge

Thanks to Eliade we can discern the basis of complementarity in that both share in the Platonic structure of ascent from the fragmentariness of this world to a higher realm which is the source of what we see and understand here.

I have noted already that in the *NOUS* the Greeks had discovered the spirit of the human subject, its *élan* towards transcendence. It was the transcendence that bore Plato's mind toward the fullness of intellectual light in a transcendent realm.

The primal people had made a discovery too. What they had discovered was the human soul (psyche). The psyche bears the subject's interaction of earthiness with spirit. This soul was the source of the earth symbols which evoked the hidden realities. Soul delights to dwell within the life of earth and to express its mysteries in ceremonies and mythic drama. Likewise it is in soul that mystery resonates.

⁴ Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History*, (Harper and Row, NY 1959) 34-35.

Spirit and soul together constitute the dynamism of the human subject. However, transcendence and soul need to be kept in balance with a dependence on one another. If one or other dominates there is an inauthenticity or even breakdown. An example of the dominance of transcendence over soul in the contemporary world is in the development and proliferation of nuclear weapons. The will to achieve and use such world-destroying technology manifests a rejection of bondedness with the earth and with fellow humans.

Clearly in the modern cultural form of human self-realisation there has been and remains a domination of transcendence: in that of primal culture there has been a domination of soul. Each culture has a considerable bias against the other. Thus the primal people have feared being drawn into the world-changing attitude of the west. They have deep anxiety that their cultural identity, with its profound sense of communal belonging, would be destroyed. Therefore they have hung on to whatever memories they have of their myths, ancestral stories, totemic affinities and so on.

The human self-realisation culture has disdained the sorcery, the superstition, the backward state, the images and fables of the primal people. These they considered signs of the barbarism which the Greeks had risen above. This insistence on superiority has contributed to the west's shameful treatment of the indigenous. Oddly, it has been the west's sorry record toward primal people which is a considerable factor in its suppressing of primal influences.

What is needed is a personal experience or the context of another culture which puts these two biased cultural views into a new and constructive light. I believe we can find this new context through the work of a follower of Plato who was converted to Christianity in 386 AD. He became bishop of Hippo in North Africa and a giant in Christian theology — St Augustine.

First, let us see how Augustine put Plato's philosophy into the context of another culture, the redemptive culture of Christianity. After his conversion Augustine used Platonism only as an instrument for his thinking as a Christian. His Platonic thinking, then, was not purely philosophical. The images of the Gospel, the symbols of Christian worship and his prayer were primary. The experience of the redeeming

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Mystery of Christ burst the frame of Platonic ascent. It was Christianity's power to deliver from moral impotence and to bring the forgiveness of sin that made the difference. Plato's philosophy oriented the human self toward a God who rested in *immovable* transcendence. Augustine, who had felt deeply the bondage of sin in his life, found a God who bent down in grace to welcome a sinner. Here was Something Other—a Beauty and a Goodness other than the perception of Beauty and of Goodness that is attained by ascent from the fragmentariness of this world. This Divine Beauty and Goodness, met in the crucified one, could never be reached by the transcendence, however desperate, arising from human desire or need.

The Divine Beauty and Goodness opened up a new kind of participation, a *redemptive* participation. A nation's moral failures, as shown in the scriptures, could also be forgiven. This offers the light to overcome the shame that lies deep in the bias against primal people. In a similar way, the teaching of the New Testament proclaims the redemptive love as poured out for *all* peoples especially for the poor. This offers the light to overcome the bias of the western claim to human superiority because of superior scientific development.

The Primal Affirmed

Let us now consider how Augustine's transformation of the Platonic ascent affirms the validity of the spiritual ascent of the primal people.

The movement from participation in this fragmentary world so that its very fragmentariness evokes a participation in a higher world of perfection was a favourite of Augustine's even after his conversion. However, his immersion in the mystery of redemptive love put this primal ascent into a new light. His mind and soul moved *downwards* from the light of divine Beauty in Christ to the created beauty which participates in the divine. The fact that he still used the ascent model shows that Augustine's Christian soul, in spite of the attraction he felt to begin from above with the divine, did not seek to reject his soul's attraction upwards. Augustine's soul beckoned him to move upwards as well as downwards.

In view of the example of Augustine, indigenous people should not find Christians discounting the ascent at the heart of their spiritual

heritage. Hopefully *their* ascent may be enriched by the experience of Christ's redemptive love as was the great African's. Such an outcome would offer them the light to overcome the fear that western Christianity would, of necessity, seek to destroy their spiritual identity.

There is another side to these reassuring considerations. We western Christians cannot simply assure indigenous people concerning the God of Love. The western track record of greed and insensitivity has to be confronted by a Christian love that is committed.

Turning back to the indigenous—if, in spite of the amount of failure by so-called Christians, they can accept the Divine Lover as one who has cared for them even in their ill-treatment, it will help them to overcome their anxiety in facing the road of history.

It may be objected that I have not been properly even-handed. I have asserted that Augustine burst the frame of the Platonic ascent to the realm of the Ideas, but affirmed the primal ascent as consonant with the Christian descent from above.

My argument goes back to my position that the Platonic ascent is an intellectual movement of transcendence whilst the primal ascent, however similar, is a movement of soul, of receptivity. The movement of intellectual transcendence arises from the western desire to know and to experience. Confronted by the Love and Goodness of the crucified, the limitation of an ascent merely from the drive of human transcendence is manifest.

In contrast, the primal beginnings arose from solitude and from a receptivity to symbols and mystery. They picked up the beat of the cosmos before they had any proper words for it. Whilst their myths fall far short of the mystery that is sought yet, because the primal movement is coming much less from transcendence, there remains an openness in the primal symbolisms.

I would also wager that Augustine, after his conversion, was able to keep the ascent from participation in the fragmentary world only because it seemed in tune with the contemplative downward experience.

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The project of this book must take many of these issues much further. Our modern culture has made transcendence more and more dominant over soul and over the receptivity to mystery. It is now even more Promethean, stealing the fire of heaven with the dire risk suppressed.

At the same time, through the indigenous people, we are re-awakening to the solitude of the bush and to the wonder of symbols. The voice of the primal soul is quietly questioning us.

FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Daniel O'Donovan¹

The following of Jesus is simple, but not easy.

THE SIMPLER ONE'S LIFE, the more open one is to becoming universal. Because, it is in simplicity that the vast majority of humankind is at one. Like understands like by intuition, so language is no impediment. The simple understand the simple and, in compassion of heart, embrace. By simple I mean, uncluttered, uncomplicated.

Jesus is the supreme example of this. We are not told he ever wrote anything, except that one time, when he 'wrote with his finger on the ground,' giving the woman's accusers a chance to sneak away (John 8,6). Jesus, in the love of his sacred heart, is the divine Universal. That is why, on the cross, he points all four ways: 'the length, the breadth, the height and the depth.' (Ephesians 3,18).

A thousand years later came Francis. He had no great liking for books either. For him, the Book of the Gospels and the Book of Nature were enough. They said everything we needed. He made them his rule of life, and struck again that chord of universality in what looks quite like a Syrian way.

Another thousand years on, in 1986, leaders of all the main religions of the world came together in his hometown, Assisi, to pray for world peace: Buddhist, Shinto, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Zoroastrian, Animist, yes, and Christian too, stood for a moment side by side as one, under the dome of the sky. They might just as well have met at Uluru, or anywhere. But Assisi was agreed upon because, well, Francis had so loved those hills and lanes.

¹ The Rice Bowl Hermitage, Beagle Bay WA.

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Francis, you see, had a message of peace, ecology and justice for all the world. It arose out of the cave of his heart. The cave was dark, but the inner Fire lit it up and allowed him to see clearly.

It is commonly claimed today—to the point almost of appearing axiomatic—that, first you must have justice, then ‘peace’ will flow across our planet. The Gospel says rather that it is out of peace—the messianic peace, originating within and moving outward in the form of love—that justice becomes loosed to flow, like a river from its mountain source watering the plains. Justice is a consequence, not a cause of peace. The one, and the other, come jointly out of the graced purified heart.

Francis’ vision started to take shape one day, when he was still young and wasting his life. Finding himself in a spot of trouble, he had slipped into the small church there, called *San Damiano*. He knelt down and poured out all his sorrows before an image of Christ on the cross. Jesus had spoken to him, saying he should go and repair the Church which was falling into ruins. Francis had thought he meant the church building where he was kneeling, so he set to work on it with brick, mortar and plaster. But Jesus had really meant the wider Church, and he was giving Francis a special work to do, like saint Paul before him.

When it finally dawned on him, Francis turned with all his heart to the Lord Jesus, his Saviour. Soon companions, more or less his own age, joined him, and after a while they grew into big numbers. People called them ‘Franciscans’. They lived poor, as Jesus had done, and really practised what the Gospel said about loving others.

Seeing how they lived, people around them were filled with wonder, because they had known them before. Everyone listened to them, as they could see they were doing what the Gospel said, that they were not haughty but truly humble, and that they were deeply in love with all God’s creation.

In the end, there was not much left of Francis. He had become ‘like a root out of dry ground’ (Isaiah 53,2): dry, because cave was all around it.

What was the secret of this simple poor man, who has captivated so many in his own day and in ours? By the light of the Fire in the cave of his heart, he had come to realise that all health, or wholeness (holiness)

consists here on earth in three things: holism, kinship and *wunan*. These three, however, need to work in unison.

When he started telling this to the ordinary people he met around the roads in his own country, they were surprised. He explained to them that they had only to look in the Gospels and they would find it. As for living it out in practice, Jesus who had done it before them would help them. Was he not God, who had come down to do that very thing, and gather them together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings?

Francis was known in his lifetime as 'il Poverello' (the Poor Man), because he knew that Jesus had lived a poor man's life, and wanted to follow him that way. With the poor people among whom he lived, he had a deep understanding of Nature, a love of Nature and a holy communion with Nature. He saw Nature as related to him, another part of him. He was wholly in 'sympathy' with Nature.

Two years before he died, while he was meditating quietly on a mountain called La Verna, and listening *dadirri-way*, a six-winged angel appeared, and wounded Francis in his body with the five wounds of the Crucified.

Some time later, he also went blind. The Franciscan Sisters looked after him, especially saint Clare. They gave him a humpie to live in, near where their own house was. At this time, he was suffering a lot. Not only had he the five wounds on his thin body, sometimes bleeding blood. He was sick and physically weak. 'For forty days or more,' we are told, 'Francis could not bear the light of the sun during the day or the light of the fire at night... He eyes caused him so much pain that he could neither lie down nor sleep.' The hut he was living in was crawling with mice.

But, one morning he called his companions around him, and said he would sing them a song he had made up during the night. He named it, *The Brother Sun Song*. It went like this, and he had his own tune for it:

Most high, all-powerful, all good, Lord!
all praise is yours, all glory, all honour
and all blessing.

Nelen Yubu

To you alone, Most High, do they belong.
No mortal lips are worthy
to pronounce your name.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through all that you have made.
And first my lord Brother Sun,
who brings the day; and gives us light.
How beautiful is he, how radiant in all his splendour!
Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Moon and Stars.
In the heavens you have made them, bright
and precious and fair.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,
both fair and stormy, all the weather's moods,
by which you cherish all that you have made.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Water,
so useful, lowly, precious and pure.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom you brighten up the night.
How beautiful he is, how full of cheer, of power and of strength.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Earth,
who feeds us in her sovereignty and produces
various fruits and coloured flowers and herbs.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Death,
from whose embrace no mortal can escape...
Praise and bless my Lord, and give him thanks,
and serve him with great humility.

Everything had become Brother and Sister and Mother to Francis, the animals too, who were never afraid of him.

Francis had a special love for Brother Fire: 'My brother fire,' he pleaded, 'that passes all else in grace, the Most High created you strong, beautiful and useful. Be kind to me in this hour, be courteous, so that I may bear it when you burn me gently. For I have loved you in the past in the Lord.'

The doctor, who was heating up the burning-iron, had decided to cauterise the skin on Francis' temples to help his eye sickness.

Always, Francis liked to go near fire; to sit beside it, look into the movement of the flames, and practise *dadirri* that way.

We have seen, in Gracie Greene's painting of the Jesus Dreaming,² that, in the Bible, fire is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. If you look again at that painting, you will see that the Holy Spirit is the mid-point of the whole canvas. So, 'living in the Spirit' means living in the divine Fire. In the Spirit, you become yourself 'seraphic'—a Hebrew word which means 'a fiery being,' a 'seraph.' You not only survive in the middle of the purifying flames, (read Daniel, chapter 3, with the added 'Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men', found in ecumenical Bibles), but from there, are able to sing your hymn of praise and thanksgiving for all creation.

This song of ours can even be completely silent. The Spirit (Fire) is then the singing within our heart. She prays in us, for us, 'with wordless groaning'. 'And the one who searches the heart—that is to say, God—knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for us in a divine way' (Romans 8, 26-27).

Living simply, and walking always with the poor, Francis was a happy man. Illumined by his faith, he had tasted and seen how sweet the Lord is. The living and dying of Jesus were his daily bread. Particularly those last three days of Christ's earthly life, which we call the Paschal Mystery.

Of the four Gospels, he liked John most of all. He had really understood and taken to heart the action of Jesus washing the disciples feet on the night before he suffered and died. And, when his own time came to leave this world, asked those around him to read that bit for him to comfort his soul:

Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end... He got up from supper, put aside his clothes and girded himself with a towel. Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded.

² *Nelen Yubis*, 76 (2000) centre page.

When he had washed their feet and put on his clothes again, he said: What I have done is give you an example that, as I have done to you, you do also to one another... (John 13, 1-5).

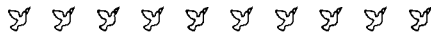
And that is exactly what Francis did, living a life of loving service of others. Whether they were friendly to him or not friendly didn't matter. What mattered was what Jesus had done, because that was the way to go.

After the feet-washing, and as part of the supper-meal, Jesus had also taken bread and wine which he said were his body and blood that he would give over for them the next day. They were to do this holy sacrament in the community when he was gone, as a reminder of him.

Now, Francis was not a priest, but he had a great hunger for this Bread of Life as the food that kept him going on his journey. His followers were the same. In that sacrament of the body and blood of Jesus, they found they were held together as community, even as crushed grains of wheat stayed together to make one loaf, and the crushed grapes to make the wine. They saw this as a mystery of divine communion in Love.

Not long after making up his *Brother Sun* song, the time came for Francis to die. Thinking then about how Jesus had died, he asked those with him to lay him naked on the bare ground. It was in this way that he offered his poor life back to his Maker.

That was Francis.



Let's finish up now with a page from David Mowaljarlai's book, *Yorro Yorro—Aboriginal Creation and the Renewal of Nature* (Magabala Books, Broome, 1993, pages 104-105).³

My mother used to tell me stories and made me go to sleep early. All the mothers used to do that. They would go dancing then on corroboree nights and ceremonies like that. While they were dancing, someone would stay back and look after us.

Next day, when the sun came up, the older people had a fire going already. The older men would say, "That's *wudu*," at the fire in the morning. *Wudu* is the Law saying, "You must not do this: forbidden thing."...

³ With kind permission of Magabala Books, Broome, publishers.

Then our grandmother, our father's mother, came along. She was responsible for us kids. She warmed her hands over the fire and she said, "Wudu-uuu, wudu-uuu," and placed her warm hands on our hands. That means: "Don't rob anybody. Don't steal food or whatever it is that belongs to someone else."

Then she would hold her hands over the fire again, place them on our eyes—we had shut our eyes—and she'd say, "Don't look at other people's possessions, a thing might look beautiful to you and you might want it."

Then she would hold her hands over the fire again, place them on our nose. And she would say, "Don't smell around. Don't sniff around. Don't smell out things that belong to other people." In other words, "Don't beg. Don't loaf around waiting for other people's things. You train in hunting and catch your own food." That's the story about the nose.

Then, after warming her hands over the fire again, she would place them on our pubic area and she warmed us there. "You must not be sexy, not until you become married and allowed your own wife. Don't be a sexy man go chasing other people's wives. You get killed. It is the Law that you are promised a woman. You must stick to one woman."

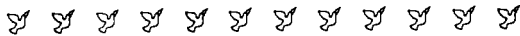
In the afternoon, when the sun was setting, our grandfather would be with us again. You know that beautiful colour when the sun is setting? "You look up at that colour," he would say. With a little wooden stick he would go tap-tap-tap on your forehead and he'd say, "Luluai-luluai-luluai-luluai-luluai..." tap-tap-tap-tap, "Don't be greedy, don't be selfish, just give the things that you must share with other people. You must be as beautiful as the sunset." Those were the warnings. Every sunrise and sunset they did this, to all the kids, whether girl or boy.

That was the Law that was taught to us every early morning and every sunset, until we grew up. Until we were sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, we were still warned by our grandmothers. We had pubic hair already, we still were warned. They never let go.

Even after we were initiated, my mother's younger sister, our 'young mother' as we called her, she would go and get water and put it on our jaw, our face. Only then were we allowed to drink. We could not drink the water that a young woman had caught, because it was *under law*, a taboo-kind-of-thing. It was sacred because she was a young teenager, she went through the same ceremonies as we did with our family. The water given by our young

Nelen Yubu

mother gave us protection. When there was a fight, we couldn't get speared in the face or a clubstick pierce our face. It was the protection...⁴



In the 1970s, a young film-producer, Michael Edols, put out a film named *Lalai*. As I watched it, I thought it must be one of the most striking achievements I had ever viewed on screen. *Lalai* means 'the Dreaming' for Worora people of the North Kimberley. What Edols did was to move into their own bush country with three generations of Sam Woolagudja's family: there was the baby, his parents and his grandparents, five 'actors,' living out the old-style nomadic life. The movie was entirely in Worora language, with English translation underneath in print. Conversation was spare—just enough to fit in perfectly with the surroundings and circumstance.

I mention this movie for one reason, in continuity with Mowaljarlai's comments above. (From memory:) one short but intense sequence shows the grandmother holding the baby in her lap, and with her forefinger tapping his forehead, his eyes and so on, just in the way Mowaljarlai described. Visually, it makes even a deeper impact on the viewer.

So, learning starts even at that earliest stage of life, with all the baby's senses being addressed.

⁴ Quoted with kind permission of the publishers, Magabala Books, Broome.

A Century of Effort: contributions to the study of Aboriginal ethnology and linguistics by Pallottine missionaries in NorthWest Western Australia.

Peter Bindon¹

MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY OF THE CATHOLIC APOSTOLATE have made and continue to make significant contributions to anthropological and linguistic understanding of indigenous Australians in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. From his perspective as a linguist at the Kimberley Resources Language Centre, McGregor observes that towards the end of 1988, it was only in Catholic-run schools that bi-lingual teaching in Aboriginal languages as well as English was being undertaken.² Part of the reason for this is that it was the case that only in denominational schools were the resources for linguistic studies available. In north-western Australia, most of those resources were the product of Pallottine effort. In some moments, I will talk about specific achievements by a number of individuals, but firstly, it is instructive and perhaps helps to explain the zeal with which these individuals tackled their particular enterprises, if we refer to the example provided by the founder of their Society.

Saint Vincent Pallotti was born in Rome in 1795. He was ordained as a priest in 1818 at a time when in Rome there was a lack of direction among many institutions, they were tired and approaching exhaustion. There is no doubt that people's energies were dissipated in individual action to the neglect of social cohesion and regularised organisation. The young priest Vincent saw in this atmosphere the necessity to 'revive faith and rekindle charity'. He also experienced some recurrent dreams around the theme of gaining for Christ all non-Catholics. To accomplish this feat he inaugurated a revolutionary program, which united the laity with

¹ PO Box 557, Yass NSW. 26 January 2001

² McGregor, 1988:100.

the apostolate of the clergy. The organisation that he founded in 1835, and which incidentally foreshadowed the establishment of Catholic Action, was the Society of the Catholic Apostolate.³ In achieving his unswerving aims, Saint Vincent demonstrated that he was determined, single-minded and tireless. As we will see, these characteristics seem applicable to his followers in their Australian Mission.

One would expect that an organisation that promised to fulfil so many of the challenges faced by the Catholic Church during the mid-nineteenth century would have been welcomed with open arms by the hierarchy in Rome, but this was not the case. To be fair, Rome was in some turmoil. It was that period immediately after the return of Pius VII from his imprisonment in France just before Napoleon's demise, and Catholicism did not flourish in Latin countries during the nineteenth century amid chaotic social conditions. In Rome amongst the Church hierarchy, some of the objections to Vincent's vision were simple pettiness regarding the name that he had chosen for his Society, which was considered too universal. As we shall see, it was not for a number of years that his original name of the Society was approved. There were many other setbacks for the fledgling Society before it emerged from its Roman winter in about 1869. Then called the Pious Society of Missions, the group developed strongly spreading to the United States of America in 1884, some South American states in 1886 and Germany in about 1891 when a house, committed to missionary activity in Cameroon in Africa was established in Limburg.

Only about ten years later in 1901 Father Klugelmann, at Limburg, a German house of the Society at that time supporting missions in Africa, contacted Father George Walter, recently returned from service in Cameroon regarding a new mission to Australia. Father Walter, accompanied by three other Society members arrived in Western Australia to manifest Pallotti's dream of 'reviving faith and rekindling charity' at Beagle Bay and Disaster Bay on the northwest coast.⁴ If the

³ Gaynor, John S. S.C.A. *The Life of Saint Vincent Pallotti*. The Mercier Press, Cork, Ireland.

⁴ See his account of this matter and the subsequent arguments within the Society: Walter, Georg, 1982, *Australia: Land, People, Mission*. Bishop of Broome, Western Australia, [English translation of the German edition of 1928.]

natal years of the Society had been difficult, the gestation and birth of the Australian Mission were to be horrific. It was somewhat ironic that an early visitor to the new mission, and someone who later provided encouragement for the anthropological studies being made there, was Daisy Bates, who was never to see her own major work on Western Australian Aborigines in print. Isolation and remoteness from resources, a lack of recognition of the importance of this work, an ambivalent Government, insufficient funding to be able to publish without sponsorship and in one case the lack of suitable type-faces in Australia have dogged the Pallottines even as they followed Daisy Bates.

Although the history of an institution may be defined as a record of the accumulated actions and endeavours of a collection of individuals who united in one way or another, histories of institutions rarely focus on the deeds of individuals themselves. The early history of the Australian Pallottine Mission is well recorded in Durack's book, *The Rock and the Sand*,⁵ and their more recent work by Brigida Nailon in *Nothing is wasted in the household of God*.⁶ As these are adequate records of the institutions, it is not my intention here to discuss the missions themselves but rather to set out the academic and scientific achievements of the Pallottine missionaries themselves.

Despite the somewhat inauspicious beginnings and enormous difficulties that had to be overcome by this Missionary Society in their new Australian venture, they made important contributions to the anthropology of indigenous Australians in two different ways.

First was the direct contribution to linguistic understanding and anthropological study contributed by Society members themselves. It is instructive to look at the amount of material amassed by Pallottines working in the Kimberley against what was collected by government agencies or interested individuals. Secondly, the mission establishments in remote areas of Australia provided a base or in some cases a centre that facilitated the work of other researchers. Some of these were German nationals who must have found the familiar atmosphere of the missions run by their compatriots a pleasant haven from the rigours of

⁵ Durack, Mary, 1969, *The Rock and The Sand*, Constable, London.

⁶ Nailon, Brigida, 2001, *Nothing is wasted in the household of God*. Spectrum, Richmond, Victoria.

remote Australia, while others, not of that nationality, also found the missions a useful place where they could conduct research. Gathering the dispersed populations of indigenous Australians from a wide area and concentrating them in communities, such as accomplished by the missions at Beagle Bay, LaGrange and Balgo certainly facilitated the research of anthropologists not attached to religious organisations. Helmut C Petri, Gisela Odermann, Ronald M Berndt and Catherine H Berndt are amongst those who benefited directly from Pallottine missionary activity in north-west Australia. Professor Klaatsch, who worked for three weeks at Beagle Bay, had unfavourable views of many of the missions that he had visited in Australia but changed his generalised view after visiting the young establishment. His favourable opinion of Beagle Bay was reported in German and Australian newspapers.⁷

The first of the Pallottine fathers to undertake systematic collections of anthropological information was the energetic German Father Rensmann who arrived in 1903. He had a great interest in Aboriginal matters and immediately began preparing a dictionary of Njul Njul, one of the languages of the Dampierland Peninsula. He also managed to translate a few pieces of liturgy and some prayers into this language. Sadly, about a year after his arrival, he drowned in a waterhole near the mission within sight of people who were unaware that he could not swim. Rensmann extended the earlier work of a Trappist priest Father Alphonse Tachon who, before 1900, had also collected Njul Njul language and prepared a few translations to assist in conversions.

Father Bischoffs arrived at the mission in 1905 with similar interests in the language and culture of the Aboriginal people, although some may consider that he was too empathic when he dressed in little except paint and danced in a welcoming corroboree for a newly arrived party of nuns. He had a scientific interest in the language and published in the journal *Anthropos* as well as preparing some unpublished linguistic manuscripts.⁸ Regrettably, the First World War interrupted his work. It

⁷ Walter, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-167.

⁸ The first was 'Die Njol Njol, ein Eingelomestamm in Nordwest Australien', *Anthropos*, 3, pp. 32-40, 1908, followed by 'Churinga und Totems in Nord-West Australien', *Anthropos*, 1909, a

seems he was a little outspoken when the struggling German mission was visited by Australian wartime authorities and Father Bischoffs was dispatched for internment in Liverpool near Sydney. This brought to a close the important anthropological work that he had begun with such fervour. He eventually transferred to South Africa and died there in 1958.

In 1930 a priest arrived who was to be the anthropological jewel in the tiara of the Pallottine missions. Father Ernest Ailred Worms was to be a member of the Society for 49 years and a priest for 43 of them. He was appointed parish priest of Broome in 1931. His anthropological interest in Aboriginal people and his compassion for their plight in the remote parts of Australia never waned during these long years of service. Durack recounts a story of how a wandering resident heard Aboriginal chants coming from a ceremonial ground near Broome and moved closer to observe. As he noticed there were a number of Catholic Aborigines present and participating, he contemplated reporting their names to the new parish priest. Glancing around he saw that very person squatting in the outer circle of elders busily taking notes!⁹

Father Ernest Worms of Borchum, in the diocese of Muenster was born in 1891. He entered the Society in 1912, but his divinity studies were interrupted when he was called up for military service during the First World War in which he was seriously wounded. He won the Kaiser's Iron Cross during this tragic conflict. Returning to the seminary after hostilities concluded he continued his studies, being ordained in 1920. His courses had included some linguistics and studies in ethnology (the branch of anthropology dealing with the various groups of humanity, their origins, distinctive characteristics, customs and distribution). These lectures were presented by Dr Herman Nekes, about whom we will hear more. On Worms' appointment as parish priest of Broome after 10 years in German speaking missions, he was dismayed to find that that all study of Aboriginal language and customs had ceased with the departure of Father Bischoffs. This situation was the result of economic and other concerns of survival, but now that some prosperity

grammar and vocabulary sent to individuals in Vienna, (Durack).

⁹ Durack, op. cit., p. 235.

was being enjoyed, he recommenced anthropological studies amongst the local Aboriginal people, eventually extending his studies to peoples originating in the desert south of Gregory Salt Lake. He did not have an easy time of this. Some of his fellow missionaries thought his activities were a waste of time, but the scientist in Father Worms made a different interpretation. He saw that the Aboriginal capacity for balancing different faiths on different shoulders was an illustration of their extreme spirituality. He felt that this characteristic could be a stepping stone from which the missionaries could build a people strong in Christian faith. I will speak further about Society members who managed to use the vernacular in religious celebrations to enhance both understanding and enjoyment of liturgy.

Father Worms' ethnological studies led him to follow the ancient Aboriginal routes of cultural exchange that proceed from the Indian Ocean inland up the Fitzroy River to the reservoir of Aboriginal religious practice in the interior deserts. Durack asserts that:

He would return from these expeditions sunburnt, almost inarticulate with excitement and in his own words 'stripped as far as decency would allow', most of his clothing having been given away in token of thanks to his native guides.¹⁰

He also found opportunities to explore the rock galleries flanking the riverine gorges of the north Kimberley in which are painted huge representations of heroic ancestral figures that have interested every individual who has ever seen them, and some who have only heard of them.¹¹ Despite the inane claims of some authors, these Wandjina figures, whose heads are surrounded by radiant headdresses, are not depictions of extra-terrestrials. They depict entities from the creative formative period of Aboriginal Dreaming who had and have far greater influence over the spiritual practices of Australian Aboriginal people than any pop culturist could imagine. One should not imagine that Father Worms neglected either his parishioners or his ecclesiastical responsibilities whilst thus engaged. Perhaps he had some time during

¹⁰ Durack, *op.cit.*, p.243.

¹¹ E A Worms, 'Contemporary and Prehistoric Rock paintings in Central and Northern Kimberley', *Anthropos*, 50, 1955.

his travels to dream as did the founder of his spiritual path Saint Vincent, because we shall see that he had aspirations for expanding mission influence in remote parts of the Kimberley where the Christian message had not yet reached.

When Bishop Raible opened the Pallottine College in Kew in 1938, he appointed Fr Worms as the first Rector. Professor Father Nekes also transferred to Kew so that their scientific collaboration could continue. One result of their linguistic studies is a work including twenty-six languages that was eventually published on microfilm.¹² In 1948, Father Worms returned to the Kimberley where he worked until 1957 before being called to the theological college at Manly in Sydney as Rector. Using a grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Work, based in New York, he made a nine month expedition to Central and Western Australia in 1960 to verify some of his earlier observations. In 1961 he was made a member of the Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Studies, indicating that he was well respected by fellow academics, one of whom, N B Tindale, dedicated a major work to his memory with the following words:

To the memory of Father Ernest A. Worms whose active encouragement, beginning in the year 1952, led to the preparation of this work in its present form.¹³

A further acknowledgement of Worms' contribution came when he was one of the select group invited to the Conference on Aboriginal Studies in May 1961 during which he was elected as a member of the Linguistic Advisory Panel.¹⁴ This conference saw the foundation of what was to become the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, and later as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies it has evolved into the premier institution researching and publishing on Aboriginal and Torres Straits themes. Sadly, in the third issue of the

¹² Professor Herman Nekes, SAC, and E A Worms, SAC, 1953, 'Australian Languages, Grammar and Comparative Dictionaries, Micro-Bibliotheca,' *Anthropos*, Fribourg, Switzerland.

¹³ Tindale, N B, 1974. *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia, their Terrain, Environmental Controls, Distribution, Limits, and Proper Names*. Australian National University Press, Canberra.

¹⁴ *ALAS Newsletter*, Volume 1, Number 1, January, 1963, page 9. This publication was the predecessor of *Australian Aboriginal Studies*.

fledgling Institute's Newsletter, an Obituary to Father Worms appears. He died of cancer in St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, on August 13th, 1963 at the age of 72, but even during the last year of his life he contributed to a many volumed work under the general title of *Die Religionen der Menschheit*.

Father Worm's mentor and later his collaborator, the Pallottine Father Herman Nekes, was a native of Essen where he was born in 1875. He was ordained in 1899, gaining a Doctorate in Theology in 1900. The following year he went to a mission in Jaunde near Cameroon working on languages there until 1909. For the next 6 years, he was lecturer in West African languages at the Seminary for Oriental Languages in Berlin. From 1916, he lectured at the philosophical and theological academy of the Pallottine Province of Limburg on missiology, ethnology and linguistics. Concurrently he edited two of the mission publications of the province. It was during 1918 at Limburg that Father Worms came under his influence. Nekes became so interested in the work of his former student in the Kimberley that in 1935 when he was 60 years of age, he came out to Australia to join him at Beagle Bay to work on linguistic and ethnological studies in Aboriginal culture. They at once began their combined study of tribal languages, which they believed held the key to the mystery of Aboriginal origins.¹⁵ Fr Nekes worked on this monumental task in Dampierland while Fr Worms gathered information far and wide. Prior to World War 2, Fr Nekes expanded the research into Nyul Nyul undertaken by his predecessors and prepared versions of the basic prayers in that language. Father Nekes also extended his investigations to include studies of Bard at Lombadina, the Yawuru of Broome and the coastal Karajarri at LaGrange. Father Nekes died in Kew in 1948.

We have reviewed contributions made by Pallottine Fathers for the first half of the twentieth Century and have arrived at the time of the second global war of that period. Never short of over-reactive nationalism in times of conflict, the Australian authorities again rounded up all the non-naturalised missionaries of the Kimberley for internment during World War 2. Happily, after a brief period of imprisonment,

¹⁵ Op. cit.

common sense came to the fore. Except for the three most recent arrivals at the Kimberley missions, who were sent to Melbourne to serve in parishes there, the German missionaries from North-West Australia were released and allowed to return to their respective establishments, remaining circumspect in their correspondence and public attitudes until peace again reigned.

By the end of World War 2, two of Father Worm's wishes had manifested. A mission had been established at LaGrange Bay about 200 kilometres south of Broome and after several false starts, another at Balgo Hills on the tablelands 270 kilometres into the desert south of Halls Creek. Pallottine Fathers at both of these localities continued the anthropological and linguistic work of their predecessors in the Kimberley Mission.

Father Kevin McKelson was born in Melbourne in 1926. Apparently, his father was a Union man in the hatter's trade and supported Trades Hall, so Kevin's social conscience developed at an early age. He grew up in Brunswick and later studied at Kew before completing his studies in Rome. Back in Australia, he was involved in teaching young priests at the centre in Sydney before going to Broome in July 1954, where he was treasurer of the diocese and Vicar General until about 1970 under Bishop Jobst. In about 1961 he went to LaGrange, now Bidadanga, where he remained for some 30 years. Always interested in languages Father McKelson studied the Kimberley language groups, in particular the five languages spoken at La Grange Mission—Nyangumarta, Karajarri, Yulpadja, Juwaliny and Mangala. Among his extensive manuscripts and publications, one can find a *Topical Vocabulary in Northern Nyangumarta* for use by teachers and other persons interested in the language. He would have liked to be permitted to teach these languages but Government policies aimed at sterilising Aboriginal cultural endeavours would not permit this step until recently.¹⁶ Now that this policy has been reversed, there are considerable resources in these languages gathered by Fr. McKelson as resource material.

¹⁶ "Get rid of the blacks!" is the white man's slogan. Missions find no understanding from the white man and get little support from the Government.' Walter 1982:117.

I came to know Fr McKelson in the last years that he was in La Grange and discovered a man of enormous compassion and humanity. In fact, just the kind of person that one would wish to see as a Missionary. He has now moved back into Broome becoming involved with Notre Dame University as Chaplain and a teacher of Divinity. In July 2000, he celebrated 50 years of priesthood in services in Broome, Melbourne and LaGrange.

Later, a very gifted man, Father Anthony Rex Peile arrived in the Kimberley. He was born in 1931 in East Malvern, Victoria. In May 1949 at the age of 19, this man, already conversant with Latin, Greek, German and French, joined the Society. He undertook his philosophical studies at Kew, before the Society sent him to Vallendar, Germany to complete his four years of theological training. Father Peile was ordained on 22 July 1956 at Vallendar along with some priests from the North German province. To acquire the tools to be an effective missionary among Australian Aboriginal people he did incidental linguistic studies in Brisbane and studied general anthropology through the University of California. He moved to Balgo, now Wirrimanu in 1973 where he remained for most of his life. He died in January 1989 and was mourned in traditional style by his Aboriginal friends in Balgo who also ritually 'swept' his house in Balgo with tree branches.¹⁷

Fr Peile undertook linguistic research at Balgo and began amassing information supplied by local Kukatja people on health and well-being, uses of medicinal plants and the language relevant to these topics used by the Kukatja people. This enterprise became his passion and his life's work. On a previous occasion, I have referred to how Father Peile strove to transmit his research findings to health workers to help them understand the cultural imperatives and patterns of thought of Aboriginal people concerning health and sickness, with the aim of delivering appropriate medical assistance. Regrettably, he had difficulty finding acknowledgment and acceptance for this work during his lifetime.¹⁸ Eventually, some of this work has been published earning him

¹⁷ Hevern, R. 1989:72

¹⁸ Peile's perceptions, minus the corroborative texts in the Kukatja language, were edited by Peter Bindon and published by Hesperion Press and the Pallottines in Australia in a book: Peile, A R,

the respect of many. In 1993, the Luurnpa Catholic School at Wirrimanu (Balgo Hills) published a Kukatja to English Dictionary based on Father Peile's extensive word lists that were edited by Hilaire Valiquette. Peile's works in Kukatja include some Scripture texts, sermons and the Catholic Mass that will be a boon to both clergy and laity in that community. It seems that his Bishop's criticism that Anthony was not producing Kukatja material relevant to the converted may have been misplaced.

There were other Pallottine missionaries who contributed to a general understanding of Aboriginal spirituality and who recognized the value of the vernacular in pastoral practice. I remember witnessing a mass at Balgo at Pentecost when the Aboriginal ritual celebrating the first coming of fire into their culture was incorporated into the celebration of the Mass. The biblical tongues of flame, symbolic of the bestowal of linguistic capabilities on the Apostles during the sermon preached on that particular day, was later the subject of considerable discussion among Aboriginal people. I assume that this inclusion of an indigenous example resulted from the understandings of Father Hevern and Father Peile who were at Balgo at the time. According to notes supplied by Father McKelson, Father Werner Kriener, now retired but for many years the pastor of Halls Creek parish, also became adept at implementing the directives on liturgy made by the Vatican 2 Council regarding the participation of the people in the liturgy.

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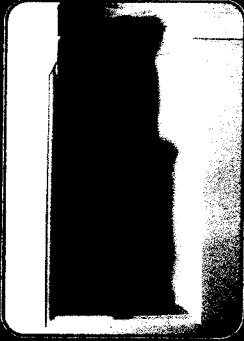
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Nothing is wasted in the household of God



Brigida Nailon CSB

Sr Brigida Nailon CSB, both a long-time subscriber and a contributor (Nos 31, 53, 54, 55) to *Nelen Yubu*, presently based at Kyabram, Vic., has produced for the Pallottines a very well-informed and informative account of their work in Australia (also India). She has welded a great mass of material into a very readable overview of the Pallottine apostolate in Australia, particularly in the Kimberley. Due reference is made to other collaborators—communal sharing in apostolate is, after all, a characteristic of Pallottine operations.

Rather than burden the book with a complete annotation of sources, she has decided, rather courageously, to leave them all out. She invites those who want notation for particular facts to enter into negotiation with the author.

The book was produced by Spectrum Publications, PO Box 75, Richmond, Vic. 3121 (Tel. +61(3) 9429 1404; fax +61(3) 9428 9407) and can be obtained from them for \$25.

—Nailon CSB, Brigida (2000), *Nothing is Wasted in the Household of God: Vincent Pallott's vision in Australia 1901-2001*. Spectrum Publications. Richmond, Vic. ISBN 0 86786 310 2. 365 pp., illustrations, soft cover.

From the Secretary's Desk...

Tramping along clifftops recently, somewhere south of Maroubra, I happened on a small lonely cemetery lying on a hillside. A sign stating 'Botany Bay National Park. Historic Coast Hospital Cemetery, ca. 1880-1920' told me the grounds were under restoration. Already it was looking cared for, the grass cut, scattered graves standing out bravely in the sunshine above the pounding ocean.

The cemetery is very old; 'ca. 1880' could mean anything, but the nearby old Coast Hospital (now modern Prince Henry Hospital) stood not far across the sand dunes, where from the early 1880's it served as a quarantine station for contagious sufferers of small pox, typhoid, leprosy and other infectious diseases. Stories were rife about great suffering, deaths by the thousand, even that there is a famous ghost who appears to this day in the person of a strict old former Matron.

One headstone was over the grave of a ten-year-old boy, who died in 1907. My mind ran riot: had he been a victim of one such epidemic? I felt a pang of sorrow for his family of long ago.

What amazed me was the proximity of this place to the urban area. Standing with my back to the ocean, I faced golf links, houses,

and beach shelters, while the city was only a comparative stone's throw away over the hill; yet here was I on a rugged ridge high above the ocean, feeling a world away from civilization, amongst a carpet of tiny wildflowers and flourishing native vegetation.



Soon after my exploration of this hallowed place, I was called to Canberra to my sister, Patricia Haugh, who was ill. Armed with some goodies to cheer her up, we hurried by train to the ACT to stay at Daramalan College, greeted by our host, Fr Harold Baker msc who immediately loaned Fr Martin his car to drive to Braidwood Hospital, an hour's run, to visit Pat.

Unfortunately, on arrival we found she had suddenly died, only three hours before. We were allowed to sit with her awhile — all I could do was to kiss her goodbye.

The shock was devastating, but many kind people rallied to support me, including the hospital staff, and my sister's local friends, while back at Daramalan Masses and prayers were offered for Pat and our family.

From the Secretary's Desk

It was necessary to return to Sydney, then back to Daramalan a few days later for the funeral. Again we accepted the hospitality of Fr Baker and the Community, when my daughter Judy came from Melbourne to be with me. Our gratitude to all the staff is deep: they understood our grief and helped us relax.

Grateful too, to our editor, Martin, who again drove me to Braidwood for Pat's funeral, then back to Canberra and finally to Kensington Monastery where the MSC Community and our kind, concerned friends had been praying for my beloved sister.

Pat was buried on a lonely bush hillside at Mongarlowe, which had been her wish. Martin, who knew her well, offered some touching prayers at her graveside. It is a beautiful burial ground, set among tall gums with a creek nearby where platypuses play.

Standing by her grave, my thoughts fled back to that cemetery above the crashing sea waves, where a little boy sleeps at peace.

I have since been back to those lonely graves to remember them both, and to pray silently for all the souls who have left this windswept world for far happier pastures.

I wish to thank you, my loyal friends, who helped me so much when I needed you in my unhappy hour.

May God bless and keep you all.

Secretary Keren Calvert

Notices

1. Missing Copies?

If you have not received issue No.77, please let us know. On the envelopes we used address labels that failed to hold on. So far we have only had some overseas copies returned to us with an indication from the post office of "Insufficient address". As the address label is gone, we have no way of telling whose copy failed to be delivered.

It is strange that only overseas postings seem to have been affected...

2. Apology

I have to apologise to Dr Gideon Goosen for referring to him as "Eugene" in the course of my note about his recent publication *Australian Theologies. Nelen Yubu* No.77, p.30.