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EDITORIAL

IT LOOKS AS THOUGH we have started up a hare, and the chase is on.

In *Nelen Yubu* no.27 Eugene Stockton told the 'mission dioceses of Broome and Darwin' a few home truths ('The Plight of Catholic Missions in Australia', pp.20-29). He wrote up some 'observations' after an Aboriginal Apostolate Programme 'safari' to areas where the churches are working with tribal people in the north. To understand the relevance of the papers in this issue by Ahern (pp.1-11), Huegel (pp.12-18) and Knight (pp.19-25), one should get out no. 27 and re-read Eugene's clarion cry. By way of help I provide a precis at the back of this issue (no.29, pp.37-38).

I first came across Eugene's paper in the form of a report that was going to guide discussions at the Townsville AICC meeting in January this year. What appeared eventually in *Nelen Yubu* was a version revised by Eugene.

My first reactions to the original paper were mixed; a lot of good stuff, and some statements that I took exception to. Of the latter class, Eugene himself edited out a few that I had reacted to very strongly. Looking at my original copy, I see marginal notes of 'false!', 'romantic nonsense!' After experiencing the force of the Broome reaction to the relatively mild published version, I was rather pleased that they had indeed disappeared. My marginal notes also instanced some omissions that I was pleased to see that Eugene made good when reconsidering his paper in view of publication. Some of the more substantive points I questioned are those that writers for this issue of *Nelen Yubu* have subjected to scrutiny.

One matter is the 'culture-free gospel', which Francis Huegel has touched upon (pp.16-17) and Jim Knight has made his first point of comment (p.20ff). The gospel is *functionally* culture-free, like truth or honesty, but as they *exist* only in true statements or honest people, so the gospel (meaning the gospel dynamic), while open to every culture and so unable to be contained by any one of them, is necessarily embedded in particular cultures. Transmission is not a matter of discover-

ing some pure form and unselfishly handing it over, but a complex process like translation — and the version we are working from (*our* understanding of the gospel) is pretty suspect in places! In this context I find particularly relevant what Jim Knight (a professional missiologist) writes in the last paragraph of his section of comment on Eugene's 'Formula One' (pp.21-22), viz. missionaries need to develop sensitivity to the values etc. of all the cultures involved at the gospel interface; and the need for missionaries to 'learn to trust their educated feelings. . .'

Another issue is the practicality or even desirability of organisation on the national level. As Fr Huegel points out (p.18) organisation on the *diocesan* level is necessary, practical and does in fact take place. Broome has its biennial assembly; Darwin had a similar thing, which its vigorous new bishop can be expected to re-institute, probably in a reformed state. I would add that *regional* co-ordination right across northern Australia is more urgent than a national forum. In aiming at national uniformity I believe Eugene complains of a distinction that we don't really make any more, and is induced by the vehemence of his protest to fail to acknowledge the consequences of a distinction that is very real. There are clearly plenty of Aboriginal people in Australia today outside of the 'tribal' areas in the north — though it does come as a bit of a shock to realise that, for example, there are more Aboriginal people in Moree parish than in the whole of the Geraldton diocese, and almost as many in the Sydney area under Eugene's pastoral care as in the whole NT! At the same time there are two very different cultural sub-groups: the tribal people still speaking their own languages and performing their ceremonies on the one hand, and rural and urban people on the other. One would think that a very different style of evangelisation would be apposite in the two cases, a different array of concerns, a different type of formation and support needed. National bodies are good to co-ordinate operations occurring on the lower levels of region and diocese, but pre-suppose them and cannot substitute for them.

Eugene maintains that his main endeavour was to address

the responsibility of the Australian church as a whole (*infra* p.26), but his message did not come through like that. Before arriving in the Broome diocese on my recent 'PICT' survey, I was warned to prepare my soul for tribulation. In fact, I was treated very kindly. The gamut of reaction to Eugene's paper was complete. Some were delighted that he had said what they felt had needed for a long time to be said. Others told me that it was most unfortunate that I had published such an article. Then there was the middle ground, which Sr Clare Ahern might be taken to represent (cf. pp.1-11).

The Territory's reaction is not represented here, except to the extent that I write from a Territory stance. No paper was offered. I heard one report of a sad nonchalance: 'We are criticised by a priest this year, by an anthropologist last year; it will be an historian or linguist or something next year. . . .' This reaction saddened me as editor. From the beginning the policy I have proposed for *Nelen Yubu* is to aim at the 'positive, mutual cultural enrichment of two traditions, Aboriginal and Christian' (cf. inside front cover). I have tried to avoid negative papers: they are easily come by and, if valid, are so only in a superficial, factual and unhelpful way. (My aim as editor, and as a person, is stated well for me in the middle verses of Browning's 'Rabbi Ben Ezra' about aim and intent.)

When I was passing through Darwin in September, I found the calmness of the Territory response both a relief after the ferment in the Kimberleys, and a bit of a puzzle. Bishop Collins was planning to use the paper as a main discussion topic in a forthcoming clergy conference. Maybe the Territory felt that Eugene's charges were not so wide of the mark in their case as the Kimberleys had felt them to be.

At any rate this sort of discussion is what *Nelen Yubu* is meant for. When policies are challenged, one is forced to think them out. It's a chance for updating. The dangerous policies are those that are taken for granted, never consciously expressed or articulated. So they escape criticism, but also lose the chance for improvement. Unexpressed policies have an inbuilt factor of progressively increasing irrelevance.

Re Enclosure

We include with this number a letter regarding subscriptions and a statement of each reader's financial status in our regard. Many subscribers are financial, several have subscribed for years ahead, but some will be embarrassed when they realise the extent of their arrears. The nature of the periodical is such that we would not want really interested individuals to drop out just on that account. I am thinking of cases where, for example, a Sister may have 'inherited' a subscription originally requested by a former member of her house. Take out a subscription for 1987 (nos. 30-33) and let's see what arrangement we can come to regarding the backlog. . . We are able to publish so cheaply because the labour-intensive and costly tasks of typesetting and paste-up are done as a freely donated service, but we still have to pay the stationers, the printer and Australia Post.

As in the letter, the *Nelen Yubu* staff wish you all the blessings and joy of Christmas.

Martin Wilson msc

Editor

A KIMBERLEY RESPONSE TO EUGENE STOCKTON

CLARE AHERN r s j

WHEN I READ Father Stockton's article in issue 27 of *Nelen Yubu* (Winter 1986), I had to stop, reflect and re-examine my own attitudes. I wondered what was different about my views of the Broome diocese. I was sure that I was not reflecting on life through rose-tinted glasses and I was equally certain that I was not very different from the rest of the Kimberley personnel. I had to ask myself why my eyes saw different scenes to 'the eyes of the missionaries'¹ that gave Fr Stockton his views. The article raised so many queries that I set out to do some research on the validity of the statements in the article. Fortunately I was en route to the Aboriginal Women's Culture and Law Meeting, so I had the opportunity of meeting many church people on the track. Consequently, I raised with them the issue of Fr Stockton's article, and in seconds we were deep in discussion about the points raised. However, before I proceed, I would like to emphasise that discussion for us does not happen on a rare occasion.

We talk and discuss many things in the Kimberley. The art of discussion and conversation is not lost here. Our lives are not dominated by television or newspapers, so we take the opportunity as often as we can to talk. It must equally be

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emphasised that our conversation and discussions are not just at the level of polite small talk or Women's Weekly issues. However, the Kimberley people have learnt survival techniques from Aboriginal people. We know the damage that journalists, media personnel and academics can do in the name of research and the result of short visits; so sometimes in the presence of such august visitors the conversation deteriorates to the level of cats, dogs and trivia to distract the notetaker. Unfortunately, such trivia items and survival techniques can get us classified as nonthinkers, nonreflectors and nonplanners.

But to return to the discussions on the track There were many views about the different points in Fr Stockton's article and I am not listing them here in priority but according to the way I remember them.

Older Missionaries

One of the phrases that touched many hearts was the one about the 'sour and disappointed' missionaries. Here we used a Sherlock Holmes technique and finecombed the Kimberley personnel. (We did not look at the diocese of Darwin in our discussions, even though nearly all of us have visited most of the missions there and some of us are close friends of the missionaries. We felt that our short visits of a week to six weeks did not equip us to give an accurate and authentic picture of the complexities of another diocese and its personnel.) In our search, none of us could find 'sour' missionaries. Some older missionaries may be disappointed about certain developments, but we concluded that that was not a characteristic of a 'failed missionary' but part of the growing-old syndrome, the generation gap and the reaction to progress and different approaches. How often does one hear an older person talk about 'the good old days' and 'how life was better then'? I felt that as we younger missionaries were discussing, our conclusions were not just the result of loyalty to, or friendship with, those missionaries who paved the way for us, but we all

knew from personal contact that in the Kimberley we have no 'soured and disappointed missionaries'. We know only of human beings, capable of all the human emotions, capable of great love and hope, but prone, like all human beings, to moments of doubt. In fact, we reflected on Christ in his prayer in the Garden and on the Cross and on the ups and downs in the lives of the apostles. We concluded that the One who inspires us did not intend us to be super-human but made us in his image and likeness, knowing that the life of his Son would be the life that upheld us.

Meaning of Mission

We had difficulty understanding the use of the term 'mission' in the article. It was used in so many ways that we had to clarify its use as we read along. We read of 'mission dioceses'; 'Aboriginal missions'; 'never a mission'; 'mission personnel'; 'status in mission'; 'mission policy' and 'mission as being sent'. We decided that for the most part, Fr Stockton's article speaks about missions as pieces of land, places where church people serve a particular group of Aborigines. That discovery meant that the conditions in Fr Stockton's article apply, or do not apply, to approximately 26% of the Catholic Church centres and the associated church personnel. Consequently, the analysis did not give a true picture of the total Kimberley Catholic Church.

Outdated Points

There were many points in the article that were outdated even in the period of the research, e.g. the question of identity in missions. When we looked at particular places and specific persons affected by the entry of DAA, appointed community advisors and various workers we could not find them. The Church people who were present at the time had moved on. The Church people now present, whatever their problems, could

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not be diagnosed as a cause of the changeover. Since they were not present and in many cases were continents or miles away how could their identity be affected by something they never experienced?

In fact many of the points in the identity section relating to mission personnel are exaggerated. Most of us are boringly normal. Nearly all of us in our first few months have our settling-in problems which gradually sort themselves out. If they do not, people move on. None of the people I know have a martyrdom complex, remaining in the Kimberley scene because they *dislike* it or feel they should. To safeguard the Aboriginal people from such church-workers our superiors are constantly visiting and reassessing our involvement, suitability and co-operation with Aboriginal people. The usual comments of visitors to the Kimberley is about the enthusiasm and joy of the missionaries.

Of course some do suffer from burn-out, perhaps because some personalities are affected in that way. Burn-out is a common enough complaint in the helping professions and is not confined to mission areas. Wherever there is commitment, dedication and a willingness to give totally, for the sake of the other, burn-out can result. Most of the congregations try to prevent this happening by advising their members to withdraw from the Kimberley after a period of anything from three to six years, in order to renew their energies before continuing.

Teamwork

And while we were looking at personnel and identity problems we also considered teamwork, discussion and communication. If the total Kimberley Catholic Church involvement had been treated in Fr Stockton's article and all the Church personnel visited, the writer would have discovered that many places had written mission statements, goals, aims and objectives; that people meet regularly to discuss, plan and evaluate and that they work in teams and challenge each other openly. He would have discovered that in the non-mission places, nonAboriginals

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often meet together with Church-Workers to discuss community issues. These people know that Church-Workers are not just confined to the 'spiritual'. They see them as being involved in all aspects of Aboriginal life, well aware of the principle that the sacred and profane have never been separated by Aborigines in Aboriginal society, so why would Church people start breaking a very foundational principle in Gospel living?

In many places there is excellent communication between nonAboriginals and if it is not happening it is not always the cause of Church people. I personally am waiting for the day when an anthropologist or sociologist will come to research and evaluate the changes that nonChurch people have initiated in the lives of Aborigines. Not all the conclusions would be positive. To analyse the mission situations accurately and completely, equal focus needed to rest on the influential positions of the nonChurch people.

Kimberley Meaning of Mission

In our discussions we tried to ascertain what was meant by the statement recognising 'mission in the sense generally understood by the Catholic Church today'. We felt that Fr Stockton's statement is probably the one held by professional Church people but is not the one held by the ordinary rank and file members who constitute the major numbers in the Church. However we accept his understanding of mission 'whereby the Universal Church relates to the local indigenous church and the missionary works to enable a people/community to realise the Gospel for themselves, as a people true to their own culture, with their own spiritual leadership and ministry' as the one held by the Church personnel of the Kimberley. In fact, I would say that Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmweller (1983:3) sum up the way many Kimberley Church personnel understand mission:

By 'mission' we mean the God-given call to appreciate and share one's religious experience and insights,

first within one's own community and tradition, and then with people and communities of other cultural, social, and religious traditions. In so doing Christians attempt to fulfil the divine mandate given to the church that humanity reflect God's own life as one people drawn together in love and respect. Such a notion means that mission is two-way: faith is shared but not imposed, and the missionary will be instructed and enriched by discovering God's salvation already at work in the people and culture to whom he or she is sent. This dialectical pattern rules out any imperious forcing of a religious system on individuals or communities. The gospel comes in the person and message of the missionary as a free and respectful invitation. The gospel-bearer must be aware that he or she is not the proprietor of all truth but bears as gift of God's salvation that, in many ways, the non-Christian has already experienced.'

If a survey were conducted amongst Kimberley Church-Workers the result would be very favourable. Most of them have completed missiology courses in Australia or overseas. Many of them have specialised in various areas. Most are well qualified and *all* are well read in current missiological trends. Just a look at the shelves of their libraries would be a verification of those statements. The gap between their knowledge and practice of 'missiological ideal and fact' is not as distressing as Fr Stockton would have the reader believe.

It is also important not to underrate the vast experience of those wonderful missionaries who have watched so many others come and go.

White Initiatives

Our discussions also lead us into what was called 'largely white initiatives'. Here we felt that if Fr Stockton had reread past articles in *Nelen Yubu*, he would have discovered

the initiatives were not 'largely white'. On the other hand, if he stayed for a reasonable time in each place in order to see the functions of the white people and had consulted with the remaining 74% of Kimberley personnel, the above phrase 'mostly white initiatives' would have had to be omitted.

Goals and Objectives

And now to consider overall goals and objectives. I would like to know what are the overall goals, aims and objectives of other dioceses in Australia. I would also like to know if they are stated in clear terms and available to and known by Catholics in that diocese. And then I would ask why expect more of a diocese that has tremendous distances between its Catholic centres? Yet this diocese might be the only one in Australia where every church worker knows each other. These people plan biannual assemblies which all attend and have meetings sharing visiting lecturers. Some congregations plan seminars, conferences and updates for their personnel involved in Aboriginal issues. These meetings are not arranged to cater for the social needs of the people, but to evaluate and plan.

Aboriginal Bishops

We are glad that Fr Stockton praises the Anglican and Uniting Church for their policies. We are equally glad that Aboriginal leadership is obvious at the 'upper echelons', but we would like to be practical as far as our own case goes. All of us look forward to the day when we will have Aboriginal priests, but the changes that are to happen to bring that about are outside the authority of the Broome diocese. We know that the celibacy issue and the long years of hard study demanded of candidates to the priesthood have to be challenged. Such issues need to be presented to the Universal Church even though the local diocese has and will need to continue presenting the case to Rome. I would also point out that since leadership in

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many of the Kimberley centres is invested in a group and not an individual, the model of leadership such as that seen in a bishop or moderator may not be the type sought by Aboriginal people in the Kimberley. I would also emphasise that many great Aboriginal men, under the stress of being appointed chairperson of the community (a white model of leadership), have drowned the tension and pressure of the position in alcohol and consequently have been destroyed in the process. I would also stress that the loneliness often associated with a celibate priesthood might be unbearable for such a group-oriented person as an Aboriginal. Changes have to happen at a higher level than the Broome diocese and, like Christ, we may have to wait a while before the desire to become priests grows stronger in the hearts of Aboriginal men. As Segundo Galilea (1985:20) states:

In his mission, Jesus knew how to wait for God's own time as regards people and events. This is wisdom and not pastoral knowledge. Christ was the master and teacher who waited respectfully for people to mature, never using undue power to convert them and make them understand. His attitude toward the twelve apostles is a brilliant example of pastoral wisdom. He accepted them with their slowness, their contradictions and hardness, without giving up on their formation and preparation in view of the future. He never judged, never imposed himself; rather he extended an invitation: 'If you wish ... If you are ready ...' He did not take advantage of his leadership or of his power to force the normal development of their rights.

We cannot force anyone to be a priest or bishop, we will just have to do as Jesus did and exercise pastoral wisdom which will probably mean waiting for more than three years. However, in concern for future Aboriginal priests, we will have to continue discussing the issue and presenting the case to Rome. I would hope that the total Australian hierarchy would present

a united front on the topic.

Incomplete Pictures

As we continued our discussions around tables and campfires we felt that for each of the issues raised by Fr Stockton there was another side or an incomplete picture. One little example, the issue of marriage and morals. This is not unique to Aboriginal societies. There is a great need in the Catholic Church for our moral theologians to get together and discuss the topic. The need is in the Universal Church and not just a tiny section of it.

And as for the specific proposals, listed in the final section of Fr Stockton's article, many of them are happening. I will not labour the point here, but I would just like to mention Point 3, entitled Formation. This is well catered for by individual religious congregations and the Kimberley Diocesan Committee. However, as regards the concept of 'visitation'. I feel it is important that some official notification come from the National Council of the Major Superiors of the Religious of Australia or the appropriate Bishops' Committee or whatever group employs the official visitor to the Kimberley Catholic Centres, informing the personnel of the arrival of the intended visitor and the purpose of the visit. In this way Kimberley people would know who is coming to give and receive, to teach or to learn and who is coming just to take. The ethics of the situation would then be known to all.

Plight of the Early Church

To conclude, I would like you to know that we also reflected on the Crucifixion and recalled the terrible chaos and 'plight' of the first believers in Jesus. We remembered the 'desolate aimlessness' in the lives of the Apostles as they waited for the Resurrection and Pentecost. We remembered their lack of direction, the vacuum without goals, aims and object-

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ives. We retold the stories of the disciples of Jesus and saw their very human-ness limiting the vision of Jesus. We went through some Church history recalling the prophets of doom. We saw how in spite of terrible troubles, the Church survived. We knew that none of us knew what the future held or where the church will go, but we all knew that we follow Jesus, the One who holds the future.

! Like Paul in Cor 4:7-15, we remembered that God works even in the midst of human weaknesses, that success in the ministry and the Church came from God's power. We told each other that the time and place of proclaiming the word is the work of the Holy Spirit and, deep within us, we felt that the Church is not about bigger and better systems, about how many priests we have, or who is leading, or what great goals we have. The primary task of the Church is to transform the world. Let us pray that *that* is what we are all about.

Young Trees

And so I came to the end of the track. The aim of my journeying had been fulfilled. I was present at the Aboriginal Women's Culture and Law Meeting. I sat there with the Aboriginal women and the other women religious present. We watched the women re-enacting their myths through dance and song. We joined in the times of seriousness and silence, humour and fun. We took our turns to mind the babies or put wood on the fire and we shared in the arrival of the State Emergency Supplies with an airlift of food. (Unfortunately, unseasonal rain had made the roads through the black soil impassable and the truck-load of food was unable to move through). During those days I became friends with Aboriginal women from different places and learned of the names of their communities. So many had the names of trees that I felt myself recalling the words of Jeremiah and the article of Rosemary Haughton, *There Is Hope For A Tree*. I prayed that we would be hopeful, that we would allow the life of the Spirit to blossom in those Aboriginal trees, that we would look to the new shoots and receive life

from them, and that we would not worry too much about or trip over the older branches that had made way for the new. And in my prayer I knew, as everyone else knew along the track, that there are struggles in the Kimberley between the different levels, understanding and practice of the Catholic faith in the Aboriginal and nonAboriginal groups. Being intelligent and committed people, we ask questions and aim for higher ideals. We know there are certain areas which need greater discernment and different approaches. We will always want better teamwork, communication and planning because life changes and is full of searching. We will always have to challenge each other to allow more scope and space for Aboriginal people in the planning and decision process. Thank God, we will never be able to sit back and say, 'Now we have the perfect situation and approach'. It would be a dull life if we did and we would have no use for the virtue of hope.

And so I ended my little research, glad that I belonged to the Kimberley group and ever so glad that my eyes saw the same hopeful scenes as the other Church-Workers' eyes. I was content to belong to *The Catholic Thing* with all its incompleteness, but with its great involvement in 'creating for the future'.

NOTES

1. All words or phrases in inverted commas are from Father Stockton's article unless otherwise indicated.

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RESPONSE TO FR STOCKTON FROM BEAGLE BAY

FRANCIS HUEGEL SAC

INTRODUCTION

WHOEVER READS FR EUGENE STOCKTON'S observations ('The Plight of Catholic Missions in Australia', *Nelen Yubu*, No. 27, pp.20-29) will be surprised, even shocked. If all his statements are objective and generally applicable, at each (former) mission then it seems that the plight of the missionaries is as alarming and wanting as the plight of the Aborigines living at those missions and mission-parishes.

Reading through the text of his monograph one may conclude that the Religious author was not prejudiced, his criticisms are meant to be positive, not negative, his reassessment and proposals endeavour to be helpful and constructive. (However, without help from outside it would seem impossible for the present limited staff to carry them out).

If the plight of Catholic Missions has come to a point where the choice is 'to pull out or to reform' (p.25), then this means an alarm call for the whole Catholic Church in Australia, especially the hierarchy, clergy and religious Societies.

Fr Francis Huegel, Pallottine, was ordained in Germany in 1929; came to the Kimberleys December 1930 (along with Fr E A Worms amongst others); has been there ever since: Beagle Bay, Rockhole, Lombadina, Broome, Derby, La Grange, Balgo. Parish priest at Beagle Bay 1966 till present.

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More than that, it is my conviction that without the help of the Aborigines themselves we cannot bring about what our Pope postulates: an 'incarnation' of the Church within the different ethnic groups and peoples.

It gives great hope and proves the ability and interest of some of our Aboriginal Christians that they have come forward and even taken leading positions in the small meetings as well as in the big demonstrations that took place here in Beagle Bay and Broome.

This supposes from our side, the missionaries, that we see and treat the people no longer as objects of our mission work, but rather as co-operators, trustworthy helpers.

If the Anglican and Uniting Churches have surpassed us, then we must remember that it is much harder for an Aboriginal boy or man to become a Catholic deacon, priest or religious. Browsing through the history of the Catholic Church in Western Australia we read that already Bishop Salvado had sent students for the priesthood to Rome.

In 1940, at the Golden Jubilee of the Beagle Bay Mission, Bishop Raible opened a Native Sisterhood. After an initial flourishing their numbers dropped down to three without any hope of new candidates. After ten years existence he had to close down this promising community of Sisters.

In 1975 the first MSC priest was ordained; since he left the priesthood and Society the question arises: Why did he leave?

Bishop Jobst of Broome offered to make one of our men a deacon; his wife protested. Still we hope and pray for vocations among our boys and girls. We will not have any unless we have true christian families. And if we look at our present world with its strong currents of materialism, hedonism and moral confusion, then we can say that no vocations will come from this generation unless God works in extraordinary ways. We do not give way to pessimism because we believe in the power, wisdom and love of God.

'These innovations have not been accompanied by any overall shift in rationale, nor by reference to a global policy'—the latter part is true. Why? An Australia-wide policy can be worked out only through the higher superiors, ecclesiastical and those of the Mission Societies.

Sacraments and doctrine as such cannot and must not be changed since they are of divine origin. Vatican II gave us a new evaluation and a partly new ritual for them. As to doctrine (dogma), as Pope John XXIII explained: The truths given by revelation are always the same, the language and method of teaching can change and has changed; he called it 'aggiornamento', which means up-dating (or assimilation to the mentality and language of our generation). But in our case we want integration, which goes much deeper. This means a twofold action: to keep whatever is good and true and useful; at the same time to take over from another culture what is good or better or more useful. This inculturation holds good for cultural change, as the word explains, not for religion as to its substance, nor for truth and morals. As regards the means and ways the gospel truth or revelation is expressed in ways of thinking, feeling and acting (ritual, art, philosophy and theology), this difficult process can come about only with the help of the people who want such an inculturation. This is a slow and difficult process.

Re 7. Aboriginal Response (page 24)

'...that sphere was largely irrelevant.' I dare to question the statement that 'if we left, would anyone notice the difference?' Yes! I think so. The christian community at Beagle Bay has repeatedly proved this: the Mission-church is still 'their church; the Missionaries belong to us'. In Lombadina and Turkey Creek they wanted 'their' teachers, viz. Sisters. We also know the reasons for the poor response in religious life. First, lack of faith-life within the families; rare family-prayers; little family church-life and sacramental life. Secondly, lack of faith among our teenagers. When our

students leave school they do not continue their study nor their religion. They feel 'free' from school tasks and want to explore their way towards happiness. The same holds good with regard to their moral life: 'free love'. 'Free' also from any binding job, casual work or any work at all. Worst is 'freedom' to drink which can lead to promiscuity and prostitution.

What have we done to help them? It is not easy to come in touch with them. I show interest in their sports-life, their band; invite the band to play in church during a Youth Mass. I offer good literature, good videos. Last week our people, including youth, were invited for a community retreat; two teenage girls turned up for one day. All told, one married couple, five men, two women (and our teachers) turned up; for the last meeting followed by Holy Mass only five were present. That does not mean lack of interest.

Second reason: hedonism. Our people now earn money and that must be spent; budgetting is not known or observed; the stores offer all sorts of wares and goods in attractive packing. The first and greatest wish is to get a car, next a TV set; modern, expensive clothing, expensive toys for their children, bikes or even motorbikes (for teenagers).

Some, especially the elders, have at the same time an open hand and purse for Project Compassion or similar charitable works; but Sunday collections range between zero and a few dollars. Over the 'weekend' (no more Sundays) many go out camping or to town for sports; for Mass, there is no time free.

Human respect and influence by negative or bad example is a third factor in the phenomenon of little or no response. On one mission station we experienced a typical case: a young couple wanted to marry: but they felt embarrassed because they were the only couple among so many 'de facto' marriages!

Fourth factor: Lack of leadership by their own people. Wielding authority is not easy; the old, tribal system no longer exists at Beagle Bay.

In the christian families parents are failing to pray with their children or bring them to the church.

Fifth factor: Lack of sacramental life. Baptism of bab-

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ies is delayed; adults (parents) and children seldom receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion; it happens at times that children come even when parents fail.

Finally: the Aborigines, like us Europeans, are undergoing a big change: from traditional functions and habits to a religious life out of personal conviction; even 'swimming against the tide'; a deeper, more mature spiritual life with the courage to witness for it. Here again we missionaries see our task as helping and leading them to 'make the turn'. Here again we are confronted with difficulties, because the Aboriginal Communities are socially divided in sometimes antagonistic groups.

'...If we left, would anyone notice the difference?' Definitely yes! Meaning not so much the single missionary but the church as such. Every time when leaving for a holiday the old people and the children too ask: Father, will you come back?

These facts may give an answer to the suspected 'condemnation of the whole system'. Does 'system' or 'method' = way of bringing Christianity to our Aborigines? The priests of the diocese of Broome have tried for years to work out the right system or policy: integration or inculturation?

How far we have achieved this, everyone knows. Again I maintain that this is not possible without the help of the Aborigines. It is not sufficient to translate texts of the bible or liturgy, but liturgy as such must be incorporated into the language, form and spirit of the Aborigines. We European missionaries can only inspire, co-operate, moderate the works of our Aboriginal brothers and sisters. Surely, we must be and we are prepared to undertake mission in the sense of current Catholic missiology, understood in the Catholic church today.

We do well to upgrade our knowledge and method. What Fr Eugene means he expresses in the second part.

REASSESSMENT

Re page 25, Goal: 'In mission, the christians of one

culture are offering a culture-free gospel to the people of another culture.'

Is this possible? Or isn't the gospel embedded in the culture of the Jewish people? To mention only the parables of Our Lord: they can hardly be translated. What are the mind-pictures, for instance, of Kingdom (of God), Heaven, Jerusalem, Temple etc? Yes, religion as such is culture-free, but *in concreto* is embedded in the culture of the respective peoples. (No need to add that this cultural shift makes the teaching of religion so difficult).

Fr Eugene expresses this when he continues: 'In this case,...the culture gap to be bridged is the greatest between two peoples anywhere any time, making this the greatest missionary challenge.'

'It is Christ himself who is being re-incarnated in Aboriginal flesh...' With a change of emphasis we can say: It is Christ himself who re-incarnates himself into Aboriginal flesh: He is the *causa*, we, as *alter Christus*, the *con-causa* of re-incarnation. I believe this is what Fr Eugene really means: 'we as members of the Universal Church mediate to enable it to happen in whole and in part.'

RE 'LIBERATION THEOLOGY'

One can ask how relevant this consideration is in the Aboriginal context.

Observations regarding Fr Stockton's suggestions:

- cry for freedom, equality and justice: This cry is heard amongst Aboriginal people. We as their friends and, if necessary, spokesmen can help them towards freedom, but in the first and truest sense we must help them towards spiritual freedom.
- communication: This is what we missionaries of the diocese of Broome have been doing in our diocesan conferences, especially in the last one, 1984. In view of the Pope's visit this year, the next one has been held off till 1987.
- team work: Perhaps it is more realistic to look for team

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work on the diocesan level. There is too much diversity on the state and national levels in the sorts of communities that exist and the type of work appropriate among them.

-- mandate: 'It should be clearly understood and stated that the apostolate to the Aborigines is the responsibility of the whole Australian church'. The voice of one crying in the wilderness! And who is going to convey this message to our Catholic brothers and sisters? An 'Aboriginal vicariate': something worth dreaming about!

-- co-ordination: Aboriginal church workers. Perhaps the old scheme of minor orders could be broadened by the introduction of new forms of ministry. One can think of making 'ministries' of those positions that Aboriginal people already fill: teachers, teacher aides, nursing aides. This would give them an opportunity for spiritual training, if they should want it.

-- popular support: Something we do need! Maybe the reintroduction of a monthly mission magazine would help.

The 'Specific Proposals' can all be endorsed.

* * * * *

ERRATA

Nb. 28, P.3 & Contents:

read 'The Pentecost Experience in Arnhem Land Churches in 1979'
for '...in 1975'

Nb. 27, p.23:

#5 *after insert* in small numbers,
looking for a deeply committed community as a
springboard for
#6 *read* Moral Teaching...
for More Teaching...

A COMMENT ON EUGENE D STOCKTON'S MISSIOLOGY

JAMES KNIGHT SVD

BEING LARGELY IGNORANT of the actual situation of the Aboriginal Catholic Missions in Australia—even in spite of a long-enduring interest in them—I shall leave a judgement of Father Stockton's hard-hitting critique of the efforts of Catholic missionaries amongst Aboriginal Australians to those who have the knowledge and experience to make such judgements. Instead, I wish to offer a comment on the missiological basis on which Father Stockton offers a reassessment of the present situation (*Nelen Yubu*, Winter 1986, pp.24-29). On page 25 under the heading of 'Goal' he sets out three formulae with which, it seems to me, he undergirds his reassessment. As stated these formulae are:

1. In mission, the christians of one culture are offering a culture-free Gospel to the people of another culture, so that they might incarnate it in their own culture.
2. From another point of view, according to current Catholic missiology, it is Christ himself who is being reincarnated in Aboriginal flesh, the Body of Christ truly Aboriginal, with its various Aboriginal members mutually interacting grow to full maturity (Eph.4:15-16)—in this we as members of the Universal Church mediate to enable it to happen in whole and in part.

Fr James Knight is coordinator of missiological education and research for the south-east Asian and Pacific regions of the Divine Word Society.

3. From a further point of view, that of Liberation Theology, we are empowering the poor/oppressed to go free—liberation in a holistic sense including salvation, self-determination, freedom from fear, pressures, internal constraints, freedom to lead, to minister, express, to make their own integration of Old and New Laws, to become fully Aboriginal in a sense not possible even under traditional ways.

There is much missiological thought and discussion packed into these formulae; but if we accept them unexamined they will become either rarefied abstractions or, worse, little understood slogans that we throw at one another. Hence, I shall offer a comment on each formula.

Formula One

Father Stockton proposed that in mission christians of one culture offer a 'culture-free Gospel' to the people of another culture, which will allow the receivers 'to incarnate it into their own culture.' To be capable of offering a 'culture-free' to others is a beautiful goal, but how realistic is it?

Paul probably came closer than any other missionary to this goal. He had been raised in Tarsus and obviously knew the Greek culture. He was also deeply imbued with the Jewish scriptures, and had encountered Christ on the road to Damascus. It was the Christ who had been crucified, died and had risen (and whom Paul had met on the road to Damascus) that Paul proclaimed to the Greeks--in order that they might place this enormous event at the centre of their personal and cultural lives. Paul did not consider it necessary to deal with the early or public life of Jesus and so was free to proclaim the central, transcendent mysteries of Christ 'culturally-free' to his hearers. But he soon found himself locked in a struggle on two fronts. His Greek converts often distorted his Gospel in a way which brought a strong rebuke from Paul. He was forced to

remind the Thessalonians: 'We gave you a rule when we were with you: not to let anyone have food if he refused to do any work' (2 Thess 3:10). His fellow Jews on the other hand accused him of not only betraying his Jewish culture but destroying the Law, the religious foundation of their culture. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul vehemently defends the right of gentile christians to be free of the Jewish Law and customs. He even withstood Peter to his face (Gal 2:11-14). But Raymond Brown argues that Paul was not always consistent, that as time went on he was more accepting, even approving, of the Jewish Christianity he had found against in his early apostolate.¹ Brown deduces this conclusion primarily from Paul's letter to the Romans.² All this does not show that Paul abandoned a Gospel which transcends every culture, but it does demonstrate that in order to present a culturally-transcendent Gospel the missionary must come to grips with all the cultural forces and variables in the situation with which he or she is dealing.

There are at least three, and sometimes more cultures which the missionary must be able to handle. First, there is the Jewish culture in which Jesus grew up; this is particularly important if, unlike Paul, we consider the early and public life of Jesus of Nazareth as essential to the gospel we preach. Second, there is the cultural background of the missionary. The missionary must have a clear understanding and acceptance of his or her own culture and of its potential for affecting the communication of the gospel. And then there is the culture of those who hear the gospel. Every culture will hear some aspects of the gospel clearly, will be completely deaf to some aspects, and will probably distort other aspects.

What then can offering a 'culture-free Gospel' mean? It cannot mean preaching the gospel without cultural perceptions, since without cultural perceptions the gospel could hardly be preached at all. In practice I suggest it means being as sensitive as possible to the values, images, concepts and habits of all the cultures which come into dynamic interaction in the act of communicating the gospel and then handling these elements so that they help rather than hinder the desired communication. Missionaries can develop this sensitivity with

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the help of anthropology, theology, missiology, comparative religions, psychology or higher mathematics—it doesn't matter how. What does matter is that missionaries learn to trust their educated feelings, because through such feelings the Spirit leads them in the precious task of communicating the gospel cross-culturally.

Formula Two

Father Stockton's second formula is very important and necessary, but I believe—if we are to avoid romanticising Aboriginal Catholicism—the image of the Aboriginal Church as the Body of Christ must be complemented with the image of the People of God. The image of the People of God will enable Aboriginal Catholics and missionaries to come to grips with the historical, social and cultural dimensions of Aboriginal Catholicism. Let me set out briefly what I mean by this.

Aboriginal Catholic communities have come into existence through a series of encounters between the bearers of two cultural-religious traditions. Encounters between Catholic missionaries, the bearers of western Catholicism, and a number of Aboriginal tribes who were bearers of their traditional cultures and religions. The quality of the encounters varied according to the success or failure of the dynamics and communication we have referred to above. Yet, the Spirit was present in these encounters and the Word was creative—both the Word present as seeds, *semina verbi*, in the traditional Aboriginal religions and cultures and the Word proclaimed by western missionaries. Hence new communities and a new people of God were born. This new people of God belongs neither to western Catholicism nor to the traditional Aboriginal religions, it is completely new, it is simply: Aboriginal Catholicism.³ Like Chinese, Irish, or Melanesian Catholicism, it is a unique form of Catholicism and must be accepted as such.

It is, as Father Stockton points out, the Body of Christ and therefore Christ present in and to all Aboriginal life and history. As Word became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, who grew up in the Jewish culture and learned its resources so

expertly that he could use them to challenge the Jewish culture to open itself to new and greater possibilities, so Aboriginal Catholicism incarnates itself into Aboriginal societies and cultures, learning to use their rich resources and challenging them to open up to new and greater possibilities.

But as the People of God, the Aboriginal Catholicism has the characteristics and capacities of all—old and new—peoples of God. It can grow or die, it can live in the Spirit or it can choose sin and death. It can build up ties with the rest of God's people or it can isolate itself from them; it can make a unique contribution to the Catholicity of the whole Church or it can become a pale copy of an alien Catholicism.

Formula Three

This is the most critical of Father Stockton's formulae: how can Aboriginal Catholicism realise its Godgiven potential? Father highlights this potential by borrowing categories from Liberation Theology and proposing what liberation could mean for Aboriginal Catholics. Although this is a legitimate procedure, I feel the context within which the proposed freedoms are set, albeit implicitly, is too narrow. A pursuit of the freedoms as presented, even 'to become fully Aboriginal in a sense not possible even under traditional ways', is a pursuit of freedoms as ends in themselves and must in time become a self-ish pursuit. I suggest therefore that Aboriginal Catholics will have a more solid basis for their future if they pursue these freedoms within the context of their mission to the wider Aboriginal and Australian society and of the contribution that Aboriginal Catholicism can make to the mainstream of Catholicism in Australia and elsewhere.

Aboriginal Catholics and Aboriginal Catholicism will speak as a minority (to Aboriginal society) or even from the periphery (to Australian society and mainstream Catholicism), which are positions of critical importance. In particular, the contribution of Aboriginal Catholicism—perhaps a deep sense of justice, sacramentality or the fatherhood of God—could be a precious gift, without which mainstream Catholicism will be

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poorer indeed. To make this contribution, however, Aboriginal Catholics at times may have to take strong stands against fellow Catholics. Within the context of mission and participation, Aboriginal Catholics can make such stands not to reject fellow Catholics, nor to isolate themselves, but for the sake of the wider Catholicism and their authentic participation in it.

What can missionaries to Aboriginal Catholic communities (or to Melanesian, African, Chinese or any young Catholic community) be and do? Before all else, missionaries to these communities must be able to give and *receive* within human relationships and dialogues. Self-sacrifice and giving have often been stressed so strongly in missionary formation that missionaries have lost their capacity to receive. To evangelise the roots of a culture, one must be capable of receiving deeply from it. In addition, today missionaries are links of communication and communion between communities and churches. Missionaries will need to interpret Aboriginal Catholicism. And draw Aboriginals into these linking roles as well.⁴ In this way a modern missionary can be a disciple of the kingdom who 'like a householder brings from his storeroom things both new and old' (Mt 13:52).

NOTES

1. Raymond E Brown and John P Meier, *Antioch and Rome*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983. On p.114 Brown states his position: 'Of course, here I am proposing what is virtually heresy in the eyes of Pauline scholars: namely, that Paul was not always consistent in his major epistles: that Paul even changed his mind; that the defiant Paul of Galatians was exaggerated; and that something is to be said for the position of Peter and James over against Paul on the observance of Jewish customs (so long as the observances were not looked upon as necessary for salvation).'

2. *ibidem*, pp.105-127.
3. By employing the term 'Aboriginal Catholicism' I am not implying that there is a complete uniformity running through all Catholic Aboriginal communities. I am aware of the diversity amongst these communities, yet historically and theologically I believe there is in Australia a form of Catholicism which we can happily term 'Aboriginal Catholicism.'
4. Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann's article 'Autobiographical Reflections' (cf. *Nelen Yubu* No. 28, pp.13-18) is an excellent example of the sort of self-expression and self-communication to which missionary linkage should lead.

* * * * *

Fr Ernest Ailred Worms, *Australian Aboriginal Religions survey of traditional religion throughout the continent — religious material culture; high spirit beings; initiation; birth, death, funerary rites, human destiny.*

German edition, *Australische Eingeborenen Religionen*, Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 1968. Translated by M Wilson, D O'Donovan, M Charlesworth; printed by Spectrum Publications, Richmond, Vic., for Nelen Yubu Missiological Unit, 1986. Pages 231+xvi, soft cover, sewn, available from:

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* * * * *

A REPLY TO THE RESPONSE

EUGENE D STOCKTON

I WELCOME DISCUSSION of the points I raised in *Nelen Yubu* — (no. 27, Winter 1986, pp.20-9) and particularly appreciate the glowing picture Sister Clare Ahern paints of the Aboriginal apostolate in her area of experience. Her response fleshes out four of the eight positive Church initiatives I listed on p.21 and highlights the Sisters' works in the East Kimberley as among the most significant and innovative in the Aboriginal apostolate. However satisfaction from success in one area should not blind us to problems elsewhere.

I am sorry if the opposite impression was given, but I was not attacking the Diocese of Broome or particular individuals. I made it clear I was addressing the responsibility of the Australian Church as a whole (in which you and I share) and I was concerned that lack of awareness and reflection is stifling efforts of really dedicated people in a most demanding apostolate. It was genuinely motivated by pastoral concern for people working with Aborigines, but the problems of morale they disclosed (and in some cases begged me to make known) exposed symptoms of problems in the Church's ministry to Aborigines as a whole. Unfortunately, 'soured missionaries' do exist: this I know on the basis of personal testimonies, both written and spoken, which of course must remain confidential. It is a pity they were missed in the finecomb discussions along the track, because they deserve sensitive support of their brothers and sisters -- perhaps one needs to peer past the hair to the scalp beneath.

The pastoral concern which motivated my paper may well have unbalanced it towards the negative, but the Good Shepherd showed the same imbalance to the one sheep in the wilderness, as against the ninety-nine who needed (or felt they needed) no

change. Sister Clare's optimistic response (as my 'Aboriginal Renewal', *Nelen Yubu*, no. 19, 1984, pp.3-11) may be a good balance to my pessimism, but I am acutely aware that my overview is mild compared to complaints made to me by Government officers and anthropologists. It is easy to dismiss academics, but it should be taken into account that they are trained observers seeking to be impartial, and in most cases they are genuinely moved with human concern. There is a Sydney University thesis which is a scathing attack on Catholic missions: while I believe its interpretations are faulty, its detailed factual basis is embarrassing. It is well at times to view ourselves as others see us, if only to trim our triumphalism, to refine our operations, and to specify our aims more realistically.

The term 'mission' also caused me difficulty. It is a term better avoided in Australia because of its bad connotations from the past. However when speaking of local Church activity with Aborigines in the light of Catholic thinking and practice in cross-cultural evangelisation worldwide, one cannot escape the use of the word in the *ecclesiastical* sense, as it occurs in Church documentation. Surely anyone conversant with this documentation does need to have spelled out the range of meanings and usages of the term 'mission' and its cognates.

Sister Clare's remarks on Aboriginal church leadership are right on target. I did not mean to imply that we set up an Aboriginal hierarchy slavishly on the model of the Western Church. I praised the Uniting and Anglican Churches

- (a) for giving Aborigines access to the highest levels of leadership in their Churches,
- (b) for devising a parish model of group leadership apparently more appropriate to Aboriginal ways.

The monarchical (and male-dominated) model of church leadership is not the only one possible. In 'Nomadic Ministry' (*Nelen Yubu*, no. 24, 1985, pp.18-24) I described seven models from the past quite different from what we would now regard as sacro-

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sanct and normal, besides offering a suggestion how a (non-Aboriginal) priest might work under local Aboriginal leadership (briefly mentioned in *Nelen Yubu*, no. 27, p.29). The important point is that whatever structure is created, it be one which

- (a) suits the local community,
- (b) carries real power and authority,
- (c) can be assumed fully by the local people,
- (d) is fully respected and upheld by the Church at large.

In all this disputing about particular points I would hope that the positive recommendations of the original be not lost, and especially that the underlying assumption behind it all be not overlooked. The principal thrust was that for Australian Aborigines to hear the gospel of Jesus clearly and accurately is the responsibility of the whole Australian Church. Here is no place for parochialism. It is not the cosy province of a couple of dioceses or of a few congregations. Invidious and un-gospel are distinctions between 'real' Aborigines and 'coloured do-gooders from the South', between 'real' missions and 'pretend' missions. If we share in this work I cannot help caring for those working on the other side of the continent, both for their own sake and for the effect of their actions on the rest of the apostolate. Do you care for me, a third priest in a parish four times the size of the Broome diocese in population with many more Aborigines, and responsible to an Aboriginal population (of all Sydney) little less than that of NT? Do you know of those working in Queensland -- their innovations, hopes, successes, disappointments, meagre resources? Can you imagine the isolation of the Adelaide chaplain? This broadness of view and of love is part of belonging to a Thing called Catholic.

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE
OF ABORIGINAL STUDIES:
BIENNIAL MEETING

BILL EDWARDS

THE BIENNIAL GENERAL MEETING of the Institute was held in Canberra on 15 May 1986 and this was preceded by four days of conference and workshops. I was present throughout the conference and meeting and the editor of *Nelen Yubu* has asked me to prepare this paper giving an outline of the program and some comments on the proceedings.

A three-day conference under the title, *Social Anthropology in Aboriginal Affairs, Selected Themes 1961-86*, opened on 11 May and the theme for that day was *Egalitarian and Hierarchical Tendencies in Aboriginal Social Life*. Les Hiatt convened the sessions and papers were presented by Kenneth Maddocks, John Bern, Bob Tonkinson, Ian Keen, Chris Anderson, Kingsley Palmer, David Trigger, Gillian Cowlshaw and John von Sturmer. As each speaker was allocated 30 minutes and they were reading from longer papers it was difficult to follow them as they had to pass over sections and were inclined to read quickly. There were no transcripts or abstracts available and by the time one had listened to nine papers during a day it was difficult to recall what the earlier ones had said. The debate

The Revd Bill Edwards served as a missionary with the Presbyterian and Uniting Churches from 1958 to 1980, working with the Pitjantjatjara people in the northwest of South Australia apart from one year at Mowanjum Mission in WA. Since 1981 he has been lecturing in Aboriginal Studies at the SACAE.

centred on the thesis presented by Meggitt in 1964 in which he argued that Aboriginal government could be summed up as egalitarian, and the more recent responses of Bern, Hiatt and others.

The second day was given over to the theme, Aboriginal Identity and the Uses of the Past. Convened by Jeremy Beckett, papers were presented by Beckett, Gillian Cowlshaw, Kenneth Maddock, L Coltheart, Barry Morris, Basil Sansom, Deidre Jordan, Howard Creamer and Jane Jacobs. The same comments made about Day 1 apply to these presentations and one must await publication of the papers before being able to recall much of the substance. I found Jane Jacob's contrast of the experiences of the Kokatha and Adnjamathanha peoples of South Australia in relation to land rights of interest. The former have not obtained title to any lands in their traditional area whereas the latter have the titles to former station land. She commented on the differences in the white groups which had provided guidance and assistance to the two groups. A vital point that was not made in her presentation, but which I understand is included in her thesis is that a mission was established in Adnjamathanha land but not in Kokatha country. Although the mission was not sympathetic to traditional practices and to the traditional ties to land it at least provided a base for continuing association with the land during the years of culture contact. One comment in relation to this day's proceedings is that it is a sad comment on the developments over the past 25 years that in 1986 a conference could be held on the theme of Aboriginal Identity without an Aboriginal person presenting a paper.

The conference continued on 13 May with Topical Overviews, with five papers presented reviewing twentyfive years of research in the following areas: Kinship by Ian Keen, Economy by Chris Anderson, Gender by Francesca Merlan, Law by Nancy Williams and Religion by Howard Morphy, the last paper being read by Bob Tonkinson as Dr Morphy is now in London. Ronald Berndt convened this session. These review papers will be published later and this will provide a valuable contribution to Aboriginal studies. Readers of this Journal will no doubt

be interested in the paper on Religion. It was disappointing that the paper did not refer to the contemporary Aboriginal religious movements and to the impact of Christian missions and the indigenous responses to them. Father Martin Wilson was quick to point out this shortcoming during the discussion period and anthropologists such as Ian Keen commented that they had researched in these areas. It was generally agreed that the omission should be rectified before the paper is published. It should also be noted that although Father Worms had presented the paper on Religion at the 1961 conference which led to the establishment of the Institute, no reference was made in the 1986 paper to him or his writings. His phenomenological approach to the study of religion appears to be of little interest to those engaged in the present-day anthropological studies. On the afternoon of that day Professor John Barnes gave a Conference Address reviewing the past twentyfive years and other conference papers.

On Wednesday 14 May the day was taken up with a Symposium on Aboriginal Discourse convened by Margaret Clunies Ross. Speakers included Patricia Waterman from the University of Florida, Peter Sutton, Bill McGregor from the Kimberley Language Centre and Barbara Sayers from the Summer Institute of Linguistics. Once again there was no general distribution of papers although some speakers circulated copies of short texts they were analysing in their papers. The papers tended to be very technical and there were changes in the vocabulary from the earlier days concentration on the language of social anthropology. Words such as genre dominated on this day. The Biennial Wentworth Lecture was delivered in the Coombs Lecture Theatre that night by Professor John Mulvaney. His overview of archaeological research over the past twentyfive was restrained and measured. He referred to romantic conclusions at times drawn from scanty evidence and suggested that conclusions should be based on solid evidence only. He commented on the scarcity of human remains for the period beyond 20,000 BP and warned against generalising on the basis of limited evidence and against the making of claims for human occupation of the Australian continent beyond 40,000 BP until there was hard

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evidence.

The General Meeting of the Institute, chaired by Ken Colbung, was held on 15 May. Following the dissemination of a suggestion and the holding of meetings in several centres in recent months, the idea of forming regional chapters of the Institute was discussed. Some speakers supported the idea on the grounds that it would provide a forum for the sharing of ideas and papers, and could perhaps provide for some local consideration of research applications. Others opposed the idea as they felt that it would spread available funds too thinly. The matter is still open for responses from the various centres. The other major item on the agenda related to academic freedom and was raised by Dr (now Professor) Dianne Bell who had written an article on problems related to land rights hearings in the Northern Territory and the demand of the Court to have access to the field notes and other records of the research anthropologists. The article had been accepted for inclusion in an issue of the Institute's Journal, *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, but had been withdrawn at the request of legal counsel for the Central Land Council. This led to vigorous debate on the issues involved. In the course of the debate the editor of the Journal submitted his resignation on the grounds that his powers were insufficiently defined and he had been overruled in the matter. A motion of confidence in him as editor was passed and reference was made to his efforts in catching up with the backlog of editorial work in recent months and the issuing of several editions of the Journal. The issue No. 1 of 1986 I have since read and found of great interest as it raised issues which need airing.

Other events during the conference included the launching of the book, *Rom*, on the Monday evening and the official Dinner on the Tuesday night. Running concurrently with the conference was a Language Revival Workshop and this attracted a number of Aboriginal people and consultants who are interested in reviving languages which have declined as English has been introduced into the areas where these languages were once the languages of communication. A colleague, Brian Kirke, was able to attend this workshop with Ngarrindjeri people. He had

worked on the preparation of a kit of this language for use in schools, and the kit had been launched at Port McLeay shortly before the conference. Aboriginal involvement in the Language Workshop contrasted with the minimal involvement by them in the conference. Only two Aboriginal people attended the latter on a regular basis. One was David Mowaltjarli from Mowanjum in Western Australia. Having worked with him in 1972-3 at Mowanbjum I was pleased to have the opportunity to meet with him again and to discuss some of the concerns he has about the community at Mowanjum. The other was Gordon Briscoe who is studying History at ANU and is on the staff of the Institute. He raised questions during many of the discussion periods.

The main value for me in attending the conference was in the renewing of old, and the making of new contacts, with people with whom I share common interests. Coming from a background in mission work two of my interests are the history of missions, and the relationship between Aboriginal culture and the Christian Gospel. (Edwards, 1978). Delegates at the conference on occasions pointed others in my direction when they knew that they would be interested in my experiences. I in turn was able to put others with common interests in touch with each other. During a break in proceedings someone mentioned to me that a man sitting near the end of a row of seats was some kind of Minister. I sat down next to him and introduced myself and received the response: 'I am Martin Wilson'. Having corresponded in the past we spent much time over the next few days in conversation and have since been able to renew this contact when Father Wilson visited Adelaide recently. I also met for the first time, David Thompson from Nungalinga College and formerly of Edward River Mission. One evening I spoke to Noel Loos from James Cook University and found out that he is using my article referred to above in a Reader for students and that he is involved in a research project on the history of Australian Board of Missions work in Northern Australia. Jack Horner, who is now writing a book on the history of FCAATSI was also present and I was able to put him in touch with Noel. Other delegates sought me out to discuss aspects of my experience as it related to research work on which they were

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engaged. This in turn stimulated reflection on these experiences and focussed on aspects that may be worth following up in writing at a later stage.

A task I have been engaged in over the past couple of years has been the editing of a volume, *Traditional Aboriginal Society: A Reader*, which will be published by Macmillans early in 1987. The volume is designed for the use of students at College. The Conference gave me the opportunity to meet several of the contributors and to discuss progress with the editing of the volume. One of the contributors is Deborah Rose whose article first appeared in *Nelen Yubu*. While searching for suitable articles on religion I read this article while flying from Adelaide to Darwin last year and it struck me immediately as suitable for my purposes.

These are my reflections on the conference. Perhaps they will stimulate an interest in *Nelen Yubu* readers so that others will be encouraged to attend the next conference in 1988. If there are sufficient delegates at that conference who share the interest in Aboriginal Christianity it may be an appropriate occasion for a workshop on that theme.

REFERENCE :

- EDWARDS, W H 1978 *The Gospel and Aboriginal Culture.*
Interchange, Number 24. Sydney.

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

In our last issue (No.28) there was a typographical error in the *Editorial*: para.2, penultimate line. The year '1986' should have read '1968'. I apologise!

A helpful letter from Fr Fred Mordaunt msc, Novitiate, Kokopo in Papua New Guinea, held the remark 'I have noted with interest and admiration the very good cause of keeping this magazine going. All I can say is *Ad Multos Annos!*' And Father adds: '...a request for prayers for the Novitiate here; the future of MSC's in this country depends upon it. We have a good lot of Novices this year: 13, made up of five PNG students, four PNG Brothers, two Fijian and two Kiribatian students'. That request will not go unanswered.

While compliments are being aired, we have found a great deal of support and approbation from people sending for a copy of the Fr Worms translation, *Australian Aboriginal Religions*, published this year by NYMU. Dr Herman Janssen of the Mission-swissenschaftliches Institut in Aachen, West Germany, writes: 'Ernest Ailred Worms' *Australian Aboriginal Religions* is a good translation of a good book! You deserve praise for making it available to the English speaking world, especially to all the friends of the Australian Aboriginals. I have given your publication to the library of the Missiological Institute of Missio.'

And an interesting anecdote comes from Monsignor D Stewart of Canberra: 'The publication of this book recalls a meeting with the author, when he passed through Townsville on his way to visit the Palm Island Mission. Father Frank Rush—now Archbishop of Brisbane—and I were told by Bishop Ryan to look

SECRETARY'S DESK

after our visitor. That was easy enough, except for the problem of getting him to bed! He entertained us into the wee hours with his talk about his work and particularly about his discoveries on the Island concerning the remnant of a tribe of pigmies.' It's interesting to have emerge these little-known facets of the character of Fr Worms whom we feel we have come to know so well.

A sad occasion was the death of Mr Jack Pye, brother of Brother Pye of Bathurst Island. Jack and his wife Jean had visited BI when I was stationed there about nine years ago and we have all been firm friends ever since. Brother Pye flew from Darwin for the Requiem Mass in Sydney, at which Fr Wilson concelebrated. Those of us who were able to attend the Mass were impressed by the many tributes paid to Jack. We offer Brother Pye and Jean and the family our very deep sympathy.

It was good to run into Fr Dennis Murphy msc at the Kensington Monastery early in November. He looked so fit and *young* when he came to the car to speak to me that I had to look twice. He was on brief leave from Rome, and was just about to leave for Indonesia and points north and west, I believe. A pity he could not have stayed longer to delight some of us with his quick sense of humour and entertaining banter.

And now another year has gone! A happy Christmas to all and much success in 1987.

Secretary Keren

SYNOPSIS OF E. STOCKTON'S 'PLIGHT OF CATHOLIC MISSIONS *NELÉN YUBU* No. 27:20-29

pp.20-21: He noted the historical change of recent years in the 'mission' situation: church missions are no longer 'total institutions' under church management; the community looks after its own affairs; the priests and assistants are more or less restricted to 'serving the purely spiritual needs'.

p.21: The Anglican and Uniting churches have applied the dynamic of 'self-management' to the very parish structure, viz. local ministers, Nungalinga College, the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. . . The Catholic Church has failed so to move -- apart from eight commended initiatives (one of them being *Nelén Yubu* itself). The Catholic Church still works on an implicit assimilationist policy. 'It is difficult here to recognise "mission" in the sense generally understood by the Catholic Church today'.

p.22: Many church people show 'extraordinary dedication and heroism', but morale is low.

p.22-24: The areas of failure are:

1. Identity. 'With the government-induced change of status...to self-managing communities', the missionaries are either swimming against the tide or trying to divert the flow towards white-style parishes.

2. Mission Policy. 'With no sense of direction it was rare to find anyone working to a plan.' Activities were *ad hoc*, requests were unmanageable. Priests had received no special training, Brothers and Sisters a bit.

3. Teamwork. Little of it; more of 'individuals concentrating on self-contained tasks', programs that would lapse when their initiator left.

4. Communication. A regretted lack.

5. Community. Any faith sharing beyond formal office and liturgy was something just longed for.

6. More Teaching and Practice. A lack of enlightened moral theology and missiology to span the perceived 'unbridgeable gap between moral teaching and Aboriginal practice, especially in the area of marriage.'

7. Aboriginal response. '...church attendance was low and liturgical participation at a minimum.' "If we left, would anyone notice the difference?" The 'Jigalong syndrome': some older soured and disappointed missionaries blamed the 'innate corruption or paganism of the Aborigines'.

pp.24-27 Reassessment: 'To pull out or to reform -- the choice is as stark as that.' Either hand over to the Uniting and Anglican Churches, or, following their lead, get our act together!

Some parameters of the reassessment:

1. Goal. The transmission of a 'culture-free gospel'; a truly Aboriginal Mystical Body of Christ; a liberated people.

2. Communication. Goal and aims discussed by mission staff and Aboriginal people: chosen or rejected.

3. Teamwork. Aboriginal workers and co-workers operating as a team on national, state or local levels. Periodic review; the use of outside professional help.

4. Mandate. 'Mission' to Aborigines is a responsibility of the whole Australian Church, not just of a particular diocese or congregation. Should there be an Aboriginal Vicariate for those working outside Darwin and Broome dioceses?

5. Co-ordination. The hierarchy might organise a more equitable sharing of personnel and other resources throughout the continent for the purpose of mission to Aborigines, without distinction between 'full-blood and part-blood'.

6. Popular support. Make it possible for *all* Australian Catholics to participate: directly, special services, financial or moral support.

pp.27-29 Specific Proposals:

1 & 2. National Forum to reassess, National Organisation to support the Aboriginal apostolate.

3. National Centre for research and training of Aboriginal pastoral workers and (non-Aboriginal) co-workers.

4. Newsletter? Link with *Nelen Yubu*?

5. Formation and pastoral care for pastoral workers.

6. Positive inter-church relations and link-ups.

7. Symbolic actions: regarding the Bicentenary and Pope's visit.

8. Feasibility of the Aboriginal Vicariate?

9. Exploration of new modes of ministry: local ministry teams, mobile priestly ministry, ministry at nodal centres (e.g. Alice Springs, Katherine, like Halls Creek).