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EDITORIAL

TOWARDS THE END both of October and the Lumko International Course I was attending in Lesotho I decided to write the course up for this issue of *Nelen Yubu*: which meant that Secretary Keren, who had already typeset and pasted up No.33 with other articles, had to undo some of her work! I am sure the Lumko material will be of great interest to many people in Australia, especially those working in the Aboriginal apostolate — and I would like to hear from them!

While marking time in Lesotho before the course (cf. my paper) I was invited to give some classes and a general talk at St Augustine's Seminary at Roma (Lesotho). (There are over 100 seminarians, a few of whom responded by expressing a missionary interest in Australia!) One of the staff was the French-Canadian missiologist, Eugene Lapointe OMI, who by now will have begun to commute between Ottawa and Lesotho as he takes up an Associate Professorship at Ottawa. He is a lecturer who practises what he preaches, being involved in establishing Small Christian Communities in some Lesotho parishes. He gladly allowed us to reprint a paper on inculturation that he had prepared for a conference in Rome (Italy).

We present our Christmas greetings to all our readers in the form of an occasional poem by our poet-in-chief, Dan O'Donovan. His article on a recent theological painting in the eastern Kimberley is one of the casualties of this issue: it is being held over to No.34.

Happy Christmas to everybody!

Martin Wilson msc
Editor

SYDNEY COVE 1788

I

An eagle was my sister
soared into the sun
dying the thousand deaths

And she cried
Show me the spirit of my father
and of my totem ground.

Now the sun was gold and molten
and all around there was a brightness
which consumed even the night.

I am lost, wailed she,
how can I live?

Then fell her eye upon a solitary blackthorn bush
burning unburnt.
There was laughter in its voice as it recited:

*But the angel of the Lord
came down into the furnace,
and drove the fiery flame out of the furnace
and made the midst of the furnace
like a moist whistling wind...*

Even as she stood there watching
green tongues went out from the bush
devouring the fire.

Ha! came a guffaw,
did you expect to find a windshaken reed
here in the desert of the sun?

She saw then it was a hunter's spear
fashioned of light.

II

His chest was charred land
fire and wind and sharp stones
spit through the teeth of years.

Weal ridges crossed the plain
running with one-time pain
and overflow of secret...

Come not too close, my friend,
not too close.

*(What did you go out into the desert to see?
Someone clothed in soft clothes?
Behold, those who wear soft clothes
are in kings' houses.)*

Dan O'Donovan,
Fitzroy Crossing, WA

CHRISTIAN REVELATION IN RELATION TO OTHER RELIGIONS AND HUMAN CULTURE

Eugene Lapointe O M I

[In my paper 'Aboriginal Religion and Christianity: Ideological Symbolism, Ritual Sacramentalism' (*Nelen Yubu* no. 13) I endeavoured to outline two principles in terms of which a Christian could extend an understanding welcome to Aboriginal religion. In the following paper Fr Lapointe develops the first principle (ideological symbolism) more fully and in a theological mode. It may be remembered that many Aboriginal Christians look upon their traditional culture as *their* Old Testament. Fr Lapointe outlines a theological rationale for such a view. — The paper was prepared for a congress in Rome in 1985 to mark the 20th year from the close of Vatican II: the congress theme was, 'Portare Cristo all'uomo'. — MJW]

The *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* of Vatican II and its previous *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions* are a challenge to theologians and pastoral practitioners to find new ways to understand and to encounter people who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ and his proclamation of the Kingdom of God explicitly. The Church today is more and more sympathetic to the

Fr Eugene Lapointe has been a missionary in Lesotho for 27 years. He was born near Québec, Canada, in 1932; ordained priest in 1959 in the congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI). He worked in Lesotho parishes for more than 15 years. He was superior at the Oblate scholasticate at Roma (the name given to the area where the Oblate mission began in Lesotho in 1863) and lectures now in pastoral theology and anthropology at the Lesotho national seminary, St Augustine's, also at Roma. At the end of 1987 he will begin to commute between St Augustine's, Lesotho, and the Institute of Mission Studies, Ottawa, where he will occupy the post of Associate Professor.

values brought by other religions and human cultures. However, despite the increasing number of research projects and much reflection, it is my contention that the basic question still remains to be confronted:¹ What is the relationship of religions and cultures with God's saving event as proclaimed in the Bible and Christianity? How far can we say that religions and cultures can be considered as saving means in the Christian sense of the word? Or, is it even legitimate to ask such a question? Many, I feel, would answer negatively. Is it possible to consider that God may reveal himself in his saving event in other religions and cultures? Still more may say no.

I would like to be allowed to disagree with these negative answers and contribute to the debate by this paper. My intention is to show that people, even outside Christianity, may be able to and actually do know the saving God, albeit mysteriously, inchoatively or imperfectly. Religions, culture, literature or oral tradition manifest and are means of expressing the deep human experience of Salvation worked by God in the world. Consequently, it would be erroneous pastoral practice for the Church to proclaim the Word of God without making reference to, starting from and building on this experience.

My arguments are presented in three stages:

1. A general exposé on Revelation and its manifestation in other religions and culture;
2. Presentation of some Biblical arguments in favour of my thesis;
3. Proposal of some possible examples from African oral traditions.

I

Revelation of the Saving Event and its manifestation in other religions and culture

The concept of a specific Revelation in Christianity cannot exclude, I think, the possibility of God manifesting himself through other religions, human endeavour, including politics, and modes of understanding. When I say: 'God manifesting himself', I do not speak

of natural manifestation only. The reason being that Christianity understands creation as being influenced by grace since the beginning, even after the fall. There is no state of pure nature. The Spirit of God influences and is present to any human reality and leads it to Salvation, even outside explicit Christianity.

Consequently, any human being and group of human beings are moved by the Spirit, be they conscious of it or not. This does not mean that they always correspond to this impulse; they may fail to do so. For this reason, it remains to be seen what is inspired or moved by the Spirit and what is not. The Holy Scripture may well come in here as a means to discern how other religions and culture manifest the saving God.

But then, human phenomena like philosophies, religions, cultures, even political movements, cannot be understood as totally irrelevant or without any intimate relation with Christianity as such, i.e. as a revealed religion. They should be influenced by grace and the Spirit in one way or another. If it is so, there should be a possibility of discovering what the Spirit of God does and reveals through these phenomena, once we know that God acts in human history. I think that this is what Christianity gives us: that God acts in human history through the Spirit and the saving act of Christ.

It may be possible to go further and to assume that other religions and human endeavours are part of the saving event of God. They could be considered as real means or rather as milieus of Salvation, although we may be obliged at some stage to admit that they have their limits, as Christianity for that matter, as it is lived and understood at any moment of human history, has its own limitations and must be questioned.

Furthermore, since we believe that God acts in human history, that he is present, he must be experienced in one way or another and can be known therefore, not only naturally, but supernaturally² (to use a centuries old category), even outside Christianity, although possibly only in a mysterious way. The phrase 'mysterious way' is important here. It is my contention that God's action may open itself up to recognition in all kinds of human activity. However, there might be a privileged human area where God's saving event can be approached and known.

To know for man is not only to speculate, to express what he knows in straightforward language or 'clear concepts'. Symbolic and mythical language is the proof of that. Man knows by his experience,

not only by his reason. He knows through his whole person: perception, feelings, imagination, emotions, and this cannot be expressed wholly except through a mysterious language, a language which is deeper than 'clear concepts', the language of symbols and myths, the language of poetry, which appeal to the whole person instead of to reason alone, a language which opens up a whole possibility of meaning, not expressible in purely rational language, of feeling, of *pathos*, which make us say: 'This is true', although the story may be fiction. The story is true because it corresponds fully to what we experience deeply as human beings³. God may therefore make himself known in this way; his actions may be perceived in this way, i.e. in our deep human experience that we express in myths, stories, poetry, etc. After all, is it not the way the Bible has been written? In the third part of this paper, I will present some possible examples of such an opening of God's saving event in stories and myths.

However, a fundamental question remains: what is the specific role of Christian Revelation, what is the proper relevance of the Christian Bible, if deep human experience, expressed in culture and other religions, reveals already the saving action of God? I think that basically the Christian Revelation provides a privileged tool for analysing human experience in all its manifestations, be they religions, cultures and human thought in general. It provides a unique means of dialogue, of discernment, for explicating what God is trying to tell us in all the human manifestations of his saving action. The reason being that any human experience is fallible. In particular its symbolic expression in myths and stories and its celebration in religious rituals. There remains always the possibility of erring. Human existence, being an enigma by definition, its tentative explanation through symbolic language, stories and poetry, remains open to continual shortcomings. It has always to be resumed again and again, and expressed differently in new forms of language, in new myths and stories. Christian Revelation may come up here to limit this frailty and may serve as a critical tool, but above all as a means of identifying the real action of God through all these.

I did not say enough. There is something in Christianity which appears to be irreducible to any human experience and which cannot be known except through Revelation: the historical saving event of Christ. This, I think, cannot be perceived, in any human experience, except maybe through an enigmatic longing for a kind of saviour, a mysterious need for salvation, the experience of a kind of a fall,

which seem to be expressed in many cultures, especially in Africa. The rest (I mean, apart from Christ), particularly the Old Testament Revelation, may be found more or less in other religions and in cultural expressions. My phrase, 'more or less', is important, because as I said above, religions and cultures are open to shortcomings, can and do err. But still, I think I am justified to say that, because the grace of God and the action of the Holy Spirit are active in any group of human beings and dwell in the heart of man, this should be open to some kind of recognition even outside Christianity, be it enigmatic as it may. We cannot possibly say that the Spirit moves the heart of man and excludes his intelligence.

II

Implications for Pastoral Theology and the Proclamation of the Saving Event in Church

If my argumentation is right, it has enormous implications for pastoral theology and for the mission of the Church in general, in particular the encounter of Christianity with other religions, culture and human thought. These could be taken, for people other than the Jews, as a kind of Old Testament, as imperfect as it may be, on which Christianity could be built, to which the Church could bring the Revelation of Christ. Perhaps the two types of kerygma to Gentile people presented by the *Acts of the Apostles* could serve as models and paradigms.

Models or paradigms, because it is generally admitted among the exegetes that Luke does not report necessarily the exact wording of Paul, but rather present typical approaches to the kerygmatic proclamation to the Gentile world, to non-Jewish populations: the Lycaonians (Acts 14:6-18) and the Athenians (17:16-28). It is revealing to compare these kerygmatic pronouncements of the later part of the *Acts of the Apostles* with the ones addressed to the Jews at the beginning, particularly the speech of Peter after the Pentecost (2:14-36) and the one of Stephen (7:1-53). While the latter are heavily loaded with arguments from the Old Testament, the two speeches of Paul, mentioned above, have no evident references to it, but start

of some kind of catastrophe at the beginning, a longing for a saviour whom, paradoxically, man wants to get rid of.

Let's start by the experience of estrangement from God. First a story from the Krachi people (Ghana and Togo) which can be found in P Radin, *African Folktales*⁴.

In the beginning of days *Wulbari* [name for God] and man lived close together and *Wulbari* lay on top of Mother Earth, *Asase Ya*. Thus it happened that, as there was so little space to move about in, man annoyed the divinity, who in disgust went away and rose up to the present place where one can admire him but not reach him.

He was annoyed for a number of reasons. An old woman while making her *fufu* [flour] outside her hut, kept on knocking *Wulbari* with her pestle. This hurt him and, as she persisted, he was forced to go higher out of her reach. Besides, the smoke of the cooking fires got into his eyes so that he had to go farther away. According to others, however, *Wulbari*, being so close to men, made a convenient sort of towel, and the people used to wipe their dirty fingers on him. This naturally annoyed him. Yet this was not so bad a grievance as that which caused *We*, the *Wulbari* of the Kassena people, to remove himself out of the reach of man. He did so because an old woman, anxious to make a good soup, used to cut off a bit of him at each mealtime, and *We*, being pained at this treatment went higher.

[And the story continues.]

In this tale it is perceived that although man is very intimate with God, just the same he is separated from him. Moreover, man seems to separate himself willingly by his fault: God has to go away, he is pushed back to the sky. On the other hand, man appears to be in between God and earth although earth is called mother. Or should we say that man is the product of both God and earth at the same time, earthly and heavenly (divine)? Is he not a mean between earth and God?

Another story, from the Zulus this time (South Africa), shows that man was separated from God because of his naughtiness, although God still recognises him as his child and cares for him. The story is taken from A I Berglund, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*⁵:

It so happened that when *uMvelinqangi* [name for God] was sitting outside his hut, it was reported to him that a certain young man had been mischievous in that he has been riding the favourite white ox of *iNkosi* [Lord: other name for God]. Being tired of complaints about this man, *iNkosi* decided to send him down to earth so that he would not cause trouble in the sky any more. The young man was brought before *iNkosi*. He [*iNkosi*] ordered that a hole be opened in the floor [of the sky]. Then *iNkosi* himself tied *ithumbu* [umbilical cord] around the waist of the man. He was lowered to the earth through the opening. When he came onto the earth he looked around. He saw all the things that were there. But he was still tied to the cord. He took a reed nearby and cut off the cord. He found himself being free, the cord merely hanging down from his waist. After one month, *iNkosi* said: 'How is that young man living there on the earth?' So the hole was opened again. He [*iNkosi*] looked to see where the man was. He saw him lying under a banana plant, being very thin and weak. He was troubled, seeing his child thus. He said: 'What is it with my son? Was there no food or water [for him on earth]? Why does my son appear in this state, as if he is suffering?' Then *iNkosi* remembered that the man was still young and alone, and he said: 'Now I understand the ailment of the child. He is lonely, having nobody. I shall give him somebody, so that all may see that I, being the father, am the one that gave my son a wife that she may live with him'. So he called upon the most beautiful girl in the sky, saying: 'Today you must leave this place and go to another place and live with your man, so that he may have somebody [with him] who will make him happy'. So he took the cord again, tied it around the waist of the maiden and lowered her down to the earth through the hole in the sky. She came down on the earth. She stood up on her feet and walked close to the banana plant. The young man woke up and was very much amazed to see such a beautiful maiden. He said: 'Surely, I have never seen anybody so fair since I came to this place. It must be my father that gave me this maiden because who else can give such beautiful gifts?' Then he took a reed again and cut off the cord from the stomach of the maiden,

freeing her from the cord. *inkosi* returned the cord into heaven and closed the hole in the sky so that they [the people on earth] could not look up into heaven, nor the people there look down on them, seeing the thing that they did in that they multiplied. That is how people came from the sky to the earth. Furthermore, that is why they are known as *amazulu* [Zulus]. It is because they came from that place [i.e. the sky, *zulu*].

To understand this story completely one should know the symbols used: cattle are the most important animals in the life of the Zulus, a sign of wealth, and used for ritual celebrations, marriage and funerals; so they imagine that God has oxen as they have; the cord from heaven is the umbilical cord; the reed is another symbol of the origin of mankind; the banana tree is a most important one for them, providing food; the Zulus called themselves *amazulu*, those of or children of the sky (*zulu*) and the main name for God is *inkosi yapezulu*, the Lord of the sky or *izulu* (the sky) for short; God is also called Chief, Lord, *inkosi*.

So, the story expresses that the human being is child of God, but has been separated from him because of his mischievousness and bad conduct. But still, God cares for him and gives him his greatest gift, the woman. One can perceive that the story about the human being and his predicament is not so far from the story about man and woman in *Genesis* and uses the same medium, the *myth*, a story about the origin. The same can be said about the first story.

Other interpretations are possible, and this is usually the sign of a good story. Explanations in clear terms cannot exhaust all that the story tries to convey because it is an attempt to express a deep human experience. In the present case, the story can be interpreted also as a deep explanation of what the birth of a human being is. The symbols used, in particular the cord, the umbilical cord descending from a hole in heaven, witness to that. Birth is not only a physical event, it is a happening which brings together heaven and earth, man and God. Birth is first of all an act of God, the bringing of a human being on earth. But strangely enough, birth is at the same time the sign of estrangement from God, man being mischievous. In this, it is not difficult to relate the meaning of the story to the concept of original sin in the Bible.

Here is another story, about the origin of death this time, or why man has to die. I could have quoted from other African people similar but slightly different stories because they have dissimilar cosmogonies or different ways of life. I chose the one narrated by the Basotho (Lesotho)⁶:

They say that long ago there was a chief whose son was called Leobu [chameleon]. He heard that his people were in pain. So he called for his son. But the maid heard the conversation. She heard the chief telling his son: 'Go, tell my people that they will die but they will rise again.' So Leobu went. But the maid whose name was Khatoane [lizard: the type that changes colour] went faster. When she arrived to the people of the chief, she told them: 'You are told that people will die, that they will not rise again.' She went from one village to another and told everybody that people will die, that they will not rise again. She went to all the villages and hamlets. This is Khatoane.

Then, the son of the chief, Leobu, arrived and said: 'My father asked me to tell you that people will die, but that they will rise again. They answered: 'No, the first word is the first word, the last is a covering attempt [to hide the truth]'. But he replied: 'No, I tell you that the chief said that people will die, but they will rise again.' They refused: 'We do not know you. We heard the message of Khatoane; she said that people will die and will not rise again; we do not believe your message. The first word is the first word, the last is a covering attempt.'

End of the story.

This story is about the origin of death. People experience that man, every human being, has to die although, it seems, nobody wishes to die and should not die; still we die and do not come back to life. So something wrong happened. Something bad must have happened at the beginning. This is what the story attempts to explain. If we die and do not rise again, it is because at the beginning somebody has made or committed a mischievous deed. Moreover, it is not the fault of God;

he wanted people to rise again. Here of course it is not clear who the chief is. In other versions of the story, for example the one from the Akamba (Kenya)⁷, it is God who sends the message. For the Basotho in the above story it may be God, but the present state of the story does not permit us to conclude firmly in favour of God. But yet, for the Basotho, the chief is the father of his people and is the one who cares and is responsible for them; and, as for the Zulus, God is called Chief, Lord, *Morena*.

It is not difficult to compare this conception of death with what comes out of *Genesis* in the story of Adam and Eve and from the Old Testament as a whole: death is the consequence of sin. Moreover, in such a conception of death the proclamation of the resurrection of Christ comes as Good News, as a rectification of what happened to humanity and can be accepted easily, if not eagerly, since it answers to a secret longing in the heart of man. Hence the importance of knowing and explicating this longing as it is expressed in the culture of the people we speak to when proclaiming the Word of God.

Finally, I would like to bring a last story, this time about a Saviour, a story which the Basotho compare spontaneously to the story of Christ. I give only a summary because of its length.⁸

It is said that there was an enormous beast, Kholumolumo (roaring, thundering), which swallowed all the people. Only a pregnant woman remained. She gave birth to a boy who succeeded in killing the beast and delivered all the people from its belly, including their cattle, their dogs and hens. The people made the boy their chief, but soon hated him without reason. They tried all kinds of tricks to kill him, but did not succeed until finally the boy let them take hold of him. They killed him. After his death, his heart came out of his body and went up to the sky.

End of the story.

There are two other versions of the story in which the boy does not die and in which people are punished for their misdeeds and die. But the first version is the most commonly quoted and used. What can be said about that story is that people experience the need of a Saviour. They know that something very wrong happened to humanity in the beginning. But still, when they are saved people do not listen to

their Saviour, are ungrateful and do wrong to him. The story expresses the experience of corruption, weakness, wickedness in man's heart. The Old Testament has something similar in the stories of Moses and David where people rebel against their saviours, although there is a fundamental difference, Moses and David being historical figures but possibly idealised.

Generally speaking, we can say that these African stories catch up with the experiences narrated by the Old Testament. On the other hand they are relatively brief and do not form a whole as it is found in the Old Testament from *Genesis* to the prophet *Malachi*. Until recently the African cultures were essentially expressed in oral traditions; they had no scripture, no writing. We have no way to verify the evolution of thought as we can do with the Bible, to verify the re-interpretation which took place during the centuries of their existence. We have only what people can tell now and their memory does not go much farther than a hundred years ago. They do not possess therefore an historical approach to their culture and their oral traditions. They do not have the tools necessary for this.

These stories reflect also the way of life of the people concerned. They are expressed in the context of their daily life, the importance of cattle for the Zulus and the Basotho for example, in the context of their cosmogonies. On that aspect, they are often very different from the world of the Old Testament. This is what makes these stories very strange to other people who do not pertain to the same sphere of cultural environment.

Still, so it seems, the deep human experience reflected in the stories compare favourably with the one expressed in the Old Testament. Why? First of all, no doubt because these African populations participate in the same human nature.⁹ However, if we believe that the experience of life expressed in the Old Testament is a special gift of God, a Revelation, then I cannot see how the same cannot be said equally of the African experience of life. After all, God has always been with them as well as the Jewish people. And how could it be possible to say that God could not reveal himself to them in one way or another? St Paul in the letter to the *Romans*, St Luke in the *Acts of the Apostles*, seem to provide us with a tool to understand and justify such an affirmation.

Fundamentally, what remains to be proclaimed to these people is the saving event of Jesus Christ starting from their deep experience, as Paul did in the *Acts of the Apostles* for the Lycaonians and the

Athenians. After that, the message of the Gospel may correct some expression of their experience, some shortcomings, but still a foundation is already there on which to build, and finally they may be introduced to the Old Testament which they will understand without much difficulty.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to refer briefly to a review by P J Cahill¹⁰ of the book of N Frye, *The Great Code*.¹¹ Though Cahill warmly commends the book he sees in it an unfinished work. He suggests that Frye should pursue his study and develop 'what we mean when we say the Bible is more than literature' (p.410). This is a very pertinent and fundamental question. I think I have tried already to bring an answer to it. I am not ready to affirm that myths, stories and literature, for that matter, are sacred or inspired as we say of the Bible. The Bible will occupy forever a privileged place for the Christian and serve as a universal reference for appreciating and judging all deep human experience in literature, religions and human endeavour. What I tried to say is simply that in literature, in religions and all human endeavours, the revealed God of the Bible, the God of Salvation is manifested and made known because he works there with his grace and his Spirit. But there is no guarantee that this manifestation is recognised fully and is not open to error in its encounter with the human which is fallible and weakened by man's frailty. On the other hand, a story which has been handed down from generation to generation and has no known author because it is the product of a whole community and identifies with it, has a better chance to be genuine than any piece of literature written by one individual which is read today and put into the waste-paper basket the following day. The traditional story has sustained the proof of time and has been confronted with man's experience throughout generations. Hence the outstanding value of such a product of the human mind. Is it not partly, notwithstanding its sacredness and inspiration, what makes the Bible an outstanding document, having been compiled, rewritten, completed and reinterpreted for thousands of years by generations upon generations of people?

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES

1. One important document on the subject is *Humanae Personae Dignitatem* of the Secretariat for Unbelievers of Rome, published on August 28, 1968. The document describes specifically how to dialogue with unbelievers, and by using that category, it implies that there could be mutual enrichment between Christians and non-Christians, although what could be this mutual enrichment is not explicit, except maybe in that affirmation that 'true pluralism' can result from that dialogue.
2. I am not happy with the distinction between natural and supernatural. It is a fiction of the mind. In matter of fact, there are not two worlds which could operate independently from each other. Existentially speaking, there is only one world, at once created and redeemed, at once natural and supernatural. Any human action is at once influenced by nature and the grace of God. If it is good, it is influenced at once by nature and the Spirit, otherwise it cannot be good. Consciously or not, every human being is moved in all his activities by the Spirit of God, although he may refuse to obey this impulsion. On that point of view, the Spirit of God is present even to such human activities as science, philosophy, politics which appear, at first sight, purely natural. But these phenomena of human existence cannot existentially be separated from the whole purpose of human life and form part of the whole saving plan of God, therefore are influenced by it and manifest it. I do not deny that the distinction between nature and supernature could be useful in some instances. But it must remain what it is, a fiction of the mind, and not be taken as things which, existentially, could exist independently from each other.
3. In this, I appeal to the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, especially his study of symbolic language.
4. P. Radin, *African Folktales: Selected and Edited by...*, Schoken Books, New York, [1983], p.28.
5. David Philip, Claremont, Cape, [1976], pp.33-34.
6. My own translation from E Jacottet, *Litšomo tsa Basotho*, Morija Sesuto Book Depot, Morija (Lesotho), 1979, Book one, p. 24. [The Basotho (pronounced Ba-su-tu; singular Mosotho) are the inhabitants of Lesotho (pronounced Le-su-tu), who speak Sesotho (pronounced Se-su-tu). — Ed.]
7. See *African Folktales*, p. 62.
8. The original Sesotho (language of the Basotho) text can be consulted in the book referred to in the previous note, pp.35-37.

9. The proponents of *structuralism* may explain this phenomenon by referring to a common structure in the human mind. But to me, there is something else here. The phenomenon originates rather from a common experience in human life that people express through the different symbols of their cultural environment. I do not deny that structuralists may have a point of their own there. But the structure of the mind they speak about remains empty until such a time as some experience is perceived and has to be expressed in a form of speech, through a story, a poem or any literary device.
10. P J Cahill, *The Unity of the Bible*, in *Biblica*, 68 (1984), pp.404-411.
11. Northon Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, San Diego, New York, London, [1982].

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2. Paul Ricoeur, *Poétique et symbolique*, in *Initiation à la pratique de la théologie*, Ed. du Cerf, Paris, 1982, tome 1, pp. [37]-61. This is the best summary I know of Paul Ricoeur's philosophy of symbolic language.
3. Pierre Erny, *Nos Contes merveilleux: une plongée dans le Mystère* (Our folktales: a dive in Mystery), in *Etudes*, June 1984, pp.803-818. This is a study of Western folktales as expression of the mystery of human existence.
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5. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Crossroad, New York, [1982]. This is one of the outstanding studies from the German school of Philosophy of Language and hermeneutics.
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NEW BOOK RELEASE:

IN BLACK AND WHITE AND COLOUR

Fr Peter Malone msc is the author of this informative report on how Aborigines have been presented in Australian films. It has been printed by Spectrum Publications, Richmond, Vic., for Nelen Yubu Missiological Unit, 1987, and is now on sale in the bookshops. Ideal for students, those who enjoy films and all interested in the Aborigines, it is obtainable from:

NYMU

4/17 Jersey Avenue
Leura NSW 2780

Telephone: (047) 84-1710

Price: \$9.95, plus \$1.00 for postage and handling.

LUMKO MISSIOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

Martin Wilson msc

EARLY IN 1987 my Provincial Superior offered me some sabbatical leave. It was probably expected that I would join the steady stream going off to the States for updating. However my thoughts turned immediately in the opposite direction, to Africa, specifically to the Lumko Missiological Institute.

The main reason why I thought of Lumko was that I had heard that it was preparing programs for developing indigenous ministry. Through involvement with Nungalinya College and the survey I did in 1985-86 of the church's outreach to Aborigines in Australia I had come to the belief that the Australian church's major missionary goal vis-a-vis the Aboriginal people should be the development of an Aboriginal ministry. Many of the problems we white missionaries face in the area of inculturating the gospel would be solved almost automatically if the evangelisers were themselves Aboriginal... Moreover, I had been told that Africa is developing models of ministry that could be significant for the Australian situation. Lastly, I knew that the Irish MSC province had an involvement with Lumko, so I could expect easy access to the institution, being myself MSC.

My original thought had been to spend some months at Lumko during 1988. However, the director, Fr Richard Broderick MSC, answered my initial letter of inquiry with an invitation to take part in the second international course that was to be run by Lumko during October 1987. Though I had meagre knowledge of the nature of such a course, I decided to accept his invitation. I had described my own particular situation to him quite fully and was prepared to accept his advice that I would find the course quite suitable.

Getting There

Getting to the course was complicated. It makes quite an interesting story in its own right but takes up more space to tell than this number of **Nelen Yubu** can allow. The main trouble was that the South African government is annoyed at the the church's opposition

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to apartheid and pays back by petty obstructionism — so far! It held up the granting of visas to the course participants until the whole course had to be shifted to the Kingdom of Lesotho which, though entirely surrounded by South Africa, is a (theoretically) independent country and member of the Commonwealth. One presents one's passport at the Customs and a visa is granted on the spot.

Lesotho is the old Basutoland. Last century when the Zulu people under Shaka and his successor Dingane were pressing hard upon the Basotho in the east and the Boers were invading from the west the Basotho paramount chief Moshoeshoe petitioned Britain to make his country a British Protectorate. Moshoeshoe is reckoned by the French-Canadian missiologist, Eugene Lapointe OMI (1986:18), to have been 'the most remarkable leader in the history of southern Africa, even perhaps of the whole continent.' Lesotho became an independent kingdom in 1966 under King Moshoeshoe II. It underwent a technical coup in 1970 and a military coup in 1986 out of which the king emerged with executive powers whereas he had earlier been a mere 'constitutional' monarch. Evangelisation of the Basotho was commenced by the Paris Evangelical Society in 1833 and the Catholic Church was introduced by the Oblates in 1862. When Pope John Paul II visits Lesotho in 1988 he intends to beatify the pioneer Oblate missionary, Fr Gerard (French). At the moment 75 out of the 150 Catholic priests in the country are Basotho, and 625 out of the total of 690 religious Sisters.

I found the existence of an independent country right in the middle of South Africa quite a puzzle until the fine study of modern South Africa by J Lelyveld (1987, **Move Your Shadow**) showed me how perfectly such a situation fits apartheid policy: but that is another story!

I had allowed myself some 3 weeks before the course to visit the Irish MSCs in the Transvaal. Being without a visa to South Africa until half-way through the course, I had to mark time in Lesotho as the guest of the OMIs. The course began on 29 September and ended a month later. But first of all, a short description of the Lumko Missiological Institute.

Lumko Missiological Institute

In August 1950, the Apostolic Delegate to South Africa, Archbishop Lucas SVD, wanted to start a missiological institute. Various religious orders were willing to help with staff but none wanted to assume formal responsibility. Bishop J B Rosenthal SAC of Queenstown

diocese agreed to set it up in his own diocese and the Pallottines (SAC) agreed to staff it. Rosenthal's idea was to make a lot of use of guest lecturers at seminars conducted on a regional basis. The institute opened formally in Queenstown 1951, with 3 SACs released for research work. This team operated from January 1952 to April 1953.

The Apostolic Delegate proved to be mistaken in believing that he could get a subsidy from Propaganda Fide. Not only did Propaganda refuse a subsidy but asked him to cancel all his arrangements. When the SACBC (South/Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference) was informed of the matter, they decided to stick by their resolution of April 1952, viz. 'The development of Missionary Research was strongly recommended to the attention of the Administrative Board.' The Board decided to go ahead, even without financial aid from Propaganda. However, the Pallottines decided to discontinue.

About 1959 Rosenthal approached the Irish MSC province with the hope of solving the staffing problem of the institute. In August 1961 he was informed that the Irish MSC provincial council had decided 'to take on the responsibility to staff this Institute in accordance with the conditions you [Rosenthal] prescribed in your letter.' Those conditions were:

'The Fathers will have their own community life, free medical and hospital services in our own hospital, free board and lodging in comfortable modern quarters. I have no assurance at this stage of getting any financial help from either the South African Hierarchy or from Propaganda Fide, but I am willing to make an offering of £20 per month as part remuneration to each of the Fathers. They would of course retain their own Mass stipends and I would provide a car for the personal use of the Fathers'. (Rosenthal, Report, quoting from his own letter of 11 July 1961 to Irish MSC Provincial).

The institute was to 'cater for the following major subjects: Missiology in general, Anthropology in general, Social Anthropology, Sociology, Ethnology, Bantu languages, Native Law and Administration, African Music and African Art.' Fr S O'Riordan left his post as lecturer in Bantu languages at Rhodes University to become Organising Secretary of the institute. He was joined over the next five years by

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other MSCs: T Nicholson (Sotho), P Whooley (Social Anthropology), H Slattery (Zulu). Others were attached to the institute for a time: Fr J Coffey msc, Bro. K McAteer msc. An MSC house was erected canonically at Lumko (as Rosenthal consistently spelt the name) in July 1966, with Pat Whooley as superior. In October 1966 Whooley was appointed Rector and Treasurer: the post of Organising Secretary was abolished. O'Riordan (who had been Organising Secretary) was confirmed as Director of the Language Department, and Tom Nicholson as Secretary of the Institute. Whooley was succeeded as Rector by Hugh Slattery in May 1973, and he, after his appointment as bishop of Tzaneen, by the present rector, R Broderick in 1981. Frs M Maher and M J Kelly (MSCs) had taught at times as guest lecturers.

During 1967-68 the SACBC discussed the situation of the Lumko Institute in regard to the Pastoral Institute it wanted to establish. In July 1968 the Conference recorded its intention to accept complete responsibility for Lumko Institute as soon as it would be in a position to do so, and undertook in the meanwhile to contribute R5000 per annum. The SACBC formally voted in February 1974 to accept responsibility for the Institute. As a result of that decision a constitution was drawn up which was intended, presumably, to replace one signed by Bishop Rosenthal and P Whooley msc on behalf of the staff 24 June 1971. In the new constitution a governing Council was envisaged (which would include, among others, all members of the teaching and research staff); the Administrative Board of the SACBC would appoint the Rector and Vice-Rector, but other staff appointments would be made by the Institute Council itself. During the MSC Conference held in Johannesburg in 1985, at which were present the MSC Superior General Braun, Irish Provincial Curran, Transvaal Regional Slattery and R Broderick, rector of Lumko, the chairman of the SACBC Commission for Christian Education (under which Lumko is subsumed), Bishop Brenningmeijer OP, made a personal appeal that the MSCs would supply staff to Lumko.

Lumko

A mission station had been established near Lady Frere, in 1929. It was begun on a property owned by a Xhosa family named Lumko. The name comes from the Xhosa word for 'wisdom', *ubulumko*: an appropriate name for a mission station but even more so for a missiological institute. Bishop Rosenthal established at Lumko in 1958 the first Catechist Training Centre in South Africa. In the early '60s he added

an African Art and Crafts Centre and a Domestic Science School, both of them involving African Sisters of the Congregation of the Precious Blood (CPS). When Rosenthal resurrected the missiological institute, which had only lasted for a year at Queenstown, he established it also at Lumko, under the care of the Irish MSC province. Fr Fritz Lobinger joined the Catechist Training Centre in 1969. He led the Catechist Training Centre and the Missiological Institute towards a basic re-formulation of their roles.

Frs Fritz Lobinger and Oswald Hirmer, friends from seminary days in Bavaria, came as 'fidei donum' missionaries to South Africa in the early '50s. In 1969 they returned to Germany to achieve an articulated new vision of the church's pastoral role through study for doctorates in theology. Vatican II had given authentic formulation to a new vision of the church as the 'People of God'. In the earlier formalistic hierarchical view of the church, the bulk of believers, the laity, appeared almost as a residue left over after all the hierarchical offices had been allocated. They were the mass to be 'provided for'. In the renewed vision of the church they are central to it, not just the rump end. They are not the ones left over after all the ministerial posts have been filled; rather the various ministries have come to be seen as no more, and no less, than functions of service towards and arising out of the faithful themselves. Fritz Lobinger studied missiology at MÜNster under Dr J Glazik msc: his thesis was on the role of the catechist from the point of view of ministry. Oswald Hirmer made his thesis in Pastoral Theology on the experience of non-Catholic churches in establishing shared ministry (leadership). Both had chosen areas that they considered would be important both for the church in southern Africa and for the Lumko Institute. After completing their degrees Fritz Lobinger returned immediately to Lumko. Hirmer had to spend some five years at a seminary before joining the Lumko staff in 1977.

On his return Lobinger worked out a total revision of the catechist training program. The catechists were to be changed from ministers in a 'providing church' to ministers who would animate the self-ministering potential of the faithful.

Meanwhile the Missiological Institute was being forced to reconsider its role. Since 1962 it had functioned mainly as a means of inducting new missionaries into the South African pastoral scene. Its main area of endeavour was in developing learning programs in some five languages: Xhosa, Zulu, Tswana, Sotho and Afrikaans. It had

pioneered new methodology in language teaching and after the Lumko language section closed down the work was carried on by several South African universities. The missionary crisis that occurred after Vatican II meant that few new missionaries were coming to South Africa. The Lumko Missiological Institute accordingly changed its role into that of an instrument for implementing the new pastoral vision of ministry. Fritz Lobinger initiated a new Pastoral Department in 1973. In 1977 Oswald Hirmer joined the institute and developed a Gospel Group Department. In 1978 an African Church Music Department under the care of the South African priest-composer, Dave Dargie, was established in the Institute. In 1982 a Faith and Life Department (i.e. justice and peace issues) was added under the care of the present rector, Fr Dick Broderick msc.

The Lumko staff conducted both residential courses at Lumko and, increasingly, regional courses in other South African dioceses and in neighbouring countries like Malawi and Zimbabwe. As Lumko's reputation spread staff members came to be invited to such places as the Gaba Institute in Kenya (transferred from Uganda), East Asian Pastoral Institute in the Philippines and the SVD Centre at Nemi near Rome. Demand arose for printed records of the courses and a large Publications Department was developed. At the moment some 60 countries would be receiving Lumko materials.

Even in the best of times Lady Frere was an out of the way place. Access to it is even more difficult these days as it is within the bogusly independent country of Transkei. As Lumko Missiological Institute had become a national institution when it was officially adopted by the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference, it was fitting that it should move to a more central location. In October 1985 the LMI, while keeping its original name, moved from Lumko Mission to its present site in Germiston, near Johannesburg. It is established in a former OMI novitiate building rented by the SACBC. Another reason for the move to Germiston was the desire to move the institute closer to where the Irish MSCs are working in South Africa, i.e. in the Transvaal.

Staff

At the time of its maximum size the teaching staff at Lumko comprised 6 priests (5 MSCs, 1 SAC) and three lay members. At the moment the full-time teaching staff number only four. Some reduction resulted naturally from the institute's developing concentration on its

pastoral and missiological function, having sloughed off the language and catechist training sections. The staff was further reduced by the elevation of three of them to the episcopate, including its only African staff member, Andrew Zolile Brook, now bishop of Umtata. The former rector, Hugh Slattery msc, was made bishop in 1984 of Louis Trichardt-Tzaneen, the Northern Transvaal diocese where the bulk of the Irish MSCs are working. In 1986 Fr Fritz Lobinger was made Apostolic Administrator of the diocese of Aliwal North in the eastern end of Cape Province. He was told that this is considered to be a long-term commitment: all the same, he managed to take part in the last fortnight of the 1987 International Course. The MSC component has been reduced to one, the present rector, Fr Dick Broderick, though another Irish MSC is due to come soon from the USA, Fr James Harnan (presently Executive Director of the Shalom Center in Texas).

The present staff comprises: Fr Dick Broderick msc (rector); Fr Oswald Hirmer, Fr Anselm Prior OFM (English, working in South Africa for some 20 years), Fr Dave Dargie (South African secular priest). Some hired staff assist three Precious Blood Sisters in the Publications Department and with administration and catering for participants in residential courses.

Aim and Activities

Lumko defines its aim as: 'To enable the local church grow at grassroots level in prophetic service of society' (Broderick 1987). Each word in the definition is important, but the key word is 'enable'. Lumko works to enable ordinary people to be church, praying and worshipping together, learning together, teaching one another, ministering to one another. It trains ordained ministers and pastoral teams to understand that their role is one of service to the local communities. They are trained to enable people to nourish themselves on God's word, to pray together, to exercise a Christian apostolate within their social environment, and to celebrate the sacraments as the People of God.

Lumko pursues its aim through residential and on site courses both within South Africa and, increasingly, in other African countries, Asia and Europe. In 1986 it began an annual one-month long international course to give to pastoral workers from other countries an intensive introduction to the pastoral vision and methods of the

Institute.

Its specific aim is at a basic transformation of society by the establishment and promotion of SCCs (Small Christian Communities).

People are being led from domination to service leadership, from fear and lack of trust to growing trust, from passive to active laypeople, from clerical control to skilled and shared ministry, from an inward looking Church to a community at the service of society in the light of the Gospel. (Broderick 1987)

The Small Christian Communities (SCCs) being promoted by the church in Africa are similar to the Basic Christian Communities (BCCs) that have developed particularly in Latin America. The most obvious difference is in size: while the SCCs are small neighbourhood groups, BCCs can be as large as 7000 people in Brazil. Again in Brazil, each BCC has its own church and functions more or less like a sub-parish, whereas the SCCs are orientated towards the central parish church. In Africa the parish, like the universal church itself, is seen as a 'community of communities'. The African SCCs are focussed on the bible, which they meet together to pray about and from which they find the inspiration for their daily life and Christian action: socio-political action is something they have to grow into. On the other hand, the Latin American BCCs have generally originated in the context of social protest. Bible groups are sub-elements in the BCCs, whereas they are the basic and constituent forms of the African SCCs. The SCCs use the bible itself, and their reflection and action arise out of their consideration of the bible within their particular local social context. The Latin American BCCs tend to use pre-prepared sheets containing biblical text, discussion guides and suggested action. Maybe the Latin American methods presuppose a conscientised people, whereas the African SCCs are working at self-conscientisation. Lumko has prepared a program called 'Life-Bible-Notes' to facilitate the arrival of the African SCCs at a stage of effective social consciousness and action.

1987 International Course

The 1987 International Course took place at Mazenod in Lesotho. Twenty-six of us did the course, all except myself being either African or white missionaries working in Africa. There were 19 priests, 6

Sisters and one layman, a catechist from Zimbabwe. Of the priests, 8 were white missionaries: two English Mill Hill working in Kenya and Uganda, a Northern Ireland Holy Spirit priest and an Italian Comboni priest working in Uganda, an Italian Xaverian from Sierra Leone, a Northern Ireland member of the St Patrick's Fathers from Zambia, a member of the Spanish Missionary Institute from Zimbabwe, and myself from Australia (Darwin). The 11 black priests came from Sierra Leone (1), Zambia (5), Botswana (1) and Malawi (4). All the black priests were seculars, except the one from Botswana, Fr Gabriel Afagbegee SVD (originally from Ghana). Of the Sisters, four were African, members of local congregations (3 from Zambia, one from Zimbabwe), and two were white (a Canadian Marist Sister working in Gambia and a German Holy Cross - OSF - stationed in Zambia). The Zambian contingent was the largest: ten from four different dioceses. A woman from New Zealand had planned to attend the course, but had to cancel at the last moment.

Participants: The body of participants was rich in pastoral experience, cultural background and personality. An Italian priest from Uganda, myself and one of the staff (Oswald Hirmer) shared the same age and were the oldest until Fritz Lobinger arrived for the last fortnight: he had one year on us. (The German Sister might have beaten us all in this respect, but we did not get around to asking!). Except for one Sister, the Africans were all fairly young but already had quite a deal of pastoral experience behind them. The spirit of the group was extraordinarily pleasant: though we were looking forward to getting home by the time the month ended, we parted with a strong sense of regret. We were deeply grateful to one another, and to God who made us, for the rich experience of one another's company. It is sad to think that many of us will never meet again...

Staff: The three staff combined theological vision, long pastoral experience, expertise and the ease of manner that comes from being liberated persons in themselves. Anselm Prior remained for the whole month; Oswald Hirmer's place was taken after the first fortnight by Fritz Lobinger. After the course ended in Lesotho most of us travelled to Lumko in Germiston where the rector, Dick Broderick, supplemented the course with some presentations on the social justice issue in South Africa itself.

Object: The general object of the course was to introduce us to the various kits that Lumko has produced to enable parishes and Small Christian Communities fully live the gospel in belief, worship and action. The specific object was to enable us to train group facilitators in the use of the kits. Pastoral teams trained in this method act as animators of the Christian communities. This means that on a purely practical level priests and pastoral teams can multiply their effectiveness in these days of priest shortage by sharing out their ministry with others. Lumko recognises this practical advantage of its method, but hastens to add that it is not really about supplementing for a deficit of priests until numbers improve. The shortage may have forced us to change our tactics and modify our vision, just as the shortfall in religious vocations has caused a rethinking of the role of the lay teacher in Catholic schools. But just as the school crisis has occasioned recognition of the teaching ministry of lay people, so the shortage of priests has broken through our priestly reluctance to recognise the ministerial worshipping and action role proper to the faithful by virtue of their baptism into Christ. The priest, in other words, most properly exercises his role as evangeliser and preacher when he is training animators who will in turn enable small Christian communities to be self-ministering, particularly through group use of the bible. Maybe this vision of the church in its fullest development would see the small local Christian communities ministering to themselves even sacramentally through the appointment of their own priestly ministers, whose 'ordination' by the small local church community would be ratified and completed by the leader of the wider church community, the 'bishop' — and the bishops would be leaders of the wider church community with the specific ministerial function of oversight ('episkopoi') of the smaller local churches. This would bring us closer to the original pattern promoted especially by Paul. However, in our factual situation at this stage in the church's evolving renewal we have not got this far yet! At any rate, the basic vision of the church promoted by Lumko is securely based on the New Testament and Vatican II, viz. that the church is a community of communities. Our priestly sacramental role is to celebrate the incorporation of the smaller church communities into the wider church community and ultimately into Christ himself.

Method: The method followed was one of learning by doing. There was very little formal lecturing, and what there was was always accompani-

ed by poster displays and 'chalk talk'. When learning the use of the various kits, once one representative program had been explained, maybe demonstrated, we were sent off in small groups of two or three to design our own. The results would either be performed before the whole group or displayed around the walls on sheets of 'newsprint' and evaluated by the staff and other participants. Early in the piece we were divided into three basic groups, and activities that involved group work were performed in or prepared and presented by one or other of these groups. Such a method drew upon the personal experience of the participants — something that we had failed to find a way of doing in the Orientation Courses I had been involved in at Nungalingya College! Such activities as the 'Seven-Step Method of Gospel Sharing' were both practised and performed in the basic groups. It was an intriguing combination of practice and real life. Our liturgies were both learning experiences and the real thing. The stable method was: Show, Do and Evaluate. The principles of Centering Prayer or Prayer of the Heart were explained at the beginning of the course, and each day started with such, except Mondays when we met in our basic groups for Group Gospel Sharing. Six liturgy groups were set up by region and the liturgy groups took it in turns to prepare Morning Prayer and the Eucharist — generally celebrated before the evening meal. (I was a member of the liturgy group in the region closest to mine, namely Kenya and Uganda!) Recreational activities both provided relaxation and performed a group building function. After the evening session each day we opened our bar and most of us sat around for quite some time chatting, playing cards or some game like Chinese Checkers or draughts over a can or a glass of wine. Each Thursday was free: a normal occupation for Thursday morning was a trip to town (Maseru, 16 km away) for shopping etc. On Sundays we normally attended Mass at some church that would give us some experience of the local liturgy; then we continued on to some scenic place for a picnic lunch. After the course ended in Lesotho all of us who could go to Lumko in Germiston visited several of the African townships, also a few places in Johannesburg and Pretoria. (In Johannesburg we visited the 50 storey high Carlton Centre, and 17 of us had the experience of being stuck for some 45 minutes between floors in a lift that was certified to hold only 17 persons.) On the Sunday we had the fine experience of attending Mass at St Philip's church in Soweto where we experienced typical African friendliness, vibrant liturgy and magnificent singing. In many ways the course was like an active sort of retreat. One

was enlightened, challenged and enriched.

Lumko Kits and Publications

The Lumko kits combine theological vision, enlightened pastoral experience and the sort of practicality that will sometimes even suggest where the chairs should be placed. I first saw them as a great stack of large envelopes owned by Fr Mick Peters on Palm Island. When confronted with them like that, one has no idea where to start. The kits normally contain three elements: a trainer's manual, users' books or sheets, and display posters. So far about 30 have been produced: while others are being added, earlier ones are revised after evaluation in the field. Their general topics are:

- building Christian community (especially SCCs): Awareness Programs; how to start and build up Small Christian Communities; Sacraments and Life.
- skill training for community ministries: training leaders of community services, readers, preachers, assistant ('special') ministers of the Eucharist, hymn leaders, composers of church music, funeral leaders, sacristans, parish councillors; training for visitation of the sick, parent meetings; development of gospel sharing groups.
- spiritual formation and spiritual growth of community leaders; induction rites.
- programs to arouse social concern and action.

Lumko also offers several books: one, a study of Marxism and Christianity by Oswald Hirmer (**Marx-Money-Christ**, 150pp.); **The Sunday Reader's Lectionary**, by O Hirmer and F Lobinger, published by Collins; an RCIA catechism for adult catechumens, **Our Journey Together**, by O Hirmer, 304pp.

To quote from the Lumko publicity brochure, the book that 'presents the underlying vision of the Lumko Series, the principles involved, and the methods used' is **Towards a Non-Dominating Leadership** by Fritz Lobinger (109pp., Code No.10).

Relevance to the Australian Scene

If the Lumko view of the church as a 'community of communities' is based on the New Testament and formulated for us afresh in our days by Vatican II, it is relevant anywhere. For this reason some of its material is becoming popular in Germany, especially the Seven-Step Method of Gospel Sharing'. Lumko is directly orientated towards third

world countries, in particular the black populations of southern Africa, but not exclusively so by any means. White parishes might require a difference in style of presentation, but Lumko kits are only helps and guides. They are meant to incite ministers and communities towards creativity. If they became a new sort of canon to be adhered to slavishly, they would thereby have failed in their primary purpose. The principles behind the Lumko kits and pastoral methods are universal. Even the posters are not exclusively African. For one thing, the figures are mainly outlines, neutral as regards skin colour. Moreover, when colour is indicated, groups always include both blacks and whites. ('Apartheid' is not recognised!) The only thing that would distinguish outlined figures as African rather than, say, Australian Aboriginal is hair style, which is not a factor one has to pay much attention to when designing a pastoral strategy!

The Lumko method relates directly to Small Christian Communities, which are more easily established in the African social context where extended kinship is an important social dynamic. In this respect the Australian Aboriginal scene is similar to the African. However, white parishes, especially the large urban ones, are searching for ways to make church life more relevant to the population. White parishioners are already using face-to-face groups, like prayer groups, bible-study groups, charismatic groups, associations, to break down the amorphous anonymity of the large parish. Australian lay people, both white and Aboriginal, are already looking for ways of sharing in ministry. From all this I would conclude that the Australian church, both white and particularly black, is ripe for something like the Lumko pastoral vision and strategy!

I came to South Africa and Lumko in my search for a way to respond to the statistic of zero Aboriginal priests in Australia. Lumko does have a program aimed at the development of ministry, but it sees ministry as functionally related to faith communities, i.e. small local church communities. The advice given me was that the immediate aim should be at the development of such self-ministering communities rather than directly at the promotion of an Aboriginal ordained ministry as such. Maybe both aims can be pursued concurrently. At any rate I would believe that the Queensland AICC groups are ripe for such a development and I note with mounting enthusiasm that one of them has just ordered a set of Lumko kits. Moreover, it was in Queensland that I saw Lumko kits in the first place. What I believe, and propose, at the moment is that promotion of the Lumko vision and methods — what

the International Course was all about — could give a new focus to the Nelen Yubu Missiological Unit's pastoral outreach.

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ACCOUNTS:

With this issue of **Nelen Yubu** you will find an account regarding your subscription. The Director has worked out this system as a simple reminder that we prefer our subs. paid annually if convenient. Normally our year ends with the December issue which makes it easier for our limited staff to handle the accounts in one fell swoop. If you have a query, please don't hesitate to contact me.

— Keren

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK. . .

I think I'm rather glad I don't live in Africa. Unusual things seem to happen in that worried country. The mails are atrocious, but that may be the fault of the rest of the world. I felt there were other strange things too, but I won't go on performing about them. The missiology course attended by Fr Wilson seemed to be a great success, which was the main object of the exercise.

Such a shock to read of the death of Sister Columbanus FDNCS. I thought she was indestructible. A knowledgeable, gentle, wise elderly Sister, who never ceased to amaze us with her mental clarity and sound commonsense. She had green fingers too, and when I told her the Aborigines had said I shouldn't be eating the wild passionfruit growing up my wall because I would 'go doopy', Sister quietly asked: 'Why did they say that, Keren?' 'Because a girl once went into a coma after eating some', I said. She shook her wise head: 'That's not right. You eat and enjoy them!' She gave me strong advice on several occasions. I used to take her the first flowers of my garden. Sister Columbanus was a good friend. R I P.

Another surprise was meeting up with two dear friends, Sister Naomi now of Katherine NT; and Sister Monica formerly of the NT and now at Kensington, NSW. They were staying at the OLSH holiday house at Leura and I collared them both, taking them home to chatter and reminisce. Both are nursing Sisters, and they came armed with lots of news of other FDNCS nuns whom I know. 'Twas truly a breath of the Northern Territory to hear their familiar laughter and interesting anecdotes.

The latest book out by Fr Peter Malone msc is **In Black and White and Colour**, an excellent and authoritative guide to films concerning Australian Aborigines. This is number four in the Nelen Yubu Missiological Unit series and is available from the Leura office. The price is a modest \$9.95, with \$1.00 extra for postage.

A new book out by Fr Michael Fallon msc is **Who is Jesus?** Written in a different style from **At Home with God** and his other books, this

one is quite gripping and very easy to read. It is described as 'Exploring the responses of the first Christian communities and the early Church Councils', and is published by Parish Ministry Publications, retailing at \$16.50.

Fr Dan O'Donovan, Fitzroy Crossing WA, has kindly sent me the following comment for this column: 'My belief is, as suggested in an article ages ago now, that all our catholic engagement in the north, from Broome across to Brisbane needs to meet up together in the form of a conference of representative persons from grass-roots to bishops. In this new stage of mission up here, we ought to plan together within a unified program of action, using most economically all our available talent. (This would presuppose recognising it — an easier matter when one gets out of the local tribe-situation.) A necessary sequel would be an inter-church conference, at least between Anglicans, Uniting Church and RCs. I see life at present as emanating mainly (apart from NYMU) from (catholic/anglican/uniting) **Brisbane**, and (uniting/anglican) **Darwin**; not to mention the evangelical-pentecostal christian churches or ecclesial communities, which I consider a witness of major importance. I am a believer in getting in wherever life (grace) happens to be most effectual at a given moment. If genuine conference were to occur — and it would not be difficult to organise, given the goodwill — domestic pettinesses would spontaneously fall away.' Thank you, Fr Dan. Perhaps this will generate some reaction from our readers.

While in Perth, Fr Wilson met Dr Gisela Petri-Odermann, widow of Professor Helmut Petri who collaborated with Fr E A Worms in the writing of **Australian Aboriginal Religions**. Prof. Petri died in 1986.

I did warn in my last column that by the time **Nelen Yubu 33** came out I may be packing my swag. I'm not quite sure about that, but if this issue proves to be a bit haphazard you will know there is only one person to blame. I always did rather fancy a drover's life.

A very Happy Christmas to you all, and grateful thanks for the kind messages that have poured into our office through the year. I truly hope that 1988, the bicentennial year, will be a rewarding one and full of blessings for all Australians.

Secretary Keren

from the knowledge of God that his audience gained from their own world and culture: the cosmogony of the Lycaonians, the philosophies and the poets of the Athenians.

To the Lycaonians, Paul says: 'In the past, God allowed each nation to go its own way; but even then he did not leave you without evidence of himself in the good things he does for you: he sends you rain from heaven, he makes your crops grow when they should, he gives you food and makes you happy' (Acts 14:17-18). Note the phrase: 'He did not leave you without evidence of himself'. To the Athenians, Paul refers to the philosophy of the Stoics and the Epicurians and he quotes Phainomena of Aratus (Acts 17:24-29).

It seems possible also to use the passage of the letter to the *Romans* when Paul explains how the pagans had the opportunity to know God and his will although they fell short of it (Rom. 1:18-32). They could have known God and his will through his action in the world. They have no excuse: 'They knew God and yet refused to honour him as God or to thank him' (v.21). Usually theologians say that the knowledge of God, implied in this passage, is a merely natural knowledge as opposed to the supernatural knowledge of faith and Revelation. But is it so clear? Is it sufficient? If that knowledge has the power to save in the Biblical sense of the word, as seems implied by the argumentation of Paul ('they have no excuse'), is it possible to argue that this knowledge of God is purely natural? Paul's argumentation and his purpose indicate that Revelation in Christ comes to strengthen, to fulfil, to complete what pagans in their own world and Jews through the Old Testament (2:12-29) already know or should know.

III

A concrete case: African cultures

At this stage I would like to bring some possible rapprochement with African cultures by presenting examples from these. In them there is a striking resemblance with the Old Testament approach regarding the problem of death, the experience of estrangement from God,