

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	2
MARIE MINGA: THEOLOGIAN IN PAINT	3
Dan O'Donovan	
SINEW THE HEART, HALLOW THE SOUL	13
Noel McMaster CSsR	
THE LUMKO VISION AND METHOD	16
Martin Wilson msc	
TWO WAYS	21
Dan O'Donovan	
FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK . . .	28

EDITORIAL

THIS YEAR is certainly one of challenge for us here in Australia. The bicentenary is just an arbitrary number. All the same it is a 'kairos', time of opportunity for us. The Aboriginal voice has become strong and is demanding redress. Many of us 'New Australians' are willing to respond.

Hence Dan O'Donovan's papers are timely. Noel McMaster also underlines the 'kairos' nature of this year.

The vision and methods generated by the Lumko Missiological Institute in South Africa look like providing us in the north with a practical way of taking up the challenge to transmit the gospel as a seed that will grow afresh into a new and wonderful Tree of Life rooted in Aboriginal soil.

Martin Wilson
Editor

Painting 1¹

Marie did this painting in 1984 at the age of twenty-one. It was done with acrylics on light canvas, as Red Hill's banner for the 1984 diocesan assembly held in Broome. It is currently hanging in the Halls Creek Catholic church, to the right of the altar.

Let us take a look at it, starting from the bottom.

The main symbols of the lower half of the painting — tree, mountain, sun — are perennial motifs in comparative religion.²

This painting, or theological statement, is about a particular point on planet Earth, home for the Lunja community. It is out of this ground that the tree, symbolic of the community, grows; becomes in fact stout and strong. The ground is more, however, than the visible soil and rock of the community's immediate surroundings — surroundings indeed rather inhospitable, arid and hard. It is the deeper, fuller basis of their essential and existential belonging, the 'paradise' of their collective and personal origins.

In the symbology of world religions, the particular tree of a specific myth always has its wider connotation. Ultimately, it is the cosmic tree which binds known reality together and preserves it from a disintegration always threatening. There is heaven, earth, underworld. The sacred tree pertains to each of these cosmic zones. It is the axis of existence. In their commentaries on the Scriptures, the early Church Fathers show this human understanding to be both marvelously fulfilled and transcended in the Tree of the Cross.

But notice the astounding skill and artistic originality of what Minga has done: the tree bears the mountain as its foliage. This would be bold imagery in an artist of the schools, mellowed and advanced in years. Marie cannot have derived the concept from anywhere. It is pure creative intuition drawn from the archetypal subconscious.

Primarily of course she had in mind 'Red Hill', her people's centrality and self-definition. Nevertheless, by this deliberate choice and conjugation of symbols, she undoubtedly places herself in the wisdom-current of all time, with its scarcely varying vocabulary of sign and its infinite versatility, and breathes its imaginative freedom.

Says Eliade in the work already referred to: 'The symbolic and religious significance of mountains is endless. Mountains are often looked on as the place where sky and earth meet, a 'central point'

therefore, the point through which the *Axis Mundi* goes, a region impregnated with the sacred, a spot where one can pass from one cosmic zone to another...³

The mountain at the centre anchors the picture firmly as a whole, and makes it decisive. The mountain's base tapers off to the horizon at either side like the arms of a cross, as if to embrace both space and time.

Sunrise places us in the innocent morning of 'the beginning' (cf. Gen 1,1 and John 1,1): our own continual beginning, and the world's. The sun shines upon the mountain and the tree, redeeming them from cold and infertility. It is all about the mountain, and the mountain noses into it like a thirsty stag at the water's edge. What more powerful word could one invent for our thirst for the Word of God? (Cf. Psalm 42, 1-2).

'And very early on the first day of the week they went to the tomb when the sun had risen...' (Mk 16,2). This sun, like the tree and the mountain, is the symbol well-known in universal mythology. As it rises it is beginning, (re-)birth, light, heat, life-source, victory. In Christ once again it transcends all such figures: 'I am the light of the world...' (Jn 9,5). It is epiphany, theophany, of a hitherto undreamt of kind: '... the resurrection and the life' (Jn 11,25).

All three religious symbols — tree, mountain, sun — merge into one another with such naturalness and ease, that the observer might fail to advert to the unusual feat of their coherence.

The bird to the left is an eagle (warlawurru). If one looks from the Lunja community settlement toward the 'Red Hill' just above it, a rock stands out at the summit eagle-like in shape. The eagle is said to be watching a white kangaroo (i.e. kangaroo-shaped rock), on a far hilly outcrop. In favourable light, one can still see it. The eagle has thus been adopted into the people's totemic conscience.

Outward from the sun go variegated rays, whose perfect asymmetry conveys Immanence's many ways of meeting with Transcendence.

For that is precisely what the upper portion of the picture represents. The circle protects or asserts the Transcendent, incomprehensible and beyond our finite reach, even by grace. Quite beyond? Well, the central vertical ray touches the circle's perimeter and gains 'energetic' access.⁴ The dove-like Spirit, pointing with its beak, inviting and permitting, enables it to do so. It is the one Spirit, brooding forever over the chaotically-inclined waters (cf. Gen

1,2); the Spirit of the 'Word' and of the 'Father'. '... And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him⁵ we both have access in one Spirit to the Father' (Eph 2,17-18).

There is a multiplicity of design within the circle. It is 'the manifold wisdom of God' (Eph 3,10), incarnate, so to speak, in the one Spirit who gives access; and made accessible, in human measure, to those who believe.

The surrounding vacancy is heavy with meaning. One recognises the genuine artist by her restraints and abstentions as much as by her forms. It was not disinterest which made Marie Minga leave so much upper space unfilled. It was her inspiration. In the mystery of God and man, 'silence' is the most telling word of all.

For silence, in the Mystery, is not void or negation. Rather is it a certain fullness of super-utterance, opening on to a shoreless sea. In the spiritual ascent it is the limit of human apprehension and realisation, unexpressed and inexpressible; that communion in the 'theia apthenxia', divine ineffability⁶, which the influential 6th-century mystic pseudo-Denys found to be the highest theology: '... The higher we raise ourselves in fact, the more concise our words become in synoptic perception of the things known. Now however, as we begin to enter into the darkness which is beyond the intelligible, there is no longer question even of conciseness, but of the total cessation of word and thought. When our discussion descended from the higher things to the lower, (reference to his previous writings), in the measure that it distanced itself from the heights, its volume increased. Now, as we ascend from the lower things to the transcendent, the closer we draw nigh to the summit, the smaller the number of our words becomes. At the end of our ascent we shall be wholly silent in full communion with the Ineffable (τὸ ἀφθeggatὸ)'⁷

Here we have an early unemotional declaration of the sweet lament of all the christian mystics —

I know a man in Christ..., caught up into Paradise..., and he heard unspeakable words (arrhēta rhēmata) which man may not speak... (2 Cor 12,2-4) —

and the final flowering of that sense of wonder (greek, thauma; cf. Judges 13,18, thaumaston, wonderful with 1 Peter 2,9, thaumaston phōs, wonderful light), which at least two gentile philosophers, Plato and

Aristotle, recognised as the beginning of philosophy: 'For such is the state of a man who loves wisdom really in depth: wonder. Yes, there is no other beginning to philosophy than that.' (Plato, *Theaetetus*, 155d). And Aristotle: 'It is indeed because they wondered that men, in the beginning, as still today, began to philosophise.' (*Metaphysics A*, 982b, 12f).

Painting 2

The work was executed, (traditional paints and ochres on plywood), in 1986 when Marie was twenty-three. It was commissioned for a Pentecost assembly held that year at Violet Valley station, to the north of Halls Creek. As well as being good art, it is a theological masterpiece. Both idea and composition demonstrate a sublime level of religious maturity, which only grace can explain. Every detail is controlled in a total vision of breathtaking sweep.

Ngawi ('the Father') presides in freedom over the Dreaming, himself outside it. He is the upright figure at the centre. The parting in his hair makes a cross at the headband which itself has impressed on it three smaller crosses, signifying the eternal 'Verbum mentis' (mental Word) of the Father, as he fashions through It, or through Him (cf. Jn 1,3) the created order. The white above his head stands for fire. This is the Holy Spirit, completing a trinitarian document of uncommon refinement. Ancient — too ancient by far for us to measure — he, (the 'Father') invites to meditation, as all else in the picture, or the historic drama, goes out from him. Graceful as a dancer lost in the ceremonial action, he holds with both hands the snake, much as a dancer does the threaded frame of the myth being re-enacted.

His equipoise sends strength vibrating through the entire composition. He is not immobile, but part of the general rhythm, a commanding presence. He quietly smiles because the Word of his mind is a pleasing one.

His hands do not appear, and the drapery in which he is attired is not like anything familiar. The fact is that the 'Father' is a stylised hierophant whose nature removes him from comparisons.

The lower righthand corner of the picture is the mythical 'paradise'. Adam dances a 'wanga' beside 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil' (Gen 2,9), spear in hand. On the grass three bush turkeys roam.

Our attention is drawn to this corner by the increased density of the white dots. (Note, incidentally, how through all the picture every dot has been placed with the utmost care.) Indeed something serious is happening there, even as Adam dances. Out of the waterhole just next to him a snake has been sinuously emerging, encircling him and apparently the whole of creation. Passing through another waterhole (top left), it has come face to face with its creator who still holds its tail. There is even that touch of levity which is never far absent in Aboriginal celebration.

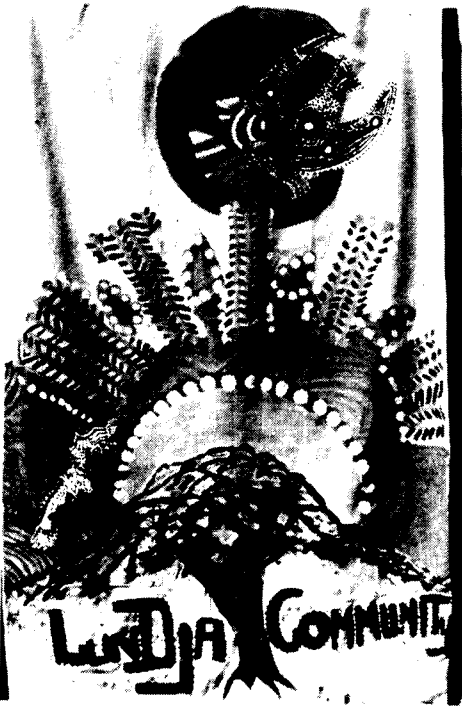
While the snake motif is part of the universal deposit of religious symbology, in the tradition of Aboriginal Australia it has an unusually high profile. Kalpuru, as he is called in the Walmajarri language around Fitzroy Crossing, is not necessarily a malign creature. She, (sometimes he), is a fertility symbol, gross with spirit-children who come out from her, or from the waterhole, or from both, to enter into ready mothers. The rainbow and the Milky Way share this same weight of serpentine significance.

Ngawi is in no way perturbed by the snake's appearing, here evidently the snake of biblical understanding, principle of evil. He smiles as though to say: 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test' (Mt 4,7, citing Deut.6,16). The snake even tries to 'speak to his heart', a term which in the Bible 'belongs to the language of courtship'.⁸ But Ngawi is master of the work of his hands: the horizontally held tail section is a denial of all the snake stands for; an eternal 'No'.

But now we come to the full brilliance of this artefact. With unbelievable ingenuity, this young Aboriginal painter has hit upon a device developed over a long period in christian iconography. She has used it, wittingly or unwittingly, to respond to the problem of evil with which so many generations of philosophers and theologians have grappled till their pens ran dry. She has done so simply and with unparalleled force.

The device in question is the cross within the circle. Andrei Rublev's Trinity icon (15th century), which the Council of the Hundred Chapters (1551), declared to be the 'canon' or norm of all icons of the Blessed Trinity, and 'the icon of icons', is constructed around this device. The circle signifies universality. The cross is the Cross of Jesus. The cross within the circle thus conveys the teaching that salvation permeates the cosmos to its limits.

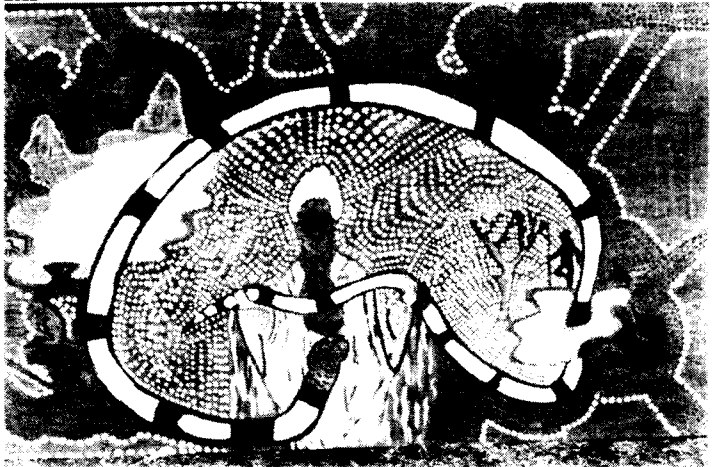
THEOLOGIAN IN PAINT



PAINTING 1

Photos by courtesy of Sr Angela Sambucida,
a Canossian Sister of Halls Creek, W A.

PAINTING 2



In the Cross of Jesus, as we know, the depth of evil meets with the height of good. In the Cross these two opposites join, or are conjoined, salvifically. I cannot recall ever before having seen in christian art the 'Father' symbol and the 'snake' symbol being employed at once to express this doctrine, and with such finesse.

II

It may be objected that I am reading too much into what must have been initially a fairly simply conceived artistic plot; that the artist scarcely had the grasp of theological nicety I seem to ascribe to her.

I have conversed with Marie Minga on two separate occasions about the paintings we are examining; once, before writing Part I above, the second by way of confirmation after.⁹ I am convinced that she had a broad understanding of the Word her paintings speak. She produced them, consciously, as an Aboriginal interpretation of the christian Gospel, and as such they stand.

I have merely added an explanatory, if elaborate, footnote. Perhaps the exercise may illustrate one possible form of what has been called the 'maieutic' service, (from the Greek verb 'maieuomai' = I serve as a midwife); and remind us also of the interdisciplinary dimension of every modern science, theology most of all.

In this instance Ms Minga has, by furnishing an excellent instrument, facilitated the birth of the kerygma I have attempted in this paper. On the other hand I have teased out, without betrayal I would hope, the latent content of her painting, and indicated its homiletic and catechetical value.

In a sense, of course, painting does not stand in need of commentary any more than does poetry. It is self-evident to the attuned mind. Words *can* even defile it, its purity, its holiness. However, there is the evidence of history that commentaries can also illuminate. At times the artist, in whatever medium, has even been known to have been filled with wonder (thauma!) at the richness of what to her/him had seemed little more than urgent, maybe burning, intimations.

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NOTES

1. The photos are by courtesy of Angela Sambusida, a Canossian Sister stationed in Halls Creek, to whom I am also indebted for corrections of detail.
2. See, for example, Mircea Eliade's standard work, 'Patterns in Comparative Religion', Sheed and Ward, London, 1958, Meridian edition, 1963, pp.124-153 (sun, and sun-worship); 265-330 (tree); passim, (mountain).
3. *ibid.*, pp.99-100.
4. According to the tradition of eastern christianity there is in God 1) *his nature*, incomprehensible, inaccessible which by definition cannot be communicated to the finite creature; 2) *his energy, or energies*, which are certain forces arising out of the divine nature, and truly divine, through which God communicates himself dynamically to his creatures, and in them; and through which the rational creature can indeed know God.
5. That is, the Word, which has *become* (greek: *egeneto*, Jn 1,14) 'flesh'. In other words, has taken on, assumed, once for all, continuously and totally, in healing and redemption, everything that is jewish, everything that is aboriginal, *sax*, the human composite as such. Through him, we *both* have access. That is, the jewish people and the gentile world all-inclusively.
6. Greek, privative, from verb 'phtheggomai' = I utter a sound, I speak; here, the divine not-to-be-spoken-of-ness.
7. Mystical Theology, Migne, Patrologia Graeca, 1033 B-C.
8. Hans Wolff, Hosea, Fortress Press, 1974, p.42. Cf. Hos 2,16; Gen 34,3; Ruth 2,13; Judges 19,3.
9. For the sake of honesty, I will set down here what Marie explicitly understood her paintings to mean. This does not exclude the possibility of their actually meaning more.
 Painting 1: The tree is the 'lunja' tree; the ground out of which the mountain arises is the Lunja community, land and people. The mountain is the 'Red Hill' visible easily from where the people live. The sun is the sun, plus. The eagle is the rock projecting against the sky on top of Red Hill. The rays are rays, plus. The dove-shaped bird is the Holy Spirit.
 Painting 2: The figure at the centre is 'Ngawi', God the Father, the one true God, Lord of creation. The snake is the Dreamtime snake, whom, or which, Marie sees as good, as life-source of everything that grows, and as Ngawi's friend. Marie called my attention to the crosses on Ngawi's head-band. They are the christian symbol, standing for the Christ. The white

above Ngawi's head is fire. In the lower righthand corner of the picture, the three birds are bush turkeys walking in the grass. The white patch through which the snake's tail passes, and out of which the snake emerges, is a waterhole, as is the bigger white expanse at top left. The figure with the spear who appears to be dancing, is 'the old people'. The tree is a tree.

From this it will be seen that the main liberty I have taken is with the meaning of the snake, which I am regarding as the biblical snake, principle of evil.

If we were to take it as representative of the Dreaming and friendly to Ngawi, or not at odds with him, we would have a different theological statement from the one I have delineated. It would seem to mean that Ngawi is holding the snake, not in a gesture of eternal 'No', but rather in sympathy and continuity, yet as the snake's author, because he does hold him, and the snake is not opposing him in challenge. The cruciform design at the centre of the circle would in this viewing be no more than accidental, or at most would result purely from aesthetic instinct, and would not convey a 'theologia crucis'. It is nonetheless amazing, from the standpoint of 'theologia crucis', that the 'accident' has happened.

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continued from page 15

is essential. There are no easy or universal solutions whether we are in Africa, South America or across Australia's Top End. At the close of his third volume (*The Humanist Christology of Paul*), Segundo comments on a one-to-one solution from the Bible being the best for any particular context: 'human reality is in much more lively intercommunication than is assumed by all too prevalent notions of that sort.'

The spirit announced in the vast swinging beauty of little fires eons ago is always offering us Alcheringa — may it be big and heavy again in 1988 in the land of the Holy Spirit.

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SINEW THE HEART, HALLOW THE SOUL

Noel McMaster CSsR

FULL-BLOWN ARTICLES FROM ONE not in the field can be too laborious, book reviews can be patronising. Short, sharp reflections on what one has seen and read recently may slip in between and be useful.

Recently I have discovered a beautiful poem, renewed acquaintance with some cherished friends in the Kimberley region of WA, read with difficulty three volumes of Juan Luis Segundo's *Jesus of Nazareth, Yesterday and Today*, and reflected on Australia's so-called Bicentenary.

Readers of Rex Ingamell's poem 'To Mirrabooka' will detect lots of resonance with the ancient and contemporary Aboriginal ethos. I reproduce it in full, pointing out, if necessary, that Mirrabooka is the Southern Cross.

TO MIRRABOOKA

Mirrabooka across the still branches
of trees that are older than settlement and now dark,
but bright with Alcheringa, my spirit calls to you...
Lacking artificial daylight
to help them imagine
the immense night inferior,
now may my people,
walking in black-out,
expelled from their neon-niche,
find you, Mirrabooka.

Fr Noel McMaster CSsR, presently stationed at St Francis', West End in Brisbane, was previously parish priest of Kununurra WA, and has contributed articles to *Nelen Yubu* nos. 6, 11, 14 and 15.

NELEN YUBU

Let your pinaroo branches
sinew the heart,
your ancient hills
hallow the soul,
as once in starry hours when Earth
grew big and heavy with Alcheringa
and the vast beauty of little fires swung
a master constellation,
announcing the spirit.

On TV last night (Aug. 16) I saw 'people walking in black-out expelled from their neon-niche' in Brewarrina, NSW. Who knows how many more blackouts there will be before the Bicentenary is with us. Only history will tell.

According to Segundo, God works in history. In every age men and women have had to 'sinew the heart' and 'hallow the soul' as they committed themselves to values they judged to be ultimate.

Segundo says that this owning of meaning and values, or faith, is a primary, anthropological 'given' in human existence. Everyone establishes values and wagers on them. He also says a lot about ideologies by which he means the effective ways people set about realising the values they have wagered on.

There have been many hours of faith-wagering in two hundred years of Australia's history; but in this land we can think of 'starry hours', just as Abraham, man of faith, did in another land long ago.

In Segundo's language this expanded Australia is where our faith and values are born. To be true to our faith in Australia we will acknowledge the cross immemorially suspended over our land, observed by Aborigines in their way for thousands of years, seen by children of Abraham in recent times as the symbol of Christian life and hope — the axis of the world's coherence and meaning.

Aboriginal faith was symbolised in The Dreaming — that 'time out of time' when their expression of life's wager began to unfold: a sense of belonging together and being destined to live and act in harmony with the world; and finally, in faithfully following up their dreaming, a sense of moving from faith fulfillment.

All faith is like that. All missionaries today surely appreciate it. Across eras and across cultures the difficulty is to know the key in which a tradition's faith is expressed, and has been expressed at different times. Segundo shows that Jesus lived and moved in such a

way as to promote a political key: he challenged powerful religious leaders of bad faith who were exploiting people even in the name of religion. To evoke faith in Christ Paul wrote, in Romans especially, in an anthropological key: Jesus is the expression of free obedience which spans the chasm between our inner graced intentions and the contrary law of our members. From an anthropological point of view that can now call on evolutionary categories to cope with 'all sinned in Adam' and 'Christ is the first-born', there is in Christian faith 'neither Jew nor Greek, male or female, slave or free'. All are equally free in Christ, and all such truly free people will be raised up.

From this Segundo argues that in every age, therefore, missionaries must be prepared 'to learn to learn'. Such deutero-learning implies that they will be alert to the use of the particular keys at particular times. Before we learn about Jesus in the gospels or in Romans we must learn how these writings came to be in a particular key. After many centuries and through many cultures there must now be an extraordinary variety of possible readings of faith's wager in Christ.

All religious faith, Christian, Aboriginal or any other, is steeped in tradition and carries transcendent data i.e. life's wager must wait for a *final* result. Our poet Ingamells expressed Aboriginal faith, I believe, beautifully. Is it true to Aboriginal tradition and their recently begun process of learning to learn about their wager of faith? Is it in the right key for the Blacks of Brewarrina? To 'sinew the heart' may sound a political key and lend itself to political ideology. Waiting can be painful! To 'hallow the soul' may suggest the inner peace of the anthropological key that Paul wrote in: slaves could experience true freedom even in their continuing slavery. Waiting is possible!

In the meantime, on the ground or in the missionary field, and in the face of that Bicentenary, there is so much good being done by men and women of faith, black and white, even in different keys.

One last word, for the present, from Segundo: there must be reflection within keys and communication between keys, not with a view to making a quantitative 'kill' so that all Australians are reconciled and stamped Christian in 1988, but so that energy will be used wisely and qualitative continuity of the gospel will be enhanced. Dialogue, especially interior religious dialogue where one's own faith and tradition are opened as best one can to another in cultural contact,

continued on page 12

THE LUMKO VISION AND METHOD & THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

M J W

ON THURSDAY AND FRIDAY mornings, 21-22 January, a meeting was held at the MSC house in Darwin, the "Ranch", so that Martin Wilson could present to the priests from the Top End Missions and the Darwin parishes, and some other interested persons, the gist of the pastoral vision he became acquainted with at the Lumko International Course in Lesotho (southern Africa) during October last year (cf. his paper in **Nelen Yubu** No 33).

Bishop Ted Collins, John Savage (MSC Top End Missions superior), and some 22 other people attended, mainly priests from the Top End missions and Darwin parishes. Amongst those present were also Sr Ann Corbett (regional superior of the OLSH Sisters in the NT), a couple of Christian Brothers from Bathurst Island (N Feeney) and Port Keats (V Roach), and John Kavanagh, the diocesan CEO.

The purpose of the meeting was twofold: to gain some knowledge of the Lumko pastoral vision and method (Thursday morning), and to sound out its applicability to the Northern Territory (Friday morning).

Martin Wilson presented the theme in several short talks and a practical demonstration of the "Seven Steps of Gospel Sharing", which doubled as the formal prayer session of the first day.

Lumko Vision & Method

The overall vision is of a church that is a **Community of Communities**. In such a church:

1. The basic units are **Small Christian Communities**, "SCCs", face-to-face neighbourhood groups whose members live in close relationship with one another; they inter-act socially; they nourish their Christian life from the bible (scriptures); they pray, worship, act and celebrate together.
2. These communities coalesce into the **Parish Community**, which celebrates and consolidates its unity and the interrelationship of the SCCs particularly in and by the Parish Eucharist.

The Eucharist is the focal point of church life, not in the sense that it is the basic element of that life but rather that it is the crown, centre, creative hub or seal of it.

3. The parish communities coalesce into the **Diocese**, and the dioceses... form the **Church**, Christ's Mystical Body.

New Features: A Reversal of Vision:

Such a vision of the church might seem familiar and normal. However, for many of us the familiarity is deceptive. It is really a mirror image and involves a complete reversal of vision and roles.

1. The church is not defined from the top down, like a pyramid, nor exactly from the bottom up (reversed pyramid), but rather as a system of inclusive and interlocking circles... (Maybe something like a spiral?)
2. The Eucharist is a focal point at the centre of the larger community rather than out at the edges. The nucleus at the centre of each cell is the **bible** - guiding the cell and feeding it.
3. Church life becomes a reality within the neighbourhood. The people can meet and pray as Christians, plan apostolic outreach, care for their own spiritual needs and those of their neighbours: authentically and without priests and other ordained ministers. They don't need the Mass to be celebrated to make their meeting an authentically (Catholic) Christian one: they pray from, with and out of the bible, which they can read without being ordained for it!
4. They **minister** to one another. Ministries emerge out of such groups.

A Clarification of Roles

1. The **ordained ministers** become more clearly supplementary and complementary, i.e. they have been **ordained** by the church, appointed to represent the church, to function in a "churchly" role, namely and formally as those to whom is specially committed

the "care of the churches", the responsibility for the building up ("edification") of the small communities into the Body of Christ.

Their real task is not to perform the Christian thing more or less in the role of main operators but rather to **facilitate** its performance. Amongst Catholics people tend to become totally dependent on a priest, in such a way that if no priest is present and Mass cannot be said, then nothing happens at all. Martin Wilson gave the example of a very small township near his home. The people used to get Mass only on "spare" Sundays, i.e. on the fifth Sunday of a month that had five Sundays in it. To their thinking that was their Sunday for religion, so much so that even when holidaying in Sydney they did not think of going to a local Mass unless it were a "fifth Sunday".

2. It becomes a reality to talk about the church as the **"People of God"**. The people **are** the church, not just those left over after all ministerial roles have been allocated from the Pope down.
3. **Lay ministries** become truly functional, i.e. functions exercised by lay persons in their own proper right. They are not makeshift substitutes in the absence of enough priests to go round.

Practical Spin-Offs

1. The priestly role changes, but becomes more practical, i.e. able actually to be done. Even if there were many more priests than there are, there would not be enough to be present for performance of the Eucharist every time an active Christian cell meets for worship!

[At our MSC Provincial Mission Meeting in Port Moresby in 1973 we formulated the theory-model of the "spontaneously operating Eucharistic community". To work, it needed that the PNG village catechists would be ordained Eucharistic ministers. That essential preliminary step could not be taken. Maybe Rome's reluctance is better founded than we thought!]

The full-time pastoral staff members of a parish have a facilitating and animating role. They **enable** the Christian life of the people to function.

Their role of preaching the Good News is performed effectively when they are training and animating the leaders of the small groups. In this way they multiply their own outreach.

-- In these days of priest-shortage, such a method is particularly attractive. It may be the shortage of priests that has made us pay more attention to the role of the laity, but the ministry of the laity should not be seen as a temporary stop-gap. Our received values have been challenged, and we are asked to change - which most of us will do with relief!

Practical Considerations

On the Friday morning small discussion groups were formed to consider the applicability of the Lumko vision and method to the Northern Territory, particularly the Aboriginal "missions". Three practical considerations were to be kept in mind, viz.

- 1) Lumko has prepared a mass of practical material to help in the development of SCCs and their ministries: 20 kg of it!
- 2) The material is geared directly towards Third World peoples, so that adaptation to the Aboriginal scene is nowhere near as massive a job as adapting such programs as "Renew".
- 3) Lumko encourages adaptation and creativity.

The group took up a very positive attitude towards the whole program. Accordingly Bishop Collins decided that the diocese would enter upon the program seriously.

Conclusions

There was overall agreement that the Lumko method was both relevant to the NT and practical. In fact it would help us fill in the missiological gap we have been troubled with for some time. It was decided to aim at establishing the program at least in the Aboriginal "missions":

- 1) Martin (with help) would repeat his presentation of the Lumko vision & method, on site, to the pastoral teams of BI, DR & PK during March. Also in the Centre.
- 2) The aim will be to get some gospel-sharing groups going in each place, so that in due time the awareness programs (or their equivalent) can be run in each locality. (To be effective, such programs need small groups to be discussed in. It is something of the chicken-egg situation...).

- 3) Martin spoke of the need of having some persons associated with him to form a Pastoral Animators Team. In response to this expression of need, a group was nominated to act with him as a sort of interim advisory committee to get the program going: John Savage, John Fallon, Sr Ann Corbett, and J Kelly. One or two others (not present at the time) were suggested as useful people to have on such a committee. [Such a "committee" would be quite other than the "team" that would need to be formed.]
- 4) We shall try to bring to fruition an offer made by one of the Lumko team who will be visiting Australia in August-September (Anselm Prior OFM): he would be willing to conduct a week's workshop for people interested in the Lumko method. - It was noted that there is a good chance of getting funding for such a venture.
- 5) Serious consideration should be given to sending some Pastoral Team members to the next Lumko International Course (Nov. 1-30, in Lesotho).
- 6) Some of the town parishes also expressed interest in the program: gospel-sharing groups could appeal to people who are genuinely religious but turned-off by formal church services. Paul Cashen (Administrator of St Mary's cathedral parish) said he would use some of the Lumko themes in drawing up an adapted Lenten program.

WORKSHOP

As mentioned above, Anselm Prior OFM, of Lumko, has offered to conduct a workshop at the end of August for persons interested in learning about the Lumko method. If members of pastoral teams in other parts of northern Australia (i.e. Kimberleys, Northern Queensland) would be interested in attending, we would like to know. Regarding precise topics, Anselm is waiting for suggestions. There is also a chance that we might be able to raise funding to help people get to the workshop.

* * * * *

TWO WAYS*

Dan O'Donovan

This paper is offered as a small memorial, in this centenary year of the famous 'Lambeth Quadrilateral', of what has been called 'the most important document of nineteenth century efforts towards church unity.' (See *Apostolic Faith Today: a Handbook for Study*, ed. Hans-Georg Link, Faith and Order paper no. 124, WCC, Geneva, 1985, p.3).

The 'Lambeth Quadrilateral' (1888) marks the beginning of that great labour for christian re-unification which has happily set its hopeful seal on our present century.

In that year the bishops of the Anglican Communion, meeting for the third Lambeth Conference, attempted to establish, under four heads, a basis for agreement, within the Anglican Communion, as to the content of the christian faith.

They further expressed 'readiness to enter into brotherly conference. . .with the representatives of other Christian Communions of the English speaking races, in order to consider what steps can be taken, either towards corporate Reunion, or towards such relations as may prepare the way for fuller organic unity hereafter.'

This initiative paved the way for the emergence in 1910 of the Faith and Order Commission and, in 1948, of the World Council of Churches.

* Cf. **Which Wineskins?**, Susanne Hargrave's enlightened and enlightening article, **Nelen Yubu** 31 (1987) 11-23. This should be required reading for every missionary involved in the transcultural christian effort here in the north of Australia.

THE JEWISH LAW STANDS IN a privileged place in relation to all other Laws or religions of the world. There was a divine election of Israel. This was no matter for boasting (cf. Rom 3,27, etc.). It was simply Wisdom's dispensation.

All creation was loved. 'I have loved you with an everlasting love. Therefore have I continued my faithfulness to you...' (Jer 31,3), is the redemptive sigh of the Creator, responding to the sighing of the Spirit within the universe (Rom 8,26) and 'all creation's groaning in travail... waiting...' (Rom 8,23). However, a receptive womb had to be formed for Messiah, and so a people needed to be chosen out.

Between the Gospel and the Jewish Law, there is a mode of continuity which is not to be found between the Gospel and the religions. It is called typology. The typology of revelation is peculiarly jewish-christian. It centres on the Promise; is essentially eschatology.

The Law (Torah) comprises three foci of jewish interest and attention: the moral (the Decalogue), the cultic or ceremonial (Israel's ritual), and the social or judicial (the code of the Alliance, with all its prescriptions and prohibitions.)¹

As 'Law', it is one of the manifold life-systems of the world, providing order for a particular society. But prophecy distinguishes it out and makes it what it is. Law and prophecy do not exist separately in Israel. They are co-ordinates in that people's life.

Fr Dan O'Donovan's paper had to be held over from the last issue, No.33, as we wanted to bring my report on the Lumko International Course to the notice especially of people in the Northern Territory in preparation for the workshop that was held at the "Ranch" in January, cf. Lumko Vision and Method.

TWO WAYS

The Law is itself prophetic, and prophecy comes out of the Law. That is why one would be quite mistaken to view the Decalogue, for instance, as no more than a wise moral program like the Laws of other nations, or of the religions. The Decalogue cannot be understood in isolation from prophecy and eschatology, nor from the whole code of the Alliance which controlled Israel's political regime, its relations with foreign nations, its family life, organisation of property etc. It is the charter of a singular historical people whom God appointed in destiny.

Can the mode of continuity which existed between the Jewish Law and the Gospel, and which is called typology, be said to exist in any manner between the religions and the Gospel? No. This mode itself it is in fact which sets Israel apart from religion as an evolution actually constituted by that people's history, both in sign and act. Between the religions and the Gospel there can be said to exist certain correspondences, arising out of the nature of religious man and expressing themselves in the universal symbolic vocabulary of mythology. They are not **typological** correspondences, which attach necessarily and intrinsically to the Promise and which form the Promise's actual embodiment.

A good illustration of the difference between the two 'continuities', of Jewish Law and Gospel on the one hand, and religions and Gospel on the other, is the typological figure of the Passover Lamb.

While animal sacrifice (and even human sacrifice) has been practised from time immemorial in the religions of the world - the late Prof. Stanner found resemblances to sacrifice in the rite of the bullroarer in Aboriginal Australia, though he insists he is not saying that it is sacrifice² - the Passover Lamb is not of that mode of continuity, but constitutes a mode on its own: it is a 'dabhār', a word and an event embedded in the historical Exodus symbol-complex. It cannot be detached from that position, a detachment which would be required were one to compare Israel's paschal sacrifice, which the lamb represented, with the animal sacrifices of the religions. The Passover lamb is the entire exodus mystery, 'a type of the one who was to come' (cf. Rom 5,14; 1 Cor 10,6.11; Heb 9,23-24).

In Christ the animal sacrifices of the nations were taken up; **their** word was made flesh, finding complete expression. But in no other continuity could the Word of Promise find 'a guest room in which to celebrate the Pasch with my disciples'. Israel's history, alone

out of all histories, prepared and offered that guest room, as it had first prepared and offered the self-revealing God a mother.

'The true Lamb brings to an end the figure of the typical lamb, sings an earlier christian liturgy.³ As there was one 'true Lamb' and one only, so there was one 'typal lamb' and one only. Any sacrificial lamb or victim offered to a god is not, in the technical sense, a 'typal' lamb. It is, however, a graced **calling for** (epi-klēsis) that typal lamb with its antitype in Jesus, and as such already, though modally distinct from it, has a hold on it and owns it.

The same may be said of the law of circumcision. While commonly practised outside the ambit of Israel, it had no express eschatological significance there.

In Israel the circumcision rite not only signified the covenant with YHWH. In a strict sense it actually **was** the covenant. 'Now this is my covenant which you are to maintain between myself and you and your descendants after you: all your males must be circumcised'. . . 'My covenant shall be marked on your bodies. . .' (Gen 17,10.13). Out of that theological-ontological ground, Israel could view the gentile world, without distinction, as 'uncircumcision'.

So, in truth, it was. Though circumcision may have been practised, and even ritualised outside of Israel, it was modally different in that it was not positioned in the typological stream of the covenant of Promise.

Could it be said to be related positively to that stream in any way? Once again it was at least ideally and implicitly a **calling for** the reality, which Paul defines clearly as 'of the heart' (Rom 2,29); and as such, already had a hold on it and owned it.

If Peter could say that 'the Spirit **of Christ** which was in them (i.e. the Old Law prophets) foretold the sufferings of Christ and the glories which would come after them'⁴ are we not justified in adding that it was no other than that one same Spirit of Christ who was latent also, though according to a different mode, in every gentile word of life, as epiklesis, calling for wholeness, soteria, salus? 'Everything is created unto him.'⁵ All rational creation has an innate impulse or desire for its christic fullness; moves, or at least opens, naturally towards it.

Transmitting the Gospel to religious cultures other than that of Judaism was recognised soon in the early Church as a formidable challenge. There were those who wished to impose ancient legal requirements such as circumcision on peoples of non-judaic tradition.

The situation was doctrinally cleared up at the first church council in Jerusalem. Liberation Theology, long in gestation, was joyfully born. (See Acts 15).

In the greco-roman world of the first centuries the Church was nevertheless under no illusions concerning the new Word which had been uttered in history and its (the Church's) responsibility in transmitting it untarnished as Light. While efforts were painfully made to assume, in the way of incarnation, the preparations for the Gospel discernible by grace in the many and far-flung cultures, this exercise was fully understood to be paschal and baptismal in character. Without the death - subjectively an agonising break indeed - there could not be the rising to the new Life which had appeared in time.⁶

As I hope to show in a series of articles to follow, there was a generous enough christianising of non-christian myths, but the starting point was never lost sight of: the Gospel is a wholly original Word to humankind. It is wholly original in that it is based on, and itself is, in Jesus Christ, a divine **Word of Promise**. It is the only such word. There is no other, nor has there been. That Word was made flesh once and assumed in his person all the words of hope and understanding which were in the world before his coming. In him, they **cease to be** as they were, and **begin to be**, as the human now is, divine in the historical Jesus.

Here in the north of Australia we have the meeting of that same Word made flesh with the pre-christian Aboriginal word of life. In his address to the Indian people in Canada last September, Pope John Paul II repeated his weighty statement spoken at Shrine Field, Huronia, Ontario, three years earlier: '. . .not only is Christianity relevant to the Indian peoples, but Christ, in the members of his Body, is himself Indian.'⁷

In terms of doctrine, we are faced in our proclamation of the paschal Word very much as were the first missionaries of the early Church, with two possible excesses, each of which needs carefully to be avoided.

The first of these excesses, the less dangerous of the two missiologically, seems to threaten more, at the present stage, the evangelical-style christian, preoccupied with the purity of the biblical text in all its literalness. It is the excess of unqualified rejection of traditional Aboriginal religious culture, judged to be un-christian rather than pre-christian. This is an easy expedient for

the busy foreign pastor. It saves him from the time and energy-consuming task of **engaging** with the culture he is judging, and humbly listening with mind and heart to the distinctive wisdom it brings. It is this wisdom-content which in fact has kept it going as a word of life over a very long period of time, and which is its epiklēsis, its appeal, unto Christ. The labour of discernment is an arduous one, to be conducted in much prayer and study and trying to see the main agents being the culture-owners themselves.

This first excess has the advantage of stating unambiguously that the Gospel is wholly new and that all religion has to die in the baptismal process. Evangelical christians speak of 'the one-way Gospel', 'the skinny road', beside which there is no other. It is a road which makes stern demands on the traveller, but heaven is at the end and so the sacrifice is worthwhile.

As will be generally acknowledged the word is accurate and biblically founded. It is only the **excess** which needs to be avoided as unworthy of our Truth.

The second excess, more dangerous and deceptive in that it evacuates the Gospel, is that of allowing, even encouraging, Aboriginal religious culture to capture Christ, so to speak;⁸ to bring him in to the vision of reality which has been that of Aboriginal Australia from earliest times.

In the redemptive act it is Christ who 'apprehends' us. We do not first apprehend him. This is the consistent biblical and patristic view of knowledge and salvation. Many texts could be cited.

This excess threatens especially the present ecumenical-style christians of the mainline churches, intent on remedying past negations and on countering the opposite excess.

The expression has been coined recently in catholic circles in the Kimberleys that we follow 'a two-way' method. The expression is not at all in contradiction of the one-way Gospel announced by the evangelicals - what catholic would question the revealed truth that there is only one Way? (cf. John 14,6; Acts 9,2) - but it is confusing because it gives the impression that it is. It will sound confrontationalist to the 'one-way' christian at a time when enduring and sterile confrontations are the last thing we need. By the two-way approach these catholic christians have in mind an educational plan of action currently being followed in catholic schools, by which white missionary teachers teach Aboriginal children literacy and numeracy, while

approved local Aboriginal teachers teach Aboriginal language and culture.

This excess, were it to arise, could spill over into a wider doctrinal/cultic permissiveness, reminding one of the 'wide gate' and the 'easy way' Jesus spoke of which 'lead to destruction' (Mt 7,13). This road would make few and uncertain demands of the traveller, the quality of whose life would remain unchanged.

The strength of this christian word lies in its refusal to reject the ancient religious culture in question; in its ability, in grace and prayer, to recognise that that culture is pre-christian rather than un-christian, and in its generous attempt to draw this out in actual religious praxis.

As will be acknowledged the word is accurate and biblically founded. It is only the excess which needs to be avoided.

Prayerful interaction in hope and love between our two proclamations - or rather, our one undivided proclamation in baptism, in Jesus Christ and in the Scriptures - will help each of us in this avoidance, and enable us each to grow by the respective strength of the other. The blessing of the Holy Spirit will be on us.

* * * * *

continued from page 28.

A call from Sister Celine Auton, Melville Island, was full of local news. Sister Delores has gone from Garden Point and is much missed. An American nun, Sr Therese has come to replace her. Sr Therese spent seventeen years in PNG and has been working with Alanon in preparation for her work in the NT.

In December Brother Andy Howley msc wrote to me: 'After ten years dreaming the family Alcohol Education and Awareness Institute became a reality in May this year [1987]. Up to date we have had seven four-week programmes and another scheduled for January; then we close for two months and begin again in May. We have about twenty adults and nearly as many kids at each programme.' Congratulations to all involved with this project, which is at present based at Daly River.

That's all from me. Best wishes!

Secretary Keren.

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK . . .

NYMU's thanks to all those who so promptly renewed their subscriptions for 1988. We will endeavour to print a list of all subscribers, as requested, in our next issue.

Sister Monica FDNSC (formerly Sr Thecla) has gone back to the Daly River Mission after nearly six years away from the Top End, the last couple of years having been occupied at St Joseph's at Kensington. Sister Elsie Flicker FDNSC who spent many recent years at Daly River followed by a stint at Port Keats has now gone to Santa Teresa Mission, via Alice Springs. Sister Anne Gardiner FDNSC has now returned to Bathurst Island as Principal of St Therese's School.

A mistake in our last issue: I typed the postage for Fr Peter Malone's book 'In Black and White and Colour' as being \$1.00, when in reality it is \$2.00. The price of the book of course is \$9.95 -- plus postage!

The MSC missions in the NT have had a lot of changes of pastors: Fr John Fallon has gone to Daly River; Fr Laurie Bissett has gone south; Fr John Leary is at present at Bathurst Island; Fr Kingston Summerhayes will shortly be off to Japan; Fr Corry is going to Nhulunbuy, Fr Desmarchelier has gone to Port Keats; and Fr Shallvey is also going south.

In Sydney there is an office dealing with the welfare of lay missionaries. The person one mostly comes in contact with is Mrs Denise McCaffery who is a pleasant, understanding and very efficient lady. We lay missionaries receive an annual stipend from the Bishops of Australia, which is much appreciated as it always arrives just on Christmas! However, sometimes the office wonders if there are any lay missionaries in the field who are not aware of this facility, in which case they may write to Denise, at the NCMC Secretariat, 154 Elizabeth Street, Sydney, 2000. Very recently an Association for lay missionaries was formed in Melbourne, the secretary being Kristin Allen, 484 Moreland Road, West Brunswick, Vic. 3055.

continued on page 27.

MARIE MINGA: THEOLOGIAN IN PAINT

Dan O'Donovan

I

ABORIGINAL ART HAS RECENTLY been receiving both national and international acclaim of an unprecedented kind. (See *The Weekend Australian*, March 14-15, 1987, *Weekend Magazine* 1-2; *Weekend Australian*, August 8-9, *Magazine* 6). Some of this art is christian in character and deserves our attentive notice.

The most remarkable single theological achievement to date to my knowledge is the statement contained in two paintings by Ms Marie Minga, of the Lunja ('Red Hill') community, Halls Creek, WA. For breadth of scope and synthetic vision I would venture to call them a work of genius. It is these I would like to present in this article with Ms Minga's consent.

Born in 1963, Marie is one of a family of eight, four boys and four girls. Their language is Jaru. She attended primary school in Halls Creek and then went for secondary education to Nulungu College, Broome, a Catholic school.

From around 1977, a small group of Aboriginal people claiming ties with the 'Red Hill' area some three kilometres outside Halls Creek town associated and pressed for legal title to a small block of land there. This they obtained in 1981. Houses were built and a community of six families took up residence.

The 'Red Hill' community, called in Jaru language 'Lunja' from a tree which grows there, (it had been called 'Darungarr' in Kitja), is proud of its ancient language and its new identity, though life continues to be a battle in the difficult circumstances of today.

Marie's father, Mr George Sturt, is chairman of the now incorporated community, and a composer of christian songs (junba) in Jaru. These junba are the living and lively accompaniment of their inculturated christian liturgy.

Fr Dan O'Donovan was incardinated into the Broome diocese in 1985, and is now resident priest at Fitzroy Crossing. He has been in the Kimberleys since 1972.