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EDITORIAL

FIRST of all I must thank Secretary Keren for filling in for me as Editorial writer with last issue. My situation in PNG [cf. my "Looking Back (2)" in this number] made it difficult for me to meet the printer's deadline. Keren stepped into the breach.

At the time I started writing the "Looking Back" series, I had thought only of looking back on my time in the Northern Territory. However, returning as I had unexpectedly to PNG in a consultative and reflective sort of role automatically set me off on a personal "looking back" on my years in Papua New Guinea also. An obvious question people would like to ask me was, What changes have you noticed?

Nelen Yubu in this issue continues its traditional line: missiological topics among Australian Aboriginal people, whether they be in Northern Territory, the Kimberleys or elsewhere. We might expect the balance to veer towards "elsewhere". Thus Gerard Goldman, while reflecting on Territory experience, is doing so from out of a Sydney context. Frank Fletcher has become a quiet, strong influence within the Sydney and NSW scene. My confrere, John Fallon, has also been bitten by the reflection bug. His personal witness to the massive missiological change brought in by Vatican II and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* is particularly valuable - and presented with charming candour.

It has been suggested to us that *Nelen Yubu* would do well to expand its range of interests, e.g. to canvass African views on topics common to ourselves and Africa. This would represent an important change in policy direction...

We are pleased to be able to include a brief review of the documentary produced by Keren's daughter on the Torres Strait Islander people: cf. review of *Talking Broken*.

We are happy too that our pages can be graced yet again by one of Rod Cameron's reflective lyrics.

Martin Wilson
Editor

LOOKING BACK (2)

Martin Wilson msc

IN No.46 of *Nelen Yubu* I looked back over the first years of my stay in the Northern Territory. As I was writing this continuation, I found I had projected myself back physically even further. These reflections were intended for *Nelen Yubu* No.47, but circumstances required a postponement...

While writing these lines I am sitting in a room at Vunapope, New Britain, where last century the German MSCs set up the base of their missionary outreach in Papua New Guinea. I was here last in 1977. At that time I was involved with organising the Chapter out of which the MSC Pacific Islands Province emerged eventually, i.e. last year, 1990. In 1977 the Pacific Islands "Provincial Administration" was set up. After that it became a "Pro-Province". And the final developmental step was just one year ago. Back in 1977 the MSC presence in PNG was strong but fragmented. Each section was still connected to its overseas founding province as a "region", i.e. a part of a province that is outside the home province's geographical boundaries. The French, Swiss and a few Spanish MSCs were in Bereina diocese, the Americans in New Ireland, the Australians in Eastern Papua and Port Moresby, the German, Austrian and some Irish MSCs were in New Britain, and the local born were spread out amongst the rest. It was a typically colonial church.

The task facing us was to weld these all together into some functional whole. Vunapope I remember well as the place where I had my hardest tussle in the pre-Chapter organisation stage. The German MSCs did not want to lose their connection with their home provinces, their *heimat* - as neither did the French. Some of the others (American and Australian particularly) didn't mind that but were unsure as to how they should relate to the Nationals. At Vunapope I was facing the gathered forces of the North German Province. Their Provincial Superior was present on visitation. He sat in the middle of the meeting room on a large chair, flanked by his men. I was seated in front of him. He enunciated great fluent paragraphs of German, which I had to listen quietly to, then wait for it all to be put into

English before I could reply. I believe he could follow my English quite well, so he had me going and coming. As I struggled later to find a way, I came upon the "dual citizenship" formula. Eastern Papua, for example, would be a "region" of the Australian province but at the same time an "Area" of the PNG one. We could remain members of our home provinces while also integrally related to the one we were working in. The formula enabled effective steps to be taken towards the emergence of the PNG province.

Actually the formula was finally adopted only in modified form. I still think the modifications confused matters, but that is merely a private and maybe biased opinion. It was my fellow Australian MSCs, and the Americans, who could not agree fully with the formula that the Germans had come to find quite satisfactory. They thought "dual membership" as I was proposing it intruded too much upon the proper independence of the Nationals. It always bemuses me when I recall that the "expat" who was the main spokesman for that position went on to accept office within the top ranks of the provincial administration of the new PNG province!

I remember thinking at the time that the Chapter at Kavieng pulled together so many of my previous endeavours in life and fitted even my failures and disappointments into a pattern. It is very true that the closing of one door often signals that different ones are about to open quite beyond expectation. The fact that I was thinking these thoughts while sitting in the MSC house at Vunapope was itself an instance in demonstration...

When I left the Northern Territory somewhat bewildered in November last year, I had some ideas about what I hoped to be doing. All the same 1991 looked like a year to be struggled through. First came an invitation to take part at the Liturgical Catechetical Institute, Goroka PNG, in the planning of a research project. The invitation in effect implied a revitalisation of my past links with PNG. While still in the PNG Highlands but on my way home to Drummoyne, I was asked by the President of the Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands if I would be willing to accept an invitation to help them evaluate and possibly restructure the "commissions" of their Conference.

My first reaction was, How could I ever do something like that, never having done it before? But then I thought, Well, I don't suppose there are many people around who have in fact evaluated a bishops con-

ference! Moreover, those who invited me would have had reasons for doing so. I suppose the sort of work I had had to do in setting up the 1977 MSC Chapter in Kavieng, and the 1975 *MSC In NT* meeting at Daly River, NT, were similar sorts of ventures. What really intrigued me was that I was just coming out of experiences that effectively removed the word 'bishop' from my list of favourite words! At the time I was also reading a book on ministry which supported the notion that it was St Ignatius of Antioch with his non-New Testament idea of the monarchical bishop who had put us onto a bad track right back there close to the beginning! Was I really willing to work for bishops as such...

What the PNG bishops were looking for was an evaluator and facilitator who would be independent of them but at the same time not totally unfamiliar with PNG background and history. When I recalled my seven years period in PNG, my studies in anthropology at UPNG and field-work cum pastoral care amongst the Doura people, again I felt, as at the Kavieng Chapter, that I was once more involved in a venture that gathered together in a most unexpected way so many of those experiences that have made up my life so far. The fact that I was no longer stationed in PNG was one of the factors that made me eligible, and the added fact that I had just left the Northern Territory meant that I was quite free to respond to the invitation. In fact it should occupy me, off and on, until well into 1992.

While travelling around PNG in the search for information on the work of the PNG (and Solomon Islands) Bishops Conference, I have been invited at times to share my reflections on the changes I have noticed in Papua New Guinea since my times of residence in the early 70s, just before independence.

Lumko tries to school us to look for the good things first. So, instead of talking about the law and order problem right away, let me remark on some really big positive things that have happened.

The first would be the growth of the church in PNG. When I left in 1974 the PNG church was involved in a massive nation-wide self-study. The result was a simple strong awareness that "We are the Church - Yumi Sios". Christianity has become an integral part of the nation's life. Maybe it is a long way yet to a completely indigenous church with the majority of its bishops, priests and religious being Nationals. All the same the laypeople in the church are impressive in their dedication. In the "commissions" working under the Bishops Conference most of the diocesan co-ordinators

are PNG laypersons, as also are some of the national secretaries. I have been meeting lay people who give retreats to communities, run village courses on justice and peace, family life, marriage enrichment, Christian renewal, human development. Out in the villages people attend these courses late into the night, or they come into pastoral centres for concentrated work for two, three or more days, or even in some cases, several weeks.

Another aspect is the Fellowship. This parallels the Australian Aboriginal experience in northern Australia. Typically, the Papuan New Guineans go about it in a more organised fashion. They build Fellowship Houses: often of bush materials, but sometimes they are better built than the churches themselves. Such Fellowship Houses are mainly places for charismatic prayer. Often, they are also the best places for the village courses I mentioned in the previous paragraph.

While at Kavieng I was able to attend the ordination to bishop of one of my PNG students of earlier times. I have never seen such extraordinarily beautiful liturgical dancing. I knew I was witnessing a human culture totally engrossed in worshipping God as it celebrated the elevation of one of its own sons to the top rank of spiritual leadership. And while on New Ireland I met a couple involved in the Family Life Apostolate whose lived and simply articulated theology of the "domestic church" was so up-to-date in its scope and generous towards us priests as to make it hard for me to hide my tears while I listened.

One of the negative sides to the picture comes from the very excess of vitality! Pentecostal splinter groups are rife. This is the place to start a break-away religious group: it would be most unusual not to get an immediate following!

The law and order problem has to be recorded. One can be held up and robbed at gun point either in the middle of the city of Port Moresby, or along many out-of-the-way bush roads. Recently everyone in a Port Moresby restaurant was robbed at gun-point - except the Bishop of Bereina. The gangsters apparently had respect for their spiritual leader... The guns might be home-made. I'm told they could do more damage to the shooter than to the target, but I'd prefer not to test that. In the cities and towns gangs of youths, euphemistically called "rascals", roam around seeking victims. At the moment in most of the big towns there is curfew from 8 or 9pm until 5am. In the Highlands full scale tribal wars are being

waged. Over several months the rate of killings can get to 50 or more. I heard of one community school which is itself the subject of dispute. The teachers were withdrawn during my stay in the area. Guns were going off while the children were in school, people were shot at times on the road outside. The Channel 9 TV program on Highlands violence provoked a strong official reaction. But one does not have to be in the country long to know that the presentation was substantially accurate. - Of course, most people aren't robbed or shot, most areas aren't involved in tribal warfare. The off-putting thing is that I myself could quite easily figure among the minority that are! At times I was asked if I were here in PNG for a holiday. I think that if I were looking for relaxation I could easily think of more suitable places!

There is trouble in paradise - as always. At the same time there is extraordinary vitality, and there is always the chance of one of those break-throughs that can only happen in frontier or missionary societies. For instance, the Anglican Church is seriously considering integral union with the Roman Catholic Church. The Anglicans' hope is that they may enter with substantial retention of their Anglican rites. At their conference the Roman Catholic bishops listened with sympathy and eagerness to one of their Anglican peers who shared with them on this matter. What a marvellous thing it would be if the break-through to reunion happened here in Papua New Guinea. And it is very possible. After all, the modern ecumenical movement started in a missionary context.

SUPPORT OF THE RACIAL VIOLENCE ENQUIRY

Frank Fletcher msc

THE EDITORIAL OF *The Australian* newspaper, April 22, 1991, was headed 'Hysteria will not rid us of racism'. It dismissed crucial sections of the Human Rights Commission's National Report into Racial Violence as 'full of wild unproved allegations'. In a revealing sentence which referred to the Report's recommendation of specific safeguards for Aboriginal and ethnic suspects when in police custody, the editorial observed: 'The Commission should try explaining why *some thugs* deserve more favourable treatment by the law than *other thugs*' [my emphasis]. So suspects and prisoners are apparently categorised as thugs.

The editorial also played that familiar line that anaesthetises any serious investigation of Australian society: 'We can rightly claim that by international standards Australia's record [on racism] is good'.

And, anyway, the editorial's opening paragraph informed us: 'this propensity [to racism] seems likely to be with us always'.

The editorial's contention that the Racial Violence Report is full of wild unproved allegations mainly relates to the sections concerning the relationship between police and Aborigines. Let us dig into this contention. Obviously the Report has taken up allegations concerning the police. Are the allegations wild and unproven? That is to say, are they without adequate foundations in evidence? The Report, aware that this kind of objection would be raised (p.119), insists that the evidence it received is more than adequate. It sees this adequacy manifested in the extent and internal consistency of the evidence. The extent of the evidence is manifest in two ways: it was from right across Australia, State after State; it was not only verbal evidence but also written submissions and reports researched by independent academic consultants.

Fr Frank Fletcher msc, works in the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Sydney, and is stationed in the parish of Erskineville.

The consistency came in 'the statements concerning police violence amongst a large number of individuals and organisations across a wide geographical area'. In other words, people, in different States, thousands of miles apart, who don't know one another at all, have told remarkably similar stories of police violence.

But the editorial writer would remain unconvinced and would insist on the question: would these allegations be able to be proved in a court of law? The Report openly acknowledges that most would not. It explains why: 'those who presented evidence to the Enquiry were generally poor and disadvantaged people who have difficulty in formally proving a legal case or pursuing an official complaint. Given the fundamental inequality in terms of Aboriginality and (in the case of women) gender of those assaulted, compared to the power and authority of those who committed the assaults, the chance that legal demands for evidence would be met are slim indeed'.

Even more is this the case with allegations of violence against Aboriginal children and juveniles documented by the Enquiry. Eighty-five percent of the 171 Aboriginal juveniles interviewed alleged themselves subjected to police violence. Even if only one in ten could be legalistically proven, that would be a shocking statistic.

A further suggestion made in the editorial was that the police had no opportunity to respond to any of these allegations. The Human Rights Commission has replied that the most serious complaints were referred to the relevant police for comment and investigation.

The major findings of the Report are: *that* racist violence is an endemic problem for Aborigines in all Australian States and Territories....arising not from the isolated acts of a few maladjusted individuals but from entrenched racism in our society;

that Aboriginal-police relations are at crisis point due to widespread police involvement in acts of racist violence and harassment. (The report believes this crisis was graphically illustrated by the so-called 1990 Redfern raid).

These findings are substantially well supported by extensive and consistent evidence. If this is conceded, then how odd is *The Australian* editorial's ready assertion that, compared to some other countries, our record on racism is *good*.

One thug (to use the editorial's term) may not be brutal to as many

people as another thug. Does that make a thug's record good? Perhaps our record is 'good' largely because we have many times less black people than South Africa or southern USA?

And what of the editorial's acceptance that the propensity to racism will always be with us? There is truth in this statement. However, in the context the editorial can be perceived as saying: 'this propensity will always be there, so don't be too forceful about eliminating it; do what you can reasonably do, but be realistic. -- Clearly the editorial writer is not a member of an oppressed minority.

I have tried to hold up to the light assertions of this editorial because I suspect that it echoes the thoughts and feelings of much of mainstream white Australia. It lends support to those police spokesmen (notably in Western Australia but also in NSW) who have either denied completely the findings of the Report or who have put the proposition that there was in the past atrocious behaviour but now there are regulations and training that are correcting this. I have some Aboriginal friends who could relate problems with the police right up to this moment. So my limited but first-hand experience convinces me that the Enquiry's findings are substantially correct and that its recommendations need to be heeded.

Will the recommendations be taken up? The record shows that such Enquiries are often not taken seriously and acted upon. The situation needs conscientious people in large numbers, such as Church people, who will make plain that they will not accept racial violence as just as unfortunate propensity we have among us. Such support for the recommendations of this Report will need to be widespread so that politicians and government are encouraged to act against the old white complacency and despite the pressures of those tough groups who will obstruct any real reform.

I believe there is a special responsibility on us as followers of Jesus. Jesus has called us to be loving and forgiving, even to enemies -- but not to be weak. Following Jesus' example Pope John Paul has been insisting upon the dignity of every person especially the outcast.

Sometimes as I make the Stations of the Cross, when I recall how Jesus was bashed whilst in prison, subjected to racist gibes: 'hail, king of the Jews' and so on, the figures of Aboriginal and ethnic people rise to my mind. Then I hear anew Jesus' words to that violent self-righteous fellow, 'Saul, why do you persecute me?'

FILM REVIEW:

Talking Broken, a Portrait of the Torres Strait Islanders.

AUSTRALIAN DIRECTOR, Frances Calvert, who lives in Berlin, has released her first film, *Talking Broken*, which screened at the Melbourne and Sydney Film Festivals, as well as in Germany, Los Angeles and Paris. Frances and her English producer, Lindsey Merrison, accompanied the film, a gentle tribute to the Torres Strait Islanders, to screenings in Australia and New Zealand in June of this year. The highlight of the tour was presenting the film to four hundred Islanders on Thursday Island. Despite enormous technical hitches the film was received enthusiastically and endorsed by the people who had waited so long to see the results of years of research and filming.

Unlike the Aborigines, the Torres Strait Islanders, Australia's "other" indigenous minority, had remained little known until they made a brief claim for independence in 1988. During the three years when Frances Calvert travelled to the Strait to conduct her research, Islanders expressed their wish to be better known in a wider area. With humour and intelligence, various Islanders talk openly in the film about independence, culture, tourism, adoption, sex and sorcery. These topics are handled with delicacy and care,

based on a relationship of trust and friendship. Clever use is made of the recurring image of a telephone booth suspended from a helicopter: Telecom happened to be installing it at the time of shooting. It added meaning to the "Talking" of the title. The film takes full advantage of the beauty of the Islands, and foregrounds the Islanders themselves.

The "Broken" of the title refers to Broken English, a pidgin spoken only by the Torres Strait Islanders, but it also pinpoints the problems of any indigenous minority living in a first-world country. Although they appear to keep up with "the system", the hidden language of the authorities always remains a mystery.

Ken Wlaschin, Director of the Los Angeles Film Festival describes it as "an outstanding film which rises above being only anthropological and becomes a comment not only on the lives of the Islanders but on what civilisation means."

Talking Broken: is available in Australia on video from Ronin Films, PO Box 296, Broadway, NSW 2008.

--M.H.

THE GOOD OLD DAYS

John Fallon msc

I ENTERED the Apostolic School at the tender age of 12, in my first year of secondary studies...and loved every day of it. It was there that we boys met many MSC missionaries of every nationality from "the Islands", i.e. PNG, and sat enthralled by their stories. So I wanted to go to PNG and "save souls"! This desire changed a little in the Novitiate: it was a desire to make Jesus' love for his Father and us known that I wanted to go to the "missions", which meant PNG. Each year of my Scholasticate up to 1954 I wrote to the Provincial expressing this wish - best to make sure and get in early, eh?

But a change of heart came in 1954, the year of my Final Profession and the taking of Minor Orders. The Bishop of Darwin and the Northern Territory at that time, Bishop J P O'Loughlin msc, came to Croydon to see us and talk about his work in the NT. When he spoke of the needs of the Aborigines, my heart melted and from that moment I changed the object of my desires to the Black Australians who, in my mind then, deserved our help as MSC even before the people of PNG. So the next letter the Provincial got must have been a bit of a shock for him!

In the appointment of MSC personnel for 1958 I was listed for the Diocese of NT, together with Pat O'Connell and Br John O'Brien msc. We all received our mission crosses from Bishop Stemper msc at Randwick OLSH church. I can recall waiting for the inspiring words that he would give us, maybe from St Paul or Jesus. So, after he made the sign of the cross, I was getting myself ready to accept the words about the cross or the sufferings that were ahead of us etc., when the bishop said in his wonderful American accent: "I have one piece of advice for you young men: Go slow! Second gear all the way!" And he was so correct, for the people of the "missions", the Aborigines among whom I was to work on Bathurst Island knew no other gear, except perhaps first gear...

So early February I arrived at Nguuu, Bathurst Island, and the very next day I was faced by a class of 30 purple-black, smiling faces, all wait-

ing for the wisdom that would come from the new Father's mouth. He was untrained as a teacher and for that matter untrained to work in another culture! My stay there would last until November 1970, with some two periods at St John's College, Darwin, between 1962 and 1964. The Tiwi people were instrumental in training me to become a true missionary of the Sacred Heart and one of them (in many ways).

The metamorphosis took some years to come about. I was there to "save souls" according to the then Church and Diocesan Plan: help the people become Australian citizens and true members of the Catholic Church - our way! No language is to be tolerated in school - or Church! Don't try to interest yourself in pagan ceremonies: they must go! So I, being a devoted Catholic priest and obeying the policy of the diocese, didn't bother about language or ceremonies. In fact I was a Saul on the way to Damascus, ready to break up any such "pagan" ceremonies: against the First Commandment, I was told they were. I can recall vividly two such occasions when in my Saulian zeal I marched up to Jubilee Park, strode angrily into the middle of a ceremony, a Kulama (life-preserving ceremony and very sacred to the Tiwi - it continues to this day) where old Enraeld was the leader, and gave them all "a piece of my mind". I told off the tribal leader, the guru of his clan, a fount of wisdom and tribal knowledge, and said he should be ashamed of himself, bringing into the Mission this pagan and superstitious ceremony. I told him to leave and not come back. (Later I baptised him with his two wives. Recently old Aloysius reminded me of the occasion, with a great smile on his face...)

The second occasion was more memorable, especially to the Tiwi who were taking part in the ceremony. It was a Pukamani, a very sacred ceremony after a death, and it too continues to this day. It was a Sunday. There was nobody in the church - only a few - and I could hear the sounds of a Pukamani coming across the Aspley Strait from Paru, on Melville Island. My Mass was totally distracted - and made short! I got myself across the strait and immediately scolded the people in good dramatic language with all the show of anger and shame that I could muster. This was early in my zealous days. I even shook one of the sacred posts, belonging to Minnipinni, Thomas Woody's father. He asked me to stop. I didn't. Such a pagan symbol deserved shaking, just as they all did! I left in a huff. Now, the sequel is worth hearing. I'd forgotten this part, but Thomas Woody reminded me in 1986. (I call him my "brother" - or used

to: he's dead since.) Within a fortnight of this happening I was on my way over to Paru once more. in a peaceful mood, when I lost a brand new Mercury 25HP outboard motor, over the side of the boat, never to be retrieved. So I was duly punished for shaking that post, according to Thomas. Who won the battle?

Many happenings of those good old days have escaped my memory, but I loved being with the Tiwi. Towards the end of my first five year period at Bathurst Island, about 1961, I had a group of 'pagans', the last of the 'cleanskins', in a catechesis group, doing a two-year preparation for baptism. They weren't really asked if they'd like to do such a course but were 'mustered' for it, including old Jerry who had two wives. So the day of Pentecost came round and they were to be baptised by me, the one who prepared them all. Now I came to see Jerry at his "home" on the beach and to remind him of the coming great day. "I'm not going to be baptised," he informed me. I couldn't believe my ears. I explained how he had been to the classes over two years, knew all his doctrine - to this he agreed - and that he *must* be baptised. "No," replied Jerry. I assured him that he could keep the two wives, now one would be his wife and the other his "sister". (That's the way we got around this difficult situation, and the people agreed.) I asked why. He told me: "You see So-and-So over there, --'s husband? He has two wives and he is a baptised Catholic." I explained that he did not have two wives, but only one. "Yes," said Jerry, "one in the church and the other in the bush. (He was right!) And you know So-and-So: he is a Catholic and he always fights his wife and swears and fights everybody. No, I'm staying a pagan!" And so he did until someone baptised him at the hour of death - to make sure, I guess.

So after all this I began to rethink my approach to "mission apostolate". I spent some years at St John's College in Darwin, so had time to think and to realise how wrong the Policy was and I was. What right have we to try to discourage the Tiwi talking and learning to write and read their own language? What right had we to stay aloof from their culture and try to get rid of it? So on my return in December 1964 I approached the apostolate from a more humble point of view. I used to frequent the many ceremonies to learn more about them and to discover the "seeds of God's word" in them. The Council had just finished: it had stressed respect for other cultures and that we enculturate Jesus' word with such cultures. So I had good support!

After the Referendum in which 95% of Australians recommended that Aborigines be no longer "wards of the State" but citizens and be included in the census, much happened to help the Tiwi. Money for health, schools, even for a work-training program came in. I could see that materialism would soon engulf the people whom we had badly prepared to such an event. Their Faith was there, but it was not enculturated and I was afraid it would not withstand the blast of materialism. They would soon be materially independent, and how would their Faith stand up to this? So I asked to go to PNG to experience a two-months' course on missiology and enculturation. It was just what I wanted to help the Tiwi into the next phase of their life. On my return I was asked to go to Port Keats and leave my beloved Bathurst Island. This shattered me, so much that I asked for time away from the Aboriginal apostolate and ended up having 10 years in PNG, 1973-1984. This was a great help, because enculturation was the norm of the apostolate there. PNG had become independent while I was there, in 1975, so the need to encourage a local church was pressing.

The next phase of my life in the NT began in May 1985 after a 6 month stay at the WA Institute on Alcoholism and Other Addictions - Holyoake - where I began to understand the disease concept of alcoholism. This stint was to prepare me for my apostolate with the Aborigines of the NT. Alcohol Awareness and Family Recovery is our first work here: it is the most important work in the Aboriginal apostolate. The AA spiritual program taught me to approach every aspect of my apostolate with the Aboriginal people with a respect they deserve and with a certain powerlessness, not knowing the language, culture and personality of these people. This was a new approach and a rewarding one. I felt I was more than ever before a guest among these people, a learner. I was powerless even with all the usual "power" that belongs to the priesthood. All I can do in the work is to tell my story and to tell Jesus' story. This is how the people themselves relate to one another. They are story people. This approach credits them with being unique children of God with a culture that has gone back - unbroken - for at least 50,000 years! God is in their culture - it has (Vatican Council 2) the "seeds of the word" in it, and together we reflect on it with the Gospel and we find what God wants of the people today. In our story sharing and prayer together we understand how Jesus does not destroy their culture, their "law and prophets", but brings all to perfection, completion.

After a 7 months' stay at Port Keats where I worked alongside the AA group there and helped them in spreading the Holyoake principles, I was asked to go to Garden Point, where I spent two years. Then in 1988 I was asked to go to Daly River. In 1989 I had a glorious Sabbatical: 42 months Sacred Scripture course in the Holy Land, then another 42 months in South Africa, working among the poor Black citizens in so-called "independent" countries, understanding how the Black Church survives within the apartheid policy. Both experiences made me even more prepared to work among the Aboriginal people of the NT. On my return I stayed at Santa Teresa for almost a year before returning to my beloved Nguiu, Bathurst Island, in December 1990. Here I found enculturation in full swing thanks to the work of the previous parish priest and the staff of St Therese's school, in particular Sr Tess Ward OLSH. The Sunday liturgy was all in Tiwi and the main events of the liturgical year are done in Tiwi cultural style, in particular the Holy Week ceremonies. The Good Friday Passion Story is totally Tiwi and powerful. The people all turn up and they take part in it with full attention: it is now *their* legend, story.

I guess my approach to the Tiwi people is now at a stage that reflects my own spiritual life: a reflective living stage. I am trying to help them and especially those who are Ministers, to reflect on their culture and also their own lives as Catholic Tiwi. Within each Tiwi person is a "culture-child", a "Tiwi-child", that has been trained into a role play that is based on an Irish Roman Catholic way of living. Now they have to find that child within and help it grow into the mature Tiwi child of God, expressing the kind of person God wants each to be. This takes good parenting. I hope to help the people and in particular the Ministers to become good parents to themselves, to that Tiwi child within, that has been 'put down' a lot, albeit unknowingly, by the formation it has received within our Catholic schools and parishes. When I say "put down" I mean that in the past this child has not been recognised by many of its formators as uniquely Tiwi, and they have gone ahead and formed each person according to the then Policy of the school and parish, into "good Catholics", our way. This reflective way of life I hope will come about in the prayer groups we are encouraging, prayer groups where we pray with Jesus and the bible.

The above story results from simple reflection on my times with the beautiful Aboriginal people of the NT. My approach to the Aboriginal apostolate has changed drastically over the years. God bless.

RAHNER'S ESSAYS (9)

Dan O'Donovan

Môly and Mandragore

TO HELP US grasp the meaning of the psychic mythology of Môly, some background detail may be appropriate.

The human pilgrim (Odysseus-Ulysses) is placed between Hermês and Circê. That is to say, he/she is courted at once by the light-footed messenger of the gods and the mistress of hell. These two are the personification, in the myth, of the Môly plant itself, with its coarse, hard root and its delicate blossom.

Hermês (-Mercury) is, as Ovid described him, the *agilis Cyllenius* (the agile Cyllenian; *Metamorph.*, II,720; II,818: *velox Cyllenius*, swift Cyllenian); the handsome guardian of Kyllênê, where the Môly grows. To the Greeks he is the 'logios', the astute embodiment of the awakened person; indeed the Logos in visible form. Hermês is the sage, and hence the mediator also of all arcane wisdom. By no means confined to heaven, he is further decidedly of earth. Hence his skills against cthonic forces: he can beat them because he knows them. Whoever obtains from him knowledge of the magic formulae, is secure in the face of every kind of evil. In the *Paris Magic Papyrus*, the god of Kyllênê is designated 'pantôn magôn archêgetês', the leader of all magicians. From Apuleius' *Book of Magic* we learn that 'Mercurius, the "vector carminum" (song-bearer) used to be invited to the ceremonies of the magicians' (*De Magia*, 31); while an altar inscription in the carolingian foundation of the Aachen cathedral honours him as 'Mercurius Susurrio' (Mercury the prompter). He survives in this guise, even in the christian consciousness, up to the time of Isidore (cf. *Etymol.*, VIII, 9,8); and for (christian) Rhabanus Maurus, *De magicis artibus*, he is the inventor of magical practices, the clever soul-guide of all

magicians; the one who, with his rod, leads the human spirit into the light or into the darkness. Prudentius had well expressed it: '...Facit hoc ad utrumque peritus', (he does this, skilled as he is for both). (Contra Symmachum, I,94).

Hermê-Mercurius is the magical conqueror of Evil because, *knowing* all, he is capable of *doing* all. In this last sentence, we have in a nutshell all the thought of Greek antiquity on the subject of magic. (For a distant echo in the religious culture of Aboriginal Australia, see Eric Kolig, Australian Aboriginal Totemic Systems: Structures of Power, Oceania 58 [1988] pp.212-230).

Circê is Hermês' opposite. She is the enchantress of the scary, yet tantalising cave on the isle of Aiaia. (Cf. Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, for those two same elements: the 'tremendum' and the 'fascinosum'.) She too is a half-way being: daughter of Hêlios and Persê, the oceanid. But the maternal component predominates. Her nature arises out of the god-forsaken depth of Oceanus (primordial ocean-stream which girdles the earth), essence of the cthonic. Thus, like Hekatê, she is a lunar being, and works her spells in the night. In her garden grow all earth's poisonous substances. (Theokritus called her 'polypharmakos Kirkê', Circê of the many drugs or medicines.) Those who fall for her baits turn into swine and wolves.

She too lived on in the christian consciousness. For Arnobius, she is the 'versipellis Circê (Circê the werewolf), who changes form and colour, a crafty seductress (Adversus nationes, IV,14); for Augustine, the 'maga famosissima' (the celebrated maga; De Civ. Dei, XVIII,17); and for Isidore (Etymol., XVIII,28,2), the 'maga et venefica et sacerdos daemonum' (maga, witch and priest of demons).

Between these two mythical forces, then, stands Odysseus, in his left hand Hermeê' plant, ensuring a safe journey. His right nevertheless holds a sword!

II Christian assimilation of the 'foreign' myth

Naturally and with ease the Greek mind gave Homer's images a moral interpretation. The Stoic moral philosophy in particular exemplifies this.

'The good way', for the Stoic, was a life led in accordance with the Logos, a 'bios logikos', the Logos being the all-pervading Law which gives meaning and coherence to existence. Such an ordered life allows us, in knowledge, to rise above, to have control of the 'pathê'; in other words, the earthy, passionate part of us.

It is of interest in the symbol-history with which we are now concerned, that the first witness to the application of the homeric Moly-mythology to this Stoic world-view is Cleanthês, a disciple of Zênô and teacher in turn, of Chrysippos. The Sophist Apollonios has preserved for us this fragment from Cleanthês; a genuine testimony therefore to the old Stoic school: 'Cleanthês the philosopher used to say that Moly is an allegory for the Logos, by means of which the lower impulses and passions are weakened (môlyontai).

From that on, the allegorised Moly takes on the same variety of forms as the now philosophised Hermês. In Athênaios we hear strains of the Stoic song: 'Odysseus' companions are turned into beasts because they gave way to their lusts; the Ithacan (i.e. Odysseus) is saved because he followed Hermês' Logos, (in other words, the Moly), thus becoming passionless (apathês).'

It is from some such Stoic source the author of the *Scholia graeca* on Homer must have drawn when he said: 'Because Odysseus was a wise man, he held on to the Moly; in other words, to the perfect Logos, through whose help he was subject to no passion.'

Perhaps the clearest statement of the Stoic ideal, however, is contained in the *Homeric Problems* of Heraclitos, an allegoriser of the time of Augustus. The hallmark of Odysseus' virtue is his *phronêsis*, his penetrating insight. But this comes to him from the bounty of Hermês who is here called, in fact, *emphrôn logos* (the knowing Word).

With a close eye on Homer's text, Heraclitos then goes on to explain the Moly allegory: 'Fittingly is *phronesis* represented by the Moly plant: a gift which can be granted only to humans, and of these only to a very few...For, the beginnings of that understanding which is the sum of all good things are crude, resistant and difficult. But when someone has engaged bravely in the patient struggle to grow through them, gradually flowers begin to open out as in a kindly light.'

And the opposite of *phronêsis*? In another of his writings, *De incredibilibus*, Heraclitos describes it in typically Stoic terms: Circê is the great

Prostitute, deceiver of humankind. Over her temptations Odysseus is master. In one of Palladas' poems, preserved in the *Anthologia Palatina*, there is a clear application to the overcoming of sexual impulses: 'Odysseus was wise and fled the lusts of unripe youth. It was not Hermês, however, who gave him the antidote he needed, but that understanding which belongs to the nature of man.'

Such was the terminus at which faith in the gods, in the allegory's Stoic expression, arrived. Hermês is a symbol of human reasonableness; his Môly, self-redemption/liberation.

As antiquity drew to its close, Platonism took a different course.

Hermês is no longer merely the shadowy personification of reason, but becomes again a god; a mediator of that heavenly power which humans longingly wait for from above as gracious help and salvation. Here man sees himself once more to be placed midway in the struggle between gods and demons.

This change of spirit from the Stoic enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) to the desire for liberation as it began to appear in neo-pythagoreanism and neoplatonism, Rahner sees as 'one of the most significant transitions in the history of spiritual searching.'

Of this, Hermês is at once symptom and measure. So it happens that our account of the Môly-plant turns into a sort of summary of a psychic revolution, when seen from the viewpoint of psychotherapy. Man rediscovers the divine, and comes back to the acknowledgment that the healing of our human condition, its transformation from cthonic root into heavenly blossom, comes only by empowerment from on high.

Faintly, seismographically, the coming tremor was signalled already by Plato. As shown in his *Phaidros*, he was inclined to personify the world-Logos, seeing Logos and Hermês as one. (Cf. *Phaidros*, 264C; *Kratylos*, 407E). Thinkers who, after the Stoic decline, reached out for him again - only now in that maturity and at the same time that lassitude which arises out of bitter experiences of the spirit - find in Hermês the incarnate idea of their own deep religious yearning: a strengthening must come to us from above, which will change us into light; god himself must tell us through his Word-bearer how to save ourselves from Circê's hell. 'O you messenger of god, you prophet of the Word for mortal man!' sang the fifth Orphic hymn.

That divine knowledge which frees us from ourselves and which

comes to us *anôthen* (from above) and *theothen* (from god) is the *Logos prophorikos* (the uttered or articulated Word). It is Hermês in person. Truly with the turn of the era, Hermês (with his soul-healing flower had gained another lease of life (cf. Acts 14,12). Plato and Homer were in agreement.

At this precise point Christian theology first stepped in, announcing to the culture of religious Greece an altogether new fulfilment of the human aspiration.

In a passage which compares the greek Hermês-Logos with the christian Logos-Jesus, Justin proclaims: 'In this we are of one mind with you who recognise in Hermês the Logos, God's envoy.' (Apology, I,22. See also Hippolytus, Elenchos, IV,48,2; the pseudoclementine *Recognitions*, X,41; Augustine, City of God, VII,14).

Still an important interpreter for us today of the finer shades of the religiosity of his time, Maximos of Tyre offers us a rounded note on which to conclude:

'Within the nature of the human race', he says, 'God has placed as it were a live spark: the longing expectation of the Good. At the same time, he has left profoundly hidden the way of finding this Good.' (Oratio XXIX,6). He then quotes Homer: 'Its root is hard and coarse, but fair is its blossom...I see the Moly plant, and have an inner understanding of its deep mystery, for well do I know how difficult it is to find the way to the Good.'

to be concluded

* * * * *

MISSION SPIRITUALITY

DISCERNING THE LIFE-SUSTAINING STRUCTURE OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Gerard Goldman

THE SPIRITUALITY OF Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is life-sustaining to the core. It is foundational to the alcoholic's regeneration and re-entry into society as a fully empowered person. An essential ingredient of AA spirituality is that the recovery process is never completed until one reaches out to others who are suffering, and also to practise actively this spirituality wherever one is.¹ Mission Spirituality is focused clearly on the Kingdom. The Kingdom coincides with the establishment of a thorough-going peace. It is a peace that will leave no facet of human life or creation out of account. This focus is deeply engrained in the spirituality of AA. The emphasis on reconciliation and the need to seek God through prayer and meditation are foundational to AA Spirituality. However, the overwhelming aspect of AA Spirituality that makes it thoroughly mission spirituality is admitting one's powerlessness and surrendering one's will to God. It is only through this that one may work towards helping bring about the Kingdom of God on earth.

In the Biblical Tradition there is an unwavering conviction that humankind is unable to obtain, on its own, the kind of peace it longs for. The growing awareness of one's helplessness paves the way for the implicit need for a new life and a new beginning. There is a need to admit

Gerard Goldman is furthering his studies in theology at CTU (Sydney). He previously worked for three years at the Five Mile Awareness Centre, Daly River. He published "Listening to a Culture" in *Nelen Yubu* issue 47.

¹The twelfth and final step of AA declares: 'Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we try to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practise these principles in all our affairs.'

one's powerlessness and helplessness over alcohol as eventually life becomes unmanageable. The alcoholic has the distinct awareness of being devastated through one's drinking. By simply admitting one's powerlessness there is a promise of life. Even the very anticipation of being rescued from this position is empowering.

Admitting one's powerlessness over alcohol is far easier than admitting one's powerlessness over greed, honour and power. Anthony (1987:26-7) notes that the two New Testament texts that claim a need for conversion and an admission of powerlessness are not directed to alcoholics alone but to all members of society who are bonded to idolatry. These are: Luke 15:18-19, in which the prodigal son admitted that his life had become unmanageable. He said, '...Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son...' The second text is 2 Cor 12:7-10. In this text Paul boasts:

My grace is enough for you: my power is at its best in weakness. So I shall be very happy to make my weakness my special boast so that the power of Christ may stay over me, and that is why I am quite content with my weaknesses, and with insults, hardships, persecutions, and the agonies I go through for Christ's sake. For it is when I am weak that I am strong.

Paul clearly recognises that by honouring his weaknesses he has been led to a deeper relationship with his God.

It is very difficult to deny one's addiction to alcohol, as eventually it overwhelms one or finishes in premature death. On admission of one's weakness the alcoholic undergoes a radical personal change. This results in seeing the world in need of radical social change. The sober alcoholic is unlikely to deny the need for societal change. They are aware that the radical change that they have undergone has drawn them closer to the reality of God's Kingdom. They see society also in need of this change, and that it needs to admit that it has become unmanageable and requires God to restore it to sanity [Anthony (1987:33).]

The alcoholic readily accepts one's utter creatureliness before God. Without God in their life, there is no life, only chaos. To be fully restored to sanity and thus have a vision of the Kingdom requires an all embracing faith in the God who calls one to sobriety. To have faith in anything else is a delusion as one is acutely aware of the intensity of one's helplessness

and dependence on God. The alcoholic is thankful that each day of sobriety is gift-given to them from God.

An intrinsic element of AA Spirituality is its aim for each person to grow in union with God. This involves creating space for his reign in each person and in his reign in society. This is sought through prayer, meditation and contemplating. Being aware of one's personal salvation in recovery from alcoholism, one becomes more enthusiastic, hopeful and patient in knowledge that God can also reign in others and society. The alcoholic is aware that one can only share with another what one has, and what one has depends on what one has received from God's grace in prayer.

Human beings create for themselves thousands of synthetic substitutes to sate their thirst for God. The alcoholic readily identifies with how one easily alienates oneself from God. Through prayer, meditation and contemplation one attempts to improve one's conscious contact with God, and to discover the knowledge of his will for us. One also prays to have the courage to carry that out.² In a world which places much emphasis on society's will, that is, to enter the spiral of upward mobility, this is a humbling prayer. It requires the person to remove oneself from worldly preoccupation and to enter into the prospect of listening to God's challenging will for oneself. When this is shared with others, the task and challenge does not appear so daunting. One then continues to seek God's will. Increasingly, one is able to identify the substitutes which one has placed for God. One then returns to a simpler life where the presence and dependence on God become like leaven in one's life. One's energy comes from the source of this union with God.

Essential for an active outreach is the need to own one's personal defects (AA refers to this as a 'cleansing process').³ This assists one in working towards the cleansing of the social defects of society. Personal sin is inextricably linked to social sin. One cannot remain content to place blame on some external force for wrong in society. There is a need to scrutinise one's own heart and self-centredness, and lust for power, honour and glory. Regarding this Comblin (1977:91) states:

²This is found in Step 11 of the AA Recovery Program.

³The cleansing steps are referred to as Steps 4 to 10 of the AA tradition.

The institutions of injustice exist within each human being; they would not last for a day if people were not willing to let them continue. Hence sinful structures must be overcome inside human beings.

The Spirituality of AA demands a rigorous honesty in the efforts to cleanse oneself of the personal defects which hinder the grasp on what God wants one to be. This ruthless honesty is necessary, due to the possibility of the desire to drink being re-activated in times of trouble and temptation. A searching moral inventory reduces this possibility. Similarly in the world, in times of difficulty when hope seems impossible to sustain, there is the possibility of reverting to old selfish traits. When this occurs one loses sight of proclaiming and striving towards the Kingdom. Thus one needs to be cleansed and delivered from the materialistic consumeristic greed within oneself. It is only in attempting to do this that one can reach out confidently to the absurd world outside.

God wants each person to live an abundant life -- a life abundant in physical goods as well as spiritual goods. Recovery through AA is more than the mere abstinence from alcohol and the removal of physical defects. It is a spirituality that penetrates the depth of one's soul and shapes up all facets of one's character. All aspects of one's character come under scrutiny. These include social, sexual, physical, psychological and spiritual facets of one's character. One begins to appreciate the frailty and extent of one's earthly humanness. There is a freedom in the recognition that God is giving one new life. There is desire to move with this new life rather than to move against it. This movement makes obstacles appear less significant compared with the truth and energy that one experiences. The defects also assist one in easing into a give and take relationship with life as one is forced to accept one's limitations. The discovery of this new-found energy and life is to be placed at the service of the Kingdom. Holding on to it reduces it to a comfortable segment which does not allow the spirit and energy of God to work through it.

The cleansing process of AA Spirituality requires making a searching and fearless moral inventory of oneself; admitting to God, oneself and another the exact nature of one's wrongs; being entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character; humbly asking God to remove one's

shortcomings; making a list of all persons one has harmed, and to become willing to make amends to them all; making direct amends to each where possible, except where to do so would injure them or others; and continuing to take personal inventory and when one was wrong to promptly admit it. One cannot rest with a passive knowledge of God. One needs to correct inappropriate ways of relating and thus create a more peaceful and just environment. As one steadily works through the above tasks, one is gifted into a vision of the best the world could be. One begins to imagine the Kingdom of God, the new society that God plans for the world. One has an illumination and views the world and self with new eyes. One laughs at the old way and rejoices in the new-found sobriety and peace. Similarly, one can only laugh at the absurdities of the present society, and rejoice in the signs of the Kingdom breaking through.

Ultimately the Spirituality of AA demands surrendering to the reign of God in one's life. One practises obedience to this moment by moment. One surrenders to one's helplessness and powerlessness to the extent that one feels victimised and devastated by it. From this point there is the promise of enlivenment. The sign of God's presence is in this helplessness. Jesus on the cross is the most powerful symbol of a person's total surrender, on the road to freedom from self. One needs to surrender oneself to God moment by moment, seeking the state of abandonment to God as a way of life.

Jesus did not attempt to relieve the tension he lived under in a convenient fashion. He demonstrated that one must meet God at the point of this tension. One must admit their powerlessness over their suffering. It is the unresolved defects that hinder one from making a breakthrough from what one is, to what God wants one to be. One is aware however, that it is the actual process of coming to terms with these defects that brings God into one's life. One must accept that only God can help the individual to survive and choose life.

It is difficult to surrender self-will and self-concern. Human nature challenges one to remain in control of one's life. However, the more one enters into union with God the more one realises that control over one's life is hindering God's movement within one's life. This develops in the

sober alcoholic the notion of the 'sacrament of the present moment'.⁴

That is, abandoning oneself to God's will as it unfolds in one's life moment by moment. This personal surrender is the sovereign way out of despair. It can come as a gift, through prayer, meditation, sharing; or through models. The proclamation and fidelity to the Kingdom possessed Jesus -- he did not possess the Kingdom. Similarly the alcoholic is possessed with the desire for sobriety. Sobriety does not possess the alcoholic. There is much unsundered territory in the human. The Spirituality of AA demands that one undertakes a daily program to attempt to conquer this unsundered territory. This allows God to take increasing control over one's life, all the time knowing that one can trust this life-sustaining spirit.

Social surrender is the opposite to placing oneself first. Anthony (1987:115) states it is surrendering 'to the prophetic imagination' and thus becoming 'redeemed from self-occupation or self-obsession'. In AA Spirituality, social surrender or self-transcendence inevitably leads outwards. Having experienced the release from the bondage of alcoholism one works towards the delivering of society from the bondage of evil. This evil presents itself in materialistic consumerism, racism and sexism in which love of neighbour and the yearning for the Kingdom are ignored.

One becomes aware that the choice is no longer between this world and a better world, but is between no world and a new world. The sober alcoholic does not speak of a better self and the old self. One inevitably becomes willing to give one's life for the new self and new society, as it is better to give one's life than to take it. In this respect, witness is integral to the Spirituality of AA. It is the living out of the Kingdom. This whole process of AA Spirituality is leading to reconciliation and peace in one's life and in society.

The alcoholic is mindful that the Kingdom and the new self continue to be utterly God's achievement. It is not one's own accomplishment. Ultimately the Kingdom, like sobriety, is gift -- it cannot be inherited.

AA Spirituality demands that one allows God to be God. It encourages one to increasingly walk in the spirit under the awareness that one is

⁴First stated by Father Jean-Pierre de Coussade, an eighteenth century Jesuit in his book *Self Abandonment to Divine Providence*. Found in Anthony, S.B. (1987:112).

being gifted into authentic life. There is a spirit of confidence that God is vitally amongst the group, eager to assist in one's darker moments.

Participation in the Kingdom is freely accepting to live totally in the foundational conviction that God is the God of all people. The distortion of God occurs when one excludes others from one's God. There is a need to share the knowledge and love that God has given one. This is what Nouwen (1979:20) means when he states: 'Changing the self and changing society are not separate tasks but are as interconnected as the two beams of the cross.' Uniting these two is the challenge of AA Spirituality. One becomes increasingly aware of the need for a synthesis of "solitary" and "solidarity."

For the alcoholic, the AA steps are foundational to one's mission spirituality. Inherent in the AA steps is the ultimate need to move out and transform society. AA Spirituality can assist society in recognising that it has become unmanageable and needs to become dependent on God. The spirituality of AA successfully identifies areas in which society is placing emphasis on false gods. This primarily illustrates itself in society's willingness to substitute synthetic substances for our thirst for the living God. AA Spirituality aims to awaken a new self and a new society. It is thoroughly revolutionary. It does not attempt to divide oneself into religious and mystical versus revolutionary. They are seen as 'two sides of the same human mode of experiential transcendence' [Nouwen (1979:18).] The recovery through AA demands that all facets of one's lifestyle be renewed and developed. Similarly, it demands that all facets of our society increasingly undergo transformative change. This is to help bring about the breakthrough of the Kingdom and to establish the reign of justice and peace on earth.

AA Spirituality is a missionary spirituality which is life-sustaining to the core. It beckons all to take courage and to enter into it.

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THE RITUAL OF THE RAIN

Sing in the Rain Bird from the sultry west
and dance in the mingling of wild wind and water.

Call till the Spirits of the sky respond.
Sway with tall trees and touch cold drops of rain.

With watery gem-stones glistening on your limbs
awake the Rainbow to delight.

Dance! Dance! Bring on re-birth
as rain renews the fertility of the earth.

Rod Cameron osa

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

This letter was written in December 1987 to Dr Pat Lowe, Broome Prison Psychologist, regarding a much publicised novel by Bruce Chatwin, since deceased. The writer, Fr Dan O'Donovan, had thought that silence would be the best response but has now discovered that at least some few people in Western Australia are talking about it. So he feels he ought to register his reaction, and asks us to print the letter in Nelen Yubu now.

Dear Pat,

I am grateful to you for having put me on to Bruce Chatwin's novel *The Songlines*, and the pages (48-67) which speak of me under the thin disguise of pseudonym.

When one opens oneself to media people, one takes a calculated risk. Indeed, were another Bruce Chatwin to come to my door tomorrow and state his purpose, I would again invite him in and talk freely with him. I am inclined to trust media people, in hope.

The more imaginative the persons concerned however - and novel writers are professional imaginers - the greater the risk one takes of being travestied beyond recognition.

Though I am pretty well familiar with the *dramatis personae* of the catholic saga of recent decades in

the Kimberley, I can't for the life of me guess who 'Father Dan Flynn' ('ex-Benedictine') might be. Yet he surely is not mere invention, as the author chooses him as one of his spotlight puppets. He also indicates that he was known to 'Father Terence' on a friendship basis. Strange. But perhaps I am being blind. (Could it be Pat Dodson? Surely not.)

Regarding the pages which pertain to me, apart from a couple of trivial details accurately conveyed, the whole statement is purest fantasy, from the opening offensive and untrue allusion to my father.

The words, in particular, relating to Aboriginal religious culture in its meeting with the Gospel greatly falsify my actual understanding.

This is all the more hurting in

that a Northern Territory priest anthropologist and I have been pioneering this area in writing and discussion since 1979, attempting for the first time to prepare the ground for a now developing Aboriginal christian theology, a development which is bound to have a bearing on future praxis. We argue along the lines of Black and Third World Theologies, which are culturally and contextually sensitive. The quarterly review in which the writings in question have appeared is called *Nelen Yubu*.

I am glad, after reading Bruce Chatwin, that somewhere at least I have stated my position on this matter with clarity.

The one redeeming factor, which suggests also that I do not *unduly*

worry over this betrayal, is that it is only a novel anyway; probably not many around here will read it, or if they do will suspect that 'Father Terence' and I are one.

I only ask you that if you lend the book around, and feel inclined to remark that 'Father Terence' refers to me, you add that I disown the pages in question, having never held such weird views.

Perhaps you might even like to insert this letter at that place in the book.

Again, dear Pat, with thanks, and hoping to have a good yarn with you some day.

Sincerely,

Dan O'Donovan

[Then of Fitzroy Crossing WA]

Father John Fallon msc, my cousin at Bathurst Island, gave us a fright in June this year. Word came that he had been hospitalised in Darwin and operated on for an ulcer which had been found to have malignant connotations! Frenzied prayers from all concerned finally brought the news that the offending cancer had been excised and he was pronounced clear. But his diet! Nine tiny meals a day, keeping strictly to the rules, and a long spell in Darwin before returning to BI. But in his usual style he remained cheerful. My daughter Judy in Darwin at the time, rushed to the hospital to see him and was amazed to find him able to talk with her and anxious for news of everyone. He even rang Fr Martin Wilson to wish him a happy birthday at Leura, and as I was the lucky one to answer the phone, I also had a brief yarn to John. We all wish you a quick and blessed return to health, Cousin, and no more frights please!

An exciting event for me was the showing of daughter Frances' film, *Talking Broken* at the Melbourne Film Festival in June. I missed it in Sydney and Canberra, but we made up for it in Melbourne with much enthusiasm and joyous

celebrations. I was really impressed with the way she handled the audiences' questions after the screening. A short review of her film on the Torres Strait Islanders appears in this issue.

Since Nelen Yubu now has access to a laser printer we had to spend a week in Sydney learning the ropes. My thanks again to Fr Barry Brundell for his hospitality at 'Dadirri' where the weather was good and the food sumptuous. The time in Sydney was well spent in unravelling the vagaries of the laser.

It wouldn't be my column if I didn't mention another visit to Melbourne -- but I do think three trips in three months is slightly overdoing it. However, a blossoming little granddaughter of 18 months and a boisterous grandson just turned five is a huge drawcard. So I'll be off again before the end of the year, making it six trips to the southern capital altogether during 1991.

And in the Blue Mountains we have been celebrating **Yulefest**. It certainly brings droves of tourists to our lovely area, just as in the Southern Highlands where they hold a similar Festival.

Secretary Keren