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EDITORIAL

Here in Australia we are gradually coming to put into practice - or at least are beginning to seek out means of giving practical expression to some thing we have long acknowledged in principle, namely that the real evangelisers of Aboriginal people are Aboriginal people. This theme is common to a number of articles in this issue.

Noel McMaster is looking for a forum where people of different cultural traditions might search out the operation and scope of God's gift of "life-promoting life" within their cultures. Brian McCoy is becoming still more impatient with our (RC) sluggish response to the Aboriginal cry for a meaningful place within the church. Phil Hoy details some practical steps he and the Tiwi have been taking in an endeavour to bring Tiwi, western and modern cultures into cooperative interplay. Dan O'Donovan has concluded his erudite series on the practical cooperation - contrary to a lot of the theory - between the early christian church and the "pagan" culture that was traditional and contemporary in those early centuries. He has concluded on a very practical note: he calls us to be open to the rich spirituality of Aboriginal people, to avoid as much as we can what his nearby pastoral colleague (Noel McMaster) cited as the "tyranny of supposition". Eugene Stockton gives us practical schooling in some different ways of thinking we might expect to encounter as we begin to listen more to what the Aborigines themselves are saying to us.

With Mrs Alice Kelly we have the chance to hear what an Aboriginal leader is thinking today when she talks explicitly out of a consciousness that goes back well beyond the limits of human history.

My own note about my work with the bishops conference in PNG winds up a theme I began last year. It is good that we keep on looking further afield than our own vast land! Also I describe briefly a research project that would relate us on a common dimension with happenings in the church in other parts of the Pacific region and also in Africa and Germany.

Martin Wilson msc
Editor

ABORIGINAL CATHOLICS AND THE PERMANENT DIACONATE: SERVICE OR SERVITUDE?

Brian F McCoy sj

IN 1990 Archbishop Hunthausen announced that he would cease the ordination of permanent deacons in the North West American Archdiocese of Seattle. He gave his reason that such a program would 'reinforce by an optional procedure the sexism already operative in the Church'.¹ His decision was received with criticism by some and applauded by others in his diocese.

There is talk, and even preparation, for ordaining more Aboriginal men as deacons in the coming years. It is important that such a move, and the resulting advantages and disadvantages, be discussed further in the Australian Church and the opinion and wishes of Aboriginal people canvassed. This article is an attempt to open up the discussion of a most important and pressing ministry question facing Aboriginal people in the Australian Catholic Church.

On 18 June 1967 Pope Paul VI laid down the norms for the restoration of the permanent diaconate. Twenty-five years later the Church has experienced numerous ordinations of these men, most of whom are

Brian McCoy sj is presently living in Broome. After working at the Mirringki Spirituality Centre at Turkey Creek, he joined the *W A Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody*, based in Broome. Since the completion of the Commission he has been on the staff at Nulungu College, while awaiting and preparing for an appointment into the Tanami desert at the end of 1992.

married and have families. In North America some thousands were ordained, including many men from different native Indian communities. In Australia we have three Aboriginal permanent deacons in the Catholic Church: two in the Northern Territory and one in Queensland. The first was ordained in 1974, the second in 1982 and the third in 1990. Three ordinations over sixteen years! And while there are many other Aboriginal people ministering in different parts of Australia these three stand out as the ones whose ministry the Catholic Church has formally recognised.

Is the Catholic Church in Australia at another crossroad in terms of Aboriginal ministry?² Since Vatican II there have been some attempts to support ministry by Aboriginal people but the efforts have been often piecemeal. While local initiatives in local communities are the ways most ministries develop, if one looks at the church nationally one cannot say that there is any general agreement about the way in which Aboriginal ministry might move or take its place within the Church. Nor are there diocesan policies for ministry training and goals. In some places outsider priests and religious are clearly 'running' the local church and no local ministry is evident; in other places there is a variety of local ministers, men and women. Townsville, Pularumpi and Wadeye are distinct in that they have their own publicly ordained ministers.

Put simply, in the Australian Catholic Church there are important issues about the permanent diaconate which need to be opened up, discussed and the resulting advantages and disadvantages appreciated, before more ordinations are made. This is especially so if some Australian bishops are intending to follow that model in the coming years. For the ordaining of men as deacons will not only determine the nature of ministry in some Aboriginal communities, it will also focus and determine the expectations for Aboriginal ministry in general for the immediate future.

I would like to enumerate some of the key advantages and disadvantages of the permanent diaconate as I see them. Others may perceive others.

Advantages of the Permanent Diaconate

1. It has a traditional base and status. While it is often experienced and perceived as part of the historical and clerical 'step-ladder' model of ministry (deacon, priest and bishop) it is officially a ministry in its own right and not merely a step on the way to priesthood.

2. It has clear roles and functions, usually around ministry of service and of the liturgy. There is a predictability and stability of the deacon role.³
3. While the deacon is a cleric he is often seen and experienced as a married pastor living close to the secular world. With his first consideration being his family, then his work or job, and finally his diaconate responsibilities, he is often perceived as a married Catholic minister with ministry in and to the world.
4. People can become deacons without the presently needed years of priestly training, often requiring one live for a long time, a long way from one's family and community.
5. People can be married as deacons, live and minister in their own communities and not be moved from community to community.

Disadvantages of the Permanent Diaconate

1. It is open only to men. The wives of deacons, while needing to approve their husbands' ordinations, are not generally incorporated in either the ministry training nor the ministry itself.
2. It tends to be perceived and experienced as the ordination of an 'individual'. Rarely are men ordained with others as a group, and as the diaconate is linked with priesthood it is often experienced and understood as individual ministry within a hierarchical Church.
3. It is ministry with severe limitations in that deacons cannot perform some of the important services which are asked of priests, viz. eucharist, confession and anointing of the sick. These sacraments are at the heart of the Catholic faith, but are becoming increasingly unavailable to communities, due to the growing shortage of priests.
4. The role of deacon is often seen in narrow terms, i.e. largely as a liturgical ministry. When Paul VI wrote in 1972 about the diaconate he outlined various ministries they were to exercise. A number of them included liturgical and sacramental ministries. Some stressed the service aspect in the wider secular world, and this dimension can sometimes be forgotten.
5. There is an age restriction and a re-marry restriction. A man must be at least thirty-two years and six months old before ordination.⁴ Once ordained a deacon cannot re-marry if his wife dies. If not married at ordination a deacon cannot marry after ordination.⁵

Risking oversimplification, the permanent diaconate offers a clear, tangible, institutional form of ministry with a number of serious limitations. Being linked to priesthood and hence part of the clerical family, it can be seen as 'mini-priest' ministry, especially in the area of liturgy. This link can be reinforced when a deacon ministers with a resident priest, with the deacon working more creatively when the priest is absent. This limitation of role is also seen when the deacon performs communion services: unable to perform the eucharist in his own right (or 'rite') the deacon can only re-offer what a priest has previously consecrated.⁶ This dependency on priests both confirms his limited role but also the enduring nature of it. For at the moment, and despite efforts by a number of bishops, Rome has yet to approve the ordination to priesthood of married deacons.⁷

At the same time, without public and institutional alternatives, much can be said about ordaining more Aboriginal men as deacons. Our present three Aboriginal deacons offer to the Australian Catholic Church an important example and witness of ministry. Those who were at the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council Conference in Adelaide [September 1991] witnessed the warmth and vibrant life which those deacons communicated to those present, and vice versa.

Hence whether to ordain or not to ordain more deacons is a serious issue for the Catholic Church. In fact the Church is faced with at least three serious challenges in facing this issue.

The first is a challenge to the Australian Church to make some decisions or initiate a process to help make some decisions. The presence, or more realistically the absence, of recognised Aboriginal ministers is an important statement about the motives and seriousness of the Catholic Church among Aboriginal people, especially where the Anglican and Uniting Church have been ordaining ministers for some years (and even recently in the Uniting Church, an Aboriginal woman). For what cannot be argued, as it was argued for some time, is that Aboriginal people do not want ministry or are not capable of it. There are numerous examples in the Uniting and Anglican Churches to dismiss those arguments. These ministers, not to mention the numerous evangelical, fundamental and independent churches run by Aboriginal people, remove any thought that 'they are not yet ready' for ministry. The challenge is on the Australian Catholic Church. There are Aboriginal people in the Catholic Church who wish to exercise ministry and who are already performing many types of ministry.

The majority of them are not deacons. One example is Palm Island (N.Qld) where the Catholic community is being ministered by a group of elders together with the leadership of a married man who spent 1991 studying at Nungalinga College in Darwin.

A second challenge is the role of Aboriginal women in ministry. There are many Aboriginal women already involved in ministry in the Catholic Church. Some have done ministry and theological training. How their ministry, together with that of their husbands and male relations, might work has yet to be proposed. When the Canadian Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie began ordaining Ojibway men as deacons in the 1970's the local bishop took up the challenge of offering ministry to their wives. He instituted a diocesan 'order' and enabled them to minister in his diocese along with their husbands. This initiative speaks to the growing silence in the Anglican Catholic Church about the role of Aboriginal women in ministry.

A third challenge to the Church is the declining and aging numbers of non-Aboriginal ministers among Aboriginal people and communities. Their increasing inability to serve the Aboriginal communities, together with the formation of more and more 'outstation' communities in the north, will within a very short time provide a serious crisis. Communities will experience a lack of the sacraments, and the eucharist in particular. It is no exaggeration to say that the next 10-15 years are the critical ones as the Church struggles with the aging and lessening in numbers of priests and religious.⁸

One obvious question is: if not the diaconate, what then? What alternatives are possible? Is the lack of alternatives to the permanent diaconate because of a lack of imagination, difficulties with canon law or is it one of conviction? Is the Australian Church unable to explore new possibilities or is it afraid to explore and commit itself to new ones? There is no doubt that some people within the Church have been exploring ministry possibilities with Aboriginal people for some years. There are some dioceses, some priests, religious and Aboriginal people who have initiated local or regional courses and have encouraged Aboriginal people to take up different ministries. And this has been evident since the early 1970's. In addition there are regional centres such as the Mirringki Spirituality Centre (East Kimberley) which has been running spirituality and other courses for groups of adults since early 1980's, similar to the Daly River Centre (NT)

courses of the late 1970's and early 1980's. There has been the evolution of the Lumko program in some communities. And some people have made use of Nungalinya College's courses, either longer term residential courses or others by extension.

Despite these initiatives it would be hard put to find one diocese where there is a ministry plan for the coming years where goals have been set with Aboriginal people and where particular ministries are being offered and prepared. Health, education and many other key aspects of community life have been pressured into working closer with Aboriginal people and devising clear goals for their training and employment for the coming years.

Is the permanent diaconate to become the only way to go, that is by default? Are there other forms of ministry, which do not involve the diaconate, or are they and will they always run the risk of being seen and experienced as 'second class' ministries? For unless the bishops, or a bishop, formally recognise a ministry, it will always be compared with those which are already available, acceptable and evident: lector, acolyte, deacon, priest and bishop. And what of celibate ministry? Is it being proposed at all or is a married form of ministry the preferred option?

The problems which surround this issue could be addressed in the following ways. Others may have further suggestions. These could be:

- a) negotiation with Aboriginal people as to the type of ministry they wish. The Northern Territory Anglican Church attempted this through a consultation process several years ago and some important initiatives for ministry developed out of it.
- b) negotiation with Aboriginal people that move across diocesan and State boundaries and includes people from all parts of Australia. Such boundary barriers often prevent people from exploring what has been tried and learned from other communities.⁹ NATSICC (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council) could possibly help with such a process of negotiation.
- c) a theological and practical presentation of ministry possibilities to Aboriginal people and communities, together with the resources which are available for ministry training. Various dioceses have

attempted different ministry training efforts over the years. An evaluation of their strengths and weaknesses is needed, as also of present resources and available choices. With a Catholic member of staff coming to Nungalinga College from the beginning of 1993 its role in assisting ministry training is a further possibility.

When the permanent diaconate was revised and proposed by Pope Paul VI in 1967 the result was to meet the changing needs of the people of God with a ministry that was both new and old. It was new in that it took shape and direction from the many needs which people of the post Vatican II church sought from it; it was old in that it was one model of ministry, among others, which served well the early church. It then became a form of ministry that developed and took different shapes in different places in different countries over the past twenty-five years. Whether it is a model or the model for ministry among Aboriginal people can be long debated. At the end of the day it is not ultimately possible for non-Aboriginal people in the church to say.

How to encourage and allow ministry take shape and form by Aboriginal people has not been well answered by the Catholic Church this past twenty-five years. With a challenge by the recent *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* that all of society further empower Aboriginal people, the Catholic Church cannot avoid its own responsibility in this task. Serious negotiation with the Aboriginal people about the ministry they wish, need and have a right to, is well overdue.

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ENDNOTES:

1. The Tablet, 12 May 1990.
2. National gatherings of Catholic Aboriginal people in Melbourne in 1972 and Alice Springs in 1986 spoke of their place and need for a stronger role within the Australian Catholic Church; many *Aboriginal and Islander Catholic Council* conferences, and others, since have echoed those feelings and hopes.
3. One Canadian program for native Indian deacons stresses four areas: ministry of service, ministry of liturgy, ministry of the Word and ministry of spiritual leadership.
4. Why the need to choose this particular age and not leave the decision to the local Church remains a mystery, at least to this writer. The extra six months to the thirty-two years is especially puzzling.

5. Some Canadian bishops have sought exemption from these clauses.
6. The link between a deacon and priest is both reinforced and blurred when communion services repeat not only the eucharistic format but also many of the words of a eucharistic prayer.
7. The Bishop of the Broome diocese has said on a number of occasions that he had approached Rome to allow the ordination to the priesthood of Aboriginal married men; such a request has yet to be approved.
8. In 1991 there were more than 100 priests and religious working in the Broome Diocese and more than 150 working in the Northern Territory Diocese. The average age of the members of the longest serving religious orders, who comprise about 40% of the priests and religious in these two dioceses, was more than 60 years.
9. It is significant, in this regard, that the Broome Diocese has no Aboriginal deacon nor has moved in that direction.

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RESEARCH PROJECT: *Local Church and Communities*

In February 1991 a group was convened at Goroka, PNG, to organise a theological research project. The convener was Fr Günther Koller sm, at that time director of the Liturgical Catechetical Institute based in Goroka. The patron and financial supporter of the meeting was Missio, Aachen, represented by Dr Hermann Janssen of the associated Missiological Institute Aachen.

In brief, the idea was to parallel a study that was already in progress in Africa, East and West, in conjunction with the diocese of Freiburg in Germany. That study had been set up to see what influence the 'Communio' theology of Vatican II had had on church growth in some representative areas. Scholars were invited from various areas in the Pacific to meet in Goroka to see if they would build out the theological picture by documenting what the church had done to communities in their own area.

Only PNG and Australia were represented at the Goroka meeting: the Polynesia reps did not make it. A rather ambitious research project was planned out...but nothing happened. People were busy, and it was a bit too ambitious.

Hermann Janssen called us back again to Port Moresby in May this year. Meanwhile he had visited scholars in Fiji, Tonga and Samoa. Seven of us from PNG and myself from Australia met and planned out a more achievable project. For PNG the formal theme is phrased thus: *Reception of Communio Theology in the Context of the Changing Communal Cultures*. Here in Australia I would like to write up what the church has done and is now doing to and among Aboriginal communities.

The plan is to publish the papers from the Pacific area in a booklet of some 200 pages. Also, the area will probably be represented at a combined conference in Cameroon in September 1993.

I am looking for suggestions!

Martin Wilson msc

RETURN OF MUNGO LADY

Alice Kelly

"THELLUCUTA ingiato Whartenen Domkolarra Narringerri.

It is good that you have come to the land of our ancestors in Aboriginality, Christianity and humanity. Tread softly and peacefully as we seek and share the classification of circumstances of these great lakes of Mungo and the Willandra World Heritage Region.

Today is a very important day for us all here from the Mutthi Mutthi, Paakintli and Ngyampaa people, because it restores the continuity, the tribal link between past and present. For us Aboriginal people that link was tragically interrupted two hundred years ago. Now through mutual understanding that link has been restored.

This is not the end of an era. It is the continuation of a beautiful, powerful era. The return of Mungo Lady is a symbol of that era which goes back to Creation, the Dreamtime.

The return of Mungo Lady is not just restoring a link with the past. It is also restoring *Spirituality*. Today as we receive her back, we want to share the spiritual values of love, peace and harmony for all Australians, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.

This is the *Tribal Law* as it always was. Without love, there can be no peace. Without peace, there can be no harmony. Instead there will be conflict and confusion. This is the hallmark of all woman- and mankind.

Today's gathering here at Lake Mungo is also about *Reconciliation*. The sign of this reconciliation is the return of Mungo Lady. But to be effective, reconciliation must be based on true consultation. This means

Mrs Alice Kelly is an Aboriginal Catholic Tribal Elder of the Mutthi Mutthi people. She now lives at Balranald, NSW. The bones of the Mungo Lady were returned to Lake Mungo on 11 January 1992. This is the address of welcome made by Mrs Kelly at that ceremony.

that all parties must really listen and talk with each other in order to restore the harmony that was here at Lake Mungo.

So the return of Mungo Lady is symbolic of a real commitment to consultation, reconciliation and mutual respect. If we are not faithful in this, our gathering today will become meaningless.

We can speak from the lips, but it must come from the mind, the heart and the soul. I conclude now, deep sympathy, love and welcome, beautiful Lady, for ever and ever."

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WHERE THE ANCIENTS WALKED

To walk anywhere in this Sacred land
is to walk where the Ancients walked.

To learn anything about this Sacred land
is to move into the Mystery of God.

To be open to the moods of this ancient land
is to become a child of the Universe.

To live in communion with this land
is to carry a stigmata of Light.

Beyond all the Dreaming in this land
is a yearning, burning Love.

Every blade of grass is blessed,
every trembling leaf caressed.

Every leaf of every tree is blessed.
We are loved.

Rod Cameron osa

TOWARDS AN MSC MISSION STRATEGY

Phillip Hoy msc

THE NIGHTLY CAMP Masses remains the most fruitful avenue for apostolic development. These Masses are often late in starting and go on until they stop. They are occasions when people reflect, in the light of the gospel, on where they are and where they are called to be. From these Masses the following practical steps have ensued. They are to be compared with what was envisaged and outlined at our 18 November 1991 Port Keats meeting.

1. Combined Tiwi Meetings

1. The Taracumbi meeting of 19 December 1991 secured acceptance for an integrated Tiwi community plan.

1.2 We have a President and propose to meet several times each year at Taracumbi.

1.3 For the weekly Melville Island Masses we have been moving groups between Milikapiti, Pularumpi and Nguuu — the Liturgy, Women's Prayer, and youth groups. There has been mutual enrichment by the process.

Fr Phillip Hoy msc is parish priest at Bathurst Island, NT.

2. Religious Studies Group

2.1 Alcohol is a problem which is in part consequent of the tremendous community change. While one can go endlessly on the *chicken and egg* cycle, clearly it was acknowledged that there is need to treat the *families problem* or the booze will get worse as the next generation gets older.

2.2 John-Baptist said that the old way of marriage is past — it is irrecoverable! It is the christian way that must be taught to the young.

2.2.1 I have been through Hart and Pilling and Jane Goodale. While people are not saying that these accounts are *spot on accurate* it seems as if they are close enough to indicate the revolution in marriage thought.

2.2.2 I was told that old men who had numerous wives readily grasped the truth of the Jesus teaching — though they were implicated in a social-economic system from which they could not easily disengage to quickly go the christian way.

2.2.3 I was told that within Tiwi tradition there were truths that lead the older ones to readily accept the fundamental truth of what early missionaries brought.

2.2.4 They were saying that the christian teaching on marriage is one clear area where the Jesus teaching was an advance on traditional belief.

2.3 We assembled all the marriage texts in New Testament and noted that Jesus went back to Old Testament to handle problems of his age. He discounted the contemporary teaching and went back to the Creation myth.

2.4 We then assembled the Genesis creation myth to identify from where Jesus drew his teaching. We went on to see the depths of meaning in the Genesis story, and how a story has subtle depths that have to be developed: woman was drawn from man's rib, woman is drawn from man (in contradiction with our birth experience), the snake introduced the evil, not man or woman, the meaning of the Curses. . .

2.5 We felt there was need to go through Tiwi creation stories and develop and expound the deeper messages for the young.

2.6 There was acknowledgement that these stories were in times past dismissed as *fairy stories* and that European treatment could not always give attention to the depths of meaning.

2.7 It was noted that the Kulama was the proper time for this exercise to occur. John-Baptist again noted that class time is not the Tiwi style of

teaching. He was saying that the teaching role was best exercised in the liturgical cycle of Kulama.

2.8 It was then agreed that Kulama and Confirmation should be run conjointly. They said that many christian elements have been absorbed into the songs of Kulama, but it remains distinct from Catholic ceremony. It is best for the time being to have them as separate and distinct, but running conjointly where there is the opportunity for mutual reinforcement.

2.9 We therefore resolved to have the confirmation ceremony at the same time as Kulama.

2.10 It was suggested that as there was one community over the two islands, confirmation should be on the same weekend.

2.11 I then went on to suggest that we use the RCIA principle so as to maximize the liturgical dimension and to put the emphasis back on the family.

2.12 An attendant consequence of this discussion has been a profusion of marriages – we have had four since Christmas and more to follow.

2.13 These marriages have seemed to feed on one another, and I have felt that the ceremony is itself doing the evangelising. I have purposely kept a low clerical profile. I have not given homilies, I have used the Pascal candle and Offertory, Gospel processions so the people's priority on marriage is demonstrated. The marriage ceremonies have been very delicate and beautiful.

3. Darwin University

3.1 There has been discussion of instituting a Darwin University Annex on Nguiu.

3.2 Darwin University said if I can get the numbers, they would consider coming to Nguiu in 1992. I got the numbers. I did not assiduously search for the best talent on the island. I got numbers for the University to evaluate. They made offers to those I assembled. I was quite confident there was better talent at home.

3.3 The University has attempted to move them into Darwin at the *Daisy Yarmirr* hostel. I suggested that this hostel was not up to the standard for our youths to manage university study.

3.4 It is necessary that our students have a fair go at learning – I did very intensive work at Monash with the Arrente students and am aware of the difficulties. We should do our best to give them optimal conditions.

3.5 The bishop mentioned the possibility of Gsell Centre being made available for Aboriginal university students in 1993. If this current venture with Darwin University prospers, we should pursue that option and begin to evaluate what would be necessary for the Gzell facilities to be optimal by next year.

4. Nungalinya College

4.1 We are developing Nungalinya College to give *bite* to the Parish council.

4.2 I believe the impetus for change comes from the Older ones who constitute the Religious Studies Group. The translators are the middle aged people. The real future makers are the young.

4.3 We have ten at Nungalinya now from Pularumpi and Nguuu -- Milikapiti representatives went bush! When they return we will need to consolidate their ideas into action steps.

5. St John's College

are trying to accommodate our people.

5.1 Paul Brooks is to be congratulated for the work he is doing to support Aboriginal students at St John's -- very often without the support of teachers who do not appreciate the importance of the work.

5.2 The fact is that Aboriginal children in the communities are falling further behind, they are not keeping pace with the acceleration of educational standards in the white community.

5.3 It is for this reason, I suspect, that the government is putting such emphasis into tertiary studies for Aboriginal students.

5.4 We will need to devise ways of the community supporting the Tiwi students and backing-up St John's in the work they do.

(12 February 1992).

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ABORIGINAL THINKING

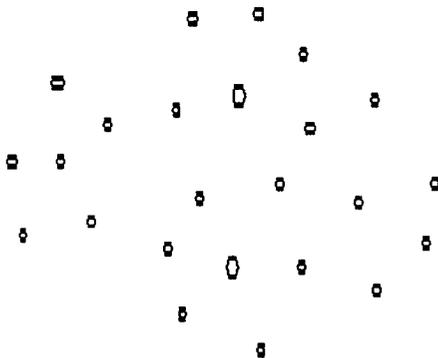
Eugene D Stockton

IN THE LAST issue, in discussing Aboriginal spirituality, I contrasted Western or European thinking with Aboriginal thinking as the contrast between a *hierarchical* world view and one that is *egalitarian*, while allowing for seniority between equals, i.e. a family model. The latter incidentally concurs with the revolutionary message of Jesus, which instead of seeing God as 'a big boss up there' revealed God as a family circle of three extended to us on earth. Once God is seen as Father, all else in creation is related to me as family. The Kingdom of God is one in which there are no lords but only servants.

The contrast has been brought out more clearly by the following statement, which I understand came from David Mowaljarli via Helen MacFarlane, in their co-authored unpublished paper, 'Pattern and Triangle Thinking' (July 1991).

* * * * *

PATTERN THINKING



Pattern thinking is Aboriginal thinking.
There is no big boss.

Patterns are about **Belonging**. Nothing is separate from anything else.

The land is not separate from nature, people, the heavens, ancient stories. Everything belongs in the pattern.

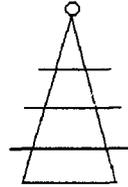
There is no "ownership" in pattern thinking. Only **Belonging**.

Money cannot buy bits of a pattern.

Power runs all through a pattern. It cannot be sold. It is not separate from the pattern.

TRIANGLE THINKING

Triangle thinking is Western culture thinking.



There is always a big boss.

There are other bosses who have power over people down the Triangle.

Triangles are about **Money** and **Power**.



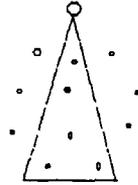
Everything in Triangle thinking is connected with money and power.



Triangle thinking Separates everything into layers of power and administration.

"Ownership" is a triangle idea.

"Belonging" cannot fit into Triangle thinking. Ownership means "rulership" by the owner.



TRIANGLES are **Separate** from each other, and separate from patterns.

Triangle thinking tries to squeeze patterns into triangles. This cannot work. Patterns do not have rigid lines like triangles.

* * * * *

We would like to thank those people who have responded so readily to our request for articles, papers, notes, any sort of contribution to *Nelen Yubu*. Such offerings enable *Nelen Yubu* to perform its role of intercommunication.

Anybody, especially if living in a field situation, who would have some thoughts to share with us, please feel invited and encouraged to send them to us.

- Editor

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Martin,

Congratulations to you and your helpers who have successfully brought *Nelen Yubu* to its fiftieth issue. I think I joined the readership at about No.3 or 4, and have found it of interest ever since, both during my postings in the Kimberley and while absent for a few years. I hope *Nelen Yubu* can continue to be a vehicle of opinion and shared experience for many years yet.

The fiftieth issue was appropriately true to *Nelen Yubu's* aims: 'to mediate the Evangelical Message to Aboriginal society through missiology, anthropology, sociology and kindred disciplines'. With your indulgence I would like to make a few comments on how I received those three articles of No. 50.

For me anthropology's contribution is fundamental. It provides the language for us to communicate what is presumed to be good news both for us and to those with whom we would dialogue. Such language

is all about articulating what is of value to us, even prior logically to so-called religious preferences and expressions, although the two will often run together. Hence Jesus cut through the religious language about sabbath in his time to expose the underlying human value of helping another destined to be free with all others as equals. (What Paul would later refer to as the freedom of the children of God).

Such an anthropology, already graced, seems to me to offer an insight into the inculturation conundrum raised again in Carlos Maesters' excellent articles: do we get Jesus into the myths of other religions or expect myths to be retold with christian consciousness?

Jesus seemed to presume a reservoir of values that could be reduced to two: love of 'God' and love of one another. Admittedly his experience and understanding of 'God' were culturally and religiously conditioned — incarnation is indeed a mystery of emptying; but with critical human awareness and graced human freedom, he was prepared to wager on the

value of love. In any faith his example may be imitated; in christian faith he is believed to be vindicated with a God-given, absolute seal on the value of his love which is always proposed thus to Christians and is now their offering in dialogue at that same human-faith level. Myths then may simply lend themselves or not to such an absolute seal and the God who offers it in Jesus' resurrection.

It is here our anthropology must be acutely conscious of what recently I heard referred to as 'the tyranny of supposition', viz. till now we, Christians in the western tradition, have supposed that we have had to add fruit to a tree (Aboriginal faith) that was capable of bearing its own (Aboriginal myth and culture). Is it not rather that all cultural trees are rooted in the same soil and have been subjected to degrees of cultivation, and even abuse? And that with the Judaeo-Christian culture we have a claim to special treatment and a unique gift of life-promoting Light: no gesture of love in the spirit of Jesus is ever wasted?

Our evangelical role, then, is to show that all cultures can respond to this

Light from within. Through our own lives of critical gospel reflection and willingness to dialogue, we can promote the value of those other human sciences which help to authenticate and enhance what we believe is God's gift to us in Christ. Such sciences are sociology, psychology, and history which together with anthropology and theology deepen our understanding of what we believe God has done for us whatever our culture. At the same time they remind us of what we must be prayerfully attuned to within our particular culture if we are to be true to this same God, to ourselves, and those we meet across cultures. These same attitudes, with appropriate nuances, I would hope to find in our interlocutors from contemporary Aboriginal culture.

As No. 50 demonstrates, these issues continue to be canvassed in *Nelen Yubu*. I believe however that a majority of our 'mission' personnel, in schools, in towns, in communities, in various gatherings of pastors, their associates and school principals, not to mention our Church at large, still labour unwittingly for the most part under the tyranny of supposition.

I therefore suggest the following:

1. A degree of backing off by 'mission' personnel with renewed commitment to contemporary missiological insights. (Cf. for example, Robert J. Schreier, Faith and Cultures: Challenges to a World Church, *Theological Studies*, Dec. 1989).

2. A quest for a forum wherein representatives from both traditions, Aboriginal and Christian,

face to face and regularly, can cultivate the critical acumen necessary to enhance understanding and dialogue, and with the guidance of the spirit of truth, lead us all in the ways of truth.

Yours in the Lord,
Noel.

(Noel McMaster,
Kununurra, WA)

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HUGO RAHNER'S ESSAYS (10)

In Conclusion

Dan O'Donovan

WITH THIS ISSUE number 51, I conclude my series *Hugo Rahner's Essays*.

There *were* more to come, notably a treatment of the sea, along the lines of those on sun and moon; but in response to the Editor's request that we do not wander too far from the 'good way' special to this quarterly review, I turn my head towards home.

Many years ago, when it first appeared I guess, my attention was caught by a study in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* called 'Pour aider au dialogue: les Pères et les religions non chrétiennes.'¹

The impression I was left with at the end of that well-researched and documented article was one of surprise at the apparent general negativity of the early Church in its attitude and behaviour toward the many religions which it met in its evangelising effort. The article was in fact an attempt to cover the subject of its title as one item in the history of dogma, a dogma which was polemical during that period for a number of reasons.

¹NRT 89 (1967) pp.821-841; 914-939. The author is A. Lumeau, omi.

Later, on reading Hugo Rahner's much earlier book, *Griechische Mythen in Christlicher Deutung*, published the year World War II ground to a halt as an effort to initiate a thought-train for a rich and comprehensive 'Christian humanism', I found that by following another line of investigation – that of the *cultus* (or the area of prayer, devotion, worship) – the author was able to convey a quite different and much more positive view of the matter arising, and abundantly, out of the same source material.

Last year (1991), the Council for Inter-religious Dialogue in Rome published a document to mark the 25th anniversary of the second Vatican Council's declaration, *Nostra aetate*.² It is called *Dialogue and Proclamation* and treats of Christian mission in today's world as made up of both. This document is a sequel to the same body's statement of 1984 titled *The attitude of the Church toward the followers of other religions*, in which proclamation was treated first and dialogue second. The Tablet weekly, reporting on the issuing of the new document, noted therefore 'a shift in emphasis.' (22 June 1991).

It seems to me that Luneau's statement of the question in his NRT study, corresponds more with the 1984 emphasis (proclamation and dialogue); while Hugo Rahner's (pre-Vatican Council) book represents rather the 1991 emphasis of *Dialogue and Proclamation*.

In Luneau's defence it must be said that his work is much shorter than Rahner's. Also that he does balance his presentation of the polemical side of the patristic attitude to other religions, ('paganism'), with a generous section on the Church Fathers' action as distinct from their (severe) words: 'Action often corrects the word. Better than their word, their action is indication of their deeper thought. To understand the Fathers' ideas of "pagan values", it is not enough to examine their sayings; their mode of action should be studied first.'

Rahner's intuition, or better perhaps, the inclination of his choice, is enlightening and may serve as a lesson to us who are trying to prepare the ground for a healthy and on-going Aboriginal Christian theology. His book is evidence that it was in and through the *cultus* that dialogue with other

²Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to non-Christian Religions. The text of the new document *Dialogue and Proclamation*, will be found in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 1 July 1991.

religions most effectively occurred. Its fruits are still our joy, well integrated now in what took form initially in apostolic times. Indeed, the *cultus* is more open to dialogical engagement than are the highly-wrought definings in the history of dogma.

There is an ancient maxim in the Church: *lex orandi, lex credendi*.³ The 'lex orandi' (the law governing its prayer-activity) was seen to determine the 'lex credendi' (the law of its belief).

In the south-east Kimberley — possibly in other places — for some years now, not long, the Aboriginal Catholic Church has been learning this by trying it, by allowing it to happen; feebly as yet, but really. There seems no other way of learning it. The 'lex orandi' leads us; and so the 'lex credendi' grows, matures, in appropriate forms.

So, as *Nelen Yubu* reaches its half-century, we have come back full circle to where we started: sacramentality and celebration.⁴ Now re-read Martin Wilson's book in its entirety and see if our understanding has not widened through it all.

One possible relevance of this Rahner series of articles for those in the present and future who are, and will be constructing an Aboriginal Christian theology:

Considering the reluctance of some Christian denominations with whom we work, side by side, evangelically, to give any sort of recognition to Aboriginal prophecy, it may be useful to point to a number of instances which show that from early times Christians did not feel they had always to oppose what others religiously venerated.

The particularly 'hot' Christian art of the catacombs at Rome (2nd to 4th century), speaks loudly of this freedom instinct, this sympathy-sense for what was different, but good. Orpheus charmed by the attraction of his music not only wild beasts, but trees and rocks as well. All were enticed from their fixations by the heavenly melody of that lyre Apollo had given him, and were impelled to follow. In that underground prayer-centre, where persecuted Christians assembled to worship, Jesus as Good Shepherd is often portrayed as Orpheus.

³Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 1960, 139.

⁴See M. Wilson, *New, Old and Timeless*, Chevalier Press, Sydney, 1978, pp.49ff.

The prophecies of the ('pagan') Sibyls seem to have been used by Christians as early as the second century. Lactantius, a 4th century Christian, quotes verses by Christian authors as prophecies of the Sibyl of Eri-threa. He puts them on the same level as the utterances of Old Testament prophets. During the Middle Ages, the Sibyls were treated by the Church as understanding friends. Thomas Aquinas, Dante, Raffael, Michaelangelo drew inspiration from their words. The 'Dies irae' cites the Sibyl alongside David as a witness for its description of the Last Judgment.

Can Aboriginal Christians not bring along *their* pre-christian oracular voices? Perhaps the answer is no, because of the esoteric (secret/sacred) nature of Aboriginal religious Law, as noted previously in *Nelen Yubu* no.11, pp.8-9. That may be a standing difficulty. On the other hand, it may not. It is for Aboriginal Christians responsibly to decide.

Saint Justin (2nd century) has no qualms about representing Jesus in the features of the giant Heracles,⁵ or of Asclepius, the Helper.⁶

Others use the ('pagan') Dionysian vine as symbol of immortality; or portray Jesus as Apollos ascending in his chariot of the sun.

Always this transposition takes place, of course, within the normative baptismal-paschal process of dying, and rising in (Christian) regeneration.

So far in our Australian Aboriginal setting, we have not shown much imaginative 'daring' of the kind we saw Origen was, by Christian disposition, ready for.

The Church virtually canonised Homer, the *sophôtatos martyr* (wisest of testifiers).⁷ Was there a 'Homer', or more, in Aboriginal Australia during those long millennia? The difficulty of knowing lies in our being unable to trace, since all the mythology was orally transmitted; hence identities are as lost as birds' tracks in the windswept sand. Indeed, the further back one goes, the more is anonymity the name of the game. Israel too knew corporate personality...Again, is there an Aboriginal 'Homer' perhaps today? Or could there be tomorrow?

⁵1 Apol. 54,9.

⁶1 Apol. 22,6; Dial. 69,3.

⁷Isidore of Pelusium, Epist.II, 228.

In his letter to me of 1 August 1991, which I alluded to in the first lines of this paper, Martin wrote: 'Concentration on Aboriginal affairs was the specific thing that *Nelen Yubu* did. If we broaden our scope, then we just become another missiological journal, a field already well catered for.' I agree with this.

In view of the fact that Aboriginal religions are planted in the far-flung pastureland of comparative religious mythology, I still think there is room for coverage at least in a general way, and once, of key symbols which keep recurring. The natural and supernatural home for all of these is within the *cultus*: sun and moon, mountains, rivers, sea; plant life, animal life, human life and the infinitely varied forms of their interaction; fire and water and air. The sacrality in which all things subsist: God and sacrament.

If this particular attempt happened not to stimulate specifically Aboriginal contributions from Aborigines themselves, or from non-Aborigines who have meditated on the available sources and have the vitality of field-experience in properly Aboriginal situations, it will at all events be there for reference or consultation.

Perhaps even more, if we look. At an opening, and thoroughly Aboriginal celebration for National Aboriginal Week in Wyndham last year, an Aboriginal flag was blessed, then hoisted on a flag-pole. I found that ancient Christian understanding of the sun symbol much to the point for the occasion, and was able to draw attention to the fact that for us who believe, the sun on the flag is much more than the sun in the sky. It is a sign of resurrection, hope, the person of Jesus...But why should a *kartiya* priest have to point this out?

* * * * *

GONE DROVING

Martin Wilson msc

A DROVER'S JOB is only temporary. He takes the sheep from one owner to another. Having just finished a sort of droving job, it's good to sit back and reflect a bit on it.

When I was in PNG early last year for a workshop on church development after Vatican II, I was invited by the president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands to take on the task of evaluating their conference.¹ It meant in effect herding the shepherds, droving the drovers. I accepted the job basically because I had been asked. The judgment as to whether or not I would be equal to the task was largely the responsibility of the bishops and their advisor. At times, when I thought about it, I would freeze inside at the thought of the disaster I could cause if I got it wrong. However, it was a challenge worth taking on. Hopefully, one could even do quite a bit of good.

The shepherd image of leadership in the church is not as straightforward as it might seem. We understand easily enough that Christ is shepherd to the flock. We do have a problem in that our whole style of relationship between drover and sheep is very different from that of shepherd and sheep as in the gospels. The shepherd leads his sheep like a mob of pets. The drover drives them along with the help of yapping dogs. We Australians can make an appropriate accommodation when we read the gospels. Another problem comes when the image is applied to bishops in the church.

¹cf. *Nelen Yubu* no. 48, pp.4-5.

The bishops (and any other person in authority within the church) are not related to us as shepherds to sheep, but rather as some sheep to other sheep. They have been chosen from among the flock and given a leadership role, but they still remain sheep, *lead sheep*. A lead sheep in a flock is much closer in function to a shepherd than a drover: it leads, the others follow. Troubles would really start to occur if a lead sheep got an identity confusion and began to think of himself as a drover.

My original commission with the CBC (Catholic Bishops Conference of PNG & SI) was to evaluate and suggest re-structuring of the CBC 'commissions', i.e. of those organisations that do a lot of the actual pastoral work, e.g. Family Life Commission, Commission for Justice, Peace and Development, Education Commission, etc. There had been thought of combining all the 15 or so commissions into some four mega-groups. As I went around the country to find out what the commissions actually do I came to the conclusion that it was not the commissions that need co-ordinating, but the bishops themselves, or more precisely the bishops in their relationship with their commissions. The commissions constituted really a quite impressive national network of pastoral engagement. To combine them artificially could have confused their operation helplessly.

The important thing to aim for, I thought, was that when the bishops lead, they lead from within the flock. They are lead sheep, not the shepherd. The shepherd is Christ, in whose name they lead us forward... What had to be avoided was putting the bishops into a situation where they would think they should decide and act in a monarchical sort of way. Unfortunately the history of the church so far has tended towards an over-development of the 'I am the shepherd' side.

I got what I thought was an excellent lead from the re-structuring of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference that was facilitated by Father Brian Bainbridge a few years ago. The clever bit is a division of the AGM (often in Australia simply called the 'Conference') into two parts. In the first part, the 'committee stage', they sit down with commissions and various interest groups to receive advice on and discuss the matters they will take into their later plenary sessions. In this way the bishops are free of the hassles of having outside observers watching them when they actually make their decisions; but neither do they work towards their decisions in isolation, and other 'sheep' have their part to perform. In some ways the change is not very big. The bishops used to get advice from their commis-

sions before they came to their AGM. In the new setup they get their advice *within* the AGM itself. The change is small but, I would think, significant. To implement it we had to organise bishops into three pastoral committees. Each of the commissions will plug into one or other pastoral committee. One or other bishop will have a special relationship to each commission ('bishop deputy'). There is a bit more to it all than that, but that is the linchpin of the new system.

The aim was at a 'co-operative interface', a situation where bishops and faithful interact in the development of policies. Where *lead* sheep and the other sheep commune.

I was surprised at how readily the PNG and SI bishops agreed with the suggestions I proposed to them. Inasmuch as it was they themselves who had asked for and commissioned the evaluation, I suppose I should have taken co-operation for granted. The chance to help them achieve a restructuring of their conference was not only a privilege but also a pleasant experience.

* * * * *

STRICKEN

I saw poor Day, a jaundiced thing,
Gasping his life upon the sky,
And only I and a bird on wing
Were there to see him die.

Fr Archibald Bryson msc

Fr Archibald Bryson msc presented a selection of his poems to Fr Martin Wilson msc. He died in October 1981. We propose to print some of them in *Nelen Yubu* from time to time.

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK...

NEWS FROM Dr John May, our subscriber in Ireland: "I continue to enjoy *Nelen Yubu* and to find 'uses' for it in my work, e.g. in writing a paper on 'Human Rights as Land Rights' for a symposium in Frankfurt, and an encyclopaedia article for a German Lexicon (LThK) on Theology in Australia." We look forward to seeing you in July, John.

* * * * *

Fr Dirk Tolboom who left PNG and his 'headhunters' for health reasons, is now stationed at Three Springs, WA where he is building a church at Leeman on the coast. Fr Dirk celebrates Mass at five different places every weekend: Carnamah, Coorow, Eneabba, Leeman and Three Springs. That must entail a lot of travelling, but he says he is 'doing fine'. I asked him if Three Springs were as lovely as the name implies and he said it is surrounded by salt lakes! However, he gave a beautiful meaning to the name in his sermon on arriving there three years ago: "God the Father created you all, God the Son redeemed you and gave you a new life, and God the Holy Spirit tries to make you good people so that you can return to

God again as good sons and daughters of His." Bravo Fr Dirk and Three Springs!

* * * * *

Crocodile Encounter

Have you ever come face to face with a croc in the wilds? After lurid tales from Tiwi friends it was not a prospect laced with joy.

Sitting in our motionless boat at the mouth of Blue Water Creek on Melville Island we cast and reeled hopefully for barramundi over and over like automatons, wishing one would strike before the heat of the sun sizzled our brains, but catching nothing except some sizeable crabs. Languidly, I looked out across the water — and sat bolt upright!

A youngish croc about three metres long was laconically swimming towards us, lying on top of the water, tail slowly swaying. I knew what that meant: we were encroaching on its territory and it was letting us know that this was not the done thing. The master of the expedition was sitting in the bow, oblivious to our visitor.

Coughing gently, I murmured: "Don't make ripples, but over to your left there's a slightly unwelcome guest." In a flash he

twisted round, saw the crocodile so close to us, and took fright. Reeling in his lure he stood up in the tiny boat which wobbled horribly, sat down and stood up again. I thought he'd fall overboard or that the boat would upturn, leaving us floating with our far from friendly visitor. This was enough for me. Throwing caution to the empty heavens I shouted: "Sit **down!**" which he promptly did. In a trice I had the anchor up, the boat trimmed, and prepared for instant departure.

The croc circled us then went across our bow, turned and faced us with its baleful eye, waiting. Waiting for **what?** I wondered what would happen once the outboard started. There was a breathless silence, then with quick decision a pull on the rope roared the engine into life. But which way could we go? Certainly not forward — and behind was the creek entrance where the saurian undoubtedly lived. Very quick thinking prompted desperate action.

Deftly manoeuvring head-on to the crocodile, which immediately sank, we shot across its track and flew out into Apsley Strait. Not knowing where the creature was, and hoping it wouldn't decide to surface under our little boat, there was only one course to take:

head for home at breakneck speed. Tearing down the strait between Melville and Bathurst, we broke every inter-island race record until we ran up on the sand at Pularumpi beach. With a shudder as of relief I was told: "Well, I've never seen you move so fast before!"

The crabs were delicious for dinner that night.

* * * * *

Winter has come to the Blue Mountains early this year, but in all its glory. After the shedding of brilliant leaves we expect snow-falls to deck our stark trees in sparkling array. Bracing air and hearty log fires go a long way towards making us happy in these high ranges.

Thank you again to all those thoughtful readers who send such encouraging messages for our work with *Nelen Yubu*.

Best wishes!

Secretary Keren