

CONTENTS

<i>Editorial</i>	(ii)
The Moving Mountain of Light Rod Cameron osa	3
Tracks in the Desert Robyn Reynolds fdnsc	6
Liberation Theology Kimberley Style Michael McMahon sac	11
A Reflection on Aboriginal Women's Contributions Catherine Stewart	23
Book Review	30
From the Secretary's Desk	32

THE MOVING MOUNTAIN OF LIGHT

WORKING WITH WONTULP-BI-BUYA

Rod Cameron osa

WONTULP-BI-BUYA is an Aboriginal and Islander education network supported by the Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran and Uniting Churches. It is the Queensland branch of Nungalinga College in Darwin. The network provides studies for Aboriginal and Islander people, mainly in theological studies and community development courses. These programs are carried out with a keen sensitivity to the needs and aspirations of the people involved. The Gospel is studied in the context of their culture.

The network is made up of six Regional Educational Committees covering major areas of Queensland. There is a State Committee. As well as providing the educational courses, each committee has become a focus of much ecumenical activity. One admirable feature of the work is the friendly co-operation between the participating churches in an atmosphere of deep mutual respect.

Funding for the work has been made available by the partner churches, as well as by World Vision, Tear Australia, the Australian Board of Missions and Nungalinga College.

The name *Wontulp-Bi-Buya* is made up of Australian and Islander words. The name stands for faith and the light of Christ.

Wontulp is the Wit Munkan (Aboriginal) name for Mount White in Cape York Peninsula. In the traditional story of the Cape Keerweer people at Aayka and Aurukun, this mountain moved from Cape Keerweer to near Coen.

Fr Rod Cameron osa is the Chairman of Cape-Gulf REC. He is also Chaplain to Aborigines in the Diocese of Cairns, and Director of the Augustinian Aboriginal Ministry.

The Sacred Story

The Wontulp story as told by the Rev. Silas Wolmby of Arukun is of deep spiritual meaning. Long, long ago, down at Cape Keerweer there stood a great mountain. It was high and beautiful. One day when the people were celebrating a big feast, the Quail family was weeping because their son had died and nobody came to visit them in their sorrow. So the Quail family went away on a journey towards the East and as they journeyed in their sorrow the sacred mountain journeyed with them. The light from the beautiful mountain was a comfort to them in their sorrow. The Sacred went with them, even when it meant the movement of a mountain.

It is interesting to note that in our christian story we read of Faith that moves mountains, (Matt.17.20).

Light of the World

The title words *Bi-Buya* are Islander and mean *light*. So the total name *Wontulp-Bi-Buya* means *Mountain of Light*. It is hoped that just as our various cultures combine in this christian ministry, so also the partner churches may long continue to work together in a truly ecumenical spirit, without threatening in any way the cherished beliefs of each. It is our constant aim to strengthen the bonds between the people and their church.

Catholic Involvement

As a Catholic priest I have for years been working with Wontulp-Bi-Buya, and I hold it as a sacred honour to serve as the Chairman for Wontulp on the Gulf-Cape Regional Committee. Our area includes communities on the Cape York Peninsula and in the Gulf Country, including Mornington Island. The Cairns region is also included.

As an Augustinian priest, I have been commissioned by my Order to work amongst Aboriginal people with the specific aim of learning about their Dreaming, with a view to bringing a deeper understanding of this to other Australians. Thus it is that my work with Wontulp combines well with my Augustinian ministry.

Over the last few years our Regional Committee has conducted courses and conferences at Cairns, Tinaroo, Hope Vale, Lockhart River, Napranum, Arukun and Pormpuraaw. In their work the students are encouraged to relate the studies to their own particular community and cultural context. Much enrichment comes from the life experiences, cultural

background and insights that the people bring to their study. Through this Wontulp program we are able to offer Nungalinya College courses at Certificate and the Higher Diploma levels.

As well as these formal courses, we also conduct conferences on areas of special concern to the community people. The theme for each conference is selected by the host community. Themes which the communities have selected include:

Building Aboriginal Leadership

Spirituality

The Grass Roots Church

Up-Building People

Spiritual Recovery through Shared Ministry

Living the Gospel and Community Building in Hard Times

These times may be hard, but there is no evidence of pessimism or despair in the Woltulp-Bi-Buya network. We may journey in present sorrow, but the Sacred is ever present with us like a Mountain of Light.

* * * * *

BIRTH AND DEATH

Birth's horizon is
Death in silhouette;
Life but the brief kiss
Space and time beget.

Death diminishes life
Each fait accompli:
Life with death is rife
Till eternity.

A W Bryson msc

TRACKS IN THE DESERT

ROBYN REYNOLDS FDNCS

THERE IS a tension between the Jesus of history and the Christ of our faith. Is it our traditional Catholic teaching, especially since Chalcedon, that sustains and strengthens the division? Or do our western philosophical understandings and our modern day theories of meaning, based on specialisation and isolation, require such divisions anyway? Whatever it is, I am uncomfortable with too rigid a separation. I have no doubt this unease is healthy. The Jesus who walked this earth *is* the Christ who saves, who gave us his Spirit, who empowers us, with him, to make his Kingdom come. The faith and the example of the Arrernte Australians confirm me in this belief, just as their struggles towards discipleship challenge me. The following reflections come in the form of a dialogue between a black woman and a white woman in the Central Australian desert. Their words together are, I believe, important for our understanding of 'Jesus', 'Church' and Catholic missionary endeavour in our country.

A: God's footprints are at Palm Valley. People have seen them. They were made thousands and thousands of years ago. The Lord our God was in this country long before white people came here. In Alice Springs there is a place too.

B: That is good news! For God doesn't 'break in' does he? He breaks out! When the missionaries came, their most important work was — and still is — to bring the story of Jesus.

Sr Robyn Reynolds FDNCS is a teacher at the OLSH school at Santa Teresa, via Alice Springs, NT.

(1) *Like Jesus, we are called to speak the Word of God and to proclaim the gospel by our lives. The emergence or the forming of local theologies then will follow, as it did in the early Church. Our terminology gives us away: 'Training local leaders', 'Constructing local theologies' – it is not freeing, not respectful and it is too dominating, too powerful. With opportunity given us by God, we are sometimes privileged to sow seeds. God's Spirit does the rest. Jesus' energies were focused on proclaiming the Kingdom. Individuals were drawn to follow him and share in his work of furthering God's Kingdom.*

A: We all used to go to church in the old days. Everyone knew all the prayers. We went to all the church ceremonies. We went to confession, holy communion – everything the missionaries taught us, we did.

B: People still seem to respect missionaries, to sometimes ask for their help, like down at the village before Easter. That was something frightening for everyone. I was there. Those tears of Jesus....

A: The mother of that family went up to the convent to ask you to go down and pray at the house. There was a big panic. Everyone was terrified. That picture of Jesus in the house – tears had come from the eyes of Jesus. Everyone was running around in the dark, they were all confused. They said it was a sign from God – a warning.

B: Yes, and they told me they needed my support, to bring holy water and pray the rosary with them. When I got to the place, I was shown that picture. I saw that face with the tears.

A: Something like that always happens during Holy Week. God was telling us we had to come together and not fight within the families. That is why people came to church at Easter. All the men too. We all came together to pray and to show God we would try and live peacefully with each other.

(2) *Because of the dependency syndrome which exists in so many Aboriginal communities, there is a real problem in casting off some of the non-essentials in European Christianity. Ritual and law are important as Aboriginal Australians well know, but there is a yearning and a struggle for the church to be claimed as one's own. The Arrernte culture, like any other, is jealous of its own integrity. The people themselves will formulate the benefits that christianity can bring. This 'appropriation' of the divine is their right.*

B: The women are not leaving God out. They are brave. Sometimes they speak out and act on their own (like Myra on Imparja TV last night) and sometimes they are strong together. The government is still talking about building a dam at 'Werlatye Therre' (Women's Dreaming in Alice Springs). The Uniting Church invited the Catholics to join in and support a petition about freedom of religion, so that people will be careful about respecting Aboriginal beliefs when they come to making decisions about the dam.

A: If the dam is built many women and children will get sick and die. The Dreaming is for all women in and beyond Alice Springs; and not just Aboriginal women. It belongs to us all. We are very worried about this. We are going to meetings in town, talking to the government leaders. We keep on praying.

(3) What we must never do is to deprive people of their memory, their myths. This is like an inner killing. The christian faith and the Catholic religion need to be unlocked for the Aboriginal Australian through the key of the Dreaming.

B: I am very concerned too. It is very serious... Here is the story one old man told me: he said that when he was a young man at Arltunga he had gone out bush with another man. They went separate ways for a while and suddenly he saw a wild horse coming towards him. He tried to dodge to one side of a tree, but the horse knocked him down. He was badly hurt and lay unconscious for some hours. His friend came back later, found him and tried to restore life to him. Finally, after trying for a long time, he stopped and cried for his dear friend. Then he went away. After a while the dying man suddenly opened his eyes. He saw a cluster of stars in the sky. When they came close to earth, near him, they came as butterflies. They were angels God sent to look after him. And so, he told me, he always stays the friend of God. He never forgot what God did for him.

So you are doing all you can, even though it seems you are nearly dying. You are trying to explain the importance of this place for your spiritual wellbeing and survival; and you are remembering, like the old man, that God is with you. Perhaps you could ask the church leaders to support you in particular ways?

A: They are not ready to listen properly to us. Sometimes they are on the side of the NT Government, or just follow that government. Look what happened to our school at Traegar Park. That was our own Catholic Church that took it from us.

B: I am ashamed of that. I am sorry. What the NT Catholic Education Department and the Church in Darwin and Alice Springs wanted, asked for and agreed to, seemed very wrong to me.

(It is ironic that this week — long after the event — we received from the CEO in Darwin an article from ‘Education Australia Issue 16’ which outlines the injustice of the decision taken).

B: There was a Church meeting at Daly River. The old man who was asked to go told me later that he didn’t want to go because when people came back from Daly River they didn’t share what they had learned. He said the AA meetings were ‘too much talk.’ So this old man didn’t even realise what the meeting was about. He thought it was to be a kind of AA meeting — or maybe he thought properly and guessed it might just be another meeting of ‘too much talk’ and not enough listening, as you say.

(4) Catholic christianity will never be totally credible amongst the Ar-rerntes or any other Catholic group as long as it is silent in ‘restating’ its own interpretation of the gospel. In fact there needs to be a healthy ‘de-mythologising’ to occur to enable the christian message to be proclaimed appropriately in a truly Aboriginal context and terminology.

A: Our main worry is the grog. It is killing us. Every week someone is dying. Oh! ‘Yaye kweke’ [my little Sister] what can we do? We keep on praying to God, so he will help us.

B: One night a little family came up to the convent. It was very late. They had walked from East Side and they were terrified. They said it was the devil. Did you know about the blood on the wall?

A: Tell me what happened.

B: They told me to come back down with them to pray. They told me to bring holy water and a crucifix. All the families gathered in the house. The blood line was on the wall. It was terrible! I did what I was asked. We prayed in language and said a decade of the rosary and then I sprinkled the blood with the holy water. The next morning we heard about the big grog

fight, the stabbing and the death at Charles Creek that had happened the night before (when the blood came on the wall). It was a sign to us.

A: God always gives us signs. And we have to keep praying to him and trying to live our lives properly.

(5) *The commitment to inculturation must apply to all aspects of life. So far the encounter with christianity and with modernity has not really satisfied the yearning of Aboriginal people for wholeness. The terrible, huge gaps created through the inter-cultural conflict have been left open as ugly, gaping wounds of poverty, hunger, sickness, crime, unemployment, illiteracy, aimlessness, spirit-lessness, unlike any other group in Australia. 'The gospel does not adapt itself to cultures, nor do cultures adapt themselves to the gospel. They meet, clash and test each other mutually, like gold and fire in the crucible. It is this encounter... which brings about the cultural "new creation" in which the gospel is appropriated as a power of redemption and recreation.'* (M'nteba in 'Incultural in the Third Church' from Concilium '92 p.142).

Conclusion:

There is a gap between the historical Jesus and Christian religion that is very evident in Aboriginal communities; not such a gap though, it seems to me, between Jesus of Nazareth and the Christ of our faith. Schillebeeckx' words are timely for us: 'To the extent that christians tend to overlook or forget the historical Jesus, they tend to structure christian life more and more as a religion in the pejorative sense.' (*Jesus an experiment in Christology*, p.305). The christian way for us all to reach God is to follow in the footsteps of the historical Jesus. For the missionary amongst Australian Aboriginal people today, I believe this means primarily, like Jesus, to advocate justice and love in the profane realm of daily living.

* * * * *

LIBERATION THEOLOGY KIMBERLEY STYLE

or:

A Short History of the Bishop Raible Co-Op

MICHAEL McMAHON sac

DURING THE MANY YEARS that the Priests, Brothers and Sisters had worked with the Aboriginal people, despite the paucity of resources they had attempted to provide a package of total care. The Sisters taught in the schools, provided medical care in clinic and hospital, organised the dining halls as well as supervising the girls' dormitory. The Brothers and priests provided training and work supervision in the gardens, cattle industry, poultry and other small undertakings which aided life style and which were feasible, granted the limited financial resources of the community involved.

New Era for Aborigines

But times were changing and from the mid-sixties on, the governments, and in particular the federal government, were placing greater emphasis on self-determination. Now, only Aboriginal groups were being funded by government. The readjustment for both black and white was in many cases quite difficult. With this new emphasis, there were some personnel from the 'professional Church' who saw this change to Aboriginal control as a chance to contrast the efficiency of the Church-controlled missions with the newly emerging Aboriginal-controlled communities. Other Church personnel were supportive and encouraging towards the emerging self-controlled communities.

Fr Michael McMahon sac, was the Parish Priest of Broome from 1967 to 1989, and is at present working with the Pallottine Community at Rossmoyne in Western Australia. He wrote this article in June 1992.

The older Aboriginal generation in general had favourable recollections of the old mission system, though they certainly were critical of some elements involved. The younger generation, particularly those who had the benefit of higher education or exposed to the philosophy of the Aboriginal movements, were more inclined to criticism of both Church and government for their past actions, particularly their lack of respect for Aboriginal language, law and social structures, and the forced separation of many Aboriginal children from their natural parents. In such circumstances it was quite natural that many Church people became rather frightened to enter the field of Aboriginal social welfare. The government was seeking to help these groups directly and no longer through European patrons. Many within the Church saw a necessity to return to an approach which was more spiritual. They were willing to help Aboriginal people on an individual basis but they were not anxious to be involved in work with Aboriginal-based organisations. They perceived that previous efforts were not acknowledged sufficiently, and they sensed that their presence in ~~off~~ Aboriginal organisations was somehow resented.

A New Era, A New Initiative

It is quite ironic that at this particular time an organisation linking Church and Aborigines in the social welfare area should arise.

In late 1972 a series of events and the presence of two remarkable ladies led to the birth of the Bishop Raible Co-op. 1973 had been set down for a Eucharistic Congress in Melbourne and the organisers had decided to place special emphasis on the Aboriginal Church. There were to be conferences involving both Aborigines and Church people who worked in the Aboriginal apostolate. The organisers had made arrangements for people from Aboriginal communities to attend. They also left it open for communities to send extra people if they could raise the finance. In order to send more people to this significant Church event two ladies, Mrs Rosie Lee and Mrs Lily Chi, sold secondhand clothing. Their efforts were very successful and I noted that these sales could be a significant source of income.

Around about this time an Aboriginal man approached me with a financial problem stemming from a hire purchase agreement. The Church was able to help and the man repaid the loan given to tide him over the

difficultly. But it struck me that what we did was second best. If we could raise money and buy household goods for people, they could repay us (the term at this stage was very vague) and everyone would be much better off. There would be no danger of goods being repossessed, the price would be cheaper and there would be a real chance of people taking more control of their economic future.

The Church still did much at an institutional level for people (schools, hospitals), but little to help people in their economic struggles except on a one-off basis and in a very unstructured way. The sale of second-hand clothing was obviously one way in which we could raise the necessary funds to structuralise this help. For many years the ladies had done the catering at the Broome races to help Church finances and to support the local convent school. We extended this activity and started to cater for various functions in the town. All the profits went to this fund for buying furniture. We used the facilities of the local Church so that the establishment costs could be kept to a minimum, and because we were convinced that this project was christian.

The Baby Gets a Name

Bishop Raible was the previous Catholic Church leader in this area. He resigned as Vicar Apostolic on 1 January 1958. His successor was John Jobst, ordained as Bishop on 19 March 1959. He had always involved the local people in the spread of the Church. People from the established missions had worked at new foundations. Since this initiative came from a christian origin and Bishop Raible had been so anxious to involve local people in Church, it seemed appropriate to name the organisation after him. The control in the early years was exercised through the parish council. The advice and expertise of both local and Perth-based people and organisations was sought and almost inevitably given: the beginning of a long list of people who by their advice, contacts and generosity made the o-op emerge from the area of dreams to the real world of christian action and concern. The support of the local people was vital. If this venture were to succeed the people had to own it. This whole process was innovative and there were times of doubt. The support of the parish council was clear. The quiet acceptance and utilisation of the services offered, made it clear that this venture had a real future.

Hire Purchase Goodbye

Broome in the early seventies had no retail furniture outlet. Almost all of our sales were to Aboriginal people. There was a need to help all people. It was decided that whilst the organisation would remain under Aboriginal control, it should deal with all people. Most of our customers were people who had no credit rating. We wished to keep formality to a minimum. It was decided that the goods would be forwarded to the people who wished to purchase and then they would repay in their own time at regular intervals. If people did not pay we would talk to them or send them a letter reminding them of their obligation to the rest of the people who were members. A yearly fee of \$10 established people as members. Since it started as a very small undertaking, I did most of the day-to-day running of the o-op in addition to my normal pastoral duties. At times local people were employed on a part-time basis.

There is one innovative aspect of the operation that needs a bit of explanation. Since we had such good contacts in Perth, we were always able to buy at the right price. The volume of the sales we were able to generate also assured us of this. We constantly checked our prices to make sure that we were competitive and almost always we found we were significantly cheaper.

If people could buy cheaper elsewhere, we encouraged them to do so as we were obviously not helping them and this was the whole reason for our existence. The attraction of the o-op, apart from its lower prices, was the opportunity to repay over an extended period without any interest charges being incurred. We were able to do this because we have kept our operating costs to a minimum, the dedication of our staff and volunteers and the constant source of income from the Op-shop. The people who have worked in the Co-op could have earned more money elsewhere. But here they felt they were doing something that could not be measured in mere monetary terms.

This, to me, is a great example of how the ideal of the Christians living in community and sharing things in common can be applied in our own day. There have of course been times when people have exploited the facilities we offered: people who have paid a small deposit and then sold the goods in question and kept the profits: others who have purchased goods from us and made little effort to repay but have patronised other outlets where they have paid cash.

Thankfully, such incidents have been rare and never sufficient to endanger the whole concept.

The records of the Co-op reveal from 9 April 1974 to 30 June 1977 the following transactions:

Sales \$54,464.58. Purchases: \$54,504.98

A trading deficit of \$40.40.

Catering: a nett surplus of \$2,577.18

Funerals: a nett profit of \$3,301.68

Clothing income: \$11,603.42

This gave a nett trading surplus of \$17,441.88.

Donations, grants and interests: nett income of \$21,363.70.

There were modest expenses on wages-sundries of \$2,003.98.

This gave a total operating surplus of \$19,359.72.

Funeral Operation:

In 1974 another venture was commenced. For some time the parish council had been discussing the question of funerals. There were aspects of the current procedures that we did not care for. It was not uncommon that the price of burial would be demanded before the service was provided. It had happened that back-hoes were used to fill in graves whilst the mourners were still in attendance. The previous contractor was getting older and declared that he wanted out. The shire, which had performed this service prior to the advent of private contractors, was not anxious to resume the task.

We were still discussing the possibilities when a local identity, Frank (Lofty) Cavanough was killed in a traffic accident. We had to make a decision. We decided to take on the task. We were not perfect from the beginning though we rapidly learned. As in all aspects of our efforts the advice and assistance from friends in both Perth and Broome was vital. This whole endeavour not only took away an economic worry at a time of great stress, but it enabled the community to take control of a most important social, religious and cultural event. Each community has been able to preserve its customs and the unique character of Broome funerals has been preserved and enhanced. Because of close involvement, the whole grieving process finds a healthy outlet.

The staff at the Co-op have been magnificent in the selfless way they have carried out their duties. Without entering into too much detail, it can be imagined that death often occurs at most inconvenient times and sometimes in quite horrific ways.

Growth of Opportunity Shop

The Opportunity Shop has always proved a great meeting place for people and a constant source of finance to keep the Co-op solvent. Since we were dealing principally with people whose credit rating was not high, there was an inbuilt risk. It is remarkable that we are now in our eighteenth year of operation and still remain viable.

At first the Op-shop operated from a garage in the presbytery grounds, then from the front verandah of the presbytery and more lately from a building in the church grounds. When ill-health forced both Lily and Rosie to cease their efforts, other local women came to the fore. For the past ten years Margaret Lands and Katie Isigushi have run it most efficiently and their families and friends have always been willing to hop in and help. Following the advice of the ladies who worked in the Op-shop the Co-op started to sell sheets, towels, blankets and other items needed in the home. Without the efforts of these ladies and the constant source of sales from the St Vincent de Paul Society in Perth, the viability of the Co-op would have been doubtful.

Freight Operation

Up until the late seventies we had been unstructured in our freight arrangements for furniture. Due to a chance meeting with Mr Jack Gobells from Bellway, a transport company in Perth, a new era opened. He offered competitive rates and together with some of the surrounding Aboriginal communities we became their customer. Later on this expanded into an agency situation.

The Co-op paid the freight bills for various customers and then recharged them at a higher rate sufficient to generate a wage and to pay for the operation of a vehicle. In particular this service became valuable to both schools and communities in the whole Kimberley area. We generated a greater cash flow and they received the benefit of lower freight rates. Other smaller retailers in Broome were also able to utilise this service. Many good friends among the truckies and management of these compa-

nies were made over the years and their support and advice have proved of great help.

Full-Time Aboriginal Management

In many ways, mid-1977 was a watershed period for the Co-op. It employed its first fulltime employee, Stewart Gregory, who has managed the operation from then till the present. The *NEAT* scheme was in operation and in May 1977 Stewart was signed up for a two-year course with a wage subsidy from the Department of Employment. We were most fortunate to have the services of Michel Beuchat, a lay missionary and trained accountant. The debt of the Co-op to Michel is immense. He trained Stewart, and the results of his training, plus the effort of Stewart and the support of the community, meant that the Co-op has been able to grow.

In his first year as manager the sales of furniture equalled that of the previous 32 years. In that year (1977-1978) the operation recorded a trading surplus of \$11,181.46. It had been proved that the Co-op had a future as a fulltime operation run by an Aboriginal manager. The Co-op had certainly helped many local people in its short time of existence: now it could become a real self-help operation and in time a significant employer of Aboriginal labour.

A Home Of Our Own

The Co-op under the leadership of its Aboriginal manager continued to grow. In general, each year was producing a modest profit and the total assets of the Co-op were increasing. In the late seventies, with the help of a grant from Australian Catholic Relief, the Co-op was able to purchase a warehouse in the light industrial area for the storage of furniture and to expedite the freight operations. This property remains in Co-op ownership and has made it much easier to run the furniture and freight.

Serving the Community

In my early days in Broome there was no legal representation for local people. Whenever I was asked and insofar as I was capable, I helped people summoned to court. I also made regular visits to the jail. It was a natural progression to go into probation and parole work. When I was offered an appointment as an Honorary Probation Officer I accepted on condition that two Aboriginal people would be likewise appointed. When

the system of community service orders was instituted in Western Australia, some of the people with such orders acquitted them at the Co-op. This has been continued over many years. One of the chief benefits has been to have these people work in a congenial atmosphere where their identity and talents will be affirmed. Nowadays the Aboriginal Legal Service, the Australian Legal Aid Commission and the Department of Community Based Corrections all have an active presence in the town and so the necessity for intervention is limited. However, the supervision of the community service orders remains a function of the Co-op.

In the late seventies the Co-op ceased its close relationship with the parish council and formed its own committee. The basic motivation remained christian and the support the Church, both as client and as a source of help and expertise, remained vital.

Objections and Answers

There now seemed a certain unease in some circles that perhaps the Co-op was in fact a business and was using its Church connections to gain an unfair advantage over other outlets in the town. To me, this line of thought is only possible for those who have never really seen the Co-op in operation.

I have already explained the start of the Co-op. I have mentioned that we were the first outlet in Broome for furniture. The vast proportion of our business is done with people who have very poor credit ratings and whose business, under the conditions under which we deal with them, would never be sought by a regular retail outlet. In addition I have always felt that community action to better the lot of the deprived is an integral part of the christian message. Every single part of our operation has come about at the urging of the Aboriginal people in answer to a clearly perceived need. We have never refused help to any person and indeed we have taken many a risk because of our philosophy of christian trust.

Liberation Theology in Practice and Theory

My experience in Broome has led me to the deep conviction that liberation theology has much to offer the Aboriginal people. I have come to this conclusion on both practical and theoretical bases. Poor people, because they lack lines of credit are wide open to exploitation. Poverty forces people to go without things that others take for granted. The efforts

of the Co-op have enabled virtually all people in Broome to have those items of household furniture (beds, tables and chairs, refrigerators etc.) that virtually all Australians take for granted. I firmly believe that Jesus came to set us free not only from religious fear, but from social economic and political fear. I firmly believe that the christian message propels us to work together as brothers and sisters for a better life style in the religious, social economic and political aspects of our lives. I have been saddened by people who have reaped the benefits of what the Co-op had to offer and then walked away from what it stood for. Indeed, I only became aware over the last few years that even in its infancy some business people were attacking the Co-op and attempting to manoeuvre Church authorities to disband it. Many of these people were not well noted for their christian commitment and indeed some of them have sold their assets at a considerable profit and now live in other parts of the world. At the same time it would be churlish not to acknowledge the support and Co-operation of some business people who, in a quiet way, have been most supportive and encouraging.

In 1986 I spent six weeks in Manila at the East Asian Pastoral Institute. The staff at the Co-op used this time to move the operations from the presbytery to the adjacent buildings. The experience in Manila was most enriching and enabled us to get new focus in parish life. Later in the year with the help of the Movement for a Better World, we started to introduce the New Image of Parish program. This began what was in many ways one of the most satisfying periods in Broome. What I read, what I experienced and my reflections convinced me that we were on the right track with the development of the Co-op. Gospel reflection became a part of my life and the life of the people involved in the renewal program. This gospel reflection strengthened my conviction that the type of structural change that the Co-op was bringing about was an integral part of the gospel message.

Role in Emergency Relief

A few years earlier we had been contacted by the Federal Government to participate in the Emergency Relief Program, funded initially through the Department of Social Security but more lately by the new Department of Community Services. Basically the government allocates a certain amount of money to an agency which then distributes these funds to needy people. Though the volume of work involved in distributing these

funds is considerable and the reporting procedures demanded by the government quite time consuming, we still felt that the positive aspects outweighed these negatives. A whole new interaction now took place: Aboriginal people were the instruments of welfare not only to Aboriginal people but also to Europeans – quite a role reversal. In the present financial year the Department has made \$23,000 available. For the past two years the Lotteries Commission has made funds available for use at Christmas time. The whole operation of this scheme has meant that the Social Security Department and the Department of Community Services refer clients to the Co-op. This has led to a very healthy appreciation of the role of each organisation in the total welfare picture.

Food Store for Low Income Earners Opens

With a new location for the Co-op, it became imperative that we upgrade the facilities. The bishop, John Jobst, kindly offered the old class rooms from St Mary's which were surplus to their needs. After the relocation of these class rooms, a whole revamp of the buildings and facilities took place. This was possible due to a \$25,000 grant from the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority. This gave more room for day-to-day operations. On 20 July 1988 a new venture commenced. For a long time we had been talking of the possibility of running a food store for the economically disadvantaged. We were slow to move for three reasons: we felt we had enough work to handle, we realised that the retailing of food is a very competitive game and that many poor people use a system of booking down to enable them to survive from one payment to the next. In this year Michael McCabe, a social worker with the Department of Social Security, came to town. He had heard of the Second Harvest organisation in Perth and knew that their method of operation could provide a good model. Due to his endeavours the whole project took shape. It has been managed by Aboriginal people from its inception, with advice and help from various friends and supporters. We christened the store Mungarri, the local Aboriginal word for food. Grants were received from Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Community Aid Abroad and the Lotteries Commission.

In the first year we recorded a substantial loss (\$9,500) but the viability of our other enterprises enabled us to handle this. The following year another loss was recorded but by June 1991 we were able to turn this

around and make a modest profit of almost \$7,500 on a total turnover of \$162,000.

Present indications are that there is scope for further growth and we feel that when we reach a turnover of \$250,000 per year we will be in a sound financial position.

Unity is Strength and Jobs

Smaller communities and organisations such as Milliya Rumurra and Lombadina Community purchase through Mungarri and this has aided our cash flow. We have a dream of using the Co-op as a purchasing facility for any Aboriginal community in the area which wants to use its services. This would also embrace the fields of furniture, food and freight. There is already a small start in the food area. The Co-op also acts as funeral director for the surrounding communities.

In the early days of the Co-op, when we started the transport side of the operation, we used the combined volume of Co-op, schools and communities to obtain a very competitive rate. With changing circumstances, the demise of the original operator and new personnel on the surrounding communities, part of this united approach has been lost. But it seems to me that the combined freight volume of these various communities can be a significant factor in obtaining economic benefits for all. It seems that the Aboriginal people do not gain the benefits in employment which their numbers of consumption would suggest. Probably the solution lies in more Aboriginal-run and -controlled enterprises which will bring direct economic benefits and employment opportunities to these people who are such a significant group in Kimberley society.

Unemployment was becoming a structural problem in Broome. It gave me great joy to see many Aboriginal people employed in government departments and the success of the various Aboriginal-run and -controlled organisations. But private enterprise was not employing a significant number of Aboriginal people. There had to be some solution since as a human being and a christian, I could not sit by and watch people consigned to a life of workless poverty and social neglect. We started to use schemes from *DEET* and in particular short-term schemes which gave people the experience and maybe the confidence and connections to lead to a permanent position.

Stocktaking

In April 1989 I ceased to be priest in charge of the Broome parish and left the area for nine months. It was my first long-term absence from Broome since I came there in 1967. The separation of the parish from the Co-op was now complete and the staff and the committee, who were now taking a higher profile, made the necessary adjustments. There were teething problems but the Co-op came through stronger for the experience.

All the staff who have worked at the Co-op over the years have contributed to its success. The volunteers, both short- and long-term, have given much and in return enjoyed the sense of belonging to the Co-op. Of great significance also has been the involvement of the families of staff in stocktaking, clean-ups and social gatherings.

On 4 February 1992 I left Broome to take up a new position in Perth. The episode of the establishment and consolidation of this work gives me great joy. I have made friends who will remain for the rest of my life. It has been a great honour to work so closely with the Aboriginal staff, volunteers, advisors and supporters. Maybe in the whole process I have ruffled a few feathers.

I believe deeply in what we have done. I think it is a great project from both a human and christian perspective. I am grateful for the dreams that we have dreamed together and hope that they may one day come true. I am thankful for the dreams that have taken reality and I pray that they may continue to happen. I trust that people will realise more and more that the true message of the gospel is to enable all of us to live freely, stripped of fear — to enjoy the freedom that belongs to the sons and daughters of God. I would not have missed this experience for quids.

* * * * *

A REFLECTION ON ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY: Through Their Rituals, Ceremonies and Religious Spirit

Catherine Stewart

TO BEGIN THIS essay I wish to reflect upon three aspects of influences that have affected my life in a profound way since beginning this short course on 'Christianity and Aboriginal Society'. The first is having the opportunity to hear the many stories that were enmeshed in our Wednesday night lectures, about the Aboriginal spirit, their struggles, life, history, warmth, creativity, forgiveness; all of which touched me very deeply, opening my eyes, ears and heart to a people to whom I had paid little attention.

Secondly, the treasured experience of visiting the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry in Thornbury and listening to Vicki Walker and her friends. In particular I recall the story of Vicki's return to Lake Mungo — the country of her ancestors — and how the presence of the kangaroos, wallabies and kookaburras on the roadside were welcoming her back to her land. And then upon leaving, how the animals were there again as if to say 'Good-bye'. I recall telling a friend this story and at the same time crying. My tears were about myself and my own history, and about the life, nature, society etc. that I pass by blindly — noticing nothing.

The third and most beautiful influence is a week spent in Adaminaby in the Snowy Mountains: sitting, watching, wasting time, feeling — sharing with wombats, kangaroos, kookaburras, wallabies, 'possums, magpies, currawongs, rocks, mountains, trees, valleys, the essence of their home — the bush. The learning in the lectures, the listening to Vicki and the sharing of the bush, have all given me life, forgiveness and a sense of being a sister

Catherine Stewart wrote this paper in Martin Wilson's missiology course at YTU, Semester II, 1991. She lives and works in a parish community at St Kilda, Melbourne. She has co-initiated and co-administered within the Catholic community a welfare system that reaches out in support to individuals, families and groups of all cultures.

to the original inhabitants of this land.

While in Adaminaby I began reading a book, *The Search for Meaning* by Caroline Jones, and to my amazement she writes of the meaning the Aboriginal people have in her own life. 'Aboriginal people give meaning to my life by showing through their suffering, their courage, their unselfishness, their sense of family, their forgiveness, their survival and their sense of the sacred? what it is truly like to be human. For me they are the steady beating heart at the centre of our Australian spiritual identity'.¹ I will continue to become aware and learn about this 'steady beating heart'.

In this essay I want to briefly note some anthropologists' and writers' perceptions of the role of Aboriginal women and their participation in rituals within their society, and then to concentrate on Diane Bell's studies of Aboriginal women's lives in Central Australia and the comparisons and differing perceptions that she makes. I would like then to make some attempt at connecting Aboriginal spirituality with christian spirituality, the Dreaming with Church Law; and in so doing discover the challenge that exists for both Aboriginal and white women as we live the reality of our lives.

Rather distressingly I read of some early observations which reflected the ugliness of Aboriginal women. For example Peron, a member of an expedition in the early 19th century wrote: 'She was uncommonly lean and scraggy, and her breasts hung down almost to her thighs. The most extreme dirtiness added to her natural deformity'.² In 1960 Hart and Pilling wrote about older women as 'ancient hags',³ and Meggitt in 1972 classed the women's camps as 'hotbeds of gossip'. Lloyd Warner in 1937 wrote of Aboriginal women 'little sacred progress is made during her lifetime' and later in 1972 Ken Maddock states that women's cults are centred upon narrow, divisive and personal interests such as love, magic and female reactions to physiological crises.⁴

These writers agreed that Aboriginal religion is the business of men and that the relevance of women's rituals is for women alone, not the whole Aboriginal society. Others like Baldwin Spencer and Francis Gillen saw women as 'denied access to the spiritual domain, as ritually impoverished, as pawns in male political power plays'.⁵ Munn (in 1973) emphasises the complementarity of sex roles with respect to the sociobiological maintenance of life. And in the economic, domestic and religious spheres she sees a 'balancing of informal and formal authority and commitments'.⁶

White (1974) perceived women as the junior partner, 'responsible for producing physical life as against men's responsibility for spiritual life.'⁷

Another writer states that it is 'true that men hold the key to religious revelation and play the executive role in most religious rituals and ceremonies, that they are in possession of the major part of the relevant mythology and songs and are custodians of the sacred emblems'.⁸ Certainly the perception of many of these writers is that women have secondary positions in terms of economic makers, in the realm of symbolism, social organisation, kinships and spirituality. 'They have cast women as the profane, the "other", the devalued, the wild, the feared and the excluded, the substance of symbols but never the makers of their own social reality, the exploited and dominated, but never the decision-making adult'.⁹

Now I want to reflect on the role of Aboriginal women, particularly in regard to my understanding of Diane Bell's writings. Diane Bell studied the life and religious rituals of Aboriginal women for approximately six years mostly in Central Australia. She sees their role as nurturers of people, land and relationships. Very early in her study Bell understood the women's self-perception of 'being their own boss' was manifest in economic, social and ritual spheres. Many of the women lived in the *jilimi* (women's camp) and all the women would participate in the "women's" business ceremonies known as the *yawulyu*. It is from the *jilimi* that women's ritual activity is initiated and controlled, and here they 'achieve a separation from men in their daily activities'.¹⁰ It is here in the *jilimi* and during the ceremonies ? *yawulyu*, that women drew on their intimate knowledge of family, personal life history, ceremonial status and relation to land. I understand Bell to be saying that women are economically and emotionally independent of the world of men, and that they would often not confide in their menfolk. Both men and women practised equal consultation and neither saw themselves as subservient to the other sex. Woman's knowledge is jealously guarded and information was not given to Aboriginal women who stood outside the ritual land holding and management group.

The women themselves wanted their role recognised as not one of dependency, but a role of independence, responsibility, dignity and authority which enhanced them as knowledgeable women and equal members of their society. The body of knowledge and beliefs about their ancestors was shared jointly as a sacred trust, but each had separate responsibilities for

the ritual maintenance of this heritage. As the women leave behind their mothering roles, they move into more prestigious women's activities of creative and life-giving forces which always retain a sense of immanence and transcendence, of the actual and the potential.¹¹ Stanner says that we cannot 'fix' the Dreaming 'in time', 'it was,' and is everywhere'.¹² Diane Bell describes it as the establishment of form and meaning to the society and its institutions, 'an all encompassing, all pervasive force in the lives of the people'.¹³ Within the law of the Dreaming, the world is already known through the activities of their ancestors. Dreaming activity is assumed and it is highly important for the men and women to transmit this knowledge to their descendants. This is done through song, dance, story and revolves around what is meaningful and good — land, health, love, ancestors, spirits of human, plants, rocks, animals, planets, stars, moon and sun.

Women play an important role in passing on the Dreaming through their rituals. In their rituals women emphasised their role as nurturers of people, land and relationships. 'Through their *yawulyu* (land based ceremonies) they nurture land; through their health and curing rituals they resolve conflict and restore social harmony, and through *yilpinji* (love rituals) they manage emotions'.¹⁴ Their major responsibilities fuse together in the 'growing-up' of people and land and harmonious relations between the two, thus the maintenance of their society in accordance with the Dreaming Law. Ritual knowledge resides with the older women — having been freed from the responsibilities of child care, they devote their time and energies to upholding and transmitting their spiritual heritage to future generations. Aboriginal women express their self-image as independent and autonomous members of their society. They are loyal and cling to the separation of the sexes which becomes evident in the *jilimi* or single women's camps, which has as its residential core the older and respected ritual leaders and their dependent female relatives — it is the focal point of women's activities and during the evenings it provides a refuge. Bell found that women's ceremonies were respected by men, in that they didn't attend or abuse, and this reinforced the women's self-image of independence and subservience.

From the *jilimi* women gained a sense of purpose, strength and knowledge. In the *jilimi* there are two groups of women — one is the *kirda* who follow the dreaming from the father and grandfather; the other is *kurdungurlu* who follow the dreaming from one's mother. Women who are

kirda hold certain knowledge which is encoded in myths, designs, songs, gestures, and ritual objects. These women uphold the trust and transmit the knowledge. The *kurdungurlu* women co-operate by being responsible for the safety of the ritual objects, for the correct performance of rituals; for the singing and painting-up these have a detailed knowledge of country and its proper maintenance. Health is an important core in the women's rituals — it is the harmonic relations between people and places — they seek to restore harmony, happiness, thus health. In their love rituals, the women stress the importance of the land and personal relationships. These rituals called *yilpinji* are used to correct unions and have control over male-female relationship. The women are mainly concerned with emotional management and maintaining the values of their society.

Many writers have had the opportunity to work directly with Aboriginal women, but have perceived and recorded information within a male-dominated theoretical framework. Here I want particularly to pay attention to Diane Bell's comments regarding the changes in the roles and rituals of Aboriginal women. Bell argues that the women had their own rituals and ceremonies that were quite separate from the menfolk, but were closely connected to the same land and ancestors. She describes a closed women's ceremony (*jarada*) where the assembled women celebrated the travels of the Munga Munga ancestral women who pioneered the country from Tennant Creek to Arnhem Land. 'The Munga Munga assumed different forms, met with, crossed over, absorbed and transferred the essence of other ancestors; their influence infused country with the spiritual essence of women'.¹⁵ In this ceremony the women stated their responsibility for the land and emphasised certain themes — emotional management and health. To show their interdependence with the men, who were excluded from the actual ritual, the women and men exchanged gifts when the women entered the main camp. This also shows that the women's intention and commitment is that their rituals benefit the whole society, not just themselves. Women do not verbalise their intense and complex spiritual attachment to land and to the ancestors, but express it rather through rituals and actions.

The loss of land has had an enormous detrimental effect on women's rituals, because it was from this land that these women and their ancestors drew not only their livelihood but also their very being. The influence of the white male dominated society of today and has defined the Aboriginal

woman as the dependent one, thus taking away the perception of her being, i.e. solely as a member of the Aboriginal society. Their autonomy has been fundamentally eroded and their relationship to land dislocated. Women's nurturing role is *now* being stated in *terms of country and relationships*, but this new role of women is severely affected, especially their search for harmony, as their freedom is constrained by the male-orientated and dominated European controls and policies which govern Aboriginal affairs. *Before* settlement women were *responsible for relationships* and were independent in terms of economics and survival. Today women are dependent on social security payments which entail relationships over which they have no control. Women now live on settlements where the men now *monopolise* the work, where the women are now dependent.

Compared to the 2,000 years of christian history, the history of explicit faith in Jesus, there is 40,000 or more years of Aboriginal experience of the Spirit of God in this land. I believe that Aboriginal spirituality has much to give to the ongoing struggles and searchings of our Christian religions.

This spirituality has a sense of mystery and meaning in the land — the land and all it contains are part of each Aboriginal person's inner being. The Spirit of life, the Spirit of God can be encountered in this land, in this place, in this meeting of land and souls. This spirituality is full of the spirit of life, not full of theological creeds. I believe that when life revolves around points of reference like land, the spirit of ancestors, plants, animals, sun, moon, etc. that life is orientated towards what is meaningful and good — thus God. The children of the Aboriginals are deeply loved — they are cuddled not chastised — they learn from love. They are tutored in the life of the Spirit in respect of the elders, kinships and the ways of the land.

To finish this assignment I wish to quote Burnan-Burnan saying, 'the gentleness of the energy of this continent, its essence and truth has to be a tool with which the Aboriginal people can come to grips with all the problems with which we're faced...It is also my belief that if you approach any issue in a spirit of gentleness, then the sky is the limit as to what you may achieve...'.¹⁶ Surely a message to all white sisters and brothers of the Aboriginals! I believe that Aboriginal women by their life and history, call white Australian women to a life of simplicity, forgiveness, independence, centredness, creativity and nurturing of land, health and relationships — they are a gift from God.

ENDNOTES

1. C. Jones, *The Search for Meaning*, Collins Dove, NSW, 1989, p.17.
2. W H Edwards, *Traditional Aboriginal Society: A Reader*, Melbourne, The Macmillan Company of Australia Pty. Ltd., 1987, p.239.
3. *ibid*, p.239.
4. *ibid.*, p.240.
5. D. Bell, *Daughters of the Dreaming*, Allen & Unwin, Australia, 1990, p.24.
6. RM & CH Berndt, *The World of the First Australians*, NSW Lansdowne Press, 1982, p.298.
7. *ibid.*, p.298.
8. *ibid.*, p.256.
9. *ibid.*, p.242.
10. D. Bell, *Daughters of the Dreaming*, Allen & Unwin, Australia 1990, p.17.
11. P. Malone, *Discovering an Australian Theology*, St Paul's Publications, 1988, p.83.
12. W H Edwards, *op. cit.*, p.225.
13. D. Bell, *Daughters of the Dreaming*, Allen & Unwin, Australia 1990, p.12.
14. *ibid.*, p.21.
15. W H Edwards, *op. cit.* p.251.
16. C. Jones, *op. cit.* p.35.

BOOK REVIEW

JOHN HARRIS: *One Blood: 200 Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity: a Story of Hope*

The first thing one has to notice about John's book is its massiveness. It contains 956 pages. It is obviously a work of extensive scholarship. One can quite believe the truth of his opening sentence: 'I have been writing this book for most of my life.' He is the son of Len Harris, who was an Anglican missionary in Northern Territory and a pioneer in bible translation, as John himself recounts (pp.838-841).

The scope of the book is accurately indicated by its subtitle: 200 years of Aboriginal encounter with Christianity. The first chapter begins with the establishment of the British convict settlement in Sydney in 1788, and the last date referred to in the closing chapter is 1989. The book was published in the following year.

The main title and the end of the subtitle indicate its overall theme. As John writes on p.34, 'Most missionaries took refuge in Acts 17:26: *God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.* There is hardly a missionary in the nineteenth century in whose diary, letters or sermons this text is not found.' It is to the credit of the Christian churches that they proclaimed the common humanity of the original inhabitants of Australia and the white invaders. This may seem to be no big deal until one reads in Chapter One some of the unbelievably derogatory assessments of Aboriginal people and culture that were standard amongst our white forebears. John underlines accusingly the cultural blindness that affected even the missionaries who defended the humanity of Aboriginal people. Even to quote examples is already too close to an insult these days...

In spite of the calamitous nature of black-white interaction over the last 200 years here in Australia, John is prepared to call his book 'A Story of Hope'. Some of the early missionaries thought the Aboriginal people completely lacked religion, had only 'superstition'. Nowadays it is coming to us as a shock to discover how much religious ceremony dominated Aboriginal life; to glimpse something of the powerful mysticism of world-view that was, and is still, embedded so matter of factly in ordinary day life among Aboriginal communities. One of the great bases for hope is the fact that white Australians are becoming ready to apologise to Aboriginal people for the suffering, violence and hurt our European forebears have caused to the Aboriginal race, as the Anglican Primate of Australia, Archbishop Sir John Grindrod, did during a bicentenary ceremony in 1988 before the first Aboriginal bishop in the Anglican (or any) church, Bishop Arthur Malcolm (pp.828-829). Bishop Malcolm's reply is recorded on p.829.

One Blood gives an excellent overall view of Christian missionary efforts, both Protestant and Catholic. It is written with insight and with admirable objectivity, allocating praise and blame where due. It is no whitewash; neither does it have the patronising tone that our a-religious anthropological confreres sometimes affect.

In spite of its size, the book is not an encyclopedia of Christian missions. Obviously John had to select mission areas to write up. Apparently his decision was to write up quite extensively some missions that he found particularly significant and/or representative. For instance he noted on p.440 that there have been Catholic

missions in the Kimberleys from 1890 till the present day. He would not consider them in any detail as 'their complex history has already been meticulously and sensitively written by Mary Durack'. He preferred to dedicate some pages to significant individuals like Fr Duncan McNab (pp.431-440) and Fr Nicholas Emo (pp.441-449). Thus the work of the Pallottines in the Kimberleys is compressed into two pages (pp.449-450), and that of the Sacred Heart Missionaries in Northern Territory into several sentences on p.480. It is a matter of judgment as to whether it is better to spend some 20 pages (pp.461-480) on a mission that is well documented but failed, i.e., the Jesuit mission in the Northern Territory, rather than, for instance, on the one that succeeded it and is still struggling on some ninety years later! On pp.109-114 John has summarised the attempt of the Passionists on Stradbroke Is., the first Catholic mission to Aborigines (1843-1846). He provides an extensive coverage of the Benedictine mission at New Norcia (pp.281-306). What apparently distinguished the Benedictine missionary approach from that of so many others, Catholic and Protestant alike, was the gentle way Aboriginal people were integrated into the Christian community. The dormitory system was avoided. The Aborigines were not used as a workforce, as the monks dedicated hours every day to manual labour in proper Benedictine style. John wryly notes (p.301) the Protestant judgment of the day that Protestants could never run such a successful mission, not being able to muster 'a like number of men so full of self-abnegation, patient, persevering...'

One note of caution must be sounded. A student using *One Blood* as a source book should carefully check references. The academic apparatus may have been prepared hurriedly. The analytical index does not always lead

one to the matter referred to. Noticing my own name, I looked up the bibliographical reference involved. I found it referred to a book I have not written and the publisher (Collins-Dove) has never published (endnote 197 on p.678)! I noticed also that a Latin quotation on p.472 has not been transcribed correctly. These are only small blemishes, which a second edition will remove.

I would like to acknowledge my appreciation of the kind remarks John made about Nelen Yubu Missiological Unit (p.864). But that is quite another story...

One would hope that this book will be read and used by many people, especially teachers. White Australians will learn a lot to be sorry about. Black Australians should note that at last we whites are starting to learn. The final theme struck is one of hope.

This review was written for the Catholic Leader and printed in the Leader on 9 September, 1992, p.15.

- Published in Australia and New Zealand by Albatross Books Pty Ltd, first edition 1990, ISBN 0 86760 095 0. Soft cover; cover illustration by Sally Morgan. RRP: \$34.95.

MARTIN WILSON msc

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK...

MELVILLE ISLAND is second only in size to Tasmania in the Australian group. For many years the FDNSC Sisters, followed by the Sisters of St Joseph of Orange, California, have catered for the Catholic population of Melville, but now there is to be an auspicious change.

In January 1993 Srs Barbara and Dorothy AD, (Handmaids of the Lord, a Congregation founded in PNG), and possibly a third Sister will replace the present nuns. These Aboriginal Sisters grew up at Pularumpi (Garden Point) and are now described as 'coming home' to work there. It will be a triumphal return. In early January the present incumbents will leave. Sr Clare CSJ left a few years ago, and Sr Therese CSJ will now return to California, while Sr Céline Auton CSJ expects to go to Sydney. Sr Céline has spent the last twelve years working at Pularumpi and Milikapiti (Snake Bay) and will be much missed by the people – whom she will miss very much herself. We wish all the Sisters a happy future, with our grateful thanks for their sterling work amongst the Tiwi people of Melville Island.

Gulf Poets Award.

Father Rod Cameron osa of Mareeba, North Queensland, has won a Gulf Poets Award at the Saxby Round Up which is an annual event at Martin's Water Hole on Taldora Station. The function which is run to raise funds for the Flying Doctor Service and Julia Creek Ambulance, attracts hundreds of visitors. There is a wide variety of events including a camp draft using over 1,000 head of cattle. On the program is an Art Show and a Poetry Competition, and we congratulate Fr Rod, our 'resident *Nelen Yubu* poet!'

Time and space have run away from me here, but two books that thinking people should read, and which I recently devoured are: **God is Near** by Fr Michael Morwood msc, and **Prayers for a Listening Heart** by Fr Paul Castley msc. Both are superb in their own way. Try them!

At present I am doing a huge and exciting work, typesetting for the MSCs the history of missions in the Pacific Islands, from the early 1800s.

Seasons Greetings to all!

Secretary Keren