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EDITORIAL

The issue of inculturation has come up spontaneously in this issue of *Nelen Yubu*. Kevin Barr's reflections have been incited by the Columbus celebrations last year—it was then that he actually wrote his paper. In quite the same way as here in Australia in 1988, the indigenous peoples who were 'discovered' by the West find in the event much cause for sorrow.

At the same time, one can transcend the small-scale scene in a more universal vision—especially if one is not a member of one of the indigenous minorities. From a Teilhardian point of view, one can see the immense advances in technology and many forms of skill, learning and wisdom, and their propagation throughout the world, as so many definite steps towards the fulfilment of the Omega Point.

The strange thing is that one—in fact, the greatest—of the riches brought along by the colonising powers is the knowledge of God through Christ and his gospels. And this gospel presents itself as good news of liberation! Here is a paradox that Noel McMaster is struggling with—and many others of us along with him.

We welcome Sr Brigida Nailon's contribution, the story of someone who has worked hard in the field of mission, Sr Peter (Allie) Evans. Her story underscores the paradox.

At the moment at *Nelen Yubu* we are engrossed in helping to set up for printing (camera-ready copy) a history of the MSC society in the Pacific area. The work was commissioned by the Australian MSC provincial some years ago. Dr James Waldersee worked hard at it, but died suddenly of a heart attack when some chapters remained to be written. Fr J F McMahan has supplied the missing chapters. The book will be quite large, but it makes very good reading.

Martin Wilson msc

Editor

THE CENTRE AND THE PERIPHERY

KEVIN J BARR MSC

LAST year the world celebrated the fifth centenary of Columbus' famous voyage of 'discovery' to the Americas. Some celebrated with joy, others with sadness. It can be a time of very useful reflection for Third World countries and for expatriate missionaries all around the world—even in Aboriginal Australia. For, what took place in 1492 in Latin America was repeated three centuries later in Australia.

A number of people see Columbus' voyage as symbolic of much that has happened in our world over the last five hundred years and is still being perpetuated today—namely the European conquest of empires, the subjugation of peoples and the exploitation of resources. The Church also cannot escape criticism for the type of evangelisation that often accompanied this conquest, subjugation and exploitation.

Some who are reflecting this year point out that 1492 was the beginning of European world domination. Writing in *Cross Currents* (Winter 1991) Enrique Dussel, the Latin American philosopher of history, says:

I believe that the phenomenon that launched Europe into a completely new mode of self-interpretation was the expansion that occurred following 1492, when a new world—at least, it was new for Europeans—changed the life and thinking of all Europeans at the level of their everyday and geopolitical existence, and when the lives and thinking of its people impacted on the periphery. Europe, almost without knowing it, was transformed into the centre of the new, empirically born world history... Europe began to be a centre and the rest of humankind was constituted a periphery (first a colonial, later a

Fr Kevin Barr msc is in charge of Chevalier Hostel, Suva, Fiji. He wrote this paper last year (1992): we have adapted several time phrases.

postcolonial periphery, today an underdeveloped Third World). This date, 1492, inaugurated the centrality of Europe and is the foundation of what is today called modernity.

Dussel points out that this has had certain consequences. Europe has come to confuse its own particularity with human universality and assumes that it alone constitutes the human. He writes:

Those who think that to be European is to be universal fall into four errors:

- 1) they confuse the centre with human universality;
- 2) they judge the periphery as simply non-human because it is non-centre;
- 3) they fail to recognise true planetary universality with its differences;
- 4) they deny their own responsibility for a domination that continues to be invisibly exercised.

Once we establish 1492 as the origin of modernity, we have taken an important step in understanding the peripheral world and the whole North-South domination that continues right up till today. Dussel quotes the words of Bartolome de las Casas written around the year 1536:

No sooner did the Spaniards know the Indians than like the cruellest wolves, tigers, and lions, starving for many days, they leaped upon them. And nothing different have they done for forty years up to this time, and even today they still do the same. All they do is to tear them to pieces, kill them, distress them, afflict them, torture them, and destroy them by strange and new and never-before known or seen forms of cruelty.

When we take into account the history of the original Indian inhabitants, the black slaves brought from Africa, the mestizos or mixed race termed nobody's children, the poor and exploited peasants, the industrial workers crowded into the industrial slums, and the marginalised multitudes, we can understand that Las Casas' words have become symbolically prophetic.

Columbus and those who followed him insisted that divine providence had enabled them to discover and take possession of the land so that the inhabitants would receive the blessings of the Christian faith. Yet today, many question the extent to which the indigenous peoples of the Americas were ever truly evangelised. Dussel suggests that Catholics cannot celebrate 1492 with a peaceful conscience. Rather it should be a time of mourning and penance, for Christian evangelisation often accompanied conquest and domination:

The violent soldier accompanied the missionary who claimed to speak to the indigenous about the Christian God, the Jesus who was crucified by the powerful of his time, proclaiming 'Blessed are the poor', the Jesus in whose name the Indian was crucified on landed estates and in silver mines.

Given this context, it is amazing that Christianity made as much headway as it did among the indigenous people. Yet surprisingly, in spite of the violence of states and church, the people were able to accept Christianity creatively, identifying with the crucified one. They recognised God as the one who hears the cries of the poor and the oppressed.

In the same issue of *Cross Currents* Gary MacEoin—a specialist on Latin America—takes up the implications of Dussel's article for evangelisation today. If we accept that the events of 1492 began Europe's conviction that it had a right and duty as centre to exercise control over the periphery, we can understand better the religious domination that Rome began to exercise over the peoples of 'missionary lands' and why recently there has been so much opposition to liberation theology. It also makes us question the type of evangelisation envisaged by Pope John Paul when he announced a 'new evangelisation' to celebrate five centuries of Christian presence in Latin America. Is it to justify further control from the centre or does it envisage shifting power and decision-making away from the Vatican to the local Churches? The universal catechism, the silencing of liberation theologians, the appointment of conservative bishops, and the reluctance to give recognition to the authority of local bishops conferences make us wonder.

MacEoin writes: 'The original evangelisation of what has come to be known as Latin America by a church that functioned as a department of the

Spanish state involves the importation and imposition of a religion encased in a European dress specifically, the dress designed and produced by the Council of Trent.’

After Vatican II, Latin American theologians developed the theology of liberation which was the first non-European theological system created by catholic thinkers in more than a thousand years. As they analysed the reality of Latin America they established that extreme and growing poverty was the primary issue and that this poverty was the inevitable result of systemic structures that impoverished Latin America and the rest of the Third World for the benefit of the powerful industrialised countries.

This alarmed the ruling classes of Latin America as well as the guardians of world order in Washington. Presidents Nixon and Reagan were both advised to work to counter and delegitimize liberation theology as hostile to its own interests. Conservative bishops in Latin America also began an offensive against liberation theology and Pope John Paul II and Cardinal Ratzinger publicly raised serious questions in opposition to it. Then in 1991 Rome, in an unprecedented authoritarian action, suspended the Latin American Confederation of Religious (CLAR) who had remained faithful to the documents of Medellin and Puebla against the conservative secretariat of CELAM.

While Liberation theology distinguished between oppressors who monopolise power and the oppressed who have to organise to obtain balancing power and their fair share of the goods and services generated by the efforts of all, John Paul and his allies favour distributive justice as affirmed by papal teaching but reject the idea of asymmetrical powers that must be corrected before the oppressed can escape their intolerable conditions.

MacEoin comments: ‘John Paul’s new evangelisation means reversing the initiatives taken by the Latin American Church since Vatican II. His appeals on behalf of the marginalised poor are surely sincere, but they are not encouraged to become the agents in their own history, and some of the bishops who were the strongest voices in protesting present unjust structures, have been replaced by rigid conservatives— appointed in a highly non-traditional fashion and chosen for their willingness to accept Rome’s understanding of local priorities. If such a policy and appointments continue, the Latin American Church will differ from the one created by the first evangelisation only to the limited extent that Rome no longer

relies on the secular arm to implement its plans.'

Leonardo Boff, the Brazilian liberation theologian, has expressed what he thinks a genuine evangelisation should require today: 'Resistance to the Spirit calling for new cultural expressions of the Christian message is perhaps the greatest historic sin of Roman Catholicism. Catholicism has become a product of the West and thus increasingly a regional phenomenon in world history...The truth of the 'New Evangelisation' will be measured by its ability to free the oppressed effectively and to create an Amerindian or African-Latin American Church that will allow a deeper humanisation of those who live their life within it.'

The documents being prepared by CELAM for its meeting in Santo Domingo in October 1992 sought to eliminate the distinctive contributions of liberation theology, relativise the preferential option for the poor, and domesticate Christian base communities. They sought to bring in what Comblin describes as 'neo-traditionalist theology'. The implications are that only Rome as centre can decide what is best for the Church of Latin America. European Roman control is once again dominating the periphery despite the fact that the Church has shifted its demographic base to the Third World.

It is estimated that by the year 2000, Latin America will hold half of all the world's Roman Catholics. Logically, the locus of power should recognise this demographic development, establishing the church as an advocate for the liberation of the oppressed and for the reordering of society to favour the poor. Yet Pope John Paul and the Roman Curia seem afraid of this solution. They cling to the conviction that it is their right and duty as centre to exercise control over the periphery. And of course the military and oligarchies of Latin America as well as the transnational corporations have a stake in seeing to it that the Church's declarations on behalf of the poor do not become more than pious rhetoric.

The recent moves to re-unify the communities of Europe together with George Bush's declaration of a 'new world order' can be seen as a reassertion that the North (the G7 countries of Europe, North America and Japan) still dominates the world and will dictate to the periphery (Third World countries). This it does through agencies such as the World Bank, the IMF, and transnational corporations. The Third World represents 75% of the world's population yet these agencies are able to dictate to them the policies they must follow—opening their economies to free market forces

through deregulation and an export oriented economy, new approaches to taxation, privatisation of public services, control of the labour market. Some speak of these new forms of subtle control as the 'recolonisation' process because ultimately they are to the benefit of the First World nations and are increasing poverty and inequality in Third World countries.

The central authority of the Catholic Church likewise, through its program for a 'new evangelisation' of Latin America seeks to assert its control and domination of the periphery. Reflecting on Vatican II, Karl Rahner saw it as a Council which had addressed the needs of the whole Church and had, at last, recognised itself as truly a World Church because it was able to break out of its European limitations and restricted vision. Paul VI's great document on evangelisation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, officially recognised the concept of the local Church and the need for inculturation and acknowledged that, to a large extent, inculturation involved liberating the Churches in Third World countries from domestication to First World models, thus enabling them to be themselves and grow in their own way. Current trends in the Church are disappointing because they seek to impose controls from the centre that do not seem to be life-giving and that contradict the beautiful words often spoken on the occasion of papal visits.

It should be obvious that there are worrying implications here that go far beyond Latin America. Those who think of themselves as the centre—be it politically, economically, or religiously—are reluctant to give up their domination of the periphery. It seems that the centre is still involved in the conquest of empires, the subjugation of peoples and the exploitation of resources. The periphery is undergoing a new kind of 'recolonisation'. Hope for the future lies in the pressure of transborder 'people's power' at work throughout the developing world (PP21) and in the power of the Spirit working in the Church.

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* * * * *

MIND

Mind, at your summit piercing peaks
Are blindly pointing; who knows where?
But where they point the eagles are,
And meaning of you there.

Mind, you are pent, are charged with thought,
Waters unharnessed whither they go —
Niagara bends its mighty back
To man's yoke: you, not so!

Mind, you are torrent, waters unleashed,
Waterfall-deep where the spirits walk;
Cataract where the beak-eyed rocks
Wait, silent as a hawk.

A W Bryson msc

THE ANGEL OF MANY ROLES

Brigida Nailon csb

THOUGH WOMEN have played an important role in missionary endeavors, it is a fact that women missionaries generally accepted an inequality on the mission field, grateful for whatever opportunities they had for meaningful ministry. A Methodist bishop argued that *'when a field was found too difficult for a man, a woman should be sent.'*¹ The Catholic mission field to which Allie Evans came was that of Pallottines, from Limburg, Germany.

In the Kimberley, North West Australia, her call to work with Aborigines at Broome, Beagle Bay, Derby, Balgo, and La Grange Missions, was also closely linked to the Sisters of St. John of God. As an Australian, Alice Evans wanted to do something for Australia. Her family lived in Brunswick and her mother worked for the Pallottines helping their missions. Bishop Raible was often at their home. Her brother John entered with the Pallottines as a missionary. Trained in the Shoenstatt way, he left the Pallottines in Germany when there was internal ideological conflict in the order, and became a Schoenstatt priest working in Sydney.

When Father Otto Raible had come to Australia there were three established Catholic missions on the West coast of Dampier Peninsular, at Beagle Bay, Broome, and Lombadina. By decree from Rome, he had been named Apostolic Administrator, 18 January 1928. He boarded the steamer 'Saarbruecken' in Genoa for the voyage to Australia, 1 May 1928.

He saw opportunities to expand the mission enterprise. Balgo Hills was one of the small economically useful Reserves which had been gazet-

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ted to help later Missions on the inland frontier. It was 290 km south of Halls Creek. La Grange was on the coast, but also near the Western extension of the Great Sandy Desert. It was a Government Aboriginal 'Feeding Depot'.

There were twenty-two Sisters of St John of God in Beagle Bay, in Broome, and Lombadina.² They had been on the Missions since 1907. When Fr Raible arrived, they were discerning future directions, for their group.³ Following the advice of Bishop E.Coppo, five Sisters decided to go to Sydney, where they took up residence in a small cottage in Darley Rd, Manly.⁴

The Aborigines were being kept under stringent control by the enforcement of the 'Native Act'. Their condition is described in the annual report made by, A O Neville, Chief Protector of Aborigines in West Australia:

At Feeding Depots such as La Grange, only the old and infirm Natives were fed twice daily and a small ration of tobacco allowed once a week. Quite a number of Natives, starved out in the back country were forced in on to the coast for food. Some went back to the bush. They were a poor lot.

Regarding their general health: Cold sickness has been very bad amongst the Natives since March and the early part of December. Ailments during the year included measles...⁵

The general trend of the Government in the 1930's was to establish Aboriginal administration with even more rigid control, for Aboriginal 'good' and for Aboriginal education, and to include more and more of those of part-Aboriginal descent within the scope of the special legislation. Injustices of the frontier had produced a real reaction, but the effort made by the Chief Protector was channelled into more extensive and more rigid control of individuals. One effect of the great depression had been exerting pressure to remove Aborigines, some long established, off Reserves, and move others, who had never lived on reserves, on to them.⁶

A major problem was caused by leprosy. 'Leprosy', as described by the Oxford Dictionary, is a chronic infectious disease of skin and nerves causing mutilations and deformities. For Aborigines, it was an inexplicable condition. An East Kimberley Aborigine, Grant Ngabidj, explained that with leprosy, one man gets it in the body from the ground, and the spirit

remains hidden in the one tin of tea or water for perhaps a month or a year. In this way a man who had leprosy gave it to another man.⁷

Many Kimberley families were broken up by the 'Big Sick'. Captain Scott, responsible for the transport of several contingents of lepers in his boat, caught the disease and eventually died in the Derby Leprosarium. Rita Patrick, a survivor from Beagle Bay, told how leprosy affected her life:

They came and took my mother from here for Darwin. She was living down in the old police station. She went with the first lot. I be in school then, I be in the dormitory. I cried when my mother left. I felt sorry. Two of my family left with my Mother and 15-20 people. I was in my teens, just come out from school when I was told I had to go to Derby Leprosarium. Matthias Sebastian was only a little boy. We went together, Frank Dolby, Uncle Stanny, Victor and Olam. Alex, he ran away from Police Station (father of Henry), he was afraid to go on the boat...⁸

In 1931 it had taken 18 months to negotiate the transfer of patients from Cossack and from the north west to Darwin. In 1933, cases of leprosy started to come in at epidemic proportions. 65 cases of leprosy had been transferred to Darwin and still there was an accumulation of patients at Derby and Beagle Bay (in temporary leper camps). In 1933, there were 30 - 40 cases in Derby. From 1931-1935, 161 cases of leprosy were reported in the North of Western Australia.

The Leprosarium had began operating for a year or two in Derby, when the Administrator of Public Health placed an advertisement in the local paper appealing for nurses to work at the Leprosarium. The Sisters of St. John of God applied for the positions though some were not in favour of women Religious working in Government Departments. Sr Gertrude Greene and Sr Brigid Greene began the work in 1937. Sister Matthew Greene, and Sister Gabriel Greene joined them. In 1938, if admitted to the Leprosarium, there was only a 45% chance of being discharged alive, but for those admitted for the first time in 1965, there was an 88% chance of being discharged alive.⁹

Other Sisters came. Sister Bernadette O'Connor was appointed there immediately after Profession in 1942. She was there for 12 months and left to take one of the little babies to the Broome Orphanage. Another outstand-

ing sister was Sr Alphonse Daly, who described the reaction of the Aborigines to pain, as 'deep silence'.¹⁰

After Allie came to the Kimberley,¹¹ Rev. John Herold was in charge at Rockhole, near Halls Creek. He was there until 6 January 1939. This was the first step to found a mission in the East Kimberley. Ambrose Cox, an Aborigine from Beagle Bay, started work there and was later nine years in Balgo. His sister Barbara Cox, went to Balgo as a Novice of the Native Sisters about 1947, appreciating the presence of her brother, her sister-in-law, Nancy, and their family. Ambrose had been born in Beagle Bay. His father was David Cox from Noonkanbah Station and his mother was Lena Manado from Disaster Bay. His history was rather unique:

One of my grandfathers was Willie Manado, a Filipino who died during the Second World War. The other was Billy Cox, a Scotchman who died in Louisa Downs and left the station to his sister.

I was 9 years on the Balgo Mission. I went with Bishop Raible to look over the place. I started my work in Rockhole with Fr John Herold. There was trouble with Welfare, too close to Moola Bulla. We shifted. I was on my own with Fr Alphonse.

I came back and married Nancy O'Grady who was brought up in Lombadina Mission, and went back for a couple of years...¹²

12 February 1937, Bishop Raible wrote to Dr. Mannix that the Pallotines had approved of a new foundation in Victoria, and of the purchase of a property in Studley Park Road, Kew.

...In order to have your formal consent recorded amongst our documents, would you kindly send me a few lines giving your approval of the establishment of a Pallottine Missionary College for the Australian Aborigines Missions in your Archdiocese...¹³

Alice Evans entered the Sisters of St John of God novitiate in Broome as Sr Peter in May 1938.¹⁴ In Beagle Bay, Mother Joseph was her Mistress of Novices and Mother Margaret Carmody was her Superior. Alice was therefore privileged to be part of the community which supported Bishop Raible's Institute for Native Sisters in Beagle Bay. She was present during the innovative period when Bishop Raible began the Insti-

tute for the Native Sisters, and when first steps were taken into the desert to help the Balgo mission.

14 January 1939, the *Beagle Bay Chronicle* recorded the foundation of the Native Sisters:

From the 5th to the 14th Bishop Raible paid a visit. He made the first arrangements for a new religious society Aboriginal girls. Up to this date seven had volunteered for this new Sisterhood.

Bishop Raible's long letter to the Mother General, Sisters of St. John of God, Wexford, 2 February 1939, described his hopes for training boys for a Native clergy and to encourage girls to enter religious life. He asked the Mother General to give permission to Sr M. Augustine to act as Mother General and Mistress of Novices until such time as the new Congregation would be able to have their own Superior.

...it is the continuous prayers and the good example that your Sisters have given to the girls for the last 32 years, which will be mainly responsible for this new little plant in God's own garden...¹⁵

The world was in turmoil. England had declared war on Germany, 3 September 1939, and brought an abrupt end to current discussions of Aboriginal Issues between the Government, academic pressure groups, mission authorities, and humanitarian bodies. The German Catholic missionaries were to be limited as to the freedom necessary for effective evangelization, but efforts continued to be made to 'humanize' the situation for both the missionaries, and for the people 'Under the Act'

The Broome Chronicle recorded that three Germans would set off into the Australian desert. Br. Stephen Contempree and Br. Frank Nissl accompanied Fr Alphonse Bleischwitz into the desert.¹⁶ Bishop Raible had written to Fr Worms, the parish priest in Broome, 12 September 1939:

...Br Nissl left with Philip (Cox). Richard and Paddy have started already with the sheep and the horses. Camels and donkey team will follow shortly.¹⁷

1 October 1939 was the day of the takeover of Rockhole Mission. Failure of the Rockhole hospital project had cut a deep wound in the heart of the Bishop. Occasional remarks revealed this in the years to come. The

whole new scheme of the Bishop for medical and educational care of the Aborigines in the East Kimberley had totally collapsed, as his new ideas had done in the West Kimberley. His saying, '*In the household of God nothing is wasted!*', was his anchor. This gave him strength in all the years of mission work.¹⁸

Gleanings from the Broome, Beagle Bay, Lombadina and Balgo Chronicles, reveal something of the situation with the war.

21 October 1940 4 p.m. Fr George and Br Joseph, who had just been discharged from hospital were arrested and put into the Broome jail. Two days later, all the other Priests and Brothers who were not naturalized were brought from Beagle Bay and Lombadina and interned.

Two Sisters of St John of God, Sr Bernadette O'Connor and Sr Ita Parkinson had arrived in 1940 from Ireland on a captured German freighter. Before the year had passed Sr Ita had died of heat exhaustion, and Sr Peter (Alice Evans), and Sr Alphonsus Daly had laid her body out on the verandah of the old novitiate. Sr Peter was professed in 1941 and her parents were present in Beagle Bay for the ceremony.

Other events which would have affected life in the convent at Beagle Bay were:

During 1942, Broome became a military station of defence and was within the war-zone. Many people found their way to Beagle Bay Mission looking for a refuge. Church personnel had to accommodate 200 or more extra people at Beagle Bay for some years.

Three Sacred Heart Fathers were sent as Military Chaplains to take a certain control of Beagle Bay Mission, and Fr Hyland stayed at Broome, in the capacity of the Senior Chaplain, the link between the Military Authorities and the Mission.

Once it had been decided to evacuate Broome because the victorious Japanese army was approaching the Australian coast, all whites not needed had to go South, and all the blacks and half castes had to go to the Beagle Bay Mission. The Orphanage moved into the Sisters Novitiate, and the people moved into the colony. Some housing was provided by the Government, which also cared for the Broome people.¹⁹

When the Broome parish was dissolved on account of

wartime; a number of Catholics went to Derby. The Broome military chaplain visited Derby and the Leprosarium, where there were 250 patients.²⁰

Sr Peter was sent to work in the Leprosarium in Derby. There is an unsigned description of 'Wartime' at the Leprosarium, in the archives of the Sisters of SJG, Subiaco, dated February, 1942:

A telephone call from the Chief Officer said that invasion was imminent, and all white women and Sisters were to evacuate to Perth, leaving by 3 a.m. on a Qantas plane.

When the sisters refused to leave they were asked to evacuate three miles out into the bush with the patients. All drugs, dressings, equipment and patient's records were buried, and names of lethal poisons painted on bottles.

Willie Wright, Cas Drummond, Stanny Victor and the Dolbys organised and encouraged patients not to abscond. Stretcher cases were placed in trucks, the lame led the blind on long sticks.

The C.O. sent out a truck with orders for the Sisters to board it and leave the patients in the bush. They refused. Three patients died a few days later. Routine treatments were carried out every day and night. The sick were attended by lantern light covered. No fires were to be lit.²¹

Sr Peter (Alice Evans) with Sr Bernadette, Sr Gabriel, Sr Gertrude and Sr Aloysius, helped in the evacuation and stayed in a bough shed constructed in the bush.

The foundation of a new Mission at La Grange seemed to be moving ahead. F.I.Bray, Commissioner of Native Affairs, wrote to Bishop Raible, 2 January 1942:

...I acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 18th ult. in reference to the taking over of the La Grange Depot. I note that you are preparing to take over the Depot within two weeks following the date of your communication. This suggestion meets with my approval and in due course I shall be pleased to learn the actual date on which you enter into occupation of the premises...

The appointment of Dr Hermann Nekes as Priest in Charge is satisfactory to me, and so also is the appointment of Br. Henry Krallmann as Priest Assistant. Mr. Sharp, the telegraph linesman,

is now in charge of the Depot...

Inspector L.O'Neill will visit the Depot as soon as possible and satisfy himself in regard to the correctness of the handing over. At the same time he will check off and revise the subsidy list.²²

10 January 1942 Bishop Raible wrote to the Commissioner of Native Affairs:

... I have received your letter of 2nd instant for which I thank you. I now wish to inform you that we had made all preparation to shift cargo and the two missionaries to La Grange, when heavy rains lasting for over a week made the roads impassable for heavy traffic. We shall however, try about the middle of next week, to reach La Grange and we will let you know by wire of the date of taking over...²³

But the La Grange venture was stopped. Under war conditions all Government Departments were subservient to the Military Department. The Military Authorities did not approve, and cancelled the arrangements made with the Commissioner of Native Affairs in Perth.²⁴

Sr Ignatius Murnane had left the convent of Our Lady Help of Christians in Sydney and returned to the Sisters of St John of God in Broome, and a little later, Alice Evans left the Sisters and returned to Melbourne.²⁵ She had had Dengue fever. She stayed in Perth for 6 weeks intending to join the Navy., but was in Melbourne for VE day.

When she then applied to train as a nurse at St Vincent's Hospital, there were no vacancies, until Bishop Raible spoke for her. In 1951, when she had finished her training, Bishop Raible invited her to Balgo Mission, where, for some years, the Native Sisters had helped to staff the mission. The Bishop had seen in the simple desert nomads at Balgo an opportunity for his Native Sisters to help with the foundation of the East Kimberley Mission. But these civilised part Aboriginal girls whom the Bishop had hoped to fire with zeal towards 'their own people' had felt little affinity with them, they tried hard but they did not stay.²⁶ By the time the Bishop asked Alice Evans to come to Balgo, he had dissolved the Native Sisters Institution, burying his dearest hopes with it.

The young women would become the backbone of the laity in the struggling church of West Kimberley. The great faith venture of a native

congregation would bear fruit in the Kimberley Catholic Community, and in the quality of Christian life in the region. Alice Evans worked with the Pallottines and with the Aborigines in Balgo for four years.

The Balgo Hills Catholic Mission was near part of the Canning Stock Route which wound almost a thousand miles across the Great Sandy Desert of W A. The scaled mileage extending from Wiluna in the East Murchison to Halls Creek in the Kimberley was 925 miles, and the exploration party sank 20 bores and opened up 37 native waters, the longest distance between them approximately 16 miles. A W Canning had estimated that at least fifty four watering stages would need to be established. N S Trotman, who was a member of the Canning Stock Route party between 1908 and 1910, explained how their wells were timbered with desert oak, which had straight tall trunks covered with a dark corky corrugated bark. When the Canning Stock Route was completed it was accessible by sea through Wyndham, 250 miles away, or over the 400 mile track to Derby on the Western coast.²⁷

In this environment, Alice Evans became a 'Rouseabout of God'.²⁸ On Balgo Mission, she looked after twenty-eight children in the dormitory where she had her room and had contrived to fit up some sort of infirmary. The bathroom for the adults was made of mud brick, seven feet six high, and roofed with galvanized iron without any ceiling. That for the children had a roof but no walls.

As soon as Alice arrived at Balgo, she began teaching the children. There was no school, only an old house with a lean-to verandah. There was no blackboard; come to that, there was no chalk, either. The children were shy, intelligent and eager to learn. Allie wanted to learn their language so that learning would be easier for them. For some time, she was also doing all the cooking. When Claire came and took over the cooking, Alice still handled the making of clothes for the children, and the sick were in her charge. Once a week a bullock was killed, and there was always tea, lots of tea, and milk from the mission's seventy goats. She was schoolteacher, seamstress, gardener and general rouseabout as well as nurse.

Alice said:

I was in Balgo for 15 months and hadn't seen a white woman for 15 months until I took a patient into Wyndham. We had a kero-

sene refrigerator which was always breaking down. When I came on a holiday to Melbourne I spent my time writing letters to get a frig. and a truck. I got a certain amount of money. Going back on the train I palled up with the owner of the Windsor Hotel, he made up the money for the ute. I took him for a drive in Perth. While I was in Sandover's office with Fr Leo, he said, 'There's someone who can give you a refrigerator. Is this what you want? Don't tell anyone who gave it to you!' The Bishop said, 'Put it on the boat!'²⁹

In 1953, Bishop Raible had written to the Minister for Native Affairs to advise that the Church was still interested in taking over La Grange. He was told that the Reserve of 450 acres was on Thangoo cattle station. There were 85 Aborigines, 28 of whom were children, and another 15 being rationed at Wallal would be transferred to La Grange. The Hon. J Rhatigan, MLA advised that the sooner they took over the place, the better it would be for the Aborigines and the community generally. He pledged his support.

Bishop Raible intended to put sheep on the land to give suitable employment and enable the mission to pay its own way. Knowing that the maintenance of La Grange cost the government a yearly sum of almost £6000, the Bishop asked for a yearly grant of £4000 for a period of four years for improvements, and in addition to the customary subsidy for children and infirm Aborigines.

29 December 1954 Fr F Hügel, with Albert Dan and Paul Howard, left Broome in a new Ford V8 truck, which Fr Worms, Fr Regional, with Br Besenfelder from Tardun had driven overland from Perth. In 1955 the La Grange Feeding Depot was handed over to the Pious Society of Missions, Beagle Bay, to be a mission.³⁰

Sr Alice Evans came from Balgo at Easter. She was replaced by Sisters of St John of God. Her coming to La Grange was providential. The Chronicle recorded March 1955:

...At the initiative of Sr Alice Evans we opened the children's Kitchen and Dining room, using the hut and bough shed put up before we took over. There is a big new stove. Melba and Bennet are the cooks under the supervision of Sister. The 26 who are fed include the cooks. No need to call the children, they turn up visib-

ly interested. For the first time they receive every day 3 full meals with fresh milk, eggs, vegetables, bread, etc.

During the same week the Nissan-hut hospital was painted inside. (Sr Evans was a trained nurse in charge of the make-shift nursing outpost.)

24 May 1955 We opened the New Mission School with 20 children, including the infants on the Feast of Our Lady.

Measles in La Grange became an epidemic with complications of colds, pneumonia, and sore ears. The old people in the Karajarri camp were not infected, they had the measles before, but everyone in the Udialla camp went down with them, including the babies, likewise the dormitory boys and girls, so far, 2 fatal cases...³¹

7 August 1955, Fr Francis Hügel wrote to Bishop Raible :

... a matter of emergency, when the hot season and the rain sets in I am completely at a loss where to put our children, leave alone our Sister. One could argue, why did you start then at all and not wait. I can only say that I felt that something should be done, and that as soon as possible. And I also hoped (and still hope) that the dormitories at least will be up before the rain...

Re a builder: I don't know whom you are going to send...

As to accommodation for Sr Evans: She offered herself, to stay in the Nissan hut which is partly dispensary, partly workshop. It has no windows, neither on the eastern now the western side, also no lining which makes this building unbearably hot, unfit to stay in. At present it serves at the same time also as dormitory for the girls, So we need badly accommodation for all of them. I think, if we could build a girls' dormitory with two rooms, one room could be allotted...³²

What were the historical conditions that made the missions so necessary?
There were many reasons:

- The people had lost their land.
- They were under special legislation, under the Aborigines Act. They could be placed in a position where they could not help themselves.
- There was a movement of people. For example, in 1956, the Worora (originally from Kunamunja), and the Ungarinyin (originally from Munja) were moved to Mowanjum near Derby. Those from Moore River were moved were moved to

Wandering.³³

- There was no entitlement to Social Services. For example, the Grayden Report, at the end of 1956, told of starvation in the Laverton-Warburton Range area. It was possible for people out in the desert, with no legal entitlement to social services, to die from starvation and the diseases of poverty.

It was the exception to pay cash wages for work. Mr. Middleton may well have contributed directly to the development of a cash wage system when he paid cash wages for work done on Moola Bulla, a Government Aboriginal cattle station, before the station was sold to private interests.³⁴

Alice Evans stayed at La Grange Mission for two years.³⁵ She was difficult to replace. Bishop Raible wrote to Fr F Hügel at La Grange, 14 May 1956:

...Regarding the lay helper... you say that you gave Fr Hennessy all the particulars that you could give regarding the work the lady was expected to do.

It will be necessary to point out the loneliness of the place, where the girl will have no congenial company and no entertainment except wireless. Also only rarely an opportunity to go to town. Even for a Catholic girl who has had no experience of the life of a religious it will not be easy to make life at La Grange bearable...

Elizabeth Dann will be ready any time you want her. I think we should pay her £3, if she looks after the girls, does the necessary sewing and conducts the kitchen. She is also capable of teaching elementary things...³⁶

Alice Evans became Matron in the Broome Hospital. She was replaced by Elizabeth Dann, one of the former members of the Native Sisters.

ENDNOTES

1. F B Hoyt, 'When a Field Was Found Too Difficult for a Man, a Woman Should Be Sent', Adele M Fielde in *Asia, 1865-1890*, *The Historian*, Vol. XLIV, 1982, pp. 314-334, in Ruth Tucker, 'Female Mission Strategists: A Historical and Contemporary Perspective', *Missiology: An International Review*, p.74.
2. W Schtzeichel, 'Die Pallottiner in Australien', p.307, op.cit., Walter, Australia. p.205. Pallottine Book of the Dead. Born in Stuttgart, 27 November 1887, Otto Raible enrolled at the Pallottine Missionary College in Ehrenbreitstein in 1904, was professed 24 September 1907, and ordained 9 July 1911. He went to the Cameroons, Africa, 24 October 1912, in charge of a missionary school in Jaound. With French occupation of the colony in 1914, he was forced to leave in 1914, and he became an Army Chaplain. 1919-1922 he was Spiritual Director at Freising. 1923-1922 he attended to German migrants in the Trautenau district, Cschecoslovakia. Fr Raible was appointed Apostolic Vicar, and consecrated Bishop in Limburg, 18 June 1935. By opening a Missionary College in Melbourne in 1937, he made the way clear for the establishment of Pallottines in Australia. When his health was deteriorating, he requested his Superiors for retirement from his missionary assignment. He died, 18 June 1966 and was buried in the graveyard of the Mother House in Limburg, the North German Province on the Lahn.
3. The authority which is uniquely proper to the Church is a religious authority to save, to make disciples, to preach the gospel, and to bring all to the Father. Religious authority is never absolute. It is mediated through persons and structures and is necessary for a life of vowed obedience. (cf. Mary Linscott, SND. 'The Service of Religious Authority: Reflections on Government in the Revision of the Constitutions' pp.201-202).
4. 'Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Our Lady Help of Christians Congregation', *Catholic Weekly*, September, '81, ADB.
5. A O Neville, Annual Report of CPA. 30 June 1929.
6. C D Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, ANU, 1970. p.104.
7. Grant Ngabidj, 1904-1977, East Kimberley, interviewed by Bruce Shaw, My Country of the Pelican Dreaming, p.116.
8. Rita Patrick from Beagle Bay, in Brigida Nailon and F. Hügel, (eds), *This is Your Place*, Broome, Beagle Bay Community, 1990. p.19.
9. W S Davidson, *Havens of Refuge*, Nedlands, 1978.
10. M Alphonse Daly, *Healing Hands*, SJG Sisters, Derby Printing Press, 1980 pp.19-20.
11. Balgo Chronicle, 26 April 1937. ADB.
12. Oral Sources, Archives Diocese Broome.
13. Raible to Mannix, 12 February 1937. ADB.

14. Mission Statistics and General outline of the Missionary work in September 1933.

Permanent Native Population	Fullblood	Halfcaste	Total
Children under 14:	69	63	132
Youths and adults:	98	52	150
Total:	167	115	282

Staff: 2 Priests, 5 Brothers, 6 Sisters.

School: In charge Sr.M.Gerard.

There are 3 Sisters teaching in school, which is attended by 44 full-blood and 38 half-caste children. Care of the Sick: In the hands of the Sisters of St John of God. There is a surgery for the treatment of out-patients. A special isolated place has been provided last year for the leper patients awaiting transport to Port Darwin. The general health is good, common complaints being sore eyes, hookworm and attacks of influenza. ADB.

15.Raible to General, SJG, Wexford, 2 February 1939. ADB.

16.Prendiville to Raible, 3 January 1939. ADB.

17.Raible to Worms, 12 September 1939. ADB.

18.Reminiscences of Fr Alphonse Bleischwitz, Archives of the Diocese of Broome.

19.Broome Chronicle. Original in German. Trans. by Bishop J Jobst. ADB.

20.Derby Chronicle. ADB.

21.'Description of "Wartime" at the Leprosarium.' Archives of the Sisters of SJG, Subiaco. Unsigned. February 1942.

22.Bray to Raible, 2 January 1942. ADB.

23.Raible to Commissioner of Native Affairs, 10 January 1942. Re 820/37. ADB.

24.Bray to Raible, 16 February 1942. ADB

25.'If I had my time again, I'd still be there.' Alice Evans was interviewed by Brigida Nailon in Echuca, Victoria, 21 February 1992.

26.Sister Rose MacGinley, PBVM, 'Native Sisterhood, Kimberley', Foundations of Australian Congregations of Religious Women. Major Superiors.

27.Eleanor Smith, The Beckoning West, WA Newspapers Ltd. 1979.

28.The Advocate, February 12 1953, p.15.

29.Interview between Alice Evans and Brigida Nailon, 21 February 1992.

30.La Grange Chronicle. ADB.

31.La Grange Chronicle. ADB.

32.Hügel to Raible, 7 August 1955. ADB.

33.R M Berndt and Catherine Berndt (eds), *Aborigines of the West, Their Past and Present*, Nedlands, Univ. W.A., 1979. p.296.

34.C D Rowley, *The Remote Aborigines*. Middlesex, Penguin, 1976, p.263.

35.La Grange Chronicle. ADB.

36.Raible to Hügel, 14 May 1956. ADB.

LUMKO INTERNATIONAL COURSE NEW ZEALAND

Some of the New Zealand people who did the Lumko International Course at Kincumber (NSW) in 1990 are organising another course in New Zealand this year. Fr Anslem Prior ofm, the director of the Lumko Institute in South Africa, will be present once more as chief presenter.

Venue: Stella Maris Conference Centre
16 Fettes Crescent
SEATOUN, WELLINGTON 3
NEW ZEALAND

Dates: Evening 31 May 1993 till morning 24 June

Applications:

by: 28 February

to:

Sr Stephanie Kitching rsm
Religious Education Catholic Centre
Box 1937
WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND

Applications should be accompanied by a short statement as to how one would expect to gain from the course; also a reference from an appropriate religious or ecclesiastical authority.

Cost:

\$NZ1250.00, including a non-refundable deposit of
\$NZ50.00 payable upon application.

Application forms and brochures describing the course are obtainable from Sr Kitching.

TYRANNY OF SUPPOSITION — SUPPOSITION OF TYRANNY?

NOEL McMASTER CSsR

AS MALCOLM FRASER taught us a few years ago, a catchy phrase such as 'life wasn't meant to be easy', even if not altogether original, can be preserved and seen to generate a lot of cultural currency. So when the 'tyranny of supposition' fell upon a meeting of priests in the Broome Diocese a few months ago, the minutes secretary thought it was worth preserving as a passionate comment on at least some of one priest's mission experience over nearly forty years.

Subsequent discussion has not quite identified the supposition to the satisfaction of all, and hence has not confirmed the tyranny either; in fact, there is a feeling that the chiasmus in the title of this article is well justified. Since however, our Broome Diocese is embarking on a thorough program of Review and Renewal in the spirit of Evangelisation 2000, I think it is worth keeping the phrase in circulation; there may be something to learn from it.

At the outset I should say I believe there has been something of a tyranny of supposition in the mission or evangelising style of many of us. Readers of my article, 'Cross-Cultural Mission', in *Nelen Yubu* no. 42, may recognise there the lineaments of a tyranny in terms of what Juan Luis Segundo calls faith and ideology: our experience within a dominant culture too easily leads us to suppose that similar values across cultures are present, and that when values are thus loosely identified there should be

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identical ways of expression and realization. Some values related to contemporary child-encounters as described in Kununurra are two ready examples of false suppositions.

The Supposition

But here I would like to unwrap the 'tyranny of supposition' in more generally evangelising terms, and my thesis is that generally in our mission to Aboriginal people we have supposed we have had the whole truth and a well defined method of truth-telling and celebrating beyond dispute or question. Though I will make various references to tyranny in the course of this article, each reader will no doubt make his or her own judgment on both the thesis and the matter of tyranny.

Without any sense of recrimination therefore, since this is my story as much as anyone's, missionaries in the past can be seen to have gone into the field to find people to convert to christianity. The 'good news' was proclaimed and people were prepared for baptism. Other sacraments followed, accompanied by more or less instruction, with the Mass occupying a central place according to our Catholic tradition. We then supposed we had done a good-job, or at least had done our best, in the only way possible by adhering to the teachings of our faith and its moral code. Thus was built up the membership of the Church which could then be gathered together from time to time for ritual celebration and, in the case of many children especially, a membership that could be further instructed in a classroom setting.

In hindsight the above supposition invites many questions, and especially so in the light of a fairly recent joint document, *Dialogue and Proclamation*, from the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious dialogue. (19 May, 1991). This document speaks of a 'theology of history' as a patristic offering to the Church, and adds 'the same patristic current, whose importance is not to be underestimated, may be said to culminate in Augustine who in his later works stressed the universal presence and influence of the mystery of Christ even before the Incarnation. In fulfilment of his plan of salvation, God, in his Son, has reached out to the whole of humankind. Thus in a certain sense, christianity already existed "at the beginning of the human race"'. (1 (A) - A Christian approach to religious traditions).

Questions

Some of the questions alluded to above can now be listed in an effort to test the supposition:

1. In meeting people to be evangelised, how conscious were we of the possibility of grace, and how respectful were we of their freedom, with or without grace?
2. A corollary of (1) – how anthropologically aware were we, seeking to identify genuine human values and their expression through language and in culture generally?
3. Was any celebration of baptism seen simply as salvation within the Church, or did it engage people on the level of value and conversion to universal Kingdom values to be teased out within a particular culture?
4. Did catechesis proceed with due regard for a hierarchy of truths and a respect for long established Catholic moral principles?
5. In the development of liturgy and other christian ritual celebrations and ministries, has there been a genuine inculturation of the christian gospel, or to use another expression from the unnamed inspirer of this article, has a tentative 'innovative but safe' attitude been our guiding rule?

Because of the dynamic quality of life in any given context it is difficult to give cut and dried answers to any of the above questions. But they can be addressed honestly to help assess our suppositions and to free ourselves and our interlocutors from any semblance of tyranny. My purpose generally is focussed on evangelisation among Aboriginal peoples, but not exclusively so.

Theological Awareness

As noted above I have already written of my context here in Kununurra, in Nelen Yubu no. 42, and earlier in no. 11. In the earlier number, I dealt briefly with the graced quality of our lives across cultures, drawing on the theology of Karl Rahner which is surely in line with the Augustinian conviction that in a certain sense christianity already existed 'at the beginning of the human race'. If one can approach evangelisation in this

spirit then one is surely starting with a supposition free of tyranny. At the same time we need not be so naïve as to overlook the possibility of a certain falling from grace.

Anthropological Awareness

Anthropological awareness requires a very much *in situ* assessment. I for one have not been able to acquire language skills, and even though the local Miriwoong language is nowadays largely confined to ritual occasions and the subject of a belated attempt at retrieval in a Language Centre, its absence must suggest a degree of tyranny in the way an evangeliser proceeds.

But even where language is diminished as an issue, contemporary evangelising insights will require us to accept that our gospel must at some time be interpreted in an anthropological key. This means that the gospel of Jesus, especially as understood by the apostle Paul, is a challenge to people of all cultures at all times to assess human values against one basic human attitude: no genuine and integrating love for another will ever be wasted. This is so because in christian faith there is a Kingdom to come in which all injustice and exploitation will yield to a love whose source is the triune God. And the absolute guarantee, or witness, of such a reading of human history is Jesus of Nazareth.

In every age christian anthropology takes the above meaning structure and proposes it to people whose lives unfold in such diverse ways, yet always with the same outcome: awareness grows and sooner or later they make a faith wager on what they have calculated to be worthwhile. The role of the evangeliser is surely crucial, and we must suppose, always requires openness and continuing critical self-assessment within the tradition which stems from Jesus himself. In this vein of critical self-awareness it must encourage us to ponder Jesus' own growth in awareness as revealed in the gospel story of the Canaanite woman whose faith was praised as Jesus himself overcame a certain cultural tyranny. (Cf. Mtt. Ch. 15).

Church Membership I

This level of discussion naturally leads into the question of baptism and membership of the Church. What we have come to call a 'theology from above' tends to deal with the Incarnation of Jesus in realms prior to or beyond the mystery of grace created for men and women in history. It is

therefore seen by many to take Jesus out of history and thus to accommodate a view of baptism as security and title to ultimate salvation amidst the mix of frequently alluring temptations and the vicissitudes of daily living. Christian life and membership of the Church then come to be seen as a minimum disposition undertaking with an all-round sufficiency of sacramental excursions to ensure a future maximum peopling of the heavenly city. I know of many pastors who labour in this kind of context, often across cultures, with a sense of tyranny: is precipitate baptising on often unexpected request and later mustering of the baptised for vague expressions of salvation-oriented religiosity what the gospel is really about? In such circumstances what has happened to the anthropological gospel key?

On the other hand a 'theology from below' (cf. the 'theology of history' — Dialogue ad proclamation) seeks to balance personal salvation with involvement in the project of Jesus: through a conversion of hearts there will be a promotion of those values that speak especially in favour of the exploited and marginalised. (Cf. The Beatitudes in both Matthew and Luke as blessedness here and now as well as hereafter). This project-involvement will not be measured solely in what we as evangelisers, may be privileged to experience in particular 'church' contexts where there is a sense of our gospel taking on. Indeed in many settings today, cross-cultural and otherwise, it may have to mean that we assume a role of being merely interested and concerned onlookers, or ready helpers in particular 'non-church' projects, and willing parties to a future dialogue if an invitation is forthcoming. But if that is the case, at least the common value engaged will be true freedom for all, for us a fruit of our own conversion to the gospel and a worthy proclamation in itself that all are called to experience the freedom of being God's children. Church membership in such settings may seem to be put on hold, but I believe, with good cause. Before however, developing that, a word on the next question.

Hierarchy of Truths

The implication so far is that much of our approach to a 'theology of history' and subsequently to evangelising and church membership has meant an experience of some tyranny for both so-called evangelisers and those being evangelised. An honest response to our fourth question will, I believe, confirm a supposition of tyranny.

The existence of a 'hierarchy of truths' is affirmed in Vatican II's decree on Ecumenism, no.11: there is 'an order or "hierarchy" of truths, since they vary in their relationship to the foundation of the christian faith'. However, I suspect that our catechesis has often pushed dogmas to the limit and overlooked some moral traditions to the detriment of so many people. Hence we have had catechetical saturations often issuing in piety and devotions too easily divorced from the real world with its personal struggles and structural evils. A Catholic in-house attraction to medals and beads and a predilection for legalistic sacramental practices has accompanied the sad spectacle of too many people languishing unnecessarily in so-called sinful situations.

Somehow we have lost sight of guidelines given by teachers such as Pius XII, e.g. in one famous address to Italian jurists. Taking up Pius XII's address, Cardinal Lercaro tried to develop the Pope's point that tolerance of error was not only a lesser evil, but could even be the greater good. As Juan Luis Segundo writes, Lercaro 'noted that it [the Pope's teaching] was not based on the commonly accepted notion of respect for the freedom of the erring person (cf. below). Paradoxically enough, it was really based on respect for the truth — not for the truth in itself but for the way in which truth reaches human beings.' There is always a calculus involved in assessing truths and making them one's own: 'for the things we really get control over are things with which we make mistakes first and then learn to handle correctly.' (Segundo).

Sexuality and interpersonal and marital relationships, I suppose, are uppermost in our minds in this kind of discussion, and not simply in cross-cultural situations. But attention to our authentic traditions will give us heart and forbearance in a scene of often considerable confusion. Moreover, to suppose that people are always free in this quest for truth is to overlook the insights of Alphonsus Liguori, saint, and patron of moral theologians. Alphonsus recognised that while people are born with the potential of acting freely and personally, as against choosing to reduce the gifts of creation to playthings or instruments, one's culture, education, opportunities in life — and today we would add structural evils — may well diminish freedom, even to the point of what we call 'invincible ignorance'. This means that particular perceptions of moral reality are thoroughly clouded, but without fault; and I remember a learned Redemptorist confrere once writing that in such situations Alphonsus could be interpreted as

teaching that God enters into 'sympathetic partnership' with such people even in their error. And that is surely a liberating supposition to work with!

Church Membership II

Here our suppositions about church membership reappear. We easily forget that God's grace has been given, as Augustine taught, long before the emergence of the Church, and we go about our evangelising as though all without exception must be included within the visible Church, there to measure up, invincible ignorance notwithstanding. In the real world of learning to learn or 'learning by mistakes' this creates two difficulties: how to accommodate those who don't pass the tests for even minimal sacramental participation, and how to preserve an image of the Church as appearing at a particular point of history not to maximise membership, but to dialogue with the world at large about human destiny, as Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes* reminds us.

A renewed effort then, to recapture the meaning of *sentire cum ecclesia* — to think with the church — will help to cleanse our suppositions as we continue to evangelise in a world of mixed human motivation and varied opportunities for moral growth. If we envisage the Church as a leaven for society in our times we will be in harmony with the 'universal presence and influence of the mystery of Christ', and we will not be led to dilute the notion of membership, only to be vexed by the ensuing pastoral conundrums. Our liberating tradition is carried by the likes of Augustine and Alphonsus who have spoken eloquently of God's care for those who may be beyond our reach culturally or not within the normal ways of caring pastorally. Visible membership remains secondary.

For all that, in many fluid gatherings of God's pilgrim people we know only too well in our contemporary Church, the scene fortunately, 'occasionally', is usually true to our tradition. Some pastors may continue the struggle to preserve what others see as inherited and deficiently legalistic suppositions. But at least for the moment, for a particular occasion such as Sunday Eucharist and, let it be said, often with the concerned connivance of leadership, most 'in fact' recognise that the Holy Spirit is not confined by imperfect human ideologies. Bad faith aside, and saving earlier comments on a disturbing 'vague religiosity' which is perhaps best dealt with in the bud, in the words of the old dictum, sacraments, like The Sacrament, are in the end for people. Thus too, it should be added, any

suggestion of elitism in supposing the Church to be primarily a leaven while numbers are secondary is laid to rest. Equally, because being a leaven is a conscious, Spirit-driven role, we cannot be complacent in a flukey outcome. It is never good enough to be right for good reasons we have forgotten or overlooked.

Inculturation

Much, if not all, of what has been said so far is readily assumed under the heading of inculturation, although I suspect we mostly use the word in a ritual and liturgical context. At any rate we come to the final question which asked, have we been tormented by a need to be 'innovative but safe' in liturgy and celebration?

No doubt most of us have been innovative at one time or another, juggling and juxtaposing symbols and even incompatible rites, introducing a range of local rhythms, and encouraging community preparations and active participation in singing and dancing. In all of this some few indeed have been acquainted with and even fluent in language. But the innovation has in the end been safely contained in a generally Roman Ritual alien to Aboriginal law and lore. This suggests to me that we have been like the 'daring' young man on the flying trapeze who is always conscious of his need of a safety net to which he inevitably drops to be at home again.

But those we would celebrate with in liturgy are figuratively at home 'up there'; they don't need our safety net. Or to follow Carlos Maesters (*Nelen Yubu*, no.49, p.9), they (Aboriginal peoples, indeed all peoples) live and move with the meanings of their myths and rituals as insiders, which is marvelously imaged by the spider spinning and living uniquely within its web. Having seen others momentarily and always imperfectly at home with them in their web of life and celebrating 'good news', cannot new 'hearers of the word' now celebrate it from within, acknowledging the uniqueness of God's Good Word in Jesus proclaimed by the Church?

Conclusion

This seems to bring us to some kind of frontier which as yet has not been adequately mapped. Church teaching and theological reflection remain in process as indicated by prominent missiologist, Robert Schreiter, who, noting that 'work is just beginning on a theology of inculturation',

adds 'how the diversity of cultures will impact upon our understanding of revelation, of Christology, of the meaning of grace, not to mention theological anthropology, still awaits greater exploration'. Somewhere in there we can add 'our liturgy' with the fond hope there will be no tyranny from any quarters.

Useful Readings:

Dialogue and Proclamation, Rome, May 1991.

J L Segundo, *The Hidden Motives of Pastoral Action*, Orbis Books, New York, 1978.

R J Schreiter, 'Faith and Cultures: Challenges to a World Church', in *Theological Studies*, December 1989.

* * * * *

NOTICE:
Research Project:
People of God

The Aachen Missiological Institute, Missio, is sponsoring a theological research project on the development of the church, more specifically, of the *particular* churches under the influence of the '*Communio*' theology that came out of Vatican II.

The central, but not exclusive, interest zone is constituted by particular churches in developing countries. The research project was initially oriented toward the churches in Africa. A comparative element was an integral part of the project from the beginning. The development of the churches in Africa was to be correlated with similar happenings in some selected European churches.

During 1991 interest in the project was extended to the Pacific region. In February of that year Dr Hermann Janssen, of Missio Aachen, met at Goroka, PNG, with a number of research oriented people to discuss the proposed extension of the research to include churches in the Pacific area. Our meeting, briefly, was a bit short on representation and over ambitious in planning!

Early last year Dr Janssen returned. He himself travelled to various Pacific countries—Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, PNG, Australia—to help us reorganise the project and stir up wider interest.

The results of the Pacific studies will be published in booklet form by Nelen Yubu. There will probably be a conference in Cameroon during the second half of this year to enable us to put it all together, the African, Pacific and European elements in comparative and correlating stance.

I personally, besides caring for the publication of the Pacific area results, am responsible for some research into the Australian scene. This note is partly to inform, but it is also very much a plea for suggestions from readers and other interested persons!

Martin Wilson msc

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK...

Errata

In *Nelen Yubu* no. 51 there was a misprint in Fr Brian McCoy's article, '*Aboriginal Catholics and the Permanent Diaconate: Service or Servitude?*' p.7: the words 'Anglican Catholic Church' should have read 'Australian Catholic Church'. We regret this inadvertent error and apologise to Fr McCoy and our readers. It was discovered too late to be corrected in issue no. 52.

Greetings and Things

What an avalanche of cards, wishes, Masses and novenas offered; generous remarks and spirited banter from so many readers! Thank you, indeed, from the *Nelen Yubu* staff, for your thoughtfulness.

Good news that Fr John Fallon is holding his own and even tells me he will be in Leura again before long. I saw him twice in hospital, where he is having excellent treatment.

My special thanks to Frs Doug Smith and Roy O'Neill for their frequent hospitality to me at 'Dadirri', for which I am very grateful. They even tried to teach me to play 500!

Cobwebs

All my life I have been terrified of spiders. Even running into a web made me shriek in terror at the thought of the sticky thread touch-

ing me, or worse, leaving its weaver to scale my hair or lie buried in my clothes — hidden, waiting to pounce!

When I went to the missions in the NT I was very happy to find so few spiders anywhere in the Top End. Even tramping through the bush I rarely saw a web, let alone an arachnid. But I didn't let this lull me into false security: ever watchful, just in case.

While living on Melville Island we often took our boat across to Bathurst Island to fish for barramundi. Up the rivers we went, chugging along far into the reaches, and many beautiful barra we landed and brought home for delicious meals, not only for ourselves but also for friends at Pularumpi and Darwin.

Once, trolling idly along in Mrs Best's Creek we turned off to a smaller tributary where the banks sloped uphill and the trees came down to the water's edge: some of them mangroves, some tall gums, and everywhere very thick undergrowth. Suddenly I froze. Confronting us was a blanket of cobwebs — a great enormous grey mass of web, stretching up the bank higher than the wall of a house and completely covering the entire trees so that I couldn't see through them. It was incredible! How could those evil webs get there in such density, so thick and menacing? And worst of all —

where were the spiders? They must have been as big as bats to weave webs like that. I'd heard of spiders that ate birds, and some that went fishing — but all of them from the tiniest money-spider to enormous monsters were the same to me. Shuddering, I sat in the boat staring at the ghastly sight.

"I don't like this creek — let's go!". And since I was operating the rudder, we did a quick turnabout and sped away from that dreadful, haunted place. For countless nights I had petrifying dreams of spiders with big purple eyes sliding precariously down those grey wall-hangings, looking for me. In subsequent trips we occasionally saw this phenomenon to a lesser degree in other creeks, but I managed to steer us away very smartly; and I always had those nightmares afterwards.

Last year I went walking in the bush of the Blue Mountains, far out in rugged ranges where rushing creeks sparkled into waterfalls, where the going was rough and in the distance we could hear the howling of wild dogs. One of our party was a bit scared of the dogs but they didn't worry me. Mooching along I lost my footing and crashed into a swampy hole, landing among wet green ferns. Lying there to get my breath, while startled, right in front of my face I beheld a beautiful sight! A tiny square of gossamer, woven into little shapes with reinforced corners instead of the usual circular trap, lay across a few inches of fern. It still glinted with dew from

the early morning mist and it looked so fragile and inoffensive that, instead of shrieking for help, I just crouched there mesmerised. How could I ever have been afraid of such a beautiful work of nature? Dare I touch it?

Someone shouted from the hillside and I called back that I'd soon be up. Breathing on the little web, I longed to touch it — not even wondering where its builder was. Spellbound, I was captivated.

But I couldn't touch it. It was a spider's web, wasn't it, and spiders were my mortal enemies. Climbing out of the bog I struggled up the hill. But something had happened, some uneasy truce had wedged itself between the powerful antagonists and myself.

Eventually on another trek I realised that a great load had been lifted from my mind. It was while walking through the forest, this time high on a ridge above deep gorges, that I felt a single web blow across my face. Stockstill, heart pounding, I let it float away before pushing on in the warm sunshine. No ghastly shriek. No terrorstruck call for help. Had I beaten the curse? Was the spell broken? I wondered. . .

Just the same, I never again want to see those terrible cobwebbed banks on the northern rivers of Bathurst Island, across the Apsley Strait from Pularumpi!

Best wishes for a happy 1993.

Secretary Keren