

Editorial

What an important period this first part of 1997 has been!

In Melbourne May 26-28 was held the Australian Reconciliation Convention, which hopefully might lead to a renewal of our nation. For possibilities, look again at Chapter 14, 'Australia of the Future', of Eugene Stockton's *The Aboriginal Gift: spirituality for a nation* (1995). I offer some observations about the convention in the opening paper of this issue of Nelen Yubu.

For me, one of the most important statements made at the convention was Rev. Djiniyini Gondarra's, to the effect that all people born in this land have 'tasted of the spirituality of this land'. *Pace* Dr Stanner, but White Man *has* got a dreaming, if he is willing to accept the gift being offered to him with extraordinary generosity by the original people of this land. — A particular part of this gift is being explored by Dan O'Donovan: the gift of *dadirri*.

Another important event for NYMU and the Australian MSC Province was the Provincial Missions Conference held at *Genazzano*, the Cairns diocesan centre 14-20 April. Fifty-five MSCs from Japan, NT, PNG, the Central Pacific and the provincial administration gathered to discern our missionary directions. The last time was in 1973 in Port Moresby. Among other things, we noted a dramatic change in our role as evangelisers. Gone are the days of claiming complete massive tracts of country as our exclusive bailiwick. Today we are more aware of the implication of Christ's images for the kingdom: salt, leaven, light. This issue offers some further thoughts about evangelisation: the need to ensure that it is genuine, rooted in life and culture, not just nice displays (McMaster); and the ambiguity of being an inter-cultural worker (Goldman).

Nelen Yubu, in response, sees its function as having broadened. It will attempt to serve the wider area of our MSC missionary interests: PNG, Japan, Central Pacific, India besides Aboriginal Australia.

— Martin Wilson msc

Inculturation

Faith at Work in Life and Rite

Noel McMaster CSsR

AT THE conclusion of his comprehensive description of the 1996 episcopal ordination of Christopher Saunders within the frequently used Kimberley 'Missa Bidyadanga', (*Nelen Yubu* - No.64)², Matthew Digges expresses the hope that 'a realistic discussion on inculturation' might follow.

In launching into such a discussion I presume the reader will have access to Matthew's article and will readily agree that the phrase 'mosaic liturgy' as found in Anscar Chupungco's writing is an apt description of that celebration at Broome in February, 1996. Chupungco observes that a mosaic liturgy arises out of a valid desire for and pursuit of liturgical pluralism; it is a 'liturgical celebration produced as it were, by the process of inlaying bits of various cultural traditions in the structure of the rite.' He further notes the risk involved in such an enterprise, but adds, 'risk is no reason why new things should not be tried, provided they fall within the confines of doctrinal orthodoxy, liturgical authenticity, and pastoral concern.'

Working backwards in this Broome instance, pastoral concern was clearly the motivation for the inclusion of particular components of the final mosaic. Liturgical authenticity on this occasion was readily suggested in the identifiable dynamic equivalents from culture to culture, and indeed, in the *Missa Bidyadanga* itself as a plausible inculturation of the Roman Rite of Mass. The third confine,

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²Mistakenly attributed to Noel McMaster by editorial error! — Editor.

however, doctrinal orthodoxy, invites a further examination of the inculturation of Christian faith as it moves through life into an eucharistic celebration often called its source and summit.

What I am proposing then in this article, is that the discussion on inculturation hoped for by Matthew Digges must return to the various Kimberley scenes of first evangelisation, or in the usage of the last few years, to the contemporary scenes of second, new, or re-evangelisation as these present the challenge of authentic inculturation (and interculturalisation, as we shall see). In these evangelising scenes I am taking doctrinal orthodoxy as assent in faith to the teaching on paschal grace as revealed in Christ, while also noting the inseparability of appropriate cultural commitment to this mystery in life. Our probing instruments for the task can be found in mutually supporting guidelines, the first from an address by that champion of orthodoxy, Joseph Ratzinger, and the second, dealing with the orthopraxis of lived commitment, from an article by Aloysius Pieris. By way of localising the discussion, I will refer to two scenes of evangelisation/inculturation with which I am familiar, that of Kununurra where I have just concluded twelve years as parish priest, and that of Doon Doon-Warrmarn within the Halls Creek parish to which I have recently moved.

The Guidelines

1. Joseph Ratzinger, quoted in *Origins*, 1995, p.680, writes, 'The programme of inculturation only then makes sense if no injustice is done to a culture when, due to the universal human disposition towards truth, it is opened up and further developed by a new cultural power. It would follow too that whatever in culture excludes such opening and exchange marks what is deficient in the culture, for exclusion of the other goes against man's nature.' Further in this light, Ratzinger speaks of 'understanding better the possible inter-communication of cultures which the term inculturation must mean.' In fact he promotes the term interculturality, the meeting of cultures:

'only if all cultures are potentially universal and open to each other can interculturality lead to flourishing new forms.'

2. Aloysius Pieris, (Vidyajyoti, Nov.'93), in speaking of inculturation develops his approach from a specifically Indian experience. He believes the eucharist (so often our first image when we hear of inculturation) will always be a sign of inculturated faith, or not, but that inculturation must begin with life and be proclamational within the world of the would-be inculturating believers. 'A group of us made a survey some years ago about the reaction of non-Christians to the Mass celebrated through television. The findings have confirmed what I am saying now,' that is, 'proclamation is not proselytism. We [Indians] convert ourselves to the Kingdom values of other religions, and through them express the mystery of Christ so that God's Reign may become a reality among our people. This is the inculturation of the Liturgy of Life.'

Pieris further notes, 'inculturation is a natural process which cannot be artificially induced. It cannot and should not be the conscious target of any action. It is something that happens unconsciously and spontaneously in the course of our struggle to bring in God's Reign in our local context. [Quite different, then, from a TV presentation of Mass, or indeed any purely occasional ceremony detached from life's culture-bound struggle.] In other words the Liturgy of Life is the primary target of our Christian commitment. Inculturation is its byproduct.' [Parenthesis mine].

The Problings

1. Kununurra as an Aboriginal Kimberley church scene is quite young: thirty years or so for the Miriuwung and Gajerrong peoples, with a Wadeye (Port Keats) influence helping to sustain what little there is of the Christian liturgy of life and rite.

I have described the larger Kununurra church scene as still colonial. When we would sit down for Mass with a handful of people, the Mirima Mob, it was usually on the verandah at the

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Miriuwung/Gajerrong Traditional Owners and Custodians Office. It is from this office that the local native title claim is managed. In the town at large and in the surrounding pastoral district there is general opposition to the claim. During the Mass I often alluded to the claim, but it did not rate as a spontaneous issue for attention and prayer among the participants. The claim is managed otherwise, and that it is so managed carries a subtle message about the enduring effect of our (colonial) catechesis over the years, albeit until recently without the benefit of Mabo. Such catechesis influencing our celebration must now defer to Ratzinger's insistence on cultural openness, in this instance to those signs of the times carried by the Mabo judgment: our engagement in interculturality as non-Aboriginal evangelisers must respect the just place occupied by land in the lives of the Miriuwung/Gajerrong peoples.

From another point of view, however, it did seem to me that there was a degree of interculturality behind the movement of life into rite at our Mass. There was prayer, mostly for the sick, for the drunken humbugs of the night before, and for similar domestic needs. At best I could tell myself that this was an occasion of interculturality touching raw life with its, to me, familiar paschal possibilities, even though it did not engage indigenous story and symbol linked with land which as yet remained separate and seasonal. But because this latter aspiration to land, so vital to indigenous culture, continues to find its expression away from the Christian liturgy of the Mass, and as already noted is opposed by many local Christians, then in Pieris' approach the proclamational value of such liturgy to the indigenous world is brought into question.

On these two scores, i.e. because of what I have called a colonial catechesis and the suspect effectiveness of the liturgical proclamation, both due to our exclusion of the significance of land and its ownership in Aboriginal culture, we have risked a dimming of the light of doctrinal orthodoxy, a crippling of the lived reality of paschal grace. We all celebrated the rite of the

eucharist, but in life we non-Aborigines were not emptying ourselves of a hurtful cultural exclusion (cf. Ratzinger), while our gatherings as consequently poor proclamations of gospel justice (enshrined in land rights) could be excusably adjudged as proselytism by those not moved to attend (cf. Pieris).

What I am proposing admittedly comes in part from the availability of hindsight. Nevertheless if it is directed by the openness/exclusion and proclamation/proselytism probes of our guidelines it is worth pursuing. It is only a genuine and thorough inculturation which can prepare for the flourishing new forms that might flow from God's Reign introducing truly inculturated paschal grace. In this vein I mention the local Catholic school as part of the parish evangelising scene. In its own way it shared in our shaky doctrinal orthodoxy and orthopraxis. The School Newsletter from time to time announced to all and sundry that there would be a class 'liturgy', a school 'liturgy' etc., with these organised by teachers who generally belonged with the rest of us in the largely colonial ethos of Kununurra. Naturally, when school celebrations were well attended, e.g. that marking the paschal events of Easter, there was little proclamational value in it for the indigenous onlookers. Back at places like the Mirima Village — one of the local Aboriginal residentials — life experience did not relate to what was celebrated in the 'liturgies'. Accordingly with a management of faith in life and rite akin to the adult Mirima scene already described, and on Pieris' vital proclamation test, there was minimal authentic inculturation.

2. This excursion backwards from rite to first or new evangelising scenes and our probing of orthodoxy and orthopraxis as the ultimate criteria for authentic inculturation can now be directed to the south of Kununurra, to the communities of Doon Doon and Warrmarn. The people here, especially at Warrmarn, project a Catholic presence developed over the past twenty years or so. They have a reputation for innovative ritual and artistic presentation of the Christian

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mysteries. I have seen a baptism rite for a ceremony at Doon Doon which included a fire blessing, the liberal use of bush oils on the baby, the *bundawela* for the baby's forehead, and according to the text the mother would baptise the baby. All the priest did as far as I could see from the text was, at the M.C.'s direction, ask a few credal questions. On various other celebratory occasions Warrmarn's Christian art and creative corroboree are central, while at the end of a life I have heard there can be quite moving, inculturated funeral services.

In my opinion the Warrmarn experience can take us to the heart of inculturation and the challenging issues of openness and exclusion within cultures that either already claim to be or, through interculturality are hoped to become, the expression and proclamation of lived Christian faith. A prominent Warrmarn artist and lawman, Hector Sundaloo, I have been told, does not include Joseph in his representation of the nativity of Jesus. This is a mother's domain. Do we have here a clue to the composition of the above-mentioned baptismal rite?

In any sacramental theology we would say that the Warrmarn babies baptised in the rite described are graced and welcomed to the family of believers. But we then must ask what is happening later on with initiation of boys when the women give them back to the men and their law with its 'kukpum darwung' (secret place and law)? Whether or not our western theological understanding of paschal grace suffers from this cultural imperative of secrecy — cf. Ratzinger's openness and exclusion guideline — at the very least what is done in the name of inculturation at baptism cannot overlook the later indigenous cultural events of significance. And this will apply all the way to death with its rituals that can suggest the inherent — even essential according to Tony Swain in his 'A Place for Strangers' — value of place for one's final spiritual rest, as well as place's role in the reincarnation of spirits, the *wupilirri* in Miriuwung, the *jarrinye* in Kija (cf. *Aborigines and Mining*, Eds. Dixon and Dillon).

As a matter of fact a chapter of significance in the work just mentioned (Dixon and Dillon, eds) is that which outlines as late as 1980 the traditional beliefs and cultural customs of the Warrarn people who were dealing with mining company, CRA, and their proposed diamond mine. In this chapter there is significantly no mention of any interculturality with Christianity as it was present in their community at that time. The question has to be asked, are there two worlds here, two world views? There clearly have been, at least till the recent past, so the further question, are those baptised and especially those baptising as in the rite already mentioned, professing a Catholic faith really inculturated, or are they keeping separate the independent integrity of their Aboriginal world view as an ultimate, and for whatever reason drawing on it with or without encouragement for occasional Christian celebrations? And further, then, can these Christian celebrations also represent and communicate to others the ultimate value in their lives (which here has to be grace understood somehow as both universally paschal and a locally proclaimed liberation for all)? These are not easy questions for interculturality: they raise the possibility, in secret rite, of that kind of exclusion which as Ratzinger says goes against human nature (and grace). No less easy is the issue of an inculturating praxis of justice to enable true gospel proclamation which as Pieris says must surpass mere proselytism.

The Indications

Dealing with inculturation in response to Matthew Digges' article has taken us beyond laudable pastoral motivations and dynamic cultural equivalents to the heart of world views and ultimate values. It has led us to consider paschal grace as the basic faith issue of a vital interculturality which we hope can give rise across cultures to a first or re-evangelisation that embraces both dialogue and effective proclamation. I propose two outcomes of my attempt at furthering the serious discussion

Matthew hoped for, one to do with interculturalisation, the other to do with evangelisation.

Inculturation

1. In a world culture which is more and more seen as both evolutionary and entropic (involving the gradual loss of energy, death), it would seem that the Christian paschal mystery is quite at home. In the death of Jesus Christ we believe a new threshold of resurrection was crossed. In our age the evolutionary paradigm should help us to deal with the challenges that confront us in facing new thresholds in our intercultural dialogues about faith and the reasons for living and dying. For example, a nuanced acceptance of evolution from the scientific culture of our times is an expression of that openness called for by Ratzinger. We are now able to read our creation stories against the backdrop of a scientific evolutionary explanation, without losing the enduring exploratory character of the Genesis accounts. (The exploratory/explanatory duo has appeared in our vocabulary just as first and second naïveté did earlier on to allow for the critical attitudes which have helped us recognise the relative while continuing to respect the essential doctrine of [paschal] grace firmly implanted in our creation myths and other biblical stories).

In the same way Ratzinger's view of interculturality as the source of authentic inculturation should prompt us to encourage openness in the telling and re-telling of what Aboriginal culture calls Dreamings or Dreaming stories. Instead of being drawn, sometimes naïvely and uncritically, into their world of myth, dance and art with all its possibilities of dynamic equivalence, should we not first be promoting and enabling those conditions which canvas the value of a second naïveté in Aboriginal culture? Until explanation can in some degree meet and measure mythic exploration we will continue to operate and to relate across our cultures under the spectre of dualism — the possibility of two distinct world views.

The suspicion of dualism can be exemplified in this extract, hardly novel, describing Warrmarn culture at the time of negotiation with CRA over the diamond mine: 'The narrative sequences that tell the story of the journeys of the snake are typified by frequent and specific place name referents. At these various named places the snake stopped, made a camp, and urinated in the morning, creating the spring or water course which is to be found at the place to this day. Tellers of the stories frequently employ stylised markers in the narration of the myth to indicate the progress of the snake across the country...The spirituality of the snake and the esoteric rituals associated with mythologies we have outlined here constitute a body of religious knowledge that concerns matters which are "dangerous" and "powerful".' (Dixon and Dillon, Eds. p.22-23). The task of interculturality here is clear: to promote open, critical thought, and to entertain the desirability of facing up to any possible exclusions (the esoteric rituals?) which go against human nature and (paschal) grace.

Evangelisation

2. If the openness of interculturality is at the heart of authentic inculturation, a proclamation in line with gospel conversion and commitment that speaks to culture is the first test of its authenticity. As Pieris has said, the liturgy of life precedes rite, and is fashioned in paschal willingness both to affirm gospel values already in a culture, e.g. the justice of land rights aspirations, and to challenge anomalies in any culture which might obstruct or negate evangelisation in any way at any stage. An example of the latter might be that of the oppressed becoming the oppressor as in family control and conflicts (and kinship related co-dependencies) which are contrary to shared paschal grace; the departure from orthopraxis in turn precludes the doctrinal orthodoxy belonging to true inculturation.

To underscore the scope of this second indication, it is worth recording a comment relating to Pieris' own Asian context. It

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comes from a recent meeting of The Asian Liturgy Forum and is reported thus in *Liturgy News*, Dec.'96, p.10: 'when the evangelisation of Asia took place...instead of the creation of an inculturated liturgy, there took place a transplanted of a ritual system formulated in another culture. Only when the gap between culture and christian cult is bridged will the people of Asia recognise Christ as he breaks bread in their midst. Until this is realised, the participation of Asians in worship is in many ways superficial. Thus the link between inculturation and evangelisation was highlighted.'

They might well have said a second or re-evangelisation, because that is where I believe we all need to be today in our intercultural undertakings in faith (orthopraxis and orthodoxy) as discussed in this article: they in their Asian context and we in all our differing contexts in the Kimberley Church. The well known lament of 'faith separated from culture' has been the negative leitmotif of my discussion: faith variously distanced from culture as continuing colonial or mythically unmoved; faith facing a culture of calculated corporatism, or familial dysfunction through conflict. Faith as the positively new cultural power of transformation (Ratzinger) can only be realized by revisiting and learning again from the Kingdom testaments (Pieris) of the very first evangelisation.

Spirituality for Life and Rite

It has been said that a spirituality in any culture is what gets us up in the morning and keeps us going till meal time.

To conclude my discussion of inculturation I would like to refer to a spirituality inherent in the Lord's Prayer, the Our Father. There we have the inculturated words and aspirations of the first of all evangelisers who placed his work before his Father in heaven.

The Father's name is to be held holy. Commenting on Yahweh's response to Moses in the book of Exodus when Moses asked for his name, Juan Luis Segundo interprets with

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the Jerusalem Bible Commentary that 'I am who I am' is 'first an evasive or negative answer, as the context brings out, meaning: "I won't tell you". But it also suggests that to gain knowledge of Yahweh one must look and see what Yahweh is for this people in history.' In the Father's name, then, Jesus continues this tradition in history by announcing the arrival of the Kingdom to those who have cultural openness to the values proclaimed in this Kingdom: thy Kingdom come.

God's secret carried forward in his love and fidelity is thus progressively announced through Kingdom praxis, that action which lives the truth that our deeds done in a spirit of gospel conversion have value which is sealed absolutely in the paschal action of Jesus of Nazareth: thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Kingdom praxis is then seen to be also tied in with the winning of daily bread for all as strength to pursue and sustain those values which belong to God's reign in particular cultures: give us this day our daily bread.

At the end, or towards the end of any day, this bread, won and available in justice, is destined to be broken in inculturated eucharist with a confidence that what is thus celebrated will powerfully proclaim the loving presence of Jesus' Pasch remembered.

USEFUL READING

- RATZINGER, Cardinal J. 'Christ, Faith and the Challenge of Cultures', in *Origins*, 1995, Vol.24: No.41, pp.679-686.
- PIERIS sj, A 'Inculturation: Some Critical Reflections', in *Vidyajyoti*, 1993, Vol.LVII, No.11, pp.641-651.
- CHUPUNGO osb, A *Worship: 'Beyond Inculturation'*, The Pastoral Press, 1994, (especially the last two chapters).
- ABORIGINES AND MINING* (Dixon & Dillon, Eds), Uni. of W.A. Press, (especially Chapter 2).
- McMASTER cssr, N 'Between Cultures', in *Liturgy News*, 1995, Vol.25, No.2, pp.12-13.

'Mission in a Post-Modern World: A Call to be Counter-Cultural' — a synopsis

[In May this year, 1997, fifty-five Australian MSCs involved in evangelisation *ad Gentes* met for a Provincial Conference near Cairns, Queensland. We used this paper of Michael Amaladoss sj to help us discern our way. This synopsis was presented at the conference as a basis for discussion. It was found to be very helpful.]

1. Our MSC Founder, Jules Chevalier, related his apostolic vision to the signs of the times.

Michael Amaladoss sj reads the signs of our times thus: Today God's Good News Kingdom is opposed by the dominant liberal capitalist economic and commercial systems of our societies, often sustained by military systems. 'The poor are not only increasing in number but are becoming poorer.'

- 1) To remedy such ills actively we need to help people
 - i) develop alternative technologies and alternative economic and commercial practices;
 - ii) gain participative control of systems governing lives through developing networks of small counter-cultural groups: a change in world-views and value systems through a cultural transformation: a spirituality that motivates, inspires and enables...

2. Our present world state can be defined as: *Radical Modernity* or *Post-Modernity*

1) *Radical Modernity:*

Science has delivered marvelous control of much of

Published on the Internet by SEDOS, Bulletin on the Net, December 1996. Fr Michael Amaladoss sj served on the General Council of his order. These days he resides at Vidyajoti, College of Theology, 23 Raj Niwas Marg., Delhi 110054, India. The paper was first delivered in Buenos Aires at the IAMS conference at Easter 1996.

nature: in brief, the global community. But globalisation has not brought peace and prosperity, but rather fragmentation and competition for scarce resources. Exploitation and war.

2) *Post-Modernity.*

The 'modern' scientific processes have not delivered peace and prosperity, as they had promised. Rather than progressing we seem to be moving towards self-destruction. The 'modern' ideal has failed. People are searching for other sources of value. The transcendent has refused to disappear. It is a time for pluralism, ethnic, cultural and religious.

'We are therefore living in a moment of crisis and tension between the radical modernity of the scientific-technological world and the post-modernity of the cultural perspectives.'

Traditional groupings have broken down: family, churches, dogmatic systems of belief and control. People are searching for new identities.

'No one seems to emerge with an alternative vision. This is unfortunately true of the Churches too. Though there is much talk of mission, a convincing new vision that one could propose, relevant to the post-modern world, seems lacking.'

3. *Modernity and the Church*

The churches themselves have become compromised with modernity in many ways, endeavouring to show the congruence between science and religion. The vision of mission has been very *colonial*. Significant that people looking for alternatives look towards the Orient for inspiration.

Much talk of pluralism, but are the churches ready to accept cultural and religious pluralism?

'It may also be that my view of the Churches looked at from India, with our experience of continuing economic and cultural colonialism and of a Christian existence that makes us foreigners in our own country seems different from the view had by others looking at it from elsewhere.'

4. Our Mission Today

1) Two clarifications:

i) The Good News directly addresses world-views and value systems of our cultures, and through them seeks to influence our choices in the economic and political spheres. Hence we see *post-modernity* rather than radical modernity as the locus of mission.

ii) The vision of mission in today's world must arise from the point of view of its *victims* — the poor, marginalised, oppressed. [Amaladoss delivered this paper in South America.]

2) Our mission is to offer *an alternative way of living in the world*. Three aspects: affirmation of life, experience of life in community, awareness of transcendence.

5. Affirmation of Life

Modernity has turned everything, including human beings, into *objects* that can be manipulated, quantified.

The Good News affirms life: the value of the human person and creative self-expression. Hence it promotes the richness of cultural diversity and pluralism.

6. Life in Community

1) 'To discover life profoundly is to become aware of it as sharing, as gift, as love, as community.'

The modern stress is on individualism and competition, which generates a culture of *domination* — through economic, political and military power. Modernity prizes aggressive and exploitative domination, *male* characteristics: hence the domination by men of women as a group.

2) Jesus' Vision

Justice, liberation of the poor, a new commandment of love, a community held together by the bonds of love and mutual acceptance. Richly multicultural. The model is not architectonic (building) or organic (tree or body), but

family, viz. the Trinity; "May all be one as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they all be one in us!" (Jn 17:21)

7. An Awareness of Transcendence

1) Modernity produced secularisation: 'It has done away with a God who is simply an image of our ignorance, stepping in to explain what we have not yet discovered.' The incarnation of Jesus means that God is an intrinsic part of human history — *God's secularity.*

'To become aware of the secularity of God is to relativise the religious institutions as special and exclusive mediations of the Sacred. They assume a symbolic role of service.'

8. Challenge of Mission Today

— to be a counter-cultural community that will embody the values of life, community and transcendence, and so witness to and promote the Reign of God in the world. Prophetic.

- 1) not worried about numbers, missionary acreage. A people-centred community rather than institutionalised.
- 2) not liminal communities, but involved in the world, both 'models of' and 'models for' communities of the Reign of God.

'I wonder whether some of the so-called secular institutes or movements, involved in the world in various ways, but representing and offering models for a different way of living, may not be more relevant today than the traditional religious institutes.'

Contrast John the Baptist coming in from the wilderness and Jesus living with the people...

- 3) its favourite self-images will be *leaven, salt or light.* Involved in the course of events, not frightened of conflict...
- 4) not necessarily labelled "Christian". They may belong to other religions, or be multi-religious. This involves a **paradigm shift** i.e. members of other religions or denominations are not seen as our enemies but our allies.

'Our theological reflections are still coming to terms with this shift with questions turning around the uniqueness of Christ... I think we will not solve such questions without a real experience of working with other believers in our common fight with Mammon. Praxis must precede theory. Then we may discover that Christ is present, enabling the people, wherever the power of Mammon is challenged. Our mission to witness to this presence does not allow us to claim exclusive rights to it.

'Conclusion

Let me recall some of the main points I have made by way of conclusion. Though our struggle against Mammon takes primarily economic and political forms, it has to be supported by efforts at cultural transformation. Today there is a tension between the radical modernity of science and technology and the post-modernity in the area of culture. The tension is all the more acute since post-modern trends in culture are not offering an alternate vision for life. This crisis is an opportunity for mission. The alternate way proposed by the Good News of Jesus in dialogue with post-modernity will have, among others, three characteristics: an affirmation of life, an experience of life in community and an awareness of transcendence. To embody these perspectives we need counter-cultural communities, who will be both 'models of' and 'models for' the communities of the Reign of God. They should be neither institutional nor liminal. In today's world such communities will be inter-religious, people of different beliefs and ideologies united in their common struggle against Mammon.'

Martin Wilson msc
Cairns, April 1997

DADIRRI — WHAT NEXT?

Dan O'Donovan

In 1995 a joint conference of clergy and deacons of the Darwin and Broome dioceses was held at Daly River. Frank Fletcher came and did an excellent and much appreciated job as facilitator. Bishop Ted Collins also was a heartening presence.

We were all looking forward in particular to a meeting with Miriam Rose Ungunmerr, Principal of Daly River School. It had been programmed into our conference agenda by kind arrangement with Miriam Rose.

The appointed time came. We all awaited her arrival in the school library. In no hurry, she turned up informally, accompanied by three other young ladies of the Daly River community. After friendly and easy introductions all round, Miriam Rose and her team of three sat down, Miriam on a chair with her guitar, the three sitting simply on the floor around her. Then they sang in their own Nangikurrungur language, their own songs. They sang in harmony, in the sweet silence of that undulating countryside and the flowing River itself, as though singing to our souls.

We were spiritually elevated by their songs, by their transparent unison in love which we saw as sacramental of something much bigger than our fragile little group. They were feeding us, in fact, as Paul would say, that strong fare the mature are able for, but not those still in spiritual infancy. We were thankful for their trust.

When the singing was finished, Miriam Rose alone remained to speak to us about her life, her experience, her now

Dan O'Donovan has just spent a year in Sri Lanka and India following the mystic trail. He will probably have returned to Broome by the time this is printed.

far-reaching Christian Aboriginal religious and artistic work which has made her name well known around Australia.

She began by explaining to us a religious painting of hers which was on display. We were offered, further, a few of her writings on *Dadirri*, or Aboriginal contemplation. Though I have followed anything she has written on this profoundly significant subject for some years, as it came to my notice, I felt myself again, on re-reading it now, moved to the quick by this language of the redeemed 'new creation', a foretaste of the language of heaven for Aboriginal Australia.

As I write this article, unfortunately I do not have Miriam Rose's writings with me. If I did, I would be referring to them throughout.

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Here in the mountainous region of Tamil Nadu in India, where I am spending some three months at a Zen meditation training centre recently opened, I am observing how many people come here, mostly from Europe, to draw water from the deep wells of Asia's wisdom; in this case, from Zen.

The centre, Bodhi Zendo, was founded and is directed by an Indian Jesuit priest, Ama Samy Roshi² who was the first and only qualified Zen teacher in India. There is much emphasis on 'sitting' (a technical term: Japanese, *shikantaza*), a technique for inducing concentration, awareness, inner peace, with a view to discovering oneself more fully and more deeply — by 'losing one's self' as Jesus advised — so as to live out one's life more fruitfully and more enjoyably.

Often we go through life — is it not so? — without having found, still less explored, this inner dimension of ourselves which is our divinely constituted beauty as humans; and so are weighed down by many unnecessary forms of psychological burden — worries, fears, self-contempt, self-importance and the

²Adopted name. His real name is Fr A M Arokiasamy.

rest — which curtail the contribution we can each make to life, our effectiveness as human agents.

Through all this I have been thinking much of Miriam Rose and her word of life. She seems to me to be reminding her people of something: something at *once* ancient and precious. She is drawing her people's attention to *a natural resource* which is theirs as birthright and heritage; a resource which, in the tensions, pressures, confusions of their painful transition to the often cruel world of today, may have been left, for some time now, largely untapped. It is there, she is saying to them, still there! Come, let us revive this wholeness of ours together. If we are spiritually stronger with our own inner strength, perhaps time and circumstances may be gentler; and we will not have to waste ourselves in search of meaning, or our children either.

Already the world has witnessed the astounding resurgence of Aboriginal spirit in art, dream and song. These are no more than externals. Great — but needing to be sustained. Sustenance can be generated only out of *Dadirri* itself; practised, examined, developed with concentrated energy and assiduity.

This will call for generous persons, dedicated to pursuing an ideal. Like a mountain climb. Or a long desert crossing into a good country, which flows with milk and honey. Persons who are able to rise above even family interests, and who despise temptations to power. Indeed, *Dadirri* will reveal to them quickly that nothing is weaker than that so-called 'power' people talk about; nothing stronger, or more steadying than inner peace.

If I understand Miriam Rose correctly, the *Dadirri* she speaks about is the obverse, personal side of the intensely socialised face of Aboriginal religious cultural expression which goes under the general name of 'Law'. Both sides were always there. They had to be; as they are correlative parts of the one Aboriginal condition: it is social and personal.

In choosing to draw attention now to the more personal side of the Aboriginal life-experience, Miriam is following the same course as the major religions we are about to consider.

History and geography have enabled some of them to appear as more 'developed' than others. Among these are the spiritualities of some of the numerically bigger religions of the world: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam as well as Christianity. Each of these has a well-tested *method or technique* by which to attain its ends. In the present article I will be drawing on the following methods, therefore: Hindu *Yoga*; Buddhist *Zen*; Christian *Hesychasm*; Islamic *Dhikr*.

Australia's near neighbours like Indonesia, Malaysia-Singapore, the Philippines and so on, have been much influenced throughout their history by one or more of these Asian religions, with their spiritual ways and practices. Australian indigenous 'Asians', on the other hand, whom we now call the Aboriginal people, had minimal contact only with boat-people like the Macassans and others, and so were thrown firmly into religious self-reliance, strongly developing their own traditional way.

To an extent this was good. It allowed them easily to preserve their own religious purity — uncontaminated, so to speak, by elements extraneous to the faith handed down. But it was also a weakness as those seas surrounding their island home cut them off from the trial and error and consequent gradual refinement which religious experiment and cross-fertilisation produces, or at least may produce.

Across all of Asia and beyond, there were the much frequented caravan and trade routes, by land and sea, which means that international traffic was always passing; and a merchant from China, say, could sit down and talk with his Arab friend in Arabia about how things were going with him or her — and *what people were saying and doing!* The spreading of ideas out of which any civilisation and religions grow.

Australia was out of that flow. A sort of pre-colonial 'reserve'. But 'the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit which in God's sight is very precious' (1 Peter 3,4), it has held on to tightly. It still holds that jewel in its grasp.

It is this that is now of burning interest to the wider world, itself hungry for the spirit.

* * * * *

Agreed Understandings

One notices in the study of the above-named techniques, that they arrive at similar convictions and experiences which they speak of in their own different ways.

The deepest inner religious experience, called by a variety of names, comes always after much laborious effort in self-discipline. As the self becomes purified of such things as untruthfulness, greed, sexual uncontrol, the urgings for power, instincts of violence and so on, a spirit of rest and serenity takes over in the soul. Things become clearer, and the inner self, set free, becomes ready for the experience of contemplation, 'enlightenment', and for the task then of passing this on in love.

1. So, we may say that a first agreed understanding among these religions is: no mysticism without asceticism; or, in other words, no contemplation without the active practice of self-discipline.

2. A second concerns the way, or method, followed as a helpful means to this active practice. Its foundation is the exercise of meditation. By 'meditation' I mean sitting in the way I will describe more fully later.

It is in this exercise of meditation that the well tried, proven techniques have their place: *body posture*, *breath control* (in Indian Yoga and Christian Hesychasm; or breathing-in awareness in Zen), and *concentration* not merely of the mind,

but of the whole personality in one-pointed attentiveness or vigilance.

I think these techniques — which apply irrespective of whether one follows a religion or not — would fit comfortably with the *Dadirri* described by Miriam Rose. One cautionary word, however. I am becoming convinced from study and observation here in India, that the appropriation by the Christian of elements from other religious traditions needs to be done with critical discernment, subject to the advice of one's spiritual guide (cf. No.3 ff).

Zen, for example, is a discipline of awareness in 'self'-emptying. But because it comes out of a different religion (Mahayana Buddhism — after the meeting of that religion with Taoism), and innocently speaks it, I find it more appropriate to use the Christian method, Zen's equivalent in Christ Jesus, called 'Hesychasm'. This is no impediment to our being lovingly open to Zen in our hesychast vigilance, nor to our recognising it as a movement of grace for others.

The fact that Hesychasm is scarcely heard of, and scarcely known in our Roman Catholic 'West', even by those Catholics who write much and sympathetically about Zen, shows how grievously the immense tragedy of our Christian brokenness has affected us. For it has been said, rightly, that 'Hesychasm is the soul of Orthodoxy' (that is, 'Eastern' Christianity). A great Orthodox spiritual master of our time has referred to Hesychasm as 'the common treasure of the Church.'

The antiquity of *Dadirri* and the fact that it is born out of the sacred Law, its Mother, would indicate that it is for the responsible traditional Aboriginal elders, many of them Christian now, to themselves discern and decide what sort of admixture, if any, would best suit their journey into the future. This can be done, perhaps over a period of some time, only by serious personal and social group experimentation. In the present article, I am writing with Christian Aborigines in mind.

3. Though Islam does not emphasise this, a third agreement arrived at by the mystical traditions we are considering, is: the person and role of *the spiritual guide*. Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity all insist on the need of finding, and opening oneself in trust to someone, male or female, who has grown wise in understanding of the particular spiritual way about which they are discerners. Not everyone, but rather very few, would qualify for this role.

***Dadirri* Cultivated**

What Miriam Rose is recording in her writings and in her lectures on the subject, is the *Dadirri* experience she herself has received and knows. The experience is spontaneous, uncontrived.

What I am putting forward as a suggestion here is something further; a next stage, as it were, to Miriam's *Dadirri*, about which I will need to talk with her, and hope to do so.

In chapter 11 of his letter to the Romans, Paul distinguishes between the 'natural' and the 'cultivated' olive (verses 17-24).

Miriam's experience in *Dadirri* is the grace-moved natural.

I am proposing the (natural) *cultivated*. It is a program of total health and well-being, deliberately followed in daily practice, of which good diet is a part. It is personal, with social reach. In brief Christian Hesychasm offers:

A Total Technique

1. Sit cross-legged, alone or with others, eyes settled on a point, and open.
2. Simply and quietly become *aware*: of body, breathing, sounds, the place of the heart. For some time.
3. Out of much previous and daily reading of the Bible, pray 'Jesus'. Either just shaping the word in your mouth, without sound; or silently, in your heart.
4. Complete silence of word and thought.

In another article I would like to show how the technique works.

Missionary as Change Agent

A Missiological Reflection on Everett Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovations*

Gerard M Goldman

INTRODUCTION

Everett Rogers in *Diffusion of Innovations* (Fourth Edition, 1995) provides a penetrating account of the nature of being a change agent. Whilst Rogers does not list the role of 'missionary' amongst those occupations that can benefit from diffusion research (cf.p.336), missionaries should be in no doubt that the insights of this book can be significantly applied to the process of contextualization. His understanding of the role of change agent is all the more compelling in an era of unprecedented social change. The underlying message that missionaries can take from this text is that if they are to be morally responsible gospel agents of change they must become cognizant of the consequences that evangelisation will have on a community. We must acknowledge our past colonial behavior so as to effectively embrace the present context with hope and sensitivity.

Diffusion is 'the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among members of a social system' (p.5). 'It is a special type of communication, in that the messages are concerned with new ideas. Communication is a process in which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding' (pp.5-6).

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Three interrelated themes emerged as I read the book from a missiological perspective. First, missionaries must recognize the foundational importance of understanding social structure. A holistic appreciation of a people's culture allows the cross-cultural witness to communicate more effectively with the other. Second, the missionary is a marginal figure on the contextualization stage. The missionary is neither insider nor outsider - she/he straddles two worlds and willingly pays the cost of such radical discipleship (cf. my previous paper, *Nelen Yubu*, 65). Third, contextualization of the gospel is very risky business for the sending church. The sending church has to be prepared for a cultural reinvention of the gospel. The locals may reject the cultural forms of the sending church in their efforts to express authentically the gospel meaning through their own cultural genius (worldview). The nature of contextualization always acknowledges the tension that exist between the church universal and the church local. This tension is never removed from an authentic process of contextualization.

I. Social structure - a bird's eye view into the others' world(view)

The social structure of a culture provides the primary identity for the person. It shapes the person's worldview. This is why Rogers can argue that it is as 'unthinkable to study diffusion [evangelisation] without some knowledge of the social structures' as it is 'to study blood circulation without adequate knowledge of veins and arteries' (p.25). Without this holistic appreciation of the person cross-cultural witness is shallow, even abusive.

Worldview differences are inevitable obstacles for cross-cultural communication. Rogers claims that communication is at its best when people are of similar backgrounds. This is referred to as *homophily*. However, the nature of cross-cultural witness is to be with those of different backgrounds; the missionary must by nature of his/her ministry

experience varying degrees of non-relatedness (or *heterophily*) to the other (p.19). The tasks of cross-cultural communication is to lessen the heterophilous gap.

Traditional Aboriginal societies have a large degree of homophily. People are closely connected to each other. The extended family often means that all members of a community are related one way or another. The Australian Aborigine has the added dimension of a Dreaming cosmology which even links strangers with one another.

Homophily can be both a bridge and barrier to evangelisation (cf. p.288). The greater degree of homophily means that ideas spread horizontally rather than vertically (i.e. through leadership positions) throughout the community. There becomes a need for many persons to be part of the decision-making process. This considerably slows the process of change. Leaders of traditional societies, like Aboriginal societies, have risen to high status not through western education and economic success (vertical measure), but through virtue of their age and knowledge of traditional culture (horizontal measure). Thus, we find the 'opinion leaders' in these communities to be the Elders — or those with 'greying hair'! It is essential that missionaries engage these 'grey leaders'.

Missionaries have historically circumvented the Elders. The great bulk of missionary resources has been focused instead on those with least leadership role in the community, namely, the youth. In many communities, the christian message began to be equated with 'kids stuff'. The results of such an emphasis have been disastrous for all concerned. Young adults are thrown into the confusion of not belonging to either the missionaries' culture or their traditional one. The Elders see missionaries as representing a direct attack on all they consider sacred as well as on their very own roles in the community. The missionaries become frustrated when efforts at changing the youth appear to be undermined by the traditional culture. Rogers' diffusion research suggest the need for a new paradigm of evangelisation.

Adults must be acknowledged as the religio-cultural innovators of a culture. They, not the youth, are the proper subjects for contextualization. To be sure, we always need to remember the special place of children in our efforts, but these selfsame efforts must not endeavor to place children in opposition or antagonism with the adults of the community.

II. Change agents are marginal and are necessarily subject to role conflict.

It takes time and effort for a new paradigm to emerge. There is a certain irony in this: Whilst missionaries have historically called for radical change in the other's life they begin to experience a disturbing sense of dislocation in changing their own historical patterns of ministry. Missionaries are often caught in this tension. They wish to be loyal to their sending church, yet see the historical and contemporary pain that the current church paradigm places on local people.

Missionaries become changed as they immerse themselves in the culture through participant observation. They are changed through the process of listening to the others. The others are changed as well. Through this cultural immersion the missionary gains insight into the movement of the spirit in the others' life, and the others begin to see the change that the gospel is demanding in their lives. The question of loyalty begins to become apparent. Will loyalty to the Reign of Life values which inspired the missionary's decision to do cross-cultural ministry be too much of a radical challenge for the sending church? As Rogers (p.336) succinctly states: 'As a bridge between two differing systems, the change agent [cross-cultural witness] is a *marginal character with one foot in each of two worlds*' [italics added]. The cross-cultural missionary becomes 'necessarily subject to role conflict' (p.340).

The missionaries straddle two worlds. In order to be authentic they know that at particular points in time they do not belong to either world — they are called to be 'in-between'.

Nelen Yubu

This is costly discipleship and exhausting ministry. Rogers posits: 'One of the main roles of a change agent is to facilitate the flow of innovations from a change agency to an audience' (p.336). The missionaries begin to recognize that they must not attempt to control the process. If change is to occur it must come from people who are rooted in their own cultural framework. It cannot be forced from outside. This leads us into our final insight.

III. Decentralized Diffusion - Dare We Trust the Other to Reinvent the Gospel Idea?

What are the causes of such role conflict? Why do many missionaries feel separated from their sending agency, even church their own church? I believe some of the answers to these questions can be found in Rogers' discussion of decentralized diffusion. Decentralized diffusion acknowledges the primacy of the local context in the decision to accept or reject innovations. In decentralized contexts it is rare for a proposal to be accepted unchanged by the local person. It is expected that the original proposal will undergo creative local efforts of reinvention. This is not simply masking the original under the cultural clothes of the local context. Changes will need to be radically shaped by the unique environmental history of each particular culture (cf. p.411). Rogers highlights that, 'A fundamental assumption of decentralized diffusion systems is that members of the user system [insiders] have the ability to make sound decisions about how the diffusion process should be managed' (p.365). In short, we must trust the other.

There is a tension between decentralization and the sense of a universal church. How much does the local context need to reflect the universal? What is non-negotiable? The missionaries have discovered that in order to effectively communicate the gospel they must focus on the felt needs of the other. This process has drawn the missionaries into the others' world. In a sense the missionaries become cultural relativists — they

recognize the genius as well as the imperfections in both cultures (cf. p.411).

Rogers' understanding of reinvention can be equated with the critical stage of contextualization. That being the process whereby locals infuse their traditional forms with the radical meaning of the gospel. For example, they are the ones who will best discern what an indigenous ecclesiology in the local context needs to embrace. What is disturbing for the missionaries and wider church is that authentic reinvention has the capacity to make the gospel and the church appear to have lost its (western) identity (p.177). There is a strong psychological need for reinvention to exist — it is the process by which the local persons are able to integrate and fashion something meaningful in their own cultural configuration. Without this process an internal dissonance will occur. This leads to disenchantment. When this occurs the gospel can be rejected because it has not been centered in the local cultural context (cf. pp.181-3).

Reinvention is what makes or breaks contextualization. Without it, contextualization is nothing less than a hegemonic exercise of the powerful (universal) over the local. We should note that reinvention is the riskiest and most critical component of the diffusion process. Rogers places reinvention at the implementation stage of the diffusion process (p.175). It is that which threatens to end or fulfill the promises of conversion. In short, without this process authentic local church cannot happen. To be sure, the local community must remain in contact with the wider church. However, this is done with an understanding of equality, that both the universal and the particular can learn and be challenged by each other. The emic/etic tension is consciously brought together.

CONCLUSION

What has happened to the missionaries in this process of contextualization? Rogers reminds us that the change agent

should seek a terminal relationship with the other (p.337). There is something uncomfortable about the phrase 'terminal relationship'. There is a sense of the inevitable. If the contextualization process is authentic there is no reason for the missionary to expect a lifetime's journeying as facilitator. The facilitator works to help people proceed from one part of their journey into another. We hope that lasting friendships are made in this process. Both the missionary and the other are radically changed. Both in a sense become 'new converts': the other's experience of the gospel and (Reign of) Life will equally challenge the missionary as the missionary's cross-cultural witness challenges the other. The missionaries will leave with a transformed understanding of both the gospel and themselves. They will be ready to begin again the mystery of understanding another and themselves. The wider church will be nourished by the added contribution of the others' life and witness. The others will be bolstered by becoming part of a universal fellowship in the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, Fourth Edition. Sydney: The Free Press, 1995.

PARABLE OF THE PLATYPUS DREAMING

Elizabeth Pike

LONG long ago in 'The Dreaming' there were some ducks who lived in a secluded river pond. They never left their home for fear of the evil water spirit. But one young female took no notice of the warning of the Elders. One morning, unnoticed, she floated quietly out into the stream until she found a patch of green grass. Coming close to the bank she waddled up the slope and sat down to enjoy her freedom. Unfortunately she had chosen to sit on the roof of the home of the water rat. Water Rat, hearing something moving above his burrow, came out to investigate and discovered the young duck. He was overjoyed for he had been lonely for a long time. He crept up behind her and whispered. 'Welcome to my home, my lovely.' Duck shrieked and flapped her wings and struggled to move toward the water. But Water Rat was annoyed and prodding her with his spear, dragged her into his burrow.

'You are my prisoner', he said. 'But do not be afraid; I will be good to you. Live here and be my wife. See, my heart is kinder than my face.' Helpless, Duck had no choice but to accept, hoping one day to escape from her repulsive husband. Duck huddled closer against the side of the damp, gloomy hole. Water Rate just smiled. 'If you think you can escape by night, remember the evil water spirit, so it is better to remain with me.'

For some time Duck remained with Water Rat. Eventually he grew careless and allowed her to paddle in the water outside. Then one hot sunny day, seeing Water Rat curled up asleep and snoring, she quickly moved outside and paddled upstream to

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her home. On arrival home, she was greeted with so much excitement by her family that she soon almost forgot her ordeal with Water Rat.

Soon the time for nesting and the laying of eggs arrived. The young females hid themselves among the reeds and waited. Then one day they floated out proudly leading their baby ducklings. With them was the young duck who had been married to Water Rate, and behind her swam her two children — two little ones with duck bills and webbed feet, but alas, no feathers. Their bodies were covered with fur, like the Water Rat. Instead of two webbed feet they had four, and on their hind legs were sharp spikes which looked like the spear of Water Rat.

Duck and her babies were now scorned and taunted by both family and friends. In shame and despair, she left her home and made a new home for her babies far away from her family. Her children grew up to become the first of a new tribe, the 'Gay-dari', the tribe of the Platypus.

* * *

LATER on the Ancestor Spirits were deciding on totems. A big gathering was called. First, the birds decided to hold a special meeting thinking they were the most significant of all and would be the most favoured. The birds decided to invite Platypus to their meeting. After all, the Platypus laid eggs and had a bill like a duck. Emu spoke up saying, it was alright because she could not fly either. After a good deal of noisy chatter they decided Platypus could be part of their group.

But then Platypus spoke. 'I am glad you invited me to your meeting, but I am not really a bird.' The birds answered, 'We agree your family are different, but we would like you in our group.' I will think about it', promised Platypus and went off.

Soon after, the animals held their own impressive meeting, thinking they were the most important. The Kangaroo was chief speaker: 'We are strong, swift and more intelligent than

birds or water creatures'. Koalas, Wallabies and 'Possums agreed loudly. 'Yes, we are the best.' Then Kangaroo said, 'I think we should invite Platypus.' I know he is different in many ways, but is covered in fur like us and runs on land too'. So some ran to tell Platypus. Platypus was surprised and happy to receive the attention. But he told them, as he had told the birds, that he 'would have to think about it before making a decision.'

It was not long before a Big Fish called a meeting of all the water creatures. Along they came, telling each other how important they were, with all their wonderful swimming abilities. In fact, Dugong and Turtle got into a fight about which of them were the best. Then Big Fish asked, 'What about Platypus? He builds his home on the water's edge and swims remarkably well. Shouldn't we ask him to join us?' Everyone agreed. The whole group went to Platypus to discuss the matter.

The next day Platypus discussed this strange situation with family, but no advice could be given. Platypus finally went to visit his friend, Spiky Echidna. The Echidna thought carefully, then advised him not to join any group. He did not belong truly to any group. Platypus agreed, then sent a message telling all the groups to gather near his home for the verdict, but they must all come in friendship.

When Platypus finally arrived, a hush fell over everyone waiting to hear his verdict. Quietly he began with sincerity: 'You are all my friends. I understand the Birds because you have to keep your eggs warm as we do. I understand the water creatures as they swim and dive to the depths to explore the underwater world. I also feel akin to the animals who run on the land and have fur like us.' Platypus paused for a while, then looked at them. 'Yes, you are indeed all special, each in your own way. I am very grateful that the great Creator Spirit, Father of us all, saw fit to make me a little bit like each of you.' Then he said slowly and clearly: 'My family and I have decided to be friends with all of you, but we will not become members of any group. It is my hope that each time you see a member of my

family you will be reminded that the Great Spirit made all of us and He created us all differently. Even though we do not understand his reasons, we must respect his decisions.' Platypus bowed his head and said no more. Slowly, they all left much wiser than before, agreeing that Platypus was unique.

* * * *

NOW, it is at this point that I began thinking about the two stories of the Platypus, 'How Platypus was born' and 'Why the Platypus is special', having a connection with the story of so many of my contemporary indigenous people. For one reason or another there are many thousands of our people who are now of mixed race and colour. Yes, it is true, they do not have the same purity of pigmentation and do not live the same lifestyle as their tribal Ancestors, but they are still rooted in their heritage and they are still creations of the same Great Creator Spirit who created us all. They, like the Duck in the story, have had to move far from family and friends. So many of them, together with their offspring, have had to suffer shame, degradation, loss of culture, loss of language, an horrific sense of loss of identity through non-acceptance by their traditional people as well as non-indigenous people which leads to loss of self, a soul-destroying situation many of our people find themselves in. All this because they have different characteristics or features.

Fortunately however, many of the survivors of that situation have developed into a new tribe of people. Some have become strong and resilient, displaying qualities of leadership and newly acquired skills that their Ancestors would be proud of. Many in consultation with some 'Traditional Elders' are now sharing and exhibiting some of their innate wisdom and appropriate aspects of their heritage with the wider Australian Community. This sharing may well prove to be the saving of this nation, environmentally and spiritually. It is also proof that these people still treasure many important aspects of their Ancestors

and their lost culture. But in spite of this, there still remains room for stronger acceptance of one another. The scars and deep hurts wrought by forced alienation from land and family should not deny any one of us from treasured heritage, or the hope of one day returning to 'Our Dreaming'.

The 'Parable of the Platypus' then, is to 'see' the wisdom and hope of that new species, 'Gay-dari', the 'Platypus People', the descendants of 'Duck' and 'Water Rat' as they adapted to a new situation, grew, and learned to accept and respect all in spite of differences. Aboriginal people must also recognise and 'see' in one another the Spirit of our Ancestors and the Great Spirit, the Creator, who created difference as a basic law of creation. It is always a difficult truth to perceive that there is always 'more' that we are capable of. 'More self knowledge, more knowledge of others, more knowledge of the Creator'. This can only be reached through a process of being able to let go of the truth that we have understood, in order to reach for a bigger truth.

Goodness is not so much a state of 'Being', but having an attitude of openness to learn and change. This moves us into a state of 'Becoming': isn't this the essence of 'The Aboriginal Dreaming'? The past, the present, the future, the Eternal Now. A continual circular movement. Finally coming to rest in 'The Creator's Dreaming'.

So the Platypus in our story becomes like the figures of both Mary and her offspring, 'Jesus', who was disowned and scorned in his own homeland and at times having to flee. He also chose not to belong or be bound to any one group, even his own family. Jesus accepted everyone's differences, becoming a friend to all, and founding a new people, 'People of the Way'.

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FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

COINCIDENCES are strange happenings, and this is one of them. This week, just as we were going to press, my daughter arrived from Germany to present her documentary, *Cracks in the Mask*, at the Sydney Film Festival. She is Frances Calvert and she has spent the last six years researching the whereabouts of artefacts from Torres Strait. She visited museums across Europe, flew out to the islands repeatedly to discuss the film with the people; arranged for Ephraim Bani, representing his people, to travel to Europe to see, and as he hopes, to claim the artefacts for his homeland.

Frances has spent untold hours deliberating about the style and ethics of such a film. This 35mm documentary runs for 57 minutes, and certainly does justice to the beauty of these previously unseen objects. The film serves as a form of catalogue, presenting to all Australians these great artefacts of which they may be quite unaware, and opening the way for a possible exhibition in Australia one day. The coincidence is that it comes to the Festival just at the very time that Australia is deeply involved with

Aboriginal matters of lost children, apologies to the indigenous people and hopeful plans for the future. I quote in part from her synopsis:

'A century ago the Torres Strait Islands in far north Australia were the subjects of the famous Cambridge Anthropological Expedition; yet the resulting depletion of their cultural artefacts left them with nothing but a history of remembered loss. The only people in the Pacific to make elaborate turtleshell masks have none left; they are all in foreign museums.

'In a quest to reclaim the past, Ephraim Bani, a wise and knowledgeable Torres Strait Islander, travels with his wife to the great museums of Europe where his heritage lies. The film asks: "What does a people like this, a small indigenous minority living in a first world country, make of the rediscovery of its past? Will the Islanders be inspired to renew the old arts and handicrafts once they see the objects they thought lost forever?"

'In Europe, Bani soon realises that the artefacts made by his ancestors have undergone transformation as museum displays. He unburdens himself to his diary in moments of poignant

revelation and this is the "voice" of the film. Through his eyes, the museum is subjected to a novel form of scrutiny.

'Filming takes place in the British Museum, Cambridge and Glasgow Museums and in Berlin-Dahlem. When Bani requests that two mummies be returned to Stephen Island, the resulting debate throws light on questions of repatriation all around the world.

'Taking the great turtleshell masks as an example, three avant-garde curators throw light on questions of "art" versus "artefact" and the different modes of exhibiting cultures.

'In Neuchâtel, Switzerland, the director of the ethnographic museum has ceased to display his collections conventionally because he feels that we in the west can never understand what the people who made them thought or felt; the only thing we can exhibit, he feels, is how we think about these people whose objects we hold. A curator from Aberdeen, Scotland, and one from Brighton, England, offer multiple perspectives — not just western views — on how museums are to deal with their colonial heritage.

The film shows that the thickest of masks cracks when a descendant of the original owners enters a museum.'

The documentary runs for 57 minutes, and is a cry from the heart for the return of the artefacts to their rightful place in the Torres Strait Islands.

I feel my daughter has had much influence in bringing the story of the loss of the masks to world attention, particularly at this time. I am very proud of her concern in accepting this challenge to produce *Cracks in the Mask*. The film has won the audience's prize for best film at the 2. EthnoFilm Festival in Berlin.

It is the second documentary Frances has made. The first, *Talking Broken*, also filmed in Torres Strait, documented the social change that the people have undergone since white contact. I hope that the enormous effort entailed in this dedicated attempt to make the public aware of at least some of the missing artworks, will bear fruitful results.

Congratulations, Frances!

Secretary Keren

Bulletin Board

In response to a request at the MSC Cairns Missions Conference we invite anybody who has come across a particularly helpful or relevant bit of reading matter, to make a brief note about it to be published here in *Nelen Yubu*. Or notices about events, past, present or future.



¶ An example of the proper two-way flow of inculturation is Vyn Bailey's recent publication on yoga meditation — which chimes in rather well with Dan O'Donovan's *dadirri* article, and also with Eugene Stockton's book mentioned in the *Editorial*:

BAILEY msc, Vyn (1997) *Patanjali's Meditation Yoga*. Simon & Schuster Australia, East Roseville 2069. ISBN 0 7318 0648 4. Soft cover, 144 pages. Available at Dymocks, \$14.95.

¶ The papers given at the MSC Cairns Missions Conference will be printed in *Encounter*, an MSC privately produced and distributed magazine. Editor Stephen Hackett msc, PO Box 156, Drummoyn NSW 2047.

Australian Reconciliation Convention

26-28 May 1997

Martin Wilson msc

AS individuals we do not expect to be privileged very often in our lifetimes with being a part of world or national history in the making. Yet those of us who were present in Melbourne's World Convention and Exhibition Centre Monday 26 May till Wednesday 28 May at the Australian Reconciliation Convention knew that such was indeed our privilege.

This was the first time since 1788 that the Aboriginal inhabitants of Australia have been able to stand up as a whole people face to face with the descendants or successors of the original white invaders and confront them. Such a global confrontation had previously been prevented by several impediments which had only recently been removed. The High Court's Mabo judgment of 1992, which effectively wrote finish to the *terra nullius* fiction, enabled the Aboriginal people to present themselves as the original owners of the land. They had to be acknowledged as victims on a massive scale. At the convention their grievance was expressed in a particular poignant form, the 'stolen children'.

This was the first time too that they were able to surmount all their traditional tribal differences under a charismatic leadership that managed to involve effectively both the tribal people of the north, many of them still speaking their own languages and performing their ancient ceremonies, and those of the south who had somehow managed to retain their distinctive identity with only memories of these things to support them.

All the same, 'confrontation' is not the right word. At the convention, as at most other times, the Aboriginal people showed the same sort of generosity of spirit towards their

oppressors that had characterised so many of the Black victims of apartheid, as was pointed out by one of the keynote speakers, Dr Alexander Boraine, vice chairperson of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. There were no extravagant claims, no ranting or grandstanding. There was passion and feeling, and tears were shed. I suppose the offences against the Aboriginal people were so massive that exaggeration would only have detracted from the overall effect. It was all so very *real*. There was a tremendous flow of spirit both ways, to and fro, culminating in the moment during the closing ceremony when we non-Aboriginals were invited to turn to our Aboriginal neighbours and say 'I'm sorry'.

The great disappointment at the convention was that our prime minister could not bring himself to say 'We're sorry' on the part of the Australian government. He said he was sorry personally, but he so wrapped it all up in words and began to rant at us and strike the rostrum and defend his ten-point Wik plan that is diametrically opposed to everything we were celebrating, that he lost all credibility. What a shame it was! Fortunately our governor-general and his wife, Lady Deane, spoke for us with such feeling, information and empathy that we could almost dismiss the little man from our minds.

Many items deserve to be mentioned. I shall content myself with recording my appreciation of the regard expressed by Noel Pearson for our colleague in anthropology, W E H Stanner, who, by noting it in his 1968 Boyer lectures, broke 'the Great Australian Silence'.

But, to keep perspective, the convention only marks the beginning of a process that will terminate in an appropriate constitutional action when we will celebrate the centenary of Federation in 2001.

Nelen Yubu

experience varying degrees of non-relatedness (or *heterophily*) to the other (p.19). The tasks of cross-cultural communication is to lessen the heterophilous gap.

Traditional Aboriginal societies have a large degree of homophily. People are closely connected to each other. The extended family often means that all members of a community are related one way or another. The Australian Aborigine has the added dimension of a Dreaming cosmology which even links strangers with one another.

Homophily can be both a bridge and barrier to evangelisation (cf. p.288). The greater degree of homophily means that ideas spread horizontally rather than vertically (i.e. through leadership positions) throughout the community. There becomes a need for many persons to be part of the decision-making process. This considerably slows the process of change. Leaders of traditional societies, like Aboriginal societies, have risen to high status not through western education and economic success (vertical measure), but through virtue of their age and knowledge of traditional culture (horizontal measure). Thus, we find the 'opinion leaders' in these communities to be the Elders — or those with 'greying hair'! It is essential that missionaries engage these 'grey leaders'.

Missionaries have historically circumvented the Elders. The great bulk of missionary resources has been focused instead on those with least leadership role in the community, namely, the youth. In many communities, the christian message began to be equated with 'kids stuff'. The results of such an emphasis have been disastrous for all concerned. Young adults are thrown into the confusion of not belonging to either the missionaries' culture or their traditional one. The Elders see missionaries as representing a direct attack on all they consider sacred as well as on their very own roles in the community. The missionaries become frustrated when efforts at changing the youth appear to be undermined by the traditional culture. Rogers' diffusion research suggest the need for a new paradigm of evangelisation.

Adults must be acknowledged as the religio-cultural innovators of a culture. They, not the youth, are the proper subjects for contextualization. To be sure, we always need to remember the special place of children in our efforts, but these selfsame efforts must not endeavor to place children in opposition or antagonism with the adults of the community.

II. Change agents are marginal and are necessarily subject to role conflict.

It takes time and effort for a new paradigm to emerge. There is a certain irony in this: Whilst missionaries have historically called for radical change in the other's life they begin to experience a disturbing sense of dislocation in changing their own historical patterns of ministry. Missionaries are often caught in this tension. They wish to be loyal to their sending church, yet see the historical and contemporary pain that the current church paradigm places on local people.

Missionaries become changed as they immerse themselves in the culture through participant observation. They are changed through the process of listening to the others. The others are changed as well. Through this cultural immersion the missionary gains insight into the movement of the spirit in the others' life, and the others begin to see the change that the gospel is demanding in their lives. The question of loyalty begins to become apparent. Will loyalty to the Reign of Life values which inspired the missionary's decision to do cross-cultural ministry be too much of a radical challenge for the sending church? As Rogers (p.336) succinctly states: 'As a bridge between two differing systems, the change agent [cross-cultural witness] is a *marginal character with one foot in each of two worlds*' [italics added]. The cross-cultural missionary becomes 'necessarily subject to role conflict' (p.340).

The missionaries straddle two worlds. In order to be authentic they know that at particular points in time they do not belong to either world — they are called to be 'in-between'.

This is costly discipleship and exhausting ministry. Rogers posits: 'One of the main roles of a change agent is to facilitate the flow of innovations from a change agency to an audience' (p.336). The missionaries begin to recognize that they must not attempt to control the process. If change is to occur it must come from people who are rooted in their own cultural framework. It cannot be forced from outside. This leads us into our final insight.

III. Decentralized Diffusion - Dare We Trust the Other to Reinvent the Gospel Idea?

What are the causes of such role conflict? Why do many missionaries feel separated from their sending agency, even church their own church? I believe some of the answers to these questions can be found in Rogers' discussion of decentralized diffusion. Decentralized diffusion acknowledges the primacy of the local context in the decision to accept or reject innovations. In decentralized contexts it is rare for a proposal to be accepted unchanged by the local person. It is expected that the original proposal will undergo creative local efforts of reinvention. This is not simply masking the original under the cultural clothes of the local context. Changes will need to be radically shaped by the unique environmental history of each particular culture (cf. p.411). Rogers highlights that, 'A fundamental assumption of decentralized diffusion systems is that members of the user system [insiders] have the ability to make sound decisions about how the diffusion process should be managed' (p.365). In short, we must trust the other.

There is a tension between decentralization and the sense of a universal church. How much does the local context need to reflect the universal? What is non-negotiable? The missionaries have discovered that in order to effectively communicate the gospel they must focus on the felt needs of the other. This process has drawn the missionaries into the others' world. In a sense the missionaries become cultural relativists — they