

Editorial

In this issue Dennis Murphy msc takes up the dialogue with India that was initiated by Tyson Doneley in No.70 ('Jesus Christ—Lord of All') and continued in No.73 ('To See Ourselves'). Dennis has committed himself to the MSC Union of India by transferring from the Australian province (of which he had been provincial superior).

Dan O'Donovan continues to follow the lead of Aboriginal *dadirri* as he further elucidates the richness of the Christian tradition of meditation. The present contribution constitutes in fact the closing chapter of a book that gathers together all his papers on this theme, due to be published later on this year.

We have a number of smaller items: three reviews done by the *Nelen Yubu* staff, and a couple of notices.

As usual, Keren's 'From the Secretary's Desk' ends off the issue. Many readers have told me that that is where they begin reading!

— Martin Wilson msc
Editor

INCULTURATION IN INDIA

One or many?

Dennis J Murphy msc¹

THE Indian-rite mass is based on Hindu ceremonies and uses at times prayers from the Vedanta. Most find it an inspiring experience. I certainly did and continue to do so.

Objections

It came as a surprise to me that one Indian religious community (male) that I am in contact with objected about having this inculturated mass celebrated in their chapel. I would not like to generalize from this, because reactions differ. When my own community has used the rite, I have never heard any objection to it. But the incident helps indicate a point I want to make.

What puzzled me at first was the fact that the community that did not like the Indian-rite mass is well known for its openness to inculturation. The reason for their rejection was the obvious Brahmin influence in the rite. The community is made up predominately of Dalits and Tribals.² And most of its members come from a State notorious

¹ Fr Dennis Murphy MSC LSS resides at Hridaya Bhavan (Heart House), Bangalore, India. On behalf of the Theological Publications of India he is preparing for publication later this year a collection of church documents on scripture.

² 'Dalit' (oppressed) is generally used today instead of 'untouchable'. The sanitized legal terms for people outside the strict caste system are 'Scheduled Classes' (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and 'Other Backward Classes' (OBC). However, the classification of castes is an extraordinarily complex matter with a consequent fluidity of terminology. I leave aside more precise terminology here and use 'Dalit' in a wide sense to cover Dalits, Tribals, and Fisherfold etc.—people who are considered to be outside the 'main' stream of society and, in consequence, oppressed. The mili-

for the oppressive conduct of upper-caste Hindus. Furthermore, it should be mentioned in addition that the community is involved exclusively in the care of the poorest of the poor in India—the real Dalits.

The objection was that for many hundreds of years Brahmins and upper-caste Hindus had humiliated and oppressed them and continued to do so. And now they were being asked to imitate their rites although they found them, to say the least, irrelevant to their situation and to the situation of the oppressed people for whom they worked.

Dalit theology

In recent years the Dalits have begun to develop their own specific type of theology and spirituality. The suffering of the oppressed (Dalit) Christ and the experience of his presence in their own struggles; the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt; the protests of the Prophets against injustice; the laments of the psalms— these say far more to them than the more transcendental, other-worldly emphasis of the Vedanta. Consequently, the emerging Dalit theology has many similarities with liberation theology even though it retains its specific Asian context.

This dilemma of inculturation in the Indian Church is usually not noticed by outsiders and at times not even by some Indians. Even granted that comparisons can be very misleading, Australians may find it easier to understand if they try to imagine basing an inculturated mass for tribal Aborigines on what appealed to and was traditional for Australians of European origin.

In 1998, October 23-25, I attended a seminar organized by the recently established Centre for Dalit Solidarity (CDS) at the Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore. The aim of the seminar was to make people engaged in formation more aware of the plight of Dalits so that it could be kept in mind in seminaries and religious houses of formation. After all, anything up to 75% of Christians come from this and connected groups. Many of these are urbanized and live ordinary lives in cities. Many others still live like slaves in dire poverty, and are inhumanly oppressed.

itary term 'subaltern' (meaning 'of inferior rank') is also used technically for these groups, but it is a rather academic, detached word lacking the emotive value of 'Dalit'.

Aryan north and Dravidian south

Father Thomas Mankckam CMI, at present President of Dharmaram College, is a recognized expert in Hindu religion and has a very positive attitude to it. He cannot be suspected of bias against Brahmin religious literature and rites. However, he stressed that any exclusive concentration on 'northern', 'Aryan' Brahminism would not do justice to 'Indian' culture, or even to 'Indian' religion. A balanced view would need to give at least equal emphasis to the Dravidian south, which is no less Indian than the more populous and influential north. In fact, there are arguments that the Dravidian south is more 'Indian'.

Fr. Manickam drew attention to the fact that Tamil is one of the oldest living languages and was once a *lingua franca* of India. And there are, he stressed, outstanding literary and religious works in ancient Tamil such as Thiruvalluvar's *Kural* (couplets) known as *Tirukural*. This is a sacred book of the Tamil Vaishnava tradition (*parampara*), but has been accepted for centuries by each devotional sect in Tamilnadu.³ Since 1730 AD the work has been translated into Latin, French, German, English, Czech, Sanskrit, Hindi, Telegu, Malayalam, Urdu and other regional languages. Nevertheless, it is Sanskrit religious literature that has been considered almost exclusively as 'Indian' when the question of inculturation occurs.

Sanskrit takes over

In a recent article (*New Indian Express* 11/11/99), Seema Alavi, the associate professor of history at Jamia Inillia, New Delhi, gave an explanation of the exclusive Western (and Indian) concentration on the Sanskrit tradition—popularly referred to today in India as 'saffronisation' (the identifying colour used by the Brahmins). This saffronisation process is extending today even into politics and state education. The author claims that the educated Brahmins and to a lesser extent the Muslim *ashraf* (elite) formed the Indian bureaucracy of the British colonialists as they had done also of the Turkish and Mughal powers before them.

³ Generally, 'Tamil Nadu' is used to refer to the State that has resulted from the change of boundaries after independence; Tamilnadu refers to the area in which Tamils have lived prior to that.

The university background of the top British colonial administrators, particularly from Oxford, gave them a particular perception of 'classical' languages. 'Being obsessed with classical thought, they naturally turned to Sanskrit as the equivalent classical language holding the key to Indian civilization'. Thus they relied heavily on the Brahmins who knew Sanskrit and, to a lesser extent, on the *ashraf maulvis* and *munshis* who knew Arabic and Persian. The elite of the intellectuals among the British colonisers were indifferent to the language and literature of the Dravidian south and to the Dalits and Tribals everywhere. This quest for Brahminical knowledge resulted in the establishment of the Bengal Asiatic Society which became considered the main repository of 'oriental' literature by the West and also by the Brahmin elite in India itself.⁴

Warren Hastings (1732–1818), the first Governor General of India, was also a patron of the pandits of North India. Sanskrit was seen as *the* language of the Hindus and Arabic/Persian as that of the Muslims. Seema Alavi claims that this contrasted with the policy of the Mughals, who worked for a linguistic synthesis that cut across religious identities. He also claims that this division caused by British policy ultimately led to the two nation theory, which continues to be an acute problem in post-colonial, independent India.

One may dispute Seema Alavi's explanation of the causes of this problem within India concerning its languages, cultures and religions, but the problem itself is indisputable. And the present stress of the present BJP government (Indian People's Party) on *hindutva* (Indianness), especially in its more extreme forms, is increasing the problem by identifying being 'Hindu' with being *truly* 'Indian'. Followers of this movement attempt to bring Dalits and Tribals under the umbrella of Hinduism by dividing it into a 'great tradition' (Brahmin and higher caste) and a 'little tradition' (lower castes and out-castes). Other anthropologists claim this neat distinction is untenable because the differences are too great.

⁴ I do not have official statistics, but some claim that Brahmins are 5% of the population and yet hold around 60% of administrative positions in the country. They are, therefore, a powerful influence.

A distinctive Dravidian and Dalit Culture

In his talk, Father Manickam pointed out how the distinctive mythology of the Dravidians in Tamilnadu, Karnataka, and Andrapradesh lived on despite the Aryan influences from the north. 'There prevailed the ancient tribal and village folk culture, mythical beliefs, social customs and annual festivals'. The Tamilians were more interested in solving day-to-day problems than in other-worldly speculations. And their religious and cultural practices were deeply rooted in the powers of mother earth and the forces of nature.

Two other speakers at the conference gave the results of their own research among Dalit groups in Kerala (mainly fisherfolk) which backed up the point Father Manickam had made concerning cultural differences between the 'Aryan' north and the Dravidian south and Dalits and Tribals everywhere. Dr J J Pallath gave an account of his experience with the Pulayas of north Malabar, concentrating more on what they had lost through their conversion to Catholicism. Prof. P T Matthew SJ dealing with the Mukkuva community concentrated more on how traditional beliefs and rituals had continued as an easily discernable undercurrent beneath Catholic customs.

Prof. Roger Hedlund at the same conference drew attention to a third approach, mentioning a Ph.D. thesis of Samuel Jayakumar, *The Impact of SPG Missions on the Dalits of Tirunelveli 1830-1930* (Open University, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies). From his study of the Paraiyas and Nadars, Jayakumar holds that 'Dalit Christian theologians for the most part do not represent the experience of India's poor and oppressed, but draw on outside sources which are mainly American, European and Marxian. Contrary to common liberationist assumptions, converts did not lose their traditional identity. Rather Christianity helped them to recover their local culture, which was further refined through interaction with the Gospel'. Jayakumar stresses that the escape from being out-castes allowed them to have a sense of pride in their own identity. At the same time, he holds that his research among the Paraiyas and Nadars indicates that the motive for their conversion was not merely an escape from caste, as is often presumed. They appreciated also spiritual values in their new religion.

Nine contrasts

Dr Pallath listed nine contrasts between the traditional worship of the Pulayas and the type of worship Christianity had given them: emotional vibrancy vs rigidity; feminine/lunar vs masculine/solar; material vs spiritual; ephemerality vs permanency; playfulness vs seriousness; body affirmation vs body negation; cosmic vs individual; mythic vs historical; social catharsis vs individual fulfilment. His use of 'value' adjectives seems to me to make the contrasts excessively black and white—the first list being obviously preferred to the second. Depending on the descriptive words used one could just as well reverse the evaluation in the contrast. However, the main point he wanted to make was clear.

A suppression of tradition; its continuance as an undercurrent; a balanced interaction of both—they can each be the honest result of this type of research. To some extent it depends on one's point of interest and *a priori* value judgments. The lesson is probably that no one approach should be absolutized or generalized, but each should be kept in a healthy tension with the others. However, the point on which all three converge is that there are distinctive differences in culture and religiosity among genuinely 'Indian' people.

I will continue to like the present Indian-rite mass. But as an outsider I am becoming more and more doubtful whether there will be *one* solution to the challenge of inculturation of the liturgy in India. Naturally, the outcome rests with Indians themselves.⁵

⁵ For interest: the most numerous Catholic rites in India are the Syro-Malabar and the Latin. Basically, the Latin rite remains as it is throughout the world, but a number of typically Indian ceremonies are allowed within it. However, a significant and lively inculturation has taken place in music (both vocal and instrumental) where local languages are used. This gives the liturgy a genuine and very attractive Indian flavour.



Review:

Contextual Social Theology: An Indonesian Model.

J B Banawiratma sj and J Müller sj. Special issue of *East Asian Pastoral Review*, vol.36 (1999) Number ½. 249pp.

Any work on contextual theology would be of interest to all *Nelen Yubu* clients. What adds particular relevance to Australian readers is the locale, Indonesia. Recent political events in East Timor have brought forcibly to our minds an awareness of the closeness to us of this large nation teeming with life.

Contextual Social Theology defines itself as a workbook on social theology. It begins appropriately with a summary description of the social context the Indonesian church finds itself in. One of the stats I was prepared for, namely, the size of the population: 200 million people, expected to go beyond 280 million by 2025. The one that surprised me was the size of the land mass.. We are so used to looking at maps of our region which show Indonesia as a small blob of islands to the north-west of the Australian continent that we tend to minimise in our minds the size of Indonesia—as I found I had done in regard to Europe when I was a student there. It amazed me that I would get into a train in Rome in the evening, travel all night, and still be inside Italy in the morning. Maybe all Europe does fit inside the boundaries of Australia, but it takes a long time to travel across Australia! Indonesia is a just a lot of islands, some 13,000 of them, but they all add up to a land mass six times the area of Germany. The spread of the population is very uneven: the central island Java is only 7 % of the total land mass but it contains 60 % of the total population.

The ecclesial context also contains some surprises. We all know that Islam is strong, in fact 80 % of the population adhere to it. Chris-

tianity is one of the minority groups, along with Hinduism (especially in Bali), Buddhism and Chinese religions. However, the Catholic church is manifesting astounding growth. Catholics only constitute some 3 % of the population, but that fraction does indicate some 6 million Catholics, one million of whom live in Java. In 1945 there were only 700,000 Catholics, but since then the church has adopted a much more Indonesian character. As the book puts it:

Indonesian bishops almost exclusively represent the leadership of the dioceses today. The number of indigenous priests, nuns and brothers is continuously increasing and has almost completely replaced foreign missionary workers. Ever since, lay-people have played an important role in the Church. (p.18)

In my own MSC congregation, the Indonesian province is now our biggest—while we watch the parent European provinces withering away and we are not quite holding our own here in Australia...

The book results from five years experience of teaching social theology in a faculty of theology in Yogyakarta between 1988 and 1992. The course was interdisciplinary in nature, involving both theology and sociology, and combined lectures, reading, group work and field experience. It has been written to be a resource useful not only to theological students (and their staff), but also to catechists, lay people, especially those with active involvement in social activities, and people of other faiths who might be searching for a method of conducting theological reflection on social reality.

It describes in quite some detail a method that can be employed. Chapter 3 (at the end of Part I, pp.47–55) outlines the main elements of each of the major stages. The project chosen to exemplify the method of social theology was one carried out by some 40 to 60 theological students over an eight-week period. The actual theme of the project was *poverty as a challenge to faith*. This represents the first of the four main challenges the authors believed Indonesia was facing (pp.19–20). The others are: (2) the political authoritarian system of Indonesia; (3) religious diversity; (4) cultural diversity. What we are reading is a book translated into English from Bahasa Indonesia and composed, it must be noted, before the breakdown of the Suharto regime.

The basic general value of the book is its description and exemplification of a theological method of social theology they call *bottom-up theology*, which is another name for liberation theology. Instead of starting in time-honoured manner with God in heaven and the processions *ad intra* and *ad extra*, and working down through creation, incarnation, church and all that, hopefully ending up with man (and woman), they start with a concrete social situation. They get their hands dirty with direct experience—literally in the project chosen, which involved for one group for example a week's live-in at a fishing village in Central Java (Enclosure 1, pp.216–220). Experience is gained, it is reflected on both by the individuals themselves and in groups. The social situation is further illuminated by reading and analysis of media reports, of statements by governmental agencies etc. Sociology and social anthropology are brought to bear to help detect the parameters operating. And then the participants go to the gospels to discover what the Christian dimension of the situation might be. Of course, with poverty as a theme, they found they were dealing with a central gospel issue. The final stage of the project was 'aimed at opening a path from social and theological reflection towards pastoral praxis both as a personal commitment and as a political responsibility in the general sense.' (p.53)

So, instead of starting with God on top and working down, they begin with men and women in a concrete situation and work up. It seems to be a sensible way of doing 'social theology'.

— Martin Wilson msc

Grace Through Our Land

REVIEW

Noel McMaster CSsR

A collection of poems written by a Redemptorist priest who has lived in the East Kimberley for 23 years, first as Parish Priest in Kununurra, then Wyndham, followed by Halls Creek, WA. Fr McMaster describes his book as *Reflections in verse for the turn of the Century*, and has suitably illustrated it with three colour prints, as well as spectacular front and back covers embracing a rolling Kimberley landscape in rich colours.

The Contents are shown under three headings: *Cultural, Personal and Global*, all poems written by Fr McMaster with sensitivity and insight. Some somewhat humorous, others touching.

The central pages (pp.21–22) express the underlying theme. Beside a large one and a half page photo of that glorious plant, Sturt desert pea (courtesy of Karen Mitchell), Noel has a seven-versed poem in which he ponders the symbolism of such a flower in his arid rugged garden. It shouts its glory, then withers away, plants its seed to wait for more rain later on—to rise up and display its splendour once again. The preaching of the gospel out there is much the same...

An interesting feature is that Noel supplies a key at the back of the book to some of his poems. Though he does prize simplicity (p.32), those who know him, and readers of his contributions to *Nelen Yubu*, will be aware of the density of his thought patterns, e.g. 'metamyths' p.11.

Copies are available from Fr Noel McMaster, P O Box 32, Halls Creek 6770, WA. ISBN 1 875617 33 7. Copyright Noel McMaster 1999. Price: \$10.

Black Swans on the Fitzroy River

Dan O'Donovan¹

IT IS nesting-time for the Black Swans on the Fitzroy River. Soon their young will be learning to fly.

In our meditation-life, life, the Wind, [Holy Spirit], is waiting to take us up. 'The wind blows where it will,' Jesus tells us, 'and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it is coming from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' (John, 3, 8)

We know that Elijah the prophet was taken up to heaven by a strong willy-willy (2 Kings 2). But usually it is the quiet breeze that takes us up, day by day, as you see it lifting the leaves and light things off the ground, or even a feather that may be lying around. The breeze lifts it up, and it is caught into the air. The wind is more strong in keeping it up than the earth's pull in dragging it back down.

So, the Black Swans have come to breed on the Fitzroy River. They like it there. It suits them. There is the good wide, flowing water. Shady trees on both sides. And no people around, or only now and then for fishing. The swans take off when they see me coming. Splash, splash, splash, splash, splash. Oh, it is so hard for them to lift off, because there is no wind under them to help them up, and their bodies are heavy. But in the end they start rising, and then the wind helps them up, takes them with it.

¹ This constitutes the final instalment of Dan's series on *dadirri*, meditation. It will appear as the closing chapter of the articles collected into a booklet which will appear later this year under the title *Dadirri*.

Still, for a long time they have to work hard with their wings to get properly clear of water and land. Now they can relax a bit, but not much. They have to get higher because the sky above them is saying, 'Come!' That is where they want to go. Up there, everything is calm and the wind carries them. They can even stop beating their wings altogether, and just rest on the wind, lie on it, allow it to support them, to bear them along. You can see them sometimes, up there, flying in formation, like a V. In that holy country, India, people give the name *Paramahansa* to an outstanding spiritual leader. It means, Supreme Swan. That is, the one in front.

'O that I had wings,' sings the inspired poet in Psalm 55, 'I would fly away, and be at rest. Indeed, I would wander far, and stay in bush country.' He knew well that God had already given him wings, inner wings of the soul, with which he could fly any time he liked, and he was flying there already now, as he prayed, in the Spirit. He felt the need to 'be at rest', and that could be only out in the bush. Or, for the swans, in the higher sky, where the Wind would get right in there under their wings and hold them freely. The sky would be like their pleasant river then; they would swim on the waters of the Wind.

The Three Stages of the Inner Life

Like the swans on the Fitzroy River rising up into the higher sky, our life in meditation (-action) passes usually through three stages. Not many make it through to the third stage during their lifetime here on earth. That is not because God is holding back his grace from them, but because their own effort slackens off or gets side-tracked into doing too many things. It is not possible for us even to start an interior life without first gaining a good a measure of control of our lower cravings: cravings for food and drink, sex, money and importance. Notice how hard it is for the swans to struggle free of the water because of the heavy weight of their bodies. But they have made up their minds, and in the end they win.

1. As we follow the meditation way, our hearts become filled with longing to know God more. We cry out to the Holy Spirit, [the wind], to please get in under our wings and lift us up. When he does, it is like a new beginning for us. We begin to feel a quiet joy in our heart which

we can't explain. Saint Paul calls this joy a 'fruit of the Spirit.' He names these fruits of the Spirit in his letter to the Galatians, chapter 5, verses 22-23. We are freed then, by this new inner strength, from any need of other excitements that the world holds out to us temptingly, and which kill our inner life, like drugs, too much TV, video, and other things like that.

If we cannot reach this new beginning yet, but are still dependent on those other things, we are like the newborn swans. Their feathers are still too weak for them to shake free of the river which holds them down. But we can pray to the Spirit-Wind to make our wings firm. And the Spirit-Wind who is waiting just for that same thing, will do it.

Supposing now that you have experienced that new beginning in the Spirit, and are continuing to do a little Bible reading every day, then meditation-time when you are quiet in the presence of God: at first, you still have a big struggle to lift your body off the river like the swans, and start rising with the Wind under you. For this, you need special gifts, which are called the gifts of the Holy Spirit, like wisdom, understanding and courage, with which Jesus, the Messiah, was filled. The 'gifts of the Spirit' are named in the messianic prophecy of Isaiah, who lived about 700 years before Christ, in Isaiah 11, 1-9.

The gift of courage, in particular, will make you able to do things, or to say things, which without that special gift you would not be able to do or say. Speaking out bravely when that needs to be done. Or, holding your temper back when you are roused, and speaking a gentle word or staying silent instead of swearing. That will show that you are in control of yourself. It is a most courageous act.

All these sorts of things we will find ourselves growing more strong in spirit to carry out, if we keep at the daily reading of the Bible and the meditation-prayer, carrying it over into the rest of the day around home or at work. We will be surprised at the change that has come over us. Our friends too will be surprised, and will begin maybe to admire us and look to us for example, even leadership. The time will come when this will have built up a big self-confidence in our heart. You will feel yourself standing on level ground with everyone else. You will also feel a growing love for that time in prayer with God when you have silence around you and inside you. When your mind is

emptied completely of silly things, and simply at peace like a baby in its mother's arms. You will feel like spending a longer time at it.

2. That will be a sign that you have moved into the second stage of your spiritual life, when the Spirit-Wind takes over more, and lifts you up. You still have to use your wings, and use them energetically, if you want to arrive at the unbroken enjoyment of life in the Spirit. As long as we are here on earth, our days are always a spiritual battle, and we have many enemy forces to deal with.

3. The day will come, however, if we are generous, when the Spirit-Wind will enable us to break through to the third stage: our true, full selves, our real resting-place and home. In this stage, we will find ourselves unable any longer to forget about the God who lives in our heart. It will be like a love-pain we carry around inside us everywhere. A sweet pain indeed, which we would not want to be without. And it reaches and touches everyone, and the world itself becomes raised up a little by our life.

The breakthrough to this third stage may happen even when we are going through some terrible loss and sorrow or suffering, ourself or in our family. By now we will have learned to understand that the liberation in the Spirit which we have reached, in no way means freedom from suffering. It means rather that any time suffering comes, it does not enslave us, nor crush us under its weight. We are now above it, free of it, and able to handle it, by God's grace.

We are able, also, at such times, to share around to others who maybe are not as strong as we, some of the light and courage that now fill our heart to overflowing. And they will feel able to cope, because of us.

All this is God's work in us, accompanying our own efforts

But now, what about the young, waiting all this time down there on the Fitzroy River? They haven't yet learned how to fly—their wing feathers haven't even grown yet—and they need feeding. So, the swans return back down to them again. Always, however, 'the upward call' (see Philippians 3, 14) remains there, buried deep inside them:

the voice of the Beloved:

... Arise, my love, my beautiful one,
and come away.

For look, winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.

The flowers appear on the earth,
the time of singing has come,
and the cooing of the turtledove is heard
in our land.

The fig tree puts out its figs,
and the vines are in blossom.

They give out sweet smell.

Arise, my love, my beautiful one,
and come...

Song of Songs, 2, 8-13.

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The Nijmegen Graduate School of Theology

Some times I am asked for advice on a good place to go for sabbatical studies with a missiological direction. Recently, through Dr Frans Wijsen (whom I had met at a Missio conference in Aachen some years ago), I received a brochure about the Nijmegen Graduate School of Theology. I would recommend that it be considered by anyone interested in working to a licentiate or doctorate degree recognised both by Dutch and canon law, with all the course working being in English.

The Licentiate two-year program 'aims to prepare students for pastoral, educational, spiritual and theological functions in a leadership capacity at local, regional, and national levels.' Two more years may be added, which will lead up to a Master's degree in pastoral studies.

A four-year Doctoral program is offered to prepare students for academic functions in the field of theological instruction and research.

For further information contact Dr Frans Wijsen, Graduate School of Theology, PO Box 9103, 6500 HD Nijmegen, The Netherlands. Email: bureau@theo.kun.nl, Internet: www.kun.nl/theo/. —MJW, *Editor*

Laundry Stories

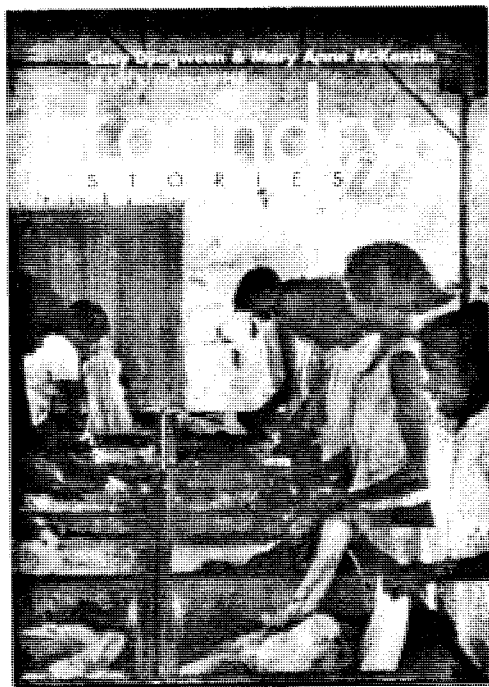
A REVIEW

Cissy Djiagween & Mary Anne McKenzie

As told to Margaret Hill

These Gospel stories were retold, Broome way, by Mary Anne McKenzie and Cissy Djiagween in the Nulugnu laundry in 1990. Sr Margaret Hill wrote them down.

Such is the introductory note of this delightful little story book, written in its own simple way



and maintaining the effect throughout its 27 pages. Two ladies of the Kimberley talk to Sr Margaret Hill who faithfully records their own expressions with feeling and understanding. I particularly like the expression 'Broome way'!

There is a number of photos depicting the people in different situations, the attractive cover (B&W) being most significant as it shows seven ladies at work in the laundry (photo courtesy of the Australian Pallottine Photo Archives). One can

feel the atmosphere of happy laughter as they work, recalling recent events, chatting and commenting in their own observant manner.

The best description of this little gem is as given on the back cover, which we quote:

Down through the centuries the Christian community has always tried to keep the image of Jesus present in the community where it tries to live out the great command to love God and to love the neighbour. There are vastly different times and places where Christians try to follow this command. The basics are always the same. The details differ. But there is always the ongoing effort to make Jesus real in our situation and time.

Laundry Stories does just this, situating the Jesus story in the life and times of two Broome women, Cissy Djiagween and Mary Anne McKenzie. Their retelling of the Gospel is immediate, fresh and relevant.

The reader will be reminded of the work that has been done in South America, where people had read the Gospels and tried to see how Jesus meets them in their own situation. The phenomenon of the Basic Christian Community depends very much on the people's ownership of the Gospel.

At a time in history when it is a struggle to keep Jesus as the guiding light in our own lives and the lives of the communities in which we live, many people of faith wonder about the most effective way in which we can replicate these endeavours of the Basic Christian Communities of South America. In Broome it was a great thrill to find out that this process had already started in such a small but significant way in the laundry of the John of God convent.

Nobody could fail to enjoy this frank and informative account of life and work amongst the Kimberley people, told 'Broome way.' Priced at a very reasonable \$9.95, it is published by and obtainable from Spectrum Publications P/L, PO Box 75, Richmond, Vic. 3121. ISBN 0 86786 282 3. Soft cover, 27 pp.

— Keren Calvert

OUT BUSH IN THE NT

Marriage, a Cyclone and some Fishing

John Leary msc¹

ON 15 April 1953 I married Cyril Rioli and Helena Tebuti. The only thing that made it a little different from a marriage down south was the arch of flowers erected over the altar-rail gate. The marriage was followed by Nuptial Mass, and the bride wore a long white dress with a beautiful veil. The groom wore a white suit.

After Mass, the two Brothers and myself attended the breakfast. All the married couples were present — the seven others. We sang 'For They are Jolly Good Fellows' at the cutting of the cake. That afternoon at four o'clock I went down with the Sisters and many of the children to bless the house. After I had blessed it, everyone passed through the house to have a look-see. At two o'clock the boys, five of them, left in the *Quail* to go fishing and hunting, with the barge towed at the back. They went to the creek halfway between our place and Bathurst Island mission. It is a large body of water and has many side creeks. They would do the main stream in the *Quail* and the side creeks in the barge, which was petrol-driven.

On 17 April it was reported over the National News that there was a cyclone heading towards Darwin. As the afternoon progressed, the rain here got heavier and the wind stronger. From our calculations it

¹ Another item from Fr John Leary's memories of life at Pularumpi (Garden Point) on Melville Island in the 1950s.

looked as though we were going to collect the full force of the cyclone. According to the news report, it was 160 miles wide. We put down the statues in the church from their pedestals, nailed down anything that looked a bit loose, and waited for something to happen. To our relief nothing big did happen. We got an occasional gust of wind that would have reached near 60mph, but apart from a few trees that were blown over near the place, no damage was done. For the 24 hours ending at six o'clock next morning, we had registered 430 points of rain.

On Sunday 19 April, I went down in the afternoon to the front beach to watch the boys fishing for shark. An air-proof drum floated 100 yards out from the beach. Two or three feet below the drum was an enormous hook with a heavy sinker further down. I watched for about three-quarters of an hour and then returned to the house. Some time later, up came the boys wanting the winch to bring home the fish they had caught. It was a groper: 143 lbs. and 5 feet 9 inches long. What a pity I didn't catch it! Though perhaps it is better I was not there, for in playing the monster, the line broke. Fortunately, the drum was still there, racing over the water. The boys took after it in their canoe. They eventually caught up with the drum and hauled it on board. The fish then proceeded to pull the canoe almost home! How would I have done in the canoe?

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Aboriginal Women's Healing House

Nelen Yubu has been handed a very attractive brochure offering a form of Retreat under the above title. It is so delicately composed that we think we should reproduce its wording by quoting directly:

"Aims

What we are aiming to achieve for our Koori women is unique, and has not been addressed by other healing places. Our gatherings allow the everyday person to speak out and be heard, thus allowing us to collectively assess our real needs, our inner pain, and our hopelessness in a workable way.

The Healing House gives women the appropriate environment with other sisters, a place where we share our pain, share experiences, reclaim our stories, yarn, and address stress and how it affects our body, spirit, soul, mind and relationships. The Healing House is a place for relaxation and meditation, massage and Reiki, Aboriginal Spirituality, basket weaving, painting, sewing, yarning. Women to come together, share, create and be renewed.

"Women's Healing Weekend Retreats

The Women's Healing House will also arrange and facilitate weekends away. All women who feel the need are most welcome to apply, from the Community, from Aboriginal Organizations and Government Departments. These retreats offer facilitated weekends away, relaxation, meditation, bush walking, healthy foods; bush tucker available if required. Bushwalking is usually planned with a local Community member. Weekends can be arranged with local Aboriginal Elders, who participate in the Story Telling and reflection on Aboriginal spirituality. Accommodation will be at the beautiful setting of the Healing House at Picton, NSW.

“Location

The Retreat Centre is located on the Razorback Ranges. It is surrounded by beautiful trees with an amazing variety of bird life. The tranquillity of the house and gardens allows oneself to get in touch with Mother Nature. The symbol we have chosen for the Aboriginal Healing House speaks of *Healing as the beginning of Life*. For us this Healing is our Dream come true.”

* * * * *

This refreshing invitation to Aboriginal women to attend a retreat in the comfort and silence of the bush is surely not before its time. For those who would care to accept the offer, the address is:

Aboriginal Women's Healing House

30 Mount View Close

Razorback via Picton 2571

Telephones: 02 4636 6085 (Picton)

or

ACM Erskineville

02 9519 6394

From the Secretary's Desk. . .

IT WOULD not be news to anyone to learn that, as happens at this time every year, *Nelen Yubu* took its annual holidays down the south coast with the same old preparations, same old gear, fishing rods and reels, foul-weather attire, high expectations of bags full of fish, and always at least one adventure to cram into the precious fortnight's leave. But this year was almost the exception.

Leaving Sydney in pelting rain which lasted all day, one was heard to say: 'At least we could have chosen a better day to drive here' ... but undaunted, on we pressed and were very grateful to arrive at comfy dry accommodation.

Next morning, lo! we were greeted by blue skies, cloudless; gentle breezes, a sparkling sea in perfect weather which persevered for the full two weeks, plus fish galore. Our very first day the Editor caught a nice flathead for tea. Next, four brim, followed day-by-day by flathead, yellowtail, whiting, and brim again, and on our last

day an enormous salmon came our way and had to be eaten before we took off for home. It was a very healthy holiday in the sun every day, and I even learned how to catch pippies for bait. I also had to learn another art. Normally the fisherman kills, scales and guts his catch, but this time I somehow found myself being directed to some convenient rocks to do that job on my own because the fisherman was still occupied catching fish. But, for those who remember our horrifying escapade of last year, we did not nearly drown, or lose belongings to the hungry sea, or gash ourselves on sharp rocks. Instead we took a run to Shallow Crossing.

I'd always wanted to see this place since finding it on the map years ago, so we set out through tall forest trees, a winding bush road and beautiful scenery. It went on and on till I wondered if this may not have been a very wise move after all, because if we chanced to break down, how would we ever get help? But at last, triumphantly, we arrived at Shallow Crossing.

This remarkable place is a causeway bridging the Clyde

River in its upper reaches. A beautiful spot, but on our arrival the water was already lapping a few inches over the concrete so I went into panic. I didn't want to go all the way back by the same road, but if ever there were an uninviting prospect this was it. The tide was rising, soft slippery reeds swirled over the surface, and the causeway itself seemed to grow narrower the longer I looked at it. Then I realized it would be impossible to turn the car around, so we'd have to reverse uphill backwards for heaven knows how far.

Two men were eating lunch on the other side of the river. I think they might have been council workers or something, but I could see we were not going to appear wimps in front of them, so I was ordered into the car, 'Open your window and watch your side of the track to see we steer straight!' What an order! I did watch, petrified, expecting any minute that we'd gently slide into the depths. But of course we made it, and as we drove up the opposite bank, one of the men warned us not to try to go back because it would be too deep to cross

within thirty minutes. We needed no second bidding, shot uphill and were on our way through more picturesque country, along the wide winding river till we ran by comforting farms, in one of which lay a new-born foal, its proud mother bending over to shade it from the hot sun.

Very hungry, it was quite pleasant to be back in civilization. But I don't recommend taking that road to Canberra from Termeil via Shallow Crossing, if you are in a hurry.

* * * * *

Nelen Yubu has decided to move away from the Lotus WordPro to Microsoft Word 2000, with which we are very happy. The one big disadvantage for us of Word is that it does not have an inbuilt booklet-printing facility like WordPro's; however, the shareware program, ClickBook, adequately compensates for that deficiency. It is amazing how far we have come since the days of my typesetting all our copy and taking it off to an outside printer. Suddenly Martin announced that we couldn't afford to continue

Nelen Yubu

that habit, so we set to and learned how to do it ourselves. Now we are able to produce all our issues in the office at Kensington, thus saving ourselves expense and enabling us to keep our price low for much longer for the benefit of our faithful subscribers.

* * * * *

I am having my little ten year old granddaughter, Anna, to visit me for a week just before Easter – a treat in store

for us both. Although she is quite used to plane travel, this is the first time she will be flying up from Melbourne to Sydney on her own. I am quite sure I'll be waiting at Mascot Airport even before she leaves Tullamarine.

Happy Easter to all from us at NYMU!

Secretary Keren

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