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Editorial

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One major shift in mission studies in the last decade or so has been the shift toward seeing "The West" which once was the sender of missionaries, to itself being a mission field. How this new mission is to be carried out depends upon which part of the Church one comes from. There has been much talk of "Fresh Expressions" on the one hand, while a renewal of the Catechumenate has been taken up on the other hand. At bottom, for whomever engages in mission, is the question of Christian Initiation. Simply "getting people to come" is not enough. As William Abraham has commented, what is needed is a renewed emphasis on how people are initiated into the ways of the Reign of God.<sup>1</sup> This edition of the **Australian Journal of Mission Studies** attends in a modest way to this theme.

The issue begins with a "summing up" of the present state of the case by Paul Dalzell, following the same kind of article by Ralph Keifer soon after the promulgation of the **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults**. Two other articles from Ron Browning and Irene Wilson approach the theme as it finds expression in the Catholic and Anglican life of Melbourne, Australia. Madeleine Graley gives us a reflection (initially intended as a report from one of its members to a local Parish Council) about how a particular context and recent societal changes affect the mission of that place. Stephen Burns and Neil Sims give us examples of how the Catechumenate is taken up in Uniting Church congregations, and how the Mission of the Church is taught in a Theological college in Brisbane respectively. Before a person can be formed in the ways of the Reign of God at all, there is that moment of first encounter with the faith through hospitality or other forms of contact. In this issue, Michael Duncan looks at how local Churches view and make contact with "strangers." Finally, the issue is rounded out by a splendid reflection from Ennio Mantonvani on the process of initiation as he has experienced it over many years. Ian Robinson and Anna Killigrew reflect on the cross-cultural aspects of work with indigenous peoples when that cross-cultural experience necessarily involves the history of dispossession of aboriginal land. Brian Edgar draws our attention to the significance of the doctrine of the Trinity for a renewed sense of mission which is individual, communal and *cosmic* in its dimensions.

This issue as usual brings to the reader's attention a good selection of the latest literature on mission with contributions this time from Darren Cronshaw, Mary Lewis, Ross Mackinnon and Larry Nemer.

Larry Nemer has recently undergone heart surgery. He is making a good recovery, and we ask for your continued prayers from the Australian missiology community for a much loved member of it.

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<sup>1</sup>ABRAHAM, W J, (1989), **The Logic of Evangelism**, (London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989), p84

## Christian Initiation: The State of the Case

Paul Dalzell

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Soon after the promulgation of the **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)** in 1972, a collection of articles appeared (1975) in which Ralph Keifer addressed "The State of the Case" (Chapter 7.) In his article Keifer reviewed the situation of the Church as it was then and commented on it in the light of the RCIA. This article reviews Keifer's assessment and revisits "The state of the case" regarding Christian Initiation, comparing the time just after 1975 with our own, and asking whether we are better placed to initiate new Christians or not.

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The new **Rites for the Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)** were promulgated as part of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council in 1972. Soon after (1975) a compilation of essays **Made not Born**<sup>1</sup> was published. One of these essays was a general stock-taking by Ralph Keifer called *Christian Initiation: The State of the Question*. Keifer's essay is a pointed, and sometimes sorrowing assessment of the Church's ability to make use of the new opportunities that the RCIA had given it.

The Anglican Church of Australia waited till 1991 to hear about the Catechumenate (RCIA). This introduction occurred in the form of a series of conferences sponsored by the General Board of Religious Education. That first conference featured the renowned Christian educator Rev'd Dr. John Westerhoff III and his partner Carolyn Jones. It is now twenty years since I was introduced to the Catechumenate at that conference. It seems proper to do a similar stock taking to Kiefer's. This article, based on Kiefer's assessment, will compare his assessment of the Church then with the situation which we find today and will make some appropriate comments on the way.

The first thing that Keifer remarks upon is the radicalness of the change that the church made in introducing the RCIA. He outlines four ways in which this change was so significant.

They are, first: That Lent and Easter are restored as baptismal times. The focus is on baptizing adults. The lectionary and the liturgies make sense *only when there are adults to baptize* because the whole of Lent and the Easter season is now designed for them.

Second: That the RCIA implies that Baptism is brought into the centre of Church life, instead of being something done on a Sunday afternoon for babies, or hurriedly for adults. The implication in this shift of focus is that the transformation of people's lives which becomes visible in adult baptism, the making of new Christians, becomes "The revelation of the saving healing and redeeming power in our midst."<sup>2</sup>

Third: Keifer highlights that the RCIA *expects more of believers* than has been the case for a long time. He says that the new perspective "...rejects the idea that an implicit faith, appropriated by a Christian culture is enough. The norm is now radical transformation."<sup>3</sup>

Fourth, Keifer draws attention in the RCIA to the *end* of the divorce between "liturgy and life, private devotion and public function, active ministers and inert laity."<sup>4</sup> He continues, "The real nature of Christian ministry as collegial, shared, and mutual is revealed in the preparation of the Catechumens."<sup>5</sup> They are *both* ministered to and ministers. The role of the laity as sponsors and catechists brings them actively into the central act of the Church's life.

Soon after describing this radical change in the assumptions underlying the Church life that come with the promulgation of the RCIA, Keifer runs headlong into the cognitive dissonance which arises when he compares this image with the image of Church life with which he is familiar. He says, "There is the

pastoral difficulty. The conception of the church as the local community of faith, as vehicle of the experience of the risen Lord as eschatological sign, exists only in official texts and clerical rhetoric, not as something perceived by the great majority of churchgoers. Our operative model is still that of established church: a bastion of conservation, convention and respectability. For most of us the church is not a dynamic and communal reality but a static institution which ministers to the needs of individuals. The standard by which church life is measured is not conversion but conformity... That conversion should be a matter of any kind of experience is not expected and not really desired."<sup>6</sup>

There in a nutshell is the problem as Keifer sees it. We have a document which envisages one kind of Church, and a Church which because of its role as "establishment" is not capable of living out the intention of the document.

This juxtaposition of the intention of the RCIA documents and the state of the Church as Keifer saw it deserves reflection. What has happened in the meantime? Are we still in the state of affairs as described by Keifer, or are we better off, or worse?

The first observation to make is to notice just how exciting the potential of the RCIA is. When I was first asking the question "What does it mean to be parish priest?", it was wonderful to hear the response - "To be parish priest means to make Christians: both of the members of the existing congregation, and of those who are not yet members."

But Keifer's analysis of the Church in 1975 seems to me to be as valid now as it was then. Keifer refers to the cultural or "osmosis factors" that drew people into the Church's life, but without any form of initiation.<sup>7</sup> Since then, there has been further analysis of the Church's situation which has helped, but the basic problem remains the same. As Westerhoff, just a year later (1976), made clear in **Will our Children Have Faith**,<sup>8</sup> the ways in which the society has helped us to gather members (like holding no events on Sundays) have, like the props holding up a ship, all been knocked away. But since Keifer wrote, the Church has not responded in a way that makes the initiation of new members possible. A little further analysis with the help of Westerhoff's faith development theory can help us to understand what has happened.

To make the change which is called for in the RCIA, from an implicit faith (which was and is the norm) to a faith that is capable of giving an account of itself such that it becomes a credible witness in the world, requires something like a conversion on the part of the long time Christian.<sup>9</sup> It is this change from the implicit faith of an adolescent to the "owned" and articulate faith of the adult. Kegan<sup>10</sup> describes this kind of a change as a step up in consciousness, like the change in consciousness that occurs as an infant begins to assume control of its bodily functions at about two years of age. We can expect the same kind of struggles (and tantrums?) as a person leaves behind the neatly packaged faith of teenage years, and takes on the doubts of an adult faith which is owned by the individual person, and can give an account of itself. Up till now, it has only been the clergy who have been required to do this, because they must preach. But Kegan strikes a note of warning when he says that this kind of a step up in consciousness will not be made if it can be avoided or ignored!<sup>11</sup> In congregations this step *has* mostly been avoided and ignored. As a result, the capacity of the Church to be a community of faith which knows what it is to be transformed is limited. The result has been a continuance of the steady decline in numbers, or a consumer mentality, where any attempt to go through the pain barrier to reach this new consciousness has been met with opposition from congregational members who are being asked to take a step they have never been asked to before, yet who can withhold their presence and money. In so doing, they threaten the leadership of the clergy. The response instead has been the amalgamation of parishes. The Christendom (or in Keifer's words "establishment") mindset has remained, but two parishes have become one.

The requirement of clergy training is that they be competent at managing parishes but not competent at inviting new people into the Christian faith journey. It is not seen as necessary to the equipment of clergy that they know how to use the rites of initiation. It follows then that baptism has also remained a sacrament which is mainly concerned with infants and families. The church as "establishment" is seen in some way as belonging to the whole of society and serving its needs. The idea that parents may be invited to undergo some form of renewal of their own baptisms as their child is baptised, or that they ought to become members of a congregation as their child is baptised, is as alien to many members of the society as it is to many clergy. Those who suggest otherwise are charged with "sectarianism" or not being "pastoral". This does not apply of course in traditions where believers' baptism is the norm.

In our time there seems to be a split between public expectations of mainline denominations and other groups. The Pentecostal movement, or the movement toward "Mega-churches]" as represented, for example, by "Hillsong" by and large play down the sacraments. They attract large numbers of people, but the expectation that any others than believing adults would be baptized is not in general a part of their ethos. On the other hand, it is a general expectation that in "establishment" churches, families who do not want to become Christians, will complain bitterly if the "pastoral services" (including baptism) are not available to them as of right.

This last charge brings us to consider whether the context in which Christian initiation is thought about is different now than it was in Keifer's day. What people expect the Church to do for them, or what clergy and parishes expect of themselves about initiation, depends on how they think that they are seen by others. If the Church is seen as rigid, cold, judgemental or too respectable: in fact "Churchy", then those who consider themselves the "good guys" will want to change that image which both they and the society share about what the institution of the Church is. They will want to be "pastoral". Approaches about Christian initiation will be seen in this "pastoral" light in the hope of attracting a family, at some later time, with whom a good impression has been made. If this is the shared assumption of both applicants for baptism and clergy and congregations, then baptism will remain a ceremony of the welcome of a new life, but not a sacrament of new birth. The words of dying, entombment and rising will remain foreign to the experience of those who make promises on behalf of their children, or of the children themselves. As Keifer fears, the rites will remain unused because the context in which they are useful is absent.

Since Kiefer's day, there has also been another change in context which has made the initiation of new Christians all the more difficult. Australian society has been difficult ground for the Church, since convict times. The scandals (literally: *Skandalon*, stumbling block) of paedophilia and sexual abuse in the Churches have made getting a hearing for the Gospel of Jesus that much more difficult. It remains true that in individual congregations a different witness may overcome this generally held view, but because of the sexual abuse scandals, the Church faces a more difficult situation than the Church did in Keifer's time.

There are some other changes in society since Keifer's time of the 1970's which impinge upon the task of Christian initiation. They are the related issues of the rise of "economic rationalism" and consumerism, the rise of post-modernism and the rise of "spirituality".

To understand this movement, I find it helpful to begin by thinking about the question, "What makes a thing 'real'?"<sup>12</sup> In the High Middle Ages when the Church determined what was "real", the question of "work-life balance" did not arise because the idea of the Sabbath and time for rest and God as "real" was built into the "norms" of daily life. Because "God" was "real", everything else found its place in relation to that reality. These days, "God" is not so real. These days, to be, is to be a member of the economy (having a job and consuming). "The Economy" is real and everything else finds its place around *that* reality. Family time must be fitted in around the demands of the economy. Time for God cannot be a collective activity, because the economy demands that people be available *en mass* for work. Consequently, groups suffer and individualism rises. The replacement form of religious life is one that does not challenge the demands of the economy, but, like religion of the nineteenth century in Marx's critique, ameliorates its worst effects through the individual practice of "spirituality". The philosophy of Post-modernity has documented this fracturing of the meta-narrative of God, or other ideologies, and the rise of individualism and "spirituality" which does not challenge the actual power of the meta-narrative of 'the economy'.

In this context, Christian initiation becomes ever more difficult, with some positive challenges. As Keifer has outlined,<sup>13</sup> the Church is caught in the cleft stick of acting and thinking of itself like the "established church" and having certain public "establishment" expectations made of it, yet at the same time being situated with a cultural framework of ideas which attributes "reality" not to God and the Church but to something else: the economy (mammon) and the subsidiary gods of "sport" and "hearth" (family and home and renovation). That is the difficulty. The opportunity lies in the fact that in our time, people who express an interest in the Christian faith are not prepared to be treated as a "group" which is given "information" and in a relatively passive manner accepts the information as "gospel". Rather, individuals demand that faith become real "for me". If adults are to become Christian today, it will not be by way of teaching, or by way of osmosis, but by way of personal engagement. This has the positive benefit that those who are initiated will be those who have made the transition

from a “belonging faith” to an “owned faith” in Westerhoff’s terms. These people will have lived into the implied norms of the RCIA which according to Keifer make the new norm of Christian life - “the radical transformation of life and values publicly celebrate as corporate responsibility.”<sup>14</sup>

In the context of thinking about “what is real” and Christian initiation, Berger and Luckmann’s Book **The Social construction of Reality** becomes useful for our purposes.<sup>15</sup> For Berger and Luckmann, whether a thing assumes the status of being “real” depends upon two factors: to whom one is talking, (conversation partners) and whether or not there is a big or strong enough group to maintain an ongoing sense of the “realness” of an idea (plausibility structure). In a largish group of people this twofold process operates at three levels. First, there is the “small group” of no more than ten people, say, where personal issues can be addressed and worked through. At a second level is the larger group of 50 – 500 people which meet to establish their “reality” on a regular basis both as a message to themselves that they are not alone, and to their suburb or village, that they are capable of determining “what happens” at that level. Third is the city wide gathering which proclaims to individuals and to the city that their “reality” is worth taking seriously. In sporting terms this three fold structure can easily be seen with the three levels of organization of football clubs. There is the local level where players are selected and trained and issues can be worked through. There is the weekly competition level where claims are made on the time of sports fans all over a city or suburb once a week. Then there is the “grand final” which operates now on a national level and “stops a nation”.

In our time, Christian initiation is faced with needs to embed the “reality” of God within the lives of seekers at the same three levels. It is no longer enough to say, “Come to Church”. The personal attention and intense personal relationships of a small group is necessary to provide good conversation partners, and begin the establishment of a plausibility structure. Regular attendance at a weekly congregational meeting is necessary too, and because it is already established, it is the easiest to maintain. What is problematic for some Churches however is the support for the reality of Christian initiation at the city wide or diocesan level. The Roman Catholic Church with its yearly “rite of election” in the Cathedral, where those who are to be baptized come to have their names recorded as candidates for baptism the following Easter is a good example of how institutional support for a process helps it at the local level. In other Churches, for example the Anglican Church, with which I am familiar, such diocese-wide events are not usual, and so the “reality” of Christian initiation is weakened for Anglicans. Suffice it to say that in times of the increased demands on people’s time from “the economy” and an increasing individualism, the Church will need to respond with increasingly personal forms of initiation (better conversation partners) which also attend to the three levels of the establishment of a plausibility structure.

Keifer’s assessment of the Church’s ability to rise to the occasion offered to her by the introduction of the RCIA is pessimistic. An extended quotation of his views is worthwhile here. He says:

We are religiously schizophrenic because we tend to rock between assumptions resting on irrelevant, outmoded, mostly inoperative ecclesial model on the one hand, and on the other, assumptions resting on an uncritical appropriation of less than Christian values of our culture. As we stand at present, people can be partially assimilated but they cannot be initiated. The reason is that we function as an aggregate, not as a community. Moreover our initiatory symbols are symbols of transformation and if there is anything that the present Church does not stand for it is transformation. It merely oscillates between conservation and capitulation.<sup>16</sup>

Have we moved on from this? I do not think so. In the Anglican Church, which I know best, an example of how this polarisation is happening is being played out in our times. On the one hand, there is increasing conservatism from both Anglo Catholics and Evangelicals which has mostly been focused around the issues of women’s ordination and attitudes to Gay and Lesbian clergy. On the other hand, attempts at cultural relevance have meant the abandonment of the celebration of the Eucharist for Café Church or churches stripped of Christian symbolism in the name of a “style” which suits some people and not others, or of “reaching the unchurched” or “not putting people off”. The cultural assumptions of consumerism have penetrated the life of the Church to the extent that it is the norm that worship is understood as being *for* the people who come, and not the celebration *for God by the people who come*. The assumption underlying such practices is that the glory has left the temple, and God is no longer with those who have served him long. It is better either to hang onto the tradition, or to abandon the local congregation because modern people want to worship in a different “style”. What is missing now, as in Keifer’s time, is a community which seeks to be transformed by the

gospel, live Baptismally (and by implication Eucharistically) and is confident and capable of initiating others into its life. This community is neither rigid in its holding onto tradition nor uncritically accepting of every new wave of cultural expression.

Finally, Keifer outlines the radicalness of the RCIA by describing the difference between the Church and cultural assumptions about religion, and those contained within the rites of initiation. He says:

The attempt to reform the rites of initiation has issued in the promulgation of rites which are, historically and culturally speaking, a massive rejection of the presuppositions of both pastoral practice and of most churchgoers regarding the true meaning of Church membership....The Catholic Church has never in any time in its history done such violence to its ritual practice as to make its rites so wholly incongruous with its concrete reality...The new rites, with their enormous demand on the individual and on the local church are neither congruous with nor relevant to the popular presuppositions as to what the Church is all about."<sup>17</sup>

It is this difference, combined with the characteristic response of oscillation between rigid conservatism and lemming-like flock toward the culture, which makes living with Christian initiation the most difficult and painful aspect of parish life and a desire to be faithful at mission.

## Conclusion

Kiefer sees in the RCIA the opportunity for the Church to become again a community of faith, which lives the transforming power of the Gospel, primarily through her involvement with the initiation of those who, as a result of her witness, enquire after the Faith. He also sees the twofold difficulty of a Church which is either still acting like "the establishment" or is falling headlong into the arms of the culture in order to find some relevance. Sadly, the same assessment is as true now as it was then. Keifer could not foresee the dramatic rise in influence in the grand narrative of economics. Nor could he foresee the increased fracturing of narratives which is described as "post modernism". Nor could he foresee the damage done to the Church's witness by sexual abuse. He was right in his assessment of how difficult the task would be and how the characteristic oscillation between conservatism and "flock to the culture" would be still a part of our own life. In the Anglican Church, the Catechumenate (RCIA) has influenced the practices of some places, but has not "taken hold". For many it is "too hard" or not seen as necessary to "running a parish". The "Café Church" is winning the day. In the Roman Catholic Church, the existence of diocesan supports and the official status of the RCIA have meant that it has fared better, but not much.

I have often been moved by the story in Numbers (Chapters 14 -20). The people come up to the promised land, but in fear, are not able to conquer it. God sends them back into the wilderness to prepare further to inherit the land. Then Miriam dies (Numbers 20:1). It was she who watched over Moses right at the beginning; she who led the women in rejoicing at the Red Sea. She made a lot of mistakes too, and suffered the scars of failing. Yet she dedicated her life to a cause whose fruition she would never see. As someone who has devoted his parish life to the cause of Christian initiation, I have built up an amazing reserve of "skills" at presenting the Gospel and initiating newcomers into the reign of God: all to be not valued or seen as "too hard". Like Miriam (I), we may die before the elements of Church life which we have treasured and valued, or the Church may take a completely new direction. Like the monks in the Middle Ages, what *can* be done is that some continue to hold onto the knowledge of how to initiate others into the Reign of God until it is needed again, and remain committed to a process whose time is perhaps not yet.

Twenty years of experimenting with and applying the Catechumenal process across local churches in the Anglican church of Australia gives rise to considerable reflection about the difficulties of engaging the process in the long-term. According to a recent survey, many clergy have found using the process "too hard" (largely due to its 'group flow', non-curriculum based approach) whilst inquirers who were exposed to the process found it exciting, challenging and a definite route to faith and commitment. The author argues that, as a vital and central way of introducing adults to the Christian faith, a deeper look at the need for the process is urgently required to be undertaken by church leaders, local and wider. Focusing on the nature of the massive changes in society, and uncovering with more awareness the post-Christendom reality in which the churches are placed, will evoke more strongly the need for the Catechumenal way. That is, embarking on person-based, shared-response gospel

story, progressing the group at its own pace yet framed in stages (with companions). Here is the appropriate, albeit costly, way to make new Christians in our time and context.

## Resisting What We Love: The Struggle of the Anglican Church to Embrace Initiation

Ron Browning

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**Ron Browning** has been a parish priest for many years in Melbourne. He has co-taught mission studies at the United Faculty of Theology at the University of Melbourne for some years. He has grown passionate about pathways to Christian belief and adult baptism within western cultures. One outcome has been the publishing of **Taking the Plunge** in 2008. In recent years, he has been working with the Karen refugee communities both in Australia and Thailand. He is President of the Australian Karen Foundation.

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The journey of the Australian Anglican Church in the last twenty years with the key notions of initiation has been a truly “undulating affair.”

Much of the emphasis in this edition of *The Australian Journal of Mission Studies* is to claim that the Catechumenate is at the heart of the how churches go about initiation. The local church is the baptising community – it is responsible for and is the milieu of conversion. This takes place by means of accompanied inquiry, shared personal response to scripture, an exploration of church belonging and discovering what it means to a Christian in the world. The revival and adaptation of the ancient practice as one whereby individuals who make inquiry are embraced in community, rather than an educational program that presents itself as a gift and challenge to be practised by the churches today. Putting what is at stake in another way: our task in the churches is to engage searchers/ inquirers and ourselves with them in a rhythm of making connections between persons, God, the Church and the world, with the outcomes of faith, ministry and enriched community. It is around this enterprise that the sacrament of initiation expresses its vitality and truth.

To the ear that is not familiar with this stance it may at first sound a somewhat arrogant position to hold. But once understood, best through experience, any comparison with introductory programs does not hold. Introductory programs are curriculum-based whereas the Catechumenate progresses in stages which are guided in the first instance by the questions and the concerns of the participants. The task therefore becomes one of understanding at depth and grasping the daring required to introduce the catechumenal way as a more person-centred, inter-active process into the local church setting, and for that matter, into the diocesan or wider church setting.<sup>18</sup>

This article traces the struggle of one church tradition in the Australian context to move into a commitment regarding to the “way of initiation.” As we shall see it has been a rocky road and the reasons for this can be named. I shall also present some thoughts on what is needed for on-going revival for putting the “way” into practice in our cultural context of church and society.

## Two Decades of Partial Engagement

Some years ago I wrote a report on the use of the Catechumenate in the Australian Anglican Church entitled **What do you seek?**<sup>19</sup> It became apparent that since 1990 until 2006 that some ninety parishes had used the process, either for a short term or longer. The “Easter Journey” became for many parishes the more user-friendly term for the Catechumenate. The national educational body of the church had facilitated training in the states, and in 1999 produced a manual. It became evident that it was a common view in local leadership that the process was hard to maintain year by year. The reasons for this were mainly due to other local competing priorities. Parishes also had difficulties in sustaining lay team leaders. Furthermore, many local leaders spoke of the lack of encouragement and resources on the diocesan level. Often there was not and still is not a commitment by diocesan bishops to the initiation way. The same could be said of the theological colleges in their training of future priests.

Yet, locally, as a survey of six parishes in Melbourne held in recent years indicates, newly baptised and confirmed adults who had been a part of the process expressed very positive views of the process. Several of the adults voiced the following reflections on their experience:

- there was an environment free of judgment where I could ask questions and air doubts
- a rare trust developed in the group
- “I found acceptance of my own spiritual experience”
- reading scripture together in “Gospel encounter” became occasions when God met us in our particular moments
- “I realise now that I have gifts and can use them in ways I never thought possible”
- “I found a growing a sense of the sacred with others”
- “I appreciated the support of the congregation and participating in the liturgy”
- “The course was quite long – it’s OK to be on a slow pathway”
- “I am now committed to the Christian path.”

Alongside the many lay people who reflected in this positive kind of manner on the catechumenal process is the mixed and often confused understanding of the clergy. The last few years saw a declined use of the process around the dioceses. The most usual responses as to why those who had given up the process had done so, was that “I don’t have time to implement it” or “it’s too hard.” These comments lead me to the second part of this article.

In our context, more light needs to be shed upon these comments to discover what is at stake when such responses are made: one is about there not being enough time and the other is about the difficulty of the process. My view is that it is better primarily not to maintain a management approach to local church life. Such an approach concentrates on managing the multifarious day-to-day problems of current parish life which tend to crowd in and swamp the initiation agenda when it is introduced. Rather, in order to foster good initiation practice in the long run, it is better to take a step backwards from the management coal-face so that the central task of initiation can be approached at a deeper level. This approach involves looking at the issues of society and church, and how the current state of each either helps or hinders the making of new Christians. What follows is an outline of some of the elements of Church and society which I believe are relevant to developing the practice of Christian initiation. To do this is to attempt to empower each other’s minds for what indeed is a central agenda of the local church’s life and mission. There is at stake here a “mind shift” which I call initiation consciousness.

## Growing Initiation Consciousness

This form of consciousness which I have called “initiation consciousness” is about developing a keen awareness and desire to engage searchers/inquirers and ourselves within a rhythm of making

connections between persons, God, the Church and the world, with the outcomes of faith, ministry and enriched community.

In order to grow this consciousness - in order to empower clergy and lay people truly to embark on initiation practice for the future - we must address the following topics:

- How we can promote and keep the vision of an initiating Church.
- How the shifts in priorities in local church life can be made to sustain the Catechumenate.
- How we can learn from the practices of other mission contexts.

### **Holding the Vision**

Three elements come to mind in an attempt to explicate what is needed for a vision of the future in which initiation returns to its rightful place within the Christian community. I wish to call these elements *culp*, *culture* and *colony*.

To be on the 'Cusp' is simply the acknowledgment that we find ourselves, in history, on the end edge of Christendom; it implies that we have to begin to see and do things differently. It is a time of experimentation but in the midst of the experimenting stands the core requirement to look discerningly at baptism and to open up the sacrament into an adult journey of faith discovery as the developing norm of its practice. The fourth century was, we can say, the "beginning cusp" of Christendom. In Christendom time the Church stood high at the centre of society; now the church sits low in a secular, pluralistic society. Then most people came to the Church; now the Church must go to the people. Such an inter-active, person-centred pathway of initiation as the Catechumenate offers provides the initiation route in this context.

By referring to *culture* we acknowledge that the Church must always relate to cultural forms and must find ways to enculturate the Gospel without compromising it. Equally, the Church needs to find ways to challenge and stand against the wrongs in the culture.

Christendom, according to writers such as Hauerwas and Kreider<sup>20</sup>, enculturated the Church in many ways that sharply compromised Christian life and witness. In our own time we are therefore thrown into the task of discerning what the authentic Christian community way and witness is. The Catechumenate provides the initiation route in this context by providing a context in which candidates for baptism can learn how not to be "conformed to this world but transformed by the renewing of their minds" (Rom 9:2).

The word *colony* is a word Hauerwas uses to define what, he argues, the Church needs to become:

The Christian colony of the future is not primarily about togetherness but about individual call, communal call ... What sort of community (for example) is required to support ethics of nonviolence, marriage fidelity, forgiveness and hope as these are sketched by Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.<sup>21</sup>

In other words, our times require a Church which is more distinctly the "ek-klesia": the "called-out" ones. Hence the Church, at it is "called out" from the world, develops a living social witness in each generation in its separate identity. As church congregations begin to see themselves as distinct from society they see the need to be prepared to give an account of their faith. Christian people therefore need to make the transition from affiliative (belonging) faith to "owned faith."<sup>22</sup> In other words, believers need to move beyond being members of the local church as persons who simply belong to knowing what "my faith is" and being "ready to share the hope that is within you" (1 Peter 3:15). The Catechumenate provides the route for both church members and inquirers to discover the new perceptions needed in the changed context in which they find themselves.

If these three components, cusp, culture and colony, describe the broad parameters of the vision for the future for us to hold regarding initiation, then the way forward involves filling in these parameters with content.

In this discussion Catechumenate becomes the fourth 'c' to be entertained here.

At an Anglican conference on Christian initiation in Canada in 1991, Robert Brooks listed succinctly the following characteristics of the place of the Catechumenal process in the life in the Church:<sup>23</sup>

1. *It challenges the Church to an awareness that the paschal mystery is the very centre of its life.*
2. *It develops a prophetic faith to challenge the values of society.*
3. *It challenges the view that baptism is an inoculation of the individual against sin and evil.*
4. *It challenges the compartmentalization and fragmentation of parish life.*
5. *It challenges the Church's understanding of ministry.*

### **Making Shifts in Priorities**

Effective support for local leaders who hold the vision becomes a major priority. Close support groups allow the dream of authentic initiation to be invigorated so that leaders can take heart again in the face of recurring resistance, and know together that progress does take place albeit slowly. One priority for visionary church ministry today therefore is a commitment to leadership support. This support centres largely around what John Westerhoff has often named - local church leadership needs to move from a model of pastoral care, administration and education to a model of conversion and initiation.<sup>24</sup> This transition takes considerable time and energy since the legacy of the Christendom habit in which the first model is deeply embedded, is difficult in practice to transcend. It can only be achieved with the holding of a strong vision and having effective support.

Here we may need to clarify what the difference between an educational focus and a focus on initiation is, since at first sight both involve learning and formation in relation to the Christian faith. As Paul Dalzell puts it:

Education forms the character of those who are being educated within the context of a largely given identity. On the other hand, initiation aims at changing a person's sense of who they are.<sup>25</sup>

Once the transition has been inaugurated on the local level, shared ministry that is apostolically geared becomes a major focus. Local apostolicity has to do with being oriented to outreach, awareness of who might be a searcher, service to and solidarity with the poor and the vulnerable. Outreach opportunities that "speak a word in season" in the local community in relation to what is happening in people's lives, raises the thought that the Church may in fact have something to say. Outreach of various kinds becomes a major strategy in order to gather people for the journey into faith and commitment as well as being avenues of community care in and of themselves. What cannot be under-estimated is the value of simply being watchful in daily community contact in order to invite people to inquire and bring their questions to the group process of the initiation journey.

### **Learning from Other Mission Contexts**

Let me mention just one story of an overseas setting from which we can learn.

Insights about initiation can be gained from Vincent Donovan's book **Christianity Rediscovered**.<sup>26</sup> The way of conversion in some contexts other than our own can have much to teach us about Christian mission in our own context. The missionary work of Donovan among the Masai in the mid 1960s was an exploration with tribal communities into "who God is in their culture."

It led to an introduction of the Gospel into that culture without preconceived notions of what the Gospel is. It was in the encounter of the Gospel with the culture that conversions gradually occurred. One village, after a series of discussions, refused the Gospel. But the other tribal groups with whom he worked felt led by the "High God" of Abraham to move forward into a relationship with the Christian God. This God was seen as the God who brought about peace by means of "the love of enemies."

Then, after some time, the sacrifice of the elder, Jesus, came into their central view. As a warring people, more than one year had to be spent before the time came for decision and commitment.

The years of evangelism were an exploration into what it meant to live as a Christian community. As the time for baptism approached, Donovan and the tribal leaders realised that to be baptised meant they then could baptise others. Gifts in the community were recognised, especially regarding those who had the gift of being evangelists. They were ready to move into being a eucharistic community in which all is offered to God. In other words, baptism entrusted them with everything in terms of becoming a responsible church community with its own leadership to be ordained to the task.

Donovan was following the strategy of the Apostle Paul in setting up new churches. Soon after the celebrations of baptism were performed it was the time for him to leave. I provide this outline of this "Masai story" because it points to the all-embracing nature of the meaning of initiation. The nature of baptism actually includes the dialogue between culture and faith in a movement towards conversion and sacramental immersion, in order then to live in Christian community.

The community that baptises needs to ask similar questions to those that the Masai asked: Who is God in our faith community? Who is God in our surrounding local – and wider – culture? What are the particularly striking qualities in the gospel narrative and teaching that need to be pondered in the local context? It is the communal discerning of the answers to these questions that brings light to moving forward in openness and gospel-bearing engagement of the surrounding world. It is the way of initiation.

The reflections began with my interest and concern for the active place of initiation in the mission of my own church, the Anglican Church of Australia. Clearly the dark times of the church's life in these present decades is partly or largely about losing our way; having a misty vision in relation to initiation. It will take time and persistence for shared, clear vision and good practice to be anchored in the common life of my denomination, as I suspect it will in others.... we resist what we love .... but hopefully for not too much longer.

## IRENE WILSON

### Bio - data:

Irene Wilson holds a M Theol degree from the Melbourne College of Divinity. Her thesis, *The Catechumenate Comes Home*, explored the theological, ecclesial and pastoral aspects of the model of adult initiation that unfolded in the Belgrave Catholic parish of St. Thomas More. She offers her time as an RCIA resource person across Australian dioceses and parishes, and convenes Project Link-up, an ecumenical dialogue where Anglican and Catholic practitioners can find encouragement and support to implement the process well. With husband John, she values continued participation in a Belgrave Small Christian Community.

### Abstract:

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*, promulgated in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, emphasised in the clearest possible terms that the entire faith community has a central role to play in the Initiation process of its catechumens. Unhappily, all too often the community's involvement is derailed by well-meaning but overworked RCIA teams, thus depriving newcomers of critically important opportunities for forging strong bonds with the wider parish, and denying the community the same experience of conversion and renewal that the catechumens enjoy. This article describes how one Melbourne Catholic parish, reading the signs, addressed this parlous state of affairs by involving its small faith-sharing groups in the journey of catechumens, all the way to Initiation and beyond. Underpinned by sound research and rooted in ancient Tradition, the model that developed transformed the parish into an evangelised and evangelising community.

### Using small groups in Christian initiation

Irene Wilson

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*Irene Wilson holds a Master of Theology degree from the Melbourne College of Divinity. Her thesis, The Catechumenate Comes Home, explored the theological, ecclesial and pastoral aspects of the model of adult initiation that unfolded in the Belgrave (Victoria) Catholic parish of St. Thomas More. She offers her time as an RCIA resource person across Australian dioceses and parishes, and convenes Project Link-up, an ecumenical dialogue where Anglican and Catholic practitioners can find encouragement and support to implement the process well. With husband John, she values continued participation in a Belgrave Small Christian Community.*

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### Introduction

Whatever one's motivation for undertaking travel, whatever expectation one might have of the experience, it seems certain that travel will guarantee some degree of change, not only within the traveller, but change that can also ripple over and affect those whose lives the traveller touches. And so it is with the Catechumenate journey. Paul Turner writes:

When the Catechumenate arose in the post-Vatican II Church, we were all changed because it invited us into evangelisation, catechesis, worship, community and service in a transformed way.<sup>27</sup>

Those of us who have already been privileged companions on the adult catechumenal journey, perhaps as a team member or sponsor, will readily resonate with the accuracy of Turner's observation. Intimacy with those on the faith journey enabled within our own lives a unique sense of change and renewal, our own dying and rising, which continued to inspire and invigorate us for the work of furthering the kingdom long after the formal process had concluded.

The **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)** document in actual fact calls *the whole community*, not just a privileged few, to this same experience of conversion. *The whole community*, it insists repeatedly, has an important role to play, declaring unambiguously that "the initiation of catechumens takes place within the community of the faithful" (paragraph 4). Again it states, "The community should understand and show by their concern that the initiation of adults is the responsibility of all the baptised ... and must help the candidates and the catechumens throughout the process of initiation" (paragraph 9). The Rite therefore is assuming that it is *the whole community* who will evangelise, catechise, celebrate, live the Christian life and be mission oriented - in other words, who will *initiate* and who, consequently, will also be transformed and renewed by the experience.<sup>28</sup>

Unfortunately, the reality in most Catholic parishes is quite different. Too often "community" involvement in the journeys of newcomers is confined to the dedicated efforts of a small group of parishioners, the RCIA team who, on behalf of the community, oversees the entire initiatory process, endeavouring year in and year out to micro-manage the various steps and stages and develop relationships with the enquirers/catechumens. The rest of the parish often remain rather peripheral to the sublime event taking place in their midst, passive onlookers who continue on, untouched and unchanged by the Rite's powerful call to conversion.

Of even greater concern with this style of catechumenal activation is the loss of new Christians after Mystagogia.<sup>29</sup> Feeling lost and side-lined as the RCIA team turns its attention to the needs of a new group of enquirers, and floundering in the relative anonymity of parish life, neophytes sometimes decide that the cost of belonging in the Christian community far outweighs the benefits. Once described by American RCIA activist, the late Father Jim Dunning, as "a revolving door syndrome", this deplorable situation should be a cause of grave concern for anyone who is committed to seeing the Rite implemented with fidelity.

The hard work of parish initiation teams over the past forty years has undoubtedly made a huge contribution to the success and understanding of the revised Rite, but to RCIA practitioners, now seasoned and insightful, it must be apparent, in light of current research, that the role of the wider community has been conceived and packaged too narrowly. By virtually replacing the community, initiation teams have inadvertently controlled and limited the journey of those seeking initiation, denied the wider community an opportunity of reflecting on the implications of the paschal mystery in their own lives, and created for themselves a behemoth of work. Surely this scenario does not reflect the ecclesiology of *Lumen gentium*, of empowerment and responsibility of all God's people in a Spirit-filled communion that the Rite, more than any other liturgical reform, sought to implement.<sup>30</sup>

The good news is that there is a better way, as the Catholic parish of St Thomas More, Belgrave, in the Melbourne Archdiocese, discovered. Thanks to intelligent and visionary leadership there, a broader, more communal model of adult initiation that satisfactorily addressed particular pastoral challenges was set in train in a spirit of collaborative and empowering ministry. In short, the deployment of small faith-sharing groups across the Belgrave parish, to accompany newcomers to initiation and beyond, was the key that unlocked the potential of the Rite for renewing the whole community - and with astonishing results!

This, then, is the Belgrave story.

### **The Belgrave story**

For St Thomas More's community, the process of loosening the reins on the old "team alone" model of adult initiation and implementing something more communal happened quite gradually. Up until

1990, the RCIA Team always endeavoured to be all things to all catechumens. Their task, involving ministry in all five Mass centres across this sprawling parish, was nothing short of an endurance feat. Of further concern was the growing practice of slotting the faith journeys of all enquirers into an identical time frame in order to make the process manageable and to ensure team survival.

In 1991, however, under the leadership of Cheryl Graham, things began to change and Neighbourhood Support Groups (NSG) were invited to form around each faith seeker from the period of Catechumenate onwards.<sup>31</sup> NSG members lived in the vicinity of the newcomer. Randomly selected, they gathered in a home setting with the newcomer on alternate weeks in order to share the Word and to share life. It was a simple yet effective way in which the team could share the work load and create opportunities for their own development/planning and prayer. But it did carry an element of risk. What if NSGs gave the candidate/catechumen a different message? A different picture of church? Out of date teachings? The risk was considered worth taking. Indeed the outcome of this experiment was both positive and significant. Catechumens and candidates welcomed the opportunity to develop close bonds with the wider faith community. The NSG members, for their part, felt that by their involvement they were no longer confined to the margins of parish life. Newcomers and “old” parishioners alike were all experiencing a greater sense of belonging.

### Recent research

About this time, Graham embarked on a research project which addressed the retention rates of new Catholics, and the sociological factors associated with their retention or cessation of involvement.<sup>32</sup> The study was restricted to the findings from one large Australian parish, identified as Ferndale, where her target group had been all those initiated over a twelve year period.<sup>33</sup> Whilst this is a small study of one parish only, and therefore does not necessarily lend itself to generalisations, the conclusions that Graham draws will surely ring bells for anyone else involved in the care of new Christians, and provide a starting point for discussion at least. They certainly confirm the soundness of her decision to utilise NSGs in Belgrave in a ministry of accompaniment.

Two major findings emerged from the study. The first related to the number and intensity of close ties that new members had with people in the parish, and the degree to which people in their lives were Catholic and supported their concern. She described as “most at risk” those who joined the church “on their own” – for example, the widowed, divorced or not yet married and those married but unsupported by their partner. This group, she maintained, are always predisposed to cease involvement *unless* significant close relationships with parish members have been formed to counter the indifference and opposition they encounter. She reports:

My deduction from this observation is that it is not enough for catechumens to form close ties with RCIA members ... by the time Mystagoga ends the new Catholics need to have developed several close relationships with community members other than RCIA Team members.<sup>34</sup>

The second major finding highlights the RCIA process itself as an important factor in retention. Her study revealed:

More than half of those who ceased involvement did not go through a recognisable RCIA process lasting eight months or more with four clear stages and/or their RCIA process was very disrupted by inconsistent attendance or changing parishes midway.<sup>35</sup>

In identifying a number of pastoral strategies suggested by her research, Graham emphasised the expediency of identifying those “most at risk” early in the process, and of encouraging “a sense of ongoing mission in the new converts”.<sup>36</sup>

Significantly, NSGs and their new Catholic members opted to continue meeting on a regular basis after the formal journey had concluded. Jim Dunning’s “revolving door syndrome” had well and truly been dismantled!

With Graham’s findings in mind, ten years on I surveyed all Victorian Catholic parishes to get a sense of catechumenal practice at that time.<sup>37</sup> The conclusions were the same. It was noteworthy but not surprising that the study showed that only five parishes reported taking “less than eight months” for

the catechumenal journey. Experience has taught facilitators that meagre preparation does not work in terms of addressing the Rite with vigour, instilling a sense of commitment in catechumens and assisting them to establish lasting friendships in the community. This group reported that either some new Catholics continued involvement or that the majority were absent.

By contrast, those in the study whose journey had taken “eight to twelve months” or “more than twelve months” had a far higher retention rate. Of these two groups however, it was the first which had the better rate, suggesting that *another* factor, other than the length of the journey, was not only in the mix, but impacting significantly. On closer examination, the data revealed that the “eight to twelve month” groups alone had conspicuously gone well beyond old familiar strategies like bulletin notices and cuppas with the catechumens, intended to “include” the wider community. Deftly, they had instigated innovative measures such as:

- Sustained companionship by parish groups other than the team – for example, NSGs, small Christian communities, Cells of Evangelisation, both during and after the process;
- Follow-up programmes to support neophytes whilst they were embedded into the community- for example, gospel/pizza nights, insertion into Parish Family Groups;
- Regular reunions for the new Catholics;
- An understanding of the sponsor’s role as an ongoing relationship;
- A role for new Catholics on the Initiation Team during the next cycle so that they could revisit their own experience whilst walking the faith journey with newcomers.

With small groups now a familiar part of parish life, initiating teams here had either seized upon already existing groups or created new ones for involving the wider community with the care and initiation of newcomers. These practitioners signpost a way forward wherever parishes are serious about implementing the Rite well.

Thus far, the discussion has focussed on the way that the involvement of groups other than the RCIA Team in the faith journey of newcomers can make a difference for all involved. Permit me to repeat that interaction between group and candidate needs to be of a sufficiently sustained and intimate nature in order for affective bonds to develop, and for the whole group to experience the blessings of the Rite in their own lives. The NSG model is one of these ways in which the wider community can be included. Happily it easily finds a place wherever parishes have been clustered in order to cope with the current shortage of priests, and it is equally at home in an urban or rural setting. Put simply, all enquirers/catechumens from the cluster’s parishes attend the RCIA team meeting with their sponsors at a central location each fortnight. On alternate weeks they attend their supporting NSGs on home turf, and celebrate all liturgical rites with their local community.

Cheryl Graham makes an important point that the care of new Christians really begins with caring for the “old” ones, by nurturing and empowering them “to build an inclusive community of vision and shared responsibility”.<sup>38</sup> In time, Small Christian Communities (SCC) were developed in the more urban areas of the Belgrave parish. With their intentional ecclesial formation and commitment to the Word of God, SCCs provided a dramatically exciting, even richer locus for catechumenal endeavours. The integration of RCIA and SCCs in the parish has been the high point of catechumenal development there, as the snapshot below attests.

### **Small Christian Communities**

As church at the grass roots, SCCs around the globe may be known by many names, - for example, House Church, Basic Ecclesial Communities, Small Church Communities. What they do have in common, however, is a basic will to live out the hallmarks of church - community, proclamation, prayer and service. *Evangelii nuntiandi* (EN) captures their spirit and essence, describing how they live the Church’s life more intensely, “places of evangelisation”, seeking “nourishment in the Word of God”, growing in “missionary consciousness, fervour commitment and zeal ... hearers of the gospel (and) proclaimers of the gospel themselves.”<sup>39</sup>

With the SCCs as the primary setting for the steps and stages of the RCIA journey, the RCIA team now recast its role to provide resources and guidance for the small groups involved.<sup>40</sup> With this latest development, an exciting link was inserted into the Christian tradition’s chain of memory, one that highlighted our lineage of belief with the early church. The Fathers had favoured easy-to-understand pregnancy language to speak about the journey to faith in the womb-like embrace of Mother Church.

Quodvultdeus, for example, instructed neophytes thus, “And so this mother seeks to feed with suitable food those whom she carries, that after birth she may have joy to have brought forth those whom she has spiritually fed.”<sup>41</sup> Similarly, SCCs now offered a nurturing environment where instruction and liturgical action would become the nourishment offered to the new Christian to grow *in utero*.

When prospective enquirers came knocking at the parish door, the Team often learned of the “wordless witness” that SCC members had already offered, perhaps in the neighbourhood, local school community or workplace, witness that had stirred up “irresistible questions” in the enquirer’s heart. (EN 21). This is one of the ways in which first proclamation of Jesus Christ occurs. Appropriately, the formal catechumenal process would then be activated for the newcomer starting with the initial Period of Evangelisation when, according to the document, “faithfully and constantly the living God is proclaimed and Jesus Christ whom he has sent for the salvation of all” (RCIA, 36). And those “irresistible questions” would be explored through the sharing of stories, both scriptural and personal, in the SCC circle.

SCCs, as evangelised and evangelising communities, tend to live with energy and passion for parish, local community and environment - for peace and justice generally. Their mission to evangelise can often take on fresh, contemporary expressions. For example, with the formal apology to the stolen generations in 2008, one SCC participant decided to journey to the Wadeye community in Daly River country where she had worked thirty years previously as a young teacher. She decided that she wanted to offer her own apology to the indigenous friends there. Subsequently, with encouragement from her SCC, she has organised reciprocal immersion experiences for students from both Wadeye and the local Catholic Girls Secondary College. The point here is that it is into the ambience of such conspicuously Christian commitment that newcomers at Belgrave are immersed, then swept up in the prevailing desire to bring the “Good News into all the strata of humanity” (EN,18), to be the means whereby Jesus’ mission continues. In 1976, Bishop Christopher Mowleka, extolling the pastoral wisdom of integrating the RCIA and SCCs in his diocese of Rulenge, Tanzania, uttered a prescient statement that is as relevant in our own day as it was in his. “Faith,” he announced, “is caught, not taught.”<sup>42</sup> This is all sacramental territory of course, where catechumens learn by observation, then deepen their understanding of what is meant by the Church as Christ’s Body in the world and sacrament of salvation, and where, as Michael Lawler explains, they will encounter at its very core, “the mysterious presence of the God who is triune communion and who calls men and women to communion with one another and with God.”<sup>43</sup>

### **Some pastoral implications**

It may be timely at this point to mention that with the incorporation of groups like the SCCs it was now possible to respect the uniqueness of all individual faith journeys. This model ensured that catechumens could take as long as they needed. Equally important, newcomers could be slotted into a group whenever they make an initial enquiry. No longer did they need to wait for a designated intake period.

The SCC ministry of accompaniment at Belgrave is not conducted in isolation from the rest of the parish community. Catechumens are brought along to Sunday Eucharist where liturgies associated with the Rite - for example, Scrutinies, Rite of Acceptance - are celebrated in due season and in front of the gathered Assembly. In this milieu the apprentice Christians can be introduced to wider parish networks. During the period of Catechumenate, SCCs will escort them to a series of Adult Education in Faith sessions offered not only for their benefit but for the whole parish family as well. Paul Dalzell’s own research highlights the need for newcomers to be exposed to small, medium and large groups of conversation partners if their re-socialisation is to take root.<sup>44</sup> The utilisation of small parish groups in the catechumenal process would appear then to play a vital role in this plausibility structure, parish and diocese providing the other components. Drawing on the literature about organisational identification and commitment and socialisation, Dalzell identifies other fundamental aspects of incorporation that the successful inductee needs to absorb. These include learning the new language, trying on the new identity and experiencing mentoring, aspects that dedicated parish groups like SCCs are adequately equipped to cover.

A catechumenal journey in this small group setting is always one of mutual influence and engagement in formation. When participating group members in Belgrave’s inaugural RCIA/SCC cycle were invited

to explore ways in which the experience had impacted upon their ecclesial identity, they described how initial doubts about their qualifications or levels of worthiness soon gave way to the joy of openly supporting adults “who made an enormous turn around”.<sup>45</sup> The experience had forced them to ponder their own Catholicism and also to appreciate it anew. They agreed that it had also matured and consolidated them as a group, and interestingly, it had also strengthened their bonds with the wider Belgrave faith community. They spoke of their ability to offer the newcomers a real picture of church, “a warts and all church but still Catholic”. The extent to which they were “moved”, “touched” and “empowered” is captured below in a testimony offered by one of the group. It is reproduced with her permission.

When I had been in the small church group for a very short time, I was amazed to learn that there were people who wanted, not only to join our group, but who wanted to become Catholic. It really got me thinking, why in the face of so much media criticism of the Catholic Church and apparent hostility from society at large, would these seemingly normal people choose to become Catholic. It was, I became convinced a miracle unfolding before my eyes. I was like the disciples on the road to Emmaus - I did not recognise what was before me. People's lives were being turned around and it wasn't just the RCIA candidates. It was us, witnessing them and supporting them in this new direction who had changed. We understood more of the power and beauty of our God, and of our faith and indeed our parish, in particular.

Recalling Paul Turner's observation, the catechumenal journey had changed not only the “travellers”. It had affected everyone in the accompanying group as well.

## **Conclusion**

The main points above can be summarised thus:

- The catechumenal journey as outlined in the revised Rite has, at its core, an experience of conversion.
- The Christian community as primary minister of initiation is an intended recipient of this graced experience along with the catechumens in its midst.
- All too often well-meaning initiating teams take over almost the entire activation of the process, thereby stifling and diminishing the possibility of renewal for the wider community.
- This “team alone” model has been a major contributing factor wherever faith journeys have been incomplete and neophytes lost.
- Inviting small parish groups, in addition to the initiating team, to accompany candidates in a sustained and personal way enables the Rite to renew the community.
- This approach is capable of ensuring the successful re-socialisation and retention of new Christians.
- Whether these groups are already in existence or have been created for the purpose of accompaniment, both they and their candidates will significantly benefit to the extent that they have been enabled to develop a heightened awareness of their ecclesial identity, and are open to the transformative power of God's Word.

Initiating teams may complain that it's all too hard to instigate a more communal model of adult initiation. Parishioners may point to the busy-ness of their lives to explain their inability to undertake one more parish involvement. But the truth remains that excluding or limiting the role of the parish community is simply not an option. I suggest that, where change is called for, parish leadership groups should take steps to make the kind of catechumenal implementation outlined here a prioritised central plank in their platform of pastoral strategies. I truly believe that parishes today need to do little else other than encourage the integration of the catechumenate and small groups of faith-sharing parishioners if they want to form proclaiming communities, on mission in today's world, reading and responding to the signs of the times and caring for one another.

I suspect that these communities are precisely the right kind of “new wineskins” that the heady “new wine” of the revised Rite is calling for!

## “Trusting God with our lives”: missional process in the liturgy

Stephen Burns

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This descriptive introduction to the **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults** highlights contours and features of Roman Catholic theology and practice of initiation, as well as aspects of widespread Protestant appropriation of the RCIA's patterns, with special reference to the Uniting Church in Australia. The rite's emphasis on a staged ritual process of initiation is outlined, and its approach commended as a resource for mission and spiritual formation. Furthermore, the descriptive weighting of the article intends to counter prescriptive assumptions disconnecting worship and mission, as found in some current "mission-shaped" literature.

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### Descriptive dearth in *Mission-shaped Church*

“Mission-shaped Church” spin-offs have overwhelmed much mission-thinking in recent years,<sup>46</sup> and they have sometimes attached to themselves the claim that public worship does not attract and is no starting place for evangelism. So Graham Cray, head honcho behind **Mission-Shaped Church** itself:

A fresh expression of church starts with a desire to reach those with whom the local church has no significant contact as yet. It normally involves a process of listening, serving and relationship building before any public event of (sic) act of worship can be established.<sup>47</sup>

The report, and the genre following in its wake, can be severely criticized for lack of attention to worship matters, and related, rather hasty conclusions.<sup>48</sup> It does not appear to have crossed the minds of too many “mission-shaped” thinkers that the missionary capacity of “any event of public worship” might depend on how that worship is conducted, what kinds of participation are made available, and whether it is beautiful or striking, dazzling enough to “grab our insides.”<sup>49</sup> This is at the very least to say that a public event of worship may or may not approximate to the ideals of liturgical renewal, and that moving from an unsatisfactory *status quo* need not necessarily entail the minimalism of thought and the paucity of imagination in relation to worship of much of what has as yet emerged as “mission-shaped” thinking, at least as it has ensued from **Mission-Shaped Church**.

The liturgical renewal of the latter half of the twentieth-century in fact proposes some strong engagement in mission, although this does not equate simply with giving worship a utilitarian purpose: evangelism. Worship is always, first and foremost, for nothing more, nothing less, than adoration. The missionary potential of liturgical patterns have, however, become a major concern of liturgical theologians, and nowhere has this been more evident than in the wide ecumenical appropriation of the Roman Catholic Church's post-Vatican 2 **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)**.

### Seeking a descriptive richness

However, it does remain the case that a great deal of liturgical studies continues to be preoccupied with questions relating to the eucharist, described in Catholic parlance in terms which have become an “ecumenical treasure”<sup>50</sup>: “the source and summit” of faith.<sup>51</sup> So eucharist has oftentimes been seen to sit at the top of a “hierarchy” in liturgical studies in which other sacraments and rites occupy lower places.<sup>52</sup> That being so, within the realms of liturgical studies, preoccupation with eucharist has included a good deal of attention to how eucharist relates to mission. Nevertheless, a point that can be allied to **Mission-Shaped Church** is that a large “alumni and alumnae” of the churches may need

to be engaged in another way, quite apart from those persons now commonly referred to as “un-churched.”<sup>53</sup>

The following reflections on missional process in the liturgy, particularly in relation to the ecumenical appropriation of the **RCIA**, are largely descriptive<sup>54</sup> - with deliberately tentative reserve about prematurely prescriptive “application” of liturgical resources that may or may not be from another tradition to the reader’s own; in fact, doing little more than introducing the resources. Yet the descriptive richness that is sought here also has a more combative intent, as already signalled, in that it aims to contest the premature, prescriptive rejection of worship that has come to characterise certain kinds of “mission-shaped” thinking. Rather, it suggests an alternative configuration of relationship between worship and mission by inviting attention to the possibilities of stages and process, approaches to evangelistic ministry, and the importance of concern for both ritual and formation in effective mission.

### From moment to process

“Journey” is the over-riding motif of many contemporary liturgies: to take some examples from just the British churches, and only in relation to baptism, the **Methodist Worship Book**’s services of “entry into the church” speak of baptism as “the ritual beginning of a journey of faith,” and of “the journey of faith which starts with Baptism.”<sup>55</sup> The baptism service in **Worship from the United Reformed Church** talks about “Christ’s journey from death to resurrection [a]s the pattern of our lives,”<sup>56</sup> and the journey motif comes to particular prominence in the Church of England’s **Common Worship**: the pastoral introduction to the baptism service begins, “baptism marks the beginning of a journey,” and uses the image repeatedly.<sup>57</sup> Prayer within the service speaks of “a life-long journey,”<sup>58</sup> and indeed, the journey motif is a lens through which it is intended that all its pastoral services are interpreted.<sup>59</sup>

Use of the motif of journey in baptismal contexts, as others, reflects a widespread, ecumenical shift in recent sacramental theology from moment to process, that is, from regarding the idea of localized or narrow sacramentality with suspicion, as too unambiguous.<sup>60</sup> A perhaps more prominent case of this shift can be seen in eucharistic theology - at the top of the “hierarchy” - in which once many traditions regarded the repetition of Christ’s words of institution as consecratory (with visual theology sometimes reinforcing this with manual acts and/or bows, genuflections or other gestures of special devotion), whereas recent eucharistic theology has stressed that the whole eucharistic prayer – rather than just a part of it – is consecratory (and hence strong discouragement of ceremonial gestures that may contest the sense that the whole prayer is equally significant: so, preferably, a single posture should be maintained throughout, without interruption).<sup>61</sup>

With respect to initiation, the move to process is sometimes especially conveyed through use of the image of adoption, as a mutually involving commitment over time, being made central to recent baptismal theology. For example:

At one level, baptism is something immediate. It comes into effect as soon as the legal process is complete. But, as all parents of adopted children realize, the reality is rather different. In terms of relationship between parent and child, gradual process rather than instantaneous act best characterizes what occurs. For, while the declarative legal act removes any possible insecurity from the relation, the subsequent bonding can take as long as several years to complete. So likewise with baptism. Our heavenly Father has, as it were, in baptism signed the necessary legal documents, but as in adoption this marks the beginning of a story, not that about which nothing further needs to be said. . .<sup>62</sup>

Consequently, services of baptism are now often contextualized in rich, related surrounding rites, all threaded together with the journey motif. As well as strengthening the capacity for pastoral care and evangelistic contact around baptism, this wider context impresses the key point that the baptismal covenant is a continual deepening over time. So various liturgical directories now more consciously locate the service of baptism in pre-baptismal care and catechesis, and also in a whole raft of resources for life-long baptismal renewal. Note, as just one example, the stirring prayer - “Generous God, touch us again with the fire of your Spirit and renew in us all the grace of our baptism. . .” - that is prayed by the whole congregation in all services of baptism in the **Methodist Worship Book**.<sup>63</sup>

### Before and after baptism

Pre-baptismal catechesis has been a growing concern of the churches as they have become more aware of “the secular orientation of new Christians.”<sup>64</sup> There is increasingly widespread recognition of the need for appropriate baptismal preparation, and this is increasingly ambitious in its scope. The **RCIA** of 1987 paved the way for wholesale reforms in a number of traditions, recovering from fourth-century patterns of initiation rites in addition to water-baptism, such as the making of catechumens, scrutinies and exorcism.<sup>65</sup> Although with various adjustments (some little more than cosmetic, so for example, the new American Lutheran rites switch “scrutinies” for “blessings”),<sup>66</sup> the **RCIA** has influenced the making of new space in the services of other traditions for testimony, public affirmation of personal faith, and congregational embrace of baptismal inquirers and candidates. This has, in turn, led to greater attention than previously to staged growth and involvement in church-life (seen, for example, in more “traditional” evangelistic resources such as the **Emmaus** Course).<sup>67</sup>

Many traditions have similarly been concerned to enlarge the role of post-baptismal renewal. Providing opportunity for testimony has been central.<sup>68</sup> This is also a notable feature of various rites for re-affirmation of baptism, which have been provided in part as an alternative to re-baptism - about which the World Council of Churches’ **Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry** received widespread assent in its adamant denial of such a possibility: “Baptism is an unrepeatable act. Any practice which might be interpreted as ‘re-baptism’ must be avoided.”<sup>69</sup> However, such reaffirmations do sometimes involve water. The implication for mission is that whilst re-baptism may not be being contemplated, ritual opportunities to “personalize” experience may very well be available.

Further, many traditions have also been keen to revive regular opportunity for congregational re-commitment to the baptismal covenant. Such rites have been central to attempts to re-animate a wider sense of sacramental spirituality, complementing a eucharistic focus and richer for such wider perspective.<sup>70</sup> An official example, among many, is the **Common Worship** thanksgiving for baptism – itself among other thanksgivings – as a pathway to enriching word-services and providing a broader repertoire of rites. At a non-official but influential level, there is the like of Richard Giles’ argument in his **Creating Uncommon Worship**,<sup>71</sup> for beginning the celebration of the eucharist with a gathering around the font for baptismal remembrance in which the recommended ritual is close to one of the options for the beginning of mass in the Roman rite where the opening invitation to repentance may be replaced by baptismal recollection.

Within this enlargement of the baptismal process, the role of confirmation is inevitably being re-examined, sometimes radically. Long regarded as “a rite in search of a theology,”<sup>72</sup> it is generally no longer seen as a gateway to eucharistic participation, but rather as an adult rite of re-affirmation, providing opportunity for testimony and public commitment, as above. A striking example of the commitment articulated at confirmation can be found in the Anglican Church in Kenya’s rite:

**We about to be commissioned  
for the mission of Christ and his Church,  
pledge to keep and walk in God’s commandments  
all the days of our lives,  
and to read the Bible and pray regularly.  
We pledge to proclaim Christ,  
in season and out of season,  
to obey him and to live in the fellowship  
of all true believers throughout the world.  
We pledge to be active in church,  
to give to the work of the church,  
to help the needy, support the poor,  
and to be good stewards of all that the Lord has given to us.  
We pledge to uphold truth and justice,  
and to seek reconciliation among all people;  
the Lord being our helper.**<sup>73</sup>

Pressure to reconfigure the role of confirmation comes strongly in the wake of ecumenical and worldwide rediscovery of baptised children’s participation in the eucharist, which has in fact been the majority practice of the Christian tradition, seen in the long view.<sup>74</sup>

## The RCIA itself

The **RCIA** ritualizes in highly experiential events various stages of invitation and response to the gospel. As already noted, many Protestant traditions have adopted some of its emphases, whilst almost universally, the motif of journey has been embraced as key to understanding initiation, with consideration now given to the whole *process* of contact, invitation, teaching, response and after-care around baptism. The **RCIA** itself asserts that baptism follows a number of stages along the way: gaining knowledge of scripture, sharing of prayer with the Christian community, and personal profession of belief in the “blessed Trinity” (general introduction 5): adults are “called to the gospel by the Holy Spirit and infants are baptized in the faith of the Church and brought up in that faith” (general introduction 7). The rite designed for adults is for those “who, after hearing the mystery of Christ proclaimed, consciously and freely seek the living God and enter the way of faith. . .” (RCIA introduction 1). The rite “restores, revises and adapts” “all the rites of the ancient catechumenate” and turns “ancient practice” to “contemporary missionary activity” (RCIA introduction 2). The catechumenate is “a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful” (RCIA introduction 4). And the hospitality of the whole community is crucial: priests *and people* are to be a part of the new believer’s preparation and the full compliment of the local church should play an active part in receiving the newly baptized (general introduction 7). Godparents “living a life consistent with faith” (general introduction 10.3) must be involved. But the initiation of new believers is both responsibility and gift – that of “continual conversion” and maturity in Christ - for *all* involved: “by joining the catechumens in reflecting on the value of the paschal mystery and by renewing their own conversion, the faithful provide an example that will help the catechumens to obey the Holy Spirit more generously” (RCIA introduction 4).

The “journey” on which the church embarks with new converts consists of three essential steps:

- (i) “reaching the point of initial conversion and wishing to become Christians. . .”;
- (ii) progressing in faith through catechesis, teaching, and choosing a “more intense” commitment;
- (iii) being spiritually prepared and so receiving the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and holy communion (RCIA introduction 6).

Each of these steps involves public testimony and celebration, over time: the first two steps “may last for several years” (RCIA introduction 7.2), though the third step “ordinarily coincides with the Lenten preparation for the Easter celebration.” Once initiated, there is another step: “post-baptismal catechesis or mystagogy” (the name given to teaching and renewal after baptism in the early church), which lasts a lifetime, consciously renewed every Lent and Easter as more new converts are welcomed, taught and baptized, and by evangelism at all times, all of which is sharing the “apostolic vocation to give help to those who are searching for Christ” (RCIA introduction 9).

Some of the ritual stages include the following dialogues, which offer a sense of the “mood” of the rite, which is part conveyed by a register of language which is warmly personal and which corresponds in turn to gentle touch. From the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens:

What do you ask of God’s church?

**Faith.**

What does faith offer you?

**Eternal life.**

[ ] The way of the gospel now lies open before you. Set your feet firmly on that path and acknowledge the living God, who truly speaks to everyone. Walk in the light of Christ and learn to trust in his wisdom. Commit your lives daily to his care, so that you may come to believe in him with all your heart.

This is the way of faith along which Christ will lead you in love toward eternal life. Are you prepared to begin this journey today under the guidance of Christ?

**I am.** (RCIA, 52)

And later a prayer from the same rite of acceptance:

Father of mercy, we thank you for these your servants. You have sought and summoned them in many ways and they have turned to seek you. You have called them today and they have answered in our presence: we praise you, Lord, and we bless you. . . (RCIA, 53)

And then the senses are signed by members of the community:

Receive the sign of the cross on your ears, that you may hear the voice of the Lord.  
Receive the sign of the cross on your eyes, that you may see the glory of God.  
Receive the sign of the cross on your lips, that you may respond to the word of God.  
Receive the sign of the cross over your heart, that Christ may dwell there by faith.  
Receive the sign of the cross on your shoulders, that you may bear the gentle yoke of Christ.  
Receive the sign of the cross on your hands, that Christ may be known in the work which you do.  
Receive the sign of the cross on your feet, that you may walk in the way of Christ.  
(RCIA, 56)

How these signings “restore, revision and adapt” ancient catechumenal material can be seen by reference to their source, itself richly scriptural, in the writings of Cyril, fourth century bishop of Jerusalem:

First you were anointed on the forehead so that you might lose the shame which Adam, the first transgressor, everywhere bore with him, so that you might ‘with unveiled face behold the glory of the Lord’ (2 Cor 3.18). Next you were anointed on the ears, that you might acquire ears which hear those divine mysteries of which Isaiah said: ‘The Lord has given me an ear to hear with’ (Is 50.4). Again, the Lord Jesus in the gospel said: ‘He who has ears, let him hear’ (Mt 11.15). Then you were anointed on the nostrils, so that after receiving the divine chrism you might say: ‘We are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved’ (2 Cor 2.15). After that, you were anointed on the chest, so that ‘having put on the breast-plate of righteousness, you might stand against the wiles of the devil’ (Eph 6.14, 11). Just as Christ after his baptism and visitation by the Holy Spirit went out and successfully wrestled with the enemy, so you also, after your holy baptism and sacramental anointing, put on the armour of the Holy Spirit, confront the power of the enemy, and reduce it saying: ‘I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me’ (Phil 4.13).<sup>75</sup>

The Period of Belonging to the Catechumenate consists largely of “celebrations of the word of God,” accompanied study of scripture and vigorous responses: “scrutinizes...meant to uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective and sinful in the heart” (RCIA, 141): prayer for “a spirit of repentance, a sense of sin, and the true freedom of children of God” (RCIA, 152), renunciation of false worship and a series of exorcisms, of which the following extracts are among the gentler portions:

God of power, you sent your Son to be our saviour. Grant that these catechumens, who, like the woman of Samarian thirst for living water, may turn to the Lord as they hear his word and acknowledge the sins and weaknesses that weigh them down. Protect them from vain self-reliance and defend them from the power of Satan. Free them from the spirit of deceit. . . . [And then, with outstretched hands:] Lord Jesus, you are the fountain for which they thirst, you are the Master whom they seek. In your presence they dare not claim to be without sin, for you are the Holy One of God. They open their hearts to you in faith, they confess their faults and lay bare their hidden wounds. In your love free them from their infirmities, heal their sickness, quench their thirst and give them peace. In the power of your name, which we call upon in faith, stand by them now and heal them. Rule over that spirit of evil, conquered by your rising from the dead. . . [And joining their hands:] All-merciful Father, [ ] free them from the slavery of sin, and for Satan’s crushing yoke, exchange the gentle yoke of Jesus. . [And laying hands upon them:] Touch their hearts with the power of the Spirit. . . (RCIA, 154)

Through this period, they (and the rest of the gathered congregation) receive teaching in public worship on the Lord’s prayer and the creed, and in that context receive prayer for deep reflection on God’s word, for “power to proclaim the good news. . .” (RCIA, 168), and so on. The period

culminates with the Ephphetha rite (see Mark 7:31-37): the ears and lips are touched with the prayer: "Ephphetha: that is, be opened, that you may profess the faith you hear. . ." (RCIA, 199)

### **Ecumenical appropriation: The Uniting Church in Australia**

The Uniting Church in Australia's **Uniting in Worship 2** (UIW2) includes a significant slice of material on baptism and related rites, much of which models a process approach to mission and indebted to the **RCIA**. So a service for baptism, which may be used for either infants or adults is surrounded by a wealth of resources on "paths to discipleship" (pp15-130). For children at least, prior to baptism, there is a notable personal declaration that compliments the focus elsewhere on adult appropriation of faith, and is as warm in tone as the personal address that marks the **RCIA**:

N and N,  
for you Jesus Christ has come,  
has lived, has suffered;  
for you he endured the agony of Gethsemane  
and the darkness of Calvary;  
for you he uttered the cry, 'It is accomplished!'  
For you he triumphed over death;  
for you he prays at God's right hand;  
for you, N and N,  
even before you were born.  
In baptism the word of the apostle is confirmed:  
"We love, because God first loved us."(79)

Most of the resources, however, shape a staged rite of baptism, with surrounding material for renewal of baptism in various circumstances.

The **Uniting in Worship 2** materials' dependence on the **RCIA** can be seen in the like of its provisions for signings with the cross:<sup>76</sup>

Receive the cross on your ears,  
that you may hear the gospel of Christ, the Word of life.  
**Glory and praise to you, gracious God.**  
Receive the cross on your eyes,  
that you may see the light of Christ, light for your way.  
**Glory and praise to you, gracious God.**  
Receive the cross on your lips,  
that you may sing the praise of Christ, the joy of the Church.  
**Glory and praise to you, gracious God.**  
Receive the cross over your heart,  
that God may dwell there by faith.  
**Glory and praise to you, gracious God.**  
Receive the cross on your shoulders,  
that you may bear the gentle yoke of Christ.  
**Glory and praise to you, gracious God.**  
Receive the cross on your hands,  
that God's mercy may be known in your work.  
**Glory and praise to you, gracious God.**  
Receive the cross on your feet,  
that you may walk in the way of Christ.  
**Glory and praise to you, gracious God.**(23)

Yet the **RCIA** model is creatively adapted in a distinctive catechetical process through the weeks of Lent prior to baptism, in which new believers may be "presented" with the Lord's Prayer (UIW2, 36), the Creed (UiW2, 40), the Basis of Union (UiW2, 44), an invitation to song (UiW2, 51) and so on - this being a mixture of gifts from both the church catholic (prayer that Jesus taught and creeds, *sanctus*), also found in the **RCIA**, and gifts that suggest the bespoke timbre and tone of the Uniting Church itself. As reference already to *asperges* and signing of the cross suggests, the resources are rich in

symbols, also including the Ephphatha (UiW2, 58), the choosing of a baptismal name (UiW2, 60), and anointing (UiW2, 60). So in relation to the Lord's Prayer:

In the name of the Lord  
who has called you to life among us,  
we hand on to you our common prayer  
in which we pray for God's reign  
to be established in our midst.

And in relation to the Uniting Church's **Basis of Union**:

In joining this congregation of the Uniting Church in Australia,  
you participate in the life of a Church  
that commits itself to the worship, witness and service of God  
as Father, Son and Spirit.  
We therefore hand on to you  
the *Basis of Union*,  
which calls us to live within the faith and unity  
of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church  
and also commits us to being open  
to Christ's constant renewal,

which is followed by an affirmation of faith itself modelled on the **Basis of Union**, and a compliment to the Apostles' Creed presented the previous Sunday in Lent.

**Uniting in Worship 2** also includes an astonishing array of materials for the reaffirmation of baptism, both personal<sup>77</sup> and communal. The latter includes the "commitment to mission" (UiW2, 93) affirmed at adult baptism, and confirmation, and another instance of an ecumenical treasure widely shared across churches around the world:<sup>78</sup>

I ask you now to pledge yourselves  
to Christ's ministry in the world.

Will you continue in the community of faith,  
the apostles' teaching,  
the breaking of bread and the prayers?  
**With God's help, we will.**

Will you proclaim by word and example  
the good news of God in Christ?  
**With God's help, we will.**

Will you seek Christ in all people,  
and love your neighbour as yourself?  
**With God's help, we will.**

Will you strive for justice and peace,  
and respect the dignity of every human being?  
**With God's help, we will.**

May almighty God,  
who has given us new birth by water and the Holy Spirit,  
keep us steadfast in the faith,  
and bring us to eternal life;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

A rite for the recollection of baptism involves an elder praying

Come, Lord Jesus,

refresh the lives of your faithful people.

Then follows an aspersion (sprinkling) of the people with water, or the people touching or “immersing themselves,” with the mandate:

Always remember that you are baptised,  
and be thankful (etc, 94-5).

Alternatively, a signing of the cross might be used:

Today we remember that, from the time of our baptism,  
the sign of the cross has been upon us.  
I invite you now to join me  
in tracing the sign of the cross upon your forehead,  
saying: I belong to Christ.

. . .on those around you,  
saying: You belong to Christ. Amen. (95)

These are most interesting steps in attempting to facilitate an ongoing personal and corporate baptismal spirituality, and consistent with the Uniting Church’s stress on the baptismal foundations of ministry - a conviction re-asserted strongly in ordination services.

### **Missional process**

At a time in which worship and mission are often being aligned in the mould of **Mission-shaped Church**, attention to the **RCIA** and its ecumenical appropriation is salutary. At the very least, they invite imagination about formation, with which, arguably, thinking in “mission-shaped church” trajectories has not to date been sufficiently concerned. So as fresh expressions of church bear fruit, they may yet turn to the **RCIA** and its ecumenical appropriation to learn a particular way of “learning to trust God with [ ]our lives.”<sup>79</sup>

## Teaching the Mission of the Church

Neil Sims

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*For the past thirteen years, Neil Sims has been a lecturer in Ministry and Mission at Trinity Theological College within the Uniting Church in Australia. Since the closure of the Brisbane College of Theology last year, he has become an Affiliate Lecturer with Australian Catholic University. His wrestling with the mission of the church began in the context of more than twenty years of ministry with congregations. More recently, he was involved with Barnabas Community, Christian residential community with people with disabilities, modelled on L'Arche. He has a developing interest in ministry with men, taking seriously the Australian cultural context, beginning in the congregation where he worships. He has been annually co-teaching "Mission of the Church" ecumenically in degree programs.*

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*The church is gradually understanding that mission is about joining God in what God is doing, it is about being church no longer at the centre of society, and it is more about relationships than words. The assessment for the unit, "Mission of the Church," taught ecumenically within the Brisbane College of Theology, has centred on a group mission model or project based on an agreed mission context, usually within Australia, and often local. Each group of students works throughout the semester on a different mission model for a specific context according to set criteria. They engage their contexts in various ways through visits and interviews, researching relevant data, articulating their theology of mission, agreeing on goals and strategies, planning how to implement and evaluate, and generally collaborating with others. Learning from one another takes place as groups work on their projects and as they present them to the whole class. This lays a solid foundation for thinking about and engaging in God's mission in the future contexts where the students find themselves. Many examples are given throughout the paper.*

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### Introduction

"Returning to Eden": Market gardening and Thai cooking: Six students worked together weekly (for a semester) on developing this mission project for the southside of Brisbane. In this area with a high proportion of people from Samoa and PNG, where unemployment is high, and where incomes are relatively low, such a project may have significant appeal. The students saw this project as encouraging the building of community across all ages, as teaching gardening, sound business practices and healthy food choices, and as providing opportunities for faith-sharing. A local multicultural congregation gave approval in principle for the project on their church property. The project was at the heart of the assessment for the degree unit, "Mission of the Church."

### The Unit, "Mission of the Church"

When I came to Trinity Theological College, then a member school of the Brisbane College of Theology, in 1997, I accepted the responsibility of teaching the unit, "Mission of the Church," jointly with a Catholic colleague.<sup>80</sup> It has always been a key unit in the field of Ministry and Mission.

The unit is primarily about mission in the contemporary Australian context. While there is some breadth of focus in the class sessions – from the Scriptural Basis for Mission to Multicultural Mission, from the Church's Stance towards the World to Equipping the People of God for their Life in the World, from Mission as Social Capital to Evangelism as Dialogue – the assessment provides the opportunity for dealing at depth with mission in a specified context.

### Mission in Australia

Back in 1990, Callahan wrote provocatively, “The day of the local church is over. The day of the mission outpost has come. More precisely, the day of the *churched-culture* local church is over.”<sup>81</sup> There is no longer a churched culture in our country, though a significant minority lives with the memory of it and the existential change since then – and so our Australian culture is an appropriate context for the church’s mission. My perception is that the Australian church has become somewhat insulated from its environment. This means, therefore, that any mission of the Australian church could be described as cross-cultural. Hopefully, if students can learn to ‘do’ this cross-cultural mission in a local context, then they will have *begun* learning how to approach mission in any context. This is not to suggest, however, that to engage in mission is easy!

Part of the learning necessary for students (and the whole church) is not to try to recapture the culture, attitudes and practices of past days, successful as they might have been. Rather, it is to accept that the church now is a minority group being pushed to the edge of Australian society, a community held together by the grace of God in Jesus Christ, to whom it bears witness.<sup>82</sup> The church must always try to discern where God is leading it today! One consequence of this is that the language of faith about a loving God is unintelligible to most people unless it is translated through acts of love the wider community understands.

### **The Focus of the Unit**

This unit develops the student’s theology of mission and asks that it find expression through a mission project related to a particular context.

The unit aims to examine theologically the purpose of the church’s life and witness in the world in such a way that the students will develop their understanding of the directions and strategies the church in Australia might take in order to live and present the Gospel in attitude, word and deed, particularly in a defined context.<sup>83</sup>

There is a strong emphasis in the unit on the *missio Dei*, the mission of God. So many students come to the class with the sense that we and the church as a whole have a mission from God, and God has left us to work it out. It takes some time to change that mindset to the understanding that God has a mission, that God is active in the world and that we are called to join God in that mission. It is not ours, but God’s mission!

Prior to the first class, students are notified by email that the assessment includes a group project developing a model of mission for a particular context. They are invited to come having given some thought to potential areas of interest in mission. By the end of the second class, after negotiation together in class, students know the other students with whom they will be working as a group and the specific context that will be their focus. For the next nine nights, the last half-hour of class time is allocated to group work. Lecturers are available for consultation on the group task, and so find that they can relate their lecture material, presented in powerpoint, to the specific mission projects. Most groups choose to meet for more extended periods of time. Recent groups have focused on ministry with rural young people via the internet, ministry in the nursing home context, the local churches serving the Christmas crowds in the city’s major shopping centre, engaging with young people in the pubs and clubs scene, and bringing people from ethnic minorities together to support them.

Classes generally include students from the Anglican, Catholic and Uniting Churches (since the three churches have required this unit of its ordinands), and often one or two students from other Christian denominations. Consequently, the small groups of two to six students reflect that diversity. It is not unusual for one of the groups to struggle to work together. As lecturers, we believe that this reflects the reality when churches try to work together ecumenically on mission. At times, we intervene in the group functioning to clarify the task, foster working relationships, sharpen thinking and generally stimulate group productivity. Once we removed a student from a group and asked him to present separately to the class.

### **The Evolution of the Unit**

Throughout the thirteen times I have taught the unit (annually), I have co-taught with four different people, three Catholic colleagues and one Anglican. Each of them has brought their own mission passions and perspectives to the sessions they have taught. The set readings and teaching content related to the focus of each week's class have steadily evolved in line with contemporary thinking.<sup>84</sup> Much of the development of the unit has been in response to student end of semester evaluations:

- Guest mission practitioners, usually working ecumenically, now come to tell the stories of their mission practice, as requested by students;
- Students told us they were unprepared for the group process and the selection of a mission focus for their assessment, so the pre-class email assists with that;
- As the thinking and practice on the 'emerging' church has developed, this has become more significant in the unit;
- While we were using David Bosch's seminal work, *Transforming Mission*,<sup>85</sup> as our key overall text, a student introduced us to Bevans and Schroeder's, *Constants in Context*<sup>86</sup>, when it was first published, and now both serve to give a comprehensive perspective, one Reformed and the second Catholic, on the mission of the church;
- My denomination asked that we include an explicit focus on evangelism within our formation of candidates for the ministry and this was the natural place to include it; and
- My Catholic colleague did some research into social capital while on study leave and introduced that perspective from the social sciences.

When I first began teaching the unit, mostly the mission models/projects were based in a particular geographical area such as a suburb or small town. Over the years, that has changed, reflecting the fact that our sense of belonging is less in a geographical locality and more in a number of networks. Some models have been based on the internet, others on age groups, and others still on networks around life crises such as grief and divorce. A recent project was around people who are waiting, such as at a railway station.

## Assessment

Assessment for the unit is in three parts:<sup>87</sup>

1. An initial individual paper on the group's development of its mission project or model so far (1500 words);
2. A group presentation to the class of its mission project or model (20 minutes followed by 10 minutes' interaction with the class); and
3. A major individual paper on the mission project or model (2500 words).

The lecturers together assess each presentation (item 2) and everyone in the group is given the same mark, while the other items are assessed individually. This allows for the freedom of each student to develop their models differently. The first piece of assessment occurs half-way through the semester-long unit, and is primarily a reality check – to make sure each group is on track with its model. The written paper allows for specific feedback from the lecturers to each student and group.

At the same time, the dynamic of working together to<sup>88</sup>

- define the nature and boundaries of their project,
- gather data,
- articulate their theology of mission,
- set goals and determine strategies,
- plan for how others may be involved including in leadership,
- collaborate with others including ecumenically,
- establish evaluative procedures, and
- integrate these into their model/project

is normally an enriching one which mostly appears to enhance the quality of the outcomes, including student grades. One of the criteria for the group presentation to class is the quality and creativity of the presentation. This is important because in the future, the student might be presenting his/her model to a churches' gathering or a community group seeking endorsement of the proposal. On occasions, I have assessed students on the presentation they have made to a public gathering eg a congregation, people involved in youth ministry in a Brisbane suburb, and representatives of particular welfare/community agencies in a small town. Another criteria for the presentation is for students to report their learnings from the whole experience of developing the model. These may include

learnings about how difficult it was to work in the group, about the *missio Dei*, and about everything in between.

### **Engaging the Mission Context**

The fact that students gather data on specific contexts, often interview people engaged in the particular context, and often visit the context taking photos helps the students think critically beyond the classroom about the practice of mission in the name of Christ. To assist further in this orientation, guest lecturers come in to tell of their mission engagement. In 2009, the guests were two young ministers of different denominational backgrounds who work together in ministry with the homeless people of the Brisbane CBD, and another minister who intentionally asks the ecumenical question in his entire ministry, "Is this something we could be doing with people of other denominations?" as a witness to our one Lord.

The range of mission models/projects has been very diverse. Here is a sample:

- Workplace Spirituality
- Boomerang Connections – ministry with 'grey nomads'
- Brekky in the School – breakfast for high school students
- Cuppa in the Carpark – connecting with parents waiting at the school for their children
- Fade – helping people **face death**
- "But God is not defeated" – supporting local Sudanese people resourcing the rebuilding of their churches in the Sudan
- Christian spiritual resources on the internet
- "Just in the nick of time" – ministry with gay and lesbian people with suicidal thoughts
- Well-come Place – ministry with TAFE students
- City Heart – ministry with high-rise residents in the inner city
- RAFT: recovery after family turmoil – connecting with divorcees

Sometimes people from the particular ministry contexts have joined us to be part of a group's presentation. A group of Sudanese Christians travelled for a couple of hours from Toowoomba in support of the mission project on rebuilding churches in their home country. In the presentation from the group supporting ministry with suicidal gay and lesbian people, a couple of people came and told their personal story to the class. Often the model of mission has been acted out in class. For example, the breakfast for high school students' presentation included barbecued food for class consumption. The lecturers had to be careful not to be open to bribery in relation to students' grades!

It has been common for students to interview people in the selected mission context eg a school chaplain about how to work with her on connecting with students and their parents. One group developed a partnership with Sandgate-Brackenridge Action Group (SANDBAG) in their welcoming of newcomers to this community on the northern outskirts of Brisbane. Some groups have developed websites and got them up and running. Perhaps most exciting is the story of a pilot project where one group member was employed in a call centre. How do you minister with people in a call centre when they only take thirty minutes for lunch? The student got permission for some of the group to visit the call centre. It so happened that the visit was a couple of days after September 11, and the students had lots of significant conversations!

### **Images of the Mission Model**

The RAFT project developed a logo of a person guiding a raft with a cross for a sail. It was subtitled, "the calm in the storm". The City Heart ministry used a red, paper heart as its focus. On the heart was the text, "Create in me a new heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me." Well-come Place used a symbol of three people gathered around a well – a place to sit, to be heard, to experience the compassion Jesus offered the woman at the well, and to draw out life. On reflection, these kinds of images and key phrases serve to integrate a model and give people a "handle" on them. They provide a focus and help define the parameters. They "most powerfully express our visions and convictions; they challenge us and motivate us; they provide standards that we are willing to stretch towards and live up to; they help stir up the emotional energy that we need to live out our commitments."<sup>89</sup> In a number of ways, images serve to enhance the mission model.

### **Group Projects**

The literature is full of wisdom on group projects with group assessment. Let me comment briefly. For example,

When effective group management processes are employed, clear assessment guidelines developed and communicated, and valid and fair grading processes employed, the likelihood of positive learning outcomes and student satisfaction with group activities is significantly increased.<sup>90</sup>

At its best, the advantages of the group process are:

- The group process mirrors the real world of mission being a collaborative process, and students have to work out how to work with others;
- The group process means that the students learn not only from the lecturers but also from one another, and this additional learning is reflected in the assessment pieces;
- The group process often means a greater level of energy and motivation;
- The group process demands better planning and organization on the part of the group members; and
- The group process can share the workload of gathering data, doing theological thinking, framing goals and strategies and so on - which is a different style of learning from the standard individual alone process.

## **Conclusion**

Because the mission of the church finds varied expressions in very diverse contexts, there is no one way of teaching it. With a postgraduate class, after some introductory lectures, students could take it in turns to lead a seminar on a topic chosen out of a list provided of the key issues in mission today such as mission in a multifaith world or gospel and culture or the integration of ecclesiology and missiology. Field trips as a class or immersion experiences are other valuable learning models, especially where good preparation precedes the engagement and critical reflection together follows.

However, the processes outlined above have generally been well received. It would be wonderful if one or more ministers who had completed the unit a few years ago contacted us to say that they had a much better idea of what to do in their current ministry context to express the church's mission because of their group experience in class!

## Local Churches and the Stranger

Michael Duncan

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*Right up to and including the eighteenth century the Christian Church by and large knew that it had a responsibility towards strangers. This is no longer the case. Today's church, like the rest of society, is wary of the stranger. Christians see the stranger in their midst but see them as invisible. Christians act and behave as though the stranger were not there. This "mis-meeting" is in stark contrast to the call of scripture to walk toward the stranger in our midst and either sit in their space (incarnation) or make room in our space for them (hospitality). Whereas society screams "stranger danger" we as Christians are called to "stranger love."*

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### The Stranger

Who are these who walk among us, observed from a distance, off to one side, unknown, unacknowledged, often neglected, ill-fitting, isolated or banished, with us and yet not one of us? Who or what is the stranger?

For Walter Brueggemann, strangers are "people without a place."<sup>91</sup> Henri Nouwen talks of strangers "estranged from their own past, culture and country, from their neighbors, friends and family, from their deepest self and their God, [who] search for a hospitable place where life can be lived without fear and where community can be found."<sup>92</sup> Christine Pohl suggests that "strangers, in the strict sense, are those who are disconnected from basic relationships that give persons a secure place in the world. The most vulnerable strangers are detached from family, community, church, work, and polity."<sup>93</sup> Pohl goes on to describe various types of strangers. There are "relative" strangers who we interact with on a regular basis but hardly know; "unknown" strangers from another place who (we) do not know and have nothing to do with at all. "Risky" strangers bring "baggage" with them and have the potential to disrupt our lives and there are "desperate" strangers, like refugees, who are in dire need of human support.<sup>94</sup>

Zygmunt Bauman writes that "all societies produce strangers; but each kind of society produces its own kind of strangers, and produces them in its own inimitable way."<sup>95</sup> Because society produces strangers, then as Davina Cooper asserts, "strangers are not real subjects but socially constituted."<sup>96</sup> They may simply be someone who we have not encountered before or they may be an outsider, someone who doesn't have the characteristics of an insider. They could be the dispossessed, those who have been abandoned, or even the rebellious, those who do not fit "the boxes." Of these, Zygmunt Bauman writes:

If the strangers are the people who do not fit the cognitive, moral, or aesthetic map of the world - one of these maps, two or all three; if they, therefore, by their sheer presence, make obscure what ought to be transparent, confuse what ought to be a straightforward recipe for action, and/or prevent the satisfaction from being fully satisfying; if they pollute the joy with anxiety while making the forbidden fruit alluring; if, in other words, they befog and eclipse the boundary lines which ought to be clearly seen; if, having done all this, they gestate uncertainty, which in its turn breeds the discomfort of feeling lost - then each society produces such strangers. While drawing its borders and charting its cognitive, aesthetic and moral maps, it cannot but gestate people who conceal borderlines deemed crucial to its orderly and or meaningful life and so are accused of causing the discomfort experience as the most painful and the least bearable.<sup>97</sup>

People who betray the acceptable notions of their day are turned into strangers. The socially isolated among us, those in proximity but with whom we do not have conversation, may also be considered strangers. In 2006, the *American Sociological Review* published an alarming study, **Social Isolation in America: Changes in Core Discussion Networks over Two Decades**.<sup>98</sup> The researchers discovered that discussion networks were smaller in 2004 than in 1985. While in the 80s most people had at least three confidants, this had dropped to two by 2004, and the number of people who stated they had no-one they could discuss important matters with had nearly tripled. The nature of the discussion networks had also changed with a notable shift away from ties with neighborhood and community toward conversations with close kin and especially spouses. The net result was that more and more people were socially isolated. Social connections between people are quite literally shriveling up. More and more people sit alone as strangers surrounded by strangers. "We live among strangers," write the sociologists Zygmunt Bauman and Tim May, "among whom we are strangers ourselves."<sup>99</sup>

In pre-modern times people were delineated as being either neighbour or stranger. Neighbours lived in proximity and were known. All others were aliens and to be feared and often treated as enemies. In modern times a radical shift has occurred whereby a person can be in close proximity and be a next door neighbor but also the stranger or alien. In pre-modern times the stranger was invisible but today the stranger has "become omnipresent."<sup>100</sup> In colorful language, Bauman describes this new state:

They are not visitors, those stains of obscurity on the transparent surface of daily reality, which one can bear with, hoping that they will be washed out tomorrow (though one would still be tempted to do the washing right away). They do not wear swords; nor do they seem to hide daggers in their cloaks (though of that one can never be sure). They are not like the aliens, the outright enemies that prompt one to draw out the sword (or at least this is what they say). However, they are not like the neighbors either. True, one cannot avoid being aware of their presence, seeing, hearing and smelling them, even talking to them or being talked to by them on occasion. But the encounters are far too brief and casual to make a firm classificatory decision, and then there are so many of them coming and going.<sup>101</sup>

### **Civil inattention**

The technique of civil inattention is often employed in order to cope with the stranger, an approach described by Erving Goffman<sup>102</sup> and further explored by Bauman and May:

Characterized by elaborate modes of pretending that we do not look and do not listen, or assuming a posture that suggests that we do not see and do not hear, or even care, what the others around us are doing, civil inattention is routinized. It is manifested in the avoidance of eye-contact which, culturally speaking, can serve as an invitation to open up a conversation between strangers. Anonymity is thereby assumed to be given up in the most mundane of gestures. Yet total avoidance is not possible, for a simple passage in crowded areas requires a degree of monitoring in order to avoid collision with others. Therefore, we must be attentive, while also pretending that we are, not looking or being seen.<sup>103</sup>

Even though the stranger might be close in a physical sense, we pretend that they are not. Civil inattention enables "us" to see "them," the strangers in our midst, as invincible. We can be aware of one another without being overly friendly or occupy the same space, street or suburb but choose not to engage. Bauman calls this the "arcane art of mismeeting."<sup>104</sup> He writes:

By the technique of mismeeting, the stranger is allocated to the sphere of disattention, the sphere within which all conscious contact; and above all a conduct which may be recognized by him as a conscious contact, is studiously avoided. This is the realm of nonengagement, of emotional void, inhospitable to either sympathy or hostility; an uncharted territory, stripped of signposts; a wild reserve inside the life-world. For this reason it must be ignored. Above all, it must be shown to be ignored, and to be wished to be ignored, in a way allowing no mistake... The point is to see while pretending that one is not looking. To look 'inoffensively', provoking no response, neither inviting nor justifying reciprocation; to attend, while demonstrating disattention. What is required is scrutiny disguised as indifference. A reassuring gaze, informing that nothing will follow the perfunctory glance and no mutual rights or duties are presumed.<sup>105</sup>

Civil inattention is the art of being socially avoidant or de-socialising an encounter. The stranger in our midst is not physically evicted from our space but is sociologically evicted. Strangers are made to “hover in the background.”<sup>106</sup>

At best, this art of civil inattention is a coping mechanism in that it enables us to live in the constant company of strangers. Such an enablement is however not devoid of anxiety. It can engender a fear that Bauman labels as *proteophobia*<sup>107</sup> in which a person just doesn't know how to proceed. It is a “dislike of situations in which one feels lost, confused, disempowered.”<sup>108</sup> Instead of making such discomfort of our issue we can blame the stranger and subsequently turn on them in anger. At worst, then, civil inattention can become detrimental when it is but a “short step away from the more serious notion of moral indifference.”<sup>109</sup> This has the effect of turning strangers into “them” because they are not of “us.” Two groups are therefore socially constructed. At best, the stranger becomes someone to be wary and suspicious of and at worst, less morally valuable than the non-stranger therefore moral responsibility toward them is diminished. Instead we engage in “moral indifference, heartlessness and disregard for the needs [of the stranger].”<sup>110</sup>

Roger Yates argues that whenever strangers are denied the right to our moral responsibility then they are treated as “lesser humans,” as a “flawed human,” “not fully human,” or downright “non-human.” He writes:

If simply being ‘less-than-human’ can be a serious threat to one’s moral standing, the apparently thoroughly unforgiving status of nonhuman puts one far away from the likelihood of being treated as morally valuable. Thus, historically, some early human communities deliberately described themselves with names that literally meant ‘human’, thus automatically casting all ‘outsiders’ and ‘others’ into nonhuman categories and therefore beyond the boundary of ethical concern.<sup>111</sup>

### **Exclusionary practices**

If moral indifference is only a short step away from civil inattention, then the exercise of exclusion is one step from moral indifference. From pretending that people are not visible to mistreating or maltreating strangers we can so easily end up pushing for their exclusion. Miroslav Volf in his award winning book **Exclusion and Embrace** describes what exclusionary practices might look like. First, exclusion “can entail cutting of the bonds that connect, taking oneself out of the pattern of interdependence and placing oneself in a position of sovereign independence.”<sup>112</sup> This may mean withdrawing from those places that are populated by strangers. Withdrawal, rather than engagement, becomes one’s praxis. Or, we may indulge the practice of exclusion as abandonment. As Volf writes, “we make sure that they [the strangers] are at a safe distance and [we] close ourselves off from them.”<sup>113</sup> As in the parable of the Good Samaritan, we simply cross to the other side of the road and pass them by. Or, we push for exclusion as elimination.<sup>114</sup> Those strangers that we do not like, we push out of “our” place and dump them somewhere else. If they refuse to oblige we destroy their habitations.

Echoing Volf, Bauman spotlights two often used strategies in the war against the stranger. He writes:

One was anthropophagic: annihilating the strangers by devouring them and then metabolically transforming into a tissue indistinguishable from one's own. This was the strategy of assimilation: making the different similar; smothering of cultural or linguistic distinctions; forbidding all traditions and loyalties except those meant to feed the conformity to the new and all-embracing order; promoting and enforcing one and only one measure of conformity. The other strategy was anthropoemic: vomiting the strangers, banishing them from the limits of the orderly world and barring them from all communication with those inside. This was the strategy of exclusion - confining the strangers within the visible walls of the ghettos or behind the invisible, yet no less tangible, prohibitions of commensality, connubium and commercium; 'cleansing' - expelling the strangers beyond the frontiers of the managed and manageable territory; or, when neither of the two measures was feasible - destroying the strangers physically.<sup>115</sup>

Mary Douglas in her study of *Purity and Danger* puts it more graphically in stating that “what we perceive as uncleanness or dirt” we “busy ourselves scrubbing and wiping out.” Such filth must not be included if we believe “the pattern is to be maintained.”<sup>116</sup> Rudolf Stichweh suggests that there are three ways for dealing with the stranger: “one can privilege him, one can tolerate him or one can disprivilege him.”<sup>117</sup> Strangers are privileged when powerful groups use them to weaken other groups. A more left leaning political party for example may privilege immigrants in an attempt to discredit their political opponents. The second approach of tolerance means “that the stranger is still disturbing but one feels obligated to suffer this.”<sup>118</sup> To disprivilege is to render the stranger problematic and to reframe them as non-members of society who need to be expelled.

To go from the stranger in our midst to a “thing” that must be pushed aside and or got rid off is something that can happen in the “blink of an eye.”<sup>119</sup> The Mennonite academic and writer David Augsburger illustrates this by telling the following story:

A young man approaches you on a late evening walk along a deserted street. From a distance, judging from his gait, he appears familiar. A neighbor boy, you assume. As he passes under the streetlight a half block ahead, you sharpen your gaze. His color differs from yours. He is totally unfamiliar. You straighten your back, seeking to appear taller; square your shoulders to look more fit. Fear flits through your thoughts. The light glints on an earring, a tattoo is visible on his arm. He is carrying something long and round in his hand. You see his eyes, fixed on you, sizing you up. His face, seen more clearly now, is the face of a potential enemy. He is smiling. In threat? A ploy? A precursor to assault? Fear accelerates your heartbeat. A film of sweat shines on your upper lip. You glance both ways seeking support. There is none, you are on your own. Tomorrow's headlines will report ...

"Good evening, professor," he says warmly. "How fortunate to find you here." He extends the club - a rolled sheaf of paper. "This is the research project I owe you. My extension is until tomorrow, and you asked me to drop it in your mailbox at home. Thank you for giving me the extra week."

As you accept the paper, his name on the cover allows you to greet him personally. The warmth of your response is intensified by the adrenaline pumping through your bloodstream. "Please come along for a cup of coffee and you can tell me a bit about your work," you say. And the two of you – friends - walk down the street, your hand falling on his shoulder.<sup>120</sup>

“The transformation from distant neighbor to presumed enemy,” notes Augsburger, “took only seconds – seventy seconds of your life.”<sup>121</sup> Enemy creation, as Augsburger calls it, starts with the construction of the “us” and “them” divide. We then access stereotypes about “them” so as to reframe them as the aggressor. Fearing “them” we anticipate danger. “They” have now become dangerous and require exclusion if not elimination. Far from falling in love with the stranger, “falling in hate”<sup>122</sup> has become our way.

### **Social Spaces & Christians**

For most people in most places, however, the issue is not how to eliminate the stranger but rather how to live in their company. How do we live with those we are socially distant from and yet physically close to? How do we occupy the same social space? According to Bauman, some employ a cognitive approach and basically categorise strangers into types. This enables them to manage the social space without needing to know too much else about the strangers in their midst. Others approach strangers more from an angle of whether they should show some moral concern. Bauman argues that the first approach usually results in people knowing little and in the second, caring little. In both approaches the observer is in control. They categorize before deciding to care or not. A final approach, equally as controlling, is what he calls the aesthetic one, where the observer is amused or entertained by the stranger. They are objects of interest and curiosity. Strangers are to be gazed at but kept at safe distance. “Offering amusement,” writes Bauman, “is their only right to exist – and a right which they must continually confirm, with each successive ‘switching.’”<sup>123</sup> But again it is the distant observer that controls the switch, something which Bauman calls an “aesthetic control” moment. Such a moment may look like the following:

I see that man there meeting that woman. They stop, they talk. I do not know wherefrom they came. I do not know what they are talking about. I do not know where they will go when they finish talking. Because I do not know all that and much more, I may make them into whatever

I wish, all the more so that whatever I make them into will have no effect on what they are or will become. I am in charge; I invest their encounter with meaning. I may make him into a philanderer, her into a wife seeking escape from the grinding monotony of marriage. I may send them to bed right from where they stand at the moment, or to their respective rooms, where they will sulk the missed chance. The power of my fantasy is the only limit the reality I imagine has, and the only one it needs.<sup>124</sup>

These three approaches are somewhat cynical. They may be real but ensure the person we are physically close to but socially distant from retains their stranger status. A Christian response to the stranger in these social spaces is to be radically different. The Christian is to create new “free and friendly space(s).”<sup>125</sup> For Henri Nouwen, this means recapturing the motif of hospitality where we enter the space of another and or welcome them into our space. He writes:

Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place. It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer freedom not disturbed by dividing lines. It is not to lead our neighbor into a corner where there are no alternatives left, but to open a wide spectrum of options for choice and commitment... The paradox of hospitality is that it wants to create emptiness, not a fearful emptiness, but a friendly emptiness where strangers can enter and discover themselves as created free; free to sing their own songs, speak their own languages, dance their own dances; free also to leave and follow their own vocations. Hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adopt the life style of the host, but the gift of a chance for the guest to find his own.<sup>126</sup>

Nouwen is the first to admit that this is no easy task. He likens it to the “task of a patrolman trying to create some space in the middle of a mob of panic-driven people for an ambulance to reach the centre of the accident.”<sup>127</sup> Such hospitality is made even more problematic by Nouwen’s insistence that when we invite strangers into new spaces they must be allowed to come on their own terms and not ours. Strangers are to be reframed as guests and not potential enemies. As such they come with their beliefs and behaviors intact. The Christian thus gives up on their right to order the social space as they see fit. Space that was once uncontested is now challenged. For this reason Bauman admits that living with strangers “is at all times a precarious, unnerving and testing life.”<sup>128</sup>

Likewise Miroslav Volf picks up on the theme of making space for others by appealing to the cross of Christ. “At the heart of the cross,” he writes, “is Christ’s stance of not letting the other remain an enemy and of creating space in himself for the offender to come in.”<sup>129</sup> In light of this cross and having been embraced by God, Volf urges that the Christian “must make space for others in ourselves and invite them in”<sup>130</sup> and having done so Volf then asks that we leave “the door open.”<sup>131</sup> This is what Volf believes is the drama of embrace. Such a drama has four acts of which the first is that of opening the arms. He writes, “open arms are a gesture of the body reaching for the other. They are a sign of discontent with my own self-enclosed identity, a code of desire for the other...open arms are a sign that I have created space in myself for the other to come in and that I have made a movement out of myself so as to enter the space created by the other.”<sup>132</sup> Once the arms are open the second act commences which is one of waiting. Open arms are but an invitation, not a command. There is to be no control or coercion of the stranger. The stranger must have the space or room to move as they will. If they reciprocate with a desire to move closer then act three is enjoined which is marked by the closing of the arms. This is where “each enters the space of the other.”<sup>133</sup> The fourth and final act is one of opening the arms again. Each must let the other go so that both retain their true identity. Unlike the previously mentioned strategies of assimilation, abandonment or exclusion, the Christian makes space for the strangeness of the stranger. Their difference is welcomed and given ground to flourish.

Christine Pohl also calls Christians to make room for strangers and talks of “setting aside space for a stranger.”<sup>134</sup> At a practical level, Pohl suggests this may mean making a place in our homes by setting aside a “Christ room” that is always free to be used for the stranger. What one person sometimes can’t do however, a group of people can do. So Pohl calls churches to make room for strangers. Churches are households of God and the Christians that belong to them are to be “responsible stewards of God’s household.” Strangers to these churches are to be seen as guests that have an “equal place” in God’s house.<sup>135</sup> Pohl is mindful of the difficulties surrounding the embrace of strangers and recommends that alongside homes and churches there is a need to have places for strangers in intentional communities. Such communities are made up of people who band together from several households or choose to live together under the one roof. According to Pohl, “hospitality

to a steady stream of persons on a long term basis, or with very needy people, almost always requires more than a single person, a family, or a typically structured local church to share the burdens and the risks.”<sup>136</sup>

All three Christian writers, Volf, Nouwen and Pohl, press for space for the stranger. Throughout history, Christians, churches and societies have heeded this biblical call to the stranger. Rodney Stark argues that one of the main reasons contributing to the rise of Christianity in its early stages was that Christ-followers quite literally walked towards those excluded by the rest of society. Stark cites the epidemics of the day and notes that during times of contagious diseases most people were unwilling to visit the sick or come to their aid. Stark suggests the early Christians helped the world to see something new and distinctive: the linking of a highly social ethical code with religion.<sup>137</sup> To love God is to love what God loves, and the Christian God loves the stigmatized and the shunned. “Christians,” writes Stark “cannot please God unless they love one another. Indeed, as God demonstrates his love through sacrifice, humans must demonstrate their love through sacrifice on behalf of one another. Moreover, such responsibilities were to be extended beyond the bonds of family and tribe...”<sup>138</sup>

But of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Christine Pohl makes the point that these have been difficult in terms of Christians attending to the stranger.<sup>139</sup> In other words, right up to and including the 18th century the Church held to the absolute importance of reaching out to the stranger in their midst. And arguably one of the last shining examples was that of John Wesley. Since his time, Pohl’s view is that Christians have been remiss in their responsibility to be there for the stranger. Such an omission can be attributed to a number of factors.

Sociological reasons for modern inattention toward the stranger include the following. For one, the professionalizing of care where strangers and strange people are out of sight in institutions and are therefore difficult to approach. Second, in the absence of regular contact with the stranger, people begin to imagine all sorts of things about them. Technically, this has to do with the process of catastrophizing. This occurs when people make a negative overgeneralization about “the other,” where they assume too much. The stranger becomes something far more than what they actually are in reality. To catastrophize is to give a negative spin on a person. The stranger thus becomes truly strange and thus all the more reason to stay away from. What is reinforced in this distancing and catastrophizing is thirdly a culture of fear. In other words, better to play it safe with people - better safe than sorry. Best not to take any unnecessary risks with someone you don’t know. A compounding factor in this mix and the fourth reason is the tyranny of time. Life is lived at such a hectic pace that the stranger is not seen or that there is no time for them. Another reason for inattention toward the stranger revolves around the issue of shyness. But whereas shyness was once considered normal, to be expected and managed; since the early 1970s it and introversion have been pathologized. Shyness is now considered a condition, a pathology needing treatment. A net result of this pathologizing of what was once considered normal behavior has been the legitimization of withdrawing from strangers. People, now believing that they have an “illness” or condition; feel justified in not facing their fears and encountering the stranger in their midst. And until their illness is cured the stranger in their midst will remain unattended. A final reason for inattention toward the stranger centers on “the ideology of intimacy.” Because intimacy or feeling close has been privileged, people are reluctant to embark on those encounters or relationships that will not promise this. Encounters with strangers, for example, that inevitably marked as brief, casual, distant, cold, fleeting and difficult; are thus avoided.

So what is to be done? Well, that is fodder for the next article and it is taking shape. But in the meantime, I want to make it my daily practice, rhythm and pattern; to walk toward the stranger in my midst and to especially come alongside those who when they sit, they sit alone. I want to share their space.

## **Mission: Collision or Dialogical Encounter? - Reflections on my missiological journey**

Ennio Mantovani svd

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**Ennio Mantovani** is a priest member of the Divine Word Missionary Society. He was born in Italy, studied philosophy and theology in Vienna and in 1962 obtained a doctorate at the Gregorian University in Rome with a specialisation in phenomenology of religion. In 1962, he moved to Papua New Guinea to work for fifteen years as a bush missionary in a newly opened area of the Highlands. In 1977, he joined the Melanesian Institute, in Goroka, researching and lecturing on Melanesian cultures and religions. Since 2002, he has been resident in Australia, lecturing at the Yarra Theological Union, Melbourne, on issues of culture and Christianity.

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The author reflects on his first 15 years as a missionary in a newly opened area in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. He describes the mutual and total misunderstanding, in those days, between people and missionaries and his process of understanding and appreciation of the culture and religion of the people which leads him to support the call for dialogue and inculturation. He questions, however, the right of the Western Church to be the sole judge of what is good or bad in the cultures and religions of the others.

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I have been translating the diaries and letters of my first seventeen years in Papua New Guinea during which I worked full-time with adult catechumens. Reading those documents today, over thirty years later, I realize that I was writing about my experience of the encounter of two ways of life, of two cultures, and also and especially of two religious traditions, the one of my catechumens and my Christian tradition, and the experiences it both engendered and presupposed. All my problems during these years derived from not understanding the depths of the cultural divide between myself and the people among whom I was living.

Actually, more than an encounter it was a collision between two religious traditions that not only did not know each other, but that denied the identity and validity of the other by reinterpreting the other in terms of one's own identity. Both shared this attitude but the Christians went so far in their denial that they wanted to change radically the other in order to give them a new identity; the Christian one. It was this denial of the other, of its right to exist that determined the collision. At that time I was not fully aware of this process, but I felt uneasy and hence my struggle and my frustrations.

### **The catechumenate**

The catechumenate in our area had two distinct parts. The first one consisted in instructions given by a catechist and based on the catechism. I had the impression that often it boiled down to learning of the answers of the catechism by heart. Often the catechist was so poorly trained that this was everything he could do: teach the Christian doctrine using the questions and answers of the catechism.<sup>140</sup>

The first official "manuals" for adult catechumens came into existence only in the seventies. A sub-commission for adult catechumenates was established on a national level with the mandate to prepare a manual for the catechists. That manual was eventually published by the Liturgical Catechetical Institute at Goroka.

The second part of the catechumenate was the immediate preparation for Baptism and, at least at my time in Dirima, it was conducted by the priest with the help of a good catechist. There were, however, no written rules or guidelines. When I began my work with catechumens I had a copy of the manual that Genovefa Bühler<sup>141</sup> had developed at Koge while teaching in the catechumenate. I had collected it when I first arrived and I was posted at Koge to be introduced into the pastoral work and to learn Pidgin.

I was also influenced by the Neuendettelsau Lutheran missionary methods.<sup>142</sup> Their practice consisted in a long process which could take years, aiming at changing the whole way of life of the community from within. One could not set a date in advance for baptism. Each group reacted and

moved differently. It was not a question of knowledge but of life. It was always communitarian: it was a whole group journeying together.

### **My starting point**

I, as a missionary, believed that I had been sent by Christ to instruct all nations, to show them what I believed was the only way to true and full life. Christ had come to show us that way. I was called to show that way to the catechumens.

The Roman Catholic tradition to which I belong, assumed that there was only one true divine Revelation and that we Christians were the recipients of the same. The Bible together with the Tradition of the Church encompassed that Revelation. Any other revelation that did not correspond to the one handed down to us could not be true.

The way we interpreted Romans 1: 18-32 was one that saw other religious ways and beliefs to be result of human sin; of the turning away from the true God. If the New Testament seemed to be clear on that point, the Tradition made it even clearer: there was no salvation outside of the Church.<sup>143</sup> The other beliefs and rituals were not salvific and had to be given up.

This was the theological background of the missionaries working in Papua New Guinea after World War Two and before the Second Vatican Council.

I was in a slightly different situation because I had studied phenomenology of religion at the Gregorian University in Rome. Phenomenology observes, describes, and analyses without passing judgment. The religious traditions of the gardeners of the Pacific had caught my interest.<sup>144</sup> My advantage was that I knew about such religious traditions, I had studied them and I had discovered their uniqueness and depth. I did not support the traditional negative attitude.

For that reason I never used terms like superstition, magic, and the like. I never spoke negatively about their traditions. My policy was to stress God's care in the daily life of the people and stress the fact that it was God's power that gave success to their rituals. I was convinced that people themselves would find the adequate expression of their faith, whether by reinterpreting the old symbols or by developing new ones.

### **The Catechumens' Starting Point**

My impression was that the people did not see Christianity as a different "religion" – a concept they did not possess – but as a different and more powerful bundle of rituals. These rituals were proved more powerful by the white man's obvious achievements; however, they were understood structurally as and directed to achieving the same ends as the rituals they had been using. One only needed to learn on how to use them the proper way. No personal change was needed. One kept doing what one has been doing the whole life: look for better, more powerful rituals.

From this point of view, both Christianity and Melanesians did not see in the other something entirely different; however, while the former saw the corruption of their own religion which they understood as making possible a "true" relationship to God, the latter saw an improvement, an enrichment on their traditional "religious" life. The former despised, while the latter admired the other. The former wanted to transform the other, while the latter just wanted to learn what would prove advantageous for him or her. This explains the zeal of the missionaries and the openness and welcoming attitude of the people to Christianity.

For Melanesians the key value was life, a life that was more than just biological existence.<sup>145</sup> It was a life which could satisfy a human being in all his/her physical and spiritual needs; a life in which all forms of evil did not exist, where good in all its aspects would shape human existence. Culture was the proven way to achieve and enhance this life; proven by the experience of past generations.

This life was holistic. It was experienced by the senses, but it was more than that. It was like the human body: fully physical, but more than that. As a matter of fact, the physical was totally dependent on the other element for its existence. Working with the catechumens, I gained the impression that for them the idea of a "life" which was not holistic, which had no concrete, tangible aspects, did not make

sense. It was a fake. A Christianity that did not bring also wellbeing, health, prestige was not worth pursuing. The so called “cargo mentality” was a misnomer for the religious search for such a holistic life.

Reading the mythology of Melanesians, I was struck by the fact that every development, every new achievement, every improvement, was given freely by someone who was “more than human”. It was never the result of human achievements; of human skills and intelligence. One aspect of that gift was that it was complete; there was no idea of a slow growth. The gift did not imply a period of waiting by the receiver. The concept of promise of something to come was not part of the mythology. A promise of a life to come in a distant future did not make sense. One had to see it and experience it now.

It is here that I learned the meaning of the “signs” Jesus set in his life. He made visible and tangible what he was talking about. I learned to do the same and point out the visible results of Jesus teaching in our daily life. People learned to do the same. Christian faith had to be seen and felt in one’s daily life.

It is dangerous to generalize; however, I had the impression that the easiness with which people might switch from one church to another or between church and the Government found an explanation in what might be called the Melanesians’ “pragmatic” mindset, a mindset that they carried into their evaluation of Christianity. Promises do not satisfy. People must see results. If mythology is the expression of a religious tradition, than a “promise” was not part of it.

Another aspect of Melanesian mythology, especially of the gardeners, the people among whom I was working, was that the one, who gave them the “gift” of the garden’s produce, always prescribed the manner in which people had to act in order to obtain the “gift”. His or her gift was not the food or some other good, but the knowledge of how to obtain it. What we call a ritual is the way prescribed by the “more than human” to obtain what people needed to lead a full human life. Mythology makes clear that only the one who follows literally the prescribed way will obtain success and immediately, but it also makes clear the fact that one who tries to improve on the prescribed way, will fail.

Also apparent was the lack of a continuous, personal relationship between the “more-than-human” giver and the receiver. The giver gives the information and with that, ends the personal relationship. The receiver only needs to apply the knowledge he/she has received. There is no need for personal relationship and there is no need for a special moral behaviour to achieve the results. The giver helps because of who he/she is and because of who the receiver is. It is not remuneration for good behaviour. What is needed in the receiver is only the blind, exact application of the prescribed way of carrying out the instructions.

According to Melanesian mythology the giver, while being “more-than-human” is also a blood relative, somebody who by definition cares for the receiver and does not expect any gratitude in return. There is relationship but the “personal”, “emotional” one, goes only one way; from the giver to the receiver.

### **The catechists**

The catechists were the backbone of our missionary work. Those I was working with had only a limited Pidgin education, and their catechetical training was not extensive. One could not expect from them to be capable of reflecting theologically on our faith tenets, and help people go deeper into that. They were not theologians; they were only supposed to keep alive the relations between the community and the mission, lead the prayers, teach the children to read and write in Pidgin, and teach catechism to children and adults.

Among them there were married and unmarried ones. Because of their position within the community, all of them were in continuous and protracted contact with women. The possibility of unlawful sexual relations was always present. The married ones had the support of their marriage but not the younger ones who by living alone – something new in this culture – in a house built for them by the community, did not have the support and constraint of their blood relatives and elders. The temptation to have a girl stay with them overnight was great and, living outside the norms of their tradition, there was nothing to help them to avoid it. From the side of the girl, linking up with a catechist was a good proposition, and often she would take the initiative. Trouble with girls was not unusual and that did not help the pastoral work on those outstations.

Catechists shared the culture and religious traditions of the people they worked with and in this sense they had a great advantage over the missionaries. This only worked, however, if they translated the Christian faith into Melanesian life patterns in a way that, one could say, had married Christian ideas and ideals with the Melanesian world view. In that case they could share their Christian understanding and help the catechumens in their process of true conversion.

I am tempted to doubt the inculturation of the Christian faith into their daily life and especially into their world view. Christianity had denied the Melanesian spirits world. It has been labelled a superstition. Melanesian spirits simply did not exist! It had denied the existence and efficacy of those mysterious powers that healers and sorcerers were supposed to be able to control. I knew of only one of my co-workers who had inculturated the Christian faith into his Melanesian world view and could explain theologically the power of traditional healers. He could move easily in the Western and traditional world as a true believer in God's love. He had only Pidgin education but, in this field, he was far ahead of many others.

I do not know whether I had influenced him, but for sure he confirmed me in my pastoral approach. In my teaching, preaching and talking, I always stressed the continuous revelation of God's love in the people's daily life, without ever condemning or disparaging their traditional world view. I knew too little of it to be able to judge it and, I knew enough to know that I could not pass judgment. People themselves would grow to be able to judge what was good and what was bad. My friend seemed to have been able to see God's love, as he told me, in the work of the traditional healers. For me this friend was an exception not the rule.

### **The interaction**

My key complaint in early years in Yobai was that the entire "evangelization" process, as it was put into practice, rested on the often questionable ability of the catechists to translate the Gospel message into daily life. As a foreigner, I remained superficial in my teaching and preaching, so if the process was to work it had to rest on the ability of my Melanesian co-workers to become concrete, to supply the cultural depth to my feeble efforts to find ways to enable the Christian message to enter the daily life, to touch the world view – including the world of rituals and spirits that was so integral to the traditions passed down by the ancestors. Yet no catechist got to that depth in his or her teaching to touching the daily life. My concern, put another way, was that the catechists were talking about a new shirt I was presenting them, not about the skin God had given them.

The cultural taboos surrounding certain topics like rituals could be invoked as an excuse for not mentioning and discussing them in public, especially while people of other communities were present;<sup>146</sup> still, there were many aspects that were common knowledge. It could be too, that the poverty of universals in their language made it more difficult to talk, so that one could not talk about rituals in general but had to name a concrete ritual, which in many cases would be culturally forbidden. Sometimes, I hoped that in the men's houses they were more explicit but I did not have any proof that this was the case.

Today, I feel that I expected too much from my co-workers. We missionaries had failed to understand their culture and religion and therefore did not help the process of inculturation. I do not deny that God can write straight with crooked lines, but I do not bank on miracles. The fact is, the missionaries did not help true inculturation and often made it more difficult.

Inculturation is a process of growth of a community into faith. Missionaries can be resources. What cross-cultural missionaries still in the field can and ought to do is to dismantle the barriers that an earlier generation of missionaries (among whom I number myself) erected and that still hinder the process of inculturation. Whether the community will make use of that opportunity or not is up to the community to decide.

### **Need for dialogue**

We missionaries need to enter into dialogue with traditional Melanesian cultures and religions and accept the need to be questioned on our strict dichotomy between sacred and profane, between the spiritual and material realms. There are aspects of the reality we call "life" that are more awesome

than others, but there is no strict separation between the sacred and the profane. There is only one value called life, which has many different aspects but all belonging together. Life is a “whole,” and when Jesus speaks of life, of being the only true way to it, he talks about this holistic reality.

Dialogue will challenge our simplistic idea of a God who makes things for us and replace it with an image of one who allows and empowers ourselves and creation to evolve. We might discover a God who is a Father who respects our freedom, the freedom of all creation, and shows us the right way to get involved. We are a creation in evolution. We Christians know about God’s plan and it is our responsibility to get involved, to take decisions. The model is Christ, but we must make choices in his spirit.

If we attend to the Melanesian religious traditions and experience we might also question our understanding of Grace. Only God’s love is a pure gift, only his Son showing us the way is an absolute gift, the rest depends on our cooperation in obedience and trust. How God’s Providence works to accomplish God’s purposes while respecting our – indeed, all of creation’s – freedom is a mystery.

Maybe listening to Melanesian religious traditions we might begin to question the assumption that we know everything there is to know about our – creation’s – nature. Natural sciences tell us more and more about how nature works, but the power of the healers is still a mystery. It is too superficial to dismiss it as nonsense or as autosuggestion. Maybe there is one aspect of creation which is at work in miracles, which is linked with the human mind and will, with what we call faith, and with the trust as expressed in prayer.

Listening to the traditional Melanesian stories of the older brother who is more-than-human and who wants to be killed to make true life possible for his brothers, makes us reflect on our interpretation of the death of Christ. The Melanesian brother dies out of concern for the lack of true life for his brothers, a life they had never possessed and did not know it existed or could exist. He dies not because his brothers did something wrong, but because he cared and wanted to make a fuller life possible for them. The death of Christ could appear for what it: is the greatest instance of “divine” love in the context of a world still in evolution.

### **Tentative assessment of my involvement**

My greatest regret is that I never mastered the language the way I wanted and needed. In Dirima I had six months to learn the local language, Golin, and with the help of my teachers I made good progress so that at the end of that time I was able to preach. I never read my sermons: especially at the beginning I prepared them in writing but then spoke freely.

When I moved to Yobai I kept using Golin as nearly all the catechists were Golin speakers anyhow and the Yui people understood us, though they spoke and answered us in Yui. This was a mistake. I should have started immediately with Yui as I had done in Dirima. Linguistically, I did not have the possibility to listen to people talking the language I spoke and so progressing in my language skills. I remained at the stage I had acquired at Dirima. It is true that in the catechumenate I was listening to the catechist speaking in Golin, however, I often felt frustrated because I had the impression that he was using my way of talking instead of improving it. When later I tried to correct my mistake and learn Yui I did not succeed.

On the positive side, the best thing I could have done was to listen to the people and to take them seriously. If there were things I did not understand and looked dubious, I told myself that the people among whom I was living were as intelligent and honest as me. Of course I do make mistakes and act against my conscience, but that is not the rule. If there was something I did not understand or I had trouble in approving of, it was not because they were “primitive” or “pagans”, as older missionaries taught me, but because I was ignorant. I needed to study in order to understand. I thank God that I always followed this principle. It took years but today I am enriched by what at first appeared to be strange if not worse. My trust in the people, my listening to them, my efforts to try to understand them, enriched me tremendously.

This listening, however, got me into trouble not only with the missionary tradition but sometimes, also with the teaching of the Church. On the other hand, it enabled me to discover a new dimension in my

identity as missionary. I discovered that I was called to use my academic preparation to become the spokesman for the people, to translate into theological and philosophical terms what they said and believed.

There are three fields in which I followed the people against the missionary tradition: the killing of pigs in relation to the ancestors, the nature and structures of the Church, and marriage.

### **Killing of pigs for the ancestors**<sup>147</sup>

All the churches and missionaries in Papua New Guinea, as far as I know, regarded the killing of pigs at funerals and in the cemeteries as sacrifices to the ancestors. Because of this understanding, the killing of pigs at funerals and in the cemeteries was forbidden as a sin against the first commandment.

Listening, however, to the people and observing their life I discovered that it was not a sacrifice to false gods but the expression of relationship to relevant members of their community, expressing grief, regret of having offended, desire to make and to live in peace with them, etc. It was exactly what Jesus told us to do.

It was a pity that we Catholics did not learn what we should have from the Chinese Rite Controversy and never considered and studied the revocation of those fatal decisions that caused so many martyrs in the Asia. Today on New Year in the cathedrals of China, Korea, Vietnam, etc, we Roman Catholics do what those people who were martyred refused to do because they were told by Rome that it was mortal sin; a betrayal of their Christian faith.

As I was told by one of my leaders during a funeral, "We know that you never condemned the killing of pigs, but the Church does and we were afraid you might be forced to do the same." He told me that the Church had hindered them from expressing their feelings of sorrow and regret for having offended the dead person, a statement that shows the deep human dimensions of these ritual acts and the Melanesians' sense of continuity between the world of the living and the dead.<sup>148</sup>

### **Structure of the Church**

Today lay leadership, pastoral councils and so on are common but when I started this was not the case. When, influenced by the social structure of the community I was living in, I suggested having a leader responsible for the new Catholics, replacing the Western institution of godparents. I was forbidden to do it. No discussion was allowed. Once I started a new parish in a newly opened area, however I introduced this kind of lay leadership into the structure of the Church.

Besides being influenced by the local structure of the community, I was moved also and especially by the catechumens. I was getting very frustrated: for them the Church was the bishop and the priests. There was no way I could get them to acknowledge the fact that every baptized person belongs to the Church. For a couple of years I struggled with this issue. I blamed myself, my teaching, my language skills, etc. I was even tempted to blame the intelligence of the people, but I could not accept that. People were seeing and expressing something I did not see.

Eventually one day I told myself: put yourself on the other side and sit with the people and describe what you see. Of course, the only people officially representing and having the final say about the church were the bishop and myself. That's what the catechumens were seeing and no talking could sway them. They were right!

I began to talk with the catechumens about their responsibility in the Church and how to express it in our community, and slowly a new structure emerged. A lay leadership was born. The first to be baptized in my new area were the leaders of the community and a few days later these leaders presented the other catechumens for baptism and took responsibility for their Christian life. From that moment on the catechumens and Catholics saw themselves as Church. "We are the Church," became the expression of their identity and responsibility.

Another aspect of leadership I learned had to do with women. If women had anything to say, they had to fit into a male structure. They were measured on a male scale. One day I was talking with one of my co-workers and my teacher in cultural matters. I was concerned about the female initiation,

whether we were doing enough pastorally for that very important moment in women's life. He told me that as a male he did not know anything about female rituals and secrets. I was flabbergasted: how can the church teach and preach without knowing half of the reality we live in? He told me that, if I wanted to know something, I had to ask his wife who might talk to me since I, as white man, did not fully fit into the traditional categories. (!)

I do not know how I could have run my parish without the help of the women leaders. I did not force them to act as males; I respected their traditional way of leadership. I discovered a new dimension in the structure of the local community that women anthropologists only later were to discover and write about.<sup>149</sup> By discovering how to engage the female dimension of the community I was able to discover the true male dimension in which I belonged. Coming to understand myself in that way was another enrichment gained by listening to the people I was living with.

## **Marriage**

The practice in Papua New Guinea was to wait till at least the first child was born before blessing a marriage. However, during that time, the couple was not allowed to come to the sacraments as they were considered to live in sin.

The catechumens and then the baptized I was working with could not understand this practice. They distinguished between extramarital and marital intercourse. The former was sinful in the eyes of the church and the ancestors; the latter was a duty towards the community. As one of the leading catechists in the area stated, "To take a sweet potato from a neighbour's garden is a theft, but to take one from one's own garden is not a theft but the way of life."

This was made even clearer to me very early in my ministry. A young unmarried woman got pregnant. The leaders of her community told me: missionaries usually force these people to get married in church. You can do the same but then we will wash our hands of any further responsibility. If the couple gets into trouble in the marriage, do not come to us, do not preach about the responsibility of the community for the couple. It will be your responsibility and only yours.

I asked him what I should do and he told me to wait. The community would take care of the young couple and when and if they think they were that far, they would present them for the blessing of their marriage in church. He was telling me that marriage in this culture was a communitarian affair and that it was a process with many stages. The Christian community and its leaders were responsible for this process and took that responsibility seriously. I recognized his leadership and accepted his advice. It was not only the bishop and priest who had responsibilities, but everybody who was baptised and especially the recognised church leaders.

I presented and defended this position among the priests in our diocese and then discovered that the leaders and catechists in our deanery were unanimous in the opinion that this is the way the church should proceed. From that moment, I became one of the spokesmen for the deanery at the level of the national Bishops Conference.<sup>150</sup>

## **Inculturation**

As a conclusion to these reflections, I need to raise a few questions about inculturation.

When I began my work as missionary in 1962, we were working with what was called the model of "adaptation" in deciding which elements of traditional cultures were acceptable in the church. In this model, the Christian Tradition has absolute priority and one looks for analogous or homologous elements in the host culture to make the tradition of the church more acceptable, but there is no question of giving up a church tradition in favour the new element or practice in Melanesian cultures. The temple might be used again, but only transformed into a Christian church. The old was regarded as useful if it helped attract the people to the new way being presented by the missionary.

It was only later that the way of approaching differences and dialogue about them that we call the "inculturation model" made its appearance. In this model dialogue becomes necessary as Christianity recognizes itself as cultural, hence limited in its expression of the Gospel and therefore open for enrichment by insights and practices found in different cultures. This model is now official and should

guide us in our approaches when meeting cultures and religions which are not shaped and nourished by the Biblical revelation.

We need, however, to ask an important question: Who is the judge for what is good and bad in a culture and religion? The accepted answer is the Bible. But then we must ask: Which interpretation of the Bible? The Western or some other? An African Womanist reading? A Chinese reading influenced by Confucius? A Melanesian reading influenced by a holistic understanding of "life"? No reading of the Bible is absolute, but always cultural. The Spirit talking in Yobai communities led to a different view of what the word of the Lord was, in and for those communities. It was a cultural one, but what interpretation is not cultural? Is the Western tradition alone going to be the judge or also the study of the culture and religion of the communities? And what about the variety of interpretations within the West itself? And, if truth be told, what about the variety of interpretations to be found within Western Catholicism? Today we cannot seriously talk about inculturation without stressing the need not only of theological but also of social and religious sciences.

Finally – and this is basic – inculturation cannot succeed unless we believe that the Spirit is given to and is at work in each Christian community and all the members of the same. This belief will enable us to move into dialogue with an open mind, ready to listen and to be enriched by the Spirit talking in the other. We have been sent by the Spirit to bring the Good News to Cornelius but the Spirit might use Cornelius to challenge the cultural aspects of our convictions and help us on the way towards the complete truth (Jn 16:13).

## WHAT HOPE IS THERE FOR MISSION?

Annual Mission Lecture, Whitley College, Melbourne – 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2010

Brian Edgar

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*"It is the role of Christian missionaries, and I include all Christians in that category, to bring simple, immediate hope into the world, into situations like that and to make a connection with the bigger, broader, transcendent hope which expects that God will do something completely new and different, something that is completely unexpected and unpredictable....."*

*"In the end, mission emerges out of hope which is connected to our understanding of the Trinitarian God. The church's hope, and thus the church's mission, should focus on all three dimensions of that hope: individual, communal and cosmic. Only because the church has a hope does it engage in mission. Anything that is done without hope is not a part of the mission of God."*

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The humour of this kind of "end of the world" cartoon reminds us that there is a certain disdain for crazy preachers who proclaim the end of all things, but we ought to remember that Jesus came into Galilee as an end-time preacher saying, "The time has come, the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:14-15). It might be good if the church was more willing to sound equally crazy in saying that the kingdom of God is a lot closer than many realize, and that we are nearly there at every moment of time! The Celtic Christian tradition has a saying that heaven and earth are only three feet apart, and that in the "thin" places the distance is even less. This is a way of saying that there are times and places when it seems that the veil between heaven and earth is lifted and we are able to get a glimpse, a sense of the holy.

The "thin places" can be found everywhere, in conversation, in prayer, in the classroom, in worship, in the street. This is partly because the idea of the "end" of the world has two distinct meanings. It can refer to the *temporal* end, the time when it finishes; and it can refer to its *meaning or purpose*. From a biblical or eschatological point of view these two dimensions of "the end" are connected because the meaning of all events is to be discerned from examining those events which occur at "the end times." God, by grace, has helped us in this by locating the resurrection of Jesus Christ, an event which, theologically, belongs to the end of time, in the midst of time. An analogy of this is that although the "end" (the purpose or meaning) of this talk really belongs at its "end" (the temporal "end") I can actually anticipate this and bring the future into the present and say:

The mission of the church (participating in the mission of God) is to help people understand that the purpose of life can be found and experienced right *now* as well as in the *future*; in what God has done through the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus; *individually* in the eternal life we can experience now; and *corporately* in the life of the kingdom of God in which we share; and *cosmically* in the redemption of the whole of creation.

This means that the church's mission is to bring the future into the present. There is a joke about a man trying to explain complicated directions to a disorientated tourist who finishes up saying, "Well, if I were you I wouldn't start from here"! But, in terms of finding one's way to the kingdom of God, you

can start from *anywhere*! God is gracious, if you want to start with him, he simply does not mind about time or place.

### **The scientific story and simple future hope**

Christian mission can be conceived as the attempt to bring together the two different sorts of “ends” – the temporal with the eternal. These different “ends” belong to different stories but, as we shall see, they can become a single story. The first of these stories is generally known today as a scientific story where the journey to the end of the world began, as best can be established, about 13.7 billion years ago with the Big Bang. The universe has been expanding ever since, creating galaxies, stars and planets and then, out of a mixture of chemicals, amino acids, proteins, more complex molecules and life. There are somewhere between 7 and 100 million species of living things! And there is no guarantee that the human species will last forever. Human life is under threat because the sun will eventually expand and burn up the earth and everything on it. But most of us do not worry about it because it will not happen for another 7 billion years or so. Ultimately there is no hope for the universe as a whole. If gravitational forces are strong enough then one day the universe will stop expanding and will contract and, eventually, all matter will collapse into black holes and a Big Crunch. But if, as scientists currently expect, the gravitational forces do not overcome the expansionary forces of the universe, then the expansion will continue with the universe behaving like the coals of a camp-fire that have been scattered, gradually getting cooler until, eventually, it becomes too cold to sustain life. A Big Freeze. Neither picture is very inviting.

But, as I am sure you understand, most people are not worried about whether the earth will burn to a crisp in 7 billion years but they do care if rains tomorrow, and they do care about whether they get that pay rise they have been waiting for, whether they will lose their job in the re-structure, that there is a cure for cancer soon, and whether their kids will turn out OK. This is what we might call simple hope, that the future will be good and satisfying. This is a hope for the kind of future which emerges out of the present, and it is vital for life. Our lives need hope as much as our bodies need oxygen, and if we don't have it life is not worth living.

A friend of ours who had lived for many years in a refugee camp on the Thai-Burma border showed us slides of the camp with raw sewerage streaming down between the houses. “It didn't used to be like that”, he told us - there used to be proper drains but people have been there so long now that they have no hope for the future and so they cannot be bothered about the present. And there are refugees who had been waiting for years and even decades for the opportunity of relocating to another country who, when the opportunity finally arose, said that they didn't want to go. After years of disappointment and failed hopes they have simply run out of the spiritual and emotional energy needed to establish themselves in a new country. They are saying, “Well, maybe it is just meant that we stay here, perhaps that is just our life.” They have no hope, he said, and so life is pointless, and action to change it is useless and futile.

It is the role of Christian missionaries, and I include all Christians in that category, to bring simple, immediate hope into the world, into situations like that and to make a connection with the bigger, broader, transcendent hope which expects that God will do something completely new and different, something that is completely unexpected and unpredictable.

It has to be both because there are deep connections between them. It is wrong to point people to the future hope of eternal life in Christ; or the hope of the community of the kingdom of God; or to the final New Creation without seeing the implications for the present situation. And it is equally wrong to work towards a better future within the immediate situation without also pointing people to the transcendent hope which does not just emerge out of the activities of the present.

### **The Biblical story and transcendent future hope**

Within the whole biblical story there are two events which point to this connection. Firstly, the incarnation tells us of *the eternal coming into the temporal* and the physical. It says that God is so concerned about this world that God came into it and participated in it as the God-man. And secondly, the bodily resurrection tells us about *the temporal and the physical going into the eternal*. The resurrection of the whole of the person of Jesus tells us that God did not create this world (bodies,

and all other physical and temporal things) to just throw it away and start again. No, it is precisely *this* world which is transformed, and the resurrection of Jesus is the beginning of it.

There are those who believe in the real and genuine resurrection of Jesus yet who also believe that the tomb was not empty and that his bones and body remained here and that the resurrection was some super-spiritual event. I think that is a most unfortunate error for it implies that God does not really want *this* world, this life; it devalues all that is taking place here, and it creates a complete dualism of body and soul which is unhelpful. The New Testament speaks of a direct *continuity* between the persons and the physicality of this world and the next. The apostle Paul's preferred analogy was of a seed and a plant, but I also like the analogy of a piece of wood which is then burnt and becomes heat energy. A piece of wood and heat energy exist in very different ways, but there is a continuity between them, just as there is a continuity between me as I am now (and that includes the physical dimension of my life) and me as a resurrected person.

The connection between the eternal and the temporal, which the incarnation and the resurrection guarantee, provides hope in both this world and the next and makes a connection between them which should be expressed in the form of the church's mission.

### **Difficulties with eschatology in the modern context**

Dealing with these eschatological concepts is difficult, for a number of reasons. Firstly, because whereas a Christian understanding of hope was once part of the fabric of western society (vividly portrayed, for example, in art and literature) there has, in the modern era, been a sharp cultural decline in the knowledge of these events. Modern and post-modern western people typically have very little idea of what the Christian story is, and simply do not think in anything like these categories.

Secondly, while it would be wrong to say that despair and hopelessness pervade our culture, there is certainly an air of despair – or hopelessness – which assumes that there is nothing other than this world. This is compellingly portrayed in “Waiting for Godot” by Samuel Beckett, which, as I am sure many know, had a recent run here in Melbourne with Ian McKellen and Roger Rees playing Vladimir and Estragon, two tramps who are waiting for the mysterious Godot about whom they know very little and who never comes. Beckett would not commit himself to say that the play was about a society that has lost faith waiting for a God who never comes thus leaving the tramps, indeed society, perpetually and pointlessly bickering and debating and waiting without any real hope. But that is what it seems to portray to many people. It has two acts and was described rather cuttingly as a play in which nothing happens, twice. The twentieth century's most significant English language play, is, in the real sense, absolutely hope-less.

Thirdly, there is an ambiguity in Christian scholarship about eschatological themes. Not only does the church have to face the scepticism of the modern, scientific world but it also has to deal with a long history of ambiguity and uncertainty among Christians about the interpretation of Biblical eschatology. On the one hand it has to be said that biblical scholarship has been responsible for re-focusing on the importance of eschatology as the medium in which the biblical narrative is conducted. That has been very positive, not least because it puts the focus on the person of Jesus; however, on the other hand it has produced serious interpretive difficulties. While modern, scientific culture has *some* difficulty engaging with miraculous elements of the apparently historical gospel narratives, it has *profound* difficulty with eschatological concepts typically expressed in terms of visions, dreams, strange portents in the sky, angels, symbolic cities, mythical animals, whores and beasts with seven heads, dragons and lambs and global battles between good and evil. Debates between scientism, literalism, de-mythologization and historicism have left many (at least in the mainstream protestantism that I am describing here) either confused or preferring to leave it all aside. Even if one finds a satisfactory way of dealing with the apocalyptic literature, many still have significant problems with related concepts such as resurrection, judgment, heaven and hell.

My local church is like many others which follow the Christian year. It begins with Advent, moves on to Christmas, usually loses Epiphany in the January holidays, but celebrates Lent and Easter and so forth. Advent is the *season of hope* because it looks forward to the coming of Christ which lies at the heart of all Christian expectation. Traditionally, there is a connection between the coming of Christ in terms of the incarnation celebrated at Christmas, and the second coming of Christ to reign over all. Consequently, the four Sundays of Advent prior to Christmas have traditionally celebrated four great

elements of Christian hope: heaven, hell, death and judgment. It was usual to have readings focused on these and for the preacher to address them in his or her teaching. But for many modern churches that is often a bit too much. This is evidenced by the fact that whenever I mention this there is usually (as now) some quiet laughter from those who immediately recognize the improbability of this happening in their own church. So when it comes to the time to progressively light the four candles made into an Advent wreath there is a tendency to focus on four different themes like love, joy, peace and hope, which are much more acceptable when stripped of the more exotic eschatological imagery. All of this has the unfortunate effect of diminishing the hope-full dimension of the church's mission.

The problem is also seen if you ask people to define the church. The answer will come in different ways but I would suggest that, typically, the popular mainline Protestant perception of the church is far too limited, too small. The church is commonly seen as "the community of believers" or "a gathering of the people of God" or "a congregation of saints." That is, the focus falls upon the gathered people of God which is, in itself, good and correct, but without an obvious reference to the ultimate Christian hope it becomes too present-orientated, lacking a genuinely eschatological dimension. The Biblical images used in such definitions as "the people of God", or "the body of Christ" do, in biblical usage, have an eschatological dimension, but this is usually neglected and thus one typically ends up with a view of the mission of the church which is very present-orientated and not hope-full enough. The problem is accentuated by the very common tendency for Christians to think about the church *sociologically* rather than theologically. In sociological terms the world or the culture is the broader concept, and the church, a typical voluntary association, is one component of it. But *theologically*, the church as the body of Christ is the greater, broader concept; it is the future and the destiny of all things. The world was created so that there might be a church, a community worshipping God, a body of Christ. The church, as the body of Christ, is the primary category and it is nothing less than the future of the world.

The church needs an understanding of *mission* which is clearly expressed in terms of eschatological hope, to the effect that mission is the present, proleptic anticipation of what God is going to do, which as we shall see is nothing less than the incorporation of all things into the Trinitarian life of God. The church's mission is to do nothing less than share in, and to help others to share in the life of God.

### **There are individual, communal and cosmic dimensions of the church's mission**

It should be clear by now that not only are *mission* and *hope* intimately connected but also that it is necessary to connect hope very clearly with our understanding of *God*. In fact, many debates about mission are really debates about God. The way that we understand God as Trinity affects our understanding of hope which then affects our understanding of mission. Our concept of God really controls everything.

Christian hope can be seen as focusing on three related dimensions of life: the *personal*, the *communal* and the *cosmic*. These are found in three broad sets of biblical images relating to eternal life, the Kingdom of God and the New Creation. One's emphasis on these will largely determine whether there is an emphasis on mission as evangelism, or as social action or as worship or all three correlated in some way. I suggest that in our present western context it is the last of these (the cosmic) which is more neglected and in need of renewal. It is this which is most focused upon the action of God (rather than our own efforts), and which is broader and more all-embracing. It is also the most hope-full. (The relationship between these, which will be expounded in the following material, is summarized in the associated table found at the end of this paper.)

It is possible to see all three dimensions of hope in the first chapter of Ephesians. Firstly, Paul speaks of the redemption of *individual* believers, pointing out that God "chose us in him (Christ) before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ...In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph 1:4-5). Other parts of the New Testament use similar language to express the personal dimension of hope including the language of conversion, reconciliation, justification and eternal life. Secondly, Paul shows that this salvation is also about *community* and participating in the body of Christ, who is the head of the church (Eph 1:22). He also speaks about "redemption (not as individuals but) as God's own people" (Eph 1:14). Other parts of the New Testament express the same general point with different imagery: the language of kingdom, a people, an army, or a flock.

Thirdly, Paul's Trinitarian teaching reveals to us the true nature and the future of the *cosmos*, indeed, the whole structure and purpose of creation. Paul says, "He made known to us the mystery of his will...to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ." (Eph 1:10). The language is of *cosmos*, a new creation of all things, the redemption of creation.

The various expressions of the work of salvation (individual, communal and cosmic) each have their own emphases. Perhaps the central focus of this cosmic teaching about salvation is that this new creation is nowhere other than "in" God. Paul's description speaks of *anakephalaiōsis* which has the sense of "bringing things together" so that it can be translated "that he might gather together in one all things in Christ" or "to unite all things in him". The only other New Testament occurrence of this word is in Romans 13:9 where Paul says that all the commandments of the law "are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbour as yourself." In other words all the myriad laws, principles and commandments of the Old Testament are *summed up* in one single command. Here the meaning is that all of God's purposes, plans and actions throughout the universe are *summed up* in the person of Jesus Christ, the focal point of the whole of creation.

To be a part of the body of Christ means to share in this future of which the church is the anticipation. The church is not merely a gathering of people, it is where *Christ* lives with his people, and is a part of the future. Christian hope is not just God *giving us something*; Christian hope is not just God *being with us*; Christian hope is God *sharing the divine life* with us.

Another expression of this is found in 2 Peter 1: 4: which says that our hope is that we will *participate in the divine nature*. We will never be God but this is a remarkably strong way of saying that we will share in God's life, and there is absolutely *no human analogy for this*. I can know someone else really well but I can never actually be "in" them. But Christ is in us, and we are in Christ and we will share in God's future life one day. This is extraordinary. This sort of language is used metaphorically by all sorts of groups like Rotary or Scouts who speak of a global "body" of members, but for Christians this is not a metaphor but an expression of a reality. In the consummation of all things we will experience this fully – life in God.

We can think of *God being for us* – which is good, and we might say that this is part of the message of the Old Testament. But since the incarnation it is possible to say more, because we can also say truly that *God is with us*. Then again there is, with Christian hope, even more than that because we can also say that God did all this so that *God might actually be in us* – or, to put it another way and more accurately, *that we might be in God*. This is best of all and it is the hope which we have. It has a present realization through the Holy Spirit, but we await the final consummation when all things will be found in God. This is the future of the world.

### **The relationship of hope to Trinity**

At this point I want to relate this discussion of hope, church and mission to discussions that take place within systematic theology about the nature of God as Trinity, and I want to suggest that the typical discussion needs to be extended further.

Firstly, theology has spoken extensively of "the economic Trinity" which is an understanding of the way God works in the world as Father, Son and Spirit in order to bring salvation. The Father sends the Son, the Son ministers, suffers and dies and is raised, and the Spirit applies to the believer the power and presence of God. This is the work of salvation traditionally understood. In terms of developing this understanding the central historical debate concerned the person of Jesus. If Christ is to bring salvation it seemed he must be both *God* and *man* – but this was problematic for many. The debate swung around this word *homoousios*: can we say Jesus is "of the same substance" as the Father – and thus truly God? The answer was, "Yes, not only can we, but we must." In this case mission is all about bringing salvation; eternal life. It is about conversion and in this regard, faith is critical. This understanding of salvation stresses the fact that believers are raised in Christ, and it provides an assurance because this is a work done by Christ. But it also provides us with a challenge and a mission. The challenge is that the resurrection does not wipe out one's personality or character – it changes, enhances and refines it while, at the same time building on it. What God and I are doing together today is part of the process of recreation. As Oscar Wilde said, "every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character..." and this is the character which God refines and

transforms in the resurrection. The mission is to share with others the possibility of resurrection life in Christ.

Secondly, there is another dimension to the Trinity. Many writers have found it helpful to speak of “the essential (or immanent) Trinity” which is one way of referring to the inner life of God who lives uniquely and perfectly as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God has not merely *appeared* to us in a trinitarian fashion in order to save the world but God *actually* is trinitarian in essence. As this understanding of God is expounded it says a lot about life in community. The critical word in this discussion has been *perichoresis* or mutual indwelling which refers to the nature of the inner trinitarian relationships of Father, Son and Spirit. This understanding of Trinity can become a model or paradigm for the way that the church is to live, and logically therefore mission becomes a much more socially orientated activity in which peace and justice come to the fore. The church is a foretaste of God’s community; it is an eschatological community working for the good of society - ending poverty, doing justice and so forth.

Sometimes there have been discussions about whether mission is really evangelism or social action. Is one more important, or prior to the other? The answer is that both of them are grounded in the nature of God as Trinity, and one ought not to choose just one dimension of mission any more than one should choose between the economic and essential dimensions of the Trinity. The Micah Declaration on Integral Mission rightly says, “It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our *proclamation* has *social consequences* as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our *social involvement* has *evangelistic* consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ.”<sup>151</sup>

### **The consummate Trinity**

Keeping these dimensions together is good for both theology and mission, but there is a third, much neglected dimension which needs to be incorporated that shifts the focus more towards what God has yet to do. It provides a stronger basis for hope in mission.

The concepts of the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity need to be related to what I refer to as “the consummate Trinity.” This dimension, though not the term, is found in the writings of Karl Barth, Jurgen Moltmann, Catherine LaCugna, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Ted Peters and others, but it seems to me, while discussions of economic and essential understandings of the Trinity seem to be endless, the implications of the consummate Trinity are more rarely addressed and have significantly less influence on the life and mission of the church, perhaps because of the problems associated with eschatology discussed earlier. This dimension is vital for at least four reasons. Firstly, this perspective stresses the utter *comprehensiveness* of what God is doing. The whole of life and creation is gathered up - the physical world, the cosmos, the deserts, the earth, the stars: all things are taken up. Secondly, this perspective also stresses the *continuity* of the New Creation with the present world. The creation of a new heaven and a new earth does not mean the total abandonment of the old heaven and the old earth. God does not create in order to destroy. Thirdly, this cosmic perspective stresses the *transcendent* nature of hope. This is not something we can do (nor can we really convert or create community!). We need to be reminded of the transcendent hope that does not emerge out of the present; and of the fact that mission is the *mission of God* in which we are able to participate. Finally, this cosmic dimension reminds us that the future is *in God*. When the end comes there is redemption, a new creation, a transformation, and all goes into God. We should bear in mind that the future is not so much a *place* as an *existence in God*.

What, then, are our missionary responsibilities in this particular area? Firstly, we can care for this world as best we are able; ecology is a part of our mission. Secondly, the immensity of the cosmic dimension and our smallness point out that there is a need for *God* to come in and transform the world and this calls us to praise and worship. It points us towards *worship, doxology as the focus of our mission* because it reminds us of the greatness of what is to be done and the fact that only God can do it.

To worship in this way is our mission. Indeed, to have the world worshipping God – that is the ultimate mission, the ultimate goal of all these other activities of evangelism and community-building. Evangelism which does not lead people to an *on-going life of worship* within the church is not good

evangelism; maybe it is not evangelism at all. Also, a mission that seeks peace and justice in this world which does not equally seek to bring about *the peace of God* (and not just the absence of war, discrimination and injustice) is not really mission either.

### Conclusion

In the end, mission emerges out of hope which is connected to our understanding of the Trinitarian God. The church's hope, and thus the church's mission, should focus on all three dimensions of that hope: individual, communal and cosmic. Only because the church has a hope does it engage in mission. Anything that is done without hope is not a part of the mission of God.

The hope of mission points us towards those "end-time" events which really constitute a new beginning, the beginning of eternal life, the beginning of the kingdom of God and the beginning of the world to come. Consequently, I will finish with a few lines from T S Eliot's "Four Quartets" – four poems which deal with our relationship with time and eternity. Time, says Eliot is a limit to our own transcendence, a limit which can only be overcome through Christ.

We shall not cease from exploration  
 And the end of all our exploring  
 Will be to arrive where we started  
 And know the place for the first time.

\* \* \*

What we call the beginning is often the end  
 And to make an end is to make a beginning.  
*The end is where we start from.*

Aspects of life	The focus of the hope of salvation	The Trinity	The Trinity understood as -	Central concepts concerning Trinitarian relations	Mission understood as -	Attitude
Personal	Eternal Life	Reveals God's <i>plan</i> of salvation	"Economic" - describing the specific work of Father, Son and Spirit	<i>Homoousios</i> (Jesus is "of the same substance" as the Father)	Individual Evangelism Word Conversion	Faith
Social	Kingdom of God	Is a <i>paradigm</i> for community life	"Essential" - Describing the inner-life community relationships of the Trinity	<i>Perichoresis</i> (Father, Son and Spirit live in community in one another)	Community Peace/justice Model; action, transformation	Love

Cosmic	New Creation	Involves <i>participation</i> in the life of God	“Consummate” – describing the “future of God” whereby all things are in Christ	<i>Anakephalaiōsasthai</i> (all things gathered together under one head)  <i>Theias koinōnoi phuseōs</i> (We become “participants of the divine nature”)	Cosmic  Doxology  Worship; ecological care,	Hope
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## Book Review

**Another way to love: Christian social reform and global poverty**, edited by Tim Costello and Rod Yule, Brunswick East, Australia: Acorn Press, 2009

**Reviewed by Mary Lewis**, an ordained minister within the Anglican Church of Australia, currently serving in Roxby Downs, South Australia, in partnership with Bush Church Aid. Previously she was a General Practitioner in regional South Australia and served with Church Missionary Society (CMS) Australia as a missionary in Nepal for 14 years and as a teacher in the CMS missionary training programme for 3 years. She is a Director of the Board of CMS Australia.

**Another Way to Love: Christian Social Reform and Global Poverty** is a collection of essays compiled and edited by Tim Costello and Rod Yule, both senior officers within World Vision Australia and recognized voices on Christian social justice. The book seeks to “highlight the opportunities for Christian communities to express God’s love and alleviate suffering” by participating in “social reform and political engagement” and so show God’s heart for the vulnerable and live out our “love for our neighbor”.<sup>152</sup> Anne Robinson writes, “While Christian care and concern for the poor is often expressed in practical welfare” to ease immediate suffering, and “this is important and essential”, “social reform seeks to bring about longer-term social change that can deal with the causes of suffering”. Robinson continues, “The fight against poverty and injustice has always been an essential part of the Christian faith because it reflects the character of God himself.”<sup>153</sup>

The book is divided into three sections and each chapter has reflection questions which make it ideal as a discussion book within a church fellowship that is seeking an understanding of global poverty, social reform and God’s mind. The first section contains two essays, one by Tim Costello, the Chief Executive of World Vision Australia, and the other by Jayakumar Christian, the National Director of World Vision India. These two essays reflect their personal experiences of poverty and injustice in the world and the sources of their passion and commitment to Christian development. Tim Costello takes us on his journey from Christian responsibility to provide aid and relief, to one of advocacy and change where we are “called by God to partner with him to set things right”; where development programmes are “at the heart of the gospel.”<sup>154</sup> Jayakumar Christian points to abuses of power and flawed relationships between poor and non-poor being the root cause of poverty. He writes, “The Bible redefines our understanding of power” and “redefines the rules of the game.” Therefore, it is “the life of the development worker”, transformed and changed by the Cross and living in the power of the resurrection, that “becomes the fundamental intervention.” Christian development “influences communities through the power of submission rather than exercising power over others.”<sup>155</sup>

The second section contains four essays that examine the theological and biblical perspectives of social reform and an historical review of Christian social engagement. The aim of these chapters is not so much to justify social engagement as being Christian and biblically founded, as to challenge and encourage individual engagement in social reforms. Christians are to expect transformation in their own lives through the Holy Spirit, and see this change flow over into communities. “Transformation through knowledge of Christ is simultaneously spiritual *and* social, personal *and* communal. Christian conversion is, after all, a process of world-making.”<sup>156</sup> Andrew Cameron points to the “easy-going seamlessness of the biblical authors’ love of Jesus’ saving work and their love of the poor. Paul won’t change his allegiance to Jesus Christ for anyone (Philippians 3:8) ... but knows that this allegiance entails care for the poor ‘which is actually what I was please to do’ (Galatians 2:10).”<sup>157</sup> The reader is invited by Siu Fung Wu to “enter the stories in the gospels and try to live out the values of God’s kingdom in those narratives.”<sup>158</sup> The historical chapter is very brief; a vast subject to be covered in so few pages. It left me conscious of what is left out rather than what was included. The 20<sup>th</sup> century was barely introduced leaving a significant historical gap to the last section.

The last chapters are written by Australians Christians championing their particular areas of social reform and political action, a number of which are under the umbrella of World Vision. These projects reflect the work of Christ in those who are the writers and activists, and are examples of actions that seek to reverse power abuses and inequalities between the poor and the non-poor, but they are not the “both ... and” of Andrew Cameron’s argument in chapter 3, nor do they demonstrate the “lives of the development workers” seen as fundamental by Jayakumar Christian. Some “calls for revolution and wealth distribution often seem to ignore the Bible’s deep analysis of the human spiritual condition

– an alienation from God and from each other that requires Christ's atonement, the Father's forgiveness and Holy Spirit-driven change. Any short-term gains made by dumping this ancient account of human existence will be overwhelmed by long-term losses."<sup>159</sup> I wonder if this applies to the examples included: the international initiatives of Fair Trade coffee, the Make Poverty History advocacy campaign and the relieving of debts, the prophetic voice and action of the Micah Challenge, World Vision action against child exploitation and trafficking as part of the larger Don't Trade Lives campaign and community empowerment of the poor so that they develop a voice of their own to speak out against injustice through World Vision's Citizen Voice and Action. However, real change "requires Christ's atonement, the Father's forgiveness and Holy Spirit-driven change."<sup>160</sup> In her Foreword, Anne Robinson says that this book "seeks to highlight the opportunities for Christian communities to express God's love and alleviate suffering" through "longer-term social change that can deal with the causes of suffering";<sup>161</sup> i.e., "the human spiritual condition." The book falls short of doing that.

This book offers little new to the conversations about Christian social reform and global poverty. The project examples are contemporary, but the arguments are well rehearsed and published by World Vision over the last thirty years. The Lausanne Movement has had this issue on its agenda since 1974. Dr Jayakumar Christian's monographs published by World Vision were informing our community development work in Nepal in the 1980s. It is more to our shame that we need to be motivated and reminded again with the plain arguments for intentionally Christian development and social reform because injustice and global poverty continue. Have we forgotten to address the root causes of suffering, "the human spiritual condition"?

## Book review

***Madness!: An extraordinary journey from a childhood plagued by insanity to a crazy dream of planting 100,000 churches*** by Jossy Chacko. Melbourne: Empart, 2008.

**Reviewed by Darren Cronshaw**, coordinator of leadership training with the Baptist Union of Victoria and pastor of Auburn Baptist Church.

A refreshing trend in global missions today is the growing recognition that we in the Western world have so much to learn from people from other cultures. Rather than missions just being us in the West reaching out to the rest, mission is happening in all sorts of exciting directions and with rich global partnerships.

**Madness!** is a modern missionary biography of apostolic church planter and emerging missionary statesman Jossy Chacko. Born and raised in India, Jossy now works based in Melbourne as President of Empart ([www.empart.org](http://www.empart.org)), which he founded to partner with local church planters and community development projects in India and other Asian countries.

Jossy's story is full of humour and adventure. He relates his childhood escapades of fishing with dynamite, avoiding an abusive father who struggled with mental illness, and learning from his business-minded grandfather. He tells of the colours and sounds of Indian's trains, slums and villages, and the cross-cultural challenges he first faced when he came to work and study in Australia. He married an Australian wife Jenny, and struggled through faith and financial crises to start a missionary movement and an organisation to foster it. Through his honest and heartfelt sharing, and admitting his own hesitancy to leave his comfort zones, he concludes: 'God does not hold you to your failures, your past, your cultural background or your experiences' (p.7).

North India has the world's highest number of unreached groups. It includes two-thirds of the country's population but only five per cent of its Christians. It is the heartland of Hinduism and the world's third largest Muslim region. Church planters in North India face unsympathetic government authorities and anti-conversion laws, experience alienation and sometimes violent opposition, and grapple with the legacy of 'Christian' colonialism. Jossy relates Empart's strategy of supporting local workers to plant culturally-appropriate churches, and shares stories displaying the courage and strategies of some of these church planters.

Empart church planting centres organise experienced pastors to teach new church planters what to do when they go to a new area. Their typical approach is to find somewhere to live, visit every house in the village, start a prayer meeting and spiritual study program in their house, and pray and fast for miracles. They also do what they can to respond to local community development needs.

Empart's strategy is focused on multiplying church planting, and the churches they are starting are committed to social transformation and evangelism. One of the most successful programs for social transformation they have discovered is sewing education classes. And instead of orphanages, Empart has found it beneficial to empower pastors to open up their homes to 10-15 extra children. This fits the Indian context of extended families and consistently opens the door for local community acceptance. Some extremists wanted to evict one church planter, until he said 'all right I'll go but you'll have to look after these children'. The village elders stood up for him and the extremists backed down.

Jossy has a passion to cultivate rich relationships between Australian and North Indian Christians. It is a two-way partnership as he explains: 'We have so much to teach each other. The days when Western Christians can assume they have all the answers are over. We in the West have a lot to give, but we have a lot to learn as well. ... The Western church, for example, is very good at leadership, structure and strategy ... the Asian church can learn from that [but] the Asian church has strengths in flexibility and faith, in waiting on God and being led by the Spirit, in sacrifice and commitment and fervency' (p.172).

The book comes with a DVD displaying stories of mission in North India and Empart's strategies for church planting and community development. Read **Madness!** to get a closer picture of Jossy's passion and let him take you to where he has been and show you what he has seen.

## Book review

**Christian Theology in Asia** edited by Sebastian C H Kim. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008

**Reviewed by Darren Cronshaw**, coordinator of leadership training with the Baptist Union of Victoria and pastor of Auburn Baptist Church.

My theological reading of the last few years, if not my whole Christian life, has been dominated by Western writers. My shelves are dominated by writings from North America and Europe, interspersed with a smattering of local Australian works, but little from Latin America, Africa and Asia. I am keen to broaden my reading and learn from Christians in these areas where the church is growing. Their perspectives on God, mission, justice, the Holy Spirit, community, other religions and other theological topics and contemporary issues have a lot to teach me. The global church will be healthier and our theology more complete when we listen to and learn from one another.

As a newcomer to global theology, therefore, I warmly welcome Sebastian Kim's edited volume **Christian Theology in Asia**. It is a product of the Christianity in Asia Project (CAP) at the University of Cambridge. The first half of the volume offers seven chapters that map the formation of Asian Christian theology in particular regions – India, Indonesia, China, Japan, Korea and Asia in general. The second section contributes six chapters that explore particular theological themes – pluralism, multiple Scriptures, feminist theology, ecumenism, evangelical and pentecostal mission, and subaltern theology.

The book shows how Asian theologies have been distinctively shaped by the interaction of Christian communities with their societies, and how they relate to their contexts which have shaped them. Asia is a diverse region – holding geography broadly in common but so diverse religiously, politically and socio-culturally. The stories of different expressions of Christianity in Asia and how they have faced historical challenges is insightful for understanding Asian churches but also instructive for the church in the West.

Three issues from the book that stood out relevant for me as an Australian pastor and teacher were pluralism, poverty and training.

Christianity in Asia has always existed in a plural religious context. The response of Asian churches to other religions is complex in its diversity. Thangaraj describes models of encounter that categorise the other as enemy of God, potential convert, primitive superstition, unfulfilled seeker, storehouse of culture, companion in struggle and/or partner in dialogue (pp158-163). Do all religions express or point to the same Ultimate Reality or are all non-Christian religions completely demonic? Or is there an alternative theology of religious and cultural pluralism, as Hwa Wung encourages, that affirms the uniqueness of Christ and recognises the presence of good and evil in human cultures and religious pursuits? (p267) Asian Christians have been grappling with these questions for centuries. They have initiated some bold adventures in indigenous theology; they have engaged Buddhist and Hindu ideas; they have developed hermeneutics of the Bible among other Scriptures; and some have explored whether other holy books are parallel to the Hebrew Bible in preparing people for the fulfillment of their religion in Christ. The majority of the book's contributors are ecumenically-minded thinkers, and some push for a wider ecumenism and cooperation with other religions. How much other religions are vehicles of God's revelation is an inescapable question in Asia. It is also an ever more contemporary issue in the West, and one in which we can learn from churches in Asia.

A second key challenge for Christians in Asia is poverty and injustice. This is another area the church in the West has a lot to learn from the church in Asia which faces a context of widespread exploitation, violence and oppression, and a widening gap between the rich and poor. For example, India has evolved "Dalit theology" to develop a relevant theology with the marginalised Dalits who are below the caste system, although it needs to extend to other subaltern groups such as those whom the Dalits themselves ignore – the Adivasis. Korea has developed a liberationist theology called "minjung theology" to focus attention on the priority of the gospel for the "minjung," the poor, alienated and outcast. It has led to a rediscovery of the greed but a gospel that addresses holistic needs. The overwhelming challenges of poverty and injustice in Asia challenge the church to address the gospel

to the whole spectrum of human needs including, but broader than, personal salvation. The Western church has to grapple with this as well – for its own context and in terms of its global responsibilities.

A third area that **Christian Theology in Asia** touched on was the formation of culturally-appropriate leaders. Sathianathan Clarke, for example, takes his “Dalit theology” class to spend three days in a Tamilnadu village in South India. The students learn about themselves, mission and the church by sleeping and praying in the church, eating and dancing with local families, and visiting different local communities (p271). Another Indian lecturer, Israel Selvanayagam from Tamilnadu Theological Seminary, is inspired by Sadhu Sundar Singh to appeal for complementary critical Bible study with devotional practice and piety to avoid degenerating into speculation, criticism and empty arguments. Other teachers enhance classroom and book learning with theological reflection on local poetry and songs. Echoing again Sadhu Sundar Singh, Asians need the Water of Life, but in Asian rather than European cups.

**Christian Theology in Asia** reflects the diverse theological scene in Asia. The volume is a broad overview and presents a sometimes daunting array of authors and texts. However, it is a solid introduction to the breadth of Asian theology which would benefit Asian leaders to help them see what else God is doing around Asia, and theologians from other parts of the globe to learn from what the church has been grappling with in Asia.

## **Book Review**

**A thinker's guide to SIN: Talking about wrongdoing today** edited by Neil Darragh. Auckland, NZ: Accent Publications, 2010. NZ\$35. ISBN 9780958345460

**Reviewed by Larry Nemer.** A member of the Divine Word Missionary Society, Larry Nemer has taught in the United States of America, the Philippines, the United Kingdom and Vietnam. He is currently lecturing at the Yarra Theological Union, Box Hill, Victoria.

It might seem unusual to review a book about SIN in a missiological journal, and yet it addresses the "other side of the coin" of redemption and salvation that mission is concerned about. It is an interesting book, edited by a well-known Kiwi theologian, with a collection of articles by other New Zealanders, some of whom are in academics and some in pastoral ministry. The context they address is the current situation in New Zealand; however, there are enough similarities to the Australian scene to recommend this book to Australian missiologists, mission educators and mission workers.

In his opening essay, Darragh points out the reluctance of contemporary spiritual writers to talk about sin; they prefer the term "wrongdoing" or its equivalent. One writer pointedly says in her essay: "Our horror of being called sinners – especially on the grounds that we like to travel, have up-to-date clothes, computers and TVs, and live in large homes – is understandable if we have a concept of sin only as something we as individuals consciously and deliberately decide to do when we know it will hurt another person (or God)."

This collection of essays broadens the understanding of wrongdoing in our contemporary world and suggests many "sinful thoughts, words, and actions" that are not included in any traditional list of sins. This is not intended to stir up guilt feelings but rather to help readers face the issues in their lives that are impeding their growth and development. It is a call to conversion. In the words of one of the authors: "Ultimately, conversion is about individuals and communities together turning from situations of alienation and wrongdoing. Their goal is to enjoy authentic human relationships and the love of God who, in the Spirit, is always loving and ever-inviting."

The book is divided into four sections: contemporary shifts in the understanding of sin (e.g. in a secular world, or in a city parish); at the roots of sin and wrongdoing (e.g. experience of betrayal, relational rupture, heedlessness, forgetting sin-talk in economics); the grey boundaries of sin and wrongdoing (e.g. fault-lines in our lives, illness and sin, mystery of being human, civil disobedience, obsessive compulsive behaviour and sin); and naming the new sins (e.g. denying justice, attacking women's sexuality, forgiving when it is not appropriate, need for ecological conversion).

Readers who might approach this book in the hope of finding a new list of "clear-cut sins" that one can use for self-examination before going to confession will be disappointed. However, readers will be challenged to think about sin in a different way (the title of the book promises that) and will invite the reader to consider conversion – one of the most important outcomes of mission.

## Book Review

**Montgomery of Tasmania: Henry and Maud Montgomery in Australasia** by Robert Withycombe. Brunswick East, Australia: Acorn Press, 2009. ISBN 9780908284788 (hbk)

**Reviewed by Ross Mackinnon**, Editor of *Australian Journal of Mission Studies*.

This book is a detailed, scholarly and analytical account of Henry Montgomery's time as Anglican Bishop of Tasmania from 1889 to 1901. When Montgomery arrived in Tasmania, the Australian states were separate colonies. By the time Montgomery left Tasmania to return to Britain, the Australian states had federated to form one nation.

Montgomery's appointment as Bishop of Tasmania was his first appointment as a bishop. Prior to coming to Tasmania, he had served as a vicar in a couple of busy London parishes and did not actually know where Tasmania was. The change of circumstance could not have been more different for him. Yet, he and his wife Maud and their growing family accepted the challenge and quickly fell in love with Tasmania. It was a great wrench for them all when he was called back to Britain to become the Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG).

Henry Montgomery was to face many challenges - distance, poverty, differing church party loyalties (High, Low, Evangelical, Liberal, Broad), parochialism (Hobart versus Launceston), conservative laity, recruitment of suitably trained clergy, truculent clergy, to mention just a few! He faced all of these squarely. He saw himself primarily as a "Bush" Bishop and a "Missionary" Bishop rather than a "Citizen" Bishop. His approach to settling internal differences within his diocese and the Australian General Synod was to try to get people to look to wider missionary needs, such as the need for expansion of the church into Papua New Guinea. He made annual trips to remote mining settlements in Tasmania's northwest, to the indigenous settlements on the Bass Strait Islands and to lighthouse keepers around the island. He saw these trips as important missionary endeavours. He was often away from Hobart for more than six months a year. The author has included many of Montgomery's descriptions of these trips in the book and they give a vivid idea of what he was up against. Here, for example, is his description of part of the journey to Boko camp in the North-west:

The first five or six miles were easy enough. It was a track partly corduroy and partly deep mud leading to the Pieman camp. Those who know what unmade tracks are in winter time, cut up by pack horses and sledges, can easily understand the joys of stepping up to the knees in thick glutinous, yellow clay. Those who have not experienced this treat cannot be made to appreciate it. But when it comes to comparisons, I give the prize (for mud) without hesitation to the 'Cue' variety (page 90).

Montgomery's wife often accompanied him on regional trips. She was a skilled horse rider and skilled buggy driver, and often did the "driving".

During his time in Tasmania, he constantly argued for a General (Australian) Synod that met more frequently, and for the President of the Synod, the Primate, "to be liberated from diocesan responsibilities in order to travel and inspire his fellow bishops as their forward-looking and proactive national leader" (page 270). By forward-looking, he meant looking outwards to new mission areas, not inwards. He took an active and leading part in General Synod activities – no mean feat, given Tasmania's isolation from the other states.

The author tells Montgomery's story by using a different theme for each chapter. Two of the chapters are devoted to Maud Montgomery and her life and work as a wife, mother, and social justice campaigner. We get a clear picture of a close partnership between Montgomery and his wife. They emerge as dedicated, hard-working and visionary people.

The book is well-illustrated with photographs from the time. The pictures of Montgomery's Furneaux Strait tent residence (page 70), Montgomery in seafaring and mutton birding garb (page 75), Montgomery and the Reverend F G Copeland dressed for the West Coast (page 91) and Maud Montgomery and her horse, Zoe (page 238) deserve special mention.

The index and extensive bibliography are impressive. The author has accessed a wide range of primary and secondary documents, many of them personal Montgomery family papers. The many quotes from Montgomery's personal documents and accounts are an important feature of the book. They bring us face-to-face with Montgomery and give us a clear idea of his thinking and motivation.

The book makes for absorbing reading and will appeal to anyone interested in history, especially the history of the Anglican Church in Australia, and in the approach of one colonial bishop to mission. It is a critical account – Montgomery is not without blemish and he did make mistakes. It is interesting (and somewhat dispiriting) to note that many of the problems and challenges Montgomery faced are still with us!

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<sup>1</sup> KEIFER, Ralph A, in **Made Not Born**, (London: Notre Dame Press, 1976)

<sup>2</sup> KEIFER, in **Made Not Born**, p139

<sup>3</sup> KEIFER, in **Made Not Born**, p139

<sup>4</sup> KEIFER, in **Made Not Born**, p139

<sup>5</sup> KEIFER, in **Made Not Born**, p139

<sup>6</sup> KEIFER, in **Made Not Born**, p141

<sup>7</sup> KEIFER, in **Made Not Born**, p147

<sup>8</sup> WESTERHOFF, J, III, **Will Our Children Have Faith?** (Expanded and Revised Edition) (Toronto: Morehouse Publishing, 2000), pp10-13

<sup>9</sup> WESTERHOFF, J, III, *A Necessary Paradox: Catechesis and Evangelism, Nurture and Conversion* in **Religious Education** Vol 3 1978

<sup>10</sup> KEGAN, R, **The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development**, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982) p.31

<sup>11</sup> KEGAN, **The Evolving Self**, p.39

<sup>12</sup> For a good description of how "The Market" as taken over the attributes of a "god" see COX, Harvey, *Living in the New dispensation* in **Ministry Society and Theology** Vol 14:2 November 2000, pp8 – 18

<sup>13</sup> KEIFER, **Made Not Born**, p146

<sup>14</sup> KEIFER, **Made Not Born**, p139

<sup>15</sup> BERGER, P L and LUCKMAN, T, **The Social Construction of Reality**, (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1971)

<sup>16</sup> KEIFER, **Made Not Born**, p148

<sup>17</sup> KEIFER, **Made Not Born**, p150

<sup>18</sup> For a wider look at the value of the Catchecumenate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century see my book **Taking the Plunge: Seeking, Accompanying, Baptising** (Richmond: Spectrum Publications, 2008)

<sup>19</sup> Unpublished report available from the author: P O Box 1022 Newport Vic 3015.

<sup>20</sup> See KREIDER, Alan, **The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom** (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999) and HAUERWAS, Stanley and WILLIMON, William H, **Resident Aliens** Nashville: Abingdon Press,1989)

<sup>21</sup> HAUERWAS, **Resident Aliens**, p73.

<sup>22</sup> WESTERHOFF, J, III, **Will Our Children Have Faith?** (Expanded and Revised Edition) (Toronto: Morehouse Publishing, 2000).

<sup>23</sup> HOLETON, David, (ed) **Growing Newness of Life, Christian Initiation in Anglicanism Today**, (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1993) pp81-83.

<sup>24</sup> WESTERHOFF, J, III, *A necessary Paradox: Catechesis and Evangelism, Nurture and Conversion* in **Religious Education** Vol 73, 1978, p413.

<sup>25</sup> DALZELL, D.P, *Four Shifts in Mission*: in LANGMEAD, Ross, (ed.) **Reimagining God and Mission**, (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2008) pp113-129.

<sup>26</sup> DONOVAN, Vincent, **Christianity Rediscovered** (London: SCM Press1978).

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<sup>27</sup> TURNER, Paul, **The Hallelujah Highway: A History of the Catechumenate**, (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2000), p172

<sup>28</sup> See O'DEA, Sheila, *Words of Warning for Initiation Teams* in **Today's Parish** Vol 31:6, 1999, pp12-14, and O'DEA, Sheila, *Initiation is the Assembly's work. How will they Know?* in **Today's Parish** Vol 33:7, 2001), pp28-30, for a thorough discussion on the place of the wider faith community in adult initiation.

<sup>29</sup> Mystagogia is the name of the fourth and final stage of the formal process. It is a reflective period that occurs between Easter and Pentecost.

<sup>30</sup> *Lumen gentium*, in FLANNERY, Austin [ed], **Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents**, revised edition, (New Town: E.J. Dwyer, 1988), pp350-423

<sup>31</sup> Catechumenate is the name of the second of the four periods of the Rite. It is a time of formation and catechesis when celebrations of the Word are central.

<sup>32</sup> GRAHAM, Cheryl, *Retention of Converts in a Catholic Parish*. A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of M. Min. Melbourne College of Divinity, 1995.

<sup>33</sup> Study estimates indicated that more than 50% of those surveyed had ceased involvement.

<sup>34</sup> See GRAHAM, Cheryl, *Caring for New Catholics* in **Australasian Catholic Record**, Vol 75, 1998, p23, for a succinct summary of her research.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid*

<sup>36</sup> *ibid*, p25

<sup>37</sup> WILSON, Irene, *The Catechumenate 'Comes Home': Exploring the Ecclesial, Pastoral and Theological Implications for Australian Parishes Locating the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in Small Church Communities*. A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of M Theol, Melbourne College of Divinity, 2007

<sup>38</sup> GRAHAM, *Retention*, p26

<sup>39</sup> *Evangelii nuntiandi* 58, in FLANNERY, Austin [ed], **Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents**, revised edition, (New Town: E.J. Dwyer, 1988), pp738-740

<sup>40</sup> More detailed information on the RCIA/SCC integration in Belgrave can be accessed on the Project Link-up website - <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~rciascc>.

<sup>41</sup> *Mystagogical Reflection of Quodvultdeus*, in WHITAKER, Edward, **Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy** (London: SPCK, 1970), p79

<sup>42</sup> The story of Bishop Mowleka as driving force behind the establishment of SCCs in East Africa can be found in HEALEY, Joseph and SYBERTZ, Donald, **Towards an African Narrative Theology**, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999)

<sup>43</sup> LAWLER, Michael G and SHANAHAN, Thomas J, **Church: A Spirited Communion**, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1995), p6

<sup>44</sup> DALZELL, D Paul, *Two Paths. One Process? Exploring the Lived Experience of Participation in Two Forms of Evangelism in Two Anglican Churches in Brisbane*. A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry Studies, Melbourne College of Divinity, 2003.

<sup>45</sup> See WILSON, Irene, *Project Link-up: A Model of Adult Initiation in Australia* in HEALEY, Joseph G and HINTON, Jeanne, [eds], **Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment**, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2005), p133

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/resources/missionshapedchurch>

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/e-xpressions/sep10> See also **Mission-Shaped Church** (London, Church House Publishing, 2004), and in the Australian context, **Building a Mission-Shaped Church in Australia**, (Melbourne: John Garrett Publishing, 2007). See further, for example, the Winter 2010 of the Uniting Church in Australia's "Evangelism Resources Direct" for a recent re-iteration of this idea.

<sup>48</sup> Indeed, it can be questioned and critiqued on many points. See, for example, CROFT, Steven, [ed], **Mission-shaped Questions** (London: Church House Publishing, 2007) as an early attempt to "harness the opposition" to moves towards fresh expressions of church, and DAVISON, Andrew and MILBANK, Alison, **For the Parish: A Critique of Fresh Expressions** (London: SCM Press, 2010) as a recent rather shrill and acid response to fresh expressions of church.

<sup>49</sup> HOVDA, Robert, *Liturgy Forming Us in the Christian Life*, in BERNSTEIN, Eleanor, [ed], **Liturgy and Spirituality in Context: Perspectives on Prayer and Culture** (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990), p146.

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<sup>50</sup> LATHROP, Gordon W, *Strong Center, Open Door: A Vision of Continuing Liturgical Renewal*, in **Worship** 75 (2001), p36.

<sup>51</sup> Note the Second Vatican Council's **Sacrosanctum Concilium**, paragraph 10. Available at: [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19631204\\_sacrosanctum-concilium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html)

<sup>52</sup> WHITE, James F, **Christian Worship in North America: A Retrospective** (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997), p312.

<sup>53</sup> The language of “un-churched” and “de-churched” has been popularised in circles of “mission-shaped” thinking beginning in Britain and is gaining a wider international audience.

<sup>54</sup> WHITE, **Christian Worship in America**, p314.

<sup>55</sup> METHODIST CHURCH OF GREAT BRITAIN, **Methodist Worship Book** (Peterborough: Methodist Publishing House, 1999), p61.

<sup>56</sup> UNITED REFORMED CHURCH, **Worship from the United Reformed Church** (London: URC, 2003), p56.

<sup>57</sup> CHURCH OF ENGLAND, **Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England** (London: Church House Publishing, 2000) p345. The image is used four times on this page.

<sup>58</sup> **Common Worship**, p359.

<sup>59</sup> See the introduction to **Common Worship: Pastoral Services** (London: Church House Publishing, 2000): “We are all on a journey through life. . .” (p3). On the **Common Worship** rites more broadly, see also BURNS, Stephen [ed.], **Journey** (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2008).

<sup>60</sup> For a definitive expression of this, note the Second Vatican Council's **Sacrosanctum Concilium**, paragraph 7, which “disperses” of divine presence among congregational celebrants, ministry, word, sacramental action and sacramental matter.

<sup>61</sup> As in this example from the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation: ‘*Gestures by the presider during the eucharistic prayer should underscore the unity of the prayer. The traditional manual acts which draw attention to the institution narrative or other portions of the prayer serve to locate consecration within a narrow portion of the text and may contradict a more contemporary understanding of eucharistic consecration*’. See HOLETON, David, [ed.], **Our Thanks and Praise: The Eucharist in Anglicanism Today** (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1998), p300.

<sup>62</sup> DOCTRINE COMMISSION OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, **We Believe in the Holy Spirit** (London: Church House Publishing, 1991), 75-91, p77. Cf. Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6.

<sup>63</sup> For example, **Methodist Worship Book**, p73.

<sup>64</sup> STOOKEY, Laurence Hull, *Comparing the Rites of Christian Initiation*, in MEEKS, Blair Gilmore, [ed.], **The Landscape of Praise: Readings in Liturgical Renewal** (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), p147.

<sup>65</sup> See YARNOLD, Edward, **The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: The Origins of the RCIA** (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, [2] 1994) for the primary sources, and KAVANAGH, Aidan, **The Shape of Baptism** (New York, NY: Pueblo, 1990) for relation to the RCIA.

<sup>66</sup> EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA, **Renewing Worship: Holy Baptism and Related Rites** (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Press, 2004).

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<sup>67</sup> [http://www.e-mmaus.org.uk/emm\\_index.asp](http://www.e-mmaus.org.uk/emm_index.asp) See especially the rationale in COTTRELL, Stephen, CROFT, Steven, FINNEY, John, LAWSON, Lawson and WARREN, Robert, **Emmaus: The Way of Faith: Contact – A Vision for Evangelism, Nurture and Growth in the Local Church** (London: Church House Publishing, 1996).

<sup>68</sup> **Common Worship**, p352: “testimony by the candidate(s) may follow”; **Worship from the United Reformed Church**, p59: “a short statement or testimony may be given by the person to be baptized”.

<sup>69</sup> WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, **Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry** (Geneva: WCC, 1981), baptism, paragraph 13.

<sup>70</sup> **Common Worship**, pp48-49. Also, “a form for the corporate renewal of baptismal vows” (pp149-152), which employs the commitments made in the baptism service (p359).

<sup>71</sup> GILES, Richard, **Creating Uncommon Worship: Transforming the Liturgy of the Eucharist** (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2004). Compare the INTERNATIONAL ANGLICAN LITURGICAL CONSULTATION on the eucharist: **Our Thanks and Praise**, in which sharing in the celebration of the eucharist is itself seen as “reaffirming the baptismal commitment to die to self and be raised to newness of life. . .” (p262).

<sup>72</sup> BUCHANAN, Colin, *Confirmation*, in FERGUSON, Duncan and WRIGHT, David, [eds], **New IVP Dictionary of Theology** (Leicester: IVP, 1987), p157.

<sup>73</sup> ANGLICAN CHURCH IN THE PROVINCE OF KENYA, **Modern Services** (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 2004), p74.

<sup>74</sup> For example, The International Anglican Liturgical Consultation on the eucharist: **Our Thanks and Praise**, p261: “No baptized person should be excluded from participating in the eucharistic assembly on such grounds of age, race, gender, economic circumstances, or mental capacity”.

<sup>75</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, **Mystagogical Catechesis**; quoted in YARNOLD, Edward, **Awe-Inspiring Rites**, pp83-84.

<sup>76</sup> Notably, a similar prayer is transposed into materials for daily prayer in the Anglican Church of Australia. Cf ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA, **Daily Services from A Prayer Book for Australia** (Alexandria: Broughton Books), p88:

God our creator,  
you have made each one of us in every part.  
Bless us through and through,  
that we may delight to serve you to the full.  
Bless our eyes, that we may discern the beauty you give.  
Bless our ears, that we may hear you in the music of sounds.  
Bless our sense of smell, that your fragrance may fill our being.  
Bless our lips, that we may speak your truth, and sing your joy.  
Bless our hands, that they may plait, write and touch as you guide them.  
Bless our feet, that they may be messengers of your peace.  
Bless our imaginations, that we may be fired with wonder in your truth.  
Bless our hearts, that they may be filled with your love.  
Bless us through and through,  
that we may delight to serve you to the full, through Jesus Christ,  
who took our nature to make us whole. Amen.

<sup>77</sup> “N, we rejoice in your experience of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit”, **Uniting in Worship 2**, p112.

<sup>78</sup> The text first appeared in the EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE USA's **Book of Common Prayer 1979** (New York, NY: CHP, 1979), and was subsequently incorporated in its original form in the like of ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA's **Book of Alternative Services**, (Toronto: ABC, 1985) and

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adapted in the like of the Church of England's **Common Worship** and the Uniting Church's **Uniting in Worship 2**. For further comment on the text(s), see BURNS, Stephen, *Liturgy and Justice*, **International Journal of Public Theology** 3 (2009): pp371-389.

<sup>79</sup> **Uniting in Worship 2**, p31.

<sup>80</sup> Because of the closure of the BCT at the end of 2009, I will continue to teach the same unit through Trinity's affiliation with Australian Catholic University, effective from 2010.

<sup>81</sup> CALLAHAN, Kennon L, **Effective Church Leadership**, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990), p22

<sup>82</sup> A personal experience of "being pushed to the edge" is that in the last five years I have received regular emails from a high school contemporary, now an atheist, with the aim of persuading me to give up my nonsensical faith which implicitly supports fundamentalist groups and their divisive and violent ways.

<sup>83</sup> See

[http://www.acu.edu.au/about\\_acu/publications/handbooks/handbook\\_2010/unit\\_descriptions\\_for\\_2010/thcp210\\_mission\\_of\\_the\\_church/](http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/publications/handbooks/handbook_2010/unit_descriptions_for_2010/thcp210_mission_of_the_church/) (accessed 8 December, 2009)

<sup>84</sup> Two of the papers presented at the AAMS conference in Melbourne in 2005 were included in the readings.

<sup>85</sup> BOSCH, David, **Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission**, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991)

<sup>86</sup> BEVANS, Stephen B, and SCHROEDER, Roger P, **Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today**, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004)

<sup>87</sup> The major paper by postgraduate students is 3500 words. They also do a 1000-word paper on their critical learnings from their participation in the unit.

<sup>88</sup> The dot points here represent the criteria for the major piece of assessment.

<sup>89</sup> BEVANS, Stephen, SVD, *Images of the Priesthood in Today's Church*, in **Emmanuel**, Sept, 1996, p390

<sup>90</sup> JAMES, R, McINNIS, C and DEVLIN, M, **Assessing Learning in Australian Universities**, (Melbourne: Centre for the Study of Higher Education, the University of Melbourne and the Australian Universities Teaching Committee, 2002), p47

<sup>91</sup> BRUEGGEMAN, Walter, **Interpretation and Obedience** (Minneapolis, US: Fortress, 1991), p294

<sup>92</sup> NOUWEN, Henri J M, **Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life** (London, UK: Fount Paperbacks, 1996), p63

<sup>93</sup> POHL, Christine D, **Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition** (Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), p13

<sup>94</sup> POHL, pp85-103

<sup>95</sup> BAUMANN, Zygmunt, **Postmodernity and its Discontents** (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1997), p17

<sup>96</sup> COOPER, Davina, *Being in Public: The Threat and Promise of Stranger Contact*, in **Law & Social Inquiry**, Volume 32, Issue 1, (Winter, 2007), pp203-232

<sup>97</sup> BAUMANN, **Postmodernity and its Discontents**, p17

<sup>98</sup> McPHERSON, Miller, SMITH-LOVIN, Lynn & BRASHEARS, Matthew E, *Social Isolation in America: Changes in Core Discussion Networks over Two Decades*, in **American Sociological Review**, 2006, Vol.71 (June), pp353-375

<sup>99</sup> BAUMANN, Zygmunt & MAY, Tim, **Thinking Sociologically** (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing; 1990, 2001), p39

<sup>100</sup> STICHWEH, Rudolf, *The Stranger – On the Sociology of Indifference* in **Thesis Eleven**, Number 51, November 1997: 1-16 (London, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997), p8

<sup>101</sup> BAUMANN, Zygmunt, **Postmodern Ethics** (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 1993), p152

<sup>102</sup> GOFFMAN, Erving, **The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life** (Harmondsworth: Penguin; originally published in 1959)

<sup>103</sup> BAUMAN & MAY, **Thinking Sociologically**, p40

<sup>104</sup> BAUMANN, **Postmodern Ethics**, p53

<sup>105</sup> BAUMANN, **Postmodern Ethics**, p154

<sup>106</sup> BAUMANN, **Postmodern Ethics**, p155

<sup>107</sup> BAUMANN, **Postmodern Ethics**, p164

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- <sup>108</sup> BAUMANN, **Postmodern Ethics**, p164
- <sup>109</sup> YATES, Roger, *Insiders and Outsiders* in *On Human-Nonhuman Relations: A Sociological Exploration of Speciesism* (Monday, April 23, 2007) on: <http://human-nonhuman.blogspot.com/2008/07/on-controlling-atmosphere-of-chickens.html>
- <sup>110</sup> BAUMAN & MAY, **Thinking Sociologically**, p42
- <sup>111</sup> YATES, *Insiders and Outsiders*, p4
- <sup>112</sup> VOLF, Miroslav, **Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation** (Nashville, US: Abingdon Press, 1996), p67
- <sup>113</sup> VOLF, **Exclusion and Embrace**, p75
- <sup>114</sup> VOLF, **Exclusion and Embrace**, p75
- <sup>115</sup> BAUMANN, **Postmodernity and its Discontents**, p18. Bauman in his **Postmodern Ethics** (1993:163) also makes mention of two other strategies: phagic and emic. He writes, "The phagic strategy is 'inclusivist', the emic strategy is 'exclusivist'. The first 'assimilates' the strangers to the neighbors, the second merges them with the aliens. Together, they polarize the strangers and attempt to clear up the most vexing and disturbing middle-ground between the neighborhood and alienness poles. To the strangers for whom they define the life condition and its choices, they posit a genuine 'either/or': conform or be damned, be like us or do not overstay your visit, play the game by our rules or be prepared to be kicked out from the game altogether. Only as such an 'either/ or' do the two strategies offer a serious chance of controlling the social space. They are therefore included in the toolbag of every domination.
- <sup>116</sup> DOUGLAS, Mary, **Purity and Danger** (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p53
- <sup>117</sup> STICHWEH, **The stranger**, p5
- <sup>118</sup> STICHWEH, **The stranger**, p5
- <sup>119</sup> For a popular treatment of how humans make snap decisions see GLADWELL, Malcolm, **Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking** (London, UK: Penguin Books, 2005)
- <sup>120</sup> AUGSBURGER, David W, **Hate-Work: Working through the Pain and Pleasures of Hate** (Louisville, US: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), pp164-5
- <sup>121</sup> AUGSBURGER, **Hate-work**, p165
- <sup>122</sup> This phrase was first coined by Anthony STORR in **Human Destructiveness** (New York, US: William Morrow, 1972)
- <sup>123</sup> BAUMANN, **Postmodern Ethics**, p178
- <sup>124</sup> BAUMANN, **Postmodern Ethics**, p169
- <sup>125</sup> NOUWEN, **Reaching Out**, p68
- <sup>126</sup> NOUWEN, **Reaching Out**, p69
- <sup>127</sup> NOUWEN, **Reaching Out**, p69
- <sup>128</sup> BAUMANN, **Postmodern Ethics**, p161
- <sup>129</sup> VOLF, **Exclusion and Embrace**, p126
- <sup>130</sup> VOLF, **Exclusion and Embrace**, p129
- <sup>131</sup> VOLF, **Exclusion and Embrace**, p131
- <sup>132</sup> VOLF, **Exclusion and Embrace**, p141
- <sup>133</sup> VOLF, **Exclusion and Embrace**, p143
- <sup>134</sup> POHL, **Making Room**, p154
- <sup>135</sup> POHL, **Making Room**, p158
- <sup>136</sup> POHL, **Making Room**, p161
- <sup>137</sup> STARK, Rodney, **The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History** (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p86
- <sup>138</sup> STARK, Rodney, **The Rise of Christianity**, p86
- <sup>139</sup> POHL, **Making Room**, p56
- <sup>140</sup> Actually, there was a mimeographed Manual to help the catechists explain the content of the Catechism; however, it was not available to the catechists in our area. It had been written by Fr Wiesentahl SVD at Alexihafen on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1955, had 59 pages and its title was **Catechists' Manual**. The Manuals produced in the Seventies were biblically based, reflecting the spirit of Vatican II.
- <sup>141</sup> Genovefa belongs to a Secular Institute, has been studying Theology, and one of her professors was Karl Rahner. She had learned the Koge language and, besides being involved full time in the catechumenate, she was very active in the liturgy, making use not only of the Koge language but also of its music and melodies.
- <sup>142</sup> KEYSER, Christian, **Eine Papuagemeinde**, (Neuendettelsau, 1950). English version: ALLIN, A and KUDER, J, [trans], **A People Reborn**, (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1980)

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<sup>143</sup> See, for example, *Lateranense IV* in DENZINGER, Henrici, **Enchiridion Symbolorum**, p430

<sup>144</sup> See JENSEN, E Adolf, **Myth and Cult among Primitive People**, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963) (German original, 1951)

<sup>145</sup> See MANTOVANI, Ennio, **Divine Revelation and the Religions of PNG: A Missiological Manual**, (Goroka: The Melanesian Institute, 2000)

<sup>146</sup> Rituals were secret; hence one could not talk openly about them and even less share them with outsiders.

<sup>147</sup> See MANTOVANI, Ennio, *Dema as Religious Symbol in Papua New Guinea* in CUSACK, Carole M and HARTNEY, Christopher, [eds], **Religion and Retributive Logic. Essays in Honour of Professor Garry W. Trompf**, (Leiden: Brill, 2010)

<sup>148</sup> I often wonder if it would not be time for the Church to ask for forgiveness for her statements that caused so many martyrs in the East and so much confusion also in Papua New Guinea and other parts of the world.

<sup>149</sup> See WEINER, Annette B, **Women of Value, Men of Renown**, (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1977) and MANTOVANI, Ennio, **Male-Female Relationships in Melanesia**, (Goroka: Occasional Papers of the Melanesian Institute, No 8, 1991)

<sup>150</sup> See MANTOVANI, Ennio [ed], **Marriage in Melanesia: A Theological Perspective, Marriage in Melanesia: A Sociological Perspective and Marriage in Melanesia: An Anthropological Perspective**, (Goroka: the Melanesian Institute, 1987, 1990, 1992 respectively)

<sup>151</sup> MICAH NETWORK, **Micah Declaration on Integral Mission, 27 September 2001**, <http://www.micahnetwork.org/en/integral-mission/micah-declaration>

<sup>152</sup> From the "Foreword" by Anne ROBINSON, Board Chair of World Vision, Australia.

<sup>153</sup> *ibid*

<sup>154</sup> COSTELLO, Tim, **A Passion for Hope and Justice**, p14

<sup>155</sup> CHRISTIAN, Jayakumar, **The Nature of Poverty and Development**, p24

<sup>156</sup> HUTCHINSON, Mark, **Christianity and Social Reform**, p90

<sup>157</sup> CAMERON, Andrew, **A Theological Approach to Social Reform, Advocacy and Engagement**, p38

<sup>158</sup> WU, Siu Fung, **Good News to the Poor**, p74

<sup>159</sup> CAMERON, p38

<sup>160</sup> *ibid*

<sup>161</sup> ROBINSON, pviii