

65  
YEARS  
of  
Priestly  
Life

Ennio Mantovani SVD



# Foreword

In Biblical times, from time-to-time special women and men appeared who had a challenging role in society. They were wise people who had a gift of reading the signs of their times, and then interpreting these in often extra-ordinary ways. They spoke out, sometimes “bucking the trend”, challenging people to think and act differently. They were collectively known as prophets.

Actually, throughout human history, and probably throughout the world, there have been people like this, right to the present day. One such contemporary prophet is Ennio Mantovani, whose latest work is in your hands now.

Throughout his long and fruitful life as a missionary priest, Ennio has been observing the signs of the times in the places where he has lived, particularly in Papua New Guinea and Australia. Fortunately, he has been a prolific writer, sharing his insights with a broad audience. Readers of his books and articles will know about the life changing experience he had in Papua New Guinea many years ago, an experience which continues to colour his thinking and teaching.

When you read this work, you will see that there is a logical progression from his early mission experience to his excitement about Quantum Physics. He uses his gifts as a modern prophet to encourage his readers/listeners to be open-minded about possible, yet possibly not yet mainstream, ways at looking at the world in which we live. Ennio makes us think, wonder and question. Yet he does so as a man of deep faith.

This is not a difficult book to read, but it is challenging. I thank Ennio for presenting us with this challenge.

Bill Burt, SVD,  
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Throughout his long and fruitful life as a missionary priest, Ennio has been observing the signs of the times in the places where he has lived, particularly in Papua New Guinea and Australia.





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## The History of a Journey

I celebrated my silver jubilee of ordination in Essendon, the evening before returning to Papua New Guinea after my lectures at the Yarra Theological Union. In PNG nobody noticed my jubilee and I did not mind.

My golden jubilee fell when beginning my ministry for the Italian community at Sacred Heart Parish, Preston, in suburban Melbourne. Fr Thien organized a dinner in the library of our Primary School. I projected a film that I had prepared which helped also to introduce myself to the Italian community for which I was new. It was a success. It happened that at that time the Club of the Italian Pensioners of our parish of which I was member celebrated one of its famous Pranzi (dinners) lasting between four to five hours. The President congratulated me for my golden jubilee. To be honest, I was happy that, when my turn came to say a few words, the microphone broke down, and I could sit down.

My diamond jubilee fell while at Preston and the launching of my book *65 Years of Priestly Life. The history of a Journey* took place as part of the Mission Saturday Celebration organized by the SVDs.

*65 Years of Priestly Life. The history of a journey* does not have the glamour of the jubilees marked with precious metals: silver, gold and diamond. Still, it marks a journey which is worth remembering. On a journey, one leaves the point of departure to move to new geographical localities, sometimes discovering new, beautiful panoramas.

I will begin with a few reflections based on my specialisations on phenomenology of religion, moving to my other field, that of missiology, to continue with Pope Francesco on evolutionism, another interest created by my encounter with the religions of the digging stick cultivators of Yobai. I will add a few facts on quantum reality and end with a reflection on the role of culture in inculturation in mission and Christianity.

## Phenomenology of religion.

Our Christian theology has been strongly influenced and shaped by the philosophy of two greats of the past: Plato and Aristotle. Plato distinguished between a heavenly spiritual ideal and a material realization of the same in our daily life. Hence, for instance, the superiority of virginity over marriage. It is true that lately the popes tried to correct this error by canonising married people. Even today in the Mass we pray "do not look at our sins but on the sanctity of our Church". Somewhere outside of the reality of our sinful Church - the new cases emerging in France involving not only priests but also bishops - floating somewhere in the ether there is the real, perfect Church, postulated by Plato. We Christians belong to the inferior reality but above there is the perfect reality. We forget completely that we are the Church, people called to continue the mission of Christ. Personally, I think that we Christians, in order to change our mentality, need to go to the roots of our situation, the philosophy of Plato. We admire that great intellect, but evolution is ongoing and humankind has evolved far beyond Plato.

The other great that influenced our Christian tradition is Aristotle with his theory of form and matter that can be used to explain the mystery of the Eucharist: the exterior form remains but the matter changes: Transubstantiation. As already mentioned, humankind has evolved into quantum physics. Our life has been revolutionized and digitalization dominates our daily life. Only our faith has not changed, missing the possible deepening of faith and rituals.

Jesus promised the Spirit who would guide us towards the full truth. We are on the way. If we do not change, it means that we are lagging behind, that we do not trust that arm that guides us forward.

We grew up in the world of classic physics, however, not too many years ago we moved, without realizing, into the world of quantum physics. We could not use our TV sets, we needed to buy new ones, analogue had to change to digital, our gadgetry adapted to this change, often without ourselves being aware of it, of the epochal change that was taking place.

Our faith continued in the old world. Quantum did not affect it. That our faith was not a platonic idea somewhere up there in the Platonic universe, but expression of our daily life, of our cultural upbringing, of the inculturation of our faith in our 'Weltanschauung' - our ways of seeing the world around us - did not even dawn on us.

Our salvation was by no means in danger, in the sense that our personal relationship to God, was not affected, at least not for my generation. Our attendance at Church was not affected. The old Tradition, as a matter of fact, gave us security.

The Spirit, however, was urging us forward. The quantum world opened up great possibilities for our faith.

Just a few examples. Without any problem we say: Jesus went up to heaven, we celebrated Mary's Assumption into heaven. Gagarin, the first astronaut is supposed to have remarked that in his exploration of space, he did not find the heavens. When we fly, the outside temperature is -40 degrees Celsius. When we climb the Alps at 3000m - in central Europe where I was born - it is already zero degrees. Have you ever thought about these facts? We seniors were quick in suppressing those doubts of faith. Maybe we thought that we were dealing with mysteries. As a friend of mine once told me: keep searching, I close all those questions into what myself I call the Mystery of the Church.

Unfortunately, the younger generation who went through senior High School have been told not to learn by heart - as we did - but to ask questions; to research. That's maybe one of the reasons that once they finish High School in our Catholic schools they desert the Church. Statistics force us to reflect.

Latest Census 2021: 40% no religious affiliation, from the almost 30% in the 2016 Census. In 5 years, a loss of 10% - mostly young people.

Quantum physics should have warned us that God is Love (L), a creative and sustaining Reality who is not bound by time and space. L is everywhere and is eternal. We do not need to search for L behind the clouds. L does not sit anywhere; the L is looking for us as our Abba, and will never give up.

Jesus is not sitting at his right hand as in a Royal Palace. Jesus lives among us: where two or three are gathered in my name I am among them (Mt18:20). Jesus knows and loves each of us. He is looking for us and not the other way around. We cannot take seriously these words of Jesus otherwise we will get confused: what's the difference between that presence and the one in the tabernacle?

In our theology we distinguish between memory and memorial. We remember an event in history which is past, and we celebrate the memorial of an historical event that somehow becomes past present. We remember Jesus' passion, an event that happened just over two thousand years ago but the memorial of his last supper becomes present for us in the Eucharist. We eat his body and drink his blood.

Quantum physics tells us that at his death Jesus left the limitations of creation - his physical body - and became a reality outside, not limited, by space and time. He is here and everywhere. I do not need to be in a chapel to be close to Him, he is

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always with me, with each of us. He knows and loves each of us. The Eucharist is not a remembrance of what Jesus did in Jerusalem over two thousand years ago. We take part in the Last Supper as the Apostles did. We sit down with Jesus and eat with him. It is mind boggling; however, that's where the Spirit has been trying to lead us and the ongoing evolution of our brains was providing the tools in the quantum science.

## Missiology

I have already written on this matter in *Word in House* November 2012: *The Missionary Nature of the Sacraments*. I regard it worth reprinting.

Dear Confreres

In this issue of *Word in House* we are grateful to Ennio Mantovani SVD for sharing his ideas with us on the missionary nature of the sacraments. His starting point is the long struggle as a bush missionary.

Ennio began working full time in adult catechumenates with the pre-Vatican II mentality and theology and then moved on to Vatican II, trying to understand and make his own the teaching of the Church.

Thank you again Ennio for your contribution.

Yours in the Word

Gerard Mulholland SVD  
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## The Missionary Nature of the Sacraments

In the last Provincial Assembly, I made two interventions: one on the missionary nature of the Sacraments and one on discovering what God is revealing to the people among whom we are working. For me, what I said was the result of years of study and reflections as a bush missionary in PNG and then at the Melanesian Institute and I assumed that everybody understood my concerns. Maybe I was too optimistic. Allow me to present in a more detailed way what I wanted to communicate to the Assembly.

My starting point is the long struggle as a bush missionary who began working full time in adult catechumenates with the pre-Vatican II mentality and theology and then moved on to Vatican II, trying to understand and make his own the teaching of the Church.

For me the greatest change was in the understanding of the Church as "missionary by nature". It is from this missionary nature that I deduct the nature of her sacraments.

Those who did not have to work through that theological transition might miss the changes which took place and which ought to be part of the post Vatican II theology. I see the danger of us accepting the Vatican II view of an outgoing, missionary Church while keeping the pre-Vatican II personalistic understanding of the sacraments.

# My Personal Journey

I was brought up in the pre-Vatican II spirituality that was grace-centred. We were urged to acquire grace and the sacraments were the main sources of it. That spirituality was coloured by the individualistic Western philosophy and culture of the time and, on the other hand, stressed very much the dichotomy spirit – matter. There was a negative attitude towards the world.

In my SVD formation I was encouraged to receive the sacraments frequently in order to obtain their grace, sanctify myself and find the strength to detach myself from the world. The sacraments were seen only as sources of this salvific, personal grace.

This individualistic, inward-looking understanding of and approach to the sacraments seems to continue and be prevalent even today. The New Catechism, as far as I can see, does not change significantly this inward-looking spirituality.

## Vatican II

### Individualistic vs. Altruistic Spirituality

When the documents of Vat II were promulgated, as already mentioned, I was working full time with adult catechumens. What struck me in these documents was the opening of the Church to the world and to the other. Up to that point, the Church was inward-looking, individualistic, stressing the eternal salvation of the individuals. The individual was at the centre. We missionaries were there to bring that eternal, personal salvation to as many individuals as possible. The salvation was personal; inward-looking.

In the new documents, as in the life of Jesus himself, the other was at the centre and not I. Jesus is the one who renounced all his privileges, who forgot himself for us (Ph 25ff). Paul, the great missionary who boasted of imitating Christ, cared so much for others to the point of wishing to be accursed, to be cut off from Christ for the others (Rom 9:3). It is by serving my brothers and sisters that I will enter the house of the Father (Mt 25:31ff).

### Document on the Laity

The document on the laity showed this change of position. What I call the personalistic, inward-looking spirituality gives way to an altruistic one. Salvation and sanctification do not come directly from the sacraments and their grace, but by being active in caring for others. The sacraments are expressions of faith, of one's decision to follow Christ by continuing his mission to others. A Christian is not primarily the one who has reached the harbour of salvation, but the one who received and accepted the mandate to continue the work of Christ, to be for others.

For by its very nature the Christian vocation is also a vocation to the apostolate. No part of the structure of a living body is merely passive but each has a share in the functions as well as in the life of the body. (AA 2)

The document continues:

All activity of the Mystical Body directed to the attainment of this goal is called the apostolate, and the Church carries it on in various ways through all her members. (Ibid)

The Council is not talking about the clergy or the religious but about every Christian.

Salvation and sanctification do not come directly from the sacraments and their grace, but by being active in caring for others. The sacraments are expressions of faith, of one's decision to follow Christ by continuing his mission to others.

Christ conferred on the apostles and their successors the duty of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling in His name and power. But also the laity shares in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own role to play in the mission of the whole People of God in the Church and in the world.

The time when I was the missionary while my mother was only a committed Christian belonging to a missionary association praying for the missionaries and supporting them materially, is over. This, however, has serious consequences:

Indeed, so intimately are the parts linked and interrelated in this body (cf. Eph. 4:16) that the member who fails to make his proper contribution to the development of the Church must be said to be useful neither to the Church nor to himself.

The Council takes seriously the words of Jesus in Jn 15:2: "Every branch of mine that bears no fruit he takes away" and "the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned." Jn 15:6. What John says here is not much different from Matthew 25:46.

For me, this teaching was a breath of fresh air. Those mass baptisms – up to 500 in one ceremony – of people caring only for their souls that smacked of ritualism found here a serious question mark. Catechumens had to prepare themselves to an active life, to the apostolate to which they were called by Christ.

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Since it is proper to the layman's state in life for him to spend his days in the midst of the world and of secular transactions, he is called by God to burn with the spirit of Christ and to exercise his apostolate in the world as a kind of leaven. (AA 2)

It was not I nor the bishops who invited the one or the other as co-worker in our mission. It was Christ himself.

The laity derives the right and duty with respect to the apostolate from their union with Christ their Head. Incorporated into Christ's Mystical Body through baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit through confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord himself. (AA 3)

The Holy Spirit does not make his calling depend on an academic degree. Unfortunately, when the document on the laity appeared, the Hierarchy made a condition for that ministry to attend an academic preparation given in English. Instead of the bishop imposing his hands on the catechists who had dedicated with success their whole life to the service of the community recognising them as the "backbones of our missionary work in PNG" he gave in to the Rules from Rome, burdening the 'David's with the armours of Saul. For sure, even academic updating is necessary, but that should not mean that we should not recognize those catechists without whom our missionary work - and not only in PNG - in establishing the Church in the world would not have been possible.

The lay people have the right not just permission to exercise their apostolate in the community. It is their birth right. That right, however, creates a duty, a responsibility.

For the exercise of this apostolate, the Holy Spirit who sanctifies the People of God through the ministry and the sacraments gives to the faithful special gifts as well (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7), "allotting to everyone according as he will" (1 Cor' 12:11). Thus may the individual, "according to the gift that each has received, administer it to one another" and become "good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Pet. 4:10), and build up thereby the whole body in charity (cf. Eph, 4:16). From the reception of these charisms or gifts, including those which are less dramatic, there arise for each believer the right and duty to use them in the Church and in the world for the good of mankind and for the up building of the Church. In so doing, believers need to enjoy the freedom of the Holy Spirit who "breathes where he wills" (Jn. 3:8). (AA 3) (My underlining)

The catechumenate, as a consequence, ceases to be just a learning of the Christian doctrine, but must become a training in Christian life, in the apostolate.

The catechumenate is not a mere expounding of doctrines and precepts, but a training period for the whole Christian life. It is an apprenticeship of appropriate length, during which disciples are joined to Christ their Teacher. (AG 13) (My underlining)

## Missionary by Nature

The foundation for this theology of the laity is the new understanding of the nature of the Church. For me who had been working full time with adult catechumens it represented a radical change. From a Church concerned for her members, for their personal salvation, I moved to a Church looking outside of herself to the others, to the world and its cultures. The challenge to my catechumens now was to be co-workers with Christ for the establishing of the Kingdom, of God's cosmic plan of salvation for the whole world. If they accepted that challenge to be co-workers with Christ, they needed to 'repent', to change their way of thinking and acting, to follow the way of Christ.

The challenge to be co-workers was first, while the call for conversion was a consequence of its acceptance. The issue was not primarily personal salvation, avoiding eternal perdition, avoiding hell, but concern for the world, acceptance of God's cosmic plan for the world. One was called to cooperation and if one accepted the call one needed to undergo a *metánoia*. What was supposed to move people was not self interest, fear of hell, but concern for the well-being of the others, of the world.

For me as a missionary in PNG, this was really good news. I was to challenge people to put their values at the service of the Kingdom. I had to start by recognizing and appreciating the values of the people among whom I was working and asking them to put themselves at the service of Christ, to allow Christ to use them to transform the world, to fight evil, and to help God's love to reign supreme. God loved them and their culture so much that God wanted to need them to 'save' the whole world.

People wanted progress, wanted to eliminate evil in their environment and God wanted to use their cultural values to achieve that in a radical way. This was an entirely new way of doing mission.

In a note in Abbot's Documents of Vatican II we read: "It should be pointed out that the great contribution of *Lumen Gentium* to "the missions" was to locate the activity of the Church within the centre of the Church's life instead of its periphery."

The document *Ad Gentes* highlights this change by stating: "The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature."

When today, after Vatican II, we talk about the Church we talk about a people called to mission. If we are consistent, we must state that if the sacraments are not "missionary by nature," they do not belong to this Church. There cannot be a Church which is missionary by nature and sacraments that do not share that nature. It does not make theological sense. As a consequence, the faith expressed through the sacraments that are missionary by nature needs to be a missionary faith.

To better understand the missionary nature of the Church, we must remind ourselves too of the fact that today theologians see the Kingdom of God at the centre of Jesus mission. He truly lived and died for the Kingdom, for the reign of God. This was the program he announced at the beginning of his ministry, the mission he entrusted to his followers. His followers were to announce God's plan for the world

The challenge to my catechumens now was to be co-workers with Christ for the establishing of the Kingdom, of God's cosmic plan of salvation for the whole world.

The shift I witnessed and experienced since Vatican II was from the liturgical rite to the faith it was supposed to express. It is faith expressed in love that saves.

– God’s reign – and to call for a change of thinking and living. Not only his teaching but also his ‘miracles’ were signs of the Reign of God, a foreshadowing of what was to come.

The theology of liberation helped us to bring God’s reign down to earth. Christianity had not delivered the peace it promised and, hence, we consoled ourselves with the peace to come; with heaven after death. As Karl Marx rightly saw, our faith helped us to carry our cross but not to change the cause of evil in the world. The Church was at the forefront in the alleviation of suffering through her works of charity, but not in the changing of the structures that caused it.

Liberation theology was only taking seriously what the popes and Vatican II had stated. Like anything human, even Liberation Theology was not perfect, but its concern was central to the teaching of the Church in Vatican II.

*Gaudium et spes* echoing *Pacem in terris* of John XXIII shows the new position of the Church, speaking “to all men in order to shed light on the mystery of man and to cooperate in finding the solutions to the outstanding problems of our time”. (10) Now the Church does not only alleviate the pain, it works together with the world to find solutions.

The mission of the Church and the sacraments need to be seen in this light. Heaven is not forgotten but our task is to change not only our thinking and our life – *metánoia* – but the thinking and life of the whole human society. It is through this involvement here on earth that after death we will live with Christ forever.

## The Missionary Nature of the Sacraments

### Sacrament of Baptism

Baptism, in the pre-Vatican II days, was seen only in terms of personal, eternal salvation. The Johannine *nisi quis*, ‘unless one is baptised will not be saved,’ was the driving motif. Catholic nurses were urged to baptise the foetus in the womb of dead or dying mothers. Baptisms in *periculo mortis*, in danger of death were very common in PNG. We were very quick in invoking the *ecclesia supplet* axiom. The platonic, perfect Church up there, was able to fix these human problems in mysterious ways. We missionaries had to save souls from hell!

The shift I witnessed and experienced since Vatican II was from the liturgical rite to the faith it was supposed to express. It is faith expressed in love that saves. The document on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, of Vatican II expresses this clearly when it states:

Catechumens who, moved by the Holy Spirit, seek with explicit intention to be incorporated into the Church are by that very intention joined to her. With love and solicitude Mother Church already embraces them as her own. (14)

It is the faith that motivates these people that saves them. The rite only expresses it officially. If this active faith fails, baptism not only does not help, as a matter of fact it makes things worse for the one who received it.

He is not saved, however, who, though he is part of the body of the Church, does not persevere in charity.... If they fail moreover to respond to that grace in thought, word, and deed, not only will they not be saved but they will be the more severely judged. (14)

The Abbott commentary to this passage refers to Lk 12:48: "Much will be expected from the one who has been given much." For me, working in the catechumenate, Matthew 25 with the parables of the ten girls, the three servants and the judgment was of basic relevance. The catechumens were challenged with those parables of Jesus. Baptism was not a magical rite, but a commitment to work, to work with Christ for the Kingdom.

We already looked at the teaching of the Church on Baptism while talking about the laity. In Baptism, the symbol we came to adopt, the washing of the head, led us to stress the washing from sin, and St Augustine, with his teaching on original sin, did not help the full understanding of Baptism. The present symbol stresses only one aspect. The biblical idea of rebirth, of dying and rising again, (Rom 6:4; Col 2:12) of the new life in Christ (Gal 2:20) is not called to mind – signified – by the present symbol. The new life in and for Christ, however, should be at the centre of the sacrament.

If it is not I but Christ who lives in me (Gal 2:20), the one who lived and died for the Kingdom, my life ought to be for the Kingdom. Christ's mission ought to be my mission. "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you (Jn 20:21)." It is not an option one might choose; this is integral to the Christian identity. We are branches of the vine; we are needed by the vine to bear fruit.

Seen from the 'missionary nature of the Church' perspective, Baptism is the response to the call by Christ to follow him, to continue his work. The world is in need of salvation, a salvation that is holistic, comprising the whole human existence in the present world. The vine – Christ – needs branches to bring the fruit of salvation. God wants to need co-workers for God's plan for the world.

From this point of view, there can be no baptism without solid preparation. For adults there is the catechumenate and for the children there is the preparation of the parents and godparents.

During the catechumenate one is confronted by the challenge: do you want to give your life to witness to God's plan for the world, a plan of peace and justice? Do you want to be a witness through your life of the presence of God's kingdom, of the new life in your society? Do you want to be co-worker with Christ in changing this world? The catechumenate helps to reflect on the situation of the world where the catechumen lives, of what it means to radically change one's way of thinking and one's life in that concrete situation; of the behaviour and actions that express that *metánoia* demanded by Christ.

For the infant, without the faith and commitment of the parents and godparents, baptism is an empty, cultural ritual. If baptism is seen as the taking away of the original sin and opening the way to personal salvation, then one could be a minimalist and invoke the *ecclesia supplet* principle: do not worry, the Church will see to it that everything is all right. The Church, that Platonic idea of a heavenly reality, forgetting that we - the baptised - are the church. What matters is the eternal salvation of the child and, hence, let us baptise him or her. If, on the other hand, mission is at the centre, the work for the Kingdom of God here on earth, then the active commitment to the mission of the Church must be present in those who present the child for baptism.

God has a plan for the world, a cosmic plan of salvation, but it will not be numbers that will help that process but quality and commitment. It will be the little flock that is salt, leaven, and light showing the way to the many.

If it is not I but Christ who lives in me (Gal 2:20), the one who lived and died for the Kingdom, my life ought to be for the Kingdom. Christ's mission ought to be my mission. "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you (Jn 20:21)." It is not an option one might choose; this is integral to the Christian identity. We are branches of the vine; we are needed by the vine to bear fruit.

The Eucharist, together with Baptism and Confirmation completes the Christian initiation. Through Baptism/Confirmation we are called and accept to continue the mission of Christ, and the Eucharist is the food that enables us to carry out the mission of Christ.

## Sacrament of Confirmation

In the post Vatican II theology, Baptism and Confirmation, together with the Eucharist, are part of the one rite of Christian initiation.

If in Baptism one expresses one's acceptance of the call by Christ to continue his work, in Confirmation the Holy Spirit is given to enable that mission to be carried out. Even in the pre-Vatican II theology, the Holy Spirit in Confirmation made one a *miles Christi*, a soldier of Christ.

Today, for adults, the two sacraments of Christian Initiation are conferred together. The one catechumenate prepares for this commitment to continue the mission of Christ. Those who have been baptised as children need to go through a kind of catechumenate. The stress should be on continuing the mission of Christ in their context.

The reason given for confirming the children at primary school age is that otherwise, most of them will not be confirmed at all. They will miss the sacramental grace of Confirmation, as I was told in PNG. We are in danger of going back to a pre-Vatican II grace centred theology, abandoning that of a Church which is missionary by nature. It might be a sign that the theology of the Church which is missionary by nature is still only skin deep. We pay lip service to it but we do not live by it. Maybe also we SVDs failed the people in our teaching and preaching.

## Sacrament of the Eucharist

The Eucharist, together with Baptism and Confirmation completes the Christian initiation. Through Baptism/Confirmation we are called and accept to continue the mission of Christ, and the Eucharist is the food that enables us to carry out the mission of Christ.

Besides, it is the memorial, the making present of the mystery of God's love for us, "God loved the world so much that he gave his only son" and of the love of that son who loved us so much to give his love for us. We are thus confronted by our model Christ who shows us the way to carry out God's mission: total trust in the Father, even and especially in time of total failure, forgetting oneself for the good of the others to the point of giving one's life.

The Eucharist is both nourishment and reminder. "As the father has sent me, so I am sending you."

## Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation

The Sacrament of Penance was not treated in Vatican II. Originally, penance was a new chance for those who in a serious way had broken the baptismal commitment. Sometimes penance was postponed to the death bed, to be sure not to fall again. Besides, Thomas Aquinas taught that the case when one comes to confession with a mortal sin was a borderline case. If one repents, that person is forgiven. From that point of view, there is no special need for a sacramental ritual.

But there is another aspect. A grievous sin is one that betrays in a radical way the commitment to Christ expressed in Baptism. One, through such an action, puts oneself outside the Christian community. One cannot come back into a community at will.

This explains also the procedure with the so called 'third rite.' One is absolved

of sins, however, for the grievous ones, for those putting one outside the Christian community, one needs to ask and to officially be readmitted to the community. This is the ecclesial aspect of the sacrament.

For me personally, this understanding of penance, as a renewal of my commitment to Christ and his mission is very meaningful and satisfying.

## Sacrament of Matrimony

Marriage, in my opinion, given the fact that most Christians have been baptised as children, is the missionary sacrament par excellence.

Once I was told: If I sleep with my partner just before going to church to be married, I commit mortal sin, I need to go to confession before going to Communion, and, if I die on the way to the church, I go to hell because in mortal sin. However, if I do the same a few minutes after the ceremony in church, everything is ok. There is no sin. The God, who, a short time earlier would have punished me with hell, now is pleased. The sacrament has purified the sexual act. It is not love that is at the centre but sex. This is a caricature of a sacrament.

I see marriage differently. In a position paper I gave at the combined bishops conferences of our Pacific area in Sydney in May 1980 prior to the Synod on the Family, I presented my understanding of marriage as the renewal of Baptism in the context of marriage. The Nuncio privately warned me, that if the bishops did not raise the question, he would object that I did not distinguish enough between Baptism and Marriage. In the afternoon discussion, a woman – for the first time, lay people took part in the bishops' conference – stated that she has been married for a few years. Before marriage, she was very active in her parish and after marriage, she and her husband continued their commitment. However, she felt uneasy. She had kept up her work but something was amiss. Three years after being married, one day it dawned on her that now she could not serve the mission of the Church as she did before, as a single woman. She was married, two in one, one flesh with her husband. They had to serve the mission of the Church as a couple, not as two individuals. That was an entirely different ball game, she said. I looked across at the Nuncio but he kept his head down. The couple had confirmed my understanding.

In Baptism we give our life to Christ to work for the Kingdom, to help Christ establish God's Kingdom here on earth. Marriage, for every culture is a turning point for the individuals involved and for the community as well. Most cultures express this fact through appropriate ceremonies involving very often appropriate instructions for those getting married. One takes on new and greater responsibilities for the community. One becomes an adult.

It is not the question of a sexual expression of love that offends God. On the contrary, God appreciates that marital union so much as to want to use it to change and save the world. In this missionary view of marriage, it is not the sinfulness that is stressed, but its beauty and relevance for the mission of Christ. It is the implicit or explicit refusal to live one's baptism in and through that marital union, the implicit or explicit refusal to allow Christ to use that union as a visible and efficacious sign for the Kingdom that puts a Christian outside the Church.

Nowadays this understanding might give us a better foundation for rethinking the love of people with same-sex attraction.

In Christian marriage, the couple allows Christ to use that union as a building block for the Kingdom. Their union ought to be a witness to the love of Christ for the Church, and of God for the world. The Christian marriage is not better or superior to other marriages, but is one where one consciously lives that witness. The Christian

In Christian marriage, the couple allows Christ to use that union as a building block for the Kingdom. Their union ought to be a witness to the love of Christ for the Church, and of God for the world.

The sacrament of Ordination is a special call and empowerment to serve the missionary community, the community of those called and sent to continue the work mission of Christ.

marriage is not one in which there are no quarrels but one in which, because of one's promise to be a witness to Christ's love for the Church, one tries to forgive, thus helping the coming of the reign of God's love. Because of this missionary nature, a Christian marriage ought to be indissoluble.

I prepared some of my nephews and nieces for marriage and with them I discussed the present situation in society and the world. As with many young people, they wanted to see changes, they were concerned about the future. I told them that Christ needed their help to change society, needed their love to make a difference. Were they willing to do something to change it? Were they willing to dedicate their union to create a better world based on justice, love and forgiveness? Were they willing to educate through their example the children that would come from their union? Our society can be healed only if the building blocks of the same, the families, live the ideal preached by Christ. They, as a couple, had to renew the commitment to Christ made at their Baptism by their parents.

I see society as a safety net in which marriages are the knots that build and keep it together. To Christianize society, we need to Christianize marriage. Christian marriage ought to be the healthy cell in society, healthy in that it lives the justice of the Kingdom.

This for me is the missionary sacrament par excellence. As children, they have been Baptised and Confirmed; now they have a chance to reflect on their Baptismal commitment and renew it together as adults; as a couple.

## Sacrament of Holy Orders

The sacrament of Ordination is a special call and empowerment to serve the missionary community, the community of those called and sent to continue the work mission of Christ.

As a seminarian I was looking forward to being ordained a priest, to becoming and *alter Christus*, as theology told us, another Christ. Preparing for Ordination, I was reading and meditating on the treatise on the Sacrament of Ordination. I did not read it to prepare for an exam but to reflect on the grace to have been called to be an *alter Christus*.

When Vatican II came and the documents became available, I realized that every Christian was an *alter Christus* through Baptism. Every Christian was assigned to the apostolate by Christ himself. I was not the only minister but one among many. My role was that of reminding the community of its dignity and mission and of enabling the community to live up to that responsibility. My task, in dialogue with the community, was to establish structures that helped the laity to exercise their birthrights. Another task, given my philosophical and theological preparation, was to be the spokesman for the community, the one who presents their insights in a philosophical and theological language to the leadership and the wider Church.

My priesthood blossomed after Vatican II. My role was clear and the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity guided my ministry. I would never do what one of my lay co-workers could do. As a matter of fact, I would encourage and support them to go as far as they could in their ministry. On the other hand, I would be supportive and stand up for them. I needed to foresee the problems that would emerge, given the clerical structure of the present Church, and stand by and support them.

Reflecting on this Sacrament, I realize that I experienced the teaching of Vatican II as a pastor at Yobai. I had been shaped by a formation that taught me to see in the other an equal, though, maybe, quite different from me. My theological journey probably was shaped more by my openness based on my anthropological formation

received in the Seminary at St Gabriel, than by my theological formation. Vatican II made sense to me. What I rejoiced about were the new openings presented by the Council, showing the direction in which the Spirit wanted us to move. Social sciences and theology, in this point, were moving in the same direction.

## The Anointing of the Sick

This sacrament has to do with sickness and healing and that's based on James' recommendation in his letter. Today the Church has dropped the traditional term of 'extreme unction' stressing the point that it is the sacrament not only for the dying and the grievously sick but also for the old and the frail. This is relevant in a Church missionary by nature. Each sacrament has to do with our commitment to the mission of Christ; however, the context of that commitment varies during our life. When old age and serious sickness come, we enter a new phase in our life. Often these people say that they cannot 'work' anymore for Christ. In this sacrament one renews one's commitment to Christ and his mission, accepting as Jesus did in Gethsemane, the will of the Father, and one offers one's pain and suffering for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

When I visit the old and sick, I share with them my conviction that they are greater missionaries than myself. I enjoy my ministry while they must suffer with Christ, carrying their cross and so helping the coming of God's Kingdom, working for the coming of justice and peace in our world today. I always ask them to include my ministry in their prayers, as I need their help.

## Conclusion

When I entered the Society, I was convinced that outside my Church there was no salvation. My task as missionary was to bring the light where there was darkness of sin and death. Vatican II and my work in PNG changed my life in a radical way. I still thank God from my whole my heart that I am a Christian, however, not because I am saved while the others are not, but because Christ called me and sent me out to continue his mission, God's mission.

The special call by Christ to continue his mission gave my Church not only a task but a clear and unique identity. As a Christian I am not superior or better than others but radically different.

I still believe I am unique because of that specific call and mission by Christ. I cannot thank God enough for the grace of my SVD vocation. As a missionary, I shall invite and challenge people of good will to be co-workers with Christ in creating a better world, a society in which individuals care for one another. I shall dialogue with brothers and sisters of other religions to work together for the justice of the Kingdom. I see my tasks as an SVD to remind my fellow Christians of their dignity and responsibility as people called and sent out by Christ to continue his mission. I see my responsibility as minister in the Church in helping my fellow Christians carrying out our mission today, in our Australian context. I will endeavour to help those who are or want to become Christians to celebrate the sacraments as a calling to acceptance and empowerment of mission.

The special call by Christ to continue his mission gave my Church not only a task but a clear and unique identity. As a Christian I am not superior or better than others but radically different.

The Big Bang does not contradict the intervention of a divine creator but depends on it. Science cannot bring out of sheer nothing, only the Creator is required for the Big Bang to occur.

# The Big Bang and Evolution

There is another topic that I would like to touch on. Today cosmology has been revolutionized with the theories of the Big Bang and of Evolution.

Pope Francis lately has entered the dialogue about these topics.

## Pope Francesco and evolution

The Pope inaugurated the Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Science on 27 October 2014. Pope Francis is the only pope in recent times with a science background, having received a Master's degree in chemistry.

## II Some Highlights of the address

### A. The pastoral dimension

The Pope is first and foremost a pastor and so the pastoral dimension takes precedence in all that he does. This puts constraints on the choice of words, metaphors, literary style, etc.

For instance, he prefaced his address with encouraging words to the members of the Academy to move forwards "with scientific progress and the betterment of the standard of living of people, especially those in the greatest poverty".(2)

He tells the scientists that they are partaking "in the power of God and is capable of building a world adapted to this two-fold physical and spiritual life: to build a human world for all human beings and not only for one group or one privileged class.

Many scholars who critique his words and deeds seem to lose sight of this central point.

## The Big Bang and Evolution

The Big Bang Theory and Evolution are the most important contributions to the two areas concerning the birth of the universe and of living beings. What is the relation between these two sets of views-religious and scientific? In his view, both these perspectives are valid and valuable, both to be taken seriously. They do not contradict each other, rather they complement each other- the focus on two distinct, but closely related aspects, of the same issue.

### 1. The creation of the universe

God indeed was the author of the universe. But the Pope says that with regard to how this creation was brought about, a literal understanding of the Book of Genesis is incorrect and unhelpful because it runs the risk of "imagining that God was a magician, complete with all powerful magical wand" or a Platonic Demiurge who formed the different things in the universe by imposing form onto the receptacle. What the Creator did was, while assuring them of his continuous presence, to endow "each being with his own internal laws and autonomy so that using them each may develop and reach its fullness". Accordingly, the universe has been progressing for millennia until becoming what it is today.

## 2. The initial Stuff of the Universe

The Pope disagrees with the idea of chaos, "the beginning of the world... derives directly from a supreme Principle who created out of love".

## 3. The big bang and the Need of God

The Big Bang does not contradict the intervention of a divine creator but depends on it. Science cannot bring out of sheer nothing, only the Creator is required for the Big Bang to occur.

## 4. Evolution and Creation - No Conflict

"Evolution in nature does not conflict with the notion of Creation, because evolution presupposes the creation of beings who evolve." The first law of Thermodynamics, forbids something coming out of nothing (absolute nothing)". The Creator has to create this initial matter with appropriate capabilities and conditions for evolution.

## 5. Special Creation of Humans

Humans are a special category in the evolutionary rang, as they are given additional autonomy in the form of freedom.

"The scientist must be moved by the conviction that nature, in its people with same-sex attraction, hides its potential which it leaves for intelligence and freedom to discover and actualize, in order to reach the development that is the Creator design."

## 6. Humans as Collaborators with God

The action of man partakes in the power of God and is capable of building a world adapted to his two-fold physical and spiritual life.

## 7. Caution against Misuse of Freedom

When true freedom degenerates into autonomy, the actions of humans "destroy Creation and man takes the place of the Creator. And this is a grave sin against God the Creator".

# III. The Catholic Church on the Big Bang and Evolution

## A. The Big Bang Theory

Today the Big Bang Theory is considered the most scientifically established theory on the origin of the universe. The theory, first proposed in 1927 by the Belgian Catholic Priest Abbé Georges Lemaitre, later published in 1931 with title "*The Hypothesis of the primeval atom*" has been receiving ongoing support as more and more data of cosmological studies pours in.

Lemaitre, later published in 1931 with the title "*The Hypothesis of the Primeval Atom*," has been receiving ongoing support as more and more data of cosmological studies pours in. Lemaitre proposed this theory on the basis of his long and extensive study of the field equations of the General Theory of Relativity of Einstein and the observed data of red shift of spiral nebulae. Although today this theory has become highly developed and sophisticated, its initial version, as given by Lemaitre, is simple and can be explained in three stages.

### 1. The Initial Explosion and Consequent Expansion

In this stage Lemaitre talks of a super-dense and super-condensed Primeval

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Atom containing everything found in the universe, exploding some 13.7 billion years ago, in a burst of fireworks. "There was a chain of explosions with larger pieces breaking into smaller and smaller fragments until they were too small to permit further fragmentations. Consequently, the universe began to expand and cool down. Two forces were active in opposite directions at this time — the expansive force of explosion acting outward and the contracting force of gravitation acting inward. (*The most recent data gathered by the European Planck's Satellite puts it as 13.82 billion years.*)

## 2. The Period of Equilibrium

As the process of expansion proceeded, the expansive force began to wane. The gravitational force also underwent change. And a stage was reached in which both these opposing forces balanced. This situation gave rise to the period of equilibrium.

## 3. The Final Expansion

Since the state of equilibrium involved too many variables, it could not continue for long. Any small disturbance in the system could put it out of step, and this indeed happened, giving rise to the stage of Final Expansion. According to Lemaitre, it was in this stage that galaxies and clusters of galaxies were formed, giving the final shape to our universe. Since the universe as a whole experiences an excess of expansive force over the gravitational contractive force, it continues to expand, thereby presenting a natural explanation for the observed expansion of the universe.

## B. Empirical Evidence for the Big Bang

Although this theory had to face stiff and violent opposition from scientists, particularly from the atheistic-minded ones, because it opened the door for some divine agency to provide the Primeval Atom in the first place, it received strong support in 1964 when Arnold Penzias and Robert Wilson discovered the Three Degree Kelvin Microwave Background Radiation, considered to be the remnant from the Big Bang explosion. Since then, many more carefully obtained empirical data has further confirmed this theory, making it a scientific fact.

Especially significant was the startling discovery of 1998 in Berkeley, California, which established that the rate of expansion of the universe is increasing, contrary to what many leading cosmologists, including Stephen Hawking, were expecting. This had very serious significance for Lemaitre since for him the Big Bang was a unique event in cosmic history, "A Day without Yesterday." If the rate of expansion of the universe were to decrease gradually, then a time will come when the universe will cease to expand, and then it could reverse the process and end in a Big Crunch. This could lead to an oscillating or cyclic universe, making it no more a unique event. This has serious religious significance because if the Big Bang is a unique event without any scientific antecedent to explain the cause of the Primeval Atom, then one will have to postulate an outside non-scientific agency to explain its causation.

## C. Critique of the Big Bang Theory

### 1. Positive Support

As mentioned already, the Big Bang has been receiving very valuable data of evidence regularly from the 1960s onwards. These findings have been systematically answering the different questions raised on the theory. The discovery of the Three Degree Kelvin Microwave Background Radiation has shown that the Big Bang explosion did take place, leaving this remnant radiation in the universe.

The COBE (Cosmic Background Explorer) satellite in 1992 could find 'seeds' of the cosmic large-scale structures like stars and galaxies, in the form of slight variations in the cosmic background radiation. This could explain how stars and galaxies could arise from the Big Bang origin of the universe. As we have seen, the findings of the 1998 Berkeley study supported the view that the Big Bang was a unique event, heralding a "Day without Yesterday". The European Space Agency's Planck Satellite which was launched in 2009 and has been transmitting very valuable information, is supposed to release its full data in 2014. The data of hot and cold blobs collected by this satellite is considered the ultra microscopic quantum fluctuations from the threshold of the cosmos. This gave a far more refined and accurate account of the variations in the cosmic background radiation which were responsible for the formation of cosmic large-scale structures. The discovery of the 'God Particle' on 4 July 2012 also gave strong support to the Big Bang since this discovery involved the creation of near Big Bang condition through the Large Hadron Collider experiment. All these facts lead to the conclusion that the Big Bang today is a scientific fact.

## 2. Some Problems with the Big Bang

### a. Origin or Transformation of Universe?

The Big Bang is claimed to be telling us about the origin of the universe, "The Day without Yesterday". But there is the Primeval Atom which was there already yesterday! From where did it come? Who formed it? These questions are left unanswered. Attempts have been made to respond to this problem, but unsatisfactorily. Some scholars have tried to respond to this challenge by proposing that it came from quantum "nothing". Jerry Coyne, for instance, taking the Pope to task for his ignorance of quantum theory says that the universe "could have originated from 'nothing' through purely physical processes, if you see 'nothing' as the 'quantum vacuum' of empty space." But this is no answer since the "nothing" science talks of is not really nothing, not complete absence of any material reality; it is in reality something. In fact, empty space, zero force or no force, means something different from what we ordinarily mean. For instance, zero force or no force in science often means "no net-force," as in the case of one force being nullified by another force of equal strength which is acting in the opposite direction. It is well accepted that neither 'quantum vacuum' nor 'empty space' of quantum science is free of all forms of material reality. Jerry Coyne and others also bring in the concept of multiple universes to solve the problem of the ultimate source of the Primeval Atom. Since many consider the multi-universe theory involving too many speculative suppositions, this is no helpful answer. Besides, the First Law of Thermodynamics forbids something popping up out of sheer nothing. In the absence of an adequate answer to this question of the source of the Primeval Atom one will have to conclude that the Big Bang does not really tell us about the origin of the universe as such, but rather the process of the transformation of the Primeval Atom to the current stage of the universe.

This situation opens up the need or at least the possibility for introducing some outside agency to give a complete account of the origin of the universe.

### b. The Big Bang and the Bible

The Big Bang theory seems to go against the biblical narrative of the creation of the universe. Some of the extremist religious groups subscribe to a literal understanding of the Bible, and so are greatly disturbed by the Big Bang explanation. Much has been written on this controversy. One well known way to respond to this point can be explained as follows. When we talk about scriptural passages on the creation of the universe, there are two important and related aspects: The 'who' and 'how,' the cause and the modality, of creation. The biblical writer was primarily concerned about the first aspect and the author affirms that God was the primary

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Accordingly, the Bible affirms that the universe is not self-created, it was created by God and is dependent on God for its being.

cause of the universe. As for the how or modality of creation, the author has used a story that was intelligible to the readers at the time of its writing and in a literary style adapted to their situation. This can undergo change in the light of new understanding and data. Today science is best equipped to tell us about the 'how' aspect of the origin of the universe, and we remain open to it. But the other aspect of the 'who' is also necessary and remains unchanged. Thus, one can see a relationship of complementarity between the biblical and the scientific views. Galileo, quoting the famous Cardinal Caesar Baronius, has described this situation beautifully: "The Bible teaches how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go."

## D. The Big Bang and the Catholic Church

### 1. Scriptural Interpretation

The Catholic Church has come a long way with regard to scriptural interpretation. Gone are the days of Galileo when she insisted on a literal interpretation of the text, even in the case of passages dealing with science and cosmology. Today the predominant view is that we need to make a distinction between what is said in the Bible (the fundamental message) and how it is said (the mode of communication). The former comes from the Holy Spirit directly and so endures for all times. The latter depends on the concrete situation in which the text is written and the persons to whom it is addressed since the purpose of the Bible is not to teach cosmology but to guide people to lead a virtuous, happy life. In the case of the creation story in the Bible, the fundamental message is the contingency of the universe and hence its dependence on a divine being. Accordingly, the Bible affirms that the universe is not self-created, it was created by God and is dependent on God for its being. On the other hand, the mode of communication depends on the linguistic tools and factual data available at the time of writing. Hence hermeneutics and interpretation become important to make the text more meaningful to contemporary readers. When better tools and data become available, there can be better ways of understanding and communicating the fundamental message. In this process the findings and methods of science can help to understand and interpret scriptural texts better. Hence today there is considerable openness in the Church towards science and its findings. The documents of the Second Vatican Council bear eloquent testimony to this positive spirit of engagement with science.

### 2. The Church Documents on the Big Bang

#### a. Official Documents

The response of the Catholic Church to the Big Bang is to be understood in the spirit discussed above. In this connection the statement of the International Theological Commission in July 2004, which was endorsed by its then President Cardinal Ratzinger is very relevant: "According to the widely accepted scientific account, the universe erupted 15 billion years ago in an explosion called the Big Bang and has been expanding and cooling ever since. Later there gradually emerged the conditions necessary for the formation of atoms, still later the condensation of galaxies and stars, and about 10 billion years later the formation of planets. In our own solar system and on earth (formed about 4.5 billion years ago), the conditions have been favourable to the emergence of life."

#### b. The popes on the Big Bang - Pius XII

Although several popes in recent times spoke of the Big Bang. Pope Pius XII was most enthusiastic about it, primarily because it came up during his pontificate and he knew Lemaitre personally since the latter was a regular member as well as one-time President of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences.

In his address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on 22 Nov 1951, titled "The Proofs for the Existence of God in the Light of Modern natural Science," Pius XII enters directly into the Big Bang Theory: "It would seem that present-day science, with one sweeping step back across millions of centuries, has succeeded in bearing witness to that primordial *Fiat lux* (Let there be light) uttered at the moment when, along with matter, there burst forth from nothing a sea of light and radiation, while the particles of chemical elements split and formed into millions of galaxies." (no. 43). At the same time in no. 45 he cautions that these findings need further proof and so should not be given any absolute value. Coming to the question of the origin of matter, or the pre-Big Bang stage, he says: "In vain would we seek an answer in natural science which declares honestly that it finds itself face to face with an insoluble enigma. It is true that such a question would demand too much of natural science as such. But it is also certain that the human mind trained in philosophical meditation penetrates more deeply into this problem" (no. 43).

According to the Pope, the upshot of all these developments is that it has strengthened the evidence for the existence of God. "By means of exact and detailed research- into the macrocosm and the microcosm, it (modern science) has considerably broadened and deepened the empirical foundation on which this argument rests, and from which it concludes to the existence of an '*Ens a se*' (Being itself)," immutable by His very nature (no. 49). The Pope ends his address with the words: "Thus, with that concreteness which is characteristic of physical proofs, it has confirmed the contingency of the universe and also the well-founded deduction as to the epoch when the cosmos came forth from the hands of the Creator. Hence, creation took place in time. Therefore, there is a Creator. Therefore, God exists! (nos. 50-51)."

However, Lemaitre was far from sharing this enthusiasm of the Pope, and remained disapprovingly cautious. He summarized his response: "As far as I can see, such a theory remains entirely outside any metaphysical or religious question. It leaves the materialist free to deny any transcendental Being... For the believer, it removes any attempt at familiarity with God." It may be noted that this was in 1951 when the Big Bang was still waiting for solid confirming empirical evidence, and its arch-rival, the Steady-State Theory, was in its heyday with many heavy-weights in the world of science passionately endorsing it. However, since then the Big Bang has been receiving stronger, more refined and more accurate empirical support. Also, the aggressive antagonistic stand many scientists used to take towards religion, particularly with regard to any rapprochement between science and religion, has also been in some ways giving way to one of rather constructive dialogue. I wonder what the reaction of Lemaitre would be if he were to be with us today!

## E. Critique of the Theory of Evolution

### 1. Positive Support

As has already been mentioned, Evolution has become a scientific fact today. More and more empirical data confirms this as a viable, productive scientific theory. Not only developments in its own specific area, those in related fields like cytology, morphology, ecology, etc, also have been providing supporting evidence for this theory. Today Evolution is not limited to the biological world only; rather it has been extended to many other fields as well. Even a powerful world view has emerged, inspired and supported by this theory. It seems that the evolutionary mode of development is fast becoming the universal mode of development.

"It would seem that present-day science, with one sweeping step back across millions of centuries, has succeeded in bearing witness to that primordial *Fiat lux* (Let there be light) uttered at the moment when, along with matter, there burst forth from nothing a sea of light and radiation, while the particles of chemical elements split and formed into millions of galaxies."

Pope Pius XII

It may be noted that when it comes to the Church's position on Evolution, the focus has been not so much on evolution of the physical world as evolution of humans.

## 2. Some Problems with Evolution

### a. The Mechanism of Evolution Unclear

In the past it was thought that natural selection alone was sufficient to make evolution happen. However, later developments and the problems arising from them, clearly showed that natural selection alone could not account for the evolutionary development of material realities. Even staunch evolutionists like Jerry Coyne concede this much when he clarifies: -"Evolution is not a process involving chance alone, but a combination of random mutations and deterministic natural selection." A number of other problems also have been raised by scholars and critics.

### b. Lack of Sufficient Time for the Evolutionary Process

Another difficulty raised by scholars is about the length of time available to the evolutionary process to carry out its work. It is generally accepted that the earth was formed some 4.5 billion years ago, and life could have started some 3.5 billion years ago. There is serious question whether this time was sufficient enough to produce the myriads of items in the universe. Critics point out that a modern computer, programmed to arrive at the 26-letter alphabet by a random, chance process, could get correctly only 14 letters after a whopping 35 trillion attempts. If so, how to account for the formation of a simple single cell through conventional evolutionary process?

### c. Certain Internal Contradictions

Critics have pointed out a number of internal contradictions in the evolutionary mechanism, particularly with regard to the origin of new organs. For instance, the evolutionary explanation for a wingless being becoming a winged one gets into formidable difficulties. For one thing, the process has to start with a small wing. It is clear that a small wing in this context becomes a disadvantage and hence has negative survival value. If so, how can a non-winged being transform into a winged one?

True, critics of the Theory of Evolution have raised many such issues. However, it seems to me that, despite all these difficulties, the general idea of Evolution is a viable scientific theory that has come to stay. As it happened in the case of the heliocentric theory in the 16th century, problems will be there in the beginning; but they will be solved eventually as the theory develops. In the meantime, the diehard proponents of Evolution need to become more realistic and moderate in their claims.

## F. Theory of Evolution and the Catholic Church

It may be noted that when it comes to the Church's position on Evolution, the focus has been not so much on evolution of the physical world as evolution of humans.

### 1. The Church Documents

The Official Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994, revised in 1997), no. 283 says: "The question about the origins of the world and of man has been the object of many scientific studies which have splendidly enriched our knowledge of the age and dimensions of the cosmos, the development of life-forms and the appearance of man. These discoveries invite us to even greater admiration for the greatness of the Creator, prompting us to give him thanks for all his works and for the understanding and wisdom he gives to scholars and researchers...."

Again, the International Theological Commission referred to above has the following to say about Evolution: "While there is little consensus among scientists about how the origin of this first microscopic life is to be explained, there is general agreement among them that the first organism dwelt on this planet about 3.5-4

billion years ago. Since it has been demonstrated that all living organisms on earth are genetically related, it is virtually certain that all living organisms have descended from this first organism. Converging evidence from many studies in the physical and biological sciences furnishes mounting support for some theory of evolution to account for the development and diversification of life on earth, while controversy continues over the pace and mechanisms of evolution.”

## 2. Pope Pius XII

As in other scientific issues, in the case of Evolution also Pope Pius XII took a keen interest. His encyclical *Humani Generis* of 1950, the first major document by a recent pope on this theme, says: “The Church does not forbid that ... research and discussions, on the part of men experienced in both fields, take place with regard to the doctrine of evolution, in as far as it inquires into the origin of the human body as coming from pre-existent and living matter (no.36). Here the Pope looks at human evolution as far as the human body is concerned. “The traditional position that the human soul requires a special divine intervention is upheld. Also, the Pope does not approve of the theory of Polygenism —the view of evolutionists that human evolution involved a whole group of original humans. In fact, according to evolutionists like Jerry Coyne, given the observed genetic variation present in the human species, the minimum size of the population of humans within the last million years is about 12,000.

## 3. Pope John Paul II

Pope John Paul II went much further in expressing the Church’s positive and open-minded attitude towards Evolution, particularly in his address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on 22 October 1996. In this much commented-upon address, he first recalls the views of his predecessors, especially Pope Pius XII, and restates the two “methodological conditions” put by the Pope: 1) One should not take evolution “as if it were a certain and demonstrable doctrine”. (no.4). 2) The teaching of Revelation cannot be disregarded. Then he made the well-known statement: “Today, more than a half-century after the appearance of that encyclical, some new findings lead us toward the recognition of Evolution as more than an hypothesis. In fact it is remarkable that this theory has had progressively greater influence on the spirit of researchers, following a series of discoveries in different scholarly disciplines. The convergence in the results of these independent studies—which was neither planned nor sought—constitutes in itself a significant argument in favour of the theory (no. 4)”. The Pope then enters into a brief but erudite discussion on the nature of a scientific theory according to contemporary philosophy of science. He clarifies that a theory is “a meta-scientific elaboration, which is distinct from, but in harmony with, the results of observation. With the help of such a theory a group of data and independent facts can be related to one another and interpreted in one comprehensive explanation”. It seems to me that he accepts evolution as a scientific theory in this sense. This understanding of scientific theory opens up the possibility of several theories to account for a particular phenomenon. Reasoning along this line the Pope says that “it is more accurate to speak of the theories of evolution ...in part because of the diversity of explanations regarding the mechanism of evolution, and in part because of the diversity of philosophies involved” (no. 4). He also puts certain limits to how far Christian scientists and thinkers can go in this connection: “The theories of evolution which, because of the philosophies which inspire them, regard the spirit either as emerging from the forces of living matter, or as a simple epiphenomenon of that matter, are incompatible with the truth about man. They are therefore unable to serve as the basis for the dignity of the human person (no. 50).” The Pope certainly has taken the Church forward in its openness to the scientific theory of evolution. But he has also made sure that it does not disregard the voice of Revelation and Tradition.

Pope John Paul II certainly has taken the Church forward in its openness to the scientific theory of evolution. But he has also made sure that it does not disregard the voice of Revelation and Tradition.

The theory of evolution seeks to understand and describe biological developments. But in so doing it cannot explain where the 'project' of human persons comes from, nor their inner origin, nor their particular nature.

#### 4. Pope Benedict XVI

Although one can see a gradual growth in the positive attitude of the Church towards evolution from Pius XII to John Paul II, there seems to be a cooling of this enthusiasm when one comes to Pope Benedict XVI. In fact, some scholars seem to consider him opposing Evolution, at least in some ways. There is evidence to show that he does not endorse Young Earth Evolutionism or Intelligent Design. Also, as mentioned above, the 2004 statement of the International Theological Commission headed by him shows certain openness. Moreover, in 1995 Cardinal Ratzinger, commenting on Genesis, had leaned towards a complementary view regarding the scientific and theological dimensions of creation in his book *In the beginning: A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall*. He writes: "We cannot say: creation or evolution, inasmuch as these two things respond to two different realities. The story of the dust of the earth and the breath of God ... does not in fact explain how human persons come to be but rather what they are... The theory of evolution seeks to understand and describe biological developments. But in so doing it cannot explain where the 'project' of human persons comes from, nor their inner origin, nor their particular nature. To that extent we are faced here with two complementary—rather than mutually exclusive—realities." Again, in a conference organized in 2006 at Castel Gandolfo, Benedict pointed out that the issue involved in evolution, although they have important bearing on science, goes beyond the realm of science. In the same vein in a conference for clergy in 2007, the Pope found the heated debate that had been raging between creationists and evolutionists absurd because "on the one hand, there are so many scientific proofs in favour of evolution which appears to be a reality we can see and which enriches our knowledge of life and being as such. And how did everything start which ultimately led to man?" But on the other hand, these statements on different occasions show his keen interest in the great philosophical question: where does everything come from? The doctrine of Evolution does not answer every query, especially the subject as well as the serious reflection he has done on the theme.

#### 5. International Conference on Evolution

In March 2009 an international conference was convened in Rome under the auspices of the Pontifical Council for Culture on the theme Biological Evolution: Facts and Theories, to mark the 150th anniversary of the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. This seminar, attended by some of the most prominent scholars in the field, also came to the conclusion that there is no conflict between evolutionary theory and Catholic theology. In Conclusion we can say that, on the whole, the Catholic Church shows considerable openness and appreciation for evolution, although she has reservations on certain points.

### G. The Theistic Evolution Endorsed by the Catholic Church

The Church's official position seems to lean towards a form of Theistic Evolution—a view which takes the process of evolution seriously as something real that has been happening, mostly as science describes it, but which also assigns a necessary role for God in this process. The Church does not seem to be prepared to define that role the way Intelligent Design does. She also takes seriously the critical observation that the mechanism of evolution is still an unresolved issue, scientifically and religiously.

#### IV. The Significance of the Statements of Pope Francis

Our discussion above discloses that the Catholic Church has had a long-standing engagement with science, particularly on the theme of origin of the universe (the Big Bang Theory) and of the origin of life, particularly human life (Evolution). Pope Francis's

statements are to be understood in this context. They show that he not only remained faithful to the essential ideas of the Church's tradition, but also has gone beyond, keeping in mind the astounding developments taking place in our contemporary world, thereby preparing the stage for a higher level of engagement. Perhaps what strikes one most, is his overall positive attitude with regard to the language used, issues raised, and responses given. He is appreciative of the unprecedented achievements of contemporary science and is ready to take its findings seriously. At the same time, he does not hesitate to give a gentle reminder concerning the limit to which science can penetrate — the source of the Primeval Atom and the initial stuff of evolution remain beyond the ken of science. He is equally respectful and attentive to the voice of Revelation. The word 'risks' is well chosen since it cautions against a literal understanding of the Bible on matters scientific and exhorts the readers to understand and interpret the Bible in the light of the scriptural and scientific scholarship.

Another remarkable feature of his intervention is the dialogical spirit he brings into the whole discussion by carefully avoiding concepts and words that can give rise to unnecessary and unhelpful controversies. For instance, while talking of hominisation — the moment of transition from the mere animal to human level — instead of using the traditional idea of the 'soul,' he refers to 'freedom,' the most distinguishing characteristic of humans. His idea of the partnership between the Creator and humans, particularly scientists, is another remarkably positive move. Since scientists play an important role in actualizing and bringing to fullness the potentialities the Creator has invested in nature, they are collaborating in the great divine plan of the Creator. These and similar observations on the address of Pope Francis make it abundantly clear that his intervention has gone a long way in introducing a new spirit and a new perspective into the ongoing study and reflection on the Big Bang and Evolution in the context of the Christian religion. He has taken a valuable step forward in the most timely task of interfacing constructively and creatively modern science and contemporary Catholicism. Before dealing with Mission and inculturation I would like to add something to my reflections the Big Bang and Evolution.

The religion of the digging sticks cultivators of Yobai got me interested in Evolutionism. I worked through several works on the subject beginning with Stephen Hawking *A Brief History of Time*. As an aside, Stephen Hawking never went beyond the idea of the cultural god of the Israelites which led him to the statement: "So long as the universe had a beginning, we could suppose it had a creator. But if the universe is really completely self-contained, having no boundaries or edge, it would have neither beginning nor end: it would simply be. What place, then, for a creator?" My answer is: true, the Creator of the Israelites would be out of place. However, the Eternal Love that communicates herself through Creation is eternal without beginning of end... "having neither beginning nor end". For me, Hawking confirmed my faith in the Eternal Love revealing and expressing herself in the Big Bang and Evolution.

Lately I have read other books on the issue that led me to study the 'building blocks' of the world in which we live. I knew about the atoms, the existence of which had been proved by Einstein. Einstein in 1905 mathematically proved the existence of atoms. Now we know 92 kinds of atoms. The atoms, in spite of their name, are not the smallest elements. That led me to the quantum facts.

The latest book I bought was that of Nick Herbert.

What did I learn from Nick Herbert: *Quantum reality. Beyond the New Physics. An Excursion into Metaphysics...and the Meaning of Reality* (268 pgs)?

What follows is what I pick out from his publication that I regard as relevant.

"... one of the best-kept secret of Science is that physicists have lost their grip on reality"

Einstein in 1905 mathematically proved the existence of atoms. Now we know 92 kinds of atoms. The atoms, in spite of their name, are not the smallest elements. That led me to the quantum facts.

My relationship  
with the Eternal  
Love and with  
the incarnation  
of that Love in  
Jesus has been  
deepened.

"Quantum facts forced physicists to admit that the world almost certainly rests on some bizarre deep reality."

Everything in the world is pure quantum reality a physical union of particles and waves. The particle aspect of gravity is called 'graviton'. The particle aspect of light is called 'photon'. The particle aspect of the strong nuclear aspect is called 'gluon'.

No term exists for a generic quantum object and Nick Herbert proposed the term "quon", any entity that exists that exhibits both wave and particle aspect in the peculiar quantum manner.

"All solutions to the measurement problem that the physicists have so far come up with, either lead to bizarre realities and/or sanctify some aspects of the measurement act.

There is something philosophically fishy about a measurement-centred cosmos. How the world appears to us must certainly depend on how we measure it, but it's absurd to believe that how the world actually **is**, is determined by human observational capacities. Measurements are happening ...but they are the least of the happenings that go on in the world. It demeans physics, not to mention the world, to shackle physics with its own instrumental tools through any linguistic implication that measurement is *all* that happens in the world.

It is instructive to know what scientists measured and the theories they come up with; however, that's not *reality*. The reality, as far as we know today, is that everything in the world is quantum reality. That does not change our daily routine.

The application of the quantum physics, however, has revolutionised our daily life. We now live in the era of digitalization. TV sets and other gadgets needed to be changed with the new ones.

Nick Herbert ends his book with the following passage.

Religions assure us that we are all brothers and sisters, children of the same deity; biologists say that we are entwined with all life-forms on this planet: our fortunes rise and fall with theirs. Now, physicists have discovered that the very atoms of our bodies are woven out of a superluminal fabric. Not merely in physics are humans out of touch with reality; we ignore these connections at our peril. Albert Einstein, a seeker after reality all his life, had this to say concerning the illusion of separateness.

"A human being is part of the whole, called by us 'Universe': a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest - a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our persona desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely but the striving for such achievement is, in itself, a part of the liberation and foundation for inner security."

I am not a physicist, my field is phenomenology of religion, specialized on primal religions - gatherers, digging stick cultivators and shepherds, but that specialization led me to apply reason to deepen my faith and the study of the Big Bang and Evolution are steps in that direction. Lately in my journey of faith I added quantum physics. My relationship with the Eternal Love and with the incarnation of that Love in Jesus has been deepened. Maybe, my brand of faith might shock some believers but it might be more understandable to the younger generations who went through the new type of education which is not based on learning by heart but on asking questions, on challenging traditions.

# Mission and Inculturation

## Anthropology and Inculturation of Christianity in Papua New Guinea\*

This talk represents a small anthropological reflection on inculturation using the example of Papua New Guinea. First it is necessary to clarify the concepts. Under Anthropology I understand cultural anthropology, meaning the talk and reflection about the way a group lives, thinks and feels, how it organizes itself and relates to other groups, how it sees the world and reacts to it. Under inculturation I understand the taking roots of Christianity in a given culture, in a way that it becomes part of that culture and culturally expresses itself.

Regarding New Guinea I will limit myself to the Simbu Province in the Central Highlands. Sinasina is a region in Simbu, while Mingende and Yobai are localities in this Province. Papua New Guinea belongs to Melanesia - the dark islands - therefore sometimes will I call the people of Papua New Guinea Melanesians.

### Experiences

When I arrived 61 years ago I was sent to the Sinasina area to learn the language. I was lucky that exactly during that time a pig festival was taking place and I could take photos, slides and films of the feast. At the end it happened that by the great slaughter of pigs I had to play the role of the religious specialist. For somebody who had just arrived, it was quite a task.

What is a pig feast? The pig feast is a very important, if not the greatest and fullest expression of the Simbu culture. All the values of the culture appear and are reinforced. The feast with the preparation, takes over two years. The initiation of the young males took place during this time. The dances, take place during the last part of the cycles and continue for weeks. At the end the pigs are slaughtered and distributed. I witnessed a pig feast in which in just half an hour more than 700 pigs were slaughtered. This gives an idea of how big such a feast can be.

In order to better understand the pig kills that I witnessed one needs to know the history of the Simbu Region. The Simbu area was discovered only in 1934, and it was done by SVD missionaries who from the North Coast over the Bismarck range descended into the Simbu area. The Government came shortly after that from East to West into the Whagi valley into which the Simbu valley ends.

The leader of the expedition, Fr. Alphons Schäfer SVD, during his studies in St Gabriel, had been introduced into anthropology by Members of the Anthropos Institute. This influenced to a high degree Schäfer's attitude to the culture of the Simbus.

As Schäfer came into the Simbu, he did not begin by preaching but lived among the people and spent time learning their language and culture. He was able to memorize the names of all the people he was in contact with. In Anthropos he wrote an article on the initiation in his area. However, it was not only the initiation that he studied. As he writes in his diary, he invited traditional specialists to use their knowledge in his garden. He wanted hear what they said, and see what they did. Eventually he used local melodies for the liturgy which scandalized his bishop who forbad it. Schäfer was able to convince him and traditional music became the rule for the Simbu. He respected the traditional way of dressing and became normal also in the church. If one knows how Europeans acted on this field this is remarkable. What

I witnessed a pig feast in which in just half an hour more than 700 pigs were slaughtered. This gives an idea of how big such a feast can be.

The following Sunday I had the Mass after the people had already entered and filled the church. I was surprised at seeing faces of people outside that I never met before. We had the new rite of marriage and after Mass I asked my co-workers about the 'visitors'. They told me that the Lutheran congregation had heard about the beautiful rite of marriage and wanted to witness it in person.

surprised me was that he never said anything about polygamy. Today one might understand it, however, sixty years ago, this was unheard in the mission. The reason he gives for this pastoral policy was that he wanted to study it in the context of the whole culture. His teacher of anthropology had success with him.

Already the old Romans knew, that *verba movent, exempla trahunt*, words move, examples pull. The behaviour of the missionary is fundamental for the development of the culture, not what he says. This behaviour of Schäfer who was influenced by anthropological formation, helps understand much of what follows.

It was the end of the thirties that in the area where Fr. Schäfer was working - Mingende - the issue of the Pig Kill came up. It was the time in which such a feast was celebrated - it takes place between eight to ten years - however, people did not agree: some stated that as friends of Christianity they could not celebrate such a feast while others wanted to celebrate it. In the Simbu there were also Protestants. The Protestants had leaders coming from the coast that were against dances and traditional celebrations. Actually, it was not the missionaries who forbade it, but the Christian communities. This negative attitude and the reasons for it were known in the area and influenced Schäfer's community. Actually, it was again the issue of the Ancestors as in China, the killing of pigs was reinterpreted as sacrifices to the ancestors regarded as gods.

One needs to know that the founder of the PNG mission was a China missionary that prior to his departure had to sign a document in which not only himself but also the community had to be forbidden from talking about the issue of ancestors under penalty of suspension from ministry. The Vatican had condemned the so called Chinese Rights. This was the situation facing Schäfer.

Schäfer asked the community to discuss the issue by themselves and then to report back to him. After a couple of days they came with the decision: the pig festival had nothing to do with ancestors, however, there were elements that should be dropped like the Bolin Post and the Gerua Boards. The Bolin Post should be replaced by a Cross.

When I arrived 20 years later I saw that only the traditionalist and the pro Catholics were dancing while some of the Protestants were watching. Just before the pig kill there was a religious ceremony called *Blesim Kruse* blessing of the cross. In the first pig kill I witnessed in the SinaSina area, where I was introduced to the missionary life, the parish priest asked me to take over the *Blesim Kruse* ceremony. Quite an introduction. Also, the traditionalists followed the 'Catholic' version of the Festival. The Festivals described by the anthropologists are this Catholic version. Schäfer - Catholicism - had not destroyed but saved the greatest expression of the Simbu culture.

That in the process the ritual was changed is natural, the question is whether it was true Inculturation

Later I came into another area in the South Simbu, Yobai. The marriage ceremony, culturally a communal affair, hence, always celebrated as part of the Sunday liturgy, was rubbing me the wrong way. It was a Western imposition on the local culture. In a meeting with the catechists I stated that unless they did something I would refuse to bless marriages.

The following Sunday a marriage organized by my co-workers took place. In the big church, in the back there was a large double door in the middle and two single doors each side.

I entered the church as usual and greeted the people and then I was told to sit down, which I did. I noticed that they had closed the central main door and from the

side doors a slow procession advanced guided each by a big man - traditional clan leader - in full traditional regalia of birds of paradise and painting - followed by his clan. I recognized the two clans of the couple that intended to be married. Each of the spouses was in full traditional regalia as well. Quite a sight.

The two big men met in front of the altar and now the usual preparations for a marriage, now shortened, took place. The one leader said that he had a boy who needed to find a partner to which the other responded that he had a girl needing a partner. They agreed on the marriage and each called his child to come forward and the leaders told them that now they would be husband and wife.

At the point, the catechist in full regalia, read a biblical passage regarding marriage and then invited me to take over. Now the most difficult part was taking place. In PNG marriage was called *sek hands* shaking hands. Touching in any way by two people of different sex in public, married or not, was an extremely shameful action. Usually, during marriage in church, the girl in embarrassment, would turn her back, when giving her hand.

This case was different. I was called father in local language, hence, I was allowed to touch the hands of the two, my children. I would take the hands in my hand and ask for the marital vow.

The following Sunday I had the Mass after the people had already entered and filled the church. I was surprised at seeing faces of people outside that I never met before. We had the new rite of marriage and after Mass I asked my co-workers about the 'visitors'. They told me that the Lutheran congregation had heard about the beautiful rite of marriage and wanted to witness it in person.

Later catechists told me that old men were concerned: now the young people would flock to the church for marriage before the community had time to prepare them. Quite a compliment for our success. The question: was it real inculturation?

## Principles of Inculturation

Which are the principles we need to apply to answer this question? Inculturation deals with culture, and, though it is a theological concept we need to turn to anthropology to get an answer.

In PNG working with simple people who could hardly read and write, regarding culture they distinguished very clearly between what one can observe and what gives meaning to it. Often people told me, I do not know the roots of this phenomenon, or its meaning got lost, which means the phenomenon lost its relevance. A dance, a canoe can lose its roots and have become an empty shell. There is no life, no power, no effect.

Philosophically expressed, for these Melanesians one needs to distinguish between the visible, the phenomenon and the ideas that through it are expressed. To express this fact in PNG I use the picture of leaves and roots. The leaves are what we can see of a culture, the superficial, however, what gives life to them are the roots that one cannot see. One needs to dig. The leaves might fall, but that does not mean that the roots are dead. As a matter of fact, sometimes the leaves need to fall and new, fresh ones, will replace them as part of the process of life in nature. That the leaves change is a sign that the culture is alive. Simple bush Anthropology; very simple but very helpful.

From my experience of inculturation, I state that it should not deal so much with leaves but with roots. Given the fact that the leaves are the only things we see, the danger is that inculturation wastes its energies in secondary things - works with leaves,

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and forgets or even rejects the roots. As leaves without roots will wither and die, there is the real danger that inculturation becomes a museum that suffocated the true life. In Europe we are enthused by the beautiful colours and we don't see that it is colourful shirt not the new, healthy skin.

The question that we must answer is: did the two examples I mentioned deal with roots or with leaves, that we can collect but will soon desiccate?

## Application of our principles

Let us take first the pig kill. What we can see and I describe are the leaves. My *History of Yobai in Pictures* is a description of the beautiful, unique leaves. I have often written about the event.

The missionaries in the anthropological preparation had never heard about the pig kill. The Simbu had not been discovered yet, and in the coastal region this type of pig kill was not known. Out of respect for the culture the missionaries did not forbid it, but the communities, as we saw, were divided and that shows that there might have been hidden negative aspects. Schäfer left the decision to the people.

The people around Schäfer, strengthened by his positive attitude to their culture, decided as we mentioned to accept the feast with some minor changes. The main change was the replacement of the Bolin Post with a Cross, introducing a new element, at least for the Catholics in the ritual of the pig kill. Inculturation?

From the leaves we need to dig to find the roots giving meaning to the pig kill and the cross. The roots are revealed by the myth:

Long, long ago there were two brothers who lived in the sky with their sun-god known as 'AndeYagle'. One day 'AndeYagle' decided to send them to the earth so as to make them intimated with the earthly man. When the agreement was made, the two sons appeared like a flesh of lightning through the sky and descended to the earth, touching the tip of the Kama shrub on their way. The elder brother's name was Mondo and the younger was Gande. They came and comfortably settled at Wonkama, a small mountainous place located in the Upper Simbu. They lived there for a long time and eventually became famous. Everybody respected them and regarded them as their leaders.

One day Mondo invented 'arigl' – a head gear which was made of colourful boards with feathers and later everybody imitated this idea. Usually, he wore this head gear and went to the bush and stayed there till night. Then he came home and slept. His brother Gande was very suspicious of this behaviour and wondered what the elder was doing in the bush all day long. Gande decided that he would follow his brother one day to the bush and see what he was doing every day. So, when Mondo dressed and left the next day, Gande followed him secretly. As soon as Mondo arrived at the usual place, he removed the 'arigl' – the head gear from his head and placed it on a branch of a special tree called 'Ende Mondo'. Then he grew the pig's teeth and started digging the soil just as pigs do. He kept digging till night. His brother Gande saw him from his hiding place with tears running down his cheeks. At dusk Mondo took his arigl and put it on but it kept slipping off his head. So he said: 'Did Gande come and see me that you act like this?' After saying this he placed it on and this time it stood perfectly on his head. Then he went home and when he reached the house, he asked Gande: 'Did you follow me to the bush and see me?' 'Yes, I followed you and saw you.' Gande replied with tears. 'You must take me to the place where you saw me digging and kill me and bury me at the place where I hang my arigl and put a fence around the place. Today, the sun is rising from that mountain which is on the northeast so when it comes to the third mountain (approximately 3 months) 'kangi grass' will soon grow on

the burial place,. And when this happens you go and look', continued Mondo.

So Gande took Mondo to that place, killed him and buried him there and put a wooden fence around the place just as he was told. Then he went home and for three consecutive months, he waited for the 'kangi grass' to grow on the cemetery.

When the sun began to rise from the third mountain, Gande came to see the cemetery, just as his brother had promised and within the fence, he surprisingly saw several pigs of varied colours- black, white, red, brown, black-spotted and many other with stripes. He returned with his clansmen, and put ropes around their legs and took them home. Since then they have bred pigs and eaten them, and they have made arigl- the head gear and also other decorations in commemoration of their ancestor, Mondo, who gave them life through pigs.

Had Mondo not given his life, we would not have pigs.

(This version has been collected by one of my students Gabriel Kuman, after in one of my lectures at Fatima College, I had narrated the version provided by Rev. Bergmann working among the Kamaneku near Kundiawa. Kuman's version is from the upper Simbu, the style is a bit embellished as my students used to do when reporting stories. Sun God is a case in point. Yagle does not mean god but being. The main story is identical to that of the Kamaneku in the lower Simbu.)

To understand this myth one needs to know the culture of the Simbus. The pig is the greatest value of the Simbu. Nothing can replace it. The society of the Simbus is a web of relationships that is kept together by the exchange of pigs. Without pigs there is no marriage, or burial. The pigs are needed to keep the relationship with the whole 'family' that comprises the living and the dead, the flora and fauna, the bush and the rivers. There is a famous movie: *Man without pig* based on the true story of the first PHD of PNG. After his studies he wanted to marry but could not as he had no pigs.

That great value, as the myth states, came from the death of Mondo who died to bring about the pigs from his grave. Amazing similarity with the Christ Event: Jesus who had to die on the Cross, to give us the true life that was missing.

What the people around Schäfer suggested is amazing: they replaced the Bolin Post with the Cross. Christ is the One who gives us the true cosmic life. The Bolin post, the pigs are only symbols, leaves, while, Christ on the cross is the root of the new Simbu culture. A true case of Inculturation.

(The central post of the Bolim house is called 'Ende Mondo' according to Gabriel Kuman and his informants.)

This study is a warning for everybody and especially for us missionaries not to call primal people primitive in the negative sense. They may be much richer than those of us belonging to the modern societies that have lost their roots and put their identities on empty leaves: a dress, a car, riches, etc. but lost their roots, hence the many suicides also among the rich, especially the young.

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Dialogue means that one should not enter with a final answer, but is ready to be questioned, to be shocked, to be ready to learn even from those we regarded as primitive.

## What about marriage?

Certainly, it was a great success that attracted the people, and even the Lutherans who do not believe in a sacramental marriage were impressed. But was it a real inculturation?

For sure all the leaves of the traditional marriage were present but what about the roots?

After all the splendour of the leaves I asked the couple for an oral consent and the community was the invited witness answering that they had heard the oral promise of the couple.

However, the presence of all the relatives and of the spouses, was not the Melanesian way of saying yes? In Melanesian cultures actions have priority over words. Words are regarded as *maus wara nating*, empty spittle. Yes, I had said yes to the beautiful leaves, but declared their cultural way of expressing their consent as not acceptable for a Christian Sacrament of Marriage, not acceptable to God!

As a matter of fact, that ritual, in spite of its original attraction disappeared. It denied the basic Melanesian way of expression.

This raises a further question; in the past our theology made use of Western philosophy, the *ancilla theologiae*. However, if the Church takes seriously inculturation, it must use sociology and anthropology. Today's theology needs a new foundation.

\* This is a talk I gave in German to celebrate the 50 years of the Anthropos Institute. The original can be found in Verbum.

## Summing up

I hope that the two examples have shown both the role of anthropology and of the nature of inculturation. Not everything that shines is gold. Many beautiful leaves do not mean by any way inculturation. Leaves can camouflage the loss of the roots of a culture and hide the cultural colonialism.

True inculturation can and probably needs to become a cultural and therefore also theological problem. Outsiders who come into contact with it, might experience a cultural shock. They lose their philosophical, theological and cultural balance. After such an experience one cannot think in a Eurocentric way anymore.

Another important question is whether anybody who never experienced culture in a deep way, or analytically reflected on it, can really understand inculturation and judge it. Can Europe judge an alien culture? The Ricci case and the rites controversy are points in case.

I am of the opinion, that if the leadership in the Church is really concerned with inculturation, it should take more seriously social sciences and enter into dialogue with them. Dialogue means that one should not enter with a final answer, but is ready to be questioned, to be shocked, to be ready to learn even from those we regarded as primitive.

## Epilogue

In these five years since my diamond Jubilee, I have had time to reflect and deepen my ideas and answer some questions that bothered me. The role of Plato especially and Aristotle who influenced that theological genius Aquinas was a case in point.

The solemn lunch, after my ordination in St Gabriel, was opened with a reading from St Paul extolling virginity above marriage. I was more than upset, I was furious. To think that my virginity was superior to the marriage that gave life to me, that enabled me to stay at the altar, was preposterous. My vocation was not superior but only radically different from that of my parents but not superior. In those days the females declared saints were virgins, or, less often married women, who after the death of their husbands dedicated themselves to the service of the poor. Even the mother of Jesus was virgin, though, the argument of Matthew taken from the OT as proof of this assertion, is today recognized by biblical scholars as questionable. Fortunately for Matthew's integrity, he quoted that Hebrew text in Greek, where the connotation of "virgin" is present in the Greek word *parthenos*. However, if he had gone to the original Hebrew, he would have discovered that the connotation of virginity was not present in the original text of Isaiah. The Hebrew word for "virgin" is *betulah*. The word used in Isaiah is '*almah*', which means young woman. It does not mean virgin in any Hebrew text in the entire Bible in which it is used. These facts might not affect our faith, but they might influence the faith of the younger generations trained not in following the traditions but in questioning them.

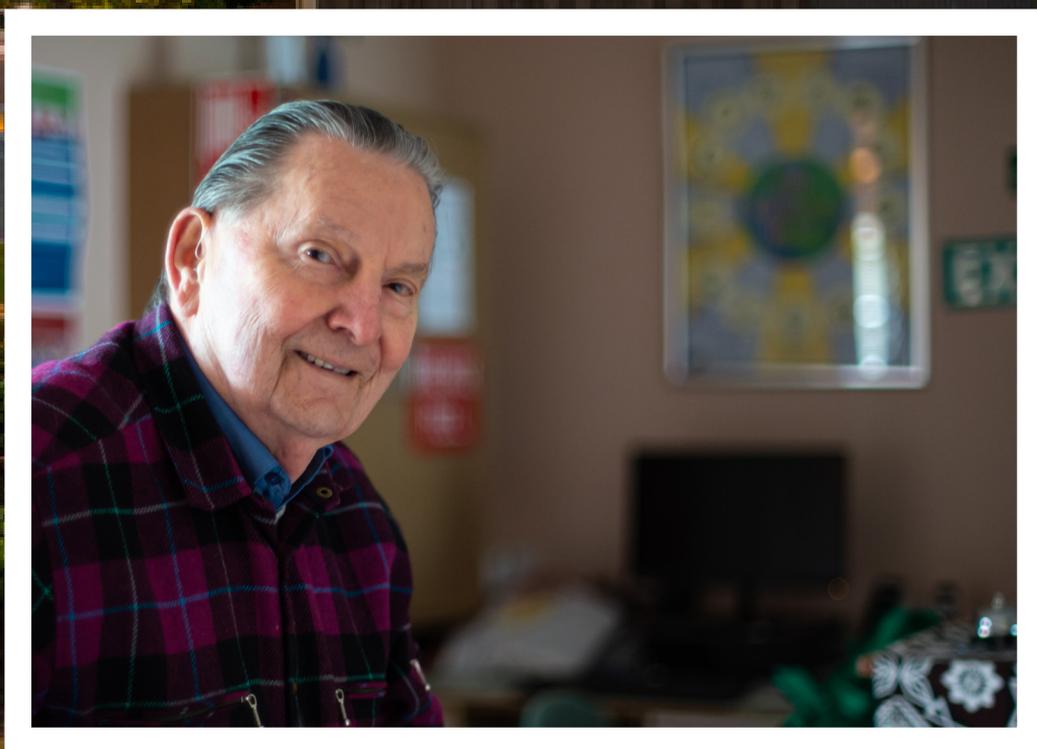
In the last 65 years after my ordination I have had time to reflect on the 'roots' of this issue of virginity in our Catholic tradition. Marsfield is the ideal place for these reflections, now, that as Emeritus of the YTU I do not have the pressure of preparing lectures.

Another issue that was very important for me as a missionary and scholar was Inculturation. My experience in the pastoral work in Preston and the various cultural celebrations in Victoria in general was a lot of folklore but little else. Maybe it is time for us, when preparing those beautiful cultural displays to encourage and help to dig and rediscover the roots of those displays, making these celebrations - in as far as possible - a rediscovery of the roots of their culture by the youth of migrants in our communities, especially for instance- but not only - in Boronia.

A theme, that I regard as essential for my - our faith - is the inculturation of our Catholic tradition in the Quantum physics. A new and urgent case of inculturation, continuing the *Aggiornamento* of Vatican II. We SVD' have that unique Anthropos tradition. However, as missionaries we must move on, into the era of Quantum physics.

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A journey implies leaving a place to move to unknown territory with the possibility of discovering new beautiful panoramas.

E.M



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