

Blood and life in a Melanesian context

by Philip Gibbs

If the Gospel is to become truly incarnate in Melanesia today, we will have to continue our search for an authentically local theology as the proper response to the Christian message. Adaptations or translations of Christian forms and concepts do not go far enough. For a truly Melanesian theology to emerge, we must begin at that level of meanings which bear the distinctive stamp of Melanesian life and thinking. Such a task is not easy. We too readily treat culture and cultural forms as factors extrinsic to the Gospel; as historical contingencies within which the Gospel message finds its context; as factors which can be separated from any appearance of the Gospel in a situation. The Gospel does not present itself as a kernel of truth easily separated from a contextual husk; rather, the notion of the incarnation tells us that they are always given together and have to be read and understood in that way.

i.

If, ultimately, culture is essential to the manifestation of and understanding of the Gospel, what does this mean for the development of an authentically local theology? I suggest that rather than treating culture and cultural influence as a factor to be eliminated, we should accept it as a fact and use it to our advantage. One must begin with culture and the meanings within it which provide the basis for its unique configuration; i.e., those meanings embodying the central values which bind the society together. So, to establish a "rooted" Melanesian theology, we begin by trying to locate central values within the society. These values, like messages repeated in a variety of ways, find expression in patterns of behaviour and in the special symbols of the culture. It is especially in the patterns of behaviour, where they converge upon the dominant symbols of a culture, that we find the *locus* for the creation of new meanings. It is at this point that the Gospel can enter a culture in such a way as to express

itself in an authentically local fashion, by respecting current meanings within the culture, by extending them and transforming them, and by altering them within the range of the polysemy of the symbols.¹

With these beginnings of an authentically local response within a culture, one begins the dialogue essential for a theology: the dialogue between Gospel, Church and culture - the living force of the Gospel, incarnated in the values of a culture, and extended and transformed through dialogue with the heritage of the Church.

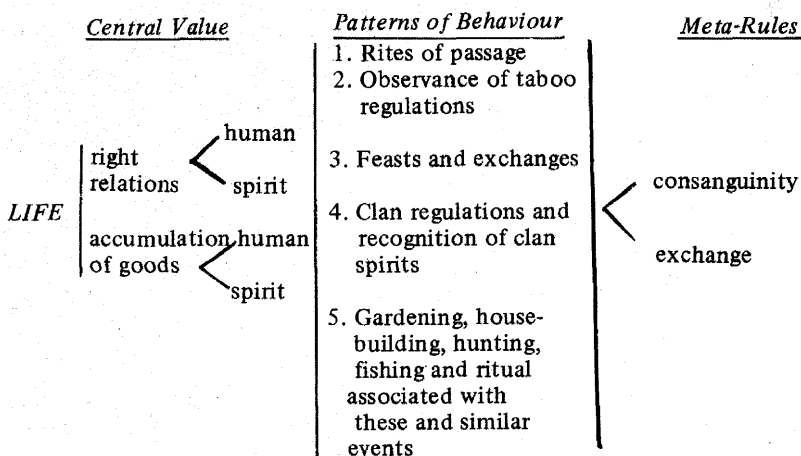
Now the outcome of the dialogue may be different from the theological expression commonly found in the West today. Theological form reflects cultural form, and the systematic, analytic theology of the West reflects in a significant degree a highly differentiated and technologically based culture. But may not Melanesian culture perhaps find its own cultural expression in a theological style more akin to the Western wisdom tradition of Augustine and the patristic period? Such a theology makes rich use of symbol, allegory and analogy, greatly respects oral traditions and their forms, and aims principally to integrate all parts of the cosmos within religious experience.²

In what follows I will outline one example of how one can work towards a Melanesian local theology based on the foregoing principles. I hope such an exercise can be valuable not only in Melanesia but for Christians around the globe.³

ii.

I propose that the continuation, protection, sustenance and celebration of "life" is a central value in Melanesian culture. Much time, energy and attention is directed to the pursuance of this value.⁴ It can be communicated in the message: "Maintain life through right relations and the accumulation of goods."

The diagram below illustrates five principal ways in which the central message unfolds in patterns of behaviour.



One may then proceed to look for the symbols and the way they are employed above: in activities, gestures, relationships, events, objects and special units.⁵ The investigation of a variety of symbols would be the subject of a work much more lengthy than a paper such as this. So I have selected one symbol to work with - that of "blood." I have chosen it from many other possibilities ("water," "food," "mother/father," for instance) because blood and its meanings recur again and again in the five areas of behaviour given above.

1. Blood may be important in rites of passages, especially initiation rites and death ceremonies.
2. Blood is central in taboo regulations, especially menstrual blood, but also the rules of consanguinity help define avoidance patterns.
3. The shedding and sprinkling of blood is central in offerings made to spirits in religious ritual. Consanguinity or lack of it (affinity) is an important consideration in exchange of wealth.
4. Blood ties with the living and dead help define mutual obligation and interdependence within the clan.
5. The same applies to the daily activities in the social, economic, political and religious balance of life.

From these illustrations it can be seen that there are two principal sets of meaning for blood in Melanesian life: blood as body substance, and blood as a bond linking units and members within society. The two meanings are closely related and both lead to the central value of life.

iii.

In order to give a concrete illustration and to simplify the presentation, I will restrict my data to ethnographic material from the Enga of the Western Highlands as reported by M. Meggitt and B. Gray, and from the Daribi of Karamui, on the "edge" of the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, as reported by R. Wagner.⁶ These authors show how blood may have meanings, both as a principle of group identity in consanguinity and exchange, and as a body substance - life-giving yet dangerous.

There is a belief among the Enga that conception occurs with the clotting or joining together of mother's blood and semen. Father's semen is believed to make the "white" parts of the child's body such as bones, teeth and fat, and mother's blood is the source of the flesh and blood of the child. The child's spirit comes from the sun via the placenta. The (agnatic) relation of the father to the child through the transmission of paternal substance is easily observable in the society, since these are the connections through which residence and recruitment to the local group are normally worked out in this predominantly patrilineal, patrilocal society. Connections through maternal blood are less obvious but are equally important, for in fact the child is closely related to the mother's group consanguinally. This is why, "throughout life, from the first hair cutting to the final funerary payment, and for every insult, injury or illness to that maternally derived flesh, each person's father's group (or husband's group for a married woman) must pay compensation to the maternal kin to whom the flesh must always belong."⁷

R. Wagner sees this connection through mother's blood as the central idiom for the inter-relation of individuals and groups in Daribi society. From the workings of native symbolic categories he abstracts two opposing principles within the society: consanguinity and exchange.

Consanguinity is the principle by which people are related to each other through substance. Exchange is the principle by which units are defined, opposing the operation of the principle of consanguinity. I will explain how these two symbolic principles operate within the society.

A child shares the blood of its mother with its mother's brother, come from the same mother. Thus they share a common maternal substance. So mother's brother has a strong claim to the child. But a father, by virtue of the "consanguinity" of his own paternal substance (symbolised by semen), has rights (and in a patrilineal society, first option) to his child, but only if he pays consistently, or in Wagner's term, "recruits" the child to his clan. These recruitment payments do not "relate" the child to the father, but serve to cancel the claims made through the maternal blood-bond by the mother's brother. The father makes the recruitment payments and so retains both the child and the obligation to make further payments. If he does not, he loses the child, although, of course, he is still related to the child as father through his own paternal substance. The payments oppose the tie of mother's blood, and the tie of paternal substance is "redeemed."

Through the reciprocity in exchange there is a substitution of wealth for living persons where there is a claim to these persons through blood ties. This happens with the birth of a child as I have illustrated above, but it also happens in the contracting of a marriage. Marriage is the creation of consanguineal ties, but only in the next generation. Therefore, exchanges must be made to the blood relatives of the wife. The wife giver's claims to the woman made by virtue of consanguinity are satisfied by the substitution of wealth for the individual herself and for her fertility, which is lost to her own group. Thus, exchange payments help define clan boundaries by the cancelling of the relationship claims on its members by other clans. The criterion of clan membership becomes the *sharing* of wealth and resources as opposed to *exchanging* wealth and resources. This is symbolised primarily in the sharing and giving of meat. Members of a clan "eat together," while those of other clans "give meat" or "are given meat" (A man cannot marry the sister or daughter of one with whom he shares meat).⁸ Wagner comments on the symbolism described:

Daribi do not recognise general principles such as consanguinity or exchange, for the exigencies of their social existence do not require them to draw distinctions on that level; yet, they do recognise and differentiate such principles as connection through maternal substance, connection through paternal substance, sharing of meat, etc. . . . One exchanges wealth with relatives through maternal substance . . . and shares wealth with relatives through paternal substance. Consanguinity is a concept which is implicit in the Daribi symbolic world.

The system of sharing and exchange is intimately connected to the meaning of the blood-bond in Enga and Daribi society. However, meanings of blood, likewise associated with body substance, are also to be found in the expression of male-female relations. Scholars have puzzled over the source of the Western Highlands syndrome in which the attitudes of men reflect unease and anxiety. There is a strongly held belief that contact with women weakens male strength, and from early boyhood the Enga are taught to avoid female company and to purify themselves after female contact. Above all, they fear menstrual blood.

The common explanation has been in terms of "pollution" fears and the avoidance of "contamination." Meggitt suggests that the relationships are akin to a conflict of enemies in which the man sees himself as endangered by his sexual partner, the member of an enemy clan ("we marry the people we fight"¹⁰). Mary Douglas,¹¹ basing her argument on Meggitt's work, believes Enga women have extremely marginal roles in the structural sense. Recently, Brenda Gray has proposed an alternative, suggesting that menstrual taboos are not simply related to the fact that in-marrying women are the sisters of potential enemies, but rather have to be understood as part of an Enga man and woman's understanding of the whole cycles of conception, birth, growth, maturation, ageing and death. Although actual contact with menstrual blood may be dangerous to men, it is not simply polluting. Even a woman can be endangered by it if it is not treated properly. In Enga society, menstrual blood is conserved because it is equated with life, growth and effectiveness. It is a potent substance which is dangerous, yet in the right ritual circumstances will promote growth and well-being. For instance, by placing moss containing her menstrual blood in the safety of a sheltered area of the forked branches of a *taro* tree, a woman ensures the wealth and strength of her husband.

Both death and growth are associated with maleness and femaleness, characterised as strength and weakness. Although women give birth to and suckle children, they also die younger, age more rapidly and begin to lose weight from the birth of their first child. They are usually smaller and weaker than men. Almost everything in Enga society is categorised as being either male or female. Feminine things are small, weak, soft, passive, domesticated. Male things are large, strong, aggressive, hard, wild. Women die easily whereas men are invincible fighters.¹² Generally, strong, healthy, aggressive things are said to be "good" (*aepe*), while weak, passive things are "bad" (*koe*, without goodness). However, the meaning of *koe* can be extended to things which are dangerous to life. Both warriors and menstruating women are potent and dangerous and hence *koe*. Ancestral ghosts, demons and warriors are *koe* because they are always "no good." Woman's blood is *koe*, not because it is polluting but because it is the very stuff of life, and so also potent and dangerous.¹³

The dialectic of the potency of blood, especially feminine blood, as a principle of vitality coupled with the predominant feminine characteristic of weakness, is why both death and growth are said to have come originally from woman (cf. Genesis). A common theme running through western Enga myths is that a mythical woman gave men strength and made them grow, and yet men murdered her for doing this. Women "make" men, and yet they are also intimately associated with ageing and death. Western Enga bachelor initiation rites re-enact this paradox. The

stated aims of the rites are to make the boys into men, yet there is the paradox of the boys being brought into ritual contact with woman's blood or a female cult object which will promote their growth. Boys have been covered with mother's blood at birth and are sustained by mother's milk for the first three years of life. How can they be male? "Hence the underlying logic of rites . . . which symbolically "kill" the (feminine) bodies of boys so that they may begin a new existence as male beings."¹⁴

In the discussion above I have set out the methodological and cultural basis for me to work towards a Melanesian local theology. Starting with the culture, I settled on "life" as a central value, and looked for ways that it is expressed in behaviour and symbolic expression. I chose just one symbol - that of blood, and explored various meanings that it can have in Enga and Daribi society. Blood may be a principle of group identity in consanguinity and exchange. It may also be meaningful as a body substance, life-giving yet dangerous, with wide-ranging effects on male-female relations. It is now possible to look for parallels in the "local theologies" of the larger Christian heritage in order to extend the meanings of the symbol of blood and to begin actually to develop a local Melanesian Christian theology.

iv.

The biblical writings have always been key in our Christian tradition. Until the time of Abelard, Christian theology was known as *Sacra Pagina*,¹⁵ and theology most commonly took the form of a commentary on one part of a text. A commentary is based on the presumption that the parts of a text are equally inspired and so can take on independent existence from the whole and be expanded into new semantic space. I think that a form of theology such as a commentary is a very useful method for the sort of "wisdom" theology which I want to develop. So I will explore some meanings of blood in the Fourth Gospel, in Melanesian terms; i.e., I will suggest areas for a commentary on parts of John, using insights gained in the discussion on the meanings of blood in the Daribi and Enga societies. The Fourth Gospel has been called the "Gospel of Life,"¹⁶ so I think it is appropriate to choose this work to expand our theology on the central value of life in Melanesian cultures. Furthermore, the Fourth Gospel lends itself to the sort of approach I have proposed, for the author makes great use of symbolic meanings. Based on the Wisdom tradition in the Old Testament, the Fourth Gospel reveals Christ in symbols of "bread," "light," "truth," "water," etc., rather than in titles as in the Synoptic Gospels. Such use of symbols can give the Gospel wide appeal, as R. Kysar notes:

*. . . the evangelist does not want to present his message exclusively in the thought modes and expressions of one heritage alone, but indeed to demonstrate dramatically the encompassing appeal of the Christian kerygma.*¹⁷

I will centre my discussion on the three occasions when the term blood (*haima*) is used in the Fourth Gospel: 1:13, 6:53-56, 19:34.¹⁸

In Chapter I, we read that "he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood (*Haimaton*) nor of the will of man, but of

God." Blood here is in the plural indicating the union of life-bearing substance of *both* parents to form the child. The "children of God," the ones who believe in his name, are not to be born in a natural human way (as Nicodemus was to discover), but *ek Theo* (of God).

The new life of those to be born again is analogous to but different from natural human life. Where the child is born of blood (and semen) and is nourished and grows in a natural sense, the child of God is born of "water" and "spirit" (3:5) and nourished by faith (2:23, 3:18). Jesus illustrates this analogy in his own life. He has *psuche* (natural life, soul), which he gives on the cross (10:11, 15, 17), but his own *zoe* (life of activity) is not interrupted by death. It is he, the *zoe* (11:25, 14:6), who has come to give life to the world (6:33, 10:10). Those who believe in him, though they die they will live, for they have already passed from death to life.

But what does it mean to be born of water and spirit? An analogy can be drawn from the effects of being born of blood and semen. Blood and semen form the basis of relationships, of "belonging," of being united in a special way to an individual, but also as a member of a group of maternal or paternal kin. Blood and semen are also the source of rights, bonds, and obligations, which endure through life and beyond. If the *zoe aionias* resulting from being born of water and spirit is different from yet similar to natural life, then it is fair to ask what relationships this institutes and what rights and obligations it establishes.

Baptism is the sign of one who believes and who is initiated into knowing God and Jesus whom he has sent (17:3). Knowing in this biblical sense not merely the conclusion of an intellectual process, but the fruit of an experience, a personal contact (10:14-15). Through belief in Jesus we are thus related to him in faith so that he becomes our brother, and we become children of God through faith in him. We who share this same faith are brothers and sisters and so must incur the same bond, obligations and rights which go with this relationship.¹⁹ Just as those are bound through consanguinity are not "given," but "share" meat, so we who are baptised by water and the spirit share the one faith and eat (*eucharist*) together. We share the right of mutual obligation expressed in *agape*.

This is the essence of *charis* (grace), which is opposed to law in the New Testament. John uses *charis* only twice, and both times they help bring out the meaning of 1:13. The Word comes "full of grace and truth" (1:14, 17) and, thus, grace "answering to grace" (1:16); we receive grace from his fullness.²⁰ Grace is in essence a free gift. It has been debated whether there is ever a free gift in Melanesian society.²¹ The closest to that is the sharing which occurs within the bonds of consanguinity. It is presumed that they will return the favour, though it is not specified how. Gift-giving with those not related is much more formal. Exchange must be reciprocated, usually in kind. We might even call this the "law" of reciprocity. But is not this law of reciprocity opposed to the spirit of the free giving of God's grace? It is in this grace event, freely given, that the fullness of the incarnate Word is offered, and God establishes a new relationship. I think we have to realise that the acceptance of this relationship takes mankind out of the sphere of the law of reciprocity and exchange, and into the sphere of life-giving power of grace in relationship, where sin and death are overcome. Though God's gift is uncalled for, there is some obligation upon

people to respond, not out of a sense of the law of exchange, but out of the offer of *relatedness*.

This message, a central one to Christianity, is not new, but I think the Melanesian concept of relationship through substance adds something to the understanding of what it means to be Christian. To live as a Christian is not to follow a "law" (of love), or to follow the example set by Jesus, or a set of prescriptions laid out by the Church. Rather, to live as a Christian is to live out what it means to be related to God as father, as adopted sons and daughters, and to one another as brother and sister. It is this relationship which obliges us to share our very selves, because in the life of the spirit we are of the same substance.

This meaning is brought out even more clearly in the reference to Jesus' blood in 19:34, which reads: "But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water." Properly to understand this passage, one must understand the Jewish belief that a person is evenly balanced; half water and half blood.²² Thus, Jesus gives the whole of himself on the cross, a theological meaning which is supported by the next sentence: "The testimony is true . . . that you also may believe" (19:35). But the blood is not only the blood of human substance. It is the means by which the spirit (water) is given. Thus, the blood poured out in death is, in effect, the source of life for the redeemed. The symbol of water representing the spirit appears in several texts of John. The relation of water and spirit in baptism has already been alluded to. Also, in the "first great statement," Jesus promises living water: "If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink . . . As scripture says: from his breast shall flow fountains of living water. Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive" (7:37-39).

The Melanesian sense of relation through consanguinity and the opposing principle of exchange help us to come to a meaningful understanding of the life-giving act of Jesus' death. An Enga father must give payments to those who share the maternal substance of the child, so as to recruit the child and in effect "redeem" the child from the maternal clan. Exchanges of wealth substitute for the living person. It is the Christian paradox that through his death Jesus redeemed us from death. In our human-ness, death has a claim upon us. This is not only death in a physical sense, but a death in the sense of not "knowing" God. The view of Jesus' death as satisfaction for "sin" has fallen out of favour of late. It is rightfully pointed out that this relies heavily upon concepts of Roman and Germanic Law, which attempted to set up rights, duties and privileges in the face of the chaos of the Dark Ages.²³ But perhaps Melanesian concepts can help us to understand this in a new way. If we consider Jesus' death, not so much as satisfaction or atonement for sin, but really an "at-one-ment", where the claims of death are cancelled and we are recruited to the clan of life in the Father, then it makes more sense. Just as through the principle of reciprocity there is a substitution of wealth for the living person, so Jesus gave the wealth of his life and died, and the rights to our "maternal" clan have been cancelled. We have been paid for and in one sense become like "brides of Christ"! The payment of bridewealth establishes relationships which open further roads for future exchanges (In Enga society, the *moka* and *Te*.) So too, continuing the analogy, our new Christ-

ian life opens further possibilities and motivates us to go and give the wealth of ourselves and our lives in the establishment of "exchange partners" in Christ.

The author of the Fourth Gospel does not deal with the concept of justification as does Paul, but it is interesting to see how the Pauline concept of justification is appropriate here. Admittedly there is the initial exchange of Christ paid for by the wealth of his own life. This having been accomplished, it is not by the law (of exchange obligation) that we are made righteous, but through the acceptance of our relationship to Christ that we are justified.

It is the parable of the true vine (15:1-10) in John which illustrates well the effects of the redemption. The branches which remain on the vine live and bear fruit. The ones that do not bear fruit are cut off; they die and are burnt. These dead branches are the ones whose relationship with the vine has ceased. Through their own behaviour, those who are cut from the vine cancel their claims to relationship with Christ and thus lose the right to call him brother/husband. Because they do not believe, they put themselves outside the boundaries of the Christian clan and cannot "eat together" with them.

The third reference to blood in 6:53-56 helps explain further Christian meanings of life and death in the symbol of blood: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life . . . He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him . . . This is the bread which came down from heaven . . . he who eats this bread will live forever."

The Daribi might not be put off by the literal meaning of these words, but the Enga, who abhor cannibalism, would be as shocked as some of the Jews were. Just as Nicodemus thought of rebirth in a purely physical sense and just as the woman at the well thought at first only of natural water, so now some of the Jews took this reference to Christ's flesh and blood literally. I think the Enga would be quick to come to a symbolic understanding of what is meant. Here blood represents both life and death in a way analogous to the paradoxical life/death, strength/weakness, good/bad, meanings of blood which I have described in Enga society. In one sense blood represents Jesus' death, blood as life violently taken from him (dangerous - like woman's blood outside of a ritual context). But in a special way the celebration of the Eucharist unites Christians with Christ, who gave up his life in death so that they may have life. In this special (ritual) setting, the blood represents goodness, growth, strength (= life). E. J. Kilmartin puts it well in his commentary on I Corinthians 11:25:24

This cup (the sharing of this cup) is (has the meaning of sharing in) the new covenant (definitive bond of union between God and man involving commitment of man to God's will) in my blood (brought to completion by the death of the Servant). . . The emphasis on the gift of blood in Mark's formula (Mk 14:29) results from the use of the Mosaic covenant rite to portray the meaning of Jesus' death. His blood is the "blood of the covenant" (Ex 24:8) . . . The relation of Jesus

to the disciples depends ultimately on their sharing in his covenant.

The mythical woman of the Western Enga gave men strength, but they killed her for this. However, she still causes them to grow through ritual contact with her blood in the bachelor rituals. Jesus gave his blood that we might grow, and he was murdered also. He continues to give strength and life through ritual contact, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist where those who formerly were "given meat" now share at the Father's table.

In everyday living, strength and life are visible in health, wealth, right relations and general well-being. The life which Jesus came to bring is less visible; in fact, we are told, "the wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or whither it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit" (3:7-8). The Enga may ask, What good is such a life if you cannot see it or touch it or know where it is from or goes to (i.e., you cannot understand or control it)? But you can feel it and hear the sound of it so you listen, and you know it is there. So too with the life which is communicated consanguinally through generations from parents to children, sharing in the same "womb blood" which extends back from an original ancestress. One cannot see it, but every Enga can feel it, knows that it is present and realises that it is vitally important.

v.

In the section above, I have sought out some of the meanings, in Melanesian terms, which can be found in the passages where the term for "blood" is used in the Fourth Gospel. The result is a fairly involved commentary, not the sort of material which one would present in a Sunday sermon in Karamui or the Western Highlands. A further step is necessary for it to be of immediate pastoral value,²⁵ for I must enquire how these people communicate sacred knowledge. There are two principal ways: myth and song. Could not the ideas above be expressed in such forms? "Hymn" singing is an integral part of liturgical expression, but it is not always thought of as "theology." However, one has only to look at the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament or at such work as the Semitic expression of Christianity of Ephrem the Syrian (306-373),²⁶ which is entirely in rhythmical prose, to see that this is not a novel suggestion. But it is important to see how people make use of these forms of communication.

P. Brennan has made a study of the nature and use of symbolism (*kongali*) in Enga songs.²⁷ He has found that the use of symbols in the songs is regarded as more forceful than everyday speech, and carries with it an element of discovery. Symbols tend to maximise the message. "Thus, for the Engas, *kongali* represent a kind of 'sacred' speech, and aesthetically preferred vocabulary level."²⁸

My Bible commentary has dealt with some meanings of one symbol. Would it not be possible to search out the meanings of other symbols ("water," for instance) and relate them to the scriptural tradition so that they could be used effectively as local theology through *kongali* in the form of Enga singing? As an outsider I could not suggest the symbols to be used in such singing, but I can offer suggestions of theological themes and

meanings which a catechist or a person skilled in composing might find suitable to put into song.

The following are a few suggested ideas on the theme of Jesus as agent and revealer of the Father (Enga songs usually consist of two brief, related statements)

By my mother's blood I came to be. By water and the Spirit I was born again.

Jesus has given payment for us. We go to his Father's line (clan).

Jesus has given payment for us. We share food which his Father gives us.

God is our Father. We are all one blood.

God gives himself to us. I feel I want to give myself in return.

I am afraid of death. The blood of Jesus gives me strength.

This is just one suggestion of a pastoral application for a local theology arising out of and based upon people's activities and their symbolic expression. I think that further development along similar lines would be valuable not only for the Melanesian Church but also for the Church in a global perspective.

Notes

- 1 Further ideas along the lines of symbol and semiotics may be drawn from writers such as Victor Turner, "The Forest of Symbols," Ithica, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967; Mary Douglas, "Natural Symbols", New York: Random House, 1970; Edmund Leach, "Culture and Communication", London: Cambridge University Press, 1976; Clifford Geertz, "The Interpretation of Cultures", New York: Basic Books, 1973; Claude Levi-Strauss, "Structural Anthropology", New York: Basic Books, 1963.
- 2 In this first section especially I wish to acknowledge the help and inspiration of others in the Melanesian Theology Work-group at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, including R. Schreiter, W. Flannery, F. Misso and A. Foley. My thanks also to D. Senior, E. LaVerdiere and P. Brennan for their helpful comments.
- 3 Hopefully one can arrive at a creative tension between particularity and universality. Many of the meanings that I will be presenting come out of a focus on two areas in Papua New Guinea. Yet I hope to show that the theological implications are bigger than any particular culture and its demands. A useful paradigm is the universality of God manifesting itself in the particularity of Jesus Christ.
- 4 This claim is supported by several other writers. H. Janssen (in "Religion and Secularisation", Catalyst vol. 2, no. 2, 1972, p.54, describes culture as a "set of behaviour patterns on which on which people more or less rely in their struggle for fuller life." J. Snyder ("Best of Two Worlds," Catalyst vol. 1, no. 2, 1971, regards the deeper layer of religion as the quest for meaning and security in life. R. Lacey ("The Enga World View," Catalyst vol. 3, no. 2, 1973), p.42, says that life among the Enga is "a continual, changing and dynamic pattern of relationships between persons, some men, some spirits: all living. The good life is lived by maintaining appropriate relationships with the proper people.
- 5 Victor Turner's "Symbols in Ndembu Ritual" (The Forest of Symbols) is especially helpful as an illustration of this process.
- 6 M. J. Meggitt, "Male-Female Relationships in the Highlands of Australian New Guinea," American Anthropologist, vol. 66, no. 4, 1964, Part 2, pp. 204-224. "The Lineage System of the Mae Enga of New Guinea," Edinburgh: Oliver and

- Boyd, 1965a. "The Mae Enga of the Western Highlands," in "Gods, Ghosts and Men in Melanesia", P. Lawrence and M. Meggitt, eds. London: Oxford University Press, 1965b, pp. 105-131. B. Gray, "The Logic of Yandapu Enga Puberty Rites and the Separation of the Sexes", Dissertation, University of Sydney, 1973. R. Wagner, "The Curse of Souw", Chicago, 1967.
- 7 B. Gray, p. 32.
- 8 The opposition can be shown as follows:
- | | | |
|----------------------------|-----|-------------------------|
| sibling bond | vs. | brideprice |
| (sharing, interdependence) | | (exchange, reciprocity) |
- 9 R. Wagner, p. 223.
- 10 M. Meggitt 1964, p. 218.
- 11 M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966.
- 12 See Meggitt, 1964, p. 219, for a schema of male-female symbolic classifications among the Enga.
- 13 For a description of similarly ambivalent attitudes to blood and its relation to a preference for red colours, see A. and M. Strathern, "Self Decoration in Mount Hagen", London: Gerald Duckworth, 1971, Chapter 7.
- 14 B. Gray, p. 230.
- 15 Y. Congar, "A History of Theology," New York, p. 51.
- 16 F. V. Filson, "The Gospel of Life" in "Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation," Klassen and Snyder, eds, London: SCM Press, 1962.
- 17 R. Kysar, "The Fourth Evangelist and His Gospel", Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 1975, p. 163.
- 18 All biblical references will be to the Fourth Gospel unless indicated otherwise.
- 19 The full meaning and implications of the "go'el" (blood-bond) relationship in the Old Testament would be a fruitful avenue for study on this point.
- 20 Jesus' law of grace, "Grace answering to grace," bears an interesting comparison with the "eye for an eye, and tooth for a tooth" (Matt 5:38) of the Mosaic Law.
- 21 The debate centres around the classic, "L'Essai sur le Don" (The Gift), 1924, by M. Mauss.
- 22 See R. Brown, "The Gospel of John", Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966, p. 944.
- 23 For instance, Anselm's "Cur Deus Homo". See Hans Kessler, "Die Theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu", Duesseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1970, pp. 117-137. Ultimately it comes down to the question, "How do you establish 'right relations' with God?"
- 24 E. J. Kilmartin, "Sacrificium Laudis: Content and Function of Early Eucharistic Prayers," Theological Studies, vol. 35, no. 2, 1974, 270-271.
- 25 A large part of the task is to translate verbal symbols (abstract words and phrases) into physical and social symbols.
- 26 Danielou, Couratin, and Kent, eds., "The Pelican Guide to Modern Theology", vol. 2, New York: Pelican Books, 1969, p. 102.
- 27 P. Brennan, "Enga Referential Symbolism: Verbal and Visual," in "Exploring Enga Culture: Studies in Missionary Anthropology", P. Brennan, ed., Wapenamanda: Kristen Press, 1970.
- 28 P. Brennan, p. 27. An example he gives is the following: "Kone atapa neapeamo uingi ongo yaka piona kaina ongonya kalyamo olaiyole kalyamo." Literal translation: "The Europeans having not come I fought stubbornly. Now they stand in the centre of the Jew's harp." The song expresses the control provided by the Europeans. Prior to their arrival according to this song, a man could not be controlled. Now with the arrival of the government and missions he is forced to change his pattern of living. The Europeans stand between him and his enemies; they constitute the tongue in the middle of the Jew's harp.