

# THE PLACE OF MISSION IN OCEANIA TODAY

*Philip Gibbs\**

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## 1. Introduction

Geographically Oceania spans almost one-third of the earth's surface. At the Special Assembly for Oceania, in 1998, the bishop of Toowoomba in Australia, noted how his diocese alone is two and a half times the size of Italy, and a former bishop of Rarotonga described his diocese as little dots sprinkled over an area of water the size of Western Europe. Epeli Hau'ofa, in his book, *A New Oceania, Rediscovering Our Sea of Islands*, describes Oceania as "a sea of islands with their inhabitants" – people who are continually enlarging their world, for "it is in their blood to be mobile."<sup>1</sup>

My task is to share with you some insights on the place of mission today in this vast and varied 'floating continent'.<sup>2</sup> I will base my reflections on my own experience of being a member of the Church "born under the Southern Cross", also on documents from the most recent SVD provincial chapters in Australia and Papua New Guinea, and interventions at the 1998 Special Assembly for Oceania of the Synod of Bishops in Rome.<sup>3</sup> Synod participants pointed out that there is a crisis of faith experienced throughout the region, and that this occurs in the midst of a crisis of culture today. Thus mission, or 'evangelization' as they termed it, will require a transformation of culture — hardly a simple matter in such a changing complex situation. This paper will outline some of the concerns of the Church in Oceania today and point to responses that are or may be made in answer to those concerns. I conclude that the place of mission in Oceania today is partly within the confines of our own religious congregation and institutional Church, but more so with those in

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the wider society who seek an ongoing prophetic dialogue with the marginalized in need of reconciliation, with the secularized in need of evangelization, with those in control of the socio-political situation, and with those looking for a community in other religious groups.

## 2. The *Wanbel* Bridge

I will begin with an illustration. In January this year, 2001, I went to visit a Christian community in the Wabag Diocese in the PNG Highlands. There was a tribal fight going on in the area and the community was suffering because of that; and also because of the hostilities, they had not had the opportunity to celebrate the Eucharist for over a year. About 100 people had died in the fight, though fortunately none from this particular community, as they had tried to stay neutral and sought ways to stop the violence. They had prayed but, since the fight continued, they felt their prayers were not being answered. So they decided to add penance to their prayer by fasting during the day and at the same time literally building a bridge spanning the chasm between their territory and that of their enemies. They called it the *wanbel* bridge – *wanbel* in pidgin literally meaning ‘one belly’, connoting unity or reconciliation. They formed the base of the bridge with large stones carried from the river, and, having constructed a three-tiered tower of stones some five metres in height (three tiers = God is with us before, now, and always), they then supported the flimsy saplings that formed the walkway with a large triangle made of tee branches (= the Trinity). To my question about why build a bridge, they replied Jesus is the “bridge” to God and Jesus said he would build his Church on stone. A coffee tree was planted at the entrance of the bridge as a symbol of life and prosperity. A notice at the other end of the bridge reads, “Welcome to the road to Emmaus”. This was saying to their enemies that in crossing the bridge they would discover the life of the Risen Christ. It took the community several months to build this bridge—a sign that they wanted reconciliation and peace. At times stray bullets would fly around them, but they continued nonetheless, and around the time they finished their *wanbel* bridge, the fight eased, and it has now stopped. I give this example because it illustrates several points I would like to make, firstly that the Church is established and the faith is alive

in Oceania; secondly that missionaries must work in solidarity with the local communities; and thirdly that one of the biggest challenges today is dialogue and reconciliation appropriate to the changing and varied context.

### **3. Oceania at the Beginning of the Third Christian Millennium**

Christianity came to Oceania only in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>4</sup> In Australia the Catholic Church arrived in 1788 along with the first convicts sent from Ireland. The official beginning of Catholic evangelization in New Zealand coincided with the arrival of Bishop Pompallier in 1838. The nationality and denominational background of the missionaries left a lasting impact on the development of Christianity in the Pacific. A few islands are predominantly Catholic, but throughout most of the Pacific the Catholic Church followed after the previously-established denominations of Protestant origin.<sup>5</sup>

In recent times there have been dramatic and rapid social changes which leave a lasting effect on Christian faith. Unemployment and migration from the Islands to Australia and New Zealand has led to the breakdown of families. Drift to the cities and urban growth provide opportunities for the rise of new religious groups. Burning issues today include poverty, the physical and sexual abuse of children, the unjust taking of life, the low status of women, the neglect of youth, the problem of drugs, the exploitation of workers, the effects of globalization and transnational companies, the rights of indigenous people, and the destruction of the environment.

Today, a tidal wave of secularism, sweeping across the Pacific, is testing the vitality of Church life. Worse than antagonism comes indifference. In Australia, weekly-mass attendance has fallen from 50% in 1960 to 20% at the end of the century.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, many people are facing a crisis of faith in institutional religion.

The problems and challenges notwithstanding, the Church in Oceania offers a unique contribution to the universal Church. Among these are the following:

- Richness of cultures, languages and ways of expressing faith.
- Laity involved and taking responsibility in Church life.
- Closeness to the environment.

- Freshness. The region is the most recent to receive the gospel
- Multicultural societies.
- Tradition of small communities.
- Australian and New Zealand societies exhibit the value of tolerance.
- Societies in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific value relationships and hospitality.
- Indigenous spiritualities as an expression of the sacred.

### Oceania

Area: 8,508,769 sq.km Population: 28,829,000 Catholics: 8,047,000 Missionaries sent 1,255 Missionaries received 1,647	Diocesan Priests 2,813 Religious Priests 2,296 Brothers 2,085 Women Religious 11,872 Catechists 12,658
Source: International Fides Service, Nov. 13 and Dec. 11, 1998, pp. 721 and 794.	

#### 4. Crisis of Faith — Crisis of Culture

In most parts of Oceania the culture that was the object of the first evangelization no longer exists as such. People today live in a completely different world. So we have to ask what methods are appropriate for proclaiming the gospel in a way that resonates with the local experience of a people's culture and history in a time of rapid change. The *Instrumentum Laboris* from the Synod notes : "The crisis of evangelisation is more than just a crisis of faith; it is also a crisis of culture. A number of responses state quite explicitly that the faith has not sufficiently penetrated the culture in question so as to call it and lead it to Christ."<sup>7</sup>

#### Take the example of my namesake, Philip.

In 1987 I left home and went to study in Mount Hagen. It was my first time there and I knew nobody. I felt lonely. I tried attending church service with Baptists and Lutherans. I liked going to the Baptist church because the services were made interesting by dancing, action songs, videos, and a delicious light meal served at the end of each service. However, all of that changed when

I met my cousin brother who invited me to his church. I wasn't so convinced by the teachings of his church but by the fact that he gave me money. I was a Catholic, but I said I would join him because he gave me K30 and told me that if I would join him in his church he would continue to give me money. I did not care much about what church I would serve as I needed money, so I said yes to my cousin brother and I became a Jehovah Witness. When I first entered the Jehovah Witness church service everyone there came to me to shake my hands, hugging and greeting me. They were all so friendly. I was happy because I had never experienced that kind of love and care for one another before in any other churches. During my two years with the Jehovah Witness church, I really challenged the Catholic faith and I even fought with my parents to get them to quit the Catholic church. However, through my mother's prayer I was converted back and now I am proud to be a Catholic because now I can see the difference between what is false and what is true. My Catholic faith now consists of hard work for the community, real love for others, care for others and committing myself to help others, regardless of what class or church denomination.

I give this example not to demonstrate Philip's shallowness of faith, since I know him now as a very committed young man with a deep faith. I give the example to illustrate the pressures, especially on young people, in this rapidly-changing world.

## **5. Concerns – Australia and New Zealand**

According to the report from the SVD Provincial Chapter in Australia in January 2000, "the most urgent signs of the times are globalisation and the environmental crisis which are inflicting horrendous suffering and hardship on a large percentage of the earth's population especially the poor and defenceless."<sup>8</sup> What would be the signs of the kingdom in this situation? They list two principal signs:

- a breakdown of ethnic and cultural barriers.
- a movement towards reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

The Australian Provincial report continues that "A new understanding of mission requires taking responsibility for acquiring the necessary skills in order to accept the new challenges through on-going formation and collaboration with other like-minded movements. This means collaboration including working with outside agencies."

From many possibilities I will briefly outline two areas of concern. Firstly, reconciliation between the indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in Australia and New Zealand. One should note that the situation in the two countries is very different and with the cooperation of the churches and the *Waitangi* tribunal, considerable progress has been made in New Zealand in recent years. However, only very recently has the wider Australian society started to become aware of the injustices perpetrated against the indigenous people there. Australian aborigines did not 'legally exist' until 1967. A recent report, *Bringing Them Home* (1997), tells how earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in a misguided government policy of racial assimilation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were forcibly removed (= stolen) from their parents and placed in private homes or public institutions (many run by the Church). These children, now adults, are nowadays known as the 'Stolen Generation'. The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference has issued a formal apology for the separation of children from their families and has asked the victims for their forgiveness for any part the Church may have played in causing harm and suffering. However, particularly at the level of government and in the wider Australian society, much more needs to be done to recognize the Aborigines in their position as the 'First Australians'. Norman Habel sees the reconciliation process as "a search for Australia's collective soul."<sup>9</sup>

Some people question the use of the term 'reconciliation' in this context, because the term implies a negotiated settlement between two equal, but differing claims. However, in Australia today it is more a matter of justice for a people who have been oppressed by the other. Hence 'liberation' might be a better word.<sup>10</sup>

Another area of concern is the progressive secularization in Australian and New Zealand society today. In the 1996 Australian Census, 17% declared that they have "no religion". The figure

was even higher in the 1996 New Zealand Census, with 26% of saying they had “no religion” and a further 7.5% objecting to giving their religion. Previously, in the 1991 New Zealand Census, 20% responded “no religion”; so there has been a 32% intercensal increase in those claiming “no religion” in just 5 years!

In New Zealand and for some in Australia, the crisis of faith for many Catholics is associated with the breakdown of the former Irish Catholic subculture. While the older people experience the collapse of a culture that once nurtured and supported them, young people find themselves hung up between the modernity of the scientific-technological world and post-modern relativism with its questioning of dogmatic certainties. With new-found individualism, mobility, and competition, people are searching for new identities and relationships of support. In this atmosphere, Christian faith becomes a personal option that seems less attractive to an increasing number of people.

The Archdiocese of Wellington, New Zealand, to the *Lineamenta* for the Synod, reported that

Somehow reactions to the documents of the Second Vatican Council were such as to bring so much of the ongoing missionary/evangelising activity of the New Zealand Church to a halt .... It was never intended by those then in leadership positions, much less by the Council Fathers, that this should happen, but happen it did. ... The local Church turned in on itself, examining its structures, its liturgy, its internal relationships, its decision-making processes. The Archdiocese of Wellington has been attempting to respond to the challenges of the Decade of Evangelisation. ... yet our efforts have not been successful.<sup>11</sup>

In his intervention at the Synod, Cardinal Williams of Wellington spoke about why some people choose not to be members of the Catholic Church. In New Zealand, religiously-mixed homes outnumber homes where both spouses are Catholic in the ratio of 2 to 1. In such mixed marriages the faith of both the Catholic spouse and the children is perilously at risk because the spouse who is not Catholic finds no welcome in the Catholic Church. Pastors witness families choosing reluctantly and

painfully to withdraw from allegiance to the Catholic Church in favour of joining another where all the family members can celebrate their unity as a family. The second example given is related to marriage breakdown. In New Zealand only 45% of school-age children are being reared in two-parent families. After marriage breakdown some Catholic single parents are faced with the choice of marriage outside the Church, or hardship for both themselves and their children. They end up on the periphery of the worshipping community or they join ecclesial communities "where the words of our saviour, 'Come to me all of you who are heavily burdened and I will give you rest,' appear more credible and comforting." The Cardinal acknowledged the scriptural, theological, and canonical bases for the Catholic Church's position but added, "I simply draw attention to the pastoral consequences, and plead for the development of a pastoral praxis characterized by compassion both for the poor as we usually understand that term and for the 'ecclesially' impoverished."<sup>12</sup>

## 6. Concerns — Papua New Guinea and the Pacific

Papua New Guinea is the richest country in the region in terms of natural resources, but the average citizen sees little benefit from the multinational projects in mining and forestry. The life expectancy is the lowest and infant mortality rates are the highest in the region. PNG ranks 129 out of 174 nations in the 1999 UNDP Human Development Index. In contrast, Pacific Islands such as Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga, have basically literate and generally healthy populations with reasonably high life expectancies and low infant-mortality rates. However, the Rousseauesque myth of the Pacific Islands as a 'paradise' has tended to conjure up a falsely-idyllic picture.<sup>13</sup> The reality is different. The Pacific is the only place in the world that has experienced the deadly combination of nuclear bombs, prolonged nuclear testing, missile testing, plutonium shipments, radioactive waste disposal, and uranium mining. Many young people from the Pacific, dissatisfied with village life, or looking for employment, have emigrated: from Tokelau, the Cooks and Niue to New Zealand; from Tonga and American Samoa to USA, and the islands of the French Pacific to Noumea.

I will briefly outline three areas of concern in the Pacific and



Papua New Guinea. The first area of concern is that of political corruption and social disintegration. Somehow the Church must find a way to be both supportive and prophetic in a deteriorating socio-political climate. In recent years we see political unrest and bloodshed throughout the Pacific: in Fiji, the Solomons, and particularly Papua New Guinea, where tribal fighting continues, and where more than 12,000 people were killed in what is termed the 'Bougainville Crisis'.

Initially the 'missions' provided the bulk of the educational and medical services. In Papua New Guinea, it took until 1985 that government-school enrolments rose higher than those in the mission schools<sup>14</sup>. At present the two work in partnership, and mission-agency schools provide services in primary, secondary, and tertiary education, including two Church-run universities. Currently the government is committed to funding 80% of the K20 million budget of the Church health services. While this appears generous, the government funding has been a source of tension between the government and some of the churches in recent years because of late, reduced, or non-existent funding through the provincial governments. Financially embarrassed, some church health services have had to suspend work for long periods.<sup>15</sup>

The more cohesive and organized a Church is, the more able it is to confront the State. For example, the highly institutionalized Catholic Church, with 44% of Church health-worker positions, and employing 51% of the teachers in the Church-agency schools, has been making demands of the government.<sup>16</sup> This, however, brings with it the likelihood of conflict between the religious authority and the State. The situation is further complicated by the way the so-called 'Mainline' (Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, United), Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Seventh Day Adventist churches, all form different groupings. There is some overlap, but in practice they operate independently. The churches tend to work together when their own welfare depends on the effectiveness of their collective action in bodies like the Churches Medical Council. Nevertheless the divisions and religious politics are scandalous in the eyes of many people.

This brings me to the second concern – the challenge of the new religious groups. Manfred Ernst has written a book called

*Winds of Change* about the rapidly-growing religious groups in the Pacific Islands. In this book (published eight years ago) he shows that the historical Protestant mainline churches are in a process of drastic decline as regards their proportion of the population. The Catholic Church in the Pacific has stayed more or less static as regards the proportion in the population. There are many New Religious Groups, some of which are growing fast, like the Seventh-Day Adventists, Latter-day Saints (Mormons), and Assemblies of God. These have now reached over 20% of the population in the Pacific. Along with this there is a growing theological fundamentalism to which the majority of the New Religious Groups have contributed.

The causes of these developments are manifold. Ernst says that the New Religious Groups are filling a 'religious vacuum' caused by the ineffectiveness of the Mainline churches which have largely failed to meet the needs of their adherents in a changing socio-economic environment. In the rapidly-growing urban settings people are searching for a new sense of life, for orientation and a new social community. Often they find a solution to these needs in one of the many New Religious Movements. The Study, by Manfred Ernst, did not include Papua New Guinea; however, it appears that the changes observed by Ernst throughout the Pacific are having a similar effect there too.<sup>17</sup>

My third concern is a more personal one. The Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific is blessed with many vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Yet, once professed, what sort of community support do we give to these young men and women? For example, consider the SVD in Papua New Guinea. We have just built a new block at Divine Word College and next year we expect every room to be occupied. This year we have 13 postulants. But what sort of community do we offer them once they leave the seminary? I see the SVD in Papua New Guinea going through a difficult period of transition at the moment as the older Western European and American missionaries retire and new missionaries come from Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. We pride ourselves on our internationality. However, at the moment our international spirit is being tested. At a recent meeting several of the older missionaries lamented that the ones they found the greatest

difficulty relating to are the younger missionary confrères, and the younger confrères in turn confessed that their greatest challenge lies in relating well to the national indigenous clergy and religious. In this situation, we must seriously question how well we witness to the love and communal values that we profess.

## 7. Responses

The SVD Provincial Chapter of the Papua New Guinea Province, in January 2000, set out their Missionary Response for the next decade as follows:

By 2010 the Divine Word Missionaries of the PNG Province will be a Society of brothers and priests living in religious communities.

We will be a part of a young, viable, and self-reliant local church, no longer in a dominant role with many PNG SVD confrères having a significant voice in the future direction of the Society.

As part of the local church, we SVDs witness through our internationality to the universality of the Church. The growing number of PNG SVDs, at home and overseas, is a concrete sign of the missionary dynamism of the local church in PNG.

With new openness to the Holy Spirit and the signs of the times, in order to promote the free growth of the local church, we accept the change of emphasis from parish administration to other apostolates.

We will be committed in a more professional way to the training of the laity, the formation of religious and clergy, and to other related apostolates.

We will have reached out to new geographical areas and accepted new challenges.

In this way we continue to respond to the mission given us by Jesus, "You will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).<sup>18</sup>

The missionary response is an ideal to aim for, but as I have

indicated above, self-reliant communities that witness to internationality are a far cry from the present reality.

In five points I will outline some responses that are or may be made in answer to the concerns described above.

### **(i). Reconciliation**

It is important to tell the truth, even when it involves the truth about past wrongs and the need for reconciliation. So it may be necessary to seek forgiveness of those who have been hurt by the Church. This may involve issues such as land acquired under colonial powers since traditionally in most parts of Oceania, the land did not belong to the people, but "the people belonged to the land". Also, the perceived view of the Church on women and on sexual morality must be confronted honestly. More needs to be done in dialogue with other Christian churches and with non-religious currents in society.

Moreover, there it will be important to present a positive image of what reconciliation can mean for society. Bishop Peter Cullinane of the NZ Bishops' Conference has said that "we need to re-imagine, re-image, and re-form the church around the theme of discipleship — the church as a community of disciples."<sup>19</sup> Among the signs in Jesus' proclamation, there is one of particular importance: the humble and the poor are evangelized, become his disciples and gather together "in his name" (EN 12). Witnesses to the Good News in Oceania, following in the footsteps of Jesus, are called to present the compassionate face of Christ to the world and in so doing to call people into communion with the Body of Christ.<sup>20</sup>

At the Synod, Bishop Gilles Côté of Daru-Kiunga argued for the reconciliation of the gospel message and culture so that the Christian community is built upon the strengths of culture, and key values of the culture become the key values of our mission: "Will the institutional Church allow Jesus to walk the way of the people of Melanesia, just like he did in Palestine, challenging the truth of their own religious experiences, purifying and enriching their lives, not from outside or from the top, but from within?"<sup>21</sup>

## **(ii). Secularization**

At the same time as more people declare they have 'no religion', many people show a great interest in 'spirituality'. Sadly the search does not lead many to the Christian churches, except perhaps the Pentecostal ones. Ever more people in Australia and New Zealand are looking for spirituality in Eastern religions and new-age techniques for self-development. We need to dialogue with these dimensions of modern culture, as Australian Bishop Michael Putney writes, "To fail to enter into this most fundamental dialogue is to risk speaking to ourselves while the real conversation is occurring elsewhere."<sup>22</sup>

While the more modern secularized cultures must take on the challenge of helping people rediscover the sacred dimension of life, the more traditional societies must deal with issues of faith and culture. Unfortunately while people are being liberated from fear of demonic inhabitants of the reef and forest, they are also losing their sense of the sacred significance of the natural world. The challenge is to build upon indigenous spiritualities that help people to see that they are part of creation, and at the same time to create a new wisdom to enable people in Oceania to be citizens of modernity. We are called not only to live in harmony with nature, but also to use creative self-expression that leads to fuller life. This is accomplished through culture – by which we humanize the world and give it meaning.

## **(iii). Our Prophetic Role In the Socio-Political Situation**

The Catholic Church has a rich tradition of social teaching that needs to be made known at all levels of society. The Archbishop of Port Moresby and some other bishops have spoken out on social and political issues, with both dramatic and at times frightening consequences. The late nuncio Archbishop Hans Schwemmer along with other prominent Catholic political leaders have been calling for the establishment of an institute for Catholic social teaching in Papua New Guinea. This is a laudable proposal so long as it is geared to the needs of people across the whole spectrum of society, from the urban elite to the illiterate poor. Socially-relevant teaching may be counter-cultural and in effect a Melanesian form of liberation theology because it will subvert

the political status quo and let people know God's special concern for the powerless.

Dialogue entails both challenging and listening. While every effort must be made to be sensitive to culture, at times evangelization means being counter-cultural. Mission will involve confronting not only personal sin, but social and structural sin where there are abuses of power and 'cultures of deceit' contrary to the spirit of the gospel. Cardinal Ratzinger warned the bishops against any false sweetening of the figure of Jesus, and pointed out that the Lord wanted his disciples not to be sugar, but rather the 'salt' of the earth.<sup>23</sup>

#### (iv). The New Religious Groups

If the Church is to be effective, it must be seen to be a real community. Often this is not the case. For the Catholic Church in Oceania to show greater cohesion and a spirit of communion a number of issues need to be faced realistically. For example, it is important for the local church that she is able to celebrate the liturgy with appropriate liturgical texts in the language and culture of the people.

Those outside of the region can hardly imagine the immense distances separating small pockets of population throughout much of Oceania. With so few priests, it is increasingly difficult to maintain a dimension of community central to Catholic communities — the celebration of the Eucharist. At the Synod, Bishop Kiapseni of Kavieng, Papua New Guinea, said that it seems the community's right to celebrate the Eucharist has become a privilege and a rare one at that. Celebrations of the Word with Holy Communion distributed by a catechist or non-ordained religious is no substitute for the celebration of the Eucharist.<sup>24</sup> Proposed solutions, such as the ordination of mature *viri probati* are considered unacceptable by people outside of the region.

A symbolic figure in Papua New Guinea is Blessed Peter To Rot who, during the Second World War, when all the missionaries were imprisoned or killed, provided leadership and inspiration to the Christian communities. The tradition continues today with men and women serving in various ministries in the Church. Nevertheless, at the moment a disproportionate amount of money

and resources goes into the training of priests. Seminary and other training facilities could be shared so that more religious and lay people could pursue biblical, pastoral, and theological studies.

#### **(v). Our Own Communities**

In Oceania, people are generally very tolerant, but not towards hypocrites. We need to look very closely at the relationships between ourselves in our own congregation to ensure that we are not hypocritical in preaching a way of life that we do not live. Pope Paul VI reminded us that the Church as agent of evangelization must begin by being evangelized herself (*EN 15*). Our response on this matter will make all the difference to our credibility in our dialogue of life with the wider community.

### **8. Summary and Conclusion**

In this short paper I have drawn attention to the fact that the Church in Oceania is becoming marginalized from the mainstream culture in the secularised cultures, and is caught up in the separation of faith and life in the traditional societies. Concerns in the region include the need for reconciliation, secularisation, deteriorating socio-political situations, the growth of new religious groups, and the witness of our own internationality.

In response to this situation, the locus of mission in Oceania today is to be found in the promotion of international community amongst ourselves and an ongoing prophetic dialogue with the marginalized in need of reconciliation, with the secularised in need of evangelization, with those in control of the socio-political situation, and with those looking for community in other religious groups; in other words, in the four areas identified by the SVD as primary evangelization and re-evangelization, commitment to the poor and marginalized, cross-cultural witness, and interreligious understanding.<sup>25</sup>

Just as Christ is not limited to the Church; we must be open to the possibility of the Good News being shared by other agents. Such dialogue partners will be found where one finds witness to values such as community, compassion, and care of creation.<sup>26</sup> Missionaries can work together with these elements in the wider

culture and contribute a Christological dimension to them. They will listen, challenge, and respectfully invite people to make their own the fulness of life which is revealed in Jesus Christ.

## END NOTES

- 1 Epeli Hau'ofa, *A New Oceania: Rediscovering Our Sea of Islands*, p. 11.
- 2 Synodus Episcoporum—*Bulletin*, 10—26.11.1998 - 4.
- 3 References to “the Synod” in the text refer to the recent Special Assembly for Oceania of the Synod of Bishops (22 November - 12 December 1998).
- 4 There were some isolated early mission efforts, but they left little lasting impact on the region. See J. Garrett, *To Live Among The Stars — Christian Origins in Oceania* (Geneva and Suva: World Council of Churches in association with the Institute of Pacific Studies, 1982) 3.
- 5 See M. Ernst, *Winds of Change: Rapidly Growing Religious Groups in the Pacific Islands* (Pacific Conference of Churches, Suva/Fiji, 1994).
- 6 Source: Intervention of Archbishop George Pell at the Synod.
- 7 Synod of Bishops, Special Assembly for Oceania, *Instrumentum Laboris* #21.
- 8 From the Minutes and Statements of the Provincial Chapter, Australian Province, 24-28 January 2000.
- 9 See Norman Habel, *Reconciliation: Searching for Australia's Soul* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 1999).
- 10 See Pauline Small, “The Human, grace and reconciliation” *Compass* 34.3 (2000) 10-14.
- 11 Response of the Archdiocese of Wellington to the Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Oceania, January 1998, p. 6.
- 12 Synod Intervention. Summary in *L'Osservatore Romano* (English edition) No. 48 - 2 December 1998, p. 16. Quotation from type-written manuscript by Cardinal Williams.
- 13 See P. Schoeffel, “Social Change,” in K.R. Howe, R.C. Kiste, and B.V. Lal, eds., *Tides of History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994) 373 [350-380].
- 14 R. D. Fergie, *Church-State Partnership in Papua New Guinea—and the folly of 're-inventing the wheel'*, Position Paper 2, The Second



Consultation between NGOs and the Government, March 30-31, 1993, Port Moresby, PNG, p. 15

- 15 Problems in the government funding of Church-run services prompted a strong editorial comment in the *National*, in which the writer says that the relationship between the Government and churches "like most neglected relationships... is turning sour." See "Government must strengthen ties with churches," *The National*, 31 July, 2000, p. 12.
- 16 The churches provide 45% of PNG health services (49% in rural areas). In 1998 the distribution of the 2301 Church health-worker positions was as follows: Catholic 44%, Lutheran, 10.7%, United 10%, ECPNG 8.6%, Nazarene 4.4%, Baptist 4%, Anglican 3%, SDA 3%, Gutnius Lutheran 2%, 16 other agencies 11% (calculated from statistics from the PNG Dept. of Health Church Health Services, 1998). Church agencies administer 52% of community (primary) schools in PNG. The distribution of teachers in church-agency community schools is as follows: Catholic 51.8%, Lutheran 17%, Evangelical Alliance 11.2%, United 10.7%, Anglican 5.3%, SDA 4% (calculated from Educational Statistics PNG, 1998).
- 17 In "'Winds of Change' also in PNG?," *Catalyst* 25.2 (1995) 175-6, Franco Zocca estimates that between 1980 and 1990, the percentage of religious affiliation in PNG decreased by 9.1% for the Historical Mainline Churches, and increased 8.7% for the Evangelical, Pentecostal, SDA, and other churches. The percentage change in electoral representation is over 5 years, which makes it double the rate of change in the general population. More research needs to be done to find out to what degree denominational membership, or merely the identification as 'Christian', was a significant factor in people's choices.
- 18 *Listening to our Missionary Response for the Coming Decade*, Divine Word Missionaries PNG, 15th Provincial Chapter, 14-24 February 2000, Alexishafen – Madang.
- 19 Synodus Episcoporum—Bulletin 06 - 24.11.1998 – 8.
- 20 See "Message to the People of God" #28. Special Assembly for Oceania of the Synod of Bishops, 1998.
- 21 Synod Intervention. Summary in *L'Osservatore Romano* (English edition) No. 48 - 2 December 1998, p. 15. Quotation from type-written manuscript by Bp. Côté. See also Ennio Mantovani, "Key Issues of a dialogue between Christianity and culture in Melanesia", *Sedos Bulletin*, 1999, pp. 35-41.

- 22 Michael Putney, "A Church in Dialogue with Itself and with Others. Australia 2000," *Compass* 34.2 (2000) 7 [3-16].
- 23 In the summary of Cardinal Ratzinger's intervention, the *L'Osservatore Romano* (daily edition) Saturday 28 November, 1998, p. 8, refers to "un falso addolcimento della figura di Gesù."
- 24 Synod Intervention. Reprinted as "Tradition and Inculturation" in *General Bulletin msc*, 6/1998 - December, pp. 9-10.
- 25 See *Documents of the XV General Chapter SVD 2000*, In Dialogue with the Word, No. 1 - September 2000, p. 31.
- 26 See P. Gibbs, "The Transformation of Culture as New Evangelisation (for the Third Millennium in Oceania)," *Studia Missionalia* 48 (1999): 327-345.