The Methodist Mission and the emerging Aboriginal Church in Arnhem Land 1916-1977

John Kadiba
ADVICE TO READERS

Readers are advised that this thesis contains the names and photographs of some Arnhem Land Aboriginal people, now deceased.
THE METHODIST MISSION AND THE EMERGING ABORIGINAL CHURCH IN ARNHEM LAND 1916-1977

Thesis submitted for Doctor of Philosophy through the Faculty of Education, Northern Territory University, 1998.

Submitted by:
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The material presented in this thesis is based on my own research unless otherwise acknowledged in the text. The material has not been submitted in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

Signed: [Signature]

Dated: 28/09/98.
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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an investigation of the missionary enterprise of the Methodist Overseas Missions (MOM) in north east and west Arnhem Land and the resultant emerging Aboriginal church. After earlier mission attempts elsewhere in Australia had been abandoned (1821-1855), the MOM concentrated its missionary efforts for the next 60 years in the Pacific and India (1855-1915). The Methodist work in Arnhem Land therefore represented the resumption by the MOM of the missionary endeavour among the Aboriginal people of Australia. By historical coincidence the MOM work in Arnhem Land was also carried out for 60 years (1916-1977).

The history of Methodism in Arnhem Land is diachronically and missiologically connected to the global Christian and colonial expansion. In the Arnhem Land context, these various segments of history converged and in one way or another interacted and impacted on the Aboriginal people. The impact of these Western histories on Aboriginal people forms an important part of the investigation in this thesis. Besides its own ecclesiastical history, the Methodist Mission, as alluded to above, is connected to the global missionary movement and missiological developments. The investigation of the MOM work in Arnhem Land in this thesis, therefore, takes into account the global historical and missiological perspectives.

This study employs selected missiological models of contextualisation to analyse the process of Christianisation of Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land. In the first 30 years of the MOM work (1916-1946), the evangelisation of the Aboriginal people moved from a noncontextualised
to a contextualised approach. The pioneer stage (1916-1925) was characterised by a lack of concerted effort to contextualise Christianity to Aboriginal cosmological frames of reference. From the mid-1920s the MOM adopted a policy of 'non-interference' and the 1939 mission policy affirmed Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal people’s capability in appropriating tenets of Christianity. This marked a shift to contextualisation, although this did not represent authentic contextualisation as the Aboriginal people were not involved in this process.

In the second 30-year period of the MOM work (1947-1977), some missionaries and Aboriginal Christians attempted authentic contextualisation. This involved relating Christianity to Aboriginal cultural, social and political contexts. This was in parallel with the international missiological trend in the 1960s and 1970s. However, this study argues that during the missionary era, the contextualisation and noncontextualisation approaches existed in juxtaposition.

During the missionary era, while there was no Aboriginal church structurally, theologically an Aboriginal *ekklesia* had begun to emerge within the structure of the Methodist Mission. This emerging indigenous church, however, was absorbed into the mainstream Uniting Church of Australia (UCA) in 1977, at the end of the missionary era. The MOM did not adopt a policy for the development of a separate indigenous church.

The binding thread of the investigation in this thesis relates to the prolonged absence of a policy on training of Aboriginal church leadership, with concomitant tardiness in developing an ordained Aboriginal leadership. This study argues that in the first 30 years of
the MOM work in Arnhem Land (1916-1946), there was a conspicuous lack of policy on training of Aboriginal church leadership. In the second 30-year period (1947-1977), however, a policy on training on Aboriginal church leadership was developed. This failure to encourage indigenous leadership meant that by the end of the missionary era there was only a limited number of Aboriginal clergy, after 60 years of Methodism in Arnhem Land; and no Aboriginal church was established. The thesis nevertheless acknowledges that the mission developed a core group of outstanding lay Aboriginal workers in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Some of these leaders could have been ordained. However, missionaries' lack of faith and high expectations prevented the Aboriginal people from becoming candidates for ordination.

A number of issues are covered in the study. They include the investigation of: missionary pragmatism, paternalism, racial beliefs and missionary ambivalence; issues dealing with the establishment of mission stations and mission institutionalism, with related industrialism and commercialism; alien contacts with Aboriginal people; the encounter between Christianity and Aboriginal cosmology; and issues emerging out of political, social and economic changes impinging on Arnhem Land, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, as a result of policies adopted by the government.

The MOM developed its own policies, separate from government policies, in order to keep abreast of and respond to the changing situation in Arnhem Land. However, while the purpose of these policies was argued in convincing terms, this study contends that they created a diversity of priorities which competed with the missiological task of specifically training Aboriginal church leaders. This resulted in a small
number of clergy at the close of the missionary enterprise in Arnhem Land, and no indigenous church was established structurally.
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<td>UNESCO</td>
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INTRODUCTION

THE TITLE : AN EXPLANATION

This study concerns the Methodist Mission which worked in Arnhem Land under the auspices of the Methodist Overseas Missions, and the Aboriginal church which began to emerge within the structure of the Mission. The study covers 60 years of Methodism in Arnhem Land from 1916 to 1977. The year 1976 would have been an appropriate date to end the study, because this year not only marked 60 years of Methodism in Arnhem Land, but also in this year the first fully theologically trained Aboriginal person was ordained by the Methodist Church of Australasia, to which the Methodist Overseas Missions (MOM)¹ was accountable. However, 1977 has been chosen to conclude this study, as it was in this year that Methodism ‘ended’² in Arnhem Land when the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches joined to form the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA)³.

THE STUDY

The MOM did not adopt a policy on Aboriginal church leadership training until the mid-1960s and as a consequence, after 60 years of Methodism in Arnhem Land (1916-1977), there were just three Aboriginal clergy,

¹ The name ‘Methodist Overseas Missions’ (MOM) was adopted in 1935. Prior to this ‘Foreign Missions’ or ‘Methodist Missionary Society’ (MMS) was used. To avoid confusion, this study uses MOM in relation to the work in Arnhem Land.

² The word ‘ended’ is used here in inverted commas because legacies of Methodism continue today in one form or another in the Northern Territory.

³ Not all Methodists and Presbyterians joined UCA. Today there is a continuing Presbyterian Church in Australia, and Methodists who did not join continue as the Wesleyan Methodist Church.
only one of whom had full theological training. This study explores contributive factors for the prolonged absence of a policy on Aboriginal church leadership training in Arnhem Land prior to the 1960s. It should be noted, however, that the Methodist Mission was also to produce a number of young Aboriginal leaders with a Western education in the 1960s and 1970s, who were to play prominent roles in the Mission and post-mission eras. The development of this lay leadership contributed to the growth of the emerging Aboriginal church in these decades, and there was increasing Aboriginal participation in church affairs. This study will nevertheless argue that missionaries' lack of faith in these lay leaders prevented them from becoming candidates for the ordained ministry.

A corollary of the argument relating to the slow development of Aboriginal clergy is that while an indigenous church began to emerge in Arnhem Land in the 1960s and 1970s, it was absorbed into the mainstream church between 1972 and 1977. The epilogue in this study will indicate that the Aboriginal church began to develop as an indigenous church structurally when a group of national Aboriginal leaders met at Elcho Island in August 1983, and constituted themselves as the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC), within the structure of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) (Edwards and Clarke 1988: 198).

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant as no previous research has been undertaken to critically examine Methodist Mission policies in relation to the development of Aboriginal church leadership training. Other works on
the Methodist Mission in Arnhem Land, mostly dealing with the pre-war era, have either analysed mission policies in relation to the Mission's role as an agent of government policies, or in relation to the general operation of the Mission, in the context of social and political changes and changes in the Mission itself.

Maisie McKenzie's book, *Mission to Arnhem Land* (1976) is a popular history, providing a general account of the Methodist work in North Australia. As a popular work, it has not been critical about difficult issues. While McKenzie refers to mission policies, and mentions the emergence of an indigenous leadership (McKenzie 1976: 249), she does not raise the critical issue of the development of a policy on Aboriginal church leadership training. Another general account of the establishment of the Methodist Mission stations is Peter Forrest's two-volume 'Report on a survey of heritage sites on former Methodist Missions in Arnhem Land, Northern Territory' (1990). This study was commissioned by the National Trust of Australia, Northern Territory, because the development of the Methodist missions was considered 'a very important phase in Australia's cultural history' (Forrest 1990: 1). Forrest provides a summary of the development of the main stages of government policy to define the setting in which the mission stations were established, as he argues that Methodist missionary work in the Northern Territory was always undertaken within the context of official policies. He also examines the Methodist policies in relation to land rights issues, and the policy of the United Church of North Australia (UCNA) embodied in the 1974 *Free to Decide* document. The Methodist Mission, which had become part of the UCNA in 1972, carried out its activities within the parameters of the 1974 policy (Forrest

4 The *Free to Decide* document was a 145-page report, compiled by the UCNA Commission of Enquiry which toured Arnhem Land in March and April 1974, edited by Bernie Clarke.
1990: 22, 30). Forrest, however, does not concern himself with policy issues relating to Aboriginal church leadership.

Three academic studies have provided research findings on various aspects of the Methodist Mission and the emerging Aboriginal church. Claude Hedrick's honours thesis, 'Arnhem Land Methodist Mission Policy Development and Culture Contact 1911-1938' (1973), encompasses roughly the first three decades of the Methodist work in Arnhem Land. Hedrick is the first to offer a critique of the Methodist Mission policies and mission establishments as they operated prior to 1939. His thesis is that before 1926 the Mission did not have a clear policy for its operation in the field, but a more well defined policy took shape between 1926 and 1939. Although Hedrick provides a useful critique of the early Methodist policies and mission stations, he does not mention the lack of Methodist policy directives in relation to Aboriginal leadership training in the formative years of the mission work which his study covers, and which becomes relevant when placed in international contexts.

The second study is Robert Bos' doctoral thesis, ‘Jesus and the Dreaming: Religion and Social Change in Arnhem Land' (1988). This is an examination of the religious revival movement that occurred at Elcho Island in 1979. Although the study is a work of social anthropology, two chapters which deal with historical analysis of the Methodist Mission work are relevant. These historical chapters include a discussion of the mission policies formulated by Theodor Thomas Webb in the 1930s and the policy changes in the 1960s and the 1970s (Bos 1988: 139-154, 183-197). Bos furnishes a useful assessment of the Methodist Mission policies in the context of religious, political and social changes in
Arnhem Land, in different epochs of the mission work. The study of the religious movement at Elcho Island also points to the emerging Aboriginal church leadership in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as to distinctive Aboriginal Christianity and theology. Bos, however, does not raise the issue of Aboriginal church leadership training policy.

The third study, though not exclusively on the Methodist Mission, is Mickey Dewar's Master of Arts thesis, 'Strange Bedfellows: Europeans and Aborigines in Arnhem Land' (1989). In this thesis Dewar examines European and other outsiders in Arnhem Land in the period prior to World War Two, with a focus on how they related to the Aboriginal people and to each other, and how people in wider Australia became drawn into debate on the position of Aboriginal people in Australian society as a direct outcome of the controversies surrounding Europeans in Arnhem Land (Dewar 1989: 3). Pertinent to the study of the history of missions in Arnhem Land are the chapters in which Dewar discusses the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Methodist Mission. In her examination and critique of the two missions she has compared and contrasted their policies, attitudes to Aboriginal religion and culture, outlook, and the general operation of the missions. She refers to the fact that the missions were closely identified with government policies and interests, and therefore acted as agents of government policy (Dewar 1989: 77-80). In relation to the Methodist Mission policies, Dewar also does not raise the issue of policy on Aboriginal church leadership training. This is surprising, given that she has made an assumption that the missionaries 'by definition considered themselves to be transient since their success would be measured by the establishment of an indigenous church' (Dewar 1989: 182). In fact, it will be argued in this present study, that by the end of the Methodist
era, no indigenous church was established, although an embryonic Aboriginal church had come into existence within the structure of the Methodist Mission. The establishment of an indigenous Aboriginal church was not on the agenda of the Methodist Mission. As a consequence the emerging Aboriginal church was absorbed into the mainstream UCA.

The present study differs from the above works in that the central proposition it advances identifies and develops a particular issue, namely the lack of policy on training of Aboriginal church leadership. This study also differs from the other works in that it makes reference to global missionary movements and missiological developments, as Methodism in Arnhem Land was diachronically linked to the history of Christianity and theology. While the study is mainly concerned with the issue of Aboriginal church leadership, it also covers other issues which emanated from the social, political and economic developments in the changing context in Arnhem Land.

THE SCOPE AND THEORETICAL STANCE

The areas covered in this study include an account of Methodism by tracing it back to England and its beginnings in Australia, in order to place the Methodist work in Arnhem Land in its wider diachronic context. There is also a brief investigation of the early Methodist missions to Aboriginal people in Australia and reference to the Methodist Mission work in the Pacific and India.

While the perspective of this study is historical, it is simultaneously a study of missiology, and therefore an examination of global
missiological paradigms, principles and issues, will be undertaken to determine to what extent these were applied or not applied to the Arnhem Land context. The purpose here is to set this study in the context of global missiological development and understanding.

An investigation of mission policy relating to the training of Aboriginal church leadership by the Methodist Mission in Arnhem Land from 1916 to 1977, in the context of political, social, economic and religious changes, is the main focus of this study. This includes an exploration of issues which emerged in the contact between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land, missionaries' attitudes and racial beliefs, and how these might have affected the development of Aboriginal church leadership and the emerging Aboriginal church. Investigation of issues which emerged in the encounter between Christianity and Aboriginal cosmology is also undertaken to set this study in relation to the developments and understandings which emerged from its synchronic context. The study also includes an epilogue which briefly explores the emerging Aboriginal Christianity and church in the post-missionary era.

Although this study is historical in its perspective, its development and its objective need to be informed by other fields and disciplines of study, notably missiology, theology, community development, Aboriginal education and anthropology. These latter two areas are helpful in understanding Aboriginal cosmology and relating it to Christianity. For example, in their works on Aboriginal pedagogy, M Christie (1985), D McLa\y (1988) and S Harris (1990), while having different focuses in Aboriginal pedagogy, have developed an understanding of Aboriginal people and their cosmologies through field research, and have utilised
their findings in developing and proposing educational principles which are relevant for Aboriginal education. Developing Aboriginal contextual theology and theological education are and should be informed by these educational principles. In addition, anthropology is significant in the process of contextualisation of Christianity.

This study is therefore in some respects interdisciplinary, in so far as it is being informed by other fields of study and disciplines. The usefulness of such an interdisciplinary method is that it draws on the learning and methodologies of other fields of study, and this contributes to a broader view of issues and to a more liberal study in its final outcome. As will be seen in chapter one, missiology itself is an interdisciplinary field. An interdisciplinary method also implies that this study is not only diachronic but it is also synchronic in its approach. This latter approach involves an understanding of culture, beliefs, thought forms and practices of Aboriginal people, which is essential for the missiological concept of contextualisation.

This study employs three broad models of contextualisation proposed by Schreiter (1986), to analyse the christianisation of Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land. The approaches are: translation, adaptation and contextual models.

The translation model is the most common type. It seeks to free the Christian message as much as possible from its previous cultural accretions, and translate it to a new situation. Schreiter points out certain weaknesses of the model. This approach assumes that patterns in culture are quickly decoded and understood by foreign missionaries. Thus in decisions about the translation, translators do a cultural
analysis up to a given point, but thereafter it comes to an end. Cultural analysis is undertaken not in terms of the particular culture investigated, but only to find parallels with patterns in contextualised Christianity. Furthermore, this theory assumes that biblical revelation occurs in some privileged, supercultural sphere, which allows for immediate translation into any given culture. This model presupposes a cultural vacuum in the receptor culture.

In the adaptation model, missionaries in concert with indigenous leaders attempt to develop an explicit philosophy or picture of the indigenous cosmology. This approach parallels either philosophical models or cultural anthropological descriptions used in Western theologies, as the basis for developing a contextual theology. Subsequently some indigenous church leaders who are trained in Western theological schools adapt Western theological and philosophical categories to give expression to factors shaping the cosmology of their people. This study argues that the translation and adaptation models do not lead to authentic contextualisation of Christianity in the indigenous context.

The third model which Schreiter proposes, namely the contextual model, is advocated in this study. Whereas the translation model seeks parallels between Christianity and culture, and the adaptation model continues to emphasize to some degree the received faith, the contextual model begins its reflection of the Christian faith from within the cultural context. There are two kinds of approaches in the contextual model: the 'ethnographic approach', which is concerned with cultural identity and relatedness; and the 'liberation approach', which concentrates on justice issues relating to social, political and
economic contexts (Schreiter 1986: 7-12).

This study is also informed by the model of critical contextualisation developed by Hiebert (1987, 1984). However, it differs from Hiebert in that it argues that ultimately critical contextualisation can best be undertaken by indigenous people themselves. Initially non-indigenous people can act as facilitators, working with indigenous peoples. This will ensure authentic contextualisation.

As this study also involves the investigation of the process of contextualisation of Christianity in Arnhem Land, some theological reflection will be made. However, the main focus is on the historical process rather than on the theological nature of and basis for contextualisation of Christianity.

RESEARCH DATA

The sources used to collect data for this study have been library and archival holdings, personal interviews and written communication between the author and people involved in mission work. Reading sources used are both primary and secondary. The primary sources come from archival collections, personal interviews, materials which include reports, minutes, bulletins and papers. The secondary sources include published works in mission history, missiology, history and anthropology.

The Methodist Mission papers and Uniting Church documents are held in the Northern Territory Archives and the Mitchell Library in Sydney. Official government records which contain government reports on
Methodist Mission and other missions in the Northern Territory are held in the Australian Archives in Darwin and Canberra.

This study is also informed by oral history. At the initial stages of the research some former missionaries and other significant persons were interviewed. ‘Significant persons’ here include Aboriginal people who had personal experience of mission operations, non-Aboriginal people who had personal experience of mission operations, and non-Aboriginal people who were not missionaries but who worked in Arnhem Land in the 1960s and 1970s in mission establishments. The interviews were largely conducted in Darwin, however, some former Arnhem Land missionaries were interviewed in Adelaide and Sydney. In the first interviews an unstructured approach was adopted. In some cases where follow-up interviews were conducted, they became more structured, and specific questions were addressed to the interviewees. During the unstructured interviews the research topic and the proposition for investigation were introduced and the interviewees were invited to comment. The reason for the unstructured approach was to allow the interviewees to comment freely on the topic and the proposition, and in this way the person would bring out some significant points, issues or insights which would not have been made in a structured approach.

Maggie Wilson (1992) has discussed examples of the unstructured and structured approaches in interviewing people. She argues that the dilemma some students encounter in the interviewing process lies in the tension between the conduct of ‘pure’ oral history work, in which the free flow of the respondent remains uninterrupted, and the parameters of a student-based assignment, which are imposed in order to delimit work. The solution Wilson proposes is to produce two
documents: the full account of the interview, minimally edited, and a more tailored version for the research assignment. Wilson's discussion implies that the unstructured and structured approaches in oral history are complementary in the making of social history and for historical investigation (Wilson 1992: 63-66; cf Featherstone 1991: 59-62). Valerie Yow (1995) has similarly argued that while it is necessary for oral historians to follow professional guidelines and ask hard questions, they need to be aware that their prior assumptions can lead to the ignoring of important historical evidence which does not fit their presuppositions. There is room later, however, in reviewing the narrative based on interviews, for historians to be hard in questioning what has been omitted and downplayed. In conducting interviews, this study has followed the approaches advocated by Wilson and Yow in oral history research. That is, both the unstructured and structured methods of interviewing have been used.

THE AREA OF STUDY

The setting of this study is the Arnhem Land area of the Northern Territory. The name Arnhem Land symbolises many legacies which European maritime explorers left behind on the north coast of Australia. Matthew Flinders, although a British explorer, gave the name to the area, more specifically to the central north coast peninsula, after the Dutch vessel Arnhem, which explored the north-eastern coast of Arnhem Land in 1623 (Powell 1988 [1982]: 29-30; cf Cole 1979: 7). Arnhem Land covers the coast of the eastern half, which extends from the Gulf of Carpentaria in the east, to the Joseph Bonaparte Gulf in the west. The Arafura Sea borders the northern coast, while Roper River
forms the southern boundary. The Gulf of Carpentaria lies to the east and the East Alligator River forms its western boundary.

South Australia annexed the Northern Territory in 1863, and governed it until the Commonwealth Government took over in 1911. With the annexation of the Northern Territory, Wesleyan Methodists began services for the white population of the new northern settlement. By 1873, Wesleyan Methodists had become firmly established in the Northern Territory, catering for the white settlers (Hunt 1985: 117). However, it was not until five years after the Commonwealth Government took over the Northern Territory that Methodists began work among the Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land.

This study focuses on the five mission stations which the MOM established in east and west Arnhem Land: Goulburn Island [Warruwi] (1916), Milingimbi Island (1923), Yirrkala (1935), Croker Island [Minjilang] (1941) and Elcho Island [Galiwinku] (1942). Later the MOM extended its influence to outstations such as Lake Evella [Gapuwiyak], Ramingining, Nangalala and the government settlement, Maningrida (see Map 2). In the 1970s these establishments became Arnhem Land Aboriginal towns. The table below indicates the population figures of the towns taken in the 1991 census counts. It shows the towns which were formerly Methodist Mission stations. Those which lie within the Methodist sphere of influence make up almost half (48%) of the Aboriginal population of Arnhem Land, and 28% of the total population of the area. As will be seen in chapter two, the MOM sphere of influence was that which was allocated by the Interdenominational Committee of

Churches in 1912.

1991 Census of Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Aboriginal</th>
<th>Non-Aboriginal</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>East Arnhem Land</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galiwinku (Elcho)</td>
<td>1,033</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1,123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gapuwiyk (Lake Evella)</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramingining</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milingimbi</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nangalala</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>West Arnhem Land</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minjilang (Croker)</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warruwi (Goulburn)</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maningrida</td>
<td>891</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>4162</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>612</strong></td>
<td><strong>4774</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These totals do not represent the total picture because a significant proportion of the Aboriginal population lives on outstations, especially those connected with Yirrkala and Maningrida.

THE COMING OF CHRISTIANITY TO THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

The very earliest attempt to bring Christianity to Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory was by a Catholic priest in 1846, Don Angelo Confalonieri. Confalonieri, who survived the wreck of the *Heroine* in 1841 Catholics in the Swan River Colony of Western Australia wanted a priest sent to them. Consequently, Father John Brady was sent to Perth in 1843. In 1845 Brady was consecrated Bishop of Perth. As a result of Brady’s missionary drive, a party of 27 Catholic missionaries left England on 17 September 1845, arriving at Fremantle in Western Australia on 7 January 1846. Among them was Confalonieri, an Austrian priest. Bishop Brady divided the missionaries into four groups: one to work in the north, one in the south, one in the ‘centre’ inland from Perth and the fourth in Perth itself. The northern group was shipwrecked in the Torres Strait, only Confalonieri

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6 In 1841 Catholics in the Swan River Colony of Western Australia wanted a priest sent to them. Consequently, Father John Brady was sent to Perth in 1843. In 1845 Brady was consecrated Bishop of Perth. As a result of Brady’s missionary drive, a party of 27 Catholic missionaries left England on 17 September 1845, arriving at Fremantle in Western Australia on 7 January 1846. Among them was Confalonieri, an Austrian priest. Bishop Brady divided the missionaries into four groups: one to work in the north, one in the south, one in the ‘centre’ inland from Perth and the fourth in Perth itself. The northern group was shipwrecked in the Torres Strait, only Confalonieri
Map of Arnhem Land

- Van Diemen Gulf
- Gulf of Carpentaria
- Arnhem Land

MAP OF ARNHEM LAND
the Torres Strait, arrived at the British settlement of Victoria in Port Essington on the Cobourg Peninsula in 1846. He established good relationships with the Aboriginal people but he made no converts to Christianity.

Confalonieri, however, lived with the lwaidja people, translated a catechism into lwaidja and left behind written vocabularies of seven Aboriginal dialects and a map showing the lands the speakers occupied (J Harris 1990: 833; Powell 1988: 60). This was a remarkable achievement considering that he was in Port Essington only for two years. Confalonieri died in Port Essington of malaria in 1848. Another 30 years or so were to elapse before the christianisation of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory was to resume.

Other early Catholic endeavours to bring Christianity to Northern Territory Aboriginal people in the 1880s also did not last. The Jesuits, after abandoning a station founded in 1882 at Rapid Creek for the Larrakeyah and Woolna people, moved to Daly River in 1886. Between 1886 and 1891 the Jesuits established three Aboriginal missions in the Daly River area. However, by June 1899 all these were closed (Powell 1988: 136; Wilson 1988: 11-13).

In 1906 another Catholic order, the Sacred Heart Mission (MSC), commenced work in what was then the Victoria-Palmerston diocese, led by Father FX Gsell, who had been recalled from Papua to take charge of the work in the Northern Territory. In 1911 the work extended

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8 In 1938 FX Gsell was consecrated Bishop and the name of the diocese was changed from Victoria-Palmerston to Darwin (Wilson 1988: 14).
to Bathurst Island and an Aboriginal mission for the Tiwi people was established. In 1914 the religious congregation of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (OLSH), who had opened a school in Darwin in 1905, also started work on Bathurst Island (Wilson 1988: 13-14). In the succeeding years other Catholic Missions were opened: Alice Springs and Port Keats (1935), Garden Point, Melville Island (1940), and Daly River (1955).

The Lutherans established an Aboriginal mission on the Finke River in 1877. Initially it was a joint venture of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Australia (ELSA) and the Hermannsburg Missionary Society of Germany. But the relationship between the two bodies was not amicable. This resulted in the ELSA handing over the complete control of the Mission to the Hermannsburg Society (E Leske 1977: 7-21). Fifteen years later the Hermannsburg Mission Society withdrew in disillusionment and sold the site to another Lutheran group, the Immanual Synod (Powell 1988: 136; E Leske 1977: 23). In spite of difficulties the Hermannsburg missionaries accomplished important tasks in the 1880s, working on the Aranda (Arrernte) language of the Aboriginal people (Leske 1977: 22; cf J Harris 1990: 389ff).

The Anglicans were the first to start a mission in Arnhem Land in 1899 at Kaparlgoo (Kapalgo) on the Alligator River, but it was abandoned in 1903. The CMS followed in 1908 to establish a mission at Roper River. The Society commenced its second mission at the Emerald River on Groote Eylandt in 1921. During World War Two this mission was

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9 The Alice Springs Mission was moved to Arltunga in 1942 when a large war camp was established there. Arltunga is about 90 kilometres north-east of Alice Springs. In 1953 it was moved to its present site at Santa Teresa, about 70 kilometres south-east of Alice Springs (Wilson 1988: 14).
transferred to Angurugu in 1943. In 1925 the CMS commenced work at Oenpelli in Western Arnhem Land, and a post-war mission was opened at Numbulwar in 1952. In 1958 Umbakumba Station, which had been established on Groote Eylandt by Fred Gray in 1938, became a CMS mission (see Cole 1979, 1980, 1985 and Dewar 1989, 1992).

When the Methodist Mission began work in Arnhem Land in 1916, it was the fourth church organisation to bring Christianity to Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory10.

MISSION STATIONS, THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND THE ABORIGINAL CHURCH

The MOM in Arnhem Land, in common with other missions, established stations on a European model characterised by the development of industries. Mission stations, as the anthropologists Catherine and Ronald Berndt point out, were centres of white settlement and with them came many features of European culture. The Berndts went on to state that:

This is an important point to remember. These missionaries not only brought certain elements of their Christian doctrine, but also carried with them the essential ingredients of their own culture. Whether or not the missionaries desired it, the acceptance of Christianity by Aborigines thus involved their simultaneous adoption of European ways, at the expense of their own religion (Berndt and Berndt 1954: 192).

10 It should be noted that in 1937 the Presbyterian Church established an Aboriginal mission at Ernabella in the Pitjantjatjara area, south of the Northern Territory border. The Mission was established at the persuasion of Dr Charles Duguid who had travelled through the region and who was disturbed by reports of injustices to Aboriginal people (Edwards and Clarke 1988: 192-193). This Presbyterian mission, although situated in South Australia, later came to be linked with the Methodist Church and the Aboriginal church in Arnhem Land in the 1970s and 1980s in particular.
The development of industries was a major component of the mission policies. The Methodists envisaged a future in which their settlements would be transformed from a fully funded to a self-supporting economy. Mission stations, however, never fully achieved economic independence through their industrial work, although some of their products supplemented their income. As will be seen in this study industrial work took up a great deal of time, effort and resources, at the expense of other important mission work.

The personality of missionaries, particularly of superintendents, was a determining feature of the mission work. The Berndts noted that the successful functioning of missions depended greatly on the personality of the superintendent and on 'their tolerant and sympathetic understanding of Aboriginal custom and belief' (Berndt and Berndt 1954: 193). David McClay, who went to Milingimbi Mission as the first government employed teacher and principal of the school on this station from 1969 to 1980, argues that:

The motives and personalities of the individual missionaries are very important to an understanding of outworkings of the Mission, particularly in small isolated communities where one or two white people often come to exert considerable personal power and influence and particularly in those situations in which there was a policy vacuum (Personal communication, October 1995).

Mission stations were perceived as places which provided 'protection' and 'welfare' to the Aboriginal people. In addition to their missiological task of evangelisation of the Arnhem Land people, missionaries became engaged in philanthropic 'care' of the Aboriginal people. The Berndts stated in 1954 that:
The missions were acting as bulwarks against more unpleasant aspects of European and alien contact. They did demonstrate to the natives that all Europeans were not the same, and that some had more kindly intentions than others. Missionaries attended to the sick, the aged and the young (Berndt and Berndt 1954: 193).

The concepts of 'protection' and 'care' in the context of colonialism were imposed ideas. These were paternalistic assumptions which implied that Aboriginal people became dependent on missionaries and their establishments. Such presuppositions, however, left little room for acknowledgement of Aboriginal people's ability to fend for themselves. The mission stations were foreign institutions which were established in order to induce Aboriginal people to settle, so that missionaries could do their task of evangelism and propagating of Western civilisation. In this new context the people had to be provided and cared for. But acknowledgement must be made that prior to the advent of white people, the Aboriginal people had been protecting and caring for themselves for many millennia. Imposed technology and introduced laws by missionaries meant that traditional Aboriginal skills of fending for themselves, and Aboriginal law, were suppressed. Aboriginal people were made to feel dependent on the mission stations.

In spite of their foreign configurations, the mission stations provided the Aboriginal people with new experiences and knowledge to meet and cope with alien forces which rapidly impinged on them, particularly in the post-war years. The Aboriginal people adjusted to the new contexts because of their ability to learn and acquire new knowledge, and muster all their experiences, and employ these creatively and proactively for pragmatic purposes. Aboriginal people were not merely passive receptors of elements of a foreign culture, but also actively selected
new ideas and ways in order to use them in adjusting to the changing context in Arnhem Land.

As this study will demonstrate, in the post-war years the Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land were able to assert themselves in dealing with land rights issues. Furthermore, during the self-determination era in the 1970s, the Aboriginal people took their own initiative to return to their homelands and control aspects of the future development of their communities. The return to homelands also marked the decentralisation of Christian activities from mission stations, and the development of contextualised indigenous Christianity under the Aboriginal people's own control and leadership. The movement back to homelands will be discussed in chapter three.

As an extension of the Methodist Church of Australasia, the Methodist Missions in Arnhem Land formed a missionary church. In form and structure, this missionary church was in some ways a replica of the Western church. An issue to be investigated in this study is the identification of the gospel message with Western forms of Christianity and church structures. Aboriginal people were evangelised through these foreign Christian forms, and in becoming Christians they were expected to embrace these Western forms of Christianity. By the 1960s, theologically an Aboriginal church had begun to emerge. However, this embryonic indigenous church exercised its theological faith within the structure of the missionary church. As noted above this study will demonstrate that at the end of the missionary era, there was no Aboriginal church structurally, although theologically an active indigenous church had emerged. This emerging Aboriginal ekklesia was absorbed into the mainline Uniting Church in Australia in 1977.
This study comprises seven chapters. As the Methodist Mission and the emerging Aboriginal church constitute a part of the study of Christian missions globally, chapter one deals with some missiological elements in global perspective. It also concerns the development of Methodism in Australasia and its missions. Historical and missiological issues, as well as policy developments in the first 30 years of the Methodist work in Arnhem Land, are explored in chapter two. Chapter three investigates the post-war developments of the MOM, in the context of social, political and economic changes in Arnhem Land. The 1960s and the 1970s saw the expansion of the Methodist Mission’s industrial and commercial activities. Chapter four deals with these industrial and commercial enterprises, as well as different missiological approaches and issues related to industries and commerce. Chapter five concerns the relating of Christianity to Aboriginal cosmology and issues of contextualisation. Chapter six investigates the absorption of the emerging Aboriginal church into the mainstream church, and chapter seven draws together the main threads of the thesis. The epilogue provides a brief account of the development of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) in the post-missionary era in the late 1970s and 1980s as an indigenous church.
Chapter One

MISSIOLOGY AND METHODISM IN AUSTRALIA

This chapter sets the stage for the study. It focuses on issues which emerge in various historical contexts or epochs in the history of Christian expansion and missionary movement. As a study of missions and churches, this study is also in some aspects a study in missiology. The Methodist Mission in Arnhem Land is connected diachronically to various segments of history - Northern Territory history, Australian history, Methodist history and the history of Christianity and of the global missionary movement. All these components of Australian and global history in one way or another have had some impact on the Methodist Mission, and by implication on the emerging Aboriginal church. The task in this chapter is two-fold. Firstly, it discusses missiological perspectives which emerge in these broad historical contexts. It will in particular explore selected missiological perspectives and issues in connection with the history of missionary expansion in the nineteenth century, which coincided with Western colonialism. The second task is to place the study of the Methodist Mission in Arnhem Land in the specific historical context of Australian Methodism from its official inception in 1815 to steps initiated in 1915 to undertake the Mission in Arnhem Land.

It is helpful at the outset, by way of a prelude to the chapter and the study as a whole, to highlight some historical features which emerged in the course of the Christian missionary movement which began in Europe from the late 18th century and into the 19th century. Firstly, missionaries from various mission societies in Europe established
missions, guided and motivated by a variety of theologies and practices and their Western cosmology, with its concomitant beliefs and perceptions about colonised peoples (cf Bosch 1991: 183). Secondly, some missionaries demonstrated flexibility in their missiological thinking and approaches. As Brian Stanley, the British mission historian states, the missionaries' fundamental theological convictions were in practice modified, to a greater or lesser extent, by the impact of actual experiences of other societies (Stanley 1990: 158). Thirdly, while the evangelical concern to advance the gospel was the main objective, missionaries and their parent mission societies found themselves in circumstances in the mission field which resulted in adoption of differing policies for their missionary tasks (cf Stanley 1990: 91). As will be demonstrated in this study, the policies of missions either fostered or ignored the development of indigenous church leadership.

MISSIOLOGY

Missiology was once studied in Europe as a course in 'practical theology' in faculties of theology (Bosch 1991: 490-492). Missiology as a discipline in its own right, however, was developed in the 1960s and 1970s. It has evolved as an interdisciplinary area of study which embraces anthropology, theology and history. The interdisciplinary nature of missiology was developed as a result of the realisation that, as Tippett says, experience and academic studies should not only involve analysis but also synthesis (Tippett 1987: xii). Tippett argues that it is easy enough to define missiology in terms of its purposes, but no adequate definition can be offered of the discipline as a complex of interacting impulses. However, Tippett proposes this definition:
Missiology is defined as the academic discipline or science which researches, records and applies data relating to the biblical origin, the history (including the documentary materials), the anthropological principle and techniques and the theological base of the Christian mission (Tippett 1987: xiii).

The importance of missiology is the insight to mission in the present and the future gained from a study of the past. Significantly, in studying the various epochs of mission in the history of Christianity, Bosch states:

We do not do this for 'archaeological' purposes, that is, just to satisfy our curiosity about the way past generations perceived their missionary responsibility. Rather, we do it also, and primarily, with a view to getting a deeper insight into what mission might mean for us today. After all, every attempt at interpreting the past is indirectly an attempt at understanding the present and the future (Bosch 1991: 183).

Bosch continues: 'We are in need of a missiological agenda for theology rather than just a theological agenda for mission' (Bosch 1991: 494). In other words, theology of the church now needs to be informed and given direction by missiology for its mission.

According to Luzbetak the study of the theory of the mission of the church and of specific missions has been given a variety of names (Luzbetak 1989:12). For example, North American missiologists prefer church growth theory, and the British show preference for the theology of mission, while the French-speaking missiologists opt to use *science missionaire*.

Although the missiologists are informed by history, anthropology and theology, they are not necessarily historians, anthropologists and
theologians (Tippett 1987: xiii). Among well known mission historians are Max Warren (1967), Stephen Neill (1964, 1966) and Kenneth Latourette (1937-1945). A more recent and significant mission historian is the Briton Brian Stanley, whose important work is entitled, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (1990). Another recent important contribution to mission history is Timothy Yates' work, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century* (1994). The works of these mission historians are significant for understanding the history of Christian expansion, particularly to the colonised world, and the interaction between Western Christianity and the environment in which it was spread. In Australia, one of the first general, scholarly works to be written on mission history which covers 200 years of missionary contact with Aboriginal people is John Harris' book, *One Blood, 200 Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity: A Story of Hope* (1990).

Luzbetak (1989), Tippett (1987) and Whiteman (1983) are mission anthropologists, whose works are particularly helpful in coming to grips with theoretical understandings of cross-cultural mission methods and models. In the Aboriginal context, two people who are

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1 Warren's work *Social History and Christian Mission* (1967) is still a classic for the study of mission histories. Neill's books, *A History of Christian Missions* (1964) and *Colonialism and Christian Missions* (1966), are important works in understanding the expansion of Christianity to the colonised world. The latter work is a comprehensive appraisal of the missionary relationship to colonialism. Latourette's monumental *History of the Expansion of Christianity* (seven volumes, 1937-1945) covers all aspects of the life of Church and Christian missions showing the two-way interaction between Christianity and different environments in which it spread. This seven-volume work struck an optimistic note in the advance of Christianity and exercised a profound influence in missionary circles (cf Bosch 1991:334).

2 While J. Harris' work provides a history of 200 years of Aboriginal encounter with Christianity in Australia as a whole, other mission historians have been working on the missionary history in Arnhem Land, for example, Cole (1979, 1985), Dewar (1989, 1992), Hedrick (1973) and McKenzie (1976).
knowledgeable in mission anthropology are Bos (1988) and Thompson (1985 [1982]). Bos’ work is a study of the religious revival phenomenon that occurred at Galiwinku (Elcho Island) in 1979, which was undertaken in the context of cultural and religious changes occurring at Galiwinku at the time. Thompson’s book is an anthropological and theological study of Aboriginal initiation ceremonies (*bora*) and the church at Lockhart River in Queensland. This work brings anthropological insights to the contextual theological themes and an understanding of indigenous church, which Thompson develops in a report on the emerging Aboriginal theology.

The works of two mission strategists, Roland Allen of England (1912) and Vincent J Donovan of the USA (1982, 1990), have offered a critique of mission models and methods (see below). An important mission theologian is Bosch, a South African, whose work *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (1991), is perhaps the most comprehensive study in mission theology to have appeared in the 1990s.

CRITIQUE OF MISSION MODELS

In the period of Christian expansion through the missionary movement, which usually accompanied Western colonialism\(^3\), the mission model presupposed movement from ‘pagan uncivilised culture’ to ‘civilised culture’, which was equated with Western civilisation. Mission stations were established with schools, health clinics or hospitals, and in most

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\(^3\) In some cases the missions preceded the imperial powers (cf Bowen 1977: 556). For example in Papua New Guinea the missions began work in the country before the German and British hoisted their flags. The London Missionary Society (LMS) was the first mission to be established in Papua in 1872, before it became a British protectorate in 1884, about the same time as Germany took control of New Guinea, about eight years after the Methodist Overseas Missions had started work there in 1875.
cases industries and commerce. The local people were made to assume that they had to move up to the level of missionaries and their civilisation, in the process of becoming Christians.

Allen (1912 [1968]) and Donovan (1982) are two missiologists in particular who have made a critique of the mission model. Allen was the first person to attack head-on the Western churches and mission agencies, and their mission models and methods (cf Bosch 1991: 379). His book *Missionary Methods, St Paul's or Ours?*, although published in 1912, is still influential in missiological studies and reflection. Allen alerted his readers to the differences between St Paul's New Testament missionary methods and those of Western contemporary mission agencies. Allen suggested that the difference was that St Paul founded 'churches' while the missionaries founded 'missions' with foreign organisational structures. The importance and the durability of the influence of his work is reflected in the fact that significant missiological works as recent as those by Newbigin (1992), Bosch (1991) and Luzbetak (1989) have all been influenced by Allen's missionary views.

Allen argued that missionaries were putting confidence in their mission models and methods, and not in the Holy Spirit. Bosch thus points out that Allen was one of the first mission theologians to have stressed the missionary dimension of pneumatology in the sense of trusting the Holy Spirit to look after indigenous churches (Bosch 1991: 40). According to Luzbetak, Allen was a revolutionary in many ways. It was Allen's conviction that missionaries ought to imitate Paul, the New Testament missionary, by handing over authority and responsibility of

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4 Pneumatology is a theological term for the study of the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit.
missionary churches to indigenous leaders as soon as possible. He decried paternalism and ecclesiastical colonialism, and emphasised the role of the Holy Spirit (Luzbetak 1989: 12).

Donovan’s book Christianity Rediscovered (1982) is a much more recent critique of the mission model, in which he also develops a theology of mission out of a particular context. As with other missiologists, his thinking has been influenced by Roland Allen’s work (Donovan 1982: 32-37). As a missionary at Loliondo Catholic Mission in Maisailand in Africa in the 1960s, Donovan was highly critical of the traditional mission compound model, arguing that in the long history of the African mission, one of the most static and paralysing ideas has been that of the mission compound and that a permanent mission establishment necessarily carried with it the atmosphere of foreignness and of colonialism (Donovan 1982: 100-101).

MISSION PARADIGMS

Bosch (1991) provides a comprehensive discussion of mission paradigms, from the New Testament times to the present epoch, which have operated in Christian history. He has identified six major paradigms: the apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity; the Hellenistic paradigm of the patristic period; the medieval Roman Catholic paradigm; the Protestant (Reformation) paradigm; the modern Enlightenment paradigm; and the emerging Ecumenical paradigm (Bosch

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5 ‘Primitive Christianity’ refers to the ‘world’ of the first century Christians, who were predominantly Jewish, with their ethos deeply rooted in the Hebrew Old Testament.

6 Hellenistic Christianity’ refers to the ‘world’ of the Greek or gentile Christians, of the second and subsequent centuries, which was markedly different from the ‘world’ of primitive Christianity. Gentiles were non-Jewish people.
1991: 181-182). Only the two latter paradigms will be discussed in detail in the next two sections, as they have implications for this study.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT, AND COLONIAL AND MISSIONARY EXPANSION

Although evangelicals of the 18th and 19th centuries generally reacted against the Enlightenment and its religious temper, they borrowed ideas from it (Stanley 1990: 62), and as Bosch says this movement unleashed an enormous amount of Christian energy which was, in part, channelled into overseas missionary efforts (Bosch 1991: 334). Stanley also states that the thought-world of evangelical missionaries and missionary supporters was a strange amalgam of distinctively biblical preoccupations and other assumptions which owed more to Enlightenment philosophy than to Christian theology (Stanley 1990: 63).

The legacies of two other preceding movements, the Renaissance and the Reformation - the one cultural, the other ecclesiastical - still remained in Western Christianity. But the Enlightenment represented a shift. Whereas the other two developments were oriented backward, the Enlightenment's orientation, by contrast, was decidedly forward and optimistic (Bosch 1991: 334). Progress and optimism were characteristics of the Enlightenment, which the colonisers and missionaries alike embraced in their advance to 'civilise and Christianise' the colonised.

1. The three 'Rs': Reason, Revival and Revolution

It will be seen below that Methodism came into being in Britain during the Enlightenment, a period of history in Europe which was
characterised by what can be called the three ‘Rs’: Reason, Revival and Revolution (cf Dowley, et al 1977: 433; Cragg 1970). Although the Enlightenment was an 18th century philosophical movement, its beginnings date back to the mid-17th century. This era can be said to have spanned from 1650 to 1789. The dates are significant. René Descartes, a founding father of European rationalism, and known for his dictum, *cogito ergo sum* (‘I think, therefore I am’), died in 1650 (Brown 1977: 480); and in 1789 the French Revolution broke out (see Doyle 1989 [paperback 1990]).

Doyle argues that the French Revolution was an outcome of the Enlightenment, and as he states, the impetus of the French Revolution had been intellectual far more than social or economic, its message was change, ‘and it thrilled men of education far beyond the borders of France’ (Doyle 1989: 392, 393). The separation between the church and the state implied that the missionary expansion and Western imperialism were two separate movements, although it is now an established unquestioned orthodoxy that the Bible and the flag went hand in hand as colonial powers sought the subjugation of the indigenous people and the territorial extension of the imperialist power (Stanley 1990: 11, 12).

The evangelical revivals were the driving force behind the missionary movement. Bosch states that three factors converged to effect a spiritual change in the English-speaking world, a change that was to have a profound influence on the missionary development. These factors were the Great Awakenings in the North American colonies, the evangelical revival of Anglicanism and the birth of Methodism (Bosch 1991: 277). Revival movements, both in Britain and on the continent,
originated in the impulse to return to the model of the first century Christianity. In doing this the revivalists were following the 16th century Reformation tradition and precedent. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, who is said to have towered above his evangelical contemporaries, in fact stood theologically within the Reformation movement (cf Kerr 1966: 193).

While revival movements characteristically emphasised a personal religious experience, they were also deeply concerned for mission and evangelism, as well as Christian Social Mission (Linder 1977: xviii). For example, the Moravian church in Germany became one of the most intensely missionary-minded in modern history. The Moravians in fact were influential in John Wesley’s Evangelical revival in Britain. It should be said that contrary to the generally accepted view that Methodists concentrated on the ‘salvation of the soul’ (cf Bosch 1991: 278), and that John Wesley was theologically ‘conservative to the core’, his humanitarian interests made Methodism a far more radical force for social change than its founder had anticipated (Forell 1966: 274). In the mission fields the Methodists were to hold the ‘soul-winning concern’ and the ‘social/humanitarian mission’ in tension.

The British missionary movement developed during the period of history in which European interest in and knowledge of the non-European world had increased greatly. British East India Company rule in India had expanded to Asia by the second half of the 18th century. The journals of Captain James Cook’s three voyages between 1768 and 1780 had been published, and this created public interest in the ‘primitive’ peoples of Australasia and the Pacific. In this sense, as Stanley argues, the British missionary awakening had undeniable connections with British
expansion, both in terms of geographical exploration and growth of British power (Stanley 1991: 58).

2. Assumptions

Western Christian writers of the era argued that providence, through scientific and technological advantages of the Enlightenment, had endowed them with means which were essential for the missionary obligation to discharge the Great Commission. The sense of evangelical responsibility to Christianise the 'heathen' was also closely associated with Western civilisation. Stanley states that, for most of the 19th century, British Christians believed that the missionary was called to propagate the imagined benefits of Western civilisation alongside the Christian message (Stanley 1990: 157). This close link between Christianity and civilisation was based on a number of assumptions. Three of these may be noted here. The first was that missionaries assumed that the cultures they were infiltrating were not religiously neutral, but that they were under 'the control of the Evil One' (Stanley 1991: 161). ‘Heathen’ societies were the domain of Satan in all their aspects: religion, economics, politics, public morals, the arts, and all that is encompassed by the term culture.

The second underlying assumption was the conviction, especially in 19th century Britain, that God, in his providence, had chosen the Western nations because of their unique qualities, to be standard-bearers of His cause even to the uttermost ends of the world (Bosch 1991: 298). This conviction, commonly referred to as the notion of 'manifest destiny' (Bosch 1991: 298), was not strongly identifiable in the early decades on the 19th century. It gradually developed, however,
and reached its pinnacle during the period 1880-19207. This era has been referred to as the ‘heyday of colonialism’ (Neill 1964: 322ff) or the ‘high imperial era’ (Bosch 1991: 304).

Thirdly, the confidence of Western Christians in the belief that their own culture was superior to other cultures, rested on the implicit faith in human progress which was one of the legacies of the Enlightenment to Christian thought (Stanley 1990: 161). Before Darwin’s theory of evolution, the thinkers of Scottish Enlightenment had postulated a theory of social development. This theory hypothesised a progression from a primitive or hunting form of subsistence to pastoral and agrarian forms of economy, eventually reaching the highest or commercial stage of civilisation.

3. The gospel and non-Western cultures

The assumptions that non-Western cultures were under Satan (Stanley 1990: 63-67) and that Western Christian culture was a model for all peoples, meant that missionaries went to mission fields with a tabula rasa assumption and mentality. The missionaries did not believe that the indigenous people had religious beliefs which were worth respecting. As a consequence many missionaries made little effort to create dialogue between Christianity and non-Western religions and cultures. Their stance was ethnocentric, and where this was carried too far, a cultural void and loss of creativity occurred. Tippett made this observation:

If we get into this kind of a situation where evangelists dispose of all cultural values and creative arts on the presupposition that

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7 It was during this period that the missions began work in the Northern Territory.
they are all incompatible with Christianity because they have been used previously for heathen purposes... we find ourselves with creative people who can no longer create, and would be participators who become nonparticipant, and before long cultural voids we have created begin to be felt (Tippett 1987: 335).

On the whole the missionaries, with some exceptions, took an issue-oriented approach in their encounter with the cultures of the colonised peoples (cf Newbigin 1992 [1989]: 18). On 'mission fields' they created issues out of certain cultural elements which were non-issues as far as indigenous people were concerned, and they asked questions which the people had not raised. For example, polygamy, which was an accepted custom for many indigenous peoples, became a contentious issue for missionaries.

As noted earlier in this chapter many missionaries modified their prior assumptions in the light of their experiences as missionaries. By the 1850s there was gradual decline among some missionaries of Christian confidence in Western cultural values. They were now more hesitant about reproducing in their converts cultural patterns which might be counter-productive to their evangelistic work. There was a new willingness on the part of the missionaries to perceive that cultures in which they were working were in many ways closer to the world of the Bible than their own cultures (cf Stanley 1990: 165-168; Neill 1964: 325-396).

4. *The ‘three Cs’ and the ‘three Ss’*

In 1828, John Philip, superintendent of the London Missionary Society at the Cape of Good Hope, wrote:
While our missionaries...are everywhere scattering the seeds of civilisation, social order, and happiness, they are, by the most unexceptional means, extending British interests, British influence, and the British empire. Wherever the missionary places his standard among a savage tribe, their prejudices against colonial government give way (Quoted in Bosch 1991: 305).

In 1857 David Livingstone delivered a public address in the Senate House of the University of Cambridge, and in conclusion said:

I beg to direct your attention to Africa; I know that in a few years I shall be cut off in that country, which is now open; do not let it be shut again! I go back to Africa to try to make an open path for commerce and Christianity; do you carry out the work which I have begun. I LEAVE IT WITH YOU (Quoted in Stanley 1990: 70).

The two statements above show that Christianity, civilisation and commerce were intertwined in the 19th century missionary enterprise. Although the slogan of 'commerce and Christianity' in history had been closely associated with David Livingstone, the ideology is not original to him. It was already identifiable from the very start of the British missionary movement. In Africa it became an anti-slavery ideology. Commercial companies were established in the 18th century for the abolition of the slave trade, the civilisation of Africa and the introduction of the gospel there (Stanley 1990: 71; cf Brown 1977: 556; Neill 1966: 425-428). Commerce was used as a method of promoting Western civilisation and a means of propagating the gospel. When evangelicals gave voice to their belief in 'the regenerative role of lawful commerce within the providential order, they were revealing themselves to be true children of the Enlightenment' (Stanley 1990: 71). Social philosophers of the time did not see any contradiction between spheres of economics, politics and theology (cf Padilla 1977: 612).
During the ‘high era’ of colonialism (1880-1920), Christianity, commerce and civilisation, became the axiom of the colonial and missionary enterprises, and according to Bosch these came to be known as the ‘three Cs’ of colonialism (Bosch 1991: 305; cf Hiebert 1987: 104). It followed then that the establishment of mission stations, industrial and commercial activities, and social welfare work including education and health, virtually became the missiological principle in the late 19th century right up to World War Two, and as this study will show in the case of Arnhem Land, right up to the 1960s and 1970s.

Earlier, in 1854, Henry Venn had expounded three missiological principles for development of indigenous churches. These came to be known as the ‘three Ss’: self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating (Neill 1979 [1964]: 260-161; Tippett 1987: 85-87; Bosch 1991: 307-308). Venn was the Secretary of the Church Missionary Society in London. Ahead of his time, as early as the 1840s Venn was advocating the concept of indigenous churches, and proposed that these churches could be self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. Venn spoke in terms of the ‘euthanasia of a mission’. The ideal was that once the mission had brought a church into existence, it might make itself die out. In theory, the missionaries would then move on to the unevangelised regions.

During the ‘high era’ of colonialism, however, the ‘three Cs’ pushed the ‘three Ss’\textsuperscript{8} to the background. The ‘three Ss’ principle was never

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\textsuperscript{8} It should be noted that since the 1930s, but gathering momentum in the 1950s and the 1960s, a fourth ‘S’ had emerged: self-theologising (Bosch 1991: 453). This was largely the initiative of indigenous theologians, especially Indians and Africans. Arnhem Land Christians would begin to self-theologise in the 1970s and 1980s. In other colonised regions the three ‘Cs’ as colonial impositions were being questioned or reassessed by the 1960s. In comparison the three ‘Cs’ intensified their dominance in Arnhem Land during the welfare/assimilation era until the 1970s. In fact they would take priority over the three ‘Ss’.
formally abandoned, but simply forgotten by the new 'militant' missionary force, in advancing Western Christendom and civilisation to the colonised geographical frontiers (Bosch 1991: 307).

In 1987 missionary anthropologist Tippett, who did extensive work in Fiji and the Solomon Islands, wrote:

Even though this theory [the 'three Ss'] was widely accepted by mission Boards and field missions, it was very seldom tried. Missionary paternalism and their lack of faith in the ability of their converts to take control prevented their letting go. This can be documented in scores of mission fields and may be taken as a general weakness of missions in the colonial age. Even after a century or more of Christian instruction very few indigenous churches came into being (Tippett 1987: 85).

5. Missionaries and race

Philosophical and scientific thought and technological advancement, which the Enlightenment generated, made Western civilisation and religion appear to many as superior to other cultures and religions. In the era of the colonial and missionary expansion this sense of superiority was also accompanied by Western ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism occurred in many forms, for instance, in paternalism, triumphalism and racism (cf Luzbetak 1988: 65). These 'isms' were generally intertwined. Paternalism implied that indigenous peoples of the colonised world were incapable of decision-making and taking care of themselves. This view seemed to have been confirmed when missionaries were confronted in the mission 'field' by 'conspicuous failures' of indigenous leadership (cf Stanley 1990: 163). Triumphalism was the conviction that ultimately Western Christianity and civilisation were going to triumph over indigenous world-views.
Connected with these beliefs was racial superiority of colonisers, which was sometimes reinforced by scientific, or pseudo-scientific beliefs, which often contributed to racist views.

Enlightenment philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), in particular, depicted the peoples of the colonised world as 'noble savages'. Descriptions by Captain James Cook and others of the South Pacific Islanders, as the 'sum of all earthly charm and beauty', were no doubt influential in forming Rousseau's views. Such views were, however, no evidence of the fact that Westerners regarded others as their equals. The 'noble savage' of Rousseau was rather a 'charming child, a tabula rasa, unspoiled by civilisation and as yet innocent and unable to perpetrate evil' (Bosch 1991: 288).

In the 19th century, social anthropology in Europe was beginning to emerge as an academic discipline. But researchers did nothing in helping Christians to adopt a more sympathetic stance toward other people and their cultures. Much of the late 19th century anthropology was, on the contrary, devoted to expounding the principle of 'scientific racism', which threatened the Christian concept of the essential unity of humanity. The exponents of 'scientific racism' regarded the attempts of missionaries to uplift the savages as futile (Stanley 1990: 162). Missionaries were not immune from the racial prejudice which had become entrenched in society by the end of the 19th century, although many of them refused to accept any notion of genetic inferiority as advocated by the exponents of 'scientific racism'.
THE ECUMENICAL ERA

The Ecumenical era takes Christianity into the 20th century, during an epoch in which what Bosch calls the Ecumenical mission paradigm emerges (Bosch 1991: 368-507). Ecumenism in the 20th century sense began with a shared concern by the churches for evangelism, and a desire to rediscover their common denominational heritage, and their wider unity in Christ (Buchanan 1977: 634). As a consequence of this new move, the first International Missionary Conference was held at Edinburgh in 1910. The Edinburgh conference marked the end of an epoch, but it also pointed towards a new age - the era of liberation, when the world-wide movement that had taken shape through the missionary work was to emerge independently. It pointed to the displacement of Christianity from its traditional European centre, which was entering a 'post-Christian era', to a new world beyond Europe (Padilla 1977: 613). It needs to be said that up to the 1950s, ecumenical developments were only in terms of missions. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, ecumenical cooperation and union among churches were also becoming common.

1. The Ecumenical movements

Three main movements developed as a result of the 1910 Edinburgh conference. The first was the formation of the International Missionary Council (IMC) in 1921, which held its second meeting in Jerusalem in 1928. By this time Christianity had come to be seen as a world religion. At the Jerusalem missionary conference the 'parity' between old and younger churches was brought to the fore as never before (Padilla 1977:
633). At the next IMC conference, held at Madras in 1938, the emergence of a global Christian community was reflected by the fact that delegates were from nearly 50 countries, many of them from non-Western countries. However, it was the post-war IMC meeting held at Whitby in Canada in 1947 which was confronted with the need to break down the distinction between the ‘older and younger churches’, so that the church might face its global responsibility together. The call was made to shift from missionary paternalism to partnership in mission (Padilla 1977: 633). The second movement was the ‘Faith and Order’ movement, which held its first world conference at Lausanne in 1927. Issues addressed by this movement were the questions of church union, as well as doctrinal problems which had divided the Protestant churches. The third strand originating from Edinburgh was ‘Life and Work’, with the objective of churches uniting in service to the world. The ‘Life and Work’ movement took shape after World War One, and its first conference was held at Stockholm in 1925, followed by a second at Oxford in 1937. The Oxford conference was significant, as initiatives taken for wider union led eventually to the formation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Amsterdam in 1948 (Buchanan 1977: 634-635).

There was, however, reluctance by a number of mission agencies to enter into partnership in mission with the emerging indigenous churches, even in the post-colonial situation. This explains a call for a moratorium in the 1970s on the sending of missionaries from the West to the indigenous churches (Padilla 1977: 633; Stanley 1990: 27). The call for the moratorium was first issued by John Gatu, a Kenyan Presbyterian clergyman in 1971. The debate that followed, especially among conservative evangelicals was characterised by more heat than
light (Padilla 1977: 636). For its part the All-Africa Conference of Churches added heat by adopting the moratorium at its meeting at Nairobi in 1972, stating 'should the moratorium cause missionary agencies to crumble, the African church could have performed a service in redeeming God's people in the Northern Hemisphere from a distorted view of The Mission of the church in the world' (Quoted in Padilla 1977: 636). There was, however, some light added at the International Congress on World Evangelism held at Lausanne in 1974, when the congress recognised in its covenant that a reduction of foreign missionaries might sometimes be necessary to facilitate the national church's growth in self-reliance and release resources for unevangelised areas (Padilla 1977: 636). The articulation of the views of indigenous Christians, and the propagation and interpretation of the new contextual theologies owed a great deal to the role of the WCC as a global forum for theological exchange (cf Stanley 1990: 26). The development of the indigenous contextual theologies is explained below.

2. From noncontextualisation to contextualisation

Hiebert (1987) states that roughly from 1880 to 1920, the period which embraces the heyday of colonialism (Neill, 1964) or high era of imperialism (Bosch, 1991), most missionaries rejected the beliefs and practices of the people they served as 'pagan', as has been seen in the preceding discussion relating to the Enlightenment missionary/colonial epoch. Hiebert sees this period as coinciding with the era of noncontextualisation (1800-1950), in which Protestant churches and missionaries by and large implemented the doctrine of *tabula rasa*. This doctrine maintained that there was nothing in non-Christian cultures on which Christianity could build, and therefore, every aspect of the
traditional non-Christian culture had to be destroyed before Christianity could be built up (Hiebert 1987: 104; cf Bosch 1991: 427). It should be noted, however, that not all Westerners wanted to relegate or destroy indigenous cultures. This reluctance for example, is implied in W Robertson Smith’s statement in 1889:

No positive religion that has moved man has been able to start with a *tabula rasa* to express itself as if religion was beginning for the first time; in form if not in substance, the new system must be in contact all along the line with the old ideas and practices which it finds in its possession. A new scheme of faith can find a hearing only by appealing to religious instincts and susceptibilities that already exist in its audience, and it cannot reach these without taking account of the traditional forms in which religious feeling is embodied, and without speaking a language which men accustomed to these forces can understand (Quoted in Hodgson 1980: 82).

The Christian doctrine of incarnation is inherently contextual. But this essential contextual nature of the faith has not been recognised until fairly recently. For many centuries every deviation from declared orthodoxy was viewed in terms of heterodoxy or even heresy (Bosch 1991: 421). Many theologies which developed in the West were an outcome of the attempt to deal with the contextual nature of the Christian message in various epochs. Christianity had therefore been contextualised in various orthodoxies and heterodoxies in the Western cultural contexts, before the 19th century missionary expansion. However, by the time the large-scale Western imperial and colonial expansion began, Western Christians failed to acknowledge the fact that their theologies were culturally conditioned, and missionaries generally assumed that their theologies were ‘supracultural and universally valid’ (Bosch 1991: 448; cf Newbigin 1989: 142). Since Western culture was implicitly regarded as Christian, it had to be
exported with Western Christianity.

Missiologists and mission historians such as Bosch (1987), Hiebert (1987) and Stanley (1990) imply that noncontextualisation falls within the Enlightenment mission paradigm and Bosch explicitly discusses contextualisation as a new missiological model in the emerging Ecumenical mission paradigm (Bosch 1991: 420-432). Contextualisation, both as a process and a missiological methodology (Puloka 1987: 82), is currently one of the most widely used concepts in missiological circles (Bosch 1991: 447). It is also perhaps one of the most widely debated terms in the post-missionary era cross-cultural mission. Various opinions are discussed in such works as Newbiggin (1992 [1989], Hodgson and Kothare (1990), Costa (ed. 1988), Hiebert (1989) and Bevans (1985). Comprehensive discussions of contextualisation as a missiological model are subsumed in Bosch (1991) and Luzbetak (1989).

The term ‘contextualisation’ was first used in the early 1970s by the World Council of Churches (Bosch 1991: 421; Costa 1988: xiii), and was first made public (Hesselgrave and Romen 1989: 28) in the publication Ministry in Context: The Third Mandate Programme of the Theological Education Fund (1970-1971) [1972]. Bosch (1991) and Luzbetak (1989) have identified various types of contextualisation as a missiological or theological model. But two which are relevant for indigenous theologising in their contexts are first, the indigenisation or inculturation model and second, the revolutionary model (cf Bosch 1991: 421). These are discussed below.
3. Indigenous Theologies: the fourth ‘S’

The gospel with Western cultural wrappings has been deposited with indigenous peoples through missionary and colonial expansion. Western Christianity has made its impact and indigenous theologians and churches have been responding to this. Stanley states that one of the highest priorities for the national churches is to unwrap the gospel from its alien cultural packaging and develop expressions of the Christian faith which are genuinely indigenous to their particular cultural context (Stanley 1990: 157). In this process they have developed a fourth ‘S’ - self-theologising, to add to the three ‘Ss’ - self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating principle - which Venn advanced in the 1840s. Self-theologising was begun between 1930 and 1960 by Indian and Asian theologians from ‘mission churches’, and this set the stage for contextual theologies in the colonised countries, gathering momentum in the 1960s (Bosch 1991: 452; Hiebert 1987: 106-108; Stanley 1990: 23).

As noted above indigenous contextual theologies comprise two broad missiological components: inculturation and liberation. Inculturation is a method of allowing the gospel to take root in the local soil: as Bosch states ‘the Christian faith must be rethought, reformulated and

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9 Tongan theologian Sione Havea said: ‘Theology is only a vehicle that may be used in discovering God in His hiddenness. We do not worship theology, but we use theology like using a torch to help us find directions for knowing, worshipping and adoring our God of salvation and of revelation’ (Missionary Review, December 1977: 3-4).

10 This missiological term is not to be confused with two anthropological words *enculturation* (the process of learning a way of life, closely linked to socialisation, the process by which one is incorporated into a society) and *acculturation* (the process by which culture is transmitted through continuous direct contact between groups of people with different cultures [Whiteman 1983: 477]).
lived anew in each human culture, and this must be done in a vital way, in depth and right to the cultures' roots' (Bosch 1991: 452). To this Luzbetak adds that the 'most important key to contextualisation will always be the soul of the local community - the local ways, values, needs and traditions' (Luzbetak 1989: 81). Inculturation is therefore engaged in interaction between culture, traditional religion and Christianity, in a positive manner, in order to arrive at contextual indigenous theologies.

Liberation theology (not to be confused with Western liberal theologies), on the other hand, grapples with the social, economic, political and related justice issues. It is a revolutionary 'counter-hegemonic' theology, as contrasted to modern Western theologies which are evolutionary in their philosophy, and are therefore oriented towards an upholding of the status quo, even if in an adapted form (Bosch 1991: 423, 432-439; Thistlethwaite and Engel 1990: 5-7; Gutierrez 1973: 25-27).

The WCC made a distinction between indigenisation [inculturation] and contextualisation, as is illustrated by this statement:

Indigenisation [inculturation] tends to be used in the sense of responding to the Gospels in terms of a traditional culture. Contextualisation, while not ignoring this, takes into account the process of secularism, technology and the struggle for human justice, which characterises the historical moment of nations in the Third World (Quoted in Costa 1988: xii).

This study, however, argues that indigenisation and involvement in social ethical issues emerging from contemporary social and technological contexts, both come under contextualisation. In other words, this study contends that contextualisation entails two aspects:
indigenisation which involves relating Christianity to indigenous cosmology; and being engaged in relating Christianity to social ethical issues in the contemporary social, economic and political contexts. In Arnhem Land contextualisation of Christianity is to be understood in terms of the two elements proposed here. These two aspects fall into the ethnographic and liberation models of contextualisation noted in the introduction. Missionaries and the Aboriginal people came to be involved in relating the gospel to Aboriginal cosmology, while simultaneously becoming engaged in social ethical issues relating to mining and land rights.

Contextualisation, whether in Western Christianity or indigenous Christianity, demonstrates a plurality of theologies. This has been a recognition of the development of many theologies, which presupposes plurality of unique cultures, which also means as Bosch states, 'a farewell to a Eurocentric approach' (Bosch 1991: 452). Differences in theologies have emerged because each theology has its own frame of reference from which it operates, although it may draw on other theologies and Christian traditions in an ecumenical sense.

In spite of theological diversity, Western and indigenous theologies have in common their faith in Christ. However, interpretation and application of the belief and perception of Christ in indigenous theologies, which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, differ greatly and even radically from Western theologies. Indigenous theologians interpret Christ from within their cultural framework, 'from below' and 'from the underside of history'. For example, MM Thomas, a lay Indian theologian, advocates 'Christ-Centred Syncreticism', while the Japanese Kosuke Koyama interprets Christ through his 'Waterbuffalo
Theology' (Hesselgrave and Rommen 1989: 70-85). Latin American 'liberation theologians' see Christ as taking a 'preferential option for the poor' and the oppressed (Bosch 1991: 435), and the Minjung Theology of Korea\textsuperscript{11} assists people to translate their Christian faith into their socio-political situation. A more politically radical theology is South African theology, a variant of 'African theology' but which emerged as 'black theology' in the 1970s. The black theology of South Africa was influenced by the black theology of the USA, which was the theological counterpart to the secular Black Power movement which emerged in the 1960s (Stanley 1990: 23). 'Black theologians' of South Africa and North America\textsuperscript{12} demonstrate their belief in Christ in their struggle against racism. Among the less known theologies is the Pacific Theology, with its own variants arising out of the beliefs of various Island groups (cf Trompf 1987). Trompf says that theologians from this region 'are well aware that Christianity has usually arrived as part of the larger parcel of colonialism, and they know they must uncover the partially obscured truths of the Gospel and avoid being duped' (Trompf 1987: 7). Trompf quotes a Papua New Guinean lawyer, Bernard Narokobi as saying:

\begin{quote}
[T]he Pacific world has been invaded by a huge tidal wave from the West in the form of colonisation and Christianisation. Like any tidal wave, the West came mercilessly, with all the force and power, toppling over our earth, destroying our treasures, depositing some rich soil, but also leaving behind much rubbish (Quoted in Trompf 1987: 7).
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{11} See Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History (1983), edited by the Commission on Theological Concerns of Christian Conference of Asia. Minjung means 'people' or 'the mass of the people'. Minjung theology is therefore a 'theology of the people', which grew out of the Christian experiences in the political struggle for justice.

\textsuperscript{12} Black theology in North America represents theologies which are regarded as 'Third World' in developed industrialised 'First Worlds'.


Pacific Island theologians not only seek to express their universal Christian faith in their particular religio-socio-economic and political contexts, but they also search for culturally relevant symbols to identify Christ in the Pacific context. This latter point is illustrated in ‘coconut theology’ developed by Sione Havea of Tonga, in which he poses the question, if Christ was born in the Pacific would he have said ‘I am the bread of life or I am the coconut of life?’ (Prior 1993: 31-40; cf Kadiba 1987: 46).

Other emerging indigenous theologies include the Maori Theology of New Zealand, the theologies of the indigenous or the ‘first nation’ peoples of North America and Canada, and more significantly from the point of view of this study is the emerging Aboriginal Theology (cf Pattel-Gray and Trompf 1993).

Reactions of the indigenous theologies, and black theologies within countries such as South Africa and the USA, have been in many cases quite varied and forceful, against Western colonialism and Western Christianity. However, it needs to be said that there have also been proactive developments. In other words, non-Western theologies not only react to mission and Western theologies, they are also proactive developments to address contextual issues. Three points may be made in this regard. Firstly, indigenous theologians not only deal with the past legacies of Western colonisation and christianisation, but also with social justice issues which emanate from neo-colonial oppression and

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13 Prior (1993: 31) says this about the significance of the coconut to the Pacific people: 'The development of Coconut theology rests on the fact that the coconut is fundamental to the life of the Pacific Islands. The coconut can be found on almost every island, and has been and remains today a resource for satisfying of a wide variety of peoples' needs.'
exploitation. Indigenous theologians often act as the conscience of their respective nations. Secondly, as contextual theologians work to undo the gospel from Western wrappings, they are simultaneously endeavouring to rediscover local people's traditional history, religion and spirituality, and culture, in order to translate the gospel or integrate it with their cosmologies. Use of people's stories, imagery and symbolism which are familiar and relevant to local people are a method used by contextual theologians. Thirdly, through the ecumenical movement indigenous theologians have participated in partnership with Western theologians in discussions relating to global mission in the 20th century in the framework of the new ecumenical paradigm for mission. Indigenous churches and theologians are conscious that they are members of the worldwide church, and an emerging feature of this new mission paradigm is the sharing of indigenous spiritual and theological discoveries with others, in a 'new ecumenism' of missiological venture (cf Kadiba 1992).

All of the foregoing has implications for the study in Arnhem Land. It is a contention in this study that missionaries in Arnhem Land consciously or unconsciously operated from a number of frames of reference. These include Christian scriptures and traditions; the Enlightenment world views and the colonial and missionary movement legacies of the 19th century; Methodist and ecumenical frames of reference; missionaries' own frames of reference, and those of the contemporary white Australian society. All these added to a complex interactive situation, and it is against this background that the Methodist work and Aboriginal church leadership are investigated. The Methodist mission work began in Arnhem Land during the high era of global colonialism (1880-1920), which means that legacies of preconceived Western assumptions about
METHODISM AND FOREIGN MISSIONS

Methodism was a product of the Enlightenment and in particular of the evangelical revival movements in Europe, of the ‘three Rs’ - reason, revival, revolution. Methodism did not begin as a church, but as a society. It sprang up within the Church of England, and John Wesley (1703-1791) the founder, was determined that it should never separate from it. But by the time of his death in 1791, Methodism was already emerging as a church. The Church of England's inability to accommodate Methodism and the desire of the Methodists to remain independent, eventually led to the severance of Methodism from the Church of England after Wesley's death (Cragg 1970: 150-151; cf Wood 1977: 450; Davis 1963: 128-129; Udy 1974: 5).

The revivals of the 18th century, especially the Wesleyan renewal in Britain, brought into being one of the notable developments in the history of Christianity: the modern Protestant missionary movement. Out of the evangelical and pietistic ‘awakenings’ in Europe came new efforts to organise Protestant missionary activities which in the 19th century swelled to major proportions (Linder 1977: xx). A number of evangelical missionary societies were formed, foremost among them the Baptist Missionary Society (1792), the London Missionary Society - an interdenominational venture (1795) - and the Church Missionary Society (1799).

The desire for evangelism became a consuming passion for John Wesley;
hence his dictum 'the whole world is my parish'. This had more than one meaning. It included a missionary vision. However, it was left to Thomas Coke (1747-1814), Wesley's lieutenant, and others 'to translate the universalism of Wesley's theology into a policy of expansion' (Bollen 1973: 10). Coke is remembered for giving the Methodist movement a commitment to evangelise the non-whites (Dowley et al, 1977: 476). As early as 1783 he drew up and circulated *A Plan of the Society for Establishment Among the Heathen*, a document which 'spoke the language of the day and produced striking effects' (Burton 1955: 13; cf Stanley 1990: 56). In 1786 the Wesleyan Conference approved Coke's plan for him to embark on a mission to India and to take on the task of overseas missionary extension (Wood 1977: 454).

Coke produced his missionary strategy in 1783, just five years before the first ship-load of British settlers arrived in Australia, and he died 26 years after the beginnings of the settlement. John Burton wrote that Coke's death came as a shock and challenge to the Methodist Societies, and resulted in a closer relation between the Foreign Mission Adventure and Methodism as a whole (Burton 1955: 15); and according to Bollen, Australia was a beneficiary of Coke's grand designs though he did not himself initiate the Australian Mission, and the Wesleyans saw an opening in New South Wales well before any other section of British Christianity (Bollen 1973: 10).

In 1812 the Wesleyan Methodists in New South Wales sent two letters to the Wesleyan Missionary Society (WMS) in England requesting one or two Methodist preachers to be sent to NSW, to help the laity and the mission work in the colony. The Wesleyan Conference responded by sending Samuel Leigh, who arrived in the colony on 10 August 1815
(Wright and Clancy, 1993: 4). With the arrival of Leigh, British Methodism officially became established in Australia (Clancy and Hickman 1988: 1934). Distance and concomitant communication problems caused difficulties in NSW, but some progress had been made. Between 1817 and 1821 four Wesleyan chapels were opened in the Sydney district (Wright and Clancy 1993: 6-7). From 1815 to 1855, Australia was seen as a mission field of the WMS and it came to be called the Australia Methodist District.

By 1835 the British WMS had begun missionary work in the Pacific. When the Wesleyans gained independence from Britain in 1855 and formed the Methodist Conference of Australasia, the Conference took over the responsibility of the missions in the Pacific. The Australian Wesleyans requested that the Pacific missions be put under the control of the Australasian Conference, in the belief that the responsibility would quicken interest in the work in a way that nothing else could. It was thought that in due course the Australian Methodists would raise money to meet the full cost of the work including the supply of workers. In the meantime the Wesleyan Committee in London would supplement the income for mission work (Wright and Clancy 1993: 56). British Methodism continued to support the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Australasia until 1883, when the final gift of money was made (Burton 1955: 19, 26, 24.

In 1902 the British Wesleyan Missionary Society requested that Australasian Methodists become involved in the evangelisation of India. Initially, however, the Board of the Methodist Missionary Society (MMS) of Australasia regretted that it could not be engaged in the evangelism of the ‘Missions of the Great Imperial Dependency of India’, because of
the 'magnitude of the claims' which were pressing upon them in connection with the missions in the Pacific. However, from 1908 onwards Australasian Methodism decided to become involved in the mission work in India (Finance Committee Minutes August 2 1902, Meth. Ch. OM 276, ML; Burton 1955: 61-62).

EARLY WESLEYAN METHODIST WORK AMONG ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

Christianity was brought to Australia on the spring tide of the missionary movement; and Australia's settlement coincided with the revival movements in Europe, and Britain in particular. Furthermore, British Christianity had become far more outward-looking by 1800 than it had been through most of the preceding century. However, as Bollen notes, its energies were being absorbed by dozens of new stations in India, Africa and the Caribbean (Bollen 1973: 5).

Although the conversion of the 'heathen' was high on the agenda of evangelicals like Coke, and Coke produced his missionary strategy just before the settlement of Australia, the bringing of Christianity to Aboriginal people was given a low priority. In the colonisation of other indigenous peoples of the world, Christianity either preceded imperial powers or went under the flags of respective empires, and the flags were hoisted, 'in the name of the empire and God'. In the beginning of the settlement of Australia, however, there was an official silence about taking Christianity to Aboriginal people. No missionaries to Aboriginal people accompanied the first fleet, and while Governor Philip was exhorted to enforce a due observance of religion on his charges, he was not instructed to preach to the Aboriginal people (Woolmington 1988: 77).
Three factors may be suggested for the lack of interest in mission work among Aboriginal people, and for the official silence about starting Christian work among Aboriginal people at the commencement of British settlement. The first is that in 1788 the great missionary movements had not yet been founded. There were two older societies which existed when the first fleet left England: the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK, 1698) and the Society for the Propagation of the gospel (SPG, 1701). But these societies concentrated on a distribution of the Scriptures and sending of clergy for white settlers in colonial settlements and raising funds, although the SPG sent missionaries to Indians in North America and West Indies (Woolmington 1988: 77; cf J Harris 1990: 40; Cowie 1977: 472-473).

The second factor, which relates more to the official silence, was probably the result of rationalism and free-thinking which accompanied the Enlightenment, and which also contributed to the outbreak of the French Revolution, a year after the settlement of Australia. Both the Enlightenment and the French Revolution brought about great changes to the history of Christianity in Europe, and Christian thought was no longer the sole authority in dealing with human affairs. The 18th century started an era of plurality in thought and religion, and it seems that the British authorities did not feel the imperial obligation to commission Governor Phillip to propagate Christianity to Aboriginal people. A third factor in the late start of mission work among Aboriginal people might have been due to the pre-occupation with Australia as a penal colony, where ministering to the convicts was seen to be the pressing need. All these factors contributed to the fact that the first attempt to Christianise Aboriginal people occurred more than
thirty years after Australia was settled.

The Methodist WMS was the first mission organisation to attempt an Aboriginal mission. Its work began in New South Wales in 1821, with the arrival of William Walker, some 33 years after the establishment of the colony, by which time the relationship between Aboriginal people and whites had deteriorated. The first Aboriginal mission at Wellington, NSW, was consequently abandoned in 1826 (Wright to Clancy 1993: 11, 12; Woolmington 1988: 78, 79; Harris 1990: 47, 48)\(^{14}\). Initially Walker adopted an itinerant model of ministry, which was compatible with Aboriginal people's way of life (cf the Masai safari mission, Donovan 1982). However, he eventually opted for a settled model of mission, which was a missiological axiom of the 19th century missionary sociology elsewhere (Wright and Clancy 1993: 11; Harris 1990: 47).

The Wesleyans attempted work among Aboriginal people in Victoria in the 1830s and 1840s. However, the work was abandoned in 1848, due to opposition by the local settlers and conflict among the Wesleyan missionaries themselves (Harris 1990: 118-222; Woolmington 1988: 85). The Aboriginal mission in South Australia was also aborted in 1844, as a result of divisions and ill-feeling among the Methodists (Hunt 1985: 25-29, 36-38; Harris 1990: 320-339).

The most significant of the early Christian missions among Aboriginal people was the Wesleyan mission in Western Australia. This work, which started in the 1840s, was forced to close in 1855. Among the

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\(^{14}\) Five other Aboriginal missions were run by missionary societies supported by the Presbyterians and the Roman Catholics. These were Nundah and Stradbroke Island in the Moreton Bay District, Reid's Mistake near Newcastle, Wellington Valley, and Port Philip District near Geelong (Woolmington 1988: 79).
factors which led to the abandonment of the mission was the Western Australian Government’s ‘assimilation policy’ \(^{15}\) and education objectives, which the Methodists adopted and implemented (Green 1988: 158-160; Harris 1990: 280-281). Frances Loche, the editor of the *Inquirer*, on 16 November 1842, highlighted the difficulties:

> It is asking too much of human nature to suppose that persons will consent to live nominally in our communion, and yet be excluded from those social advantages which they see enjoyed around them all beside. Unless constant employment be found for the adult natives, in the towns; unless they are properly wived, and they and their families considered part of the general society; in short unless full equivalent be given to them for the adoption of our forms in the relinquishment of their own, we much fear that all that is now being done will have little ultimate good (Quoted in Green 1988: 159).

The brief accounts above show that the early Methodist Aboriginal missions in Australia between 1821 and 1855 were all aborted.

Other mission societies - the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the London Missionary Society (LMS) - and churches which included the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, the Moravian Church, the Lutheran and the Presbyterian Churches, also attempted to establish Aboriginal missions in eastern, southern and western Australia between 1821 and 1897. The accounts of the work of these missions and churches among Aboriginal people are recorded and discussed in such works as Cole (1988), Edwards and Clarke (1988), Harris (1990), Green (1988) and Woolmington (1988). All of these attempts to establish Aboriginal missions were unsuccessful.

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15 Green argues that the government policy in Western Australia in the 1840s was assimilationist in that it attempted to prepare Aboriginal people for a place in the colonial society. A programme of training initiated for the Aboriginal people resulted in the employment of about 500 Aboriginal people by the settlers, by 1848 (Green 1988: 158).
A number of factors contributed to the failure of the early Aboriginal missions. The nomadic life and Aboriginal world-view and the language difficulties were significant factors, but were not the only causes of failure. There were missionaries who worked to understand the customs and language of Aboriginal people, for example Lancelot Threlkeld of the LMS, who spent a great deal of time between 1827 and 1834 learning the Awabakal language of the Lake Macquarie Aboriginal groups south of Newcastle (Edwards and Clarke 1988: 187; Harris 1990: 53; Woolmington 1988: 81). William Ridley of the Presbyterian church also stressed the importance of learning languages and studying cultures, and in the early 1850s worked on the Kamilaroi language of the Aboriginal people from Murrumbidgee to Point Curtis (Edwards and Clarke 1988: 231; Harris 1990: 231). Similarly John Weatherstone of the WMS collected Aboriginal words from the people of the Swan Beach area in South Australia in 1834 (Hunt 1985: 38).

There were other reasons for failure. Harris has argued that Aboriginal people had developed survival techniques, one of which was not to remain long in any one place, including the missions (Harris 1990: 122). They were able to use the 'old nomadic' method for survival purposes in the new situation. In some cases Aboriginal populations became depleted before any converts could be made, for example the Awabakal language group (Woolmington 1988: 81). In 1858 the Wesleyan Robert Young attributed the failure of the Wesleyan missions to the effect of European influence resulting in 'deep mental and moral degradation of the natives' (Quoted in Harris 1990: 122-123).

The setting up of mission establishments was an axiom particularly of
the 19th century missionary movement. However, in Australia the unsuccessful results indicate that this model of mission was incompatible with Aboriginal peoples' way of life. For one thing the bringing together of Aboriginal people from different clans or groups frequently created unrest and dissension resulting in Aboriginal people leaving the mission and the abandonment of the stations (cf Harris 1990: 122). Furthermore, moving Aboriginal people from their land to settle in another 'country' was problematic, as Aboriginal people refused to cooperate with missions which were situated in alien land, as was the case with one of the Wesleyan missions in Western Australia (Green 1988: 169; Harris 1990: 281; McNair and Rumley 1981: 137).

The aim of the Methodist missionaries was the same as all other missionaries: to Christianise and 'civilise'. Food, gifts and free houses, were used to attract Aboriginal people, so that they could be christianised and civilised. Aboriginal people, however, did not stay long enough for the missionaries to instruct them in the tenets of Christianity (Harris 1990: 119; Woolmington 1988: 85). When Aboriginal people refused to settle, some missionaries, such as James Gunther of CMS in 1838, called them 'an ungrateful and treacherous race who could not be depended upon' (Woolmington 1988: 85).

Missionaries came out of the revival movements in Europe with evangelical zeal. Many of the missionaries had dramatic experiences of conversion. If they expected instant responses from the Aboriginal people, they were disheartened, as Woolmington aptly states:

The possibility of similar conversions among Aboriginal people was very remote indeed for theirs was a society which did not
have a deep sense of original sin; a society in which future rewards and punishment played no part... (Woolmington 1988: 86-87).

There were still yet other factors which brought about the downfall of the early missions. There were financial difficulties and staff shortages, which were inevitable problems faced in the frontier mission work. These problems were compounded by introduced diseases, which caused deaths amongst Aboriginal people. To add to these, in some cases there were quarrels and ill-feeling among the missionaries, and between them and their mission and supporting bodies. Government policies also contributed to the failure of the missions.

The above survey of factors contributing to the failure of missions and churches in christianising Aboriginal people has been broad. This places the early WMS missions in the wider context. The survey, however, also shows the complexity of the situation. The causes of failure of missions cannot simply be attributed to the Aboriginal people's nomadic existence and Aboriginal cosmology and their 'inability' to appropriate Christian tenets and Western civilisation. Christianity was first brought to Australian Aboriginal people almost a generation after white settlement, which means that by this time the Aboriginal people in settled areas had formed their own perceptions and judgement about the newcomers, and behaved towards them accordingly. As a result of its early experience, the Methodist Church was reluctant to resume work among Aboriginal people.

THE RETURN OF METHODISM TO ABORIGINAL MISSION

As noted above, by 1855 all WMS Aboriginal missions had been
abandoned, and a 60 year period of 'silence' elapsed before Methodism resumed its mission to Aboriginal people in 1915. By 1902 various Methodist Churches\textsuperscript{16} in Australia had joined to form the Methodist Church of Australasia. The union of the different Methodist branches in Australia was significant for mission in Arnhem Land, for, while there had been some interest shown by South Australian Methodists to begin work with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, nothing was done until after the Methodist union (cf Hunt 1985: 117; Breward 1988: 45).

Methodist missions in Arnhem Land have been closely identified with the Methodist Overseas Mission (MOM). After 1855 Wesleyan overseas missions operated under the Wesleyan Missionary Society of Australasia, with a 'Foreign Missions Board' in control of operations. At union in 1902, it became the Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia (MMS), although still under the 'Foreign Missions Board'. Thus when Methodism commenced work in Arnhem Land, it initially came under the MMS. From 1935 onwards, however, the Arnhem Land missions came to be identified with the MOM. In 1935 the General Conference of Australasia felt that 'Foreign Missions' was no longer appropriate, and consequently changed the name to 'Overseas Missions', thus dropping the term 'Foreign' from its mission vocabulary. One reason for the change was that by 1935, some Pacific missions had become independent Methodist Conferences, for example Tonga and Fiji, and the use of 'Foreign' caused uneasiness (cf Burton 1955: 85-86).

\textsuperscript{16} By the time Australia became an independent Wesleyan Conference of Australasia in January 1855, British Methodism in its variant forms had become established in Australia: the Wesleyan Church, the Primitive Methodist Church, the Bible Christian Church, the New Connexion Church and the United Methodist Free Churches (Hunt 1985: 14-22; Wright and Clancy 1993: 35-55). From 1881 onwards steps were taken to consider the union of these various Methodist Churches in Australia.
For many years the MOM had been sending missionaries to the Pacific and India, while no Methodist missionaries were working among Aboriginal people during the corresponding period. After a 'rambling' expedition of the Northern Territory in 1915, James Watson stated, 'We ought to have been amongst them fifty years ago' (Watson 1915, NTAS NTRS 45).

Watson was commissioned by the MOM Board in 1915 to investigate a possible site for mission work in Arnhem Land - 'to soak up information concerning a proposed mission to the Aboriginal people' (Watson 4/12/1915, NTAS NTRS 45). Watson had been one of five European missionaries who pioneered the Methodist work in East Papua in 1891. He had returned to Australia due to serious illness with malaria (William 1972: 180-183; Ellemor 1966: 12; Grant 1995: 12). Watson was the State Secretary of the New South Wales Foreign Missions Board. He was 50 years old when he was commissioned to survey the north (Dewar 1989: 78; McKenzie 1976: 2). In a chronicle of the purpose and details of his field investigation entitled Ramblings in the Northern Territory, he wrote: 'Strange that the Methodist Church should have neglected such interesting people all these years. I wonder why?' (Watson 1915, NTAS NTRS, 45). If the question was meant to be rhetorical, it has nevertheless provoked reflection in retrospect of the

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17 Watson's terms of reference were to report on: (1) The General charter and extent of the sphere allocated to [the] society by the Interdenominational Committee. (2) The probable number of Aboriginal people within the sphere, with a statement as to the localities where they are likely to be effectively reached, in the sphere on which to commence a mission, having due regard to: accessibility by land and water; distance to be travelled, mode of transport and cost for passengers and freight; proximity of white population; fresh water and food supply; nature of soil and its suitability for gardening and general cultivation, and its capacity for carrying sheep, cattle, etc.; (4) Suggestions, based on... personal observations and enquiries to the best place upon which to commence the mission, including: the number of agents needed; the status of such agents; the best class of work to be done i.e; the plant required, houses, churches, schools, boats, etc., and the probable initial capital outlay and Permanent Annual Expenditure to be incurred. (Watson 1915, Meth. Ch. OM, 183: 95, ML; see also Ellemor 1966: 8-9, Hedrick 1973: 13).
Methodist Church's 'neglect' of Aboriginal people for six decades. Edwards and Clarke have said that the question has not been convincingly answered (Edwards and Clarke 1988: 191; cf J Harris 1990: 801). McKenzie has similarly noted that the reasons for the Methodist Church's lack of previous involvement with Aboriginal people 'even now ... are not clear' (McKenzie 1976: 6). Could it be that the Church 'felt that the usefulness of establishing a static missionary station would be limited by the Aboriginal people' nomadic nature'? (McKenzie 1976: 7). Or perhaps it was in the face of the belief then that Aboriginal people were a dying race that 'Methodist missionary motivations of offering salvation lost their focus'? (Edwards and Clarke 1988: 191).

One explanation of the slow return to Aboriginal missions by the MOM seems to lie in the earlier unsuccessful attempts to christianise Aboriginal people. This is reflected in the following statement which the Reverend SS Moncrieff\(^1\) made in Adelaide in 1882:

> The case of the blacks has presented a difficulty with which Christianity of Australia has failed to cope. With all the agencies that have been employed throughout this whole continent during the last fifty years has there ever been the blackfellow whose convictions of the truth and worth of Christianity have been of such a character as to fit him for the office of a missionary to his fellow countrymen? (Quoted in Grant 1990: 52).

He added:

> When over and above all this we take into consideration the immoral practices indulged in towards the Aboriginal people and the debasing influence exercised over them by a large section of the European population, the vastness and inherent difficulty of the work becomes more apparent (Quoted in Grant 1990: 52).

\(^1\) Moncrieff was a Wesleyan clergyman in Darwin from May 1880 to May/June 1882 (see Grant 1990: 50-51).
Further, as alluded to above, the task of evangelism among Aboriginal people was perceived to be made complicated by the adverse effect of white settlement on Aboriginal people. However, this was only of minor consideration and did not deter mission societies in the long run.

Following the founding of Palmerston in 1869, Wesleyan Methodists began services for the white population of the new northern settlement. However, it was not until 1873 with the appointment of Archibald Bogle that Wesleyanism became firmly established in the Northern Territory (Hunt 1985: 117; cf Grant 1990). South Australia was responsible for Darwin Methodists until 1900 when it was transferred to the Queensland Conference. Through the Wesleyan Methodists in Darwin, some interest in and concern for Aboriginal people had been shown (Grant 1990: 47-54). In his work on the history of Methodism in South Australia Hunt states that:

For years the Conference passed resolutions urging the establishment of a mission ‘with a view to overtaking [sic] the spiritual wants of many thousands of natives’ in the Territory living in a state of ‘spiritual destitution’ (Hunt 1985: 117).

A number of factors focused the attention of the Methodists on the Northern Territory. From the 1880s Methodists in South Australia were aware that other churches had commenced work with Aboriginal people in the Territory (Grant 1990: 51-52). In 1911 the Association for the Protection of Native Races (APNR) was formed and it had become concerned with the status and conditions of Aboriginal people of North and Central Australia. Furthermore, in 1911 the Commonwealth Government take-over of the Territory from South Australia created Australia-wide interest amongst church groups in Aboriginal people in
the north (Ellemor 1966: 6). In 1912 an Interdenominational Committee of the Churches was formed in Melbourne. This committee felt that the Northern Territory had been ignored as a field of missionary endeavour (Hedrick 1973: 12), and also negotiated with the Federal Government in Melbourne for the allotting of spheres of work in the Northern Territory (Ellemor 1966: 6; Board Minutes 17/1/1913, Meth. Ch. OM 255, ML; JG Wheen 4/8/1914, AA ACT CRS A3 23/4594). Another factor which influenced the return of Methodism to Aboriginal mission was the challenge issued at the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910, for the churches to renew their efforts in their task of world evangelism (Ellemor 1966: 6; Hedrick 1973: 12; cf Padilla 1977: 613).

Early in January 1913 the Victorian Foreign Mission Committee wrote to the MOM Board regarding the establishment of a Methodist mission in the Northern Territory (Board Minutes 3/1/1913, MOM 277, ML). Subsequently the Board passed the following resolution:

That the Victoria Foreign Mission Committee be requested to secure and forward as early as possible, information as to the number of Aboriginals resident within the sphere proposed to be allotted to us by the Committee, their location, the number of missionaries required and the probable capital outlay for starting the Mission and the cost of annual upkeep (Board Minutes 17/1/1913, Meth. Ch. OM 277, ML).

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19 The Roman Catholics did not form part of this committee.

20 Some members of the committee would most likely have been familiar with the precedent set in Papua, when in 1890 the mission representatives in Papua met with the Administrator, Sir William MacGregor, and reached a friendly agreement for the missions to work in certain defined 'spheres of influence'. It was hoped that in this way competition between the missions would be avoided.
The Board did not approve the Aboriginal mission venture immediately because it was facing financial difficulties which were sharply felt by 1915 (*The MR*, 4 May 1915). In June 1913, however, the General Conference of the Methodist Church held in Brisbane resolved to establish a mission in the Northern Territory. It accepted the proposed sphere allocated by the 1912 Interdenominational Committee of Churches and authorised the MOM Board to make a special appeal for the funds necessary to establish and carry out the proposed mission among the Aboriginal people (Ellemor 1966: 7). In July 1913 the Board committed itself to return to Aboriginal mission with this resolution: 'A Mission to the Australian Aboriginal people is to be commenced. A definite sphere is suggested. A special appeal is authorised' (Board Minutes 15/7/1913, Meth. Ch. OM 277, ML). In the following year the Board resolved:

That the Board accepts the responsibility for the Mission work within the Territory allocated provisionally to the Methodist Church by the Interdenominational Committee Meeting in Melbourne and that the said committee be officially notified accordingly.

That a committee be appointed to consider and report to the Board as to plans of work, estimate of expenditure in equipment and working, probable sites for stations and other matters.

To appeal to the Methodist people to provide the amount required for the current year (Board Minutes 2/2/1914, Meth. Ch. OM 277, ML; see also *The MR*, 5 May, 1934: 3).

In 1914 extensive groundwork was undertaken to prepare for the proposed Aboriginal mission. The Reverend JG Wheen, who had been appointed General Secretary of the Foreign Mission in 1913 (Board Minutes 15/7/1913, Meth. Ch. OM 276, ML), had consulted some key
people to gather information about Aboriginal people and the Northern Territory. These people included JRB Love, a Presbyterian clergyman who had just completed a two-year survey for the Presbyterian church about the needs of Aboriginal people, and Professor W Baldwin Spencer of Melbourne University who had also completed a report on Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory and who had recently spent a year as Chief Inspector of Aboriginal people there (Spencer 1913; Ellemor 1966: 7).

By 1915 the MOM Board was already facing a difficult financial situation, and this was exacerbated when World War One broke out (Ellemor 1966: 7; The MR, 4 May 1915). The Board was therefore appreciative when it received a cheque for £250 from R J McBride, a Methodist layman from South Australia. In donating the money he expressed the wish 'that as soon as the Board has received a sufficient amount to warrant it establishing a mission station there shall be no unreasonable delay in making an announcement' (Ellemor 1966: 7).

In the months of August, September and October 1915, James Watson made a thorough investigation of the area in the Northern Territory which was allocated to the Methodists. Watson covered an extensive area of country which included the Roman Catholic missions at Bathurst and Melville Islands, the East Alligator and Oenpelli region, and the north-west coast of Arnhem Land including Goulburn Island. Although not in the sphere of influence allocated to the Methodists, Watson also visited Pine Creek, Mataranka and Elsey Station south of Darwin21.

21 Watson described the purpose and details of his field investigation in the notes entitled Ramblings in the Northern Territory (Watson 4/12/1915, NTA NTRS 45). For the information of the Methodist Church, the accounts of the expedition were also published under the same title in four parts in The Missionary Review, December 1915, January, February and March 1916. Dewar (1989: 77-78); Ellemor (1966: 9-11) and McKenzie (1976: 2-6) have also given accounts of
Watson's investigation of this inland region convinced him that the isolation of the north coast offered the best prospect for the success of the MOM work (Dewar 1989: 78). In Darwin, on 21 October 1915, Watson applied to the Land Board through the Administrator for an option over North and South Goulburn Islands and an area on the adjacent mainland. On 27 October 1915, the Methodists were granted a mission lease applied covering the Goulburn Islands (Watson 12/10/1915, NTA NTRS 398; Board Minutes 17/12/1915, Meth. Ch. OM 205: 439, ML).

In November 1915 a deputation from the MOM Board submitted the following proposals to the Minister of External Affairs in Melbourne through the Secretary of External Affairs:

That should the Methodist Mission society be prepared to commence missionary work among the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory within six months from this date the Federal Authorities be requested to agree:-

(1) To grant to the society, free of rent, such area or areas of land as may be required for the proper working of the Mission - such area or areas to be reserved entirely for the use of the Mission.

(2) To pay to the society reasonable compensation for all buildings and other improvements effected by the society in which area or areas in the event of such areas or any part thereof, being resumed by the Government.

(3) To appoint as Government superintendent, with the powers of a 'Protector', the Missionary appointed by the society to the charge of the Mission - such Missionaries to be under the direction and control of the society.
(4) To make to the society a reasonable grant toward the capital outlay involved in the establishment and extension of the Mission and also an annual grant towards the annual cost of the upkeep and maintenance of the Mission.

(5) To provide that any lease of the islands that may be granted shall include all the trepang reefs within five [5] miles of the coast line with the right to remove any trespassers. The object of this being as far as possible to maintain the segregation policy.

(6) To authorise the Missionary in charge of the Mission to employ such natives as may be required for the legitimate work of the Mission - provided that such employment shall be with the full and free consent of the native or natives concerned (Board Minutes 17/12/1915, Meth. Ch. OM, 205: 409, ML).

The Minister indicated through the Secretary of External Affairs that he was in thorough sympathy with the proposals to commence a mission and would make all possible concessions in regard to reserving the lands. The Minister could only give the same financial help as was given to other missions. He would grant £250 per annum but could not make any grant toward capital outlay. The Minister was also prepared to give the missionary the powers of 'Protector' as requested (Board Minutes 17/12/1915, Meth. Ch. OM 205: 440, ML). Subsequently the Board at its meeting on 17 December 1915 resolved to commence a mission on Goulburn Island as early as possible in 1916. The New South Wales Conference was requested to release Watson for appointment as superintendent of the Aboriginal Mission (Board Minutes 17/12/1915, Meth. Ch. OM 205: 440-441, ML).
Chapter Two

METHODIST MISSION IN ARNHEM LAND 1916-1946

Three factors were largely influential in the commencement of the Arnhem Land mission. Two were historical, and one was missiological. Historically, the assumption of responsibility for the Northern Territory by the Commonwealth Government in 1911, and the formation of the Interdenominational Committee of Churches in Melbourne in 1912, drew attention to Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. Missiologically, the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference issued a fresh challenge to the evangelisation of indigenous peoples (cf Yates 1994: 31-33). This conference demonstrated the spirit of optimism and confidence which characterised Western missionaries at the beginning of the 20th century, and in Bosch's words, 'Edinburgh represented the all-time highwater mark in Western enthusiasm, the zenith of the optimistic and pragmatist approach to mission' (Bosch 1991: 338; cf Meth. Ch. OM, 294, ML).

Missionaries' enthusiasm and pragmatism in the first half of the 20th century was not generally paralleled by their desire to be engaged in active and meaningful cross-cultural interaction. Missionisation of indigenous people during this period was generally a one-way approach. Missionaries' pragmatism in fact left little chance for them to ask if their mission activities and methods of evangelism were appropriate or beneficial from the perspective of indigenous peoples and their cosmologies. As Hiebert states, in critical self-examination:

[W]e are pragmatists. We seldom stop to ask whether the goals we pursue are themselves worthwhile. We want to know how to get
things done, and we rarely examine the means we use to see if they are "good". We assume they must be if they do the job (Hiebert 1985: 119).

What appeared best in the missionaries' pragmatist approach to establishing missions and what worked and seemed essential to them, was often not good or contextually appropriate for the indigenous peoples.

The investigation in this chapter covers the first 30 years of Methodism in Arnhem Land. It includes an examination of historical and missiological issues which emerged during this period, in relation to the establishment of mission stations and mission institutionalism, mission policies and the evangelisation and 'civilisation' of the Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land. The central argument proposed in the chapter is that in the period under consideration the Methodist Mission adopted no policy for Aboriginal church leadership training. It is argued here that the lack of such a policy was symptomatic of the missionaries' pragmatism and paternalism, which were closely intertwined with their beliefs about and attitudes towards Aboriginal people.

Informal (unarticulated) and formal (articulated) policies of the Mission existing or evolving during this period revolved around influential missionary personalities. Between 1916 and 1925, the MOM policies in Arnhem Land remained basically informal, uncoordinated and unarticulated. Significant policy changes, however, occurred in the subsequent period between 1926 and 1939. As will be seen the first clearly articulated district policy statement was formulated in this latter period. The absence of policy regarding training for Aboriginal
church leadership and the tardiness in evolving such a policy, was partly the result of the noncontextualisation approach adopted by missionaries in Christianisation of the Aboriginal people, which was strongly connected to missionaries' ethnocentrism, paternalism and pragmatism.

MISSION STATIONS AND INSTITUTIONALISM

The Methodist mission fields elsewhere were subdivided into districts. In following this tradition the MOM eventually decided to call the Arnhem Land Mission, North Australia District (NAD). From 1916 to 1925, the district was listed in minutes as Aborigines Mission District (Northern Territory), from 1926 to 1928 as Northern Territory District (Aborigines Mission), and from 1929, Northern Australia District (NAD). To avoid confusion, this study will use NAD to refer to the entire period of Methodism in Arnhem Land.

Five mission stations were established, all of which were founded within the first 30 years of the Methodists' work in Arnhem Land (1916-1946). South Goulburn Island mission station was the first to be established in 1916, followed by Milingimbi Island station in 1923, Yirrkala in 1935, and Croker Island institution for Aboriginal children of mixed descent in 1941. A false start was made at Elcho Island in

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1 Aboriginal children of mixed descent, who were originally residents of Kahlin compound in Darwin and the Bungalow in Alice Springs were relocated to Croker Island. Austin (1993) has provided a detailed treatment of Kahlin compound and the Bungalow in relation to the children. From 1944 the MOM implemented a separate policy for Croker Island institution (The MR 5 April 1944: 11). Being a 'half-caste institution', Croker Island station was not regarded as a 'real Aboriginal mission' (Goodluck 1995: 25). In 1946 AP Elkin was impressed with Croker, with the standard it had achieved in a relatively short time, and he pointed out the necessity for building up the other stations to the same standard (Elkin 1947: 4). When the children were transferred to Darwin in 1967, Croker became a 'real Aboriginal mission'. The separate work of catering for the Croker Island residents at a relatively high standard meant a greater degree of commitment and responsibility on the part of the MOM staff. In 1944 the MOM adopted a separate policy for the
1922 but the station was relocated to Milingimbi the following year. However, Elcho Island was re-established in 1942 under the exigencies of World War Two and subsequently became the fifth permanent mission station.

In establishing the mission stations, the MOM in Arnhem Land were not only repeating the global model adopted in the missionary movement of instituting mission stations and mission institutionalism, but also the abortive attempts made elsewhere in Australia between 1821 and 1855. The pragmatist approach of missionaries meant that no questions were asked as to the appropriateness of the mission station model as a missiological paradigm to the Arnhem Land context. There was an underlying assumption that because the station concept worked for missionaries in the Pacific and elsewhere in the world, it would also be effective in Arnhem Land.

There was an unwillingness on the part of the MOM, as with other mission bodies, to learn lessons from history. They did not, for example, draw conclusions for their work from Roland Allen’s critique of the mission station model and missionary methods which appeared in London in 1912, four years prior to the commencement of the MOM work in Arnhem Land. Allen (1912) had argued against the station model stating that contrary to St. Paul’s New Testament model of planting churches, missionaries were determined to found ‘missions’, with foreign organisation structures. Allen, a former missionary in North China with the Society for Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), drew on his

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experience and observation in analysing and attacking Western mission agencies (cf Yates 1994: 59-63). It might be argued that Allen was unrealistic and that he overstated his case, and that he was talking about cultures with well-established social and political units. Nevertheless the theological validity and implications of Allen's argument needed to be considered in the Arnhem Land context, as Donovan (1988) did much later in the 1960s for the nomadic Masai tribe in Africa. Furthermore, the conglomeration of mission activities and configuration of structures and missionary personalities, all of which were foreign and all centralised and concentrated in the mission establishments, pose some questions in retrospect about the wisdom of adopting the station model and related institutionalism, especially in view of the fact that this mission phenomenon was generally counter-productive to the development of a indigenous church and its leadership in some cases, as in Arnhem Land.

By the 1930s Allen's work had become known in Methodist circles, at least in the official ranks. In 1935 John Burton, the General Secretary of the MOM, drew attention to Allen's principles, stating that the Methodist Church was 'making a great mistake in founding huge stations and making a permanent foreign organisation'. Burton argued that the Methodists should adopt St. Paul's New Testament model of 'planting' churches and leaving them to grow with a maximum of oversight (Burton 1935: 2). This did not, however, prevent the MOM in Arnhem Land from expanding its mission establishments and institutionalism.

3 It needs to be said that while Aboriginal people did not have villages like Pacific Islanders, archaeological and anthropological findings reveal that Aboriginal people had developed complex social and political structures in their nomadic way of life and belief systems (cf ARDS 1994).
In the Arnhem Land context, an itinerant model of mission might have been an appropriate approach to adopt. In fact, there had been an early, albeit brief, precedent established by William Walker, the first Methodist missionary to Aboriginal people in New South Wales in the early 1820s with his 'wandering' mission (Woolmington 1988: 78; Wright and Clancy 1993: 12; Harris 1990: 47). In 1936 the possibility of 'an itinerant mission' was proposed by Wilbur Chaseling, the first superintendent of Yirrkala Mission station. In such a scheme the missionary would encounter Aboriginal people on their own ground. Chaseling proposed a central station from where all itinerant work could be implemented. Selected Aboriginal families could be trained at the station and sent back to their homeland. Chaseling argued that 'the whole scheme of a training centre for selected families and a patrolling missionary would be similar to but necessarily simpler than that used by our Society in the Pacific' (Chaseling 1936: 5, NTAS NTRS 44/45). The implementation of Chaseling's proposal with a station as a base for the mission operation would have been useful from several points of view. It would have facilitated the process of contextualisation of Christianity; and the difficulties relating to staff shortage and finance relating to mission stations would have been minimised.

The idea of 'missionary patrols' or 'an itinerant mission' was shelved, however. The NAD Synod had in fact discussed 'missionary patrols' following Chaseling's proposal. But the value of such patrols was seen to be in gathering information about the people and country, 'and in introducing the healing and teaching ministry of the church'. The patrols were not viewed as an alternative to the work of established stations, but rather as introductory in some cases and in most cases complementary to mission stations (Annual Board Meeting 7-10
February 1939, Meth. Ch. OM 313, ML, Sydney). Ironically, Theodor Webb, the chairperson of NAD from 1926 to 1939, who throughout his leadership was constantly agitated by the shortage of staff and lack of finance, was not so optimistic about the proposed missionary patrols. Consequently, he disagreed with Chaseling's concept of itinerant mission, with a central mission station as a base. Webb saw the Aboriginal people's 'nomadism' as a barrier to mission activities, stating that, 'had the aboriginal arrived at even the simplest form of village or community life, such activities would provide something of a way out, as is the case on other fields'. Webb went on to argue that:

The most that Missionary Patrols can ever do would be to produce a very limited and superficial effect in mere material things, and would merely serve as an introduction to and an attraction toward mission stations. The work we are here for is never going to be accomplished by such means (Webb to Burton 22/5/1939, Meth. Ch. OM 238, ML).

Nomadism as the antithesis of a settled mode of life led James Watson, Webb's predecessor, and Webb himself to adopt the practice of inducing Aboriginal people to settle on mission stations. As early as 1917 Watson told the MOM Board in Sydney that the situation in Arnhem Land was unique and the people had to 'be induced to settle otherwise there would not have been a station' (Watson to Wheen 4/8/1917, Meth. Ch. OM 450, ML, Sydney); and as late as 1934 Webb wrote:

Obviously little, if anything, can be done for these tribes while they continue their purely nomadic food-gathering existence.

Any real development necessitates first of all the acceptance of a settled mode of life, and we have, consequently, to allow them to congregate on our mission stations. This they are increasingly disposed to do, as the advantages of this new mode of life become more fully appreciated. At the mission station their food and water are sure, and they are relieved from the uncertainty which
is rarely absent from their old mode of living (Webb 1934: 35).

The policy decision made by Watson and Webb to opt for the station model was partly influenced by the uniqueness of the Arnhem Land Mission. This distinctive feature was connected with the nomadic nature of the Aboriginal people. Throughout his term as the chairperson of the NAD (1926-1939), Webb continually pointed out to the MOM Board that the situation in Arnhem Land was vastly different from that in the Pacific, therefore the Board needed to recognise this fact so that special consideration and attention could be given to the work in the NAD (Webb 1934: 35; Webb to Burton 22/5/1939, Meth. Ch. OM 238, ML). As will be seen below, this was frequently a point of contention between the MOM Board and Webb.

In his first visit to Arnhem Land in 1927 as the MOM General Secretary, John Burton also recognised the unique situation. He wrote in his report:

I must confess that I never felt so helpless and, at times, so hopeless in the presence of a missionary problem. As a Society we have not had anything like it in the history of our Mission. We have never before dealt with a nomadic people - a people who do not discern the relationship between a seed and a plant but who believe that all growth is magical... The problem of attempting to convert these people from a hunting and gathering tribe into a settled and agricultural people is surely one of great magnitude (Burton, Report of General Secretary’s visit to the Northern Territory District June-July 1927; 19, Meth. Ch. OM 238, ML).

It is apparent that the view of nomadism held by missionaries and other non-Aboriginal people was simplistic. Aboriginal people were ‘induced to settle’ because of the assumption that nomadic life was ‘backward’ and ‘primitive’. The stereotyped picture of nomadism was one of ‘simplicity’, ‘primitiveness’ and ‘aimless’ wandering. However, contrary
to this generally held perception, archaeological and anthropological findings show that so-called nomadism was a complex and a highly developed system of practice and belief in its own cosmological framework (Brockwell 1989; Blainey 1987; Flood 1983; Tonkinson 1974). The inter-social and inter-group interactions were exacting and methodological. Had the missionaries understood this, they might have modified their stance, since the degree of intinerance required of missionaries would have been lessened. Aboriginal people had developed their own strategies to manage plants, land and water animals, and on the basis of this they established elaborate ceremonial and complex social systems (Davidson 1988: 33). They had exact knowledge of their surroundings (Middleton 1977: 42), and a highly developed trading system (ARDS Report 1994: 10). Misunderstanding between the missionaries and the Aboriginal people existed because initially the missionaries adopted a condescending stance and noncontextualised approach. In hindsight, Jack Goodluck, a former missionary from the 1960s and 1970s, claims the Aboriginal people ‘hid their sophistication very well. They did not challenge the ethnocentric views of invaders. They used all the survival skills they possessed, and kept low’ (Personal communication 18/11/1996).

The adoption of the mission station model led to mission institutionalism, with concomitant missionary hegemony. Before the turn of the 20th century the policy of missions in the Pacific was focused on evangelistic work in villages. However, by the time the MOM commenced work in Arnhem Land, the trend in the Pacific mission work was one of movement away from villages to mission stations as centres of activity and evangelisation. Sione Latukefu (1968: 307), a Pacific historian, and Alan Tippet (1967: 66) a missiologist, both point
out in relation to the Methodists that a shift of focus away from the village was a significant departure from their earlier policy in Oceania. Another missiologist, Darrell Whiteman, who studied the Anglican Melanesian Mission in the Solomon Islands, similarly observed that the Mission's policies and personnel regarding the evangelisation of Melanesians moved further and further away from the village context toward an institutional setting (1983: 330). This move towards mission stations and institutionalism was a global trend in the high era of colonialism (1880-1920), which coincided with the missiological era of noncontextualisation (1880-1950), as will be seen below.

Mission institutionalism in the Pacific involved establishing schools, dormitory systems, hospitals, stores, technical training, industries and plantations. All these developments were centred on or managed through mission stations, which also comprised church buildings and accommodation for missionaries. A similar pattern was adopted by the MOM in Arnhem Land, and as will be seen in subsequent chapters, mission institutionalism intensified in the post-war years.

In the Pacific, selected students were brought to the mission stations to be instructed in the industrial activities and in general Western type education, and to be evangelised. Whiteman, in his Solomon Islands study, while acknowledging that not all was lost, stated that more often than not, when students left these mission institutions and returned to village life, they left behind many of the practices they had been taught there (Whiteman 1983: 330). While things they learned were appropriate for European dominated institutions, the knowledge and skills they gained were not always employable in the village contexts. This was even more the case in Arnhem Land. Lack of contextualisation
was the primary cause of the missionaries’ failure to effectively transmit belief and practices to the indigenous peoples. Mission stations, whether in the Pacific or in Arnhem Land, were Western institutions, and as Whiteman says, indigenous people would frequently feel like strangers in these Mission institutionalised settings (Whiteman 1983: 332).

In 1938 Burton, having earlier argued that the Methodists were making a mistake in building up mission stations with foreign structures, also raised concern about the tension which had developed in the course of the global missionary expansion, between mission institutionalism and the missionary objective of evangelism. He wrote:

This question of institutionalism versus direct evangelistic effort is a very real one, and has occasioned much concern to executives in the field and to the Home Boards ... In order to clear our minds, let us think how institutions arise. The history of most missions is similar. We set out primarily to win men and women to our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the very core of all missionary endeavour (Burton 1938: 1).

Burton insisted that the primary goal of mission work was evangelism, and mission institutionalism which emerged in the process was and should be secondary. In theory, mission stations and mission institutionalism were seen as means of implementing the goal of evangelism. However, in practice, because of the heavy build up of mission station structures, more often than not the stations and their operations became an end in themselves. This means versus the end, or ‘institutionalism versus direct evangelistic effort’ was an issue missionaries had to contend with.

Burton was an outstanding Methodist of his time in Australia and an
influential General Secretary of the MOM Board. Yet his concerns about the dangers of mission institutionalism generally went unheeded. Missionary pragmatism became an overriding factor, and building up of mission stations and structures became the preoccupation of missionaries, well into the 1960s in some cases, as in Arnhem Land. Mission institutionalism was characterised by institutionalised Christianity in Western forms, established and expressed through mission-sponsored programs. Missionaries became perpetual institutional caretakers, based on the stations, preoccupied in the organisation and operation of the institutions. Consequently the developing of a basic understanding of Christianity in the indigenous context, and the training of indigenous church leaders were relegated to a place of secondary importance.

Ironically, the policy of concentrating and centralising all activities on mission stations created considerable difficulties for the missionaries in Arnhem Land, particularly in the first 30-year period. Contrary to Dewar's estimation that the 1930s was a period of 'consolidation and growth' for the MOM stations in Arnhem Land and that they 'were continuing and their tranquillity was not to be shaken' (Dewar 1992: 22-37; 1989: 177), the late 1920s and 1930s was an unsettling period for the Mission. The concepts of 'consolidation' and 'tranquillity' provide a far from complete picture of the MOM stations. In fact the years between 1926 and 1939 were characterised by change, agitation and frustration. Theodor Webb, the chairperson during this period, was critical of the Goulburn Island and Milingimbi stations and questioned their suitability as sites. Both these stations were established under Webb's predecessor, James Watson. Throughout Webb's term as chairperson (1926-1939) the positioning of the mission station sites
was a recurring issue. In 1929 he wrote: ‘It is truly a deplorable thing that after so many years we find our stations so unsatisfactorily placed’ (Chairman’s Report 30 September 1929, Meth. Ch. OM 450, ML; Synod Report 1938, NTAS NTRS F1 44/45; Webb to Burton 8/7/1926, Meth. Ch. OM 450, ML). 4

As chairperson of the NAD, Webb had to deal with many issues, historical and missiological. One of the major concerns he had, especially towards the end of his missionary career, was the conflict between what he called the ‘essential work’ and ‘real work’, which was the direct result of the mission station models adopted. Webb’s frustrations came to a head in 1939, the last year of his missionary service in Arnhem Land. Webb despatched a revealing letter to Burton airing his frustrations and outlining the conditions under which the missionaries were ‘forced to labour’ in the district (Webb to Burton 22/5/1939, Meth. Ch. OM 238, ML). The letter stated that the ‘real work’ in the Mission had been frustrated because of the necessity of being engrossed in the ‘essential work’ of the stations. The cause for his frustration was the ‘apparently complete indifference of the Board’ to the work in Arnhem Land.

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4 Apart from issues relating to the mission stations, missionaries had to contend with problems emanating from Aboriginal people’s contact with foreigners. Arnhem Land was made a reserve in 1931 as a result of the recommendation JW Bleakley made in a report to the Commonwealth Government on Aboriginal people in the NT. Bleakley was Queensland’s Chief Protector of Aboriginal people. In the second half of 1927, the Commonwealth Government appointed him to investigate the treatment and administration of Aboriginal people and ‘half-castes’. His visit to the Northern Territory included visiting the mission stations. Bleakley began his enquiries in 1928 and subsequently the Bleakley Report was made public in 1929 (Report 1929: 34-35). A major concern for the missionaries was the intrusion on the Arnhem Land Reserve by pearlers and trepangers, particularly Japanese. Missionaries found interaction between Aboriginal people and the crews of pearling luggers, which led to issues such as prostitution, difficult to control (Synod Report 1937, NTAS NTRS F1 44/45). The seriousness of the situation was also reported by the anthropologist Donald Thomson in his 1936/1937 expedition to Arnhem Land. According to Thomson the invasion of the reserve by the pearlers reached serious proportions during this period. While there were Darwin based intruders, Thomson estimated that 700 Japanese operated on the Arnhem Land coast and the intrusion by Japanese trepangers had had a profound effect that extended throughout the reserve (D Thomson 1939: 14-16).
Webb described the 'real work' as the study of people and organising and directing religious and recreational activities. Without such work, he said, the whole mission enterprise was 'pathetic and tragic in its inefficiency and futility'. The 'real study of people' implied the study of Aboriginal culture and their language, a step towards contextualisation. However, work of such a significant nature had suffered, as he indicated to the Board:

Why is it that there is not, and never has been, a single one among us with a real knowledge of an Aboriginal tongue? Why has there been not even a Gospel translated into the tongue of the people? Why is there no properly organised religious or educational work to be found? Is it supposed that these things, which are recognised as of first importance on other fields, are unnecessary here? Is it that the Board has struck in us such a lot of duds that we are incapable of accomplishing them? Is it that we are too disinterested and dilatory to set ourselves to them? Or is it that the policy of the Board has rendered it impossible for us to really snatch only an odd hour now and then for such (important) tasks? (Webb to Burton 22/5/1939: 2, Meth. Ch. OM 238, ML).

In comparison to other mission districts, for example in the Pacific, Webb pointed out that the NAD, even after 20 years of work was nowhere near the other districts as far as the 'real work' was concerned. Only when this was attempted could the Mission be regarded 'as on anything approaching the same level as other districts'. He argued that what was needed was an extra person on each mission station who could devote effort and time to the 'real work' (cf Lawes-Chalmers analogy below).

Webb was concerned that concentrating on the 'essential work' instead of the 'real work' was having two adverse effects on the mission Aboriginal people. Firstly, the relative success of the mission objective
of awakening personal initiative and independence had resulted in promising young Aboriginal people going off to Darwin with undesirable consequences, whereas if the Mission was able to devote effort to the work of developing Aboriginal people they could keep them on the stations and further develop them to realise their potential. Secondly, ‘the pressure of material tasks’ connected with the ‘essential work’ created a situation where ‘the attitude of everyone of us to the people is largely that of a labour boss, while what is definitely needed is an association which is as intimate and personal as possible’.

The ‘essential work’ was related to the maintenance and operation of the mission stations. This work was essential, Webb argued, because once the Aboriginal people adopted the settled mode of existence at the mission station, ‘every detail of even their physical well-being becomes a burden on the mission and the staff’. Thus industrial, agricultural and other mundane duties were ‘absolutely essential to the very existence of our stations’. Webb ‘time and time again’ pleaded with the MOM Board for extra staff who could concentrate on the work of developing Aboriginal people in Christianity. There was a ‘seemingly limitless number of tasks’ which the missionaries themselves had to do. The staff were ‘just barely capable of getting through the manual tasks’ which had to be done, and on which the very existence of the stations depended. Webb thus expressed his disappointment to the Board:

For the thirteen years I have been here I have been obliged to do the work of a navvy or handy-man, and do you wonder that I am sometimes tempted to feel very bitter toward the Board in that I have been forced into that position while the real work we ought to be doing remains all but untouched? Looking back over only the past few months I have been engaged in ploughing, harrowing, planting, logging, fencing, building, black-smithing, boat
repairing, and all the other incidental tasks on a place like this, in addition to the constant supervision of the people and the provision of their needs. So has it been throughout the whole period... Can the Board expect anything worthwhile to be accomplished under such conditions? I have protested time and time again but all to no purpose (Webb to Burton 22/5/1939: 2, Meth. Ch. OM 238, ML).

Webb cogently argued that the essential need for the Mission in Arnhem Land was 'an extremely new outlook and policy' on the part of the Board. He stated that the Board had either 'unconsciously or deliberately' closed their eyes to the fundamental differences between the NAD and other districts. He vehemently argued that the Board was indifferent to the work in the Mission:

I greatly deplore the apparently complete indifference of the Board to my repeated protests and appeals and can say in all honesty and sincerity that could I have foreseen that things would continue as they have done, I should have retired from the work several years ago. I have hung on in the hope of seeing the work of the district placed on a reasonable footing and so have very largely wasted many of the best years of my life (Webb to Burton 22/5/1939: 3, Meth. Ch. OM 238, ML).

Webb recognised that the appointment of more staff to undertake the work of developing Aboriginal people was expensive. But he added, 'surely common sense demands that the Board count the cost and either do the job properly or recognise their inability to do so... [and] close down part or the whole of the work'. When circulating Webb's letter to the Board members as 'private and confidential', Burton stated:

It may be that Mr. Webb's contention is quite true and that as a Board we are very ignorant of the actual condition of the Aboriginals in the North; but our real problem is that of finance, and we cannot do things we would (Burton to Board members 1939, Meth. Ch. OM 238, ML).
Finance had been a problem affecting the MOM work in Arnhem Land from the outset, and this was continually raised in the inter-war period in relation to changes that the Arnhem Land Mission requested the Board to make.

The Methodists in the post-war years received or sought advice from outside, in relation to the organisation and functioning of mission stations. Towards the end of the period under consideration the MOM received recommendations from AP Elkin, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Sydney, following a visit to Arnhem Land. Elkin visited mission stations, government settlements and pastoral properties both in Queensland and the Northern Territory in 1946 (Elkin 1947: 1-4). During the visit to the Northern Territory, he took two MOM Board members with him for a fortnight's boat journey along the Arnhem Land coast, and expressed the hope 'that they realised at least something of the difficulty and comprehensiveness of mission-work among the Aboriginal people' (Elkin 1947: 1).

Elkin foresaw the mission stations becoming 'true community centres', providing health services, paid work for the Aboriginal people, recreation and education. He recommended the policy of government-mission co-operation as a sound and logical course of action. Elkin perceived the mission stations to be involved not only in religious work but also in secular activities. Some of the recommendations he made

5 With such dual roles in view, Elkin proposed specific staff requirements for each mission station: the ordained clergyman should be the linguist as well as able to undertake anthropological research; a nurse with specific training in child-welfare and mothercraft; two trained teachers; a boat engineer or a carpenter, or both; a practical agriculturalist who could teach and get Aboriginal people to work; and a book-keeper, a store-keeper, a banker and radio attendant all in one person (Elkin 1947: 4).
had important implications for contextualisation of Christianity. In their evangelistic task missionaries were to adopt a positive stance towards Aboriginal culture, avoiding 'a spirit, attitude, or practice of condemning the natives' own past and culture'; and refraining from preconceived ideas of 'what is right and wrong in that culture and way of life' (Elkin 1947: 2). Missionaries were to present the gospel in language that could be understood, and allow Aboriginal people the prerogative to choose whether they would accept it, or would modify their own codes and beliefs, or would effect some form of syncretism. Elkin forcefully stated:

The missionary who condemns the natives' language, their corroborees or secret ceremonies, or whose wife cannot bear the kidgeridio [sic] playing, should be withdrawn. Let him present the Gospel; let him reason with the natives; but he should not condemn as of the devil what sufficed and helped the Aboriginal people for centuries in the past (Elkin 1947: 3).

Elkin's proposals for missionaries to communicate the gospel, taking into account the particular context of the Aboriginal people and their culture and beliefs, implied aspects similar to what Webb called 'real work'. The implementation of these would have been in the right direction towards contextualisation, in the true sense of the missiological concept (see below). It would have been true contextualisation because the Aboriginal receptors of the gospel would have been engaged in choices and decision-making as to what indigenous forms of Christianity would evolve in the Arnhem Land context.

In forecasting post-war developments in Arnhem Land, Elkin posed two questions for the MOM, stating that the mission stations needed to ask yearly, not only 'How far have we got?' but also 'What is it we are really trying to do?' He suggested that answering the latter question
required ‘much hard thinking and very deep sincerity’ (Elkin 1947: 4). It implied issues of contextualisation. What was the purpose of the MOM in Arnhem Land missiologically? What was the Mission really attempting to do as far as the development of an Aboriginal church was concerned? Did the MOM attempt to implement missiological principles and strategies for establishing an indigenous church in Arnhem Land? This study contends that because of the MOM’s heavy involvement in the building up of the mission stations and related institutional activities, the addressing of such missiological questions was not given priority. The MOM began to consider some of these contextualisation questions seriously only in the next 30-year period (1947-1977) from the mid-1960s.

MISSIONARY PERSONALITIES AND MISSION POLICIES

Whiteman aptly assessed that missionisation was not a monolithic influence, but a ‘structural configuration composed of mission policies, institutions, and personalities of individual missionaries interacting with indigenes’ (Whiteman 1983: 205). In this organisational configuration missionary personalities played a prominent role in formulation of mission policies, and these policies either fostered or ignored the development of indigenous church leadership.

Whiteman (1983: 205-219) identifies three missionary personality types as models of missionary leadership and interpersonal relations in cross-cultural contexts in missions. The first is the agitator and reformer type; the second, the autocratic, extreme paternalist type; and the third, the empathiser missionary type. Whiteman analyses the three models of missionary personality as behaviour models in a ‘larger
interpretative framework' (Whiteman 1983: 219). That is, as leadership models they are characteristic of ideal types found in any social system. However, in analysing the missionary types, Whiteman concluded that these missionary types did not fit neatly into any stereotype modes characterised by autocratic, democratic and *laissez-faire* behaviour. There was a divergence of missionary personalities which influenced the nature of cross-cultural inter-relatedness in mission. Even within the same mission in the same period of mission history, there were very different missionary types. Different mission organisations at different periods of mission history would have had different missionary personalities within their ranks. This was true of the Methodist Mission in Arnhem Land. It is not the intention here to analyse the leading missionary personalities of the MOM, but it can be stated that the three models which Whiteman has identified can be applied to different missionaries in Arnhem Land in the 60 years of interaction with the Aboriginal people.

The NAD came under the leadership of a chairperson, with a resident superintendent in charge of each mission station. The superintendent was responsible to the chairperson of the district, who was in turn responsible to the MOM Board in Sydney, with a General Secretary as the administrative head of the Board (Milingimbi Report 31/12/1931, AA CRS F1 53/266). Chairpersons and superintendents were power-holding figures in the district. However, the power of superintendents was often overridden by the chairperson. For example, there was disagreement between Watson and J Jennison over the site of the second mission station. Jennison favoured Elcho Island and being the chairperson had the upper hand, and a false start was made at Elcho in 1922. Similarly, as noted above, in 1936 Chaseling, the superintendent
of Yirrkala, proposed an itinerant mission but Webb as chairperson over-ruled the proposal.

Unlike the CMS superintendents and policies which were subject to control from Sydney (Swann 1976: 3; Cole 1977: 184), the MOM chairpersons and superintendents of mission stations had greater freedom to deliberate on policy matters and the operation of the mission stations. The district chairperson in particular, was largely responsible for policy matters and decision making. This meant that policies could be changed with every new appointment. This situation remained unchanged until 1951, when the annual Synod decided to elect a District Committee, which would relieve the chairperson of all responsibilities of policy decision making concerning district matters (Annual Synod Report Nov. 1951, Meth. Ch. OM 313 ML, Sydney). The MOM Board in Sydney was mainly responsible for financial matters and the appointment of staff. Any policy the Board formulated was general in nature and it was left for the mission personnel to interpret and apply it to their particular contexts.

The NAD in the first 30 years was under the leadership of five chairpersons, James Watson (1916-1919; 1923-1925), JC Jennison (1921-1922), Thomas Theodor Webb (1926-1939), Len Kentish (1940-1943) and Arthur F Ellemor (1944-1957) whose term extended into the first decade of the second 30-year period of the Mission. As power-holding missionary personalities, the formulation of policies of the district or lack of policy depended largely on them.

Watson was a suitable choice to open up a new district. He had a penchant for exploration and pioneering missionary work, and his
experience as one of the pioneer Methodist missionaries in Papua in 1891 (Williams 1972: 180-183) was valuable for the pioneer work in Arnhem Land. When Watson assumed the position of leadership at the commencement of the Mission in 1916, the government policy on Aboriginal people was one of protection, segregation and restriction, although in 1939 the Government with the assistance of Professor AP Elkin created a new policy, the 'New Deal for Aboriginal people'⁶, which laid the basis for assimilation, which at the time was seen as 'positive' and 'advanced' (Elkin 1944: 9-21; Giese 1969: 76). The MOM, as with other missions, was an agent of government policies, and up until 1939 the Mission followed the negative government policy of 'protection' of Aboriginal people.

As noted in chapter one, in 1915 prior to the commencement of the Mission, the Methodists had asked the Federal Government to grant their missionaries in the Northern Territory the 'powers of Protector' (Board Minutes 17/2/1915, Meth. Ch. OM 205: 409 ML). Subsequently the Government appointed the chairperson of the district as honorary Protector of Aboriginal people. Watson did not hesitate to use his power in his capacity as Protector to arrest Aboriginal people who were 'law-breakers'; for example arrests made in 1917 and 1919 (Watson 5/3/1917, NTAS NTRS 45; Watson 20/1/1917, Meth. Ch. OM 450). In 1917 and again in 1918 the MOM Board asked Watson whether there was any danger that his official duties as Protector might necessitate at times action incompatible with accepted missionary ideals. Watson advanced two arguments to defend his official role as Protector. Firstly, he saw his duties as a humanitarian necessity of protecting Aboriginal people from whites and Japanese intruders. Secondly, as

⁶ Julie T Wells has provided a detailed analysis of the 'New Deal' in her PhD thesis (1995). See also Austin (1993 and 1997) and Markus (1990).
patrolling was 'left entirely' with him, he saw this as a means of extending the 'influence of the missionary and the Mission', and of 'preaching the gospel of good will' among Aboriginal people (Watson to Wheen 4/8/1917, Meth. Ch. OM 450, ML; MOM Board Minutes 7/6/1918, Meth. Ch. OM 205, ML).

As Aboriginal people were induced to settle on the mission stations, Watson implemented an 'open-house' policy of indiscriminate feeding of Aboriginal people who came into contact with the Mission (cf Hedrick 1973). He also adopted a policy of employing Pacific Island missionaries, although because of immigration restrictions this policy was not implemented until the late 1920s during Webb's era (see below). However, Watson did secure the services of a Pacific Islander, Mosesi Mansio, from the Fijian Island of Rotuma in 1916. Both Watson and fellow pioneer missionary AE Lawrence called Mosesi the 'third' member of the pioneer missionary party, which landed at South Goulburn Island on 23 June 1916. Mosesi was not an 'official missionary' as his recruitment did not originate in Fiji, as did other Fijian missionaries.\(^7\)

In his attitude and cross-cultural interaction with Aboriginal people Watson demonstrated ambivalence. While he wrote in his Ramblings in the Northern Territory (Watson 4/12/1915, NTAS NTRS 45) that Aboriginal people were folk of dignity, pride, spirit of gentleness, and capable of demonstrating positive human feelings. Watson also showed strong paternalistic control over Aboriginal people in his capacity as

\(^7\) Watson recruited Mosesi in Darwin. He had been in Darwin since March 1916 without employment. He had been a captain of a trepang lugger and was shipwrecked at Port Essington and 'five of his blacks were drowned'. This experience turned Mosesi to 'a Godly life', and he was willing and 'happy in being associated with us in the lotu [Fijian term for church]', (Watson to Wheen 25/6/1916, Meth. Ch. OM 450, ML).
honorary Protector of Aboriginal persons and chairperson of the district. There is evidence that during his term of leadership missionaries used corporal punishment, and he himself used a stock-whip (Watson 1925, NTAS NTRS 38, Box 5: 55). Superintendents of mission stations followed his example and used whipping 'only in serious cases' of breach of missionary discipline (General Secretary's Report June-July 1927, Meth. Ch. OM 238, ML). Although corporal punishment was not part of district policy and could not become mission policy, the fact that Watson allowed its use on certain occasions demonstrated a form of paternalism exercised by some MOM missionaries in the period prior to the coming of Theodor Webb. It should be noted that other missions also used corporal punishment, for example the CMS in Arnhem Land (Dewar 1989: 113; 1992: 62-63), and overseas in the Anglican Melanesian Mission in the Solomon Islands (Whiteman 1983: 206). The fact that corporal punishment was administered by some missionaries and not by others, was indicative of different types of missionary personalities who interacted with indigenous people on missions.

The period during which Watson was chairperson (1916-1925), was characterised by uncoordinated and unarticulated policies (cf Hedrick 1972). While Watson demonstrated strong missionary enthusiasm and industrial and organisational sagacity, he did not demonstrate the same wisdom to formulate a coordinated district policy. Furthermore, as was characteristic of the period under consideration, Watson gave no thought to starting work towards developing a policy on Aboriginal church leadership training. This was disappointing given the fact that the MOM Board had formulated a policy for indigenous churches in the Pacific in 1923, although belatedly after almost 70 years of missionary
work in the South Pacific (1855-1923). The 1923 policy urged missions to take responsibility for engineering self-supporting and self-governing indigenous churches (Board Minutes 1923, Meth. Ch. OM 207: 80, ML). It took 40 years before such a policy was initiated in Arnhem Land.

When Watson returned south in 1919 after his first term, the MOM Board appointed Gordon Burgess as his successor. Burgess, however, died of pneumonia as he prepared to sail north. In 1920 Louis D Keipert was appointed as superintendent of Goulburn Island and to act as chairperson of the district for a year. In 1921 the Board decided to establish a second mission station, appointing Jennison as new chairperson of the Mission and entrusting him with the task of commencing the second station (Board Minutes 31/3/1920; 7/1/1921, Meth. Ch. OM 206, ML). Jennison had been a missionary in Fiji. At the Board's request Watson accompanied him in 1921 and introduced him to the mission work in Arnhem Land. The relationship between Watson and Jennison, however, became strained over the choice of the site for the second station. Although in 1917 Watson had recommended to the Board the establishment of Elcho Island as the second mission station (Watson 3/12/1917, Meth. Ch. OM 450, ML), this time he disagreed when Jennison decided on Elcho Island. Watson had advocated Milingimbi for its industrial potential, in particular the trepang industry. However, as Jennison was chairperson, the Board upheld his choice of Elcho (Board Minutes 6/1/1922, Meth. Ch. OM 206, ML), and as McKenzie states, 'unreconciled Watson returned south' (McKenzie 1976: 23).

Jennison’s term as chairperson lasted a year (1921-1922). The Mission faced a number of problems during his leadership. The situation in the
Mission was such that John Wheen, the MOM General Secretary, arrived in Darwin from Sydney in 1922 to conduct an investigation into the Mission's problems. Subsequently Wheen advised Jennison to retire at the end of his three-year term in 1923. Jennison, however, decided to return south a few months earlier in 1922 (Report of General Secretary October 1922, NTAS NTRS 44/45; Board Minutes 1/12/1922, Meth. Ch. OM 207, ML). Elcho Island mission station was one year old when Jennison left. Watson offered to return to Arnhem Land and the Board appointed him for a second term as chairperson (1923-1925). On his arrival in June 1923, Watson advised the Board to transfer Elcho to Milingimbi. Subsequently, the Board appointed a Commission in 1923 to investigate the whole mission operation and recommended the transfer of the mission station from Elcho to Milingimbi. Eventually Milingimbi was thus established as the second permanent mission station in 1923, and Watson served until his retirement in 1925 from missionary work. The Elcho-Milingimbi dilemma typified the ongoing issues related to the positioning of the MOM mission stations in Arnhem Land up until 1942, when under the exigencies of World War Two Elcho was reopened as a safe haven for the mission equipment from Milingimbi. Subsequently Elcho became the fifth and the largest permanent mission station in the post-war era.

The historical issues which emerged in the 1920-1923 period had missiological implications. It is apparent that dealing with issues of conflict between missionaries took priority over the development of suitable hermeneutical principles of christianisation of Aboriginal people in their context. Furthermore, the chairpersons were more concerned with implementing their own policies relating to the way they perceived the development of the mission stations, than
formulating policies which facilitated the development of an Aboriginal church.

Watson was succeeded by Webb in 1926. Austin is accurate in his estimation that Webb was probably the most profound thinker of the Methodist Mission in Arnhem Land (Austin 1996: 6). Trained at the University of Melbourne Queen's College, Webb was ordained in 1911, and after 15 years of service in the south, he was appointed chairperson of the North Australia District (NAD), a position he held until his retirement in 1939, after 13 years of missionary service. Webb was the most anthropologically informed of the missionaries of his time. Influenced and encouraged by AP Elkin, Webb developed and blended anthropological and missiological insights in his work in the Mission. Webb had had contact with Aboriginal people from an early age. He grew up in a farming community in Gippsland, Victoria, close to the Moravians' Ramahyuck Mission, where he received his early education. Among his first teachers was a former Ramahyuck missionary who was likely to have had plenty to say about Aboriginal people. Webb's first 15 years of service (1911-1925) included an appointment in south western New South Wales and a later position as chaplain for workers constructing the Trans-Continental Railway. Both of these appointments brought him into contact with Aboriginal people (cf Austin 1996: 6; Ellemor 1981: 245-246; Grant 1995: 19-22).

Webb's appointment to the NAD coincided with the election of John Burton in 1925 as the new General Secretary of Australasian Methodist

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8 Watson and Webb were the most influential missionary personalities in the MOM Arnhem Land mission prior to the outbreak of World War Two. The whole mission work up until 1939 centred around them and their policies. Arch Grant's book Aliens in Arnhem Land (1995) gives an account of Watson and Webb.
Overseas Missions (MOM). Burton had earlier served for nine years as a young missionary in Fiji. As innovative thinkers both Burton and Webb brought intellectual leadership which was lacking in the Mission previously. They were prolific writers and shared a wide range of missiological, historical and anthropological subjects with readers in journals and books. Webb was the dominant missionary personality in the 1926-1939 period. His dominance in this era was indicative of the influential role of missionary personalities as compared to formal policy directives. From the outset, Webb was critical and diagnostic in his approach, resulting in changes being made to the Mission. His diagnosis and pinpointing of major difficulties in mission operations, and his ability to assess situations rapidly, were characteristic of his leadership. However, as noted above, he was frequently troubled by the Mission's preoccupation with the 'essential work' of managing stations rather than directing effort to the 'real work' of developing Aboriginal people; and as Austin states, throughout his term Webb railed against the Mission's methods and parsimony (Austin 1996: 6). He often demonstrated resentment of the MOM Board's indifference to the mission work in the north. Webb represented the missionary personality of an agitator and reformer.

Burton's visit to the Northern Territory in 1927, was influential in initiatives Webb took in effecting changes in the Mission. Following the visit Burton recommended that missionaries learn the local indigenous language and employ it in conducting services (General Secretary's Report June-July 1927, Meth. Ch. OM 238, ML). As a consequence of this and other recommendations Burton proposed, Webb initiated changes and reforms to the Mission between 1927 and 1939.
Two significant changes Webb made relate to the 'open-house' policy and the dormitory system, both of which evolved under Watson’s leadership. Besides the ‘protection’ of the Aboriginal people under its ‘care’, the Mission also attended to the welfare needs of the people. This led Watson to adopt an ‘open-house’ policy of indiscriminately providing food for them. As Hedrick puts it: ‘Whereas the Government was offering a minimum form of welfare to some Aboriginal people, the Arnhem Land Mission was setting no apparent limits on its aid’ (Hedrick 1973: 56). The Mission was supporting five groups of Aboriginal people: children attending school, other children, able-bodied people dependent on the Mission, old and infirm, and those visiting the mission stations (Milingimbi Report 31/12/1932, AA CRS F1 53/266). Consequently Webb found the ‘greatest problem’ was the food bill. In 1926 there were 400 Aboriginal people at Milingimbi, of whom a number were ‘weeded out’ so that the figure was maintained at about 350. Webb admitted that this action of weeding out the people was difficult as it was ‘contrary to the spirit and purpose of the Mission’. However, he saw himself as having no alternative. The indiscriminate supplying of food through the open-house philosophy would mean going above the budget limit set by the MOM Board (Webb to Burton 8/7/1926: Webb to Burton 12/5/1949, Meth. Ch. OM 450, ML).

By 1932 Webb had replaced the dormitory system with a ‘colony system’, which was recommended to the MOM Board by Burton following his 1927 visit to the Northern Territory. Burton wrote:

I favour the colony system rather than the dormitory method, especially for people of this character. I am of the opinion... that it is better to form a nucleus of a few selected families who are prepared to stay on the station as permanent residents, show them how to build a suitable house... train their children in our
schools, and engage them, on a piece-work basis for preference, in agricultural and other industries. In such a colony provision can be made for a considerable amount of self-government and the people should be allowed a continuation of such native customs, practices and ceremonials as are not imimical to the health or morals. A congeries of say twenty families would furnish an opportunity for thorough training and would gradually form a Christian community which we have faith to believe would grow (General Secretary's Report June-July 1927: 21, Meth. Ch. OM 238, ML).

Burton's proposals and Webb's own assessment of the situation led him to abolish the dormitory system in 1932. Watson had introduced the dormitory system because he was impressed with this system on one of his visits to missions in the Torres Strait area. The children were taken away from their parents and were housed with one of the staff, and the reason for this was that Watson felt that the 'camp' environment was harmful to the education process (Watson 1917, Meth. Ch. OM 185: 146, ML). Webb's own perception of the dormitory system was, however, that it had a 'most undesirable' effect on parents and was 'an entirely unjustifiable intrusion into Aboriginal family life' (Webb 1944 [1938]: 69). Webb wrote:

As the result of years of observation and enquiry I do not hesitate to condemn entirely this method for the children of tribes such as those of Arnhem Land... By ...[the dormitory system], the child is removed from its natural environment, and placed in one which is quite foreign to it, and which is quite differently understood and regarded by child and teacher respectively, and in which actions have a widely differing significance. In such a situation the children are thrown into associations with each other regardless of the tabus, obligations and restraints of their own social and moral codes... and the result is seen in a general looseness of life and the development of a spirit of deceit and want of integrity (Webb 1944 [1938]: 69).

In addition to the disadvantages admitted by Webb, it is argued that
increased dependency of parents on the Mission interrupted the cultural transmission begun between parent and child soon after the childbirth (Hedrick 1973: 69).

Webb formulated the first clearly articulated policy for the North Australia District in 1939 (see Appendix A). Critics might be forgiven for questioning why Webb took 13 years before formulating the policy. There were, however, a number of reasons for the delay in the policy formulation which included, as noted above, a large proportion of Webb's time being consumed by the daily operation of the mission station at Milingimbi. Against the odds Webb attempted a study of the Aboriginal people and their culture, which he perceived to be the real work of the Mission. This study of the people and his critical assessment of the operation of mission stations, provided the basis for the policy, which he began articulating between 1936 and 1938 (Webb 1944 [1938]; Grant 1995: 60-67). The 1939 policy statement was consequently an articulation of directives for the mission work based on a sound contextual and anthropological approach. Emerging from the study of the people and their cosmology, the policy advocated respect for Aboriginal people's life, culture and language.

While Webb's policy statement gave clear directives for the mission work, it did not contain any specific statement relating to the training and development of Aboriginal church leadership. Training at the time was advocated only for instilling basic skills in rudimentary forms of agriculture and industry, as well as simple moral and religious teaching for personal character development. Thus, although the 1939 policy was an enlightened statement, it was not sufficiently forward-looking as far as the development of an Aboriginal church was concerned. The
missiological implications of the policy will be examined below.

Len Kentish replaced Webb as chairperson of the mission district in 1940. Kentish had been the minister in the Darwin circuit from 1935 to 1937. In 1938 he became the superintendent of Goulburn Island. However, his leadership as chairperson, which coincided with World War Two, was shortlived. He was captured by the Japanese on 22 January 1943 and was subsequently beheaded on 4 May 1943 at Aru Island (HMNA n.d: 13; McKenzie 1976: 140-143). Kentish appeared to be a promising missiologist, demonstrating his inclination to apply Christianity contextually. He started undertaking linguistic work in the Maung language of the Goulburn Island people (Ellemor 1981: 256) and in his first Synod in 1940 as the new chairperson of the NAD, Kentish presented a paper entitled ‘The Relating of Christian Doctrine to Aboriginal Belief’. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that the paper was preserved. Although a ‘fruitful discussion’ followed its presentation, and the Synod resolved to give further ‘consideration and research to this subject’, the content of the paper was not recorded (Synod Minutes 1/11/1940, Meth. Ch. OM 312, ML).

Arthur F Ellemor became the next chairperson, taking up the position left vacant by the tragic capture of Kentish by the Japanese. Ellemor held this office for fourteen years from 1943 to 1957, although the first two years were in an acting capacity (Ellemor 1966; McKenzie 1976). His leadership therefore took the Methodist Mission phasing into the second 30-year period of the MOM work in Arnhem Land (1947-1977). In 1944 Ellemor revised Webb’s 1939 mission policy (see Appendix B). Although the substance of it remained unchanged, a close reading of the revised statement indicates that Ellemor actually made
some significant shifts. For example, he emphasised evangelism and related instruction, which were generally non-contextualised. This was in contrast to Webb's contextualised approach which stressed 'practical application of the Teaching of Jesus' and assisting the Aboriginal people to incorporate that teaching into their cultural context, and to encourage them to engage in religious and social service among their own people (North Australia District Policy 1939, Meth. Ch. OM 238, ML). All this implied that the hopes of contextualisation which began to emerge in the 1930s were dashed in the late 1940s and 1950s.

It is apparent from the preceding discussion that prominent missionary personalities possessed considerable power to shape formal and informal policy directions for the Mission. Therefore it was within their jurisdiction to evolve policy directions for Aboriginal church training and development. In the period under discussion, however, any such policy development was conspicuously absent.

PACIFIC ISLAND MISSIONARIES

The employment of Pacific Island missionaries was a missiological method adopted especially by the London Missionary Society (LMS) and the MOM in the Pacific from the early 1870s, in extending missionary work to the unevangelised parts of the region such as Torres Straits Papua, New Guinea and the Solomon Islands (see Threlfall 1975; Williams 1972; Wood 1978). While the utilisation of Pacific Islanders in christianising other indigenous people in the region proved an effective missiological method initially, at least from the perspective of their mission employers, in the long run it was to become a handicap to the growth and development of the local church and leadership.


Photo: Acknowledgement - Meth. Ch. OM 450, Mitchell Library, Sydney.


Photo: Acknowledgement - Meth. Ch. OM 450, Mitchell Library, Sydney.
Relating to the MOM work in New Guinea, Williams has stated that the Europeans and Pacific Island missionaries might be blamed for the slowness in transferring of responsibility to local leaders (Williams 1972: 138). In the 1920s and 1930s, when a ‘flowering of local leadership’ occurred in New Guinea, European missionary paternalism and pragmatism continued to stunt the development of the indigenous church. This situation was exacerbated by the continuing dependence on Pacific Island missionaries. In addition, the Pacific Island workers demonstrated a Pacific form of paternalism with condescending attitudes to the local people. This was illustrated by the fact that at the MOM New Guinea District Synod in 1927, the Pacific Islanders put to the Synod that they did not want to be indiscriminately labelled ‘natives’ with the locals, and asked to be called Fijian, Tongan or Samoan missionaries, as the case might be (Williams 1972: 137-139).

In the New Guinea District at least, the MOM eventually recognised that continuing dependence on the Pacific Island missionaries was a hindrance to the development of the local church and leadership, and decided in 1930 after more than 50 years (1875-1930) to discontinue the services of the Pacific Islander missionaries. The situation in the New Guinea District is relevant here because a similar situation existed in Arnhem Land in relation to the employment of Pacific Islanders, although the NAD did not acknowledge that dependence on the Pacific Islanders might have been a hindrance to the development of an Aboriginal church and leadership, and continued to utilise the services of the Pacific Island missionaries throughout the period in question.

Watson’s policy of utilising the Pacific Islanders at the commencement of the MOM Mission in Arnhem Land, was also influenced by his own
experience as a member of the pioneer missionary party to Papua in 1891, which included 22 Fijians, Tongans and Samoans (Williams 1972: 180). The presence of the Pacific Island missionaries in Arnhem Land extended beyond 1977, into the post-missionary era.

As noted above Mosesi Mansio was the first Pacific Islander to be employed in Arnhem Land, although his services were cut short by his death in November 1916, a few months after the start of the Mission, from a severe nasal haemorrhage (The MR 5 March, 1917: 16). Following his death, Watson suspended plans to obtain more missionaries from the Pacific due to immigration restrictions. With the MOM Board's permission Watson engaged four Baduans - Yoram, Matasia, Kapiu and Sam Doy - from Badu Island in Torres Strait from 1918 to 1928 (Watson to Wheen 3/7/1917, Meth. Ch. OM 450, ML; Board Minutes 6/7/17, Meth. Ch. OM 276, ML). In 1923, however, Watson expressed disappointment in the performance of the Baduans, and pressed the MOM Board to seek permission from the Federal Government to secure the services of Pacific Island missionaries (Watson to Wheen 7/5/1923; Wheen to Watson 1/6/1923; Meth. Ch. OM 450, ML). Subsequently in 1927 the Department of Homes and Territories gave its permission, and in 1928 the Board resolved to secure 'South Sea Island teachers' (Burton to Webb 29/12/1928, Meth. Ch. OM 450, ML).

Between 1928 and 1950, seven Pacific Island missionaries, predominantly Fijians, were employed in Arnhem Land - Paula Seru (1928-1936) Ilaijia Seru (1928-1930), Kolinio Naulago Saukuru (1933-1948), Verencki Veitarogivanua (1937-1942), Meli Tukai (1937-1944),

9 Kadiba (1993) has written a report of the Pacific Islanders who served in Arnhem Land between 1916 and 1988. McKenzie (1976) and Shepherdson (1981) have also recorded brief but incomplete accounts of the Pacific Island workers.
Fuata Taito (1940-1945) and Aminiasi Ratulaveta (1940-1950). With the exception of Taito, these Fijians were lay missionaries. However, three of them were ordained into the Methodist Church, while serving in Arnhem Land, with little or no theological education - Seru (1932), Tukai (1932) and Saukuru (1945).

The terms of five of the Fijians coincided with the outbreak of World War Two, and they proved to be valuable assets to the Mission in the war years. In fact the MOM would have found it extra difficult to cope with the situation created by the war, had it not been for the assistance rendered by the Fijians. When their white missionary counterparts were on furlough or on sick leave, Fijian missionaries single-handedly took responsibility for looking after the mission establishments. They also assisted the servicemen, for example, Taito at Goulburn Island and Saukuru at Milingimbi and Yirrkala. Saukuru in fact was seconded to the RAAF in 1943 as a navigating pilot. He was flown to Townsville, from where he piloted the Admiral Halstead and its convoy to an anchorage outside Milingimbi (The MR 5 July 1943: 6; Kadiba 1993: 49).

The initial reason for the recruitment of the Fijians was to provide instruction to the Aboriginal people in the 'rudiments of agriculture' (HMNA nd: 5). But in Arnhem Land they demonstrated their versatility in a range of jobs as builders, captains of mission vessels, Sunday school teachers, choir masters, evangelists, pastors, 'protectors' of Aboriginal people, and in Kolinio Naulago Saukuru’s case, also acting as padre at Yirrkala in 1946, when the chaplain of the armed forces was posted elsewhere (Kadiba 1993: 53). In 1949 FH Moy, Director of Native Affairs, wrote in his report that:
The experiment of bringing trained Fijians as agriculturalists, carpenters and seamen to the aboriginal mission to work has been well justified. They represented an intermediate culture between the primitive aborigine and the advanced white and they have proved real bridge builders (FH Moy, AA CRS F1 53/266).

While Moy perceived their coming as 'experimental', Fijians viewed their adventure in Arnhem Land in terms of commitment to a missiological vocation; and often they demonstrated this in the correspondence they maintained with the church officials back in Fiji (Kadiba 1993). They laboured under difficult conditions, with a minimal stipend\(^{10}\), and as Hedrick states their employment was justified in terms of economy, given the fact that their wages were less than their European counterparts' (Hedrick 1973: 73). The fact that longer serving Fijians learned the people's language, and the close affinity they had with the Aboriginal people by virtue of their being black, made it relatively easier for them to be 'bridge builders'.

References made to the Fijians in MOM journals and books on mission often expressed commendation for the Pacific Island missionaries and their service in Arnhem Land, and as Hedrick notes 'when the Mission staff mention these people in their reports it is with praise for their work and the respect with which the Aboriginal people held them' (Hedrick 1973: 73).

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\(^{10}\) In 1941 lay European missionaries earned £227 each year, while the Fijians' stipend was £38 per annum; and in 1946 the lay European missionaries' pay was increased to about £234 while Fijians' stipend was raised to £60 per year (District Synod Minutes 1941 and 1946, Meth. Ch. OM 313, ML).
Plate 2

Paula Seru with Aborigines at Milingimbi.

Acknowledgement: Photo by Harold Shepherdson, ex-Arnhem Land Missionary.

Above: Kolino with some soldiers at Milingimbi.
Right: Kolino's sleeping house at Milingimbi.

Acknowledgement: The MR, 5 April, 1944: 12.
Fuata Taito (left) and Meli Tukai (right).

Acknowledgement: The MR 5 May, 1944: 8.

Fuata Taito (left) with some Aboriginal children at Goulburn Island.


Aminiasi Ratulaveta (left) and Kolinio Saukuru (right).

Notwithstanding their contribution to the Mission, questions have been raised about their presence in Arnhem Land. Firstly, their coming has been viewed as yet another imposition of an alien culture upon the Aboriginal people, and as the Berndts argued in the 1950s, the Fijians had tried, 'often unconsciously, to recreate the conditions of their homeland, to surround themselves with an artificial environment that bears little relation to the problems of Aborigines' (Berndt and Berndt 1954: 198). Secondly, this study argues that the Fijians brought with them their own enculturated form of Methodism and thus contributed to the perpetuating of the status quo of the foreign mission phenomenon. Thirdly, while generalisations cannot be made, given the fact that a variety of missionary personalities served in Arnhem Land, nevertheless it needs to be said that there is evidence that some Pacific Island missionaries demonstrated a form of Pacific paternalism with condescending attitudes towards Aboriginal people and their culture (cf Kadiba 1993). Finally, from the point of view of the main proposition in this study, it can be argued that the reliance on the Baduans and the Pacific Islanders, and the continuing dependence on the Fijian, Samoan and Tongan missionaries in the post-war years, contributed to the delay in developing a policy for Aboriginal church leadership training, with a view to producing ordained leaders.

MISSIONARIES AND RACIAL BELIEFS

The sense of Western superiority which emanated from the Enlightenment era in Europe, included the notion of European racial superiority over other races of the world. Western ethnocentrism was very much intertwined with the idea of Western racial superiority,
which was often reinforced by scientific and pseudo-scientific beliefs. In the Australian and the Northern Territory context, Austin (1993, 1997), Howe (1977), London (1970), McGregor (1997), Markus (1990) and Reynolds (1989) have shown how various theories and views of race were brought to an interplay in the relationship between Aboriginal people and whites in Australia.

Missionaries did not accept the concept of genetic inferiority of indigenous peoples as postulated by 19th century scientific racism. They believed that indigenous peoples were capable of receiving the message of Christianity and were redeemable. However, missionaries still concurred generally with the perception that non-Western races were inferior, culturally, socially and technologically and were seen as 'backward children', incapable of caring for themselves.

Missionaries came closer to and were in more continuous contact with indigenous peoples, especially through mission stations and institutionalism, than any other group of colonisers. Consequently, their paternalism has been closely scrutinised, as Diane Langmore has done with the missionaries of various missions who worked in Papua (Langmore 1989: 126-130). Commenting generally of the missionaries in Arnhem Land Dewar wrote, ‘If the pastoralists slaughtered the Aborigines like animals, the missionaries protected them like children’ (Dewar 1989: 89). Paternalism treated, protected and disciplined indigenous people as ‘children’. The labelling and regarding of Aboriginal people as ‘children’ was apparent in the correspondence Watson and Jennison maintained with the MOM Board, showing the missionaries to be people of their time (cf Watson 4/7/1917; Jennison 2/8/1921; Meth. Ch. OM 450, ML).
Leading Methodist officials and missionary personalities who expounded their views about Aboriginal people in journals and books, were ambivalent about their racial perceptions of the Aboriginal people. Their views must have been influential in shaping the beliefs and attitudes of Methodists towards Aboriginal people.

Burton, the General Secretary of the MOM, developed a hierarchical view of race. In an undated book, he ranked the various peoples of the Pacific with the Polynesians on top of the ladder, and sliding down the scale were the Melanesians. Although Aboriginal people did not feature in this book, Burton assigned them to the base of the racial hierarchy (Austin 1996: 5). Following his first visit to Arnhem Land, he wrote: 'I think there can be little doubt they are manifestly inferior to our Pacific people... but I could not but feel that these people are worth the effort' (General Secretary's Report June-July 1927, Meth. Ch. OM 238, ML). In subsequent years, Burton's views on Aboriginal people changed (Burton 1949 and 1955), and he became one of the foremost Methodist spokesmen in Australia for Aboriginal people's welfare needs and the human potential of Aboriginal people (Austin 1996: 4).

Webb, who was the most liberal minded and forward-looking of the missionaries of his time in Arnhem Land, was himself not immune from the racial views of his age. Although he regarded the Aboriginal people as 'a happy and loveable people... capable of fine and worthy things' (Webb 30/8/1926, Meth. Ch. OM 450, ML), and in his 1939 policy document stated that they were 'capable of accepting the teaching of Jesus', Webb still viewed the Aboriginal people as 'backward'. In 1926 he had written that the Aboriginal people were 'further back on the scale of human being than any other race' (Webb 30/8/1926, Meth. Ch.
OM 450, ML). In 1939 he still expressed similar views (Webb 22/5/1939, Meth. Ch. OM 238, ML). He reasoned that the difficult conditions under which missionaries worked were due to the ‘backwardness’ of the Aboriginal people as a nomadic people. As late as 1944 Webb wrote: ‘We are dealing with a people who in general culture are among the very least developed of all races of men’ (Webb 1944: 54).

Burton’s and the missionaries’ racial views regarding the Aboriginal people reflected a social Darwinist form of racism which relegated Aboriginal people to a position lower than any other ethnic group. This kind of racism manifested itself in the utilisation of other indigenous peoples in Arnhem Land. Whatever the pragmatic necessity the missionaries believed it to be, the employment of the Baduans and the Pacific Islanders in Arnhem Land was also clearly influenced by the social Darwinist form of racism. Pacific Islanders and Baduans were placed higher in the racial ladder than the Aboriginal race. Writing to the MOM Board in 1917 Watson stated that ‘we must have some reliable Christian natives of a type superior to the Aborigine’, and that Aboriginal people must be supervised by a person ‘of a superior colour race’ (Watson 15/12/1917, Meth. Ch. OM 450, Box 24, ML). In 1921 Jennison expressed a similar view:

It must not be supposed for a moment these men [Aboriginal men] are the same class as South Sea natives, Fijian, Samoan etc. They cannot be trusted to the same extent nor is it safe to depend upon them generally for help in a difficult situation as one could depend on Fijians (Jennison 20/7/1921, Meth. Ch. OM, 450, Box 24, ML).

It needs to be said that the missionaries’ regard for the Aboriginal people improved over the years. Their view of the people and their
culture was in advance of that of most whites, although missionary paternalism and triumphalistic beliefs, consciously and unconsciously continued to exert an influence on cross-cultural interactions. Missionaries did not accept the belief in irremediable backwardness advocated by the exponents of eugenics (cf Austin 1993: 17-24). Contrary to the views of their time, the missionaries always held out hope for the Aboriginal people's advancement (cf Austin 1995: 12). Notwithstanding this, the missionaries created a situation in Arnhem Land, in which the dynamics of cross-cultural and inter-racial interaction became subtly complex, and this in part contributed to the slowness of adopting a policy of training for Aboriginal church leaders. If the ideal missionary goal was to establish an indigenous Aboriginal church with its own leaders, missionaries' racial beliefs and attitudes were a drawback to their missionary cause.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

Racial beliefs and attitudes also found their way into matters relating to the provision of education and training for the Aboriginal people. Scientific and popular racism called into question the intellectual capacity of indigenous peoples; and as Austin states, popular racism fed on the scientific pronouncements during the late 19th and early 20th centuries about the intellectual inferiority of the 'coloured' peoples. Even the most benign observers relegated Aboriginal people to the base of the intellectual pyramid (Austin 1996: 1).

Watson, as the first chairperson of the NAD, started an elementary school at Goulburn Island almost immediately after the commencement of the Mission, and subsequently established the dormitory system for
the purpose of providing basic general education. By 1939 the other mission stations were providing some form of schooling to the Aboriginal children. According to Austin the MOM did not have a comprehensive education policy, nor did it operate a school system. Rather, elementary education was experimented with in different ways on the various stations - depending on such things as the availability of qualified teachers, the priorities of the superintendent, and the receptiveness of parents and their children (Austin 1996: 9). It follows that, prior to World War Two, a relatively low priority was given to formal schooling of Aboriginal children. Schools were run intermittently, with irregular hours. A number of factors contributed to this, which included epidemics among children, frequent food shortages forcing closure of schools, precedence given by Aboriginal people to traditional obligations, and animosity between different Aboriginal groups, or between Aboriginal and white staff (Austin 1996: 9). Furthermore, the staff were frequently away either on a trip to Darwin or on furloughs.

A further factor which affected the provision of education to Aboriginal people was ideological, connected with the contemporary racial beliefs. Imbued with such racial beliefs and attitudes, the missionaries generally lacked faith in the intellectual capability of Aboriginal people. As a result, although Watson had wasted little time establishing a very basic school (Austin 1996: 9), he could not subsequently provide an academic education. While recognising that Aboriginal people were endowed with strong perceptive powers and their accurate knowledge of nature around them was indisputable, Watson nevertheless expressed doubt about their reflective and reasoning ability. He reached the conclusion that all that could only be provided for Aboriginal people
was 'the school for imbecile children' (Watson's Report, May-August 1920, Meth. Ch. OM 450, ML). This type of racial perception also generally coloured the missionaries' approach to the education and training of Aboriginal people.

More enlightened views about Aboriginal people's capabilities began to emerge in the Arnhem Land Mission between 1926 and 1939 under Webb's leadership. This was evident in the 1939 policy statement for the NAD, in which it was stated that the people's 'extremely primitive condition' was not symptomatic of 'an absence of inherent qualities necessary to development', and that they were 'capable of such development as will enable them to take their place in our civilised communities without injury to themselves' (see Appendix A). Education and training had to be re-thought with this understanding.

Webb, however, ruled out 'advanced academic learning' as he did not see any immediate necessity for it, and considered that 'education must be suited to the stage of development to which the race has attained'. He did admit that some elementary schooling was desirable. Nevertheless, his emphasis was on general education and training to enable the Aboriginal people to acquire practical skills 'to the enrichment of the affairs of everyday life' in the settled life, and for developing personal character and in preparing the people to cope with the encroachment of Western civilisation (Webb 1944 [1938]: 67-68). Webb therefore proposed a general training scheme for 'the general uplift of the whole community' through his colony system:

Here the objective of training may be stated as (1) The development of the Aborigines into settled self-supporting communities. (2) The preparation of the Aborigines for the impact of white civilisation which is ultimately bound to come in even
the remotest areas (Webb c. 1936: 2).

While there might have been flaws in Webb's philosophy of education, he was at least in advance of JW Bleakley's thinking. In his 1928 report Bleakley ruled out compulsory general education of Aboriginal children 'except where it had been possible to gather them into institutions', and for these 'the instruction should only be of a simple nature, and aim chiefly at domestic and manual training' (Bleakley 1929: 31). Education for domestic and manual training implied that Aboriginal people were to be used mainly as servants in the institutions and white homes. Webb's education philosophy went beyond this thinking. His emphasis was that all education and training ought to be along the lines of self-help, 'and should have as its definite objective the development of the Aboriginal's own capabilities and character' (Webb 1944 [1938]: 70). He thus called into question the concept of training for domestic servants: 'Should the Aborigines be trained merely so that they might become more efficient servants of their white masters, or should they be trained so as to become as a race industrious and self-reliant?' (Webb c. 1936: Meth. Ch. OM 238, ML).

It was informal and formal policy of the NAD that, any form of education and training was aimed at implementing the missionary objectives of evangelisation and 'civilisation' of Aboriginal people. This involved inculcating a Christian social, moral and work ethic, and conversion of Aboriginal people to Western forms of Christianity through various methods of evangelism. The guiding principle of the Mission was clearly stated in the 1939 policy statement 'that the practical application of the teaching of Jesus be emphasised and that every effort be made to help the Aboriginal people to incorporate that teaching into their normal standards of life' (see Appendix A). The 1944
revised policy similarly articulated that all mission station activities were ‘to be given a Christian basis, and regarded as the practical application of the teaching of Jesus Christ’ (see Appendix B). It should be noted that the revised district policy gave evangelism and Christian instruction a top priority.

The pioneer era (1916-1925) would have been a crucial period for laying a foundation for planning training for Aboriginal church leadership, but no policy in this regard was ever contemplated. There was no concerted plan to develop training and education programs for Aboriginal church leadership from the start, such as pastor training as implemented by the MOM in the Pacific, for instance in Papua New Guinea (cf RG Williams 1972). This study contends that the absence of policy for education and training for Aboriginal pastors during this period was in part due to lack of intellectual leadership. Watson was unable to provide such leadership. Other priorities relating to the frontier work and implementing the government policy of ‘protection’ through the chairperson’s role as honorary Protector of Aboriginal people, took precedence. In 1917 Watson indicated to the MOM Board in Sydney that the ideal would have been two people playing separate roles. What was needed, he said, was a situation akin to that of the LMS in Papua where William G Lawes remained on the mission station and James Chalmers did ‘the scouting in the region beyond’ (Watson 4/8/1917, Meth. Ch. OM 450, ML). Lawes and Chalmers were pioneer missionaries with the LMS which began work in Papua in 1872 (Williams 1972: 15-17). It is uncertain whether Watson alluded to the fact that Lawes from the start gave intellectual leadership to the LMS work by being engaged in language learning as a matter of priority, and as a prerequisite to establishing a pastor’s training college, which he
achieved within ten years of the commencement of the LMS work in Papua.

If Watson had intended the MOM Board to draw lessons from the Chalmers' and Lawes' analogy, he certainly did not stress his point strongly enough. The MOM had been sending its best qualified people to the Pacific and India, and consequently no people of similar calibre were sent to Arnhem Land in the first ten years, to provide intellectual leadership. The lack of intellectual leadership was a contributing factor in the absence of policy for Aboriginal church leadership development and language learning. In other missions language learning was given priority, as a prerequisite to developing training and educational programs to prepare indigenous people for church leadership (cf Williams 1972: 28). Pioneer missionaries in Arnhem Land might have demonstrated evangelistic and missionary zeal, but did not follow the precedent set by the overseas missions. Furthermore, the MOM Board gave no direction to missionaries in Arnhem Land, prior to 1927, to engage in linguistic work.

The dramatic changes which occurred in the second phase of the Mission (1926-1939), were the direct result of Webb's appointment as the new chairperson of the NAD and Burton's appointment as the new MOM General Secretary, as noted elsewhere in this chapter. Webb and Burton in their respective capacities brought to the MOM work in Arnhem Land intellectual leadership which was lacking in the first phase (1916-1925). Although they did not go far enough, in that their intellectual leadership did not lead to policy development regarding the training of Aboriginal pastors and Aboriginal church leadership, they nevertheless facilitated a number of initiatives, one of which was the practice of
district staff presenting a study paper at the annual Synod. Such studies culminated in the formulation of the 1939 policy statement for the NAD.

Following his first official visit to the Northern Territory in 1927, Burton informed Webb that the Board was astonished at hearing that the vernacular was not the medium of instruction; all experienced missionaries of the Board wondered how it was possible to convey anything worthwhile through such a foreign medium as English language (Burton to Webb 29/12/1928, Meth. Ch. OM 450, ML). The incredulity of the Board members was surprising, given the fact that no policy directives up to this point were forthcoming from the Board. It was equally puzzling that it took some 11 years for the Board to make the discovery about the lack of language work in Arnhem Land.

Burton himself was also critical of the Mission's lack of language learning. He was disappointed that no missionary had learned the language, no translation of the scriptures in the vernacular had been carried out, and that all communication on the stations was mainly in 'broken' English\textsuperscript{11}, or through an interpreter (General Secretary's Report, June-July 1927: 19-20, Meth. Ch. OM 238, ML). Burton made a number of recommendations. Among these was that missionaries should learn the Aboriginal language of the people among whom they worked and, as far as possible, services should be conducted in vernacular. Subsequently some limited progress had been made under Webb's intellectual leadership. Webb introduced the vernacular as a medium of instruction in schools and in religious instruction, although this meant that the work had to be delayed until missionaries had sufficiently

\textsuperscript{11} At the time Kriol (Creole) was not considered a legitimate language (cf Austin 1996).
learned the language. Webb had himself translated the Benediction and the Lord's Prayer in 1928 in *Gupapuyngu*, two years after he commenced work in Arnhem Land (Webb to Burton 25/3/1928, Meth. Ch. OM450, ML; *The MR* 5 March 1928: 11). The progress of language study, however, was impeded by the shortage of staff and the time and effort directed to the mundane affairs of mission establishments and related issues. In the early 1930s Jessie and George Goldsmith still ‘felt at a loss, not being able to understand a word of the native language’ (Goldsmith oral interview transcript, 15/7/1972, NTAS NTRS 45). This condition continued until after World War Two, although in 1942 during a relatively quiet period Ellemor and the Fijian missionary Saukuru studied *Gupapuyngu* and on Sunday 31 May Saukuru preached his first sermon in the language without an interpreter (*The MR* 5 August 1942: 5; Ellemor 1981: 256).

For preparing the Aboriginal people to take their place in the new world to which they were introduced, a new type of settled community on the mission stations, and to develop Aboriginal church leadership, Western-type education was required. Early language work would have assisted in facilitating and expediting the educating and learning process of Aboriginal people. It was apparent that a number of factors, including racial beliefs, hindered the progress of any sustained effort in education and training of the people. Notwithstanding this, it should be noted, as Austin does that: ‘Northern public opinion opposed the establishment of schools for Aboriginal children. Mission opinion insisted on it, and in doing so, attributed human intelligence to the Aboriginal people’ (Austin 1996: 15). Bleakley’s report (1929) and Austin’s case study of schooling at Goulburn Island Mission (1996) show that in the period under consideration, the young people at Goulburn
Island had achieved remarkable proficiency both in written and spoken English (cf McKenzie 1976: 18). Given this fact, the MOM in Arnhem Land should have stretched the intellectual capabilities of the Aboriginal people much more than they did.

INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE

Industries and related commercial activities, in the global context, were a missiological axiom from the mid-19th century, as noted in chapter one, which gave rise to the principle of the three colonial 'Cs' - Christianity, commerce and civilisation. Industries and commerce became an integral part of mission establishments and institutionalism, in the course of the global missionary expansion. In some cases, mission programs related to industry and commerce continued well beyond World War Two. In fact in Arnhem Land, MOM's involvement in industries intensified in the post-war years, as will be seen in a later chapter. Beginning in the first 30 years, but progressively in the two decades after the war, involvement in these areas became a major preoccupation for the Mission.

The MOM work began in Arnhem Land at a time when the policy of industrial missions was being advocated by MOM in the Pacific in the early 1900s. This was a departure from the earlier mission policies of working with villages rather than concentrating on mission stations (Lutakefu 1968: 307; Tippet 1967: 66). In May 1916, just prior to the commencement of the Goulburn Island Mission, a 'Report of the Committee on Industrial Missions' was presented to the MOM Board. Out of the report the Board passed this resolution: 'That in the judgement of the Board, Industrial Work is a valuable and essential part of our
Mission operations.’ The Board further resolved:

That the Board considers that Industrial Work in connection with our missions should always be conducted with due regard to the educational and spiritual interests of natives employed therein, and not only solely[sic] with the object of commercial profit. The Board is also of the opinion that industrial work may not only be made self-supporting, but should be so managed as eventually to provide funds for the extension of missionary work (Report on Industrial Missions, May 1916, Meth. Ch. OM 450, ML).

From the commencement of the Mission therefore, the Methodist missionaries placed emphasis on industry. As noted in chapter one, in the 1915 proposals submitted to the Minister for External Affairs the Methodists included a request that any lease of the islands granted by the Government to include all the trepang reefs within five miles of the coast-line with the right to remove any trepangers. The Methodists envisaged the Mission to be a self-supporting establishment with an economy based on trepang harvesting (Hunt 1916, AA CRS A3 23/4594).

From the outset therefore the MOM in Arnhem Land adopted a policy of industrialism and commercialism. This in fact became Watson’s undergirding philosophy for mission station development. In 1923 his dominant motive for persuading the MOM Board to transfer Elcho Island Mission to Milingimbi was to develop the trepang industry. Watson had in fact moved temporarily to Rabuma Island just north of Milingimbi, where he said the trepang was very plentiful and of good quality and easily procurable. Among the reasons Watson stated for the transfer, besides the problems created by the Petroleum Company12, was that

Prior to the relocation of Elcho Island Mission Station to Milingimbi, there had been controversies surrounding the Mission and the Naptha Petroleum Company which had started drilling at Elcho in 1922. Ironically, CJ Jennison the chairperson of the Mission, was the catalyst for the coming of the Petroleum Company to the mission establishment. Subsequently, Jennison’s action was viewed as an ‘error of judgement’ which ‘cost the Board much money and embarrassment’
Elcho Island lacked trepang and suitable agricultural land (Watson’s Report, NTAS NTRS 44/45; Watson to Wheen 19/6/1923, Meth. Ch. OM 450, ML).

Globally, missionaries’ involvement in industry and commerce was closely connected to the implementation of the missiological objectives of evangelisation and ‘civilisation’ of indigenous peoples. Industry and commerce, operated through mission stations and institutionalism, were also methods employed to propagate and disseminate aspects of Western civilisation and Christianity, which missionaries perceived to be of benefit to indigenous peoples. In addition, as alluded to above in relation to Arnhem Land, industry and commerce were considered to be means of making missions self-supporting in their operations. A further factor emanated from the fact that as many indigenous converts and adherents of missions, particularly in remote areas, did not have access to Western-type goods and services, industries and commerce were developed to encourage some form of economic development, and to facilitate the availability of introduced goods and services to the people. Therefore, in addition to schools, dormitories, church buildings, hospitals and clinics, agriculture, animal husbandry, plantations and trade stores became part and parcel of mission operations in the global context and in Arnhem Land.

In the period covered in this chapter, industrial activities in Arnhem Land shifted from trepang in the first phase to agriculture and other forms of industry in the second phase. This shift was indicative of...

(General Secretary’s Report October 1922, NTAS NTRS, 44/45; Board Minutes 1/12/1922, Meth. Ch. OM 207, ML). Naptha Petroleum Company ceased drilling in March 1926 and went into liquidation in November, with subsequent cancellation of licence.
emphases in priorities and policy differences of the leading missionaries. In 1916 Watson reported to the MOM Board in Sydney that the chief industry of the Mission was trepang, and by 1920 he was able to speak of trepanging as ‘our ready money proposition’\(^{13}\) (Correspondence papers, 1916-1937; Watson’s Report, May-August 1920; Watson to Wheen 19/6/1923; Meth. Ch. OM 450, ML).

In his time (1926-1939), Webb shifted emphasis to agriculture and other industries - animal husbandry, logging, cottage industry, collecting of pearl shell and Aboriginal crafts. These industries provided employment, training and trading\(^{14}\) opportunities for the Aboriginal people. In 1930 Webb reported that:

> An extension of the principle of definite trading with the natives has been affected with satisfactory results, particularly in the trepanging and logging industries, in connection with which several camps have been established by the natives themselves who have then received payment in kind for the trepang brought to the station and the logs procured. We are hoping for further development in this direction as a means of creating a spirit of independence among them (Milingimbi Report 1930, Meth. Ch. OM 198, ML).

In the pioneer stage of the mission work, employment and on-the-job training, with concomitant instilling of tenets of Christianity, were provided to the Aboriginal people on an *ad hoc* basis. However, under Webb’s leadership more definite policy guidelines for training and

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\(^{13}\) The marketable value of trepang between 1919 and 1924 was substantial. Hedrick in his thesis compiled a table from the MOM General Financial Statements and Balance Sheets and it shows the trepang value in 1919 was £835 or £975 and in 1924 was £1487, although some figures on the table do not reconcile with figures given in yearly reports (Hedrick 1973: 36).

\(^{14}\) Trading was not new for the Arnhem Landers. They had for many years traded with the Macassans until 1907, when the South Australian Government stopped the Macassans from trading in the north.
employment in the industries, with emphasis on agriculture, were evolved in the 1930s. Webb stressed agricultural activities for the reason that 'as simple forms of agriculture must be one of the first developments of settled life, it is preferable then that Aboriginals should find employment in that activity, rather than in other forms of industry equally or even more profitable to the Mission\textsuperscript{15} (Webb 1944: [1938]: 60).

Having introduced the cottage or colony system in the 1930s, Webb saw agriculture as a compatible activity for the Aboriginal people to adopt in their new mode of existence in the mission stations. In addition to employment, therefore, Aboriginal people were trained in the cultivation and care of a variety of crops and encouraged to look after these as their own property. The Mission's objective was to inculcate ways of 'independent living' in the Aboriginal people and to develop them 'industrially and economically as well as mentally and morally and so fit them for useful settled life' (Milingimbi Report 31/12/1931, AA CRS F1 53/266). The report of Goulburn Island in 1931 indicated that results of agriculture were considered to be successful and that the Aboriginal people became keen to cultivate crops, and they were encouraged in the idea that these crops were their own property and

\textsuperscript{15} The cultivation of agricultural crops included: sweet potato, cassava, maize, sorghum, taro, peanuts, yams, melons, pumpkins, tomatoes, sunflower, beet, beans, cowpeas, bananas, pawpaws, citrus (oranges, lemons), custard apple, mangoes and coconut palms. Animal husbandry involved the rearing of goats, pigs, cattle and horses. From 1928 timber milling began, which supplied timber for mission building projects in the District, with the logging of cypress timber (E Shepherdson 1981: 91; cf Hedrick 1973: 35). Other forms of industry included mat and basket making and collecting of pearl shell. Aboriginal crafts were also encouraged. The returns from these industrial activities were not of commercial value, as was apparent in the station reports in the 1930s. For example Webb reported in 1937 that 'none of our activities are revenue-producing in character but all are directed to the betterment of the Aboriginals and the further development of the station' (Milingimbi Report 31/12/1937, AA CRS F1 53/266).
were grown for their own benefit\textsuperscript{16} (Goulburn Island Report 1931, AA CRS F1 1949/456).

The NAD Policy which Webb formulated in 1939 placed emphasis on simple technology rather than complex machinery, and simple forms of agriculture and animal husbandry instead of establishing industrialised mission stations. This simple approach, which also reflected Webb’s gradualist policy, laid the basis for an ‘upward’, ‘evolutionary’ model for the development of the Aboriginal people ‘in climbing the [Western] ladder’ (Ellemor 1981: 246), which was the belief at the time. In 1944, however, when Ellemor revised the policy, he emphasised economic development. Ellemor advocated progress in agricultural and industrial work using advanced methods, in contrast to Webb’s view of ‘simple and manual training’ with less complex tools, hence the title of Webb’s book, \textit{From Spears to Spades} (1944 [1938]). Ellemor disagreed with Webb, stating that such a view failed to recognise the wide range of manual and artistic skills latent in Aboriginal people who could readily be trained for building and engineering trades as well as for primary industries (Ellemor 1981: 246). The stage for increased and intensified mission industrialism and institutionalism was thus set for the post-war development in Arnhem Land.

Industrial training and systems of trading including dealing with mission trade stores\textsuperscript{17} had educational value in that they helped the

\textsuperscript{16} By 1934, 40 Aboriginal people cultivated their own gardens on Milingimbi and between 20 and 30 worked plots on Goulburn Island by 1936 (Milingimbi Report 1934, Meth. Ch. OM, ML).

\textsuperscript{17} In 1931 Webb reported that at Milingimbi mission station: ‘A system of trading at the Mission Store has recently been instituted. For this purpose the daily ration of tobacco given to men in employment has been adopted as the currency, and in this way many of the natives are now purchasing such things as tomahawks, knives, fishing lines... This system of trading is we are convinced doing much to develop in them a spirit of useful work in their own interests’ (Milingimbi Report 31/12/1931, AA CRS F1 53/266).
Aboriginal people in their transition to the new world. As will be shown in the investigation of the next 30 years of the MOM work in Arnhem Land (1947-1977), industrial and commercial activities intensified in the 1960s. However, by the end of the missionary era, the period covered in this study, almost all industrial and commercial activities sponsored by the Mission had disappeared.

In the period covered in this chapter, missionary pragmatism implied that no questions were ever raised as to the suitability and compatibility of the industrial activities to the Aboriginal cosmological framework. Nor were there any questions asked as to the likelihood of these activities becoming a hindrance to their missionary ideals. On the international scene, Neill has argued that a mission which becomes a commercial concern may end by ceasing to be a mission (Neill 1966: 278). Furthermore, as Bosch states, such a policy made the missionary an employer and indigenous people employees, and this ‘easily destroys awareness of the fact that they are, first and foremost, sisters and brothers to each other’ (Bosch 1991: 295). In fact the situation created in Arnhem Land was the missionary as the boss or master and the Aboriginal person as the servant.

TOWARDS CONTEXTUALISATION

Christianity reached Arnhem Land during the high era of colonialism (1880-1920). Globally colonialism had demonstrated Western cultural, technological, historical and intellectual superiority (Hiebert 1987).

A similar trading system was introduced at Goulburn Island, as George Goldsmith the superintendent of the station commented: "We cut out cardboard money, representing a penny, three pence, 6 (pence) and a shilling and with money we paid each one according to their work. This was to help them relate Christian teaching to every day behaviour and to help them learn the value of money as well" (Goulburn Report 1931, AA CRS F1 49/456).
The 18th and 19th centuries also saw a merger of the concepts of culture and civilisation in the West (Schreiter 1984), so that to speak of Western culture was to speak of Western civilisation. Colonialism showed the triumph of Western civilisation (Hiebert 1987) which became the perceived and accepted standard for other cultures to follow. In addition, an evolutionary framework had emerged (Schreiter 1984), fed by the theory of cultural evolution (Hiebert 1987). In this framework the theory was to progress from a simpler or more primitive configuration of social life, to a more complex or advanced configuration. All other 'uncivilised' cultures were to progress, through the process of cultural evolution, towards Western civilisation.

Missionary ethnocentrism and triumphalism emanated from the understanding of the superiority of Western civilisation and the theory of cultural evolution. For missionaries, the parallel was the superiority of Christianity, in its Western configured form. 'Paganism' had to be rooted out. Many missionaries, in fact, equated Christianity and civilisation. Western civilisation spread around the world, and the assumption was that people would be Christian and 'modern'. There was no need, therefore, to study other cultures seriously or to take them seriously. They were on the way out (Hiebert 1987: 104).

Many missionaries embraced the theory of cultural evolution. As Hiebert states, 'Christians argued with secular biologists over biological evolution, but cultural evolution was another matter' (Hiebert 1987: 105). Western Christians accepted a paradigm which saw history as directional, with an origin, progressing and ultimately culminating in an ideal state whether through development or redemption. The approach was diachronic rather than synchronic.
Given this background, it is not surprising that globally and in Arnhem Land, missionaries generally took a noncontextualisation stance in the period from 1800 to 1950 (Hiebert 1987: 105). This period coincided with the first 30 years and merged into the beginning of the next 30 years of the MOM work in Arnhem Land. Noncontextualisation by its very nature was diachronic in approach. Therefore the cosmologies of indigenous peoples were largely discounted. Missionaries were products of Western civilisation and Christianity, and in many instances took an issue-oriented approach, creating issues out of cultural practices which were non-issues to the people. Elements of the indigenous cultures which were at variance with the values and traditions of the missionary, were denounced as ‘pagan’ (Whiteman 1984: 278).

Paradoxically, the noncontextualisation stance with its concomitant issue-oriented approach, created problems in the presentation of the gospel. Missionaries were people with prior enculturation, communicating the gospel to the indigenous people who themselves were also enculturated, and who therefore were unable to understand and accept ‘allegedly culture-independent communications’ of the gospel (Taber 1978: 5). Where people accepted Christianity, in many instances it was generally through compliance rather than personal conviction (Hiebert 1984: 294). This situation remained as long as there was no genuine contextualisation of the gospel.

From the late 18th century the obligation to bring the Christian gospel to the ‘heathen’ world seized the conscience of evangelicals in all parts of the Western church (Stanley 1990: 57). This evangelical urgency and objective was again enthusiastically stressed at the Edinburgh
International Missionary Conference in 1910 (cf Yates 1994: 31-33), six years prior to the commencement of the Methodist Mission in Arnhem Land. It followed then that evangelism formed the nucleus of every mission activity, humanitarian or otherwise, and evangelisation of Aboriginal people became the regular activity of the MOM in Arnhem Land (cf Hedrick 1973: 62).

Missionaries in Arnhem Land introduced their own Christian and theological framework and patterns of worship and religious activity, without any reference to the Aboriginal cosmological framework. They reflected the evangelical experience which shaped their missionary vocation, and sought to reproduce in the Aboriginal people what had been the turning-point in their own lives. They introduced forms of religious activity and methods of evangelism which were foreign to the Aboriginal way of life. The missionaries in the pioneer era lacked the critical tools to understand how closely their own Christianity was enmeshed with Western culture (cf Davidson 1996: 3). Furthermore, no attempts were made to understand Aboriginal cosmology and beliefs and to enter into dialogue with the Aboriginal people. In fact, Watson took a *terra nullius* approach in establishing the Goulburn Island Mission. He assumed that Goulburn Island was unowned and unoccupied. Unbeknown to him the island was the main ceremonial and ritual ground for the Goulburn Islanders (Lamilami 1974: 90; Lamilami, transcript of

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18 Prayers were conducted daily in the morning, afternoon and evening on the stations and Aboriginal camps, also on boats while out on trepanging/fishing expeditions. It was the ‘rule’ that all staff and the Aboriginal people were to be present (Keipert 1923, Meth. Ch. OM 450, ML; cf Hedrick 1973: 20, 62). Sunday morning services were followed by Sunday Schools in the afternoon, and Sunday evening services were held at Aboriginal camps. Weekly Bible studies and Methodist ‘class meetings’ were introduced. The dormitory children were given separate and specialised religious education (Keipert 1923; Reid to Burton 1928; Meth. Ch. OM 450, ML; cf Hedrick 1973: 62). Other methods of evangelism included the use of music and musical instruments (brass, piano), ‘magic lantern’, teaching of Western hymns and creating of youth choirs, the use of biblical stories and the use of charts and picture rolls in preaching with Aboriginal interpreters.
tape, nd, NTAS NTRS 944/45). Watson and his colleague Lawrence also from the start began an assault on 'un-Christian' practices found among Aboriginal people, thus attempting to stop the system of polygamy (Watson 1917, NTAS NTRS 45).

Steps towards contextualisation in Arnhem Land occurred from the mid-1920s. This was the result of critical approach brought by Webb, and the policy changes which evolved under his intellectual leadership. The 1939 NAD policy not only recognised the Aboriginal people's ability to appropriate the teachings and tenets of Christianity, but it also directed the MOM to acknowledge and take into account Aboriginal cosmology, beliefs and practices, and to learn and use the vernacular in their work.

In the late 19th century some missionaries in the global context modified their prior assumptions about indigenous peoples and their culture, and questioned the identification of Western civilisation with Christianity (Stanley 1990: 166). The steps taken towards contextualisation of Christianity in Arnhem Land similarly represented a modification of the MOM missionaries' prior assumptions about Aboriginal people and their culture. Webb, in fact, in a paper entitled, 'A Suggested Basis for Aboriginal Mission Policy' challenged the intertwining of Christianity with Western civilisation, stating that in christianising the Aboriginal people it was 'vitally necessary that we recognise what are essentially part of Christian revelation of God's Truth and what belongs merely to our cultural forms' (Webb 1936, Meth. Ch. OM 238, ML). Webb was equally critical of missionaries who viewed Aboriginal culture as 'essentially evil' and therefore tried abruptly to end such practices as polygamy (Webb 1944 [1938]: 53-55; 63-65).
The steps initiated towards contextualisation in Arnhem Land in this period (1916-1946), however, could hardly be called contextualisation in the true sense of this missiological concept. What had started to occur was more within the translation model. While Lutzbetak (1989) and Schreiter (1986) deal with various models of contextualisation, the translation and contextual models are more relevant for the purpose of the present study. In the translation model the missionary attempts to free the Christian message from the previous Western cultural accretions, tries to understand the local culture, and begins to translate or adapt the gospel to the local context. Cultural analysis is undertaken not on terms of the indigenous culture investigated, but only to find parallels with patterns in previously contextualised Christianity (Schreiter 1986: 6-8).

As will be seen, the evangelisation and development of Aboriginal people in the 1960s and 1970s generally occurred within the contextual model. In this contextual model the concentration is more directly on the cultural context in which Christianity takes root and receives expression. Reflection begins with cultural and social context, and from there moves to new patterns or forms of Christianity, which are contextually based and relevant. In this approach the missionary initially engages the indigenous people, but ultimately contextualisation is best done by the people themselves. The involvement of the indigenous people in this process is crucial, especially in undertaking critical contextualisation (cf Hiebert 1987; 1984). This must be so because in the end the people themselves decide which aspects of their culture and beliefs to omit and which to incorporate into the new forms of indigenous contextualised
Christianity. Although towards the end of the period under consideration critical contextualisation was a growing feature of the MOM work, analysis was done largely in terms of critical examination of Western assumptions and the approaches of the missionaries, which led to modification of their views.

Genuine contextualisation had a long way to go before its realisation in Arnhem Land. While the missionaries in this period began to take into account Aboriginal cosmology and beliefs, their approach to christianisation remained translational or adaptational. Furthermore, they still operated within the framework of cultural evolution. In fact, however enlightened Webb was, he could not entirely divest himself of unilinear evolutionist precepts (Austin 1996: 7). He thus advocated a gradualist approach:

Our aim should be to awaken the mind of the aboriginal to new ideas and conceptions of the meaning and value of life, to help him to develop and grow into a new life... Because the upward movement of this race can come only by evolution rather than revolution, we must be prepared to carry out our work very carefully, very patiently, and for a very long time... Real progress must of necessity be slow (Webb 1994 [1938]: 55, 56, 76).

The noncontextualisation approach in the pioneer era meant that the efforts of the missionaries in the evangelisation of Aboriginal people met with little success. However, by the 1940s, as a result of steps taken towards contextualisation through the translation model, Aboriginal people increasingly participated in religious activities on the mission stations, as interpreters and evangelists (Yirrkala Report, 1940, NTAS NTRS 44/45; Hedrick 1973: 21, 62). Lazarus Lamilami and Phillip Magulnir, who were ordained very late as will be seen in a later chapter, were products of this period.
Chapter Three

POST-WAR DEVELOPMENTS 1947-1977

This chapter and the subsequent chapters deal with historical and missiological developments in the post-war years from 1947 to 1977, the second 30-year period of the MOM work in Arnhem Land. Reference has been made in chapter one to the Enlightenment and Ecumenical missiological paradigms. The ecumenical missiological paradigm was a feature of the second 30 years of the MOM work (1947-1977). It was characterised by the halting of the tidal wave of the global missionary movement, a redefining of the concept of mission, the emergence of independent indigenous churches and indigenous contextual theologies, and the ecumenical participation of missions and churches on the international arena. This was the context in which denominational cooperation and developments occurred in Arnhem Land in the 1960s and 1970s. Globally, ecumenical cooperation and unions had occurred in these decades, and earlier, for example in the Pacific and India.

Warren (1967) and Yates (1994) have pointed out the importance of the study of the theory and practice of Christian mission in its historical setting, because of the dynamic relationships between the missionaries and the people in a given culture and its historical context. Taking history seriously implies that Christian missions must always be studied in their political, social and economic context (Warren 1967: 11). The Methodist Mission in Arnhem Land is no exception. The MOM work in the second 30-year period was undertaken in a climate of accelerated change in Arnhem Land. These changes were brought about by the Government, the mining companies and the Mission itself.
Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land, as elsewhere in the Northern Territory, had to deal with new issues precipitated by the rapidly changing 'world'; and the missionaries, while attempting to grapple with the new conditions induced by the changes, also endeavoured to help the Aboriginal people to work through and adjust to the new circumstances.

The aim of the present chapter is to show that after almost 50 years of missionary work, the MOM took belated initiatives to adopt a policy of training for Aboriginal church leadership, in the midst of multifarious changes impinging on Arnhem Land. The changes meant that Aboriginal leadership training had to compete with other priorities which the missionaries saw as necessary to cater for the new circumstances and demands made on them and the Aboriginal people.

SOME FEATURES OF THE 1947-1977 PERIOD

Leadership was provided by prominent MOM and Board personalities including the chairpersons Arthur F Ellemor (1943-1957) and Gordon Symons (1958-1972), and the General Secretaries Cecil Gribble (1949-1972), Harvey Perkins (1973-1974) and Peter K Davis (1975-1977).

As noted in the previous chapter Ellemor led the Mission in the closing years of World War Two and during the immediate post-war years. In revising the (1939) NAD policy in 1944 (see Appendix B), Ellemor emphasised economic progress and independence for the mission stations, besides the missionary objective of evangelism which in the early 1950s was still basically noncontextualised in approach, a reversal of the tentative steps initiated in the 1930s and 1940s.
towards contextualisation. This reversal of approach in evangelisation of the Aboriginal people was in fact indicative and symptomatic of the conservatism and ambivalence of many missionaries throughout this period. It also indicated the disparity between mission policy and practice. In theory mission policy spelt out the importance of taking into account Aboriginal culture and beliefs, but in practice many missionaries could not rid themselves of their conservative beliefs and ambivalent attitude towards Aboriginal people and their cosmology.

Ellemor’s leadership demonstrated the conventional beliefs and attitudes of missionaries. This was apparent in his thinking regarding the policy of assimilation. While commending the Government for the policy, he cautioned the Mission at the 1955 District Synod that there were ‘certain aspects of its application’ which gave him cause for concern and ‘call for our vigilance’ (Synod Report 1955, Meth. Ch. OM 313, ML). In a booklet, *Can the Aboriginal be Assimilated?* (c. 1954), Ellemor elaborated on what these ‘certain aspects’ were. They certainly conveyed both strong and subtle racial connotations. Before the Aboriginal people could be accepted by the whites, they had to become ‘thoroughly acceptable’ (Ellemor’s emphasis). As far as the ‘thorny question’ of intermarriage was concerned, it was out. Ellemor did not believe that assimilation meant or was intended to mean ‘free intermarriage’. Furthermore, while economic and political assimilation were ‘possible and desirable’, social assimilation was feasible only ‘up to a certain natural limit’, and cultural absorption only partly possible (Ellemor, c. 1954: 12-15).

Symons as the chairperson of the NAD and Gribble as the MOM General Secretary, were two of the people most involved in the consequences of
the changes made during these tense and vital years in the 1960s and 1970s (McKenzie 1976: 196). Symons had been the superintendent at Yirrkala (1953-1958) when he was appointed chairperson and subsequently took up residence in Darwin, from where he officiated. Gribble, who had been a missionary in the Pacific colony of Tonga (1939-1946), replaced Burton as General Secretary in 1949. Although he brought with him wide experience of mission operations, he had little knowledge of Aboriginal people and their cosmology. Consequently, he, together with Symons, initially took a pro-mining stance which made concessions for mining companies to operate in Arnhem Land. This will be illustrated below. Symons and Gribble were also strongly in favour of the mission stations becoming engaged in economic development. In the mid-1960s they sought advice from external experts such as Ronald Berndt, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Western Australia, and Dr Colin Tatz, Centre for Research Into Aboriginal Affairs, Monash University. Berndt advised the MOM that the Mission in Arnhem Land ought to be involved not only in evangelistic work but also in 'the more materialistic side'. He advocated mission work in the Northern Territory translated in a variety of forms directly associated with social and economic development (Berndt 1965: 1, NTAS NTRS 52/53). Tatz proposed to the MOM the concept of community development, in order to bring about an evolution of a new but still Aboriginal society, based on Aboriginal self-help programs with a Christian impetus and orientation (Tatz 1965: 2-3, NTAS NTRS 52/53). Importantly, Berndt and Tatz stressed the involvement of the Aboriginal people directly in all these developments. Tatz cautioned against repeating mistakes made elsewhere in the colonised world, pointing out to Gribble that:
Too often missionaries and officials have based their policies on the mission concepts of what a community needs, without sufficient thought or consultation as to whether it wants it or not [Tatz's emphasis]. Too often programmes have failed through this ignorance of the mood of the people. Social improvements have thus been planted - only to wither in a climate of unexpected apathy or unforeseen suspicion. What is needed then is a new principle which says that no programmes are initiated unless they have originated from Aboriginal leadership and have the wholehearted support of the Aboriginal people (Tatz 1965: 3, NTAS NTRS 52/53).

The MOM's performance in the light of Tatz's statement above will be assessed later in this study, in relation to the development programs the Mission undertook. Evangelisation of Aboriginal people aside, economic, social and community development projects became key undertakings, if not preoccupations, of the MOM in the 1960s and the early 1970s, under Symons' and Gribble's leadership.

From the point of view of the underlying proposition in this study, however commendable their leadership and administrative skills were (McKenzie 1976: 197), Symons and Gribble lacked a vision for establishing a separate indigenous Aboriginal church in Arnhem Land, and they were still very tardy in initiating a training program for Aboriginal church leaders. Symons was in fact 'forced' by new forward-looking missionaries who arrived in Arnhem Land in the mid-1960s to commence training courses for Aboriginal local preachers (cf, Goodluck 1995). McKenzie considered that Symons and Gribble possessed 'a deep and understanding concern for the Aboriginal people', and that 'with wisdom and insight they could both see clearly that Aborigines themselves must ultimately take over responsibility for their own future' (McKenzie 1976: 197). Clearly though, this was envisaged only in
so far as Aboriginal people assuming responsibility in other areas, not in a future indigenous church. As will be seen, Symons took the lead in discussions which eventually resulted in the shelving of the missiological principle of the ‘three Ss’ - self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing indigenous church - by the end of the missionary era in Arnhem Land. As will be shown in the next chapter, the MOM continued to emphasise the ‘three Cs’ - Christianity, civilisation and commerce.

Harvey Perkins replaced Gribble in 1973 as General Secretary. By this time the MOM in Arnhem Land had joined the United Church in North Australia (UCNA), a predominantly white church (1972). Perkins brought to the position a wide knowledge and experience of ecumenism in the global context and its developments historically and missiologically. He had held ecumenical positions since 1954, which included that of General Secretary of the Australian Council of Churches, Secretary for Inter-Church Aid in Singapore, and Secretary for Development with the World Council of Churches (McKenzie 1976: 197). Although he held the position of General Secretary only for a short duration, Perkins played an important role in shaping the direction of the MOM and the UCNA in the 1970s in the Northern Territory. As a member of the 1974 UCNA Commission of Enquiry, he made pivotal contributions to the Free To Decide policy of the church, which resulted from the work of the Commission, and which created significant historical and missiological shifts in the work of the MOM and the UCNA (see below).

In 1975 Perkins was succeeded by Peter K Davis. While Davis showed benevolent concern that mainline churches at federal and state levels had limited and tepid involvement with the emerging Aboriginal
Christian groups in Australia and urged the churches to explore possible ways to recognise, facilitate and support the development of Aboriginal Christian identity and fellowship (Davis 1976: 1, NTAS NTRS 53, Box 2), his attitude towards Aboriginal people nevertheless remained racially ambivalent. This conflicting attitude was demonstrated in his reluctance to accept intermarriage between Aboriginal men and white women. Consequently, he did not fully accept the marriage of Jenny Peck, a former white staff member in the Darwin UCNA office, to Aboriginal leader Gatjil Djerrkura of Yirrkala in 1976. This was surprising given the fact that officially registered marriages between indigenous men and white women were becoming more acceptable elsewhere in the 1970s. Peck’s marriage to Djerrkura was conducted at Yirrkala United Church. Davis, who was present at the wedding, described the occasion as ‘unique’, ‘interesting’ and with ‘the depth of emotion present in the marriage service’. His ambivalent attitude, however, was betrayed in his report:

The identification of some of the younger members of staff in Arnhem Land seems to me to be in contrast to that which is possible for some older staff members. As I have observed elsewhere there are some stages of development of which close relationships are very difficult and we must be careful not to judge too harshly when others appear in less favourable light in their relationship with developing communities (Report of General Secretary 2-16 September 1976, NTAS NTRS 53, Box 2).

Against the rapidly changing post-war background described earlier, and the direction of the mission and church personalities noted above, the five mission stations continued to grow and consolidate. With the transfer of part-Aboriginal children to Darwin in 1967 (Sommerville nd.: 48), Croker Island became ‘a real Aboriginal mission’ (Goodluck 1995: 25). In 1963 the MOM extended its missionary outreach to the
Maningrida government settlement, established in 1957, with the appointment of the first chaplain to the settlement (McKenzie 1976: 25). In the 1970s, apart from Milingimbi and Yirrkala, the other stations took on Aboriginal names: Warrawui (Goulburn Island), Galiwinku (Elcho Island) and Minjilang (Croker Island).

By the mid-1970s, organisational and structural changes were made, with the mission stations becoming Aboriginal towns and the establishing of village councils, church councils and town councils. Various developmental programs and projects were undertaken at different levels of progress and with varying degrees of success. These developments are explored in detail in the next chapter. Companies and associations were established. Community development, civic development, and economic development became the catch-words of the era. Separate self-service type trading stores were established. Extensive building programs were undertaken, and to assist in the building projects, voluntary work parties from south became a regular feature in the Aboriginal towns (McKenzie 1976: 192).

With increasing government subsidies to missions for trained staff during the government welfare era (1953-1973), white staff increased in great numbers. The development of the welfare era is discussed below. By 1966 the MOM had 124 staff positions in the NAD and in 1972 there were 196, an increase of 60% (Board Minutes 15/8/1966, Meth. Ch. OM 350, ML; Board Minutes 25-27/2/1972, NTAS NTRS 53, Box 2). In the 1950s and 1960s large amounts of money were allocated by the Welfare Branch for Aboriginal health, education and training, and for
Aboriginal agricultural and industrial enterprises\(^1\) (see next chapter). Besides the clergy, there were teachers, nurses, social workers, linguists, agriculturalists, carpenters, secretaries, town clerks, store managers, mechanics, and sewing instructors (cf Symons 1973, NTAS NTRS 53 Box 2). While the white staff increased, and the Pacific Island missionaries continued to be employed (see below), Aboriginal staff numbers remained relatively small, which raises serious questions about priorities given to the training and development of Aboriginal people. In 1972 there were only four Aboriginal people listed on the staff: Lazarus Lamilami (minister), Gatjil Djerrkura (Community Development Field Worker), George Winungudj (Christian Education Regional Supervisor) and WW Wunungmurra (Youth Work Secretary) [Board Minutes 25-27/2/1972, NTAS NTRS 53 Box 2]. What these men lacked in numerical strength, however, was compensated for by their calibre and the quality of leadership they provided during and beyond the missionary era.

The heavy build-up of the mission stations meant increased institutionalism, with foreignness of structures and organisations. Frank Whyte, Principal of All Saints College in Sydney which trained missionaries, who visited Aboriginal missions in Cape York, Central Australia and Arnhem Land, found accelerated change in progress most markedly in the Northern Territory. Contrary to his prior assumption that missions had now shifted from 'the rather heavy, paternalistic institutionalism', characteristic of the past, Whyte discovered instead a new and heavy build-up of church involvement in civic, industrial, agricultural and commercial projects and enterprises of one sort or

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\(^1\) Keith Cole states that an enormous disparity existed between the amount of money government supplied for its own settlements and that granted to missions, although the government and the mission settlements were operated on very similar lines (Cole 1985: 33).
another. He questioned the morality of the escalation of foreign staff dominated mission stations and 'a host of proliferating costly and intricate operations controlled and organised by the mission' (Whyte, 1970: 1). The influx of foreign mission staff and the proliferation of complex operations organised and controlled by the Mission, meant increased and continuing mission hegemony. In comparison to missions overseas it can be stated quite categorically that nowhere else, for example in the Pacific, was the conglomeration of activities and people, with foreign structures and organisations, so concentrated and centralised, as in the five MOM missions in Arnhem Land.

Concern had also been expressed that the relationship between missionaries and Aboriginal people during this period was not as close as expected. This was illustrated by the fact that Whyte, in the course of an hour's conversation, was asked by a young Aboriginal person four times: 'Why don't the missionaries come and sit and talk with us in the camp as they used to do?' (Whyte 1970: 2). In 1965 Berndt similarly pointed out to Gribble that there was a 'tremendous gap between white missionaries and local Aborigines'. This gap was more conspicuous in the material differences between the two groups, for example in housing. White missionaries' residences became prominent features of mission stations. While Berndt did not object to large sums of money being spent on church buildings where all would share in its use, he thought that it was 'unwise to have large mission houses and all modern conveniences in contrast to shacks that are only too obviously transitional'. Furthermore, he pointed out that communication and interaction between the two groups were 'mostly formalised and stereotyped' (Berndt to Gribble c. 1976: 1-2, NTAS NTRS 52/53).
The heavy build-up of the mission stations, with concomitant institutionalism and foreign configurations, secular and religious, had missiological ramifications. As missionaries became institutional caretakers and preoccupied with mission operations, the development of a basic understanding of Christianity within the framework of Aboriginal beliefs and culture, and the training and development of Aboriginal church leadership, were relegated to a place of secondary importance. Furthermore, the influx of new staff with no knowledge of, or no inclination to understand Aboriginal cosmology, meant that the noncontextualisation and contextualisation approaches of presenting the Christian message to the Aboriginal people remained in juxtaposition, as long as the missionaries were the dominant group and as long as conservative elements persisted. This thinking will be explored further in chapter five.

Two important features of the 1947-1977 period were the development of outstations and the homeland movement. An outstation was an outpost in a remote area away from the main mission station. These outstations fulfilled a dual function: evangelistic activities of the Mission were extended to the Aboriginal people in the outposts; and commercially, the outstations became outposts, where the MOM conducted trade with the Aboriginal for crocodile skins, mats and baskets. In 1936 the MOM made an abortive attempt to establish one at Gattji, south of Milingimbi Island on the mainland (Shepherdson 1981: 35). However, between 1947 and 1969 the Mission established a number of outstations along the Woolen River, Arnhem Bay, Buckingham Bay, Wessel Islands, Howard Island and English Company Islands. These early outstations were serviced by Harold Shepherdson's private plane, which
was based at Elcho Island\(^2\). Of these outposts Lake Evella (later Gapuwuyak) which was established in 1969 was the largest\(^3\). Subsequently other outstations were established from Yirrkala and Milingimbi (Welfare Branch Reports 1957-1961; Sweeney nd., AA CRS F1 54/80; Shepherdson 1981).

The terms ‘outstation’ and ‘homeland’ have been employed interchangeably in government and mission reports and other writings. However, this study contends that in the MOM sphere of influence in Arnhem Land, there were critical historical and missiological differences between the terms in their evolution and understanding.

The term ‘outstation’ was an innovation of the missionaries and it embodied the values, aspirations and objectives of the MOM in Arnhem Land. On the other hand, the ‘homeland’ concept was a creation of Aboriginal people. It challenged the ethos and goals of not only the Mission but also the Government. ‘Homeland’ symbolised the aspirations, values, goals and initiatives of Aboriginal people. The movement back to ‘homeland’ was initiated under traditional leadership. As Jonetani Rika commented, the movement facilitated the revival of the traditional leadership system which had been suppressed and remained dormant (Personal communication 1990; cf Council of Aboriginal Affairs Report, April and June 1975: 4). The homeland movement to create decentralised communities was a step towards freedom from mission and government hegemony, and towards authentic contextualisation.

\(^2\) Harold Shepherdson and his wife Ella arrived in the NT in 1927 and moved to Arnhem Land in 1928 and served for 50 years, at Milingimbi (1928-1941) and Elcho (1942-1979). Shepherdson came as a lay missionary but was ordained in 1954 without theological training (E Shepherdson 1981; McKenzie 1976).

\(^3\) Lake Evella was named after Webb’s wife, Eve, and Shepherdson’s wife, Ella.
The homeland movement in Arnhem Land, as an initiative of Aboriginal people, started in the 1970s. The movement was from centralised settlements, government and mission, to decentralised communities. Initially the movement was viewed with apprehension, scepticism and in some cases opposition by non-Aboriginal staff, for example by some of the participants at Batchelor seminars in 1973 and 1974. These seminars were arranged by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs to discuss the policy of self-determination with their all-white staff, to which mission representatives were invited. Some participants expressed fear that decentralisation might 'mean fragmentation of Aboriginal communities, the accentuation of tribalism, and a threat to pan-Aboriginalisation' (Report on Batchelor Seminars 1973-1974: 24; cf Report of Visits to Arnhem Land by Council for Aboriginal Affairs, April and June 1975: 3-10). Jonetani Rika, the Fijian community development advisor, who provided assistance in resettling Aboriginal people in their homelands around Yirrkala, stated that the church was unsure of the movement because of the uncertainty about its outcome; and the Government initially did not provide financial assistance for the homeland scheme (Personal communication 1990). The 1975 Commission of Enquiry which reflected the shift in thinking of the UCNA, stated that the movement concerned Aboriginal freedom to develop their own lifestyle and to have power to determine their own destiny (Clarke 1974: 46). In a paper presented to the MOM Board in Sydney, Bernie Clarke stated that the MOM needed to encourage the growing movement of Aboriginal people to scatter to tribal lands or selected locations of their own choice, and to plan their life there according to their own shape and pace (Clarke c. 1974: 2, NTAS NTRS 52/53). The background to Clarke's statement was that initially the
MOM adopted a policy of non-intrusion in relation to the homeland movement, for the reason that the work of the mission stations would decline.

Missiologically, the homeland movement was a significant development. It meant a decentralising of Christian activities from missionaries and mission stations, and the establishment of 'homeland churches' under the leadership of Aboriginal Christians. In the scattered communities Aboriginal congregations developed under the people's own initiative. For instance, the UCNA 1974 Commission noted that at Gangan, a homeland settlement of Yirrkala, the life of the church was led by Aboriginal Christians from within the homeland community. The Commission thus reported:

Church services go on, everybody comes and listens - they are small services but people do get together and think it was through the power of God that these things came to be possible in the first place for the Aboriginal people to start things and get continuing help from outside... clapsticks play an important part in the life of the Aboriginal people, because they call the people together (Clarke 1974: 46-47).

Jonetani Rika found that the people at the homeland centres functioned better than in the town. People were happy, healthy and they attended meetings well; and 'at worship time, they all came to worship' (Dhawu 1974, Vol. 1, No. 1: 17; cf Kiekebosch 1981: 17). Similarly, the Tongan chaplain, Mosesi Latu, who held monthly services at the homeland centres of Maningrida government settlement, found that the people manifested an 'at home' feeling and were much easier to communicate with than at Maningrida when 1200 people from different clans were together (Dhawu 1973, Vol. 1, No. 1: 17). Similarly, McKenzie wrote referring to the Yirrkala homelands that people who seldom attended
church at Yirrkala were now conducting services in their new communities (McKenzie 1976: 233). This was in fact self-determination in the missiological sense, and in essence contextualisation of Christianity in Aboriginal homelands and within their cosmological framework.

The MOM's policy of continuing to employ the Pacific Island missionaries was also a prominent aspect of the second 30-year period. The services of these missionaries extended beyond the missionary era (post-1977). This meant that those who came after 1977 were employed under the auspices of the UCA to which the MOM through the UCNA had joined. Even during the self-determination era 'foreign' missionaries from the Pacific continued to be engaged.

In the post-war years Samoans and Tongans began to be recruited: Poka Maua and Siose Selesele, both clergymen, were Samoans; and there were four Tongans - Ilaisa Fainga (agriculturalist), Neikoas Fainga (agriculturalist), Mosesi Latu (ministerial) and Haloti Faupula (ministerial) [Kadiba 1993: iv]. The first of this group, Mosesi Latu, arrived in 1965 (Board Minutes 1962-1965 Meth. Ch. OM 462, ML). Siose Selesele was the last of this contingent to leave the Northern Territory in 1987.

Fijian missionaries continued to be the largest group and the longest serving Pacific Islanders in Arnhem Land (Kadiba 1993: 105-191). The last of the pre-war missionaries, Aminiasi Latulaveta, left in 1949. He was replaced by the Reverend Taniela Lotu (1949-1964) and an agriculturalist Penaia Sati (1951-1965). Sati worked at Elcho Island, while Lotu served as pastor, Sunday School teacher, choirmaster,
linguist', school teacher, religious instructor in schools and superintendent of mission stations at Yirrkala and Goulburn Island. Jonetani Rika (1965-1987) made his base at Yirrkala but served the Arnhem Land MOM stations in his various capacities as agriculturalist, social worker, lay pastor, community worker and community advisor. Jonetani helped in homeland movements and assisted people to resettle in the Yirrkala area (cf McKenzie 1976: 233). He played an important role in preparation for the visit of the UCNA 1974 Commission of Enquiry. The preparation for the Commission’s visit was carried out by the staff and particularly by Jonetani Rika, who visited every community (Clarke 1974: 1). Jovilisi Ragata (1970-1988) worked at Milingimbi, Nyangalala, Ramingining, Goulburn Island and Elcho Island as agriculturalist, community worker and lay pastor. When he and his family left Darwin in 1988, their departure marked the end of the employment of Fijian and Pacific missionaries, who played a crucial role in the Methodist missions in Arnhem. Samuela Vateitei (1970-1973) served as an agriculturalist and community worker at Yirrkala and Lake Evella. Taione Leweniquila (1970-1973) was an agriculturalist at Croker Island. He suffered ill-health and a medical examination revealed that he had developed a malignant brain tumour and he was sent to Royal Brisbane Hospital. Subsequently he and his family returned to Fiji where he died in 1974. The Reverend Viliame Kamikamica (1974-1979) served at Goulburn Island, Tennant Creek and Croker Island.  

In the early 1980s when Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land began seeking their own identity as an indigenous church, in the aftermath of the missionary era (post-1977), the UCA brought two more Fijian missionaries, Niumaea Mairara (1981-1984) and Manavolau Yabevula (1981-1985). Mairara served as a minister at Milingimbi and Yabevula worked as community development worker at Goulburn Island with the Aboriginal Advisory Development Service (AADS), the resource agency of the UCA, Northern Synod. Yabevula later transferred to Goulburn Island town council as community advisor. There was conflict between the town council and European workers, and allegations were made that Yabevula was manipulating the Council, causing conflict. In the midst of all the turmoil, Manavolau Yabevula died on 22 June 1985, after a heart attack. To
Reliance on Pacific Island missionaries continue to mean a delay in developing Aboriginal church leadership and slowed down the transfer of responsibilities to Aboriginal people. Some Pacific Island missionaries themselves were aware of this issue. In 1975, in preparing to hand over pastoral responsibility of the Goulburn Island Parish to Philip Magunir, the second ordained Aboriginal clergyman, Viliame Kamikamica referred to the UCNA Free to Decide policy of the 1974 Commission of Enquiry, stating that Aboriginal people must be given freedom to exercise responsibilities fully, in keeping with the spirit of the Commission (Kadiba 1993: 133). In 1971 and 1972 Jonetani Rika was lay pastor at Yirrkala, working closely with the lay Aboriginal church leader Gawirrin Gumana. Rika’s hope was that he would be replaced by Gumana. However, Rika was disappointed that another European minister was appointed, whose term was followed by the Tongan minister, Haloti Faupula (Personal communication with Rika 1990). Even as late as 1984, in the post-missionary era, Jovilisi Raga, who had become a staff member of Nungalinya College, advised his countryman Niumaia Mairara not to take away responsibility from people, when Mairara wanted to continue missionary service after his initial term (Personal communication 1988).

investigate the allegations, the Northern Territory Ombudsman and the Commonwealth Ombudsman conducted inquiries in 1986. Yabevula’s body was flown back to Fiji for burial (Kadiba 1993: 148-149).

With the establishment of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) in 1983, the Aboriginal church recognised Guman’s leadership and accepted him as a mature-age candidate for the ministry, and arranged with Nungalinya College for him to undertake specially tailored theological courses. He was eventually ordained by the UAICC on 15 November 1991.

One of the legacies of the Pacific Island missionaries in Arnhem Land was the introduction of Kava. Between 1981 and 1983 Rika took groups of Aboriginal people to Fiji to observe the work of community development. They were welcomed with the traditional Kava drinking ceremonies. Subsequently Kava was introduced to Arnhem Land (Kadiba 1993: 128, 168-173).
Plate 4

Pacific Island Missionaries

Above: Taniela Lotu (1949-1964), wife and family.


Acknowledgement: Given to author by Jovilisi Ragata

Above: Teitame Kamilamica and wife (1974-1979)


Acknowledgement: The Arnhem Courier, Nhulunbuy's Weekly Newspaper, 15/6/90, Vol. 6, No. 22.
Apart from its own policies implementing missionary objectives, the MOM in Arnhem Land from its inception always undertook its work in the Northern Territory within the context of government policies (cf Forrest, 1990). This section places the Methodist missionary work within the framework of government policies and developments in the post-war era in Australia and the Northern Territory. It limits its focus, however, to the assimilation and self-determination policies, as well as issues relating to mining and land rights, in order to determine the response and reaction of the MOM and individual missionaries to these developments in the Northern Territory context.

Although well covered elsewhere (Wells 1995), a brief discussion of the background to the assimilation policy is needed here. By the time the Federal Government assumed control of the Northern Territory in 1911, the process of 'pacification' of Aboriginal people had been replaced by a 'euphemistic' policy of 'protection' (Austin 1997: 1). As with other missions, the MOM became an agent of government policy, although the missions implemented the policy with very little financial assistance from the Government in the pre-war years.

The underlying assumption of the policy of protection was the perceived inevitable passing away of the Aboriginal people, a view which by 1900 had become commonly accepted (cf Alkin 1979 [1938]: 366). For social Darwinists the dying out of Aboriginal people was a natural process of evolution or natural selection. In 1906 Bishop Frodsman, Bishop of North Queensland, addressed a church congress in Melbourne and
predicted that in the course of a generation or two 'the last Australian black fellow will have turned his face to warm mother earth, and given his soul to God who gave it. Missionary work then may be only smoothing the pillow of a dying race' (Quoted in Cole 1985: 58). For a clergyman as prominent as Frodsman to make such a statement showed how entrenched this perception had become in the settler community. At this stage missionary work had not begun in Arnhem Land, and Bishop Frodsman appealed to the church to become engaged in compassionate and humanitarian work of 'caring for' and 'protecting' the Aboriginal people. It should be noted that whereas the notion of 'protection' can be considered 'euphemistic' in relation to government policy, there was nothing euphemistic about it as far as the missions were concerned.

By the mid-1930s, however, it became apparent that Aboriginal people were not dying out. From his 1927-1930 anthropological fieldwork in the Northern Territory, and through his association with the Society for the Protection of the Native Races, AP Elkin convinced many people that the protectionist policy had failed, and that a 'positive policy' based on the conviction that the Aboriginal people need not die out was the only hope (Elkin 1979 [1938]: 368; Giese 1969: 79). The 1939 MOM policy adopted in the context of these circumstances in fact stated that the frequently made statement that the Aboriginal people were 'a dying race' was not necessarily true and that they were definitely increasing in numbers. The developments in the 1930s culminated in the proposals which John McEwen, the Minister for Interior, placed before the Parliament in 1938, which subsequently became the 'New Deal' for the Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. The 'New Deal' was announced in 1939. Markus (1990) has dealt with the circumstances under which the New Deal was formulated, and Austin (1993 and 1997)
has analysed the prevalent racial ideologies and provided a comprehensive account of Commonwealth policy development between 1911 and 1939. The New Deal effectively ended the policy of protection and gave birth to the policy of assimilation.

In 1947 the Commonwealth Government's New Deal for the Northern Territory Aboriginal people was revised and it became the basis for the policy of assimilation. This remained the policy for dealing with Aboriginal people during the 23 years when the federal Liberal Country Party Coalition was in power (1949-1972). Paul Hasluck, the Minister for Territories (1951-1963), as the principal post-war engineer of the policy, stated in 1951 that assimilation was the aim for all Aboriginal persons and acceptance of this policy governed all other aspects of Aboriginal affairs administration (Powell 1982: 232). In 1961 the official definition of assimilation was issued (Hasluck 1965: 499) and this became the orthodox understanding, which was reaffirmed in 1963, that all Aboriginal people would attain the same manner of living as other Australians and live as members of a single Australian community (Hasluck 1963: 3).

The Welfare Ordinance of 1953 which was gazetted in 1957 became the instrument for implementing the policy of assimilation through the Northern Territory Welfare Branch (cf Annual Report Welfare Branch 1958/1959). Prior to 1951, assimilation was a goal reserved primarily for part-Aboriginal people (Powell 1982: 232). The policy, however, shifted emphasis to 'full-blood' people. Under the Welfare Ordinance Aboriginal people were cared for and controlled as 'wards'. The Ordinance gave Harry Christian Giese, the Director of Welfare (1954-1972), wide ranging powers to arrange training and employment for
'wards' in centres under his own control such as government settlements or on mission stations (Rowley 1970: 298-299; Powell 1982: 232-233). By 1961 there were 13 government settlements and 14 mission stations in the Territory. There were also four institutions for part-Aboriginal children operated by missions, and subsidised by the Government (Progress Towards Assimilation 1958 [1960, 1963]: 23-50). By 1970 there were 20 government settlements under the control of the Welfare Branch (Powell 1982: 234). Rowley stated that the fact that the Welfare Ordinance was withdrawn in 1964 'must be taken as an admission that it was a venture in the wrong direction. But for the decade after 1953, the Ordinance justified bigger and better institutions, and stricter controls' (Rowley 1970: 297).

The Welfare Ordinance was replaced by a comprehensive social welfare ordinance in 1964 which lifted all major restrictions on Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory (Powell 1982: 234). It was, however, the 1967 referendum which lifted the constitutional impediment to, and empowered the Commonwealth Government to become directly involved in, policy formulation and program administration in relation to all Aboriginal people in Australia. Julie Wells (1995) provides the most recent significant analysis of assimilation policy and practice, between 1939 and 1967. She argues that the 1967 referendum marked the end of the assimilation era, and the start of the search for an articulate pan-Aboriginal identity (Wells 1995: 234). Although Wells contends the referendum ended the assimilation era, as understood in the orthodox sense, the policy of assimilation was in fact still exercised on the government settlements and missions until 1973.

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7 In addition the Australian Board of Missions operated St. Francis House for adolescent boys sent to Adelaide for further education and training.
Although policy makers saw assimilation as a 'positive' step, the policy and its practice received a barrage of criticism from social scientists. Stanner (1958) saw the assimilation process as an encounter between two peoples with incompatible cosmologies, attempting to bridge a gap by goodwill, material help and general solicitude, only to discover that there was no firm foundation for the bridge, as both peoples had failed to comprehend the ethos and structure of each other's lives. Strehlow (1964) similarly perceived the impossibility of an assimilation concept, which made no reference to Aboriginal people's wishes and therefore threatened their entire existence. Assimilation involved 'methods of forced change', and the tools for acculturation in the process were not only 'harsh and cruel' but also 'utterly useless in their intended purpose' (Strehlow 1964: 5). Spate (1971 [1968]) also argued that assimilation was a one-sided move, in which the Aboriginal people were forced to surrender their 'one remaining possession, their sense of immemorial identity'. Policy makers and implementers were more concerned about material advantage, rather than moral superiority or psychological comfort (Spate 1971 [1968]: 247). Tatz (1964) directed his criticisms to the welfare methods employed in implementing the policy, stating that little progress was made in all welfare measures taken. For example, Aboriginal people were still unskilled and unqualified despite training programs; and education programs had done little to lift the literacy and education standard of Aboriginal people. Rowley (1970) was critical of the strict, heavy-handed and paternalistic and hegemonic control of Aboriginal people; and in spite of expensive, bigger and better institutions, Aboriginal people were reduced to pauperism. In her study, Wells (1995) argues that what was achieved was not assimilation in the orthodox sense. Aboriginal people were in fact still living in segregated, often grossly impoverished
conditions. Powell (1982) provides a balanced view. While acknowledging that paternalism was intertwined in the assimilation process, Powell argues that neither Native Affairs nor the Welfare Branch has received due credit for the advances made under their guidance in preserving the lives of Aboriginal people and preparing them to cope with the changing world (Powell 1982: 233). The implementation of the policy of assimilation by the Welfare Branch through its own institutions and mission agents clearly had its flaws and its good points.

The MOM in Arnhem Land had in fact been attempting an assimilationist approach, through the mission stations and through the implementation of the Western missiological principle of the 'three Cs' - Christianity, civilisation and commerce (see next chapter). The assimilation/welfare era provided added impetus to what the MOM had already been doing. As noted above the heavy build-up of mission stations and institutionalism in the post-war years was the result of financial grants provided to the missions for the implementation of the assimilation policy.

The official Methodist Mission stance towards the assimilation policy and government welfare measures up to the mid-1960s was one of compliance. Individual missionaries were, however, critical of MOM's uncritical acceptance of the assimilation policy. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Edgar A Wells was a lone voice strongly critical of the government policy, and the MOM's uncritical implementation of the policy through welfare activities. In 1962 he sent a paper to the MOM Board, bypassing the District Synod to the disappointment of the chairman, Gordon Symons. In this paper Wells criticised the MOM programs and their adverse effect on the Aboriginal people and their
cultural and social structures (Gribble to Wells 7/12/1959; Wells to Gribble 20/12/1959; Symons to Newman 11/7/1962; Meth. Ch. OM 457, ML). A few years later Goodluck similarly rejected the Government's policy and the ethnocentric approach of most missionaries. He argued that the MOM had uncritically accepted and implemented the policy of assimilation. Goodluck believed that Methodism had become so identified with the Government through economic dependence that the church had 'lost the power, the prerogative, and perhaps perspective for prophetic criticism', which implied standing up for the rights of the Aboriginal people (Goodluck 1966: 2-3; 1977: 6). The MOM Board in Sydney, however, became increasingly aware of the problems in the Territory. In 1965 the Board commissioned a Committee of Enquiry to investigate the situation in Arnhem Land. One of its terms of reference was to assess the relationship between 'the presentation of the gospel, the life of the Church, education and social assimilation... and a continuing of Aboriginal culture and language'. In its final report the Committee stated:

The wishes of the Aborigines must be respected. There are dangers of self-satisfied white paternalism and the desire for simplicity in administration and education. The intimate relationship of the Church through its missionaries and its inherent concern for human dignity lay on its special responsibilities of [mediation] and interpretation between the cultures, and even by opposition to the policy of enforced assimilation (Committee of Inquiry 1965: 7, NTAS NTRS 52/53).

From the early 1960s there were already signs pointing to a new direction. In 1961 Hasluck told church representatives that in the assimilation process, he expected them to train Aboriginal people for self-management of mission stations. The Watts/Gallacher Report of 1964 commissioned by the Government to investigate Aboriginal edu
Aboriginal education, directed all teachers and instructors to recognise and respect the Aboriginal culture. In 1961, after a study tour of the United States and Canada, Giese pointed out the infrequent use of the terms ‘assimilation’ and ‘integration’ in the vocabulary of these countries and strongly advocated discontinuing their use in Australia when referring to official government policies (Powell 1982: 235-236). In addition, Aboriginal political assertiveness was gaining momentum in the 1960s and early 1970s. The 1963 Yirrkala protests against mining (see below), and the walk-off of the Gurindji people at Wave Hill Station in 1966 protesting against poor working and living conditions, were examples of political activism at local level. The pitching of the ‘Aboriginal tent embassy’ in Canberra in 1972 expressed Aboriginal aspirations at national level. Gough Whitlam, national Labor leader, who visited the ‘embassy’, promised Aboriginal people that when Labor came to power they would be granted freehold title to land (Powell 1982: 235; Pattel-Gray 1991: 157; Franklin 1976: 209).

Training for self-management programs in settlements and the mounting spirit of Aboriginal political assertiveness were therefore pointing to a new direction. The Liberal-Country Party coalition responded slowly to these growing Aboriginal aspirations. However, when Labor gained power towards the end of 1972, as Alan Powell states, it seemed that ‘evolution in Aboriginal Affairs was about to be replaced by revolution’ (Powell 1982: 236). From 1973 ‘Self-determination’ became the new catch phrase in government policy.

Some measures which the MOM initiated in Arnhem Land in the 1960s and 1970s in some ways prepared the Aboriginal people for the policy of self-determination. A range of skills developed through mission
activities and programs helped the Aboriginal people in some respects in the development of local incorporated councils. In 1973 the Federal Government decided the Northern Territory Aboriginal communities would have elected councils. Prior to this decision the MOM established village and station councils in the 1960s and town councils in 1972. In preparation for the town councils to replace station councils, the MOM/UCNA conducted a 'Voter Education Drive' to prepare for the elections which were held in October 1972 (The ALE April 1972: 8). The church therefore in some ways prepared the Aboriginal people for the election of community councils and their subsequent incorporation under the 1976 Commonwealth Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act (Wells 1993: 34). Aboriginal community councils were to be autonomous and in charge of community administration, and community matters were to be channelled through them.

The policy of self-determination was the most enlightened and liberating of all government policies dealing with Aboriginal people. However, church spokesmen were critical of the Government's continuing bureaucratic control over the missions and Aboriginal people. Money was seen to be a means of exercising government hegemony. While the Federal Government aimed for self-determination and encouraged Aboriginal initiative, the administrative structure had built up a 'white bureaucracy' which exercised considerable control through its officers and through its funding (Engel 1978: 5). For example, money could not be obtained for developmental programs in the Aboriginal communities unless these were implemented through incorporated bodies (see next chapter). In 1974 Bernie Clarke presented a paper to the MOM Board in Sydney in which he expressed his concern:
The most frustrating and damaging bond... is financial. Finance has become... the main weapon to ensure compliance with Government policy. The financial structure also seems to thwart the Government's own policy. As a weapon in the hands of Treasury officials, it is wielded against church, community, Aboriginal aspirations and government goals with equal and gay abandon (Clarke c. 1974, 'Self-determining Communities', MOM, NTAS NTRS 52/53).

Many Aboriginal people felt that the pace of change was too fast for them. In 1973 the Aboriginal lay church leader from Yirrkala, Gatjil Djerrkura, expressed this view:

A lot of things are happening in missions and settlements since self-determination became Government policy. A lot of things are happening to the Aborigines suddenly. A lot of things are happening without much learning what this new policy means.

Sometimes responsibilities are given over to Aborigines without going through the process of learning what this policy means. The policy is a process and not a program for Aboriginal communities. I wouldn't like to see Europeans (staff) sitting back and doing nothing. Aborigines and Europeans should come together with respect, human dignity and with one aim to achieve the goal in the work situation (Djerrkura 1973: 1-2).

The 1974 UCNA Commission of Enquiry found that throughout Arnhem Land the 'pace was beyond the control of the people', who reported that they did not understand many things. Concepts such as 'incorporation of Councils' were incomprehensible, and the people found it difficult and 'confusing to manage companies and associations' which had a longer history in Arnhem Land, but which were now required to be incorporated in order to qualify for government financial assistance. The people indicated they lacked the knowledge to handle money. Understandably, Aboriginal people wanted mission workers to remain to give assistance
Under the Liberal Government the 1960s witnessed mining companies encroaching upon Aboriginal reserves. This gave rise, for example, to the Yirrkala protest against the Nabalco mining company in 1963. Some synchronic insight is necessary to understand the background of the Aboriginal land rights protests in the historical process. The concept of land is central to Aboriginal cosmology. The people are profoundly attached to their land. Nancy Williams’ book, *The Yolngu and their Land* (1986) provides an understanding of land in the ideological framework of north-eastern Arnhem Landers, in particular the Yirrkala area. Similarly a recent paper (1996) produced by Aboriginal Resources and Development Services (ARDS), Uniting Church Office, Darwin, shows significant insight into the traditional land tenure system in north-eastern Arnhem Land. These works demonstrate the empirical and non-empirical interconnectedness of all categories of land rights - social, economic, historic and religious. The land rights are governed by a precise set of rules or a complete system of law called the *madayin*. It embodies the rights and responsibilities of the owners of the land (ARDS 1996: 1); the rights entail sets of responsibilities related to sacred duties as well as the secular protection and management of specific lands and resources (Williams 1986: 20). The ARDS paper further explains that the *madayin* encompasses the ownership of land and waters, the resources on or within these lands and waters. It regulates and controls production and trade; the moral, social and religious aspects of the community; and laws relating to the conservation and farming of fauna, flora and aquatic life (ARDS 1996: 1).
The above concepts of land provide the background to the Yirrkala land dispute in 1963. Aboriginal people, joined by Edgar Wells, the superintendent of Yirrkala Methodist Mission, and Aboriginal people protested against the excision made by the Nabalco mining company in that year without the prior knowledge of the Aboriginal people. Not only was there no consultation, but also no meeting with the Aboriginal people was convened to discover precise locations of sacred sites, many of which were within the excised area. A bark petition signed by representatives of the 12 clans of Yirrkala, incorporated with traditional symbolic Aboriginal designs, was sent to the Federal Government in July 1963. But other than the appointment of a sympathetic Select Committee, nothing was done. The petition had little impact. The mining went ahead (Bos 1988a; McIntosh 1994; Powell 1982; Wells 1982).

The Select Committee found that there had been consultation between the Federal Government and the MOM Board authorities in Sydney. Edgar Wells and the Yirrkala mission people had no knowledge of this consultation at the official and national level. This was a blunder on the part of the MOM authorities. Aboriginal people at Yirrkala felt betrayed by the MOM officials. Cecil Gribble, the General Secretary, although he had a distinguished missionary career in Tonga, lacked experience of Aboriginal work in Arnhem Land and therefore would not have understood the depth of significance of the totemic designs representing sacred symbols and therefore the land of each of the clans related to the Yirrkala mission (Bos 1988a: 202). He, together with Symons, the chairperson of NAD, who had been a superintendent at Yirrkala (1953-1958), not only took a pro-mining stance: they were both strong advocates of the assimilation policy and their approach to
mission work was one of noncontextualisation. Wells, by contrast, was strongly against the assimilation policy and was critical of the mission's uncritical acceptance of the government policy. His approach to the mission work was one of contextualisation. Before moving to Yirrkala, he had worked at Milingimbi (1949-1959) and developed an appreciation of Aboriginal art and spirituality (Edwards and Clarke 1988: 195).

As a result of Wells' role in supporting the Aboriginal people in their stand against the Nabalco mining company, tension had developed between him and the MOM Board and mission authorities. Subsequently, the General Secretary wrote to Wells notifying him of the termination of his appointment as superintendent of the Yirrkala Mission, effective from 31 December 1963. Wells received no support from the NAD Synod, which was under Symons' leadership. Wells believed that his dismissal was a 'disciplinary action' the MOM Board took against him for disagreeing with the MOM authorities over the mining issue. His own account of the conflict is recorded with documentary evidence in his book, Reward and Punishment in Arnhem Land 1962-1963 (1982). Ironically, Gribble and Symons were both made Officers of the Orders of the British Empire (OBE), among other things, for their services in the advancement of the Aboriginal people of Australia. Wells was not.

The conflict between Wells and the MOM officialdom demonstrated the disparity between individual missionaries, who attempted contextualisation and who empathised with Aboriginal people, and the paternalistic and ethnocentric MOM policies under Symons’ and Gribble’s leadership between 1958 and 1965. It is not surprising therefore that McKenzie (1976), who was commissioned to write a history of the
Mission in Arnhem Land, is conspicuously silent about the initial blunder the MOM made in relation to land rights and mining. On the other hand, Bill Edwards and Bernie Clarke, former missionaries, admit the mistake and acknowledge Wells' part in opposing the MOM Board's collaboration with the Government in approving the mining development (Edwards and Clarke 1988: 195).

On a positive note the experience of the Yirrkala land rights case widened the horizon and political acumen of the Aboriginal people. They grew in awareness and confidence in dealing with white institutions (Bos 1988a; 203-204). They became much more involved in the Australian political process, which was just beginning to emerge in the 1960s. In Wells' assessment the Aboriginal people had established a direct link of communication with Australian Government, by-passing all previous lines of authority. The late Roy Marika (MBE) was one of the outstanding leaders who emerged in this struggle for land rights. Wells also observed that 'the intellectual powers of the leading elders increased as their anxiety retreated' (Wells 1982: 18, 66).

Wells was perhaps the first post-war missionary to acknowledge the intellectual capabilities of Arnhem Land elders. The Yirrkala land dispute in 1962/1963 not only increased the people's political acumen, but their confidence also extended to dealing with other matters. The people's intellectual stature was evident in discussions and actions which were pursued in relation to the protection of their land and in

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8 Roy Marika died on 9 January 1993 aged 67. Edgar Wells' granddaughter Lee Hunt was one of the people invited to offer eulogies. Marika was buried at Yirrkala on 22 January after a 'two-hour long Christian service'. His coffin, 'draped with the combined flags of Australia and the United States' was carried by the Arnhem squadron of Norforce. A military firing party fired three volleys at the end of the funeral service. Messages of sympathy were received from Paul Keating, Gough Whitlam, Justice Gerrard Brennan and Sir Edward Woodward (NT News 23/1/1993).
development of their traditional art forms. Wells, for example, received a typed letter from Wandjuk, who acted as secretary to the clan group belonging to his father, Mawalan. Clan elders stated that they wished ‘all balanda [whites] to keep out of Melville Bay, Cape Arnhem, Caledon Bay and Bremer Island’. The letter further indicated that ‘Notices will be placed at all these places’ proclaiming the area as belonging to the Aboriginal people (Wells 1982: 19).

An artistic fraternity was also established at Yirrkala. Discussions in the artistic groups put forward ideas concerning stimulation of traditional ideas among people working at any form of handcraft. In 1962 Dr Stuart Scougall and Jon Molvig, an artist, arrived from Sydney with Rudy Komon, a Sydney gallery owner. Discussions were held with the artistic fraternity regarding the possible sale of art and craft work and its promotion internationally. This was a gesture of appreciation of Aboriginal artistic values and it ‘drew a response from the Aborigines that was markedly enthusiastic’ (Wells 1982: 19). Subsequently, discussions were also held for the sale of the artwork at local markets. A significant development which emerged was the emphasis on preserving ancestral thought forms in artwork, and placing these in the church at the Yirrkala Mission. The anthropologist Berndt reported in 1964, concerning the Aboriginal art boards in the church:

The acceptance of these into the local church is also a matter of some pride and, to older men, a sign of rapprochement between what are conceptualised as the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ ways, underlining what they appear to hold as a basic assumption - that traditional Aboriginal life cannot disappear\(^9\).

The Yirrkala land case in 1963 forced the Methodist North Australia District to consider its position in land rights (Bos 1988a: 203). From 1965 there was clear support for Aboriginal claims to land, against mining companies (cf MOM Committee of Inquiry 30/8/1965: 7, NTAS NTRS 52/53). In 1968 the MOM made clear its policy on land rights, and affirmed ‘that Aboriginal people have a clear RIGHT [MOM emphasis] to have their ownership to land recognised (The ALE March 1969: 5). This represented significant advance in policy. A number of factors set the background to the positive step the MOM took to recognise Aboriginal land rights. By 1968 the MOM missionaries had gained a greater understanding of the close relationship between the Arnhem Land people and their land. The MOM also became aware that the strike action taken by the Gurindji people in 1966 to press their claims for better working conditions, had also ‘encouraged Aboriginal people to express long held sentiments about the land and their association to it’ (The ALE March 1969: 4). Furthermore, the MOM was conscious that the mining activities of companies such as BHP at Groote Eylandt and Nabalco at Gove had awakened both Aboriginal and Europeans to the need for some protective measures for Aboriginal land rights. There was also increasing national publicity due to outside pressure to deal with land rights issues.

About the time the UCNA Commission of Enquiry conducted its inquiry into the Arnhem Land matter in 1974, the Government released the Woodward Commission Report on Aboriginal land rights. The Government adopted in principle the policy of granting land rights to Aboriginal people. The church Commission found that this was in line with the wishes expressed by the Aboriginal people. The UCNA Commission ascertained, however, that the Woodward Report did not concur with the
expectation of Arnhem Landers regarding mining rights (Clarke 1974: 69-72). This was related in particular to the clause which stated that ‘Aboriginal power of veto should only be overridden if, in the opinion of the Government, the national interest requires it’ (Woodward Commission Report April 1974: paragraph 708 [iii]).

RACE AND POLITICS

The two previous chapters in this study have already initiated discussions on racial beliefs. Chapter one has dealt with the influence of the Enlightenment and scientific racism which accompanied missionary expansion in the 19th century. Chapter two has investigated Methodist missionaries' racial attitudes in the first 30 years (1916-1946), which generally reflected social Darwinist beliefs, and the modification of these views in the course of the period. This chapter revisits the racial ideologies in the context of post-war developments, and examines the interconnectedness of racial beliefs and politics. In order to put racist beliefs, perceptions, and practices in historical perspective, this section will briefly review the development of racial ideologies from the Enlightenment era, up to the period covered in this study.

Various policies adopted by Australian governments, state and federal since 1901, reflected legacies of racial perceptions and ideologies about Aboriginal people in the process of colonisation (cf London 1970; Kalantzis 1994). The 18th century Enlightenment and the 19th century scientific developments left their mark in political decisions effected in relation to the original people of Australia (cf McGregor 1997). Perceptions and ideologies in themselves are ineffective, however,
unless they are reinforced by political powers. The fact that Germans saw themselves to be a superior race, a perception endorsed by pseudo-scientific beliefs, would not have become so menacing had perceived racial superiority not been the motivating ideology for Nazism. Similarly, action initiated by intellectuals in the United States and Britain to combat scientific racism in the inter-war years, would not have come to fruition if scientists and academics had not become politically active at local and international levels (cf Barkan 1992). Political will and power was required globally, as well as in Australia, to rebuff scientific racism and its legacies.

By the middle of the 19th century, scientific racism had begun to replace the Enlightenment notion of progress of all human races through various stages of development from ‘savagery’ to civilisation (cf McGregor 1997). There was a move away from the 18th century optimism about humanity’s ability to adapt and progress, towards a 19th century biological pessimism, and a belief in the unchangeability of racial ‘natures’ (McGregor 1997: 19). From the middle of the 19th century, scientific racism and social Darwinism became influential.

McGregor (1997) has argued that the Enlightenment idea of progress became entangled with the scientific concept of race and gave credibility to the prediction of the inevitable extinction of Aboriginal people. He states that from 1880 the doomed race theory had become consolidated by the evolutionary science of the late 19th century (McGregor 1997: x). An inevitable outcome of the scientific beliefs and social Darwinism, and the doomed race theory, was the exclusion of Aboriginal people as citizens in 1901 (cf Wells 1995; Kalantzis 1994; London 1970). The concept of the inevitable extinction of the Aboriginal
race, was the underlying assumption for adoption of the policy of protection. Scientific beliefs and politics combined in dealing with Aboriginal people in racially discriminatory ways.

By the outbreak of World War Two, the theoretical bases for racism and social Darwinism were being seriously questioned. The accession of Hitler to power in 1933 and the rise of Nazism, which became synonymous with scientific racism, accelerated rejection of racist theories (Barkan 1992). Barkan states that the Nazi regime compelled scientists to recognise the danger and the horrendous consequences of the misuse of the concept of race (Barkan 1992: 1). This led to the decline and repudiation of scientific racism in the intellectual discourse.

Anthropologists in the United States and biologists in Britain provided leadership in discrediting scientific racism (Barkan 1992). A small number of intellectuals in these countries had rejected the theoretical base for scientific racism in the 1920s. However, while the defeat of Nazism contributed to rejection of racist ideas, the rebuff of Nazi racism itself was a unique response among scientists during the late 1930s and the war years. The decline of racism was the result of changes in the sciences and of the scientists themselves, and was closely related to the politics of race in the United States and Britain (Barkan 1992: 2). Prior to the late 1930s only a minority of scientists explicitly opposed racism. From 1938 on, the scientific community declared itself against racism. Scientists became politically active and leading intellectuals were ready to address the issue of race. It took great effort and political engineering by scientists to facilitate the rejection of racism. The single most active American scientist, who
had international impact in the campaign against scientific racism, was Franz Boas, who can be credited with sowing the seeds of rejection of social Darwinism in the early years of the 20th century, and who remained the central figure of American anthropology until his death in 1942 (Barkan 1992: 279-281).

From 1938, as a reaction to Nazism, a number of anti-racist declarations materialised. However, while all these opposed Nazi racial theories, they did not go far enough in defining race in egalitarian cultural terms. This was not done until UNESCO initiated its first statement on race in 1950, in which it declared that there was no scientific justification for racial discrimination. The UNESCO statement represented a return to environmental determinism, and the replacing of biological explanations by cultural analysis of race. As Barkan states scientists had finally more or less reached an egalitarian consensus on the concept of race (Barkan 1992: 280-281; 341-345).

Australian intellectuals and policy makers were slow in coming to terms with the fact that scientific racism, based on biological determinism, was a declining phenomenon. In fact, as Austin (1997) shows scientists in Australia in the inter-war period remained ambivalent in their attitudes and views about Aboriginal people. While they generally admitted the potential for Aboriginal people to progress, Australian scientists still regarded the people as 'among the lowest of all humanity' (Austin 1997: 11). Among the learned, missionaries and other citizens, social Darwinism remained influential right up to World War Two. Austin shows how pervasive the influence of scientific racism was, and argues that even as new schools of anthropological thought from the late 19th century increasingly cast doubt on theories
of inevitable inferiority, it remained possible for people to choose those aspects of scientific opinion that suited their biases. Most politicians, bureaucrats and the general public had not read the new biological and anthropological findings. However, the most innovative policy makers in the period between the world wars, were well read in anthropology and related disciplines (Austin 1997: 9). Elkin who gave intellectual leadership in the cause for Aboriginal people’s progress, and who exerted considerable political influence in policy matters relating to Aboriginal people, remained ambivalent. McGregor argues that Elkin demoted rather than denied the possibility of influence of inherent racial attributes as a determinant of ability (McGregor 1997: 205). Similarly, Austin states that, while Elkin was increasingly aware of the economic, social, cultural and cross-cultural factors which caused Aboriginal people’s indifferent showing in school, he was nevertheless not able to dismiss the possibility that causes might be biological (Austin 1997: 16). Missionaries demonstrated a similar inclination. While they generally held out hope for Aboriginal people’s progress and improvement, they still regarded the people as the ‘lowest of humankind’, in the social Darwinist language.

While Elkin did not altogether dismiss the possibility of biological determinism, it would not be far-fetched to state that he was the most influential intellectual in the 1930s to combine academic work and research and political manoeuvring to push humanitarian concerns for Aboriginal people (cf Austin 1997: 156-157; 226-227). He exerted enormous influence on both the Government and the missions. McGregor (1997) has argued that the settler community in Australia prior to the mid-19th century, operated within the Enlightenment framework. Elkin’s thinking in the 1930s was in fact a return to the Enlightenment
thought. While race received consideration in his work, Elkin's paramount concern was with social and cultural issues. He expounded social progress, which was resonant of the Enlightenment stage theory. One of the major shifts in Elkin's thinking in the 1930s was to move away from a racial conception of 'Aboriginal primitivity', towards an economic interpretation. That is, in continuing the Enlightenment theme, Elkin argued that if appropriate circumstances were provided for Aboriginal people, they would adopt a settled life of agriculture and industry (cf McGregor 1997: 205-207). He played an influential advisory role in the Government's formulation of the 1939 'New Deal' for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, which became the basis for the assimilation policy. An underlying presupposition of the 'New Deal', which heralded a 'positive policy', was that the Aboriginal people need not die out (Elkin 1979 [1938]: 368). This was a reversal of the doomed race theory, which was propagated and disseminated by the advocates of scientific racism and related social Darwinism. Hasluck, who officially launched the assimilation policy in the Parliament in the 1950s and 1960s, thus ending the policy of protection (Yarwood and Knowling 1982: 266), and continued the return to the Enlightenment theme of progress towards civilisation. However, Hasluck's thinking still implied superiority of Western civilisation. This was evident in his argument that there was no future for the Aboriginal people except in close association with the white community, by implication Western civilisation (Hasluck 1965: 447-448).

By World War Two, racial perceptions about Aboriginal people were beginning to change. The war itself accelerated and consolidated this change. It brought together Australian servicemen and Aboriginal people, especially in the Northern Territory. Although the war in the
short term hindered the executing of the 'New Deal' for Aboriginal people, it gave decisive experiences to people on both sides of the colour line and set forces in motion which could no longer tolerate the continuing of the status quo (Yarwood and Knowling 1982: 259). Furthermore, as noted above, by 1950 the international community had publicly decried racism. In 1965 the United Nations took a further step when the General Assembly issued a definition, describing 'racial discrimination' as:

Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life (Quoted in Yarwood and Knowling 1982: 257).

Yarwood and Knowling (1982) have shown that the parliamentary debates in Australia in the immediate post-war years reveal that the politicians continued to attach themselves to the principle of racial purity and were determined that outside pressures would not sway them from the 'White Australia' policy. However, there were changes in the 1950s. Prior to his appointment in 1951 as Minister for Territories, Hasluck stated in the parliament: 'The Commonwealth Parliament is the custodian of the national reputation in the world at large. Our record of native administration will not stand scrutiny at the standard of our own professions, publicly made in the forum of the world, of a high concern for human welfare' (Yarwood and Knowling 1982: 265).

The progress in the race discourse in Australian politics took a momentous turn in the 1967 referendum, when the Australian people abolished section 127 of the Constitution, which read: 'In reckoning the
numbers of the people of the Commonwealth... aboriginal natives shall not be counted'. Although in some states Aboriginal people had been given the right to vote earlier, the referendum gave all Aboriginal people the right to vote as citizens of Australia, thus overturning the 1901 racist-based exclusive policy. However, Australia still had to deal with one major issue closely related to the race discourse, namely the question of land rights. Aboriginal people, 'perhaps alone amongst the victims of European colonisation, remained a landless minority' (Yarwood and Knowling 1982: 274). In the election of 1972 Aboriginal rights became a political issue for the first time in Australian history.

The 1967 referendum gave the Federal Government the constitutional power to direct Aboriginal affairs throughout Australia. Thus with the accession of Labor to power, Gough Whitlam's government demonstrated a determination to remove the flavour of racism flowing from Australia's treatment of Aboriginal people. A most significant act initiated before losing power in 1975 was that the Whitlam Government secured the passage of the Racial Discrimination Act, applying the ideas of the International Convention of 1965 (Yarwood and Knowling 1982: 274, 289).

Missionaries, while not directly party to various policies adopted in Australia in relation to Aboriginal people, were nevertheless constituents of state and federal governments which politicised issues of race. They were not immune from racial beliefs which emanated from scientific racism. However, by World War Two their racial views had been considerably modified. This was due in part to the influence of Sydney University's newly established Department of Anthropology, which enrolled trainee missionaries in short courses in Anthropology. Professor Elkin used this opportunity to bring the Protestant mission
bodies more fully into his sphere of influence. He also became an unofficial scientific consultant to the Australian National Missionary Council. The Anglicans and Methodists in the Northern Territory in particular sought his advice on missionary matters. Pursuing the Enlightenment theme, Elkin viewed missionaries as playing a vital role in the elevation of Aboriginal religion to a higher Christian plane, as this constituted one essential part of their overall social and cultural advancement (cf McGregor 1997: 210-211). While there was a return to the Enlightenment optimism of progress, and while scientific racism had faded to the background, legacies of racial ideologies still exerted their influence in different ways in the post-war developments. In their work and relationship with Aboriginal people, missionaries continued to demonstrate paternalism, with a concomitant general lack of faith in Aboriginal people's abilities, and this was no more evident than in the slow provision of education and training for church leadership.

CHURCH POLICIES, LEADERSHIP TRAINING AND ABORIGINAL DESTINY

In the immediate post-war years the MOM followed a 1944 revised version of the 1939 district policy (see Appendix B). However, policy changes occurred in the 1960s and 1970s. By the 1960s, with the build-up of mission stations, the ordained superintendents became encumbered with both pastoral and administrative duties. It was no longer possible for one clergyman to undertake chaplaincy, pastoral and administrative work. This led the 1961 NAD Commission to recommend a change of policy, so that superintendents, lay or clergy, would be specifically appointed for the superintendent's position on the mission stations, and would concentrate on administrative responsibilities. In 1965 the MOM Board appointed a Commission of Enquiry to the Northern
Territory. This Commission similarly recommended relieving the minister of administrative duties in order to devote time to evangelism and pastoral care ministry. Subsequently, lay superintendents were appointed to mission stations (Report of District Commission 1961, NTAS NTRS 52/53; MOM Commission of Enquiry 1965, NTAS NTRS 52/53.

Significantly, the 1961 Commission reported that 'our present system handicaps the work of pastoral training, translation work, language work, Bible training and teaching, [and] pastoral work' (Commission Report 1961, NTAS NTRS, 52/53). From the point of view of this study the admission of lack of training of pastors was crucial. Up until this juncture, no work on pastor training had been undertaken. Preoccupation with administrative duties was a major factor which hindered initiating pastor training. But the fact that there was no MOM policy on the training of pastors did not help either. The MOM up to the mid-1960s did not see it as important enough to give priority to establishing a pastor training scheme, a development which should have been undertaken much earlier. By 1964 the MOM took steps to initiate policy on training for Aboriginal church leaders. However, a committee set up to plan a course of training reported to the 1964 synod that the course did not eventuate due to over-commitment of the ordained superintendents with other responsibilities (Goodluck 1995: 22; The ALE April 1970).

The year 1965 was a milestone in the history of the MOM work. The policy of training of church leaders was 'inaugurated' with the conducting of the first local preachers' course for the Aboriginal
people. At the 1964 synod Jack Goodluck and Bernie Clarke\textsuperscript{10}, both newcomers to Arnhem Land, offered to initiate a program of training for Aboriginal local preachers. The first course was conducted at Croker Island (Minjilang) in 1965, lasting for four weeks. Subsequent courses were held at Milingimbi in 1966 and Maningrida in 1967 (Edwards and Clarke 1988: 187; Goodluck 1995: 22; Goodluck, personal communication 18/5/1994). Goodluck and Clarke stood well above their MOM contemporaries in the 1960s and 1970s, as strong contextual theologians. They gave a prominent lead in contextualisation of the mission work. The courses they conducted were in fact 'teaching theology in context' in Arnhem Land\textsuperscript{11}. Teaching theology in context implied two things. Firstly, theology was for the first time taught formally in the context of the Aboriginal communities; secondly, it meant applying theology contextually to the Aboriginal people's experience and cosmology, a step towards authentic contextualisation.

The lay church leaders courses inaugurated by the MOM in 1965 led to inter-church training programs. The MOM invited the CMS to join with them in training staff (Aboriginal and European) for the work in Arnhem Land. From 1966 the two Missions conducted combined courses. These joint programs led eventually to the establishment of Nungalinya

\textsuperscript{10} Goodluck was appointed as superintendent of Croker Island part-Aboriginal institution in 1964 and Clarke was appointed superintendent of Goulburn Island mission station in 1965. Both were university educated men with backgrounds in Community Development and Social Work. In the early 1970s Goodluck became the Director of the Department of Christian Education in Darwin, and in the late 1970s became the founding lecturer in the Community Development course at Nungalinya College. Clarke also moved to Darwin and became the Director of Missions and the Secretary of the Board of Church and Community in the UCNA. He played a central role in the 1974 Commission of Enquiry. Clarke's parents were missionaries in Papua and for 16 years at Mogumber, Western Australia.

\textsuperscript{11} Through teaching in context, Goodluck and Clarke discovered that the Aboriginal people 'were competent already in inter-personal relationships'. They also learnt 'the values of stories and drama, pictures and symbols, conversations, music and songs, places and travel', and folkways of communicating (Goodluck 1995: 30-31).
College in Darwin.

The 1965 MOM Board Commission of Enquiry came to the Territory just as church leader training courses were being conducted in the communities and in Darwin. Significantly, through the Commission the MOM Board for the first time drew attention to Aboriginal church leadership. It noted that no system of church officers and church courts had been set up, and that action had just been taken to train and recognise a group of local leaders. It also indicated that it was clear that past missionaries had felt 'unable widely to trust the maturity and stability of the Christian life of the Aborigines who had made some response to the gospel'. The Commission stressed the importance of ordained ministry:

The Committee is convinced that immediate consideration should be given to the ordained ministry of Aborigines. Until this is done we have not fully expressed the missionary obligation of the indigenous church. The Committee gained the impression that there were men worthy of admission to the ordained ministry. (Committee of Inquiry 1965, 3-5, NTAS NTRS 52/53).

As with the training of lay church leaders, this was a positive but belated move. Subsequent to the visit of the Commission of Enquiry, the NAD Synod recommended that the MOM Board consider the possibility of establishing a training college, depending on agreement between the MOM and CMS (Board Minutes 15/11/1965, Meth. Ch. OM 350: 202, ML). In 1967 an agreement was reached. On 29 October 1973 Nungalinya\textsuperscript{12} was legally incorporated as the Combined Church Training and Research Centre, and it commenced work in 1974.

\textsuperscript{12} The word *Nungalinya* is a Larrakia Aboriginal word which means 'old man rock' or 'big rock'. Old Man Rock is the name of the long low reef that can be seen out at sea from Casuarina Beach at low tide. This is a sacred site for the Larrakia people, and they have different totem songs connected with the place (Cole 1978: 3).
Nungalinya College was established in the period during which dramatic changes occurred in Arnhem Land. Understandably missions and churches were obliged in the changing circumstances to offer other courses of training, besides theology, to prepare and assist Aboriginal people to adjust to the changes. As a 'multi-purpose training centre', Nungalinya offered training not only for the ordained ministry, but other courses as well, which included programs in community development and management. The College produced its first ordinands in the 1980s.

Prior to the establishment of the Nungalinya College, the MOM adopted a policy of offering scholarships between 1964 and 1973 to selected young Aboriginal people to the Methodist Lay Training College at Kangaroo Point in Brisbane. The adoption of the policy to provide scholarships to the Aboriginal people was indicative of improved educational standards for Aboriginal people in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the policy the MOM developed for training Aboriginal church leaders. Among these Arnhem Landers were Bunug (Bunuk)13, Banabi, Barrayuwa, Wali Wulanybuma, Gatjil Djerrkura14 who became the first Aboriginal senior community advisor at Yirrkala and later the first Aboriginal Director of Community Development based at the church office in Darwin (The ALE April 1972: 8; cf Bos 1988a; 184), the late

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13 Bunug from Goulburn Island later became a Community Development Co-ordinator at Nungalinya College in 1985 and 1986.

14 In December 1996 Djerrkura was appointed the new Chairman of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Commission (ATSIC). He has been the general manager of Yirrkala Business Enterprises, an Aboriginal-linked business which operates in conjunction with the Nabalco bauxite mine on Gove Peninsula (Northern Territory News 7/12/1996: 12; Sunday Territorian 8/12/1996: 3). In 1997 he was appointed chairman of Batchelor College.
Rurrambu Dhurrkay, Galarrwuy Yunupingu\textsuperscript{15}, and Djiniyini Gondarra, the Aboriginal theologian. These Aboriginal people became outstanding leaders during the 1960s and 1970s and beyond the missionary era (post-1977). Their immersion in Western culture during their time in Brisbane, equipped them for Aboriginal leadership in Western contexts or on Western issues (cf The ALE Dec. 1970: 13-14 April 1971: 17-18).

In a further development in 1967 Ron Williams, an Australian Methodist who was the principal of Rarongo Theological College, outside of Rabaul on the Gazelle Peninsula in Papua New Guinea, suggested to the MOM Board that Aboriginal ministerial candidates might be trained at Rarongo (Board Minutes 5/10/67, Meth. Ch. OM 351: 104, ML). Although the 1965 Commission of Enquiry 'gained the impression that there were men worthy of admission to the ordained ministry' (Report 30/8/1965: 5, NTAS NTRS 52/53), the Board only noted Williams' proposal as a matter for further consideration when such candidates were nominated in the district. In fact, in the 1960s there were outstanding lay preachers such as the late Rurrambu Dhurrkay of Elcho Island and George Wunugudj of Goulburn Island, who could have been considered for the ordained ministry. In 1973 Gatjil Djerrkura of Yirrkala commented:

\begin{quote}
I am convinced there have been and there are people looking to go into the ministry but lack of facilities and through lack of follow up by black and white, they have found themselves isolated. But there are Aboriginal people ready to take up the challenge to go into the ministry (Dhawu Dec. 1973, Vol. 1, No. 2: 2).
\end{quote}

In 1971, four years after Williams' proposal, Djiniyini Gondarra took up theological studies at Rarongo. Prior to this Gondarra and Mawindjil

\textsuperscript{15} Yunupingu is currently the chairman of the Northern Land Council, an influential organisation. See Helen Chryssides (1993: 271-287) on 'Galarrwuy Yunupingu - Chairman, Northern Land Council'.

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Garawirrtja were offered scholarships to study at Malmaluan Christian Education Centre, also outside Rabaul on the Gazelle Peninsula, in Papua New Guinea, in 1969 and 1970. The initiative to offer training at Malmaluan in Christian Education came from the Director of the Centre, John Mavour, also an Australian Methodist (Board Minutes 20/11/1967; Annual Board Minutes 26-28/2/1968, Meth. Ch. OM 351: 115, 157, ML). In 1970 Garawirrtja and Gondarra reflected on their experiences. Garawirrtja recounted: ‘At Malmaluan we go on weekends to witness to the villages. When on these weekends, I often think, “How can I help my people in North Australia?” ’, and Gondarra reflected:

> In my own experience in the church I would say that one of the very important things that our church in North Australia can learn from the United Church of Papua New Guinea... is to give more responsibilities in the church to our own indigenous people so that they can take a greater role in the church activities... There are three main particular problems which our church needs to think more about: 1. More training is needed; 2. Leadership needs to be shared; 3. Not enough higher education has been received to suit the life of the church (The MR February 1971: 10-11).

In the light of the dramatic changes which occurred in Arnhem Land in the 1960s and 1970s, the MOM/UCNA produced an important 145-page document entitled *Free To Decide*, compiled by Bernie Clarke (1974), which subsequently came to be called the *Free to Decide* policy. This policy gave directives for the church in the self-determination era, and guided the ‘mission’ and praxis of the MOM/UCNA for the rest of the period under consideration. The policy shaped significant historical and missiological directions for the Mission and the Church. It reflected philosophical and theological shifts in the work of the church in Arnhem Land and the Northern Territory, and provided an intellectual and theological frame of reference from which the MOM/UCNA operated between 1974 and 1977 (and post-1977). The missiological
implications of the policy in relation to theological contextualisation will be explored in a later chapter.

As noted elsewhere in this chapter the *Free to Decide* policy was the outcome of the 1974 MOM/UCNA Commission of Enquiry. The Commission listened and responded to the Aboriginal people and their concerns that they were hearing 'too many voices'. This multitude of 'voices' was the 'babel' which came from the Government and the Mission, and the influx of white staff (mission and government), all expounding and implementing the government policies of assimilation and self-determination, without taking into account Aboriginal people's wishes. The Aboriginal people expressed their wish to take more responsibility themselves, but with white staff working alongside them. The Commission found that Aboriginal people had firm ideas about direction. They wanted to take control of their own destiny, and they had to be free to do this. In the past the Mission and the Government had made decisions about Aboriginal people's direction and destiny. The concept of self-determination could fall into the same situation if decisions continued to be imposed by external and foreign bodies. The Commission therefore advocated a 'liberating style of community work' (Clarke 1974; Edwards and Clarke 1988: 196-197). This implied the concept of freedom. A liberating style of work was also concerned with 'the results that might accrue from that freedom, which was "open" ended in that free people may move in new directions not foreseen by themselves or their community' (Clarke 1974: 100). Missionaries had a commitment which entailed liberating and empowering Aboriginal people so that they could control their style, pace of change and direction in their communities.
The Commission stated that in order to help Aboriginal people to be free, the MOM/UCNA staff needed themselves to be free from their own values, goals and aspirations, in order to respond positively to those espoused by Aboriginal people. The basic goal of the MOM/UCNA staff was to work to liberate Aboriginal communities from dependence upon them, whether that dependence arose from past policies, lack of knowledge, inexperience or fear (Clarke 1974: 104). The Commission stressed in particular the concept of dialogue as the means or method of the 'liberating style' of ministry. Through this method the MOM/UCNA staff were to be facilitators to enable Aboriginal people 'to see their bonds, and what is preventing them from achieving their own goals... [and] their own lifestyle... [and] their own Aboriginality' (Clarke 1974: 105). The Commission stated:

In advocating a liberating style of community work the Commission is stressing the importance of liberty - the freedom church workers need to become liberated to those they serve - freedom for Aboriginal people to live in the lifestyle which gives their own meaning to their lives. It is stating that development of people is not primarily a question of finance, up-building of education etc., but rather the development of the capacity and power of people and groups to control their own destinies and to order their own place under the sun (Clarke 1974: 107).

The philosophical and theological shift embodied in the *Free to Decide* policy (1974) was reflected in the change of emphasis from management/development to the concept of liberation. This shift was in line with the trend in the Ecumenical era on the global scene. In fact radical changes were occurring historically and missiologically in the 1960s and 1970s in the global community, and in this context Timothy Yates argues that the theology of liberation which developed in the late 1960s and flowered in the 1970s represented a radical approach to Christian mission and theological method (Yates 1994; cf Itty 1974;
Ponk 1975; Gutierrez 1973). Bernie Clarke, the editor of the 1974 Commission Report, and Harvey Perkins, the MOM General Secretary, were men with wider experience and knowledge of global ecumenical developments, through their participation in international conferences and their association with the World Council of Churches (WCC). Their experience and knowledge of historical and missiological developments globally and the contextualisation of these in the Arnhem Land situation was reflected in the *Free to Decide* policy.

Up until 1974 the focus of the secular involvement of the MOM/UCNA was community management and development. The Commission argued that development with purely economic gains could have a disastrous effect on Aboriginal corporate survival and identity. It therefore proposed the liberating style of work. It asserted that the church's liberating 'mission' was to assist Aboriginal people to develop without leaving their true identity - both as individuals and as a people (Clarke 1974: 86-90) and enable and empower them to take control of their own destiny, in their Arnhem Land communities.

The previous chapter and this chapter have demonstrated that the MOM undertook its missionary work in Arnhem Land in a situation which was much more complex than perhaps any foreign mission in the Pacific. The situation in Arnhem Land was in many ways unique. This uniqueness was in part due to the 'nomadic' nature of the Aboriginal people. At the commencement of the Mission, missionaries admitted the complexities arising from this situation. John Burton, the pre-war MOM General Secretary, confessed that he had 'never felt so helpless and, at times, so hopeless' as the MOM had 'never before dealt with a nomadic people' (General Secretary's Report June-July 1926: 19, Meth. Ch. OM 238, ML).
This uniqueness led to the establishment of the mission stations and related institutionalism; and, as the stations consolidated and institutionalism intensified in the post-war period, the situation in Arnhem Land became more complex. Nowhere in the Pacific was there such concentration of missionaries and missionary activities on mission stations as there was in Arnhem Land. Missionaries became perpetual caretakers of mission stations and their operations. Furthermore, as agents of the government policies and recipients of government subsidies, missionaries were obliged to follow the dictates of the Government. In addition, foreign intrusion as well as changes impinging on Arnhem Land in the post-war era added to the complexity of the missionary work. In 1970 Gordon Symons, the chairman of the NAD, wrote an article entitled, 'A Mission of Complexity'. He wrote:

Recent years have brought dramatic and extensive changes to the work among Aborigines. Changing attitudes of Government and general population, big increases in finance available and range of work to be done have all brought great pressure to bear upon us ... The tremendous complexity of the work is at times frightening. As we struggle to clarify relationships between mission and Aborigines, mission and companies, mission and Government, Aborigines and Government and external groups and Aborigines, and at the same time seek to pursue a course of spiritual and material development, we are fully extended (Symons 1970: 21, 22).

The MOM could therefore be forgiven for not giving priority and due attention to the training of Aboriginal church leaders and pastors. However, the fact that no policy at all in this regard was adopted from the outset of the mission work and that a very belated step was taken in the 1960s to initiate such a policy, warrants criticism of the MOM missionary enterprise in Arnhem Land.
The *Free To Decide* policy which the MOM and the UCNA adopted in 1974 was a significant development. It was in fact a revolutionary policy. It strongly recommended that Aboriginal people be granted freedom to decide for themselves, and be freed of both government and the mission hegemony. The freedom to decide and control their own affairs, without continuing hegemonic control, was perceived by the church to be the meaning of ‘self-determination’. The church in fact expressed concern that government bureaucratic control was going to be contrary to the concept of self-determination. The policy also proposed that the missionaries had to free themselves of even benevolent paternalism, in order to grant freedom to Aboriginal people to assume the responsibility of shaping their destiny. It marks a shift in the 1970s in the MOM philosophy of operation, changing from an emphasis on economic and community development to include a focus on a theology of liberation. The concept of liberation embodied concern and action for social justice issues. The philosophical and theological shift facilitated by the *Free to Decide* policy, was in parallel with the global trend which was characteristic of the Ecumenical missiological paradigm in the 1960s and 1970s. It needs to be said, however, the policy was not revolutionary enough. The policy contained no statement giving directives to the development of the Aboriginal church, to the point where it could be granted self-determination. Not only was the MOM slow in developing a policy for training of Aboriginal church leaders, but it adopted no policy for creating a separate indigenous church.
As has been noted elsewhere in this study, from its inception in Arnhem Land the MOM became involved in industrial and commercial activities which had impinged on the evolution of an indigenous church. This chapter therefore focuses closely on these aspects of the Methodist Mission work in the second 30-year period (1947-1977). It has three main underlying objectives. As engagement in commercial and industrial enterprises constituted a major part of the MOM work in Arnhem Land, both in the pre-war and post-war years, this chapter investigates and records this particular feature of the Methodists' missionary enterprise. A second related objective is to demonstrate and substantiate that the MOM was in fact heavily engaged in industrial and commercial activities within the Mission. Thirdly, in the process of this historical exploration, this chapter assesses the missiological principle of the 'three Cs', Christianity, civilisation and commerce, and the 'three Ss' principle, self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating, in the context of the mission work in Arnhem Land. It is argued that the 'three Cs' took priority and eventually sublimated the 'three Ss' principle during the missionary era.

The late 19th century and the 20th century missionary movement generally saw no contradiction between the spheres of commerce and Christianity. By the dawn of the 20th century, colonialism and Christian mission had become intertwined. As Bosch states the term 'mission' in its 'modern' use presupposed the 'ambience of the West's colonialism of
overseas territories and its subjugation of their inhabitants' (Bosch 1991: 303). Christianity, Western civilisation and commerce became closely interconnected in the process of subjugation of the colonised peoples. Engagement in industrial and commercial enterprises thus became axiomatic in the global missionary enterprise from the late 19th century right up to World War Two in some cases, and in the case of Arnhem Land up to the 1960s and the 1970s. This study in fact argues that, whereas in other mission areas, for example in the Pacific, the industrial and commercial activities began to recede by the 1960s, the Methodist Mission's involvement in this feature of its work intensified in Arnhem Land, reaching relatively large proportions by the early 1970s.

INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE: POST-WAR DEVELOPMENTS

A number of factors combined to give rise to the MOM's heavy undertakings in industry and commerce in the post-war era. As was noted earlier, in the course of the global missionary movement, industry and commerce were employed as a method of disseminating and propagating Western forms of Christianity and civilisation, through mission stations and related institutionalism. The MOM in Arnhem Land followed this missiological precedent in christianising and 'civilising' the Aboriginal people. This aspect of the Mission was also, from the outset, dictated by policies of individual chairpersons of the NAD, who saw industrial activities as an essential feature of the mission work. This was especially seen to be necessary in the process of resettling Aboriginal people in the mission stations, and teaching them the rudiments of the new 'civilisation' into which they were being introduced. Furthermore, it was MOM Board policy from the outset that
the mission stations should not only become self-supporting but also generate funds for the extension of missionary work (cf Report on Industrial Missions May 1916, Meth. Ch. OM 450, ML). In the period under consideration, the MOM also sought and received advice from external advisors and consultants, and experts such as Colin Tatz and Ronald Berndt. In view of the mounting involvement of the church in the general social and economic development in Arnhem Land, and in dealing with the large sum of money related to social and economic development, Berndt advised that the Mission needed to be engaged in a variety of activities directly associated with social and economic development (Berndt c. 1965, NTAS NTRS 52/53; cf NAD Synod Minutes Sept. 1970, Meth. Ch. OM 1272, Box 2, ML).

Industrial and commercial activities of the MOM prior to World War Two were directed towards a self-supporting mission economy of the Mission. Any revenue generated from industry was used for maintenance purposes and 'to better the establishment and development of the station' (Milingimbi Report 13/12/1932, AA CRS F1 53/266). Similarly, in the immediate post-war years up to the 1950s, the revenue from the various industries was expended for consumption and incidental mission station operations. However, there are indicators that the 1960s was the decade in which economic development of the MOM mission stations shifted from self-supporting economic activities to commercialism. For example, the Synod Minutes explicitly stated in 1961 that efforts were to be made to establish a fishing industry commercially (Notes on Synod Minutes 1961-1970, NTAS NTRS 44/45).

With the development of the MOM operations to outstations in the post-war years, industrial activities expanded. The outstations were in fact
called 'trading posts' (AA CRS F1 54/80). From outstations items such as crocodile skins, dingo scalps, crafts, baskets and mats were obtained. The average income for the mission stations for 1955, 1956 and 1957 was about £15,566, which was generated from timber, handcrafts, hides and agricultural produce. In 1957 this amount represented 23% of the total mission revenue of £67,566 (NAD Report 1956, Meth. Ch. OM 313, ML; Statement of Income Expenditure 30/6/1957, Meth. Ch. OM 313, ML).

There was steady commercial progress on all stations of the Mission, although at various levels of development and degrees of success. The heavy build-up of industrial and commercial activities was the direct result of increased government subsidies to missions in the assimilation and welfare era (1953-1973). As an agent of the Government, the Mission was committed to the implementation of the assimilation policy through its secular 'more materialistic side' (Berndt c. 1965, NTAS NTRS 52/53). As noted in the previous chapter, the Welfare Branch in the Northern Territory allocated large sums of money by the 1960s for the Aboriginal development in various social and welfare services, and Aboriginal agricultural and industrial enterprises. With increasing commercial emphasis, the 1968 MOM Commission of NAD visited the mission stations and outstations to examine the new and old industrial projects, and sites for further developments, and made recommendations for improvements of projects, as well as recommending new economic projects (NAD Annual Synod Minutes Oct 1968, Meth. Ch. OM 1272, Box 2).

The following tables indicate the industries which the MOM developed
on mission stations in the post-war period¹.

Industries in Arnhem Land MOM mission stations².

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIMARY INDUSTRY</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Beans, cassava, cassava starch production, cow peas, cucumbers, Fijian yams, guava, lucerne seed, lucerne hay, maize, peanuts, pumpkins, radishes, rock melon, rice, rosellas, sorghum, sweet potatoes, silver beet, shallots, sugar cane, tomatoes, turnip, watermelon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plantations</td>
<td>Banana, citrus (orange, lime), coconut, custard apples, mangoes, pawpaw, pineapples, plant nurseries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal husbandry</td>
<td>Buffalo, cattle, dairy, egg production, poultry, goats, horses, piggery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>Arts and crafts (traditional), bakeries, baskets, crocodile skins, dingo scalps, dugong meat, mats, mineral prospecting, oyster farming, pearl shell, salt pan, sawmill and timber logging, trepang, turtle shell, wallaby meat.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECONDARY INDUSTRY</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carpentry and building; boat building; maintenance and repairs; brickmaking; engineering and technical; furniture building; garbage collection; pottery; sewing industry.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

With the shift to commercialism the demand for labour and capital


² Not all of these industries were developed on all mission stations. Some stations specialised in such industries as sawmills, bakeries, piggeries, dairies, brickmaking and craft outlets. The degree of success varied from station to station and from year to year (cf ARDS Report 1994: 21).
increased. In this situation the Mission was the employer and the Aboriginal people were employees. Aboriginal men, women and children were employed in various industries (see tables above). The capital costs escalated for the various mission stations. The capital and operational costs for 1971 amounted to £1,154,350 (NAD Minutes, 17/9/1971, Meth. Ch. OM 352). The district mission expenditure for the year exceeded $2,000,000, of which $312,000 came from station revenue, $1,125,000 came from government grants and the rest from church offerings which came through the MOM Board (The MR 1971, Vol. 79, No. 2: 24). In this year the sales of crafts from the Yirrkala, Milingimbi and Elcho Island missions yielded $50,000. Produce from agricultural and pastoral industries for the whole district was valued at nearly $104,000. For the year ended 30 June 1973, returns from various industries amounted to approximately $200,000, about 10% of the total district expenditure (The MR 1971, Vol. 79, No. 2: 24; UCNA, Mission Division, Annual Report 1973, NTAS NTRS 53, Box 2). This amount shows a disparity from the previous years, which indicates that the mission revenue generated from agricultural and pastoral industries fluctuated from year to year.

The MOM's growing involvement in industrial and commercial activities, as well as political changes necessitated the formation of associations, companies and incorporated bodies. Associations and companies had to be incorporated in order to be eligible for government funding. In 1969 the NAD Synod empowered the MOM District Committee to approve associations to be formed within the mission stations. The Synod also sought information concerning various forms of companies and associations from appropriate professional advisors and distributed such information throughout the district. The aims of the NAD Synod in
its relationship to Aboriginal companies and civic development were to recruit staff; support them with the offer of general facilities available in towns; assist in marketing of produce; assist mission staff in the early stages; and to seek government subsidy to assist village councils to undertake municipal duties. The manager of the company was appointed by the synod and he was responsible to the synod. He was, however, allowed freedom in the application of his duties to the company, although he was required to work in close liaison with the mission station superintendent (NAD Minutes, Annual Synod Sept 1969, Meth. Ch. OM 1272, Box 2; ML).

On 17 September 1971 the MOM held its last synod at Yirrkala (NAD Minutes, Annual Report Synod 17/9/1971, Meth. Ch. OM 352, ML). In 1972 the MOM was amalgamated with the UCNA. Two years earlier, with integration pending, the MOM proposed an Arnhem Land Civil and Economic Plan with a view to establishing a Civic and Economic Council of Arnhem Land following the amalgamation. The aim of this council was to consider policy and all financial and administrative matters relating to social, civic and economic development in Arnhem Land (Notes on Synod Minutes 1961-1971, NTAS NTRS 44/45). In 1971 the MOM Synod resolved that the Arnhem Land Civic and Economic Development Council was to be referred to as CEDAR. It became an incorporated body on 1 April 1972 (NAD Minutes, Annual District Report 17/9/1971, Meth. Ch. OM 352, ML).

With the integration, the MOM stations became incorporated as a separate agency under CEDAR. As an incorporated body, CEDAR assumed the duties of the church’s ‘development arm’, taking on the financial and

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3 Bos in his thesis erroneously deciphered the acronym CEDAR as Community Education and Development Arnhem Land (Bos 1988a: 184).
administrative responsibilities of the ‘secular’ activities of the church in Arnhem Land towns (cf Wells 1993: 31). A further development was effected when the UCNA changed the agency from CEDAR to Aboriginal Advisory and Development Services (AADS) in 1974, and in that year the church sent the Commission of Enquiry to visit the Arnhem Land towns with the task of making recommendations as to which activities of AADS should be transferred to the Aboriginal people, and to examine the structure of AADS in order to recommend its reorganisation4 (B Clarke 1974; cf S Wells 1993: 32).

By 1973 the MOM and the UCNA (after 1972) had established a number of associations and companies, which included: Galiwinku Progress Association; Galiwinku Furniture Company; Goulburn Island Progress Association; Milingimbi Community Advancement Association; Murwangi Pastoral Association, on the mainland adjacent to Milingimbi; Ramingining Housing Association; Yirrkala Brickworks Company; and Yirrkala Association. CEDAR and later AADS became the parent organisation for these associations and the companies (NAD Annual Board Papers 1973, NTAS NTRS 53, Box 2). The companies and some of the associations were founded for economic development purposes, for example mineral operations and pastoral enterprises. Housing associations in all the towns were initiated for developing Aboriginal housing prospects. Monies received from the Government for the economic ventures and housing projects were channelled through such associations and companies5.

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4 In 1986 AADS, which had come under UAICC was changed to ARDS (Aboriginal Resources and Development Services) (cf Bos 1988a: 184-185).

It was the aim of the MOM/UCNA to eventually transfer the associations and companies to the Aboriginal people. In 1970 the NAD Synod resolved that:

Once a project is considered feasible, then a legally constituted Incorporated Association, or Company, with European managerial assistance, if necessary, should carry out the work of the project. The Methodist Church of Australasia should assist until such time as Aboriginal members are able to carry out all aspects of the work (NAD Synod Minutes Sept 1970, Meth. Ch. OM 1272, Box 2, ML).

However, the verbosity and complexity of constitutions adopted for the incorporated bodies were, for any person for whom English was a second language, not easily understood and followed. Not only were the constitutions verbose and complicated, but the meeting procedures and organisational structures adopted were all foreign, which meant that the management of the incorporated associations and companies was largely to remain with the whites. The aim of the MOM/UCNA to Aboriginalise and contextualise these enterprises was in many ways, therefore, self-defeating. (For examples of constitutions refer to NAD Minutes, Annual Synod Sept 1970, Meth. Ch. OM 1272, Box 2, ML).

The MOM had also operated trade stores on all mission stations. Another major change to the UCNA, to which the MOM had been integrated, occurred in relation to the trade stores in 1972 with the incorporation of the Arnhem Land Progress Association (ALPA). This became the umbrella organisation for all trade stores in the Arnhem Land MOM towns. A physical infrastructure was established in order to operate the stores on a commercial basis, with the aim of making a profit. In 1973 the annual income from two of the trade stores exceeded
As a retail organisation, ALPA came to be called the Arnhem Land Retail Association Incorporated (NAD, Executive Officer's Report, 1973 Annual Board Papers, NTAS NTRS 53, Box 2; Notes on Synod Minutes 1961-1971, NTAS NTRS 44/45). Samantha Wells (1993) has documented a detailed account of the development of ALPA from its inception in 1972 to 1992. Wells demonstrates that while the Methodists established stores to supply basic goods for the mission stations, the store was also a depot for distributing rations for food, tobacco, blankets and sometimes clothes. Up until the 1960s, the Federal Government provided missions with sums of money to buy food to be distributed as rations. However, during the late 1960s ration stores were superseded by counter-service stores, which could offer a wider variety of goods. The introduction of social security benefits in 1968 and the direct payment of these benefits to Aboriginal people, meant that they could now purchase goods directly from the counter-stores (Wells 1993: 36-40).

As with associations and companies, in theory the mission administrators saw the ownership and control of the stores eventually being handed over to Aboriginal people. Trade store committees were instituted both at local level and district level, and Aboriginal people were represented on those committees (NAD Minutes, Annual District Synod Sept 1970, Meth. Ch. OM 1272, Box 2, ML; NAD Minutes, Annual District Synod 17 Sept 1971, Meth. Ch. OM 352, ML). The report from the trade store association committee which was presented to the final Synod at Yirrkala in 1971, and which recommended the formation of the Arnhem Land Retail Association (ALPA) Incorporated, stated that:

The principles that have to be kept in mind when drafting the rules and regulations of the proposed association, include a
recognition of the fact that sooner or later this incorporated body will be handed over to Aboriginals who will end up being the owners of the incorporated body.

It is therefore proposed that the organisation of the trade store association incorporated should be as much as possible along business lines so that future Aboriginal owners will have an opportunity of seeing how a business organisation is run on a district basis. Full recognition must be given to the needs and requirements and desires of those living in each individual station area (NAD Minutes, Annual Synod 17 Sept 1971, Meth. Ch. OM 352, ML).

By the end of the missionary era, most of the industries had declined and they gradually disappeared in the post-missionary years (post-1977). The only continuing operational legacies of the MOM/UCNA industrial and commercial enterprises are the counter-service stores and the Yirrkala agricultural banana plantation. The counter-service stores in the Arnhem Land communities have remained under the management of ALPA. The survival of the Yirrkala plantation has been due to the fact that the town council decided to return the plantation to the church, which has continued to employ non-Aboriginal people including Pacific Islanders, and the accessibility of a market at the Gove mining town in the vicinity of Yirrkala (Stuart McMillan personal communication 1997; cf Kadiba, 1993: 165-166).

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6 According to Stuart McMillan, a former managing director, ALPA took on the responsibility of managing the stores, shops and retail outlets, and provided training in these areas. In 1984 ALPA dissolved its constitutional link with the church and became a separate entity. This severance was effected in order to 'Aboriginalise' ALPA and be eligible for government funding (McMillan personal communication 1995; cf Wells 1993: 96-97). However, Samantha Wells states that 'The Church, through the [Uniting] Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) and the Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) and the Aboriginal Resource and Development Service (ARDS), remains a significant force in both the Arnhem Land communities and in Darwin' (Wells 1993: 33). Following the formation of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) in 1983 (see Epilogue) in the post-missionary era, AADS was transferred to the UAICC and in 1986 changed its name to ARDS.
Bill Edwards and Bernie Clarke, former missionaries, have stated that educational and industrial projects which had seemed promising under mission direction in the 1960s lost impetus as the government took control and introduced outside contractors and employees, closing opportunities for local residents (Edwards and Clarke 1988: 196). Edwards and Clarke have pointed to one factor contributing to the decline, namely the coming of non-mission outside contractors and employees. Other reasons included the handing over of industrial and commercial projects to the Aboriginal town councils, which started to operate them on a larger and more centralised base rather than on small traditional clan-based operations, for example fishing industries which were operated during the mission era (ARDS Report 1994: 21-28). By the 1970s the Methodist Mission had transferred most of its projects to town councils, and it became the councils' prerogative to decide which projects were to be given priority. Furthermore, the introduction of social security benefits in 1968 and the introduction of award wages for Aboriginal people, as well as a training allowance in 1969, meant that the people could now earn more money than they received from the Mission working in industries such as agriculture and plantations. An added major factor was the cosmological incompatibility of the industries and their operations which were based on Western economic models (cf ARDS Report 1994). Could one factor be, as Tatz intimated in 1965, that the industrial and commercial projects were introduced without consultation with the Aboriginal people? The mission industrial projects thus lost impetus in the 1960s and 1970s. For so much effort and huge sums of money spent, there is little remaining in Arnhem Land of this aspect of the mission work.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EVANGELISM IN TENSION

It will be recalled from earlier discussions in this study that in 1938 Burton, the MOM General Secretary, expressed concern about the effect of mission institutionalism on the missionary objective of evangelism. Burton pointed out to the Methodists in the pre-war era that the 'question of institutionalism versus direct evangelistic effort was a very real one' (Burton 1938: 1). In the post-war years, however, the MOM was advised by Elkin (1946) and Berndt (c. 1965), as noted elsewhere, not only to be engaged in evangelism but also in social and economic development, the more secular side of the mission work. The heavy build-up of mission stations and institutionalism, to which industrialism and commercialism contributed in the post-war developments, presented a situation in which potential conflict existed between the secular involvement of the Mission and its missionary objective of evangelistic work.

In the period under consideration, the MOM Board and missionaries in Arnhem Land, up until the late 1960s, generally saw no contradiction or conflict in being engaged in the dual task of evangelism and what Berndt called 'the more materialistic side' of community life. The MOM's theological base was sufficiently broad to accommodate 'secular' activities in its missionary aim of evangelism. In 1959 Gribble, the MOM General Secretary, in the context of discussions relating to the Gove bauxite development, informed the Secretary of the Department of Territories of the MOM's official theological position. In correspondence, the Secretary of Territories had assured Gribble that missionaries in the Gove-Yirrkala area would have full access to Aboriginal wards of the state and their families for 'spiritual
purposes'. Gribble indicated to the Secretary that the term 'spiritual' was limited in its understanding, as the church's work was aimed at the 'whole person', caring for 'the general welfare of Aborigines as it relates to their physical and social conditions' (Gribble to the Secretary of Territories date c. 1959, Meth. Ch. OM 457, ML). The MOM'S theological understanding at that stage of its ministry in Arnhem Land was broader than what the term 'spiritual' implied. Gribble rejected the term 'spiritual' because it narrowly confined the mission work to evangelism.

The 1969 Annual Synod minutes stated: 'Whilst we are concerned for economic development, our first concern is that they [Aboriginal people] each might respond in faith to Jesus Christ' (NAD Minutes, Annual Synod Sept 1969, Meth. Ch. OM 1272, Box 2). In theory this was the understanding. However, in reality by this stage divided priorities relating to evangelism and economic development had emerged. Up until the end of the 1950s, the objectives of evangelism and industrial activities were integrated. However, with the change from a self-supporting economy to industrialism and commercialism in the 1960s and 1970s, a dualism was effected, with increasing demarcation between evangelistic and industrial and commercial activities. As the latter enterprises increased in complexity and required specialisation, the 'secular side' and evangelistic work came to be implemented separately through different structures, although still under the auspices of the MOM/UCNA. Ann Amos, whose husband Keith was employed by the town council at Elcho Island as town clerk (1974-1976), based on her own observations, stated that the overt and central purpose of christianisation of Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land was no longer the prime goal. Other objectives relating to CEDAR/AADS and
ALPA in fact took priority (Personal communication 14/8/1994). In other words, evangelism was no longer the prime goal.

In 1968 and 1969 concern was expressed about the church's involvement in industries and commerce and their effect on the work of evangelism. In about 1968 an anonymous paper entitled 'Economic Development in Arnhem Land' was circulated among the missionaries and MOM Board members in Sydney. This paper was written in reaction to a letter which was despatched to Gribble by Bruce Walker, the president of the Mission Liaison Group in Melbourne, who had visited the Arnhem Land communities. Walker indicated to Gribble that 'by all reports development in the Northern Territory during the next ten years will reach astronomical proportions, [and] if the church is to keep pace with this development... then planning is now essential' (Walker to Gribble c. 1968, Meth. Ch. OM 467, ML). With a background in commerce, Walker made subtle criticisms of the produce of some industries on the mission stations, stating that they were below commercial standards, and suggesting ways to improve the quality. The anonymous writer, in taking issue with Walker's letter, stated that he understood the role of the church to be encouraging the development of certain types of business organisations, which would provide capital and competent staff, and ensure 'the participation and training of Aborigines for employment and ownership'. Once such structures guaranteeing Aboriginal people's interests and participation were in place, the church should then withdraw. It argued that the businesses would not be church enterprises. Evangelism was the church's main business (Anonymous c. 1968, Meth. Ch. OM 467, ML).

In 1969 the Assistant General Secretary of the MOM Board in Sydney,
EV Newman, wrote to Symons, the Chairman of the NAD, expressing concern that social and economic developments were taking priority over the task of evangelism, and calling for a conference of both indigenous church leaders and missionaries to consider the dilemma. The conference was to discuss evangelistic, pastoral, liturgical and Christian aspects of the Mission as Newman was concerned that the 'enormous pressure of the social [and economic] development part of our work is tending to thrust these things out of the centre where they should belong' (Newman to Symons 4/12/1969, Meth. Ch. OM 467, ML). Symons was a strong advocate of economic development in the 1960s and there is no evidence that he convened the conference which Newman called for. In the same year, however, Frank Whyte, Principal of All Saints College in Sydney which trained missionaries, after visiting the Northern Territory, became very critical of the heavy build-up of church involvement in industrialism and commercialism. He did not think this undertaking was the church's responsibility (Whyte 1970: 1). He stated:

We need to assess not only what we are doing and the increasing amount of work we are letting ourselves in for, but also the proportion of time, energy, thought, concentration and care that the sheer doing of these jobs requires and the corresponding shrinkage of time, energy, thought, concentration and care which is put into the recognition of people and into missionary solicitude for people [his emphases] (Whyte 1970: 2).

INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

Industrial and commercial activities of the MOM, purportedly undertaken for the Aboriginal people, had wide ranging ramifications for the Arnhem Landers. Aboriginal people were offered on-the-job training, although according to Djiniyini Gondarra, in the 1950s the missionaries were so engrossed with the management of the industries
that they had no time for providing either secular or religious training for the Aboriginal people (Personal communication 1995). The MOM, however, began to formally train Aboriginal people in various areas in the 1960s. In 1969 and 1970 the government introduced training allowances, which further facilitated training programs (NAD Minutes, Annual Synod 1969, Meth. Ch. OM 1272, Box 2, ML).

Prior to World War Two little attention was given to a Western form of elementary schooling. 'Advanced academic learning' was ruled out as the missionaries at that stage saw no necessity for it in Aboriginal people's development. In the immediate post-war years, apart from Croker Island 'half-caste' institution, there did not seem to be any urgency in providing scholastic education for Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land, by either the Government or the Mission. In 1951 and 1952 at Elcho Island and Goulburn Island, the MOM did not have any trained teachers. Selected pupils were tutored on a curriculum from South Australia, with 'little attempt at adaptation to meet the requirements of the native pupils in their environment for their development in this environment' (Review Report, Goulburn Island Mission 31/12/1952, AA CRS F1 54/82; Review Report, Elcho Island Mission 31/12/1951, AA CRS F1 48/80). Milingimbi and Yirrkala stations suffered from the problems of lack of continuity of trained teachers. In 1955 there was no teacher at Yirrkala, after the regular teacher, who was not a trained teacher, left (NAD Synod Report 1955, Meth. Ch. OM 315, ML).

As in the pre-war years the emphasis in the late 1940s and 1950s was on providing training through various industrial activities. Referring to various industries the Review Report of Elcho Island Mission stated that the development would provide 'an excellent preparation and
setting for the work of the school as all of the constructive activities of the mission play their part in education of the people' (Review Report, Elcho Island Mission 31/12/1953, AA CRS F1 51/532). In fact in mission reports of the early 1950s ‘Advanced Education’ was reported as comprising primary and secondary industries; domestic science (sewing, housework, etc.); hygiene; arts and craft; recreation and entertainment; transport and communication; and employment and wages (for example, Elcho Island Report 31/12/1951, AA CRS F1 54/80; Goulburn Island Report 3/12/1952, AA CRS F1 54/82). While industries provided useful general practical education, the emphasis placed on them delayed any concerted effort to develop academic education prior to the 1960s.

In 1973 the UCNA reported that while capital improvements had taken place in the industries, economic development continued to ‘present many problems’ and ‘big problems have been staff shortage and motivation of Aborigines’. The UCNA experienced difficulties in finding avenues that both appealed to the Aboriginal people and could fit into the general economic system. Regarding the missionaries' perception of ‘lack of motivation’ on the part of Aboriginal people in industries, the UCNA diplomatically stated that opportunities had been offered to the people especially in the field of agriculture but they had ‘exercised their right to decline work quite frequently’ (UCNA Mission Division Report to MOM Board 1973, NTAS NTRS 53, Box 2). On the eve of the union in 1977, which ended the missionary era in Arnhem Land, Peter K Davis, the MOM General Secretary, visited Darwin and Arnhem Land in September 1976. He stated in his report that:

The office operations and trading activities of UCNA are very extensive and there seems to be a danger of the bureaucracy
attached to that kind of operation becoming disproportionate to the strength of the rest of the church. Nevertheless there is no easy solution as these trading activities are very closely related to the development of the Aboriginal communities, and whether they would be able to operate satisfactory stores themselves, or whether other people of sufficient sensitivity to their needs could be found, is a question not easy to answer (Report of General Secretary 2-16 Sept 1976; NTAS NTRS 53, Box 2).

The fact that the industries such as agriculture were imposed without the people's desire for them, as well as their cultural incompatibility with the Aboriginal cosmological frame of reference, and the fact that foreign intricate operations were organised and controlled by white staff for many years (cf Whyte 1970), must be seen as contributing factors for the Aboriginal people's disinclination to work regularly on industries such as agriculture, and their perceived 'inability' to operate trade stores at managerial level.

In Djiniyini Gondarra's assessment, the situation which emerged in Arnhem Land in the mission establishment in the 1950s and 1960s between the Aboriginal people and missionaries was one of an employer/employee relationship (Personal communication 1995). The timetable for a typical working day was: morning prayers at 6.50am; work bell at 8.00am; 12.00-2.30pm lunch; and work ended at 5.15pm. On Saturday Aboriginal people were given time off for hunting and Sunday was set aside for religious activities (Review Report, Elcho Island 31/12/1951, AA CRS F1 54/80). The timetable and work routine had to be adhered to for the efficient operation of the industrial activities and other mission programs, and Aboriginal people were expected or made to conform to this modus operandi. Dhalganda (Rronang) Garrawurra, whose childhood and young adulthood were spent at Elcho Island in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, stated in retrospect that Aboriginal people
found the mission programs, and work schedules in particular, difficult to cope with. From the missionaries' point of view, he implied that the discipline of the work ethic 'was good, but from the Yolngu [Aboriginal people] side it was a bit hard'. Garrawurra recalled that sometimes arguments developed between missionaries and Aboriginal people, because the people felt that missionaries 'controlled their lives' (cf ARDS Report 1994: 23). He recounted that only at night were the Aboriginal people given the opportunity 'to sit and to talk about things' and participate in their cultural activities (Personal communication 1995).

In spite of ethnocentrism, paternalism and mission hegemony, exercised in and through mission stations and institutionalism, there were benefits for the Aboriginal people from industrial and commercial enterprises. These provided some training for them and in some ways prepared them for the changing circumstances in their Aboriginal communities. In the 1970s the Aboriginal people carried out many semi-skilled jobs, such as building new houses and undertaking repairs, with a white co-ordinator or manager. There was no need for contractors from outside. However, this situation was reversed during the self-determination era with 'more Balanda [white] than ever before on communities doing jobs that in the past were carried out by the people' (ARDS Report 1994: 69). Apart from the building industry, trade stores provided an example of how industry and commerce played a multifarious role for the Aboriginal people. In addition to its commercial function, the store also fulfilled a number of social, economic and educational roles, as Samantha Wells succinctly states:

The store's social and educational functions include providing neutral ground for people of different clans to meet and discuss
community matters. The store also provides an appropriate forum for learning about the goods that are available at the store in terms of their monetary, social and nutritional value. The store's economic functions include the employment and training of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal labour. The stores are often the only community employers not dependent on government funding. Training includes basic store work but can also lead into clerical work and supervisory and management duties (Wells 1993: 36).

If missionaries saw their engagement in industry and commerce as a means of evangelism, then the Aboriginal people's perception was different. This was illustrated by a case from Milingimbi Mission station. When Marcel Spengler departed Milingimbi in 1971 after 11 years of missionary work, one Aboriginal man was reported to have stated in his valedictory speech: 'Before you came, we had no transistor radios, not many different types of food to choose from, no motor cars. Under your leadership we were brought into the position where we can enjoy all these things. You are a good man' (The ALE Dec 1971: 8). In response to this speech, Spengler said: 'If I am a good man because of this, I feel I have failed completely. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" [Spengler's emphasis]. This is the message I have wanted to bring to you all these years' (The ALE Dec 1971: 8).

THE PRECEDENCE OF THE ‘THREE Cs’ OVER THE ‘THREE Ss’

The investigation above provides the historical background for reflecting on the missiological principle of the ‘three Cs’ and the ‘three Ss’ in the Arnhem Land context. As has been noted elsewhere in this study, the ‘three Cs’ replaced the ‘three Ss’ principle for developing an indigenous church, in the high era of colonialism (1880-1920), which was paralleled by the high missionary developments on the global scene. When Henry Venn, the Secretary of the Church Missionary Society, was
proposing the 'three Ss' principle in the 1840s and 1850s, the missionary movement was relatively small. However, the new missionary force, which developed in parallel to the colonial power from the late 19th century, 'conscious of its assets and imbued with the desire to save the world, as a matter of course took charge wherever it went' (Bosch 1991: 307). Subsequently, although the 'three Ss' policy was never formally abandoned, it was simply pushed to the background. As Tippett states:

Even though this theory was widely accepted by the mission boards and field missions, it was very seldom tried. Missionary paternalism and their lack of faith in the ability of their converts to take control prevented their letting go. This can be documented in scores of mission fields and may be taken as a general weakness of the Colonial Age (Tippett 1987: 85).

Tippett also argues against the concept of the 'three Ss' on the basis that the theory was a strategic rather than a theological motive. He argues that what is more significant is the theological reinterpretation of the whole concept of an indigenous church, arising out of the indigenous context. The concept of indigenity has nothing to do with the 'three Ss'. Furthermore, Tippett argues that all three criteria had foreign Western and often denominational models and did not relate to the local lifestyle and economy (Tippett 1987: 85-87).

This section of the chapter does not explore the theological nature of indigenous church, nor does it pursue discussion on the foreignness of the 'three Ss' principle. It rather investigates, in the Arnhem Land context, the 'three Cs' and the 'three Ss' as given historical and missiological propositions, in the course of the global and colonial missionary expansion into the indigenous world. The emphasis here is on the historical process rather than on the theological issues relating
to the 'three Cs' and 'three Ss' principles.

It is apparent from the investigation in this chapter that in their missionary enterprise the Methodists in Arnhem Land adopted and implemented a vigorous policy on industrial and commercial activities in the 1960s and 1970s, even after their amalgamation with the UCNA. The consequence of the MOM's involvement in industrialism and commercialism was that the 'three Cs' outweighed the 'three Ss', thus repeating the trend that occurred in the global missionary movement during the high era of colonialism.

The expanded industrial and commercial enterprises in the post World War Two period and their effect on the 'three Ss' principle for developing indigenous church, needs to be brought into the perspective of the inter-war policies of the MOM Board in relation to the development of indigenous churches in the Pacific and in Arnhem Land. Although the MOM Board in 1916 stated in relation to Pacific missions that it was now necessary to make 'more real to our people there the ideal of a self-supporting and self-governing Church' (Board Minutes May 1916, Meth. Ch. OM 450, ML), it was not until 1923 that the Board made explicit the objectives of developing indigenous churches. The first objective was the evangelisation of the indigenous peoples within the MOM spheres of influence; and secondly, the establishment of indigenous churches through Christian instruction and training, and as soon as possible, these churches should be entrusted with the responsibility of self-government and of becoming self-propagating (MOM Board Minutes 6/4/1923, Meth. Ch. OM 207: 80, ML). The MOM Board entrusted the responsibility to the various mission districts to exercise discretion and to implement the above objects. In the NAD,
however, the 'three Ss' principle was not given priority. In fact before the 1960s, this principle was hardly discussed in Arnhem Land. When steps were taken to discuss it in the 1960s, it was not with a view to developing a separate indigenous Aboriginal church, but to assert its 'impracticability' and 'inapplicability' to the Arnhem Land context.

Before Jack Goodluck took up his appointment as superintendent of Croker Island 'half-caste' institution in 1964, he delivered a paper in Melbourne, in which he stated he was 'committed to working for the emergence of an Aboriginal Christian church' (Personal communication 18/5/1995). In 1965 he reiterated his thinking on the Aboriginal church in The Arnhem Land Epistle (ALE):

I would like to share an unmatured thought with colleagues in the Mission. It seems to me that we will never achieve one community, multi-racial and yet vitally united until there is an Aboriginal Church, as Aboriginal as Aborigines want to make it, and a European Church, both having their autonomous life and both being joined in the one Christian Church which has a combined life... I would be glad to know what you think about it (The ALE March 1965: 9).

Goodluck pointed to a paradox. That was, unless there were two separate churches, Aboriginal and European, existing and interacting in a give-and-take participatory mutual relationship, there could not be a truly 'united Christian church'. However, Goodluck's vision did not prevail, at least during the missionary era. But as has been pointed out elsewhere in this study, throughout his missionary career in Arnhem Land and the Northern Territory, Goodluck strove to advocate and facilitate the development of a distinctive Aboriginal Christianity, and in the process prompted the MOM and the UCNA to reflect on this missiological challenge. Goodluck was in fact proposing the
development of an indigenous Aboriginal church based on the 'three Ss' principle, but with a distinctive form and contextual theology.

In Arnhem Land, however, the 'three Ss' principle was eventually shelved in the missionary era. In a paper to the synod in 1965 Beulah Lowe stated, 'What we have (here) is not an indigenous church in the true sense of the word, but an European church with Aboriginal attendants'. She added that 'now and in the future, the church membership cannot be entirely Aboriginal but will be a combination of Aborigines and Europeans' (The ALE Dec 1970: 4). Gordon Symons, the chairman of the district, in another paper implied that the 'three Ss' principle was not applicable to the Arnhem Land context. They would be, he argued, if the Arnhem Landers were like a tribe 'living in the bush' in isolation. Symons cited as an example the Aboriginal Inland Mission (AIM) which in 1963 had accepted that the concept of an indigenous church would promote segregation, and had therefore decided to 'abandon the term indigenous altogether and allow for churches composed of and led by Aboriginal and white Christians' (Symons, c. 1965, NTAS NTRS 52/53). Symons held similar views to the AIM.

In 1970 Gowan Armstrong in an article entitled, 'The Mission of the Church to Aboriginal Communities' (The ALE Dec 1970: 4-7), expressed a similar trend of thought when he implied that while the 'three Ss' principle was a possibility in such communities as Mexico and the Philippines, where the 'foreign missionary' would withdraw, it was not possible in Arnhem Land. The rationale for his thinking was the fact that Aboriginal people in Australia were part of a broader Australian society, and 'missionaries' in Arnhem Land, unlike those in Mexico and the Philippines, would always be in Australia. Armstrong envisaged a
church in Arnhem Land which would be composed of Aboriginal people and Europeans, although the latter would comprise a minor sector. He expressed a similar view to that proposed by Beulah Lowe in 1965. As with the AIM, and most likely influenced by the thinking of this Mission, Armstrong argued that it would be desirable not to use the term 'indigenous', as it implied 'apartheid' (The ALE Dec 1970: 4; The MR 1971, Vol. 79, No. 3: 22). Similarly, the Goulburn Island Report for 1970/1971 contained a statement in which it was argued that the term 'indigenous church' should not be used in reference to Aboriginal Christian groups (NTAS, NTRS 38, Box 5, 5.8), as this implied segregation. Consequently, during the missionary era the 'three Ss' principle was not considered applicable to Arnhem Land. It was not surprising, therefore, that while theologically an Aboriginal church had begun to emerge, the MOM did not adopt a policy for creating a structural framework in which to develop a separate indigenous church, as Goodluck had advocated.

This chapter has demonstrated the extent in which the MOM/UCNA were engrossed in industrialism and commercialism in the post-war developments in Arnhem Land. It has also shown that this aspect of work in which the church was preoccupied, was diachronically linked to the colonial and missiological principle of Christianity, civilisation and commerce, which was evolved from the mid-19th century in the course of the global imperial and missionary expansion into the indigenous world. In Arnhem Land the MOM/UCNA ultimately shelved the 'three Ss' principle for indigenous church development in favour of the 'three Cs'. The consequence of this was that at the end of the missionary era in Arnhem Land, there was no separate Aboriginal church structurally.
Plate 5

Banana and citrus plantation, Elcho Island, 1959.

Above: Rev. Harold Shepherdsen.

Right: Penaia Sati, Fijian agriculturalist.

Photographs: courtesy of Meth. Ch. OM 450, Mitchell Library, Sydney.
Plate 6

Pawpaw and pineapple plantations and cattle

Below: Cattle industry, Milingimbi, 1959.
Photographs: Courtesy of Meth. Ch. OM-450, Mitchell Library, Sydney.
Plate 7

Building work

Sawmilling and timber industry, Elcho Island, 1959.
Above: Elcho Island Aborigines transport Cypress logs for the sawmill.
Below: Elcho Islanders inside the sawmill.
Photographs: Courtesy of Meth. Ch. 014-350, Mitchell Library, Sydney.
Chapter Five

CONTEXTUALISING CHRISTIANITY IN ARNHEM LAND

This chapter continues to investigate the post-war developments of the MOM work in Arnhem Land. Its particular focus is on the process of contextualisation of Christianity. The MOM’s involvement in this aspect of its work in the first 30 years has already been dealt with in chapter two. However, some salient points may be recapitulated. In following the general global trend of the noncontextualisation era (1800-1950), which embraced the high period of colonialism (1880-1920), the MOM missionaries in the pioneer stage (1916-1925) took a noncontextualisation approach to evangelisation of Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land. Steps towards contextualisation, however, were initiated between 1926 and 1946. This study however, contends that this could only have been partial contextualisation because the Aboriginal people were not involved in the process at this stage. Authentic contextualisation, in particular critical contextualisation, would have needed Aboriginal people’s active participation, which up to the late 1950s was virtually nonexistent. Up until this juncture the Aboriginal people’s involvement in religious activities amounted generally to mere compliance with the forms of Christianity as transmitted by missionaries.

This chapter includes the investigation of the shifting views of missionaries about Aboriginal cosmology, missiological issues which emerged from the encounter between Christianity and Aboriginal cosmology, steps which both the Aboriginal people and missionaries took towards critical contextualisation from the late 1950s, and the
accentuating in the 1970s of the need for missionaries to enter into dialogue with Aboriginal people. Although some theological reflection will be necessary, the main focus is on the historical process rather than on the theological nature of and basis for the contextualisation process. An underlying argument of the chapter is that, although the MOM official policy in Arnhem Land allowed for a contextualisation approach, missionaries in the post-war period employed both the contextualisation and noncontextualisation approaches, so that throughout the missionary era both approaches continued to be practised in juxtaposition. This situation existed because of the ambivalence and conservatism of some missionaries.

CONTEXTUALISATION IN WIDER PERSPECTIVE

In the post-war years the Methodist Mission carried on its work of evangelism in the midst of dramatic political, social and economic changes, as has been noted elsewhere, although in the 1960s and the 1970s the evangelistic task had become one of many priorities which the MOM/UCNA undertook. It has been noted in the preceding two chapters that other concerns were also given prominence, as the MOM/UCNA responded to the torrent of change in Arnhem Land in the post-war years.

Rapid changes which occurred in Arnhem Land in the period under investigation, ran parallel to what took place globally. The post-war years ushered in far-reaching changes in the world community, which in some cases were characterised by political and social unrest. Timothy Yates is accurate in his assessment that although historians will continue to see 1945 as a convenient moment of transition in the 21st
century into a post-world war period, it is the decade of the 1960s, which displayed a sharpness of discontinuity with what had gone before (Yates 1994: 163).

The world church also responded to and reflected some of the pressure of change, and the 1960s and 1970s witnessed significant ecumenical developments on the global scene (Yates 1994; Neill 1964). In Protestant circles, although there had been momentous ecumenical developments since the watershed World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh in 1910, it is not far-fetched to state that mission historians in the 21st century will see the 1960s and 1970s as the high era of ecumenism. The ecumenical developments in these decades were facilitated by the World Council of Churches (WCC) which was formed in 1948, and which was joined by the International Missionary Council (IMC) in 1961. Among the important ecumenical developments in the 1960s and 1970s was the stress on dialogue between Christianity and other religions, and between Christianity and indigenous cosmologies (cf Yates 1994: 163 ff; Bosch 1991: 483-489); and significant from the point of view of this chapter, was the development of the missiological concept of contextualisation.

Although in its theological understanding and in its practice in various contexts, contextualisation is as old as Christianity itself, the term and the concept as understood today in its missiological context is relatively new (cf Johnson 1987: 9-19). The notion of contextualisation was first introduced by the WCC in 1972 in response to the need for reform in theological education (Hesselgrave and Rommen 1989: 28). It was first coined by the Taiwanese theologian Shoki Coe (Johnson 1987: 9), the director of the Theological Education Fund (TEF). The TEF was
launched by the IMC at its Ghana assembly in 1957-1958, and at the IMC's amalgamation with the WCC in 1961, the TEF came under the Division of World Mission and Evangelism (DWME) of the WCC. At the inaugural meeting of the DWME in Mexico City in 1963, the TEF was issued a mandate that was to enhance the kind of indigenous theological education that would lead to a real encounter between the student and the gospel in terms of his own forms of thought and culture, and to an active dialogue between the church and its environment (Hesselgrave and Rommen 1989: 28).

The term contextualisation made its public debut in the publication *Ministry in Context: The Third Mandate Programme of the Theological Education Fund (1970-1977)*. Since this publication there has been a proliferation of literature on this subject in missiological books and journals, and contextualisation is now one of the most widely used concepts in missiological circles (Bosch 1991: 147). It is equally one of the most widely debated terms in the post-missionary cross-cultural mission, following the 1970s.¹

Shoki Coe stated in 1976 that in developing theologies of indigenous churches, the emphasis shifted from indigenisation to contextualisation, and TEF did not speak about contextual theology nor contextualised theology but about contextualising theology (Coe 1976: 22). The WCC in making a distinction between indigenisation and contextualisation stressed the latter (Costa 1988: xii; Coe 1976: 22). This study, however, in following the ethnographic and liberation contextual models (Schreiter 1986: 13), argues that issues dealing with

cultural identity and indigenisation (ethnographic approaches) and involvement in social ethical issues emerging from contemporary economic, political and social and technological contexts (liberation approaches), both come under contextualisation. As noted earlier, this study adopts the ethnographic and liberation contextual models as the general framework for investigating the process of contextualisation in Arnhem Land. The study is also informed by the critical model of contextualisation developed by Hiebert (1987, 1984). In the process of critical contextualisation, cultural issues are dealt with consciously, and in this process the old is neither rejected nor accepted uncritically. It is explicitly examined with regard to its meanings and functions in the Society, and then evaluated in the light of biblical norms (Hiebert 1984: 290). It is the contention in this study that ultimately critical contextualisation can best be undertaken by indigenous peoples themselves. Initially non-indigenous people can act as facilitators, working with indigenous peoples.

ABORIGINAL COSMOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGISTS AND MISSIONARIES

When in the colonised world the missionary movement involved an encounter between Christianity and indigenous cosmologies. Generally, missionaries created a situation in which these two world-views became polarities. For example, as noted elsewhere in this study, in the noncontextualisation era missionaries by and large adopted a tabula rasa belief, with the presupposition that there was nothing to learn from the indigenous cosmologies. Furthermore, indigenous beliefs and culture, being regarded as ‘pagan’, were perceived to be under the domain of ‘Satan’, and as such they were to be triumphed over by the power of the gospel. Consequently, in the noncontextualisation period,
the approach on the whole was diachronic. That is, missionary expansion in the main involved a developmental or evolutionary approach, with the expectation that non-Western peoples would move out of 'heathenism' and upward towards Western forms of Christianity and civilisation, following the general model evolved in Western history. This meant that the synchronic approach was largely ignored. In other words, the cultures, beliefs, thought forms and practices of people were not taken into account.

Anthropologists and anthropologically informed missionaries and mission officials paved the way for synchronic approach to understanding of Aboriginal cosmology, which facilitated steps towards contextualisation in Arnhem Land. Attempts to understand Aboriginal people's cultures and practices by missionaries occurred in a limited way from the late 1920s and 1930s and this trend was generally sustained in the post-war years. Arthur Ellemor, the immediate post-war chairperson of the NAD stated in retrospect:

Right at the heart of taking the gospel to Aborigines lies the matter of relating the faith to their basic beliefs. Contrary to the position taken by certain missions - that there is complete discontinuity between Christianity and other faiths, which are therefore to be supplanted - Methodism has adopted a position of respect towards Aboriginal religion and culture, seeing many links between them and the Christian way, striving to develop and fulfil Aboriginal concepts and on that basis to the central doctrines of the Incarnation and the Atonement with their implications for ethics and morals (Ellemor 1981: 257-258).

Two comments may be made regarding the above quotation. Firstly, it shows a translation model of contextualisation (Schreiter 1986), which seeks only linkages and parallels between Aboriginal cosmology and Christianity. It does not go beyond this, therefore it cannot be authentic
contextualisation. Secondly, while the statement indicates the official theoretical stance of the Methodists in Arnhem Land, in practice some missionaries continued to adopt the noncontextualisation approach in relating Christianity to Aboriginal people, in spite of a growing influence of anthropology on missiology.

AP Elkin and WEH Stanner, two well-known anthropologists who had an influence on missionaries, were among the first non-Aboriginal thinkers to contextualise the Aboriginal concept of 'The Dreaming'. In fact it was Stanner who renamed the concept 'The Dreaming' in 1953, although it was first expounded by anthropologists in 1927 when B Spencer and FJ Gillen used the Aranda term Alchera and its derivative alcheringa, to derive the concept 'the dream time'. Since then the concept has variously been called 'The Eternal Dreaming', 'The Dreamtime' and 'The Dreaming'. The Aboriginal people also call specific concrete manifestations and symbols of the concept their 'Dreaming' (Stanner 1979). The Dreaming is not only the binding but also the overarching principle of Aboriginal world-views. It is in their cosmologies, yet not bound by them. The concept is complex, impalpable, subtle, all encompassing and mysterious. With such a rich and diverse understanding, it is hardly surprising that Stanner said it suffers badly by translation into Western dry and abstract language (Stanner 1979: 23).

In 1953 Stanner described the Dreaming as the Logos (Stanner 1979: 24), and in 1969 Elkin depicted it as the Ground of Being (Elkin 1969: 88). It is interesting that Stanner and Elkin chose to use these Western

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2 This study uses the concept of 'The Dreaming' as it was coined and used by anthropologists. However, the study acknowledges that some Arnhem Landers are against the use of the term (cf ARDS Report 1996: 1).
theological and philosophical notions to delineate the concept of the Dreaming. As the Logos, it is the principle of order transcending everything significant for Aboriginal persons, and as the Ground of Being, it is the creating, supporting and sustaining principle behind all existence. Elkin perceived the Dreaming as the universal ground of being, which shows itself in the particulars (Elkin 1969: 88-89). The particulars include: myths and chants (which tell of heroes creating country, sand hills, water wells, trees, and living creatures); totems, rituals, re-enactments of creation, other ceremonies, ancestors or cult-heroes (and dancers who embody them during ceremonies); the sacred sites and the laws governing the social, cultural and the economic life of the people. The universal Dreaming and its concrete particulars constitute Aboriginal cosmologies. Stanner and Elkin put the Dreaming on par with Western philosophy and theology when they attributed the concepts of the Logos and the Ground of Being.

Stanner's and Elkin's exposition of the Dreaming falls into what Schreiter calls an adaptation model of contextualisation (Schreiter 1986: 9). In this model Western philosophical and theological categories are used to give expression to factors which shape the world-view of

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3 In theology and philosophy the Ground of Being, and the Logos are connected. Paul Tillich (1886-1965) was the theologian/philosopher who coined the phrase the Ground of Being (Tillich 1951). Tillich proposed that ‘Ground’ is ‘the mystery which appears in revelation and which remains a mystery in its appearance’; and the theological or religious word for this Ground of Being is God. The Logos is the principle of ‘the divine self-manifestation’ in the Ground of Being. The ‘self-manifestation’ is the Logos ‘character’ of the Ground of Being (Tillich 1957: 156-158).

4 Elkin also used another Western concept, the noumena, to further explain the Dreaming, the ‘ever-present, unseen, ground of being - of existence’. The noumena is the ‘essence of the non-appearing’, which ‘exists’ behind the ‘appearing’, and it is the ‘essence of the non-appearing’ that is ‘summed up in the concept of the Dreaming’ (Elkin 1969: 87-88). Elkin illustrated the notion of the ‘non-appearing’ with the ‘making of man’ in Aboriginal initiation. Initiation is ‘a transformation and revealing of what exists’. In the ritual, ‘the essence of the non-appearing is made available’ to the initiate. Initiation is an act in which the Dreaming ‘appears symbolically and becomes operative sacramentally in ritual’. ‘Every sacred ritual is the lifting of the impenetrable veil of the non-appearing which lies behind the appearance which is the individual’s own experience’ (Elkin 1969: 87-88).
the people. This in essence was what Stanner and Elkin did. While this model of contextualisation takes culture seriously, the theology that emerges from such a model is replete with categories, names, and concerns of a local culture, yet looks like Western theology and is relatively easily understood by Western theologians (Schreiter 1986: 10). It is a theology addressed principally to the academy. In fact some Western trained indigenous theologians adopt this adaptational model of contextualisation, for instance the African theologian John S Mbiti, who employs such expressions as ‘A Theology of Ontology and Time’ and ‘The Ontological Basis of African Theology’ (Hesselgrave and Rommen 1989: 98-99). In their work of relating Christianity to their cosmology, Aboriginal theologians could fall into this model of contextualisation. As I have argued elsewhere, indigenous theologies do not have to be systematic in the Western way, following Western categories (Kadiba 1987: 147).

In the post-war developments the MOM missionaries in Arnhem Land generally attempted to enter into dialogue with Aboriginal people in order to understand, appreciate and participate in the Aboriginal cosmological framework, and provide freedom for Aboriginal people to begin to relate their Christianity to their world-view. However, some missionaries remained ambivalent and conservative in their attitudes towards the relationship between Aboriginal culture and Christianity.

A lay missionary who worked in Arnhem Land in the late 1940s and 1950s, while adopting a tolerant attitude toward Aboriginal culture, stated that ‘there was nothing in their culture that could equip them and enable them to stand up against the pressure that would be brought to bear on them by white commercialism’ (Personal communication
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This missionary was also ambivalent about land rights. He held the view that what was important was their new life as Christians. Referring to the religious revivals in the 1970s, he stated in retrospect that:

People were healed. A vision was given, Australia for Jesus. Are the Aboriginal people going to turn their back on all this for Land Rights and culture?... I hear talk of them going back to the Law and culture to solve their problems and I'm sad. The way is forward, not backwards. I have no doubt that God will deal with land rights in His time and in His way if the Yolngu [Aboriginal people] are faithful to the vision He has given... I support Land Rights. The sad thing is that unless change and growth comes to that culture it will not meet the people's needs in our present commercial world (Personal communication 24/4/1994).

This quotation illustrates the ambivalence of some missionaries, who were also ultra-conservative in their views and beliefs. Harold Shepherdson, the superintendent of Elcho Island (1942-1969), while not condemning Aboriginal ceremonies outright, nevertheless banned the gunapippi (Kunapipi) ceremony from the Island, as he considered the ceremony to have influences and practices which were contrary to Christian values. Such missionary ambivalence and conservatism was indicative of the disparity between the MOM official policy of tolerance and acceptance of Aboriginal culture and the beliefs and practices of certain missionaries. This incongruity of policy and practice was a general characteristic of missionaries in the post-war developments, and in fact in the whole of MOM history in Arnhem Land, in relating Christianity to Aboriginal culture. Noncontextualisation and contextualisation approaches existed side by side.

In the 1970s some missionaries attempted to gain some understanding of the ceremonies. In 1971, at Bernie Clarke's suggestion from the
church office in Darwin, Heather Hinch, the teacher and linguist at Goulburn Island, attended a *gunapippi* ceremony with the permission of the elders, so that this might help the ‘missionaries to “understand” more about the ceremony’. The ceremony was a re-enactment of the Dreamtime story of a father and a son who gave the ‘law’ of the ceremony and created sacred sites, and performed certain Dreamtime acts such as digging yams and spearing fish. In conversation Hinch found that Aboriginal people drew a parallel between these Dreamtime creative acts and the biblical and theological proposition: ‘In the beginning God made the earth’ (Hinch 18/8/1971, NTAS NTRS 45/46).

The steps undertaken towards contextualisation in Arnhem Land occurred at two levels: what might be called a superficial level; and the level of deep theological reflection and praxis relating to Aboriginal cosmology and social justice issues.

The development of outstations between 1947 and 1969 represented a surface level contextualising of Christianity. While commercially these outstations served as trading posts, missiologically evangelistic activities were decentralised and extended to Aboriginal people in the outposts. There were also activities in the mission stations, which, while important in that they represented initial steps in relating Christianity contextually, were nevertheless shallow approaches in contextualisation. At Milingimbi a painted window of Aboriginal motifs had been placed in the church building (Berndt 1962: 101). In the 1960s Christian events such as Christmas and Good Friday began to be re-enacted through Aboriginal ceremonies. Clap sticks and didgeridoo also started to be used in the church and Aboriginal camps, ‘experimenting with the medium’, where it was claimed ‘the use of local talent and
music will not only make for an easier use of Christian words and music but will reach a deep psychological level’ (The ALE Sept 1963: 2-3, 4, 5). In addition Aboriginal artwork was experimented with to portray Christian symbols. For example in 1962 two Maningrida elders were asked to be ‘missionary helpers’, using their ‘professional’ bark painting skills to paint the Crucifixion scene. From the 1960s Aboriginal youth camps organised by missionaries became a regular feature. The first Aboriginal youth camp held at Elcho Island in the 1962 Easter weekend was regarded as ‘an experiment’, to discover whether a camp could be effective among the Aboriginal people. Significantly, the activities at the camp included hunting and fishing using traditional methods, and Beulah Lowe, spoke in Gupapuyngu to give Easter talks (The ALE Sept 1963: 2-3, 4, 5). These were some early attempts in relating Christianity to the Aboriginal context in the post-war developments by missionaries. However, they did not constitute authentic contextualisation.

In the 1970s some missionaries raised questions about the superficial relating of Christianity to Aboriginal culture. This was evident in discussions regarding developing forms of worship relevant to the Aboriginal context. In 1972 Brad Harris, chaplain at Milingimbi challenged the church that it needed to go beyond the mere display of dilly bags, bark paintings, clapsticks and didgeridoo, and stained glass in totemic and ritual designs. He proposed a model of worship based on Aboriginal ceremonies. This pattern of worship would be in an informal and less structured setting, in which people sat in circles without chairs, sitting family by family in clan circles, and generally everybody
participating in the worship ceremony\(^5\) (The ALE Aug 1972: 1). This would have been meaningful for the Aboriginal people, and it would have been a step towards authentic contextualisation. In the mission church buildings, with its foreign structures and European forms of worship, Aboriginal people were only observers and restricted in their participation.

Language work was an important prerequisite to Aboriginalisation of Christianity. Yet, as noted earlier, between 1916 and 1925 language work was not undertaken. From 1927, as a result of recommendations made by Burton, this aspect of the mission work was initiated under Webb’s leadership. In the 1940s a few missionaries learned *Gupapuyngu* and started to preach in the language. The linguist A Capell, who visited Arnhem Land in 1941, also encouraged the missionaries to undertake work in the vernacular (Ellemor 1981: 256). By 1948 progress had been made in the use of language in Sunday service. Scripture passages had been translated and read both in English and the vernacular (Milingimbi Report 1948, Meth. Ch. OM 313, ML). It had also become NAD policy for staff to learn an Aboriginal language. The MOM was fortunate with two of its missionary appointees in the 1950s, Beulah Lowe in 1952 (McKenzie 1976: 181) and Heather Hinch in 1958 (Ellemor 1966: 21). Lowe and Hinch demonstrated aptitude in language learning, and became self-made linguists, although language work was only part of their missionary duties, as they were also required to teach children at

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\(^5\) In the late 1970s especially after the 1979 Revival Movement in Arnhem Land and after the formation of Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) in 1983 (Bos 1988a; Gondarra 1986), Aboriginal Christians increasingly adopted patterns of worship similar to traditional patterns. They integrated their faith in Christian songs with traditional tunes, using their language. They did not of course exclude European Christian songs/choruses. In fellowships and services songs were dramatised in dance and action, giving free spontaneous expression of their faith in worship. This spontaneity was given free expression because fellowships and services were conducted in the open air rather than in introduced church buildings. Greater attendance also occurred in the evenings. (This information is based on my research and personal observation).
school and to undertake nursing duties.

In 1966 Lowe produced a lengthy conversation and grammar book to help missionaries learn *Gupapuyngu*. About the same time Hinch produced for the mission district some hints to enable missionaries to overcome difficulties of learning a new language (The ALE Oct 1966: 4-6). In the 1970s, however, with the influx of new staff, language learning among missionaries was again given a low priority. As Ann Amos stated from her personal observation, new staff attached no importance to language learning as they were no longer deemed to be making life-long missionary commitments (Personal communication 14/8/1994). In any case, however important language learning was for relating Christianity, it did not necessarily constitute or lead to authentic contextualisation. Knowledge of an Aboriginal language was in the main used for advancing the missionary goals of evangelism and 'civilisation', from the point of view of missionaries, and not necessarily to explore and dialogue with Aboriginal people's thought forms and beliefs in order to look at Christianity from Aboriginal perspectives. The use of language in evangelism and 'civilisation' was evident in a paper Beulah Lowe produced:

Most missionaries would regard as first priority the training (or guidance) of the Aboriginal people as citizens of the Kingdom of God. In this realm the use of the vernacular is of inestimable value. In Arnhem Land today the work of the missionaries involves training the Aboriginal people for community living, contact with European culture and Christian citizenship. In each of these aspects the use of the vernacular is highly desirable if maximum results are to be obtained (Lowe nd., NTAS NTRS 44/45).

At the deeper level of contextualisation, the leadership generally came from individual missionaries. The thinking and action they took led to
authentic contextualisation. They related theology contextually and dealt with social justice issues from the point of view of Aboriginal people, and in this process missionaries aimed to work with Aboriginal people and supported them in their aspirations. Edgar Wells' involvement with the people of Yirrkala in the 1963 land rights issue, as noted elsewhere, is a case in point. Whereas the MOM authorities at that stage were party to allowing the Nabalco Mining Company to make indiscriminate incisions thus desecrating Aboriginal sites, Wells supported the people at Yirrkala in their protest against the Mining Company. As a result of the Yirrkala case, from 1968 onwards the MOM adopted a policy of siding with the Aboriginal people in dealing with land rights issues. Arthur Ellemor in retrospect stated:

One of the very important contributions that Methodism has made towards salvation - in the full social sense - of Aborigines has been the part it has played in helping them gain recognition of their right to the land they have owned and occupied since time immemorial... My conviction is that had the church not acted on the land rights issue, had the Mission Board continued to discuss vital issues and agree to conditions seriously affecting the lives of Aborigines in its care and without consultation with Aborigines - instead of solely with governments and mining authorities - all the good work done in other ways and the dawning faith of Aborigines in Jesus Christ and His church could have been shaken, perhaps shattered (Ellemor 1981: 249).

Perhaps two missionaries who did most to provide intellectual leadership to the MOM in Arnhem Land in the process towards authentic contextualisation in the 1960s and 1970s were Jack Goodluck and Bernie Clarke. In these decades they were to the MOM in the second 30-year period, what Webb was to the MOM work in Arnhem Land in the late 1920s and 1930s, in providing intellectual leadership. Both were actively involved in land rights issues, as supporters of the Aboriginal people in their aspirations, and Goodluck and Clarke's views became
influential in the MOM’s pro-land rights stand in the 1960s and 1970s. As noted elsewhere, Goodluck and Clarke were responsible for conducting the first Aboriginal church leaders courses from the mid-1960s in the communities, in the Arnhem Land context, entering into dialogue with the student participants and their cosmology. Their approaches in relating Christianity to the Aboriginal context in effect represented and reflected the ethnographic and liberation models of contextualisation.

Goodluck was the Superintendent of Croker Island part-Aboriginal MOM institution in the latter half of the 1960s. In the 1970s he was based in Darwin. His major contribution was in the areas of theology, Christian education and community development, and in relating these areas to Aboriginal cosmology, advocating a model of critical contextualisation and entering into dialogue and consultation with the Aboriginal people. In 1970 Goodluck encouraged two Aboriginal leaders, George Winungudj and Wali Walanybuma, to openly bring before the NAD Synod the proposition that: ‘God’s Spirit had always been with Aboriginal people and their culture was a response to the truth they had received and as valid as that of any other culture’ (Goodluck personal communication, 18/5/1994). Although there was some opposition at the Synod to the proposition, in 1970 Goodluck and the Department of Christian Education in Darwin produced a draft statement on ‘Gospel and Culture’ and circulated it for comments to both Aboriginal and white church members throughout Arnhem Land, through Local Education Committees. This draft document defined culture and its importance and necessity in human life, and laid down principles for cross-cultural ministry in Arnhem Land. It included four ‘guiding principles for preachers and leaders’:
1. *We are at work in the Aboriginal Cultural World.* Preachers and teachers... will need to remember that the 'Aboriginal' way of life... is the Aboriginal people's whole world-view, their outlook, their method of understanding the world, life and self. If they are going to understand the preaching and teaching, they must understand it from within their culture..

2. *The meanings of the Gospel should be told in terms understood from within the Aboriginal world.* The language we choose for preaching and teaching should be the first language of the people listening, whenever possible... Also, the ideas, pictures, stories and testimonies should be about what is known, experienced and understood within the Aboriginal culture...

3. *Aboriginal Christians should be encouraged to express their faith response in ways that are meaningful to themselves and their neighbours.* When the message has been received and an Aboriginal decides to trust and obey Christ... then it is important that his way of doing is not just an imitation of the way somebody else does it in another culture..

4. *Aboriginal (and other) Christians should be warned that the demands of Christ may lead them to separate themselves from the usual ways of thinking and acting in their cultural world.* While we recognise that missionaries need to make the message clear in terms of Aboriginal culture, and Aboriginal Christians need to work out meaningful ways of expressing their faith... we must recognise that, in every culture... Christians... must take a stand for the Lord by refusing to follow some of the ways of their people... (Gospel and Culture, Draft 1, MOM Department of Christian Education, Darwin 1970-1971: 7-8).

The document on the gospel and culture was compiled under Goodluck's intellectual leadership. By 1977 Goodluck had been in Arnhem Land and Darwin for 13 years. He had not only attempted to understand Aboriginal people and their cosmology, but he also tried to enter into a give-and-take participatory relationship with them. The crystallisation of his
experience and reflection was evident in 1977 in a paper entitled ‘Aboriginal people and Religion: Missionaries and Religion’, which he presented to anthropology students at Darwin Community College. At the time of delivering the lecture, Goodluck was on the staff of Nungalunya College, which he was partly responsible for establishing, and about which he said in the paper that ‘from the beginning until now there has been emphasis on the need for a truly Aboriginal Christianity to emerge’. In the paper Goodluck treated Aboriginal cosmology from the point of view of philosophy of religion, and defined religion generally as the quest for meaningful existence, arguing that traditional Aboriginal religion and Christian religion were similar in that they were not only organised religions, but there were also common elements such as orthodox belief systems and ethics, rituals and ceremonies, sacred places, stories, songs and symbols. The fundamental differences between the religions was in their adherents’ search for existential meaning. Goodluck argued that ‘typically, Europeans look for meanings by thinking along a time-line in which many describable factors are connected to each other in cause and effect linkages’, whereas the ‘typical Aboriginal endeavour is looking for meaning in discovering how to relate oneself properly to all that is’ (Goodluck 1977: 2). This type of synchronic approach and ethnographic understanding and analysis was essential for true contextualisation.

While Goodluck advocated the relating of Christianity to the Aboriginal people’s cosmology along lines commensurate with the ethnographic or indigenous model of contextualisation, Clarke’s influence reflected the complementary model of liberation. Clarke had been the superintendent of Goulburn Island mission station from the mid-1960s. In the 1970s he was based in Darwin where he held the influential positions of Director
of Missions and Secretary of the Board of Church and Community in the UCNA. As noted in the previous chapter, Clarke played a major and catalytic role in bringing about the philosophical and theological shift in Arnhem Land, from the concept of development to that of liberation. His influence was most marked in the *Free To Decide* document (1974), which he authored and which provided the policy directives for the work of the UCNA in the 1970s. The document proposed 'liberation' as the 'new approach', which was to be called a liberating style of community work (Clarke 1974: 46). Liberation became the key guiding principle for the work of the Church in Arnhem Land. In dealing with social ethical issues in relation to the Aboriginal people, the liberation approach became the intellectual and theological frame of reference from which the Church attempted to contextualise its 'mission' in the 1970s. Liberation entailed freedom - freedom to allow the Aboriginal people to deliberate on issues, to decide for themselves, and to act on their aspirations and goals, and to take control of their destiny in their communities, without continuing government and church hegemony. Clarke strongly supported the homeland movement, an initiative of the Aboriginal people, as a viable development in which the people would create their unique forms of Christianity within their cosmological framework. He also emphasised the need for missionaries to enter into dialogue with the Aboriginal people, an important requirement in contextualising Christianity (Clarke 1974: 46; Clarke c. 1974: 2, NTAS NTRS 52/53).

The above approaches represented by Goodluck and Clarke do not, however, give a full picture of the situation in Arnhem Land in the 1970s with regard to christianisation of the Aboriginal people. In fact the situation became much more complex and this complexity was the
creation of missionaries. Janice Reid, a medical anthropologist, who undertook research at Elcho and Yirrkala in 1974 and 1975, observed that:

"The first missionaries at Yirrkala advocated a syncretistic approach to proselytisation, but more recent teaching and preaching has tended to be evangelical. It has emphasised the need for those who wish to be affiliated with the church to discard old beliefs and make a commitment to a fundamentalist interpretation of Christian ideology (Reid 1983: 127)."

Reid also commented that on Elcho Island the mission staff had been divided between pentecostal and conservative beliefs since at least 1974 (Reid 1983: 129). In the 1970s, therefore, generally three groups of missionaries exerted their influence on the Aboriginal people: Goodluck and Clarke represented one group, which was convinced that the ethnographic and liberation approaches of relating Christianity were appropriate for the developing of distinctive Aboriginal Christianity; a second group espoused a conservative evangelical stand; and the pentecostal missionaries made up the third group. All these missionaries were employed by the UCNA. The evangelicals and pentecostals, as would be expected, took a noncontextualisation approach. Thus the contextualisation and noncontextualisation approaches continued to exist even in the 1970s.

The evangelical and pentecostal groups put emphasis on personal experience and healing through prayer (Reid 1983: 129; Blacket 1997: 69). They expected the Aboriginal people to experience and embrace the beliefs they expounded and conform to missionaries' form of Christianity. These missionaries believed that the beliefs and experiences they espoused constituted 'authentic' Christianity. They perceived Christianity and culture to be in friction. John Blacket, a
former missionary, wrote that 'as the sticks of Christianity and culture were rubbed together in Arnhem Land in the 1970s, a fire was produced' (Blacket 1997: 65). This 'fire' was to burn away the 'evil' in the culture. Ron Williams, another former missionary stated: 'The Lord through his spirit exorcises the demonic in the culture and makes them [the people] free. There needs to be exorcism of the culture, purifying: a fire burning so the gold will come out' (cited in Blacket 1997: 65).

Missionaries with pentecostal beliefs saw non-Christian Europeans and Aboriginal people coming under 'demonic powers' and prayers for exorcism became a common feature (Blacket 19987: 70-71). Blacket states that: 'It was around this time that books on deliverance from evil spirits began to appear in some bookshops' (Blacket 1997: 71). The missionaries read some of these books and copied methods of exorcism in them. There were also books and tapes by noted evangelists which were circulated among missionaries and also passed onto the Aboriginal people (Blacket 1997: 68; cf Reid 1983: 130). It needs to be pointed out that the missionaries with evangelistic and pentecostal beliefs were all employed by the MOM/UCNA and were very influential in propagating their forms of Christianity.

An Aboriginal Christian spirituality devoid of meaningful interconnectedness with Aboriginal cosmology was dangerous. The officials in church office in Darwin therefore expressed concern about the 'excesses' of charismatic teachings and practices, particularly at Elcho Island (Blacket 1997: 68). However, the church policy makers and the most forward-looking missionaries were all based in Darwin and seemed powerless to curb the practices. The conservative and pentecostal missionaries of the UCNA in the Aboriginal communities
had the most sustained contact with the people and these missionaries in the 1970s had the greatest influence on the Aboriginal people.

Even in the 1970s the Aboriginal culture and beliefs were still considered by some missionaries as 'evil' and under the 'power of Satan' (cf Blacket 1997: 76-77). This 19th century view which was applied to indigenous cosmologies in the high era of missionary movement and colonialism, and which was apparent in the pioneer stage of Methodism in Arnhem Land (1916-1925), was revived by pentecostal missionaries. The official Methodist policy since the 1930s, which was anthropologically informed, was one of tolerance and understanding of Aboriginal beliefs, and was given a deeper perspective in the 1970s with the steps taken towards ethnographic and liberation models of contextualisation. Missionaries with conservative beliefs in the 1950s and 1960s on the surface tolerated Aboriginal beliefs and practices in compliance with the official policy. Ellemor, the post-war chairperson of the NAD, issued this warning in retrospect in 1981:

To condemn Aboriginal religion as heathen, pagan and to endeavour to blot it out is to ignore our Lord's caution about the man from whom a demon was exorcised whose house was left bare and empty only to be re-occupied by seven other demons such that "in the end the man's plight is worse than before" (Luke 11: 26, N.E.B.; Ellemor 1981: 258).

SOME MISSIOLOGICAL ISSUES

In the course of the global missionary expansion, many missiological issues emerged in the encounter between Christianity and indigenous cosmologies. Missionaries generally took an issue-oriented approach (cf Newbegin, 1992 [1987]: 19). This was consistent with the noncontextualisation model missionaries adopted in the evangelisation
of indigenous peoples. In this process, missionaries created issues out of certain cultural elements, which were non-issues for the indigenous peoples, and they raised questions which the indigenous peoples had not raised. Globally and in Arnhem Land these issues were the result generally of missionaries' perception that indigenous cosmologies were incompatible with Christianity. Missionaries generally confused the gospel with Western Christianity and civilisation and their own religious experience, making these the norm for Christianity. The perception of the incompatibility of Christianity and indigenous cosmologies is well illustrated by the beliefs and practices of missionaries espousing fundamentalist evangelical and pentecostal doctrines in Arnhem Land in the 1970s, as noted above. Alan Tippett, anthropologist and missiologist, cogently asserted that where a missionary ethnocentric stance was carried too far, a cultural void and loss of creativity occurred. He wrote:

If we get into this kind of a situation where evangelists dispose of all cultural values and creative arts on the presupposition that they are all incompatible with Christianity because they have been used previously for heathen purposes ... We find ourselves with creative people who can no longer create, and would be participators who become nonparticipant, and before long cultural voids we have created begin to be felt (Tippett 1987: 335).

This section explores the issues of religious dualism and syncretism, polygamy, conversion and the related concept of 'individualism' in Christianity. An underlying argument here is that missionaries' preoccupation with such peripheral issues meant that the work of developing and training Aboriginal Christians for Aboriginal church leadership was given low priority.

Religious dualism and syncretism were two significant responses of
the encounter between Christianity and indigenous cosmology (cf Luzbetak 1989: 360-371). These developed because, in spite of the missionaries' belief of triumphalism, Christianity did not eradicate core beliefs in their world-views (cf Whiteman, 1983: 345). Religious dualism and syncretism did not pose problems for anthropology and phenomenology of religion. They did, however, raise questions for missiology, as they involved theological issues as well as missionaries' beliefs.

In dual religious systems, traditional and Christian beliefs did not integrate but operated side by side. For example, in Melanesia after a minister or a priest visits and offers ministrations to the sick, people also turn to traditional healing methods or consult a 'traditional healer' (cf Luzbetak 1989: 369). This is similar to the practice in the contemporary society where the sick can be prayed for while receiving medical care from 'scientific doctors'. In her research into Aboriginal traditional medical and healing systems, Reid found that while some Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land found the incompatibility of the Christian and traditional doctrines 'very troubling', there were some individual Aboriginal people who did not have difficulties in adhering to the dual systems. For this latter group following Christian teaching and traditional beliefs did not constitute a problem: each was espoused when appropriate (Reid 1983: 129).

Syncretism in relation to Aboriginal Christianity will be explored below. Syncretism involved a synthesis of traditional beliefs and practices with Christian beliefs and practices. Generally, a typical reaction of Western Christians and missionaries of such amalgamation, was that it was 'Christopaganism' and 'theologically untenable'
Western Christians and missionaries who reacted in this manner often forget that Christianity, which carried the gospel, was in itself a syncretistic religion, an amalgamation of Judaism, new ideas taught by Jesus and the Apostles, and ‘many later cultural accretions and theological and philosophical developments and recombinations of beliefs and practices that had occurred over the centuries’ (Luzbetak 1989: 360).

Syncretism in relation to indigenous missiology was evolved by indigenous receptors of Christianity themselves, either consciously or unconsciously, in an attempt to blend the beliefs and practices of Christianity with elements of indigenous cosmology in order to make sense out of new beliefs and practices which had been introduced to their cosmological framework. The issue involved here was one of meaning and connectedness - connectedness of their newly acquired beliefs and practices with their world-view, in order to find existential meaning in the evolving new context. In 1959 A Capell in discussing interpretation of Christianity to Aboriginal people said:

What needs to be realised is that in nearly every case where Christianity has been presented in the traditional way, syncretism has... already resulted. Very little is said about it, missionaries as a rule are quite unconscious of twists put by native ‘converts’ into their teaching and only the anthropologist finds out much about them... There will always be some degree of syncretism... It happened centuries ago in Europe... (Capell 1959: 10).

Berndt (1965) and Hedrick (1973) used syncretism from the missionaries’ perspective. Berndt employed syncretism for the blending of missionaries’ evangelistic task (spiritual values and ideology) and the tangible aspects of political, economic and social developments. He said that ‘evangelistic’ and ‘materialistic’ aspects needed to be blended (Berndt 1965, NTAS NTRS S2/S3). Hedrick argued that while the missionaries’ use of the Bible stories was effective in an ethical sense, the more abstract content of mission teaching was not easily communicated to Aborigines, because ‘the missionaries were unable to relate it in a syncretistic way to their culture’ (Hedrick 1973: 70).
Polygamy was one issue which became contentious in the course of the global missionary movement. A legacy of this was that in the post-missionary developments, polygamy also became a divisive issue among some indigenous churches, for example in the African Independent churches (Tippett 1987: 338-341; Turner 1966: 313-322). As noted elsewhere, in the pioneer stage of the MOM work in Arnhem Land (1916-1925) missionaries attempted to discourage the practice of polygamy. There was, however, a modification of missionaries' views between 1926 and 1946 due to Theodor Webb's influence. Webb argued that polygamy might be repugnant to the missionaries, "but that does not, of itself, constitute a significant reason for our regarding it as being essentially evil" (Webb 1944 [1938]: 27). Nevertheless, polygamy was still a continuing topic of discussion among the MOM missionaries, and others, in the second 30-year period (1947-1977). Opinions varied among the missionaries on the topic (cf G Bence 19/11/1976, NTAS NTRS 45/46). In 1973 Brad Harris, chaplain at Milingimbi, said: 'I am told that previously the missionaries spent so much time denouncing polygamy that people began to wonder whether there was anything else in the gospel' (Dhawu, Sept 1973, Vol. 1, No. 1: 13). In spite of the missionaries' endeavours to discourage the practice, polygamy was still continuing in the post-missionary era (Shepherdson 1981: 23). In the 1940s and 1950s this issue also caused some tension between the Aboriginal people who complied with the missionaries' views and those who wanted to retain the system (Blacket 1997: 57-59).

7 The MOM journal The Arnhem Land Epistle (ALE) produced some papers on polygamy in the 1960s. Missionaries from other missions were invited to contribute to the journal, thus on polygamy there was ecumenical sharing of views on the subject. For example P Albrecht of the Lutheran Hermannsburg Mission (The ALE July 1964) and J Morris of the Catholic Bathurst Mission (The ALE Oct 1964) were asked to write papers on polygamy and traditional Aboriginal marriage.
Missionaries regarded aspects of Aboriginal cosmology such as polygamy to be impediments for the Aboriginal people to be considered for ordination, or for other offices such as parish clerk or local preachers. This was evident in the resolution passed at the annual District Synod at Yirrkala in 1971 that an Aboriginal Christian who 'had taken more than one wife be ineligible for these offices' (Minutes of Annual District Synod 17/9/1971: 2, Meth. Ch. OM 352, ML). Batanga's case served to illustrate this. He was a 'genuine convert' and had been a committed 'mission boy'. He had been in association with the MOM for well over 30 years (Shepherdson 1981: 65-68). Robert Bos wrote that: 'Batanga is remembered today for his commitment to Christianity. Yolgu [Aboriginal] people today feel that, had he not taken additional wives after becoming a Christian, the Methodist Church would have ordained him' (Bos 1988a: 175). The issue-oriented approach illustrates that while there was a general shift in thinking towards Aboriginal cosmology in gaining greater understanding of Aboriginal beliefs and practices in the 1960s, some cultural elements still remained problematic for missionaries.

The question of 'conversion' in terms of Aboriginal people and their world-view was also a problematic concept. Individual conversion assumed and expected by missionaries was incompatible with the notion of group solidarity and belongingness, inherent in Aboriginal cosmology. Group solidarity and belongingness constituted the Aboriginal people's essential existential being and social organisation. Furthermore, Aboriginal people's traditional beliefs encompassed a spiritual dimension which emphasised interconnectedness between people, and between people and their environment as an unchanging network of relationships (Isaacs 1986).
The emphasis missionaries placed on ‘individual conversion’ was a legacy of Western free thinking which originated from the Western Reformation and Enlightenment epochs. Martin Luther (1483-1546) the father of the Reformation stressed the individual’s right and responsibility to discover and appropriate the tenets of Christianity. The famous dictum of René Descartes (1596-1650), *I think, therefore I am*, became an influential Enlightenment thought (Bosch 1991; Brown 1977). Assessing the effect of the Reformation and the Enlightenment on Christianity, Bosch states that the most recognisable legacy was the rampant individualism which soon pervaded Protestantism in particular (Bosch 1991: 273). The Reformation and the Enlightenment concept of individualism brought by missionaries was bound with the emphasis on individual ‘converts’ and ‘individual soul-winning, other-worldly salvation’. These often caused separation between the individual ‘convert’ and the ‘group’, a demarcation which was not only artificial but also utterly incompatible with the traditional essential and pragmatic world-view, particularly in closely knit societies.

In the 1960s some missiologists began to repudiate the ‘Western concept of individualism’, based on their insights to indigenous people’s ontological dimensions of their cosmology. For example in 1963 John V Taylor argued against the imported concept of individualism and proposed the maxim, *I am because I participate*, based on his observation and experience of the African primal world-view (Taylor 1973: 93). Similarly, the British missiologist, Max Warren (see Yates 1994: 138) offered a specific critique of Descartes’ dictum, arguing that for centuries missionaries were heirs of ‘Western individualism’. He put forward another maxim, *I belong, therefore I am*, as an
alternative to Descartes' intellectualism of *I think, therefore I am*. This alternative 'has been the dynamic idea which has hitherto dominated and defined the cultural life of Asia and Africa' (Warren 1967: 158-159). This has also been the undergirding principle of the Aboriginal people's relationships with each other, with society and with their environment, and with their Dreaming.

About the time Taylor and Warren, on the global scene, pointed to the incompatibility of the 'Western concept of individualism' with indigenous world-views, the MOM journal *The Arnhem Land Epistle (ALE)*, published a significant article in August 1969 on Aboriginal ontology. This paper by Margaret Bain, a Presbyterian missionary at Ernabella in Central Australia, with a background in science and anthropology, enquired into the Aboriginal essential being. She demonstrated that an Aboriginal person's attitude was based on *being* rather than on *doing*. This did not imply a static and passive existence, but rather the Aboriginal person was always in interactive relationship with the community and the land in which the person dwelt, which were the major factors of the person's life. The Aboriginal person 'was consciously and essentially of them and received from them'. In the 'new world' where the emphasis was on 'doing', the question Bain posed was how to maintain the old framework of 'being', of connectedness, belongingness and participation, and how not to change or interfere with it by unconscious pressure [or conscious pressure] (*The ALE* Aug 1969: 1-4).

In ideology and in structure the MOM mission stations in Arnhem Land were foreign and artificial configurations. This along with the emphasis on 'individual converts' in some ways undermined the group
aspirations, practices and interconnectedness, which were embedded in the concept of Aboriginal essential being and social organisation. The artificial nature of the mission stations was evident when the mission stations became Aboriginal towns or communities in the 1970s. The 1974 UCNA Commission of Enquiry found that the term and the concept of 'community' as it related to the Aboriginal towns was problematic. The Aboriginal people did not identify themselves as belonging to the 'community', but as members of a clan or a 'tribal group' living in the town community. The Commission was rarely approached by individuals but by people 'in relationship with a group of others'. Even when an 'individual' approached the Commission, 'the person spoke on behalf of other members of his clan or interest group. The concept of the individual seeking his own personal satisfaction was submerged in a more general aspiration' (Clarke 1974: 92).

The UCNA Commission was also aware of the problem that the artificial situation created by mission stations, later Aboriginal communities, presented to the Aboriginal people in relation to individualism and evangelism and the life of the church. The Commission stated that individual conversion, although never invalid, was always a difficult process in Aboriginal cosmology with its strong social solidarity. Individual conversion was 'often divisive in social consequence in the community' (Clarke 1974: 109). The Commission, which represented the modification of views of some missionaries on the issue of individualism, thus stated:

Our emphasis on individual conversion, of an individual's personal response to God and his personal responsibility to God needs to be examined very carefully. It is a question about the relationships of our Lord to his church and to his people; the church has different answers to this question in different countries, and
different times of church history (Clarke 1974: 92).

The concept of individual conversion not only created problems for the Aboriginal people in relation to their group solidarity, but it also hindered the growth and development of Aboriginal church leadership. The idea of individual conversion carried with it criteria laid down by missionaries based on their experience and perception of Christianity. Aboriginal adherents who did not meet the missionaries' criteria of 'true conversion' were not eligible for church leadership.

Although the 1974 Commission of Enquiry stated that the concept of individual conversion needed to be examined very carefully, in the 1970s missionaries with evangelical and pentecostal beliefs, which in the main were conservative, continued to stress and crusade for individual converts. Unfortunately, the missionaries' zeal for proselytisation was not matched by their desire to enable Aboriginal people to reflect critically on their Christian experience in the context of their cosmological framework, which would have meant some form of sustained cross-cultural theological and biblical study and reflection at the local level for their proselytes. The evangelisation process which occurred in the Aboriginal Arnhem Land communities in the 1970s was quite contrary to the MOM official policy of enabling the Aboriginal people to reflect and relate Christianity in their context. The Christian teachings Aboriginal people received in the communities from missionaries were incompatible with the official MOM/UCNA sponsored courses in the late 1960s and the 1970s, and teachings offered at Nungalinya College, which aimed at developing distinctive Aboriginal Christianity and contextualisation of theology.
ABORIGINAL CHRISTIANITY

The fact that the MOM policy towards Aboriginal beliefs and culture since the 1930s was generally more liberal, enabled Aboriginal people to freely express their cosmological beliefs and practices openly, thus instilling confidence in themselves and the respectability of their traditional world-view, and becoming more assertive. This also led Aboriginal people to develop syncretistic forms of Aboriginal Christianity in Arnhem Land, particularly in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. Missionaries who held conservative Christian beliefs in these decades, generally took tolerant and non-interfering attitudes towards the Aboriginal world-views, in compliance with mission policy.

In 1946, after hearing the news that Len Kentish, chairman of the NAD, had been beheaded by the Japanese, traditional mourning ceremonies were performed spontaneously by Aboriginal people on several of the mission stations, displaying genuine grief (Ellemor 1981: 263). At Milingimbi traditional mourning songs, dances and symbols were performed and used together with translated Christian hymns. In the centre of the ceremonial ground, a symbol of the cross was erected. Ellemor commented in retrospect that 'this was striking evidence of the Aborigines' acceptance of the central symbol of our faith as lying at the core of their late chairman's work and witness' (Ellemor 1981: 263). This was most likely the first public expression of Christian syncretism in Arnhem Land. There was meaning and interconnectedness of Aboriginal cosmology and Christian faith.

A most overt form of syncretism occurred in 1957 based at Elcho
Island. This was related to an unprecedented politico-religious movement, which has been analysed and dissected by anthropologists (McIntosh 1994: 103). It was a politico-religious movement because it involved non-empirical elements as well as the tangible or empirical 'requirements of maintaining community integrity and commonality of interest' (Berndt 1962: 83). This was in fact compatible with the Aborigines' cosmological beliefs and practices. Berndt (1962) whose work contains the most comprehensive early account of the movement, called it 'An Adjustment Movement'. Burridge (1971) labelled it a 'Millenarian or Chiliastic Movement'. The Arnhem Landers themselves called it 'the Memorial' (Bos 1988a: 170; McIntosh 1994: 103). It was in fact a syncretistic movement, in which Elcho Island Aboriginal clan leaders Batanga, Walalipa and Burrumarra, publicly displayed, for the first time, the most sacred and secret ceremonial poles or rangga (sacred objects) and the madayin (traditional system of law) associated with the poles. The leadership of the movement emerged independently of missionaries, although Batanga and Walalipa had been 'mission boys' for many years. These two men had moved from Elcho Island when the mission station there was relocated to Milingimbi Island in 1923. At the outbreak of the war they returned to Elcho (Shepherdson 1981: 65-68). Burrumarra himself had been a church leader, delivering sermons and prayers and acting as an interpreter for the community (McIntosh 1994: 106). He was the youngest of the clan leaders and acted as the secretary of the movement. Eminent Australian academic John Mulvaney writes that:

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8 Ian McIntosh (1994: 103-113) tells Burrumarra's story and his assessment of the movement in retrospect. In 1978 Burrumarra was awarded an MBE by the Governor General, Sir Zelman Cowan, at Elcho Island for services to Aboriginal community development, education and anthropology. He died on 21 October 1994, the last of a generation.
Burrumarra played a significant part in attempting to reconcile the old traditional culture and beliefs with introduced ways of life following the war, and with Christianity, so visibly represented by the Rev. Shepherdson... Burrumarra deserved great credit for his attempts to represent traditional people and to present the case for the retention of traditional culture while yet attempting to adapt to the inevitable changes introduced by white Australians... (Quoted in McIntosh 1994: 124).

The 'Adjustment Movement' was an example of syncretism in which some Arnhem Landers in the 1950s attempted to give meaning to new developments, both religious and secular, which had impinged on them, and to express aspirations in a syncretistic manner.

One noticeable feature of the publicly displayed rangga was the Christian cross built at the apex of one of the poles. This particular rangga belonged to Badanga's Wangurri clan and it was his 'believing' for the cross to be displayed with the rangga. Badanga, however, said that he had kept the madayin, 'but the Bible is there too', and according to Burrumarra, Badanga had 'combined both ways' (Berndt 1962: 60; McIntosh 1994: 20). The placing of the cross at the apex of the rangga did not symbolise, for Aboriginal people, a hierarchical superiority relationship between Aboriginal cosmological beliefs and Christianity. Rather it represented a syncretistic interaction between them. The Aboriginal leaders expressed this in their acceptance of the Bible standing alongside the madayin, which was reiterated later by the younger generation of Aboriginal people in the 1960s and 1970s. The acceptance of the Bible alongside the madayin was not in a dualistic manner but in an interactive, syncretistic way. The symbols of the
cross and the *rangga* are to be understood in this latter sense\(^9\).

The leaders of the movement set themselves the goals of the unification of Arnhem Land people under their leadership and bringing together Aboriginal people and whites\(^10\). They also sought improved economic and political conditions, bigger and better schools, greater occupational diversity and a greater degree of independence (Berndt 1962: 18, 66, 78-88; cf Bos 1988a: 170-179). The leaders wanted to gain independence, assert their own authority and self-confidence (cf Berndt 1962: 82), set their own goals and take control of their destiny. The means to achieve their goals and aspirations was through the blending of traditional culture and religion and Christianity (cf McIntosh 1994: 109; Berndt 1962: 82). Berndt thus stated:

> The bringing out of *rangga* for public exhibition... has actually strengthened their case, widening their range of adherents; and placing the tradition in the context of mission teaching provides for all people in the community. Religion, now, is not defined in European terms but is associated with their own past as well as with their future \(^11\) (Berndt 1962: 88).

In his biography of Burrumarra, *The Whale and the Cross: Conversations*

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\(^9\) Robert Bos has discussed in greater detail the way the Arnhem Land Aboriginal people have integrated the Christian symbol of the cross with the traditional symbols of the *madayin* (Bos 1988a: 287-297).

\(^10\) The Arnhem Landers saw that the Christian ideal of 'black'/'white' equality 'in the eyes of God' was not evident in everyday living, 'even though the Methodists were, in this respect, much more tolerant than others' (Berndt 1962: 82).

\(^11\) The *rangga* posts still stand today near the beach on the north shore of Elcho Island, but are rather battered by the weather and have deteriorated considerably since 1957 (cf Habel 1991: 2; McIntosh 1994: 103).
with David Burrumarra MBE (1994), which contains a chapter on the ‘Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land’, McIntosh states: ‘That the Yolngu [Aboriginal] leaders were blending Aboriginal and Christian values is undisputed’. He quoted Burrumarra as saying that in the movement ‘people gave themselves and their rangga and madayin to God’, but ‘this did not mean we forget the past or that Balanda [Whites] can do what they like’ (McIntosh 1994: 109).

Badanga stated that in 1951 he changed his life from just ‘leaning on the old laws’, and embraced the Bible to stand alongside the madayin, combining ‘both ways’. Gondarra recognised that there were ‘bad’ and ‘good’ elements in Aboriginal culture, beliefs and practices. On the basis of this understanding the present writer proposes that the Aboriginal people were operating on a principle of selective Christian syncretism, in which they selected elements from their cosmology and Christian teachings, integrating them and evolving an Aboriginal understanding and form of Christianity. They attempted to do this in the light of their understanding and interpretation of the Bible in their cosmological context. In this process they were also developing an Aboriginal contextual theology. Instead of totally denying all, the selective Christian syncretism principle enabled them to give expression to certain selected elements of their cosmology, which in part constituted their Aboriginality. Christian syncretism for Arnhem Landers entailed and entails search for meaning and connectedness. In 1959 A Capell said:

It seems reasonable to suggest... that an approach to the Australian Aborigine along the lines of what he has previously

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12 It is usual practice in north-east Arnhem Land that names of the deceased are not mentioned publicly. McIntosh has been granted permission by Burrumarra's family to publish this biography.
believed, what has been the sustenance of his spiritual life in past centuries, will also be the best means of leading him into the new spiritual life that it is the aim of the Christian missionary to give him... (Capell 1959: 10).

In the 1960s Arnhem Landers were not only becoming politically assertive, but they also collectively began to speak on issues related to their cosmology. The theme of the first District Village Council conference, held at Yirrkala in 1967, was the emergence of ‘compatibility of traditional Aboriginal system with a Christian way of life’ (The ALE Oct 1967: 1-3). The conference, which was attended by representatives from all the MOM mission stations and the government settlement at Maningrida, was also attended by the Yirrkala superintendent and all the staff, and the District Welfare Officer, Ted Egan. Among other issues, the Aboriginal councillors discussed certain aspects of their beliefs and practices. They agreed that the madayin system (traditional system of law) ‘will stand forever alongside the Holy Bible’. The conference resolved to keep such cultural elements as singing, dancing, painting and sacred stories from bark painting, as they constituted part of traditional law (The ALE Oct 1967: 1).

At the official level the 1970s in particular was a decade in which the MOM and UCNA increasingly gave freedom for Aboriginal people to deliberate and decide not only on secular matters in their communities,

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13 Egan was invited to the conference and spoke only when invited. He said that the conference was a stimulating experience and offered the Aborigines the opportunity to put their views to mission and government authorities. Egan commended the MOM for organising the conference and stated that ‘unless we encourage this sort of approach and take deliberate pains to find out the thoughts and aspirations of Aboriginal people, Europeans are largely wasting time’. In a report to the Assistant Director (Northern) Welfare Branch, Egan also offered constructive criticism (The ALE 1967: 1-3).
Plates 9

The 1957 Adjustment Movement Memorial


but also on the relationship between their cosmological beliefs and Christian faith. The *Free To Decide* policy of the MOM/UCNA played a crucial role in facilitating this contextualisation process. As noted elsewhere this policy not only dealt with issues relating to self-determining communities and a liberation style of community work, but it also drew attention to the new missiological developments in which evangelism was seen to involve an interaction between the gospel and Aboriginal cosmology. The 1974 Commission of Enquiry was told in one Aboriginal community of the ‘new approaches towards group evangelism alongside the more traditional call to individual response to the gospel’ (Clarke 1974: 108). As noted in an earlier chapter, the homeland movement was also an important development in relating Christianity to the Aboriginal context. This represented decentralisation of Christian activities from missionaries and mission stations, and the establishment of Aboriginal ‘homeland churches’ under the leadership of Aboriginal Christians.

This chapter has demonstrated that in the second 30-year period of Methodism in Arnhem Land (1947-1977), the MOM and UCNA made genuine efforts at least at policy level to enable the Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land to express, and relate their culture and beliefs to, Christianity. This was a process towards authentic contextualisation. Unfortunately, however, this progressive method was pushed to the background in the Aboriginal communities by a reversal to the noncontextualisation approach in the late 1960s and 1970s, with the increasing influence of new missionaries with conservative evangelical and pentecostal beliefs (cf Blacket 1997), emphasising individual Christian religious experience. The noncontextualisation approach of these missionaries, who had the most sustained influence in the...
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communities, left little room for allowing independent Aboriginal Christian reflection, and furthermore, such missionaries and their conservative beliefs were counter-productive to the development of an independent Aboriginal church with its own leadership and distinctive forms of Christianity.

The expression of Aboriginal Christianity in a syncretistic way and the emergence of Aboriginal leadership through the 'Adjustment Movement' was a step towards authentic contextualisation. The leaders of the movement not only endeavoured to contextualise Christianity to their traditional beliefs, but they also attempted to relate their Christian beliefs syncretistically to the socio-economic issues which emerged as a result of changes the Aboriginal people experienced in Arnhem Land. This emerging Aboriginal Christian form was not generally fostered by missionaries, in spite of the official mission policy which allowed for the expression of authentic contextualisation. Christianity generally remained Western in form. In spite of the foreignness of the Christian form, by the end of the missionary era, an active Aboriginal church or ekklesia had come into existence theologically. In other words, 'a community of faith' in Arnhem Land had emerged, as the Aboriginal receptors responded to the message of Christianity brought to them by the missionaries. Many Aboriginal lay leaders had appeared and in the 1960s and the 1970s Aboriginal Christians in Arnhem Land were increasingly and actively expressing their faith, within the structural mechanisms of the missionary church, or mechanisms created for them by the MOM and UCNA.
Chapter Six

THE EMERGING ABORIGINAL CHURCH ABSORBED INTO THE 'MAINSTREAM' UNITING CHURCH

The task in this chapter is to demonstrate that the Aboriginal *ekklesia* which had come into existence was absorbed into the wider structure of the 'mainstream' Uniting Church in Australia (UCA), at its inception in 1977. This move also marked the end of the 60 years of missionary work in Arnhem Land, although the legacy of missionaries still continued in many ways. The absorption of the Aboriginal church into the UCA meant that the establishment of an indigenous church in Arnhem Land in the sense of the 'three Ss', self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating principle, was ultimately shelved. Some degree of self-extension, however, had occurred through Aboriginal lay evangelists, and some Aboriginal people had also started to be engaged in the 'fourth S' - self-theologising, which entailed expression and contextualisation of Christian beliefs within their cosmological frame of reference. Unfortunately, the MOM/UCNA did not create an independent structure for the Aboriginal people to continue developing and expressing their Christianity and theology in their own way and in relation to their Aboriginal context.

By the 1970s the Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land were expressing their Christianity at three levels: practical, experiential and reflective. At the practical level the missionaries expected the Aboriginal people to demonstrate a Christian work ethic, however foreign these might have been, through mission station programs. For the Aboriginal converts, more often than not, they were expected, particularly by
missionaries with conservative evangelical and pentecostal beliefs, to undergo and embrace Christian experiences similar to the missionaries' own. The missionaries' Christian experiences were the standard by which to measure 'authentic' Aboriginal experience. From the missionaries' point of view, anything short of their own religious experience was not genuine. At the reflective level, a minority but significant group of Aboriginal Christians began to articulate their Christianity contextually.

As is apparent from the above, in the emerging Aboriginal church, generally, two groups of Aboriginal Christians appeared by the end of the missionary era, the legacies of which were to continue in the post-missionary period. One group, under the influence of missionaries with conservative evangelical and pentecostal beliefs, sought and expressed noncontextualised forms and experiences of Christianity, while a second group attempted to relate Christianity at a reflective level in their cosmological context. It was this latter group which endeavoured critical contextualisation, a step towards authentic self-theologising, although at an embryonic stage. This self-theologising started to appear in the 1960s and 1970s as a result of the official policy and the encouragement given by forward-looking missionaries. The first group of Aboriginal Christians accepted the evangelical and pentecostal beliefs uncritically, while the second group critically related Christianity to their cosmological frame of reference. These two groups existed side by side, and in the post-missionary era created some division among the Aboriginal people.

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1 This division led to the seminar, for example, held at Elcho (Galiwinku) from the 18th to the 27th of March 1991, to discuss issues of Aboriginal spirituality and gospel. The seminar was organised by Aboriginal people themselves under Djinijini Gondarra's leadership, and it brought the two groups of Aboriginal Christians together to share their views on Christianity and culture.
THE GROWTH OF THE ABORIGINAL CHURCH AND A WIDENING HORIZON

For many missionaries church planting, growth and extension was connected with the idea and practice of evangelism. This in fact was the work in which the MOM Board in Sydney expected missionaries to be engaged. In 1977 Bernie Clarke, the Director of Mission and Service of the UCNA, assured the Board that ‘evangelisation and extension and public witness’ was still continuing in the midst of the changes which were impinging on Arnhem Land. He reported:

In our report to the Conference, the Executive Officers find that in the United Church... there is a remarkable silence under this kind of heading. This does not mean that we are not participating in or engaging in activities concentrating on evangelism, extension and public witness... It... reflects the fact that many activities which might be discussed under these headings are described and seen in different terms yet remain evidence of Parish concern (Clarke 1977: 6).

Missionaries in the 1960s and the 1970s employed a number of activities and organisations as means of evangelising Aboriginal people. These included religious instruction at schools, weekly fellowships and Bible Studies on the mission stations, annual Bible camps, all-age Sunday Schools, choir groups, Vacation Bible Schools, Girl Guides and Brownies, Boy Scouts and Cubs, and social clubs for boys and girls (NAD Notes on Synod Minutes 1961-1971, NTAS NTRS 44/45; NAD Minutes Annual Synod 17/9/1971, Meth. Ch. OM 352, ML). As with the commercial and industrial activities, however, most of these religious and social activities and organisations declined and disappeared in the post-missionary era.
In addition, the Methodist missionaries sponsored crusades or evangelistic campaigns. In 1969 Ralph Bell, a Black American evangelist and a team associated with the American evangelist Billy Graham, were invited to conduct crusades at Yirrkala and Elcho Island, which people from other mission stations attended. At Elcho Island a choir of 100 people were trained to be part of the Ralph Bell open-air crusade (*The ALE* Oct 1964: 8-9; June 1967: 10; Oct 1967: 8; Oct 1959: 15; cf Blacket 1997: 72). In 1974 Jim Grant and a team of four associated with the Assemblies of God (AOG) church in Darwin conducted four weeks of evangelistic campaigns at Minjilang (Croker Island) and Goulburn Island (*Dhawu* March 1974, Vol. 1, No. 3: 6). Grant, an Aboriginal person of mixed descent, had been a boarder at the Croker Island 'Half-caste' institution (Jim Downing, personal communication, 1996). The AOG church with its strong pentecostal and charismatic emphasis, and the crusades illustrated by Bell's evangelistic campaign with a focus on individual proselytising, were attempts by MOM missionaries who sponsored these crusading groups to foster Aboriginal religious individualism and to propagate conservative evangelical and pentecostal beliefs among the Arnhem Land Aboriginal people. This study argues that the religious activities of the evangelical missionaries, who worked with the MOM and the crusades which they sponsored, by virtue of their foreignness and noncontextualised approaches, were not only counter-productive to authentic Aboriginal church development, but were also in direct opposition to attempts made by some thinking Aboriginal people to develop contextualised and syncretistic approaches to Christianity, which were in line with the official church policy, as already noted.

Under the pressure of noncontextualised methods of evangelism, the
Aboriginal people responded to the Christian message, which was communicated to them generally in a foreign language, English, and in foreign forms. However, two aspects of the whole introduced religious phenomena were self-defeating to the missionary goal of proselytisation of the Aboriginal people. Firstly, as just alluded to, there was the foreignness of the missionaries' approaches. Apart from the religious activities which were operated under the direction of the MOM Department of Christian Education based in Darwin, and in the 1970s headed by Jack Goodluck as Director, George Winungudji as Regional Supervisor and Wali Wulanybuma as Youth Work Secretary (NAD Annual Meeting 25-27 Feb 1972, NTAS NTRS 53, Box 2), almost all activities and organisations used as means of evangelism were noncontextualised approaches. It was not surprising therefore that most of these evangelistic methods did not survive beyond the missionary period.

In the second place, there was inconsistent reinforcement by MOM missionaries of new proselytes through appropriate follow-up programs and contextualised teachings in Christian tenets. In other words, the intensity with which the Methodist missionaries subjugated Aboriginal people through various means of evangelism, was not matched by Christian teaching to develop Aboriginal people's beliefs in the new religion, and more significantly the relating of Christianity to Aboriginal cosmology. Missionaries admitted that this lack of sustained follow-up teaching was due to their preoccupation with material and physical development of mission stations connected with commercial and industrial activities. In 1966 it was reported that 'ministers who are superintendents are too busy to support baptised members, etc' (Notes on Synod Minutes 1961-1971, NTAS NTRS 44/45). Similarly the
1969 Milingimbi mission report indicated that missionaries lagged in providing instruction in 'spiritual development' and 'personalised Christian witness' to the Aboriginal people (NAD Minutes, Annual Synod Sept 1969, Meth. Ch. OM 1272, Box 2, ML).

Some evangelistic activities were highly forceful and 'crusading', such as the Ralph Bell American style of conducting public evangelistic rallies. In such evangelistic campaigns, invitations were issued for people to go forward to indicate their response to the message delivered, and their desire to make a public commitment to the Christian faith. At the Ralph Bell crusade, there were 242 'enquirers' of Elcho Islanders alone. However, most of these 'dropped off'. A similar trend was noticed at Milingimbi. This attrition rate was attributed to lack of appropriate follow-up work. As former missionary John Blacket admitted, 'there was still a long way to go before there was a lasting effect' (Blacket 1997: 72). The MOM missionaries did not stop to ask themselves if their methods of proselytisation were compatible with Aboriginal cosmology.

Up to the 1950s and early 1960s Aboriginal people were in general observers of the evangelistic activities and passive recipients of missionaries' message, and generally subservient to the missionaries and the objectives of mission programs. McKenzie states that at the 1954 Synod meeting, Aboriginal delegates took part for the first time (McKenzie 1976: 175). They were in actual fact observers, not delegates. It would be more than 10 years before the Aboriginal people would represent their stations as delegates in Synod meetings. This was indicative of the slowness with which the MOM allowed the Aboriginal people to participate in church matters. In 1963 Lamilami,
Magulnir, Gunupun, Burrumarra and Nyabililngu attended the Synod as observers, and in the 1964 Synod there were 11 observers (Notes on Synod Minutes 1961-1971, NTAS NTRS 44/45). Although Lamilami and Magulnir had been associated with the Mission for almost 50 years and were at this stage outstanding laymen in their own right, they were still attending the Synod meetings as observers, and not as representatives of their people.

In 1966 the Synod minutes recorded that 'Aborigines now represent their stations, not just observers' (Notes on Synod Minutes 1961-1971, NTAS NTRS 44/45). This was the result of the changes which began to occur in the Mission in 1965, facilitated by missionaries like Jack Goodluck and Bernie Clarke, who were committed to initiating and expediting the development of Aboriginal church leadership, and the visit of the 1965 MOM Board Commission of Enquiry. At the time of the Commission's visit, the District had drafted a constitution, although belatedly, which included proposals for Aboriginal people's participation in Councils and Synods. The report of the visit noted:

The Committee also notes with approval that the draft constitution for the District to be submitted to Synod with a view to securing the approval of the Mission Board provides for strong Aboriginal representation on Church and Station Councils and in the District Synods (Committee of Inquiry 1965: 9).

In the late 1960s and the 1970s Aboriginal people became actively engaged in evangelism and in church life in general. They played increasing roles in the various activities and programs introduced by the MOM which were noted earlier. They became Sunday School teachers; for example, at Yirrkala there were 11 Aboriginal Sunday School teachers in 1971 (The ALE April 1971: 16-17). Local preachers, whose
training programs commenced in 1965, became active participants in the church work in general and as evangelists to their own people. The talents and gifts which had hitherto been restrained and untapped were unleashed and became assets to the emerging Aboriginal church. The Aboriginal people assisted in Bible Camps conducted annually, and they participated in outreach evangelistic work to outstations. There were Vacation Bible Schools and weekly Bible classes which were organised and led solely by Aboriginal leaders such as Djiniyini Gondarra at Elcho Island and Galarrwuy Yunupingu at Yirrkala (Notes on Synod Minutes 1961-1971, NTAS NTRS, 44/45). In the 1970s with the movement back to homelands, Aboriginal churches began to emerge in the homelands at the people’s own initiative and under their leadership, as noted elsewhere in this study.

Choirs2 and string bands were a feature of Aboriginal evangelistic campaigns and fellowships. Perhaps the first church-related string band in Arnhem Land was formed at Elcho Island, which performed at evangelistic meetings and other church functions. The band was called ‘Elcho Island Strings’, and although it encountered opposition from old people, 12 young men played guitars, ukuleles, mouth organs, the bass and brass bass. The band was formed under the leadership of the late Rrurrambu Dhurrkay in January 1964 after his return from the Methodist Training College in Brisbane (The ALE Oct 1974: 7). Dhurrkay was a talented musician and singer, and a gifted evangelist and preacher. Fluent in English, he demonstrated his leadership not only to his people but also to the wider church. His father, Batanga, was a leader of the 1957 ‘Adjustment Movement’ (Bos 1988a: 179). Dhurrkay

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2 Choirs in Arnhem Land had a long history. The Fijian missionary Kolinio N Saukura trained ‘the first native choir in North Australia’ at Yirrkala, which sang, Jisu dari buru (Jesus stand among us) at its inaugural performance on Good Friday 1945 (The MR 5 May 1945: 8).
was a Commonwealth Teaching Service teacher. He received his teacher education at Kelvin Grove Teachers College in Brisbane, Komilda College in Darwin, and at Darwin Community College. He later became Assistant Principal and subsequently Principal of Elcho Island School3 (Northern Synod Handbook 26-29 Sept 1992: 36; Hart 1988: 42-47). While he was a teacher Dhurrkay continued his evangelistic activities and in 1977 Bernie Clarke submitted the following report regarding him and other Aboriginal leaders:

During this year, Mr Kevin Rurrrambu [Dhurrkay] has conducted “mission” at Galiwinku, Gapuwiyak and Milingimbi. By all reports these have been well received, but more significantly, they herald a new consciousness among Aboriginal Christians of their own evangelical outreach throughout the Northern Territory. To the fore in this development are not only the men like Lazarus Lamilami, Terry Djiniyini [Gondarra] and Philip Magulnir, but also laymen like Djilwuywuy and Minipirriwuy and Garrawin, whose ministry to the people of Galiwunku and Milingimbi and Yirrkala is breaking new ground (Clarke 1977: 6, NTAS NTRS 53, Box 2).

Some Aboriginal people not only participated, but they also reflected critically on methods in cross-cultural ‘mission’ and evangelism in the Aboriginal context. For instance in 1971 Wali Wulanybuma called on ‘teachers, preachers and trainers’ in Arnhem Land ‘to be more mobile and flexible in our thinking and action’. He argued that ‘somehow, somewhere, it appears, the Church has failed in its ministry to the Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land... We in Arnhem Land are working mostly with Aboriginal people, therefore, we have got to be prepared to tackle anything and still respect them and their laws’ (The ALE April 1971: 8). In 1977 a group of Aboriginal people met together to discuss issues of cross-cultural ‘mission’ and evangelism. Clarke stated to the

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3 Dhurrkay and Djiniyini Gondarra were leaders in the 1979 religious Revival Movement at Elcho Island. In the late 1980s he became the Director of ARDS in the UAICC, and held that position until his death on 7 December 1991.
MOM Board:

We need to listen carefully to their conclusions, which among others, include an Aboriginal ministry orientated towards clan groups; the use of Christian activities; and Aboriginal leadership taking a greater responsibility in the life of the Church (Clarke 1971: 6, NTAS NTRS 53, Box 2).

While the central focus of this study has been the development of the ordained leadership, the study acknowledges the efforts of the MOM in facilitating lay leadership travel which contributed to lay church leadership development. Overseas tours and study travel which the MOM/UCNA sponsored in the 1960s and 1970s enlarged the horizon of the Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land. George Winungudj, Lamilami’s brother, had travelled to Fiji to represent the North Australia District at the South Pacific Youth Conference (*The ALE* Dec 1968: 4-5). In 1973 Winungudj travelled to the USA, Europe and Africa (Nigeria), with the Adelaide Woodwind Quintet to play a composition specially created for didgeridoo and woodwind instruments (*Dhawu* Dec 1973, Vol 1, No. 2: 4). Another Goulburn Islander, Bunug (Bunuk), also visited Europe, America including Honolulu, and Fiji in 1973. In America Bunug was impressed by the work of Navajo Indians (*Dhawu* June 1974, Vol 1, No. 4: 1). In 1974 Dhunggala Munuggurr of Yirrkala visited the Philippines and Papua New Guinea (PNG). In that same year John Baya from Milingimbi visited China with 10 other Aboriginal people, for four weeks. The visit was sponsored by the Chinese-Australian Friendship Society. Furthermore, in 1974 Buthimang, Belu, Djulaymug and Dhalpalwuy from Elcho Island visited PNG for four weeks. Their itinerary included a visit to Rarongo Theological College where they met their countryman Gondarra and his wife who were studying at the college (*Dhawu* March 1974, Vol 1, No. 3: 1-2; September 1974, Vol 2, No. 5: 1-2, 14). Apart from the overseas
travel there had also been visits to Darwin and other parts of Australia by Arnhem Land groups. For example in the 1960s and 1970s Methodist representatives participated in the Darwin Eisteddfod. In December 1968 a party of 35 from Elcho Island Junior Choir, three dancers from Yirrkala and two teachers visited Western Australia. The tour was organised so the children could be exposed to a wide variety of city life and industrial activities. Scouts representatives had also been sent for instance to Brisbane, Traralgon in Victoria (1968) and New South Wales in 1970 (The ALE April 1970: 10; July 1968: 9; March 1968: 3, 10).

Aboriginal Christians enlarged their horizon through their own initiatives; for example Walalipa and Burrumarra who initiated the Arnhem Land 'Adjustment Movement' in 1957; Roy Marika who masterminded the Yirrkala land rights movement in 1963; and George Winungudj who attempted to venture into a political career. Winungudj's political adventure is recounted here to demonstrate firstly, the degree of confidence which he had developed in himself and secondly, to show that in an ironic turn of events the MOM in Arnhem Land which fostered his leadership confidence did not lend unqualified support to further develop his leadership qualities. In 1968 he contested against two Europeans in the Legislative Council elections for Arnhem Land Electorate. One candidate was ex-Arnhem Land missionary, Rupert Kentish who narrowly defeated Winungudj. Among other factors which contributed to Winungudj's defeat was the suggestion that he needed political training, as was implied in this paternalistic statement issued by a missionary: 'Surely some training is necessary especially for Aboriginal candidates who are not habitual readers of accounts of debates in either the Legislative Council or Canberra' (The ALE Dec 1968: 4-6). Had Rupert Kentish not contested,
Winungudji would have been the first Aboriginal politician in Arnhem Land. There were expressions of disappointment that a former Methodist missionary should contest against a Methodist Aboriginal leader. Cecil Holmes, a media representative in Darwin, argued that Kentish could at least 'have given Winoich [Winungudji] a hand by keeping clear'. Holmes further stated that at 'Yirrkala and Elcho the local Superintendents have simply not given this matter attention - this is either sheer irresponsibility or a reflection of cynicism. Or both' (Holmes to Gribble 3/11/1968, Meth. Ch. Om 467, ML). In November 1968 Gribble, the MOM General Secretary, wrote to Gordon Symons, Chairperson of NAD saying:

It is a pity that the Aboriginal was not elected as this would have been a good thing for him and his people, and also I think for the image of the Aboriginal in the Australian community. However, as you said there were certain cross currents which obviously worked against him (Gribble to Symons 13/11/1968, Meth. Ch. OM 467, ML).

THE FIRST ORDINATIONS

The fact that the MOM did not give whole-hearted support to George Winungudji's attempt in 1968 to enter politics, and that a former MOM missionary had contested against him and gained narrow victory, was symptomatic of missionaries' paternalism and ambivalent attitudes towards Aboriginal church leaders, who ironically were the creation of the Mission. The MOM was willing to give Aboriginal leaders responsibility, but it could not trust them sufficiently to give full responsibility in their own right, in such positions as Winungudji was seeking or in the ordained ministry. Commenting generally of the situation in Australia, John Harris states that in southern missions and in Aboriginal communities of central and northern Australia, there was
Plate 10

George Winungudj OBE, Goulburn Island

Photograph: Courtesy of Heather Hewitt, (nee Hinch), former missionary, Goulburn Island.
reluctance to recognise indigenous Christian leadership by missionaries. Harris does acknowledge that missions gave responsibility to Aboriginal Christians. For example, the Lutherans had formalised the position of evangelist, and other missions had created roles such as 'native helper', 'lay reader' and 'missionary helper'; and Aboriginal leaders who served in these positions made important contributions to evangelisation amongst their own people. Nevertheless Harris puts forward this statement:

But they were always below the missionaries. In many cases their lives were under much greater scrutiny than white Christian leaders. Every little lapse was written down and the subject of discussion. They knew without doubt that until Aboriginal leaders were fully ordained to the position and status and function of white clergy, they were still unsuitable or unready (Harris 1990: 854-855).

All missions in Australia were slow to ordain Aboriginal people. This was not due to lack of Aboriginal Christian leaders or evangelists, rather, the missions did not have sufficient faith in them to ordain them. James Noble, from Yarrabah in Queensland, was the first traditional Aboriginal person to be ordained by the Anglican Church in 1925, while a missionary with Ernest R Gribble at Forrest River Mission in Western Australia (Higgins 1981; Harris 1990). In 1908 Noble went as a missionary to Arnhem Land when the CMS Mission commenced work at Roper River. Noble was, however, only ordained to the first of the three Anglican orders of deacon, priest and bishop. 'He was never made a priest. He was never Ernest Gribble's equal' (Harris 1990: 855). It took almost 40 years after Noble before any Aboriginal Christians from traditional communities were ordained. In 1964 Conrad Raberaba and Peter Bulla were ordained by the Lutheran Church at Hermannsburg Mission in Central Australia. As Harris states it had taken nearly 100
years from the commencement of the Mission to acknowledge that any Aranda Christian was ready for ordination (Harris 1990: 855). The CMS in Arnhem Land ordained its first clergyman, Michael Gumbuli Wurrarama, in 1973 after more than 60 years of missionary work.

There were a number of Aboriginal Christian leaders and evangelists associated with the Methodist Mission in Arnhem Land who could have been considered for ordination. Between 1922 and 1930 there were 11 Aboriginal evangelists at Goulburn Island and there was a similar number at Milingimbi (Hedrick 1973: 21). These evangelists led services in the Aboriginal camps. Among the Goulburn Island evangelists were Lazarus Lamilami and Philip Magulnir. Andrew Birrinydjawuy of the Gupapuyngu from Milingimbi and Harry Makarrwala, a Wangurri from east of Milingimbi, were active evangelists in the 1930s (Blacket 1997: 51-56). Shirly Gundhumawuy, a second generation Christian from Milingimbi states that her people remembered Birrinydjawuy as an evangelist who ‘preached the gospel in language and explained it to his own people, and his ministry was growing wider, reaching lots of people, although he faced many difficulties and obstacles’ (Personal communication 1998). Aboriginal leaders who emerged in the 1940s and 1950s included, as noted elsewhere, Batanga, Walalipa and Burrumarra from Elcho Island. As is evident from this chapter and the previous chapters, in the 1960s and 1970s some outstanding Aboriginal Christian leaders and evangelists emerged in Arnhem Land. However, tardiness in development of policy for Aboriginal church leadership training, lack of encouragement, lack of faith in Aboriginal ability and unreasonably high expectations by missionaries, all prevented these Aboriginal leaders from being considered for ordination. As noted in a

4 The Lutheran Hermannsburg Mission commenced work at Finke River in 1877.
previous chapter Gatjil Djerrkura of Yirrkala stated in 1973 that he was convinced that there were Aboriginal people ready to take up the challenge to go into the ordained ministry, but they had found themselves isolated due to the absence of training facilities and lack of follow-up work by missionaries. Galarrwuy Yunupingu, also of Yirrkala, had intentions of becoming a preacher after attending Bible College in Brisbane:

I had ambitions to become a preacher and, on my return three years later, I did some preaching and some community service. But I also thought there were other options. I found there were some little buggers in the church who expected too much of you - you had to be totally this or that, you had to pray more. I thought I was doing enough of that business. Enough was enough and I pulled out (Quoted in Chryssides 1993: 276).

The MOM eventually ordained three Aboriginal ministers: Lazarus Lamilami and Phillip Magulnir of Goulburn Island (Warrawui) and Djiniyini Gondarra of Elcho Island (Galiwinku). Lamilami and Magulnir were among the first students at the ‘inaugural theology’ course conducted by Goodluck and Clarke at Croker Island in 1965. Gondarra attended a similar ‘Church Workers Course’ in 1966, which as noted previously was an ecumenical course attended by MOM, CMS, AIM and Baptist Home Mission Aboriginal students. Subsequently Lamilami, Magulnir and Gondarra submitted their candidature for the ordained ministry. They were, each at his respective time of completion of the set requirements, ordained into the Methodist Church of Australasia through the New South Wales Conference, under which ecclesiastical jurisdiction the Arnhem Land Mission rested.

Lamilami (1908 -1977) was the first Aboriginal person to be ordained in Arnhem Land and Australia by the Methodist Church of Australasia. He
was eight years old when Methodism commenced in Arnhem Land in 1916, and was in the first intake of the dormitory system at Goulburn Island (Lamilami 1974). Lamilami was a carpenter by trade, but he also taught in Sunday School, was an evangelist and a preacher, and was often sent to conferences and on deputation work to other parts of Australia (Lamilami 1974: 223-225). In spite of these leadership qualities, prior to 1966 Lamilami attended the Synod meetings only as an observer, not as a representative of his people. Furthermore, only in 1965 was he offered any form of training in theology at Goodluck and Clarke's initiative, and subsequently undertook ministerial studies under Goodluck's tutorship. The 1965 Synod resolved to nominate Lazarus as candidate for the ministry and he underwent a 'course of training as recommended by the Synod and subject to satisfactory completion be considered for ordination' (Notes Synod Minutes 1961-1971, NTAS NTRS 44/45). He recounted in 1974:

I worked with the Reverend Jack Goodluck. He was my Principal, who taught me and told me all the things I had to study. We worked very hard, because we knew that the Synod was very, very near. I had to learn everything that I could to be ready for the next Synod (Lamilami 1974: 226).

Lamilami recounted this story to Ronald Berndt. In retrospect Goodluck wrote that 'only those who knew the real situation could see his sense of humour sparkling in that statement'. What Goodluck reveals is that Lamilami did not say was that the 'college' had been 'a shady spot under a possum tucker tree, where, for one crowded hour, twice a week, he was the only student and I was the only member of the faculty!' (Goodluck 1995: 72).
At the Elcho Synod in July 1966 Lamilami was orally examined on the prescribed studies, presented a paper on 'the Bible doctrine of Salvation', and conducted a trial service as required by the Methodist Law (*The ALE* Oct 1966: 6; Goodluck 1995: 72-75; Goodluck, personal communication 18/5/1994). At 58, Lamilami was ordained on 6 November 1966 at Goulburn Island, on the 50th anniversary of the MOM work in Arnhem Land, after approval was granted by the New South Wales Conference. Representatives from the Arnhem Land coast gathered for the first Aboriginal ordination ceremony (*The ALE* Feb 1967: 10-11; Lamilami 1974: 223 ff). On 1 January 1967 Lamilami celebrated his first Communion Service unassisted at Croker Island, administering the elements of the sacrament to a mixed congregation of Aboriginal people and whites. Albert Kuipers wrote: 'It was a most solemn occasion and Lazarus acquitted himself of his divine task in the most dignified manner' (*The ALE* June 1967: 8). Lamilami was awarded the MBE in 1968. In 1977 Lamilami, who had retired from his ministry at Croker Island, was invited to join Nungalinya College staff and worked with Goodluck assisting in teaching Aboriginal studies. His time at Nungalinya was short-lived. On 21 September 1977 at the age of 69 Lamilami died at Darwin hospital after a short illness (Cole 1978: 4-28; *Dhawu* 1973, Vol. 1, No. 1: 7-8; Goodluck 1995: 229-230; Goodluck, personal communication 18/5/1994).

Magulnir (1918-1983) became the second ordained Aboriginal minister. As with Lamilami he was placed in his boyhood in the dormitories which Watson had established at Goulburn Island. In his adult life he became an active church leader. In 1973 Magulnir took heavy responsibility in the church and also the Goulburn Island Progress
In August 1974 the UCNA Standing Committee accepted him as a candidate for the ministry. About this time Viliame Kamikamica, a Fijian minister, was appointed to Goulburn Island. According to Heather Hinch, Magulnir was initially reluctant to have a Fijian work with him (Personal communication 1990). But Kamikamica gained Magulnir's confidence and both worked together, with the Fijian assisting him with his external theological studies from Nungalinya College. On 19 November 1975 Magulnir was ordained at Goulburn Island, and for the next seven years he served his people as a parish minister. Soon after the ordination, Kamikamica and Magulnir jointly officiated at the marriage of Heather Hinch and Ray Hewett, two missionaries, on 29 November 1975 (Heather, personal communication 1990).

In 1983 Magulnir turned 65 and was to retire at the end of the year. But his health had been failing and on Sunday morning 4 September, shortly after the morning service he died (UCNA Synod Business Papers 6-13 Oct 1983: 26; cf Kadiba 1993: 132).

Lamilami and Magulnir were active as clergymen only for short durations before their retirement or death. Lamilami and Magulnir were products of the pioneer missionary era (1916-1925) and their subsequent commitment to Christianity and their eventual entry into the ordained ministry overthrows the argument that there were no genuine Aboriginal converts. Their ordination, although long overdue, was a confidence booster for their people who could state, 'they are one of us' (J Goodluck, personal communication).
Right: Lazarus Lamilami, first Aboriginal clergyman, from Goulburn Island.
(Photo by Hamilton Aikin).

Left: Phillip Magunlir, Second Aboriginal clergyman, from Goulburn Island.
Photography: Courtesy of Heather Hewitt (nee Hinch), Former missionary.
Gondarra (1945 - ), the third Aboriginal person to be ordained by the Methodist church, was the first fully theologically trained Aboriginal clergyman in Arnhem Land and in Australia. His father, Wili Walalipa, had a long association with the MOM which dated back to 1923, when the Elcho Island Mission was relocated to Milingimbi. Walalipa was a 'mission boy' and a 'foreign migrant' at Milingimbi, and in 1942 he was one of the people who assisted Harold Shepherdson to re-establish the Elcho Island Mission during World War Two. He later became a captain of the mission boat. In 1957 Walalipa was one of the leaders of the 'Adjustment Movement' or the 'Memorial Movement' in Arnhem Land. Just as his father was a leader of this movement, Gondarra emerged as a leader of the 1979 Revival Movement in the post-missionary era, as will be noted in the epilogue (cf Bos 1988a: 178; cf Berndt 1962).

After attending the MOM school at Elcho, Gondarra was trained as a fitter and turner in the Island's engineer workshop (The MR 1968; Vol 76, No. 2: 13). In 1964 Gondarra received a scholarship and spent the year at the Methodist Lay Training College in Brisbane. Upon his return he became a Lay Preacher at Elcho Island from 1965 to 1968. In 1969 and 1970 he and Mawundjil Garawirrtja of Milingimbi, as noted previously, were offered scholarships to study at Mimaluan Christian Education Centre, in PNG. After two years' training in Christian Education, Gondarra returned to Elcho and resumed his role as Lay Pastor for the next two years. During this time he was accepted as a candidate for the ordained ministry, and spent a further three years (1973-1975) in PNG at Rarongo Theological College.
Djiniyini (Terry) Gondarra

Gondarra, OAM, DipTh, DLit (Honorary), leading a seminar at Nungalinya College. He was the first fully theologically trained Aboriginal clergyman in Arnhem Land. Photograph: Courtesy of Nungalinya College library.

Methodist Church of Australasia
New South Wales Conference

We hereby Certify that

on the 24th day of November, 1976
at Galiwinku

Terry Djiniyini

was ordained by the imposition of hands as a fully accredited Minister of the Methodist Church of Australasia

Keith E. Grant
President of Conference

Secretary of Conference
Following his theological studies, Gondarra was ordained at Elcho Island on 24 November 1976, on the 60th anniversary of Methodism in Arnhem Land (Gondarra, personal communication 1995, 1996; cf Bos 1988a: 211-213; Keith 1990: 40-41).5

Gondarra wrote the first works on intellectual contextual Aboriginal Christian theology by an Aboriginal person6 (cf Keith 1990: 41; also refer to bibliography). He was the first to self-theologise (the ‘fourth S’) on this reflective and analytical level in the Aboriginal context, and his works have been quoted by non-Aboriginal persons (eg. Bos 1986; 1988a) and other Aboriginal theologians such as Anne Pattel-Gray (1991). Gondarra's work on contextual theology (1986b) was influenced by his introduction to other indigenous theologies while studying at Rarongo Theological College and his own reading of contextual theologies. Furthermore, by the time he commenced training at Rarongo, the college had made a radical departure from the traditional Western model of teaching 'systematic theology' to 'contextual theology'. This developed out of the concern that ‘students were not forming an integrated picture of theology’ and not relating their learning contextually. A new curriculum was therefore introduced. This involved teaching by themes, which were related to the students' contexts. For example the theme of The Relation between Christianity and Melanesian

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5 In the late 1970s and the 1980s (beyond the period of this study), Gondarra emerged as a noted Aboriginal leader not only in Arnhem Land and nationally, but also internationally through conferences where he presented papers. He became a founding leader of the UAICC at its inception in 1983, as will be seen in the epilogue. In 1985 he was appointed Secretary of the newly formed Aboriginal Presbytery which was subsequently named Bethel Presbytery in the Northern Synod of the UCA. He became the first Aboriginal Moderator (1985-1987) of the Northern Synod, and prior to this appointment he lectured in Aboriginal Studies and Theology at Nungalinya College (1983-1984). In 1991 he was elected to the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

6 In recognition of his writings, Gondarra was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Cultural Literature by World University Round Table, Arizona, USA, in 1994. He travelled with his wife Gelung to Arizona to receive the award. Gondarra was also awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) in 1995.
Thought, covered a number of topics, and staff from different disciplines (Anthropology, Bible, Theology, etc) explored the topics with students under the same theme (Dunstone 1973: 81-93).

The MOM's general lack of faith in the Aboriginal people and the missionaries' paternalism and ambivalent attitudes towards the Aboriginal Christian leaders and evangelists become more apparent, when it is realised that, while it took 50 years for the Methodist Church to ordain its first Aboriginal clergyman, ironically between 1932 and 1954 the church ordained four non-Aboriginal people with little or no theological training. These were three Fijian missionaries and a European. Paula Seru (1929-1936) the first Fijian to be ordained in Australia was bestowed with this office in 1932, after three years of missionary service in Arnhem Land. Meli Tukai (1937-1944) was ordained in 1943 after six years of service, and Kolinio N Saukuru (1933-1948) was ordained in his 11th year of missionary work. When Harold Shepherdson was ordained in 1954 he had been a missionary for 26 years. There were Aboriginal Christian leaders who were of similar calibre to these missionaries, but they were not placed on the same level. Lamilami and Magulnir could have been ordained much earlier.

THE UCNA AND UCA

As has been noted in an earlier chapter, in the mid-1960s Goodluck, who was instrumental in instigating training courses for Aboriginal church leaders, proposed the concept of two separate churches - Aboriginal and white - with a vision of enabling the Aboriginal church to evolve its own identity, and subsequently for the two churches to enter into a mutually give-and-take relationship. This concept and
vision did not materialise in the way that Goodluck had envisaged. In this regard he was a 'lone prophet in the wilderness'. The official MOM policy was for integration of the Aboriginal church into the 'mainstream' white church. Consequently, in the 1970s the emerging Aboriginal church was first absorbed into the United Church in North Australia (UCNA)\(^7\) and subsequently into the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA). During the missionary era, therefore, any hope of creating a separate identity for the Aboriginal church was denied.

The MOM's intention to integrate Aboriginal Christians in its sphere of influence into the 'mainstream' church was explicitly stated in 1965 around the time when the MOM inaugurated its policy on Aboriginal church leadership training, and the visit of the MOM Board drew attention to the issue of Aboriginal ordination. In that year the MOM Commission of Enquiry wrote in its report under the heading *The Oneness of the Church's Task*:

Looking at the total work of the Church in the Northern Territory, the Committee believes that the principle of integration which it sees as applying in the case of one form of church action (the Child Care work in Darwin) should apply in the whole life of the Church in the Territory. We recognise the historical, geographical and social reasons which have produced the present division of responsibility. But we believe that there should now be made a clear declaration of the objective of full integration of all the work of the Church in the Territory, and that all developments of policy, relationships and organisation should be made in loyal adherence to this principle. The imminent establishment of

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\(^7\) The beginnings of the UCNA goes back to World War Two. With the outbreak of the war, there had been an influx of armed personnel and civilian construction workers to Darwin. To cater for the welfare of the war-time population, the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational churches decided to establish an ecumenical 'Inter-church Club' in Darwin. The club was officially opened on 26 June 1940. In the post-war developments in 1955 and 1956 the participating churches under 'principles of co-operation' agreed to form the UCNA. Co-operation rather than union was stressed, as UCNA was not an 'autonomous denomination', and ministers appointed to North Australia still maintained their status and relationship with the 'parent' churches.
mineral industries in east Arnhem Land and the resulting growth of a township with several thousand white residents in close proximity to the Aborigines gathered on the Christian missions will give added urgency to this consideration. We must avoid any suggestion of segregation in the church. We must make clear the responsibility for mission of all Christians living in or visiting the Territory. We must keep before the Church in Australia as a whole the fact that for a considerable time the carrying out of the mission of the Church in the Northern Territory will require the support of the rest of the Church in workers and money (Committee of Inquiry 1965: 11).

The MOM Board Committee recognised the unique historical, geographical and socio-cultural factors which induced the missionary enterprise in Arnhem Land initially as a separate development. It was clear from the above that the Committee advocated the principle of integration basically for pragmatic reasons. It should be said, however, that the history of missions globally and in Arnhem Land had demonstrated that missionary pragmatism was not generally in the best interest of indigenous peoples.

Following its enquiry, the 1965 Commission recommended that the MOM Board 'affirms its wish to work for the total integration of the Church in its life and mission in North Australia and invites the United Church Board and the related Churches to achieve it' (Committee of Inquiry 1965: 16, NTAS NTRS 52/53). In 1969 the MOM Board recommended that the General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia facilitate discussions and plans for the integration to take effect (Annual Board Minutes 17-19 Feb 1969, Meth. Ch. OM 351: 303, ML). Two years later on 1 January 1972 the MOM Aboriginal Methodist Mission was integrated into the UCNA (Bence and Ford 1989: 109). With the integration the Aboriginal Mission and the emerging Aboriginal church became an agency of UCNA under the development arm of CEDAR which
was subsequently changed to AADS.

The Methodist Mission to the Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land conducted its final Synod on 17 September 1971, before the amalgamation with the UCNA. With the integration, the MOM Board in Sydney, while still responsible for the appointment of the Methodist staff to work in the Northern Territory, channelled matters relating to the former MOM mission stations through the UCNA. On the historic occasion of the final meeting, the MOM Synod invited Maizie McKenzie to write a history of the Methodist mission stations in Arnhem Land. Subsequently McKenzie published *Mission to Arnhem Land* (1976).

In her book McKenzie included an assessment of the emerging Aboriginal church and leadership stating that perhaps an indigenous church had not yet emerged, but indigenous leadership was emerging in Lamilami, Magulnir, Djiniyini (Gondarra), the ‘splendid local preachers group’, and the developing number of young leaders (McKenzie 1976: 249). This 1976 perception that an indigenous church had not yet emerged was valid to some extent. As has been noted before, theologically a ‘community of faith’ had come into being within the structure of the MOM and UCNA.

While McKenzie’s book provides an overview of the history of Methodism in Arnhem Land, she has overlooked some significant matters, and some of her gross generalisations call into question the credibility of her statements (see for example McKenzie 1976: 242-251). She has failed to recognise the strong Aboriginal voices which emerged in Arnhem Land and the Northern Territory in the 1950s and 1960s. The 1963 Yirrkala land rights case was the forerunner of land rights issues in
Australia. Yet McKenzie does not acknowledge the outspoken Yirrkala Aboriginal voices which emerged at this time. Even as late as 1976, McKenzie still said that the Aboriginal people ‘with their lack of sophistication and experience... are wide open to exploitation’, and condescendingly stated that southern Aboriginal pressure groups ‘may just be the catalyst that is needed for the quiet Aboriginal voice to be heard’ (McKenzie 1976: 245). Furthermore, while she acknowledges the Aboriginal church leaders such as Lamilami, Magulnir and Gondarra and the local preachers who emerged in the 1960s, she does not recognise the Aboriginal church leaders and evangelists who worked with the missionaries in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. McKenzie seems to have shared the view that ‘most missionaries have strong doubts as to whether the people are anywhere near ready to take responsibility into their own hands’ (McKenzie, 1976: 245). General statements of this nature continued to belittle the capabilities of Aboriginal leaders in general.

Aboriginal people were not involved in the decision-making process when the MOM decided to integrate the Aboriginal Mission with the predominantly white UCNA in 1972, nor were their views sought about the integration. The MOM in Arnhem Land adopted the Board’s policy of integration recommended by the 1965 Commission of Enquiry and worked towards it. The Aboriginal people were drawn into this development in compliance with the MOM Board’s and the missionaries’ policy decisions. This trend was repeated, when a further step was taken in 1977 with the UCNA joining the Congregational Union of Australia, the Methodist Church of Australasia, and the Presbyterian Church of Australia to form the UCA, the inauguration of which became effective on 22 June 1977 (Church Annual Reports, NTAS NTRS 53, Box
2: 4-9; Bence and Ford 1989: 167ff). The Aboriginal people, therefore, had no choice but to simply comply with the wishes of the ‘mainstream’ UCNA and UCA.

Whatever other reasons there might have been for the adoption of the policy which shelved the concept and vision of a separate Aboriginal church, and which resulted in the absorption of the emerging Aboriginal church into the ‘mainstream’ church, missionary pragmatism, paternalism and ambivalence were undoubtedly major determining factors. The union of the UCA had two effects on the Methodist church work in Arnhem Land. First, the emerging Aboriginal church which the Methodists had enabled to develop and grow, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, was further submerged into the structures of the predominantly European church. This was the direction the MOM and the UCNA had intended, as they did not consider the ‘three Ss’ principle applicable to Arnhem Land. Second, the union brought to an ‘end’ the 60 years of Methodism in Arnhem Land. Although this was the case, in one way or another the legacies of Methodism, which originated in England with John Wesley in the 18th century, remained in Arnhem Land and in the Northern Territory.

Almost immediately problems appeared in working within the UCA structure. In 1977 Djiniyini Gondarra, who had been ordained the previous year, took over from the last European missionary Ken Higgins, as the minister of Elcho Island. On 10 January Gondarra wrote to Graham Bence the Assistant Director of Mission and Service in Darwin. He raised with Bence two questions which related to the election of church elders and of new parish council members, and which required compliance with the UCA regulations. In special circumstances, could
believers who had received baptism but not been confirmed be elected on the Parish Council, or be eligible to vote? Could believers whose church membership had not been transferred as yet to Galiwinku (Elcho) Parish but who were intending to have this transfer made, be considered eligible to vote and to be elected to the office of Elder? (Gondarra to Bence, 10 January 1977, NTAS NTRS 45/46). While these were questions which white congregations and parishes dealt with in their contexts they were of little relevance to the Aboriginal context. Until the Aboriginal church (and Islander church) took their own initiative to form their own constitutional structure within the UCA in 1985 to enable decision making and theological reflection and praxis in their Aboriginal (and Islander) context (see the epilogue), for the next eight years (1977-1985), Aboriginal Christians dealt with such constitutional and theological issues which were in the structure of the mainline UCA8.

FROM MISSION TO CHURCH

The missionary status of the MOM and the UCNA effectively ended in 1977, with the formation of the UCA. From the point of view of the Methodists their 60 years of missionary work in Arnhem Land was drawn to a conclusion. The MOM had become a church. However, did the Aboriginal Christians see themselves as belonging to this new church? Had they passed from ‘mission’ to ‘church’? This section will explore

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8 As will be seen in the epilogue, in the 1980s Aboriginal people and Islanders (people of Islands descent living in Australia) wanted to shape the destiny of an indigenous church within the UCA. In August 1982 Aboriginal Christians met at Crystal Creek in Townsville where they discussed their own organisation. At this meeting Aborigines saw the need for a nationwide Aboriginal and Islander Christian Organisation. A national conference was called together at Galiwinku (Elcho Island) in August 1983. At this conference the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) was formed. In May 1985 the fourth National Assembly of the UCA endorsed ‘the Congress mandate very warmly’ and the UAICC was officially established (Gondarra 1986: 11-12; Bos 1986: 166-175).
these questions in the context of global developments in the transition from mission to church.

Books and papers dealing with the climax of the global mission have frequently employed the phrase 'from mission to church' (see for example Neill 1964: 510-558; Williams 1970: 666-680; Cole 1985). As Harris states, it is hard to find a better phrase to describe that transition which marks the end of subordination and the beginning of autonomy (Harris 1990: 852). Missiologists and mission historians have advanced various propositions to mark moments or stages at which the transition from mission to church have occurred. Missionaries often felt that indigenous people were 'not ready yet' to assume responsibility, as the people had not reached the standard set by the missionaries. However, once the missionaries had sufficient faith in the people and been given responsibility themselves and allowed to make mistakes for themselves, they would be empowered to become a church. The indigenous church would then enter into a new relationship with the wider church, which would not be one of domination and subservience, but one of partnership (Harris 1990: 853).

A mission became a church when it ceased to be regarded as a foreign import and was considered by the indigenous people as belonging to themselves. However, a church in the indigenous context was still a mission as long as it appeared foreign and as long as it imitated a church in some other far-distant land (Williams 1970: 673). Furthermore, wherever there was a continuing foreign Christian presence, indigenous Christians were still clients and objects of mission, and were seen as not yet able to make decisions about themselves (Harris 1990: 852). Williams has argued that the church in
the local context had not really come into existence until the 'proclaimed Word has evoked an indigenous response... which uses forms of thought and modes of action which arise from its culture and yet which expresses obedience to Christ' (Williams 1970: 672).

Missionaries from the start of the global missionary movement generally and in theory assumed that their work in the end would result in creating indigenous churches, and that these emerging bodies must sooner or later acquire all the characteristics and qualities that were classified under the concept of 'church' (Neill 1964: 510). This assumption led to the development of the principle of self-support, self-government and self-propagation (the 'three Ss'). Although during the high era of colonialism and missionary movement (1880-1920), the principle of the 'three Ss' was pushed to the background, indigenisation had often conjured up this axiom in the minds of missiologists and mission historians. As noted at the beginning of this study, Henry Venn proposed in the 1840s and 1850s, along with the 'three Ss', the concept of self-euthanasia. That is, once an indigenous church was established, missionaries should work themselves out of their job (cf Harris 1990: 853; Williams 1976: 666; Cole 1985: 197). Harris considers that in becoming a church, a particular level of Christian maturity is reached where the local Christian community becomes self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating (Harris 1990: 853).

Tippett (1987) and Williams (1970) have argued, however, that the 'three Ss' principle has to do with organisation and structure rather than other matters, as will be seen, although the principle does give certain measurable criteria in the light of which the transition from 'mission to church' is assessed: Tippett proposes that:
A church is indigenous: when it is culturally a part of its own world; when its witness is relevant in meeting the needs of its congregation and the world about it; when its message is meaningful in the context where it belongs; when its physical form and operating structures are suitable for the culture; when it acts on its own initiative in the service ministries arising from local needs and crises and in missionary outreach; and above all, when it is aware of its own theological identity... The concept of indigeneity has nothing whatever to do with the three selves. Its true selfhood requires anthropological relevance and theological awareness and effective pastoral ministry... It may even draw from outside resources and personnel as long as they do not infringe on these requirements (Tippett 1987: 86-87).

A similar line of argument is advanced by Neill (1964). He argues that an indigenous church could not become genuinely independent unless it had local leaders capable of replacing the missionary on every level of thought and activity. Lay leaders were indispensable; but much depended on the quality of the ordained ministry. Theological training was 'at the very heart of the life of a younger Church' (Neill 1964: 517).

It could be argued that the above statements put forward by Tippett and Neill, are made in relation to contexts such as the Pacific where well established village political and cultural units already existed, and where the prospects of gaining independence from foreign missions were a possibility. However, this was not the case in Arnhem Land. Here, Aboriginal people were a minority group, which meant that any political, social or communal ambitions the people might have were restricted to the degree to which the majority European community allowed them. The political and cultural units which existed among the Aboriginal people (cf ARDS 1994) were closely related to the concept of
'nomadism'⁹, and this created a challenge for the missionaries and the MOM Board (cf Burton, General Secretary’s Report 1927). Nevertheless this study argues that the indigenous church principle and theological implications still needed to be considered in Arnhem Land, especially in the context of the established mission stations which later became Aboriginal communities, and which in fact had become cultural, economic, social and political units in a modern context. In the mission stations possibilities existed for the empowerment of Aboriginal people.

This study demonstrated earlier that the MOM was aware of the concept of creating indigenous churches but by the 1970s the principle of the ‘three Ss’ was dismissed. This was despite Goodluck’s proposal in the mid-1960s of a separate Aboriginal church and the directive given by Graham Bucknall, who became Executive Officer of the UCNA in 1973, of encouraging the development of an indigenous church (McKenzie 1976: 250). Although Tippett (1987), in the global context, has given less emphasis to indigenous church structure, some form of appropriate structure would have been needed for the Aboriginal church. However, the integration and absorption into the mainstream church meant that any hope of creating an independent Aboriginal church structure was dashed. The MOM nevertheless produced a number of notable lay leaders, as has been noted, but if George Winungudji’s case is any indication, the MOM did not have sufficient faith in the Aboriginal lay leaders to give them full responsibility and allow them to learn from their mistakes. Furthermore, as Galarrwuy Yunupingu stated, some lay leaders felt that

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⁹ Elsewhere in this study (see Chapter Two), it has been noted that ‘nomadism’ was a complex and highly organised system of practice and belief in its cosmological framework. The inter-social and inter-group interactions were exacting and methodological. This fact was not generally understood by missionaries and other foreigners.
the standards set by missionaries were too high to comply with. Neill (1964) has stated the ordained ministry was crucial for the development of indigenous church. However, any form of theological training for the Aboriginal people was initiated after almost 50 years of missionary work in Arnhem Land.

The Aboriginal people themselves had responded to the 'proclamation of the Word' (cf Williams 1970: 672); and some Aboriginal people had began to self-theologise by the 1970s. They had begun to reflect on theology in the context of Aboriginal cosmology. But the continuing noncontextualisation approach of certain missionaries during and in the post-missionary era was counterproductive to the development of the indigenous contextual theology. By the 1970s the Aboriginal people were also actively engaged in self-extension or self-propagation. Evangelistic zeal by itself, however, would not produce an indigenous church and enable it to continue and develop (cf Williams 1970: 668).

Clarke (1974) and McKenzie (1976) indicated that Aboriginal people in the 1970s wanted the Mission to remain with them. Aboriginal people expressed this wish in the context of the uncertainties created by the rapid changes which impinged on the Arnhem Landers, as a result of the Government's policy of self-determination. In any case, the 'mission' through the mainstream church remained, as Aboriginal people were drawn into the structure of the UCA.

In 1976 McKenzie advocated for the future 'a new type of missionary, pioneering an entirely different field' and this new breed of missionary would be a 'people with strong shoulders like the pioneers, strong enough to bear the weight of change', and they would be a 'people with
hearts that throb in tune with those of the Aborigines they love as brothers' (McKenzie 1976: 251). Not only were McKenzie's words idealistic and naive, but more surprisingly, as late as 1976, she was still entertaining the idea of 'missionary'. Beyond 1977 the 'mission structure' continued, and if McKenzie's statements are any indication, missionary paternalism continued to be perpetuated. In fact the 'new type of missionaries' did come as community advisors and teachers. Pacific Island missionaries continued to be employed as community advisors and clergymen beyond 1977 (Kadiba 1993). Although the 1975 UCNA Free To Decide policy advocated granting of responsibility and decision-making power to Aboriginal people, the coming of wide ranging missionary personalities to Arnhem Land in the post-1977 period, created a situation in which Aboriginal Christians continued to be seen as 'clients' and 'objects' of 'mission' (cf Harris 1990: 852). In many respects, therefore, the Arnhem Landers remained under the conditions and structure of 'mission'. This situation was maintained until 1983 when Aboriginal Christians took their own initiative to create the UAICC, and in 1985 asked the UCA to grant them freedom to organise their own affairs, and to endorse the Aboriginal and Islander church structure within the UCA (see Epilogue).

ECUMENICAL PERSPECTIVES

The union of the UCNA and other cooperating churches in Australia to form the UCA, represented an ecumenical development. The UCNA to which the MOM had become part was in fact a loose ecumenical cooperation between the Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists in North Australia (see footnote 7, p.284). The Methodists in Australia had been generally inclined towards union since
the 1880s. Initiatives taken for confederation in these decades eventually climaxed in uniting the various Methodist churches in Australia in 1901/1902, as noted in chapter two, thus bringing into being the Methodist Church of Australasia. This tendency culminated in the Northern Territory in the 1960s and 1970s when the MOM with the Anglicans initiated ecumenical courses for church leadership training for Aboriginal people, which led to the establishment of the combined churches Nungalinya training college in Darwin.

Globally the Methodists had also been participating in international missionary conferences since the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, which issued a call for missions to engage in vigorous evangelisation of indigenous peoples, and which were partly catalytic in the commencement of the MOM Aboriginal Mission in Arnhem Land. In 1952 the Methodists participated in the International Missionary Council (IMC) conference at Willingen in Germany. This was an important conference in that it shifted the focus from the missionary enterprise totally sponsored from the Western countries to a 'partnership-in-mission between Christians from different parts of the world' (IMC Conference 1952, Meth. Ch. OM 294, ML). With the formation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948, with which the IMC merged in 1961 (cf Bosch 1991: 369-370; Kato 1975: 129-136), the horizon of the Methodist Church's ecumenical participation was further broadened and deepened in its commitment for ecumenical causes. In December 1972 Harvey L Perkins, the MOM General Secretary, attended a WCC conference at Bangkok, Thailand, in which Emilio Castro from South America, who was the General Secretary of the WCC, delivered the following statement:
We are at the end of a missionary era. We are at the very beginning of world mission. We have heard here harsh and hard words on the missionary enterprise. But now it is more than emotion. It is theological reflection. It is a challenge to cooperation. The affirmation of African culture, the conveying of Indian spirituality, the challenge to social revolution are the starting points for a new day in world mission. The cry for help of brothers and sisters in Europe, the expression of concern for world mission from the delegates of socialist countries invite us to a new day. Our mood should not be one of frustration but rather anticipation. We come to the end of our era with adult churches everywhere (Report of MOM Acting General Secretary 1973, NTAS NTRS 53, Box 2).

Elsewhere this study has referred to two missiological paradigms which Bosch (1991) has proposed: the Enlightenment and the Ecumenical paradigms. The statements made at the 1952 Willingen IMC conference and the 1972 Bangkok WCC conference articulated some of the characteristics of the Ecumenical paradigm: the shift from ‘foreign missionary enterprise’ to ‘a partnership-in-mission’ with indigenous churches; the ‘end of a missionary era’; and ‘international missionary outreach’, which was ‘the very beginning of world mission’.

The MOM commenced in Arnhem Land during the high era of colonialism (1880-1920). Missiologically during its 60 years of missionary enterprise certain aspects of the Enlightenment missiological paradigm juxtaposed with the Ecumenical missiological paradigm. The ‘three Cs’, Christianity, commerce and civilisation, for example, which developed out of the Enlightenment era was espoused by the MOM throughout the entire period of its missionary work, at the expense of the missiological principle of self-support, self-government and self-propagation, for indigenous church development. In other aspects of the MOM work there was a gradual phasing of the Enlightenment paradigm
into the Ecumenical paradigm. Both globally and in Arnhem Land, precisely at which point transition from the Enlightenment paradigm to the Ecumenical paradigm occurred is difficult to pinpoint. Bosch states that new paradigms do not establish themselves overnight. They take many years before developing distinctive contours (Bosch 1991: 349). There were, however, indicators which point to the shift. The union of the separate Methodist churches in Australia in 1901/1902, the 1910 Edinburgh world missionary conference, and the subsequent international missionary conferences, the formation of the WCC in 1948 and the merging of the WCC and IMC in 1961, were some indicators of the transition from the Enlightenment paradigm ('modern') to the Ecumenical paradigm ('post-modern')

Neill (1964) has shown that the global ecumenical developments, especially the amalgamation of the WCC and IMC, were significant for emerging indigenous churches. These ecumenical developments provided a forum in which the voices of indigenous Christians and theologians could be expressed and heard. In a global church organisation, the 'younger churches' could feel the new and fresh environment and atmosphere of equality. Through the global ecumenical bodies the indigenous churches expressed their dislike for the term 'mission' and everything connected with it. As Neill says, 'However unjust and unreasonable this may seem, it was clear that by 1948 the younger Churches had come to think of “mission” almost exclusively in terms of Western aggression and financial domination, and of the missionary as the representative of alien and undesired control' (Neill 1964: 556).

Another crucial area of development, as noted elsewhere in this study,

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10 Bosch (1991) used 'modern' for the Enlightenment paradigm and 'post modern' for the Ecumenical paradigm.
was the emergence of the concepts of 'contextualisation' and 'contextual theology' in the 1970s. The impetus for this came with the merging of the WCC and IMC.

While the global ecumenical developments had positive influences and outcomes for emerging indigenous churches elsewhere, ecumenism in Australia in some respects had a negative effect on the emerging Aboriginal church. The UCNA's union with the UCA meant that the emerging indigenous church was further drawn into the ecumenical developments of the wider church in Australia, which was Western in its structure and constitution. These ecumenical movements were not loose organisations promoting Christian 'sisterhood' and 'brotherhood', but were developments creating institutionalised ecumenism, which therefore were more or less binding. While the move towards this type of formalised ecumenism had its pragmatic benefits and sound theological basis, from the point of view of the Aboriginal church, this study contends that in some ways this was a premature move which cost the emerging identity, development and existence of the Aboriginal church. The Aboriginal church was given no opportunity to develop its own structure, in its Aboriginal context. The embryonic indigenous church was submerged in the structures of the wider, mainstream church and its constitutions and institutions. The fact that there was no policy for a separate Aboriginal church structurally meant that the principle of the 'three Ss' did not go beyond the rudimentary level. The missionary policy of integration as well as ecumenical developments prevailed, and the emerging Aboriginal ekklesia was absorbed into the UCA and institutionalised ecumenism in Australia.
Chapter Seven

DRAWING THE THREADS TOGETHER

The MOM and its work in Arnhem Land was diachronically and missiologically linked to the global movement of christianisation of the indigenous peoples of the colonised world. The advent of Methodism to Arnhem Land was therefore an integral part of the history of Christian expansion and the history of the Protestant missionary movement which began from Europe in the late 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. The Enlightenment and the Evangelical Revivals in Europe converged to provide the impetus for the unprecedented global missionary enterprise, which coincided with Western imperialism and colonialism. Intentionally or coincidentally, Methodism came to form part of these histories of the global movements, besides its own ecclesiastical history. In Australia it constituted part of the wider Australian history and in particular the Northern Territory history of colonisation of the Aboriginal people. In one way or another the various segments of Christian and Western colonial history interacted and impacted on the Aboriginal people of Arnhem Land.

The advent of Methodism to Arnhem Land represented the resumption of the Methodist work among the Aboriginal people of Australia. The early attempts (1821-1855) elsewhere in Australia had been abandoned. After 60 years (1855-1915) of 'silence', during which period the MOM concentrated its efforts in the Pacific and India, the Methodists resumed missionary activity among the Aboriginal people. By historical coincidence the MOM in Arnhem Land also lasted for about 60 years (1916-1977). The exploration in this study has been confined to certain
aspects of the MOM work, namely investigation of the missionary and government policies, mission institutionalism, the issues related to Aboriginal church leadership and Aboriginal cosmology and Christianity. Therefore it has left other areas unexplored, for example the Methodists' involvement in health and education work.

The goal of the global missionary movement as postulated by Henry Venn in the 1840s and 1850s was the establishment of indigenous churches. However, as Neill states, 'strangely enough, it seems that missionaries in the nineteenth century had less Church-sense than their predecessors, and found it more difficult to imagine a state of affairs different from that which had grown up under their care and that of their predecessors' (Neill 1964: 510). By the beginning of the 20th century, Western cultural, technological and religious supremacy was in place. Western ethnocentrism and pragmatism expressed through the mid-19th century principle of 'Christianity, civilisation and commerce' became the prevailing objective of the global missionary enterprise. Consequently, missionaries generally found it difficult to relinquish responsibilities to indigenous church leaders.

This study has demonstrated that establishing an indigenous church was not on the agenda of the MOM. Consequently this goal was not actualised in Arnhem Land during the missionary era. The MOM did not formulate a policy to work towards achieving this end. Even if it did adopt, by the end of the missionary era, a policy to authenticate the principle of self-support, self-government and self-propagation, the Methodist Mission would not have been able to bring into existence an indigenous church in Arnhem Land structurally, for the reason that the MOM did not produce sufficient clergy to provide leadership of an Aboriginal church
with its own structure, although theologically an Aboriginal church had begun to emerge. The binding thread of investigation in this study has been the conspicuous lack of MOM policy on the training of Aboriginal ekklesia leadership. It was only in 1964 and 1965, almost 50 years after the commencement of the MOM work, that belated initiatives were taken to develop such a policy. The steps initiated to adopt a policy in this connection were the result of the liberated thinking and intellectual leadership of a new breed of forward-looking missionaries who were appointed to assume positions in the mid-1960s in Arnhem Land. The tardiness in developing a policy on Aboriginal leadership training meant that an ordained leadership took longer to develop in comparison to the mission fields in the Pacific.

Tatz (1964), McKenzie (1976), Bos (1988), Edwards and Clarke (1988) and Forrest (1990) have all acknowledged the contribution of the Methodist Mission to Arnhem Land, the Northern Territory and to Australia's social and cultural history. While this present study is not unmindful of the role of Methodism in the social, economic, political, cultural and religious development of the Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land, it has dealt with a particular issue which has not been previously investigated by other researchers, namely the question of the development of the ordained leadership and the Aboriginal church. The underlying questions have been: why did the MOM delay adopting a church leadership training policy in Arnhem Land when such an objective had been developed in other mission fields in the Pacific from the start of mission, for example the LMS in Papua? Why were there only three Aboriginal clergy, only one of whom was fully theologically trained, after 60 years of Methodism in Arnhem Land? This study has demonstrated that the MOM worked in Arnhem Land in a situation that
was much more complex than the missions in the Pacific and therefore no simple answers can be provided. This complexity was in part due to the uniqueness of the Arnhem Land indigenous cosmology and the encounter between this Aboriginal cosmology and the various imposed external cultural, economic, political, racial and religious ideologies and the different government and mission policies through which these ideologies were implemented. The situation was compounded by wide-ranging missionary personalities interacting with the Aboriginal people and their cosmology. Mission institutionalism, and missionaries' pragmatism and paternalism left little room for thought to be given to church leadership training until the last 12 years (1965-1977) of the MOM work in Arnhem Land. This concluding chapter proposes some reasons for the long delay in adopting a policy for Aboriginal church leadership training.

In Arnhem Land missionary objectives included 'protection', 'civilisation' and evangelisation of Aboriginal people. Evangelism was the principal goal of missionary activities. Ellemor stated that 'motivating the whole thrust of the Mission has been the preaching of the gospel, the desire to see lives transformed' (Ellemor 1981: 263). However, the evangelisation process generally lacked authentic contextualisation, and missionaries' enthusiasm in proselytisation was not matched by their desire to teach and train Aboriginal people for church leadership.

As noted previously Neill has argued, in the global context, that while lay leadership was indispensable, the development of indigenous churches depended on the quality of ordained ministry and theological training was at the centre of the life of indigenous churches (Neill
1964: 517). There were Aboriginal men of quality who could have been trained and ordained much earlier (cf 1965 MOM Commission of Enquiry). Yet the MOM adopted no policy for theological training of Aboriginal church leaders until towards the end of its mission. In 1959 Capell, referring to the larger groups of Christians, such as the CMS, MOM, Lutherans and others, stated that there were no Aboriginal ministers of any kind among them (Capell 1955: 1). In their preparation of the Aboriginal people for the ordained ministry, all missions in Australia lagged behind. Capell argued that the Aboriginal people were not different mentally or physically from any other races. Therefore they were capable of being trained for ordination. However, he stated that it was the attitudes and the noncontextualised approach which was a hindering factor. This was one cause for the MOM's delay in producing ordained leaders.

In the Pacific and in Australia, language was important in the evangelisation and instruction of indigenous proselytes. The LMS in Papua began almost immediately to learn the language of the people, as a means of instructing the Papuans (Williams 1972). In Australia, Nathanael Pepper was perhaps the first Aboriginal evangelist, although he was never ordained. Pepper was converted by the Moravian missionaries in Gippsland in 1860, through the translation of the Good Shepherd passage from Chapter 10 of the Gospel of John in the New Testament. He was impressed by the image of a shepherd (Harris 1990: 192). Although the Lutheran Hermannsburg Mission, as with other missions, was slow in developing the ordained ministry, they nevertheless started language work from the beginning and adopted a policy of instructing proselytes and evangelists in the language. They baptised their first seven converts in 1887 within a relatively short
period of ten years after the founding of the Lutheran Mission (Leske 1977: 15-19). After James Noble's ordination by the Anglican Church in 1925, the Lutheran Mission was the first after a long period to ordain Conrad Raberaba and Peter Bulla in 1964, and Harris states that it is not surprising that this should have taken place in the community where Bible translation had the greatest depth of time (Harris 1990: 855).

In Arnhem Land the MOM did not give priority to language learning until the late 1960s, when Beulah Lowe and Heather Hewett were released from other duties to concentrate on linguistic work. In the pioneer missionary era of the MOM work (1916-1925), there was an absence of intellectual leadership in this pivotal area of work. When the policy of language learning and the utilisation of the vernacular as a medium of education was adopted in the late 1920s and the 1930s under Burton and Webb's intellectual direction, its implementation was impeded by the shortage of staff and the difficult conditions under which the missionaries worked. Furthermore, a paradoxical situation emerged. The policy of employing the vernacular as a medium of instruction meant that any plans for 'real work' had to be prolonged until the missionaries attained some proficiency in the local Aboriginal language.

In the late 1940s and 1950s progress had been made in linguistic work. However, the use of the vernacular was confined to the task of evangelisation of the Aboriginal people, and the enthusiasm demonstrated in evangelism was not matched by the important work of formal teaching and training of Aboriginal people in church leadership development until 1965. It should also be said that language learning did not necessarily mean contextualisation of Christianity. In fact more
often than not, language was used by missionaries in noncontextualised approaches of proselytisation. Nevertheless, had the MOM instituted theological training earlier, language work would have expedited the learning and training process.

While the MOM Board in Sydney expected annual reports from the NAD, it gave no specific policy directives for the training of Aboriginal church leadership. This is surprising given the fact that the Board had formulated a policy in the 1920s for indigenous church development in other mission fields. It has been noted in this study that when the MOM Board formulated the policy in 1923 for development of indigenous churches, it did nothing more than to urge the mission fields to take responsibility to develop self-supporting and self-governing indigenous churches (cf Meth. Ch. OM: 80, ML). Each mission field was expected to translate and implement this general policy in its particular context. It can be argued from this understanding that the Board had assumed that the Mission in Arnhem Land would undertake the task of training the Aboriginal people to eventually assume church responsibilities. From 1923 to 1965 the Board was ‘silent’ about specific policy on training church leaders in Arnhem Land, and missionaries were too preoccupied with other issues to give time and effort to develop a policy in this regard. Furthermore when Webb formulated his policy directives in the 1930s, he did not receive the assistance he needed from the Board for the implementation of his policies for what he called the ‘real work’ of the Mission, that is, the work of learning the people’s language and culture and translation work, important prerequisites for developing an Aboriginal church. The reason the Board advanced for their seeming indifference to the work in Arnhem Land was financial, as Burton, the General Secretary, said in response to Webb’s protests, ‘our real
problem is that of finance, and we cannot do things we would' (Burton 1939: 1). The Board had either a very poor impression of the Aboriginal people, or they simply treated the mission work in Arnhem Land on an equal footing with other mission fields, and were therefore not easily swayed by the uniqueness of the Aboriginal Mission, which missionaries like Webb frequently tried to impress upon the Board members. As noted elsewhere in this study the Board for the first time drew attention to the question of Aboriginal ordination and the training of candidates through the 1965 Commission of Enquiry. Up until this juncture the Board provided no policy directives.

Missionary pragmatism and mission institutionalism meant an escalation of activities. By the 1950s the MOM had established five mission stations and extended its missionary outreach to a number of outstations, which it also founded. All operations were concentrated on the mission stations and the extension work to the missionary outposts. Many issues which emerged from this situation were largely of the missionaries' own making. In addition, almost all operations were missionary-dominated, and Aboriginal people became foreigners in their own land. Aboriginal people were clients and employees of the Mission. Had the missionaries understood that 'nomadism' was a highly organised way of life for Aboriginal people and had the MOM accepted Chaselling's proposal of an itinerant mission, with one or two major stations as the base from where to evangelise and train Aboriginal people, perhaps much time, energy and finance could have been saved and used for the 'real work' of the Mission. Not surprisingly, centralising all activities on the mission stations caused tension between what was considered to be the 'essential task' related to the pragmatic mission operations and 'real work' for the development of
Aboriginal people.

The concept of 'real work', while referring to the study of the Aboriginal people's life, culture and language, did not include training and developing of Aboriginal people for indigenous church leadership. The missionaries' duties became so closely interwoven with the mundane needs and requirements of the mission stations which were regarded as 'essential', that it was the means rather than the 'real work' which became the daily overwhelming concern of the missionaries; and as mission institutionalism became more intensified, the idea of developing an indigenous church became more remote. The MOM staff felt that they had no option but to give their time and energy in establishing the mission stations, and once these were in place, missionaries 'were caught up into an overwhelming task of "maintaining the natives" and themselves' (Goodluck, personal communication 29/9/1995). The reality of the situation was, however, that as mission institutionalism became more intensified, particularly in the post-war years, the operation and maintenance of the mission stations and their various religious and secular programs became almost the all-consuming focus of the MOM. Religious activities did not constitute authentic contextualisation, nor did they mean indigenous church development. As noted in an earlier chapter, it was Roland Allen, as early as 1912, who contended in the global context that missionaries had founded 'missions' instead of 'churches'. The missionaries in Arnhem Land had not learnt from Allen. The MOM in fact established and maintained mission stations and not an Aboriginal church.

A related factor to the above discussion was the heavy involvement of the MOM in industrial and commercial activities. This aspect of work in
which the MOM was preoccupied, was diachronically linked to the colonial and missiological principle of 'Christianity, civilisation and commerce', which was evolved from the mid-19th century in the course of the global imperial and missionary expansion into the indigenous world. In Arnhem Land, up until the 1950s such activities, regarded as 'essential work', were directed towards support and maintenance of mission stations. In the 1960s, however, the emphasis shifted from a subsistence economy to industrialism and commercialism. In the pre-war years and the immediate post-war years up to the 1950s, industrial activities were more or less integrated with the missionary objective of evangelisation. But the shift of philosophy to engagement in industrialism and commercialism, whether the missionaries admitted it or not, deepened the boss-labourer gulf and created a demarcation of responsibilities between these 'secular isms' and evangelism, although all these 'secular' and 'religious' activities came under the auspices of the missionaries and the MOM Board. This study has demonstrated that the industrial and commercial activities were both capital and labour intensive, and the heavy capital build-up required major expenses. Furthermore, the complexity of organisational structures related to industrialism and commercialism demanded the missionaries' time and energy for managerial and administrative responsibilities. Concentrated effort on mission institutionalism related to the 'secular isms' meant that less time and thought was devoted to the ideal missionary goal of establishing an indigenous church with 'aggressive' and 'progressive' planning. Ironically, almost all the industrial and commercial activities declined and stopped at the end of the missionary era, except the trading stores which have continued under ALPA. Edwards and Clarke stated that the industrial projects which had seemed 'promising under mission control in the
1960s lost impetus as the government took control and introduced outside contractors and employees, thus closing opportunities for Aborigines' (Edwards and Clarke 1988: 196). The end result of the MOM and UCNA's heavy involvement in industrial and commercial activities was that when all these lost impetus by the end of the missionary era, they were left with no indigenous church structurally, and with only one fully theologically trained clergy. The self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating missiological maxim was shelved, as priority was given to industrialism and commercialism, which the missionaries had hoped would be continued by the Aboriginal people.

The missionaries expected high ethical and spiritual standards from the Aboriginal people, which were measured by Western Christian criteria and the missionaries' own standards. Furthermore, any Aboriginal candidates for ordination were expected to fulfil the requirements of the Methodist Book of Law. In addition the chairman of the NAD, Gordon Symons, proposed in about 1965 the following qualities based on the New Testament church. Aboriginal candidates were to demonstrate commitment to Christ; possess natural capacity and strength of character as was evident in the New Testament characters such as Peter, Andrew and Paul; they needed to spend three years in training, as the New Testament disciples did with Christ; and finally they needed to be accepted and authorised by the church as candidates for ordination (Symons c. 1965: 1). Symons further stated that if the missionaries were to develop effective Aboriginal leaders Aboriginal people 'must have each of these qualities', although responsibility and experience were needed to cultivate 'ability and strength of character' (Symons c. 1965: 1). Such pre-definition and pre-conception of standards and leadership qualities precluded any possibility of taking into account
traditional Aboriginal qualities of leadership. This meant that readiness of Aboriginal candidates for ordination was measured solely by Western Christian criteria.

There were some contradictions or inconsistencies in the criteria Symons put forward for ordination, especially in relation to the three-year training requirement for ordination of candidates. As has been noted elsewhere in this study, the MOM ordained four non-Aboriginal lay people - three Fijians and a European - without them undergoing any formal training in theology. They certainly did not spend three years studying in a theological college. They were ordained on the basis of their missionary service and experience. It seemed that there was a different set of criteria for lay missionary candidates for ordination and another set for the Aboriginal lay leaders. The high standard expected of the Aboriginal people by the missionaries meant that there were Aboriginal lay leaders who could have been considered for ordination but were not encouraged, and there were others who wanted to be candidates, but who felt that they could not live up to the missionaries' expectations.

The MOM's role as an agent of government policy also meant that besides their missionary objectives, missionaries implemented objectives set by, for example, the Welfare Branch of the Northern Territory. As recipients of government subsidies, the MOM as with other missions was subject to official visits and inspections. Missions were expected to demonstrate tangible results and required to submit annual reports to the administration and show accountability. This demanded a great deal of time and responsibility, particularly on the part of superintendents who documented the reports for submission.
Concomitant preoccupation with tasks other than the 'real work' of the Mission accounted for the fact that prior to 1965, the ordained MOM superintendents were unable to initiate training programs for training church leaders. The subsequent appointment of lay superintendents provided relative freedom and flexibility for some ordained superintendents to become involved in church leadership training in the late 1960s and 1970s.

The noncontextualisation approach which missionaries generally adopted presented another factor which was counter-productive to indigenous church development. Noncontextualisation by its very nature was diachronic, and therefore synchronic perspectives were generally ignored. In any case, missionaries' ethnocentric views and attitudes did not generally allow room for Aboriginal cosmology to be taken into account in the evangelisation of the Aboriginal people. In the pioneer stage of the MOM work, the absence of language work and the lack of relatedness to traditional leadership, were the result of the noncontextualisation stance. In the pre-war years, while some missionaries attempted to contextualise Christianity in the Aboriginal cosmological framework, there still existed elements of conservatism. This was in spite of the enlightened policies which the MOM formulated, affirming Aboriginal culture, for example, the 1939 policy. The noncontextualisation approach also led to the issue-oriented position which missionaries generally espoused. This was demonstrated, for instance, in the excessive concern some missionaries showed on the question of polygamy. Such issues were peripheral, and the missionaries' general preoccupation with these secondary ethical questions meant that prior to 1965 less thought and attention was given to deliberations about the task of developing a policy for
Aboriginal church leadership. Unfortunately, the noncontextualisation approach remained strong in the 1960s and 1970s with the influx of new lay missionaries with conservative evangelical and pentecostal beliefs, emphasising noncontextualised methods of proselytisation. The crusade was on ‘winning individual souls’ without any reference to culture. In fact this new breed of lay missionaries was generally anti-culture. This approach to christianisation of Aboriginal people went against the attempts made by the forward-looking missionaries and thinking Aboriginal Christians to propound authentic contextualisation. The continuing noncontextualisation approach was not helpful for the development of a distinctive Aboriginal Christianity and contextual theology, and indigenous church growth.

The policy of employing Pacific Island missionaries and reliance on them was another factor which contributed to the late development of Aboriginal church leadership. As noted elsewhere in this study some Pacific Islanders made comments to this effect. For instance Jovilisi Ragata and Jonetani Rika stated that they were both conscious that Pacific Islanders were assuming responsibilities which should have been carried out by Aboriginal people. They in fact advised other Pacific Island missionaries not to deprive Aboriginal people of responsibilities. Rika also expressed disappointment when preference was given to a Pacific Island missionary over Pastor Garrwin Gumana for appointment to the Yirrkala church. If Gumana had been appointed and assisted in his pastoral duties for which he had aptitude, this would have provided invaluable on-the-job training for him, and the MOM could have ordained him with little or no theological training, as they did the four non-Aboriginal lay missionaries (Seru, Tukai, Saukuru and Shepherdson). Fijian missionaries were originally employed as agriculturalists and
boat captains. But subsequently, apart from Fuata Taito and those who were ordained while lay missionaries in Arnhem Land, Pacific clergymen were brought direct from Fiji, Samoa and Tonga in the post-war years. Their presence extended beyond the missionary era. This is not to deny their contribution to the mission work in Arnhem Land which has been acknowledged by Aboriginal people and white missionaries alike. In fact during World War Two the MOM would have found the mission work in Arnhem Land very difficult without the services of the Pacific Island missionaries. Furthermore, they learned to speak the language and developed good rapport with the people.

On the path to self-management, however, the people's best friends could become their 'opiates'. As has been noted elsewhere in this study, in retrospect the wisdom of Pacific Islanders' continuing employment in Arnhem Land, even beyond the missionary era, has been questioned. Their coming meant imposition of yet another alien culture upon the Aboriginal people. They attempted to recreate the Pacific culture and surrounded themselves with an artificial environment, which was largely out of context. The Pacific Islanders also came with their own enculturated forms of Methodism and expected Aboriginal people to follow them, thus perpetuating foreign forms of Christianity. In addition, while generalisations cannot be made, it can be stated, as was the case in New Guinea, that some Pacific Island missionaries consciously or unconsciously demonstrated a Pacific form of paternalism with condescending attitudes to the Aboriginal people and their culture. Furthermore, in terms of the central argument in this study, the continuing dependence on the Pacific Island missionaries contributed to the tardiness in development of policy for training Aboriginal clergy. Their presence during and in post-missionary era
(post-1977) did not help towards an independent Aboriginal church with its own clergy.

The employment of the Baduans from Torres Strait initially and later the Pacific Island missionaries by the MOM in Arnhem Land, pointed to another, perhaps a more prevalent underlying factor, namely the racial attitudes and beliefs of missionaries. In common with the thinking and beliefs of the day, even up to the mid-1960s, missionaries generally held entrenched paternalistic attitudes and doubts about Aboriginal people's abilities and intellectual capabilities. Although missionaries' views of Aboriginal people and their culture were more supportive and sympathetic than most Europeans', and missionaries always held out hope for the advancement of Aboriginal people and did not succumb to the concept of irremediable backwardness, missionaries nevertheless consciously or unconsciously generally demonstrated the racial views of social Darwinism. This led the early missionaries to place Aboriginal people in a class lower than the Baduans from Torres Straits and Pacific Islanders, they consequently employed as missionaries. Even as late as 1965 the MOM Board Committee of Inquiry noted that: 'It is clear that the missionaries have felt unable widely to trust the maturity of the Christian life of the Aborigines who have made some response to the gospel' (Committee of Inquiry 1965: 4-5). Racial beliefs and lack of faith in Aboriginal people was a major factor in the long delay in developing a policy for training of Aboriginal clergy, and for the shelving of the concept of an independent Aboriginal church. Tippett, in his critique of the principle of self-support, self-government and self-propagation (the 'three Ss') in the global context, argued that although this theory was widely accepted by mission boards and mission fields, it was very seldom put into practice. He stated that 'missionary
paternalism and their lack of faith in the ability of their converts to take control prevented their letting go’ (Tippett 1987: 85). The MOM in Arnhem Land was no exception.

It is apparent that a number of interactive and intertwining factors were at work in the Arnhem Land Methodist Mission, which resulted in the prolonged absence of a policy for training of Aboriginal leadership and preparation for the admission to the ordained ministry. It is all too obvious that the training for Aboriginal church leadership was not a top priority. When a very belated step was taken to initiate training in the mid-1960s and the 1970s, it competed with many other priorities, as the MOM responded to the rapid changes which impinged on Arnhem Land. It is not surprising that by the end of the missionary era, the MOM had produced only three Aboriginal clergy and only one of these was fully theologically trained. Furthermore, the Aboriginal ekklesia which had begun to emerge in the theological sense was absorbed into the mainstream white UCA. As the epilogue demonstrates, it was the Aboriginal people themselves who instigated and evolved an indigenous church within the UCA in the post-missionary era (post-1977), with a structure of its own and a theological framework from within which to operate, and express their aspirations. This illustrates that Aboriginal people were capable of deciding for themselves.
THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INDIGENOUS ABORIGINAL CHURCH AND THEOLOGY

In 1983, six years after the formation of the Uniting Church of Australia (UCA), into which Aboriginal and Islander Christians were absorbed, the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) came into existence. This epilogue provides a brief outline of the initial developments of this Aboriginal and Islander church and its contextual theological framework.

The 1979 Galiwinku (Elcho Island) Christian revival movement was a significant religious phenomenon in the historical and theological development of UAICC. The movement has been well documented, for example by Bos (1987, 1988a), Gondarra (1985, 1986) and Habel (1990). Originating at Galiwinku, it spread and became a pan-Australian phenomenon, facilitating creative indigenous leadership in the post-missionary era (post-1977), and becoming one of the catalytic forces in the formation of UAICC (cf Bos 1987: 7). The uniqueness of this religious movement was that it was an all-Aboriginal movement, in which the Aborigines were the instruments, facilitators, bearers and disseminators of the religious occurrence. Two influential leaders in the 1979 Christian revival movement were sons of two of the leaders of the 1957 Memorial event. Walalipa, an important ceremonial leader, was a key leader in the Memorial movement. His son Djiniyini Gondarra became an important leader in the revival movement and the formation of the UAICC. Gondarra 'had both traditional Aboriginal authority or prowess through his family and due recognition as an ordained minister
of the Christian church' (Habel, 1990: 2). The evangelist of the 1979 revival movement was the late Rurrrambu Dhurrkay, a son of Batanga, another of the leaders of the 1957 Memorial action. Bos (1988a) has discussed in greater detail the similarities between the 1957 Memorial Act and the 1979 revival movement. Gondarra and Dhurrkay furthermore became leaders of the newly formed UAICC and through them the spirit of the revival movement spread to the national body, embracing indigenous Christians of Australia.

While the 1979 revival movement was influential in the formation of the UAICC there were also external factors which facilitated the development of the UAICC. The idea of an indigenous church in Australia started to germinate after the Aboriginal leader, the late Charles Harris, the first President of the UAICC, and Bernie Clarke visited New Zealand in 1981. They attended a Maori Mari (meeting) at Ahape at the Bay of Plenty. They found that Maoris had similar concerns to those of Aboriginal people. (C Harris c. 1984: 1; cf Edwards and Clarke 1988: 198). Furthermore, Charles Harris was greatly impressed with the level of organisation of the Maoris and their ability and fortitude in speaking out about their affairs. Harris was determined to initiate discussions to establish a similar indigenous ecclesiastical organisation, through which the Aboriginal and Islander Christians could similarly articulate their own affairs and aspirations (cf Gondarra 1986: 11; Keith 1990: 43).

Subsequently, a conference of small groups of Aboriginal leaders with Uniting Church officials was organised at Crystal Creek north of Townsville in August 1982 (Bos 1987: 7). Following this conference, a national meeting was convened at Galiwinku in August 1983, attended
by 80 Aboriginal delegates and Uniting Church Synod representatives (Gondarra 1986b: 12; Missionprobe 25: 4). Following the Galiwinku conference, regional committees were instituted in each state and discussions were pursued between Aboriginal and Islander Christians and white Uniting Church leaders in relation to appropriate structures to be adopted for each geographical region. Proposals for a national structure were also circulated. (Cf Bos 1987: 8).

In February 1984, the UCA Commission for World Mission gave general endorsement to the resolutions of the UAICC, and circulated the proposals for consideration by the UCA committees, councils and synods. In May 1985, the UCA National Assembly meeting in Melbourne ‘overwhelmingly approved the structure of the Congress’ (Bos 1987: 8; Gondarra 1986: 11). The formation of the UAICC was thus officially recognised and endorsed, with the late Charles Harris as President and Djiniyini Gondarra as Vice-President. Gondarra subsequently became the second President. The historical development of the UAICC outlined above indicates the beginning of the structure of the indigenous church within the UCA, in which the Aboriginal and Islander people took the initiative to start implementing the ‘three Ss’ principle, although the founding leaders did not exactly express the development of the UAICC in this term. The structure also needed a theological framework within which the UAICC could operate. This need facilitated the articulation of the ‘fourth S’, self-theologising, in the Aboriginal and Islander context.

It can be stated that Djiniyini Gondarra was the first Aboriginal person to articulate an indigenous contextual theology among the indigenous people of Australia at an intellectual level. The first public exposition of his contextual theology was at the national conference of the UAICC in 1983 at Galiwinku. At this conference Gondarra issued a theological
statement in which he indicated that the Christian gospel was brought to the Aboriginal and Islander people via the Western church. However, he stated that there was an unexplored area. This was the relationship between the gospel and the indigenous cosmology. This was the task of contextual theology, which the Aboriginal and Islander church needed to explore. In subsequent publications (1985, 1976a, 1986b), Gondarra elaborated on his contextual theology.

From the outset the UAICC leaders set out to redefine and contextualise the concept of evangelism. They shifted the emphasis from its narrow meaning of 'making converts' to a broader 'holistic' definition of the term and its praxis. This broader understanding of evangelism was adopted and advocated to provide a theological framework for the UAICC to implement its ministry and 'mission' to its own people covering a wide range of issues which concerned them. As the late Charles Harris stated, evangelism was 'not just organising the occasional rally or even door knocking. Evangelism means caring for the whole person. We want to be free to engage in a holistic ministry to our people' (Quoted in Bos 1987: 6). Shayne Blackman, another founding leader of the UAICC, added that 'holistic evangelism must help people to come to a deeper understanding of the faith in every aspect of their lives' (Missionprobe 27 :3). Justice aspects of the gospel were strongly emphasised by the founding leaders of the UAICC.

One of the goals of the UAICC was to attain freedom (Gondarra 1985, 1986a, 1986b; Bos 1987). There were many aspects of this freedom that Aboriginal and Islander people sought. These can be summarised under broad contours: freedom from 'enslaving' structures, freedom to take responsibility and freedom to develop contextual theology.
As noted previously, in 1977 the Aboriginal and Islander people who were connected with the Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists were absorbed into the UCA. However, the people found that the complexity of the UCA structure was 'enslaving' (Bos 1987: 3). The people wanted freedom to deliberate on matters that concerned them and wanted to organise their corporate existence through a structure within which to make decisions, and to take responsibility for their own 'mission'. A goal of the UAICC as an indigenous church was to be involved in 'mission' to its own people. The UAICC therefore articulated a theology of 'mission' in the context of the indigenous people of Australia.

As with 'evangelism', the Congress was also now free to redefine the concept and praxis of 'mission'. Historically, the Aboriginal and Islander people associated 'mission' with missionaries, mission stations, dormitory systems, and various activities connected with mission institutionalism. In finding freedom to redefine 'mission', the UAICC linked it with the concept and praxis of 'holistic evangelism' as noted above. In taking this direction the UAICC believed that it was recapturing the theology of mission based on what it understood to be the ministry and mission of Jesus.

The UAICC also sought unity (Gondarra 1985, 1986b; Bos 1987). Aboriginal and Islander Christians recognised some broad areas of disunity and attempted to address these as a united body. They recognised that there were divisions among themselves. In Arnhem Land this issue of disunity was addressed by the 1957 Memorial movement and the 1979 Christian revival movement. Uniting the people was one of
the goals of these movements. However, unity was now sought at a national level. The people were divided by distance and the establishing of the UAICC meant that they were united through a national structure through which to express their common aspirations and theological concerns. Furthermore, they wanted to address the fact that with their absorption into the mainstream UCA, ‘they were divided by church structures which made them into little pockets of inarticulate minorities in largely white Presbyteries and Synods’ (Bos 1987: 1). In addition, in the process of white people’s encounter with them, ‘they were divided by the stereotypes of white society which grouped them into “tribal” and “urban”, “full-blood” and “half-caste”’ (Bos 1987: 1).

They wanted to break down the barriers created by such stereotypes. They also recognised that they were divided by the denominational divisions imported from Europe and wanted to address this issue.

The establishment of the UAICC within the UCA, although not completely autonomous structurally, nevertheless marked the fulfilment of the principle of self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing indigenous church development proposed by Henry Venn in England in the 1840s, as the goal for the missionary movement. Due to the peculiar situation in Australia, the Methodist church and the others which were involved in the formation of the UCA, did not formulate policies for developing autonomous indigenous churches in Australia. The mainstream churches had either assumed that the Aboriginal and Islander peoples would become part of them, or, as in the case of the MOM in Arnhem Land, argued their way out of developing a separate indigenous church. The founding of the UAICC was therefore an initiative engineered by the Aboriginal and Islander people, thus actualising the missionary goal themselves. It should be acknowledged
that while initiative came from Aboriginal people, they also sought the advice and assistance of non-Aboriginal persons such as Bernie Clarke. Having established themselves, the UAICC had the prerogative to invite non-Aboriginal people to be their consultants.

According to Bos, three forces converged acting as catalysts in the formation of the UAICC. Firstly, the influence of the 1979 Christian revival movement in Arnhem Land which generated ‘a great surge of hope and confidence among Aboriginal [and Islander] people throughout Australia’. Secondly, the ‘frustrations’ created by ‘the white controlled structures which, although not necessarily unkindly disposed towards Aboriginal people, were nevertheless often insensitive’. Thirdly, the church leaders who were being trained at Nungalinya College included candidates for ordination, and who subsequently became leaders (Bos 1987: 7).

Among the church leaders who were being trained at Nungalinya College were three Arnhem Land candidates for ordination: Mawundjil Garawirrtja, Minipirriwuy Garrawurra and Dhalganda (Rronang) Garrawurra. Their training occurred about the time when the plans for the establishment of the UAICC were in progress. They were subsequently ordained by the Bethel Presbytery in 1985. Thus when the UAICC was formally established in May 1985, Arnhem Land had four ordained clergymen including Djiniyini Gondarra. Lamilami and Maguniri did not live to see the formation of the UAICC. Since 1985 there have been other ordinations: Raymond Bandicha (1986), Dudley Gabunaboi (1989), Liyapidiny Marrika, the first Arnhem Land woman minister (1991), Garrwin Gumana (1991) and Bilanya Garawirrtja (1996).

1 With the formation of the UAICC, Aboriginal churches formed their own presbyteries within the State/Territory synods of the UCA. The Aboriginal presbytery in Arnhem Land was initially called Bethel Presbytery but was later changed to Northern Regional Council of Congress.
Among the Northern Regional Council of Congress (NRCC) ordained clergymen, only three have had wider exposure through training either in Australia or overseas. As noted elsewhere in this study, Gondarra and Garawirrtja undertook training in Papua New Guinea in Christian education and theology. Dhalganda Garrawurra attended a Summer School of the Native Ministries Consortium at Vancouver School of Theology, on the campus of Columbia University in Canada, in 1992, as well as undertaking theological studies through the Uniting Theological College in Sydney towards a Bachelor of Theology (BTh), which he was awarded in 1995. It should also be noted that Dudley Gabunaboi spent six months in 1996 with the United Church of the Solomon Islands, gaining further experience. Such wider exposure is needed for the benefit of the Aboriginal church in Arnhem Land and should be promoted, as this would contribute to leadership development in the NRCC.

The establishment of the UAICC as a national body meant that the emerging Aboriginal church in Arnhem Land was once again absorbed into a national structure. The founding of the national UAICC was necessary, and in some respects revolutionary, in bringing into existence an indigenous church with its own contextual theological and structural identity in Australia. The Arnhem Land indigenous church needed such national action and structure, which provided the catalyst enabling its own development in its local context, while being part of the national movement. There are differences in historical experiences and a vast diversity in the cultural and sociological composition of the indigenous peoples in Australia, which form the UAICC. Nevertheless there is sufficient theological and structural flexibility to allow for the Arnhem Land Aboriginal church to evolve its own ministry and ‘mission’, and to address issues in its own unique context, while being linked to the national body.
DESCRIBING it as “a privilege,” UAICC president Djiniyini Gondarra believes his election to the World Council of Churches’ Central Committee will enhance his attempts to build bridges between Australia’s Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal churches.

Djiniyini is the committee’s first indigenous Australian.

The appointment will also strengthen contact between Australian Aborigines and indigenous peoples world-wide.

Aboriginal elders have welcomed the appointment. Many now feel that in spite of the struggles and oppressions of the last two centuries, God’s purpose for their people is being revealed. It is hoped that this new recognition will involve other Australians more closely in the journey of Aboriginal people, and see it as a journey tied to the future of the nation as a whole.

Now is the time for Australia, and particularly its Christians, to incline its ear more carefully to the voices of people like Djiniyini Gondarra.
Left: Garrwin Gumana, of Gangan homeland, was an active church leader at Yirkaia during the missionary era. In 1971 and 1972 Gumana worked closely with Pastor Jonetani Rika, Fijian missionary. Rika had hoped that at the end of his term as Pastor, Gumana would be appointed to replace him. Rika expressed disappointment that this appointment did not occur (Personal communication, 1990). In the post-missionary era Gumana was ordained by the UAICC on 15 November 1991, after undertaking specially tailored mature age theological studies at Nungalinya College.

Right: Dhainganda (Rronang) Garrawurra grew up at Elcho Island during the missionary era. He remembered the mission life as 'a very hard life' (Personal communication, 1994). Garrawurra was ordained by the UAICC in March 1985, after his theological studies at Nungalinya College. In 1995 he received a Bachelor of Theology through the United Theological College in Sydney. He was the first Arnhem Land Aborigine to receive a Bachelor's degree in theology. In 1992, he attended a Summer School at the Vancouver School of Theology in Canada.

Photograph: Courtesy of Nungalinya College Library, Darwin.
Dhalnganda Garrawura - post-missionary era achievement of an Arnhem Lander.

Left: Garrawurra receives Bachelor of Theology degree at graduation ceremony, Sydney (1995).

Below: Galiwinku Community (Eloco) honour Garrawurra's accolade with another graduation ceremony.

Photographs: courtesy of Dhalnganda and Sally Garrawurra.
Liyapidiny Marrika, the first Aboriginal Clergywoman in Arnhem Land

From left to right: Liyapidiny Marrika, Minipirriwuy Garawurra, Djiniyini Gondarra, Mawundji Garawirrtja and Dhalganda (Rronang) Garawurra. Marika was ordained by the NRCC of the UAICC into the UCA.

Photograph: courtesy of Nungalinya College Library.

Note: A month prior to the submission of this thesis for examination, Liyapidiny Marika died on 31 August 1998. Her funeral service was held at Yirrkala on 21 September 1998.
APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A: NORTH AUSTRALIA DISTRICT

The North Australia District Policy adopted by the 1939 Synod at Yirrkala (Meth. Ch. OM 238, ML).

District Policy - The Rev. TT Webb presented a statement of District Policy for consideration, and after a lengthy discussion the following was adopted. It was agreed that a copy be sent to all members of the district staff, to the Director of Native Affairs, and to the Mission Board. Also that the General Secretary be requested to give publicity to this policy through our Church Press.

Policy - Our Mission Work among the aboriginals of Arnhem Land is undertaken with the following facts and definite convictions in view.

1. That despite the very primitive stage of development which characterises these aboriginals they are capable of accepting the teaching of Jesus, and also of considerable social and economic development.

2. That the explanation of their extremely primitive condition lies mainly in the fact of their isolation from the rest of mankind and their lack of opportunity, and not in an absence of inherent qualities necessary to development.

3. That a continuance of the tragedy which contact with civilization has wrought for this race may be avoided, and that the frequently made statement that the aboriginals are “a dying race” is not necessarily true, years of experience on our stations serving to indicate that under the protection and care of the mission they are definitely increasing.
4. Believing that the ultimate contact of aboriginal with white is unavoidable, it is not anticipated that these aboriginals will remain for all time in isolated communities of their own race, but that they will in due course take their place in our general Australian life.

5. That they are capable of such development as will enable them to take their place in our civilized communities without injury to themselves and that, particularly in our Northern Tropical Districts an honourable and valuable sphere of service for them will always exist.

6. That in view of their extremely backward condition real development can only be brought about by a long, patient, and sympathetic process extending over several generations.

7. That a necessary stage in their complete development will be the creation of independent self-respecting and self-supporting communities in Arnhem Land or similar districts.

8. That during this period of development it is essential that they should be, as far as possible, segregated and protected from influences and contacts not calculated to benefit them.

The means by which this objective of the Christianization and the civilization of these aboriginals be sought may be summarised as hereunder.

1. By the establishment of Mission Stations at strategic points in Arnhem Land. Such stations to be centres from which other supporting activities, such as patrols and out-stations, may be directed.

2. That on such stations instruction in the truths of the Christian Religion, and in the arts and crafts necessary to settled life, be imparted to them.

3. That recognising the tremendous gap which exists between aboriginal culture and our own in respect to Religious Beliefs, and social and economic life, the necessary transition be made slowly and carefully, every care being taken to avoid a rude disruption of existing safeguards and sanctions.
4. That every endeavour be made to develop the personal character of the aboriginals, and that all activities be definitely directed to that end.

5. That care be taken to avoid the danger of debasing the aboriginals by relieving them of all just responsibility for their own communities, and by allowing them to become wholly dependent on the mission.

6. That the practical application of the Teaching of Jesus be emphasised and that every effort be made to help the aboriginals to incorporate that teaching into their normal standards of life.

7. That with the acceptance of the Christian Religion every encouragement be given them to engage in religious and social service among their own people.

8. That the aboriginals be encouraged to adopt the necessary habits and industries of settled life, particularly simple forms of agriculture, which must form the basis of a more advanced mode of living.

9. That we endeavour to develop the aboriginals' own indigenous arts and crafts.

10. That education be regarded as an important branch of our station activities and that facilities be provided for primary education, simple technical and manual training, and direction in home-craft and hygiene.

11. That so far as possible the vernacular be employed as the medium of education.

12. That steps be taken to elevate the position of aboriginal women and to secure for them a more important status in the community.

13. That in the fulfilment of the National Duty to improve the lot of our aboriginal people we cordially co-operate with the Government Department of Native Affairs.
APPENDIX B: NORTH AUSTRALIA DISTRICT


Our mission work among the aboriginals of Arnhem Land is undertaken with the following facts and definite convictions in view.

1. That despite the very primitive stage of development which characterizes these aboriginals, they are capable of accepting the teaching of Jesus, and also of very considerable social and economic development.

2. That the explanation of their extremely primitive condition lies mainly in the fact of their isolation from the rest of mankind and their lack of challenge and opportunity, and not in the absence of inherent qualities necessary to develop.

3. That a continuance of the tragedy which too rapid a contact with European civilization has wrought for this race may be avoided, and that the frequently-made statement that the aboriginals are "a dying race" is not necessarily true, years of experience on our stations serving to indicate that under the protection and care of the mission they are definitely increasing.

4. That ultimate contact of aboriginal with white is unavoidable; it is not therefore expected that these aboriginals will remain for all time in isolated communities of their own race, but that they will, in due course, take their place in our general Australian life.

5. That they are capable of such development as will enable them to take their place in our civilized communities without injury to themselves, and that, particularly in our Northern Tropical Districts, an honourable and valuable sphere of service for them will always exist.

6. That in view of their extremely backward condition, real development can be brought about only by patient and sympathetic training extending over several generations.

7. That a necessary stage in their complete development will be the creation of independent, self-supporting communities in Arnhem Land or in similar districts.
8. That during this period of development it is essential that they should be, as far as possible, segregated and protected from undesirable influences and contacts.

The means by which this objective of the Christianization and civilization of the aboriginals is being sought may be summarised as follows:

1. By the establishment of Mission Stations, with supporting activities such as out-stations and patrols, as strategic points in Arnhem Land.

2. By engaging on such stations in the following activities:

   (a) Christian evangelism and instruction.

   (b) Education - primary, technical and domestic, adapted to local requirements, both in the vernacular and in basic English.

   (c) Medical work, with emphasis on the prevention of disease through preventive hygiene, sanitation, improved diet, and health education.

   (d) Agricultural and industrial work, both in the development of indigenous arts and crafts, and in training the aboriginals for a more settled mode of life.

   NB: (b), (c), (d) are to be given a Christian basis, and regarded as the practical application of the teaching of Jesus Christ.

3. By endeavouring, in everything, to develop the personal character of the aboriginals:

   (a) By not allowing them to become debased by dependence upon the Mission, but rather encouraging their acceptance of responsibility for their own life and development.

   (b) By aiming to elevate the status of women in the community.

   (c) By encouraging and fitting them to engage in social and religious service amongst their own people.
4. By recognising the great gulf between aboriginal and European culture, and hence striving to make the necessary transition slowly and carefully, avoiding a rude disruption of existing safeguards and sanctions, and allowing changes to come, not by the imposition of external authority, but by inner conviction on the part of the aboriginals themselves.

5. By cordially cooperating with the Government Department of Native Affairs in the fulfilment of our national duty to improve the lot of these aboriginal people.
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9. INTERVIEWS


Amery, Howard, Uniting Church Office, Darwin 22/4/94.


Brockway, Les, Nungalinya College, Darwin 14/2/94.

Bucknell, Graeme, Ex-missionary, Darwin 14/6/94.

Butler, Barry, Nungalinya College, Darwin 19/5/94.

Carrington, Don, Ex-Nungalinya, Darwin 23/3/94.

Cracknell, Don, Uniting Church Office, Darwin 14/4/94.

Gale, Peter, Ex-Northern Synod Youth Worker, Darwin 29/7/94.
Garrawura, Dhalganda, Nungalinya College, Darwin 19/8/94.

Gondarra, Djiniyini, UAICC, Darwin 19/5/94.


Gribble, Cecil, former MOM General Secretary, Sydney 20/9/94.

Gundhumawuy, Shirley, Nungalinya College, 10/5/90.

Heading, Maurie, Nungalinya College 14/2/94.

McClay, David, Batchelor College, Batchelor 13/4/94.

McMillan, Stuart, Uniting Church Office, Darwin 3/5/94.

Perkins, Harvey, former MOM General Secretary, Sydney 20/9/94.

Sigston, Roger, Ex-missionary, Darwin 11/5/94.

Tapera, Teubisi, Goulburn Island Church, Darwin 21/4/94.

Tuffin, Dough, Ex-missionary, Darwin 17/6/94.

Wilson, Lloyd, Nungalinya College, Darwin 2/2/94.

10. CORRESPONDENCE AND PERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Amos, Anne, former missionary, Croydon, Victoria 14/8/94.

Bos, Robert, former Nungalinya College Principal, Brisbane 28/9/95.

Bucknall, Graeme, former missionary, Balwyn, Victoria 1/8/94.

Goodluck, Jack, former missionary, Noarlunga Downs, South Australia 18/5/94 and 29/9/95.

Gullick, Clem, former missionary, Riyala, Noonamah, NT 24/4/94.

Hinch, Hewett, former missionary, Oyster Harbour, Western Australia 1990.

McClay, David, former Milingimbi Government School Headmaster, Batchelor College, NT 9/10/95.