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CULTURE AND INTERPRETATION

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In this paper I wish to look at a recent aspect of interpretation in relation to culture. I do not wish to use the word "interpretation" in relation to any specific hermeneutical or other model. Rather I wish to look at a factor which is of very great importance in relation to the understanding and appropriation of the Christ Event, and indeed in relation to the appropriation of the entire Biblical witness, in many parts of the world. I have been involved in research in this area for a number of years, most recently in January 1992. What I wish to look at is this: that in fact in many parts of the world there is a central event or a series of central events associated with the appropriation of the Christ Event in a particular culture, whether that culture is related to an entire nation or whether it is related specifically to one particular tribal grouping in that nation; and, moreover, that that event largely controls the way in which all subsequent interpretations of the Old and New Testaments are understood and received. If there is a lack of appreciation of the centrality of these events, then the entire hermeneutical and wider interpretation process is without significance.

Throughout this paper "culture" denotes the total pattern of social life including religion rather than the artistic as distinct from other activities, such as those of politics, trade or religion. The term is thus used as it is used by social anthropologists rather than as it is used by historians of the arts.

Throughout this paper too "the Gospel" is used in the Bultmannian-type sense of "the Christ Event" or "the Christ Event for us" or "the Christ Event for them" and so on. "The Christian message" or "gospels" are used for the written and oral traditions.

I wish therefore in this paper to do three things. First, I wish to look at the events which were of significance in the first major interweaving of Christianity and culture. That is, I wish to look at the issue of "Theologia in Loco" in its first major long-term presentation. Second, I wish to look at certain aspects of a modern "representation" of the Christ Event in a modern "laboratory-type" situation. Third, I wish to draw some conclusions from these two in relation to Biblical interpretation.

1. "THEOLOCLIA IN LOGO"

The Christ Event took place within an immediate Jewish cultural environment, surrounded by an Aramaic and Hebrew vocabulary and Semitic expectations. Yet this integrated Judaism, in its strict and official vesture, rejected Jesus of Nazareth, and later turned against Paul in his championing of freedom from the Law through Jesus Christ. In fact, the impact of the Christian message on strictly integrated Jewish culture was minimal.

On the other hand, although the events at Athens in Acts 17 show us that the initial impact into integrated Hellenistic culture was equally limited, the general penetration into Hellenistic culture in the years ahead was far more marked. Moreover, in fact from the earliest days there was already some impact, in that Hellenism was a far more loosely organized culture than Judaism, and in the mixtures of Hellenism with other cultures, particularly Hellenistic-Judaism, the Christian message found acceptance (e.g. Acts 13:13-52; 18:1-17; 28:16-28). Although, of course, there was an "Anknüpfungspunkt" - between the Christ Event and Jewish culture, in another sense there was a greater "Anknüpfungspunkt" with Graeco-roman culture. More than Judaism this latter culture was more a "culture" in the original sense of that word; that is to say, it was related to primarily agricultural societies in the sense that their deepest concerns in ordering their lives were attuned to being in harmony with nature. (See the wider concepts in Niebuhr, *passim*; see too Tillich, pp. 61-125 and cf. Troeltsch, *passim*). For this reason an Event in which were involved the elements of birth and death and resurrection, and of suffering and healing, all related to the divine, was likely to have immediate importance (Clover, pp. 33-36; 79-81). In this way, then, we can see the spread of the Gospel into the Graeco-Roman world. However, although a similar situation had existed in the traditions of the Prophets and Psalms with their dramas of destruction and re-birth, in general First and Second Century Judaism presented a very different concept of culture; in this there was no drama of the earlier type, but rather the precise following of particular divinely-inspired words which had been uttered up until the time of Ezra and the 'Men of the Great Synagogue' and thereafter had ceased in such a way (as in the first words of the *Pirqê Abôth*; see Danby; see too Pfeiffer, p. 46). Thus, for example, in relation to law, the Graeco-Roman understanding of jurisprudence was related to the natural and cyclic order, while the Law in Judaism was related more to clear and fixed divine interventions and ordinances (e.g. Aristotle, *Ars Rhetorica* I, 13, p. 1 373b.; *Testament of the XII Patriarchs*, Judah 26:1, in Charles.) It was in the natural and cyclic culture of Hellenism and its successors, rather than in the word and ordinance culture of Judaism, that the Gospel or the Christ Event eventually came about in its initial widespread manifestation. Of course, it was the Greek language in which the Christian message found its written expression (e.g. the Platonism in Hebrew 1:3; the Stoicism in Romans 1:18-32.) However, the matter was not only that, but was much deeper than that; for behind, for example, the adoption of Roman juridical concepts was not only the facilitating of communicating the import of the Christ Event but also the beginning of the transfiguration of this culture through the interworking of Christ Event concepts and the understanding of natural and cyclic order. (On this, see

Quell, 1964, and Schrenk, 1964, where δικαιοσύνη (cf. the goddess Δίκη) is seen as part of the natural order, e.g. Plato, *Res Publica*, IV, 433c.ff.) This interworking of the Gospel and the "culture of nature" has been a dominant strand in the expansion of the Church. For many centuries the Church continued to live in the successors of Graeco-Roman culture. From time to time its modes of expressing the Christ Event were slightly adjusted to suit changing moods, but in general Europe, where the issue was most manifest, was evangelized through the gradual (although sometimes halting) assimilation of its varying cultures into the now firmly-established Christian culture. So in Europe the transfiguration of agricultural society meant that the Gospel has both totally interwoven into the fabric of the culture and also itself moulded and directed the cyclic and nature-related impulses of the culture. Wholeness, harmony, rhythm and ritual (in water or around a thanksgiving meal) were also both the medium and the message.

So, we have observed that the entry for the Christ Event into Hellenistic culture was open from the very outset, and that that entry became more than just a means to a paradigm shift in the constant reinterpretation processes. Here we have the primary long-term and widespread "theologia in Ioco".

II. A MODERN "RE-PRESENTATION"

I now wish to look at a modern situation of cultural dynamics. I am influenced here by much of the modern debate in Asia, Africa and the Pacific. Many Asian Biblical interpreters today encourage oral stories as much as those in written form. Inter-cultural stories too are regarded as 'significant' as mono-cultural narratives (see, for example, Song, *passim*). Some such narratives I have chosen here. The area is the group of North Moluccan Islands in Eastern Indonesia. From an anthropological viewpoint it is an extremely useful area in which to carry out research, for a number of reasons. First, a comparison of historical accounts by travellers over the past four centuries (E.g., Baretta. pp. 116 ff; Campen, 1882, pp. 438 - 439; Campen, 1883, p. 293.), indicates only the very slightest changes to indigenous pre-literary forms over that period. This is very different from the situations, for example, in some South Pacific Islands (Garrett, *passim*.), or among the varied Australian Aboriginal groupings (Turner, 1974, pp. 189; 192-193.), where Asian or European influences has so dominated pre-literary forms so that today we cannot really know what they were even two centuries ago. There it is very difficult to comprehend how the whole system works, or even which are the genuine vestiges of an original system (Turner, 1986, p. 18). Second, population change through immigration has been very limited. Third, the heartlands of the pre-literary systems have been very isolated; an almost "laboratory-type" situation has occurred. (The term "pre-literary" is used here

to stress the fact that these religions have a long- developed tradition the origins of which would appear to pre-date the appearance of literary forms in the various religions. The term, therefore, seems more neutral and purely descriptive in its use than many other terms (e.g., animistic, primal, primitive). Other terms (e.g. tribal, customary, traditional) seem possible, but also appear to be more applicable to other religions as well than the present use of "pre-literary".)

In looking at it, I shall be mainly concerned to look at the beliefs, and the interaction of beliefs, from the standpoint of the believers, that is, of those involved in the life-systems. I shall not, therefore, be primarily concerned to discuss the various beliefs in terms of structural -functionalism or any other socio-anthropological models. In other words, we are victoriously involved in "being there" in all senses, as far, of course, as that is possible. To the North Moluccan, of course, could be applied the words of Williamson concerning the Akan of Ghana, that "the integration of his (sic) religious views and practices lies not in the fashioning of theological and philosophical structures, but in his socially inculcated personal attitude to the living universe of which he is a part ". (Williamson, p. 86) It is, of course, impossible to dissociate in any way so-called "religious beliefs" from a total understanding of life and the world. For theological reasons, however, I have chosen those particular parts or aspects of the totality of life which are the particular focus of the meeting of the Christian message with other beliefs as our departure-point in this investigation; in doing so, however, we must be aware that we are using one particular "way-in" to view the whole.

In the North Moluccas the term "gikiri" was and is used as a generic word for one of the many local or personal divinities; it is in this sense that in recent years the term has most usually been understood. However, it is clear that the word originally had a much wider meaning. Hueting in 1908 sees the basis of its meaning as "levend wezen, mensch, iemand" ("living being, spirit, human being, someone/anyone") (Hueting, 1908, p. 100.) In other words, he sees in it the elements of "mana" (On this, see Hadiwijono, pp. 11; 17.), permeating nature in general and humanity in particular. What seems clear is that among the North Moluccans the "gikiri" was originally a "mana" type concept more connected with a Supreme Being.

It is doubtless from the breadth of the applications of the "gikiri" - concept that the term "Gikiri Moi" was related to the concept of a High God. We can see that, from "gikiri", which we translate "spirit" or "god", and "moi", the general North Moluccan word for "one", "Gikiri Moi" implies "the One God" or "the One Spirit". Thomas sums up the present understanding of "gikiri Moi" as "the One God (or "Lord"), who is head of all powers which are animistic, dynamistic or 'mana". (Indonesian: "Tuhan Jang Satu, jang

mengepalai segala kekuatan-kekuatan jang animists, dinamisistis maupun mana") (Thomas, p. 20; "Tuhan" is the usual Indonesian for (the Christian) "Lord"; it is also frequently used for (the Christian) "God", in order to avoid using the standard Indonesian for "God" (including "the Christian God"), "Allah"). However, it would seem to be inaccurate to think of Gikir Moi in terms of a "deus otiosus".

Below Gikiri Moi are the great company of the "gomanga", the spirits of the dead or, more accurately for the North Moluccans, the living-dead. It would seem that the pre-literary understanding of evil was twofold; first, there was always a tendency for the living-dead, especially of course those who had been insulted, to be jealous of the living, and so cause evil; second, there were simply those forces in nature and in the inter-relationships of the community (in North Moluccan thought there is no great divide between what occurs in nature and what occurs in inter-personal relationships; cf. Fox, *passim*.) which militate against harmony and encourage what is considered evil. Below the gomanga, then, is the world of these village - spirits, termed in the North Moluccans in general "roh- roh" from the Indonesian. From what we have seen, it can be observed that in the pre-literary religious understanding of the North Moluccans the security-creating harmony most closely related to the Christian concept of salvation concerns protection from the village-spirits, the correct relationship with other creatures and nature, the right ties with the gomanga and the hoped-for respect to guarantee one's own future gomanga-status. It seems that for the North Moluccans in general it is accurate to follow Cooley's observations in the Central Moluccas, that is, that "the indigenous religion and adat should be seen as two halves of a whole" (Cooley, p. 482).

The coming of Christianity involved significant movements. It is the *modes* of this activity which we need to note. The Utrecht Missionary Union (U.Z.V.) had begun work in New Guinea. It was formed in 1859, and in 1861 chose the northern coastline of western Nieuw-Guinea as its first missionfield. However, first the work proved to be very disappointing. Both the gossner-missionaries and the U.Z.V. missionaries were constantly beset by illness. It seemed very difficult to make contact with the local population; as a result, as Muller-Kruger puts it,

"Nach 25 Jahren mühevollster und entbehrungsreichster Arbeit zählte man nicht mehr als Getaufte". (Müller-Krüger, p. 155.)

Then, second, on the night of 22nd-23rd May, 1864, an earthquake,

"wierp echter alle plannen omver en bracht den voortgang van het werk een zwaren slag toe". (Rauws, p. 26.)

-This event seems to have had a very considerable effect on the Hoofdbestuur of the Mission, as on 15th March, 1865 it was decided to

withdraw from Nieuw-Guinea. Third, there was the influence of a tribesman named Moli upon the missionaries at that time working in New Guinea. This Moli had for a period worked for C.W. Ottow, one of the first Gossner-missionaries in New Guinea. In 1865 Moli arrived with the aim of persuading Jaesrich of the Gossner-Mission and Klaassen of the U.Z.V., to turn their attention to the North Moluccas. What is significant here is that Klaassen was impressed by Moli, and indeed "saw Moli as the Macedonian man was for Paul at Troas". (Rooseboom, p. 9.)

It is important for us to note the factors which the Moluccans themselves considered decisive in prompting the Mission to start work amongst them. Two factors stand out; first, the earthquake in New Guinea is regarded as decisive in turning the Mission's attention away from that area; second the coming of Moli is considered as vital in calling the Mission to the North Moluccas.

Hendrik Van Oijken had received permission to set up his base in the North Moluccas on the fertile land surrounding the Lake of GaleIa and the other two nearby lakes in the interior. However, the actual point near the main lake which was suggested and granted to him by the Galelarese Hoofden was a place greatly feared by the Galelarese population. The particular area had two Galelarese names. One, "Tomadoa" or "Tumadoa" meant that it was the abode of the primeval giant who was the ancestor of the Galelarese and Lord of the Land. The other name was "Morodoku"; the meaning of the place is the place of the Moros; so, its name is 'morodoku', that is the place on the promontory; 'morodoku' means 'the village belonging to the Moro' or 'Moros'. According to Moluccan beliefs, the Moros were a group of Moluccans who built a kingdom formerly, mainly based on GaleIa and Morotai; then they and their kingdom disappeared. Therefore, for Moluccans, particularly in the north of the island, the term "the Moro man" means "the man who disappears but returns occasionally"; he is either a member of the original company of Moros who come to visit the area of their former kingdom or someone who has later joined them. Franz cites an example in recent years of a Tobelorese tribeswoman disappearing after declaring that she was a Moro. (Franz, p. 72.) The Moros also show their powers; when the abandoned husband in Franz's example re-married signs of the former wife's presence, in particular earth thrown on the table at the wedding-feast from an unknown source, were noted (cf. Huetting, 1921, pp. 266-269; see Franz, p. 72.); more generally the Moros are associated with malevolent magical powers. It can be seen that here there are elements both of belief in the "living-dead" ancestral spirits in general and of belief in various primeval ancestral giants in particular. In any case, "Morodoku" indicates a centre of power of one or more of these Moros. Therefore, in directing Van

Dijken to this particular point, clearly the Moluccans were arranging a direct confrontation between him and their ancestral heroes who were lords of the land and whose abode was at Tomadoa and Morodoku. Their motivation for this was probably twofold: first, doubtless Muslims at the coastal trading-post, who disliked Van Dijken's insistence to the Sultan that he move inland, encouraged the Galelarese interior Hoofden, who were almost entirely pre-literary religionists, to neutralize Van Dijken's influence in the area by bringing him face-to-face with their "Lords of the Land" so that he would depart in fear from the area, if in fact he survived; second, as Rooseboom points out, "they (i.e. the interior Galelarese) were afraid of his (i.e. Van Dijken's) "god" or "spirit" (Rooseboom, p. 9; see too Kennedy, 1937, p. 294.) (Indonesian: "orang takoet gikinja"), that is to say, they were afraid of his presence among them and its consequences if he had not previously met with their lords of the land. Therefore, it doubtless must have seemed most appropriate to the Galelarese that the issue of the viability of a Christian presence among them should be settled at Tamadoa/Morodoku. The Galelarese, of course, did not expect Van Dijken to survive.

Nevertheless, Van Dijken continued to build up his agricultural work; he was assisted by Moli and a number of Ternatense; the Moluccans, however, would have no contact with him. As a Gossner-type missionary he aimed through agriculture to provide something at least towards his own costs. From the Moluccan point-of-view the life-and-death issue of the survival of Christianity was being settled at Tomadoa/Morodoku. The fact that Van Dijken survived was to be the first part of the Moluccan "Exodus Experience", (their term). Although no North Moluccan had yet been baptised, and no-one apart from Moli could be considered a serious adherent, Christianity in the Moluccans' eyes was being established on Moluccan soil from the Tomadoa/Morodoku experience of 1866 onwards. For this reason the beginnings of Christianity in the North Moluccas after the Portuguese period are dated not from the first baptisms on North Moluccan soil nor from Moli's baptism but from 19th April, 1866 when Van Dijken started his work in GaleIa; from that point, because of Van Dijken's determination to enter the interior, for the North Moluccans the Christian God was meeting with the Lords of the Land, and yet was still living.

The second part of the North Moluccan "Exodus Experience" came in 1871. Before that Van Dijken had renamed Tomadoa/Morodoku Duma. He seems to have related it to the Duma (or Dumah) of Isaiah 21 :11, connecting that name with the isolation and quiet of the place. However, the Moluccans were convinced that the name was related to the Galelarese phrase "Duma wi doohawa", meaning "But he (i.e. Van Dijken) was not harmed", which at that time was the reaction in the area to Van Dijken's survival. Then

in December, 1871 the issue of the future relationship between the Galelarese and Christianity (and indeed between the Moluccans as a whole and Christianity) came to a head, in the second part of the North Moluccan "Exodus experience". On 14th, 15th and 16th December there was continuous very heavy rain. As a result a number of the villages around the lake had been swamped as the waters in the lake arose. Then, according to Rooseboom,

"hundreds of people came to him (i.e. Van Dijken) and then Mr Van Dijken told them that they must humble themselves (or "bow themselves down") before God and together pray for the Lord to have pity on them".

At that point twenty-six wished to become Christians, and many wanted their children to enter Van Dijken's school. In response to this Van Dijken held a "openlucht-bidstond", and he on behalf of the Galelarese Hoofden around the lake asked for the rains to stop and the flood-waters, now covering a number of villages, to recede; and, according to Hueting, "den volgenden dag, Zaterdag, was de regen bedaard, haar wij gerust mogen zeggen, als verhooring op het gebed-van Van Dijken". (Hueting, 1928, pp. 117-118; and Van der Crab, pp. 212-213.) The effect of this experience on the Galelarese was to be crucial for the future of the Mission; for the Church historians its importance was of very great significance. Its importance, of course, was not simply related to the fact that a dangerous flood had subsided; of much greater significance for the Moluccans was the meaning of the coming and departing of that flood. Clearly then the coming and departing of the flood was related to the meeting of the various divinities ("gikiri") of the Galelarese and those of Van Dijken and Klaassen, in which those of the latter appeared now to be in control of the situation. However, another element too was involved. This was the theme of a new beginning related to a flood. This theme is found in the North Moluccas with the idea of a part of the population being destroyed and a new beginning made; however, it is not so developed as the traditions of a great flood and the re-peopleing of the earth found in Ceram in the Central Moluccas. From this we can see that for the Moluccans the experience of December, 1871 clearly sealed not only that Christianity both had a place in their society and demanded a certain allegiance among them but also that this was to be the beginning of a re-orientation of their lives. For the Moluccans, although no-one (apart from Moli) had yet been baptized, nevertheless this was the primary formative point in the history of modern Christianity in their islands; a real meeting had taken place between Christianity and the pre-literary religious system of the North Moluccas; a new beginning was required, and Christianity demanded Moluccan allegiance. However, it is also important to

note that now Christianity rightfully required of the Moluccans a reorientation of their loyalty in their eyes; it did not, in their view, necessitate a total break with the past. Their pre-literary religious system was being superceded by a new and more efficacious system; it was not being entirely annihilated by the new system, although it was now of course subservient to it. These consequences of the "Exodus experience" at GaleIa are significant.

I now wish to look at the interaction between these beliefs and stories and two world religions, Islam and Christianity, which came into the area. I wish to look mainly at some facets of the mutual interactions of this pre-literary outlook and Christianity, although briefly looking at the interactions with Islam too. I wish to pick up certain salient features, rather than give an overview. Of course there were mutual interactions between Islam and Christianity; but that is outside the scope of this paper.

First, Muslim concepts influenced pre-literary beliefs in a number of ways. There was clearly a strong Muslim influence on the development of the concept of Gikiri Moi as the One High God. Second, pre-literary concepts influenced Islam as it developed in the region. Cady notes that:

"A Sufi-type mysticism, a syncretic faith overlaid with Koranic teachings, was transmitted to the Indies during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries". (Cady, p. 153.)

For example, the pre-literary outlook of Moluccans influenced Islam as it entered the area by encouraging the Sūfī mystical movement within Islam. It would seem that the pre-literary animistic, dynamistic and "mana" concepts encouraged the mystical and pantheistic tendencies of Sūfism in the tradition of the ways of thinking originally associated with Ibn-al'Arabi of Murcia (Farah, pp. 215-217; Gibb, p. 101; Guillaume, p. 149). There was not a tendency towards asceticism, but there was an emphasis upon mysticism and the paths("tarikas") to achieving mystical and ecstatic union with Allah.

We now look at the interaction of Christianity and certain facets of the pre-literary system.

First, Christianity influenced this system in a number of ways, particularly in relation to the doctrines of the sovereignty and grace of God. The North Moluccans felt that they were coming up against a God whose relationship with them could not be controlled as their relationship with Gikiri Moi could be. The inference from the first part of their "Exodus Experience" was that unpredictably Van Dijken had not died at Tomadoa/Morodoku; the inference from its second part was that quite suddenly the flood had gone down. Therefore, the "gikiri" associated with Van Dijken (and the local and particular appearance of his Gikiri Moi) was not only more powerful than the Galelarese gikiri (and Gikiri Moi); he was also powerful in a new sense

to the Moluccans in that his actions and presence were totally unrelated to any concepts of control or predictability which they had. Thus the sovereign lordship of the Christians' God had first come the Moluccans.

The Christian sense of the sovereignty and self-giving grace of god had far-reaching consequences for the pre-literary outlook. For it was this fact which seemed to be confirmed in the various appropriation events of the Exodus Experience in the tribal areas around the North Moluccas; although many did not there and then enter Christianity, and indeed there was sometimes movement back from Christianity into pre-literary belief, the pre-literary confidence in its system of being able to relate to Gikiri Moi in its own terms and through its own clearly defined system had been broken.

Second, pre-literary influence on Christianity was and is considerable. A good example was the preliterary influence on the relationship between the triune God and the varied gikiri. There was an attempt to work out an integrated system between the Christian triune God and the gikiri and village-spirits.

Firstly, a tendency towards Sabellianism, of course, could be expected in that Gikiri Moi had been integrated into the greater Christian God and He was the unifying basis of all the gikiri; and this in fact seems to have happened. In this tendency to Sabellianism "à Ia North Moluccas" Christians regarded the varied gikiri as the microcosmic presence in each place of one of the three facets of the triune God. Unlike the situation in Ceram in the Central Moluccas (Cooley, p. 490.), in the North Moluccas the Christian God tended to be regarded more in terms of power-through-presence. Thus in Moluccan Christian thinking there seemed to be either a continued dichotomy where belief in God went in parallel with belief in the varied gikiri within their own responsibilities or especially the more integrated "Moluccan Sabellian" concept of macrocosm represented in microcosm.

Secondly, in parallel to this, there was a strong but negative pre-literary influence on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. As we have seen, the whole system had been related to the Powerfulness-through-Presence. Thus, although the facet of the Holy Spirit was received, it was very greatly minimised. This came about not in opposition to the fact, but because of the fact, that the gikiri/Gikiri Moi system had been related to "spirits", and so, once it had been integrated into Fatherhood and Sonship ideas, it found no or little "Anknüpfungspunkt" left for relationship with Holy Spirit concepts. This was further vitiated by the terms used in the island for the Spirit. The North Moluccan languages, which dominated the whole Church's thinking, used a number of variations on the same meaning-spectrum for the translation of the term, "Womaha" and "Ngomasa" and their variants suggest a fine ethereal wind, while "Debi-debini" and its variant suggest that which is very

pure. So a very pure, ethereal wind was the vehicle given to carry the Holy Spirit concepts. In the first 1874 North Moluccan translation of the Apostles' Creed the translators simply imported the Malay "Roh Elkoedoes" in their translation. But while in western Indonesia this Malay term had a connection with pre-literary and Muslim understanding, and through Arabic could be the vehicle to carry the thrust of πνεῦμα, Π Ὅ, in eastern Indonesia this was not possible. Thus where the Malay/Indonesian "Roh Kudus" had both a connection with indigenous belief and a connection with Semitic thought it would seem reasonable to expect that something within the Biblical meaning-spectrum could be transferred to where the term had vogue. In the Moluccas this term had no such vogue. So the pure-ethereal-wind concept as a feasible vehicle which was not associated with the gikiri-complex was used. As, however, the gikiri-complex had been incorporated into the Powerfulness-through-Presence ideas, the result was that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit became largely an incomprehensible addendum. Powerfulness-through-Presence was the vehicle for the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Another factor was related to this. At times there occurred an intensity of experience, belief and worship within the general North Moluccan pre-literary religious outlook. Related to this was a Messianic tendency in religious thinking until recent years. At various times the movement to raise up a "Just or Benevolent Prince" began in this area. It does not seem, however, that such a belief was indigenous, but rather an imported concept; nevertheless it played an important part in the thinking in the area in the late-Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. In this clearly there was a combination of religious and political outlook. This belief in the Coming-Just-Prince had considerable significance in their circumstance.

Here again, in this "laboratory-type" situation, we have observed how the entry of the Christ Event into North Moluccan culture became at least a means to a paradigm shift in a re-presentation and reinterpretation process.

III. SOME TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS

Transition, translation, transposing, transplanting, transferring, transforming, transfiguring are varying expressions of the intercultural activity to which Christians are called and in which Biblical interpreters bear a special responsibility.

The entry of the Christ Event into Hellenistic culture had overwhelming consequences. However, the later entries also involved paradigm shifts in the re-interpretation process. The "Macedonian man" is well attested in many parts of the world. However the Moluccan "Exodus Experience" is not. Moreover, it is confirmed in the Moluccan accounts which speak of the Spirit's "coming-without-conversion-yet" and "Powerfulness-through-Presence". The early dogmatic discussion within Christianity involved

the interweaving of the Christ Event into, and transfiguration by the Christ Event of, Hellenism and its successors. But if the Christ Event is interwoven into, and transfigures, another culture with a much more ancient and much richer background (as in the case of certain pre-literary cultures), then could not the impact of that Christ Event become clearer? (See Boyd, 1974 and 1977, *passim*.)

How far was clarity produced by the fact that the Christ Event initially became interwoven with, and transfigured, Hellenistic culture and its successors? Much of Western Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand is heir to that Christ Event in Jewish, Greek, Latin, Celtic, Anglo-Saxon, German and French traditions, largely within succeeding cyclic-cultures. Do those interweavings of, and transfigurations by, the Christ Event, bring it out in total clarity? Or do other places do so more strongly?

We can see how the Christ Event must live, and yet transfigure, the culture in which it is placed, always at the same time struggling with the fact that it is the Divine which nevertheless has entered this world. It is perhaps because the Christ Event can never be exclusively identified either with one culture or one type of culture that Paul employs the ambiguous term " ἡ ὁκοή " (e.g., Romans 10:16-17; Galatians 3:2; see Taylor, p. 254) to describe the action by which the Christ Event enters a person's or a community's life, that is, the crucial step that leads to faith. Following from what Käsemann pointed out in the early 1950's (See Käsemann, 1951-1952, and 1952-1953) in relation to the varied New Testament theologies, the Christ Event must become pagan in the original meaning of that term ("must be earthed"), and yet must also be under the opposing Divine criticism.

Later entries of the Christ Event into other cultures are traditionally supposed to have produced theological expressions in a variety of the following three ways. First, there is a "baptism" of pre-Christian cultural expressions into Christianity. Second, there is the running in parallel and occasional positive or negative interaction of Christian and non-Christian beliefs and expressions. Third, there is the production of new Christian theological formulation and praxis. Frequently in one culture all three ways are involved to some degree.

For Biblical interpretation it is not sufficient simply to observe the three above for each culture. More needs to be done and for this reason I use "Biblical interpretation" in as wide a sense as possible. First, the base paradigm-shift factor for each culture needs to be observed. (For the North Moluccans, this is the complex of ideas surrounding their "Exodus Experience", and the Spirits "Coming-without-conversions-yet" and "Powerless-through-presence"). Second, it does not need to be assumed that the

interpretation *into* the culture need be as complex as that *out of* the largely Hellenistic paradigm (for the New Testament of least). C. S. Song speaks of the self-renewing qualities of a culture. Many other Asian theologians, for example, would see it more in terms of a culture which is clearer than that of Hellenism and its successors to the reception and expression of the Christ Event. Third, on the basis of this second point, there needs to be a continuous interaction between Biblical text (in Asia, often referred to as "Text A") and a parallel text (and or written) from the culture, as defined on the basis in the first point above. ("Text B"). (on these last two points, see, for example, Song, *passim*).

Biblical interpretation, therefore, at once becomes wider (into a broader range of questions, including the experiential and communal) and more focussed (into a particular culture). "Knowing" contexts is more a matter of living them than grasping them. Biblical interpretation is thus not common semantics but is rather diversely grounded in each culture, largely through the effects of the "primary Christian events" of the culture where there has been an appropriation of the Gospel or Christ Event.

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- Bijd -Bijdragen tot de Taal -, Land-en Volkendunde van Nederlansch-Indië (uitgegeven door het Koninklijk Instituut voor de Taal -, Land - en Volkendunde van Nederlandsch-Indië). 's-Gravenhage.
M.E.B. -Mededeelingen van het Bureau voor de Bestuurszaken der Buitenbezittingen, bewerkt door het Encyclopaedisch Bureau. Weltevreden (Batavia, Java).
M.T.Z. -"Mededeelingen": Tijdschrift voor Zendingswetenschap. Oegstgeest (The Netherlands).
Tijd -Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal, Land-en Volkendunde (uitgegeven door het (Koninklijk) Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen). Batavia (Java).
T.N.J -Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië. Batavia (Java).

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