

EDITORIAL

This volume deals with the declining influence of the Melanesian church on society, the impact of animistic beliefs on Melanesian Christians, and the influence of cultures on the gospel message.

Abel Haon explores why the church's influence in Melanesia is diminishing. He notes that nominalism, syncretism, and pragmatism make the church ineffective, while the philosophy that ministry should be institutionalised, and confined to specialists – who also have a narrow view of ministry – keep the church ineffective. He believes the answer lies in a “whole people” concept of the church, which means that the people of the church must have a passion for God, and desire to proclaim God's glory, while carrying out a holistic ministry to the people of Melanesia.

Timothy Misha evaluates Christian worship in the context of his tribe, the Iatmuls of Papua New Guinea. Although the Iatmuls put great emphasis on worship, they are influenced by traditional cultural practices, including spirit worship. The result is nominalistic and syncretistic beliefs, leading to inadequate worship. Timothy concludes with several insightful recommendations, worthy of consideration by Melanesian churches.

Krista Hanson investigates the influence of culture on the gospel message, noting that Paul used many methods of presenting the gospel – depending on the recipient culture. Krista concludes that the gospel transcends culture, but the presentation of the gospel will vary according to the contextualisation needs of the listeners. For those of us that have relied on a specific memorised gospel presentation, her article will challenge our thinking.

Not everyone will agree with the conclusions reached by the authors. However, we hope that, as you grapple with the issues, the thoughts of the authors will help you grow in your understanding of what God's Word says to your life and culture.

Doug Hanson.