

EDITORIAL

In the first article, Ossie Fountain critiques three approaches, used by the Christian Brethren church Bible schools in Papua New Guinea, to communicate theology. For each of the three approaches (topical, commentary, inductive), he provides insightful breakdowns of their strengths and weaknesses in relationship to contextualisation and globalisation. Ossie has spent many years teaching in Papua New Guinea, and his article shows a depth of discernment that should challenge every educator. His article is part three of a four-part series.

Next, Daniel Johnson grapples with contextualisation within a Muslim society. He asks, “Is it possible to be a child of God and fall under the broad national and cultural category of being a Muslim?” Daniel argues that contextualisation must not be neglected, because it is both biblical and strategic. He suggests four contextualisation principles, to be used within a Muslim context: adopt Muslim forms, maintain *ummah* (world community of Islam), coach new believers, and allow gradual transformations. He agrees there is a risk of syncretism in contextualising, however, that is outweighed by the failure to contextualise. The article is well researched and thought-provoking for anyone interested in ministry to Muslims.

Jon Paschke, based on his experience of teaching for many years in Vanuatu, gives specific recommendations for teaching cross-culturally in a Melanesian context. These include issues related to group, time, gender, kinship, and language, to name a few. He presents biblical arguments for teaching Christians in small groups, and gives ample evidence for its validity, in a Melanesian context. Jon presents a solidly-researched article that incorporates contemporary theories of adult education with traditional learning patterns of Melanesians. For a practical approach to teaching cross-culturally, read Jon’s article.

Victor Schlatter, in an intriguing article, shows how the Bible came alive for the Waola people of Papua New Guinea, once they related with the Hebrew culture of the Bible. He attributes this to the fact that third-

world countries, unlike Western countries, are uninfluenced by Hellenism. Victor incorporates an interesting blend of visits to Jerusalem with living among tribal people, far removed from Jerusalem. He shows that understanding Israel, its biblical history, and prophetic future, proved to be an important piece of the puzzle for the growth of the Waola church in Papua New Guinea.

Dan Seeland shows how the concept of reciprocity, within Melanesian culture, stands in stark contrast to the concept of grace in salvation. In Melanesian culture, “nothing is given for nothing”: obligations are integral to relationships within the clan. Combining his substantial understanding of Melanesian culture with sound anthropological and biblical research, Dan shows that salvation, as seen from the standpoint of obligation, does immense damage to the exaltation of Christ, and the glory of God. His prayer is that Melanesians, despite being bound by their animistic culture, can truly understand grace.

Not everyone will agree with the conclusions reached by the authors. However, we hope that, as you wrestle through these issues, the thoughts of the authors will help you to grow in your understanding of God’s Word, and what it may say to your life and culture.

Doug Hanson.