

EDITORIAL

In the first article, Revd Ako Arua and Daniel John Eka explore the Melanesian concept of the wantok system. They argue that, historically, the wantok system served a valid purpose in binding relationships within tribes, but now has departed from that original purpose. After looking at the wantok system from a biblical perspective, they propose keeping the wantok system, but using it to honour God, and not to please man. Revd Ako Arua and Daniel John Eka close their article with specific ways to operate the wantok system, based on biblical principles.

In the second article, Ewan Stilwell focuses on 19th-century missions from Tonga and Fiji. He discusses the conversion of Tonga and Fiji, and the missionary outreach of the Wesleyan churches of these two island groups. Ewan analyses this Wesleyan expansion, using four theses: the two-structure thesis, the theological-breakthrough thesis, the spiritual-dynamic thesis, and the thesis of climatic, contextual conditions. He concludes with recommendations for the churches, educational providers, and mission agencies of PNG and the Western world.

The third article is a case study for translating “sin” in the Tabo language of Papua New Guinea. Tim Schlatter addresses the question “Is animistic terminology adequate or does it miss the mark?” This is part one of two parts. The second part will be published in the next volume of the journal.

Tim introduces the problem by showing that the most-typical solution for translating ἁμαρτία in Papua New Guinea languages is to use the generic word for ἁμαρτία in conjunction with the verb ἁμαρτάνω “do/practise”. This is, indeed, the convention that the Tabo people have adopted, thus far, in their translation of the scriptures. The question, however, is raised as to whether such a solution accurately conveys the biblical meaning of ἁμαρτία for traditionally animistic people.

Next, he explores the theology of sin from a scriptural perspective. Sin is defined, and doctrine established, with both Old and New Testament views being considered. Following the biblical theology commentary, the Hebrew and Greek words, variously translated into English as “sin”, or one of its

synonyms, are presented, along with a summary of each word's usage. To complete the article's foundation, the importance of one's view of sin, relative to two major biblical doctrines – God's character (especially His holiness) and the atonement – is considered.

Tim then contrasts the way animist groups conceptualise sin with the view of scripture. Using missiological studies from among African peoples, Aboriginal Australians, and Melanesians, the ways in which animism regards spirit world organisation, the characteristics of spirit deities, and how deity is offended and appeased are investigated. The point is made that, in order to translate the scriptures, without reinforcing theological error, one must know how previously-held beliefs inherently conflict with parallel biblical doctrines. The chapter concludes with a summary of traditional Tabo belief. The various categories of spirit beings, and their interactions with humans, are detailed, followed by an explanation of what traditionally constitutes the basis for tribal morality. The moral sense of the Tabo word *kuba* (generic sin) is investigated to see what actions and attitudes were formerly thus labelled.

In part two, Tim will provide an overview of translation theory, present a specific solution for communicating sin in the translation of Tabo scriptures, and conclude the article, by expanding the decisions reached for translating ἁμαρτία in Tabo, to translation in general.

Whether you agree or disagree with the conclusions drawn by the authors, we hope that the convictions of the authors will challenge you to grow in your understanding of God's Word, and what it may say to your life and culture.

Doug Hanson.