

EDITORIAL

Ossie Fountain concludes his series of four articles analysing Christian Brethren church Bible training in Papua New Guinea. In this article, Ossie focuses on educational methodology, and concludes that CBC Bible Schools have not adequately contextualised global learning methods for the environment in Papua New Guinea. He offers recommendations, based on evaluations of several global and contextual educational methodologies. Ossie's broad understanding of Melanesians, and his in-depth research on learning, shines throughout the article.

We are living in a world of personal dramas and concerns. Problems that invade our lives, and our neighbour's, raise questions. Theologians, Roman Catholic, or otherwise, are called upon to find solutions, as seen in the following thought-provoking articles.

Philip Gibbs defines contextual theology as establishing a link between daily life and God's Word. Does preaching from the pulpit relate to important life issues in Papua New Guinea, such as politics, AIDS, the economy, and abuse of women? Philip gives four steps towards doing contextual theology: determining the issue, relating it to faith, dialoguing with God's Word and church teaching, and calling for a response. His article is a clear reminder to us all that our faith must have feet (James 1:27).

AIDS is a growing epidemic in Papua New Guinea. How can a loving God allow suffering? How do we respond to someone dying of AIDS? Mary McCarthy, in an article that will move you to compassion, addresses such questions. She opens the article with poems by Maura Elaripe Mea, who has AIDS, and has lost two babies to AIDS.

An evangelical perspective on Mary's article: We may solve the problem of human suffering by looking at it as a participatory element in Christ's suffering. However, we must not forget the fact that Christ's suffering is substitutionary, once for all, and complete, and that He suffered as the federal head of humanity, the "second Adam". Besides, He did not die innocently: His death was a knowing death. "Jesus knew that the Father had

put all things under His power, and that He had come from God, and was returning to God” (John 13:3). Any attempt to add to the salvific value of Christ’s suffering with our suffering would only rob the eternity of its dimensions and significance. Mary’s attempt to see a parallel in human suffering with the suffering of the Saviour, foretold in scriptures, in the Servant Song does not give much consolation. However, what we gain from this article is the fact that the scriptures are not alien to common human problems of sin, pain, and suffering. One cannot avoid bringing the salvific work of Christ on the cross into the temporal world of comparisons, in order that we may justifiably relate to it with our own dramas of suffering. But, in doing so, we miss the purpose of Christ’s incarnation and suffering, and His Lordship. However, to emulate the Saviour in our existential suffering is good: it transforms our goals, our purposes in life. Mary’s article shows that the need for pastoral care of AIDS patients, in the light of the mercy of God, is a practical reality in Papua New Guinea.

Soane Malia Pulotu addresses prostitution in Papua New Guinea, describing it as “silent suffering”. Through interviews with several active prostitutes, he describes what drives these women to prostitution, and asks questions, such as, “Why is there evil?” and “Who is God for the prostitutes?” Focusing in on Jesus’ response in Luke 7:50 and John 8:11, he reminds us that God loves, and suffered, for prostitutes, too.

Justin Ain Soongie writes on suffering, specifically the suffering of AIDS patients. He concludes that, just as Christ innocently suffered, we must help AIDS patients accept their suffering. However, Justin argues it is more than acceptance of their suffering, it is a realisation that they still have a life to live, and can make a positive impact on the world. The article is a call to pastors to shepherd, lovingly, those with AIDS.

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.