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**Towards a Theological Perspective on the Mystery of
Suffering in the Midst of Prosperity Theology
Within the Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches
in Papua New Guinea, Particularly Yangoru**

Maxon Mani

**The Death of Christ and its Meaning for Melanesians
from Paul's Letter to the Galatians:
From Fear to Freedom**

George Mombi

Journal of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools



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MELANESIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

Journal of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools

The *Melanesian Journal of Theology* aims to stimulate the writing of theology in Melanesia. It is an organ for the regular discussion of theological topics at scholarly level by staff and students of the member schools of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools (MATS), though contributions from non-members and non-Melanesians are welcome.

The *Melanesian Journal of Theology* is committed to the dialogue of Christian faith within Melanesian cultures. The Editorial Team will consider for publication all manuscripts of scholarly standard on matters of concern to Melanesian Christians and of general theological interest.

The opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Editor, Assistant Editor, or the member colleges of MATS. All articles have been edited to meet the requirements of the journal.

The journal is published semi-annually, normally in April and October. Articles may be submitted to the Editor at any time for consideration.

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EDITORIAL

The church in Melanesia mirrors some challenges that the global church faces, but it also encounters challenges unique to Melanesia. The challenges addressed by the two articles in this journal are perhaps the most important issues facing the church in Melanesia today: prosperity theology and spiritual forces.

Prosperity theology is a global phenomenon, but one that has taken deep roots in Melanesia. Maxon Mani, writing as a Melanesian, who grew up in the Yangoru area of Papua New Guinea, seeks to find the appropriate theological relationship between prosperity and suffering for his people. Recognising that prosperity theology easily takes root in Melanesia culture, because of its traditional beliefs, he raises the question as to the role of suffering within scripture, and, consequently, the role it should play in the theology of prosperity among the Yangoruan. He challenges believers to take a hard look at the theology by which they live.

George Mombi's article emphasises the distinctiveness of the church in Melanesia from the global church, but, at the same time, showing commonality with those places in the world where "nameless forces", such as ancestors, spirits, and sorcery are still considered to influence life. Identifying these nameless forces with *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*) in Galatians, he shows that the bondage, Paul was addressing, also faces Melanesian believers today, but it is a bondage that was overcome by the work of Christ on the cross. By applying Paul's teaching to Melanesians, George challenges believers to transform their worldview into one based on freedom in Christ, and not on bondage to spiritual forces.

These are not the first articles we have published on these topics, nor will they be last. And, not everyone will agree with the conclusions reached by these 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 your culture.

Doug Hanson.