

EDITORIAL

The goal of the *Melanesian Journal of Theology* is to publish articles that theologically address issues facing the church in the South Pacific. We strive to publish articles authored by Melaneseans, or, more broadly, South Pacific islanders, in an effort to create indigenous, biblically-based dialogue across the South Pacific to benefit the readers of this journal.

The four articles in this volume promote four theological themes: a theology of Christ (Christology), a theology of the last days (eschatology), a theology of the environment (ecothology), and a theology of business. Each of the theological themes addresses an issue in front of the church today. To combat the continued influence that traditional religion has on Melaneseans, Christ is magnified from the book of Colossians. To challenge the notion that the Bible is not for people of the South Pacific today, an eschatological framework for interpreting scripture is proposed. To fight the movement away from caring for creation in Melanesia, the term “ecothology” is introduced. To encourage the success of church-affiliated businesses, a theology of business is developed, based on scripture, and in light of Melanesian culture.

The first theological theme, Christology, is the focus of Cliff Kiru’s article. In it, he explores the description of Christ as the “image of God” in the creedal hymn of Colossians 1:15-20. He is moved by his findings, as he ponders Christ in relation to his culture, emphasising that, if Christians in Melanesia truly knew and understood the Christ of Colossians, they would be drawn “out of their spiritual poverty”, and no longer pursue answers to life’s questions through traditional beliefs and practices.

The second theological theme, eschatology, is the focus of Ma’afu Palu’s article. He argues that the best way to interpret scripture is from an eschatological perspective. It is important to understand the big picture of God at work from creation to the final judgment to help us appropriate the truths of scripture to our lives, whether as 1st-century believers, or South Pacific believers today. To put feet to his approach, Ma’afu suggests several principles for reading the New Testament, specifically the Gospels

and Epistles, an approach he refers to as “Gospel Eschatological Framework”. His framework includes looking back to the Old Testament, and looking forward to Christ’s return, while maintaining the cross as the centrepiece. In a South Pacific context, where myths general define the past, and the future is not considered, his approach is a challenge to people today.

Timothy Kwara draws our attention to a theology of creation-care, or ecotheology. The article weaves together scripture and Melanesian culture, while drawing input from prominent South Pacific theologians. Timothy’s decidedly historical approach is refreshing, since it emphasises the legacy of theologians native to the South Pacific, rather than turning exclusively to the West. The article highlights the efforts by Solomon Islands’ theologian, scholar, and activist, Leslie Boseto, in promoting the conservation of nature. Timothy’s conservation emphasis is warranted in today’s global economic climate, as the islands of the South Pacific deal with harvesting their vast natural resources in a way that preserves the environment.

John Hitchen presents a theology of business in the final article. Historically, missionaries to Melanesia downplayed church involvement with business. John, nevertheless, sees a role that business ventures can play in the church today. However, operating business ventures in Melanesia are not without their challenges, including the need for transformation of traditional worldviews, to be able to operate within the global environment of today. John offers recommendations from scripture for operating a successful business – a theology of business. He uses the Christian Leaders’ Training College as an example of combining business with theological education, with the goal of providing cost-effective training for future Christian leaders of Melanesia.

We hope that the articles in this volume will challenge you to think deeply about theological issues facing Melanesia and the South Pacific.

Doug Hanson,
Editor.