

EDITORIAL

This volume offers a variety of topics related to Christian theology in Melanesia: animism, conflict, wisdom, narrative and translation. Each topic, in its own way, adds to the on-going discussion of applying God's word in a Melanesian context.

Kent Mundhenk, drawing on his ten years of experience working among the Ningerum tribe of Papua New Guinea, describes and evaluates animism. He compares animistic beliefs about spirits and magic with Christian beliefs, and stresses that it is hard for the animist to understand the "exclusivity of the Christian God". Kent offers recommendations on how to reach animists with the gospel, highlighting that the presentation of the gospel must start where the animist is.

Conflict is a reality in every church, the world over, and Baptist churches in Papua New Guinea are no different. How should church leaders handle conflict in the church? Hans Lane answers this question, drawing on lessons from Paul's handling of conflict, described in Gal 2:11-21. Hans appeals to the authority of scripture, leadership integrity, and unity of the body, in managing conflict, and submits that conflict can be managed by confronting the person, confronting the problem, and confronting the situation. *[Hans passed away prior to the printing of this Journal. This Journal is dedicated to his memory.]*

In "Tribal Wisdom: Help in Understanding Biblical Wisdom", Daniel Honda shows the connections of wisdom in a traditional society to the basic need for wisdom in man, and in society in general. He gives a clear picture of how wisdom is transferred from one generation to another, showing the value that people in Kawelka society attached to wisdom. This should prepare the Kawelka people in Papua New Guinea to appreciate wisdom in the Bible, which points to eternal life, and peace with God.

Timo Lothmann appraises the Melanesian Pidgin translation of the Bible, the *Buk Baibel*. He notes that any translation of God's word must be "receptor-focused", and praises the use of the rural lect of adult Mamose-region Pidgin speakers, as the basis for the translation. He analyses the translation of names, units of money, Christian concepts, idioms, poetry, and illustrations, from a functional-equivalence theory of translation. Timo deduces that the *Buk Baibel* meets all prerequisites of a functional-equivalence translation, and believes the translation will impact Papua New Guinea for Christ.

One of the significant developments in biblical studies is the renewed interest in the merits of a narrative presentation of the faith compared with that based on prescriptive statements. The article by Ken McLean and Japhet Vegogo reviews the characteristics of narrative, and shows that it effectively conveys a message that requires the readers to think divergently, whereas prescriptive statements converge onto a single understanding. The article concludes that both approaches are appropriate and useful.

In the last article, Eric Schering critiques a book by Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. Although Eric does not agree with everything in the book, he believes that the book has many valid insights into the future of Christianity around the world.

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.