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# MELANESIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY



Journal of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools

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Mt Hagen WHP
Papua New Guinea
Email: graduate_studies@cltc.ac.pg
Phone: (675) 276-5028

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**Editor:** **Doug Hanson**
Christian Leaders' Training College

**Assistant Editor:** **Robyne Hobson**
Christian Leaders' Training College

# EDITORIAL

The primary focus of this issue of the *Melanesian Journal of Theology* is on the third annual Conference and meeting of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools (MATS), held at the Christian Leaders' Training College (CLTC), at Banz, near Mt Hagen, July 7-10, 2014. The keynote speaker was Ma'afu Palu, from Sia'atoutai Theological College in Tonga. Many participants were attracted from around the country.

The first three papers in this issue of the Journal were presented at the Conference. The fourth paper is a master's thesis by Alan Sanga, a student at CLTC.

In the first paper, Scott Charlesworth gave a comprehensive Report on MATS 2014. He reviewed recommendations from MATS 2013, and their implementation at MATS 2014. His Report went on to list the various papers presented at the Conference, and commented very favourably on the fact that two women had presented papers. He believes this augurs well for the involvement of Melanesian women in theological education. He expressed the hope that MATS would continue to be a valuable forum for postgraduate students to experience an academic conference, present research papers, and meet other students and faculty from theological institutions around the country.

In the second paper, Peter Frost discussed the question of what is a just war, and how did it relate to tribal fighting. Tribal fighting within Papua New Guinea is not a new phenomenon. Often, warring parties could be closely related, speak the same language, and all claim strong allegiance to the Christian faith. He quoted Garry Trompf's observation, "Clan allegiance, once re-enlivened in all its demanding reality, can rapidly undercut all other ties, even those of the church".

Peter's paper made a thorough study of what the scriptures say about a just war. He then went on to discuss the difficulties of applying a just-war tradition in Melanesia, concluding with a call for reconciliation not retaliation.

In the third paper, Ruben Martello discussed a gospel response to payback. His paper examined the question of payback from the perspective of the life, work, and teachings of St Francis of Assisi. His paper concluded with the words of St Francis of Assisi, "They are truly peacemakers, who are able to preserve their peace of mind and heart for love of our Lord Jesus Christ, despite all that they suffer in this world".

Allan Sanga was the author of the fourth paper, which sought to contextualise Paul's expressions of community in Ephesians 2, for Melanesian Christians. His paper opened with, "The concept of community is like a backbone to the very existence of Melanesians". While Melanesians are communal people, they find it daunting to conceptualise and transfer the meaning of Christian community into their Christian lives.

The basic worldview in Melanesian cultures has been influenced by animism, or primal religion, which has always provided an interpretation for the events and experiences in life. Flowing from this, fear now controls much Melanesian activity, which has led to the importance of *tambu*, or sacredness of persons, space, or objects, in an effort to control the spirits.

Allan then undertook a detailed analysis of the biblical concept of community in Eph 2. Because of a perceived lack of understanding of the biblical concept of community by Melanesian Christians, an understanding of the community of God needs to be taught. It is not about individual believers. It is more than that. It is about a community of believers that God Himself is bringing together. This calls for vibrant Christian leaders, in all denominations, to collaborate in creating the atmosphere of a Christian community

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

Robyne Hobson,
Assistant Editor.

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# REPORT ON MATS 2014

**Scott Charlesworth**

*Scott Charlesworth has an MA (Early Christian and Jewish Studies) from Macquarie University in Australia, and a PhD (Greek) from the University of New England, also in Australia. He has just returned home after six-and-a-half years of teaching Biblical Languages and New Testament at Pacific Adventist University in Papua New Guinea.*

The third annual conference and meeting of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools was held July 7-10, at the Christian Leaders' Training College (CLTC), Banz, near Mt Hagen. Building on the momentum created by MATS 2013, this year's conference again attracted participants from around the country. In attendance were faculty from the following member and associate institutions: Catholic Theological Institute, CLTC, Good Shepherd Seminary, Martin Luther Seminary, Melanesian Institute, Pacific Adventist University, Pacific Institute of Languages, Arts, and Translation (SIL), and Sonoma Adventist College. Also in attendance were a number of overseas visitors: Derek Tovey, from the College of St John the Evangelist in Auckland; Ruben Martello, a Franciscan priest from Sydney; Eckart Garbe, a social and political scientist from Germany; and Wendy Toulmin, Executive Officer of the Langham Partnership Australia.

Another overseas visitor, Ma'afu Palu, from Sia'atoutai Theological College in Tonga, was the keynote speaker. Ma'afu, whose doctoral studies in Sydney were sponsored by the Langham Partnership, argued that contextualisation, as it is now practised, leads back to culture, and away from the Bible. Jesus was a Jew, not a "Pacifician" (to use Ma'afu's term), and "Pacificians" were pagan "Gentiles", not Jews. That is, pre-Christian Pacific cultures were idolatrous, and contrary to the gospel. Therefore, application of the Bible across cultures needs to be Christ- not culture-centred. Instead of trying to bring the Bible to culture, the Bible must be allowed to criticise and correct culture. In his final presentation, Ma'afu demonstrated how biblical theology might respond to contemporary Pacific

issues, like suicide and sexually-transmitted diseases. It is probably fair to say that attendees were challenged and inspired in equal measure. What stood out, in view of the dearth of Bible-directed leadership in Papua New Guinea, was the potential for courageous Melanesian theologians and biblical scholars to make lasting contributions.

Ten of the 14 papers presented addressed the conference theme of "Gospel responses to vital issues facing the Melanesian world in the 21st century: biblical, theological, missiological". These included Franco Zocca (MI), "Gospel responses to the growth of Islam in Papua New Guinea"; Thomas Davai Jr. (PAU), "The triangle of 'Ghora' killing in the Rigo inland: a biblical response"; Nellie Hamura (Chaplain, UPNG), "The sting of the local response to sanguma sorcery: a challenge for Christianity in Melanesia"; Gabriel Kuman (MI), "A need for providing culturally-appropriate HIV services to people living with HIV/AIDS by contextualising a theology of love, in the context of Papua New Guinea"; Simon Davidson (SAC), "Mission possible in Melanesia: the gospel challenges cultural beliefs, leading to 'worldview conversion' "; Moses Bakura (CLTC), "Redirecting *gutpela sindaun* in Madang Province from the Lord's prayer perspective for contemporary Kire people"; Robert Jonathan (SAC), "An 'equipping model': the answer to the nurturing challenge for Christianity in Melanesia"; Peter Frost (SIL), "The just-war tradition and tribal fighting"; Ruben Martello, "The customary norm of payback: a gospel response, from a Franciscan perspective"; and Peter Korave (PAU), "Towards a Melanesian contextual theology of reconciliation". The other four papers were in the areas of theology, philosophy, and New Testament studies. They were: Sussie Stanley (PAU), "The problem of evil and suffering in the great controversy context, in view of God's redemption plan"; Brandon Zimmerman (GSS), "Plato's argument for celibacy"; Derek Tovey, "Jesus, the stronger one: an intertextual association with Samson?"; and Joses Imona (SAC), "*Angelou autou* in Acts 12: icon of divine protection and deliverance".

Several things are worth noting about this year's presentations. (1) For the first time, two women presented papers. This augurs well for the involvement of Melanesian women in theological education. (2) MATS

continues to be a valuable forum for postgraduate students to experience an academic conference, present research papers, and meet other students and faculty from theological institutions around the country. This year, Sussie Stanley and Peter Korave, both MTh candidates at PAU, presented papers, based on their soon-to-be-completed theses. (3) A number of other presenters drew on research completed as part of their master's degrees. Most of these were in applied theology, or missiology, highlighting, once again, the need to encourage more postgraduate students into biblical and theological studies. (4) It is good to see the continuing involvement of staff from MI and SIL, institutions with associate membership of MATS. That involvement will be further extended next year when SIL hosts MATS 2015 at their Pacific Institute of Languages, Arts, and Translation at Kainantu.

In line with a recommendation of the 2013 General Meeting, evenings were set aside for discussion of theological curriculum. After Scott Charlesworth opened proceedings with a paper entitled "The future of theological education in Melanesia: reflections on six years in Papua New Guinea", presentations were made on the curricula of individual institutions by Bruce Renich (CLTC), Scott Charlesworth (PAU), Ulrich Bergmann (MLS), David Willis (CTI), and Brandon Zimmerman (GSS). One point that kept surfacing during these discussions was the significant challenge that poor English skills pose for theological studies. Although basic theological studies are interwoven, several institutions have chosen to dedicate the first (MLS) and second (CTI, GSS) years of study to improving English skills. Given the large bearing that this problem has on the quality of pastors and theological educators, other institutions would also do well to consider how they could address it. Another benefit that might come out of the curriculum consultation is that individual institutions can gauge the deficiencies in their own curriculum in relation to those of other schools. Moreover, changes made to rectify such deficiencies could begin a process of standardising curriculum, as far as that is possible, across institutions. This is one way in which theological schools can engage ecumenically, without undermining denominational emphases. On the subject of ecumenism, in a guest address on the last day of the conference Eckart Garbe told participants that the Institute for Research and Social Analysis (IRSA) in Suva has been commissioned to investigate the current state of ecumenism in the Pacific.

As part of that research, Eckart, who comes to PNG three times per year, will be talking to all of the churches in the Pacific about an appropriate way forward, whether it is advisable to strengthen ecumenism, revive it, or give it a new form.

As usual, the General Meeting of the Association was held on the last day of the conference. Besides agreeing that MATS 2015 can be hosted by SIL, the meeting decided that MATS would revive its accreditation function, develop an audit instrument or manual, and vote on this instrument at the next General Meeting. In order to prepare for that vote at MATS 2015, each evening will be devoted to a discussion of accreditation. It was felt that an accreditation function would encourage cooperation and accountability among member institutions. MATS might also become a resource for weaker schools, through invited consultative visits. With this in mind, it was also decided that the Secretary-Treasurer will send a letter to theological schools, accompanied by reports on MATS 2011, 2013, and 2014, which will say that the MATS president and/or vice president are willing to visit theological schools, in order to talk about the work of the Association and to answer any questions that decision-makers might have. The General Meeting closed with a unanimous vote of thanks for the work of Doug Hanson, William Longgar, and the CLTC team, in organising and hosting another very enjoyable and collegial conference.

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# JUST WAR AND TRIBAL FIGHTING – RECONCILIATION NOT RETALIATION

**Peter J. Frost**

*Peter Frost graduated from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity in Missions and Evangelism (2010), and a Master of Theology in Christian Missions (2011). He currently serves as the Language Resources Manager for the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Papua New Guinea.*

## ABSTRACT

Tribal fighting had been happening in Papua New Guinea long before the Europeans discovered Papua New Guinea. Melanesia is highly relational, and fighting has been the traditional way to gain power and prestige in a community. Relationships were balanced with warfare, and group identity was solidified with allies and enemies. The problem facing the church in Melanesia is how to address tribal fighting from a biblical, historical, and moral framework that fits the context of Melanesia. In the Old Testament, God directed Israel to annihilate certain people groups. Holy war, חֵרֶם (chērem), had specific guidelines to be followed. Some have viewed the Old Testament as allowing for warfare, and the New Testament teaching that warfare is sinful. An examination of several passages of scripture in the Old Testament and New Testament will reveal that there is a time to fight. Historically, the "just-war tradition" states three criteria for a war to be considered justified. From Augustine to Aquinas, to the Reformers, to modern ethicists, the tradition has been carefully crafted. By applying the just-war tradition to one particular case of tribal fighting, a gospel response to tribal fighting begins to take shape. Through the application of scripture, the examination of the just-war tradition, and the moral responsibility of the church, one overarching theme becomes clear. Reconciliation, not retaliation, is the proper response of the individual and the community.

## INTRODUCTION

When fighting broke out between two neighbouring villages near SIL-PNG, I was shocked to hear the news. The two villages were engaged in a war for over two months. Seven people were killed as a result of this fighting. One village was blocked from working at the institutions in the valley, and stories of atrocities, which rivalled world conflicts, were abundant. How does the church respond to this kind of situation? Two Christian villages, with generations of inter-marriage, were involved in this fighting.

I will briefly examine tribal warfare in Papua New Guinea, what the Bible has to say concerning war and killing, the just-war tradition, and, finally, how should any church respond to such conflict. As an outsider, the question that comes to mind is how can a fight between two people suddenly become a fight between two villages. The passages that will be examined in the Old Testament and New Testament serve as background passages for the just-war tradition, and help clarify the issues involved in the just-war tradition. The passages from the Old Testament focus on חֵרֶם (chērem), holy war. The reason for addressing holy war is because I have heard some of the people involved in the fighting refer to the fight as a "holy war". The passages from the New Testament relate to the attitude of the believer. I will not offer the Pacifist point of view, because I do not believe that it would be accepted in the Papua New Guinean context, and I do not believe it is the appropriate response for the church. The just-war tradition will be briefly explained, and a response to tribal fighting will be offered.

This paper will not examine the root causes of this particular fight, nor will interviews be conducted to determine whether or not the fighting was justified. This paper is more of a reflection, from the etic point of view. Limited emic perspective is provided as I questioned Papua New Guineans during the fighting, or in discussing this topic, but, again, these conversations were informal, and used by me to understand their perspective. Reflecting on these conversations over the course of many months has led me to produce this paper.

## Basic Assumptions

In addressing tribal warfare as a vital issue facing the Melanesian world, the author is making some basic assumptions. Firstly, the issue addressed in this paper does not affect all of Melanesia directly, but does have an impact on the church in Melanesia. Secondly, Melanesian culture is highly relational. Thirdly, as an outsider, the author must rely on the willingness of Melanesians to share the emic view. Fourthly, as an outsider, the author must rely on published research. Fifthly, the author does not have access to all of the available published research on tribal fighting in Papua New Guinea, many anthropologists have studied tribal warfare in Papua New Guinea, but the author has not been able to review their published works. Sixthly, principles of this paper apply to all cultures, because violence is prevalent in all societies, not just Melanesia.

## Tribal Fighting

Within the context of tribal fighting in Papua New Guinea, a Westerner is immediately struck with the sense of a lack of justice. During the time of the recent fighting near The Summer Institute of Linguistics Ukarumpa (SIL-PNG) centre, I served for two months as the Security Operations Manager. While SIL-PNG's policy is not to choose sides during periods of fighting, many ex-patriots were concerned with the level of violence that was occurring so close to our homes, with people we know, and with people we know to be Christians.

Tribal fighting within Papua New Guinea is not a new phenomenon. A brief skimming of articles and books, while researching this paper, has revealed tremendous research on the topic of tribal fighting and warfare. If one has the interest and the resources, gathering all the articles and books referenced by some of the recent writings could prove profitable for further study. It is beyond the scope of this paper to document the history of tribal warfare in Papua New Guinea, other than to state the existence, history, and continued presence of tribal warfare in Papua New Guinea.

What made the fighting particularly difficult to understand was the fact that the two villages involved were closely related, spoke the same language, and all claimed strong allegiance to the Christian faith. Garry W. Trompf

observed, "Clan allegiance, once re-enlivened in all its demanding reality, can rapidly undercut all other ties, even those of the church".[1] Dan Seeland echoes Trompf, "Relationships outside the clan may fail; clan relationships are expected to last. In Melanesia, the clan tie is strong, and serves, in effect, to promote the life of the clan."[2] Through conversations with multiple sources, I have ascertained the events that lead to the fighting. Firstly, a dead tree was cut down inside a coffee block. Secondly, the man responsible for the coffee block asked the general manager and director of the Coffee Research Institute (CRI) if they had given permission for the tree to be cut. Thirdly, the security supervisor was the person who had given permission for the tree to be cut down. Fourthly, violence broke out in the CRI director's office. Fifthly, the police were called and broke up the fight. Sixthly, the man from Aserangka stated to the police that he wanted to pursue his charges in court. Seventhly, one Sunday morning, a man from Aserangka was cut to death while working in his garden by men from Onamuna. The reality of clan allegiance clearly outweighed other allegiances – Christianity, the justice system, and the laws of Papua New Guinea.

Trompf points to the difficulty in transitioning from the old culture. "For peoples, whose traditions set such store by warriorhood, and clan solidarity, in the face of all-too-proximate enemy neighbours, the achievement of a genuinely peaceful cross-cultural order requires an enormous shift of consciousness."[3] This "shift of consciousness" is faced by anyone who comes to Christ. The shift is not unique to Melanesian culture. People from any culture experience the same difficulty when shifting from a non-Christian worldview to a Christian worldview. Paul admonishes Christians to "put off the old man". Trompf insightfully states:

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[1] Garry W. Trompf, *Payback: The Logic of Retribution in Melanesian Religions*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 331.
[2] Dan Seeland, "Obligation in the Melanesian Clan Context and Its Effect Upon the Understanding of the Gospel of Grace", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 20-2 (2004), p. 92.
[3] Trompf, *Payback*, p. 322.

> The clash between traditional expectations about justified revenge, and the insistence on the maintenance of law and order by representatives of the new superstructures is very striking! Through it, on the one hand, we see the age-old resilience of primal religion. Admittedly, the accepted course of violent action has been reinforced by a politicisation of payback, by a more-conscious agreement among the combatants to keep the agencies of change from interfering with what tradition dictated as a group's spirit-sanctioned imperatives.[4]

Here is the heart of the matter. The traditional way of dealing with conflict (revenge and retaliation) and the biblical way of dealing with conflict (reconciliation) stand opposed to one another. As Seeland noted, "Clan members are expected to help each other with gardening, house-building, and fighting, in paying out bride price and compensation claims, and in paying school fees, and other expenses".[5] The church has the authority and responsibility to speak to the problems. The authority is derived from Christ Himself, and the responsibility is to Christ Himself.

In discussing the fighting with Papua New Guineans from other parts of the country, there is a clear distinction made between highlanders and those from the coast. The highlanders felt the cause for the fighting was unjust. As one stated to me (in Tok Pisin), "If the fight was over land or family, it would be alright".[6] To this individual, fighting over who cut down a dead tree was unjustified. When I asked a Papua New Guinean, who grew up at the SIL Ukarumpa Centre, what she thought of the fighting, she replied, "The idea of payback is preventing the country from moving forward. Progress can't come if we keep going back to the old ways."[7] While discussing tribal warfare and violence with a man from Western Province, he stated, "The people don't understand what the Bible is teaching them".[8] Glenn Banks offers an insightful observation. He observes, "[W]hile

[4] Ibid., p. 329.
[5] Seeland, "Obligations in the Melanesian Clan Context", pp. 93-94.
[6] Aura Tepi, conversation on "Fighting between Aserangka and Onamuna", November 2013.
[7] Eva Waram, conversation on "Thoughts on tribal fighting", May 2, 2014.
[8] Katawer Baku, conversation on "Thoughts on tribal fighting", May 2, 2014.

conflicts in Papua New Guinea have always been, and still are, driven by disputes over resources, they are better understood as conflicts around identity, rather than resources".[9] Here is the dilemma. What identity are Papua New Guineans striving for? What is the biblical standard for such fighting? Is there a moral obligation within Papua New Guinean society to prevent two villages from fighting?

Trompf notes, "A moot point, though it is, as to whether traditional revenge warfare could ever be 'finally closed' between long-standing enemy groups; most cultures had devices to bring about at least the temporary halt to hostilities".[10] During a group conversation about the fighting, a long-term employee of SIL-PNG from Aserangka stated, "I don't want to have peace with them yet. I would have to look at murderers walking by my house every day. We need time to pass before we work the peace agreement."[11] Banks points out, "[C]onflicts are never finally 'resolved'. Just as no current conflict is without 'history' that links the participants in some way, so these same current conflicts are likely to form the background to future conflicts, even when it appears that the parties have 'settled' their differences."[12] The ability to forget wrongs suffered continues to feed the current fighting.

## GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Papua New Guinea does have a law against tribal fighting. The Inter-Group Fight Act of 1977 delineates penalties for participating in fighting. Robert Ganim, the Member for Wabag, stated, "The Inter-group Fighting Act of 1977 has been one these laws [to end tribal fighting] that was introduced in that respect. Yet it is one of the least enforced laws in the country, since that time on, all at the expense of tribal fighting, which is still a common occurrence in the Highlands to date."[13] The author has heard of the

[9] Glenn Banks, "Understanding 'Resource' Conflicts in Papua New Guinea", in *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 49-1 (April 2008), pp. 23.
[10] Trompf, *Payback*, p. 331.
[11] Sam Baimako, conversation on "Fighting between Aserangka and Onamuna", November 2013.
[12] Banks, "Understanding 'Resource' Conflicts", p. 26.
[13] Ramcy Wama, "Wabag MP Challenges 1977 PNG Tribal Fighting Law", in *PNG Post-Courier*, July 16, 2013, http://pidp.eastwestcenter.org/pireport/2013/July/07-16-17.htm.

responses by the police to end violence. Mobile squads are deployed between the warring factions. If an area is declared a "fighting zone", houses could be burned. To the author, this response seems excessive. If the threat of judicial punishment is not enough to end tribal fighting, then what could the church do? Before addressing the response of the church, it is necessary to examine the scriptures regarding violence and warfare.

### *Biblical Violence*

One difficulty in discussing tribal fighting in Papua New Guinea is that the Old Testament contains many examples of warfare, warfare sanctioned by God. Because of the lack of understanding of what the Old Testament teaches on warfare, some Papua New Guineans view tribal fighting as an acceptable means to bring God's judgment on others. Improper reading of the New Testament could lead one to a pacifist position. The just-war tradition provides an answer to the issues facing tribal fighting in Papua New Guinea. To clarify what the Bible teaches, an examination of relevant passages is required.

### *Old Testament*

In the Old Testament, God commanded the children of Israel to utterly destroy certain people groups, because of their sin. When the LORD promised Abraham that his descendants would inhabit the land of Canaan, He stated, "And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." (Gen 15:16 ESV). After the children of Israel had wandered for nearly 40 years, the LORD God instructed Moses:

> Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you and destroy all their figured stones and destroy all their metal images and demolish all their high places. And you shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it (Num 33:51-53 ESV).

The reason for possessing the land was twofold. Firstly, it was promised to Abraham. Other people lived there (Canaan), but God chose this land for

Abraham's descendants. Secondly, the sin of the inhabitants of the land had reached completion. God was gracious in dealing with the Canaanites, but He knew they would not repent.

War is a common event in the Old Testament. Violence permeates the pages from Genesis to Malachi. What was the purpose of the warfare? God was demonstrating His sovereign control and right to judge individuals and nations. One important Hebrew word, חֵרֶם (chērem), holy war, reveals God's sanction on warfare.

*Exodus 17*

The first passage examined is Ex 17:13-16. This is the first example of חֵרֶם (chērem), holy war. Even though the text does not contain the Hebrew word חֵרֶם (chērem), the idea is clear. Ex 17:13-16 (ESV) reads,

> And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven." And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The LORD is my banner, saying "A hand upon the throne of the LORD! The LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

John Durham comments, "The battle between Yahweh and Amalek will continue across the generations, because the Amalekites have raised a hand against Yahweh's throne, that is, they have challenged His sovereignty by attacking His people".[14] God always defends His people. He will not allow anyone or any nation to defy Him forever. God's judgment on Amalek had been stated and would be completed.

Douglas Stuart lists 12 propositions of an Israelite Holy War. Relevant to tribal warfare are propositions 4 through 9.

[14] John I. Durham, *Exodus*, Word Biblical Commentary, Waco TX: Word Books, 1987, p. 237.

4. Holy war could be fought only for the conquest or defence of the promised land. Israel had no right to any other land, or to warfare for any other purpose.

5. Only at Yahweh's call could holy war be launched. There was no opportunity to hold a national referendum, or for a king, or any other person, including the High Priest, to declare holy war. God alone was the arbiter of when such a war would be undertaken, if at all, and a true holy war was thus fought strictly and only at His call.

6. Solely through a prophet could that divine call come. Prophets were spokespersons for God, who did not make up their messages, but said what God had placed in their minds to say. Neither priest, nor king, nor noble, nor tribal leaders, nor any other authorities, except a prophet were in a position to declare a holy war.

7. Yahweh did the real fighting in a holy war, because the war was always His.

8. Holy war was a religious undertaking, involving fasting, abstinence from sex, and/or other forms of self-denial. It was an act of obedience to God, and not of national pride, or military strategy.

9. A goal of holy war was the total annihilation of an evil culture (the enemy, the Canaanites). This is based on Gen 15:12-16, in which God reveals to Abraham the plan of conquest as a means of eliminating the "Amorites" (Canaanites) once their progressively evil culture had become so corrupt that God could do nothing other than to exterminate it. The total

> annihilation of the enemy, and all that might have been taken as plunder, followed logically from this commitment.[15]

Comparing each proposition with tribal warfare in Papua New Guinea reveals important points for the church. Applying proposition 4 to tribal warfare, one draws the conclusion that the defence of one's property is acceptable. Proposition 5 places the right to call a holy war on God alone. No one else has the privilege. According to proposition 6, only a true prophet could speak on the Lord's behalf. It begs the question, who is the true prophet to speak for God today? Proposition 7 reveals God's providence in the war. God would fight to defend His name. Proposition 8 shows that the holy war was fought in obedience to God. Proposition 9 reveals God's judgment on the culture. The evil was to be eradicated, and its influence permanently ended. In summation, the holy war was all about God. Israel was to be obedient in fighting, because God Himself spoke.

*Numbers*

Even during the time in the wilderness, Israel learned how to fight. Num 21:1-3 records that Israel made a vow to utterly destroy Arad's cities, and God honoured their request. V. 2 contains the use of חֵרֶם (chērem). It is another early example of the use of the word, and the utter destruction of the people and their possessions. Later in the same chapter, Moses records the defeat of Sihon and Og, the Amorites. Israel did not destroy the cities, but they became the inhabitants of the conquered cities. In Num 31, the LORD again directs war to be waged. This war was to be waged against the Midianites for the sin caused by Balaam. The only humans spared in this war were young girls, who had never had sexual relations.[16] Timothy Ashley comments on Num 31:1-3, "What is meant is an executive action on behalf of Yahweh, carried out through Israel, to vindicate the honour of Yahweh and Israel, which had been sullied by the matter of Baal-Peor."[17]

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[15] Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, The New American Commentary, Nashville TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006, pp. 395-397.

[16] Which could be taken as wives or slaves.

[17] Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament, Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1993, p. 591.

*Deuteronomy*

In Deut 20, Moses explains the rules of war to the nation of Israel. Of particular importance to this paper are vv. 16-18 (ESV).

> But in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, but you shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the LORD your God has commanded, that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the LORD your God.

חֵרֶם (chērem) appears at the beginning of v. 17, which the ESV translates as "devote them to complete destruction". Allan C. Emery states, "The reason given for devastating the cities of these nations is like that of Deut 7:1-5, namely, to prevent the inhabitants from causing Israel to deviate from its covenant with God".[18] The list of names varies from Deut 7, but the purpose is of the complete destruction of these nations. Merrill, commenting on Deut 7:1-5, writes, "This drastic action was taken as a form of immediate divine judgment upon those who had sinned away their day of grace. It also was to preclude their wicked influence on God's covenant people."[19] Merrill further explains the sin of the nations in Deut 20, "Moreover, they had so irrevocably and implacably set themselves against the lordship of the Lord, and were such a moral and spiritual risk to His people Israel that there was no other course of action than to annihilate them, men, women, and children".[20] In another book, Merrill states, "Moses also exhorted Israel to put certain Canaanite cities under חֵרֶם (chērem), explaining that this meant that they could make no treaties with them, nor intermarry with their citizens

[18] Allan C. Emery, "חֵרֶם (chērem)", in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, T. Desmond Alexander, David W. Baker, eds, Downers Grove IL: IVP, 2003, p. 386.
[19] Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, Nashville TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994, pp. 179-180.
[20] Ibid., p. 286.

(Deut 7:1-3). Rather, Israel must destroy their altars, sacred stones, Asherah poles, and images (v. 5)".[21]

The use of חֵרֶם (chērem) in Deuteronomy focuses on the protection of Israel in keeping the laws and statutes of their covenant with God. God sovereignly knew the corruption that the nations would bring on Israel. Additionally, the defiance of the Canaanite nations to the rule of God demanded punishment. Reading through the Old Testament reveals that the nations did teach Israel to sin against, and rebel against, their Lord.

*Joshua*

The conquest of Jericho bears mention at this point. The instruction to the army of Israel was to destroy Jericho and everything in it (Josh 6:17). The Hebrew word חֵרֶם (chērem) is used to denote that the city of Jericho was devoted to the Lord. "The story of Jericho's fall to Israel provides clear examples of the first use. The whole city is called a 'devoted thing', and all Israelites are warned to keep themselves from the 'devoted thing', which likely is a reference to items within the city, all of which had to be burned if flammable and, if not, given to God."[22] The battle of Jericho demonstrates the propositions previously listed in this paper. God fought the battle, and claimed everything in the city as His. Jericho would be the first-fruit of the Promised Land, it was devoted to God, and the possessions were holy.

Marten Woudstra asserts, "The symbolical nature of this event is also expressed by the fact that the *curse* applied to Jericho and its inhabitants is to be most severe. This curse (Hebrew חֵרֶם (chērem) meant that something or someone was absolutely and irrevocably consecrated so that it could not be redeemed (Lev 27:28-29). It also meant that the object (person) was sentenced to utter destruction (Deut 13:16)."[23] Jericho would serve as a

[21] Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 1987, p. 110.
[22] Leon J. Wood, "חֵרֶם (chērem)", in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol 1, R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Bruce K. Waltke, eds, Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1980, p. 325.
[23] Marten H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament, Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1981, pp. 112-113.

vivid reminder of what חֵרֶם (chērem) meant. In v. 21 we read, "Then they devoted all in the city to destruction, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys, with the edge of the sword".

The book of Joshua is full of examples of God's chosen people waging war on the occupants of the land. Josh 10 recounts a battle with a great slaughter, in which the Lord Himself participated, and the killing of the five Amorite kings. In Josh 11, the "struck them" phrase occurs three times, with the conclusion found in Josh 11:17b-18 (ESV), "And he captured all their kings and struck them and put them to death. Joshua made war a long time with all those kings." The conquest did not end with Joshua, nor did warfare cease throughout the Promised Land. God had a plan for the nation of Israel, and fighting would continue to play an integral part in their existence.

*Summary*

Even after the land was divided up, God still wanted Israel to know how to fight. "Now these are the nations that the LORD left, to test Israel by them, that is, all in Israel who had not experienced all the wars in Canaan. It was only in order that the generations of the people of Israel might know war, to teach war to those who had not known it before" (Judg 3:1-2 ESV). Throughout the Old Testament, we see Israel involved in fighting wars. Saul and David were both warrior kings. But, is there a shift in the New Testament? Is God suddenly becoming the God of Peace, and not war?

***New Testament***

Moving from the Old Testament to the New Testament, one is struck by the seeming change towards violence. Had the captivity changed the people, or changed God? The teachings of Jesus and the apostles appear to support a pacifist point of view. Four passages from Matt 5 will be examined, as well as Rom 12:17-21, Jam 4:1-3, and 1 Pet 3:8-9. While the Old Testament is full of examples that seem to support warfare and retaliation, the New Testament speaks of reconciliation.

*Matthew 5:9*

Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God". Firstly, by stating that there exist peacemakers means that enmity, strife, or warfare exists. Secondly, "[M]oreover, peacemaking is costly. It involved a cross for Jesus, and it involves a cross for His followers (Matt 10:37-39). According to Jesus and the Evangelists, no cost is too great for the privilege of receiving, experiencing, and sharing God's peace."[24] Thirdly, peacemakers are recognised as belonging to God. They do not fear man, because they know that God is protecting them.

David Turner affirms, "This beatitude is not about being a passively peaceful person, but about being an active reconciler of people".[25] Reconciliation demonstrates a complete trust in God. Furthermore, he states, "Their experience of peace with God enables them to seek the cessation of hostilities, and the ultimate welfare of the world. Although the kingdom message itself may offend some people and lead to hostility, Jesus's disciples actively seek harmonious relationships with others."[26] The inner peace that a Christian experiences leads to an outer peace with others. Turner explains, "Jesus's reminder that peacemakers (not warmongers) have God's approval is sorely needed".[27] One of the key words that Turner uses in two of the quotes is active. Peacemakers are actively seeking to reconcile enemies or potential enemies.

D. A. Carson argues, "The Christian's role as peacemaker extends not only to spreading the gospel, but to lessening tensions, seeking solutions, ensuring that communication is understood. Perhaps his most difficult assignments will take place on those occasions when he is personally involved… He will not confuse issues, even important issues, with his own ego-image . . . he will learn to lower his voice and smile more broadly in proportion to the

[24] Timothy J. Geddert, "Peace", in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, eds, Downers Grove IL: IVP, 1992, p. 605.
[25] David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2008, p. 152.
[26] Ibid., p. 153.
[27] Ibid.

intensity of the argument."[28] The church must be active when rumours of hostilities arise in the community. Those who pursue peace in Melanesia will have to be church leaders, who are willing to humble themselves, and potentially endure the ridicule of their communities, when they actively oppose retaliation. Daryl Charles and Timothy Demy state, "Peace and stability themselves are the fruit of justice. For this reason, peace is incompatible with a tolerance of evil."[29]

*Matthew 5:21-26*

Jesus said:

> You have heard that it was said to those of old, "you shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment". But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, "You fool!" will be liable to the hell of fire. So, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny (ESV).

In this passage, Jesus is taking the Decalogue and expounding the deeper meaning of the text. The focus of this passage is not murder, or the act of murder, but the attitude that precedes murder. Reconciling differences, instead of resorting to warfare, would be the correct response to tribal warfare. Millard Erickson comments, "Similarly, although God is not the one bearing animosity, it is He who works to bring about reconciliation".[30]

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[28] D. A. Carson, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Evangelical Exposition of Matthew 5-7*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1978, p. 26.

[29] J. Daryl Charles, Timothy J. Demy, *War, Peace, and Christianity: Questions and Answers from a Just-War Perspective*, Wheaton IL: Crossway Books, 2010, p. 62.

[30] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd edn, Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1998, p. 832.

The person initiating the reconciliation is the one who was wronged. This idea is contrary to our human nature. Turner states, "It is not a question of arguing about who offended whom, but of taking responsibility, and initiating reconciliation".[31] Too often, we (as humans) seek to justify our actions instead of seeking to reconcile our differences. In explaining vv. 25 and 26, Turner notes, "Another hypothetical situation shows that the obligation to seek reconciliation applies not only to relations within the community of disciples but also to relationships outside that community".[32] The Christian is obliged to seek reconciliation, even if someone is not a Christian, or of another denomination. Carson writes:

> Jesus insists it is far more important that he [the "everyone" of v. 22] be reconciled to his brother than that he discharge his religious duty; for the latter becomes pretence and sham if the worshipper has behaved so poorly that his brother has something against him. It is more important to be cleared of offence before all men than to show up for Sunday morning worship at the regular hour. Forget the worship service, and be reconciled to your brother; and only then worship God. Men love to substitute ceremony for integrity, purity, and love; but Jesus will have none of it.[33]

The church must ignore our "religious obligations" and focus more on being the salt and light to a dying world. We should ignore our denominational differences when two communities are willing to shed blood. The church in Papua New Guinea has a unique opportunity to focus on reconciling enemies. When entire communities focus on reconciliation, the transformation that takes place will be incredible.

*Matthew 5:38-42*

Jesus said:

> You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth". But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if

[31] Turner, *Matthew*, p. 169.
[32] Ibid., p. 170.
[33] Carson, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 42.

> anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you (ESV).

In addressing the issue of retaliation, Jesus is raising the standard from equitable compensation to non-retaliation. Commenting on vv. 38-41, Turner remarks, "The point of the first three situations is that the disciples are not to be a part of furthering the typical cycle of evil action and escalating evil reaction in this fallen world".[34] The challenge for the disciple is reacting contrary to our human nature. When we are wronged, our first reaction may be to seek revenge equal to or greater than the wrong we received. Children demonstrate this nature. If a child has his toy taken by another child, the child may react by crying, hitting, or simply taking back the toy. With maturity, we learn proper responses to wrongs suffered. The same idea applies to Christian maturity. A mature Christian believer has the responsibility to respond properly to wrongs suffered. Charles and Demy offer this encouragement, "[I]t is *virtuous and not vicious* to feel anger at moral evil. In truth, something is very wrong with us if we *don't* express anger and moral outrage at evil. And yet, moral outrage alone is not enough."[35] Justice demands punishment for a moral evil.

Charles and Demy remind us of whom the verse is addressing, "The pacifist interpretation of Matt 5:38-39, mistakenly in our view, applies Jesus' ethical teaching on matters of the heart to the realm of the state and public policy".[36] Jesus is not speaking to the role of government, but, rather, to the individual.

Charles and Demy continue, "While rendering 'justice' is illegitimate in the private realm, and, hence, Paul warns sternly against revenge, it is both *permitted and required*, and, therefore, legitimate in the public domain, over which the magistrate has been set. Therefore, when it comes to handling personal insults, abuse, and persecution, we are to 'turn the other cheek',

[34] Turner, *Matthew*, p. 175.
[35] Charles and Demy, *War, Peace, and Christianity*, p. 297.
[36] Ibid., p. 294.

and 'not resist an evil person'."[37] The importance of Matt 5:38-42 is the personal application. The role of the government in the punishment of evildoers will be addressed later.

As if those four verses were not radical enough, Jesus adds v. 42. Turner asserts, "Not only is the disciple to avoid evil, by non-retaliatory reaction, when oppressed by a more powerful person; the disciple is also to promote good by a generous, benevolent response to those who are less powerful".[38] The disciples are to be like Abraham, who was commanded by God to go and be a blessing to the nations. We are not to concern ourselves with what is currently in our possession, but we are to concern ourselves with blessing others, and believing that God will bless us. Carson notes, "Personal self-sacrifice displaces personal retaliation; for this is the way the Saviour Himself went, the way of the cross. And the way of the cross, not notions of 'right and wrong', is the Christian's principle of conduct."[39] The focus shifts from self to others.

*Matthew 5:43-46*

In Matt 5:43-46, Jesus said:

> You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy". But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? (ESV)

Jesus addresses a common feeling many people have towards their enemies. It is a common practice to classify an enemy by placing a label on them to make them appear sub-human. In World War II, Germans were called Krauts; Japanese were called Japs or Nips. During the Vietnam War, American soldiers referred to North Vietnamese as Gooks. During

[37] Ibid., p. 297.
[38] Turner, *Matthew*, p. 175.
[39] Carson, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 52.

engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan, enemy combatants were referred to as Towel Heads. "Evidently, the traditional view of the scriptures mistakenly restricted the scope of the word 'neighbour' in order to legitimise hatred of enemies. Jesus rejects this approach, and insists that disciples of the kingdom emulate the King."[40] Jesus challenges His followers to increase the understanding of who is their neighbour. Geographic location does not make one a neighbour. The parable of the Samaritan demonstrates who truly is a neighbour.

*Romans 12:17-19*

Paul writes, "Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honourable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord'." The application of Rom 12:17-19 is critical for the church in Melanesia. As previously quoted by a Papua New Guinean, "The idea of payback is preventing the country from moving forward. Progress can't come if we keep going back to the old ways."[41] Charles and Demy provide tremendous insight:

> Whereas revenge strikes out at real or perceived injury, retribution speaks to an objective wrong. Whereas revenge is wide, "insatiable", and not subject to limitations, retribution has both upper and lower limits, acknowledging the moral repugnance, both of draconian punishment for petty crimes, and light punishment for heinous crimes. Vengeance, by its nature, has a thirst for injury, and delights in bringing further evil upon the offending party. The avenger will not only kill, but rape, torture, plunder, and burn what is left, deriving satisfaction from his victim's direct or indirect suffering.[42]

Understanding who is responsible for punishment helps the person wronged come to terms with the injustice. Ultimately, God will judge, and His justice will be appropriate.

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[40] Turner, *Matthew*, p. 176.
[41] Waram, "Thoughts on tribal fighting".
[42] Charles, Demy, *War, Peace, and Christianity*, p. 298.

John Calvin provides tremendous insight on these verses. He argues:

> [R]evenge implies more than the kind of recompense with which he is now dealing. Sometimes we render evil for evil, even when we do not exact punishment equivalent to the injury sustained, as when we treat with unkindness those who impart no benefit to us. . . . Since, therefore, this disease [pride, love of self] creates in almost all men a frenzied desire for revenge when they have suffered even the slightest injury, He commands us here not to seek revenge, however grievously we may have been hurt, but to commit revenge to the Lord. . . . Those who attempt revenge deprive Him [God] of this power. If, therefore, it is wrong to usurp the office of God, we are not allowed to exact revenge either, because, in so doing, we anticipate the judgment of God, who has willed to reserve this office for Himself.[43]

The thoughts of the individual Christian must not be on revenge. The church ought to teach the righteousness of God and that He is the Just Judge. Thomas Schreiner maintains, "The desire to retaliate almost overwhelms us when we have been treated unjustly. . . . V. 17 leaves no doubt that getting even is evil, and v. 21 demonstrates that if we do strike back, then we have been overcome by evil. This command is not fulfilled if one's heart is filled with vengeance, and an intense desire to get even."[44] Pastors and church leaders are challenged to change the culture, no matter where they live. Human nature, our old nature, desires to repay evil for evil. Commenting on v. 19, Schreiner continues, "We would fall prey to retaliation in the present if we did not know that God would vindicate us in the future. Thus, the recognition that God will judge our enemies is crucial for overcoming evil with good. Believers can leave the fate of their persecutors in God's hands, knowing that He is good and just, and that He does all things well."[45] Trusting that God will do as He has promised shows that we believe God.

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[43] John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, David W. Torrance, Thomas F. Torrance, eds, Ross Mackenzie, tran., Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1960, pp. 275-277.
[44] Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 1998, p. 672.
[45] Ibid., p. 674.

Retaliation demonstrates that we trust in ourselves more than we trust in God to judge according to the deeds done. Douglas Moo argues, "It is not our job to execute justice on evil people; that is God's prerogative, and He will visit His wrath on such people when He deems it right to do so."[46] When we retaliate, we are essentially telling God that He does not know what is best in this situation.

*James 4:1-3*

Another verse to address the issue of tribal fighting is James 4:1-3 (ESV):

> What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

For fighting that begins with land disputes, the application of James 4 seems appropriate. William Barclay observes, "Obedience to the will of God draws men together, for it is that will that they should love and serve one another; obedience to the craving for pleasure drives men apart, for it drives them to internecine rivalry for the same purposes".[47] James offers a similar theme to what has already been stated, our sinful nature is overruling our Christian nature. Douglas Moo notes, "Some battles, to be sure, need to be fought. But even then they must be fought without sacrificing Christian principles and virtues."[48] Knowing which battles must be fought is important. Does every insult, or wrong suffered, mean that violence can erupt, so long as it is fought with Christian principles and virtues? Moo comments, "With penetrating insight, then, James provides us with a powerful analysis of human conflict. Verbal argument, private violence, or national conflict – the cause of them all can be traced back to the wrongful

[46] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1996, pp. 786-787.
[47] William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter*, The Daily Study Bible, revd edn, Philadelphia PA: Westminster Press, 1976, p. 100.
[48] Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2000, p. 181.

lust to want more than we have, to be envious of, and covet, what others have, whether it be their position, or their possessions."[49] The examination of the just-war tradition will help us understand when it is appropriate to fight.

Ralph Martin observes, "Since James and his community were situated in a Zealot-infested society, and since it is quite conceivable that (at least) some of the Jewish Christians were former Zealots (cf. Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13), the taking of another's life is not out of the realm of possibility for the church members, as a response to the disagreement. . . . While James' community may have not yet experienced and engaged in literal murder on a mass scale, the contingency is a very real one and must be warned against."[50] Martin is particularly insightful in analysing tribal fighting. Understanding what James is teaching will be critical to the church responding to tribal fighting. Martin writes, "These passions – lust for power, popularity, authority – had caused the wars and fightings within the ranks of the members of the church".[51] The problem that faced the early church is a similar problem to that facing the church in Melanesia. People lust after position in the church and community. Fighting can break out between old enemies over a perceived wrong.

Another word to examine is murder. Martin points out, "To say that all James means here is 'hate' (Matt 5:21-22; 1 John 3:15) overlooks the fact that the letter of James was most likely written in a period when murder was accepted as a 'religious' way to solve disagreements".[52] One of the rumours during the tribal fighting between Aserangka and Onamuna was that the pastors were openly encouraging the men to fight. Because the two sides were different denominations, one side was rumoured to have claimed that it was their "religious duty" to kill the heretics. Martin asserts, "Yet, despite such killing, the perpetrators of heinous crimes still do not have what they desire. Might it be that James is seeking to offer several lessons here,

[49] Ibid., p. 184.
[50] Ralph P. Martin, *James*, Word Biblical Commentary, Waco TX: Word Books, 1988, p. 144.
[51] Ibid., p. 145.
[52] Ibid., p. 146.

namely, (1) that killing has not freed anyone from Roman rule, and (2) that those so bent on killing are enmeshed in a vicious cycle, setting up a train of consequences that promotes violence, but never satisfaction? . . . Until God's peace reigns in the church, James' readers will reflect the spirit of the world around them, and will be 'earthly, unspiritual, and devilish'."[53] Martin's comments on James penetrate to the heart of the issue of tribal fighting. Neither side gained more territory, and seven people were killed. Applied to tribal fighting in other parts of Melanesia, communities may recognise what Martin has stated, that nothing changed because of the fighting.

*1 Peter 3:8-9*

Throughout the Bible, God tells His people not pay back evil for evil. "Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing" (ESV).

Edwin Blum states, "The natural response to hostility is retaliation. . . . The great desire of Christians must not be revenge, but for God to grant the gift of repentance to those who do not know Him."[54] Blum's statement is a challenge for Christians everywhere, but the statement is particularly difficult in Papua New Guinea, where payback is so ingrained in the culture. Commenting on the historical purpose of Peter's writings, J. Ramsey Michaels notes, "[T]he terminology is more closely related to catechetical tradition largely preserved in Paul's letters. The likely purpose of such tradition was to instil among new converts, in the simplest way possible, the core of Jesus' teaching on non-retaliation."[55] Karen Jobes writes, "Peter instructs Christians to forgo the usual verbal retaliation that would be necessary to successfully defend one's honour, and the reputation of one's community. Given the tendency of human nature to retaliate, coupled with the social expectation to do so, the Christian who refrains from verbal

[53] Ibid.
[54] Blum, Edwin A., *1, 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3 John*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1996, p. 238.
[55] J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary, Dallas TX: Word Books, 1988, p. 177.

retaliation, and, instead, offers blessing, would give unbelievers pause."[56] Again, the difficulty is for the believer to contradict the social and cultural norms. Further, Jobes notes, "If it is difficult enough to simply refrain from retaliation, it may seem superhuman to return blessing for evil and insult".[57] Only the Holy Spirit living inside a Christian can accomplish this "superhuman" feat. The teachings of Peter in this passage are clear, and are a challenge to the church today.

*Summary*

Has the church failed to teach principles of reconciliation instead of retaliation or revenge? Has the church failed to transform culture by being salt and light? Trompf reminds us, "The gospel, for its part, posed a serious threat to many old customs, such as fertility rites, polygamy, sorcery, and the like; yet it was, nevertheless, a potent message of love between all people, and of hope for 'the abundant life' ".[58] Christians in Melanesia need to take the message of reconciliation to their nation. For cultures that value fighting as a way to establish and maintain relationship, the New Testament teaches that Christians must actively seek reconciliation with their enemies.

### *Just-War Tradition*

In addition to the previous passages, the just-war tradition focuses primarily on two passages of scripture; Rom 13:1-4 and 1 Pet 2:13-17. The tradition has been expounded by Ambrose, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, and John Calvin. In light of the just-war tradition, one can compare the requirements for a "just war" to the violence that occurred between Aserangka and Onamuna. Firstly, the two passages will be examined. Secondly, the development of the tradition will be explored. Thirdly, the current definitions of the just-war tradition will be explained. Finally, the three questions of the just-war tradition will be examined regarding tribal warfare: Firstly, is there a legitimate authority to declare war? Secondly, is there a just cause to have the war? Thirdly, is there a right motivation for

[56] Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2005, p. 217.
[57] Ibid., p. 218.
[58] Trompf, *Payback*, p. 168.

the war? While all of the above points are worth examining in depth, this paper will focus on the parts applicable to tribal fighting.

*Romans 13:1-4*

Paul addresses Christians living in the capital of the Roman Empire. Rom 13:1-4 reads:

> Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer (ESV).

Paul places the responsibility for passing judgment on the state, not on the individual. The state or government determines who is authorised to execute judgment. Within Papua New Guinea, the government is elected every five years. If individuals or communities do not like the way that judgment is executed by their government, they can vote to change the government. Schreiner argues, "The judgment of the state against evildoers in history anticipates the eschatological judgment of God at the end of history. . . . The government's function is to inflict wrath, to vindicate justice (an avenger for wrath on the one practising evil) in the case of the one who flouts the law and does what is evil."[59] The role of the government is clear. The punishment of evildoers is the prerogative of the government; provincial or national.

Calvin writes, "A second part of the function of magistrates is their duty to repress by force the insolent behaviour of the wicked, who do not willingly allow themselves to be governed by laws, and to inflict punishment on their offences as God's judgment requires. Paul explicitly declares that

[59] Schreiner, *Romans*, pp. 684-685.

magistrates are armed with the sword, not just for empty show, but in order to smite evildoers."[60] Calvin notes that only the government (national, state, and local) has the right to use force to prevent violence. Only the institutions duly authorised should be authorised to execute judgment. Charles and Demy state, "A state's authority exists for the purpose of preserving and defending the rights of its members. Its authority is legitimate to the degree that it carries out this mandate."[61] Additionally, Charles and Demy argue, "If, however, we understand that, in the infliction of punishment, the magistrate is not acting *of his own accord*, but in fact is executing justice as God requires of him, then the issue is not an embarrassment to the Christian".[62] The separation between the person and the office is important. The office, not the person, has the right to pass judgment. The person serves as a representative of the government, and, as a representative, is responsible to the government for the proper execution of the law. If the person who holds the office is abusing the office, then that person should be punished by the government for abuse of power. The rights of the government cannot be superseded by the individual who desires revenge.

*1 Peter 2:13-14*

Peter urges Christians to obey the government. "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by Him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good" (ESV). The reason is for God's sake, not the sake of the government.

Michaels declares, "The charge of 'doing wrong' is a serious charge because civil government exists for the express purpose of punishing wrongdoers".[63] Peter understood the purpose of government, and was encouraging his fellow Christians to be obedient, because, ultimately, all governments are responsible to God. J. N. D. Kelly notes, "The repression of crime, disorder,

[60] Calvin, *Romans and to the Thessalonians*, pp. 282-283.
[61] Charles, Demy, *War, Peace, and Christianity*, p. 85.
[62] Ibid., p. 141.
[63] Michaels, *1 Peter*, p. 126.

and injustice is always a function of the state".[64] Kelly's point is important. The purpose of the state (or government) is to protect the innocent, and punish wrongdoers. An individual, or a community, is not allowed to replace the function of the state. An overlooked aspect of the state is the time it takes for justice to be executed. By allowing time to pass, the hot emotions associated with a wrong suffered, and the time that judgment is passed, should allow those hot emotions to cool somewhat, and be satisfied that the wrongdoer is properly punished.

## HISTORY OF JUST-WAR TRADITION

At this point in the paper, one may ask, "Where does the just-war tradition fit in with tribal fighting?" Given that the participants in tribal fighting refer to the battles as warfare, it is appropriate to respond with similar terminology to correct the apparent misconception. Those on both sides of the fighting between Aserangka and Onamuna believed that they were justified in the fight. Anthropologists, who have studied tribal fighting in Papua New Guinea, note the mindset of the participants is similar to warfare on a national level. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the just-war tradition before concluding the paper.

John Davis defines the just-war tradition, "The just-war tradition in the history of the Christian church holds that, under some circumstances, the Christian may participate in war for the sake of the preservation of justice. This tradition holds that some, but not all, wars are morally justifiable".[65] Two points are important to note. Firstly, Christians may participate in a war if the purpose of the war is to correct an injustice. Secondly, not every war fought in the name of Christ is morally justifiable. "Hence, one finds in Aquinas the strong distinction between *duellum*, the private quarrel or duel, and *bellum*, war. Insofar as war is a public matter, *bellum* must be adjudicated by political-legal means, and not private citizens."[66] A difficulty in Melanesia is the highly-relational nature of people. Private matters

[64] J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, Black's New Testament Commentary, London UK: Adam & Charles Black, 1969, p. 109.
[65] John Davis, *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today*, 3rd edn, Phillipsburg NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 2004, p. 246.
[66] Charles, Demy, *War, Peace, and Christianity*, p. 129.

quickly become public matters, because of the proximity of the people, and the innate desire to bring balance to the relationship.

Davis further refines the definition by quoting the three requirements given by Thomas Aquinas. The three requirements are that the war is declared by a legitimate authority, a just cause is required, and right motives.[67] The Reformers also agreed with Aquinas on the requirements for just war. John Calvin asserted, "But kings and people must sometimes take up arms to execute such public vengeance".[68] From Aquinas to present, the three requirements have not changed.

The idea of just war did not begin with Aquinas, but with Augustine. For approximately 1,600 years, the church has taught the just-war tradition. Justo Gonzalez summarises Augustine's position:

> The first is the purpose of the war must be just – a war is never just when its purpose is to satisfy territorial ambition, or the mere exercise of power. The second condition is that a just war must be waged by properly-instituted authority. This seemed necessary in order not to leave the field open to personal vendettas. . . . Finally, the third rule – and the most important one for Augustine – is that, even in the midst of the violence that is a necessary part of war, the motive of love must be central.[69]

### *Current Definitions*

Within the modern discussions of just war, there are two areas that are distinguished. The first is *jus ad bellum*. A *jus ad bellum* criterion is defined as "the decision whether or not a given war is justified".[70] The second is *jus in bello*, which is "used to evaluate given lines of conduct,

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[67] Thomas Aquinas, "Whether it is always sinful to wage war?", in *Summa Theologica*, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.SS_Q40_A1.html, accessed February 10, 2014.
[68] John Calvin, *Calvin's Institutes: abridged edition*, Donald McKim, ed., Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001, p. 168.
[69] Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, vol 1, San Francisco CA: Harper & Row, 1984, p. 214.
[70] Davis, *Evangelical Ethics*, p. 248.

once war has commenced".[71] For the purposes of this paper, only *jus ad bellum* will be used, since the author is concerned with preventing additional tribal fighting, not having the church serve as a referee between tribes.

Davis explains, "The *jus ad bellum* criteria include competent authority, just cause, proportionality of proposed means, and the probable costs in the light of the probability of success, exhaustion of peaceful means of resolution, and right intent".[72] An important unspoken element in the just-war tradition is time. The time between a wrong suffered and the execution of war is not a matter of minutes or hours, but of days and weeks. *Jus ad bellum* evaluates each step before a war is declared just. It is not reacting to a perceived wrong. As stated above, the competent authority for declaring war does not reside at the local community level.

### *Difficulties Applying Just-War Tradition*

The hard part in applying the just-war tradition to tribal fighting in Papua New Guinea is the first criteria, as defined by Thomas Aquinas, "First, the authority of the sovereign by whose command the war is to be waged. For it is not the business of the private individual to declare war, because he can seek for redress of his rights from the tribunal of his superior. Moreover, it is not the business of a private individual to summon together the people, which has to be done in wartime."[73] The recurring theme in tribal fighting in Papua New Guinea is a small group, a clan, or a village, waging war against another small group, clan, or village. The right to declare war resides with the government of Papua New Guinea, not the lower levels of tribal leadership. The Constitution of Papua New Guinea states, "The Head of State, acting with, and in accordance with, the advice of the National Executive Council, may publicly declare that Papua New Guinea is at war with another country".[74]

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[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*.
[74] "Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea", http://www.igr.gov.pg/consitution.pdf, accessed February 10, 2014.

Some may argue that a person has the right to defend themselves, and they do have that right. The right to stop a hostile person from harming oneself or one's family is permissible. Where does that right end? If a person seeks out the aggressor, and commits physical violence, then that person has gone too far. The immediate threat of danger is not present. If one is being beaten, and strikes back, then one is justified in defending oneself.

Garry Trompf writes, "What concerns us here, however, is the continual process of 'score-keeping' that has been kept in vibrancy during the history of each group's interactions, such shared memories not being easy to come by".[75] Trompf's point makes it difficult to ever get to the root cause of the fighting. Generations of fighting, competing claims on the same land, a house-line moving closer to jobs, are all deeply embedded into the minds of Papua New Guineans. The local church must be quick to intercede when the rumours of war begin. "Death (not just blood) was their argument; and, considering sorcery, we must remember death could occur off as well as on the battlefield."[76]

To answer Aquinas' second question of a just cause for the warfare is difficult, because of the cultural differences between the author and Papua New Guineans. Banks observes, "Social relationship, identities, and land are the things that matter in Melanesia, and to believe that conflicts of any kind, even 'resource' conflicts, can be primarily about anything else is an illusion".[77] However, there is a biblical standard that needs to be applied.

How does one measure motivation? For one group of men, they were shamed, and needed to regain their "manhood". For another group of men, their territory was invaded, and a man killed, while simply working in his garden. If Christians in Papua New Guinea express biblical ideals, and willingly confront aspects of their own culture that are contrary to biblical norms, then proper motivation can be determined. The author cannot and will not attempt to measure the motivation of others concerning tribal warfare.

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[75] Trompf, *Payback*, p. 37.
[76] Ibid., p. 54.
[77] Banks, "Understanding 'Resource' Conflicts", p. 31.

## GOSPEL RESPONSE

Within Melanesian culture there is a deep desire to restore relationships to their proper place. Jesus is the reconciler of man to God, and God's desire is that all men be reconciled to Him. As Christians are to imitate Christ, we should be the chief reconcilers of relationships. Pastors, church leaders, lay leaders, and Christians in general should actively seek to reconcile relationships. The church must speak loudly and clearly on the issues of tribal warfare, or the church will, as it has in the West, lose its power to influence the community. Charles and Demy point out, "It is the collective witness of the New Testament, indeed of all scripture, that peace is present only in the context of right relationships – that is to say, where justice has been affirmed".[78] Law and order must be practised within local communities. Retaliation must be addressed in a culturally-appropriate manner by the churches in Melanesia.

Church leaders and pastors must teach and preach on what the Bible teaches on violence, retaliation, and revenge. Lev 19:17-18 reads, "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbour, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the LORD." This is the passage that Jesus quoted when asked, "Which commandment is the most important of them all?" (Mark 12:28b). Reconciliation, not revenge, must reign in the hearts of Melanesians. Gary North reminds us, "Civil law also cannot enforce an attitude of love; hence, civil law is not the focus of the command to love one's neighbour, except insofar as love is defined judicially: treating the neighbour legally, that is, love, as the fulfilling of God's law. . . . By prohibiting personal grudges, and requiring personal love, this verse makes it clear that the concern of the civil portion of this civil law is the elimination of privately-imposed vengeance."[79] Love must be the theme of the church in Melanesia. The responsibility of the church is to serve as Christ's representative here on earth. We are compelled to declare the good news to

[78] Charles, Demy, *War, Peace, and Christianity*, p. 275.
[79] Gary North, *Leviticus: An Economic Commentary*, Tyler TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1994, pp. 264-265.

all people. As North clearly proclaims, "The state possesses a monopoly of vengeance and violence".[80] The church should not trample on the rights of the state.

Trompf recommends, "[T]he human predicament is the better handled by the depletion of hostilities, suspicions, accusations, sullen withdrawals, and so on, and by the reinforcement of life-enhancing elements – appropriable in Melanesia itself from local traditions, and from introduced sets of values or ideas claiming universal ramifications".[81] Within the context of Papua New Guinea, tradition holds that there needs to be balance and compensation. Trompf is correct in asserting that the church must handle violence by stressing the importance of life. Losing face is not balanced out by taking a life. The church of Melanesia must hold up the mirror of the Bible, and address the culture of violence.

Trompf warns, "Without constant self-criticism, Christianity, or any religious tradition for that matter, is susceptible to being used for people's own ends – to justify violence, turpitude, unsociability, and all the opposites to 'unconquerable goodwill'. And, unless Melanesian traditions are 'vetted' by an undebased Christianity, they will easily reactivate old ethno-solidarities for divisive purposes, or tame the Christian faith's astounding universalism into forms of neo-tribalism."[82] The proper application of the just-war tradition by the church in Melanesia is critical to bringing true peace. As Charles and Demy remind us, "[J]ust wars *may* be necessary in a world of injustice and unjust peace".[83] In another place, Charles and Demy argue, "But a strength of the just-war tradition is precisely this: that it is an ongoing moral, legal, ethical, and religious dialogue that spans the centuries".[84] It is a dialogue that Melanesians can readily engage in, and bring new questions to be answered.

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[80] Ibid., p. 270.
[81] Trompf, *Payback*, pp. 458-459.
[82] Ibid., p. 459.
[83] Charles, Demy, *War, Peace, and Christianity*, p. 139.
[84] Ibid., p. 248.

## QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It is beyond the means of the author to answer two critical questions. These questions require an emic point of view, not the etic. Firstly, is there an internal conflict (within the individual person or community) between being a Christian and the old ways of gaining prestige? If there is an internal conflict, what can be the functional substitute? Secondly, does Christianity upset the traditional cultural structure of leadership in villages? If Christianity is upsetting the traditional cultural structure, what should be done? How does the church address these issues?

## SUMMARY

Tribal warfare continues to plague parts of Papua New Guinea. Fighting between two house-lines in the Highlands may cause fighting to erupt in Lae or Port Moresby, because members of the two warring communities now reside in these cities. The church has the responsibility to address the issue from a biblical perspective, a historical perspective, and a moral perspective. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament teach that God is the Ultimate Judge. God has established governments to execute His judgment on wrongdoers, now. Ultimately, God will judge each person for his or her actions. Traditionally, the church has taught that the state has the right to declare war, provided it meets the criteria of *jus ad bellum*. Finally, the church has the moral responsibility to speak to the communities about the dangers of payback. Failure by the church to teach on the wrongs of repaying evil for evil will bring God's judgment.

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# PAYBACK: A GOSPEL RESPONSE, FROM A FRANCISCAN PERSPECTIVE

**Ruben Martello**

*Ruben Martello is a Franciscan Catholic priest, and a post-graduate at University of Nottingham in the U.K. He is currently writing a master's thesis on the Pneumatology of the 13th-century Franciscan mystic and theologian, St Bonaventure of Bagnoreggio. He has a BA in classical Hebrew from the University of Sydney, and a BA (Phil)/BTh. from the Sydney College of Divinity.*

## ABSTRACT

The conversion of St Francis of Assisi provides an enduring narrative of grace and peace that can inspire us with the capacity of the gospel to transfigure a culture of retribution. Francis rejected his former way of life of military glory and revenge in order to pursue a life conformed to Christ and his gospel. Today, he is considered by many to be a famous herald of peace. Francis' response to the call of Christ changed him personally, and enabled him to transcend his own cultural mindset. Further, he was an inspiration and instrument of peace for many others during his own lifetime, and he continues to do so for many to this day. The life of St Francis enables an historical and theological appreciation of the gospel's power to break down barriers and transform society. Franciscan devotion to the particular individual, who is Christ, the crucified Saviour, manifests the universal call of the gospel to reconciliation between heaven and earth, and to peace between all creatures.

## INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I would like to present a gospel response to some aspects of the problem of payback, from a Franciscan perspective.[1] St Francis of

[1] I am indebted to Fr Joseph Vnuk OP (Catholic Theological College, Melbourne) and Anna M. Silvas (University of New England, Armidale) for their very helpful comments and suggestions on drafts of this paper.

Assisi (c.1182-1226) is widely held to have personified the gospel of peace in his life. That Francis was not always a man of peace makes him all the more relevant in a world of conflict. His conversion at the age of about 22 began in the middle of a military career, and in a world of rivalry and conflict that can plausibly be compared to the tribal fights that happen in PNG, especially here in the Highlands. His context was one of conflicts between city-states and between the noble and popular classes, but it was a culture of retribution none-the-less. I hope that St Francis of Assisi and his influence on the Christian world will shed light on pastoral issues faced here in the broader Melanesian cultural context, and in PNG in particular.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

St Francis often conjures up, in the popular imagination, an image of a carefree and joyful lover of creatures; a man who embraced voluntary poverty, and who was a great herald of peace – and so he was. Peace was his motto. He began all his sermons with the words, "The Lord give you peace". He brought peace wherever he went. It is unfortunate that some of his outstanding qualities have been misrepresented or distorted, without historical or theological scruple, by the ideologues of another age. Franco Zeffirelli, in his 1972 film, *Brother Son, Sister Moon*, presented him as "a kind of medieval hippie, misunderstood, and then exploited by the 'medieval church' ".[2] Others have presented him as a strict pacifist, a nature mystic, even a feminist. The real Francis, however, will be of more help to us in facing the problems of tribal violence.

How did this son of the wealthy cloth merchant, Pietro di Bernadone, who, as a youth, wanted nothing better than to join in victorious battles on behalf of his home-city, Assisi, and to surpass his own social and economic class by becoming a knight, come, instead, to espouse his "Lady Poverty", and become a herald of peace? There are as many attempted answers to this question as there are biographies and studies of this unique saint. Christopher Ohan argues that the historical setting of Francesco Bernadone's life "uncovers a uniquely-Christian remedy for a society locked

[2] Augustine Thompson, *Francis of Assisi: A New Biography*, Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2012, p. ix.

in a climate of fear and change".[3] The historical context, into which Francis was born, is the growth of urban life in Italy, and, therefore, challenges to feudalism, and clashes between the upper classes (*maiores*) and lower classes (*minores,* or *popolani*) of Assisi.[4] To top all this off was the constant strife between Pope-aligned (*Guelf*) Perugia and emperor-aligned (*Ghibeline*) Assisi. In the ongoing battles between Assisi and neighbouring Perugia, Ohan argues, Francis was not only looking for personal glory, he also desired to avenge his town's honour, and assert its civic pride. "Assisi wanted revenge. The civic atmosphere was, therefore, one of retribution."[5] Umbria was a region of bloodshed, violence, and terrorism in the 12th and 13th centuries. Arnaldo Fortini[6] recounts the battle that Assisi lost to Perugia, and which resulted in Francis' capture, and prolonged incarceration – the beginning of his conversion experience:

> The battle, with all its raw ferocity, and bloodthirsty pride, the sight of the dead, and the infinite grief, made in Francis's warm and generous spirit a wound so deep that time never healed it. His happy-go-lucky youth was gone forever. Once again, life's pain was more real to him than his fascinating dreams, his heroic enthusiasms, and hopes of glory, more real than stirring fanfares, waving banners, and flashing blades, more real, even than great courage.[7]

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[3] Christopher Ohan, "A Christian Remedy in a Climate of Fear: Francesco Bernadone, the War with Perugia, and Conversion", in *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 13-1 (Winter 2010), p. 16.

[4] Rosalind B. Brooke, *The Image of St Francis: Responses to Sainthood in the Thirteenth Century*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 22-23.

[5] Ohan, "A Christian Remedy", p. 17.

[6] 1889-1970. Historian, lawyer, and former mayor of Assisi, who unearthed and publicised 13th-century civil records from the Assisi archives that shed new light on Francis and his historical context.

[7] Arnaldo Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, Helen Moak, tran., New York NY: Crossroad, 1981, p. 155. Peace between Assisi and Perugia was not achieved until 1209, the year of the approval of the first Rule of St Francis by Pope Innocent III (p. 166). The peace may have been the factor that determined the rule's coming into existence, according to Fortini. The battle Assisi lost to Perugia, in which Francis was captured in 1202, was a severe massacre: "It was the cruelest slaughter that the Perugini had up to that time inflicted on their enemies" (p.155). For an alternative view, see Adam L. Hoose, who downplays the

Should "payback" be characteristic of the way many Papua New Guineans customarily seek justice, in retaliation for crimes committed against one's *wantoks*,[8] which finds expression in tribal fights. It can also be argued that something similar was taking place in the society in which St Francis of Assisi grew up. It was not only the task of the warriors to vindicate the rights of the citizens of Assisi. It also fell to municipal authorities, to the merchants (who were a new and flourishing element in the economy), and even to the religious and the clergy, to takes up arms.[9]

With this medieval Italian background in mind, the notion that Christianity is primarily tied to Europe, and white Europeans, can cause us to forget important historical details – like Francis' own background, which, in many ways, illustrates another form of payback. As Garry Trompf said in his study, *Melanesian Religion*, during their pre-contact times, the European people once lived with religious and cultural systems that were very comparable to those held by Melanesians. And, well before Europe was Christianised, Egypt, Ethiopia, Syria, Armenia, and India were places of ancient and traditional Christian civilisations.[10] In the European context, we cannot forget the slow progress of evangelisation amid a great diversity of pagan religious systems and cultures. Therefore, we cannot underestimate the influence that Francis of Assisi's conversion to peace – in the middle of retributive violence – had on his own town of Assisi, and the Christianisation of Europe in general. I am suggesting that what has been may happen again.

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significance of Francis' conversion, from a context of violence, though with the object of emphasising Francis as not a pacifist, and as one who did not oppose the Crusades: "Francis of Assisi's Way of Peace?: His Conversion and Mission to Egypt", in *The Catholic Historical Review* 96-3 (July 2010), pp. 449-469.

[8] See Shaun Larcom, "Payback Killings and the Transmission of Norms in the New Guinean Islands: Observing the Tip of the Iceberg?", Department of Land Economy Working Paper, Cambridge UK: University of Cambridge, June 2013, http://landecon.cam.ac.uk/pdf-files/cv-etc/shaun-larcom/tipoficebergDLWWP22June.pdf, accessed April 26, 2014. Larcom's study shows that payback has not decreased in urbanised areas of New Guinea. In fact, urbanisation seems to have increased the popularity of this cultural norm.

[9] Ohan, "A Christian Remedy", p. 18. See also Laurence P. Prior, "Francis of Assisi and a Cosmic Spirituality", in *Religion & Theology* 18-1/2 (2011), p. 179.

[10] Garry W. Trompf, *Melanesian Religion*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 262.

We cannot go into all the background of Francis' conversion here, but we can take up Ohan's proposition that the retributive actions of one town against another in medieval Italy helped bring about one of the most famous and profound instruments of peace. Fortini has led us to believe that, from this time on, Francis was a changed man. If Francis is seen as an important Christian symbol of peace – think about the gatherings of all the world's religions, and their representatives, in Assisi in 1986 and 2011 – it was not because he came from a peace-making culture. The contrast between the character of Francis and the times, through which he lived, could not be starker. There dawned in young Francesco the possibility of rising above the prevailing cultural mindset. It came to a crisis with the public divesting of his own clothes, in the presence of his father and the bishop, and his memorable saying, "From now on I do not call Pietro Bernadone my father, but 'Our Father, who art in Heaven' ".[11] His new way of life, following the poor, crucified Christ, demonstrated "a new form of behaviour that could provide a basis for converting society at large to a revolutionary form of Christian obedience and charity".[12]

In other words, Francis was once a "tribal" fighter, but, in embracing the gospel, he left this way of life behind. What's more is that this personal decision of his came to have a profound effect on his contemporaries. He attracted many other men around him, some of whom had fought with him in the same battles, to form a new religious order following a rule, which refused personal possessions and money, because these would have required arms to defend them. As well as the two Orders of *Friars Minor* and *Poor Ladies*, he set up a way of life for the common faithful, who were inspired to live after his example. These, too, were forbidden to take up arms. As well as giving up the sword, they were not to take public office, and the popes, on

[11] Cf. Thomas of Celano, *Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul,* Book I, chapter VII, in Regis J. Armstromg, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, William J. Short, eds, *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol II, New York NY: New City Press, 1999, p. 251.
[12] Ohan, "A Christian Remedy", p. 26.

various occasions, had to intervene to remind bishops and civil authorities, when they attempted to oppose these early Franciscan privileges.[13]

## THE APPLICATION OF THE GOSPEL FROM ONE CONTEXT TO ANOTHER

Up to this point, I have spoken about Francis' conversion from a life of military glory to follow Christ and live the gospel way of life. However, the question still remains: Why would a proud young Melanesian warrior – for whom payback and killing one's enemies is not just an obligation, but a point of *honour*, give this up to adopt a way of life compatible with the gospel of peace? For the tribal warrior, apart from the native, religious dimension of payback killings, payback is what proves him to be fearless, strong, and a man.[14] The concept is too deeply ingrained to pretend it can be resolved with platitudes. We could attempt to answer the question by asking another. How did Francis gave up that which promised him a superior social identity – the desire to fight on behalf of Assisi, to become a knight in shining armour, and win his beautiful bride?

Francis had the gift of being able to communicate his new Christian identity. He did this, not by advocating a "political" rejection of warfare (or possessions, for that matter), but by allowing the light of the gospel to transform that, which had previously given meaning to his life, into a higher and better sense.[15] For example, he gave up fighting, but this did not prevent

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[13] See *The Third Order Rule*, promulgated by Nicholas IV (in 1221) in Marion A. Habig, ed., *St Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies: English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St Francis*, Chicago IL: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973, pp. 168-175 [chap. V, p.171], hereafter referred to as *Omnibus*; Maurice Carmody, *The Franciscan Story*, London UK: Athena Press, 2008, pp. 190-193.

[14] Garry W. Trompf, *Payback: The Logic of Retribution in Melanesian Religions*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 25.

[15] Garry Trompf rejected a merely political or secular solution to the problem of payback in Melanesian culture. His argument was that payback is a native *religious* phenomenon, and that the solution must, therefore, also be a religious one: "If this book reveals anything, it is that religion in various forms is the predominant force in Melanesian life, and that no genuine or long-term solutions will be arrived at if the datum is swept under the parliamentary carpets . . . and I doubt if any state of genuine peace will be possible, or any law-reform remain unimpeachable, or any community or national bonding durable, unless

him from expressing his new identity by means of the same metaphors. He was now fighting in the *Lord's* battles. He liked to find analogies between his spiritual quest and the ambitions and contrasting values of his culture.[16] The language of courtly love became his dedication to "Lady Poverty". The same thing happened with the combative instinct. The language of chivalry, and the heroic deeds of Arthur and Charlemane, coloured the descriptions of his religious way of life. He called his friars, "knights of the round table". When human nature prides itself in being on close terms with earthly rulers and worldly superstars, or in seeking positions of power for its own sake, how much nobler is it to serve God, the King of kings.[17] A dream, which Francis had during his conversion period, is recounted by Thomas of Celano:

> It seemed to Francis that his whole home was filled with the trappings of war, namely, saddles, shields, lances, and other things; rejoicing greatly, he wondered silently within himself what this should mean. For he was not accustomed to see such things in his home, but rather piles of cloth to be sold. When, accordingly, he was not a little astonished at this sudden turn of events, the answer was given him that all these arms would belong to him and to his soldiers.

Celano adds:

> It is, indeed, quite fitting that mention be made of arms in the beginning, and it is quite opportune that arms should be offered to the soldier about to engage one strongly armed, that, like another David,

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peace, good order, and cooperativeness are embraced as religious commitments rather than political expediencies" (*Payback*, p. 460).

[16] Similarly, Douglas W. Young argues that conflict resolution in Papua New Guinea is best developed from the native peoples' own capacity to change their culture from within, using traditional practices, and only then to seek "cultural analogues or correlations from any 'outside' approach that seems helpful", see "Prescriptive and Elicitive Approaches to Conflict Resolution: Examples from Papua New Guinea", *Negotiation Journal* 14-3 (July 1998), pp. 211-220 [at p. 218].

[17] Brooke, *Image of St Francis*, p. 15.

> he might free Israel from the long-standing reproach of its enemies in the *name of the Lord God of Hosts.*[18]

Thus, St Francis' solution to strife and vengeance was by offering something better in its place, that is, an exchange, or a conversion, demonstrating the radical embracing of the life offered by Christ in the gospels. Only this brings the true spiritual joy, which no experience of victory or revenge can ever provide.

Francis inspired peace, wherever it was needed, and he was able to do so even in the middle of one of his own darkest hours. While lying ill with malaria, which he had contracted during his time in Egypt, with the trachoma in his eyes, and suffering from malnutrition from his fasting on Mount La Verna, and surrounded by the vermin that plagued him, he composed his famous "Canticle of Brother Sun", the oldest great poem we possess in vernacular Italian. He did so, not only to cheer himself up, but also to edify his fellows. He said that, for every trial on earth, "there is a joy in heaven, for every bitterness, a divine consolation, for every enemy who injures us, a creature who loves us".[19] It was the intention of Francis that, when the friars preached, the sermon should be followed by singing this canticle. At the end of the song, they should address the people: "We are jongleurs [an itinerant minstrel] of God, and the only reward we want is to see you lead a truly penitential life". He added, "Who are, indeed, God's servants, if not jongleurs, who strive to move men's hearts in order to lead them to the joys of the spirit?"[20]

Francis rightly believed that this song could bring peace to the warring parties in a new conflict. And he composed some additional verses

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[18] Thomas of Celano, *First Life*, chapter II, in *Omnibus*, p. 233. Was St Francis a pacifist? I said above that St Francis has been construed as such. Some authors have depicted St Francis' meeting with the sultan Malik-al-Kamil in Egypt, during the 5th Crusade in 1219, as a rejection of the crusades, and warfare in general. This is based on his warning the Christian forces at Damietta against a particular battle, and his correct prophecy of their defeat. It would, however, require stretching the evidence to draw this conclusion. See Hoose, "Francis of Assisi's Way of Peace?", pp. 449-469.

[19] Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, p. 565.

[20] *Legend of Perugia,* in *Omnibus*, no. 43, p. 1022.

specifically for the occasion. The traditional rivalry between Assisi and Perugia had been further complicated by factional violence between the knights and commoners of Perugia, and by the support the Podestá (mayor) of Assisi gave to the knights of Perugia. The bishop had excommunicated the mayor for supporting the Perugian nobles, and the mayor, in turn, forbad the citizens to engage in any kind of commerce with the church. Violent reprisals followed. To his dismay, on hearing that the relationship had turned bitterly sour between both his great admirers, the mayor and the Bishop of Assisi, Francis composed these two new verses, to be added to the Canticle of Brother Son:[21]

> All praise be yours, my Lord, through those who grant pardon
> For love of you; through those who endure
> Sickness and trial
>
> Happy those who endure in peace,
> By you, Most High, they will be crowned.[22]

It worked! Both the bishop and the mayor, who had been summoned by Francis to hear this sung by his brothers, were moved to bring an end to their struggle for domination. The mayor was the first to speak: "In truth, not only do I forgive the lord bishop, whom I ought to recognise as my master, but I would even pardon my brother's and my own son's murderer!" For the people, who witnessed this ending of so fierce a feud, it was no less than a new miracle wrought by Francis. Fortini explains that the bishop was conquered by the change of heart in the mayor, and he, in turn, spoke, "My

[21] For the whole text of the canticle, see appendix. For the original vernacular, see Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, pp. 566-568. In the *Legend of Perugia*, St Francis gives his reason for composing the canticle: "I wish to compose a new 'Praises of the Lord', for His creatures. These creatures minister to our needs every day; without them, we could not live; and, through them, the human race greatly offends the Creator. Every day, we fail to appreciate so great a blessing by not praising as we should the Creator and dispenser of these gifts", p. 1021. For details on the civil battle between nobles and commoners, and the strained relationship between the bishop and the mayor, see Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, pp. 569-580.
[22] Ibid., p. 577.

office demands humility of me. By nature, I am quick to anger. You must forgive me."[23]

In the famous legend of the Wolf of Gubbio – whatever its historical value may be – the message and spirit of St Francis is captured. A wolf had terrorised the town of Gubbio, by devouring not only its cattle, but also its citizens. St Francis addressed the wolf in these words, "Brother Wolf, you deserve to be put to death, just like the worst robber and murderer. Consequently, everyone is right in crying out against you and complaining, and this whole town is your enemy. But, Brother Wolf, I want to make peace between you and them, so that they will not be harmed by you any more, and, after they have forgiven you all your past crimes, neither men nor dogs will pursue you any more."[24] There was no sense in killing the wolf, even though it was responsible for the death of many of the townsfolk. There is no place in the believer for revenge. Francis urged the wolf to make a pact never to harm the people or animals, and the people were urged, in turn, to forgive, and to provide the wolf with food, so the wolf put his paw into Francis' hand as a gesture of a pledge of peace with the citizens of Gubbio. Having brought peace, Francis took this opportunity to ensure that the root cause of human strife is eradicated in human hearts and souls: "So, dear people", he said, "come back to the Lord, and do fitting penance, and God will free you from the wolf in this world, and from the devouring fire in the next world."

## ST FRANCIS, THE CRUCIFIED LORD AND CREATION

Although not an intellectual, Francis is recognised within history and systematic theology to have given new impetus to a devotion to Christ, in his individual human nature. His devotion to the poverty and helplessness of the Christ Child gave the Western church its first nativity scene. He brought new light to what the church has always taught: the universal Saviour (Pantocrator), in whose divine Person the two natures of humanity and divinity are united, while remaining distinct, is a unique individual. Francis' love for God manifested itself in his devotion to Jesus in the crib, and on the

[23] Ibid., p. 580; *Legend of Perugia*, pp. 1023-1024.
[24] *Little Flowers of St Francis*, chap. 21, in *Omnibus*, p. 1349.

cross – those moments in time when divinity was especially disguised in a helpless humanity, in suffering, and in death. As Ilia Delio puts it, this "opened up a new perspective on the unique particularity of the person. [Francis] upset an intellectual tradition [Neoplatonic metaphysics, with its emphasis on abstract ideas, and the movement of the soul *away* from the material world towards the contemplation of God], which he hardly understood, and which he certainly had no intention of challenging".[25] As the Franciscan doctor of the church, St Bonaventure of Bagnoreggio (1217-1274), who recapitulated Francis' spirit into the academy, explained, the impassible and Omnipotent God "is joined with Him Who suffered supremely and died; the most perfect and immense is joined with that which is small; He who is both supremely one, and supremely pervasive, is joined to an individual that is composite and distinct from others, that is to say, the man Jesus Christ".[26] This is the mystery that captivated Francis. The paradox did not disturb him; he was, rather, in awe of the Incarnation. For where there is difference, there is unity.[27] Francis' single-minded and wholehearted love for Jesus, as the mediator between Almighty God and finite human nature, is at the source of his ability to see Christ at the centre of everything. In the light of the Incarnation, which is expressed in its most definitive and revelatory manner on the Cross, Francis saw the goodness of God present in every living creature, even in his enemies. Further, not only man, but also all creation, is drawn into the nature of the divine, through Christ's assumption of humanity. He called a wolf his "brother", and the moon his "sister". Not only is the Incarnation the medium bridging God and

[25] Ilia Delio, "From Metaphysics to Kataphysics: Bonaventure's 'Good' Creation", in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 64-2 (May 2011), p. 163. See also Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995, especially pp. 117-118, (Chapter 5: "Hierarchy Interiorised: Bonaventure's *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*").

[26] St Bonaventure, *The Journey of the Mind to God*, Stephen F. Brown, ed., Philotheus Boehner, tran., Indianapolis IN: Hackett Publishing, 1993, p. 35.

[27] Turner makes the point: "And, if our universe is such as to embrace all the possible varieties of creation, then there is much to be said for the view that it is not the 'highest' beings in our universe [i.e., angels] which are the most *representative* of it, but those beings, in whose nature is contained elements of all its variety and complexity. What one wants in a good meal is not a diet restricted to just one dish, even of caviar, but a menu of some variety, even if made up of many dishes, of which potato is one", p. 124.

humanity, and restoring to humanity the likeness of God, lost at the fall, it extends out on the horizontal bar of the cross to embrace all humanity and creation itself into the Kingdom of God.

Through the terrible violence and cruelty of the cross comes the peace and salvation of the world, because the one who was crucified is divine love, who sought no vengeance, no payback. To quote St Francis of Assisi himself, "They are truly peacemakers, who are able to preserve their peace of mind and heart for love of our Lord Jesus Christ, despite all that they suffer in this world".[28] All the meaning and identity that tribal fights give to the people of Melanesia can be found at a much deeper level, and in a more lasting way, through the translation of these energies into following the Christ, who suffered the humiliation and defeat of the cross. Only it was not defeat. It was victory.

## APPENDIX

### THE CANTICLE OF BROTHER SUN

Francis of Assisi

Most high, all powerful, all good Lord! All praise is yours, all glory, all honour, and all blessing.

To you, alone, Most High, do they belong. No mortal lips are worthy to pronounce your name.

Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures, especially through my lord Brother Sun, who brings the day; and you give light through him. And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendour!
Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.

Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars; in the heavens you have made them bright, precious and beautiful.

[28] *Admonitions*, XV, in *Omnibus*, p. 83.

Be praised, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,
and clouds and storms, and all the weather, through which you give your creatures sustenance.

Be praised, My Lord, through Sister Water; she is very useful, and humble, and precious, and pure.

Be praised, my Lord, through Brother Fire, through whom you brighten the night. He is beautiful and cheerful, and powerful and strong.

Be praised, my Lord, through our sister Mother Earth,
who feeds us and rules us, and produces various fruits with coloured flowers and herbs.

Be praised, my Lord, through those who forgive for love of you;
through those who endure sickness and trial.

Happy those who endure in peace, for by you, Most High, they will be crowned.

Be praised, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death,
from whose embrace no living person can escape.
Woe to those who die in mortal sin! Happy those she finds doing your most holy will. The second death can do no harm to them.

Praise and bless my Lord, and give thanks, and serve him with great humility.



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PO Box 382
Mt Hagen WHP
Papua New Guinea
Email: graduate_studies@cltc.ac.pg
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# TOWARDS CONTEXTUALISING PAUL'S EXPRESSIONS OF COMMUNITY IN EPHESIANS 2 FOR MELANESIAN CHRISTIANS

**Allan Alafa Sanga**

*Allan Sanga comes from the Solomon Islands. He worships with SSEC, and, since graduating from CLTC with a BTh in 2003, he has served in the Solomons with his family in the South Sea Evangelical Church as a pastor and teacher. In 2013, he returned to CLTC to join the master's program, and graduated with a MTh in 2014, and now lectures at CLTC.*

## ABSTRACT

The concept of community is like a backbone to the very existence of Melanesians. Melanesians are communal people, and their activities revolve around the notion of community. However, Melanesians find it daunting to conceptualise and transfer the meaning of Christian community into their Christian lives.

It seems that allegiance to Christ is secondary to traditional clan ties. Reverting to these traditional ties in problem circumstances is evident, even among professing Christians. Consequently, by tracing Paul's metaphorical expressions of community in Eph 2, clearer teachings can be deduced for Melanesians. These metaphors can be explored in terms of dynamic equivalent concepts in Melanesia, to formulate biblical teachings that may help Melanesian Christians to understand what it means to be a part of the Christian community.

Towards this end, this qualitative study argues that contextualisation is a step forward in helping Melanesians to understand the biblical concept of community. With the aid of Hiebert's four steps of critical contextualisation, this study will explore four Melanesian analogies, to convey the ideas of community in Eph 2. From these explorations, new contextualised approaches may ease the necessary transition for transferring

the Christian concept of community to Melanesians. In this way, a clearer view may be obtained in understanding the community of God.

## INTRODUCTION

In this section, preliminary information about this research project is supplied. These include the purpose of the study, the guiding questions, methodology, limitations and delimitations, definitions of terms, and study assumptions.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this research is to identify the expressions of community in Eph 2, which are being taught to, but are not practically seen, in the lives of the people of Melanesia. Melanesian Christians hear and accept the gospel, but their first loyalty and allegiance is not to the new Christian community, but to their traditional clan communities. This paper seeks to identify the expressions of community in scripture, and to contextually project these into understandable and meaningful forms in Melanesia. Notwithstanding, community is a complex topic to adequately cover in such a single research project. Therefore, this paper is limited to Paul's ideas in Eph 2, and their application to Melanesian contextual forms. It is hoped that a clearer scriptural understanding of community in Melanesia is conveyed to the church for its growth and maturity.

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

There are the four guiding questions for this research project. Firstly, what is the cultural context of Melanesia? Secondly, how has Christianity influenced Melanesian communities? Thirdly, what are some of the descriptions for community that Paul used in Eph 2? Finally, what are some contextually-meaningful ways to communicate biblical expressions from Eph 2 in Melanesia?

### METHODOLOGY

This paper uses a qualitative approach to research; obtaining relevant data on the topic of study from library and internet sources. From an ethnographic perspective, the common practices and values of diverse

Melanesian cultures are gleaned from different authors. For example, Fugmann describes relationships as a key to salvation in Melanesia, which should help in contextualising the community section.[1] Other vital contributions are made by Chao[2] in the section on traditional loyalties, and by Mantovani,[3] in the qualities of culture section. In addition, as a Melanesian researcher, complementary data to the literature is in the form of personal experiences and reflections.

Exegetically, the exegetical steps found in the *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*[4] by Gorman are applied to Eph 2, to expose and critically analyse Paul's expressions of community, before contextualising these to the Melanesian Christian community. Contextually, the four steps by Hiebert, in *Critical Contextualisation*,[5] as modified by Douglas Hanson in his thesis,[6] will be used to exegete the Melanesian values. Doing so ensures a better understanding of the Melanesian contemporary context; thereby enabling a contextualisation of the expressions given by Paul in Ephesians to Melanesians. Finally, the paper concludes with considerations of the questions raised, and offers suggestions for future scholarly work.

## LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

In order to carry out the tasks described above, the paper recognises that there are limitations, and acknowledges certain delimitations to this study. Firstly, on limitations: the author was aware that not all relevant resources

[1] Gernot Fugmann, "Salvation in Melanesian Religions", in Ennio Mantovani, ed., *An Introduction to Melanesian Religions, Point* 6 (1984), pp. 283-284.
[2] M. John Paul Chao, *A New Sense of Community: Traditional Loyalties, Citizenship, and Government Policies: Perspectives from a Squatter Settlement*, Occasional Papers of the Melanesian Institute 5, Goroka PNG: Melanesian Institute, 1987, pp. 7-10.
[3] Ennio Mantovani, *Meaning and Functions of Culture: an Introduction for Melanesia*, Occasional Paper of the Melanesian Institute 9, Goroka PNG: Melanesian Institute, 1995, pp. 41-42.
[4] Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: a Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*, 4th edn, Peabody MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009, pp. 177-178.
[5] Paul G. Hiebert, "Critical Contextualization", in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11-3 (July 1987), pp. 109-111.
[6] Douglas D. Hanson, "Contextual Christology for Papua New Guineans", DMiss dissertation, Portland OR: Western Seminary, 2012, p. 118.

were available within the CLTC library to undertake this research. There may have been valuable monographs on Melanesian studies, which are available in other libraries in the Pacific, but these had not been accessed. Another limitation has been one of finances. Due to financial constraints, the researcher was unable to travel to undertake any extensive fieldwork in other parts of Melanesia. Yet another limitation was one of time. This research project had a limited time frame for completion. Therefore, the author was unable to undertake an elaborate literature research in libraries within the Melanesian region, where certain data sources may be accessed.

Secondly, on delimitations, the entire New Testament, and the book of Ephesians, are rich concerning the theme of community. However, this paper confines itself to the study of this theme in Eph 2 only. Another delimitation is that Melanesia is a vast region, which extends from the Fiji Islands in the east to Timor (Indonesia) in the west, and from Papua New Guinea in the north to the Tasman (Australia) down south. However, this paper focuses only on Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. Finally, this paper will deal only with Melanesian tribal cultures, as opposed to other tribal cultures in Africa, South America, or elsewhere.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

A few terms need clarification or definition. These include: *Abu*, contextualisation, blood relationship, primal religion, and *wanpela hauslain*. Let us now consider each term individually:

*Abu* is the traditional Malaita (Solomon Islands) term for sacredness. Kabini Sanga defined this term as, "a state of being, of sacredness or holiness, requiring reference, respect, and honour".[7] Furthermore, the notion of *abu* also carries the concept of purity from defilement. It is a deep-rooted term in traditional Melanesian religious life.

"Blood relationship" is a Melanesian phrase, which is equivalent to, or related to, the phrase "kinship relationship". In Melanesian usage, "blood

[7] Kabini Sanga, "Lightning Meets the Light-bulb: *Abu* (*tapu*, sacredness) and transformational leadership in indigenous Solomon Islands", www.leadershippacific.org/documents/Lightning%20Meets%20the%20Light-bulb.pdf, accessed April 11, 2013.

relation" emphasises the closeness of a person to another, in terms of: a common ancestry, both in patrilineal and matrilineal societies, and that related people are tied to their land. Whereas, in Western kin relationships, there are no vigorous interactions, because family members tend to move out from the land and basically fend for themselves.

Another term to define is "primal religion". "Primal religions are indigenous, local, traditional, or tribal religions that are non-universal."[8] Jason Mandryk uses another related term, "traditional ethnic religions", which means the same, and can be used interchangeably.[9] Primal religion and traditional ethnic religions will be preferred for use in this paper, although other terms are available, such as, "animism", or "animatism, totemism, ancestor-worship [sic], or even polytheism",[10] which may imply negative and derogatory connotations to be avoided.

"Contextualisation" is another term that needs to be defined. Although it is a slippery term that depends on who is using it,[11] a broad definition of this term would be to understand the meaning of a text or message that is transferred from one cultural setting to another. In this paper, it means to re-present the concept of the authentic community,[12] as presented in Eph 2, to speak to Melanesian cultures. Generally, it is the transferring of Paul's understanding of community, by using concrete examples, to enable Melanesians to grasp the concept in their context.

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[8] Carol V. McKinney, "Primal Religion", in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, A. Scott Moreau, ed., Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 2000, p. 787.

[9] Mandryk uses this term, when he refers to the primal religions of three Melanesian countries: Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, in *Operation World*, see respective pages given: Jason Mandryk, *Operation World*, 7th edn, Colorado Springs CO: Biblica Publishing, 2010, pp. 670, 752, 876.

[10] E. A. Adeolu Adegbola, "History of Thought", in *Primal World-Views: Christian Involvement in Dialogue with Traditional Thought Forms*, John B. Taylor, ed., Ibadan Nigeria: Daystar Press, 1976, p. 65.

[11] D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1996, p. 539.

[12] John M. Hitchen, "Culture and the Bible – The Question of Contextualisation", course notes, Banz PNG: Christian Leaders' Training College, 2014, p. 1, a revised version of a paper presented at the SPBC Biennial Conference, Sydney, July 1-5, 1991, published in its original form in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 8-2 (1992), pp. 30-52.

*Wanpela hauslain* refers to a small community from about ten households to around a few hundred households, who are kin- or blood-related. *Wanpela hauslain* will always look after itself in trying situations, such as, compensation payments, mortuary rituals, and tribal warfare.

### ASSUMPTIONS

Before going into the next section on the Christian and traditional cultural background of Melanesia, it is noteworthy to state some of the basic assumptions underlying the writing of this paper. There are three basic assumptions. Firstly, the biblical record of God's word is trustworthy and final in authority in matters concerning theology. Secondly, the paper can group together different Melanesian cultures and practices, because all Melanesian cultures are conceived, informed, and influenced by primal religion. finally, there is enough material to methodologically approach the issue of contextualisation of community in Eph 2 in Melanesia, based on available library and internet sources. Now, we will proceed to analyse the Christian cultural context of Melanesia.

## UNDERSTANDING THE MELANESIAN CONTEXT

Two questions need to be asked in dealing with the Melanesian context. What is the Melanesian context? How did Christianity influence Melanesian communities? These questions are dealt with in three ways. Firstly, by locating Melanesia in relation to the rest of Oceania, then analysing the common features of Melanesian traditional cultures and governmental systems. Secondly, by analysing the mission strategies used by different Christian missionary organisations. Thirdly and finally, by understanding and determining the root causes of the problems, together with the effects, results, and impacts of the changes brought on by Christian missionaries and colonialisation on Melanesian communities.

### THE NATURAL AND TRADITIONAL MELANESIAN CONTEXT

Consideration of the Melanesian context will cover the following: geographical location and people, cultural commonalities, and government systems used by Melanesians before and after the advent of Western colonialism. To claim that these are the only ways to understand the

Melanesian context is an understatement. Nevertheless, elucidating these areas will give vital background information for this study.

### *Geographical Location*

Geographically, the whole of Melanesia spans from Timor Island (Indonesia) in the west to Fiji in the east, from the New Guinea Island in the north to Tasmania (Australia) in the south. This would represent the true meaning of Melanesia, since it is made up of two Greek words: μέλας (melas), which means "black", and νῆσος (nēsos), which means "island", hence, the meaning "islands inhabited by black people".[13] However, this research covers the part of the area known as the north-central Melanesia. This consists of three Melanesian island nations, namely; Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, and the Solomon Islands. These island nations are located from east of Australia, to the Kingdom of Tonga to the east, and from Nauru in the north, to Indonesia in the west (see Figure 1).[14]

[13] Zdzislaw Kruczek, *A Short History of Christianity in Melanesian Countries.* Mt Hagen PNG: Mi-cha-el CSMA, 2011, pp. 27-28.

[14] Map of Oceania, from www.mapsofworld.com/australia-and-oceania, accessed April 12, 2014.

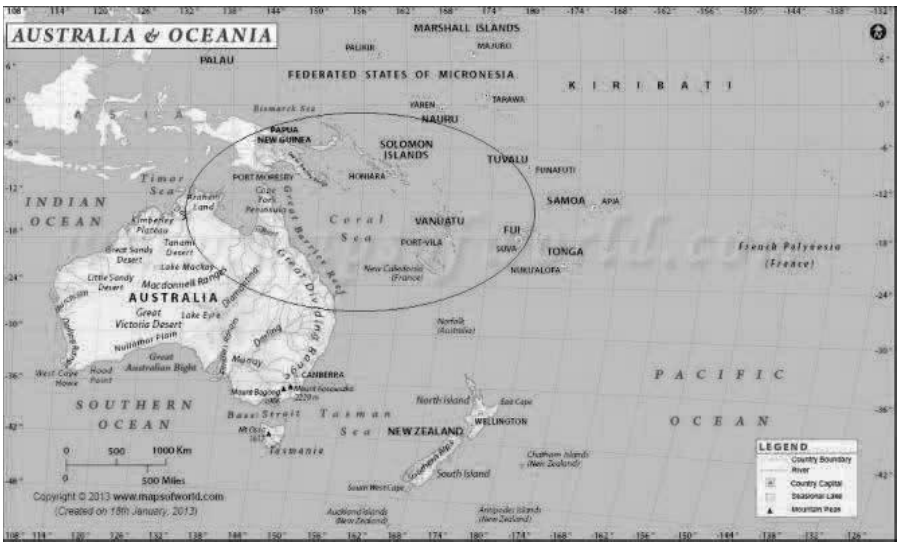


Figure 1: Location of Melanesia in Oceania

The largest island, Papua New Guinea (PNG), in Figure 2,[15] has an area of 462,840 square kilometres.[16] PNG lies across the northern tip of Australia (see Figure 1), and shares a common border with West Irian (Indonesia), to make the second largest island in the world.[17] West Irian was annexed by Indonesia,[18] although it was supposed to be given the opportunity to determine its own future, after an administrative period from 1965 to 1969.[19] PNG, however, went on to gain its independence from the Australian administration in 1975.[20]

[15] Map of Papua New Guinea with West Irian (Indonesia), from www.google.com.pg/?gws_rd=cr&ei=19xIU9utNcaGrgeY4IDwAw#q=map+of+papua+new+guinea, accessed April 24, 2014.
[16] Mandryk, *Operation World*, p. 670.
[17] Bruce Grant, *Indonesia*, Carlton Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1966, p. 117.
[18] See Figure 2: The political division between Papua New Guinea with West Irian (Indonesia), from www.google.com.pg/?gws_rd=cr&ei=19xIU9utNcaGrgeY4IDwAw#q=map+of+papua+new+guinea, accessed April 24, 2014.
[19] J. D. Legge, *Indonesia*, Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964, p. 156.
[20] Mandryk, *Operation World*, p. 670.


Figure 2: The political division between Papua New Guinea and West Irian (Indonesia)

According to *Operation World* in 2010, PNG had an approximate population of 6,888,387 people, of which 98.2 percent were Melanesians, while Christians numbered 95.84 percent.[21] Linguistically, PNG is varied and diverse, so that villagers, even only a few miles apart, cannot understand each other.[22] It has about 1,000 people groups, who speak 830 languages.[23] Despite the high percentage of Christian affiliation, traditional ethic religion remains a powerful underlying influence.[24]

Vanuatu, as seen in Figure 3, below,[25] is a nation with scattered islands. In the *Operation World* record, Vanuatu is made up of 12 larger islands and 70 smaller ones, which amount to an area of 12,190 square kilometres.[26] It has

[21] Ibid.
[22] Brian Essai, *Papua and New Guinea: a Contemporary Survey*, Melbourne Vic: Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 32.
[23] Mandryk, *Operation World*, p. 670.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Map of Vanuatu Islands, from www.google.com.pg/search, accessed April 26, 2014.
[26] Mandryk, *Operation World*, p. 875.

a population of 245,000 people, of which 94.08% affiliate to the Christian religion.[27]


Figure 3: Map of Vanuatu Islands

Even though Vanuatu has a high percentage of Christian affiliations, there are still influences of traditional ethnic religion on islands, such as, Tanna, Aniwo, Santo, Vao, and others.[28] The influence of traditional ethnic religion is slowly gaining momentum among the people. Lionel Tom, a budding theologian from Santo Island, in the introduction to his article *A Biblical Response to Divination in the Churches Among the Akey People on the Island of Santo in Vanuatu*, commented that divination is a problem in the churches today.[29] Therefore, even with a high proportion of Christians, traditional ethnic religion is still an underlying, determining factor for Christians in this Melanesian nation.

[27] Ibid., pp. 875-876.
[28] Ibid., p. 876.
[29] Lionel Tom, "A Biblical Response to Divination in the Churches Among the Akey People on the Island of Santo in Vanuatu", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 30-1 (2014), p. 36.

Solomon Islands is made up of six main volcanic islands and numerous smaller islands,[30] which make up an area of 27, 556 square kilometres.[31] It has a total population of 535,699 people, of which 90.2 percent are Melanesians.[32] Solomon Islands is sandwiched between Papua New Guinea, in the north-west, and Vanuatu, in the south-east.


Figure 4: Map of Solomon Islands

Religiously, about 95.8 percent are Christian affiliates, and other religions make up the other 4.2 percent. Even though there is a high percentage of Christian affiliation, and, in spite of having revival in almost all denominations in 1982, Solomon Islands still has a problem of nominalism.[33]

[30] See Figure 4: Map of Solomon Islands, from www.google.com.pg/search, accessed April 24, 2014.
[31] Mandryk, *Operation World*, p. 751.
[32] Ibid.
[33] The word "nominalism" roughly means to be a Christians in form only, not a committed follower of Christ, Ibid., p. 752.

| Country | Total Population | Melanesians % | Christian Affiliation % | Other Religions % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Papua New Guinea | 6,888,387 | 98.2 | 95.84 | 4.16 |
| Solomon Islands | 535, 699 | 90.2 | 95.8 | 4.2 |
| Vanuatu | 245, 000 | 91.9 | 94.08 | 5.92 |

Table 1: Populations of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, comparing Christian affiliation and other religions

*Summary* – The data in Table 1, above, shows that more than 90 percent of the three Melanesian countries profess to be Christians, and only less than 10 percent of their total populations are affiliated with other religions. Nevertheless, two principles are working beneath the high percentages of Christianity. Firstly, in each of these Melanesia countries, the underlying force of traditional ethnic religion can still be felt among Christians. Secondly, there is a high rate of nominalism among professing Christians, as is the case in the Solomon Islands. Hence, the concept of Christian community is vague in Melanesia.

### *Government Systems*

The traditional Melanesian way of governing is not equivalent to modern-day political governing systems.[34] For example, a state has its elected members and parliament as the highest decision-making body, with various supporting systems to enforce the policies made and to oversee and provide services to the people. Therefore, two leading questions can be asked.

The first question is: How did a Melanesian community govern itself traditionally? An analysis of the documents available shows that at least the following features of traditional Melanesian cultures are seen as governing instruments.

[34] Phyllis M. Kaberry, "Political Organisation among the Northern Abelam", in *Anthropological Forum* 1-3&4 (December 1965-June 1966), p. 334.

Firstly, there is strong evidence of the function of a legal code and procedure within any given traditional Melanesian culture. Gross agrees with Redfield, and other anthropologists, that traditional societies have laws, which exist in incipient and rudimentary forms.[35] This is agreeable, a leaning towards the Darwinian concept of evolution.[36] These laws are the basis for Melanesian morality. The laws govern the relationships between males and females, and the restrictions demanded by rituals and ceremonies. To ignore these laws, means to face punishment, and even banishment.

The term "law" can be equated with different terms in the Melanesian context. In Papua New Guinea, it is *lo*, which generally means "custom or rule".[37] Nehrbass, who studied the Tannese culture in Vanuatu, identified this, and argued that, in order for change to happen, a careful analysis and synthesis of the *kastom* concerning all aspects of life must be undertaken, because *kastom* is deeply rooted in rituals and magic.[38] Therefore, laws in traditional Melanesian cultures, are the functional mechanism of governing a society.

Secondly, the governing effect of law is transmitted through the relationships and social structures of the community. Radcliffe-Brown notes that the study of social anthropology deals with the "relations of association between individual organisms".[39] These relations of association can either be between the individual person, who forms the traditional autonomous political unit, between villages, which are the next political unit, or tribes, as the wider political unit.[40] It is the respect towards these levels of units that

[35] Robert Redfield, "Primitive Law", in *Law and Warfare: Studies in the Anthropology of Conflict*, Paul Bohannan, ed., Garden City NY: National History Press, 1967, pp. 3-24, quoted in Daniel R. Gross, *Discovering Anthropology*, Mountain View CA: Mayfield Publishing, 1992, p. 420.
[36] Garry W. Trompf, *Melanesian Religion*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 8.
[37] Francis Mihalic, *The Jacaranda Dictionary and Grammar of Melanesian Pidgin*, Milton Qld: Jacaranda Press, 1971, p. 122.
[38] Kenneth. Nehrbass, *Christianity and Animism in Melanesia: Four Approaches to Gospel and Culture*, Pasadena CA: William Carey Library, 2012, p. 25.
[39] A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*, London UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952, p. 189.
[40] Kaberry, "Political Organisation", p. 334.

ensures the upholding of the unwritten Melanesian behavioural codes of governance in society.

Thirdly, the governing effect of law is propagated through experiences within society. The experience of a society is both positive and negative. Mantovani rightly states that people experience the help and safety of the community, because of that, they believe in the value of the community, and readily serve or suffer for their community.[41] However, if one does not collaborate in communal endeavours, negative measures, such as, gossiping, or even sorcery, are used to pull people back into line.[42] The experience of the individual shows the effect of the unwritten codes at work in the community.

Finally, the unwritten laws of any traditional Melanesian society are directed towards the well-being, or what is sometimes referred to as *gutpela*[43] *sindaun*,[44] of the society. The *kastom*, or *lo*, of Melanesian societies is integral to the well-being of each society, although there are minor differences of *kastom*, or *lo*, in each society. Therefore, the above discussion generally points to the fact that, in traditional Melanesian societies, there are laws that undergird the governance of the community. These laws work only through the mutual respect of the stakeholders of the culture, in the expressions of *kastom*, and *lo*, before the *gutpela sindaun* of each Melanesian traditional society is guaranteed.

The second question to ask is: Why have Melanesian traditional cultural forms of governance changed? For the purpose of this paper, two specific influences will be discussed. The Melanesian ways of governance have changed over the years, due mainly to the advent of Christianity, and Western colonisation. Of these two external influences, the thrust of Christianity caused more rapid changes than Western colonialism. Luzbetak states that "Whether missionaries are inclined to admit it or not, they are

[41] Ennio Mantovani, *Traditional and Present-day Melanesian Values and Ethics*, Occasional Paper of the Melanesian Institute 7, Goroka PNG: Melanesian Institute, 1993, p. 14.
[42] Ibid., p. 14.
[43] Mihalic, *Jacaranda Dictionary*, p. 91.
[44] Ibid., p. 173.

professional agents of culture change, for there is no other way of establishing, consolidating, and perpetuating the church in a society than through its culture".[45] However, the rate of change within different localities depended entirely on the ethos of the mission agency that worked in a particular locality. For example, Keesing argued that the ethos of the South Sea Evangelical Mission (SSEM), working among the Kwaio in the Solomon Islands, was to destroy all cultural practices, so as to perpetuate Christianity.[46] But the Melanesian Mission philosophy was to allow the islanders to keep as many traditional ways and culture as possible.[47] Under the SSEM's influence, cultural changes were faster, while, under Melanesian Mission, change was slower, in certain aspects of traditional beliefs. The goals of both missions were to build a new community of God. The slow or rapid erosion of traditional Melanesian cultures and forms came as a product of the change in the lives of the people. It reflected the standards of the new community, to which they now belonged.

The other influence for change in traditional Melanesian cultural systems of governance was the "cause and effect" of the introduced governing systems from the Western colonisers, such as, England, France, and Australia. In the quest to expand their frontiers, Western nations claimed authority over certain blocks of the Pacific islands. Balasuriya rightly portrays the Western colonial superiority complex as at its height under European expansion over the past 450 years.[48] Balasuriya goes on to state that, "From the point of view of Western man [sic], they were a period of great expansion, triumph, and growth. For others, they were centuries of defeat, colonisation, pillage, and exploitation."[49] While Balasuriya is more polemic in this stance, John

[45] Louis J. Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures: An Applied Anthropology for the Religious Worker*, Techny IL: Divine Word Publications, 1970, p. 6, quoted in Jacob A. Loewen, *Culture and Human Values: Christian Intervention in Anthropological Perspective*, South Pasadena CA: William Carey Library, 1975, pp. 5-6.
[46] Roger M. Keesing, "Christians and Pagans in Kwaio, Malaita", in *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 76-1 (1967), pp. 82-100.
[47] A. R Tippett, *Solomon Islands Christianity: a Study in Growth and Obstruction*, London UK: Lutterworth Press, 1967, p. 35.
[48] Tissa Balasuriya, "Developing the Poor by Civilising the Rich", in *Pacific Perspective* 2-1 (1973), p. 9.
[49] Balasuriya, "Developing the Poor", p. 9.

Hitchen notes that in this "onward march of Western civilisation"[50] there are some positive aspects to it. For example, Hitchen, who studied the influence of Pacific missionaries on anthropology, agreeably argues that Christian missionaries contributed to the preservation and protection of the cultural heritages of local people.[51] The Melanesian region was no exception in this period of Western colonial expansion. Melanesia has been influenced, to a certain degree, as the following brief history of Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, and the Solomon Islands shows.

Papua New Guinea was claimed to have been sighted by an unknown Portuguese captain in 1512, and later by the Spanish sailor Alvaro de Saavedra in 1528.[52] It was not until more than 300 years later that Captain Moresby surveyed and named Port Moresby in 1871.[53] On April 4, 1883, Britain annexed South-East New Guinea, under the promulgation effort of a Mr Chester, who took possession in the name of the Queen, and a year later, after a political conference in Sydney, Commodore Erskine of the Australian Station proceeded to proclaim British protectorate over South-East Papua on November 6, 1884.[54] Because of these two different declarations, New Guinea and Papua were two separate territories, with their own legislative councils (see Figure 5).[55]

[50] John M. Hitchen, "Relations Between Missiology and Anthropology Then and Now: Insights from the Contribution to Ethnography and Anthropology by Nineteenth-Century Missionaries in the South Pacific", in *Missiology: an International Review* XXX-4 (October 2002), p. 460.
[51] Ibid., pp. 458-460.
[52] J. P. Thomson, *British New Guinea*, London UK: George Philip & Son, 1892, p. 2.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid., p. 7.
[55] D. Barrett, "Rubber Stamp or Parliament?", in *The Politics of Melanesia*, Marion W. Ward, Susan C. Tarua, May Dudley, eds, Canberra ACT: The Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University, 1970, p. 428.


Figure 5: The two territories under Australian control

In the years after 1884, colonial influences on cultural roles began to be superimposed on the local people. Fort confirms, in his historical account of the establishment of Port Moresby, that a certain village chief, by the name of Boevagi, was formally appointed to be recognised as the chief for the district. Other village chiefs had to refer all complaints to him.[56] PNG became a territory of Australia in 1906,[57] and finally adopted its constitution on August 15, 1975, a month before gaining independence on September 16, 1975.[58] However, PNG has continued to depend on foreign goods to satisfy the cultural changes, that it went through, because of external influences. Even today, dynamic cultural changes are continuing to be experienced.

The Solomon Islands was sighted by Alvaro de Mendana in 1568, and was annexed to the king of Spain between April 7, 1568, and May 5, 1568.[59] However, nothing much came from Mendana's voyage, other than his report and the naming of the Isles of Solomon.[60] There were other sightings of the

[56] G. S. Fort, "Report on British New Guinea from Data and Notes by the Late Sir Peter Scratchley", in *Readings in New Guinea History*, B. Jinks, P. Biskup, H. Nelson, eds, Sydney NSW: Angus & Robertson, 1973, p. 45.
[57] Charles W. Forman, *The Island Churches of the South Pacific: Emergence in the Twentieth Century*. Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1982, p. 54.
[58] John Dademo Waiko, *A Short History of Papua New Guinea*, Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 189.
[59] J. C. Beaglehole, *The Exploration of the Pacific: The Pioneer Histories*, V. T. Harlow, J. A. Williamson, eds, London UK: A. & C. Black, 1934, p. 57.
[60] Ibid., pp. 67-68.

islands, but it was not until 1791 that the islands were explored fully by d'Entrecasteaux, in his search for the missing Captain La Perouse.[61] After d'Entrecasteaux's voyage, gradual increase of contact and influence came from the outside world to the Solomon Islands.

British annexation of the Solomon Islands came in 1893, governing the remote colony via Suva, with a minimal involvement policy.[62] However, two reasons forced Britain to annexe the islands. Firstly, there was widespread dealing in arms, and in labour trafficking, also known as blackbirding, by foreigners into Fijian and Queensland sugar plantations.[63] Hilliard affirms this by noting that Malaita was a popular recruiting ground, though not free of danger, where about 10,000 labourers were taken to Queensland alone.[64] Secondly, an "annexation by any other power would have antagonised . . . Queensland, with its interest in obtaining labour".[65] At least, for these obvious reasons, Britain had to take the Solomon Islands under protection.

On July 7, 1978, Solomon Islands became a sovereign nation. However, the young nation was made in the Western mould, to support Western civilisation. In sketching the impact of colonialism on the Solomon Islands, Keesing iterates that the Solomon Islands was designed to reflect the white man's fashion – air-conditioned offices, mini-skirted Melanesian girls, transistor radios, trade stores, plantations, schools, clinics, and missions.[66] This became the basis for a continuous craving by Solomon Islanders for outside material kinds. The Solomon Islands will never be the same. It has

[61] Leslie R. Marchant, "La Pérouse, Jean-François de Galaup (1741-1788)", in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Carlton Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1967, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/la-perouse-jean-francois-de-galaup-2329, accessed May 14, 2014.
[62] I. Q. Lasaqa, "Melanesians' Choice: Tadhimboko Participation in the Solomon Islands Cash Economy", in *New Guinea Research Bulletin* 46, Canberra ACT: Australian National University New Guinea Research Unit, 1972, pp. 8-9.
[63] Ibid., p. 8.
[64] David Hilliard, "The South Sea Evangelical Mission in the Solomon Islands: The Foundation Years", in *The Journal of Pacific History* 4 (1969), p. 41.
[65] Lasaqa, "Melanesians' Choice", p. 8.
[66] Roger Keesing, "Seeking Paths for Solomon's Development", in *Pacific Perspective* 2-1 (1973), p. 21.

changed in culture, and now has to look for help from those who instigated the change in the first place.

In 1606, the Portuguese navigator, Pedro de Quiros, was the first to sight Vanuatu. He believed that it was the elusive Southern continent, though it was Santo that he had reached, and he named it *Terra Australis de Espiritu Santo* (Great Southland of the Holy Spirit).[67] However, it was Captain Cook, who charted most parts of the Islands, and named it the New Hebrides.[68]

The New Hebrides became a farmland for cotton growers, traders, and opportunists, heightened by the civil war in America, which downplayed its cotton production. The arrival of British, Australian, and French settlers necessitated the formation of the condominium[69] governing system. By 1887, they had formed the Anglo-French Naval Commission. This never went well, because of the British-French rivalry in Egypt, and other places. As a result, the condominium was actually set up in 1906, and the two powers had systems in place, side by side.[70]

According to Lini, the condominium had had some modifications, and, from 1922, a joint administration was imposed on the New Hebrideans, with no control, power, or citizenship in their own land.[71] Nevertheless, Lini piloted the nation to independence from British and French domination on July 30, 1980, following a lot of insurgence by local people, who were motivated by foreigners with French interests, and the New Hebrides became Vanuatu.[72] Within the years that the condominium was in place, the Vanuatu people experienced many cultural changes. They not only produced goods for

[67] Harry Luke, *Islands of the South Pacific*, London UK: George G. Harrap, 1962, pp. 137-138.
[68] Ibid., p. 138.
[69] The phrase "condominium" means "the joint control of a state's affairs by other states"; see "condominium", in *Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th edn, Catherine Soanes, Angus Stevenson, eds, Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 2008.
[70] Luke, *Islands of the South Pacific*, pp. 138-139.
[71] Walter Lini, *Beyond Pandemonium: From the New Hebrides to Vanuatu*, Wellington NZ: Asia Pacific Books, 1980, p. 17.
[72] Ibid., pp. 53-54.

personal consumption, but also copra, coffee, cocoa, and other tropical products, to support outside trade.[73]

*Summary* – From the foregoing discussions, we see that, generally, Melanesians governed themselves by traditional laws, which formed the basis of their morality. However, with the expansion of Western civilisation and Christianity, we see that Melanesia has changed. Melanesia has changed from islands, scattered across the sea, to island nations. New forms of governing systems were imposed on these new nations. They made new friends, to supply their demands (imports), and trades local, raw produce (exports), to meet what was required of them.

Melanesia has changed since its initial contact with the outside world, and will continue to change in the future. The focus is shifting from the local to the international community. This provides a challenge in the understanding of Christian community. With this ongoing process of cultural change, the traditional concept of communal living is slowly disappearing from the minds of a new generation of Melanesians.

### *Cultural Commonalities*

Melanesian cultures are rich and diverse, in so many ways. The scope of culture varies from the simple preparation of food to the more complex patterns of thought, behaviour, and symbolic meanings.[74] To discuss the spectrum of Melanesian cultural traditions would be a daunting task to attempt here. However, there is a fine opportunity to take on the challenge to discuss Melanesian cultures, through analysing the cultural commonalities that are presented.

The first common aspect in all Melanesian cultures is what social anthropology had previously termed "animism",[75] or, more recently, "primal

[73] Luke, *Islands of the South Pacific*, p. 141.
[74] Daniel R. Gross, *Discovering Anthropology*, pp. 14-15.
[75] The anthropologist, E. B. Tylor, was the first to use the term "animist" in the 19th century, Robert H. Lowie, *Primitive Religion*, New York NY: Liveright Publishing, 1952, p. 99.

religion".[76] Primal religion is the underlying cognate in all Melanesian cultures and communities. Primal religion has historically informed the cosmological understanding, and the interpretation of events and experiences in life. Burnett contrasts the secular and primal religious worldviews,[77] which is adapted and modified in this paper, as seen in Figure 6.

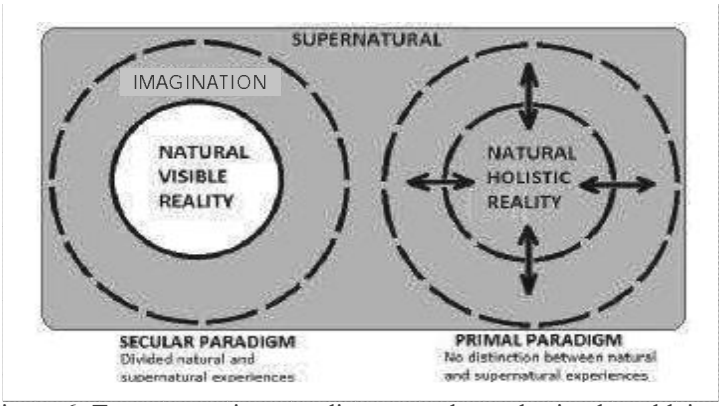


Figure 6: Two contrasting paradigms: secular and primal worldviews

The primal religious paradigm does not differentiate between supernatural and natural occurrences, as in a secular worldview. Consequently, on the one hand, an experience, in the Melanesian community context, is both natural and supernatural, although it is deemed natural in the secular paradigm. On the other hand, what is seen as a supernatural religious experience, in the Melanesian culture, exists only in the imagination of the person with a secular paradigm.

Melanesians have no distinction or disparity between natural and supernatural entities, but have one whole cosmology, which incorporates both. It is this primal paradigm that is the basic root of all Melanesian

[76] In the introduction to *Primal World-Views*, John B. Taylor defined "primal" as "the basic form of religion, as opposed to the suggestion that it means truer and more authentic than other religions, John B. Taylor, ed., *Primal World-Views: Christian Involvement in Dialogue with Traditional Thought Forms*, Ibadan Nigeria: Daystar Press, 1976, p. 3.
[77] David Burnett, *Unearthly Powers: A Christian Perspective on Primal and Folk Religion*, Eastbourne UK: MARC, 1988, p. 16.

worldviews; giving meaningful frameworks to the way people behave and practice in their social contexts.

Secondly, fear is a common aspect in Melanesian cultures. In the Melanesian community context, it can determine a child's upbringing, relationship building, or how a person decides to fulfil a day's chores. For example, in analysing the factors that shaped his personality traits, Yandit reflected on his childhood days that children were taught to fear the spirit world, because it "controlled the natural world, including human existence, with its taboos and regulations . . . and failure to observe such realities brought retributions on . . . the community".[78]

Another example of fear concerns the behaviour of the Akey people in Vanuatu. Lionel Tom raised two questions concerning their behaviour. Firstly, to whom do the people give priority, when they need guidance? Secondly, why do people give priority to diviners, and not to pastors? His answers to both questions are that the Akey people give priority to seek guidance from diviners, and not the pastors. The reason is because pastors could not do the following: provide answers quickly, diagnose the cause of a sickness, or determine if a journey will be safe. [79] However, the underlying issue of fear is not addressed in the article. It is fear of the causes of sickness, or of the unknown future, that caused the Akey people to behave in that particular manner. Melanesian people are fearful of the unknown sphere of the supernatural spiritual world. Therefore, they want to get quick answers to their questions about the uncertainties of what is to happen in the future.

Thirdly, another common aspect in Melanesian societies is sacredness, or *abu*. The notion of *abu*, in the traditional Gula'ala[80] (Solomon Islands) culture, is vital for existence within the community, in "reference, respect, honour,"[81] and "purity in actions".[82] *Abu*, or sacredness, as a value,

[78] Kirine Yandit, "Personal Development Portfolio", DMin program paper submitted for the Course PD810, Wantirna Vic: Melbourne School of Theology, 2013, pp. 6-7.
[79] Tom, "Divination in the Churches", p. 43.
[80] Gula'ala traditional culture is that of the author.
[81] Kabini Sanga, "Lightning Meets the Light-bulb".

demands mutuality among all stakeholders. In the Melanesian context, stakeholders of *abu* refer to a sacred space, persons, and objects. Habel notes that a sacred space, sacred persons, and sacred objects are notable features in any one particular Melanesian traditional cultural context.[83]

Sacredness, or *abu*, is expressed in a variety of ways and forms in most Melanesian traditional cultures. Because of the sacredness of an object, space, or the person, people behave appropriately towards it. To deviate from *abu*, or sacredness, will bring heavy consequences on the individual person, or the whole community. For example, in Tolai traditional culture, *tambu*,[84] or shell money, can be used for many different purposes. The use of this *tambu* ranges from a simple daily transaction between people at the market place to a more serious business transaction involving "cash crops, such as, copra and cocoa".[85] Significantly, our primary concern is when *tambu* is used in ritualistic occasions. During ritualistic occasions, "[*T*]*ambu* is considered very sacred, and seen as a means of contacting the spirit world".[86] When *tambu* is to be used in a ritualistic sense, right protocols need to be considered carefully, to avoid unwanted repercussions. Therefore, whether sacredness is implied to shell money, a place, or a person; the above discussion shows that sacredness is, in fact, a commonality in Melanesian traditional societies.

Lastly, symbols are another significant common aspect in traditional Melanesian cultures. For example, in the case of *tambu*, when it is used in ritual ceremonies, it translates as a distinguishable sacredness, apart from its

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[82] Allan A. Sanga, "The Resurgence of Witchcraft and Sorcery Practices in the Gula'ala Society of the Malaita Province, Solomon Islands: a Theological Response", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 30-1 (2014), pp. 56-74.
[83] Norman C. Habel, "Introduction", in *Powers, Plumes, and Piglets: Phenomena of Melanesian Religion*, Norman C. Habel, ed., Bedford Park SA: Australian Association for the Study of Religions, 1979, pp. 8-11.
[84] The term *tambu* should not be confused with a similar term, *tabu*, which is equivalent to "taboo", or "sacred and forbidden".
[85] Casper G. ToVaninara, "Tambu: Traditional Sacred Wealth", in *Powers, Plumes, and Piglets: Phenomena of Melanesian Religion*, Norman C. Habel, ed., Bedford Park SA: Australian Association for the Study of Religions, 1979, p. 33.
[86] Ibid., p. 35.

normal use, because it becomes a symbol. In analysing symbols, Flannery stated that symbols are very complex human realities, because of that, it is difficult to give symbol a precise and simple definition.[87] However, she goes on to produce six characteristics of symbols, and one of these is: "When a sign becomes a true symbol, it points to a meaning, or set of meanings, 'larger' than what it signifies in ordinary experience. It represents a reality beyond the ordinary, which is elusive, and cannot be fully grasped."[88] An example is given in the table below.[89]

| Cultural or Natural Sign | Context | Conventional Meaning |
|---|---|---|
| *Tambu* | Daily usage in a market place | Normal monetary medium of exchange |
| | *Minamai* ceremony. Shell-money sharing after burying a dead person | Guarantee the right of passage of the dead, and relationship with ancestral spirits of those dead before, protection from evil talk of those left behind, ensure proper burial process |

Table 2: An example of symbolic and natural uses of *Tambu*

ToVaniara describes this dynamic change of the meaning of *tambu* from a normal medium of exchange to a more sacred ritualistic symbol as "more or less identified with ancestral spirits, but not identical with them".[90] *Tambu* becomes even more valuable than the deceased itself, because it is identified with the ancestral spirits, hence it becomes a spiritual thing, while the deceased is still part of the physical realm. Therefore, sacred symbolism is a commonality in Melanesia.

[87] Wendy Flannery, "Symbol and Myth in Melanesian Cultures", in *Missiology: an International Review* VII-4 (October 1979), p. 238.
[88] Ibid., p. 438.
[89] The table has been adapted and modified, using the example from the paper, as discussed, above, Ibid.
[90] ToVaninara, "Tambu: Traditional Sacred Wealth", pp. 35-37.

The different examples, given above, verify that, although Melanesian traditional practices are diverse, there is a cognate sense. While traditional practices and forms are unique to individual Melanesian cultural contexts, the underlying primal religion, fear, sacredness, and symbolism are still present within each culture. This means that each culture has the potential to express and contribute towards the cultural commonalities in a specific and unique way within the Melanesian context. Hence, there is a glimpse of hope to teach and understand the meaning of the expressions in Eph 2 of the biblical community.

***Section Summary***

This section discusses three specific aspects of the Melanesian context. Firstly, the identification of the general geographical location and the population of the three island nations of Melanesia. Concerning the location and population, two principles are seen to be at work: beneath the high percentage of Christian affiliation, there is the traditional ethnic religion and there is nominalism. This may be the challenge to understanding the Christian community.

Secondly, Melanesians govern themselves by traditional laws, which form the basis for their morality. Their governing systems have changed since contact with Western civilisation. They have moved from traditional laws and morality to a Westminster and condominium systems, and from simple barter systems to meeting international market standards and demands. Melanesia has been swallowed up by the dynamic process of change, and the region will never be the same again. This could be another challenge for relaying the biblical concept of community.

Finally, this section gives different examples of the cultural commonalities in Melanesia. These cultural commonalities should be seen as in-built possibilities, in the Melanesian context, that are readily available for Melanesians to use in contextualising the concept of the new Christian community in Eph 2.

## CHRISTIANITY IN THE MELANESIAN CONTEXT

One of the contributing factors towards misunderstanding the Christian concept of community in Melanesia is the outcome of different mission organisations coming to Melanesia. Each of these mission organisations came to Melanesia with differing strategies and ethos in their mission work.

### *Mission Strategies and Ethos*

The Protestant mission movements, such as the LMS, Methodist Mission, Lutheran Mission, and the SSEM, used similar strategies to reach the Melanesian people. The successes of the different mission agencies depended entirely on the strategies employed by individual mission agencies. The following are descriptions of the strategies and ethos of different mission movements.

The pattern for evangelism in the LMS was a providential happening which lead to a more aggressive mission strategy used by John Williams, in 1823, in the Cook Islands,[91] and later, in 1839, in the New Hebrides.[92] Local evangelists were placed in locations to reach out to others.[93] This became the pattern for the westward mission expansion into Melanesia, which was that of partnership between the foreign and islander missionaries.

The Methodist Mission used this same strategy in bringing island missionaries from Fiji and Samoa.[94] In the same way, the Lutheran Mission also used local teachers, or what they termed "Simbang boys",[95] to teach their own people. The SSEM and the Melanesian Mission also used a variation of this method in the different mission fields, where schools were set up to teach young islanders to become the evangelists to their own

[91] John M. Hitchen, "Our South Pacific Mission Heritage: the Forgotten Central Strand", course notes, Banz PNG: Christian Leaders' Training College, 2014, p. 18.
[92] Ibid., p. 23.
[93] Forman, *The Island Churches of the South Pacific*, p. 8.
[94] John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania*, Geneva Switzerland: WCC Publications, 1982, pp. 220-222.
[95] Johann Flierl, *Christ in New Guinea: Former Cannibals Become Evangelists by the Marvellous Grace of God: a Short History of Mission Work done by the Native Helpers and Teachers in the Lutheran Mission New Guinea*, Tanuda SA: Johann Flierl, 1932, pp. 14-21.

people. However, the Melanesian Mission used the "extraction" pattern.[96] Garrett precisely conceptualises this in the following quote: "Young men were recruited, with the consent of their families, from the Banks Group, north of the New Hebrides, the Loyalties, and parts of the Solomons, to be trained as 'scholars' in Auckland, and sent back to teach Christianity to their own people".[97]

The Roman Catholic Mission used a much different strategy. Forman noted that the Roman Catholic Mission's reason for not using islanders as much as the other missions was that "there have been so many European missionaries available",[98] and local personnel were not trained to take responsibility by then.

Therefore, the general strategy used in most of the mission movements, discussed above, was the partnership between Western and islander missionaries to propagate the gospel. Besides having that transmission strategy, each mission movement used a specific ethos in the Christianisation process. The ethos of these mission movements had a lot of bearing on the type of Christianity in a particular community of its influence.

The LMS ethos for evangelisation can be traced back to the first batch of missionaries into the Pacific. According to Forman, there were mostly artisans in the group of 30, and only four ministers.[99] Forman further comments that "it was assumed that these people would have to be civilised before they could understand Christianity".[100] It was apparent that they had come with a preconceived cultural standard, to teach the islanders civilisation before Christianisation.

The Methodist Mission also used a similar philosophy to that of the LMS. Commenting on the nature of the emphasis of the Methodist Mission, Harwood iterates that "to missionaries like Goldie, Christianity was . . . a

[96] Hitchen, "Our South Pacific Mission Heritage", pp. 28-29.
[97] Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, pp. 182-183.
[98] Forman, "The Missionary Force of the Pacific Island Churches", in *International Review of Missions* 59-234 (April 1970), p. 221.
[99] Forman, *The Island Churches of the South Pacific*, p. 3.
[100] Ibid.

total way of life for his converts, which entailed a renunciation of the traditional lifestyle and its values",[101] and that Christianity replaced old ways rather than being an additive. With this mental envisioning, Harwood states that, after six years of founding the mission in the Solomon Islands, Goldie introduced the policy of an "industrial mission".[102] This was in vogue with "the mission's emphasis on a 'social ethic', which stressed 'works' over 'beliefs', and emphasised the 'here and now', rather than a 'future' salvation".[103] Therefore, the Methodist's ethos in evangelism was to replace traditional values by introducing industry-based values, which would demonstrate the Christian way of living to the people.

The ethos of the Lutheran Mission can be deduced from the attributes of the beginning of the mission. According to Wagner, the only available model for propagation of the gospel, familiar to the missionaries, was that which was taught to them back home – formal worship services.[104] Meanwhile, Flierl went on to build a schoolhouse, which later became useful when Labita, a close relative of a ruling chief, appeared with 14 young men, to be taught for five months. That act was regarded as an evil trick, just to obtain iron tools, but, somehow, it became the approach used for evangelism.[105] The missionaries eventually attracted the young people by offering tools, after training in cultivation methods, different fruit trees, and the "Christian way of life", hence, evangelisation by civilisation.[106] Therefore, the Lutheran Mission had to change its philosophy, even if it meant being patient before the first harvest of souls.

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[101] Francis H. Harwood, *The Methodist Mission and the Emergence of the Christian Fellowship Church: an Analysis of Partial Equivalent Structures in the Western Solomon Islands*, draft photocopy, PNG: Wesleyan University, 1974, pp. 8-9.
[102] Ibid., p. 8.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Herwig Wagner, "Beginnings at Finschhafen: the Neuendettelsau Mission Jointly with the Australian Lutheran Church", in *The Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea: the First Hundred Years 1886-1986*, Herwig Wagner, Herman Reiner, eds, Adelaide SA: Lutheran Publishing, 1987, p. 38.
[105] Ibid., pp. 38-39.
[106] Ibid.

The Melanesian Mission's[107] philosophy of working within Melanesian fields was to be more tolerant of the native cultures.[108] In analysing the policies of the Melanesian Mission, as laid down by Selwyn, Tippett specifies that one of these policies was the Melanesian Mission ethos, which allowed that "as many as possible of the ways and customs of the Melanesian should be retained within the faith and approach of the Church of England".[109] This philosophy was hand in hand with the mission's principle of evangelising by civilisation.[110] Consequently, the Melanesian Mission allowed the people to retain much of their traditional cultural forms and arts without really knowing that these were tied together in the traditional belief system of the native people.

The SSEM philosophy of ministering to the islanders was to emphasise a total break from past traditional belief systems. In portraying the ethos of SSEM, Hilliard states that "the Bible was primarily a source of doctrine . . . a textbook, which gave practical guidance in every problem".[111] With this understanding, the SSEM sought the conversion of individuals, rather than a direct permeation of a larger group of people. Garrett agrees with Hilliard in stating that "the church they nurtured, with upright doctrinal and moral solitude, took its theology from beliefs upheld at the Keswick Convention and . . . the Katoomba Convention [held in NSW Australia] . . . the priority of preaching over social service"[112] – hence, evangelisation before civilisation.

The Roman Catholic Mission's effort can be understood in the light of the question of the anonymous Christian: "can anyone outside of the Roman Catholic church attain salvation?" The resolute answer to this theological and philosophical question, from the Roman Catholic perspective, is "yes!"

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[107] The Melanesian Mission was an effort by the Anglican church to reach the South Pacific.
[108] John Barker, "Cheerful Pragmatists: Anglican Missionaries Among the Maisin of Collingwood Bay, Northern Papua, 1898-1920", in *Journal of Pacific History* 22-2 (April 1987), p. 66.
[109] Tippett, *Solomon Islands Christianity*, p. 35.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Hilliard, "The South Sea Evangelical Mission", p. 59.
[112] Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, p. 299.

The Roman Catholicism argument is that every person has the natural potential to be open to God's love, because wherever they are, they are within the sphere of His salvific influence, and grace is extended to all.[113] Even those, who live and practice in traditional worship, can be reached through conscience. From this philosophical standpoint, "the Roman Catholic church differs . . . it has made an attempt to adapt cultural rituals into a Christian context".[114] Culture is seen as a bridge to gain meaning into Christian concepts and sacraments. Accordingly, the Roman Catholic Mission's methods of contextualised evangelism are based on the ethos of people-Christianising, a more extreme form of evangelisation by civilisation. This ethos does not care whether it is productive or counterproductive, to walk the fine line of syncretism between Christianity and traditional beliefs.

The brief reflections, above, show that strategies and ethos make a big difference in the presenting of the gospel, which affects the understanding of the community of God, the believers. Firstly, it defines what type of a Christian community that mission will become. In using different methods and ethos, missions set the boundaries and standards of the particular Christian community. Secondly, it forms the DNA of the members of the Christian community, to which they belong. Thirdly, the mission strategies and ethos used become an inclusive boundary, specifying a separate mission movement, to which a Christian belongs, or does not belong. Hence, the gospel is segregating professing Christians into small groupings, or what is known as divided Christianity,[115] instead of establishing a body of Melanesian believers.

Therefore, it was on the basis of the strategies and ethos, taken by individual mission agencies, which created separate Christian communities, apart from

[113] Roger C. Bassham, *Mission Theology: 1948-1975: Years of Worldwide Creative Tension: Ecumenical, Evangelical, and Roman Catholic*, Pasadena CA: William Carey Library, 1979, p. 311.
[114] R. Watts, "The Entry of the Roman Catholic Mission into PNG and its Impact Upon the Local Culture of Wahgi Valley", assignment paper, Banz PNG: Christian Leaders' Training College, 1987, p. 4.
[115] "Divided Christianity" is the situation where the gospel is brought in from different denominations. This causes family members to adhere to separate denominations, and attend different churches for worship.

each other. The things that should help in understanding the Christian concept of community in Melanesia have become the natural concomitants of counter-productivity.

### *Synthesis of Mission Strategies and Ethos*

Having discussed the mission strategies and ethos of some of the mission movements working in Melanesia, this paper now raises the question of what was the effect of the various mission strategies and ethos on the gospel, which was brought into Melanesia? While Melanesians applaud and appreciate the sacrifices of other Pacific Islanders and Western missionaries, for bringing the gospel, that gospel was riddled with philosophies, principles, and methods, designed to procure optimum benefit in evangelistic effort. However, the same features were the natural concomitants of counter-productivity to understanding the Christian concept of community in Melanesia. At least two reasons can be deduced from the above discussions.

The first obstacle to understanding the Christian concept of community is the entry of the many different missions, which led to a divided Christianity. When the local people idealise the philosophies of a particular mission, denominational categorising is inevitable. This becomes a threat to understanding the biblical concept of community. Forman rightly argues that, when this happens, a brand of Christianity is "absolutised [sic], and all others have tended to be despised",[116] moreover, it results in disputes with neighbouring missions. The Christianity that Melanesians came to know was segregated from the beginning.

The formation of comity[117] by mission movements had been to deal with the problem.[118] According to Tippett, comity is not only strategic for focusing missionary effort in a particular area, but is also helpful for follow-up care

[116] Forman, "The Missionary Forces of the Pacific Island Churches", p. 224.
[117] "Comity" is the courtesy that mission movements have towards each other, which results in the apportioning of specific areas to do ministry. The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as, "Courtesy and considerate behaviour towards others"; see "comity", in *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*.
[118] The Roman Catholic mission was the only mission that did not agree with the concept of comity, Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, p. 299.

and organisation, and, most of all, it prevented denominational competition, and doctrinal disputes.[119] However, comity arrangements function well when adherents of each mission were confined within their locality. With the influence of modernisation, urbanisation,[120] and movement of people to other localities, the invisible divisions, agreed on through comity, have disintegrated. This exposed Christian rivalry, let alone the influx of Pentecostalism.

The second barrier to a better understanding of Christian community is the use of different philosophies from the beginning by each mission. Some missions were more tolerant of local culture, while others wanted a clear break from all traditional associations. For example, the SSEM sought the conversion of individuals through presenting God's word.[121] On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Mission allowed certain traditional values and practices to continue, in their Christian community context.[122]

The differing methods, which each mission movement used, are based on one of these three philosophies: evangelisation by civilisation, civilisation before evangelisation, and evangelisation before civilisation. These philosophies were aimed at presenting the gospel to Melanesians. However, having these philosophies as the underlying concept for mission, has a great deal of influence on the methods for mission involvement among Melanesians. For the mission movements, which are flaccid towards culture; there is a possibility of syncretism. For others, who were very rigid towards a total break from the past; there is a possibility to conceal traditional practices and values to a certain degree, which may later surface.[123]

The question is "what is the problem with Christianity in Melanesia?" The problem lies in the Melanesian principle of allegiance to the community. When a person perceives that another person is part of the family, or community, then allegiance is placed confidently in him or her. Thus, every

[119] Tippett, *Solomon Islands Christianity: A Study in Growth and Obstruction*, p. 34.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Hilliard, "The South Sea Evangelical Mission", p. 59.
[122] Watts, "The Entry of the Roman Catholic Mission into PNG", p. 4.
[123] Sanga, "The Resurgence of Witchcraft", p. 64.

person supports each other, when the need arises. If a person is deemed a member of another community, he or she may be seen as an opponent.

Studying traditional loyalties and citizenship among the Nine-mile Settlement at Port Moresby, Chao found three major ethical principles that functioned in this multi-ethnic and cultural locality. These principles were "kinship, ethnicity, and church affiliations",[124] respectively, in the order of importance. She explained, further, that, if two of these principles come into collision, the higher takes precedence.[125] That is true, because it is normal Melanesian behaviour, and a perception of community allegiance, to act in that manner. On the contrary, the Christian concept of community should take precedence over, and supersede, all other principles. In fact, the Melanesian understanding of community should be used to better understand the biblical concept of community.

## SUMMARY

This section has highlighted two things, which should help us to understand the Melanesian context. Firstly, the natural and traditional Melanesian context, which includes the geographical location, the traditional and introduced governing systems, and the commonalities in culture in Melanesia. The geographical locations, and the government systems, may give a challenge for Melanesians to understand the concept of Christian community. On the other hand, the cultural commonalities in Melanesia can be of value in trying to understand the Christian concept of community.

Secondly, the section discussed Christianity, in the Melanesian context. Under this section, we have discussed the strategies and ethos, which several mission movements used in Melanesia. Three differing philosophies were used by the different mission movements, which has determined the behaviour and practices of Melanesian Christians towards other missions and their adherents. This, in turn, has become a hurdle for understanding the Christian concept of community.

[124] Chao, *A New Sense of Community*, p. 2.
[125] Ibid.

## PAUL'S EXPRESSIONS OF COMMUNITY IN EPH 2

In the previous section, the paper discussed the Melanesian context, which poses the problem of understanding the biblical concept of community. This section looks at the biblical understanding of community, by exegetically analysing, and theologically reflecting on, Eph 2. It goes on to answer the question of what are some of the descriptions for community that Paul uses in Eph 2? To carry out this task, the seven steps in the *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, by Michael J. Gorman, are employed.[126] Consequently, applicable points of Paul's concept of community are identified and explored in relation to the Melanesian context.

### HISTORICAL AND LITERARY CONTEXT OF EPH 2

Before going on to exegete the passage, we first consider the historical and the literary context of this passage, as follows:

#### *Historical Context*

An analysis of different accounts of Ephesus points to two very important facets of this historical city: the political and religious facets of Ephesus' history. According to Acts 19:8-10, 20:31, Paul must have ministered in Ephesus for some three years, and, while there, wrote Corinthians and several other letters.[127]

*Political Facet* – The strategic location of the city helped to create a significant opportunity for Ephesus, as a capital for Roman occupation in Asia.[128] The political evidences of the history of Ephesus go back to the 7th century BC, although it may have predated that period.[129] Ephesus was a tributary of Athens in 466 BC, but was captured by the Persians at the beginning of the 4th century BC.[130] However, it was under Greek rule until 133 BC, when it was bequeathed to the Romans.[131] Under Roman rule,

[126] Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 177-178.
[127] L. M. MacDonald, "Ephesus", in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, Craig A. Evans, Stanley E. Porter, eds, Downers Grove IL: IVP, 2000, pp. 318-321.
[128] Ibid., p. 318.
[129] Ibid., pp. 318-321.
[130] Ibid., p. 319.
[131] Ibid.

Ephesus enjoyed the right of self-governing. In his introduction to the letter to the Ephesians, Hodges states that, "Its constitution was essentially democratic. The municipal authority was vested in a Senate, and in the Assembly of the people."[132] It was to this city of Ephesus that Paul wrote this striking letter.

*Religious Facet* – Religiously, the locals offered sacrifices to the mother goddess Cybele, who was later identified with the Greek goddess, Artemis.[133] The Artemision was originally built in the 7th century BC.[134] It was destroyed in 350 BC, and reconstructed in the 3rd century BC.[135] According to Arnold, the Artemis cult was the most prominent and significant in Ephesus, however. other gods and goddesses were also introduced and worshipped.[136] For example, the Egyptians introduced the worship of Sarapis and Isis, different evidences also point to the veneration of other deities, such as, Agathe Tyche, Aphrodite, Heracles, Pion (a mountain god), Pluto, and Zeus, to name a few.[137]

Therefore, as stated above, these two historical aspects of the community: the underlying democratic governance, through the senate, and the religiousness of the people of Ephesus gave a rich background to Eph 2.

### *Literary Context*

The letter to the Ephesians is different in some ways to other letters, which Paul wrote. Walter Liefeld described this feature as "Ephesians is both less and more than a letter".[138] He rightly argued that it is less, in the sense that the personal references to readers, and narrative reflections, were lacking, and yet, it is more, because its essay style permits deeper and more extended

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[132] Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1994, p. v.
[133] MacDonald, "Ephesus", p. 319.
[134] The temple of the goddess Artemis is called an "Artemision", Ibid.
[135] C. E. Arnold, "Ephesus", in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin, D. G. Reid, eds, Downers Grove IL: IVP, 1993, pp. 249-253.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Walter L. Liefeld, *Ephesians*, The IVP New Testament Commentary, Grant R. Osborne, ed., Downers Grove IL: IVP, 1997, p. 13.

exploration of the individual issues than in a letter.[139] Another point to note with this particular work is that, as a whole, the letter does not deal with a particular error or a heresy. Although the letter has these distinguishable marks, it does not differ much from other letters ascribed to Paul.[140]

The letter was written during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome.[141] Traditionally, a majority of scholars discounted it as being intended only for exclusive use in Ephesus. They argued, on textual-critical grounds, of the appearance of "in Ephesus" in Eph 1:1 as an addition, and that the letter was a circular to the churches in the Roman province of Asia.[142] However, C. E. Arnold rightly points that it is reasonable to hold that Ephesus was one of the recipients, or the primary recipient, of the letter, because of its prominence as the leading city, and its strategic importance for Christianity in the province.[143]

More importantly, the letter to the Ephesians gives light on the issues that the fledgling Christian community needed to know. The literary style can be referred to as epideictic rhetoric, and it is about appreciation of truth, rather than argumentation and proof.[144] In Eph 1, Paul introduced himself, and prepared the minds of his readers by generally forecasting what he intended to teach them (1:3-14), and by praying for their divine enlightenment (1:15-23). After his prayer, Paul progressively taught, through his letter, beginning from Eph 2, through to Eph 6, on various important truths, of which the Christian community needed to be reminded. In his analysis, Francis Foulkes gives the following: Life in Christ (2:1-3:21), Unity in the Body of Christ (4:1-16), Personal Standards (4:17-5:21), and Relationships

[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid., p. 14.
[141] Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the New Testament*, Homebush West NSW: ANZEA Books, 1982, p. 93.
[142] Arnold, "Ephesus", pp. 249-253.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ben Witherington III, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: a Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*, Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007, p. 7.

(5:22-6:9).[145] By contemplating on Foulkes' analysis, it is reasonable to say that Paul wrote to a Christian community. Therefore, Eph 2 is part of the larger teaching unit that Paul embarked on to expand the horizons of the church in Ephesus as a Christian community.

## FORM, STRUCTURE, AND MOVEMENT OF EPH 2

Ephesians is in the form of a letter, though, as mentioned earlier; it is slightly different to Paul's other letters. Since it was written in this way, it directly affects the structure of the chapter considered. An outline of the movement of Paul's thought in Eph 2 is given in the analysis below.

### *A Diagrammatic Analysis of Eph 2*

1. The new community, and the work of God – vv. 1-10
   - (a) Former state of the Ephesian Christian community – vv. 1-3
     - Dead in transgressions and sins – v. 1
     - Followed the ways of the world – v. 2
     - Disobedient and gratifying the sinful nature – vv. 2-3b
     - Objects of wrath – v. 3c
   - (b) God's character and final triumph for the Christian community – vv. 4-7
     - God's great love for us – v. 4a
     - God, who is rich in mercy – v. 4b
     - Made us alive with Christ – v. 5
     - Seated with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus – v. 6
     - In the coming ages, He might show the incomparable riches of His grace – v. 7
   - (c) The salvation of the new community explained – vv. 8-10

[145] Francis Foulkes, *The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, 2nd edn, Leon Morris, ed., Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1989, p. 49.

- It is by grace you have been saved, through faith – v. 8a
- It is a gift – not by works . . . so no one can boast – vv. 8b-9
- We are God's workmanship, created in Christ to do good works – v. 10a
- God prepared in advance – v. 10b

2. The new community and the work of Christ – vv. 11-22

(a) A reminder of the former state of the new community – vv. 11-13

- Formerly, you who are Gentiles by birth – uncircumcised – v. 11
- At that time you were separate from Christ – v. 12a
- Excluded from citizenship in Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of promise – v. 12b
- Without hope, and without God in the world – v. 12c
- But now in Christ Jesus you . . . have been brought near through the blood – v. 13

(b) A new relationship: the new community with those under Law – vv. 14-16

- He Himself is our peace, who has made the two one – v. 14a
- He has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in His flesh the law, with its commandments and regulations – v. 15a
- He created, in Himself, one new man out of the two – v. 15b
- He reconciled both of them to God, through the cross – v. 16a
- He put to death their hostility – v. 16b

(c) A new relationship: the new community with God – vv. 17-22

- Access to the Father by one Spirit – v. 18
- Members of God's household – v. 19
- Holy temple in the Lord – v. 21
- Become a dwelling place, in which God lives by His Spirit – v. 22

This analysis shows that Eph 2 is a well-constructed piece of literature. The clearly-defined structure was narrated to show that vv. 11-22 are reflections of vv. 1-10, where Paul goes back to reiterate and expand more on his thematic flow of thought. Hence, the structure of Eph 2 is given in two stanzas, which begin with the former state of the believer (vv. 1-3, 11-13); Gods character towards the human predicament (vv. 4-7, 14-16), and finishes with the believer's position after salvation (vv. 8-10, 17-22). Andrew Lincoln agreeably states that the Eph 2 discourse comprises two pericope, which form a persuasive strategy to the audience.[146] He further elaborates that "by means of the dramatic contrast in this passage between the readers' past and their present . . . the writer impresses on them how much they owe to what God has done in Christ".[147]

## DETAIL ANALYSIS OF EPH 2

In Eph 1, Paul asked God to give the Ephesian Christians "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation . . . also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened"[148] to know the "hope . . . riches . . . and His incomparably great power" (1:18-19). In Eph 2, Paul begins to expand on the things, which he had mentioned earlier in 1:3-14 and 19-23, using the dramatic contrast sequence, after his prayer. Thomas Allen analysed Eph 1 and 2, and argued that there is a notable correlation in both thought and vocabulary.[149] The analysis of Eph 2 will be given in two subsections below. Firstly, we look at the new community, and the work of God. Secondly, we will look at the new community, and salvation through Christ.

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[146] Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, Ralph P. Martin, ed., Dallas TX: Word Books, 1990, p. 91.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Eph 1:17-18. All scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version.
[149] Thomas G. Allen, "Exaltation and Solidarity with Christ Ephesians 1:20 and 2:6", in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 28 (1986), p. 103.

### *The New Community and the Work of God – vv. 1-10*

As noted earlier, the narration of Eph 2 is comprised of two stanzas. By exploring this structure one can raise the following questions. What was the former state of the community in Ephesus, before they became Christians? How does God deal with the believers' former situation? Finally, what is the response of the new community towards salvation? These questions will be dealt with in the exegesis on this passage.

The former state of the Christian community is dealt with in vv. 1-3. These three verses give descriptions of the Ephesian community, before they became believers. Paul describes two things in particular. Firstly, in their unrepentant state, the Ephesian Christian community was described as dead, in v. 1, and objects of wrath, in v. 3. Steve Motyer explains these in the following manner, "in ourselves: dead to transgressions and sin . . . in God's eyes: we were, by nature, objects of wrath".[150] Even though the Ephesian Christian community had not felt God's wrath at that time, because of their spiritual state, God is continuingly angered towards their evil.[151] Paul clearly notes that this spiritual condition was a thing of the past, in the phrases "in which you used to live", and "all of us also lived among them at one time". When the Ephesian community had become Christians, they became a new community of believers. They used to live that way, but were no longer spiritually dead, and under God's wrath, because they have passed to life, and have peace with God. When people have peace with God, they have good relationships with Him. John Stott describes this wrath as God's constant hostility towards evil, and His refusal to compromise with it.[152] Hence, this hostility is for anyone holding onto and living a life contrary to God's standard. They are under His continuous judgment.

This leads into the second description in these verses, which is inserted between the spiritual deadness and the objects of wrath. In their unrepentant state, the Ephesians had a set of behaviours that governed their lives. These

[150] Steve Motyer, *Ephesians: Free to be One*, Crossway Bible Guides, 2nd edn, Nottingham UK: Crossway Books, 1999, p. 58.
[151] Ibid.
[152] John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians: God's New Society*, Leicester UK: IVP, 1979, p. 76.

standards were contrary to that of God. Paul uses these phrases to describe these standards: "You followed the ways of the world . . . disobedient . . . gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature, and following its desires and thoughts" (vv. 2-3).

The readers of the letter were once controlled by their fleshly desires, and were so dominated that they had to fulfil these actions and behaviours.[153] In their former life, the Ephesian Christian community were so entangled in their bad behaviour that it compelled them to continue to please their evil desires, and be disobedient. This state is for all people before they become believers, as Paul notes in the phrase "all of us also lived among them at one time" (v. 3). For the Ephesians, as noted in the historical context, they were religious concerning idols, but they were spiritually dead towards God.

The second question, asked earlier, was: How did God deal with the believers' former situation? Vv. 4-7 gives God's character and responses towards human fallen nature. According to Lincoln, God's character and response towards the human predicament is staged by the adversative use of ὁ δὲ θεὸς (ho de theos = but God).[154] He explains that "ὁ δὲ θεὸς (ho de theos = but God) . . . introduces a contrasting situation, brought about because of who God is, and what He has done".[155] This contrast is between the previous fallen nature of the Ephesian community and their current state as believers.

Although they were spiritually dead, and by nature objects of wrath (vv. 1-3), it is God who moves to save, in love and mercy (v. 4). It is God's character to initiate the emancipation of humanity in its fallen state. Paul uses the phrase "because of His great love . . . who is rich in mercy" to describe motivation for His action. This action is rooted from within Himself. Paul mentions this action as "made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in transgressions" (v. 5). God's personal attributes are being displayed in the action of the making "alive" of those who are spiritually dead. Motyer rightly outlines vv. 4-7, using three words connected with

[153] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 98.
[154] Ibid., p. 100.
[155] Ibid.

God: His motivation, His action, and His purpose.[156] It is His great love, mercy, and grace that motivated Him to do what He did through Jesus Christ. This action is consistent with His being the God of love, mercy, and grace.

In addition to this, God's purpose is that "He might show the incomparable riches of His grace" (v. 7). Foulkes defines the verb ἐνδείκνυμι (endeiknumi) as to " 'display' (NEB) or 'show', rather than simply to 'make known' ",[157] and further elaborates that the new community, as Paul understands it, is "to be the exhibition to the whole creation of the wisdom and love and grace of God in Christ".[158] The idea of displaying, or exhibiting, gives the picture of someone winning a race, and holding the winner's trophy up so that others may see. Now, project that analogy onto God, He has the new community of believers as His personal trophy (v. 7). He has glorified Himself by conjoining His grace and love to the new community, through Christ, which are the incomparable riches that He intends to display as the trophy.

W. Hall Harris III rightly points out that God's gracious acts verify that it is not Christ alone, who is raised, but the new community of believers, who participate in this exaltation and dominion with Him.[159] Therefore, God dealt with the past, by reaching out willingly to those who deserve no love, mercy, or grace, from His own, just wrath and intends to show that He triumphs over all through Christ. Consequently, by telling his audience of these eschatological features, Paul would somehow inform his readers of the extent of the new community, to which they now belong. Moreover, Witherington quotes Jeal as saying Paul uses eschatological language to cause deep emotional impact, to set a foundation for further exhortations.[160]

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[156] Motyer, *Ephesians*, pp. 61-63.
[157] Foulkes, *The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians*, p.82.
[158] Ibid.
[159] W. Hall Harris III, "The Heavenlies Reconsidered: Οὐρανός and Ἐπουράνιος in Ephesians", in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 148-589 (January 1991), p. 78.
[160] Roy R. Jeal, *Integrating Theology and Ethics in Ephesians: the Ethos of Communication*, Lewiston NY: E. Mellen Press, 2000, p. 139, quoted in Witherington III, *The Letters to Philemon*, p. 256.

These eschatological understandings should give the reason to live in the new community.

The final question asked is, what is the response of the new community towards salvation? This question is answered in vv. 8-10. Motyer gives an interesting background to these verses by stating that, "Whether they were originally Jews or Gentiles, the Ephesian Christians had all grown up with religion, which told them, 'this is what you should do, if you want God to like you!' ".[161] He rightly argues that, for the Jews, there are long lists of rules to follow covering all aspects of life, and, for the Gentiles, there are rules, rituals, and spells, to infer the favour of the many gods available,[162] as discussed in the historical and literary context section.

It is contrary to this philosophy of a meritorious work background that Paul wrote the words, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith" (v. 8). Commenting on the phrase, Stott states that, inclusively, there are three foundational words of the Christian good news – salvation, grace, and faith.[163] He goes on to elucidate each term in the following manner:

> Salvation is more than forgiveness. It is deliverance from death, slavery, and wrath . . . it includes the totality of our new life in Christ . . . exalted and seated in the heavenly realm. Grace is God's free and undeserved mercy towards us, and faith is the humble trust, with which we receive it for ourselves.[164]

In saying this to the Ephesian Christian community, Paul disqualifies any argument of being saved by performing some good deeds. In fact, Paul goes on further to solidify the concept of salvation by grace through faith with two negative statements: the first is καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν (kai touto ouk ex humōn),[165] which freely translates as "and this not of you".[166] Note that

[161] Motyer, *Ephesians*, p. 64.
[162] Ibid., pp. 64-65.
[163] Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, p. 83.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Kurt Aland, ed., *The Greek New Testament*, Stuttgart Germany: United Bible Societies, 1975, p. 667.

τοῦτο (touto), "this", is neuter, therefore, it does not refer to "faith", a feminine noun, which should take the feminine demonstrative pronoun for "this", which is αὕτη (hautē).[167] Hence, it refers to the whole of the previous sentence.[168] The second phrase is οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, ἵνα μή τις καυχήσηται (ouk ex ergōn, hina mē tis kauchēsētai),[169] which freely translates as "not out of works, that anyone should boast". These two negatives consolidate Paul's idea that salvation by grace through faith (v. 8) is not generated by those, who are being saved, nor is it attained by meritorious work. Salvation is a gift, and no one has to work for it. It is a grace gift, so no one has to boast because of it (v. 9). Interestingly, the Greek word for "boast" can also mean "self-glory".[170] Thus, no one glorifies in his or her salvation, because it is entirely God's initiative and making. "What the apostle wants to say is that the whole initiative, and every aspect of the making available of this salvation, is God's."[171] All experiences under previous religious affiliations, with its regulations and rites, to confer right worship and favour to gods, does not apply, or be equated, to the salvation of God in Christ Jesus, which is a gift. R. C. H. Lenski describes this well in stating that, "A salvation coming from ourselves would . . . exclude also faith, just as salvation, obtained from works, would exclude grace".[172]

Moreover, Paul did not stop with the two negative phrases, but intended to sincerely clarify his readers' thoughts on the subject at hand by stating "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works" (v. 10). Commenting on this particular verse, Leon Morris states that "it is

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[166] Reading through *Learn to Read New Testament Greek*, by David Alan Black, helped the author to translate the phrase, David Alan Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek*, 3rd edn, Nashville TN: B. & H. Publishing, 2009, pp. 60, 66, 80, 218.
[167] Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek*, p. 80.
[168] Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, p. 83.
[169] Aland, ed., *The Greek New Testament*, p. 667.
[170] "καυχήσηται (kauchēsētai) 'boast' ", in *The Analytical Greek Lexicon*, London UK: Samuel Bagster & Sons, nd, p. 226.
[171] Foulkes, *The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians*, p. 84.
[172] R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians*, Peabody MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1937, p. 424.

*His* workmanship that results in our new creation to do good works".[173] Roy Zuck agrees with Morris that the phrase αὐτοῦ γάρ ἐσμεν ποίημα, which begins with αὐτοῦ (autou = his) is emphatic, which means that we are, indeed, God's creation! "And that creation has a purpose",[174] that is, to do good works. Therefore, when a person is created anew, he or she has been transformed from the past, and, as a result, they are able to do good works. He or she is a transformed person; added into the new community, with a set of new behaviours and practices, or good works.

### *The New Community and the Work of Christ – vv. 11-22*

It was noted earlier that Eph 2 can be naturally divided into two sections. In this second section, Paul goes on to remind the Ephesian Christian community of their former state (vv. 11-12). After that, he goes on to describe the results of the community's post-salvation state: Relationship with Jews (vv. 13-16), and relationship with God (vv. 17-22).

Vv. 11-12 begins the second stanza of Eph 2, by reminding the Ephesian Christian community of their past state. Paul uses the word "therefore" to begin the discussion in this second stanza. A. Skevington Wood argues that the word "therefore" refers not only to v. 10, but to the paragraph (vv. 1-10), which forms a single statement in the Greek text.[175] It is on the basis of the preceding paragraph that Paul now proceeds to draw some conclusions.[176] Moreover, Morris notes that what is unexpected is the nature of that conclusion, which is the argument of circumcision (v. 11).[177] However, what Morris sees as a conclusion, should not be seen as unexpected, but as a restatement and expansion of vv. 1-3. A comparison of vv. 1-3 with vv. 11-12 is seen in Table 3, below.

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[173] Leon Morris, *Expository Reflections on the Letter to the Ephesians*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 1994, p. 57.
[174] Roy B. Zuck, ed., *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1994, p. 312.
[175] A. Skevington Wood, "Ephesians", in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12 vols, Frank E. Gaebelein, ed., Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1978, p. 11:38.
[176] Morris, *Expository Reflections on the Letter to the Ephesians*, p. 59.
[177] Ibid., pp. 59-60.

| Vv. 1-3 | Vv. 11-12 |
|---|---|
| ● You were dead in your transgressions and sins<br>● You followed the ways of this world<br>Disobedient<br>● Gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature, and following its desires and thoughts<br>Objects of wrath | ● You who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised"<br>● You were separate from Christ<br>Excluded from citizenship<br>Foreigners to the covenants of the promise<br>Without hope<br>Without God |

Table 3: Comparing character traits of the Ephesians before being saved, in vv. 1-3 to vv. 11-12

Table 3 shows that Paul's list in vv. 1-3 is concerned with sins, attitudes, and natural cravings, while vv. 11-12 show that, because of the Ephesians' former state, they are distinct from God's people, and deprived of privileges. Therefore, vv. 11-12 are a constructed repetition, which further describes the former state of the Ephesian Christian community.

A few phrases, which are relevant to our study, need to be considered here. Paul specifically describes the points at which the Ephesian Christian community was underprivileged in their former state: That they were "Gentiles by birth, and called uncircumcised" (v. 11). Not only that, the Ephesian Christians were spiritually dead (v. 1), but they were also underprivileged by their physical birth, and that they were called the uncircumcised (v. 11). Wood rightly notes the fact that Paul does not use these terms derogatorily, but merely reports that the term is used then to make the distinction. He goes on to point out that self-styled circumcision has nothing to boast about, since the spiritual significance of circumcision has ceased when the redemptive work was finally accomplished in Christ.[178]

[178] Wood, "Ephesians", p. 38.

In v. 12, Paul uses four phrases to further expose the deficiencies that the Ephesian community had in their former state. Wood rightly points out these phrases, as follows.[179]

1. The Ephesians were χωρὶς (chōris),[180] or separate from Christ, by this, they have no expectation of a Messiah to save them.

2. They were ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς πολιτείας (apēllotriōmenoi tēs politeias),[181] or "alienated from citizenship".[182] By being alienated, the Ephesians had no legal reason or right to God's kingdom. However, Pheme Perkins points out that, ordinarily, the verb ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι (apēllotriōmenoi), which is translated "alienated" or "excluded" (NIV), "refers to separation from someone or something, to which one was formerly attached".[183] He elaborates further by stating, "this meaning hardly fits the case of Gentiles and Israel, since the Gentiles were excluded from the prior covenant (Ex 19:6; Ps 80:8-9, 105)".[184] In contrast to this thought, if v. 10 is seen as a reference to God's re-creation of humanity through Christ, then being "alienated or excluded" may have been a reference to that which was God's in the first place. Foulkes agreeably states that "humanity was His making at the first, and now, because that work of His was spoilt by sin, there is a new divine act of creation".[185]

[179] Ibid., p. 39.
[180] Aland, ed., *The Greek New Testament*, p. 667.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Author's translation of the Greek phrase ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς πολιτείας (apēllotriōmenoi tēs politeias).
[183] Pheme Perkins, "The Letter to the Ephesians: an Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections", in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 12 vols, Leander E. Keck, ed., Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 2000, p. 11:397.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Foulkes, *The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians*, p. 85.

3. The Ephesian Christians were ἐλπίδα μὴ ἔχοντες (elpida mē echontes),[186] or "without hope". Before being saved, the Ephesian Christian community lived in a world devoid of hope. The last phrase used is ἄθεοι (atheoi), or "without God". This points to the fact that they lived in ignorance of God, even though God created them in the first place.[187]

In the immediate context of these phrases lies the sentence "excluded from citizenship in Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of the promise" (v. 12b). The Ephesians do not have the right mark (circumcision), and they have no expectation of a Messiah (separate). The lack of these two things implies that the Ephesians neither have the mark of the old system (circumcision), nor the new system (Messiah) (vv. 11-12a). They are totally lost, and are excluded from citizenship in the new community (v. 12b). Hence, the Ephesian Christian community's former state was one which was deprived of knowledge of God, estranged of any fellowship with Him, and devoid of the hope of salvation.

In vv. 13-16, Paul describes the new relationship, which the Ephesian Christian community has with those under the law, to which the hope of salvation belongs. He introduces this next section with the phrase "But" to make the contrast between their "former desolation, and the joy of their reconciliation in Christ".[188] Formerly, as described in vv. 11-12, the Ephesian Christian community was separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel, without hope, and without God. Yet, a new sphere of possibilities is opened through Christ for those who are far away, because Christ Himself is our peace (vv. 13-14).

One specific possibility is the destroying of "the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in His flesh (vv. 14-15)". According to Geoffrey Wilson, and others, the allusion to the dividing wall of hostility is a reference to the wall in Herod's temple, beyond which no Gentile might pass.[189]

[186] Aland, ed., *The Greek New Testament*, p. 667.
[187] Wood, "Ephesians", p. 39.
[188] Ibid.
[189] Geoffrey B. Wilson, *Ephesians*, Edinburgh UK: Banner of Truth Trust, 1978, p. 55.

Josephus, the historian, also alludes to this dividing wall.[190] On the contrary, it is noteworthy to analyse the recurring phrase in the immediate context. Klyne Snodgrass rightly states that "items given prominence provide a pathway to the author's intent".[191] Accordingly, the phrase ἐν σαρκί (en sarki)[192] or "in the flesh" appears twice in v. 11, and once in v. 15. The fact that "in the flesh" is in the immediate context heightens the probability that the phrase "the dividing wall of hostility" (v. 14c) is a reference to circumcision, rather than an allusion to the dividing wall of Herod's temple. Therefore, the sting of the dividing wall, which is the law, and its commandments and regulations, which gives the Jews pride in circumcision, is abolished in the flesh of Jesus, through His death. Snodgrass is correct by arguing that the central focus of the Jews' and Gentiles' hostility, which is "in the flesh", is also the source of the solution, Jesus' death in the flesh.[193] The abolishing of this argument is made on the cross, which is also the beginning of the establishment of the new community, which God is calling together.

Paul now moves to elucidate the purpose of the negative aspect of abolishing the differences between the Gentiles and Jews: the laws and regulations (v. 15a). In order to do this, he states a positive in v. 15b, κτίσῃ (ktisē) "to call into individual existence".[194] This meaning denotes that Christ calls the two hostile groups, and caused them to exist as one. Richard Erickson identifies a dual purpose of Christ's work, "to create in Himself one new humanity out of the two hostile groups . . . and to reconcile in this one united body both groups to God".[195] Therefore, because of Christ's work in the reconciliation of the two groups, there is no disparity between them. His work destroys all reasons for disunity and intolerance between each other,

[190] Josephus Flavius, *Josephus: Complete Works*, William Whiston, tran., Grand Rapids MI: Kregel Publications, 1981, p. 336.
[191] Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, NIV Application Commentary, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1996, p. 124.
[192] Aland, ed., *The Greek New Testament*, p. 667.
[193] Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, p. 124.
[194] "κτίσῃ (ktisē) 'create' ", in *The Analytical Greek Lexicon*, p. 332.
[195] Richard J. Erickson, "Ephesians", in *Baker Commentary on the Bible*, Walter E. Elwell, ed., Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 1989, p. 1025.

because of past experiences. The two hostile groups have become one community of God (vv. 15-16.

In vv. 17-22, Paul goes on to describe the relationship between the new Christian community and God. Paul starts by reflecting on the work of Christ, that Christ came to preach peace, and give access to both, those who are afar, and those who think they are near (vv. 17-18). As seen above, the dividing wall has been removed (v. 14), denoting a new relationship between the antagonistic groups. Paul goes on further to explain other metaphors, which describe the new relationship, which the Ephesian community has, through the work of Christ, "God's household" (v. 19), and "a dwelling in which God lives" (v. 22).

Evidently, the prerequisite to this other relationship that the Ephesians have is to be at peace, and become one with the Jews, which is fulfilled in Christ (vv. 13-15; 17-18). Consequently, the two become fellow citizens, and members of God's household. According to Francis Lyall, who analyses the different metaphorical images that Paul uses in the epistles, the phrase "God's household", in Roman culture, has a complex association in law.[196] He explains that, at the heart of the household, is the father, whose power is all pervasive. The father is the personification of the family, and represents them before the family god. This position is the basis and justification for his power over all his biological children.[197] Those who are under his power, both the person and possessions, are under his control. Once a person is born into a Roman family, he or she is legally under the power of the father or paterfamilias. The only other way to become part of a family is through adoption. In both cases, the status of the person under that paterfamilias will not change unless the father transfers a child through adoption to another, or if he is pronounced dead.[198]

What is relative for this study is the fact that those, who are foreigners and aliens, are brought into this household of God (v. 19). From a theological

[196] Francis Lyall, *Slaves, Citizens, Sons: Legal Metaphors in the Epistles*, Grand Rapids MI: Academie Books, 1984, p. 120.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid.

perspective, God is bringing in outsiders (Ephesians) to become His children. God is forming a new relationship within His family. And, according to the Roman understanding of adoption, as noted above, those who are adopted have equal and legal rights, just as much as the children born into the household. Stott rightly points out that the emphasis here is not on the fatherhood of God, but that the children, who are brought in across racial barriers to be one in God's household.[199] God's household is not about the individual child born into the family, it is more than that, it is about the reconciled coming together to live and enjoy His presence.[200]

Now, Paul uses an analogy to describe this new relationship: a holy temple (v. 21). This holy temple is the work of God, in the formation of a new community, by bringing Jews and Gentiles together.[201] In Paul's usage, he tied the temple concept with the idea of a dwelling place. "The temple, in its most basic sense, symbolises the dwelling place of God."[202] This holy temple is constructed of Jews and Gentiles. They become the κατοικητήριον (katoikētērion),[203] or the "dwelling" of God's Spirit. Lawrence Richards defines the root verb κατοικέω (katoikeō), or "dwell", as "to establish permanent residence".[204]

It is noteworthy to take a look at the materials used for the construction of this temple, which is the dwelling place of God, through His Spirit. V. 20 specifies the building materials as the "foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone". Stuart Olyott[205] agrees with Liefield[206] that Paul's reference to the "foundation of

[199] Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, p. 106.
[200] Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, Nashville TN: Broadman Press, 1994, p. 626.
[201] Darrell L. Bock, "A Theology of Paul's Prison Epistles", in *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, Roy B. Zuck, ed., Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1994, p. 308.
[202] "Temple", in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, Tremper Longman III, eds, Downers Grove IL: IVP, 1998, p. 849.
[203] Aland, ed., *The Greek New Testament*, p. 668.
[204] Lawrence O. Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1985, p. 239.
[205] Stuart Olyott, *Alive in Christ: Ephesians Simply Explained*, Durham UK: Evangelical Press, 1994, pp. 74-75.

the apostles and prophets" refers to the preaching of Christ, as opposed to the apostles and prophets themselves being the foundation. Liefeld goes on further to argue that, if Paul teaches that he laid the foundation of Christ, and it will not be substituted, it is the teaching and preaching of Jesus by the apostles and prophets that constitute the foundation.[207]

The other building material in this reference in v. 20 is "Christ Jesus Himself, as the chief cornerstone". According to Stott, Paul's emphasis here is on the function of Jesus, as holding the growing temple together in unity.[208] This metaphor clearly shows that Jesus, as the chief cornerstone, is indispensable to every brick or stone that is laid. The growth and the unity of every stone, laid to build the temple, which is the dwelling place of God, depend on Him. Unless the temple is built on Jesus Christ Himself, the work is futile, and the "unity will disintegrate, and its growth either stop or run wild".[209] This is the new relationship that the Ephesian Christian community has with God. Howard Marshall rightly states this new relationship of the believers with God as, "the metaphor is developed in terms of believers being incorporated into a building . . . a holy shrine in the Lord, and believers are built into it, to be a dwelling of God in the Spirit".[210] Theologically, the focal point of God's presence is the gathering of His people.[211] The temple concept is transferred to believers, which are now the dwelling place of God's Holy Spirit. God's Holy Spirit lives in the believers, and they are always in His presence.

## SYNTHESIS OF PAUL'S CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY IN EPH 2

Eph 2 is a well-constructed pericope,[212] in which Paul describes the Ephesian believers as the new Christian community, and the new relationships they have, after being saved. In doing this, Paul employs five

[206] Liefeld, *Ephesians*, p.75.
[207] Ibid.
[208] Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, p. 108.
[209] Ibid.
[210] I. Howard Marshall, "Church and Temple in the New Testament", in *Tyndale Bulletin* 40-2 (1989), p. 214.
[211] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, p. 608.
[212] "Pericope" is derived from the Latin word *perikope*, which is an extract from a text, especially a passage from the Bible; see "pericope", in *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*.

expressions, which should help the Ephesians Christians to understand the new community God is initiating. These metaphorical expressions are: the community, as alive in Christ (2:1-6); the community, as a trophy (2:7); the community, as citizens of heaven (2:12); community, as the household of God (2:19); and community, as a temple (2:22). These metaphors, which Paul is using, can be generally placed under two categories: ones that are comparisons, and others that are analogies (see Table 4).

| Comparisons | Analogies |
|---|---|
| ● The community as alive in Christ (2:1-6).<br>● The community as citizens of heaven (2:12). | ● The community as a trophy (2:7).<br>● The community as the household of God (2:19).<br>● The community as a temple (2:22). |

Table 4: The general categories of metaphors used in Eph 2

In these metaphors, Paul describes the new community of God vividly, to enable the Ephesian Christians to differentiate between their former state and their new position in Christ, in at least three ways: the change of condition, the community as God's possession, and the community as God's vessel.

The change of condition is seen in the two comparisons (dead vs alive (2:1-6); and citizens vs foreigners (2:12-16)). Paul wants his readers to see that there is a vast difference. In the past, the Ephesians were dead, and foreigners to God's community. They collaborated with their sinful desires and thoughts (v. 3). They were not under God's covenants of promise (v. 12). They were religious, according to the world's standards, in worshipping idols. They were physically alive, and governed themselves democratically, but, according to God's standards, they were spiritually dead. They need God for them to be spiritually alive, in order to transfer to being citizens of His new community.

Concerning the community as God's possession, Paul uses the analogies of trophy (v. 7), and the household (v. 19), to help the Ephesians to capture an understanding of the new community of God. As a trophy, created in the "incomparable kindness of His grace", the new community is perfect. This

perfect aspect of the community is derived only through Christ (v. 6). As the household of God, the community has to be complete. Whether the children are born, or adopted, into the household, the community is incomplete without one.

The final analogy is the community as God's vessel (vv. 21-22). As a vessel, the community is readily available for use. The temple fulfils this function of being the dwelling place of God. However, in v. 22, this concept is transferred to the believers, as the dwelling place of God.

Therefore, in Eph 2:1-22, Paul elucidates the concept of community to the believers at Ephesus. He systematically employs descriptive metaphors to make comparisons and analogies of the diverse features, which are necessary for Christians to know, about the new community.

## REFLECTIONS: THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF EPH 2

This paper suggests that the pericope can speak to the contemporary issues of the Christian community today, in the following ways. Firstly, believers need to be aware that God is building His community, through the salvation of the lost. Eph 2 presents the fallen state of humans as "dead in your transgression and sins . . . disobedient . . . gratifying the cravings of your flesh . . . desires and thoughts" (vv. 1-3). In that condition, humanity is lost, hopeless, walking in the vanity of their minds, and in dire need of God's salvation. The consciousness of God's work in saving and ushering people into the community is a step towards victory.

Secondly, believers need to be aware that God is transforming people's lives. He is perfecting the new community, according to His expectation. This perfecting action is the incomparable riches of His grace to the community, which God intends to exhibit. When God regenerates individual people, the resultant scene is one of perfect and harmonious community. Relationships between traditional enemies are mended, and oneness is experienced in the new community. Regardless of status, caste, or experiences, God deals with the past, and is anticipating the exhibition in the coming ages.

Finally, believers need to be aware that God is living among His people. God is preparing a temple, through Christ. This holy temple is the new community He is building, together with other believers. This will be His dwelling place, through His Holy Spirit. However, at times, the new Christian community does not reflect the character of God, as His dwelling place. The community, as God's dwelling place, needs to be vibrant in saving others.

Therefore, believers need to be aware of three specific theological facets of the new Christian community of God. The fact that God is building the new community, by saving those who are lost; that God is making this new community perfect; and that God lives in the new community. Unless Melanesians are aware of these facts in their Christian lives, they know little or nothing about being a part of God's community.

### SUMMARY

This section highlights that there are at least five different metaphorical expressions, which Paul uses in Eph 2. Paul's intent is to help believers to grasp the essence of the new community of God. Being aware of these expressions should help Melanesian Christians to understand the vital traits of the new community of God. Theologically, God in His grace, reaches out to hopeless people, and transforms them to be His dwelling. Melanesians must teach, and aspire to understand, these biblical expressions, to understand the new Christian community of God.

## CONTEXTUALISING THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

In this section, the question is asked: what are some of the contextually-meaningful ways to communicate the biblical expressions in Eph 2 in Melanesia? This paper proposes that, by using contextually-appropriate equivalence of the biblical expressions in Eph 2, Melanesians are more likely to grasp the meaning of community.

As stated in the methodology, a modified version of the four steps suggested by Paul Hiebert in "Critical Contextualisation"[213] will be employed.

[213] Hiebert, "Critical Contextualisation", pp. 104-112.

Although other models are available, for example, Stephen Bevans presented six models in his book *Models of Contextual Theology*,[214] or there is another model by Ma'afu Palu, which he refers to as intra-textualisation, in his article "Pacific Theology".[215] However, this paper will follow Douglas Hanson's modification of Hiebert's critical contextualisation, in the following order: step one (exegete culture), step two (exegete scripture and build a contextualisation bridge), and step three (critical response), will be implemented.[216] In addition, the fourth step (new contextualisation practices) is omitted from each analogy, but will be used as the recommendation at the end. The above steps of the critical contextualisation will be applied to: *abu*, or sacredness, in community, the practice of initiation, the practice of bounty showing, and *wanpela hauslain*, in the Melanesian context.

## THE *ABU*, OR SACREDNESS, IN COMMUNITY

Since *abu*, or sacredness, is a basic tenet in the rural Melanesian context, its understanding is valuable in transferring the meaning of the biblical community in Eph 2 in Melanesia.

### *Exegesis of Culture*

The context of *abu* is that of the traditional Melanesian culture of rural Malaita Island in the Solomon Islands. *Abu* is the basic tenet by which every aspect of community life and people live. Commenting on the nature of *abu*, Sanga explains that,

> *Abu* (*tapu,* sacredness, holiness, etc.) is foundational to the survival and healthy functioning of communities. People speak it. People aspire to live by it. Institutions are built on understandings of *abu*.

[214] Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 3rd edn, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2008, pp. 37-137.
[215] Ma'afu Palu, "Pacific Theology", in *Pacific Journal of Theology* series II 28 (2002), pp. 21-53.
[216] Hanson, "Contextual Christology", p. 118.

> Processes are designed to achieve, sustain, and evaluate *abu*. In other words, *abu* permeates indigenous Solomon Islands communities.[217]

In addition to Sanga's explanation, *abu* exists in a tri-aspect relationship. Its nature is tri-aspect. Its existence is tri-aspect, in any feature of the community. Traditional Melanesian communities are made up of the tri-aspect features of *abu*: sacred, common, and defile. The permeation of this tri-aspect creates a tension and balance so that people within the community must always take heed not to break *abu*. For example, in a traditional kitchen (house for cooking), there are different areas that are designated for men and women. While the entire kitchen is accessible, there are specific guidelines concerning *abu*, which govern people's movements and relationships within the kitchen.

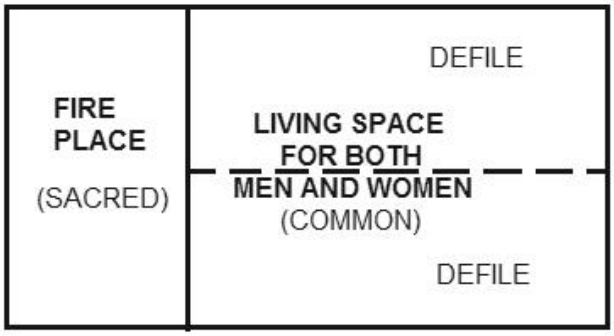


Figure 7: The tri-aspect of *abu* relationship in the traditional Malaita kitchen

In Figure 7, above, the kitchen is traditionally zoned for its use. The fireplace is the most sacred zone in the kitchen. However, it is accessible to the members of the family, because it is where the food is cooked. The women can only lean over and use tongs to do their cooking. They are not allowed to step over or sit on the boundary marker between the sacred and the common places. The men can walk over the boundary marker, but are not allowed to step into the actual fireplace, which is the most sacred. The sacredness of the fireplace stems out from the fact that pagan priests, and those who are under rituals, also eat the food prepared in the fireplace.

[217] Sanga, "Lightning Meets the Light-bulb".

In the living and working (common) space of the kitchen, both male and female members of the family move freely. However, if the women sit on one side of the kitchen, it has the potential to defile the men. These intrinsic relationships create the tension and balance of living together, in respect and regard to each other's space. It is this balance and the tension, in the tri-aspect of *abu* (between the sacred, common, and the defile), that can be applied to help Melanesians to understand the concept of separateness in sacredness, even when people mingle together.

### *Exegesis of Scripture*

The example of *abu* can serve as a cultural bridge to understand the distinctiveness of the new Christian community, in the metaphorical concept of "alive vs dead" in Eph 2:1-6. Paul teaches that, when someone is saved, he or she becomes spiritually alive, as opposed to being spiritually dead. Theologically, it is God who raises the spiritually dead community to become a living community, spiritually. Each person has to be raised individually into this new community. Although people are physically alive, Paul describes that, in the eyes of God, they are spiritually dead.

When God separates His people, it has a physical and spiritual influence on them. Physically, they are changed in their attitudes. The believers stopped doing what they used to do in the past. Their separation from the past is to enable them to live a new life in a new community. Spiritually, in the eyes of God, they are no longer objects of wrath. Their standing before God has changed. They are no longer under God's continuous judgment, but have peace with Him.

### *Critical Response*

In light of the scriptural and cultural exegesis, we need to raise the question: is the "dead vs alive" metaphor transferable into the Melanesian *abu*? The process to shift from the "dead" to the "alive" position is a sovereign act of God's grace. God changes the status of those whom He saved from being dead to being alive. The change makes a spiritual impact on the new community, which causes it to behave differently.

In a similar way, *abu* causes a certain degree of restraining effect on the people, who aspire to live by it in the traditional community. When one lives in *abu*, his or her behaviour is such that it is in line with the nature of *abu*. Hence, there is no difficulty with the tri-aspect nature of *abu*, and the boundaries, which may cause defilement.

Now, we may ask, how would biblical separateness, in the metaphor of spiritual death, be applied to the concept of *abu* in Melanesian culture? While biblical separateness is a spiritual condition, Melanesians can be enlightened that reference and sacredness are essential, so as to ensure *abu.* This understanding can be transferred to the new community of believers. The new community is God's work of grace, hence it is a sacred work. The sacredness of the community must be valued above other things.

## THE PRACTICE OF BOUNTY SHOWING

Another cultural bridge to use for contextualising the biblical concept of community in Melanesia is the practice of bounty showing.

### *Exegesis of Culture*

The practice of bounty showing is tied in closely with the traditional payback, or vengeance killing, in Melanesian culture. Payback, or vengeance killing, is a common aspect in Melanesia, which restores the balance of honour. The cause for payback is either a killing event in the past that needs redressing, or, as Robert W. Williamson notes in *The Ways of the South Sea Savage*, that, in the Mafulu area (now in the Goilala electorate of Papua New Guinea), adultery is regarded as a serious crime, always resulting in death.[218] However, in some Melanesian cultures, such as, the Mae Enga people group, in the highlands of Papua New Guinea, the initial stimulus to mount a fight, and the eventual killing, varies from a simple pig theft, ignoring the disbursement of valuables after a wedding, to a more complex interpretation of social events, and satisfaction of egos.[219] These

[218] Robert W. Williamson, *The Ways of the South Sea Savage*, Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1914, pp. 218-219.
[219] Mervin Meggitt, *Blood is Their Argument: Warfare Among the Mae Enga Tribesmen of the New Guinea Highlands*, Palo Alto CA: Mayfield Publishing, 1977, p. 17.

events are generally the background to the putting up of the bounty for showing, and possibly collection, after one fulfils the revengeful act.

The actual bounty showing is a planned preparation, which must occur after a few months, or years, if a person is not ready for it. It can also happen immediately, if the offended party has enough traditional goods, pigs, and shell money readily available for the service provided. Roger Keesing notes in his book, *Kwaio Religion*, that pigs and blood money are put up to be collected by the man or men who killed an approved victim.[220] But, before these people took on the murderous job, they had to see the bounty first, and agree that it was worth the risky task. The warriors, or *lamo*,[221] from the neighbouring tribes would come to see the bounty. This denotes that a bounty must first be attractive, and catch the attention of warriors, in order for them to take the challenge of taking action, which would lead to their collection of the bounty. The bounty is seen as a trophy that one gets after going through tough circumstances, before collecting it.

### *Exegesis of Scripture*

The reference to the community as a trophy in Eph 2 is in v. 7. It is the verb to " 'display' (NEB) or 'show', rather than simply 'to make known' ".[222] God is intending to display the work that He accomplished, through the new Christian community, as a trophy, in front of a great crowd, in the same way as an athlete does. The new Christian community will be an exhibition of God's wisdom and love and grace in Christ, the trophy of God.

The background to God's act in this exhibition must be rightly understood. Its history goes back to the very act of saving the new community from their past. The re-creation of the people to become His community is a gratifying act in Christ that God intends to display as a trophy. To display the new community is an evidence of the work He has done, through Christ, to renew

[220] Roger M. Keesing, *Kwaio Religion: The Living and the Dead in a Solomon Island Society*, New York NY: Colombia University Press, 1982, p. 19.
[221] A *lamo* or *ramo* is an intimidating warrior, a bounty hunter, and an executioner, which is often attractive for bounties, Ibid.
[222] Foulkes, *The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians*, p. 82.

the people, who were once said to be difficult, wretched, and objects of wrath.

### *Critical Response*

Is the act of displaying the new community as a trophy transferable to the act of bounty showing in the Melanesian context? To the one, who is offended, it takes much consideration to decide to engage in the bounty showing. To God, the act of saving people to the new community demands the most perfect sacrifice that He must offer, Jesus Christ. Before God could exhibit the new community as an attractive trophy, He has calculated the cost that will be involved in His act.

The concept of the community as a trophy is transferable to the idea of a traditional Melanesian bounty showing. The bounty, which is attractive, does not just come into existence on its own. It needs considerable evaluation of the cost that will be involved to show a good bounty, which will attract bounty hunters to take on the job. The concept of the biblical community can be understood in the sense of its attractiveness to all who see it. Bounty showing is a bridge for understanding the new community as God's trophy.

## THE PRACTICE OF INITIATION

The concept of initiation, in traditional Melanesian culture, is another way to understand the expression of "foreigners and citizens" in Eph 2, concerning the new community. Initiation refers to two distinct rituals: *rites de passage*, where the common element is the change in status, and rites performed by closed and secret associations to admit someone into their company.[223] The concern here is the change of status, with the different opportunities presented, because of the change.

[223] Michael Allen, "Initiation", in *Encyclopaedia of Papua and New Guinea*, Peter Ryan, ed., Clayton Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1972, pp. 552-558.

### *Exegesis of Culture*

In the traditional Melanesian context, initiation practices are found in many communities, and exist in different variations, both in form and content.[224] Commenting on initiation, M. R. Allen states that, "the rites may be voluntary or compulsory; those initiated may form inclusive cult groups, age grades, aristocracies, or secret societies; membership may be reserved exclusively for males or females, or the two sexes may be jointly admitted".[225] What Allen is saying here is that initiation is received only by those who are deemed fit, even if it is voluntary, or compulsory, to undergo the process. Once a person undergoes the process of initiation, he or she is part of the group, whether it is a cult group, age grade, or a secret society.

For example, in analysing the initiation process of becoming a real man, and bearing responsibility, in the Kiniambu village in Sepik, Patrick Gesch states that "the main results of initiation are the expectation that the new man has a voice in the village assembly to help . . . identify what is happening . . . and what can be done about it"[226] in the community. This example helps to clarify that, unless the young person is initiated, he has no voice in matters concerning the welfare of the community.

The author's recollection of Ilahita village, in East Sepik, is that of a young person, who was asked to do something, rather than an older person. When the author enquired, the answer was that the elderly person had not gone through a certain stage of initiation, which disqualified him from doing the specific task. However, the younger person had undergone the right stage of initiation, which made him eligible to do the task, rather than the older person.

The examples, above, and the author's experiences, indicate that initiation can play a role in a Melanesian community. Initiation gives a certain degree of distinctiveness between those who do, and those who do not, undergo the

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[224] M. R. Allen, *Male Cults and Secret Initiations in Melanesia*, Carlton Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1967, p. 3.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Patrick F. Gesch, "Initiation and Cargo Cults: the Peli Case", in Wendy Flannery, ed., *Religious Movements in Melanesia Today (1), Point 2* (1983), pp. 99-100.

rite of initiation. This distinctiveness can be a bridge for Melanesians to better understand their new citizenship in the new community.

### *Exegesis of Scripture*

In Eph 2:12, Paul contrasts the difference between foreigners and citizens of the new community. In the old state, the Ephesian Christian community was described as separate, alienated, without hope, and without God. In this condition, the Ephesian community had no legal right to this new community. Their state was that of total depravity and disparity.

However, through God's intervention, the Ephesian community, who were outcasts, becomes citizens of the new community. When this *Deus revelatus* (self-revealed God) intervenes, new opportunities are opened to them. The dividing wall of argument, on the basis of circumcision, is removed (vv. 14-15). God creates a new community, with these two opposing components of the human race to become one in Christ. The Ephesians become citizens of the community, to which they were once foreigners, because of their futility towards God. The Ephesian Christian has equal access to God, just as the Jews had.

### *Critical Response*

Now, the issue of transferability of citizenship into the new community can be addressed. The "citizenship vs foreigners" concept denotes the fact that God is building a new community, which is separate for certain people. Stott argues that Paul's use of πολιτείας (politeias), or "citizenship", is a metaphorical allusion to being citizens of God's kingdom.[227] In the Old Testament, it is seen in the Israelites as the people of God. The pride that the Israelites held in being the community God had chosen is in circumcision. It is their mark of being the people of God. In the New Testament, it is seen in those who are spiritually born again – the believers. This spiritual birth is available, only because God reached out to the people. In this act, God destroys all existing barriers, which encourage an unnecessary antagonistic atmosphere between Jews and Gentiles. He

[227] Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, pp. 104-105.

established a new mark, through the flesh of His son, Jesus Christ, and conjoins opposing parties, to become the new community.

To enter this new community of God is not a work done by human effort. It is God Himself, who creates and establishes the citizens of this new community. The meaning of this biblical concept in Eph 2 can be understood and transferable via the traditional initiation process. It is God who transforms a believer, and incorporates the person into the new Christian community. The believer is transformed from an alien status to being a citizen of this new community. In much the same way, the traditional concept of initiation, in the Melanesian context, changes the status of the one who has been initiated to be eligible to participate fully in the society.

## *WANPELA HAUSLAIN* CONCEPT

The concept of *wanpela hauslain*, in the Papua New Guinea rural context, is the community itself. The concept is understood in two ways. Firstly, *wanpela hauslain* is a description of an actual community. It is the village, where people dwell. Secondly, it is the description of identifying oneself with another person of the same village to another.[228] These two principles of *wanpela hauslain* are important in understanding the concept of the new community.

### *Exegesis of Culture*

In Melanesian societies, *wanpela hauslain* is an evidence of kinship relationships. Radcliffe-Brown refers to a kinship relationship as more than a relationship between two people, it is a system.[229] He explains that a system constitutes a network of social relations, which include the duties to one another, social contacts and usages they observe, and even between the

[228] *The Jacaranda Dictionary and Grammar of Melanesian Pidgin*, by Francis Mihalic, does not account for the combined word or phrase *wanpela hauslain*. However, it is a common description, if one is asked of another person that belongs to the same village. For example, to answer the question, "Do you know Peter?", the obvious answer would be, "*Mipela bilong wanpela hauslain stret*!" (We are from the same place or dwelling).
[229] Radcliffe-Brown, *The Structure and Function in Primitive Society*, p. 53.

people and their dead.[230] Because of these relationships, the stakeholders of a *wanpela hauslain*, living or dead, support each other. By supporting each other, the propagation of their *wanpela hauslain*, or community, continues. Marie de Lepervanche states that "in the small-scale societies of Papua New Guinea, social relations are primarily kinship relations. This means . . . that closely-related people tend to live together, and associate with each other in various enterprises."[231]

It is in these various enterprises that the people execute tasks to fulfil their obligations towards the *wanpela hauslain*, or community. Failure to fulfil one's part has serious repercussions. Kenneth McElhanon and Darrell Whiteman give the following example of a young girl, who is a bride-to-be to a young man, who is working in a far-off plantation, who is found to be with child. The *wanpela hauslain*, or community, gathers together in an open-air court. The plaintiffs, the girl's family, intend to find out who is the father. An elder, who represents the plaintiffs, moves into the open space, where the *wanpela hauslain* gathers, and begins to investigate. The elder outlines that the girl is marked already, but now is with a child. He asks, "What is to be done? Who is responsible for this misfortune?"[232] After raising the problem, and asking these questions, he sits down.[233]

The elders of the *wanpela hauslain* discuss in little groups. After a few minutes, one elder comes forward and said that it was not him that caused the girl to be pregnant, because he only slept with her twice. Other elders, and some pastors, also defend themselves in the same manner. Each of these elders represents one of the young people, who are accused of impregnating the bride-to-be. Now, from an outsider's perspective, it is ridiculous that these elders, and even pastors, have no moral values. But, to this *wanpela*

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[230] Ibid.

[231] Marie de Lepervanche, "Social Structure", in *Anthropology in Papua New Guinea: Readings from the Encyclopaedia of Papua New Guinea*, Ian Hogbin, ed., Carlton Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1973, p. 8, quoted in Kenneth McElhanon, and Darrell L. Whiteman, "Kinship: Who is Related to Whom", in Darrell L. Whiteman, ed., *An Introduction to Melanesian Cultures: a Handbook for Church Workers, Point* 5 (1984), p. 109.

[232] Ibid., pp. 105-108.

[233] Ibid.

*hauslain*, it is a higher value to stand in for a younger relative, when they are accused or attacked. The elders and pastors are fulfilling the obligation to defend someone in the *wanpela hauslain* from public shame, which is "more disgraceful than being involved in premarital sex".[234]

The basic point of the story is that *wanpela hauslain*, or the community, is there to take care, and to offer the necessary security, that each person needs. This ensures that relationships in the *wanpela hauslain* operate on traditionally-established principles and values. The operation of these intrinsic relationships propagates the continuation of the *wanpela hauslain*, or community. Williamson exemplifies this principle, appropriately, in his observation of the Mafulu people of Papua New Guinea, who, in the case where a married woman elopes with a new lover, the husband will demand from her people a refund of the bride price.[235] However, if this is not paid, a punitive expedition will be launched by the *wanpela hauslain*, or community. Hence, the *wanpela hauslain*, or community, always takes care of the well-being of its members.

### *Exegesis of Scripture*

From the analysis of Eph 3 in this paper, in vv. 19-22, Paul unfolds insights into the new community, which God intends to make as His dwelling place. Firstly, Paul uses the metaphor "household", in relation to the new community. This new community is built on the foundation of the teachings of the apostles and prophets, concerning Jesus Christ. In stating that the household is being built, he uses another metaphor of building. This second metaphor is then transferred to take on a totally new meaning, which is the third metaphor, which is the temple, the dwelling place of God.

All these metaphors are references to the new community of God. One aspect of this new community is the household of God. However, the community is also portrayed as a building, the metaphorical temple, which is the new community, the body of believers, the dwelling place of God. The believers are individually called to be reconciled and unified, as a single people, who are the new community of God. There will be no distinction or

[234] Ibid.
[235] Williamson, *The Ways of the South Sea Savage*, p. 219.

intolerance made on the basis of their background, race, or sex. This will be the community of God, the dwelling place of His Spirit.

***Critical Response***

Is the understanding of the household or temple transferable into the Melanesian context? How can the biblical metaphor of the household, or the temple, which is the dwelling place of God, be understood in Melanesia? In Eph 2:19-22, Paul uses these metaphorical expressions, which should help both Jews and Gentiles to understand what it means to be incorporated into the new community of God.

The household, in v. 19, relates the idea that the new community is an established corporate body, built into Christ, to be a family under God. As in the Roman household, membership is by birth, or adoption, and there is no disparity status. Both the biological and the adopted child have equal legal rights in the household. When one is born or adopted into a household, he or she has full rights, and nothing can change that status.

The analogy of *wanpela hauslain* should be able to help Melanesians to capture the meaning of the community of God. The person, who is born into a *wanpela hauslain* will always be taken care of by others in the same *wanpela hauslain*. This should be the understanding that must be transferred to the biblical community. Once a person is a believer, it does not matter whatever background, race, or sex, to which he or she belongs. He or she is now a member of the *wanpela hauslain*, or the new community of God.

Furthermore, Paul states, in Eph 2:22, that "you, too, are being built together to become a dwelling". The dwelling place of God, the temple, was only available to Jews, but now Paul is using it as an analogy of a spiritual temple, of which Gentiles are also a part. Paul's argument is that Gentiles are outcasts, but now they are a component of the temple.[236] Gentiles are now part of the dwelling place of God. It is a time of radical change. God

[236] Maxie D. Dunnam, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, The Communicator's Commentary: Mastering the New Testament, Lloyd J. Ogilvie, ed., Dallas TX: Word Publishing, 1982, p. 177.

does not dwell in physical structures, such as, the temple, He lives in the lives of people. This is the new dwelling place of God, Jews and Gentiles coming together, forming His new community.

How can this biblical truth of becoming one people be transferred into the Melanesian context? In Melanesian traditional society, the *wanpela hauslain* concept is a system,[237] which always finds a way to protect its members.[238] This notion of constant lookout for the welfare of members of the *wanpela hauslain* should be the point of contextualised contact for Melanesians. Once a person is a believer, he or she has become a member of the new Christian *wanpela hauslain*. It does not matter if that person is from a traditional enemy tribe. The new *wanpela hauslain*, to which believers now belong, should take precedence over all other systems of relationships in the Melanesian context.

## NEW CONTEXTUALISATION PRACTICES

In the above subsections, this paper exegetes the cultural traditions that are corresponding to the biblical expressions of community in Eph 2. Here, the paper seeks to analyse these traditional practices, in the light of Eph 2. The question that needs to be asked here is how is it that professing Christians live contrarily to the principles of the new community of God today?

The answer to this question lies in the transferability of biblical expressions of community into the Melanesian context. Melanesians must interpret and understand biblical truths, in order to translate and transfer their meanings to Melanesian Christians, to make the change. This is why this section raises these four analogies, as examples, to see the different aspects of the new Christian community. Now, let us consider each of these examples.

### Abu*, or Sacredness, and the New Community*

The valuing of *abu* in Melanesian traditional society is significant, in that it separates opposite sexes, and persuades them to have proper respect for each other, in their interactions within the community. It "is foundational to the

[237] Radcliffe-Brown, *The Structure and Function in Primitive Society*, p. 53.
[238] de Lepervanche, "Social Structure", p. 109.

survival and healthy functioning of communities".[239] If one does not follow the ways of *abu*, he or she is judged, and is deemed unfit for the community. By living in *abu*, people live sanctified and undefiled lives. This concept can be a point for teaching the separateness of the new Christian community to Melanesians.

The new Christian community is a community separated from the past (Eph 2:1-6, 12-16). Those who are separated from their past are sanctified into a new Christian community. As stated earlier, the change in the believer's life occurs in two distinctive ways. The believer's attitudes change, to become Christ-like, and the believer passes from being under God's continuous judgment. The outworking of *abu*, in a traditional society, functions in almost the same way. *Abu* is a constant restraint on people from defiling themselves, and it is an unseen constant judge.

### *Bounty Showing and the New Community*

Bounty showing is a negative component in Melanesian culture. It is the showing of blood money, and other traditional goods, for the ratification of a wrong done. The bounty can be collected by someone, or a group, who have killed an approved person. However, the notion that the bounty is so compellingly attractive, that one is prepared to undertake any risk, is of value to our study.

In Eph 2:7, Paul teaches that God's intent is to show or exhibit the incomparable trophy. This trophy is the outworking of His grace, expressed in the formation of the new community, through Christ. What God has done in the new community is prestigiously exhibited before the entire creation for them to see. If Melanesians could grasp the beauty of the new community, the point of reference to understand it is in the transfer of the compelling attractiveness of the bounty, which urges a person to do anything for it.

### *Initiation and the New Community*

The traditional Melanesian concept of initiation carries a lot of forms. However, the meaning of each form is coherently uniform, since the rite

[239] Sanga, "Lightning Meets the Light-bulb".

gives a person access, or the passage, to enter a new group, a stage in life, or a sacred society. Once a person has the right of passage, through initiation, he or she has the full right to participate in the new group, to which he or she now belongs. Whatever are the rights of those initiated are now accessible to the new person after initiation. Traditional initiation rites make big differences in the life of a person.

In Eph 2: 12, Paul teaches that Ephesian Christians need to remember that, at one stage, they were separated from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel, and foreigners to the covenant of promises. Their position changed, and new opportunities were opened, through the blood of Jesus (v. 13). In other words, Ephesian Christians were initiated, through the blood of Jesus Christ, into the new community of God. Hence, the understanding of initiation should be another starting point for Melanesians to understand what it truly means to be born into the new community of God.

**Wanpela Hauslain *and the New Community***

From earlier discussions, the concept of *wanpela hauslain* gives vital and interconnected principles in the traditional Melanesian community. Melanesian people identify with the *wanpela hauslain*, because it gives the people a sense of belonging, security, and unity.

The principle of belonging to the *wanpela hauslain* causes a person to be obligated to own the community. Ownership is seen in practical things, such as, defending another member. Hence it is a form of security to others in the same community. When one does good to the other, there is unity and mutual respect in the *wanpela hauslain*.

Therefore, the *wanpela hauslain* forges and maintains relationships in practical ways. When vital relationships are made by members, this ensures the continuation of the community. Belonging to the *wanpela hauslain* demands individual members undividedly commit themselves to it. Without a strong commitment, the *wanpela hauslain* will not stick, or it will become non-existent.

These essential principles can be transferred to help Melanesians understand the concept of the new community of God. In Eph 2:20-22, Paul teaches that, as believers, Ephesian Christians are joined to become part of the holy temple, where God dwells. The teachings encapsulate the notable principles in the Melanesian concept of *wanpela hauslain*. It could be a unifying factor for Melanesians, even with divisions, caused as the result of government systems, and Christian affiliations.

When Melanesians become believers, they belong to a particular *wanpela hauslain*, the holy temple of God. Every believer, from every ethnic group in Melanesia, becomes a unit in that one holy temple of God. This means that, even if a believer is from an enemy tribe, he or she should be treated as one that belongs to the new *wanpela hauslain*. All the obligations of the new community should overrule in every situation.

### SUMMARY

In this section, the paper will attempt to offer two things. Firstly, it will provide four Melanesian contextual analogies. These analogies are the concept of *abu*, or sacredness, which correlates with the concept of separateness, and enables Melanesians to understand it in the community of God. The practice of bounty showing should help Melanesians to understand the aspect of the community as a trophy. The traditional initiation practices should help Melanesians to grasp the concept of entering into a new community. Finally, the *wanpela hauslain* concept should enable Melanesians to understand the concept of the new community being the dwelling place of God. Secondly, by providing these analogies, and explaining them, the paper suggests ways that Melanesians will begin to be exposed to the truth concerning the new community of God.

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STUDY

The aim of this paper was to provide a contextual understanding of Paul's expressions of community in Eph 2. In this section, the paper summarises the different sections, and makes concluding remarks.

## SUMMARY

This paper has four sections. The first section was an introduction, which gave the background information of the study. Section two discussed the natural and traditional clan context, and Christianity in the Melanesian context. In section three, the paper exposed Paul's expressions of community in Eph 2. Finally, in section four, the paper dealt with contextualising the Christian community. Now, let us summarise these sections, individually.

In section one, the paper gave the background information of the study. The introduction covered the aspects of the purpose of the study, the guiding questions, the methodology, the limitations and delimitations, the definition of key words, and finally, the study assumptions.

Section two discussed three specific aspects of the Melanesian context: the geographical location of Melanesia, the traditional and introduced government systems in Melanesia, and the cultural commonalities in Melanesia. Firstly, by way of presenting the facts concerning Melanesia, we began to see that it is a diverse region, which offers a challenge to contextualisation of the concept of Christian community. Secondly, the paper looked at the government systems: the traditional and the introduced democratic systems of Melanesia. The government systems in Melanesia are separate entities, offering independence and patriotism to the people, ideals, which are contradictory to the concept of the new community. However, cultural commonalities can be seen as in-built mechanisms, in the Melanesian context, that provide possibilities for Melanesians to use, in contextualising the Christian concept of the community. These cultural understandings offer an entry point for the contextualisation of the new community, thereby promoting unity in Melanesia.

Section three evaluated the biblical perspective of the new community. Paul discussed the expressions for the new community, in relation to the work of God, and to the work of Christ, in Eph 2. It highlights that at least five specific metaphorical expressions are utilised in Eph 2 of the new community, which are then used in the fourth section. Paul is specifically persuading the believers to understand the depth of what it means to be the

new community of God. These important aspects of the Christian community need to be understood by Melanesian Christians. Understanding these biblical expressions should begin to help Melanesians grasp the concept of God's community. Moreover, it is God, in His grace, who reaches out to humanity, to provide the hope and transformation to become His community. Therefore, Melanesian Christians must desire to understand these metaphorical expressions.

Finally, section four provided four Melanesian contextual analogies. These analogies are the concept of *abu* in Melanesia, the practice of bounty showing, the process of initiation in Melanesia, and the concept of *wanpela hauslain* in Melanesia. Each of these analogies is then subjected to the four steps of critical contextualisation by Hiebert. After going through each analogy, with the steps provided by Hiebert, the paper used the information to propose new contextualised practices for Melanesians, to better understand the concept of Christian community.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The underlying statement for this study is "Towards Contextualising Paul's Expressions of Community in Eph 2 for Melanesian Christians". This statement is raised, because of a perceived lack of understanding of the biblical concept of community by Melanesian Christians. As stated earlier, Melanesian Christians prioritise their traditional values and practices over the community of God, the believers. Therefore, to embark on this statement, four questions were raised and deliberated on, in the previous sections. It is on the bases of these deliberations that the following concluding remarks are made.

Firstly, Christianity has been around in Melanesia for over a century, yet the proper understanding of the community of God is sketchy, in the lives of professing believers. However, as seen in section two of this study, the statistics of each of these three Melanesian nations shows that more than 90 percent of their populations are Christians. Even with the high percentage of professing Christians, the understanding of the community of God needs to be taught. This causes one to wonder what has become of

Christianity in Melanesia concerning the new community of God, the believers.

Secondly, the insights, gleaned from the expressions depicting the new community of God in Eph 2, are at the very core in understanding the community of God. For this reason, it is not a small issue that Melanesians Christians should take lightly. Paul has profoundly expressed that the new community is the work of God. It is not about individual believers. It is more than that, because it is about a community of believers that God Himself is bringing together.

Thirdly, Melanesian Christians need to understand the biblical concept of community. This can be done by exegeting and understanding God's word, and using contextual analogies as entry points for teaching. As demonstrated by the examples used in this paper, there are analogies available, in the diverse Melanesian contexts, which can be used for teaching and expressing the community of God in Melanesia.

Fourthly, the challenge to understanding the community of God is still pending. This calls for vibrant Christian leaders, in all denominations, to collaborate in creating the atmosphere of the Christian community, by dissipating and living to reflect the community of God.

Finally, on a personal note, this study has greatly influenced and challenged my perception on Melanesian Christianity. The teaching of the concept of community is vital, and may point Melanesians to a right understanding of the Christian life. This is a task in need of serious consideration.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

There are different ways to do further study, in line with the subject matter of the community of God. Here are some suggestions for future study. One can research into the community of God, as the church in the New Testament, relating it to the Melanesian context, or taking on from where

Tippett left off, of promoting an educational system that appreciates the unity of denominationalism.[240]

Another option for further study would be the contemporary obstacles, and their effects, on the community of God, or one could follow on from Robert Banks concept of *Paul's Idea of Community* in Ephesians, since Banks has left out this epistle from his book, because of authorship reasons.[241] Lastly, one could take on the concept of how to become a community of God in the Melanesian context.

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[240] Tippett, *Solomon Islands Christianity*, p. 131.

[241] Robert Banks is using Ephesians only in certain places, where he thinks it could help make his point. This treatment leaves a lot of material uncovered. His argument is that Ephesians' authorship is uncertain, Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community: the Early House Churches in Their Historical Setting*, Surry Hills NSW: ANZEA Books, 1979, p. 16.

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