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The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity

Eric Schering

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MELANESIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

Journal of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools

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

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

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

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EDITORIAL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Not everyone will agree with the conclusions reached by the authors. However, we hope that, as you grapple with the issues, the thoughts of the authors will help you grow in your understanding of what God's word says to your life and culture.

Doug Hanson.

COMMON THREADS OF ANIMISM

Kent Mundhenk

From 1994 to 2004, Kent Mundhenk was a missionary with the Evangelical church of Papua New Guinea to the Ningerum tribe in the Western Province, teaching in the Ok Ao Bible School since 1999. Kent Mundhenk is currently finishing his first year of Master of Arts in Missiology studies at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

INTRODUCTION

Animism is most often described as a simple, unevolved religion. Although it lacks the strict creeds and descriptive doctrines of many major religions, animism can be extremely complex. The word “animism” has its roots in three Latin words. *Animare* – means to vivify; this is the same word from which “animation” comes. The second and third words are similar in meaning: *anima* means “soul”, and *animus* is translated “spirit”. From this etymology, the most basic definition of the religion is found: to believe that souls or spirits give life to nature. Anthropologists, who believe in evolution, espouse the idea that, as the caveman became aware of the world around him, he began to search for a way to explain things like fire, wind, thunder, illness, and death. What this primitive man concluded was that there were spirits or souls that gave these things life. The primitive man then sought a way to control the forces around him, by controlling the spirits that animated these forces.

This is where the diversity and complexity of animism is found. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of animistic cultures around the world, and each one seeks to control the spirits in a slightly different manner. Within local geographical regions, there are only slight differences, but, with an increase in distance, comes an increase in disparity. The variations between two tribes in the lowlands of Papua New Guinea may be hard to detect, but,

comparing a tribe in Papua New Guinea to another tribe in Africa will reveal great anomalies.

Even so, the basic structure of the religion remains the same. These similarities are too striking to ignore, and these are what this article will focus on. An anthropologist, who adheres to the evolutionary standpoint, would claim that animistic religions developed from a common starting point – the efforts of a primitive race attempting to explain the world around them. Christians would agree that there is a common origination of the religions; however, that source is the deceptiveness of Satan. Satan's devices are not new, and he is not infinitely creative, but he is a master of contextualisation. He has carefully adapted a set of common beliefs and methods to individual people groups to give each one its own traditional religion.

A COMMON DEFINITION

At its heart, animism is not a primitive religion, conjured up by a primitive mind, with too much time on his hands. In its essence, it is a depraved mind, refusing to see the revelation of God all around him (Rom 1:18-23). Into this fertile soil, Satan plants a religion that gives man a sense of control. Humankind bristles at the idea that there is something that orders man's steps that he cannot control (Prov 20:24). Therefore, a system of controlling the forces, which cannot be explained, is eagerly grasped. In practice, animism has become focused on controlling those forces, for good, or for evil. If one man becomes very angry with another man, he may go to a magic man to work divination on his enemy to make him ill. The family of the sick man may then go to a magic man themselves; they would attempt to persuade the spirit or spirits to make the sick relative better, and to reveal who caused the illness. Each side of the conflict is using magic for its own purposes to bring about its own desired results. The practical definition of animism is simply trying to get the spirits to do what one wants them to do.

ONE SUPREME BEING

A core credence among most animistic people is the belief in one god, who is more powerful than the others. Quite often, he is seen as the creator-god,

even to the point of creating the other gods. He is also typically seen as transcendent, having created the world, and then leaving it in the control of lesser gods, not really any of which are entirely reliable or good. Therefore, this god is generally unpopular, and goes largely unworshipped. This god is often seen more as a first among equals, but quite unknowable. In the Ningerum tribe of Papua New Guinea there is such a god. His name is *Ahwaaman*, but little is known of him, except that he is the creator, and that he does have at least one “offspring”. He is very much like the altar, dedicated to the “unknown god”, which Paul found on the way to the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17:22-34). It is unlikely that this altar was there just in case a god was overlooked; on the contrary, it seems that this altar was dedicated to a specific god that was known to exist, but was otherwise unknown (v 28). Just as Paul associated this “unknowable god” to the Christian God, *Ahwaaman* is also considered to be the Christian God. This existence of one high god, who, in theory, equates to the Christian God, is a common thread among many animistic religions.

THE MAGIC MAN

He is known by many names around the world: witch doctor, sorcerer, wizard, priest, medium, medicine man, shaman, and magic man. In animism, a typical person does not usually have the experience or knowledge needed to properly address the spirits. Since the spirits themselves are somewhat unreliable, and prone to trickery, they must be approached properly, if they are going to do what they are asked to do. Additionally, the spirits generally do not speak in audible voices from thin air, so, to hear them, an intermediary, who can speak for them, is needed. Or, if the circumstances call for a ceremony to be performed, someone is needed, who can read the signs that the spirits give. This is the job of the “magic man” (literally, *the one to whom magic belongs*). How the magic man gets his job varies widely. In some cases, the rituals, ceremonies, and objects of divination have been passed down from a near relative. In other cases, the person has had an encounter in the past with the spirit he works with, and this familiarity allows him to call on that spirit. Still others have in some

way, been “chosen” by the spirits. Perhaps they were contacted in a dream or vision, and they may even be working with several spirits.

However they acquire their position, their relationship with the spirit is usually quite direct. In some cases, the spirit possesses them, and the spirit speaks through them. In other cases, they induce a trance in another person, who then speaks for the spirit. Many times, a ceremony is used. In the Ningerum tribe, mentioned previously, a disgruntled person may have “magic” worked on a person, so that he gets sick, and possibly dies. Many times, there are several people considered likely to have done this, so a ceremony is used to determine which one is guilty. All of the accused sit in a circle, and a small fire is lit in the middle of them. The magic man will then use a stick, about two to three feet long, with a string tied to the end of it. At the end of that string, a bone or other object of divination is tied. The magic man then holds the bone in the smoke above the fire. The bone will begin to swing, and as it does, it “points” to the person who is guilty, much like a swinging magnet being drawn to a nearby steel rod.

The fact that the magic man is paid for his services, and by the very nature of the religion, itself, opens it up to conflict. Firstly, a magic man will normally know how to do magic for good and for evil. For instance, one such diviner may work with the spirit of a venomous snake. He is paid to send a snake to bite an unfaithful wife. After she is bitten, her family may go to another magic man to make her well. It is even conceivable that both parties will actually end up paying the same magic man for opposing services. Some types of magic are both good and evil. When a chicken is stolen, the owner of the chicken may go to a magic man to have a ceremony performed to find out who is the thief. The ceremony calls on a spirit to make the thief sick unto death, if they do not repent. That’s good for the owner of the chicken, but not for the thief! The thief will normally come running, once he hears this ceremony has been performed, for fear that he will die. Either way, the magic man has done his job.

From a Christian point of view, this may seem incongruous. The Christian knows that there is only one God, and that these spirits are actually demons,

working for one master, Satan. Therefore, it would seem inconsistent that one demon would make a man sick and another – or even the same one – could be called on to make him well. How can a house that is divided against itself stand (Mark 3:25)? The answer is that the goal is to keep people ensnared in their furtive attempts to control the spirit world. One person goes to a magic man to make someone sick, and it works; that person feels he has successfully manipulated the spirits. The person, who is ill, then goes to a magic man to be made well, and it works; that person feels he has gotten the spirits to do what he wants them to do. As a result, both are more firmly mired in this deception of Satan.

MAGIC DEVICES

The animist has many tools to choose from in his attempt to reach the spirit world. One of the most basic is the use of magic words. Because this is such a simple method of gaining the spirits' favour, it is not limited to the magic man. When a person is planting a garden, he may say a short incantation, in order to procure a good harvest. When building a house, an animist will normally have some blessing announced, to ensure the health of the occupants. Conversely, words can be used, in a diabolical fashion, to injure others, or to cause illness to come upon them. Again, these methods are not limited to the magic man. The reason for this is that the words spoken equate to prayer. These "prayers" may be spontaneous and informal, or planned and rote. One common belief is that the words gain power with repetition, and, if they are repeated often enough, the spirits are virtually required to comply. However, ultimately, words are cheap, and, if a person wishes to be more certain of the spirits' compliance, then more serious steps need to be taken.

Several years ago, a very healthy and educated young Ningerum man became psychotic. Suddenly, this very gentle and soft-spoken man became a raving lunatic, to the point where he had to have his hands bound to prevent harm to others. The man's relatives began looking for causes, and it was determined that the likely culprit was the spirit of his dead father. In order to appease the spirit, the relatives were told that they needed to make a blood

sacrifice. Eventually a pig – their most valuable of animals – was procured, and the blood was poured on the father's grave. (In the meantime, the young man had gone to a mission hospital, and was given medicine for the psychosis, so, at the time of the sacrifice, he was fine.) In the minds of the people, words were not enough to free the young man from his ailment, so a blood sacrifice was needed.

It is interesting to note that, once the ceremony was performed, the pig was cooked and eaten. One would think that, since it was sacrificed to the ancestral spirit, it should have been taboo, but this was not the case. The belief held is that the part of the pig that is valuable to the spirit is the life force, which is contained in the blood. The life force is the part that the spirit consumes. Since spirits do not eat as men do, the carcass of the animal is of little value to the spirit, so the people are free to eat it.

Symbolic designs also play an important part in animistic cultures. Often, a traditional drum, or the prow of a wooden canoe, is decorated with designs that have significance to the clan. These designs can also be used to ward off evil spirits, or bring good luck. Often, it is evident that a person has gone to a magic man to obtain relief from an illness, or to be protected from becoming sick, because designs are commonly painted on the face or chest by the magic man.

Magic is often imitative and contagious, and this opens up the use of several other items for use in performing magic. In imitative magic, some type of liquid and a fire may be used in a ceremony to bring rain. The liquid, representing the rain, would be poured onto the fire, and the resulting smoke would represent clouds. In contagious magic, something that had been in contact with the intended victim – a nail filing, an article of clothing, a bit of unfinished food, or even a footprint – could be used in a ceremony to make that person ill. Other devices, which are commonly used among animistic peoples to gain favour, avert evil, or, in some other way, control the gods, include costly offerings, avoidance of certain areas, charms, and fetishes. All of these things are viewed as items, which can give the animist some control over the spirits, and, hence, the world around him.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

The widely-viewed film, *EE-taow*, is the story of a missionary family with New Tribes Mission, and the astounding success they had with the Mouk tribe in Papua New Guinea. Their approach was to learn the language, and then teach through the Bible, using the chronological approach. Initially, it appeared that virtually the entire tribe turned to God. It was a wild success, and missions and missionaries flocked to the chronological method in droves, hoping to imitate the sensation among the Mouk tribe. Unfortunately, many of those who initially claimed allegiance with Christ quickly turned back to their old ways. To be sure, there are many, who were genuinely converted, but it seems the majority were just along for the ride.

Wycliffe Bible Translators have similar stories. Several times, when a newly-finished translation of the New Testament is presented to a tribe, there are apparent mass conversions. In the final analysis, though, only a few are found to be true Christians. Even in tribes, where evangelism happens more slowly, the results are similar. The Ningerum tribe was initially introduced to the gospel in the 1970s, through contact with a neighbouring tribe, who had missionaries. A few members of the Ningerum tribe became Christians, and they took their new faith back, and spread the good news to many of the Ningerum people. Until the 1990s, there was little missionary activity in the tribe, and, although it was very questionable how many Ningerum people were actually Christians, it seemed that it was a significant percentage. After ten years of missionaries living and working in the tribe, the final conclusion of the Christians and the missionaries was that very few were actually trusting in Christ alone for their salvation.

A major problem is that most of these tribal people would still claim to be Christians, and it is a danger for the missionary or missiologist to believe the people understand the claim they are making. Many missiologists believe that animistic people are turning to Christianity in droves. If each person in an indigenously animistic culture, who claims to be a Christian, is assumed to be one, the percentage of conversions is, indeed, very high. The missiologists look at these percentages, and conclude that the problem of

tribal religions is all but solved. From this has come a multitude of ill-formed assumptions. Animism is thought by many to be a very weak religion, since so many have supposedly turned away from it so easily. In looking for reasons, they hypothesise that, because there is no firm foundation or standard of truth, the religion is unstable. Also, there is a decided lack of absolutes in animism, other than a basic belief in the reality of the supernatural, and that the spiritual realm is interrelated with the physical realm. This, too, is thought to make traditional religions weak, but, in reality, it appears to have made them adaptable.

One missiologist, Eugene Nida, has done just this. In his book, *Introducing Animism*, he assumes that animistic people are, indeed, turning to Christ in high percentages, and he, therefore, concludes that animism is a weak religion (Nida, 1959, pp. 59, 56-58). In conflict with this, he initially states that animism exists, not only as a dominant religion in some areas, but also as an underlying belief system in many major religions (p. 5). He quotes a saying in Southeast Asia, "Scratch a Muslim Javanese and you find a Hindu. Scratch the Hindu and you find a pagan" (p. 6). The fact is that the biggest danger in working with animists is syncretism. The adaptability of their beliefs allows the beliefs to remain at the core of a person's worldview, regardless of what is professed.

When Christians come and tell the animists about God, the animists are able to easily assimilate this new religion. Animists often have a traditional god that is higher than the rest. Also, they are familiar with spirits, so, when they hear of the Holy Spirit, they are very accepting. The Holy Spirit is a good Spirit, in contrast to the dubious spirits they try to control; they like that. Also, He can do anything, again, in contrast to their spirits, which have limited powers. Thus, the Holy Spirit is seen as simply the first choice in a line of many spirits they can go to, and if He cannot be convinced to do what they want Him to do, they will simply try another spirit. The way to manipulate this good Spirit is rather familiar as well. They "pray" quite often to the spirits, so, asking the Holy Spirit to do things is not difficult. Setting up a worship house (church), meeting for ceremonies (services), and sacrificing something of value (giving), are also quite common. Beyond

that, crosses are similar to charms, and pictures relate to symbolic designs – especially if they have no idea what the picture is supposed to represent. Hence, the animist may appear to be a very good Christian, when, in fact, he is being a devout pagan.

So, how does the missionary combat this? Firstly, the gospel message must start at “the beginning”. Chronological Bible teaching is still extremely valuable, because, even though it can result in insincere “conversions”, it has also resulted in a great number of people truly understanding the gospel. When presenting the gospel, the epistemology of the animist must be taken into account. He does not know the high god of his religion, and it is often the case that he believes God cannot be known. The Christian must show the animist that God can be known, and, in fact, wants to be known. From there, an explanation of God’s holiness and justice is necessary, so the animist can understand why sin separates him from God, and why Christ had to die for that sin. The good news is still good for the animist, but the presentation of the good news must start where *he* is.

One of the most difficult things for the animist to comprehend is the exclusivity of the Christian God. It is not that the animist has an alternative view of how to reach heaven, but he does have dozens of alternative views on how to live this life. Animism generates a great deal of fear, but its follower also retains a great deal of control. If a person is ill, and the spirit, to whom he goes first can’t make him well, then there is usually another magic man, and another spirit. To put all hope on one spirit seems foolish at best. To the animist, casting all his cares on Jesus is just plain stupid. To trust in God, to the extent of saying, “If You won’t make me well, then I will be content to remain sick”, is beyond anything he has ever tried before. The tendency of the animist is to simply add God – or more specifically, the Holy Spirit – to his long list of spirits. He must be confronted gently with the truth that God will not share His allegiance.

The truth of the matter is that God often chooses not to work until the person totally gives himself over to Him. God does not play power games. He is not happy to simply be first in line. And, even if He is the only One a person

will trust, it does not mean He will do as He is asked. God will do His will. A Bible school student in Papua New Guinea once faced this dilemma. His young son had been ill for years, and Western medicines had been inadequate. He turned to God and prayed, he had others pray, and many people asked God to make his son well, all to no avail. Finally, in frustration, he took his son to the magic man. The boy quickly recovered, and remained well for years afterward. God was not willing to play the game, but the spirits were more than happy to oblige.

Slowly, with much teaching, the animist's worldview can begin to change. One of the original Christians in the Ningerum tribe, who is now a pastor, asked at in-service training, "When I plant my garden, is it okay to say words over it (make an incantation)?" This was evidence that he was beginning to understand. Another of the original Christians has come much further, and will grudgingly give mental assent that someone could die of natural causes, but he is not sure if it has ever happened! The main problem in dealing with animism is syncretism, and the primary weapon against syncretism is a proper presentation and teaching of the gospel. These things, combined with fervent prayer, can change the animist's worldview.

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SOLVING CONFLICTS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEAN BAPTIST CHURCHES

Hans Lane

Hans Lane served as Dean of Studies at the Christian Leaders' Training College in Papua New Guinea. He held a Master of Divinity from the Asian Baptist Theological Seminary in the Philippines. Hans also served in the Baptist church of Papua New Guinea for many years in various capacities. He was from the Sepik region of Papua New Guinea.

INTRODUCTION

Conflict creates disharmony, tension, and fear. However, conflict also fosters change, growth, and maturity. For conflict to be useful, though, one must first understand it. This article defines conflict, and types of conflict, and then looks at biblical ways of resolving conflict, in the context of Baptist churches in Papua New Guinea.

CONFLICT

Conflict is a problem in human relationships involving people. It is a struggle over things, which one perceives as important. These may include values and beliefs. They may also include claims of status, power, and resources, one individual wishes to gain over another individual.¹ Conflict occurs when two or more individuals disagree, and dislike the view of the other. Leas and Kittlaus define conflict as, "a situation, in which two or more human beings desire goals, which they perceive as being attainable by one or the other, but not by both".² Bossart defines conflict as:

¹ Kenneth Gangel, and Samuel Canine, *Communication and Conflict Management: in Churches and Christian Organisations*, Nashville TN: Broadman Press, 1992, p. 131.

² Speed Leas, and Paul Kittlaus, *Church Fights*, Philadelphia PA: Westminster Press, 1977, pp. 28-29.

From our difference of needs and values, amidst the segments of our systems, the different movements and motivations within the individual or group, can compete for favour, with that competition for supremacy of need or value having the task of maintaining our sense of self worth.³

KINDS OF CONFLICT

Leas and Kittlaus identify three kinds of conflict: intrapersonal, interpersonal, substantive.⁴

Intrapersonal Conflict

Intrapersonal conflict is a struggle, which a person has within himself or herself. Often this conflict occurs within his or her mind. This may be the result of different feelings warring against each other. It may be struggling to determine what to do, while being concerned about others. This is a situation, where “one’s Puritan conscience can be in conflict with his playful side; or his rational, calculating self can be in contest with his love for the non-rational and aesthetic”.⁵ For example, in a church worship service, some people may want to sing praise and worship songs, while others may prefer traditional hymns. The music leader struggles, in his own mind, how to select songs to please both members of the congregation. He wants to introduce praise and worship songs, but, at the same time, he does not want to threaten or undermine those who prefer traditional hymns. This is a constant struggle, when one tries to do the right thing, yet, at the same time, he does not want to offend the other party.

Interpersonal Conflict

This conflict relates to differences between people. It refers to issues, when people relate to one another. This is a conflict, where one person is striking against the other, primarily over their non-compatibility as persons. This

³ Donald E. Bossart, *Creative Conflict in Religious Education and Church Administration*, Birmingham AL: Religious Education Press, 1980, p. 12.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

conflict is not generated by what a person does, or what he thinks about an issue, but by how he feels about the other person. Interpersonal conflict reflects one's bias in colour, whether he is black or white, in age, whether one is old or young, or profession, whether one is a minister or layman. For example, someone may say, I do not like this professor, because she is a woman, or I do not like this student, because he is talkative. Interpersonal conflict primarily reflects one's feeling about another person.

Substantive Conflict

This conflict is between two individuals, or between an individual and a group, or between groups. This kind of conflict has to do with people disputing over facts, values, goals, and beliefs. Between individuals, it can be a contest between the student and his professor, or the head of the agency and a staff member. This kind of conflict often justifies the loyalty of one's position, or the groups he or they represent. This may include differences in personal views and opinions, differences in how things should be done, or differences over values and goals.

POSITIVE ROLE OF CONFLICT

In most cases, conflict has not been totally accepted as a valued portion in the mission of the church, because the church often experiences the problem of disintegration, dysfunction, and dissociation.⁶ The church that can best respond to conflict management, according to Leas and Kittlaus, is the "one described as the pluralistic community".⁷ A pluralistic community church is one, in which its membership is very diverse, and calls for reconciliation in the internal dynamics of the congregation. Leas and Kittlaus list four major areas where conflict can, essentially, be a positive experience for the church. These include the following:⁸

1. Empowerment. This suggests, when church life and practice is dead, internal conflict is sometimes necessary to shake it to life,

⁶ Bossart, *Creative Conflict*, p. 116.

⁷ Ibid., p. 117.

⁸ Leas and Kittlaus, *Church Fights*, pp. 35-41.

to revive and energise its process for group life, toward accomplishing its mission.

2. Established identity. This suggests conflicts are helpful, when the church's identity is in question; boundary lines are established, between the insiders and the outsiders.
3. Unifying the group. This suggests that conflict, at times, plays down the difference within the congregation, and forces people to be more effective in working together as a task group.
4. Bearing the tolerable. This suggests conflicts can make individuals and groups become aware of their own strengths and limitations.

Conflicts in areas of weaknesses and strengths help people to gain experience and grow. Conflicts are neither evil nor wrong. Conflicts should not be equated with bad feelings, hostile attitudes, or anger. Bad feelings do not constitute interpersonal, or substantive, conflict, until they are manifested in some kind of behaviour that strikes against another person or group. Furthermore, viewing conflict as a positive development will facilitate great potential for growth and maturity toward attaining the mission for which the church is aiming. The church has the responsibility to educate and encourage its members, to see positive effects of conflicts, in areas where they, as a church, need to correct their discrepancies, work to overcome them, and grow in their faith, into maturity, with these experiences.

PAULINE PRINCIPLES IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

In Antioch, a conflict occurred, in which Paul applied principles that can be adapted in conflict management. These are: (1) the principle of appealing to

the authority of scriptures; (2) the principle of appealing to the integrity of the leadership; and (3) the principle of appealing to the unity of the body.⁹

The Principle of Appealing to the Authority of Scripture

Paul had been preaching that both Jews and Gentiles needed to be saved, by faith, through the saving grace of God. The incident in Antioch occurred when Peter, who had been eating with the Gentiles, withdrew his presence, when some Jewish men arrived from Jerusalem. Paul pointed to Peter's behaviour, which was contrary to what Paul had been promoting in his presentation of the gospel to the Gentiles, such as, to the Gentile church in Ephesus (Eph 1:13). Paul responded by appealing to the scripture, saying, "Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:16). According to Paul, and the gospel he preached, there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, as far as salvation by faith is concerned. The appeal to scripture was necessary for confrontation, since Paul and Peter had a common reference to what is understood from the scripture. This process requires the direct use of scripture for admonishing and teaching, to ensure growth and maturity in the making.¹⁰

The scriptures provide the basis for Christian truth and value. The understanding and expectation of a common value, in reference to scripture, provides a system, necessary to manage a conflict situation. When both parties recognise the importance of subjection of differences to the higher value in the Word of God, an appeal to that measure brings courage and confidence in confronting another leader.

THE PRINCIPLE OF APPEALING TO THE INTEGRITY OF THE LEADERSHIP

Managing a conflict situation involving another leader is not a simple task. A lot is at risk, depending on the nature and outcome of the resolution adhered to. Managing a conflict situation must be understood as both an opportunity, and an experience from which to learn and grow. "Managing

⁹ Gangel and Canine, *Communication and Conflict Management*, pp. 175-176.

¹⁰ Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, Nutley NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1970, p. 55.

conflict is more than gaining control. It is a process of listening to, understanding, and caring about, people.”¹¹ Moreover, leadership is seen to be more important than any issue or program. It is an attempt to correct a wrong. Augsburgers call this:

“[C]are-fronting”. It simply means, “I love you. If I love you, I must tell you the truth (even if it hurts). I want your love. I want the truth. Love me enough to tell me the truth.”¹²

Caring-fronting is an attempt to restore the integrity of the person, both as an individual and a leader. A leader’s position should not be taken lightly, because of the influence leaders have on others. If the behaviour was wrong, many, who follow, may either be lost or corrupted. Any responsible leader, concerned with the flock, will stand up for them. He will teach the truth, from the scriptures, and guide them to experience that truth for themselves, and to be responsible Christians in the body of believers.

THE PRINCIPLE OF APPEALING FOR THE UNITY OF THE BODY

The principle of unity has three positive effects for the unity of the body of Christ. These are: (1) it maintains unity for growth; (2) it maintains Christian testimony and witness; and (3) it maintains conviction in the faith.

Maintaining Unity for Growth

Paul was concerned with the growth and the maturity of the Gentile church. Peter’s behaviour had the potential to severely hurt the young Gentile church. Paul had to publicly rebuke Peter, in order to maintain unity, for the young church to grow. “Care-fronting is offering real confrontation that calls out new insights and understanding.”¹³ This kind of approach unites love and power, which is concerned, at its heart, for relationship, and with concerns for goals and values that are of significant importance.

¹¹ Bryan Cardis, “Why Do Churches Fight?”, in *Church Administration* (June 1993), p. 6.

¹² David Augsburgers, *Caring Enough to Confront*, Scottdale PA: Herald Press, 1973, p. 8.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Furthermore, conflict allows for growth and stability. It also creates a desire for improvement, where necessary. Such is the aim for growth and self-realisation. This is achieved through the experience of growth, as a creative possibility from the cost of strain.¹⁴

Unity is possible in any given conflict situation involving leaders. However, both parties must have a common point of reference. It is claimed that, for Christians, the scriptures are the only reference for any sound assessment and judgment. Confrontation in dialogue produces social activity; it creates understanding, and acceptance, and facilitates unity in the body of believers.

Paul recognised the importance of maintaining unity in the body. In his letter to the Corinthians, who were struggling with division among themselves, he urged them to sort their differences, for the sake of unity (1 Cor 6:1-4). Paul exhorted the Philippians to bear with one another in love. He wrote, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit, through the bond of peace" (Phil 1:13). Furthermore, Paul appealed to the leaders in the church to help sort out the differences between two leading women, Euodia and Syntyche. Despite their differences, as Christians, they are expected to agree, for the sake of the unity of the body of Christ.

Maintaining Christian Testimony and Witness

The second aim of confrontation is to appeal to Christian testimony and witness. The eyes of the world are focused on the church, particularly on the leaders. When things go wrong, leadership gets the blame for it, whether directly or indirectly.

Christian morality and ethics call for scrutiny. Maintaining the unity of the body is tantamount to Christian witness and testimony. Paul, in writing to the young pastor, Timothy, suggested that he set a strong model for the "believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Tim 4:12, 16).

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 122.

The Christian church is expected to demonstrate its ability to set a godly character, and unite in its efforts to handle conflict situations. By demonstrating this, the Christian church can proclaim an alternative model for an ungodly society.

As Christians manage conflict situations, they are expected to appeal to the testimony of their faith, and the witness of the scriptures, as the sacred and holy truth of God. Christians are urged to search the scriptures, to apply the principles and truth found in it to assist them in managing conflict situations. Gal 2:14-20 testifies that the scriptures must be honoured.

Since God is holy and true (1 Peter 1:16), His words are a guide and direction for all aspects of Christian life and practice. It is important for believers to appeal to the attributes of God, as a reminder that God's character is the best model for Christian living. Christ has given the physical demonstration of a godly character. This example is to be a constant reminder of God's desire for every believer. A godly lifestyle can impact the world as a powerful testimony and witness.

Maintaining Conviction in the Faith

Peter's behaviour had influenced those who saw him, and could be a destructive force to the young church if not corrected. His action was inconsistent with the gospel of Christ. This was a public matter, because of the number of people present. Paul resorted to confronting Peter in public with a strong rebuke, maintaining an appeal for peace and understanding, that unity may prevail. When such behaviour is misleading others in public, a public rebuke is necessary, while it is still fresh and new. In writing to the Gentile Ephesians, Paul makes an appeal to them, "I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit, through the bond of peace" (Eph 4:1-3).

The Gentile believers at Antioch were hurt by what happened that day. Paul noticed this, and confronted Peter. He also appealed to the Gentile Christians for wisdom and understanding. The understanding of biblical values is important for cohesion, and unity of the Christian faith.

Augsburger notes that, "Truth, with love, brings healing, truth, told in love, enables us to grow, truth, in love, produces change."¹⁵ Furthermore, care must be taken to honour the scriptural basis for faith building (2 Tim 3:16).

The individual's integrity, together with the Christian faith, is necessary to build a sense of personal worth and acceptance. The right approach may not be an easy one, and may include confrontation, which sometimes hurts. Yet, the right moment for reaction and timing encourages members to find self-acceptance, worth, personal values enriched, and reconciliation exemplified; thereby creating the unity of the body.¹⁶

Confidence in the pastoral leadership helps promote unity among peers, and members, in the fellowship. The recognition of authority, submission, forgiveness, and acceptance are some places with which to start, if unity is to be achieved. This also encourages and facilitates the need for understanding each other, in order to develop workable relationships.

Christian leaders are expected to use the Bible as a guide for determining what is right, fair, and just in applying Pauline principles, in confrontation. Conflict management needs prayer, love, and understanding by all concerned parties, when appealing to the scriptures, to the integrity of the leadership, and for unity among the believers in the body.

AN EFFECTIVE WAY OF SOLVING CONFLICT IN THE BAPTIST CHURCH IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Many problems do not easily go away. Some problems have easy answers, while others may be difficult to solve. Problems must be worked through, or else they remain a barrier to the growth and development of people.¹⁷ According to Scott, there are two ways to confront another human being.¹⁸

¹⁵ Augsburger, *Caring Enough to Confront*, p. 20.

¹⁶ Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, p. 55.

¹⁷ M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Travelled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values, and Spiritual Growth*, New York NY: Simon & Schuster, 1978, p. 31.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

The first is the way of arrogance. This is the most common way of parents, spouses, teachers, and people generally, in their day-to-day affairs. It is usually unsuccessful, producing more resentment than growth, and other effects, which are not intended. The second is the way of humility. It is not common, requiring, as it does, a genuine extension of oneself. It is more likely to be successful. Peck asserts that:

Confronting problems is painful. To willingly confront a problem early, before we are forced to confront it by circumstances, means to put aside something pleasant, or less painful, for something more painful. It is choosing to suffer now, in the hope of future gratification, rather than choosing to continue present gratification, in the hope that future suffering will not be necessary.¹⁹

Confronting people, who are in the wrong, is an unpleasant experience, yet it is necessary; any responsible leader is concerned about the spiritual life of the individuals involved. Peck states: “To fail to confront, when confrontation is required for the nurture of spiritual growth, represents a failure to love.”²⁰

The account, in Gal 2:11-21, reflects the need to confront with care and love. It was a situation, which required immediate confrontation. A test of a leader is the ability to recognise a problem before it becomes an emergency. Maxwell lists seven ways leaders can recognise a problem, in the following sequence:²¹

1. They sense it before they see it (intuition).
2. They begin looking for it and ask questions (curiosity).
3. They gather data (processing).

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 31.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 153.

²¹ John Maxwell, *Developing Leaders Within You*, Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson, 1993, p. 73.

4. They share their feelings and findings to a few trusted colleagues (communicating).
5. They define the problem (writing).
6. They check the resources (evaluating).
7. They make decisions (leading).

Paul sensed and noticed there was potential danger for the young church. He took the initiative, as a responsible leader, speaking with confidence and authority, he addressed an obvious conflict situation, in order to solve it.²² The approach Paul took was necessary, under the following circumstances: (a) the teaching of the gospel was compromised; (b) Peter's manner of behaviour was unbecoming of a key church leader; (c) the Jewish Christians, who were present, followed his example; (d) the Gentile Christians were confused, with their faith at stake; (e) the men from Jerusalem may have thought Peter did the right thing, in support of their claim that salvation by grace through faith is incomplete without the law. The so-called gospel to the Gentiles, having come to faith in Jesus by God's grace, is now questioned. The faith of the Gentile believers was at stake.

Confusion and disbelief were in their eyes. The nature of the situation was both confusing and critical for the young, growing church. The situation required someone stepping in to correct, and set the record straight. Disturbed by the whole episode, the apostle Paul stepped in to confront the situation. The apostle Peter, who had initiated the crisis, needed someone above him, or his peer, to set the situation right. Paul responded, as an apostolic equal and peer, to correct Peter's misleading thought, and manner of behaviour.²³

In this case, confrontation involved two opposing individuals: firstly the individual involved; and secondly, the issue, or the problem, in question. It takes a person, and an issue, to create a conflict. Once a conflict has

²² Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, p. 55.

²³ Gangel and Canine, *Communication and Conflict Management*, p. 116.

occurred, there is a responsibility to reconcile the parties involved. The following must be confronted: the person, the problem, and the situation.

CONFRONTING THE PERSON

The Galatians account required face-to-face confrontation with the individual directly involved. There is no excuse in the church, when the leadership is at fault. Confrontation is healthy and necessary. “When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong” (Gal 2:11).

Paul rebuked Peter to his face, in public, not considering the presence of other people. The approach Paul took was due to the nature and intensity of the situation. Not only was Peter’s behaviour undermining the integrity of Paul’s leadership, his behaviour also influenced other Jewish Christians to follow him. Furthermore, the young Gentile believers were even more confused, their faith, based on grace alone, was now threatened by inclusion of observance of the law.

Paul “stood up to” Peter, because he was “clearly in the wrong”.²⁴ It was necessary, because Peter was a senior leader in the church. Many people looked up to Peter, as a leader among the disciples. Peter’s behaviour went against his own conscience, and against the revelation that he had received in Acts 10.²⁵ Paul must do something to intervene and reconcile the situation. Paul had to face him as an apostolic equal. Paul rebuked Peter publicly, when the issue was still new and fresh.

Since many others, including Barnabas, followed Peter’s example, it seemed appropriate and necessary, given the circumstances, for Paul to react in such a manner. There are cases, in the course of one’s leadership responsibilities, when the situation calls for immediate reaction, although with caution.

²⁴ R. A. Cole, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1974, pp. 73-74.

²⁵ Ibid.

Confrontation is necessary, when faith is compromised. Paul faced several immediate concerns. Firstly, he was concerned over Peter's integrity, as a senior leader in the church. Secondly, he was concerned over the need to correct the misunderstanding about the truth of the gospel. Thirdly, the need to teach those concerned regarding the truth for salvation. Paul appealed to the consistency of the scripture, with respect to the gospel he preached.

In confrontation (Gal 2:11-21), some degree of opposition has been encountered. One wishes to subdue or remove it, not by punishment, but by influencing the mind to adapt and change.²⁶ According to Adams "the mind must be confronted, and be influenced to change for the better".²⁷

Paul appeals to the truth, consistent with the gospel, to correct and influence Peter's thinking, and those in line with his thinking. Paul appeals to Peter's mind that Peter should change his mind.

To confront, in this case, was to have Peter change his mind, acknowledge his weakness, and to adhere to the teachings of the gospel. The confrontation with Peter vindicates Paul on the nature of the gospel, but it shows Peter's conduct to be inconsistent with his faith. The face-to-face encounter suggests that its purpose was to clear the issue, not personal hostility. The person involved, and the issue concerned, must both be confronted and rebuked, on the basis of worthy values and goals.

CONFRONTING THE PROBLEM

When conflict occurs, there is a problem. Problems among church members must be the concern of all, because it will affect the life of church. The church must learn to own, confront, and solve its problems.²⁸ The church must develop skills and courage in approaching conflicts among her

²⁶ Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, p. 44.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Peck, *The Road Less Travelled*, p. 32.

members, which may involve some planning, to approach the situation. There are four basic steps to follow:²⁹

Firstly, it is necessary to determine the cause of the conflict. That involves stating the problem clearly in writing. The understanding of the cause and effect of the problem will determine the kind of assistance needed. Secondly, it is necessary to know who, and how many people, were directly involved. It involves identifying the sources of the problem, enabling specific individual(s) or group(s) to approach. Thirdly, it is necessary to know how many people were affected by the conflict. It involves identifying those who may have been affected by the conflict. Fourthly, is the need to plan a strategy, with processes devised to confront the problem, and deal with it. It involves organising people and resources, if required, to solve this conflict.

Confrontation always implies an issue, a problem, not an individual person. This presupposes an obstacle that must be overcome, and be dealt with, because something is wrong in the life of the one being confronted. Dayton and Engstrom write:

Confrontation is necessary to right a wrong. The idea that something is not right, there are some difficulties, or some need, which must be acknowledged, and be dealt with, is the central focus of this confrontation nature. Its purpose is to effect personality and behavioural change.³⁰

Christian leaders are not immune from sin. There are times when one makes mistakes, but that does not undermine the person's ability as a leader. Whatever the issue may be, it must be addressed, for the good of all. As much as possible, the leader must be encouraged to continue in the faith. The apostle Peter had a definite theological problem; grace by faith was insufficient for salvation, without the observance of the law. His problem

²⁹ Edward R. Dayton, and Ted W. Engstrom, *Strategy for Leadership: God's Principles for Churches and Christian Organisations*, Mandaluyong Manila: OMF Literature, 1989, pp. 95-108.

³⁰ Ibid.

was evident, by his move to withdraw from the Gentile to the Jewish table. This was a definite mistake, which must be corrected.

Paul made no mistake about it, he pointed out the error to Peter, in front of them all (Gal 2:14-16). Then he goes on to justify his answer, by explaining that, "If righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing" (Gal 2:21).

The ultimate goal of conflict management includes both reconciliation and integration. The process is painful, and does hurt deeply. It takes a lot of courage and authority in the Lord to confront another leader in the wrong. That is not easy, as leaders; yet the mandate to correct and help a brother's mistake is one's responsibility. It is the leader's primary responsibility to protect and maintain the Christian faith, in all manner and practice, by keeping in line with the teaching of scripture, even if it means confronting another. There is no easy way out, through cheap grace. Conflict is a process, a means to an end.³¹ Bossart writes:

It is a way to correct the . . . disruption and chaos of the old, with the establishment of harmony and resolution of the new, and not yet. Conflict is as essential to the Christian faith as is the cross.³²

Conflict, is not a problem in itself, rather problems can give meaning, and can evaluate one's action and practice. Furthermore, on a positive note, problem redefines the position and faith on one's practice and belief.³³ For Christians, it is an opportunity for growth, education, maturity and personal development. Such crisis situation enables those involved to mature, and grow in their faith. It takes a certain degree of humility and commitment on those involved to accept correction and patience to be corrected by another for change to occur.

³¹ Bossart, *Creative Conflict*, p. 95.

³² Ibid.

³³ Maxwell, *Developing Leaders Within You*, p. 70.

CONFRONTING THE SITUATION

The men, who came from Jerusalem, held strong views regarding the law. They insisted that salvation by grace through faith was insufficient without the law. In their presence, Peter became nervous, and acted hypocritically. This prompted Paul to confront Peter. “You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile, and not a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs” (Gal 2:14)?

Paul had no choice, but to confront the situation, in order to bring both Peter, including those with him, and the Gentile believers, all back to the truth of the gospel, and the unity of faith among the believers. It is necessary to confront issues and problems, when they purposefully create disunity, and disrupt peace among leaders.

Confrontation is one of the least-glamorous, and most difficult, facets of leadership. It is, however, one of the leadership’s most necessary and important responsibilities. Failure to confront produces negative results, for both persons and the organisation. Only, as the art of confrontation is carried out, under the divine leadership of the Holy Spirit, will the kind of personal and organisational results, desired by leaders, be accomplished.³⁴

Paul knew the issues involved in this situation. He understood God’s values and desires; he confronted the situation, and argued on that basis. Paul’s reference to the scriptures, and the meaning of grace, convinced Peter and the others that what he said was true. Peter accepted the rebuke, with calm maturity and humility. He accepted the correction, as a mark of a true Christian leader.

Rensis and Jane Liker gave five helpful suggestions for problem solving, when confronting a crisis situation. Firstly, locate the problem, and state it clearly. Be sure it is the real problem. Secondly, define the conditions or criteria by which the solution must be satisfactory. Thirdly, search for all promising solutions. Fourthly, obtain all relevant facts, for the extent of

³⁴ Gangel and Canine, *Communication and Conflict Management*, p. 181.

each solution. Try to meet all criteria, and get the desired effects. Fifthly, evaluate all suggested solutions, in terms of the criteria, and desirable effects.³⁵

According to Paul, confrontation to correct wrong is required, when the truth is compromised or denied, in the clear light of the gospel. It is essentially necessary to confront, when the gospel is compromised, when leaders are involved.

CONCLUSION

This study was undertaken to determine scriptural principles for solving problems in Papua New Guinean Baptist churches. The research showed that conflict can be defined, categorised, and delineated. This research also found that the New Testament church resolved a major problem by the application of Pauline principles: (1) the principle of appealing to the authority of scripture; (2) the principle of appealing to the integrity of the leadership; and (3) the principle of appealing to the unity of the body.

Further, the research found that, in the light of Pauline principles, there is an effective way of solving conflict in the Papua New Guinean Baptist churches. These are: (1) confronting the person; (2) confronting the problem; and (3) confronting the situation.

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³⁵ Rensis Likier, and Jane Likier, *New Ways of Managing Conflict*, New York NY: McGraw-Hill, 1973, pp. 171-173.

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TRIBAL WISDOM: HELP IN UNDERSTANDING BIBLICAL WISDOM

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INTRODUCTION

Wisdom is a fundamental factor for stability and solidarity of a community or a clan. For this reason, the people of Kawelka, in the Dei district of Western Highlands Province, regard it as the most basic and providential aspect for their good living. They keep the process of imparting wisdom to their children through proverbs and sayings.¹

Wisdom plays a central role in the Bible. In Old Testament times, wisdom was conveyed by the appointed leaders, to teach the Israelites, as God's chosen people. The words of wisdom came directly from the mouth of the Lord, in the form of laws, as a means of valued wisdom.

In the New Testament, the Word is the source of wisdom. The Word is identified in the person of Jesus Christ, as the Lord of the universe. Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the revealed Word of God, which was God's hidden wisdom since the beginning. Jesus Christ became the revealed wisdom of God; what was promised before has now been fulfilled in Him. In fact, this wisdom offers hope and salvation, through the way of the cross, and those who believe in him will receive eternal salvation.

¹ This article often uses the "present tense" when discussing the customs and sayings of the Kawelka people. However, not all customs and sayings may be as prevalent today as they were in the past.

Historically, words of wisdom were considered a true part of life for the Melpa people, who lived with their animistic beliefs. But now, by the grace of God, in and through Jesus Christ, who is the true incarnate Word, the hidden wisdom of God has now become the revealed wisdom of God for all mankind. Christ has brought a whole new reality of life among the Kawelka people of Melpa society (Col 2:17).

WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE KAWELKA CLAN

It is common knowledge that speeches by Melanesians are too long, and cannot be easily understood, because Melanesians use proverbs, symbols, and figurative speech as their usual way of communication. As Philip Gibbs writes:

Symbolic language is common in the languages of Papua New Guinea, particularly in emotionally-charged fields as religion and politics. The more abstract the concept, or more deeply felt the experience, the greater the likelihood that it will be expressed in symbols.²

Melpa culture and language, in the Kawelka tribe of the Dei in Western Highlands Province, can be studied as the basis of Melanesian wisdom. The people of Kawelka, who are part of the Melpa-speaking tribal people of the northern region of Mt Hagen city, regard proverbs and sayings as fundamental ways of transmitting wisdom.

PROVERBS AND WISE SAYINGS, A MEANS OF TRANSMITTING WISDOM

The Kawelka people hold to the wisdom learnt from traditional stories, passed on through generations. The story of “The Wisdom of a Cassowary” is an example. In this story, the mother cassowary says to her chick: “Child, you are to take a long journey, and, in this long journey, there are trials, threats, and enemies to be faced, therefore, pay good attention to my instruction, and keep in mind what I, as your loving mother, want to tell you.

² Philip Gibbs, “Evangelisation with Proverbs and Sayings”, in *Catalyst* 30-2 (2000), p. 186.

Child, if you see and hear something coming down from above, you shall go ahead and take it as food and drink, but if you see and hear something coming up from the ground, leave, and escape it; for from the ground come your enemies, who await to take your life.”

The meaning behind such a story is the value and importance of wisdom. Wisdom points to the right way of life. The wisdom, the mother cassowary gives to the chick, helps us to see life. The basic needs of life are spoken of in the fresh rainwater and the good fresh air. And, also from heaven above, come the fresh juicy fruits, which are given to eat. Therefore, the good comes down from the sky to the earth. However, what come up from the ground are the enemies – dogs, men with bows and arrows, and traps. These observations are regarded as the fundamental aspects for the well-being of the young cassowary.

Likewise, in our case, the mothers train their young ones with wisdom and that is passed on from one generation to another. Customs in the community are taught in two major ways. Firstly, customs are taught orally. Secondly, customs are learned by applying the proverbs practically, in real life situations. The mother becomes the role model of life.

There is a general belief that a couple came from the west and settled in the valley of Bagla Imp-manga, and they began to cultivate the land, and look after their pigs. Their descendants now live along the edge of the Waghi Valley, and occupy the Dei District of Western Highlands Province. When the population grew in numbers, and inhabited the Dei district, a chief, Onga Kaipa, in the early 1930s, rose to leadership of the Kawelka clan. The Kawelka clan regarded him as a wise man in everything he did, and honoured him for this quality. When the gospel of Jesus Christ came to the Dei area, he became a Christian, eventually becoming the spiritual leader of the Kawelka clan, until his death in December, 2003.

In the oral tradition of the clan, we find many sayings and proverbs attributed to this chief. For example, the following statement is supposed to impart wisdom to his clan:

As men of Kawelka, you are to put your hands into the ground, and, from there, you will have more than enough. From the ground come pigs, shell money, wives, and children, for all are there. All of these things are at your door, unless you put your hands down into the ground. When doing this, the next day, you will find yourself up in the treetops.

From his deathbed, Chief Onga spoke these words, “Love your fellow men, and keep in touch with others in various ways, which will bring peace and wealth. As men of Kawelka, you are to hold the ground.” Then he invited the men to come, one by one, and eat from his hand the head of a roasted pig, eventually just leaving the bones. This invitation was a mark of love and unity. Then he gave his walking stick and his spade to place in the Kawelka clan men’s house for remembrance of his wise teachings.

This is why people of other clans began to regard Kawelka as wealthy. They would say, “if you want to eat pig meat, well, go to Bugl. If you are hungry, then go to Bugl, where you will be satisfied to the fullest with *po palga kaimb* (valued sugar cane) and *rua kenenga membogl* (valued bananas).” According to the other clans, Bugl was the place where wisdom had originated, because they regarded the wisdom of Kawelka as the source of wealth, prosperity, and peace.

THE TRANSFER OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

Legends and tales are told at bedtime, when children, who listen with great interest, are about to sleep. These stories are recited repeatedly, so that the children understand the stories very well, and then they, in turn, interpret them to other children.

People keep transferring wisdom from generation to generation, and here is one reason: simply, men wanted to uphold the identity of the community. In addition, it is meant to build the reputation of the community, and to strengthen the recognition of the community, in terms of wealth, solidarity, and prosperity.

During teaching, the young ones pay close attention to what is being spoken, because the leaders share their experiences that they have seen and heard. As a saying goes: “Tell others what you yourself have seen and experienced; show your brother the hole in the tree, in which you have killed the possum; show your brother the hole in the stone by the pool, in which you drew the largest eel that he, too, will one day have the things you have taken.”

The other way to transfer wisdom is by practical application, which men put into practice by teaching, from generation to generation. In these practical experiences, men and women handle certain tools to use in their respective areas of work. They learn how to take good care of themselves, by handling tools, and do excellent work. By doing this, they are regarded as hard-working people, who supply food for the family, and their livestock. During times of famine, these families would have a supply of food, because they had the ability to supply enough food for their needs. Chief Kingal Pana said:

Kaukau are regarded as pig growers, for out of *kaukau* comes heads of pigs, and the household rubbish becomes the compost of the banana *kenenga* and *membogl* (valued bananas). Study the environment, and it shall tell you when to cut the bush, when to plant, and when to harvest.

Fathers to Their Sons

In Melpa society of Western Highlands Province, as in all Melanesian communities, sons are often valued with greater respect than are daughters, because they are the ones who will govern the clans and the families. To raise productive and influential sons, the fathers have the responsibility to teach them, which means that they must equip their children with enough skills and knowledge to make them become their successors.

Subsequently, a Melpa father is very much concerned for his son. He does not want his son to be poor, to be an outcast, a beggar, or even a stranger in his own land. However, he wants to see his son become a man of character and wealth, in order to be respected in the community. The father says to

his son: “With you will be the ropes of pigs, a supply of garden foods, and you will be seen as if you were being rubbed with oil everyday”, and so on. The young sons value these words, as spoken wisdom from their fathers.

A father teaches his son to be a good tribesman, and gain respect from others by good behaviour. For a spirit of humility makes other men praise him, and fix their eyes upon him, to make him a good leader in the next generation. Winning others’ hearts is important, and that means a boy shall do his best to win the full interest and attention of others, by helping them, being obedient, and being gentle, with intelligent actions. The father teaches all these leadership qualities in the house, and the boy grows up with these instructions.

In the Pidgin language, *haus man* means “men’s house”, the central place where the young men and the boys learn all the ways of becoming a man of wealth and prosperity. Every evening until midnight, the old men teach the ways of living productive lives. Some of these grandfathers were good warriors before, so they teach the young men to become good warriors, others were good gardeners, who educate the young ones to become good gardeners, and others were good spokesmen for the clan, who teach the boys how to become good public speakers.

Therefore, the wise fathers admonish the young men: “Eat whatever is given to you by your mothers and your sisters, but do not take anything which is given by others. Simply, say ‘no, thank you’, and you will save yourself in the long run, and you will see the many good things, which are to come in the years ahead.” This admonition is given to avoid death by poisoned food, which is usually given by enemies.

The fathers also teach the young men about marriage, that is, when it is suitable to sleep with their wives, and when it is not safe. This teaching is related to the menstrual periods, when it is not safe for them to sleep with their wives. This taboo must be strictly followed, because the men say that women have many ways to kill men, and this is one of them. The wise fathers also put more emphasis on the young men to put their hands into the

ground, because, from the ground, comes everything, which is essential for a stable and a productive life. When they are good gardeners, they will have enough food. As a father says, “plant a lot of sugar cane, and put a lot of sugar cane for your wives and your daughters, so that, when they come from their gardens with string bilums of sweet potatoes or *kaukau*, they will be satisfied”.

The other thing the boys learn about is their family tree lines, like who are their in-laws and uncles. These blood relatives are considered very close and they are to be called upon in trade, in times of need and in times of shortage of food.

Another way of teaching wisdom is done in a practical form. For instance, men call the boys together, and take them away to work for a man, who would need help. During this work period, boys are taught how to sharpen the posts of the house and the fences. They are shown trees that are suitable for the posts, and how to use their tools like axes. In stone-age times, stone axes were valuable, and it took a long time to make one. They are taught how to dig drains, build houses, sharpen bows and arrows, and even make flutes.

Mothers to Their Daughters

In Western Highlands Province, girls are brought up in a different environment from that of boys. In the Pidgin language, we say *haus meri*, for the place where mothers give their daughters wisdom teaching.

Raising wise children is like building the reputation and the identity of the family. Once a girl has grown up and is married, she takes along with her what she was taught, and the people, to whom she is married, certainly talk about her for her good deeds. Hermann Strauss states, “She has with her the

words of her mother, or she had not listened to her mother, and forsaken her words.”³ A wise mother, Yangui Romrui said,

Women of Melpa, we are to win the heart of our husbands, before they can marry other wives besides us. To be in the centre of the husband’s heart, we shall become as his mother, and be loyal to him; and all we do is for the good of our husband and the family. By doing these, even though he marries other wives besides us, we still remain in the centre of our husband’s heart, with the help of the wisdom, which was taught by our mothers.

Another informal educational and training, which daughters receive, is to visit and manage the gardens.

The Man-Ik Instructions

The word *Man-Ik* in the Melpa language is translated as “instructions”, given by someone, who is regarded as a wise person, especially an elder, who is a leader. *Man-Ik* is a preparation for the good of the child, in the years ahead.

The basic idea of *Man-Ik* is love. Love is the wisdom, in which *Man-Ik* is valued, for a productive life. Because, when *Man-Ik* is given, it is given to someone whom you love so much, and that you do not want to become a person, who is regarded as poor and unstable. Therefore, the father gives his son these words of wisdom to prepare him, before entering the battlefield. According to Strauss, *Man-Ik* means powerful “instructions a wise father gives to his son, or a wise mother gives to her daughter”.⁴

To confirm the idea of *Man-Ik*, as a wisdom-tool to avoid enemies, Kingal Pana, a chief of Kawelka, said,

³ Hermann Strauss, *The Mi Culture of the Mt Hagen People*, Pittsburgh PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980, p. 86.

⁴ Ibid., p. 79.

We fathers are like tins of oil, which are dried up, but you young ones are tins freshly being filled, and so you are the most wanted to be killed; therefore, avoid strangers, who give you food and drink.

On the battlefield, the enemies approach the young ones, and they are the groups most wanted to be killed, so *Man-Ik* is given to them, so that it will become a way of escape from enemies. Strauss states,

Contents of *Man-Ik* include taboo rules, instructions of sacrifice, and advice on how to avoid people, places and things, which are evil. Yet it is also ethical in import, for it warns people to behave well, to be diligent, reliable, and constant, to avoid quarrels and arguments, to be peaceful and hard working; it reminds people that, at all costs, they should not do anything that provokes contempt.⁵

Konts Gints, a village court magistrate and chief leader, said,

For the word that comes out from your mouth is like a spear, so please observe where the end would be, and where you are aiming. The words you speak are like fences that are built to guide your clan, and your words bring wealth into your clan as well. Your words are essential for negotiation with other clans for trade and terms of exchange.

People are encouraged to follow spoken words during their childhood, and into their adult lives, as a means of learning and memorising things. Yap Rolgoppa, a chief leader, said:

When you are young, your ears are soft and ready to hear and record things, therefore, we are telling you, but, when you are grown up, your ears would be hard, and would not be capable to record things. And now, your backbone and your ribs are soft, and you can bend and work, before they become hard to bend, when you grow up.

⁵ Ibid., p. 80.

On other occasions, parents and leaders give teaching and instruction from their hearts to the young people. This is done, in love, for the children by their parents. As Kots Gints said,

Child, I am like a frog, who is about to climb down the cliff, but you are starting. I am near the sunset, but you are with the sunrise, and so, keep my saying, so that you will find yourself implanted with these words. Give your daughter to those who raped your wife, give a pig to him who had stolen the other, give a banana sucker to him who stole your bananas.

This kind of a saying from leaders and parents means that they have now come to the end, and are concerned with the welfare of the young people, the community, and the clan, and the next generation.

THE *KELAMEMP-IK*

Kelamemp-Ik is one of the ways in which wisdom is delivered to the young people with blessings, and, thus, something extraordinary abides within the words spoken. *Kelamemp-Ik* is a word of wisdom, which is given by a father or a mother at a certain time, when they are pleased with something their son/daughter did for them. When the child satisfies the feelings of their parents, by a job well done, or something that is given which pleases them, then they give these words of wisdom. Out of their hearts come the words of *Kelamemp-Ik*. Strauss refers to it as, "The final farewell speech of the old parents, they have the effects of blessings."⁶

In the event of giving these words, the father or the mother also calls to remembrance memorable moments of their lifetime, puts them into words, and transfers them to the young. They might say: "Child, may you become the chief of the clan, and be their leader; may you have plenty of pigs, and a tunnel, in which shell money shall flow through." Or a wise father might say to his son: "Son, may you become rich in wealth, and may you marry many wives, and multiply in numbers, and be in possession of my land, and remain

⁶ Ibid., p. 80.

as I was.” A mother says, “Child, may you become the mother, who will be in the heart of your husband, and look after your husband’s property.” Or she may say, “Child, your gardens shall be plentiful, and your garden will produce quality food, and your bilum will be greasy (meaning that, at all times, there will be pig meat in it).”

These words of wisdom are given as visible signs of love, joy, acknowledgment, concern, and responsibility.

THE *KENTIK-IK*

Kentik-Ik is a way in which wisdom is transferred from the parents, especially a wise father to his son, or a wise mother to her daughter, whom they love. This form of wisdom is given to their children, especially from the deathbed of a father or a mother. *Kentik-Ik* could be translated as the testament of a dying person, from their deathbed.

When *Kentik-Ik* is spoken, it has to remain with the children. The last wisdom words and the items the parents give away become useful for young men and women, because wisdom, power, and might reigns within them. As Strauss says, “*Kentik-Ik* is the testament of a dying person dividing his effects among his children. Power and might reign in the words. This is revealed in the life of the recipient.”⁷

When *Kentik-Ik* is spoken, with actions, something more significant takes place, because the words accompany the items, in which strength and power abide. A wise father distributes his possessions among his sons, with certain words abiding in them. Suppose, he had only one son, he might say,

Son, I am about to go there. I leave with you the ropes of the pigs, with the mother pig. I also leave with you the axes that are to cut down trees for chopping posts for fencing and building houses, and the bush knife for gardening, and the spade for digging drainage.

⁷ Ibid., p. 81.

If he were a chief leader, and a good spokesman, he would say: “Son, I give my bundle of words to you”, and he gives his walking stick, and says, “you grow old until the walking stick would kill you”. The same pattern applies to mothers, speaking to their daughters. When an old mother is sleeping on a deathbed, and instructing her daughter with her last testament, this wisdom becomes a gift from the mother to her daughter. As she draws closer to her mother, the mother would say,

Child, as I am going, I am leaving with you what I have, take this bilum, and may it always be greasy, and here is the digging stick, may *kaukau* (sweet potato) be fastened on to it always, and your bilum shall be full of all kinds of garden crops.

From the writer’s own experience of *Kentik-Ik*, when he was a little boy, sitting beside his father, he still remembers his grandfather, who had given his farewell speech (*Kentik-Ik*) to his father. From that day, up until now, his personal view is that these words, often spoken by people from deathbed, as wisdom, become reality.

Pana Nurum, a chief leader, provides an example of the wisdom given by his grandfather to his father,

My son, take with you the pigs’ ropes, which may be with you, and my bundle of words shall be with you, that you may look after the ceremonial ground, and may that ceremonial ground, at all times, be clean. You and your brothers may live in peace, and be friendly to one another, that you may multiply in numbers, and inhabit the land of the Kawelka clan.

When a person gives someone a word of wisdom with blessing, it abides within him/her forever.

WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament says a great deal about wisdom and knowledge. Where does wisdom come from? Wisdom is a living principle, and derives from a

source that is outside of man. It is to be held carefully, because it leads a person to success of life. It is likened to a hidden treasure (Prov 3:13-18).

To obtain wisdom, Israel had to be loyal, faithful, committed, and obedient to God, because faith became the tunnel, through which it came. It was Israel's duty, also, to make sure that the tunnel to the dam hadn't been disconnected, to maintain and strengthen wisdom. There are certain conditions and instructions, which were to be followed, as a way of wisdom-keeping, and fulfilment of it. One of them was to love and fear the Lord. Israel acknowledged God as their Lord and King, because He was true wisdom, the life-giving tree.

Wisdom literature in the Old Testament stresses that the act of believing in God was fundamental, because through the faith relationship, God worked with wise men. In Hebrew, wisdom means:

intellectual virtues (generally *הַכְּמָה* = *hok'māh*, though other words are used: e.g., *בִּינָה* = *bînāh* = understanding, *תְּבוּנָה* = *t'vūnāh* = insight, or *שֵׂכֶל* = *sēkel* = prudence, which is intensely practical, not theoretical.). Basically, wisdom is the art of being successful, of forming a correct plan to gain the desired results. Its seat is the heart, the centre of moral and intellectual decision. Those who possess technical skill are called wise; kings and leaders were in special need of wisdom. On them, hung the responsibility for correct decisions in political and social affairs.⁸

GOD THE SOURCE OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

God is the source of wisdom and knowledge. And creation confirms who God is, and what His knowledge is like. As Carson says,

He required no magic to do this; His word was sufficient by itself. According to the Genesis account, there is one God, the sovereign

⁸ *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 3 vols, vol 3: parable-Zuzim, Douglas, J. D., ed., Leicester UK: IVP, 1980, p. 3:1650.

Creator, to whom all the universe owes its being, and whom it is expected to obey.⁹

About Gen 1, Martin Luther said,

God had reserved His exalted wisdom, and the correct understanding of the chapter, for Himself alone, although He had left us with the general knowledge that the world had a beginning, and that it was created by God out of nothing.¹⁰

The book of Proverbs affirms that, in the beginning was wisdom, and wisdom was with God. Since wisdom was God Himself, through Him, and by Him, the world originated (see also John 1:1-4).

For a man and woman to receive wisdom and knowledge, he/she had to put their faith and hope in the Lord. The only way was to fear the Lord first, from whom comes wisdom and knowledge (Job 28:20-23). In the words of Tozer,

God is self-existent, while all created things necessarily originated somewhere at sometime. Aside from God, nothing is self-created. By our effort to discover the original things, we confess our belief that everything was made by Someone who was made of none.¹¹

God Himself is the source of everything. Through Him came the world, and what is good and best for the well-being of men. God has given men wisdom and understanding, because God Himself is Wisdom, and is the author of all things.

⁹ *New Bible Commentary*, 21st-century edn, Carson, D. A., ed., Leicester UK: IVP, 1994, pp. 59-60.

¹⁰ Jaroslav Pelikan, and Helmut T. Lehmann, eds, *Luther's Works*, 54 vols, St Louis MO: Concordia Publishing, 1958, p. 1:3.

¹¹ A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, New York NY: Harper & Row, 1961, p. 32.

The Pentateuch emphasises wisdom as one of God's attributes, and, where God is, wisdom also reigns. Tozer states, "Without the creation, the wisdom of God would have remained forever locked in the boundless abyss of the divine nature. God brought His creatures into being that He might enjoy them, and they rejoice in Him".¹²

Mankind is searching for wisdom, but it shall never be found in the world (Job 28:20-23). Job 28:28 provides a condition that people must follow to know where wisdom dwells: "And he said to man, 'The fear of the Lord – that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.' "

WISDOM INITIATED BY GOD

God was in the beginning, and He will be in the end, and this is why He describes Himself with these words, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End" (Rev 22:13).

During the time of slavery, Israel was totally a new nation, because they were living as captives/foreigners in a foreign land. The Israelites were living among the Egyptians, and directly under the leadership of ungodly kings, who did not know Yahweh. So, God called Israel out of the slavery in Egypt, as His own beloved children, and He cared for them, and nursed them. Vern Poythress states, "At every point, its contrast between good and evil recapitulates the fundamental contrast between serving an idolatrous ruler in Egypt and serving God with freedom in a new, redeemed situation."¹³

During the 40 years in their desert wanderings, almost all the elders, leaders, and older people (men and women) perished in the wilderness, because of their unbelief. The good news is that, while the old were gone, a new generation grew with a new social lifestyle. This was a new time for them, physically and spiritually.

¹² Ibid., p. 67.

¹³ Vern Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*, Phillipsburg NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1991, p. 97.

Firstly, God spoke directly to them about His requirement for their obedience (Ex 20:1).¹⁴ He began to educate them with His commandments, in terms of didactic wisdom to Israel, as His covenant community. God gave them the law as a tool, and wisdom was given as knowledge on how to use the tool (Deut 4:6). God's emphasis was that He was the Lord God, who brought them out of slavery in Egypt; the people should listen to Him. The people were instructed in the Law, which was the wisdom teaching, directly initiated from the Lord's mouth. Hence, in the Ten Commandments, people were given revelation of the mind, heart, and the love of God for Israel.

The second way in which God showed the love He had for Israel, was that God, with His powerful and holy hands, wrote these laws, which should be followed. If we were to take a closer look at the law, and thoughtfully and even prayerfully examine it, we would see the loving heart of God for humanity. It was the love of God being transformed onto the stone tablets, upon which Israel had to see and live.¹⁵ Carson says, "It alone was inscribed on stone tablets by the fingers of God".¹⁶ This sign of God's fingerprints confirmed that there was nothing hidden from the sight of Israel. In addition, it meant that God never hid anything from His people. Thus, God as the Sovereign Lord, gave everything that was needed for the Israelites to follow in the years ahead.

Most importantly, the Lord had written His laws in the hearts of each one of the Israelites that, wherever they were; it was with them, for the law is life (Jer 31:33; 2 Cor 3:3). Then they had the duty to transfer this law to the

¹⁴ See also Ex 20:19-20; Deut 3:10, 12-13; 5:4-5, 22-27.

¹⁵ *New Bible Commentary*, p. 107.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

next generation.¹⁷ For, in these words, was the love of God, and it was given in wisdom from God to Israel for implementation to live in prosperity.¹⁸

The land of Canaan, which the Lord was to give them (a land of milk and honey), was a confirmation of the blessing in the law. Moses stressed the importance of obedience to the law, because God's sayings were God's wisdom. If they obeyed it, then they would live longer in the land, which they were about to receive as a gift from the Lord (Deut 5:22-33).

The law was not designed for a certain period of time, nor was it meant only for a certain group of people, but it was given for the whole well-being of the people of Israel. Accordingly, it was, firstly, the family's responsibility to teach their children regularly at home so that these instructions were followed at all times (Deut 6:6-8).

"Keep the law and live" was a prophetic call to God's chosen people, to remain faithful to their election. Israel had to abide in the law in all of her life situations, as an act of covenant between God and His people. Therefore, recitation of the law became an important means of education in the house. From these in-house lessons, the leaders later repeated the same in community gatherings, to enable, strengthen the people, and to make them grow in wisdom and knowledge. It was the basic role of each individual in the community to educate each other to keep the law, because the law was life.¹⁹

Moreover, the propagation of wisdom and knowledge was a parental responsibility, so Moses advised the parents to educate their children. God's message was always clear that they should "Keep the Lord's commandments

¹⁷ See S. G. Graff, *Promise and Deliverance*, vol 1, Nutley NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1977, p. 300.

¹⁸ See Herbert C. Allenman, *The Old Testament Commentary*, Philadelphia PA: Fortress Press, 1948, p. 75.

¹⁹ See Johannes Feiner, *The Common Catechism*, New York NY: The Seabury Press, 1973, p. 115.

and live, for long life reigns in the laws.”²⁰ Before Moses left the Israelites for a new world, he reinforced this wisdom to dwell within their life (Deut 11:8-9; 30:1-20; 32:46-47).

When thinking of this ideal, and referring to how Israel grew in stability, wealth, and prosperity we will look at an example from Solomon’s wisdom. Amazingly, Solomon has realised that fearing the Lord, and being loyal to Him, was a fundamental concept for all mankind (1 Kings 3:7-14). Solomon had also realised that the Lord was the source of all wisdom and knowledge, because he had learnt that, through wisdom, all other things came into existence. God made him understand what was most important and useful in ruling the nation of Israel, as a model nation among other nations. Furthermore, this wisdom of God, alone, made the other nations realise how wise the king was.

During the reign of Solomon, Israel was recognised as a nation of wealth and prosperity, because she was well organised and protected by the wisdom around her. Alleman says: “And Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt.”²¹

The most important thing, which this wisdom of God had done for the Israelite community, was that it had become a means for God’s deliverance of the nation from all forms of poverty and slavery (2 Chron 1:11-12). King Solomon’s wisdom attracted the Queen of Sheba, to give praise to him on his understanding and wisdom. She also praised the Lord, as the giver and source of all wisdom, because God was the source of wisdom.

Where the Lord reigns, there is always going to be wealth, peace, solidarity, prosperity, and happiness. However, true happiness of life is not a matter of wealth and prosperity, but the discovery of the hidden treasure in wisdom and knowledge of God, as a gift of God to this world.

²⁰ See Allenman, *The Old Testament Commentary*, p. 67.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament, the main theme, which stands out as the message to be conveyed, is that the Word of God is the wisdom and the knowledge of God. This Word became flesh, took human form, and dwelt among men. This was Jesus Christ, the true wisdom and knowledge of God.

The four gospels spell out the fact that Jesus Christ is the Wisdom of God. Jesus Christ is the Word, and this Word was the fulfilment of the prophecy given centuries before.²² The writers of the gospels had real personal experiences, and they had personally seen the events (John 20:30-31). They taught the divine teachings, with power and authority from Christ Himself.²³

The Acts of the Apostles explain the work of the Holy Spirit, who came to empower the apostles and other Christian believers to become witnesses of Jesus Christ. They proclaimed the great truth that Christ became man, was crucified, died, was buried, and rose from the grave on the third day. The gospel of Jesus Christ confirms the preexistent Word of God, who is the true wisdom of God.²⁴

Subsequently, the Revelation of John and the letters of Paul all proclaim that the wisdom of God is Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul plainly clarifies who Christ is (1 Cor 1:18, 23-25, 30). Initially, Christ came from God, and He is the true, revealed wisdom (1 Cor 2:7). Therefore, it was the hidden supernatural power, knowledge, and wisdom that is now revealed in Christ Himself.²⁵

²² See Karl-Josef Kuschel, *Born Before All Time?: The Dispute over Christ's Origin*, London UK: SCM Press, 1992, p. 242.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

²⁵ See *New Bible Commentary*, pp. 1165-1166.

JESUS CHRIST: THE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

During the course of our study, we have seen that wisdom has been with God since the beginning of the world. He created everything, visible and invisible, countable and uncountable. This is what wisdom says, "I was the craftsman at His side" (Prov 8:30a). The word "I" means someone, and it denotes a person, who is expressing Himself in this passage. If it is referring to somebody, the person must be a sovereign and superior being. He must be the creator and the founder of everything. Therefore, Gen 1:2 says, "The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters." Then we should ask, "Who is this Spirit?" The only answer is that it is the Spirit is God. The Word is the living, active, and the creating Word. For God's word creates all things, and gives power in His Word. This powerful and active Word is at work in Jesus Christ (Heb 4:12). Prov 3:19-20 states, "By wisdom, the Lord laid the earth's foundation, by understanding He set the heavens in place. By His knowledge the deeps were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew." Prov 8:22 states, "From the beginning, I was with the Lord." Christ is the living word of God, who is the wisdom of God, and He is the source of life for mankind (John 1:1-4, 14-15, 17-18). For the law was written on two stone tablets, but Christ has written the law of grace into the hearts of men and women, so that, through faith, we can now understand the meaning of the law, and the reality of life in Christ, who is the wisdom of God (Gal 2:16; Rom 3:10). Christ is the answer to the needs of humankind.

The old Israel, as a covenant community, heard God's voice through the law, as a way of life. In fact, the Torah was only a guide to Jesus, because He is the fulfilment of the law and the prophecy.²⁶ Jesus Christ is the contact point with God the Almighty for all moral beings. From now on, moral beings can come to God in and through Christ, without fear and doubt. In Jesus, there is something more than the law and instructions, for Christ is the giver, and the new Torah Himself.

²⁶ See Kuschel, *Born Before All Time?*, p. 264.

God's hidden nature in glory becomes a revealed nature through Christ. Jesus Christ had established communion with moral beings through His words. When people take hold of His words, or abide in His words, the words of wisdom remain in them, so that they then find Jesus Christ, who is the wisdom of God, as the meeting place of God and men.. A good example is the story of the Samaritan woman. Jesus said that the time will come when people will no longer worship, either in Jerusalem, or on their mountain, but will worship the Father, who is Spirit. Now, the time has come in Jesus Himself, as the redeemer of the world (John 4.21-26).²⁷

Pauline theology helps us to understand that Jesus is the Word of God, the way to the kingdom of God, the wisdom and knowledge of God, the love of God, and He is God's everything for man's necessity, now and for eternity. Therefore, when Jesus began His ministry, He often referred to Himself as men's salvation for everything. Whatever you are looking for, and what you could think of, are found in Him (Phil 3.8-10). That is why men must give up all they have, and find the reality of life in Him alone. Matthew, once a tax collector, realised that Christ was his everything, he gave up his human authority, job, title, and what he had, and followed Christ (Matt 13:44, 45-56).

Jesus Christ is this wisdom of God. All that was with God and all that will be are hidden in Him (Phil 4:12-13; 2 Cor 6:10).²⁸ He is God's wisdom and power. In light of this understanding, Jesus is the giver of life, the source, the superior wisdom, and is the manifested wisdom of God for this sinful world.

THE WISDOM TEACHING OF JESUS

The New Testament speaks very plainly about teachers being regarded on a higher plane in society. As followers, the students studied all the things that

²⁷ See Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ*, p. 93.

²⁸ See James Wood, *Wisdom Literature: An Introduction*, London UK: Gerald Duckworth, 1967, p. 13.

their teacher did, as they went around. These followers were called disciples.

There were many teachers in New Testament times.²⁹ Many young men became followers and disciples of these teachers. The teachings were basic to the life, upon which the students' lives were built, and the student could achieve respect, just as their teacher was respected.³⁰ The Apostle Paul was one of Gamaliel's students. As a result, Paul rightly claims that he was once a student of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). We understand that Gamaliel made a wise, ethical decision during a meeting of the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:33-39).

However, when we are talking about Jesus Christ as a Teacher, He was much greater than the Rabbis were. Jesus' ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing miracles affirmed the scripture that prefigured Him as the coming Messiah (Matt 5:21-31).³¹

Jesus Christ was the giver and the source of wisdom and knowledge. "You have heard . . . but now I say to you" (Matt 5:27-28). Before, the people of Israel heard the law and instructions interpreted by their spiritual fathers, but now, it is being heard from the very mouth of the Giver Himself, because Christ is the reality of the wisdom of God.

Thus, Jesus did not teach as one of the rabbis, but as one who had authority and power. Yet the people did not realise that He was the promised Messiah, who was to come (Matt 13:54; Mark 1:22).

In Matt 5-7, Jesus taught a sermon on a mountain in Galilee. Jesus delivered this long sermon to His disciples, and a great multitude. Perhaps, the scene may be likened to the people of Israel, who had gathered around the foot of Mt Sinai, when God gave Moses the law (Matt 5:43-45).

²⁹ Teachers were given the Hebrew name, *rabbi* and *rabboni*. *Rabbi* means "my teacher", *rabboni* means "my great one", *New Bible Dictionary*, p. 996.

³⁰ A classic example was "Rabban Gamaliel", in *New Bible Dictionary*, pp. 395-396.

³¹ *New Bible Dictionary*, p. 567.

When Jesus said, “Now I say to you”, these words should have been spoken by somebody with authority, and nobody else could be in a better position to say something like that, because He was revealing with what authority could He say such things. At the same time, Jesus was trying to reveal His authority through His preaching of the law. Since they were unsure, He had to make Himself known by saying, “but now I say to you”. The main idea was to help them realise that He Himself was the wisdom of God, and is the reality of the hidden treasure of heaven.

In the Matt 5-7, Jesus made it clear about the true life for which men and women had been longing for. Jesus referred to the spiritual requirement as the benefit factor for all human beings, because the word of God brings the true valued wisdom that humanity is searching for. The basics, Jesus taught, were to focus on everlasting life (Matt 6:33). Jesus knew that life does not necessarily mean food, drink, wealth, pride, title, and the honour you have. They come in the morning for a while, and then they are gone before the evening. As moral beings, we have our beginning in God, and our ending in Christ (Matt 6:21-22; 1 Pet 1:24). Jesus also taught that those who forsook His teaching would fall in doom. Jesus took this message, by applying it to the practical aspect of the people’s lives (Matt 7:24-26).

The only way to be wise and be effective in whatever has been taught is to love the teacher who taught you (John 14:23-24). To love a teacher is to follow his teachings. The words become the umbrella during the rainy season, the lamp in the dark, and the walking stick on the slippery path that will help one from falling.

In summary, we must take serious notice of what Jesus said about Himself, and God the Father. Jesus, who is the giver of all things, and the key to the heavenly treasure, affirms that He and His Father are one, and He has

everything with Him. What moral beings are longing for is Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God for salvation.³²

THE EFFECT OF WISDOM

In Melpa society, people normally live in a clan, and are united as a group, which means that they are joined to each other, in unity and cooperation. They share together what comes into their clan, and each person's problem is a communal thing. The community's aim is to raise productive and creative people to be leaders of tomorrow, who will build up the identity of the community; and, at the same time, the community strives to build unity, solidarity, and the reputation of the clan.

Therefore, it is the primary role of parents, leaders, and the older people within the clan, to bring up children, with wisdom in their instruction and teaching. For the teaching of the wise produce clansmen who will uphold the identity of the clan. However, if the recipient forsakes these words of wisdom, and rejects them, then the person will find himself or herself as a foreigner in his/her own homeland. The sad thing is that a person brings ruin and destruction upon himself/herself, and the community as a whole.

In 1 Tim 5:17, we read, "The worker deserves his wages", because a person must plant something inside to reap something from it. This applies to all forms of traditional wisdom teachings among the Kawelka people of Melpa society, in accordance with biblical terms. Traditionally, people can tell the difference by identifying a recipient, who had taken serious action with them on the words of wisdom, and the life they live.

In the Old Testament, God's words, words of wisdom, were a necessity for living. Israel had been richly blessed with livestock, fertile land, and growth as a nation. God's words were the basis for Israel's identity and solidarity as a nation (Deut 28:1-14).

³² See Ewald M. Plass, comp., *What Luther Says: An Anthology*, 3 vols, vol 3: prayers-zeal, St Louis MO: Concordia Publishing, 1959, p. 2:1455.

In the New Testament, the wisdom of God became a human form, who played the role of mediator, and thus Himself manifested the attributes of God. Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God, is the hidden treasure of God. This means that we have found the treasure hidden in a field, and the fine pearl, for which we have been longing in life (Matt 13:44-46). That means that the followers of this true wisdom have life (John 5:24; 8:31-32).

When a clan person rejects wisdom from wise clan people, he or she is viewed as a foreigner among their own clan. The same thing happened when Israel rejected the words of wisdom. They faced terrible disasters (Ps 137:1-9). This happened because Israel refused the source of life. They made their own choice, and followed their own path to destruction.

Jesus Christ is the word of wisdom (Acts 4:12). However, the people rejected Him, not realising whom He was, and for what He came. The people did not realise that He was the word of wisdom, in which life reigns in its fullness. They chose their own way, which led them to destruction (Luke 20:17-18). They loved darkness more than light (John 3:19). The same is true today.

SUMMARY

In Melpa society, the men of Kawelka historically have upheld wisdom, in various forms, as fundamental aspects for the well-being of their clan. But, in today's world, in the daily newspaper and television media, one sees violence and crimes almost daily. When such things happen, we tend to ask, "Why is there evil in society?" "Who is responsible for it?" "Who is to blame?" This leads to the answer that we are lacking in the wisdom and knowledge, which are fundamental aspects of life and faith. Therefore, we encounter emptiness, and consequently search for life. However, we do not realise that life is in our own hands.

The Bible speaks plainly about the consequences of rejecting the words of the wisdom of God and His appointed spokesmen. The way to enter the new heavenly Canaan is by believing in Him, receiving His words, and obeying His words. Through Jesus, the truth is revealed. By way of the cross, Jesus

died to the demands of the law for our sins, and opened the door of the word of wisdom, as living water, for all people. Jesus Christ is now God's revealed wisdom, for salvation for all people, not only for the people of Melpa society, but for all mankind. Our tribal wisdom has envisaged the need for wisdom to live a life of harmony and peace, thus showing us the greater need to accept the wisdom of God (John 3:18-19).

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CONSIDERING THE NOTION OF ADEQUACY: NOTES ON THE TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE INTO TOK PISIN¹

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Yumi olgeta i harim ol i autim tok bilong ol strongpela wok bilong God long ol tok ples bilong yumi (Acts of the Apostles 2:11; *Buk Baibel*, 1996) (“all of us hear them speaking in our own languages about the great acts of God”).

Tok Pisin (TP) is a fascinating language – and the Bible is a fascinating book. In what follows, I will highlight the interface between these two entities, namely Bible translation into TP. Recently, the full Bible has been translated into this pidgin/creole language, which is used as a lingua franca throughout Papua New Guinea. The TP Bible version, on the one hand, devoted to the theoretical principle of functional equivalence, and, on the other, intended for a new stratum of readers, especially, represents a remarkable resource for researchers.

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In this article, I will focus on several linguistic and stylistic aspects of this vast work of literature. In the first part, I will deal with an outline of the concept of functional equivalence in general. Subsequently, I will point out how successfully the translators have put this theory into effect in the TP Bible. In order to substantiate my arguments, I will use examples from different levels of discourse.

ON TRANSLATION AND EQUIVALENCE

FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE

Up to now, many definitions of translation have been offered, and many valuable suggestions for supposedly “adequate”, “good”, or “successful” translations have been put forward. In this respect, the concept of dynamic or functional equivalence represents one option, which has achieved considerable recognition from scholars to grass roots translators. In this article, I will adhere to the key notion of functional equivalence (FE) as a general framework of translation theory, which was elaborated mainly by Eugene A. Nida. This theory has been the cause of lively debate since its conception. My position is that I consider it, despite its old age, an outstanding theoretical and methodological basis for purposeful translation activity, particularly with regard to recipients in postcolonial countries, such as Papua New Guinea.

FE is a qualitative, meaning-based approach, which involves the following postulates: concerning the relation between source and receptor language text, the distinct language codes should be close equivalents in as many dimensions as possible, e.g., lexis, grammar, style, ideology, and response. In order to achieve a translation, according to the primacy of conveying the closest possible equivalent message, and the communicative intention of the original author, respectively, a quasi-mechanical literalness has to fade into the background. According to the theory, this can be achieved best by taking coherent paragraphs – not words or sentences – as basic translational units. When two distinct language (and thus socio-cultural) communities are connected via translation, so-called “natural” ways of expression of the receptor language are to be chosen. Thus, the *translatum* should constantly

be orientated towards naturalness, i.e., it should be characterised by non-artificial linguistic patterns. Natural patterns in a text ideally disguise the actual fact of being a translation, as well as possible difficulties during its production. At the same time, semantic content must rule over form – assuming that such things may be kept apart. Much more than merely mirroring information, translators should, thus, take advantage of the functional resources of the receptor language, in order to give life and relevance to contexts across cultures. Moreover, the text concerned is to be transferred with a maximum invariance of communicative value, i.e., functions and effect. On the one hand, the translator has to reconstruct the presumed reception of the text by the original audience. On the other hand, he/she has to anticipate the probable reception of the *translatum* by the receptor audience. This is considered necessary, in order to render both the original and the translated text congruent (at least) as regards understanding. Thus, the message should, by no means, remain opaque. Recapitulating, we can say that, in this approach, an equivalence of function (*sensus*) is more important than an equivalence of linguistic structure (*verbum*).

Clearly, certain question marks surround these rather ideal postulates of FE theory. Though not being 100 per cent realisable, with regard to their prototypical design, these postulates are not to be seen as strict laws, or as mere ivory-tower conceptions. On the contrary, these guidelines are fashioned to enhance a better reception and application of translated texts by the intended target audience. In this respect, the theory pays tribute to the cultural aspect of translation, in particular. Cultural contrasts, or gaps, which separate the social realities of original and new receptor groups by, e.g., time, place, experience, customs, *weltanschauung* (personal philosophy, or worldview), and individual variables, hinder the realisation of (near-) similar effects of a translation. In spite of this potential for conflict, the long tradition of Bible translation has led to remarkable results. Often, it was FE methodology that helped to bridge such existing gaps, when Bible versions for new audiences were produced.

BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

Translation has been one of the identity markers of the Bible for a long time. From late antiquity onwards, the vast majority of Christians have not used the original scriptural languages (and their descendants) for worship any more. In spite of this defining characteristic of the Bible,² its conversion from one language into another has always been a “non-usual” translation of a literary oeuvre (work of art), due to its ideological background.

Bible translations have been carried out in a more form- or more meaning-preserving way, depending on the zeitgeist (attitude, outlook). Popular examples of English versions in use today are the *King James Version*, which is widely literal, and archaic in wording, the *New English Bible*, and – last, but not least – the *Today’s English Version*, also known as the *Good News Bible*. In a modern Bible translation, which is devoted to principles of FE (such as the *Good News Bible*), several intricacies prevail, especially when it is intended for new readers. In this respect, an adequate communication of the situational and sociocultural contexts is as multi-faceted as the rendering of the linguistic dynamism of the 66 individual books of the Bible (plus Apocrypha). Thus, the modern reader has to be led to the normative original message, but we may ask whether, today, a “natural”, and, at the same time, appropriate reception of the biblical stories is still possible at all. Translators do not only have to bridge millennia of temporal distance – they also have to convey the remoteness of the biblical scenes, as well as the particularity of the peoples, and cultural practices depicted. Furthermore, the original reception is hardly reconstructible, for receptor groups without a (long) Christian tradition. With respect to them, the future reception of the *translatum* is hardly foreseeable. The overcoming of these problems is the yoke of Bible translators. FE may be their plough.

² With every translation, there is also new potential for misunderstanding. In this respect, cf. the different, much more conservative language policies concerning the Qur’an and the Torah, both of which are deliberately kept in their original “classical” wording and structure.

This conception of translation does, by no means, imply a deliberately biased account of history, or a transculturation of the message(s) contained in the biblical texts. The Bible may be timeless with regard to its message, but not with regard to the persons or events described. This historical particularity has to be captured, even if its “exoticism” may be bewildering for the recipients at first.³ For example, the acts of Jesus did not take place recently, in a nearby village. However, the translational task has to be performed in the languages of today. This is ideally to be done without imposing Western traditions on access to the Bible, its understanding, interpretation, or positioning, in local contexts.

When working with such a conceptual framework for Bible translation, the coping with linguistic matters is complex, and requires meticulousness. In addition to the aforementioned postulates, different text (or discourse) types, such as narrative, the Pauline epistles, poetry, legal codes, or a mixture of these, need to be brought out in the receptor language – if possible. The sensitive implementation of genre variety in a common-language translation is one of the many intrinsic difficulties. In a common-language translation, translators choose from the range of possible linguistic signs and structures, which are used and understood by a majority of the intended receptor group. Finally, the translators’ individual decisions determine the effect of the *translatum* on the particular sociocultural setting which is targeted. In this respect, additional keys to the content of the text (e.g., illustrations, glossaries, footnotes, and maps) round off the translation of the scriptures.

TRANSLATIONAL COMPLEXITY

It is well known that interlingual translation, as a social action of mediating communication, is never mere imitation or restatement, but interpretation, commentary, and filter. This view is not as trivial as it may seem, since Bible translations can fail because of a lack of acceptance by the target

³ By definition, the eternity of the biblical message renders it translatable without significant frictional loss. However, the rootedness in history and culture, as well as the fact that God’s words have always come in the language of man, are impediments to this idealistic account.

group. The translators' care to strike a balance between implicitness and explicitness directly leads to the domain of exegesis. To what extent does exegesis – being highly complex and ambiguous itself – have to be contained explicitly in the *translatum* in question so that the content becomes fully intelligible? In this respect, especially, i.e., when Bible translation also becomes an ideological and revelational task, it is open to subjectivity.

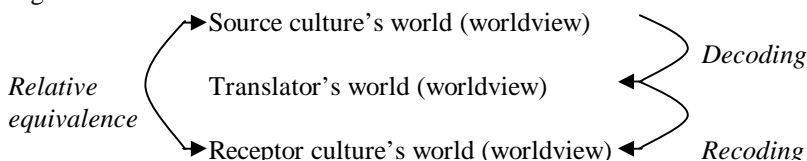
Translational complexity, thus, presupposes an “ideal translator being”. This being can be defined as an almost ethereal analyser and decision-maker – conscious, creative, critical, accurate, faithful, and consistent. At best, he/she is a trusted mediator, competent in historical backgrounds, versed in source and receptor cultures, and master of the respective languages (as regards lexis, grammar, style, and application). With regard to Bible translation, in particular, knowledge in the field of theology has to be added to this list.⁴ Thus, such a pluricultural being is an interdisciplinary, thorough worker with interacting, open-ended skills, both all-rounder and specialist. As an author, this translator is led by expertise and intuition. Consequently, he/she expands existing channels, and opens up new ones, in order to guarantee a direct access to his/her product, i.e., the *translatum*, by bypassing possible misunderstandings. It goes without saying that this ideal being exceeds human faculties, by far. Neither can a translator put his/her subjectivity aside,⁵ nor is perfect equivalence, on all involved levels (or universal translatability in general), achievable at all. The diversity of cultures and languages, plus the human factor, which constitutes them, prevent a result, which is characterised by more than just “relative equivalence” (Fig. 1). In my understanding, perfect equivalence is nothing but a subjective objective, as it were, i.e., a flexible and individual aim. In this respect, FE methodology serves as a most valuable toolkit, which has proved its usefulness in practice. In fact, the subjective residuum in

⁴ Of course, this involves the knowledge of the traditional, i.e., pre-Christian religion(s) and myths of both source and receptor groups of the *translatum*.

⁵ This subjectivity comprises the personal educational background of the translator, as well as his/her character, mentality, attitudes, experiences, preferences, individuality concerning literary style, etc., etc.

translations does not limit their qualitative potential. Quite the reverse – as long as the decisions are well founded, and a maximum semantic load is delivered to the receptor. Successful translation, in the vein of FE, means successful communication, which reflects a constant awareness of the cultural contrasts involved. In this respect, a linguistic approach, alone, cannot cope with the function of the *translatum*, as a link to the “real” world.

Fig. 1:



Bible translations do not function as intercultural communicative events only, but are traditionally indebted to a certain authoritative, ideological superstructure. The principles of FE are no hindrance to this, though FE translations have often been criticised in this respect. For instance, critics have pointed out that the emphasis on “easy”, comprehensible language is at the expense of the religious spirit and secrecy of the Bible. However, since Luther’s Bible translation into common German, the possible positive effects of a version, in which form does not rule over meaning, are indisputable. Luther’s version, which anticipated many characteristics of modern FE methodology, did, by no means, blur or diminish the sacredness of the biblical contents. On the contrary, it even represented an important milestone for the standardisation and the development of the German receptor language itself. Equally, a Bible translation for today’s new readers should be in their everyday language, i.e., in their common tongue. Compare, in this respect, the original Hebrew/Aramaic of the Old Testament (OT) as well as the Koiné Greek of the New Testament (NT). At the time of the composition of OT and NT, respectively, these languages were widely the everyday languages of both authors and recipients. What is more, these ideologically-loaded text collections (including idioms and poetry, with overlapping colloquial and literary levels) were written to be read, heard,

and, above all, understood not by an élite of whatever kind, but by a majority.

Thus, I infer that a translation is never absolute or finished (as the original text is). It can, at the most, be suitable and relevant for a certain receptor group, in a restricted temporal, spatial, and sociolinguistic setting. Furthermore, a text, be it biblical or other, does not allow a single compulsory translation only. Alternatives are always possible, and revisions are always necessary.

THE BIBLE IN TOK PISIN: GENERAL REMARKS

ECUMENICAL VERSION

At least one book of the Bible has been translated into more than 2,350 distinct languages so far. The full Bible translation in TP, the *Buk Baibel*, has been available since 1989, after about 30 years of preparation, including a revision of the NT (*Nupela Testamen bilong bikpela Jisas Krais*), which first appeared in 1969.⁶ As a result of an interdenominational effort, the *Buk Baibel* has been drafted as an ecumenical version, under the aegis of the Bible Society of Papua New Guinea.

RURAL LECT

TP is one of the official languages of Papua New Guinea, spoken by the majority of the population. This contact language, with a mainly English-based lexis originated about 120 years ago. It developed into several regional and sociolectal varieties, with an increasing number of first-language speakers today.⁷ As a language without significant functional

⁶ Since 1989, the *Buk Baibel* has appeared in several editions (including Apocrypha). It continues the (commercial) success of the *Nupela Testamen*. By 1996, 250,000 copies of the full Bible had been printed. This supply was possible due to an extensive infrastructure, which was established by the different denominations on the spot in Papua New Guinea.

⁷ Since both first- and second-/third-language speakers form the TP language community, TP can currently be classified as a *pidgin-cum-creole*. By definition, the term “pidgin” refers to a type of contact language that has prototypically come into existence in colonial contexts as a basic means of intercultural communication. Usually, and this applies to TP

deficiencies, it is being used in education, in Parliamentary affairs, in the media, and in everyday life, as the most-widespread lingua franca, besides the more than 700 local languages, and the less-used English. In sum, TP can be called the most important unifying bond of the heterogeneous peoples in this young nation today.

Nominally, Papua New Guinea is a Christian country.⁸ From the 1930s onwards, TP was considered suitable by missionaries to convey God's word, also, in written form. Much religious material in TP (with diverging orthographies and content) has been published since. The language, also having been widely used, for example, in mission schools, soon replaced several other mission *linguae francae*. Nowadays, TP represents the most important means of communication for the churches nationwide, especially in regions with a high diversity of local languages. In such a setting, the Bible translators had no easy task to fulfil, since the receptor group, aimed at in Papua New Guinea, does not form a coherent whole, as regards sociocultural and linguistic background. In addition to that, the translators neither are first-language speakers of the original biblical languages of Hebrew, Aramaic, or Koiné Greek, nor is – as the *Nupela Testamen* and *Buk Baibel* translations show – the receptor language TP their mother tongue. With these constraints in mind, plus the fact that the intention of the biblical authors obviously is – from our modern viewpoint – in places ambiguous and elusive, a multiple communication problem for the translators of a TP Bible in the Papua New Guinea setting prevailed.

When the translators started their work, an even more basic problem had to be faced: which TP variety was to be chosen? In the event, the translator

as well, pidgins gradually develop into creoles. One of the prominent characteristics of creole languages is their functioning as native languages.

⁸ Existing figures indicate up to 95 percent as the nationwide rate of Christianisation. However, the *de facto* Christian faith of the more than five million inhabitants of Papua New Guinea is difficult to assess, and must be separated from the sheer number of baptisms. Moreover, intradenominational fluctuation is high at present. Many Papua New Guineans choose certain denominations for a host of variable pragmatic reasons, relating to their social position.

teams of *Nupela Testamen* and *Buk Baibel*⁹ chose the rural lect of adult speakers of the Momase¹⁰ region as an artificially-created standard, as it were. In the absence of a consistent, governmental language policy, a concerted missionary effort resulted in a fixed orthography for TP, relying on the modern Roman alphabet.¹¹ This quasi-standardised orthography became established, via the *Nupela Testamen* and subsequent publications. With hindsight, the choice of a rural, more conservative (but not archaic, or old-fashioned) variety was quite a wise choice. In contrast to the unstable decreolising varieties, i.e., the heavily anglicised lects of the bigger cities of the country, the highest possible degree of nationwide intelligibility could be achieved, by means of a rural variety.¹² Thus, this lect, equipped with full functional possibilities, was considered potential to serve as the basis of a common-language translation of the Bible.

In settings such as Papua New Guinea, Christianity is not as rooted as in the Western world. Also, an indigenous, written, literary tradition in TP is still about to be established. These facts make a common-language translation of the Bible, which is based on FE, highly recommendable. In this respect, “common language” does not equal “trivial language”, e.g., the different types of text contained in the original must not end up in a stylistically monotonous, nor in a hotchpotch, translation.¹³ Above all, however, the

⁹ With respect to the *Buk Baibel*, the translator team consisted mainly of Papua New Guineans, who were assisted by expatriate missionaries and linguists.

¹⁰ “Momase” stands for the Morobe, Madang, and Sepik provinces, which are situated on the northern coast of Papua New Guinea.

¹¹ Without the letters c, q, x, z.

¹² This includes the urban population, for which the understanding of rural TP varieties is not problematic. Outside the cities, however, urban lects are hardly “decoded” easily by the population. Thus, by choosing a rural variety for the Bible, the translators raised the status of the lect, and, at the same time, thwarted the anglicisation trend, which accompanies the ongoing urbanisation process. Nevertheless, since the totality of (individual) idiolectal preferences of rural TP speakers could not be considered in the TP Bible translation, the existing versions are, by no means, fully representative.

¹³ In addition to that, Bible translators should avoid – with regard to the demand of the Bible and its authority – certain stylistic “devices”, such as slang words, vulgarisms, etc., etc.

Bible must remain receptor-focused. With respect to the Papua New Guinea context, this means the composition of a version, which, ideally, is *not* characterised by Eurocentrism and/or a (post)colonialist attitude.

RECEPTOR GROUP

The Bible in TP, as it is available today, is intended for “*ol manmeri bilong kantri bilong yumi*” (*Buk Baibel*, 1996, p. 1), i.e., “the people of our country”. The perspective is clear: this Bible is being given from *inside* Papua New Guinea (i.e., not from Europe, the US, or elsewhere) directly to the whole population. Thus, every individual, nationwide, Christian or not, becomes part of the translational discourse.¹⁴ This non-paternalistic act of communication, as well as the definition of the receptor group, are preliminaries to the onset of a FE translation.

In the following, I will throw some light on how the more-or-less abstract principles of FE have been translated into reality in the *Buk Baibel*. In the discussion of selected examples from different discourse levels, I will use qualitative assessment criteria. Here, I will discuss place-names and units of money, as well as several ways of expressing Christian concepts, including idioms and illustrations.

EXEMPLIFICATION

NAMES

On the word level, proper names contained in the *Buk Baibel* are borrowed from English translations, such as the *Good News Bible*. These names are spelt according to TP pronunciation rules:

- | | | | |
|-----|---------------|---|---------|
| (1) | <i>Iv</i> | < | Eve |
| (2) | <i>Matyu</i> | < | Matthew |
| (3) | <i>Pol</i> | < | Paul |
| (4) | <i>Saimon</i> | < | Simon |

¹⁴ In view of the heterogeneity of the addressees in Papua New Guinea, the publishers of the Bible must have been aware of this being an optimistic, if not an idealistic, aim.

Place names, however, are explained in the text itself, by adding the respective geographic characteristic:

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| (5) | <i>taun Saidon</i> | < | (the town of) Sidon (Acts 27:3) |
| (6) | <i>maunten Sainai</i> | < | (the mountain of) Sinai (Acts 7:30) |
| (7) | <i>ailan Saiprus</i> | < | (the island of) Cyprus (Acts 13:4) |
| (8) | <i>distrik Arebia</i> | < | (the district of) Arabia (Acts 2:11) |
| (9) | <i>provins Esia</i> | < | (the province of) Asia (Acts 16:6) |

These examples from the Acts of the Apostles show that the names themselves are disambiguated in the *Buk Baibel*, i.e., the context, in which they are used, becomes clearer *ad hoc*. For instance, “Saidon” is clearly indicated as a town in the translation, whereas “Esia” is not the continent, but, according to historical correctness, a province. This service, by the translators, as it were, is especially important for new readers. By this raising of the degree of explicitness, readers – and listeners as well – are enabled to separate the large number of (formerly unknown, and occasionally similar-sounding) personal names from geographical ones. Compare in this respect, e.g., “Saimon”, “Saidon”, and “Sainai”. Thus, this translational strategy, in combination with the maps included in the *Buk Baibel*, makes direct access to the text easier, and helps to prevent possible confusion – not only with regard to the Acts of the Apostles.

UNITS OF MONEY

A further challenge for FE is the adequate translation of units of length, weight, or money. In the source texts, these very often differ considerably from those in use today. Again, this is a cultural matter – units of measurement have been different from society to society at all times. An example from the gospel of Mark (6:37) shows that “home-grown” designations have been considered by the translators of the *Buk Baibel*:

- (10a) *Ating yu laik bai mipela i go baim bret*
 Maybe you like [FUT] I[-PL] [PART] go buy[-Vtr] bread

long 200 kina na givim long ol, a?
[PREP] 200 Kina and give[-Vtr] [PREP] they [TAG]

“You want us to go and buy bread for K200 in order to give it to them, isn’t it?”

We can compare the rendering of *tupela handet kina* (K200) in the *Good News Bible*, the modern English translation devoted to FE principles, and, at the same time, one of the main sources of the *Buk Baibel*. There, we find *200 silver coins*, which is a slight difference in meaning:

(10b) Do you want us to go and spend 200 silver coins on bread in order to feed them?

Assuming that a silver coin was the daily wage of a rural worker in the ancient Middle East, the use of the Kina, which is the currency of modern Papua New Guinea, must seem strange. In view of average wages, and current inflation rates, for instance, these numbers do not match reality. In such instances, the FE translation is stretched to its limits. Although the readers are being given a vivid impression, the historical integrity of the (ancient) original is distorted.

CHRISTIAN CONCEPTS

Several words have been included in the *Buk Baibel*, which form a separate register of religious-content words. I will classify such words, which relate to concepts and practices, firmly connected to Christian ideology, under the heading of *Church Tok Pisin*. These words must be rendered intelligible (or become semantically filled, as it were). However, explaining the exact meaning of these words in the main text would take too much space, and distract from the (ancient) original:

(11) *aposel* [N] < apostle

(12) *baptaisim* [Vtr] < to baptise

- (13) *disaiipel* [N] < disciple
 (14) *ensel* [N] < angel
 (15) *god/God* [N] < god/God

This means that words like *disaiipel*, *ensel*, but also *God* – a word theologians have been trying to explain for millennia – have to be made clear, individually, by the clergy, on the spot, in order to ensure an adequate understanding on the receptor side. As a whole, words like these enlarge the vocabulary of TP, especially in the nominal and verbal word classes. *Church Tok Pisin* words are mainly direct loans from the English language. They were used in mission and church services before the composition of a TP Bible. However, the words, contained in the ecumenical *Buk Baibel*, replace many possibly-confusing loan words from Latin or Greek, which had been inconsistently used by the different denominations.

Thus, a standardised *Church TP* register has been built up. However, in order not to overload the translation with words from that register, the translators have additionally made use of circumlocutions, which have been a very common word-formation strategy of rural TP varieties. These periphrastic expressions do, indeed, contribute to a more immediate understanding of the text, but, occasionally, result in cumbersome, lengthy clusters. For example, the concept of “Easter” is expressed by the following semantic unit:

- (16) *Bikpela de bilong tingim de God i larim*
 Big[-ADJ] day [PREP] think[-Vtr] day God [PART] grant[-Vtr]
ol Israel i stap gut
 [DET-PL] Israelite [PART] [DUR] good

“feast-day to remember the day God granted the Israelites a good existence”

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE AND IDIOMS

Single instances of the original biblical languages survive in the *Buk Baibel*. Though the readers/listeners are enabled to witness the flavour of, for instance, the mother tongue of Jesus by this, Aramaic words might be more distorting than helpful for new audiences. Instances like these require an explanation, at any rate. Consequently, a translation (within the translation) is given in the same verse, e.g., in Mark 15.34:

(17) *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabaktani?*

As *bilang dispela tok i olsem, God bilang mi,*
Basis [PREP] this[-ADJ] talk [PART] such, God [PREP] I,

God bilang mi, bilang wanem yu lusim mi?
God [PREP] I, [PREP] what you lose[-Vtr] I?

“The basis of these words is this: My God, my God, why did you abandon me?”

Much more than single words, the translation of idioms is a tricky task. Since idioms are, in general, culturally marked, these are hardly, if at all, reproducible with nearly the same effect for new receptors. One example of such a Hebrew idiom is Is 32:12:

(18) *Yupela i ken paitim bros bilang yupela na*
You[-PL] [PART] can fight[-Vtr] breast [PREP] you[-PL] and

krai sori
cry sorry

“You can beat your breast and cry in sorrow”

The Hebrew idiom “to beat one’s breast” has the original meaning of “to sorrow”. This needs to be made clear in a FE translation. In fact, this verse is one of the rare instances in which the translators could have done a little more for the recipients, as it were. The successful rendering of the original into TP negates the fact that the idiom is most probably – if it is understood

as such at all – interpreted according to traditional gesture habits in Papua New Guinea, i.e., as “to show courage/strength”.¹⁵ This is rather the opposite of the intention of the original.

POETRY

The translation of poetry in the *Buk Baibel* is worth a detailed study of its own. In this type of discourse, the translation of form is as important as is the meaning. Thus, translation becomes even more a matter of aesthetics. The translators of the *Buk Baibel* made a great effort to bring out the mnemonic (or song) character of, e.g., the Lord’s Prayer, or the Psalms, by separating them from the (surrounding) prose style. The different line arrangement, and the consideration of metre, create a certain poetic “flow”. Time will tell whether this effort may give fresh impetus to indigenous contributions to TP poetry, either religious or secular.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Since the composition of the earliest Bibles, illustrations have been an important contextualising element. However, the visualisation of the content is never merely a neutral addition to the text. Bible illustration is not a decorative gimmick – it is interpretation, like translation itself, commonly reflecting the zeitgeist (attitude or outlook – in artistic style and intention). In fact, illustrations are able to contribute effectively to the translational communication, as well as to the overall aesthetic impression. As in the composition of text paragraphs, illustrations are to be chosen according to the maxim of comprehension. They should reflect what is important to the receptors. Only then is illustrating a *translatum* in line with FE methodology.

The *Buk Baibel*, as well as its predecessor *Nupela Testamen*, are illustrated Bible versions. In this respect, the illustrations contained in the *Nupela Testamen* exemplify the difficulties, which can arise. The simple, iconic line drawings depict minimalistic, though emotional, body language, rather than

¹⁵ Compare the similar usage of the idiomatic expression “to beat one’s breast” in several Western cultures.

attempting a realistic depiction of ancient life.¹⁶ Though this style is intended to be universally intelligible, it leaves much room for interpretation. Consequently, an appropriate “deciphering” may be a problem for new readers, especially in settings without a long Christian tradition, such as in Papua New Guinea.¹⁷



Fig. 2: Baptism and Holy Spirit (*Nupela Testamen*, John 1:32)¹⁸

This example, from the *Nupela Testamen* (Fig. 2), shows the Holy Spirit descending from heaven during baptism. The form of representation *must* cause problems as regards unambiguous understanding. Neither the bird, which cannot even be recognised as a dove, nor the person below, help to decode the complex symbolism of the depicted situation. Such illustrations are used without any comment in the *Nupela Testamen*. Here, explanations would be absolutely necessary.

¹⁶ The highly-praised illustrations by the Swiss artist, A. Vallotton (cf. Nida, 1977, p. 32) are included in several editions of current Bible translations worldwide. Among these, are the *Good News Bible*, or the modern French version *Bonnes Nouvelles d'Aujourd'hui*.

¹⁷ Examples from Bible translations into African languages confirm this. If even accompanying illustrations are not understood by the receptors, how can they be sure that the text itself, i.e., God's message, is really intended for them?

¹⁸ Cf. *Nupela Testamen bilong bikpela Jisas Kraus* = *The New Testament in New Guinea Pidgin (Neo-Melanesian)*, Canberra ACT: The Bible Society in Australia, 1973, p. 305). The size of the illustrations, contained in this article, is suited to formatting, captions have been added by me. Figs. 2-4 are reprinted with kind permission of the American Bible Society, New York.

Perhaps, it is to avoid such difficulties that the choice of illustrations and visual aids (such as maps, etc.) in the *Buk Baibel* is different.



Fig. 3: (*Nupela Testamen*, Luke 5:19)



Fig. 4: (*Buk Baibel*, Mark 2:4)

Letting a paralysed man down through a roof¹⁹

When we compare both drawing styles (Fig. 3; Fig. 4), it becomes evident that the *Buk Baibel* illustrations far exceed those of the *Nupela Testamen*, in their degree of realism. Although neither was intended for receptors in Papua New Guinea, in the first place, the more naturalistic, but not overloaded, style of the drawings²⁰ increases the amount of immediate information, not only for new readers. With illustrations like these, FE is potentially higher – particularly when these include captions relating to a text passage, as in the *Buk Baibel*. Thus, the choice of illustrations in the *Buk Baibel* can be considered more felicitous, with respect to the intended recipients, and their understanding of the content, respectively.

In addition to many black-and-white illustrations (depicting events, persons, and objects), several colour photographs are included in the *Buk Baibel*.

¹⁹ Fig. 3: *Nupela Testamen*, p. 210. Fig. 4: *Buk Baibel* = *The Bible in Tok Pisin: Papua New Guinea*, std edn, Port Moresby PNG: Baibel Sosaiti Bilong Papua Niugini, 1996, NT, p. 67.

²⁰ Mainly by J. Lear. Since the 1960s, his drawings have been included in many editions of the Bible worldwide, e.g., in the *Authorised Version*, the *New English Bible*, and the *Bible in Afrikaans*.



Fig. 5: People, sheep, and donkey²¹

Photographs can be instrumental in providing impressions of the fauna, flora, and landscape of biblical settings, which are unknown to most new readers. With photographs, the temple of Jerusalem, or a camel, for example, become vivid and “real”. However, when anachronisms creep in, the historical integrity of the translation becomes extremely questionable. If this happens, its quality is diminished, in the end. An example of such a blurring of temporal distance would be the plastic containers, carried by a donkey (Fig. 5).

All in all, the choice of photographs in Bible translations remains debatable. Nevertheless, illustrations, in general, can be a suitable, additional key to understanding. At best, illustrations enhance the attractiveness of a translation. To better include the receptors, publishers would do well to take indigenous (Christian) art forms into consideration, not only in Papua New Guinea (Fig. 6). This further option would link the content of the scriptures directly to the spheres of life of the recipients. At the same time, such illustrations might promote a better text recall.

²¹ *Buk Baibel*, NT, p. 378[a)]; original in colour. Reprinted with kind permission of the United Bible Societies, Reading UK.



Fig. 6: Sepik crucifix²²

Of course, my selection of examples cannot do justice to the multidimensionality of the *Buk Baibel*. Further aids for readers of the TP Bible version, contributing to FE, which are worth discussing elsewhere, are: reading instructions, introductions, annotations, glossaries, chronologies, maps, and formatting.²³

CONCLUSION

MEETS PREREQUISITES

We may conclude that the *Buk Baibel* meets the following prerequisites for a FE translation:

- (a) Essential meaning is given priority over form or literal translation.
- (b) The lectal variety used does not lack communicative and stylistic functions.
- (c) There is a high degree of faithfulness to the (original) textual content.

²² Taken from T. Aerts, *Christianity in Melanesia*, Port Moresby PNG: University of Papua New Guinea Press, 1998, p. 248, with kind permission of the author.

²³ Cf. Lothmann (in preparation). There, syntactic decisions in the *Buk Baibel* will also be discussed.

- (d) It is geared towards a previously-defined target group.

The explicitness, which has been added by the translators to clarify the content, does not replace further necessary interpretation, on the receptor side. The cultural distance to the original is bridged, but still perceptible. In doing so, the translators did not try to produce a mere copy of a popular modern FE version, such as the *Good News Bible*, but tried to create a self-sufficient oeuvre (work or art) for Papua New Guinea. References to the receptor culture can be witnessed in the main text, as well as in the supplementary aids for new readers.²⁴ With regard to this, occasional shortcomings within the *Buk Baibel* are outweighed by the quality of the overall composition.

It is the recipients, who give final form to the quality of the Bible translation offered to them. Only if they accept the *translatum* as a whole, only if they can actively participate in the text, and perceive its authority, only then does the translation process come to an end. It is the use, not the mere existence, of a translation, which yields its success. Thus, a translation, without readers, cannot be called successful – rather, translation is a social performance.

In the *Buk Baibel*, the linguistic potential of a “common-language” TP has been adequately instrumentalised by the translators. What is more, a *Church Tok Pisin* register supplements the versatility of style. In this respect, the sacredness of the content is hardly distorted, if at all. As one of the consequences of the FE approach, the *Buk Baibel* is a linguistic, as well as a cultural, statement, both energetic and complex. In fact, it is a literary oeuvre as well. The *Buk Baibel* will definitely have an impact on the development of TP in general. This standard offers an option for education, as well as for future literary movements (as regards orthography, lectal

²⁴ As additional keys to comprehension, Bible comics, explanatory notes, and educational books have been published as well.

choice, functional possibilities, etc.).²⁵ Via the avoidance of literal translation in favour of FE, this Bible hides its status of being an imported (and imposed) book. Thus, the audience is, at least, theoretically enabled to open up the scriptures for themselves, and to make it function, as it were, within the existing community networks in Papua New Guinea. Nevertheless, the *Buk Baibel* is no substitute for the guidance of the clergy on the spot. Indeed, it should not be. If one aim of this ecumenical translational effort is the emergence and the establishment of a vital, truly indigenous, church, this church will be formed primarily on the basis of members sharing an active, constructive dialogue. In this way, the Bible becomes implanted in the spheres of life of Papua New Guinea, and, thus, will also be a matter of interest to the illiterate. Ultimately, the *Buk Baibel* may become culturally contextualised.

The fulfilment of the paradigm shift from a theology, imposed by the West, to home-grown, systematic, ecumenical theologies, will be one of the most difficult tasks in postcolonial countries for years to come. This means focusing on local problems, and related spiritual/religious insights, without suffocating traditional worldviews. Within the currently existing social networks in Papua New Guinea, a process of self-discovery is taking place. There, the individual is caught between two worlds, which seem incompatible: their own cultural heritage (including traditional beliefs, myths, customs, etc.), on the one hand, and Western-orientated modernity (including the monetisation and industrialisation of the economy, urbanisation, secularisation, striving for goods, etc.), on the other. As a matter of fact, the conflict of these entities is causing a rapid change of social structures today. In this respect, the church on the spot might be able

²⁵ From this point of view, the *Buk Baibel* represents a factor of considerable social and economic relevance; cf. its possible influence on the degree of nationwide literacy, for instance.

to function as a mediator, i.e., as a link between the networks nationwide.²⁶ In the event, the *Buk Baibel* might serve as a possible instrument.

HIGH POTENTIAL

In principle, the *Buk Baibel* is in line with the recommendations for basic procedures for Bible translation, published by the Forum of Bible Agencies.²⁷ In fact, the implications of the *Buk Baibel* are too far-reaching to form an estimate for the future.²⁸ The literary potential of TP manifests itself in the decisiveness and self-confidence of the *Buk Baibel*, which is, at the same time, the largest TP book to date. As a whole, its high potential for culture-specific prestige is able to effect a certain sense of common identity among the recipients.²⁹ Moreover, it is not only a fruitful source for readers/listeners, but also a horn of plenty for religious instructors and researchers as well.

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²⁶ In fact, reality still cannot keep up with this noble ideal of an ecumenical church, which connects the various opinions and pluralistic interests. In view of omnipresent, socioeconomic, dislocatory problems, misdemeanours of governmental politics, and religious splinter groups (e.g., cargo movements, syncretistic cults, etc.), the future of the country belongs to pessimism in this respect (F. Singin, Secretary-General of the Evangelical Lutheran church of Papua New Guinea, personal conversation).

²⁷ Cf. Forum of Bible Agencies, "Basic principles and procedures for Bible translation", in *Notes on Translation* 13-2 (1999), pp. 1-3.

²⁸ Cf. the possible influence of the *Buk Baibel* on existing and future translations of biblical books into the local languages of Papua New Guinea, for example. What is more, several local languages are in danger of being replaced by TP – some have already died out.

²⁹ This reminds us of Luther's translation. The elevation of a fragmented language, as regards lectal variety to a common standard – be it 16th-century German or modern TP – might be comparable to some extent.

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GOSPEL AND NARRATIVE

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INTRODUCTION

One of the interesting features of the Bible is that it makes use of stories or narratives about events and people to convey its message¹. In the New Testament, the narrative form is used to record the life of Jesus, and the history of the early church, and this provides the basis for the church's theology. One of the more-recent developments in biblical scholarship is concerned with understanding the nature and effectiveness of these narrative accounts.² Questions are being asked as to the characteristics of the narrative form itself, to what extent it represents historical facts, and its effectiveness in transmitting the message to the reader, when compared with prescriptive statements that set out orthodox belief in very precise and clear language.

The purpose of this article is to make a preliminary investigation into the main features of the narrative form in the New Testament, and then to compare their effectiveness in transmitting religious concepts with that of prescriptive statements. In order to restrict the scope of the article, it will focus on some

¹ Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, "Torah as Narrative and Narrative as Torah", in *Old Testament Interpretation: Past, Present, and Future*, James Luther Mays, et al, eds, Edinburgh UK: T. & T. Clark, 1995, has a good discussion of the use of narratives in the Hebrew scriptures.

² A good summary, with many references related to the New Testament, may be found in George Stroup, "Theology of Narrative or Narrative Theology?", in *Theology Today* 47-4 (1991).

aspects of the life of Jesus, and will only use a few examples to illustrate the principles involved.³

SOME FEATURES OF NARRATIVE

Fundamental to a narrative is the actual historical events it seeks to describe, which, in our example, is the life of Jesus. The four gospel writers had access to a whole range of stories about Jesus, which were part of the oral tradition, worship ritual of the early church, or in document form, such as Q, or Mark's gospel. Each author stood outside the events to be recorded, and formed an opinion of their significance, then selected material, and structured the narrative so as to convey the message intended. All four gospel writers chose to set their story in narrative form, and used various literary techniques to convey their message. The resulting narrative, while based on an historical event, is not an objective report, but is written with a very clear purpose and message for the reader.

The narrative covering the life of Jesus is made up of a number of shorter narratives. Each of these shorter narratives has a beginning and ending. In some instances, the boundaries are structural, as in the Sermon on the Mount,⁴ which begins with Jesus' going up the mountain, and ends with Him coming down. Here, Matthew has clearly collected all the wise sayings of Jesus, and placed them within these boundaries. In the Sermon on the Mount, the structure appears to invite the reader to compare this with the Law given on Mount Sinai. The detailed teaching of Jesus either expands on, or contradicts, the Laws of Moses, so it is clear that Matthew is saying that the teachings of Jesus are replacing the law, given at Mount Sinai, by a new law. In other instances, the boundaries are not so clearly defined, and it is up to the reader to define its scope.

In biblical narratives, the characters are generally portrayed through their outward appearances, and there are very few instances where their inner life

³ This article is inspired by the Major Report, *Gospel as Narrative and Narrative as Gospel*, by Japhet Vegogo, seminarian, Newton Theological College, 2005.

⁴ See Matt 5-8.

and thoughts are described. Sometimes, the New Testament narrators convey their message regarding Jesus by making a direct comment, “He had compassion on the crowd”, or by the remark of a spectator, when people were amazed, and asked, “What kind of man is this?”, or the Roman guard, who said, “Truly, this is the Son of God”. On other occasions, Jesus’ character is inferred from His discourses, actions, and conduct. Sometimes, this indirect method can convey a positive message, as when Jesus shows concern for the disadvantaged, the sick, and social outcasts, but the author can also achieve a level of ambiguity, as when Peter lacked faith trying to walk on the water⁵. If the writer wanted to make the story dramatic, or the teaching authoritative, he allowed Jesus to speak for Himself.⁶

Hence, the writer, who uses the narrative form, seeks to convey his message to the reader, by making a careful selection of the material, by structuring this material into meaningful groupings, and by using various literary techniques.

WHY NARRATIVE?

Prose narrative is one of the oldest methods of religious communication, and there are a number of reasons why this is so. Firstly, it provides a very easy means of remembering. In addition, because narratives are set in a time frame, given a definite location, and use characters that often assume some authority, the story is given a feeling of truth and reality. Stories are irresistibly persuasive.

The second reason is that understanding narrative requires a different kind of mental effort from that required in understanding prescriptive statements. Narrative provokes the reader to think about the meaning of the passage, opens up a much wider range of possibilities, and allows the reader to relate to his/her own experience and inner needs. In this sense, it represents an open system, which means there are a range of possible meanings within the framework of the narrative. A good example of this is given by the parable of

⁵ Matt 14:28-31.

⁶ Yairah Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives*, Minneapolis MN: Fortune Press, 2001, gives a very good account of these literary methods used in the Bible.

the Good Samaritan⁷. The prescriptive statement is, “Love your neighbour as you love yourself”. This now needs to be contrasted with the parable itself, which is just a simple narrative story. It conveys the message in a much more effective and memorable way than the bland prescriptive statement, and encourages readers to become divergent in their thinking, and allows them to personalise the message.

Finally, the narrative approach encourages the reader to study the final form of the documents, and not be concerned with historical-critical analysis, source and form criticism, redaction criticism, and others. It accepts the account as given in the Bible and seeks to understand the literary structure of the book and the message conveyed. The narrative approach does not exclude the use of other methods of analysis but they are of secondary importance.

NARRATIVE AND PRESCRIPTIVE STATEMENTS

An appreciation of the narrative form of communication can be made by comparing it with prescriptive statements, examples of which include the Athanasian and the Nicene Creeds, church catechisms, and confession statements of churches and mission organisations. In this case, the message to be conveyed depends on the meaning of words used, and the sentence construction. Hence, in prescriptive statements, the purpose of the statement is convergent, which means that it is directed to one precise meaning, and no other is acceptable. For example, one purpose of the Nicene Creed is to define the doctrine of the Trinity. This is essentially a closed system of belief, because any variation from it is regarded as heresy. On the other hand, narratives do not use precise language, and the meaning relies on the story, its structure, and literary methods used, and, consequently, it has a range of meanings, within certain boundaries. A prescriptive statement is basically a closed system, and there is no room for the development of new ideas. Narrative, however, may be thought of as an open system, in that it invites comment and interpretation.

⁷ Luke 10:25.

Important prescriptive statements cannot be adequately understood outside the narrative. For example, “Jesus is Lord” is a prescriptive statement, but it can only be understood in the context of Jesus’ birth, earthly life, death, and resurrection. More-extensive prescriptive statements, and especially those that form the doctrinal basis of the church, are based on the narrative stories of the Bible, but a human element is also superimposed, which seeks to reconcile the scattered biblical concepts, in order to forge them into a coherent and rational statement. They first arose as the result of differences of opinion within the church, and they are important for individual churches and groups, as they define who they are, and what is required to be an orthodox member.

THE MESSAGE

One of the important issues, raised about the value of narrative, concerns its effectiveness in conveying the gospel message. If the discussion is restricted to New Testament narratives, then the following observations are important.

If traditional Christian assumptions are accepted, then the fundamental basis of the gospel is the person, life, and work of Jesus. The four gospel accounts are based on that event, and what is significant about them is that they are recorded in narrative form. This is very powerful, as it conveys the character of Jesus, and places Him in an historical situation, involving place and time, and this helps to make Him more real, and His message credible. The things that happen in His life are important, especially the manner of His birth, acts of love during His life, and then His death and resurrection.

The meaning of His life is contained within the framework of the narrative, and this is determined by the writer’s selection of material, its arrangement, and the literary methods employed. Each writer seeks to convey his understanding. For example, John says that his account is written “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, by believing, you may have life in His name” (John 20:31), and Luke and Mark give similar reasons.⁸ Hence, the meaning of these events is conveyed in the way the narrative story is presented. The primitive gospel is contained in these

⁸ See Luke 1:4 and Mark 1:1.

narratives, but, because of the nature of narrative, the general meaning is clear, but there is also room for some flexibility of understanding.

A more complex theological structure comes from the writings of people like Paul. It is significant that he does not add much to the narrative story, and is mainly concerned with further interpretation. This process of interpretation continued in the early church, as it sought to define more clearly the gospel message, and culminated in the 4th century, with the prescriptive statements contained in the Nicene Creed.

CONCLUSION

In the New Testament, narrative accounts of the life of Jesus and the early church provide the basis of belief. It is shown that the narrative stories are written to convey a message, and each writer does this by carefully selecting his material, arranging it in order to enhance the message, and using various literary methods. Narratives are open systems, as they encourage the readers to think for themselves, and this leads to divergent understanding. In addition, they help the reader to relate to the message at a personal level, and touches things within that are of deep spiritual concern. This may be contrasted with prescriptive statements, which are closed systems, and which lead to a common belief, but leave little room for flexibility, and are unrelated to human experience and spiritual needs.

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BOOK REVIEW: *THE NEXT CHRISTENDOM – THE COMING OF GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY*

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INTRODUCTION

Philip Jenkins, professor of History and Religious Studies at Penn State University, has written a marvellous book.¹ A phenomenal amount of research has been compiled, and we readers are the beneficiaries. In this masterpiece, Jenkins attempts to describe the shape of Christianity in the next 50 years, with his primary assertion being that the centre of Christianity has shifted southward. To speak of Christianity as Western is rapidly losing validity. The huge influx of Latin American, African, and Asian believers has changed the religious landscape.

CRITIQUE

Jenkins has great depth and breadth of knowledge of the religious events of the past century, and does an excellent job projecting likely religious scenarios in the future. He's correct when he asserts that the Southern form of Christianity is more vigorous, and more conservative, than its counterpart in the north.

¹ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 2002, ISBN 0195146166.

His research on Great Britain is fascinating. He describes a mega-church in London, pastored by an African, who has publicly expressed his opinion that the Anglican church in England should die gracefully, and give all their resources and facilities to ministries, such as his. Jenkins states that less-developed countries have sent an impressive 1,500 missionaries to Great Britain, a pattern which will likely increase in the upcoming years, and will have a great impact on the island. He speaks freely of the need for Europe to be evangelised. According to Jenkins, the USA will not be impacted as much by Southern missionaries, due to the fact that a certain measure of spiritual vitality can still be found in American churches.

Jenkins is weak in his analysis and projections on China, and, to a limited extent, on India. He calculates that currently China has some 60 million believers (counting only those in the state church), and expects that his figure will remain unchanged for the next 45 years. What he seems to overlook is that the church in China is experiencing an astounding growth rate, between 14,000 to 28,000 believers a day (5-10 million per year) and shows no sign of slowing down. By 2025, China could easily have 130 million in the state church, and another 70 million house church believers.

Among the four major religions of the world, Jenkins believes that Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism will continue to experience growth. His assertion on India is that Hinduism will grow to about 1.2 billion adherents by the year 2050. Jenkins makes an insightful comment, when he states that Hinduism has some serious issues, with respect to long-term growth, the most prominent being the systemic discrimination against the Dalits, the untouchables of the Hindu caste system. Despite this problem, Jenkins inexplicably anticipates the continued growth of Hinduism. I would argue that, with the growth of Hinduism slowing, and, in light of the significant inroads of the Christian faith among the 150-250 million Dalits, Hinduism will remain at the current 800 million mark, or will decrease in numbers.

With respect to the fourth major religion, Jenkins anticipates a resurgence in Buddhism. He states that Buddhism is currently at a low ebb, claiming only five percent of the loyalty of the world's people, whereas, in 1900, the figure

stood at 20 percent. He envisions a Buddhist awakening in China, Vietnam, and Thailand, resulting in a significant uptick in the number of worldwide adherents of Buddhism. However, with little or no current evidence of Buddhist renewal, it seems probable that Buddhism will continue to lose ground.

Jenkins' greatest strength is his analysis on Muslim/Christian tensions of past and future. He projects that, in the next 45 years, there will be outbreaks of fighting, especially in nations, such as Indonesia, where Muslims are in the majority, and Christians constitute a significant minority. In that regard, things do not bode well for Pakistan's three million Christians, who comprise two percent of that country's population. Secondly, we can expect turbulence in those countries (e.g., Nigeria, Ivory Coast) that are roughly split, with respect to Muslim and Christian populations.

Thirdly, religious hostilities can be anticipated in those countries, such as the Philippines, which have a Christian majority, but Muslims claim a sizeable minority. I think Jenkins is on target when he states that, based on past hostilities, we can expect that Muslims will often be the aggressors. Generally speaking, Christians haven't been nearly as violent toward Muslims, as vice versa. He is on track – sad to say – when he points out that it doesn't take much to incite Muslim/Christian hostilities, even in those areas of the world where religious détente has existed for long periods of time.

I question Jenkins' statistics, with respect to what constitutes a Christian. He asserts 560 million Christians live in Europe, when the actual number of those regularly worshipping is somewhere between 50-100 million. Christianity is dying in many parts of Europe, though, as Jenkins states, there is hope, due to the number of Southern missionaries reaching out to the continent.

Jenkins is helpful, when he describes the character of Southern Christianity. Believers from the South have much greater expectation of God performing

miracles to meet their urgent needs. In addition, there is the anticipation of transformation. What drives Brazilian men to come to worship, more than anything else, is the desire for healing from alcoholism.

He is also on track when he surmises that Christians in the South have been, and will continue to be, more conservative in their understanding of scripture, and the daily practice of their faith. Disappointing is Jenkins' hopefulness that the day will come when Southern churches will open their doors to clergy, who are practising homosexuals.

Jenkins' sense of balance is remarkable, as he is neither optimistic nor pessimistic, concerning the future of Christianity. He expects that Christianity will continue to grow significantly, though with a decided Southern flavour. At the same time, he is fully aware that Christians can expect persecution in the coming decades, primarily at the hands of Muslims.

CONCLUSION

Overall, Jenkins makes a fine contribution to enrich our understanding of what God has done, and will continue to do, around the world. His sound research, and willingness to make projections, is of service to mission organisations, who are constantly involved in strategising how they can best utilise the resources they have been given.