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# MELANESIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

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**The Real Cost of Bride Price**

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**Developing Indigenous Melanesian Church Music**

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**Saul's Visit to the Medium at Endor:**

**An Animistic Perspective**

Kent Mundhenk

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**John's Testimony about Jesus in John 1:29-34**

Darren Cronshaw

**Christ my Brother: Shifting Primary Identity in**

**Melanesia from Clan to Christ**

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**An Exegesis of Hosea 6:1-3**

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**Book Reviews**

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Journal of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools

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# **MELANESIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY**

*Journal of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools*

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

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

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

The *Melanesian Journal of Theology* normally appears twice yearly, in April and October.

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# CONTENTS

<b>Editorial</b>	4
<b>The Real Cost of Bride Price</b> Henry Bre	8
<b>A Tune of Our Own: Developing Indigenous Melanesian Church Music</b> Melex Bosip	19
<b>Saul's Visit to the Medium at Endor: An Animistic Perspective</b> Kent Mundhenk	29
<b>Early Evangelism and Image-rich Witnessing: John's Testimony about Jesus in John 1:29-34</b> Darren Cronshaw	47
<b>Christ my Brother: Shifting Primary Identity in Melanesia from Clan to Christ</b> Dan Seeland	60
<b>A Call for Repentance in Papua New Guinea: An Exegesis of Hosea 6:1-3</b> Kirine Yandit	74
<b>Book Reviews:</b> <i>Spirit of the Rainforest: a Yanomamö Shaman's Story</i> Doug Hanson	88
<b><i>A Time for Mission: the Challenge for Global Christianity</i></b> John Prasad Yejerla	94

## EDITORIAL

This volume offers a variety of topics, related to Christian theology in Melanesia: the true cost of bride price, indigenous church music, calling upon spirits of the dead, image-rich evangelism, the shifting of primary identity from clan to Christ, and Papua New Guinea's need for repentance. Each topic, in its own way, adds to the on-going discussion of applying God's Word in a Melanesian context.

In the first article, Henry Bre investigates the true cost of bride price, and concludes that Melanesians spend far more than is warranted on the act of marriage. The typical cost of a marriage is K33,000, when the cash, animals, and wedding expenses are totalled. The addition of Western-style wedding ceremonies to traditional wedding practices is partially to blame. Greed also plays a factor. However, Henry believes there is hope, and gives an example of one Christian wedding in Papua New Guinea that cost only K7,000. He argues against the historical belief that bride price ensures domestic tranquillity, showing that marital problems are often a source for tribal fights. Perhaps his strongest message is that only God can ensure a lasting marriage.

In both the Old and New Testaments, music and song are important aspects of worshipping God. Songs, found in scripture, are culturally relevant to the singers, and often acknowledge deep theological truths about God. In the second article, Melex Bosip writes to encourage the Melanesian church to use indigenous music, believing that Melanesian worship has been lost, due to the strong influence the West has had on church music. He recommends that churches use traditional Melanesian instruments, such as the bamboo pipe, kundu drum, garamut, and susap; that Christians write more songs in Pidgin and local languages; and that Bible colleges conduct seminars on church music. Melex obviously has a love for music, and wants to see meaningful expressions of music in Melanesian churches today. May the churches take the encouragement to heart, and truly worship God in music!

In scholarly writing today, one can find many interpretations of Saul's visit to the medium at Endor in 1 Sam 28:3-25. However, most authors do not consider the passage from an animistic perspective, which is what Kent Mundhenk does in his article on "Saul's Visit to the Medium at Endor: An Animistic Perspective". Kent sees animism, necromancy, and syncretism playing fundamental roles in Saul's entreaty to contact the deceased Samuel. In animism, the deceased normally either possesses the medium, or speaks through a trance-like state, into which the medium enters. In this case though, Kent argues that the medium actually saw the spirit of Samuel. Kent peppers his article with stories from his work among the Ningerum tribe of Papua New Guinea, giving evidence that Saul's visit to the medium at Endor is not simply a historical event, but a reality today in Melanesia. The article concludes with a challenge to every believer not to be like syncretistic Saul, rather, to exhibit true faith, by being obedient to Christ alone.

In the next article, Darren Cronshaw takes an exegetical look at the imagery used in John 1:29-34, and concludes that image-rich witnessing can be "a model for spicing our conversation with witness, and for using images that are rich in meaning for those we talk with". Darren offers several examples from the passage: Jesus as the Lamb of God, Jesus as the pre-existent one, Jesus as the baptiser in the Holy Spirit, and Jesus as the Son of God. The article is rich in theology, but also practical in application. After reading the article, you will be challenged to be more creative in sharing truths about Christ in any cultural context, Melanesian or otherwise.

Identity is an important part of human existence. Whereas Westerners seek to find identity as individuals, Melanesians find identity in their clan. Dan Seeland explores the ramifications of clan-based identity for Melanesian Christians. By explaining the principle of reciprocity, and the significance of family relations in the life of Melanesians, he builds the case that Melanesian Christians have tremendous challenges in identifying with the person of Jesus Christ. Based on Luke 14:26 and John 21:15, Dan shows that Christians are to identify with Christ. How can Melanesian Christians understand this? The article offers three solutions for the church: emphasise the cost of discipleship,

promote the idea of Christian community, and concentrate efforts towards interdenominational unity. Every church leader in Papua New Guinea must strive to make these suggestions a reality.

Kirine Yandit presents Hos 6:1-3, in light of current social, political, and moral problems in Papua New Guinea. He argues that, just as Baal worship was popular in Hosea's time, idol worship is popular in Papua New Guinea today. Therefore, Kirine challenges Papua New Guinea church leaders to "intercede and plead with God for our people, and lead them to a sincere repentance and faith in Christ Jesus". The article is a call from a Papua New Guinean for Papua New Guineans to return to God. God is ready, are Papua New Guineans?

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.

Furthermore, as editor of the *Melanesian Journal of Theology*, I would like to promote a new publication by the Melanesian Institute.

*Point 29: Death, Witchcraft, and the Spirit World in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea*, by Neville Bartle, ISBN 9980650036, 364 pp., \$US20.

*Point 29: Death, Witchcraft, and the Spirit World in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea* explores the spiritual beliefs and practices of three cultures in Papua New Guinea. It goes further than a straight ethnography, however, because Bartle uses this information to reflect on contextualising theology, and the issues it raises. This is an exciting volume, dealing with contemporary Melanesian social and theological issues. For a review copy, please email: [mi\\_books@online.net.pg](mailto:mi_books@online.net.pg)

The Melanesian Institute has been publishing in the area of Melanesian culture for over 30 years. *Point* is a serial publication, produced annually by the Melanesian Institute. The series is devoted to current issues in Melanesia; each volume focuses on a specific topic. Further information is available online at: <http://www.mi.org.pg>. For ordering, or further information, email Publications at: [mi\\_books@online.net.pg](mailto:mi_books@online.net.pg), or post to Melanesian Institute, PO Box 571, Goroka, Eastern Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea.



# THE REAL COST OF BRIDE PRICE

**Henry Bre**

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## INTRODUCTION

What really is the cost of getting married in Papua New Guinea? As a native Melanesian, I have no regret in asking such a question. Melanesians may not realise the many consequences of our bride price system. The real expense of bride price, dowry, and the wedding, costs far more than most people realise. Perhaps we do understand, but, due to some insatiable greed, and the “big name” mentality, we have let the bride price get out of hand. We never bother to analyse, and reason out, things completely. For the world is changing, and we need to educate our people accordingly. This will enable us to move along with the rest of the world, in terms of civilisation.

Our society has been infected with a serious disease that is not being treated. This disease is having a negative effect on our country. It is contributing to the escalating crime rate. Our economy is going down. This disease is a factor in the increase in AIDS, and is spreading at an alarming rate in our young nation. Unless this root disease is diagnosed, and treated with a proper medication, we are headed for real trouble. That disease is called BRIDE PRICE! We should think of our youth. Insatiable greed has caused hindrances that have victimised our youth and our country. Should we work for a better PNG? Or do we remain as we are in the trap of tradition and culture, which stops us from progressing? We must assess our traditional ritual of bride price.

## **REAL COST OF BRIDE PRICE**

Let's look a little closer at the maths, when it comes to bride price. Papua New Guineans only consider the amount of cash marked for the bride price. That could be thousands of kina. We never consider the value of pigs, cows, or any other form of live animals that are also required. We do not usually count the wedding expenses either. The total value of one particular bride price can be triple, or even four or five times, as much as the actual cash bride price. We have not taken all these factors into account. We only think about cash bride price. Some bride prices are paid up front, while others are paid in instalments. Other bride prices are paid over a period of time. "A man from Daribi, Karimui (Simbu Province/Eastern Highlands District), must continue payment to the father and the brothers of his wife for the duration of the marriage; they are paid intermittently during casual visits."<sup>1</sup> Male members of an ethnic group within Melanesian society, according to their culture, are paying bride price continuously to his wife's relatives.

When talking about bride price, we are talking about valuable items: money, pigs, cows, cassowaries, chickens, coffee machines, cars, outboard motors, garden tools, and garden foods. Some of those are given regularly, on top of the bride price paid up front. Can someone calculate the actual total of bride price paid by a Daribi man? Let's start from the beginning, to the time of his death. It will cost him up to K50,000 in bride price for a single lady. That is from his remote place down in Karimui. Now, think of an educated, and employed, or a wealthy, Daribian. His bride price might rise up to K100,000. So, when discussing bride price, we should think critically, and evaluate things, for an understanding of what it really costs.

Bride price is a method of payment for a bride, as we all know. However, there are many other interpretations that go together with the meaning. "In many Papua New Guinea cultures, the bride price ceremony is a public act to show the couple is married. It also opens new ties between relatives of the

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<sup>1</sup> R. M. Glasse and M. J. Meggitt, *Pigs, Pearlshells, and Women*, Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969, p. 71.

couple.”<sup>2</sup> Another reason for bride price, which Ossie Fountain states, is, “The clan of the man to be married usually gave the most valuable gifts, because the bride was often thought of as being lost to her own clan.” Let’s look at one more example from a different culture. This comes from an African culture. “The basic thinking is that, this dowry will compensate the family for the loss of their daughter. Furthermore, dowry cements the agreement, and prevents an easy divorce in the marriage. Thus, dowry helps to stabilise marriage, and protect the wife from unreasonable oppression or rejection by the husband. The dowry was a kind of seal, showing that the marriage has been legally and properly contracted.”<sup>3</sup>

The following questions need to be asked. Isn’t Papua New Guinea a Christian country? Are we independent? Are we civilised, or are we still in the Stone Age? Papua New Guinea, it’s already midday, and the sun is high above our heads! We are not in the early stages of development in our society. We should think critically, and talk constructively, to move along with the rest of the world, in terms of civilisation. We need to do the maths, and know the real cost of bride price.

When sons and daughters reach the stage of adolescence, the immediate family prepares things in advance for marriage. It normally takes six to seven years to raise pigs, save money, and make gardens. Preparation for bride price and wedding expenses usually takes some number of years. If the bride price system was eliminated or reduced to a reasonable amount, most Papua New Guineans would be wealthy. Most of their earnings from their hard work are wasted on bride price. Please, can Papua New Guineans, who charge a high bride price for their daughter, refrain from referring to this as culture? Money just came into Papua New Guinea yesterday, and so it doesn’t have anything to do with the past. Can’t you just tell the truth, that

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<sup>2</sup> Jeanette Conway and Ennio Mantovani, *Marriage in Melanesia: a Sociological Perspective*, Point 15 (1990), p. 79.

<sup>3</sup> *A Bible Approach to Marriage and Family in Africa*, Machkos Kenya: Scott Theological College, 1994, p. 20.

you need the money to start a business, and also buy a PMV or a car?<sup>4</sup> Today, the bride price is considerably higher. It consists of more valuable items than we can think of. How can the groom find the money for the bride price? More than 80 percent of the population is not employed outside the family farm. Three-quarters of this unemployment figure are made up of youth. When such a situation occurs, we are indirectly pushing the youth into criminal activities. They go out onto the streets and do detestable things. They get involved in breaking and entering, stealing, robbery, rape, drinking JJ (homemade alcoholic fruit drink), or even using marijuana to run away from their problems.

Now, we are encountering more problems than in the old days, due to adaptation of customs from many different cultures. The wedding expenses need to be counted as a part of the bride price. When considering all the things involved in a wedding, one discovers that the wedding expense exceeds the actual bride price. Weddings are becoming more complicated, due to the fact that we are using customs from many cultures. “As Western influence spreads, it is common to see a wedding follow a Western pattern. The bride, attended by bridesmaids, will be dressed in white, with a veil, and a bouquet. After the exchange of vows, the bridal party will line up to have photos taken. A wedding reception will follow, complete with the cutting of the cake and toasts.”<sup>5</sup> The many cultural expressions about weddings, used in Papua New Guinea, are producing a more-expensive wedding. This is being put on top of the cost of bride price.

Our custom in Papua New Guinea is to expect interest on loans for everything, including bride price. This is a Melanesian way of exchanging things. The debts on bride price and wedding expenses will be reimbursed with interest. “Two men specifically said that higher bride wealth imposes a

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<sup>4</sup> Dan Jorgensen, “From Sister-Exchange to ‘Daughter-as-Trade-Store’: Money and Marriage in Telefolmin”, in *Catalyst* 18-3 (1988), p. 255.

<sup>5</sup> Marilyn Rowsome, “A Traditional Wedding: Dua – ‘The Bride’”, in *Melanesian Journal of Theology*, 17-2 (2001), p. 30.

heavier burden on the bride's parents, who must supply pork."<sup>6</sup> Customarily, those relatives, who contributed towards the bride price and the wedding, had their share of pork. But their contribution must always be reimbursed, when they need it. This is one of the cultural traditions that is of great concern. If we assist a brother in need with bride price, then we get our share of pork at the wedding feast. The problem is that we also expect our contribution to be reimbursed with interest. When looking at bride price, the demand is alarming, in comparison to the bride price in the old days. During those days, only pigs, kina shells, cassowaries, and stone axes were paid as bride price. However, today, the bride price has gone beyond to an unaffordable rate. It includes quite a number of expensive items, in addition to the wedding, as elaborated earlier.

The reality is that Papua New Guineans are at a crossroad. Some stick to the traditional culture, while others adapt to the Western culture, and some follow the Christian principle. When a family meets to confer about a bride price, one family member comes in with a Melanesian idea. Another suggests a Western-style of wedding. Christian family members speak strongly for a church wedding. All sorts of suggestions are thrown in, for the same issue. To avoid conflict, they merge their suggestions. The end result leads to a much bigger burden for the family. The contribution for bride price can be as much as K10,000 in cash. The total value for the animals contributed may reach K15,000. The wedding service expenses can total nearly K6,000. As these figures illustrate, the bride price today is more like robbing another person. "The words of one father, whose daughter's marriage had just netted him some thousands of kina: 'She is my trade store', a statement given substance by his establishing a trade store with the proceeds."<sup>7</sup> We are treating the image of God in our daughters as an object for sale. Daughters are now something that we can sell and buy, just to satisfy our greed.

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<sup>6</sup> Jorgensen, *Sister-Exchange*, p. 270.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272.

## **EFFECT OF BRIDE PRICE ON THE CHURCH**

What is the effect of bride price on our youth and our church? Bride price has cost our youth and the church greatly. There are many negative consequences surrounding the issue of bride price. A boy and a girl were in the church, ever since childhood. Their parents were also members of the same church. At the stage of adolescence, the youth loved each other deeply, but they could not get married. “There are two results of this: one is that the bride price is becoming unreasonably high. Another is that there is great pressure on the young man to find the money and goods for himself.”<sup>8</sup>

It is difficult for a youth to find such a huge bride price. If they were employed, they could manage to collect half. But the rate of unemployment in this country is rising; therefore, the problems of bride price are increasing. “It is a bad thing, if it means that, two people cannot get married, because they do not have enough money for the bride price. It is possible to be in love with each other, but not be able to marry, because the man cannot find money for the girl. This may mean that the girl will sell her body to men, in order to earn money, because the bride price is too high for anyone to marry them.”<sup>9</sup> In another instance, a delayed wedding means youth may have secret affairs with each other. Sometimes, unexpected things may happen. The girl may become pregnant following pre-marital relations. This results in losing youth and pastors in our churches. I have witnessed many youth and pastors, who have been suspended from churches, and from college. Some of those quit Christianity, and are now backslidden. “Could the church also play a role in the matching of partners? The Western fashion of individual choice, based on emotions, may not be the ideal. Christian parents, pastors, and church leaders could be acting positively, in taking the initiative to arrange Christian marriages, with the approval of the young people. The church certainly has a

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<sup>8</sup> Ossie Fountain, *Melanesian Belief and Problems about Marriage*, Wewak PNG: Christian Books Melanesia, 2000, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> Harold Taylor, *Things about Sex, Love, and Marriage*, Rabaul PNG: The United Church Tok Save na Buk Dipatmen, 1977, p. 33.

responsibility in providing suitable courting activities, before God, for its young people.”<sup>10</sup>

The wedding of Pastor David and Pastor Della Dorome is an example of a new attitude regarding bride price. The wedding was held at Emmanuel church, Kudjip, on January 31, 2004. The up-front payment was below K1,000, and two live pigs. The wedding was so wonderful and fantastic. I have never seen one like it before. The bride and the groom, with their attendants, were dressed up neatly. The wedding service was conducted professionally, with more than 1,000 people in attendance. After the wedding service, a delightful meal was served for over 1,000 people, who were in attendance. It was estimated that the cost of wedding was about K7,000.

The Dorome wedding is a fine example for Christians, pastors, and Christian parents, for the following reasons. (1) Pastor Della’s relatives do not consider bride price a priority in their life. Most of all, they wanted her to marry a Christian. (2) Pastor Della’s parents understood precisely the responsibilities of parenthood. (3) They did what they could as Christians to make the wedding a meaningful event. (4) The expense of the wedding exceeded the amount of bride price. This wedding can be an eye-opener for Christians and pastors. As pastors, we should take this as an example, and teach our Christians to do likewise. “Some parents may object to the expense involved in a lovely church wedding, but it is interesting to note that a higher percentage of happier married couples were married in a church than those who were not married in a church.”<sup>11</sup> We do things to glorify God. We should not let any earthly things distract us from our Christian journey. Let’s observe a quotation here to view some Western ways of marriage. “The Western world sees marriage as a human and social reality, which entails an agreement between two individuals, who are mature and free enough to enter

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<sup>10</sup> Rowsome, *Traditional Wedding*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>11</sup> Cleveland McDonald, *Creating a Successful Christian Marriage*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1975, p. 157.

such agreement. This agreement is expressed publicly in an act that can be clearly documented.”<sup>12</sup> This is because they do understand relationship.

### **A SUGGESTION FOR THE BRIDE PRICE PROBLEM**

The bride price issue is a chronic problem. It affects our youth greatly. And that is a cost to the churches. As the crime rate in the country escalates, you will find few or no youth attendance in the churches today. This paper is not trying to condemn the bride price. However, it is an issue that is constantly affecting our youth. And it needs to be solved somehow. Why can't we take some time to assess and analyse such an issue? We need to face it head-on, for the good of our youth, the country, and for the kingdom of God. “We are selling our beautiful gift from God, like selling beer and motor vehicles.”<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, a quote from Irene Chan says, “Bride price generates the idea that the woman is a product on the shelf, an individual, with no feeling or thought of her own.”<sup>14</sup> Some think that the bride price payment has withdrawn some of the woman's rights and privileges. In the eyes of the man's family, which pays the bride price, this is true. That is decidedly not true in the eyes of God. Both man and woman are equal in the eyes of God.

There are those who support the practice of bride price. Harold Taylor states, “Understand the reason behind culture. The first thing is to try and understand the reason behind buying and selling. The girl is not sold, like a shirt. The purpose of bride price was to act like a cement, bringing together the two families.”<sup>15</sup> Another similar suggestion is from Marilyn Rowsome. She says, “The bride price acknowledges the value of womanhood, and gives

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<sup>12</sup> Conway and Mantovani, *Marriage in Melanesia: A Sociological Perspective*, p. 32.

<sup>13</sup> Jorgensen, *Sister-Exchange*, p. 255.

<sup>14</sup> The quote is from a speech given by Irene Chan on “Bride Price” in 1996, when she received the Papua New Guinea Youth of the Year Award, given by the Lions Club in Lae. A copy of the speech can be found in the Melanesian Nazarene Bible College library, in the Melanesian section.

<sup>15</sup> Taylor, *Things about Sex*, p. 32.



expression of the girl's worth and quality. It acts as a stabiliser for the marriage. It provides security for each partner."<sup>16</sup>

From experience, and as a Melanesian, I have witnessed that bride price does not stabilise a marriage. I have not seen it cement together two persons, or families. It might have been so in days past, however, today, many influences have weakened the strength of bride price. This means the bride price does not have the power to stabilise, or cement together, two persons or families. Higher bride price, or any form of bride price, has not stopped any maritally-related problems. In fact, marital problems are often the basis for tribal fights. A tribal fight can start when:

- Women are chopped up, after having an affair with another man.
- A woman takes up with another man.
- A woman is sterile.
- A woman is not able to meet the basic needs of her husband.
- Bride price is not recouped, if a woman is divorced, or is unable to produce children.
- Husbands mistreat their wives.

“A woman may be left feeling that her bride price constitutes her value. While bride price may have affected the women's sense of self-worth, it has also affected the view that many men hold of women. This practice of presenting bride price to the girl's family is believed to give the husband, or the husband's clan, rights over the woman's reproductive capacity and physical labour. And the customary law is reflected in today's unacceptable rate of domestic violence and physical assault.”<sup>17</sup>

The bride price does not ensure a lasting and happy marriage. No person or culture can do so. However, **ONLY GOD CAN DO IT!!!** The Bible makes it

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<sup>16</sup> Rowsome, *Traditional Wedding*, p. 31.

<sup>17</sup> Taylor, *Things about Sex*, p. 32.

clear that Christ is the right foundation for marriage. Ian Malins states, “A Christian marriage is more than just joining two people or two lines together, through a custom or church wedding. A third person must always be part of a Christian marriage. And that is God.”<sup>18</sup> God is at the top of the relationship. He always is to be the joining link between husband and wife (Gen 2:8-24). That is where perpetual love exists in marriage.

The bride price system in our society has ruined most of the country’s wealth. The following example of typical expenses illustrates this point.

CASH	K10,000
LIVE ANIMALS	K15,000
WEDDING EXPENSES	<u>K8,000</u>
TOTAL	<u><u>K33,000</u></u>

The total cost for this bride price is K33,000 (not K10,000, as we thought in the beginning). This is just an illustration. Bride price is not always stable. It could be higher or lower, depending on the bride’s relatives, and the location. This is a waste of money, which belongs to hard-working people. Without paying bride price, this money could have been invested into some profitable businesses.

## CONCLUSION

Bride price was intended to stabilise, or cement, two persons and their families together. Greed has destroyed this lofty reason for the bride price. We are on a crossroad of decision, uncertain of which direction to follow. But, since we have come to understand the real cost of bride price, we have to make a proper decision. This paper is suggesting a Christian and Western cultural-style of marriage. It can be kept simpler, and not as costly, if we do not let pride enter into the planning. The marriage will be sealed with love not money, and only death should separate the married couple. In this type of

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<sup>18</sup> Ian Malins, *Christian Marriage and Family Life*, Wewak PNG: Christian Books Melanesia, 1996, p. 10.

marriage, God, the creator of marriage, must remain at the centre of the marriage. It is God, and not a huge bride price, which can bring a happy marriage, and Christian family life. Removing God from His proper place in a marriage is the most damaging cost of bride price. Bibliography

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# **A TUNE OF OUR OWN: DEVELOPING INDIGENOUS MELANESIAN CHURCH MUSIC**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Wasn't that a great service?", asked the elder in a growing church, after a service that had exuberant praises from the contemporary music. "No", replied another member of the church board. "I don't understand these Western songs, and the style of music is unfamiliar, which makes me feel out-of-place in the service, and I don't worship God as I should."

It is surprising to see changes taking place in the field of music, and, surely, these changes are affecting the work of the church. It is wise for church leaders, and other Christians, to examine and evaluate every phase of church music, to decide if the present trends are helpful or harmful, and to see if we are truly glorifying God in our music. Most Christians in Papua New Guinea today do not find true enjoyment in praising God, and expressing their love to God, because the music structures hinder them.

The purpose of this paper is to encourage the use of indigenous music in the church in Papua New Guinea. It will partially consist of the following: defining indigenous music, historical perspective in music, present trends of music, and some practical suggestions on the use of music in worship today.

## **DEFINING INDIGENOUS CHURCH MUSIC**

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* defines indigenous as “native, belonging naturally to”.<sup>1</sup> In this case, indigenous church music can be defined as that of the original inhabitants of an area.

As an art, music has relevance to different cultures and societies. People either accept or reject music, based on their own values. Of course, church music should find the middle ground, to grow in different cultures of Papua New Guinea. As a Christian and independent nation, with a mostly indigenous church, we should develop indigenous church music. Steve Walsh, a missionary to Papua New Guinea, stated that; “A truly indigenous church should have their own music, which means composing, structuring, and using authentic musical instruments from within the culture.”<sup>2</sup> He also quoted Allan Tippet, a missionary to Pacific Islands, saying, “People should be able to produce their own music within worship services that is relevant, and not imported from somewhere else.”<sup>3</sup> As society is changing, young people are listening to Western music, and ignoring local songs, but they must have confidence in their own music, as an identity, and as a unique gift of God.

## **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON CHURCH MUSIC**

Music is an art, created by God, and He gave man the ability to invent music. It originated from God, as basic as language and thought. Heaven is a place of music, where heavenly beings use music as a medium for praising, honouring, and worshipping God. The book of Job mentions, at 38:6-7, “On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone – while the morning stars sang together, and all angels shouted for joy?” The sixth chapter of the book of Isaiah records angels actively worshipping God. Not only in the Old Testament do we find records of heavenly music, but we also find exuberant music in the New Testament. God showed this to John in Rev 4:8, “Each of

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<sup>1</sup> *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, revd edn, s.v. “indigenous”.

<sup>2</sup> Steve Walsh, missionary from Brisbane, Australia, interview by author, February 5, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

the four living creatures . . . day and night, they never stop saying, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come’.” In the realm of heaven, music had been there, is there, and will be there.

Music is an avenue, whereby humanity can worship God with expressions of joy, sorrow, and victory. For instance, the lament of Lamech in Gen 4:23-24, Miriam’s song, after crossing the Red Sea, Ps 90 of Moses, and David, the great singer and writer of Psalms – from whom came many songs of praise.

Elizabeth Nelson expresses, “Man’s quest for God has seemed to find expression through the medium of songs, perhaps more than any other way.”<sup>4</sup> Examples are: Mary’s song after God’s favour, and Zechariah’s song, after seeing God’s incredible work for his family, as recorded in Luke 1. Jesus and the disciples sang a hymn after the Lord’s Supper, then they went out to the Mount of Olives (Mark 14:25-26). Paul and Silas were singing hymns at midnight, after being severely flogged and thrown into prison (Acts 16:25). Music was adapted from the Old Testament to the New Testament, as the word of God spread.

In a broad sense of experience: “It is probable that, in the matter of song, the Greek influence was being manifested in the early Christian church, for Greeks were the first to develop a theoretical system of music.”<sup>5</sup> As church music developed, there has evolved some distinct types of music. Elizabeth Nelson describes seven types:

1. Hymns address God. They are poetical and doctrinal.
2. Gospel songs give praise for a personal religious experience that has changed a person’s life.

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<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth R. Nelson, *Practical Church Music*, Kansas City MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1964, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

3. Cantatas are written for choir use, and are somewhat elaborate in structure.
4. Oratorio differs from the cantata, in that it is not just part of a religious musical production, but is a large-scale musical composition.
5. Anthem is a short musical composition for choral rendition, based upon a biblical text.
6. Carol is a folk song, having a seasonal theme, such as Christmas or Easter.
7. Spiritual are stories from the Bible that have a narrative quality.<sup>6</sup>

Each civilisation produces its own distinctive music, which is a reflection of its people and their society. Every culture in Papua New Guinea has some form of music, in which songs have been sung, and local instruments used: kundu drums, garamuts, and bamboo flutes, for example. The coastal and highlands people have their own music. Former missionaries treated some musical instruments as evil, by associating them with evil cultural and religious practices. Therefore, churches ignored these musical potentials, informing people of their foreign, or Western, musical ideas. Some missionaries valued cultural music, whereas others banned the use of native instruments in worship services.

Martin Luther said, "I am not at all of the opinion that the gospel should do away with the art. . . . I would love to see all the arts, and especially music, in the service of Him, who has given and created them."<sup>7</sup> It is very important to consecrate native instruments to God, and use them in worship services, as part of our identity. For instance, we can bring our native instruments to the church, and have them dedicated to God, before using them.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26-31.

<sup>7</sup> William J. Reynolds, and Milburn Price, *A Joyful Sound: Christian Hymnody*, 2nd edn, New York NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1978, p. 12.

No wonder there are changes today, in which music has taken a big step towards Western patterns and structures. Old people, and illiterate adults, find no pleasure in such worship services. A worship service is not a place for entertainment, nor is it a place for audience, but a place for thoughtful participation. All worshippers should understand why they are doing what they are doing.

### **DESCRIPTION OF PRESENT CHURCH MUSIC**

Modern Melanesian church music suffers from a lack of spiritual emphasis. Most Christians do not evaluate music as being either Christian or secular. They do not understand what sacred music is. Most contemporary, so-called, Christian music has all the attributes of worldly music. The beats and arrangements only create pleasure, rather than drawing people to worship God. “Jazz and rock music are finding their way into church, via contemporary music. Our church is being soiled and polluted by these worldly musical techniques and styles.”<sup>8</sup> Some church musicians and singing groups do not know enough about music to detect these dangers, therefore, they accept them without question. They use them, because it is new or popular, but ignore the spiritual emptiness of the music.

There are several recording studios in Papua New Guinea: CHM, Pacific Gold Studio, and Kumul Studio. Having these opportunities, a solo Christian artist or a group can go there to record their songs. Sometimes, the musicians from the studio do the musical arrangement for them, but others have recorded themselves. There are also non-believers, who have been influenced by Western and secular music, who record Christian albums, only for profit. In addition, some former secular band members, who are now Christians, do not change their styles of performing music to make it become real church music.

Listening to worldly cassettes, and watching videotapes of secular music, has brainwashed many youth in PNG. All these are reasons why traditional

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<sup>8</sup> Allan Jones, *Music*, Lebanon OH: The Family Institute, nd, p. 35.



church music is not being used, and it has reduced the spiritual or worshipful value of sacred music. It is good to ride the current of today's modern church music, but it is foolish to leave a congregation silent in the pews. Are we really praising God with the kind of music we perform in church worship today? What can we see in church music today that needs to be changed? What are our objectives, our goals, and our visions for church music tomorrow?

### **PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS ON INDIGENOUS CHURCH MUSIC**

This paper offers the following suggestions, to serve as a guide to halt these trends in church music. All church musicians must have some teaching in the different types of music. Could Bible colleges conduct seminars on campus, or at district meetings, so musicians can be properly educated about church music? In this session, they could be taught what God feels about music, and deserves in worship. Their relationship with God, in the right manner, can allow God's anointing to flow through them, when they make music in church services. They can also be informed of the rhythm styles, and the different time signatures (i.e., 3/4, 4/4, and 6/8) so that they know what beat they are playing in a given rhythm. Too many unnecessary sounds, and offbeat notes, are made in music, because someone is playing by ear, and without basic skills in music. Uninformed church musicians will produce unpleasant sounds, but an informed musician will produce uplifting sounds. "The church needs musicians, who know what church music should express, and who also understand the musical methodology for expressing it."<sup>9</sup>

Making music in a church worship service is a blessed ministry. All classes of people are coming to services with all kinds of spiritual problems and needs. Therefore, music should serve as an activity, through which broken-hearted and troubled souls can be uplifted, released, and find deliverance in God's presence.

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<sup>9</sup> Calvin M. Johansson, *Music and Ministry*, Peabody MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984, p. 42.

There is a greater need for balance in the types of music produced in worship services. Music must be produced to suit the needs and understandings of people within the church, so that they can feel free to worship God. For instance, in a rural church, songs marked for the service should be clear enough for that rural congregation. Likewise, in a more highly-educated urban church, music should be arranged to meet the standard of people worshipping there. The kind of melody, harmony, and rhythm used should fit the needs of the church. The quantity of music is not the issue. Rather, does the music presented suit the congregation? Is it appropriate to the culture and the community?

Most churches sing from hymns that were translated into Pidgin, and special credit should be given to these translators. Songs composed by thoughtful Christians long ago still touch lives today: “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”, by Joseph Scriven (1820-1886);<sup>10</sup> “Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus”, by George Duffield (1818-1888);<sup>11</sup> and “Rock of Ages”, by Augustus Montague Toplady (1740-1778).<sup>12</sup>

However, the exciting opportunity is that we can write songs in Pidgin, and in our own dialect. This will help our people to sing to their own tunes, enjoying the meaningful words from their own world. This can be another indigenous form of church music promotion. We can compose songs, and the best songs can be incorporated into our own song books.

“The goal in translating or composing hymns in a tone language is to present hymns to the native church, which will clearly convey the message desired, without any ambiguity.”<sup>13</sup> Today, many songs are being composed, but they are not recorded in hymnals, so that we would know who wrote them, and when they were written. As songs are sung, from place to place, the words

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<sup>10</sup> Carl F. Price, *One Hundred and One Hymn Stories*, New York NY: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1923, p. 42.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>13</sup> Marion M. Cowan, and Majorie E. Davis, *Hymn writing in Aboriginal Languages*, Los Angeles CA: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1959, p. 15.

are quickly changed from the original composition, which is a tragedy. Composing songs is a gift from God, and we can use it to build God's church. It is good to compose songs with meaningful words that will speak to people when they sing them. A song composed of repetitious phrases or words like sha-la-la-la, I love you, I love you, does not make sense. This type of repetitious song can be classed as a self-enjoyment song, not a truly Christian song.

Praise God for the talented Papua New Guineans, who are able to compose songs, and involve themselves completely in music ministry. There are many gospel groups and solo artists in PNG like: Max Manibi, Sikal Kelep, Incense, and Dapsy Yapoc. Some examples of indigenous songs are: "*Mande-Duo Mande-Duo*", meaning "my Lord, my Lord", by Max Manibi. It is sung in the Yangoru dialect, and is beneficial for Sepik people. "*Mana Kangel Nom Kunuma na Kunesi Wonpa*", by Revd Gabriel Kaulo, means, "I was born without money". It is an offering song, sung in the Wahgi dialect by Jiwaka people. "*Lord, Mi Kam Long Presens B'long Yu Nau*", by Peter Maima, means "Lord, now I come into your presence". It is sung throughout the country. We have great local music groups and solo artists in Papua New Guinea.

Internationally, there were great Christian songwriters, too, in the 1700s. Charles Wesley was one of them. "Charles Wesley usually celebrated each anniversary of his birthday by writing a hymn of praise to God."<sup>14</sup>

The book of Psalms encourages the use of various instruments, such as harp, ten-string lyre, trumpets, and ram's horn (Ps 33:2; 98:5-6). This list shows original instruments that were used in that period. They were an integral form of expression for singing praises to God. Now, we see that it is not evil to use native musical instruments in services, if they have been consecrated to God for His service. Coastal churches can use *kundu* drums, *garamut*, bamboo pipe, coconut shells, and seashells. The Highlands churches can use bamboo flutes, *kundu* drums, and *susap*. Any local instrument can be used to make a

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<sup>14</sup> Price, *One Hundred and One*, p. 68.

tune. It is interesting to read about Jews in the Old Testament worshipping God with the simplest native instruments. They composed new songs, and used simple instruments in praising God. If the Israelites can worship God in this manner, why can't the churches of Papua New Guinea use their own native instruments to worship God? Oh Yes! By all means!

## CONCLUSION

The advantage of indigenous church music is that it provides God's people with a fitting medium to worship God with expressions of joy and victory. Surely, we can find no self-identity in the imported tunes. Let us proudly join hands in singing and worshipping our gracious Lord, in the simplest way possible! "Sing lustily, and with a good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half-dead, or half-asleep; but lift your voice with strength. Be no more afraid of your voice now, no more ashamed of its being heard, than when you sang the songs of Satan."<sup>15</sup>

The music that we use in every local church should be evaluated. It should produce redeeming tunes that are appropriate for the community and the culture. Church music and songs must express deeper theological truths, which will draw people to truly worship God. It is important to make the necessary adjustments in our church music, so that it will attract people to worship and praise God, rather than drive them away.

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<sup>15</sup> Franz Hildebrandt, *Wesley Hymnbook*, Kansas City MO: Lillenas Publishing, 1982, p. ix.

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# **SAUL'S VISIT TO THE MEDIUM AT ENDOR: AN ANIMISTIC PERSPECTIVE**

**Kent Mundhenk**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

“When the plain sense of the word makes common sense, seek no other sense.” This is often considered to be the primary guideline for interpreting scripture. The question is, “common sense” to whom? Saul’s visit to the medium at Endor, 1 Sam 28:3-25, makes no sense whatsoever to many Westerners. They are often unfamiliar with necromancy, and, therefore, regard it as a hoax. Others will give mental assent to its existence, but will go no further. But what of those who know of it, have seen it, or have even been involved in it? To this group, 1 Sam 28:3-25 likely has a more substantial meaning. This paper is an attempt to examine this scene in the Bible from an animistic perspective, hopefully shedding new light on some oft-disputed events.

## **HISTORY AND CONTEXT**

Animism is most simply defined as a belief in the spirits. These spirits may be of human origin (ancestral spirits), or simply exist (having no human origin), but they are all regarded as having an effect on people’s lives<sup>1</sup>. In an unpredictable world, the animist attempts to maintain some control, through the influence of the spirits. Therefore, at its root, animism is an effort to get the spirits to do what people want them to do.

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Sanchez, Master’s level course, “Animistic Folk Religions”, Fort Worth TX: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fall 2005.

Evidence shows that animism has been around since earliest recorded history. The first cave paintings are thought to be a representation of a “spirit house” or a ritual exercise.<sup>2</sup> The first-known clay tablets were likely temple records of offerings made to gods. Even the biblical patriarchs were not exempt from animistic thought, as evidenced by Rachel’s theft of her father’s household gods. The inhabitants of Canaan worshipped false gods, and were to be driven out during the conquest, but the Philistines, among others, were never fully expelled. In fact, there is some speculation that Saul, because of his height, and his reluctance to attack the Philistines, was either a Philistine sympathiser, or of Philistine descent.<sup>3</sup> If this is, indeed, the case, and Saul has synchronised a monotheistic and animistic worldview, it may explain some of his actions.

Necromancy is one small part of animistic religion. In general, the animist believes that, when a person dies, his soul lives on, and, at least for a time, can affect others’ lives – for good or ill. The spirits are often worshipped, in order to obtain their favour, and are often consulted for the blessing of a new birth, or for advice on how to work the land the ancestor tilled while living. Ancestral spirits can also have crucial information regarding the timing and advisability of a venture. On the other hand, ancestral spirits may be viewed as the cause of a poor harvest, or illness. If this is the case, then they must be appeased – normally by some type of sacrifice – to remove the curse.

Shortly after arriving in Papua New Guinea as a missionary in 1994, the author was introduced to a young man from the Ningerum tribe, with whom the missionary was there to work. This young man was one of the few Christians in the tribe, and was a very kind, gentle, and soft-spoken person, who was only too happy to spend time teaching the missionary his language. Several years later, the author heard rumours that the young man had gone “*longlong*”, a term indicating psychotic behaviour. He had become violent, and very dangerous. They brought him to the missionary for medical help,

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<sup>2</sup> *The History of Writing*, available at: <http://www.historian.net/hxwrite.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Eric Mitchell, Master’s level course, “1, 2 Samuel”, Fort Worth TX: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, Fall 2005.

because the small chains they were using to bind his wrists were beginning to chafe. While bandaging his arms, and binding him in a way that would be less painful, the missionary was able to determine that the young man was not demon possessed, but truly ill. The missionary tried to persuade the family to take him to a mission hospital. This they eventually did, but, at about the same time, they also hired a shaman to find the reason for his illness. A few months before, the young man's father had died, and so, it was determined that his spirit was unhappy. To please the father's spirit, the family was required to kill a pig – a valuable possession – and pour its blood on the father's grave. Because of either the medicine or the sacrifice – depending on the worldview of the person asked – the young man got better.

### **LITERARY CONTEXT**

It should not be troubling that the scene of Saul's visit to the medium at Endor is out of place chronologically in the work of 1-2 Samuel. In fact, its placement is advantageous, because it clarifies the main idea of the work. Previous to this pericope, Saul is in pursuit of David. Saul's intent is to kill him, and, even though David is able to sneak to Saul's side while he sleeps, he will not kill Saul. Joab's brother, Abishai, goes with David, and urges him to take Saul's life, but David proleptically replies, "he shall go out to the battle and perish" (26:10). To escape Saul, David joined the Philistines, and was soon made the bodyguard of Achish of Gath (27:12). In 28:1-2, the Philistines gather their armies to attack Israel, and, as a bodyguard, David was expected to fight with the Philistines against his own people. The continuation of the story is in chapter 29, where David trusted in God, and was spared having to fight. Inserted between the presentation of David's problem, and its solution, however, is the story of Saul attempting to solve his own dilemma. Saul did not trust in God, but, instead, turned to a medium, a practice which had been strongly condemned by God (Deut 18:10-11). Thus, the contrast is drawn between David and Saul, between one who trusted God, and one who went against God's command, between the rightful king, and the rejected king.



## LITERARY STRUCTURE

This pericope is highly dependent on dialogue. After the author introduces the scene, in only three verses, the dialogue begins. At first, it is between Saul and his servants, as he requests a seance. After a short sequence, taking Saul from the slopes of Gilboa to the town of Endor, he is in dialogue with the medium, who carries Saul into his conversation with Samuel. There is, again, a short sequence, before the scene concludes with an exchange between Saul and the medium. The servants are reported to join this dialogue as well, and a two-verse sequence finishes the section. To emphasise the interplay between sequence and dialogue, the scene could be divided in the following manner:

1. Sequence: The scene is set (28:3-6)
2. Dialogue: Saul asks his servants for a medium (28:7)
3. Sequence: Saul goes to meet the medium (28:8a)
4. Dialogue: Saul assures the medium she will not be punished, and asks for Samuel (28:8b-11)
5. Sequence: The woman sees Samuel and screams (28:12)
6. Dialogue: Saul asks the woman what she saw (28:13-14a)
7. Sequence: Saul bows before Samuel (28:14b)
8. Dialogue: Samuel pronounces judgment on Saul (28:15-19)
9. Sequence: Saul is scared and hungry (28:20)
10. Dialogue: The medium and the servants convince Saul to eat (28:21-23a)
11. Sequence: Saul eats and leaves (28:23b-25)

An easier outline would be as follows:

1. Introduction: God will not answer Saul (28:3-6)
2. Crisis: Saul requests a seance (28:7-11)

3. Climax: Samuel appears (28:12-14)
4. Resolution: Samuel pronounces judgment on Saul (28:15-19)
5. Conclusion: Saul eats and returns (28:20-25)

### **INDUCTIVE STUDY**

#### **1 SAM 28:3-6: GOD WILL NOT ANSWER SAUL**

Samuel's death has already been recorded in 25:1, but it is repeated here. The traditional time of mourning has passed, and, perhaps, in memory of Samuel, Saul makes an edict, exiling all those who work with the spirits. This would have been very troubling to those with animistic tendencies. If Saul did, indeed, hold a syncretistic worldview, it would explain his double-mindedness in proclaiming an edict expelling the mediums, but not following through with their exile.

The army of the Philistines and the Israelites face-off across the Jezreel Valley, and it was apparent to Saul that he was in trouble; this put his worldview to the test. At first, he calls out to God for help, but God is silent, so it seems that, in Saul's mind, his next option is to turn to the spirits, specifically the ancestral spirit of Samuel. This is exactly the kind of syncretism found among the Ningerum people. They like very much the idea of a benevolent God, who loves them, and desires to do good towards them – especially in the face of some very malevolent spirits. But, when God doesn't do what they want Him to do, they are soon back to the spirits. One of the author's best Bible school students had a son, who had been ill for some time. The student prayed, then the church leaders prayed, and when that didn't work, they poured oil on the young boy's head, and prayed some more. He also brought the child to the author for medical treatment, which was administered with prayer. But the boy remained weak and sickly. A few weeks later, the boy had a large "+" sign smeared in mud on his chest. They had taken the boy to a "magic man". God did not answer them, so they turned to the spirits, just like Saul.

### **1 SAM 28:7-11: SAUL REQUESTS A SEANCE**

When Saul sees that God will not answer him, the first thing he does is request a medium be found. It is interesting to note that one is found so easily. This is not simply an aside in the text; it is there to draw attention to Saul's double-mindedness. In verse three in the introduction, the author has already stated that Saul had put all the mediums and spiritists out of Israel, and it is mentioned again by the woman in verse nine; yet, right in the middle of those two statements, Saul has no trouble finding one. This is certainly in accordance with how a person, who has aligned himself with animism, while following God, would act: to please God, he decrees that the mediums are no longer welcome. However, in order to keep from angering the spirits, there is little or no enforcement of this edict. Also, if God did not answer him, what would Saul do if there were no mediums?

Having found a medium at Endor, Saul prepared to travel. Endor was about 12-15 miles to the north of where Israel was camped on the slopes of Gilboa, but the Philistine encampment at Shunem lay between them. To make the nighttime journey unnoticed, Saul dressed in clothing that concealed his royalty and his identity (v 8). After he and his two servants arrive in Endor, Saul immediately requests a seance. It seems that something could have tipped the medium off to their possible identity. Perhaps she did not yet know he was the king, but she must have at least thought they were undercover agents of the king, because she accuses Saul of setting a trap for her that would result in her death. But Saul's reply seems to make his identity clear – only a king could pardon her of a royally-decreed capital offence.

## 1 SAM 28:11-14: SAMUEL APPEARS

Once the woman realises she is dealing with the king of Israel, there is quick acquiescence. There is no talk of payment, she simply asks Saul whom he wants to see. Saul names Samuel, and, of course, this is not likely a great surprise. The author does not mention any preparations she may have made, or rituals she performed, but, the next thing she sees, frightens her greatly.

At this point, there is much discussion among scholars. The problem is this: what caused the medium to scream? Many believe that her response is at recognising Saul for the first time that night. Some would point to the textual variation in some copies of the LXX that replace Samuel's name in v 12 with "Saul", making it read, "When the woman saw Saul . . .".<sup>4,5</sup> However, because this is found in such a small percentage of known manuscripts, this reading was likely a scribal error, or a deliberate deviation, because of the difficulty it presents. Regardless, the vast majority of textual evidence supports leaving it as "Samuel".

Others resolve this problem by speculating that something about Samuel's appearance caused her to recognise Saul. It may have been that the mental picture of Samuel in his prophetic mantle (v 13), standing side-by-side with Saul, sparked her memory, now that they were together again.<sup>6</sup> This seems unlikely, though, since they hadn't been together for perhaps 15-20 years – when Saul failed in his divine mission to destroy the Amalekites (1 Sam 15:35). Another theory, along the same lines, is that, when Samuel appeared, his posture was that of one approaching a king.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, it seems unlikely that Samuel would have given this type of respect to Saul, in light of their relationship.

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<sup>4</sup> Ralph W. Klein, *Samuel*, vol 10 in Word Biblical Commentary, Waco TX: Word Books, 1983, p. 269.

<sup>5</sup> George Arthur Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, vol 2, New York NY: Anglican Press, 1953, p. 1028.

<sup>6</sup> Klein, *Samuel*, p. 270.

<sup>7</sup> Milton Spenser Terry, "Saul's interview with the witch of Endor", in *Methodist Review* 51 (October, 1869), p. 536.

In the end, it is difficult to reconcile these views with the text. As previously mentioned, verse 9 seems to indicate that the woman at Endor was suspicious of her visitors, as she accuses them of entrapment. However, the royal pardon, given to her in verse 10, seems to make it clear with whom she is dealing.

Another possible reason for the medium's scream is that she was frightened that she was actually able to conjure up a spirit. Those who ascribe to this view, usually place little value in the reality of necromancy, and some regard it as pure hoax. Therefore, the sight of any spirit was enough to cause her to cry out. This raises yet another question: if she did bring up a spirit, was it really Samuel? Some would say that it was purely demonic activity. John I. Ades agrees with P. Kyle McCarter, in that it was a demonic spirit, and a scribe simply added "Samuel" later on.<sup>8</sup> Milton Spenser Terry asserts that Samuel never appeared at all; rather, the woman possibly went into a mock trance, and spoke as Samuel might have. He states that the first part of what was said was general knowledge: the kingdom was taken from Saul, and given to David. And, hearing how superior the Philistine forces were, she made an educated guess that he and his sons would die in a rout the next day.<sup>9</sup> Also, they argue, God vehemently condemns all types of activities involving the spirits in Deut 18:10-12, so it seems unlikely that He would use this venue to pronounce judgment on Saul.

Conversely, God often uses unsavoury people to fulfil His purposes. He used Balaam, a diviner, to bless Israel, and to curse the surrounding nations (Num 24:15ff), yet Balaam was grouped with false teachers that Peter calls "accursed children" (2 Peter 2:12-16). God used the cruel Assyrians to punish Israel, and the wicked Babylonians to punish Assyria, as well as Judah, much to the prophet Habakkuk's chagrin. So, this should not be a sticking point. Finally, the text clearly states that it was Samuel, a reading

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<sup>8</sup> John I. Ades, "Samuel, whar 'ast tha been sin' I saw thee?", in *Mappings of the Biblical Terrain*, Lewisburg PA: Bucknell University Press, 1990, p. 263.

<sup>9</sup> Terry, "Saul's interview", pp. 540-542.

which textual criticism overwhelmingly supports. The text must trump in these cases, so it is best to look for another reason for the woman's scream.

What seems most likely is that the woman had never encountered this *kind* of spirit before. When a person wants to speak with a dead ancestor, they go to a medium. The medium then chooses one of two methods, depending on the training received, and how things are done in the diviner's culture. The first method is for the medium to be possessed by the spirit. The person will normally use music, drugs, or dancing, until the demon takes control over his or her body. At that point, the spirit can be addressed by the family members, and can answer, using the medium's mouth. When finished, the medium typically remembers nothing. The second method is for the diviner to go into a trance, and to act as an intermediary between the living and the dead. This, too, may involve a stimulant of some sort, with the result being that the medium has a vision, "seeing" a spirit. The family communicates with the spirit, through the medium, but the medium normally remembers what has occurred.

In this case, it does not appear that the woman was possessed, or that she went into a trance. It seems, instead, that she saw something externally, which she had never before encountered. Here, the text provides a clue. When Saul inquires as to what she saw, she tells him, "I saw a god ascending out of the earth." The deuteronomistic writings normally use either **אֱלֹהִים** = 'ēb or **יְדִעְוֵי** = *yidd<sup>e</sup> 'ōni*, when referring to a ghost or a spirit – especially in reference to necromancy.<sup>10</sup> Here the word **אֱלֹהִים** = *'elōhīm* is used (v 13). This was the normal Hebrew word for a god, and is often used to refer to Yahweh God. It seems that this "woman with a familiar spirit" actually saw a very unfamiliar spirit. This frightened her, and caused her to cry out.

This leaves just one question unanswered: why did she then cry out, "Why have you deceived me? For you are Saul!" The story of the fall of man may

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<sup>10</sup> Brian B. Schmidt, "The 'witch' of Endor: 1 Samuel 28, and ancient near-eastern necromancy", in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995, p. 125.

help here. When a divine figure (God) approached a guilty human (Adam), the human immediately pointed the finger at another equally-guilty human (Eve). That human, in turn, pointed the finger at the serpent. Here, when a *seemingly* divine being (Samuel) appears to a guilty human (the woman), she likewise points the finger at another equally-guilty human (Saul). It would be much like a schoolteacher turning the corner to find two students in a scuffle. The first one to see her immediately shouts, “He started it!” In 1 Sam 28:12 only the words are different, “You tricked me!”

Saul, much more interested in what she saw than whom should get the blame, quiets her down, and asks for a report. She replies that she saw an **עִלְוִיָּהּ** = *'elōhīm*. Saul asks for more details, and she tells him she saw an old man wearing a robe or mantle. This robe was indicative of social standing, or prosperity; it was something the royal and the rich wore. Saul realised that this was Samuel, and bowed down to the spirit that had come up.

### **1 SAM 28:15-19: SAMUEL PRONOUNCES JUDGMENT ON SAUL**

This section begins with words that have spawned entire essays, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?”<sup>11</sup> People have often speculated on the nature of Sheol, and the state of the dead. Prior to 800 AD, rabbis believed that the dead could be raised within the first 12 months of their death, but not afterwards!<sup>12</sup> Remarkably, this may be close to the view that an animist would take towards this passage. Again, depending on local beliefs, a spirit of the dead often remains active for a certain length of time. Some cultures, which believe in reincarnation, think that a spirit skips two generations and then returns, i.e., a man’s daughter may have his grandmother’s spirit. Others believe that, if a person’s spirit feels they have incomplete business, in the realm of the living, they will stay around for a while, as a malevolent spirit

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<sup>11</sup> Ades, “Samuel, whear ’ast tha been”, pp. 60-267.

<sup>12</sup> Klaus A. D. Smelik, “The witch of Endor: 1 Samuel 28 in Rabbinic and Christian exegesis till 800 AD”, in *Vigiliae Christianae* 33-2 (1979), p. 165.

seeking resolution. For yet other animistic cultures, the time limit is set by memory. As long as a person is remembered, his spirit will stay around.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps this is why Samuel spoke this way: knowing Saul as he did, Samuel simply spoke from Saul's perspective. People thought the "grave" or the "place of the dead" was under the earth. This is similar to the Bible saying the sun rises in the east. Obviously, the sun is stationary, and the earth is revolving, so that it *appears* that the sun is rising. Samuel simply spoke in a way that fitted Saul's point of view. Samuel's words in modern English might be, "What do you want?"

Suddenly, the narrative slows down, and seems to record Saul's and Samuel's entire conversation. Saul rehearses for Samuel the troubled state he is in, and Samuel responds by repeating much of what he said, when they last spoke: the Lord has rejected Saul (1 Sam 15:26), and the kingdom has been torn from him, and given to another (1 Sam 15:28). In this case, unlike before, Samuel specifically names David. Samuel then goes on to deliver a new message to Saul: that he and his sons would die the next day, and the armies of Israel would be decimated.

### **1 SAM 28:20-25: SAUL EATS AND RETURNS**

To this point, the activities of the day had kept Saul busy. Struck with fear at his circumstances, he found a medium and rushed to her for help. Soon, he was before Samuel, hearing of his own doom. Suddenly, with Samuel's departure, Saul crashes. The adrenalin is gone, his fate is sealed, and he is flat on his face.

The woman's evening was draining as well. A trio of men showed up at her door late at night, and, somehow, she seemed to deduce that they are, at the very least, the king's men. She soon found herself doing the very thing that could get her killed, for the very men, who would kill her. If that weren't enough, she suddenly came face-to-face with a kind of spirit she had not seen before. But the ordeal is not over yet, she still had the king of Israel sprawled

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<sup>13</sup> Sanchez, "Animistic Folk Religions".



out on her floor! She came to him, and attempted to convince him to eat. She makes the very convincing argument that she listened to him, at the risk of her own life. Therefore, Saul could trust her, and he was obliged to her. She implied he could fulfil that obligation, by letting her give him a small snack for his own good.

Typically double-minded, Saul initially refused to eat, but, at the behest of both the woman and his servants, he gave in. She then quickly went to prepare this “morsel of bread” by killing her house-fed calf, and making loaves of flat bread (no time to let it rise).<sup>14</sup> Saul ate, and then he and his two servants returned to their camp that night.

The most-striking feature of this section is the author’s use of irony.<sup>15</sup> It was certainly present, previously, in the scene, such as when Saul, the lawmaker, becomes Saul, the lawbreaker, or when he swears on the life of YHWH that he will not punish one who practices what is an abomination to YHWH (1 Sam 28:10; Deut 18:10-12)! But now, the author fills this final section with biting wit. Here, we see Saul heeding the voice of the diviner, and that of his own servants, but he has long since shown that he will not obey the word of the LORD. The woman sacrifices greatly of her limited means to feed a “dead-man-walking”. Saul accepts this life-sustaining food from someone who works with the dead. Furthermore, in accepting food from this evil woman, he is signifying his acceptance of her – and his rejection of God. It was odd enough that he accepted food, since death was now inevitable, but it is ironic to see Saul strengthened by a meal, so he can go to his death.

This scene in the Bible, showing Saul’s visit to the medium at Endor, has several purposes. Firstly, it serves as a contrast between David and Saul. David and Saul are both in a jam, but David trusts God to work it out, while Saul turns to necromancy. Secondly, this passage gives us more insight into

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<sup>14</sup> This could be purposely reminiscent of the Passover meal that the children of Israel ate before leaving Egypt (Ex 12:8). Ironically, this time the death angel would not pass over Saul.

<sup>15</sup> Klein, *Samuel*, pp. 273-274.

the person of Saul. By this time, in scripture, Saul is a very round character, but this scene reveals one final facet of his personality: he has combined his belief in God with animism. Finally, this scene serves to build the circumstantial case against Saul that he, truly, is “a king . . . like all the nations” (1 Sam 8:5, 19-20). Not only is it possible that he has **רַפְּאִים** = *rephaim* (ghost/dead one) blood (see footnote 2), it seems he may also have inherited some of their pagan animistic beliefs as well.

This scene makes it clear that Saul has already been rejected, because of his disobedience, and now, he is sentenced to death for his syncretism. Necromancy is a sin, and it was rightly made a capital offence by Saul. But Saul, himself, broke that rule, and so, he will be put to death – by God.

### **THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS**

The purpose of 1-2 Sam is to show that David is the rightful king of Israel. To do so, the writer must rehabilitate Samuel as a king-maker, show Saul as the rejected king, and show David as the rightful king.<sup>16</sup> This scene fits perfectly: Samuel is still a prophet, even after death. Samuel reiterates Saul’s rejection as king, adding that the kingdom belongs to David. Saul does not deny this, but his worldview compels him to handle the crisis, by turning to that which is an abomination to God. Samuel is still a prophet, Saul is still rejected, and David will soon be king.

The placement of this scene in the book is intended to contrast how David and Saul handle crises. Here Saul turns to a medium to solve his problem, while 1 Sam 29 shows God solving David’s problem. The passage’s placement serves a second purpose as well: to show that God is on David’s side. God refuses to answer Saul, and eventually condemns him to death – but only through Samuel. On the other hand, God is at work for David, solving his life-threatening dilemma.

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<sup>16</sup> Mitchell, “1, 2 Samuel”.

One of the key verses in the work of 1-2 Sam is 1 Sam 16:7b “for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart”. God is looking for one with an obedient heart. Samuel had it; Eli did not. David had it; Saul did not. The obedient heart is a heart of faith; a person with faith will obey God.

Throughout the Bible, faith and obedience<sup>17</sup> are a major theme. Abel made a better sacrifice by faith, Noah obeyed God by building an ark, and Abraham had faith in God’s promises, and obeyed Him. The theme extends to Joseph, Moses, Joshua, and the judges. Now, Saul does not obey God, proving he has no faith, while David has a heart for God. This theme continues through the prophets and Esther, and is personified in the person of Jesus Christ. He had complete obedience, because He had complete faith. Every Christian is called to show his faith, by his obedience, until he dies, or until Christ returns. At that time, faith will become sight, and obedience will be complete.

The story of Saul’s visit to the medium at Endor is a perfect example of what faith is not. Saul did not obey God, and, therefore, the kingdom is torn from him. Furthermore, Saul seeks the assistance of an enemy of God, and, as a result, his life is torn from him. Saul disobeys God’s law in a way that dramatically shows that he has no faith.

The issue of faith and obedience transcends the Testaments. “Without faith, it is impossible to please God” (Heb 11:6). That is a timeless truth. Samuel and David pleased God; Saul did not.

### **APPLICATION**

Faith is often an obscure and intangible truth. To be sure, the whole issue of faith is more than obedience, but it is not less. To put it more simply, obedience is what faith looks like. When a Christian obeys God, as instructed

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<sup>17</sup> Faith and obedience are interlocking. When a person believes God is in control, he will obey God. The book of James explains that a person who has faith will obey, and 1 John shows that a person who is obedient has faith. Conversely, a person without obedience has no faith.

in His word, he is proving his faith. If a person believes the Bible is God's message to him, he will obey it. If a Christian believes that God is real, and that He is sovereign, he will obey Him. If a Christian believes that God wants all people to come to Him, he tells others. When the believer obeys, he is showing that he believes.

Conversely, when a person does not obey, he is showing his lack of faith. If a Christian really believes that all he has belongs to God, and He has simply made His resources available to him, he would give more. If a Christian believes that He will supply our every need, he would be willing to give it all. If the believer really believed that God looks at the heart, he would be more concerned with the smallest sin than the biggest test. If a Christian honestly believed he should do what is best for others, he would give them the parking spots closest to the doors!

A question that could be asked is, do Christians really believe that combining the worship of God with the worship of anything else is spiritual prostitution? Saul combined his belief in God with a belief in the spirits. When God didn't answer him, he turned to the spirits. When God does not answer people's prayers the way they want, what is their response? If God doesn't give them the money to buy the car they want, do they get a smaller car, or a bigger loan? When trials come, do they ask God for wisdom, and follow it, even if it seems like bad advice? Or, do they rely on their own wisdom? Are they syncretistic, like Saul? He combined worship of Yahweh with animism, just as believers are often guilty of combining Christianity with materialism or humanism.

## **CONCLUSION**

This passage is rooted in animism, yet it is often interpreted apart from it. This paper has looked at Saul's visit to the woman at Endor, not only in the light of necromancy, but also through the eyes of animistic beliefs. As the study progressed, it became clear that Saul was viewing the events in just that way: through the eyes of an animistic worldview. He expelled the mediums and spiritists to make God happy, but did not follow through and actually

remove them, because he did not want to anger the spirits. Also, when God didn't answer him, he turned to a diviner. An animist would understand these actions.

It also helps in understanding the woman's reaction to seeing the spirit. It was not that she had not seen one before; she probably had, at least in a vision. More likely, she had not seen one externally before, nor had she seen an אֱלֹהִים = 'elōhīm before. Nor would it be hard for an animist to understand why she pointed quickly to Saul, when the spirit showed up. She wasn't sure where it came from, but she didn't want to share Saul's jeopardy.

The Bible is a book that spans cultures. Some cultures will see things in a way that others will not, but the central truths of scripture will remain the same. Saul, animistic worldview, or not, is still rejected as king, for his disobedience, and his disobedience was the result of a lack of faith in God.

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# EARLY EVANGELISM AND IMAGE-RICH WITNESSING: JOHN'S TESTIMONY ABOUT JESUS IN JOHN 1:29-34

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## JOHN 1:29-34 IN TRANSLATION

The next day, John saw Jesus coming towards him, and he exclaimed, "Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."<sup>1</sup> This is the one I was talking about when I said, "After me comes a man who outranks me,<sup>2</sup> for He existed first.<sup>3</sup> And I did not know him,<sup>4</sup> but the reason I came baptising in water was that He might be revealed to Israel." And John testified saying,<sup>5</sup> "I saw the Spirit come down like a dove out of heaven and remain on him. And

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<sup>1</sup> Or, more literally, "Look, the Lamb of God, the One who is taking away the sin of the world", or "Look, the Lamb of God, who will take away the sin of the world". The literal translation could be replaced by a more-dynamic equivalent translation that reflects the warrior-deliverer interpretation of the lamb (see below); "Look, the Saviour of the world, who comes to take away its evil".

<sup>2</sup> Or "A man, who comes after me is greater than me", or "A man who comes after me has surpassed me" (NIV).

<sup>3</sup> Or "for He was before me", or "for He existed first". The use of "after", "outranks", and "first", in these two phrases translates the meaning of the sentence, but only slightly reflects the Greek text, which plays on two or three words: "After (ὀπίσω) me comes a man who ranks before (ἔμπροσθεν) (literally, ahead (of), before (of rank), i.e., ranks higher than) me, for He existed first (πρῶτος) (lit. first, earliest, or before me)." See below.

<sup>4</sup> Or "recognise Him" (NASB).

<sup>5</sup> Or "and John gave further evidence" (AMP), or "then John gave this testimony" (NIV).



I did not know Him, but the one who sent me to baptise in water told me, “The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is He who will baptise in the Holy Spirit.” And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.

## INTRODUCTION

In these six verses of the first chapter of the fourth gospel, we read of John the Baptist’s functioning as a Christological spokesperson.<sup>6</sup> John the Baptist’s testimony about Jesus is a witness to a number of Christological themes. The author’s aim in writing John is to show that Jesus is the Son of God, and, in 1:29-34, he is establishing this idea. The Lamb of God, the one who came first, the one on whom the Spirit came down, and, therefore, the one who will baptise in the Holy Spirit, and the Son of God, are the passage’s four identifying characteristics of Jesus.

## AUTHOR AND BACKGROUND

Much scholarship has been devoted to questions of setting, dating, authorship, and their interconnections. The debate regarding authorship is whether the author was John, a follower of John, or another writer, unconnected with the Apostles.<sup>7</sup> The assumption is that John would have written a mainly historical and Jewish gospel at an early date, whereas another writer may have written a theological and Hellenistic gospel at a later date. The setting is Jewish, and previous assumptions about John, as a Gentile gospel, have been overturned since orthodox Jew Dr Israel Abrahams said, in 1924: “To us Jews, the fourth gospel is the most Jewish of the four!”<sup>8</sup> This paper assumes John the Evangelist wrote an historically-accurate fourth gospel around 70-80 AD (earlier than many datings). The situation is not entirely clear, though some suggest that it was written to be universally addressed to the world.

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<sup>6</sup> W. R. Farmer, “John the Baptist”, in *Freedman’s Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, Buttrick, et al, eds, New York NY: Abingdon Press, 1962.

<sup>7</sup> Gary M. Burge, *Interpreting the Gospel of John*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 1992, pp. 37-54.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen N. Neill, and Tom Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1986*, New York NY: Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 338.

According to Dodd, the evangelist's prologue, treating the  $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\sigma = \textit{logos}$ , "word", first, addresses the Hellenistic world, yet the history that follows in the gospel is described in a manner that is grounded in Jewish tradition. It is too simplistic to argue John is meant for either the Gentile or Jewish world alone. It is, in fact, best described as the universal gospel.<sup>9</sup>

## **CONTEXT AND STRUCTURE**

### **SYNOPTIC PARALLELS**

John the Baptist's testimony about Jesus in John 1:29-34 refers to the Spirit coming down on Jesus, which we know from the synoptic gospels, occurred at His water baptism.<sup>10</sup> The fourth gospel focuses on this aspect of His baptism, compared to the synoptics, which describe the event. What is more important to John the evangelist, apparently, is that act of God, which identified Jesus (v 33). The agenda is one of witness. The writer's interest is more in showing who Jesus is than describing all the events, in which He was involved. The things in the fourth gospel are written so that its readers might believe who Jesus is, and, thereby, have life (John 20:30-31).

### **CONTEXT – THE FOURTH GOSPEL**

The literary structure proposed by Dodd is adapted here.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1953, p. 296.

<sup>10</sup> Matt 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:15-18.

<sup>11</sup> Dodd, *Interpretation*.

Table 1 – Structure of John

A.	Proem	1:1-51
a.	Prologue	1:18-18
b.	Testimony	1:19-51
B.	Book of signs	2:1-12:55
C.	Book of passion	13:1-20:31
D.	Epilogue	21:1-25

The prologue (1:1-18) introduces John the Baptist and Jesus. The Baptist is Jesus' witness. Jesus is the Word, and pre-existent one (1:1-2), the Creator (1:3-4), the true light (1:5-9), and God the Son (1:14, 18). These Christological themes are expanded in the Baptist's testimony, and throughout the book.

John's testimony of Jesus (1:29-34) forms part of the series of testimonies (1:19-51), which is seen by some to begin a seven-day scheme, describing Jesus creating a new community (1:19-2:11).<sup>12</sup> The first day (1:19-28), the Baptist begins to reply to a delegation of Jewish authorities, who ask who he is and why he baptises. He only gives his testimony in the negative – about who he, himself, is not. The Baptist is merely the forerunner to Jesus.<sup>13</sup> On the second day, Jesus appears, and the Baptist then gives his testimony in the positive, telling who Jesus is, and describing his own role in terms of revealing Him (1:29-34). On the third and fourth days, people start to follow Jesus, including some of John's own disciples (1:35-42, 43-51). It is noteworthy, contributing to the witness theme of John, that, after Jesus calls Philip, He is seen immediately witnessing to Nathaniel (1:45).

Jesus' public ministry is shown in the book of signs (2:1-12:55), as a demonstration of His nature, described in the introduction and prologue. For

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<sup>12</sup> J. Ramsey Michaels, *John*, New International Bible Commentary, Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 1989, p. 28; John A. T. Robinson, *The Priority of John*, London UK: SCM Press, 1985, pp. 161-163; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles*, London UK: SPCK, 1992, p. 80.

<sup>13</sup> Dodd, *Interpretation*, pp. 292-293.

example, on the final day of the seven-day scheme, begun with John's testimonies, Jesus, through whom all things were made (1:3), turns water into wine at a wedding (2:1-12). His passion and resurrection (13:1-20:31) climax His work on earth, fulfilling John's testimony that He was the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

## STRUCTURE

A witness is one who testifies to what they have seen, heard, or experienced. This passage is structured around John the Baptist's witness of Jesus.

Table 2 – Structure of John's testimony about Jesus (John 1:29-34)

### Section 1

Introduction – John sees Jesus and:	(1:29a)
A. Proclaims Jesus as the Lamb of God	(1:29b)
B. Reports he had said Jesus is greater	(1:30)
C. Reports he came baptising to reveal Jesus	(1:31)

### Section 2

Introduction – John gives testimony:	(1:32a)
A. He saw the Spirit come on Jesus	(1:32b)
B. God had told him this would show who would baptise in the Holy Spirit	(1:33)
C. He witnessed that Jesus is the Son of God	(1:34)

The evangelist fills this passage with the Baptist's testimony of Jesus. The whole passage is a monologue of witness.<sup>14</sup> What John the Baptist has seen, said, come for, not yet recognised, and been told about, is Jesus; and he tells this to his audience. Jesus is the Lamb of God, the pre-existent one, the one who will baptise in the Holy Spirit, and the Son of God. Here, then, are contained four major Christological statements, around which the remainder of the paper will be based.

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<sup>14</sup> C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1963, p. 251.

## JOHN'S TESTIMONY ABOUT JESUS

### 1. THE LAMB OF GOD

What John the Baptist meant by "Lamb of God", and then what John the Evangelist was communicating, has been interpreted in numerous ways. Jesus, as the Lamb of God, has become so inextricably woven with Christianity, and, particularly, with the atonement, that it is difficult to view the concept outside these categories.<sup>15</sup> Lamb of God may refer to an atoning sacrifice, or perhaps to the Servant of Is 53. Outside these categories of personal redemption, however, is a third option of the apocalyptic warrior lamb that developed in the second temple period.

The first option is that Jesus is described as an atoning lamb, specifically the paschal lamb, derived from Ex 12:1-11 (cf. Lev 16:7-10; Gen 22). Christ's death occurred during the Passover festival, and so, the early church connected the two events, in terms of God's deliverance and atonement (1 Cor 5:7). The Baptist's identification of "the Lamb of God [as He] who takes away the sin of the world" seems to support this interpretation. ἁμαρτίαν "sin", in the Jewish mind, deserved punishment, and was only eradicated by sacrifice. Jesus fills this role, being the one taking the sin upon Himself, and so carrying it away.<sup>16</sup>

A second interpretation, still allowing for the atonement, is that the Lamb of God is the suffering servant of Is 53.<sup>17</sup> Isaiah describes the servant, in terms of a lamb, with clear atonement language. He "took up our infirmities", "was pierced for our transgressions", and "was led like a lamb to the slaughter" (Is 53). If John's Lamb, then, is to be considered as a sin offering, the servant interpretation is commendable. However, the synoptics suggest the Baptist was not thinking of Jesus in terms of a suffering servant. Like many other Jews of the day, he was probably hoping for the Messiah, who would set up an earthly reign, but, those hoping for such deliverance, were disappointed.

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<sup>15</sup> D. Brent Sandy, "John the Baptist's 'Lamb of God' affirmation in its canonical and apocalyptic milieu", in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34-4 (1991).

<sup>16</sup> 1 John 3:5; cf. Lev 17:11; Prov 16:6; Is 6:7; Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17.

<sup>17</sup> Talbert, *Reading John*; cf. Acts 3:13; 8:32.

The Baptist became uncertain about Jesus' identity, such that, when he was arrested, he sent messengers to Jesus to ask Him if He was the one they were expecting (Matt 11:2). The suffering servant may have been a theme, adopted by the early church, in the light of Jesus' death, but there is little evidence that John the Baptist meant this.<sup>18</sup>

The final interpretation is of the apocalyptic Lamb.<sup>19</sup> Sheep, in the ancient world, were symbols for a variety of things, including power, war, and conquest.<sup>20</sup> In the second temple period, a lamb commonly symbolised deliverer.<sup>21</sup> The deliverer concept is still consistent with ὁ ἄμνος τοῦ Θεοῦ ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου, "the one taking away the sin of the world". This could mean bearing the penalty of sin, in atonement, and/or to "carry off, destroy, and sweep away" sin.<sup>22</sup> Dodd argues that John's testimony refers to the latter sense of destroying and making an end of sin, describing a Messiah, who comes to make an end of sin.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Sandy, "Lamb of God", pp. 449, 457. Of course, as with the Lamb of God as an atoning lamb, John the Evangelist may have alluded to the Lamb of God, with suffering servant themes in mind. From a post-resurrection perspective, the Evangelist could tell Jesus' story with insight the Baptist could not have had. This is why this essay argues that John the Baptist spoke better than he knew about Jesus' identity. Compare the high priest's statement regarding Jesus' death in John 11:49-50, in which he did not speak on his own, but spoke prophetically (v 51).

<sup>19</sup> T. Joseph 19:8; 1 Enoch 19:8; Rev 5:9; 7:17; 17:14; Dodd, *Interpretation*, p. 230; Sandy, "Lamb of God"; Talbert, *Reading John*, p. 81.

<sup>20</sup> For sheep imagery of a war expedition, see Dan 8:3-22; of Babylonian destruction, see Jer 50:45; 51:40; and of Israel, see Ezek 34. 1 Enoch 85-90 labels David as a lamb, who became a ram as a ruler. Revelation shows Jesus as the Lamb, ruling the universe, defeating foes, and officiating at the banquet held in His honour. Sandy, "Lamb of God", pp. 451-454.

<sup>21</sup> Sandy, "Lamb of God", p. 458.

<sup>22</sup> H. Bachmann, and H. Slaby, *Computer-konkordanz zum Novum Testamentum Graece von Nestle-Aland 26 und zum Greek New Testament*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980; Walter Bauer, et al, *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979, p. 24; Gerhard Kittel, and Friedrich Gerhard, eds, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1985, pp. 28-29.

<sup>23</sup> Dodd, *Interpretation*, p. 232.

John the Baptist often spoke better than he knew. His Lamb has both apocalyptic and atoning significance. The Lamb of God may have been seen as a deliverer, to the Baptist's audience. The readers of the gospel, moreover, had the hindsight of Jesus' death and resurrection, to see that it could apply to personal redemption, as well as deliverance.<sup>24</sup> That there was more than one possible interpretation of the Lamb of God in their minds is acceptable. Haenchen comments; "The various forms of the portrait of Jesus are kaleidoscopically reflected in verse 29, in which all the details, subconsciously, work together to form a new image in its own right."<sup>25</sup>

## 2. PRE-EXISTENT ONE

The Baptist continued to bear witness to Jesus, reporting that Jesus was the one he said outranked him, because He existed first. ἔμπροσθέν, "before, in front of, before (of rank), i.e., of higher rank", is here taken to refer to rank.<sup>26</sup> The reason given that Jesus outranks the witness is that Jesus existed first. πρῶτος signifies "first" or "earliest" in time, number, or rank.<sup>27</sup> Christ is often described as πρῶτος (cf. Rev 1:17, 2:8). Here, it is taken as meaning first, in relation to time, i.e., pre-existence. In relation to John the Baptist, then, Jesus is before him (in rank), on the grounds that He existed before him (in time).

John did not intuitively know (ᾔδειν) that Jesus was the One, for whom they were looking.<sup>28</sup> However, the reason he came baptising in water was so that Jesus would be revealed to all Israel. Jews practised baptism for converted Gentiles (proselytes), but John's baptism went beyond this Jewish custom. His baptism was one of repentance, and ethics, and of eschatology (for the kingdom was near). Significantly, he also baptised Jews. Jewish tradition,

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<sup>24</sup> Dodd, *Interpretation*, p. 232; Sandy, "Lamb of God", pp. 458-459.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Sandy, "Lamb of God", p. 457.

<sup>26</sup> Bachmann and Slaby, *Computer-konkordanz*, p. 446; Bauer, et al, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 257.

<sup>27</sup> Kittel and Gerhard, *TDONT*, pp. 965-966.

<sup>28</sup> Bachmann and Slaby, *Computer-konkordanz*, p. 494; Kittel and Gerhard, eds, *TDONT*, pp. 673-674.

according to John the Baptist, was not sufficient. A new day was coming, and Jews, and all peoples everywhere, needed to start afresh with God.<sup>29</sup> The basis, on which they could then meet with God, was through Jesus, who was the one who would administer a baptism greater than John's was – baptism in the Holy Spirit.

### 3. THE BAPTISER IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Continuing to witness, the Baptist now declares that he has seen the Spirit come down on Jesus. Hence, according to what God has said, He must be the one who will baptise in the Holy Spirit. John had seen the Spirit with his physical eyes come down and remain on Jesus, but in such a way that he realised, by revelation, its supernatural significance.<sup>30</sup> Jesus had been set apart, in John's eyes, as the one who would baptise in the Holy Spirit. This section will discuss the manner of the Spirit's coming on Jesus, and its significance.

John testified, saying that he saw τὸ πνεῦμα, “the Spirit”, come down ἐξ οὐρανοῦ, “from heaven”. This suggests that the Spirit had divine nature and origin. τὸ πνεῦμα, in John 1:33, is the Holy Spirit of God. πνεῦμα is the “breath (life), spirit, soul, that which gives life to the body”. It appears, throughout the scriptures, attributed to God, and John faithfully reproduces this tradition. The place, from which the Spirit came down, furthermore, was οὐρανοῦ, “heaven”. In John's world, this had special significance, because of the way the world was perceived. Heaven was where God dwelt, above the sky, the sky, in turn, being above the earth.<sup>31</sup> The Spirit of God came down

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<sup>29</sup> Flemington, “Baptism”, in *Freedman's Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Buttrick, ed., New York NY: Abingdon Press, 1962, p. 349.

<sup>30</sup> When people θεάομαι = *theaomai* “see” Jesus in the fourth gospel, they commonly recognise His glory, and make a faith decision; cf. Bachmann and Slaby, *Computer-konkordanz*, p. 136; Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon*; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1991, p. 151.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Luke 8:23; Bachmann and Slaby, *Computer-konkordanz*, pp. 254-255; Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 408. Note that οὐρανός = *ouranos* sometimes refers to the sky, or those parts of the universe, apart from the earth, but here, more probably, refers to heaven in



from heaven onto Jesus at His baptism, just as the Son had come down from the Father onto the earth at the incarnation (cf. Matt 3:16; Mark 1:10; Acts 2).

The manner of the Spirit's appearance, furthermore, was *καταβαίνον ὡς περιστέρων*, "coming down like a dove". *καταβαίνον*, "coming down", can, perhaps, be pictured like rain falling, or a storm coming down. *ὡς περιστέρων*, "like a dove", does not suggest the coming was in the form of a dove, but, rather, in the manner of a dove.<sup>32</sup> The language, furthermore, is not of tranquillity, but of flapping wings, and of power. Other literature, of which 1st-century readers may have been aware, described scenes such as people falling "upon their enemies like a dove".<sup>33</sup> The Spirit coming down on Jesus like a dove is, perhaps, not unlike the scene described in Acts 2, when the Holy Spirit comes down on the disciples, and the house is shaken.

The Spirit found a place to stay with Jesus, just as one stays at an inn. His baptism was not temporary, for the Spirit *ἔμεινεν ἐπ' αὐτόν*, "remained on him".<sup>34</sup> *ἔμεινεν* speaks of "dwelling, living, lodging, remaining, or abiding".<sup>35</sup> John witnessed that the Spirit had a permanent place in Jesus' person.

The significance of the Spirit coming on Jesus was that it identified Him as He who would baptise in the Holy Spirit. The Baptist confesses that he did not know who Jesus was, except that the One, who had . . . sent

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its contemporary understanding, as the abode of the divine, or the dwelling of God. Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, pp. 593-595.

<sup>32</sup> Interestingly, the bird Noah sent out to see if the water had receded was a dove (Gen 8:1-12). The dove came on Jesus, as He came out of the water, just as the dove was sent out to find land by Noah, as the ark was coming out of the water.

<sup>33</sup> Rikk E. Watts, "Fourth gospel class notes", Melbourne Vic: Bible College of Victoria.

<sup>34</sup> Ross, "Holy Spirit", in *Freedman's Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Buttrick ed., New York NY: Abingdon Press, 1962, p. 630.

<sup>35</sup> Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 33; Kittel and Gerhard, *TDONT*, pp. 581-584.

(commissioned and appointed)<sup>36</sup> him, told him about this sign.<sup>37</sup> John testifies now about this thing that God had told him. He is supporting his own witness by appealing to the weightier emphasis of the Father, just as Jesus appeals later (John 5:36-37). John's testimony included God's word that the person, on whom the Holy Spirit came, was the One who would baptise in the Holy Spirit.

Although the Spirit had come on Jesus, the Spirit was not to come on His followers until Jesus returned to the Father in heaven. If He goes, Jesus said, He would send the Holy Spirit to His followers (John 16:7). In fact, Jesus instructed his disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit, implying this baptism in the Holy Spirit was to precede witnessing, and world evangelisation (Luke 24:46-49).

#### 4. THE SON OF GOD

In verse 34, most manuscripts read ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, “the Son of God”, and this has substantial and diverse manuscript support. It is consistent with both the context and the terminology of the fourth gospel. The textual variants are ὁ ἐκλεκτός τοῦ θεοῦ, “the Chosen one of God”, ὁ ἐκλεκτός υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, “the Chosen Son of God”, or ὁ μονογενῆς τοῦ θεοῦ, “the unique one of God”. Several commentators argue that the text was more likely altered from ἐκλεκτός to the better known υἱός, and that a change in reverse is difficult to imagine. However, other unfamiliar titles have been left, including “God the only one” (1:18), and “Holy One of God” (6:69). ἐκλεκτός does have textual support, but it is not widely distributed.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, ἐκλεκτός appears 22

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<sup>36</sup> πέμψας “sent” is a common Johannine theme (the word appears 32 times in the gospel). Jesus and the Holy Spirit are both sent by the Father, as is John the Baptist. The idea of moving geographically is not as important as the meanings of being instructed, commissioned, and appointed. Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 642.

<sup>37</sup> Is 11:1-2; 42:1; Beasley-Murray, *Gospel of Life: Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 1991, pp. 63-64.

<sup>38</sup> Carson, *John*, p. 152; Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, London UK: United Bible Societies, 1971; Michaels, *John*, p. 36.

times in the New Testament, but nowhere in the fourth gospel.<sup>39</sup> υἱός, on the other hand, is used throughout John, and has the largest and widest textual evidence.

Jesus is described as ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, “the Son of God”, throughout the fourth gospel, though it was not a regular messianic title (cf. Ps 2:7). In John, Jesus calls God “Father” 107 times, and God calls Jesus υἱός 17 times. He is the Son, in the sense that He has His origin in God, and He has been sent to save the world (John 3:16). Similar to the Old Testament prophets, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ is sent by, and is dependent on, the Father (John 8:28-29). The Son of God has a unity with the Father, which He has come to bring all, who will believe in His name, to be a part of as well.<sup>40</sup>

The Baptist’s καὶ γὰρ ἑώρακα καὶ μεμαρτύρηκα, “and I have seen and I have testified” (both verbs in the perfect, suggesting finality), emphasise the witness motif. These two requirements of a witness (seeing and testifying) have been met by the Baptist throughout the pericope, and are summarised at its end. They underscore how the sight of the Spirit, coming down and remaining on Jesus, was transforming. It was the Father’s sign or seal on the Son. Seeing this, enabled the Baptist to point to Jesus, and climax his testimony testifying about Jesus that this is ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ.<sup>41</sup>

## CONCLUSION

John the Baptist comes before Jesus, to witness to Him. Rather than receiving glory for himself, he points to the One who is greater than he, the One who will take away sin, and baptise in the Holy Spirit. This is the Son of God. The passage is thoroughly one of Christological witness, with images that are rich in meaning. The Baptist told people about the things he saw and knew of Christ. He did not know who Jesus was, until he saw the Spirit come on Him, but he also probably did not realise the ramifications of his testimony. He

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<sup>39</sup> Ἐκλεκτός is, however, used by John in his epistles (2 John 1:13), but he still does not use it to refer to Jesus; cf. Luke 23:35.

<sup>40</sup> John 17; Dodd, *Interpretation*, p. 254.

<sup>41</sup> Carson, *John*, p. 152.

makes Christological statements in this passage, for example, identifying Jesus with the Lamb of God, whose ramifications may not have been understood until after the resurrection. John the Baptist may have spoken better than he knew, but John the Evangelist capitalised on this, and wrote what he knew:

Jesus did many miraculous signs, in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are 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 20:30-31).

This passage of early evangelism, and image-rich witnessing, is a model for spicing our conversation with witness, and for using images that are rich in meaning for those with whom we talk.

# **CHRIST MY BROTHER: SHIFTING PRIMARY IDENTITY IN MELANESIA FROM CLAN TO CHRIST**

**Dan Seeland**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Within any given social system, people invariably participate as members of numerous in-groups. Membership in the group distinguishes a person as one of “us”, as opposed to one of “them”, and implies that certain requirements or expectations exist for group members that do not exist for those outside the group. These requirements serve, in effect, as boundaries that define the group, or, more specifically, define who is identified as part of the group, and who is not.

Traditionally, within the Melanesian context, group affiliation was largely clan based, with one’s identity being found primarily within the clan.<sup>1</sup> In the present, the Melanesian situation has changed dramatically. A host of factors (i.e., increased education and employment opportunities, urbanisation, and the

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<sup>1</sup> In the Melanesian context, clan can be defined as that group of individuals, who claim descent from a common, known ancestor. Key to this definition is the word “claim”. In the end, it is not the reality of a common ancestry that is important; it is the perception that counts. In Melanesia, it is commonplace to find numerous people associated with the clan “who, in fact, cannot demonstrate their biological or genealogical relationship to other members of the descent group”, McElhanon and Whiteman, 1984, p. 114.

rise of new political, social, economic, and religious ties) have contributed towards broadening the scope of Melanesian relationships well beyond the clan. The result has been that, today, many Melanesians find their identity, not simply within the clan, but within the complex web of relationships that now characterises Melanesia.

That a multiplicity of relationships exists, and that an individual may belong to a vast array of in-groups, highlights the fact that one may possess more than a single identity. But all identities are not created equal. To get at the heart of one's identity, to get at the core of one's being, we must look to matters of primary identity. The question that needs to be asked is not "Who am I?", but, rather, "Who am I, primarily?"

In the Melanesian context, it can be argued that the increased measure of in-group membership, which has grown out of the extensive network of present-day relationships, has had very little impact on the answer to this question. Barth has argued that "ethnic identity is superordinate to most other statuses" (1998, p. 17). For the Melanesian, this is certainly the case. One may identify with many different groups. But one's primary identity still resides with the clan. Here, as always, is one's primary sense of being and belonging; and here, as always, is one's primary sense of allegiance.

This fact poses a serious problem for the church. For Christians, the lordship of Christ implies allegiance, first and foremost, to Christ. For Melanesians, this necessitates a shift of allegiance from clan to Christ, and, by implication, from clan to the Christian community, which makes up the "body of Christ". This does not lessen the importance of clan, or mean that clan loyalties, for the Christian, have been totally displaced. Rather, it highlights the fact that clan identity must now be superseded by one's identity in Christ, and, as Ramachandra has suggested, that clan loyalties must be "set within a wider and more demanding loyalty to the global family of Christ" (1999, p. 136). In this light, the question is no longer "Who am I?", in relation to the clan, but, rather, "Who am I in Christ, and what bearing does this have on my understanding of clan?" In other words, what are the implications of

allegiance to Christ, in terms of one's identity, and how must this affect one's relationship to others?

While the church in Melanesia has made great strides towards the ideal of a Christ-centred allegiance, clan-centred loyalties continue to guide both thought and behaviour patterns for many Melanesian Christians. This paper, therefore, intends to examine the issue of Melanesian clan identity, and what lies at the root of that identity, namely, the concept, or ideal, of brotherhood, and to show how this ideal, for the Christian, must now be transferred to one's new identity in Christ.

### **MELANESIAN CLAN IDENTITY**

Fugmann has pointed out that "Human identity is intimately defined by the relationships, in which people perceive and experience life" (1985, p. 83). This being the case, it is not surprising that Melanesian identity is deeply rooted in the clan. To be sure, relationships have always existed outside the clan environment, most notably in the alliances and trading partnerships that were often formed with neighbouring ethnic groups. But, in the day-to-day relationships, that made up traditional Melanesian life, the overwhelming majority of time was spent relating to one's fellow clan members. Relationships outside the clan could serve a specific purpose, or could be used as a means to a specific end. They could exist over an extended period, or could be limited to a single point in time. Clan relationships, on the other hand, have always been more comprehensive in nature. They are perpetually binding, and serve to meet all of life's needs. Within the clan, the support, security, and well-being of each member is provided for, with the ensuing effect being that, not only the individual prospers, but the group prospers as well (Seeland 2004, 92-93).

### **THE PRINCIPLE OF RECIPROCITY**

Prosperity, for the individual, as well as the clan, is safeguarded through the principle of reciprocity. McElhanon and Whiteman have noted that "An underlying kinship morality states that all kinsmen should be loyal and helpful to one another" (p. 109). Within the clan, members are expected to assist

each other in a wide range of activities, from the labour-intensive tasks of house building and gardening, to the more capital-intensive endeavours of paying out bride price and compensation claims. Each clan member participates in the life of the clan, as one who gives, and as one who receives; as one who is under obligation, and as one who, in turn, places others under obligation. Indeed, the kinship terms that are used among clan members are not mere labels, but, instead, imply the level of reciprocity and obligation that exists in the various relationships (McElhanon and Whiteman, p. 109; Shaw, 1974, p. 226). Any failure, by clan members, to either enter into, or maintain, this pattern of reciprocity would be viewed as a rejection of the clan itself. This, however, would be an unlikely occurrence, for any failure to uphold the reciprocal relationships of the clan would be tantamount to cutting off one's own life-support system.

### **THE CENTRALITY OF BROTHERHOOD**

The kinship ties of the clan are many and varied. This is compounded by the fact that kinship relationships are often built upon perceived ties, rather than those that are biological or genealogical in nature. Amidst the array of relationships that exists within the clan, however, the brother-brother relationship is typically viewed as most important (Shaw, 1981, p. 192; Mantovani, 1984, p. 203).

The brother-brother relationship is highly significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, it represents the closest of biological and genealogical links. But this is not all that forges the bond between brothers. As noted, within the clan, each member is responsible to provide for fellow clan members, and to ensure the overall well-being of the clan; the closer the kinship ties, however, the greater the degree of reciprocity that is expected. In the brother-brother relationship, this plays out as follows: "Brothers are expected to help each other, to be generous with each other, to be loyal to each other. The ideal is to act generously, leaving the responsibility for returning such generosity to the brother" (MacDonald, 1984, p. 217). This endless cycle of giving and receiving serves to perpetuate the relationship, and further highlights its significance. Brothers always remain close; they always remain loyal,



because they are constantly aware of the debt and obligation that exists among them.

### **AN EXTENDED NOTION OF BROTHERHOOD**

For Melanesians, both common ancestral descent, and a close biological link, are important indicators of clan membership. But the central idea of brotherhood can be extended beyond “true” brothers to all who act in a manner consistent with the pattern of brotherhood (McElhanon and Whiteman, p. 114). Upholding the brother-brother ideal of reciprocity and obligation is the key. It is noteworthy that all males of a common generation within the clan typically refer to each other as “brother”, rather than by given name. This implies that the ideal of brotherhood is being upheld, regardless of whether the individuals concerned are “true brothers”, or not. This same principle applies to extra-clan relationships as well. Those outside the clan can be referred to as “brother”, if the expectations of brotherhood are consistently met.

### **SUMMARY**

MacDonald has stated that, in the Melanesian context, “brotherhood . . . is an ideology, which dominates all considerations of social life” (p. 217). It is also “the basis of clan solidarity” (MacDonald, p. 217), directing the clan, and holding the clan together, through good times and bad. Melanesian clan identity is, thus, inseparably linked to the notion of brotherhood. But, who is my brother, in the Melanesian context? The answer, quite plainly, is the one who acts as my brother. Behaviour, not blood, seems to be the key.

### **IDENTITY IN CHRIST**

God’s intent, according to the book of Romans, is that Jesus Christ be the “firstborn among many brothers” (Rom 8:29). Of course, the Jesus of scripture is revealed to us as the Son of God (Matt 16:16; Mark 5:7; 15:39; Luke 22:70). At the same time, the scriptures also point out that those who are “in Christ” are sons of God as well (Gal 3:26). The implication of these texts, and, in fact, one of the key themes of the entire New Testament, is that those, who are “in Christ” through faith, are part of a new family; they have

been adopted into the family of God, and now relate to God as Father, and to Christ as first among brothers. This new status for those who are “in Christ” necessitates a major shift in identity.

### **CHRISTIAN BROTHERHOOD**

Those who belong to God through Christ do not relate to God in a solitary relationship. On the contrary, there are many sons, and, by implication, many brothers. The Apostle Paul states, in his letter to the Galatian churches, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28 NASB). In Christ, all believers have become part of one “body”, or one family. Each Christian, therefore, has many brothers; not brothers, based on a biological or genealogical connection, but brothers, based on the common ground of being “in Christ” through faith. Being “in Christ”, thus, becomes a key indicator of one’s new identity, as part of the people of God.

### **TRANSFERRING ALLEGIANCE**

Christ said that those who would become His disciples must be prepared to hate father and mother, sister and brother (Luke 14:26). Obviously, taken at face value, this statement would be odious in the eyes of any Melanesian. How can one hate those who define one’s very existence? How can one detest those who have been the support structure of one’s entire life? How can one abhor the close-knit community, where the “fullness of life” ideal has been provided for? These are important questions. Properly understood, however, Jesus’ call to discipleship is not a call to love the clan less. It is a call to love Christ more.

Christ’s words to Peter, in John 21:15, illustrate this point well. Jesus asks, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” The essence of Jesus’ question, or the point He is driving at, is that Peter must love Jesus, first and foremost (Morris, 1995, p. 768; Köstenberger, 2004, p. 596). Peter’s primary allegiance must be to Jesus. The threefold repetition of the question, found in 21:15-17, was obviously meant to reassure Peter, whose faith had

been severely shaken during the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus, of where his true loyalty resided.

Christ's question to Peter can and should be asked of all who profess faith in Christ. Only those, whose primary allegiance is to Christ, can truthfully answer "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You" (John 21:15 NASB). But, to confess Christ as Lord, does not mean allegiance to Christ alone. It also implies allegiance to those, who are from "every nation, and *all* tribes, and peoples, and tongues" (Rev 7:9 NASB), who are part of the "body of Christ". Christ cannot be separated from His "body". Neither can any Christian be separated from the host of other believers, who are also "in Christ" and part of that same "body." There is a common identity for the Christian that transcends time and place as well as all other notions of identity whether geographic, political, or ethnic. In the Melanesian context, this does not imply that one no longer identifies with the clan. One cannot be separated entirely from one's roots and indeed it should be argued that this is not God's intent. For the Christian, however, the clan can no longer function as the primary source of one's identity or stand as the primary object of one's allegiance.

### **COMPLICATIONS IN TRANSFERRING PRIMARY IDENTITY FROM CLAN TO CHRIST**

Certainly, it is true that, with the coming of Christianity, the Melanesian view of brotherhood has been broadened to include those beyond the traditional clan. As Whiteman states, "one of the most significant social contributions of Christianity in Melanesia has been to expand Melanesians' definition of 'who is my brother?' " (1984, p. 94). Local church bodies cut across clan boundaries. In addition, church denominations, with a national presence, ensure that local church members relate to other Christians, not only outside one's own clan, but, outside one's ethnic group as well. Interdenominational fellowships and Bible schools also aid in the extension of the idea of brotherhood beyond the close confines of the traditional clan.

While Melanesians have made strides in this regard, it can still be asked, “Where does the Melanesian find his primary identity? Where is his primary allegiance today?” A number of generations ago, Christian Keyser asked, “Are there, in New Guinea, any individuals at all, who could stand up against their clan?” (1980, p. 28). Keyser’s intent was not to criticise the Melanesian clan relationship, but, rather, to highlight the certainty of behaviour of those to whom he was ministering in New Guinea. Keyser understood that, in Melanesia, the individual always sided with the clan, because one’s primary sense of allegiance was not to self, but to the group that one was most closely identified with. Has this changed today?

The primary allegiance issue raises two important questions for Melanesians. Firstly, when push comes to shove, when the difficult decisions arise, which pit clan against Christ, who will the Melanesian side with? Hofstede and Hofstede have pointed out that, in collectivist societies, “The ‘we’ group (or in-group) is the major source of one’s identity, and the only secure protection one has against the hardships of life. Therefore, one owes lifelong loyalty to one’s in-group, and breaking this loyalty is one of the worst things a person can do” (2005, p. 75). Most Melanesian Christians can attest to the truth of this claim, and to the difficulty of siding with Christ, in the face of clan pressure.

A second question, arising from this issue, is, “Can Melanesian Christians find their primary identity in what may, rightly, be called the “clan” of Christ?” If, indeed, the “body of Christ” is a single unity, then the “body”, within the Melanesian context, is not to be divided along clan lines. Can the church in Melanesia be unified, so that all Melanesian Christians will find their identity within a single “body”, and show an allegiance to one another that transcends the ties of the traditional clan?

It would, indeed, be presumptuous to expect all Melanesian Christians to live in perfect unity. The church has not succeeded in doing this, in any context. But, Narokobi has argued that one of the major disservices of the church in Papua New Guinea has been its emphasis on division and disunity, with villages and even families “divided between one brand of Christian faith and another” (1983, pp. 138-139). While others have argued that the Christian notion of an extended brotherhood has helped to unite Melanesians beyond clan lines (Whiteman, p. 94; MacDonald, pp. 219-220), Narokobi’s point is well taken. Traditional Melanesian group loyalty, coupled with church relations that are sometimes openly hostile, has led to factionalism within the “body”. One’s identity and allegiance are often most strongly linked to one’s denomination, rather than to Christ, and the greater family of God. Inasmuch as this is true, church denominations have usurped the role of both the traditional clan and the biblical model of the “body of Christ.”

### **OVERCOMING THE PROBLEM**

How can the church in Melanesia challenge Christians to find their primary identity in Christ, and to give their full allegiance to Him? A focus on three areas is suggested: (1) an emphasis on the cost of discipleship; (2) promoting the idea of Christian community; and (3) a concentrated effort towards interdenominational unity.

#### **THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP**

When considering Christ, it is essential that the cost of discipleship be clearly understood. As Luke 14:26-33 makes clear, this is true for all who would follow Christ. But, in the Melanesian context, the question must be asked, “What does it mean for a Melanesian to confess Jesus as Lord?” In addition, “How should this confession shape one’s view of clan, and how must it influence one’s behaviour?” Any call to follow Christ, which does not deal with issues of primary allegiance, is only a partial proclamation of the gospel.

There are numerous implications for the church’s approach to evangelism, here. Among these, is whether it is right to encourage quick professions of faith, at the expense of a more-comprehensive understanding of the demands

of the gospel. Should Melanesians be urged to profess Christ before there is a clear understanding of the allegiance that is demanded by Him? It is likely that the Melanesian problem of “skin Christianity” could largely be avoided if the allegiance issue was dealt with more fully prior to conversion.

### **CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY**

The book of Acts declares that, in the early days of the church, “those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of *them* claimed that anything, belonging to him, was his own; but all things were common property to them” (Acts 4:32 NASB). The early church was a fellowship, characterised by the concept of brotherhood. Within the community, each member looked after the interests of fellow members, ensuring that the community, as a whole, was provided for. Most Melanesians can readily identify with this.

But, for Melanesians to truly grasp the idea of the “body of Christ” as a community that transcends clan and culture, increased opportunities must be given for brotherly interaction, beyond the clan, and beyond the denomination. How can Melanesian Christians be expected to accept one another as brothers, if there is no participation with others at the brother-brother level? Brotherhood and fellowship, outside the clan context, can only become a reality for the church in Melanesia when the extra-clan church “body” consistently interacts with one another, and where the traditional model of Melanesian brotherhood is seen to take place. Reciprocity and obligation within the “body” should be encouraged, utilising the positive aspects of these Melanesian traits, and reinterpreting them, where necessary, to keep them in line with the teachings of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> What I mean here is that the principle of reciprocity is a valuable cultural trait that can be built upon as one communicates the gospel, and seeks to grow true Christ-centred communities. Reinterpretation is necessary, to the extent that Melanesian reciprocity can be ultimately self-serving (Seeland, 2004, p. 96). The emphasis must be placed upon a reciprocity and obligation, which is not centred on self, but seeks to put other’s interests ahead of our own (Phil 2:4).

## **INTERDENOMINATIONAL UNITY**

While Narokobi has criticised the church for its role in producing division and disunity within the Melanesian context, he, at the same time, holds that cooperation among the churches of Papua New Guinea is better than in most countries. Considering the call to Christian unity, he states:

It is, indeed, a noble calling on us to build unity, on Christian values of brotherly love, mutual help, common faith in God, and in the Lord Jesus, and in His second coming.

In the past, we Melanesians have been small in our outlook. We have confined our loyalties, love, and mutual support within our own small village and clan groups. We have kept our view of God within our own tribe and linguistic groups.

But, with Christianity, we extend our loyalties, affections, love, and understanding beyond our clan, village, and racial communities. This is real unity (p. 140).

He goes on to affirm that the unity, practised by the churches of Melanesia, “is not, in any way, contradictory to our Melanesian customs, rather, it is the extension of our customs, and the perfection and fulfilment of our customs and values” (p. 140).

Narokobi is right to emphasise that Melanesian Christians have extended the ideal of brotherhood well beyond the clan. But Narokobi’s words were written some 20 years ago. While the church in Melanesia has matured in many areas since that time, it is also true that, in some sense, there is a greater degree of factionalism within the church today than there ever has been. New churches, church break-offs and splits, and a vast array of conflicting teachings, have led many Melanesian Christians to withdraw within their own unique Christian sub-culture, and to identify primarily with their own particular group. Needless to say, those who withdraw, in such manner, will limit their loyalties to their own particular group as well.

To combat this, it is essential that the churches of Melanesia emphasise the common ground of the Christian faith. A reiteration of what it means to be “in Christ” (as well as the implications of that status) is a constant necessity. Realistically, there will always be a diversity of views within the church. Historically, this has been the norm. But, if a Christ-centred allegiance is the goal, and the notion of Christian brotherhood is to be extended to all who are of the faith, then Christian commonalities must be stressed. Only then, will Melanesians feel free to relate to the entire “body”, in a brotherly manner.

### **CONCLUSION**

It is impossible to understand Melanesian identity without some reference to the clan. Matters of allegiance, and the practice of the brotherhood ideal, both grow out of the clan concept. As shown, both issues have wide-ranging implications for the church.

This paper has but touched on clan issues. In light of the vast significance of the clan for Melanesians, the church must seriously consider how to address clan loyalties, and matters of allegiance, within the context of the church. In addition, while the clan, and Melanesian kinship structures, have been extensively researched, from an anthropological and sociological perspective, issues pertaining to reciprocity and obligation, adoption, and the effects of modernisation, and the changing Melanesian context, upon the clan, all require further research, from a missiological point of view.

Undoubtedly, to understand the clan is to understand, in large part, what it means to be Melanesian. It also is to understand a large part of what it means to be a Christian, in the Melanesian context. Both the church and mission must strive to more fully understand the clan, in all its aspects, if the gospel, and its implications, are to be clearly understood, and if the church in Melanesia is to grow to true maturity.



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# **A CALL FOR REPENTANCE IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA: AN EXEGESIS OF HOSEA 6:1-3**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

With rapid modernisation, Melanesians no longer live in isolation, rather, there is pressure for us to catch up with, and adapt to, the rest of the world. External pressures of globalisation affect our economy, with acute inflation in living costs. Social dilemmas, such as corruption and laxity in high places, exist within our communities and societies. Our leaders, at all levels, compromise their convictions, for convenience. Our moral values are in decline. Social problems, such as unemployment, drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, rape, and abuse of women and children, injustice, bribery, and many other forms of moral and spiritual debauchery are on the rise, at a phenomenal rate.

The Preamble to the Constitution of Papua New Guinea states, “we pledge ourselves to guard and pass on to those who come after us our noble traditions, and the Christian principles that are ours now . . . and declare ourselves, under the guiding hand of God, to be the independent state of Papua New Guinea.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Part of the Preamble to the Constitution of Papua New Guinea, quoted from Fugmann, Gernot, “Preamble to the Constitution of the Papua New Guinea”, in *Point* 9 (1986), pp. xi-xii.

By inserting this statement into our national constitution, the founding fathers of this nation made a covenantal agreement that solemnises Papua New Guinea's relationship with the living God of the Bible, the Creator and Lord of the universe. In everyday language, Papua New Guinea passes as a Christian nation, a nation that pledges to abide by the moral and spiritual guiding principles of the Christian God, and of moral traditions.

Moreover, our constitution guarantees religious freedom, and Christian faith heritage, in particular; however, our moral decline has led many people away from the vision and spirit of the constitution. Instead of loving God, and following His ways, we have turned to many forms of idolatry. There is an increase in occult practices, such as witchcraft, sorcery, and a revival of animistic practices. In addition, there is a steady influx of non-Christian Eastern religions, such as Islam, Hinduism, and others, which seek to draw adherents from within our communities. Moreover, agnostic antagonism and pessimism is rapidly taking its toll among many of our leading politicians, academics, and bureaucrats. Furthermore, a new form of "cargo cultism", such as money scams and materialism, is creeping into the church and its leadership. They have discarded the integral Christian moral and spiritual impetus of the constitution that governs Papua New Guinea. It looks as if there is no end, and no answers, to these problems.

Therefore, we need to turn to the Word of God, as the source and guide of our faith and practice, to lead us back onto the right track again. The inerrant Word of God, the Bible, has answers to all of our dilemmas. Through an exegesis of Hos 6:1-3, this article seeks to explore and draw out some theological principles and practical applications, relevant to our perennial problems.

### **HISTORICAL AND SOCIO-POLITICAL SETTING OF HOSEA**

Many years before Hosea, God entered into a special covenant relationship with Abraham (Gen 12:1-3). Later, at Mt Sinai, under Moses' leadership, God established his special covenant relationship with the children of Israel.

However, despite God's faithfulness in keeping the covenant, Israel was never faithful in her part of keeping the covenant.

Only during the reigns of King David and Solomon, did Israel really reach the "golden peak" of her peaceful and blessed years. Towards the end of Solomon's reign, the nation began to show signs of spiritual and moral decline. Not long after Solomon's death, the great nation of Israel divided itself into two kingdoms. The northern kingdom, under Jeroboam, had ten tribes, and retained the name Israel, while the southern kingdom, composed of two tribes, Judah and part of Benjamin, gained the name Judah. Rehoboam, son of Solomon, became the first king of Judah.

The northern kingdom of Israel quickly turned away from her covenant relationship with Yahweh, her God-king. King Jeroboam made two golden calves, and built two places of worship, one at Bethel and the other at Dan, and prevented the people from the northern tribes from going down to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to God (1 Kings 12:25-33).

Around 841 BC, about 50 years after Solomon's death, Omri became Israel's king, and set up Samaria as his capital. He established diplomatic relations with the other kingdoms around him, like Tyre and Sidon. Through these ties, he brought Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Tyre, to marry his son Ahab. He was a good politician, such that, many years later, the Assyrians were still calling Israel by the name "house of Omri". Omri, however, permitted Jezebel to set up a temple to the pagan god, Baal. This stirred up the prophets against his house, and thus began a contest for religious domination that brought down Omri's own dynasty, in a bloodbath under Jehu, some 30 years later.<sup>2</sup> Jezebel proved to be a very possessive queen, who dictated Ahab's decisions. Ahab feared her, and she corrupted him. Her influence was so devastating that it even spilled over, corrupted, and degraded the moral and spiritual life of Judah, the southern kingdom, through the marriage of

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<sup>2</sup> L. Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament*, Makati Philippines: St Paul's Publications, 1993, pp. 297-298.

Athaliah, her stepdaughter. Furthermore, the political relationship between Israel and Judah was in a constant state of conflict.

Meanwhile, in the more international scene in the ANE (ancient Near East), Assyria became resurgent as a super power (745 BC). Under king Tiglath-Pileser, Assyria invaded the surrounding small nations, including Israel and Judah. Israel then turned to Egypt for help, but, by then, Egypt, herself weakened by divisions, could not help Israel. Finally, Assyria, under Tiglath-Pileser's son, Shalmaneser V, attacked king Hoshea of Israel, and laid siege for three years. Samaria finally fell, and the people were deported to other areas in the Assyrian empire in 722 BC (2 Kings 17).<sup>3</sup> Against this background, God called the prophets, including Hosea, into their prophetic ministry.

### **HOSEA THE PROPHET**

The Bible does not divulge much of the family background of Hosea, except that he was the son of Beeri. However, the Bible states that, at God's command, Hosea married Gomer, a woman known for her life of prostitution. Gomer bore him three children, all out of marital infidelity (Hos 1:1-9).<sup>4</sup>

Chronologically, Hosea lived after Jonah, and was a contemporary of Isaiah and Amos. He prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and the reign of Jereboam, son of Jehoash, king of Israel (Hos 1:1), from about 750 BC to 715 BC (2 Kings 15:1-17; 16:1ff; 2 Chron 26; 28:1ff). The duration of his prophetic ministry may have been 38 years.<sup>5</sup> Israel experienced great material prosperity in these periods. Nevertheless, spiritual and moral decay was rampant all around. Great

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<sup>3</sup> K. Shimasaki, "OT Survey II class lecture notes" Manila Philippines: Asian Theological Seminary, 2nd semester, 2001, pp. 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* Scholars are uncertain about the place and date of writing, and authorship, of Hosea, as well.

<sup>5</sup> See *The NIV Study Bible* notes on Hosea, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1985.

spiritual apostasy existed, as Baal worship infiltrated and permeated religious life. Israel abandoned righteousness and justice.<sup>6</sup>

From God's perspective, Israel's spiritual, moral, social, and political infidelity were as bad, and as damaging, as broken love, broken marriage, and broken covenant relationship, as depicted by Hosea's personal life experience of infidelity in marriage, and the message it conveyed.

### LITERARY CONTEXT

The book of Hosea is a painful love story: Hosea married Gomer, a woman who strayed to prostitution. However, Hosea continued to love her and finally brought her back.<sup>7</sup>

### GENERAL CONTEXT

Hosea has two main parts: (1) Hosea's problem marriage experience (1:1-3:5); and (2) Hosea's message to Israel, regarding her failed covenant relationship to God, and the impending consequences (4:1-14:9). Stuart sets the context of Hos 6:1-3 within the main division of Hos 5:8-7:16, and titles the section, "Wrath, return, restoration".<sup>8</sup> Hubbard, on the other hand, titles Hos 5:8-7:16 as "Politics runs a mob", and outlines Hos 6:1-3, in the smaller context of Hos 5:8-6:6, as follows:

1. Folly and greed in foreign affairs – 5:8-15.
2. Song of feeble penitence – 6:1-3.
3. Divine complaint of Israel's fickleness – 6:4-6.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For further reference, see R. B. Dillard, and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1993, pp. 353-362; Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament*, pp. 320-324; and Gary V. Smith, *OT Survey Part II: Job-Malachi*, Wheaton IL: Evangelical Training Association, 1991, pp. 45-47.

<sup>7</sup> E. P. Blair, *Abingdon Bible Handbook*, Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 1975, p. 168.

<sup>8</sup> Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, Word Bible Commentary, vol 31, Waco TX: Word Books, 1987, p. 96.

<sup>9</sup> D. A. Hubbard, *Hosea*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, D. J. Wiseman, ed., Leicester UK: IVP, 1989, p. 124.

The *NIV Study Bible* further suggests that Hos 6:1-3 depicts Israel's political situation.<sup>10</sup> God brings His judgment against Israel and Judah, because, instead of trusting God, when facing political dilemma, they sought security from foreign nations, Egypt, in particular. However, when Egypt fails to protect them, out of their misery, Israel returns to Yahweh. Yahweh will keep His promise, heal, and restore her.

Hosea depicts a blending of both prosaic/narrative and poetry, commonly used in the 8th century BC.<sup>11</sup> He also gives the impending judgment speech, and speeches of salvation and restoration.<sup>12</sup> He reports no vision.<sup>13</sup>

Other literary forms in Hosea are:

1. Proverbs used to summarise at crucial points (4:9, 11, 15; 8:7; 10:12).
2. Battle warnings given about impending judgment (5:8; 8:1).
3. Exhortation to repentance (6:1-3; 10:2; 12:6; 14:3). These reinforce the constant emphasis on return (cf. 2:7, 3:5).

Thus, the book of Hosea is “primarily poetic, though prose is found in two major places (1:1-2:1; 3:1-5). The most striking feature of the poetic/literary nature of the book is the use of metaphor and simile.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 1328.

<sup>11</sup> Hubbard, *Hosea*, p. 124.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Dillard and Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 359.



## **SPECIFIC LITERARY CONTEXT OF HOS 6:1-3**

### ***Genre and Form***

The text is in poetic form. A careful observation shows that even each verse structure is in an entirely different type of parallelism. Verse one is in antithetical parallelism, verse 2 is in synonymous parallelism, while verse three is in synthetic parallelism.<sup>15</sup>

v.1 *Antithetical parallelism:*

“Come let us return to the Lord.  
He has torn us to pieces  
But He will heal us;  
He has injured us  
But He will bind up our wounds.”

v.2 *Synonymous parallelism:*

“After two days, He will revive us;  
On the third day, He will restore us,  
That we may live in His presence.”

v.3 *Synthetic parallelism:*

“Let us acknowledge the Lord;  
Let us press on to acknowledge Him.  
As surely as the sun rises,  
He will appear;  
He will come to us like the winter rains,  
Like the spring rains that will water the earth.”

### ***Outline of Hos 6:1-3***

According to Stuart, this passage follows the “alternating doom-hope pattern that characterises the entire book.”<sup>16</sup> Stuart further states, “It represents a

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<sup>15</sup> Author’s observation.

<sup>16</sup> Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, p. 107.

faithful presentation of covenant teaching, because its orientation is eschatological, not immediate.”<sup>17</sup> Hos 6:1-3 can be outlined as follows:

1. A call to return to the Lord (6:1).
2. A call to strive to know the Lord (6:3).
3. An example of Yahweh’s faithfulness to heal and restore (6:1b, 2, 3b).

## **NOTES**

### ***A Call to Return to the Lord (6:1)***

In this penitential prayer, Hosea pleads with his people to return to the Lord. “He has torn us to pieces . . . but He will heal us, He has injured us, but he will bind up our wounds”, indicates that God, Himself, is using earthly instruments, like the Assyrians, to bring distress upon them. It is imperative to note that God did not sit down, watch passively, and allow the situation to come upon them. Rather, God was directly involved in their discipline (cf. Heb 12:1-12).

Hosea pleads with his people to return to the Lord, based on God’s covenant promises. For Hosea knew that God would never ultimately reject His people. God is consistent and dependable, and, therefore, will heal and restore them to full blessing. However, there is no elaboration of how God will bandage, heal, and restore them. It is something in the future. Nevertheless, the duration of their punishment and suffering is brief, “two days . . . on the third day, He will restore”.

### ***A Call to Strive to Know the Lord (6:2)***

“Let us acknowledge the Lord, let us press on to acknowledge Him.” Certainly, there is a deep desire or cry to know God. A proper knowledge of God produces a special relationship. There are times, when the knowledge of God is absent, when people hunger to know God. Yet knowledge, followed

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

by an expression of reliability of Yahweh, indicates that, in fact, God is knowable. “To know Yahweh means to accept His covenant relationship” (see 4:1).<sup>18</sup>

The comparisons to dependable occurrences, “the sun . . . the spring rain”, implies that God is faithful, and never changes. As Stuart states, “He will continue in the future to make Himself available to be known”.<sup>19</sup>

### ***An Example of Yahweh’s Faithfulness to Heal and Restore (6:3)***

Hosea’s call to Israel to come to the Lord to be bandaged, to be healed, to be restored, is based on God’s faithfulness. God will do it in the latter times. Although Hosea’s audience did not come to the Lord immediately, yet there was certainty that this would be fulfilled in the future.

### ***Summary***

Hos 6:1-3 is a penitent prayer, in which Hosea calls his people to return from their misery. Hosea knows that God is directly involved in their punishment. Their punishment, though very severe, is only for a short time. When they come to Him, or when He returns, He will bandage them, heal them, and restore them to full blessing. Hosea calls his people to strive for full acknowledgment of God – to know the Lord, and remain under His Lordship. This assurance of full, or total, restoration and blessing is eschatological in nature.

## **GRAMMATICAL AND LEXICAL DATA (WORD STUDY)**

### **WORD STUDY – “RESTORE/RESTORATION”**

To “restore” (or “restoration”) is the key word study in this scripture portion. A careful study groups them into the following categories of meanings.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

1. To restore to one's position, as in a career (Gen 40:13; Job 8:6; 2 Sam 8:3; 9:7; Is 1:26).
2. To restore life (Ps 71:20; 80:3, 7, 19; 85:4).
3. To restore physical, mental, emotional wholeness (Ps 43:1; 57:18; Jer 30:17).
4. To restore one's possessions and fortunes (Hos 6:11; 2 Sam 9:7; Ps 69:4; 126:4; Jer 30:18; 32:44; 33:11, 26; 48:47; 49:6; 39; Joel 3:1; Amos 9:11; Zeph 2:7).
5. To restore, by returning to the land after exile or displacement (Deut 30:3; Is 44:26; 61:4; Jer 16:15; 27:22; 30:3; 32:44; 33:26; 42:12; Nah 2:2; Zeph 3:20; Zech 9:12).
6. To restore from sin to God (Ps 51:12; 60:1; Jer 15:19; Lam 1:16; 5:21; Gal 6:1; Hos 6:2).
7. To restore all things, including the remnant of Israel, in the eschatological age (Is 49:6).

In the context of this passage, the usages of the word “restore” have several shades of meaning. It encompasses physical, mental, and emotional healing, and restoration of the people to their land. It implies spiritual or covenantal restoration to God. However, the total restoration, after punishment, is in the eschatological age. The *New Concise Bible Dictionary* rightly states:

The OT prophets looked forward to the day when God would restore His people to their own land, in a time of prosperity and bliss, example, Jer 27:22. This came to be associated with the Messiah, but Jesus pointed out that it began with John the Baptist (Matt 17:11) . . . Jesus did not deny there would be such a restoration in the future (Acts 1:6). And Peter looked forward to it at Jesus' return (Acts 3:21).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *New Concise Bible Dictionary*, Leicester UK: IVP, 1989, p. 472.

The *New Bible Dictionary* also contends that restoration is more eschatological in nature, when full restoration of everything, including the people of Israel, will be realised, with the return of Christ.<sup>21</sup>

### **SUMMARY**

From this context, it is safe to infer that:

1. The punishment inflicted upon the people, by the Lord Himself, is likened to two or three days, an imminent occurrence. However, restoration is assured.
2. Restoration may have immediate implication, but it is more eschatological in nature – the final, complete, and full restoration of all things.
3. God Himself will restore His people and everything to Himself – for His purposes and pleasure. The Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the agent of all eschatological restoration.

### **BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUMMARY**

There are some significant theological themes cited in this passage. Firstly, sin is a serious matter in God's sight. It is a betrayal of love and commitment. It is adulterous in nature. Therefore, God must judge and punish sin. Secondly, God's love for His people remains deep and strong. Out of His great love, He punishes those who sin, but forgives, heals, and restores those who come to Him in sincere repentance. Thirdly, the length of God's punishment is only brief, but His restoration purposes for His people, and the rest of creation, are forever.

In conclusion, this passage shows:

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<sup>21</sup> *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd edn, Leicester UK: IVP, 1996, pp. 1009-1010.

1. God judges and punishes those He loves, when they sin.
2. The purpose of His punishment, and infliction of pain, is to cause His people to repent, and turn to Him.
3. Punishments, afflictions, and sufferings are short-lived, from God's perspective.
4. When His people truly humble themselves, repent, and seek His ways, He keeps His promises. He forgives their sins, heals all their wounds, and restores them completely to Himself. True repentance, and a real desire to know God, is the only sure way to a complete healing and restoration.
5. Only God knows how long, or when, He will finally, completely restore His people, and His whole creation, to His ultimate purposes and glory, in the age to come.

### **APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION**

When we put our faith, trust, and confidence in others, and ourselves, rather than in God, we lose our vision and direction. When one fails to love God, and obey His commands, he commits spiritual adultery. On God's part, He loves His people. He is faithful, and keeps His covenant promises. However, God is no pleaser of man. God must judge and discipline those who do not keep faith with Him. In many cases, God disciplines His people, by letting them go through hardships, and face up with miserable circumstances, to cause them to repent, and return to Him. Only through a sincere repentance, and a real desire to know God, can He forgive, heal, and restore our fellowship with Him, and give credence to the epitome of our national constitution. Therefore, we must refocus, and strive for our vision, in the eternal hope of the full restoration we have in the living God of the Bible, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The crux of Hos 6:1-3 challenges us, as Papua New Guinean preachers, pastors, prophets, and evangelists to love our people, and to preach and present the gospel of Jesus with clarity and vigour. We should intercede and

plead with God for our people, and lead them to a sincere repentance and faith in Christ Jesus. This calls for both personal repentance, as well as communal and national repentance. God loves people, and is willing to forgive their sin, and restore them to fellowship with Himself. This challenge, and call to repentance, must be daily occurrences, just as 2 Chron 7:14 reminds us, “if my people, who are called by My name, humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land”.

Finally, God assures us that there is a hope for a complete restoration for all of us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and for the whole creation, on the day when Christ returns, judges the ungodly, and establishes His eternal kingdom. That is our greatest hope!

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## **BOOK REVIEW: *SPIRIT OF THE RAINFOREST: A YANOMAMÖ SHAMAN'S STORY***

**Doug Hanson**

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### **SUMMARY**

In his book, *The Spirit of the Rainforest*, Mark Ritchie depicts the conversion of a Venezuelan shaman, named Jungleman, to Christianity. The story, which begins in the 1950s, and concludes in the 1980s, is a story of the shaman and his spirits. It is a story of murder, rape, revenge, power, joy, and fear. It is a story of the shaman's interaction with, and dependence on, spirits, for daily life. However, it is also a story of Jungleman's people, the Yanomamö. It is a story of the impact of Christianity on the cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs, of the Yanomamö people.

Ritchie's burden in writing the book seems to be manifold. Firstly, he wants to dispel the myth that the Yanomamö people live an idyllic life, a life in Eden.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, Ritchie desires to present an authentic insider's view of the spirit world, and its impact on the Yanomamö.<sup>2</sup> In the book, we see daily life through the eyes and mind of Jungleman. Thirdly, Ritchie wants to show the supremacy of the Great Spirit *Yai Pada* over all spirits.<sup>3</sup> Although Ritchie never states it directly, it is easy to recognise *Yai Pada* as the God of the Bible.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Andrew Ritchie, *Spirit of the Rainforest*, 2nd edn, Chicago IL: Island Lake Press, 2000, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 216, 227.

Ritchie hopes *The Spirit of the Rainforest* will influence the reader, in several ways. Firstly, Ritchie hopes his readers will see their world through spiritual eyes, just as the Yanomamö do.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, he wants his readers to understand that change in culture begins on the inside of man, a spiritual change that exhibits itself in changed actions.<sup>5</sup> Thirdly, Ritchie hopes his readers will see the potential impact that *Yai Pada* could have on their lives.<sup>6</sup>

## EVALUATION

*Spirit of the Rainforest* has several strengths. Firstly, Ritchie accurately unfolds the truths of the spirit world. For most Westerners, interested in world evangelisation, the spirit world is something studied in the classroom, but not recognised in daily life. Ritchie brings the spirit world of the Yanomamö to life. The stories in *Spirit of the Rainforest* should challenge every reader to look at cultures, whether it is the reader's own culture, or another culture, through spiritual eyes.

Secondly, the structure of the book highlights the long-term mentality a person interested in world evangelism should have. The story begins in approximately 1950, when Jungleman was a child, and warrior male spirits and beautiful female spirits came to him.<sup>7</sup> Later, when Jungleman was a man, *nabas*, the Yanomamö word for "foreigners", came to the area.<sup>8</sup> A shaman named Shoefoot subsequently decided to throw away his spirits and follow the Creator Spirit, *Yai Pada*.<sup>9</sup> Many years later, in 1982, *Yai Pada* "reached out and grabbed" Jungleman, and chased away his spirits.<sup>10</sup> It had taken a long time for Jungleman to follow *Yai Pada*.

Thirdly, Ritchie writes the book from the perspective of Jungleman, which brings the reader into the story in a way that would not be possible, from a

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 251.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 252.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 21. They took him to *Omawa* Spirit, the leader of all jungle spirits.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 228.

third-person perspective. For example, the power of first person is evident in the following quote. Jungleman says, “When you have spirits as wonderful as mine are, you would never think of ignoring their advice.”<sup>11</sup> A person interested in world evangelism must understand that they are dealing with thinking, feeling people, not objects of conversion.

Fourthly, Ritchie aptly shows the power of *Yai Pada* to change lives. In the book, many followers of *Yai Pada* live in the Honey village. Consequently, the Honey village gains a reputation as a peaceful and prosperous village, and becomes the envy of all other villages.<sup>12</sup> This positive impact should encourage those interested in world evangelism, that the gospel will show itself, if accepted and followed.

The only weakness in the book is a subjective one. Western readers may question the credibility of the book. The events seem so outlandish that it seems impossible for them to be true. Nevertheless, Ritchie repeatedly states that the events are true.<sup>13</sup> In fact, he states at the beginning of the book, “truth is stranger than fiction”.<sup>14</sup> The book authentically tells the story of the Yanomamö people, no matter how strange the truth.

## REFLECTION

Several thought-provoking ideas surface, after reflecting on the material in the book. Firstly, the conversion stories in the book emphasise aspects of salvation that are refreshing. Evangelical Christians from the West discuss salvation primarily in terms of the judicial concept of justification. However, Ritchie characterised the conversions of the Yanomamö people from a relationship standpoint, a changing of allegiance – a giving up of old spirits to follow the Creator Spirit. For instance, Jungleman followed several spirits before his conversion: Charming – a beautiful female spirit who Jungleman

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 8, 245, 246, 247, 248.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

regularly seduced;<sup>15</sup> Healing Spirit – a spirit Jungleman would call on to heal sicknesses in the village;<sup>16</sup> and Jaguar Spirit – a spirit who gave Jungleman courage.<sup>17</sup> Ritchie then describes Jungleman’s conversion:

*Yai Wana Naba Laywa* reached out and grabbed me. I felt so safe. . . . He stood over me, pulled me away from my spirits, and said to me, “Don’t worry. You’ll be all right. I’m here to protect you.” Then, with a big voice, he said to my spirits, “Leave him alone. He’s mine.” They scampered in every direction, like a herd of terrified hogs. And he was right; I was his.<sup>18</sup>

Anyone interested in world evangelism must realise that different people will respond to different truths regarding salvation. Salvation is justification, but it is also adoption, reconciliation, repentance, regeneration, and redemption. The Yanomamö people seemed to latch onto the adoption aspect of salvation in their conversions. They now belonged to the Creator God. The book, however, may not have adequately captured all of the Yanomamö believers’ pre-conversion understanding of the gospel. For example, after his conversion, Jungleman states, “You told me, before, about how the Great Spirit had become a man, but I was kept from seeing it.”<sup>19</sup> The incarnation is not discussed anywhere else in the book.

Secondly, the power of the jungle spirits, in the *Spirit of the Rainforest*, was unsettling. The fact that the spirits could cause sickness and death is beyond the thinking of most Christians in the West. Jungleman states,

I asked my spirits if they could kill other children. “I don’t do that”, Charming told me, “but I can get you spirits who can.” She introduced me to Snakeman. . . . The next day I followed the directions that

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 228.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 229.

Snakeman gave me. . . . We later got a message from the village that one of their children had died of a snake bite.<sup>20</sup>

The author's addendum to the book contains an unsettling aspect. Ritchie states that a Yanomamö, while on a trip to the United States, "identified the signs and symbols of many of the spirits right here in our 'civilised' society. He has no problem understanding the Columbine High School massacre (Colorado, 1999), or any other killing spree."<sup>21</sup>

Missionaries must be cognisant of the power of evil spirits. Eph 6:12 clearly pronounces, "our struggle is not against flesh and blood". Most Christians from the West do not give much credence to these words, despite the fact that the words are from God's Word. However, missionaries cannot afford such an attitude of indifference.

Thirdly, the allure of the jungle spirits was disquieting. Jungleman states how he enjoyed his time spent with the spirits, "My spirits came into the *shabono* of my chest, and I was happy to see them. We danced, and they talked to me."<sup>22</sup> At another time, Jungleman states:

I danced with my spirits, a dance that lasted through most of the night. It was a wonderful celebration. Some of the other beautiful women come to dance with me. They are wonderful, too. . . . [Charming] danced me out into the jungle, and made love to me until I was weak. It was the great victory of my life.<sup>23</sup>

Most Christians in the West do not understand how appealing false spirits can be. However, scripture states, "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light" (2 Cor 11:14). It is interesting that Jungleman, in his first encounter

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 251. The Yanomamö was Shoefoot, the first shaman to become a Christian.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 36. A "*shabono*" is an enclosure around a Yanomamö village, built primarily for protection from enemies. The use of *shabono* in this passage may imply that the spirits indwelt Jungleman.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

with the false spirits, described the experience saying, “Suddenly, I looked up and the jungle turned so beautiful – more beautiful than any Yanomamö has ever seen it. The most beautiful Yanomamö people in the world came towards me.”<sup>24</sup> Missionaries must acknowledge how attractive false spirits can be to those seeking answers to life. People, desperate for answers to problems of life, will turn to anyone to solve those problems. Such was the case of the Yanomamö people.

Fourthly, people are concerned most about meeting their daily needs. The Yanomamö called on spirits for many reasons, two of which were hunger<sup>25</sup> and sickness.<sup>26</sup> Where there are needs, people will look for solutions. Missionaries must be ready to give answers. Christ provided food for the hungry (Matt 14:21), and healing for the sick (Matt 8:16). To be effective witnesses for Christ, missionaries must be practical in their help. Missionaries must seek to help provide the daily necessities of life. Missionaries must have a compassionate hands-on flavour to their ministries, to minister as Christ did.

## CONCLUSION

The *Spirit of the Rainforest* is an eye-opening book into the spirit world of animists. Ritchie powerfully and accurately tells the story of the spirit world’s influence on village peoples’ lives in the jungles of Venezuela. Anyone interested in working with animistic people or believers, who have come out of animism, should read this book. It may very well change your worldview.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

# **BOOK REVIEW: A TIME FOR MISSION: THE CHALLENGE FOR GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Samuel Escobar, the author of *A Time for Mission*, is the President of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, and of the United Bible Societies.<sup>1</sup> Besides holding these portfolios, he is a Professor of Missiology at the Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Pennsylvania, USA.

Being a Peruvian, Escobar acknowledges, in his preface, the role of missionaries in the establishing of the church in Peru, and in his own Christian discipleship. Escobar believes that, since the gospel came to Peruvians through the sharing of the Word of God by missionaries, Peruvians are bound to share the gospel with others.<sup>2</sup>

## **REVIEW**

The rambling style makes it difficult to halt at any point and think. The themes are lightly treated, as in a lecture, so that we cannot get much meat out of it. The reason could be that the book targets a specific audience, those having an exposure to missions, and the trends of missions.

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Escobar, *A Time for Mission: The Challenge for Global Christianity*, Leicester UK: IVP, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Preface.

In the chapter entitled, “We Believe in a Missionary God”, the author establishes the fact that God is actively involved in our human history. In another chapter, entitled “Christ: God’s Best Missionary”, he speaks of Christ as the model for missionaries. However, it is a bit jarring to the ear to call God a missionary God, and Jesus, the greatest missionary, especially in this age, when the word “missionary” could have many connotations. If God is not a missionary God, and if Jesus is not the greatest missionary, does one’s view of God in any way denigrate Him to a lesser degree? Is missionary enterprise the end of all things? This book has the common missiological pitfalls of viewing all things under the broad gaze of the missiologist. However, the book serves to bring to us a broad view of the global church, in its present task of missions, from the observer’s point of view.

The author begins his book with a story of individual Christians, who are living away from their homes, and are now involved in missionary work. They were not missionaries in the traditional sense, who had sensed the call of God, and left their homes, but individuals, whose fortunes led them far away into new, foreign cultures. Now, having found Christ, they cannot sit still, but share the gospel with others, whose culture is different from their own. Mrs Pinto, from Bolivia, living in Germany, shared the life-changing gospel with Jose Antonio, who is from Spain. This is an example of how people of all nations are involved in sharing the gospel, in most unconventional ways.

We are thrilled to observe the movement of Christian missions now – missionaries are going from all nations to all nations. In the 21st century, with its facilities of travel, and the boom of information technology, people are more mobile than in the past, and the burden of sharing the gospel has shifted from the traditional sending churches in the developed world to the churches in the developing world.

From this vantage point, Samuel Escobar goes on to describe the frailty of man, and the glory and power of the gospel, as succinctly put by St Paul as “treasure in jars of clay”.<sup>3</sup> The author points to the fact of similarity between

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.



the evangelisation, in cross-cultural context, in the 1st century, and today's situation of evangelism in poorer societies of the world, encompassing many cultures. He argues that the situation is the same. The similarity is striking, in that one would opt for a new perspective of missions, as opposed to the prevalent Eurocentric view of establishing churches, which has been the experience of missions in the 20th century. This similarity of the life and mission of the early church to the present, among the poor and marginalised, is the key to rediscovering the role of laymen, women, children, and elderly people, all involved in the process of missionary enterprise.

Tracing the growth of the church, with events of the past until the present, the author now concludes that the vibrancy of Christian faith, in the poorer societies, and in the so-called Third World, is noteworthy, when we think of missions and their work.<sup>4</sup>

Considering globalisation, under the title, "A Brave New World", the writer describes the process of globalisation, and how it affected people's lives so much that Desecrates' famous saying, "I think, therefore I am" can be safely changed to "I buy, therefore I am". He warns, however, of the danger of superimposing the ideas of globalisation onto our missions and their ideologies, but acknowledges it as a tool for the spread of the gospel.<sup>5</sup> One must be careful in assessing man's life. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 13:15).

Contextualisation is a way the text of the Bible is understood, within a given context of culture and history. While this is so, one must be careful not to make idols of our language and culture. Reacting to the wide sweep of globalisation, contextualisation can be taken to the extreme of isolation. In the same token, one cannot ignore the benefits of exposure of local cultures to a wider audience. There is a learning process going on from one culture to another, and across all cultures. Here is the tension. The missionary has to be sensitive that he could be a carrier of globalisation tools in one hand, and,

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

therefore, should give adequate hearing to the local culture and language that he is based in as a witness of the gospel. Yet, one should not forget the dimensions of the gospel, that it is universal and its application calls forth universal response.

In chapters five and six, Escobar focuses on the content and the means of the gospel. In postmodern societies, such as what we are ushered into now, Christ is still the point of attraction. The mission involves obedience to the great commission to reach the unreached people, who are found within the vicinity of our own societies. What the Apostle had in mind, when he quoted these words, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (1 Cor 15:32), seems to apply to our generation as well. People in the world are searching for answers. Can we reconstruct a safer, humane world, not with Marxist ideology, but with the message of Jesus Christ? There is new openness in today's societies, which reflects the hunger and thirst of mankind for the truth of God. What should not be forgotten in our missionary ventures, however, are the keys of prayer, and a fresh view of humanity, with Christ's compassion. The message is about Christ Himself. The model of missionaries is Christ Himself. His incarnation and His depiction of the Suffering Servant of God are the guidelines for us to follow.

In another chapter, the author highlights the importance of knowing the Holy Spirit, as the participant in the work of missions. Without Him, no mission can thrive, no missionary can be successful. To emphasise this point, Escobar points to the introduction of the Holy Spirit by the Lord Jesus Himself in John's gospel. The Holy Spirit is the fulfilment of God's promise; He was the energiser in the ministry of Jesus, and God uses people who are filled with the Spirit. In fact, the book of Acts can be read as an extension of Jesus' teaching about the Holy Spirit, found in John's gospel. The missions now have to look ahead, with the sensitivity to the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit in all our ventures.

Another most important element in successful missions, is how much we give importance to God's word. Wherever we find churches thriving in the world,

it is because they have discovered the truth of God in the Bible, in a fresh, living way. Instead of depending on the Western interpretation of the Bible, and its diversified theologies, Christians in the Third World have found the scriptures as the true embodiment of God's truth, and that Christ is the centre and end of scriptures.

### **CONCLUSION**

In closing, the author appeals to a new way of looking at the world, taking his cue from Paul's missionary experience, as outlined in 2 Corinthians.<sup>6</sup> The outcome will be new partnerships in missions, and the global church at odds with the world's values, but confidently moving in the direction of God, proclaiming Christ. The last chapter provides information on current publications in mission theology, and a few reference books.

This book enables readers to see the global church, with its inherent task of missions in our generation.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.