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Mbahomean Community**
Cephas Kuba

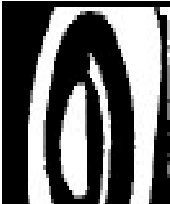
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MELANESIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

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. The Editorial Team has edited all articles to meet the requirements of the Journal.

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EDITORIAL

This volume offers a variety of topics, related to Christian theology in Melanesia: contextualisation of a Solomon Islands' feast, the history of the Catholic church in the highlands of Papua New Guinea, and lessons for the Melanesian church regarding suffering in missions. Each topic, in its own way, adds to the on-going discussion of applying God's Word in a Melanesian context.

Cephas Kuba, a Solomon Islander, compares Kabu feasting in his community with biblical feasts, analysing the contributions the Kabu feast makes to the Mbahomean community, and making recommendations to the South Seas Evangelical churches (SSEC) about whether the Christian community should participate in this cultural celebration. Other church leaders could employ the method the author uses in his analysis, as they evaluate cultural festivities in their own communities.

Zdzislaw Kruczek provides a history of Catholic missions in the Papua New Guinea Highlands. Beginning in 1934, with the entry of Divine Word missionaries into the central highlands of Papua New Guinea, Zdzislaw highlights events in the ensuing 72 years of missionary endeavours. He concludes the article by looking to the future, stating that there are three priorities: family, education, and catechesis, together with proper care being taking of everybody in the Archdiocese.

Continuing in the vein of the history of the Catholic church in Papua New Guinea, Jan Walkusz looks at Zdzislaw Kruczek's academic achievements, from the "typologico-essential" perspective, and probes his historical assessment of the church in PNG. As part of his synopsis, Jan discusses Zdzislaw's dissertation, written in Polish, entitled *Catholic Mission in the Mt Hagen Archdiocese in Papua New Guinea 1934-1984*, which he completed in May, 2006, at the Catholic University of Lublin, Poland.

Jan's and Zdzislaw's articles are a valuable source of information for anyone interested in the history of the Catholic church in the highlands of Papua New Guinea.

Amos Leana turns our attention to suffering in missions, acknowledging that Christian life and missions are more than power and victory – they include suffering. Suffering exists, because we live in a fallen world. Due to original sin, man and nature are fallen. Amos explores the lives of Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah, Jesus, and Paul and finds four common themes of suffering: suffering glorifies God, God shares in our suffering, believers grow spiritually through suffering, and there is hope in suffering. His message to the Melanesian church is clear: suffering is not optional in missions. Will the Melanesian church, one that is slowly becoming a missionary-sending church, preach this truth?

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.

TRADITIONAL KABU FEASTING IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS' MBAHOMEAN COMMUNITY

Cephas Kuba

Cephas Kuba hails from the Solomon Islands, and graduated from the Christian Leaders' Training College, Papua New Guinea, in 2002 with a Bachelor of Theology degree.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years, prominent church leaders, and some lay people, have been having difficulties in dealing with the issue of Kabu feasting among the Mbahomea community of the Solomon Islands. Kabu feasting is a traditional feast, which the Mbahomea community observes. It involves the exchange of food, in order to strengthen relationship in the community. Some church leaders thought that this traditional feast had to do with ancestral spirits, and, therefore, should not be observed. Furthermore, they said, that this feast had some negative effects on the church. For instance, the Kabu feast encouraged pride and boasting among communities. It also brought about social ills, and placed a financial burden on families. Therefore, some church leaders thought that Christians should not participate in this traditional feast.

However, other prominent church leaders argued in support of this feast, because they believed that it was already Christianised by the missionaries. Furthermore, they also understood that the prime purpose of this traditional feast was to bring the Mbahomean communities together, to enhance good relationship among them. It was also an avenue toward cooperative work in the community, and it was able to help young and old, men and women, to learn from each other about their cultural values. Therefore, these church leaders supported the feast.

This issue has been a great concern for the church for quite some time, resulting in division and tension among Christians. Therefore, the author wishes to address this issue to help the Mbahomean South Seas Evangelical church (SSEC) to evaluate celebrating Kabu, in light of the biblical pattern of feasting. At the same time, recommendations will be made for improving this feast, in order to make it more meaningful for Christians.

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON FEASTING

This section will discuss three of the Old Testament biblical feasts, and the Lord's Supper in the New Testament.

OLD TESTAMENT FEASTS

God gave several feasts to the Jewish people to celebrate throughout the year. These feasts were not just ordinary feasts, like the ones we celebrate today, for instance, Independence Day, birthdays, Mother's and Father's Days, but were religious feasts, which God Himself appointed and sanctified as holy, joyful occasions. Ryken and Wilhoit state that these biblical celebrations were filled with "images of joyful voices, festive music, and dancing and abundant food. They were not simply parties, but celebrations of God's goodness towards His people."¹ These feasts brought together the 12 tribes of Israel, to commemorate God's sovereign love and goodness towards them, and to renew their love relationship with God and to each other.

God established three significant pilgrimage feasts in the Old Testament for the Jewish people to observe: the Passover Feast, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Scholars have made their own assumptions regarding the roots of these feasts. For instance, Fleming suggests Israelites were largely farming people, and their feasts were built into their agriculture cycle,² however, the author favours Bromley's idea that these feasts not only had an agricultural significance, but were

¹ *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, s.v. "feast".

² Don Fleming, *Bridge Bible Dictionary*, Brisbane Qld: Bridgeway Publications, 1990, p. 133.

also meant to commemorate national events.³ The chart, below, explains the occasions, months, and references of these pilgrimage feasts.⁴

Month Number	Jewish Name	Modern Name	Day Date	Occasion	Scriptures
First	<i>Nisan</i>	April	14	Passover	Lev 23:5 Deut 16:2
			15	Unleavened bread	Ex 23:14-17
Third	<i>Siwani</i>	June	6	Pentecost	Deut 16:9-12
				First fruits and Harvest	Ex 23:16 Lev 25:8-9
Seventh	<i>Tishri</i>	October	1-2	Trumpets	Lev 23:24
			10	Day of atonement	Lev 23:27
			15-21	Tabernacles	Lev 23:34 Deut 16:13

The Passover Feast

The Definition of the Passover Feast

According to Roland Vaux, “Passover” is derived from the Hebrew word פסח = *pesach*, which means Yahweh “jumped over”, or “left out”, the houses where the Passover was being served.⁵

Origin of the Passover Feast

The writer of Exodus recorded that the Passover Feast began in Egypt, some think around 1446 BC, at the time when God delivered the Israelites from a 430-year period of slavery, under the Pharaohs of Egypt. On the evening of Passover, each family, which trusted God, killed an animal, and spilled its blood on the doorposts and lintel of their house, so that, when the angel of death passed over each of the houses, he would not slay the first-born sons inside the blood-smeared houses. God proclaimed

³ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Old Testament feasts”.

⁴ R. K. Harrison. *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary*, Leicester UK: IVP, 1982, p. 214.

⁵ Roland Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1958, p. 488.

to Moses and Aaron that the month of Abib, equivalent to March and April on our calendar, should be the first month of the religious year, because that was the month the Israelites escaped from bondage in Egypt. Since then, the Israelites have observed the month of Abib, later known as Nisan, as the beginning of their religious calendar.

Purpose of the Passover Feast

The primary purpose of celebrating the Passover feast was to provide an annual opportunity for each Israelite person to recall that, before the Passover, the Jewish people had been slaves in Egypt,⁶ but God's mighty acts had freed them, and sustained them, through the wilderness journey. Furthermore, through the Passover feast, the Israelites would renew their covenant relationship with God and each other.

Practice of the Passover Feast

On the tenth day of the first month, each family was to take a one-year-old male lamb or goat,⁷ without any defect, and guard it well until the 14th day. If the family was small, two families could join together to celebrate the feast. On the 14th day, the head of each family was to kill the lamb,⁸ and spread the blood on the two doorposts and the lintel of the house. The Feast was to take place during the night, and all the meat had to be consumed by men or by fire, because it was forbidden to leave any left over for the next day.

Importantly, every person in every family was required to attend the Passover feast. Foreigners were not allowed to participate, as Youngblood stated, "Foreigners, including temporary residents and hired workers, would not be permitted. The purchased slaves could take part only after being circumcised."⁹

⁶ Ex 6:6-7.

⁷ Ex 12:5.

⁸ Ex 12:6.

⁹ Ronald F. Youngblood, *Commentary on Exodus*, Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1983, p. 64-65.

Effects of the Passover

- Participating in the Passover feast helped Israelites to value their identity as the people of God, regardless of the tribe to which they belonged.
- The Passover feast strengthened the people's relationship with God and with each other.
- Each new generation learnt about their God, and about fearing and loving Him.
- The celebration aspect of the feast stimulated a longing for it.

Conclusion

This was an important feast for the Hebrews to observe annually, because it commemorated God's sovereign love and goodness towards them, and gave them an opportunity to renew their love relationship with God, and with each other. The failure to honour God, and each other, in this feast resulted in God's anger. God expected the Israelites to honour Him, and to love and be unified with each other, as they came to observe this feast.

The Feast of Tabernacles

Definition

"Tabernacle" is a transliteration of the word used by the Vulgate, and means little to modern readers,¹⁰ because it does not refer to the Tabernacle used in the wilderness, but to the temporary huts, in which the Israelites resided for a week during this feast.

Origin of the Feast of Tabernacles

The Bible¹¹ states that God was the one who instituted this great feast for the Israelites. It was held on 15-21 Tishri, which is equivalent to September and October in the modern-day calendar. This period marks the completion of the grain harvest, and the ingathering of the grapes.

¹⁰ Vaux, *Israel*, p. 495.

¹¹ Lev 23:33-44.

This feast has been described as the most joyful celebration. The Israelites started to observe this feast when they came into Canaan.

There have been records of the Israelites celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles after King Solomon's completion of the temple, and continuing until the time of Jesus.¹²

Purpose of the Feast of Tabernacles

The primary purpose of celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles was to provide an opportunity for the Israelites to remember their wandering in the wilderness, after having been delivered from Egypt. They were to share their material possessions with the poor, needy, and orphans among them, and to sing and dance with a joyful voice unto the Lord, because God was the one who had delivered them from Egypt.

Practice of the Feast of Tabernacles

The feast went from 15-21 Tishri. During the eight days of celebration, the Israelites were to live in booths¹³ made from tree branches. They would live in the booths for seven days, as a reminder of the tents they lived in when they were in the wilderness. "It was a time of joy for the entire family, sons and daughters, servants, Levities, foreigners, the fatherless, and widows, all joined in the celebration."¹⁴

The first and the eighth days were a time of rest, and nobody was allowed to work. There were a number of sacrifices¹⁵ made during the week, and people brought gifts and freewill offerings, according to whatever they had vowed.

¹² Fleming, *Dictionary*; and 2 Chr 8:12-13; John 7:2.

¹³ Lev 23:42.

¹⁴ J. Samuel Schultz, *Exodus: God Among His People*, Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1983, p. 112.

¹⁵ Lev 23:35-36.

Effects of the Tabernacle Feast

- This helped the Israelites to value God's goodness to them, and, in return, they would offer gifts to God, and share their blessings with others.
- Participation also affected their emotions, causing them to sing, dance, and shout praises to God for His goodness.

Conclusion

It was understood that the Feast of Tabernacles was the most joyous of all the biblical feasts. It was a time the Israelites recalled their wilderness wandering, and how God provided for them by His mighty power, guiding them into the Promised Land. In response to God, they gratefully shared their material possessions with the needy. Love and unity were evident in the midst of the community, when they came to observe this feast.

The Feast of Weeks/Pentecost

Definition

The Feast of Weeks referred to the Israelites' harvest festival, which was held 50 days after the Passover feast. In the New Testament it is known as Pentecost, which comes from a Greek word *πεντηκόστη*,¹⁶ which is a translation of the Old Testament Hebrew for "50".

Origin of the Feast of Weeks

The Feast of Weeks began at the giving of the law at Mt Sinai,¹⁷ however, in the Old Testament, this particular feast was known as the Feast of First Fruits or the Feast of Harvest. Originally, it was a harvest feast, usually held on 6 Sivan,¹⁸ to celebrate the conclusion of the grain harvest, and it was usually celebrated in the Temple.

¹⁶ It was held 50 days, or seven weeks, after the time they began to harvest the grain. See also Acts 2:1.

¹⁷ Lev 23:15-22.

¹⁸ Equivalent to May-June.

Purpose of the Feast of Weeks

The purpose of this particular feast was for the entire nation of Israel to acknowledge God as the giver of the land of Canaan, and all its material blessings. During this feast, the Israelites would give back to God the first fruits of their produce, for instance, loaves of bread and animal sacrifices, acknowledging that God was, indeed, the source of all that the land had produced.

Practice of the Feast of Weeks

After the Passover Feast, the people would return to their homes, “and, for the next six weeks, they were busy harvesting, first the barley, and then the wheat”.¹⁹ At the end of the wheat harvest, the people showed their thanks to God by presenting two loaves of leavened bread. They also presented to Him an animal sacrifice, cereal, other gifts, and drink offerings.²⁰ No hard work was allowed during the period of holy gathering, the needs of the poor and the strangers were to be remembered at this time, and this was known to be a joyful occasion.²¹

Effects of the Feast of Weeks

This feast developed recognition that God was the originator and giver of everything that existed on earth, including the Promised Land that God had given to them. This understanding moved them to commemorate, annually, the Feast of Weeks. Their participation helped them to see the needs of others, and to give gifts to the needy, orphans, and the widows among them.

Conclusion

God intended these feasts for the people to present the “first fruits” of their produce back to Him. They were to acknowledge Him, not only as their God, but also as the one, who provided for their needs. God’s intention was also that they share their harvest blessing with others

¹⁹ Ralph Gower, *The New Manners and the Customs of the Bible*, Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1987, p. 375.

²⁰ Lev 23:19-20.

²¹ Harrison, *Leviticus*, p. 218.

among them, who were in need. This feast brought honour to God, and unified the whole community.

Negative Effects of the Old Testament Feasts

Though the biblical feasts were holy and important, they also had negative effects. Firstly, God expected the Israelites to celebrate these feasts with sincerity of heart. Yet the Israelites failed to honour God's expectations. In response, God raised up the prophet Amos to speak against them.²² God showed His anger by destroying their crops.

Secondly, at times, the Israelites carelessly offered unacceptable animals, when they came to observe these feasts, thus exhibiting their selfishness, dishonesty, and pride. God also spoke against these actions, through the prophet Isaiah.²³

Thirdly, God came to see these feasts as meaningless, corrupt, and sinful,²⁴ because, after a time, the Israelites celebrated with wrong motives, honouring themselves rather than God. God then spoke out against these practices.

FEASTING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The discussion will centre on the particular feast that Jesus initiated for His disciples.

Definition of the Lord's Supper

Following are Fleming's descriptions of the Lord's Supper:²⁵

- Paul called it, literally, the "Supper of the Lord", because Christians observed it on the Lord's authority, and in His honour.²⁶

²² Amos 5:12-24.

²³ Is 5:10-12.

²⁴ Is 1:12-14.

²⁵ Fleming, *Dictionary*, p. 265.

²⁶ 1Cor 11:23-35.

- It was also known as “Communion”, meaning an act of fellowship, or of sharing of Christ.²⁷
- Luke called it the “breaking of the bread”, a part of the meal.²⁸
- Another name is the *Eucharist*, from the Greek, meaning “thanksgiving”, in reference to Jesus’ thanking God for the bread and the wine.²⁹

Origin of the Lord’s Supper

The Bible is clear that Jesus Christ instituted the Lord’s Supper³⁰ while eating the Passover meal with His disciples the night before His trial and crucifixion around AD 30-33. During the Passover meal, Jesus took some bread and wine from the table, passed it around among His disciples, and invited each one to eat and drink. The bread and the wine were symbols of His body and His blood.³¹

Concepts of the Lord’s Supper

Clark states, “Eating and drinking wine together at the Lord’s Supper is more than just a remembrance of Christ’s suffering and death.”³² It is a spiritual sharing together, in the body and the blood of Jesus Christ, proclaiming the benefit of Christ’s death. The apostle Paul urged all believers to keep observing this feast until Jesus returns.³³ Another significant aspect of this feast is the important companionship in worship in the church. It empowers believers,³⁴ as they meet to sing songs, pray, and learn from the scriptures. This enables believers to link together as the body of Christ, in spite of different family backgrounds.

²⁷ 1Cor 10:16.

²⁸ Luke 22:19.

²⁹ Mark 14: 22-23; 1 Cor 11:24.

³⁰ Luke 22:8.

³¹ Matt 26:26-28.

³² G. Arthur Clark, *New Testament Principles*, New York NY: Loizeaux Brothers, 1962, p. 33.

³³ 1Cor 11:26.

³⁴ Acts 2:42-47.

Practice of the Lord's Supper

During the time Christ Jesus sat with His disciples around the table, He took bread and wine and shared it with them.³⁵ Each one received it with thanksgiving. During the days of the early church, believers met regularly to celebrate the Lord's Supper in different homes. Scripture conveys that the Lord's Supper had become part of their daily lives.³⁶ Later, the early church ate the Lord's Supper on a weekly basis,³⁷ but the practice of sharing with those who were in need was still an important component of the feast.

Effects of the Lord's Supper

Just like the feasts from the Old Testament, this feast also had its effects.

The Positive Effects

- As a result of participation among the body of believers, it enhanced companionship among the believers. They saw themselves as one family, and, as such, they shared their belongings³⁸ with those who were in great need, and their food with those who came to celebrate the Lord's Supper.
- Despite persecution, the Christians persevered. Participation in the Lord's Supper brought renewed mind, strength, and a growing love relationship with God. They remained loyal and faithful to God.

Negative Effects

- Man's approach to the Lord's Supper was tainted by wrong motives. The congregation participated to gain favour with man.³⁹
- Others participated out of greed and selfishness. They ate their finest food without thought of others, and Paul was

³⁵ Luke 22:17-19.

³⁶ Acts 2:46.

³⁷ Acts 20:7.

³⁸ Acts 2:42-46.

³⁹ 1 Cor 11:22-33.

critical of this attitude, when he addressed the believers at Corinth.⁴⁰

Conclusion

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, when He shared the Passover meal with His disciples. In the meal, He helped them to understand the significance of the bread and wine. The early church was urged to come together to celebrate the Lord's Supper, to help them to recall and appreciate what Christ had done on the cross. They were to celebrate in joyful singing, dancing, praying, and sharing of their possessions with those in need. These observances were to be done with genuine love for God and the community. The Lord's Supper is still very significant to believers today, because it will restore and strengthen a love relationship with God and fellow Christian brothers and sisters. In response to God, Christians are supposed to show sincere love to others, by giving gifts to them, in response to God.

KABU FEAST AMONG THE MBAHOMEA COMMUNITY

The Mbahomea community is similar to any other Solomon Islands community, where feasts are an integral part of the culture. The feasts differ from one tribe to another throughout the Solomon Islands; nevertheless, they serve a common purpose of giving life, strength, renewal, and identity.

The Mbahomea community has various types of feasts for different occasions. *Save Vale* is a feast to mark the completion of a chief's house. *Vuvutu Ngari* is similar to child dedication in the church. *Pichukurina* is a feast for the dead. *Livosai* refers to a marriage feast. *Ponikibo* signifies compensation and reconciliation feasting. *Pesu* is a feast given in appreciation for assistance in making of gardens, or help in tribal warfare. Some of these feasts are no longer observed, while others, such as *Livosai*, *Ponikibo*, and *Vuvutu Ngari* are still observed today.

One particular feast, which will be discussed in detail in this paper, stands out as most significant to the Mbahomea community, is called the

⁴⁰ 1 Cor 11:20-21.

Kabu feast. The feast is important because it links the Mbahomea people with their ancestral spirits, in terms of renewal, thanksgiving, and identity. Furthermore, the feast brings the communities together to enhance love, friendship, and unity in the community.

IDENTITY OF THE MBAHOMEA

The Mbahomea community is located in the central part of the largest island of Guadalcanal. Central Guadalcanal consists of four communities: Malongo, Valolo, Betilonga, and Mbahomea. Mbahomea is located in the centre of the four communities. Appendix A provides more information about the background and location of this community. Languages cause many divisions throughout the Solomon Islands, as in all Melanesian countries. Just in Central Guadalcanal, there are three different languages.⁴¹

The term Mbahomea has two separate parts: *Mba* meaning “OK”, and *homea* meaning “you do it”. The term refers back to the time when ancestors, in the past century, participated in tribal wars, wealth sorcery, feasting, and *Tiagi*.⁴² The word “Mbahomea” conveys a message to tribes far and near, informing them about the Mbahomea tribes’ readiness to declare war any time another tribe challenges or schemes against them. In other words, they are saying to other tribes, “We are already getting ready to retaliate.”

The Mbahomea community is made up of two major clans: the Garavu and Manukiki. These two clans have their own sub-clans, similar to the Numai clan⁴³ in Simbu Province of Papua New Guinea. These major clans worshipped and sacrificed to different ancestral spirits at the appropriate shrines. They also owned separate blocks of land, among which they used to migrate. The land boundary could be identified easily by dividing ranges and streams. Though each Mbahomea clan

⁴¹ These are the Teha, Lalaona, and Suta.

⁴² Mbahomean word for “compensation”.

⁴³ J. Knight, “A Case Study of a Feast”, 1999, p. 176.

worshipped and sacrificed to different ancestral spirits, yet they were all bound by a common culture.⁴⁴

DEFINITION AND THE ORIGIN OF KABU

The word “Kabu” has two separate meanings. It could be “a variety of food brought together for storage”, or “a huge assortment of food being consumed among different people”.⁴⁵

Origin of Kabu Feasting

Originally, ancestral spirits introduced the Kabu feast to the Mbahomea community. These spirits, known as the *Taovia Vaituru*, “someone, somewhere, up there”, were the initiators, protectors, and givers of life, wealth, land, and powers for each clan in the Mbahomea community.⁴⁶

The ancestral spirits gave the Kabu feast to each clan, so they can show respect for the ancestral spirits. The feast was a time to renew thanksgiving and identity. For instance, the ancestral spirits desired a *gut fala stay*⁴⁷ between themselves and their clans, and they even wanted to attract neighbouring clans. Therefore, the ancestral spirits considered the Kabu feast the appropriate time to strengthen weak relationships, and even to improve relationships with other clans. Bad relationships between the clans and the spirits would result in the withdrawal of blessings, or even death.

There is no fixed time for observing the Kabu feast; it depends entirely on the adequate supply of pigs, and plentiful garden produce. This is similar to the *Bone Gene* pig festival of the Numai in Simbu Province in Papua New Guinea. A Kabu feast cannot be held unless a clan is prosperous.

Main Purposes of Kabu Feasting

Firstly, the Kabu feast is to renew both vertical and horizontal relationships, between the clan and their ancestral spirit, and between the

⁴⁴ They had shared beliefs and moral values.

⁴⁵ Chief Amuraih Launi of Chichinge, interview by author, May, 2000.

⁴⁶ Chiefs Silas Salevua and Gabriel Dii, interview by author, November, 2000.

⁴⁷ Solomon Islands’ Pidgin term for “better living”.

clan and different clans in the Mbahomea community, and their surrounding environment. This is similar to what Jim Knight stressed in his article “Festival on Manam Island”.⁴⁸ Renewal of the relationship between the participant and an eminent deity or remote ancestor is common across all Melanesian societies. The second aim of celebrating the Kabu feast is to give thanks to the ancestral spirit, because it is the one who provides, protects, guides, and sustains the clan. The third purpose of observing the Kabu feast is for the whole⁴⁹ clan to come together and to identify themselves as one particular people. Identification with a clan is evidenced through participation in the feast.⁵⁰

Practice of the Kabu Feast in the Pre-Christian Era

At daybreak, each head of a family would gather their pigs and stake them on the ceremonial arena. Then the priest, in the presence of the clan head, would stand in front of the ceremony arena, offer a prayer of thanksgiving, and pronounce a blessing upon the clan, and to all others, who would participate in the feast. When the prayer was over, the head of each family had the pigs slaughtered and distributed, along with garden foods, to the visiting clans. The next time the feast was held, the visiting clans would host those who gave the previous feast. The hosts would always be careful to give back the same amount of food as the givers had offered previously.

According to the Mbahomea community, the exchange would affirm a bond. For instance, when the hosting clan gave food to other clans, they are actually creating a sense of friendship with that particular family. Outsiders would view this exchange of foods as a debt, but the Mbahomea community views this exchange as something which binds in friendship.

After the sharing of food is over, the visiting clans would chat with the host clan for a while then leave for their respective homes, rejoicing. The

⁴⁸ Habel Norman, ed., *Powers, Plumes, and Piglets*, Adelaide SA: Flinders University Press, 1979, p. 173.

⁴⁹ Includes men, women, and children.

⁵⁰ Participation involves the sharing of foods, and sleeping together. The elderly educated the young men and women about their cultural heritage.

hosting clan would share the leftover food among themselves on the next day. They called that day *Pari Tinae*.⁵¹

The success of the whole festival would be determined by the fear and respect the clans had for the spirits, and by the generosity of the hosts, in providing pigs and garden foods for the celebration. If the clans did not genuinely honour the spirits, or freely give the food, a disturbance would arise with the ancestral spirits. The ancestral spirits like to see total devotion to themselves, and wholehearted observance of the feast. Refer to Appendix B for a detailed description of practices for initiating the feast, and offering sacrifices to the spirits in the pre-Christian era.

Practice of Kabu Feast in the Christian Era

At an elders' meeting in 1964, the missionaries allowed the Mbahomea Christians to again observe their traditional Kabu feast, if they did away with any parts that were linked with the ancestral spirits. So, the elders agreed to put God as their main focus, when they came to celebrate the feast. The pastor was to replace the clan's priest, and Christian songs, and the preaching of God's Word would be observed during the whole night, before the actual day of killing of pigs and sharing of food. Refer to Appendix C for a detailed history of the how the feast was modified under Christian influences.

Conclusion

This particular feast is, indeed, very significant for the Mbahomea community, because this feast was the only avenue of bringing the Mbahomea clans together for fellowship, in order to strengthen relationships, and to identify, together as one people, who served one God, and shared a culture. However, there are still some areas that the Mbahomea South Seas Evangelical church (SSEC) leaders and congregations need to resolve and adjust, especially regarding the negative aspects this feast has upon the church, when it is observed with hypocrisy.

⁵¹ Refers to leftover food.

PROBLEMS THE KABU FEAST HAS UPON CHRISTIANS

This section shall cover some of the problems seen in the lives of the people, which result from observing the Kabu feast. A biblical response to each of these problems shall then be drawn.

The Kabu Feast Stimulates Pride

Some Christians argue that Kabu is one of the avenues that stimulates pride in people's lives. For instance, the host community usually boasts about the number and size of their pigs being slaughtered, and the participants usually boast about the shares they received. This is in spite of the fact that, according to the Mbahomea culture, pride is unacceptable in the community, because it can trigger a tribal war, or even compensation, between clans. It is assumed that pride usually occurs in people's lives as a result of participating in this feast with a wrong motive.

It is right to be concerned about this, because the Bible clearly teaches us that pride is sinful,⁵² and God hates it.⁵³ The Bible says that pride causes a person to rebel against God,⁵⁴ but to say the Kabu feast is an avenue for pride is wrong. Kabu, alone, is good, but pride remains a characteristic aspect of the fallen human nature, and one of the hardest evils to overcome,⁵⁵ even without the practices of Kabu. Christians should avoid being boastful, when observing the Kabu feast.

Shows Favouritism in Sharing of Foods

The host community shows favouritism in the sharing foods, instead of sharing food according to need. For instance, the big man, and the wealthiest ones, receive the best shares, while widows, orphans, and the neediest ones receive less, or none. According to the Mbahomea culture, to ignore someone during such a feast is seen as disgracing the community, and such practices are unacceptable. The original idea of

⁵² Is 25:11; Dan 4:30-32.

⁵³ Prov 8:13; 16:5.

⁵⁴ Ex 5:2; Luke 18:9.

⁵⁵ Prov 16:18; Mark 7:21-22; Rom 1:28-30.

this feast was to give to people, according to their need, and without regard for their status.

The Bible forbids Christians from practising the idea of showing favouritism to someone. “Do not pervert justice, do not show partiality to the poor, or favouritism to the rich.”⁵⁶ Jesus did not show favouritism.⁵⁷ To show favouritism is a sin.⁵⁸ Christians must not show favouritism while distributing food during this feast, because people need to be given food fairly, in spite of their status. This is the kind of giving, which Christians should adopt and follow during the Kabu feast.

Brings Social Problems

The Kabu feast usually brought social ills inside the community, for instance, the consumption of drugs (alcohol, home-brew, and marijuana) by some people during the Kabu could end up in fighting and hatred. Some young people end up in sexual relationships, instead of enjoying the feast. The affected ones end up with hurt feelings, and this really undermines the idea of fellowship, in the Kabu feast. In Mbahomea culture, such practices are unacceptable. These practices disgrace the community.

The Bible strongly teaches against such evil practices,⁵⁹ because they will only ruin the lives of God’s people. Therefore, such evil practices should not be entertained during the Kabu feast.

Creates Obligation

The exchanging of foods is seen as a problem, because it creates a sense of obligation and debt among the people. Therefore, some Christians have argued that such practices are not helpful.

The exchange of foods in Mbahomea culture is for the purpose of restoring or creating relationships between clans and families. According to Mbahomea culture, people do not just speak about love and friendship,

⁵⁶ Lev 19:15.

⁵⁷ James 2:1.

⁵⁸ James 2:9.

⁵⁹ Prov 15:9.

but they do practical things, such as exchanging gifts,⁶⁰ to demonstrate their feelings. They see this as showing the reality of relationships, by actions, rather than just speaking empty words.

It is assumed that such concerns are the result of not understanding the cultural ideas of this feast. The Bible instructs believers that, when they give things to others, they must not expect a repayment or praise. Their giving should be unselfish, like God's love.⁶¹

Wrong Motives in the Practising of Kabu

Some people host and participate in the Kabu with a wrong motive, for instance, for gaining favour from men instead of God. Some people have the purpose of gaining wealth, and some just come to meet their social and physical needs. Culturally, participating in such an occasion with a wrong motive usually brings destruction to the community, even to one's personal life.

God spoke against the Jewish people, because they came to observe His feast with such wrong motives.⁶² God can do the same today, if the Kabu feast is it is not done to honour Him. God would like to see truth, love, and unity in men's hearts, when they come to celebrate in Kabu feasting.

Conclusion

To conclude, nothing man has established and practised here on earth is free from problems, like the practices of the Kabu feast. These problems occur, because the people, who have come to observe this feast, are coming with wrong motives in their hearts. If people, who are hosting and participating in this feast, are doing it with a genuine motive to honour God, and really show this love, by giving to others, and relating well to others, then the practices of this feast will be free from problems. The abolition of Kabu is not the actual solution to these problems, but the solution lies in men's spiritual relationships. Church leaders need to

⁶⁰ Foods, land, and shell money.

⁶¹ Deut 15:10-11; 2 Cor 9:7.

⁶² Is 29:13; 66:3.

teach their people to honour God, and to love each other, when they come to observe this feast.

COMPARISON OF THE KABU FEAST TO BIBLICAL FEASTS

This section will not attempt to expound on every single point of relevance, but, rather, to look for a few obvious ones that would provide an answer to the question of whether the Kabu feast is somehow similar to the four biblical feasts addressed earlier.

COMPARISON BASED ON COMMUNAL ASPECTS OF FEASTING

If the Kabu feast is closely related to the biblical feasts,⁶³ then it could be relevant and acceptable for the Mbahomea SSEC people to partake. Otherwise, the Kabu feast would be unacceptable for the Mbahomea SSEC people to observe.

On close observation, there are many similarities. However, we need to understand that the biblical feast is a perfect, holy feast, because it originated from God, whereas Kabu originated from fallen man, and, therefore, it is not a perfect feast.

SIMILARITIES

Origin

SIMILARITIES	KABU	JEWISH FESTIVALS	LORD'S SUPPER
Nature of feast	It is considered a holy feast, because it was given by ancestors.	It is considered a holy feast, because God gave this feast to the Jews. Ex 23:14-17; Lev 23:4-25	It is considered a holy feast, because Jesus started it with His disciples. Luke 22:17-20; Matt 26:26-28

⁶³ Passover, Feast of Weeks, Tabernacles, and Lord's Supper.

Purposes

SIMILARITIES	KABU	JEWISH FESTIVALS	LORD'S SUPPER
Renewing relationship	It is an avenue for clans to renew their relationship with their ancestral spirits, and with each other.	It was an avenue for Israel's tribes to renew their relationship with God, and with each other. Lev 23:19; Num 28:22, 30	It is an avenue for Christians to renew their relationship with Jesus, and with each other. Acts 2:42-46
Giving thanks	A purpose is to give thanks to ancestral spirits for their kindness.	A purpose is to give thanks to God for His kindness and goodness. Lev 23:40-43	To give thanks to God for what Christ has done on the cross. 1 Cor 11:23-26; Luke 22:14-20
Giving gifts	It stimulates the community to give back to the ancestral spirits, and to one another.	The Israelites usually gave to God, and to one another, during these feasts. Deut 16:17; Ex 12:4	Early Christians gave gifts of food, and accepted one other. Acts 2:42-46
Worship	People worship and adore their ancestral spirits, because they are the source of their well-being.	Jews worshipped and adored God, because He is the source of their well-being Ex 12:27; 23:14-17; Deut 16:15-16	Christians are to worship God, when they meet for the Lord's Supper. Acts 2:46-47

Practice

SIMILARITIES	KABU	JEWS	LORD'S SUPPER
Participants	All the clans are eligible to come and participate in the Kabu.	The 12 tribes of Israel are eligible to participate in the feast. Deut 16:16; Ex 12:47	All Christians are eligible to observe this feast. Luke 22:17; Acts 20:7
Sacrifice	An animal (a pig) is the object for the sacrifice. The people gave the sacrifice to the ancestors as thanks.	An animal (lamb or goat) is the object of the sacrifice. The sacrifice was given to God in thanks from the people. Ex 12:3, 5	In the New Testament, Christians offered a sacrifice of praise to God, singing, praying, and reading God's Word.
Celebration	Singing and dancing was the highlight of the occasion. The singing and dancing were addressed to the ancestral spirits.	Singing and dancing was the highlight of the occasion. The singing and dancing were addressed to God Almighty. Lev 23:39-40	Christians are to sing songs to celebrate what Christ has done for them on the cross. Acts 2:46-47
Sharing	Sharing of food among the visiting clans was the means of fellowship.	Israel used to share food and their belongings with one another, in response to God. Ex 12:4; Deut 16:10-11	Christians are to share food, belongings, and God's Word with each other. Acts 2:42-47
Preparation	Much preparation is required: building houses, gardening, and killing pigs.	Much preparation was required: collecting wheat and barley, cooking food, killing lambs and goats. Deut 16:5-8	In the New Testament, they prepared the unleavened bread for the Lord's Supper. Luke 22:8

Positive Effects

SIMILARITIES	KABU	JEWISH FESTIVALS	LORD'S SUPPER
Communion	It drew clans together for fellowship: people would work, eat, sleep, and communicate.	It drew the Israelites together for fellowship, as people would work, eat, sleep, and talk.	It draws Christians together for fellowship, to enhance love and unity. Acts 2:42-47
Education	The younger generation was to learn about cultural values and identities.	The younger generation was able to learn about cultural values and identity. Ex 12:26-27; 13:8-10	It helps Christians to remember what Christ did on the cross. 1 Cor 11:24-29
Cooperation	Preparing together in the fields, and visiting and listening to each other, enhances cooperation.	Preparing the lamb together enhances cooperation. Ex 12:1-12	Christians meet to pray and share burdens, which enhances cooperation. Act 2:42-47
Identification	It enables the clans to identify themselves as one people, the people of one particular ancestor spirit.	It enabled the 12 tribes of Israel to identify each other as one people, the people of God. Deut 16:14; Ex 12:47	It enables Christians to identify as one people, the body of Christ. Acts 2:42-47

Negative Effects

SIMILARITIES	KABU	JEWISH FESTIVALS	LORD’S SUPPER
Pride	People become proud, and boast about their feast as the best one, because they kill lots of pigs.	The Jews became proud, and boasted about their feast as the best one. Amos 5:21	Christians are so proud about the food they bring to the Lord’s Supper. 1 Cor 11:33-34
Injustice	People show injustice in their dealings, by being selective in the sharing of food.	The Jews showed injustice in their dealings, by being selective in sharing and eating of their food. Is 1:14; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:6-8	Some do not bother to wait and share their food with others. 1 Cor 11:33
Wrong Motives	People participate to gain favour with man not the ancestral spirits.	Jews participated to gain favour with man, not from God. Is 29:13	Some come and eat the food selfishly, others get drunk. 1 Cor 11:21

THE DIFFERENCES

The three obvious differences are the origin, timing, and purpose of the feast. Detailed explanations are below.

Origin of the Feast

The ancestral spirits gave the Kabu feast to the Mbahomeans so that the people would offer thanks, adoration, and acknowledgment to the spirits, as the peoples’ ultimate source of well-being. In return, the ancestral spirits would continue to protect, lead, and sustain the worshippers. For the Jews, God gave them the feasts, and the people would honour God Almighty by their participation. The Jews would give thanks to God for His goodness and love towards them, and recommit themselves to God. By comparing these two ideas, it seems that God is actually the initiator of the feast idea, but fallen man adopted it, and twisted it to suit his thinking.

Timing of the Feast

There is no fixed time for observing the Kabu feast. The timing was dependent entirely on the people's efforts. While, for the Jews, the timing of their feast was fixed, according to the appropriate time in their calendar.⁶⁴ Though the timing is different, the most important thing, in both cases, was to fulfil the observation of the feast.

Purpose of the Feast

For the Kabu feast, the exchange of food between the hosting and visiting communities was for the purpose of creating and strengthening relationships. When the Jews feasted, there was no exchange between parties, but there was unilateral giving to the widows, orphans, or needy.

When comparing the exchange idea in Mbahomea with the giving idea in Israel, although the methods vary, giving is valued in both. The giving and exchange of gifts play a very significant role in both Hebrew and Mbahomea cultures. Even a meal, or food offered to someone, implies friendship and peace. Gift-giving gestures enhance good relationships, and restore ones that have become bad between people.⁶⁵

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MBAHOMEA SSEC COMMUNITY

After considering the positive and the negative effects of the Kabu feast, this section recommends the following to both the Mbahomea SSEC leaders and other Christians, in order to make Kabu relevant and meaningful in a Christian perspective.

THE KABU FEAST SHOULD BE MAINTAINED

It is recommended that the Mbahomea SSEC church maintain the practice and their participation in the Kabu feast. Communal ties between clans, families, and denominational groups in the Mbahomea community are, indeed, very important. The communal feasts are the main avenues for maintaining their good relationships and identity as one God-honouring community. This feast helps the people avoid conflicts,

⁶⁴ Lunar calendar.

⁶⁵ Gen 24:30; 26:28-30; 31:53-55.

rivalry, and selfishness among themselves. Currently, no other program exists, which draws all the Mbahomeans together for common fellowship. The denominational programs, even sporting activities, cannot do it as well. Only the Kabu feasts are able to draw the Mbahomeans together for common fellowship.

The Mbahomea church should be seriously thinking about the communal aspects of this feast. Patterns of being independent and individualistic are creeping into Mbahomean society. If leaders are not careful, the Mbahomeans may soon lose the good, God-given concept of community.

From the beginning, God has truly valued and honoured the concept of community. For instance, he communed with Adam and Eve, in order to cultivate a close relationship. He also established holy festivals, for the Israelites to come together annually to honour Him, and to strengthen their relationships with each other. In the New Testament, Jesus instigated the Lord's Supper for His disciples to observe communally, and later, the early church continued this communal observance. In the New Testament, the Greek word for "communion" or "common" is **κοινωνία** = *koinōnia*. It derives from the same root word for fellowship, and it means "partnership, participation, social intercourse, communication, communion, and distribution fellowship, either physically or spiritually."⁶⁶ The early church members physically distributed food and belongings to one another, and spiritually shared in God's Word and in prayer.

The idea of community is very significant, and the church should not discourage Kabu. Instead, church leaders should identify the weaknesses and strengths of this feast, according to the suggestions in the following section. Refer to Appendix D – How the Church Should Contextualise Kabu.

⁶⁶ James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson, 1995, Gk 2842.

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN THE KABU FEAST

Mbahomea SSEC church leaders and congregations should play their role in changing the Kabu feast, according to the following recommendations.

The Church Should Influence the Kabu

The role of Mbahomean SSEC leaders should be to influence the whole process of the Kabu feast, in order to make it more meaningful and relevant, from a Christian perspective. For instance, church leaders should participate in, and inject Christian ideas, when the community is in the process of discussing the planning of Kabu. The church should not be silent or isolated. Rather than complain and argue over the negative effects seen in people's lives, it should inject positive changes.

Church leaders need to apply the words that Jesus said to His followers, "You are the light of the world."⁶⁷ The Greek word for light is $\phi\omega\varsigma$ = *phōs*, and means, "to shine or make manifest, to give direction for others to follow".⁶⁸ Church leaders and Christians are supposed to be showing Christians ways to make the Kabu feast more relevant and acceptable to Christians. Again, the fine example is Jesus Himself, who once proclaimed Himself to be the light of the world.⁶⁹

Church leaders wrongly think that the Kabu feast was just a social feast, because it has many links with tradition. Therefore, they assume that tribal chiefs and the paramount chief are the right people to lead the Kabu process. Because most of these chiefs are nominal Christians and backsliders, problems have developed with the feast. Church leaders must be the light, to help people to honour God, and to love each other, united as a community, when coming to observe the feast.

Appreciate the Kabu Values

The ultimate role of church leaders in the Kabu feast is to clearly explain, and encourage all Christians to appreciate, the cultural values of Kabu,

⁶⁷ Matt 5:14.

⁶⁸ Strong, *Concordance*, Gk 5457.

⁶⁹ John 8:12.

in the light of biblical teaching. They should not bring confusion and division among Christians, regarding the values of Kabu, based on ignorance and pride. Jesus valued good cultural ideas, and rejected bad ones.⁷⁰ However, He never compromised over cultural matters. One way church leaders could deal with such cultural issues is outlined in Appendix D.

Use Kabu to Proclaim Christ

It is recommended that Mbahomea SSEC leaders, and other believers, adopt the Kabu feast, as an evangelistic opportunity to proclaim the love of Jesus to those people, who are coming to partake in the Kabu feast. Usually, those, who are coming to participate in the feast, have different kinds of spiritual and physical needs, and the church should be using Kabu as an occasion to meet those needs. The clear example is Jesus Himself. He used celebration gatherings to explain the Kingdom of God to those who did not understand it. Examples are the wedding feast at Cana,⁷¹ and the washing of the disciples' feet just before the Passover.⁷² At the wedding at Cana, the disciples came to realise Jesus was sent from God. At the Passover feast, He taught His disciples about leaders serving other believers. If the church could use the Kabu feast in the same way, it could bring many lost people into God's kingdom. Christians would appreciate the practice of the Kabu feast, too.

Address the Negative Effects of the Kabu

One of the major roles of the church is to openly address, with strong biblical exposition, all the negative effects of culture on the lives of the people. This could be done, by hosting or participating in the Kabu feast. It is the leaders' responsibility to help their people realise how the negative effects of Kabu could affect community life. Then, and most

⁷⁰ John 5:1-18; Luke 6:1-11. Jesus ignored the Jews' interpretation of the Sabbath law, in order to do good.

⁷¹ John 2:1-11.

⁷² John 13:1-8.

importantly, the leaders must show the people that God truly hates these effects, because they are evil.⁷³

The church often blames Kabu for stimulating negative effects on the people's lives. Such logic led the church to complain and pray against the practice of Kabu, but they failed miserably to see that these negative effects are derived from man's heart, and not from the Kabu feast. If the church abolished the Kabu feast, these negative effects would still be seen in people's lives.

God spoke against the Israelites, when they failed to honour Him, with their attitudes in His feasts. God may do the same thing to the Mbhomea church leaders, and other Christians, if they host or participate in this feast with the wrong attitudes.

Encourage Right Behaviour in Observing the Kabu

One role of the church is to encourage believing Christians to truly honour God with a sincere heart, as they come together to observe the Kabu feast. Participants are not there to impress others, but, in order to win their favour, or to lift up the community. Whether people participate through singing, preaching, or sharing of food, they must do it to glorify God, and with the intention of seeing the community unified, and sharing freely with each other, as brothers and sisters in the Lord.

God requires man to do things from the heart.⁷⁴ The Greek word for "heart" is καρδιά = *kardia*, which involves the thoughts, soul, mind, and emotions of a person.⁷⁵ To do things from the heart means to do thing for God, with all their being. When Kabu is observed from the heart, then God will honour the Kabu feast as a godly feast. Otherwise, the Kabu feast will be an empty ritual that God hates. As the scripture says, the keeping of the religious feasts often became empty rituals, celebrated hypocritically, rather than sincerely, and thus God hated them.⁷⁶

⁷³ Prov 15:9.

⁷⁴ Eph 6:6.

⁷⁵ Strong, *Concordance*, Gk 2588.

⁷⁶ Amos 5:21a.

The Church Must Apply Christian Methods of Giving in the Kabu Feast

Although the cultural idea of exchanging food during the Kabu feast is significant and good (as has already been explained in the previous section), some church leaders, and other Christians, see these ideas as unhelpful for the church, because they create a sense of obligation and debt among the Christians. This section will not devalue the cultural ideas of exchange, but will recommend church leaders consider practising the Christian pattern of giving, when observing the Kabu feast, instead of being bound to the cultural idea of exchange.

The Bible reveals to Christians that giving to others is a way of giving to God,⁷⁷ regardless of status, whether widows or orphans, rich or poor. The giving should be characterised by a love for God, from the depth of the heart,⁷⁸ and, in response to God, Christians should give food and belongings to others, without the expectation of repayment and praise from others.⁷⁹

Within the biblical feasts discussed, above, there was no mention of exchange in them. The giving was centred entirely on God. In response to God, the people gave food and belongings to one another freely, without expecting repayment from the receivers. This is true love for God and others.

If Christians adopted and applied these Christian methods of giving, rather than the exchange ideas, then the Kabu feast will become meaningful for the Christian context. Furthermore, it will achieve the purpose of enhancing a true relationship with God, and each other, as a people of God, in the Mbahomea community. It is a time for all church leaders, and other Christians, to be prayerfully and carefully considering whether it is relevant for Christians to continue with the practice of exchange, or to apply the pattern of Christian giving. The decision is between God and us. Amen.

⁷⁷ Deut 15:10-11.

⁷⁸ 2 Cor 9:7.

⁷⁹ Matt 6:2-4.

CONCLUSION

The church must realise that the Kabu feast has its own problems. These problems occur, simply because people are not honouring God and each other, when coming to observe the Kabu feast. However, for church leaders to debate and argue over different problems, this feast creates for Christians, is not helpful. It only creates division and tension in the church.

This paper covered the origins, purposes, practices, and the effects of both the biblical feasts and the Kabu feast. If church leaders read, and thoroughly analyse, the content of this paper, they will be in a better position to address, and to offer solutions to, each of the Kabu problems that are affecting the Christians. This paper also provides recommendations for leaders to introduce Christian ways into the Kabu feast.

The biblical feasts and the Kabu feast have been shown to be the bridge for human relationships to be restored and renewed. This comes as a result of a united human relationship with God and each other, in order to continue experiencing *gut fala stay* in the community, and to avoid selfishness and conflict.

If Mbahomea church leaders could understand and implement each of the recommendations that are provided in this paper, then they would preach, teach, and encourage Christians to observe the Kabu feast to honour God wholeheartedly. The result would not only lift one community up, but also worship, and lift up, the name of God. The food, and the numbers of people who attend the feast, are not so important, but what really matters is to honour God, and to worship Him, from the depth of our hearts.

It is the author's prayer that, either sooner or later, church leaders use Christian methods to influence the practice of the Kabu feast, to make it become more meaningful for all SSEC Christians in the Mbahomea community, or even throughout the whole of the SSEC in the Solomon Islands.

APPENDIX A: LOCATION OF THE MBAHOMEA COMMUNITY

As James Ofasia explained:

The island country of the Solomons is a chain of islands that lies to the southeast of Papua New Guinea, and to the northeast of Australia. Solomon Islands received its independence in 1978 from British Colonial rule. The Solomons is made up of six main islands, Choiseul, New Georgia, Santa Isabel, Guadalcanal, San Cristobal (Makira), and Malaita. The main inhabitants of the larger islands are Melanesians, while those from the smaller islands are Polynesians.⁸⁰

Guadalcanal, the largest island in the archipelago, encompasses an area of 6,475 square kilometres (2,500 square miles). The Kavo mountain range extends the length of the island, and reaches a maximum height of 2,440 metres (8,005 feet) at Mt Makarakomburu. The island's chief town is Honiara, which is also the capital of the Solomon Islands. Agriculture, fishing, mining, and timber are the mainstays of the Guadalcanal economy.

The following figures were collected from the census of the year 2000.⁸¹ The whole population of the Solomon Islands is 488,020. The population of Guadalcanal alone is 60,295. The population of Central Guadalcanal, where Mbahomea is located, is 7,015.

APPENDIX B: PRACTICE OF THE KABU FEAST IN THE PRE-CHRISTIAN ERA

When the *Taovia Ni Vuguvugu*⁸² identified, and was satisfied with, the number of pigs each of his clan families had, he would convene a meeting for all the heads of families, including the *Tinoni Tarungaha*,⁸³ by blowing a *tavuli*.⁸⁴ They would all come to the *Vale Tarungaha*⁸⁵ for the important *Koriagu*.⁸⁶ Usually the tribal chief had the power to initiate a

⁸⁰ James Ofasia, "Traditional Tobaitan Method of Forgiveness and Reconciliation", Banz PNG: CLTC, 1990, p. 3.

⁸¹ Solomon Islands' Census for Year 2000.

Kabu feast, and his clansmen would have no objection to the chief's decision.

After the important discussion, the tribal chief would inform all the surrounding clans about the possibility of his clan hosting the Kabu feast. This would give them enough time to prepare for their attendance. At the same time, he would tell his clan to commence preparations. For instance, they may need to repair old buildings, and erect new, temporary ones, just before the time of feasting. Importantly, the supply of both the houses and the garden food must be adequate to accommodate and feed all the visiting clans. However, all this preparation was usually done cooperatively, and never on an individual basis. Cooperative work made the preparations easy and quick.

As the actual time of feast drew near, the clan priest, together with his clansmen, would get two *tabu* pigs, reared specially for this event, and take them to two different sacrificing spots, to sacrifice them to the ancestral spirit. The site of the sacrificing shrine, which was kept secret, was either on the side, or top, of a mountain. The sacrifice to the ancestral spirit was handing back to the ancestors what already belonged to them.

At the shrine, the priest would offer a *tataru*⁸⁷ to the ancestral spirit.⁸⁸ It was a prayer of thankfulness for the spirit's efforts toward the clan, a prayer of confession and seeking forgiveness from the ancestor's spirit, on behalf of the clan, and a prayer of seeking the spirit's peace and blessing during and after the Kabu feast. After prayers, the pig was burnt as an offering, and the meat was consumed by the priest, and those appointed by the priest to offer the sacrifice.

⁸² Mbahomean word for "tribal chief".

⁸³ "Priest".

⁸⁴ "Cone shell".

⁸⁵ "Chief's house".

⁸⁶ "Discussion".

⁸⁷ "Prayer".

⁸⁸ Cornelius Kirisi, letter sent August, 2002.

After the priest and his men returned home, the feast would commence the following day. In the first part of the feast, *Hanipichu*, the hosts, would kill all the undersized pigs, and cook them in the *mumu*,⁸⁹ together with taro and yam. Celebration commences straight after the *Hanipichu*. Throughout the night, everyone from both the host and the visiting clans would sing songs through *Rope and lele*⁹⁰ and *Halevu*.⁹¹ This music was an expression of deep appreciation to the ancestral spirits' goodness, protection, and harvest supply.

APPENDIX C: HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE ON THE KABU FEAST

From 1937-1953, the gospel of Christ was brought into, and preached throughout, the Mbahomea community by Nicholas Nigua from Weather Coast of South Guadalcanal Island, and Nicholas Kaboe from Mbahomea. These two men were among those who were saved under Samson Jacko's ministry. Samson Jacko was among those men, who were taken as labourers to Queensland, Australia, and came back to the Solomon Islands around 1894.⁹² Samson Jacko returned to the Solomon Islands about the same time as Peter Ambuofa.⁹³

Through the ministry of two men,⁹⁴ and other *Luvurongo*⁹⁵ later on, the gospel penetrated throughout the Mbahomea area, and many people from the two major clans in Mbahomea gave their lives to the Lord. All the Christians decided not to believe in, or offer sacrifices to, any ancestral spirits. From then on, the unbelievers from these two clans found it difficult to observe the feast meaningfully, because this feast was meant for the community as a whole, and not for the few. The remnant had no other alternative but to abolish the Kabu feast.

⁸⁹ A hot stone oven covered with earth and leaves.

⁹⁰ A special style of singing.

⁹¹ Making music with a bamboo pipe.

⁹² Alison Griffith, *Fire in the Islands*, Wheaton IL: Harold Shaw, 1977, p. 77.

⁹³ The man who brought the gospel to Malaita Island.

⁹⁴ Two expatriate men: Norman Deck Waite and Ken Griffith.

⁹⁵ SSEC word for an evangelist.

From 1959-1963, there was much discussion among the Christians regarding resurrecting the practice of Kabu feast again, but in a more Christian way. The Christians wished to have the Kabu feast back, because the Kabu feast enhances friendship, and deters conflicts and selfishness inside the whole community.

APPENDIX D: HOW THE CHURCH SHOULD CONTEXTUALISE KABU

Paul Hiebert is a contemporary missiologist, who offers a model called “critical contextualisation”. Contextualisation refers to the process of adapting the gospel message and Christian practice to a particular cultural setting. According to Hiebert, there are three approaches to old beliefs, rituals, stories, songs, customs, arts, music, etc. The first is the denial of the old (rejection of contextualisation). This leads to viewing the gospel as foreign – it is rejected, or the old goes underground – syncretism. The second is dealing with the old (critical contextualisation). There are four steps to follow: (1) gather data about the old; (2) study biblical teaching about the event; (3) evaluate the old in light of biblical teaching; and (4) create a new, contextualised Christian practice. The third is uncritical acceptance of the old (uncritical contextualisation), which leads to syncretism.⁹⁶ The church could use this model to contextualise the Kabu feast.

Firstly, the church leaders should gather all the relevant information from the appropriate people about the purpose, meaning, and symbols of Kabu, and study it thoroughly. They must ensure the Mbahomea people understand Kabu, in an unbiased way. Secondly, the church leaders need to study the scriptures about comparable events in the Bible. Thirdly, church leaders and believers should carefully evaluate the old practice of Kabu feast, in the light of the biblical feasts. Fourthly, after the evaluation is done, the church should be in a better position to develop a new Christian structure for Kabu feasting, based on biblical insight. The leaders can inform, teach, and preach the new structure to the congregation.

⁹⁶ Paul Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1977, p. 188.

The Mbahomea SSEC leaders should adopt these four steps in dealing with Kabu, or any other cultural matters. Without contextualisation, the SSEC, including Mbahomea, is experiencing confusion and conflict among the leaders over cultural issues, and syncretism creeping into the church.

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ABRIDGED DESCRIPTION OF MT HAGEN ARCHDIOCESE IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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OCCASION

This article is adapted from a presentation at the installation of the Most Revd Douglas William Young SVD as Archbishop-Metropolitan of Mt Hagen, Papua New Guinea, on September 1, 2006.

INTRODUCTION

In 1934, for the first time, the Divine Word Missionaries entered the Central Highlands of Papua New Guinea. The beginnings of their mission had been very hard. Fr William Ross did everything that was possible, and the Catholic Mission, at the foot of the Hagen range, survived. Later on, with the help of the other SVD missionaries, the Mission, as a part of the Eastern New Guinea Vicariate, developed into a Vicariate on its own, then into a Diocese, and finally, in 1982, into an Archdiocese. The first bishop was George E. Bernarding SVD, from the USA, who was succeeded by Michael Meier SVD, of Germany. On September 1, 2006, the office of the Archbishop-Metropolitan of Mt Hagen was handed over, in the presence of Most Revd Francisco Montecillo Padilla, the Apostolic Nuncio to Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, to Douglas William Young SVD. This event is a part of the history for the Archdiocese of Mt Hagen. The history of the Archdiocese has already been built together with the indigenous clergy,

religious lay people, and with the expatriate religious and fideidonist¹ (the diocesan priest in the mission abroad) missionaries as well. The 72 years of missionary endeavour in the territory of this Archdiocese implies further challenges and hardships for all who want to cooperate and build the local church under the leadership of the newly-appointed Archbishop D. W. Young SVD.

In every epoch, and part of the earth, the Catholic church applied methods of evangelisation that responded to the demands of the time. In the first half of the 20th century, the Christian missionaries were guided by a deepened anthropology and religionism in their activities. In the 1950s, the first fragments of the theology of earthly realities, and the theology of liberation, can be seen in their *praxis*. The Second Vatican Council supplemented these tendencies, and the teaching of the contemporary popes on missionary issues brought a new light. These teachings are contained in the encyclical letters, and other papers, of Gregory XVI, Leo XIII, Benedict XV, Pius XI, Pius XII, John XXIII, John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Being highly gifted with intellectual profundity and the power of interpretation, in particular, Pope John Paul II sharpened the thoughts on the missionary activity of the church, and soundly fixed them in the context of the theological disciplines of ecclesiology, missiology, and ecumenism.

The history of Catholicism in the Archdiocese of Mt Hagen, situated in the Central Highlands of Papua New Guinea (PNG), reflects the theology of the actual practice of mission, begun in this area in 1934 by Fr Wilhelm A. Ross SVD. This activity, from before WW II, is not only recognised as a time of effort and struggles, but also as a time of concrete achievements: the first investigatory journeys and settlements, elementary education, medical and material assistance. This was a time when contacts between Europeans and New Guineans were extended, and brought positive results in, not only the surrounding islands and the coastal areas of PNG, but also in the deep interior, which was discovered around 1930 by Australian explorers. The main credit for the detailed exploration of the PNG Highlands must go to the Leahy brothers,

¹ Pius XII, Encyclical letter, "Fideidonum" (Gift of Faith).

Michael and Daniel, as well as to J. Taylor and K. Spinks. At the beginning of 1933, these four Australians, and their accompanying native carriers from the coast, arrived at the foot of Hagen Mountain (the present territory of Mt Hagen Archdiocese). From there, they moved into other parts of the Highlands, such as Simbu and Enga, in order to look for gold. Following them, at the end of 1933, the Catholic, and then Lutheran, missionaries moved in. The first ones arrived at Nondugl via Simbu. They were members of the Divine Word Missionary Society, coming from the eastern side, at the foot of the Bismarck Range at Bundi. In January 1934, the next missionary expedition (this time officially recognised by the apostolic vicar in Alexishafen) was prepared and arrived in Wilya, near the present township of Mt Hagen. Those who formed it were: Frs Wilhelm Ross, Alphonse Schäfer, Wilhelm Tropper, Henry Aufenanger, and Br Eugene Frank.

The aim of this missionary expedition in the Central Highlands of PNG was to evangelise each human individual living in that territory. This undertaking had links with the earlier pastoral and missionary work done by clergymen of various denominations: in Australia – commencing in 1788; in Oceania in 1797; and, finally, in the islands presently belonging to PNG, or near it, in 1847-1880. As for the PNG highlanders, the first contacts with them were very costly for the missionaries, because they paid with the lives of two of their colleagues, who were murdered at the turn of 1934/1935 in Upper Simbu. Regardless of that, at the same time, the missionaries were able to establish missionary centres there at Denglagu, Dimbi/Mingende, Merani near Kundiawa, and Koge, with their outstations.

The same pattern was followed by the missionaries, who settled at the foot of the Hagen Range, at Wilya. In 1934, Bishop Francis Wolf SVD sanctioned these two missionary districts, issuing the official documentation on June 15. The bishop stated that it was the right time to commence missionary activity in Mt Hagen, and this should go ahead in parallel with that in Simbu. At this time, five missionaries worked in Simbu, and only two in Mt Hagen. These were: Fr Ross and Br Frank, who settled in the Melpa region, at the foot of the Mt Hagen range, and helped set up the very first foundations for the future church of this area.

Br Ross and Br Frank, both from USA, understood their daily tasks very well, and supported each other in their religious-missionary vocation. Therefore, in response to the circumstances, they found themselves in three ministries – of the Word, of grace, and of charity – that were successfully exercised, and this was the form of the first evangelisation. In the programme of Fr Ross and Br Frank, it is easy to recognise two characteristic elements: spiritual and material. Although the spiritual dimension was not neglected, more visible were the material aspects of their missionary work (the realm of sensory perception). These were: erecting the main mission centre at Wilya, with the church building in the middle, establishing other mission stations and their outstations, Samaritan assistance, organising the school, concern for the daily needs and existence, both for themselves, and their coworkers as well.

After a few months spent in the area of Mt Hagen, Br Frank shook hands with Fr Ross on January 2, 1935, and left Wilya for three weeks, to have his spiritual retreat, and a short break, at Bundi. Fr Ross did not even imagine that his farewell to his companion would be the last, and that he would be alone for longer than expected – a few years – as the missionary from Simbu, Fr Charles Morschheuser, and some weeks later, Br Frank, were killed. Because of this incident, from 1935, the missionaries, working in the Central Highlands, were not permitted to move further than an eight-kilometre radius from their main stations. These administrative restrictions remained in force until 1947. Despite these bans not always being seriously respected by the colonial authorities, the missionaries were sometimes able to do more than was officially permitted. Nevertheless, the restrictions were on paper, and missionaries generally had to stick to them, whether they liked to or not, and so they paid more attention to the main stations, and the people living nearby.

This style of the primary evangelisation that took place at the main stations, which was a way of coexistence with the locals, allowed the strange newcomers to form stronger relationships with them, be more secure and established. The second advantage was that the missionaries had more time to organise a proper programme for schools, which they had to establish, in order to teach children and first catechumens, the very

basic parts of the Christian faith, catechism, prayers, *singsing* hymns, and reading the Bible. Fr Ross spent a lot of time translating the necessary texts into the Melpa language. At the same time (1935-1938), he deepened his knowledge of this language, studied the local culture, and learnt something more about the traditional religion of the people from the Melpa area. After four years of hard work with the catechumens in the mission school, 28 youths were baptised at Christmas in 1938.

Since the first Australian prospectors built the primitive airstrip at Wilya, Mission planes were allowed to land there, as well as to fly regularly from the coast to Mt Hagen. This communication was a great support for Fr Ross, at the beginning of his missionary activity among the Melpa people. Thanks to this, he could be supplied properly with cargo, and other items like mail, and, from time to time, his confreres were able to come and visit him for a time. This was very important, because, in 1935-1938, Fr Ross was a lone missionary, and he had to defend himself against isolation and moral decadence.

Later on, starting from Christmas 1938, the main mission station was transferred from Wilya to Rebiamul. It did not function in the way Fr Ross wished, because, in 1939-1940, he was not able to stay at Rebiamul. In 1941, when Fr Ross returned to Rebiamul, together with the young, newly-arrived missionary from USA, Fr George E. Bernarding SVD, more life entered into the mission programme at Rebiamul and beyond.

During WW II, missionaries were ordered to leave Rebiamul and go to Australia. Because they were US citizens, they had to stay in Australia only for one-and-a-half years (from the beginning of 1943 to the middle of 1944). After that period, they were allowed to come back. The other missionaries were still under restrictions, especially these of German nationality.

The immediate reality after WW II was not much different from that experienced in earlier days. Missionaries continued their work, and tried to visit various tribes located further out in the Melpa area. Where they could, they constructed schools, built small aid posts, established farms,

in order to be self reliant, initiated plantations, and introduced the trade stores. In this post-WW II period, two cycles can be identified: the first was from 1944-1947, which was very short, and then, the second one, stretching over the years 1947-1959.

The first cycle still faced colonial restrictions, and the impossibility of extending missionary activity. The second lasted for 12 years, and was very crucial. At this time, the missionaries brought many developments to the Highlands, both spiritual and material. Side by side with the Catholic missionaries, the Lutherans were very active. There is no doubt that the Lutherans were a challenge to the Catholic way of evangelising and doing mission.

In the 1960s, the missionary tasks grew to include the catechumenate and practical ecumenism. Mt Hagen missionary district was elevated to the rank of apostolic vicariate, and the Enga area became part of it. When the restrictions were lifted by the colonial authorities, missionaries had to extend their field of penetration, and visit other tribes, some of them living in the remote and distant areas. Luckily, the missionaries, at this time, were more secure, and their patrols were relatively safe, compared with those of the 1930s, made by the missionary pioneers: Fr W. Ross and G. Bus. Their evangelising tasks were more defined, because missionaries found Christians already living there. This happened, thanks to young people, who had travelled into the Christianised areas, and had heard about the Good News, and carried this home to restricted zones. Wherever missionaries went, they always had a committed local catechist, who stayed with the people for a longer period than them, and continued what the priest set up on his first arrival. The achievements of these catechists in this first evangelisation of the Highlands are immeasurable.

As other denominations followed Catholic missionaries, cooperation and mutual understanding was not easy. It can be said that their approach to each other was anti-ecumenical. This does not mean that the missionaries did not try to implement, practically, Jesus Christ's teaching, while dealing with Lutherans, Seventh-day Adventists, Baptists, or Pentecostals. It must be said that, in the field of human development,

all these denominations participated, more or less equally, with the Catholic church in similar projects and undertakings.

In 1966, Mt Hagen Vicariate was elevated to the level of diocese. The further fashioning, rationalisation, and localisation of the church began to take place. The Apostolic Vicar, Bernarding, was made the first Diocesan Bishop of the newly-erected Diocese of Mt Hagen. He then initiated many new pastoral and promotional projects. He established 11 new missionary parishes, divided the whole diocese into deaneries, and, having very dedicated SVD men and SSpS women missionaries, he continued and extended activities, especially in the fields of education, health, and social development. He paid special attention, assisted by Notre Dame Sisters, to the young girls, whose chances for education lagged behind those of the young men. In the diocese, two pastoral centres were founded, and, in every smaller or bigger outstation, catechumenates and catechetical groups were formed.

In the years 1966-1982, some other religious communities of women and men appeared in the diocese: Christian Brothers, De La Salle Brothers, Charity Brothers, Marist Brothers, Michaelites, Missionaries of the Holy Spirit, Franciscans of the Third Order, Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, and the members of the Society of Catholic Medical Mission Sisters. To complete this list of various missionary groups arriving in the diocese, it is worth mentioning the diocesan priests, those incardinated and fideionists, and also the lay people (lay missionaries and volunteers).

The diocese strongly promoted local vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life. Up to 1982, four young men were ordained priests. Unfortunately, these later became a headache for the bishop, and were an obstacle for the personnel in the diocese. At present, the diocese has 12 younger, ordained men as diocesan priests and two deacons. In addition, three men, coming from the territory of the diocese, have been ordained as religious priests, and five others are serving the church as lay religious brothers with final vows. Among women, 13 religious sisters, with final vows, have come from this Archdiocese (but two of them have already died). These are working outside of the diocese as well. Some other

native sisters, who serve in the diocese, originally came from outside of the diocese. These are the Sisters of St Therese community, from Madang. The Sisters of the Holy Rosary, from Wewak, worked within the diocesan borders, up until 1982, but the part where they still serve is not within the boundaries of the Mt Hagen Archdiocese anymore.

Generally, it can be said that the missionary activity, carried out in the territory of the diocese in 1966-1982, led to ongoing expansion, and a stronger consciousness of the local laity that the church is the people of God, which means all baptised. As a sign of such conviction, in the diocese and in PNG, there were two workshops at the national level, in 1972 and 1975, which involved discussion and self-study. These meetings, and the realisations that led to their being held, were the cause and source of changes in the parishes and outstations. These changes began to make people more and more aware that they must take responsibility for the daily life of the church, and must be involved in her affairs as partners.

After 16 years of being a suffragan diocese of the metropolitan see of Madang, Mt Hagen was promoted to the rank of Archdiocese. So, from that time on, Mt Hagen itself, together with four other suffragan dioceses: Goroka, Mendi, Wabag, and Kundiawa, makes up the ecclesiastic province of the highlands of PNG. The metropolitan-archbishop's see is Mt Hagen, with the residence at Rebiamul. The first archbishop of this newly-established Archdiocese was Bishop Bernarding. As pastor, teacher, and administrator, he was assisted by his closest coworkers: general vicars, diocesan consultants, and forane vicars, up until 1987, when Archbishop Michael Meier SVD succeeded him, and kept his office until July 17, 2006. In order to run all diocesan matters smoothly, the Archbishop opened various offices, and set up a number of committees. This pattern has persisted up to today. These posts developed gradually, to better to serve all faithful Catholics of the Archdiocese: grown ups, youth, children, Christians of other denominations, and any people, who needed support, help, and solidarity in their spiritual life, or earthly situation.

Today, this cooperation is more open, because of the closeness brought by the ecumenical atmosphere existing among Catholics and the majority of the other confessions. The Catholics, with such attitudes, are open to share their Catholic values and faith with non-practising persons and non-Christians, because they feel that their faith in Christ Jesus, and in moral principles, fills important and unquestionable needs in the life of each human being. The local church of Mt Hagen is also tranquil in its mission, because it is able to face the material and financial demands of remuneration of the workers, running necessary institutions, keeping ancillary personnel working, and controlling the all-important petty cash.

The Archdiocese of Mt Hagen continues its mission, and many details from its past indicate that this part of Catholicism is able to be a leading community, not only in PNG, or in Melanesia, but also in the whole Pacific. Trying to make this dream a reality, the Archdiocese needs a proper pastoral plan, zealous native pastors, the support of missionaries from outside, and far-reaching and intensified spiritual, sacramental, catechetical, and intellectual formation. This is very much needed in the parishes, outstations, and basic Christian communities, among the adults, young people, and children. Although its pastoral activity focuses particularly on the ordinary level of society, it does not mean that individual and special pastoral care is out. Not at all! In the Archdiocese, there exists a need for special spiritualities, and the pastors must be aware of that, and implement this in their pastoral programmes. They must be prepared for this intellectually, they must challenge themselves, and all Christians, and ask how to improve evangelisation in the society, which is marked by great cultural variety, and is already partly secularised. Despite this, it must be remembered that this society still follows traditional values, lives in tribal structures, and, very often, in the remote areas, follows old wisdom, which is not always in tune with the knowledge of modern times.

So what is the future for the Archdiocese? The answer to this question is simple. Its future depends on the local Catholics (the local church), their spiritual formation, and intellectual abilities. There are no other options for the church of Mt Hagen. Hence, it is no surprise that this statement corresponds with the vision and mission that the Archdiocese formulated

during its so-called Archdiocesan Assembly, held at Rebiamul on June 3-5, 2004.

Here is the vision: “All the people of the Archdiocese of Mt Hagen are the Body of Christ, sharing the life of the Trinity.” Then comes the statement of the mission that says: “In order to truly be the Body of Christ, sharing the life of the Trinity, all the people of the Archdiocese of Mt Hagen commit themselves to work together in all that they do together.”

These summary statements of vision and mission are like a programme for future action in the Archdiocese, especially in connection with new evangelisation. If the Archdiocese is to be able to put it into practice, families must be properly formed, further general educational promotion must be emphasised, together with the provision of daily catechesis. As well as this, all the faithful in the Archdiocese must be treated and served equally. Those people, living in remote areas of the bush, should be convinced that they have the same rights, pastorally, as those living near the main centres, roads, and more-important settlements. These are the three priorities: family, education, and catechesis, together with proper care of everybody in the Archdiocese. These are the challenges and obligation of everybody, who really experiences the reality of the existing Catholic church of Mt Hagen, in its situation, deep in the highland interior of PNG. These, especially, are the challenges for the newly-appointed archbishop-metropolitan of Mt Hagen, His Grace, Douglas W. Young SVD, who was officially installed into his office on September 1, 2006, at Mt Hagen Catholic Cathedral at Rebiamul.

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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA IN THE LIGHT OF ONE MISSIOLOGIST'S HISTORICAL REFLECTION

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INTRODUCTION

In 1921, the Bishop of Cracow, Adam Stefan Sapiecha, then Archbishop-Metropolitan and Cardinal, erected, by his decree, a new Religious Community of Saint Michael the Archangel (*Congregatio Sancti Michaelis Archangeli*), which finally received papal recognition in 1966. According to the dream, and broad understanding of its founder, Blessed Bronisław Bonawentura Markiewicz (1842-1912), the congregation's charism was to take care of children and youth. Within the time, when this community developed, its members had enlarged their apostolate, and had engaged in pastoral activity in the country of its origin, in pastoral care of Polish immigrants abroad, in mission *ad gentes*, and in academic undertakings.

The scholarly activities, exercised by the Congregation, although they still remain *in statu fieri*, had been intensified by the attitude and engagement of one of its members, Zdzisław (Ziggy) Kruczek CSMA, who, for two years, has been the Rector of the Interdiocesan Catholic "Good Shepherd" Seminary at Fatima (Western Highlands Province (WHP)) in Papua New Guinea (PNG). In May 2006, Fr Kruczek finalised his academic studies by obtaining his doctorate at the Catholic University of Lublin, based on his researches and writings, and on his dissertation, written in Polish, entitled *Catholic Mission in the Mt Hagen Archdiocese in Papua New Guinea 1934-1984*, (Mt Hagen, 2005). This achievement had a significant meaning for the Michaelite Community, and for the church in Mt Hagen as well. It had been an official and

spectacular example of a missionary, in an academic quest, which involved pastoral formation and scholarly work. Therefore, a worthwhile task beckons to look at the author's academic achievements, from the "typologico-essential" perspective, and to probe his historical assessment of the church in PNG.

PROFILE OF THE AUTHOR AND THE PROCESS OF HIS BECOMING AN HISTORIAN

The author, born in Poland on January 9, 1945, had showed his interest in history since his youth. Later developments impelled him in such a direction in his work that he began to be more involved in studies on the missionary activity of the Catholic church, and to do researches on the vitality of new religious communities. Already, during his theological studies at the Philosophical-Theological Institute of Latin Rite in Przemyśl, and at the Catholic University of Lublin, he had revealed his curiosity for the past of his congregation, especially regarding the forms of its activity in the fields of religious and cultural aspects. At this time, he finalised his master's thesis on the origin and organisation of the Parish at Miejsce Piastowe (today, the Archdiocese of Przemyśl in southeast Poland), cared for by Michaelites. Subsequently, Kruczek also had a chance to be employed in the pastoral-educational institutions of his congregation, and these activities encouraged him to dig more into its past structures, and the lives of some of its important members. This material, which he busily collected (in 1967-1976), was used by the author in a more-organised mode at a later time – after he left his country, and took a missionary assignment abroad – when he began to portray the striking history of his Michaelite Congregation.

Being engaged in various tasks in PNG since 1977, Kruczek picked out new research possibilities, which corresponded with his interests. As a missionary parish priest at Kuruk, in the diocese of Mt Hagen, he initiated inquiries into the ecclesiastical past of the Melpa, and then other culture areas (around and beyond Mt Hagen). He considered the emergent church, and its cultural forms, in the light of its history, anthropology, sociology, and theology (or religious aspect). He was convinced that doing such research, as part of his missionary task, could

easily stir and influence his parishioners. On the one hand, this helped him to interpret, holistically, the rich *locus historicus* of the Highlands region of Papua New Guinea, and, on the other hand, this mobilised him for further quests, given impetus by his well-grounded theoretical knowledge.

Kruczek's personal experience, and connections within other university centres, additionally reinforced his activities. Kruczek began his studies in Australia (in the Department of Classics and Ancient History, at the University of New England in Armidale, and in the Department of Studies in Religion at the University of Queensland in Brisbane), and continued in Poland (with doctoral studies in Missiology and in Church History at the Academy of Catholic Theology, now the University of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński in Warsaw).

His most meritorious researches were those recent ones, which spring out of his doctorate in Missiology in 1991. Together with educational contacts at the University of Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński, the Catholic University of Lublin, etc., all these study opportunities provided remarkably fruitful stimuli for Kruczek in his scholarly activity – expressed through his various publications, seminar presentations in scholarly meetings, and symposia, e.g., in the Good Shepherd Seminary at Fatima, WHP, at Port Moresby (capital of PNG), Lublin and Warsaw. The climax of this activity came in 1995, with his foundation editorship of the annual journal *Mi-cha-el CSMA*, along with his teaching responsibilities in PNG as lecturer at the Fatima Seminary, and at the Divine Word University in Madang, as a principal lecturer in 1997-1999. We should also note his socio-organisational activity as the Bishop's consultant in the Wabag Diocese, 1986-1992, as member of the governing council of the Melanesian Institute in Goroka, Eastern Highlands Province, 2001-2003, as community superior and spiritual formator of young, local aspirants for religious life at the elementary level of the Michaelite Congregation in PNG, 1996-2004, and as present rector (and lecturer) at the aforementioned Good Shepherd Seminary.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

The author's plentiful and topically-varied academic achievements include books (as monograph studies and dissertations), articles, reviews, and (published) interviews. They can be divided into a few thematic subject blocks, even if this attempt overly simplifies matters.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ENGA PROVINCE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Kruczek's interest in Enga Province has its roots in having undertaken pastoral tasks there from 1986. While serving there, the Catholic church in Enga was about to celebrate significant anniversaries, and he had the opportunity to write something on these occasions. As a result, two books came out – one in Polish,¹ the second, in Neo-Melanesian (*Tok Pisin*)² – along with a few articles.³ These works, together, are based on the rich resources, and present a full picture of the first 50 years of the Catholic church in this province. It is worthwhile to mention that the author places this local church (her beginnings, structures, personnel, institutions, pastoral activities, social-cultural activities) in a national historical-political-cultural context, firmly authenticating his arguments by documentation, and proving originality and individuality in both his findings and their substantiation.

THE VIEW OF THE CHURCH IN THE DIOCESE OF WABAG

Following the same, aforementioned conventions, Kruczek utilised, and satisfactorily interpreted, other archival sources, so that he was able to document ecclesial forms of the daily life of Wabag Diocese, which was established in 1982, and lies in the central part of the PNG Highlands. He concentrated, first of all, on: general history of this very new diocese,

¹ *Catholic Church Missionary Activities in the Enga Province of Papua New Guinea (1947-1987)*, Pieniężno, 1991, 164 pp. (in Polish).

² *The Golden Jubilee of the Catholic Church in the Enga Province (1947-1987)*, Indore, 1997, xxix+342 pp. (in Tok Pisin).

³ "The Catholics in Enga are getting ready to celebrate their Golden Jubilee", in *Mi-cha-el CSMA* 3 (1997), pp. 87-90 (in Tok Pisin); "The Catholic Evangelisation in the Enga Province of Papua New Guinea to 1982", in *Mi-cha-el CSMA* 3 (1997), pp. 91-116 (in Polish).

and its organisation;⁴ the history of some missionary parish centres in it;⁵ and various forms of catechetical education across its terrain.⁶ Apropos this first topic, it is worthwhile noting that the anniversary of the first ten years of the diocese occurred in 1992, and this is what motivated the author to describe the first decade of this ecclesial administrative unit. Hence, his books on the Enga church concentrate on the foundation and function of the diocese in its first decade, stressing the common ground between missionaries and indigenes, in their initiatives and pastoral undertakings. Having abundant material at hand, he documents parallel developments in the emergence of both the Wanepap and Kasap parishes. This study reveals the whole entanglement of parish origins at the frontier, and subsequent culturo-historical outcomes.

CHRISTIANITY IN THE HIGHLANDS OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA AND IN THE PACIFIC

In 1994, Kruczek undertook the duty of lecturing on Christianity in Melanesia at two campuses of the Divine Word University (DWU). This very soon forced him to examine the past and present of the activity of the Catholic mission in the Pacific and in Australia. Lack of appropriate works on this topic, which would be useful for his lectures, motivated him to do something more systematic that met students' needs. Following this line, he began to penetrate into the vast historical area that opened new academic perspectives for him, and he came to explore certain aspects, from the history of the mission, in the pre-colonial period, up until the present time. Regarding this research sphere, a number of Kruczek's writings emerged, mainly in English and in Tok Pisin, and often on the foundations of Catholic missions in various

⁴ *A Decade of Struggles: The First Ten Years of Wabag Diocese in Enga Province (1982-1992)*, Madang, 1995, 132 pp. (in English); and the same book in Polish version *Wśród górali w rajskim buszu: Obraz dzieła misyjnego w PNG na przykładzie diecezji Wabag, Marki-Struga, 1997*, 144 pp.

⁵ E.g., "The Beginnings of Kasap Parish", in *Katolik Daiosis bilong Wabag: Sios Nius* (Mas 1994), pp. 6-7 (in Tok Pisin); "Wanepap Parish celebrates its 40-year Jubilee", in *Andaka: Niusleta bilong Wabag Daiosis* 10-2 (Jun 1995), pp. 10-11 (in Tok Pisin).

⁶ "The beginnings of the first Catechist Training Centre in Enga", in *Verbum SVD* 43-3 (2002), pp. 309-329 (in English).

Melanesian contexts.⁷ These works present, in an innovative manner, a panoramic view of pioneer mission activity, and demonstrate an interesting multidimensionality and complementariness of exposition, because of their ecumenical character. This latter aspect is apparent when one looks at the publication – in the form of handouts for the students – under the title *Christianity on Melanesian Soil*.⁸ This aid gives an idea about Melanesian Christianity, in broad socio-historical perspective. Special concern was given to those denominations, which first became visible in Melanesia: Methodists, Presbyterians, Catholics, Lutherans, and all the other smaller groups (including Adventists).

NATIVE CULTURES AND CUSTOMS

Today, in missionary endeavour, high profile is given to the so-called “cultural apostolate” or enculturation (the way of preaching the gospel in the context of a particular culture). For Kruczek, this component stimulated him to undertake in-depth research into various expressions and cultural forms of daily life in Papua New Guinea. He made some studies of the forms and customs of traditional marriage, and, whereas marriages were performed, this latter issue entailed a look at the traditional institutions of feast days.⁹ It is evident, when reflecting on

⁷ “On the footsteps of the sensitive Flemish”, in *Mi-cha-el CSMA* 1 (1995), pp. 47-55 (in Polish); “Implanting the Gospel in Fiji”, in *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 51-3 (1995), pp. 161-173 (in English); “The First Catholic Missionary Ventures in Papua New Guinea”, in *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 52-2 (1996), pp. 121-125 (in English); “Evangelisation of the Highlands in the Papua Region”, in *Mi-cha-el CSMA* 2 (1996), pp. 59-62 (in Tok Pisin); “The Present Territory of Papua New Guinea with regard to the Administrative Structure of Inaugural Catholic Mission in Oceania”, in *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 53-3 (1997), pp. 227-229 (in English); “The beginnings of Evangelisation in Australia and Oceania”, in *Przegląd Powszechny* 11/927 (1998), pp. 172-178 (in Polish); “Missionary attempts in Melanesia during the pre-colonial era”, in *Mi-cha-el CSMA* 6 (2000), pp. 34-67 (in English); “Christianity in Melanesia in Colonial Times”, in *Mi-cha-el CSMA* 7 (2001), pp. 72-126 (in English); “Missionary Struggles in New Guinea: part 1”, in *Biuletyn Misyjny Archidiecezji Gnieźnieńskiej: BMAG* 3-17 (2002), pp. 15-23; “part 2”, in *BMAG* 4-18 (2002), pp. 20-32; “part 3”, in *BMAG* 1-19 (2003), pp. 17-28 (in Polish); “Christianity in Melanesia in post-colonial time (the present time)”, in *Nurt SVD* 4-99 (2002), pp. 173-201 (in Polish).

⁸ Fatima PNG, 2002 (in English).

⁹ “Honesty in Agreement with Reality”, in *Wspólnota Michael* 2 (1981), pp. 9-13 (in Polish); “Singing”, in *Wspólnota Michael* 3 (1981), pp. 45-46 (in Polish); “A Few

Kruczek's analyses, that marriage in PNG is not only a matter of two betrothed people, but also a crucial affair for the parents, tribal communities, and other groups. According to most native traditions, the woman was required to live with the man from this time, after all formalities have been completed (Kruczek documented this, especially, in Highland cases). To identify this delicate area for deep discussion, and then place it *vis-à-vis* the teaching of the church,¹⁰ allows for a pastoral platform, on which all marital cases could be considered in a useful, simple manner, while also bringing out both the importance of marriage in society, and the issue of enculturation.

THE GREAT METHODS IN MISSIONARY ACTIVITY

Together with the above research topic, and appearing *pari passu* with the steady completion of historico-missiological treatments of it, are Kruczek's publications, focused on the cultural adaptations, accommodations, and other more modern methods of performing missionary work.¹¹ Although the entire matter of substance – as the author says – entails 400 years of struggle, nowadays, it is analysed on the basis of such academic disciplines as: anthropology (more particularly the anthropology of religion), psychology, and, finally, missiology, turning on the question of enculturation. Now, enculturation, compared with “accommodation” (which tends to concern one-sided response mechanisms of colonised peoples), has a wider dimension of reciprocal relations, and, as such, augments, in the church, new values,

Words on Religious Tradition in PNG”, in *Przegląd Katolicki* 8 (1984), pp. 10-11 (in Polish); “My Christmas in PNG”, in *Wspólnota Michael* 3 (1989), pp. 3-5 (in Polish); “Black Harvest: Joseph from Ganiga Tribe”, in *Przegląd Katolicki* 11-11 (1993), p. 11 (in Polish); “Two Reflections from Papua New Guinea”, in *Wspólnota Michael* 2 (2002), pp. 41-44 (in Polish); “Parishioners in ‘two views’”, in *Animator* 1 (2002), pp. 135-137 (in Polish).

¹⁰ “Enga Marriages in the Past and at Present”, in *Catalyst* 32-2 (2002), pp. 130-164 (in English); “Traditional Convictions and Christianity among the People of Enga”, in *Verbum SVD* 39-1 (1998), pp. 85-91 (in English).

¹¹ See, for example, “Gregory the Great and the Mission”, in *Mi-cha-el CSMA* 10 (2004), pp. 67-69 (in Polish); *The Return of Jesus (a story of one Corpus Christi procession in Papua New Guinea on the occasion of the Eucharistic Year)*, (in Polish) (forthcoming).

and basics for approaching people interested in the gospel.¹² This tapestry of things, which is found in Kruczek's researches, and is partly based on his personal experiences, and partly on historiographical probing, gets a solid interpretation; and his other works shed light on this whole arena of discussion.¹³

THE PAST OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

Being acquainted with the position and function of indigenous culture, in the process of evangelisation, and given his duties as a lecturer in Ecclesiastical History, Kruczek was impelled to prepare relevant handouts for students of this subject. These papers had to be written in such a way that suited the addressees' mentality, and their rank of education, so that they would be better able to understand and interpret the ecclesial facts of the past, those that were good and bad as well.¹⁴ This writing consists of three parts: from the beginning of Christianity to the Council of Chalcedon (451); from 451 up to the so-called Great Eastern Schism; and from 1054 up to Luther's revolt. On the basis of this synoptic approach to the general history of the church, he composed some smaller works: on the Orthodox-Catholic church in Russia;¹⁵ on

¹² Cf. "Inkulturacja", in *Encyklopedia Katolicka*, vol 7, J. Dachniewski, et al, eds, Lublin, 1997, pp. 235-237; *Inkulturacja chrześcijaństwa w świecie*, B. Wujek, E. Śliwka, eds, Pieniężno, 1999.

¹³ "Accommodation: Missionary Activities in China", in *Przegląd Katolicki* 10 (1993), p. 7 (in Polish); "Quarrelling on Missionary Enculturation in the XVII and XVIII Centuries", in *Mi-cha-el CSMA* 2 (1996), pp. 13-19 (in Polish); "Reflections on the Missionary Experience of the Michaelites in PNG (a panel speech at the Salesian Family Missionary Seminar, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, September 4-7, 2004)", in *Wspólnota Michael* 1 (2005), pp. 38-46; "Traditional beliefs and customs of the dwellers of Papua New Guinea used in the missionary activities (interview conducted 18-06-2000 with Zdzisław Z. Kruczek CSMA)", in *Mi-cha-el CSMA* 8 (2002), pp. 35-53 (in Polish)/elaborated by Małgorzata Laszecka.

¹⁴ *The History of the Catholic Church from her beginnings up to the Western Reformation*, Fatima PNG, 2001 (in English).

¹⁵ "Eastern Orthodoxy and Catholics in Russia", in *Zwiastowanie* 11-3 (2002), pp. 79-87 (in Polish).

mutual relations between philosophy and history;¹⁶ and on the social activity of the church.¹⁷

THE HISTORY OF THE MICHAELITES

Studying at the Theological Institute in Przemyśl, Kruczek had already begun to get interested in the history of his own religious community. Doggedly collecting materials, which he partly used for his master's thesis, and work afterwards. After collating, and bringing intelligibility to them, he now had a source base for a number of articles in English and Tok Pisin. Themes, he pursued, come in the following order: the charism of the Michaelite Congregation,¹⁸ its founder's life and activity,¹⁹ the history of the Michaelites, and their presence in the universal church,²⁰ and in Australia and Melanesia as well.²¹

¹⁶ "Philosophical Approach to History", in *Mi-cha-el CSMA* 1 (1995), pp. 65-69 (in English).

¹⁷ "Hospitality and Communication", in *Garamut: DWU Staff Newsletter* (January-February, 1998), pp. 3-4 (in English).

¹⁸ "Beatification of two Michaelite Martyrs", in *Mi-cha-el CSMA* 5 (1999), pp. 11-19 (in Tok Pisin); "The gift or intruders?", in *Wspólnota Michael* 2 (1998), pp. 59-62 (in Polish).

¹⁹ "On the Path to Holiness: The life and work of the Founder of the Michaelites (A talk delivered in the series of Staff Seminars of Good Shepherd Seminary at Fatima, WHP, on April 19, 2005)", in *Mi-cha-el CSMA* 11 (2005), pp. 51-65 (in English).

²⁰ "A Brief History of the Congregation of St Michael the Archangel on the occasion of its Centenary", in *Mi-cha-el CSMA* 3 (1997), pp. 26-30; and the same, under the title: "Know the other Members of Our Family. The Congregation of St Michael the Archangel", in *Towards 2005* (July-September, 2002), pp. 18-20 (in English); "The Origin of the Parish of Miejsce Piastowe", in *Mi-cha-el CSMA* 4 (1998), pp. 58-72 (in Polish); *A History of the Roman Catholic Parish in Miejsce Piastowe up to 1772*, Madang PNG, 1997, 88 pp. (in Polish); and a number of the other articles published in English in *Mi-cha-el CSMA* between 1 (1995) and 8 (2002).

²¹ "A Brief History of Michaelites working for 25 Years in Papua New Guinea", in *Mi-cha-el CSMA* 1 (1995), pp. 15-24 (in Tok Pisin); "Our Planned Future in Papua New Guinea", in *Wspólnota Michael* 2 (1990), pp. 13-18 (in Polish); "Michaelites in Papua New Guinea", in *Wspólnota Michael* 3 (1998), pp. 19-27 (in Polish); "Some Information on the Religious Community House in Mt Hagen", in *Wspólnota Michael* 3 (2001), pp. 10-14 (in Polish); "Missionary Activity of the Congregation of St Michael the Archangel in Papua New Guinea and Australia", in *Akta Kapituły Generalnej Zgromadzenia Św. Michała Archanioła, Górk, 21-29 kwietnia 2004*, Marki, 2004, pp. 175-180 (in Polish).

POPULAR PRODUCTIONS

Popular writing and interviews present quite rich materials in Kruczek's opus. Topics touch all those mentioned previously, but to be digested by the less academic. He is able to write in simple terms about the church and her culturo-historical past. This is not to gainsay that all his publications are solidly based on all sorts of sources, and on an abundant and multilingual reading, that proves the author's professionalism, and his thorough knowledge of essential-methodological apparatuses. One should also add to this, and point out, two characteristics of Kruczek's academic achievements, related to his "popular side". Firstly, when he penetrates the past of the Catholic church in the Pacific, he portrays, not only the beginnings and developments of her structures, but presents her as a paradigm for all kinds of changes, especially in Melanesia. These changes are of cultural, economic, social, and mental, not just patently religious, character. Though, in his works, there is much substantiation of the position that, to understand contemporary cultures of PNG well, it is important to get deeper into their metaphysical and theological spheres. Hence, the academic endeavours of Kruczek usually have an obviously theological bent. Secondly, since the author brings into his historiography many elements from the past of Polish culture, and presents the views of Polish academics, he has become, without question, the propagator of Polish academic views, and propagator of Polish achievements, in the fields of social and cultural science.

MONOGRAPH OF CATHOLIC CHURCH ACTIVITY IN MT HAGEN

In Kruczek's academic achievements, a special position must be given to his recently published, and aforementioned, book, *Catholic Mission in the Mt Hagen Archdiocese in Papua New Guinea 1934-1984*.²² Its contents have an interdisciplinary character, the topic requiring a range of methods for a vast area of enquiry. In this enquiry, he has to face up to the extensive base, on which the Catholic church matured, while its personnel were engaged in missionary activity in PNG. Seeking to develop a truly encompassing thesis, he had to employ a relevant method, commonly used in contemporary historiography, to defer to the subjects

²² Mt Hagen PNG, 2005, 452 pp. (in Polish).

exercised by the great issues of culture – ethnology, anthropology, sociology – and use the proper tools of these disciplines, while producing his portrayals and arguments.

The author, Kruczek, successfully fulfilled the aims he set for himself. In order to interpret and illumine problems, with regard to the subjective and objective activity of the Catholic church in PNG, Kruczek also examined the relevant issues – although aware of the difficulties – in the light of external factors. The historico-political context seriously conditioned the church's engagement in her mission. It has been known, from chronicles, that the Spaniards, for example, wanted to introduce Christianity to the Pacific in the 16th to 18th centuries, but the authentic beginnings of the Catholic church count from the 19th century. From that time to this day, she built up her structural-organisational base and functions in the Pacific. Talking of the main island, in 1885, missionaries reached southeast New Guinea, which was the British Colony that came to be known as Papua. The northeast part of New Guinea, at that time, was under German control, and missionaries began to evangelise there in 1896, with their starting point at Tumuleo Island; their next big move being to establish their headquarters at Alexishafen, near Madang.

Significant stimulators in the process of missionary evangelisation came from events at the beginning of the 20th century: Australia's independence; and the First World War, as it affected New Guinea, with the takeover of the German colony, so-called Wilhelmsland, by Australia. This latter, political shift brought greater stability for the hard-working missionaries in New Guinea, and allowed them to turn towards the vast interior of the New Guinea mainland. Such endeavours – carefully explained by the author – were undertaken to the more remote mountain regions in 1934 by the Catholic missionaries, who, to a large extent, got assistance from the Australian lay prospectors and gold seekers. Thanks to the cooperation of the SVD missionaries from USA, Germany, Holland, and Poland, evangelisation commenced at Wilya village, at the foot of Mt Hagen, in the Central Highlands. This activity consolidated – with a short break during the Second World War, when the missionaries were told to hide themselves in Australia in 1943-1944 – and grew, more

and more fruitfully, up until the present day, taking on a noteworthy local stamp.

There is no doubt, as the author comments, that these developments are partly a result of historical external occurrences (e.g., the independence of PNG, and consecutive steps of territorial reorganisation), on the one hand, and an internal inadequacy to keep up with the pace of things by church personnel (despite the high hopes of visionary hierarchs!), on the other.

Well-conceived, symbiotic pastoral work in evangelisation, by various religious communities (mainly by male and female religious orders), and the process of adventurous incursion into all possible regions ready for Christianisation are two big focal points of the monograph, and its exploration of a whole mental-cultural-anthropological context. Although this last remark applies to the entire book, it is more apparent, in the last two parts, which describe foundational missionary activity, and the initiation of the indigenous local church in Papua New Guinea. The author, who has partaken of a rich life in the area under study, and experienced its daily cultural realities, is able to evaluate diverse behavioural aspects of the inhabitants, and to explain them comprehensively, so as to enlighten the different processes, whereby the lives, meanings, mission, and local peoples are interrelated. The success of Kruczek's portrayal and analyses results from his integrative approach, as he scrutinises facets of reality, spots the appropriate associations of facts, and poses pertinent questions, while looking for impartial answers. On top of this, it is, of course, commendable, and should be highlighted, that the author – working in PNG for almost 30 years – refuses to ignore the issues of his subject, by taking methodological shortcuts. And certainly, given his clerical position, he might have been tempted to take a biased approach, identifying himself with the church of PNG, or with the Melanesian ethos and people.

It might also have been tempting for him to succumb to the attraction of mythologising the extraordinary endeavours and fearless attitudes of the first missionaries – above all of Fr W. A. Ross SVD, who pioneered the Catholic mission of present-day Christianity in the Mt Hagen region, and,

as such, is acknowledged by the indigenes as a half-legendary hero.²³ Kruczek could have been enticed to portray some contemporary stewards of the church of the Hagen Archdiocese in a disproportionate light. For example, the short period the ageing Archbishop-Metropolitan George E. Bernarding SVD had in leading his highland flock; and, from the other side, Kruczek – as a European – might have had a craving to compare the church, and the model of her in service in Papua New Guinea, with the model of the church on the European continent. Yet, despite these possible temptations, he avoided these snares, proving a consistency, a disinterested approach to research, a discipline in analysis, and a breadth of vision over his scanned case studies. Through all this, he demonstrates that he is able to expose positive features of missionary endeavour, to place them in context, maturely, and to be ready to indicate weak points, when they are present – as in examples regarding Archbishop Bernarding (pp. 264-273), and of the local clergy (pp. 319-327). The general approach, leaning, as it does, on deep analysis and sound method, validates the author's diagnostic conclusions (as on p. 369).

Finally, a striking element, in this synoptic study, is its attention to theological or theologically-related matters. The history belongs to a world in which supernatural values are invoked. Without coming to grips with this spiritual ethos, it is virtually impossible to understand, entirely, the forms of activity among members of a community, structured in accordance with metaphysical criteria. Hence, the whole sphere of religious life – of sacramental life, the proclaimed *kerygma*, of professed priorities in the daily action of the missionaries, and the faithfulness, most essential in missionary activity, and its impetuses – has not been passed over in silence, nor has a particular theological bent been injected into the book. It is understandable that, in the case of such research, the historian is, at the same time, a theologian, doing an accurate job. Unless exceptionally, his manner of description could not be duplicated by an

²³ Cf. M. R. Mennis, *Hagen Saga: The Story of Father William Ross: Pioneer American Missionary to Papua New Guinea*, Boroko PNG, 1982; J. Nilles, *They went out to sow. The beginning of the work of the Catholic Mission in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea 1933-1943*, Roma, 1987; Z. Z. Kruczek, *Missionary Activities in the Central Highlands of the Mt Hagen Archdiocese in Papua New Guinea 1934-1984*, Marki, 2000, pp. 114-116 (in Polish).

ethnologist, or anthropologist, or even the average professional historian, who bases research purely on material sources, and often lacks insider feel for the dynamics of church life and spiritual change. This is what makes Kruczek, a missiologist, and an effective practitioner of a broad discipline.

With regard to documentation, the contents of Kruczek's book, both descriptively and conceptually, are very rich on the "factographic-informative" side, yet the mass of materials is lucidly organised for readers, and in keeping with requirements of historical, social scientific and theological academic disciplines. The author had at his disposition a huge amount of source material and reference works, but he digests everything ably, distilling processes, so that his book bears a structure and style, whereby all its parts are logically and mutually related. Each section is in the form of the previous one, and each comprehensively includes dimensions of the problem under review. As he proceeds, he determines the full range of the church's engagement in PNG, and, at the same time, he discerns the various consequences of this engagement (especially in chapter five).

As to the resources and reference works, one is forced to acknowledge their completeness and extensiveness, with 56 archives – ecclesial (diocesan, religious, and parochial), and civil (from the territory of PNG, Australia, USA, and Europe (e.g., Rome)) – having been used! Many printed resources, however, have been checked (normative papers, memoirs), including reports and interviews. One would be remiss not to mention that the author used all kinds of information coming from local people, who are still alive, and remember the pioneer missionaries. Some of these informants were, and, until this day, are still involved in the church's many activities. Such oral and related local information bears more of a complementary character to "official recording", but is still very useful, with regard to indigenous culture, and other aspects of PNG life. The clear impression is that Kruczek did not leave a stone unturned in tapping every possible source, in the historiography of his subject, as the 32-page listing of published written works clinches. By such thoroughness, he easily sustains, and manages to achieve broad (and, indeed, useful comparative) assessments.

Although Kruczek's major book deserves the highest esteem, it does not mean that it is without a few weaknesses, and debatable points, and I would recommend some slight improvements. The reader will probably sense a deficiency of information about pioneer missionaries (except Fr Ross); about the origins and extent of preparation for missionary work (pp. 55-106); and about procedures concerning sacramental services (except baptism, which is broadly described in relation with catechumenate, pp. 279-290). It is a pity, further, that the author did not put his tables together, in juxtaposition, for an easier comparison of data, and that he did not analyse this data completely enough, as well. Anyhow, these are just fine points for discussion, and they do not weaken the academic and cognitive aspects of his general thesis. I really mean to be positive to the end, hoping that Kruczek will be impelled to do further academic investigations into the many and various characteristics of the church in the region of Pacific.

SUFFERING IN MISSION IN THE CONTEXT OF MISSIONS: LESSONS FOR THE MELANESIAN CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of suffering in the church in Melanesia is not a popular one, and does not go down well with many Christians. The persecuted church, in countries where Christian faith cannot be tolerated, has a different view. For them, suffering, inflicted through persecution, is seen as an identification with the suffering Christ. According to Wurmbrand, "Christians wear chains with the gladness with which a bride wears a precious jewel received from her beloved. They receive His kiss and His embraces, and would not change places with kings."¹

For the persecuted church, suffering and death is the norm, and, therefore, much of its time is taken up with life and death, the way of the cross, in contrast to the church in the "free world",² which focuses more on prosperity and health, power and victory. However, the victory of Jesus seems to be paramount over other issues. Jesus' victory over death, thus defeating Satan, is the reality of the Christian life, and that is what the church in Melanesia is used to. Hence, suffering is not preached much to Melanesian believers.

¹ R. Wurmbrand, "Priestly Robes or Prison Clothes?", in *The Voice of the Martyrs* (February, 2001), p. 2.

² "Free world" here implies countries that tolerate the Christian faith.

The Easter messages of the cross always end in the victory aspect, with the application of living victorious lives, because Jesus has defeated all iniquities on the cross. These include the work of the enemy, illnesses, and all forms of suffering. Hence, it is supposed that any existence of such suffering today is unacceptable, and must be rebuked. The local church is no exception to this. The issue of suffering is abstract to believers. Perhaps the contributing factors could be the lack of theological teaching, and other theological influences.³

With the church slowly accepting the challenge of mission, the grave concern is how the issue of suffering in mission can be accepted. The purpose of this paper is two-fold: firstly, to help the church to understand and accept the fact that suffering in mission is the way of the cross, and, secondly, to challenge those who intend to go into mission work about the reality of suffering, for which they, themselves, must be prepared. Hence, it focuses on the theme “suffering in mission, in the context of missions”, which will be approached along the flow of God’s redemptive purposes, from Abraham to the cross.

In the light of these, this article attempts to do the following: develop a biblical theology of the relationship between suffering and mission, to look at some missiological examples in the Old Testament (particularly Abraham, Moses, and the prophet Jeremiah), to look at the suffering of Jesus and Paul in the New Testament, and to suggest lessons for the local church to learn. However, before the issues can be discussed, the need to clarify the use of the words “mission” and “missions” is necessary, so as to avoid confusion in the process of discussion.

MISSION AND MISSIONS

Although the words “mission” and “missions” are not the main issue of discussion, the use of these words, in the process, is unavoidable. Missions scholars have given two separate meanings to the two words “mission” and “missions”: The word “mission” can be understood as the

³ Other theologies here imply getting information from other theological resources, without first testing their doctrines and backgrounds. For example, from “prosperity” television preachers.

church, as the body of Christ, sent into the world, while “missions” is the sending of missionaries out of the church, or the body of Christ, to proclaim the gospel.⁴

SUFFERING AND MISSION

Firstly, before discussing the relationship of suffering and mission, it may be helpful to briefly look at suffering, in a general sense. Suffering, in a general sense, has many causes, and affects people of all races, cultures, gender, and religion. According to John Stott, “Suffering comes in many unwelcome forms”,⁵ and has much impact, physically, psychologically, and mentally. Richard adds, “Suffering is a universal, and most common experience, for human beings. No one escapes it, and, as such, suffering functions as a common denominator.”⁶ Stott gives some causes of suffering, which affect the world:

“Firstly, according to the Bible, suffering is an alien intrusion onto God’s good world, and will have no part in His new universe. . . . Secondly, suffering is often due to sin . . . originally, disease and death entered the world. . . . Thirdly, suffering is due to our human sensitivity to pain. . . . Fourthly, suffering is due to the kind of environment, in which God has placed us. Although most human suffering is caused by human sin, natural disasters . . . are not.”⁷

Similarly, Jones suggests nine avenues of suffering: “1. Suffering from confused counsels in religion. . . . 2. Suffering from wars and conflicts in human society. . . . 3. Suffering from physical calamities in nature, such

⁴ G. W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1972, p. 11. See also the following authors, A. Willis Jr, *Biblical Basis of Missions*, Nashville TN: Convention Press, 1979, p. 11; G. Van Rheezen, *Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies of Missions*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1996, p. 20; W. C. Kaiser Jr, *Mission in the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 2000, pp. 11, 85; J. Nissen, *New Testament and Mission*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999, p. 18.

⁵ Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 312.

⁶ L. Richard, *What are They Saying About the Theology of Suffering*, New York NY: Paulist Press, 1992, p. 1.

⁷ Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, pp. 314-315.

as earthquakes. . . . 4. Suffering from physical sicknesses and infirmities. . . . 5. Suffering from economic distress. . . . 6. Suffering from one's own fellow men. . . . 7. Suffering from religious and secular authorities. . . . 8. Suffering through the home life. . . . 9. Suffering from the fact of being associated with Christ.”⁸

All these started, in the beginning, with the fall of man (Gen 3). From this, suffering entered human experience. Some of the effects are seen in unjust social systems, in which the greed of the rich deprives the poor, and poor policy formulation, resulting in tragic famines.⁹ Then “there is the unmerited suffering, the suffering of the innocent . . . there is suffering, which is not even suffering for a good cause”.¹⁰ In addition, there is the suffering of death.

Yet, there are no positive answers to the reasons for sufferings. There is a lot about suffering, which humans cannot understand. What is left in people's minds are questions of “Why?” In all these, responses from those affected vary from positive to negative. Some blame God, while others accept their situation in humility, courage, and faith.¹¹ How is it, with those whom God has called out for His purposes? Are they excluded, or exempted?

Christians and missionaries are not exempted from sufferings, nor are sufferings restricted from the perimeters of mission. Suffering and mission go hand in hand. Where there is mission, there is suffering. All those, whom God calls out for His mission, are vulnerable to all forms of sufferings that exist in this world. Amid suffering and mission is the element of God's love, which is the driving factor. God's love for the world to be reconciled to Him climaxes on the cross of Jesus.

⁸ S. Jones, *Christ and Human Suffering*, London UK: Hodder & Stoughton, 1933, pp. 23-40.

⁹ D. Burnett, *The Healing of the Nations*, p. 92.

¹⁰ Richard, *What are They Saying About the Theology of Suffering*, p. 30.

¹¹ D. Hewetson, *Why Does a Good God Allow Suffering?*, Sutherland NSW: Albatross Books, 1992, p. 13.

As God initiates His redemption plan throughout history, it all points to bringing glory to Himself.¹² More than this, “it also declares that He is sovereign over all things (Ps 103:19). . . . His work of creation, with all the apparent risks involved, was the work of His sovereignty.”¹³ Despite the suffering that is involved in His redemption plan, He is able to bring glory for Himself out of this situation.

Suffering in mission, for those whom God has called out, reflects the power and glory of God, as a testimony to others (2 Cor 12:9). “The sufferings God’s people endure in this world are for the sake of the Kingdom of God” (2 Thess 1:5).¹⁴ Those of God’s servants who suffer, experience spiritual growth, providing they offer it to God, who can bring them to new depths of faith and service. According to Richard, “Suffering is a complex reality, as it is perceived in the history of humanity [however] is not always a negative reality. [It] can contribute to the maturity of an individual.”¹⁵ Ladd adds, “sufferings must be expected and endured; but those who patiently endure will be counted worthy of the gracious gift of the eschatological salvation. This suffering is not mere passive submission; it includes labouring for the Kingdom of God (Col. 4:11).”¹⁶

Four principles are seen in the theme of suffering in mission. (1) God is sovereign, and He is glorified over all the earth. (2) He is with those of His people who suffer, and shares in their suffering, and feels with them.¹⁷ (3) Suffering brings about spiritual growth and maturity. (4)

¹² S. Hawthorne, “The Story of His Glory”, in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement A Reader*, revd edn, R. D. Winter, and S. C. Hawthorne, eds, Pasadena CA: William Carey Library, 1992, p. A-34.

¹³ S. Ellisen, “Everyone’s Question: What is God Trying to Do?”, in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement A Reader*, revd edn, R. D. Winter, and S. C. Hawthorne, eds, Pasadena CA: William Carey Library, 1992, p. A-19.

¹⁴ G. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, revd edn, Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1993, p. 450.

¹⁵ Richard, *What are They saying about the Theology of Suffering*, p. 30.

¹⁶ Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 450, 451. Note: “Labouring of the kingdom” here refers to devoted ministry in the service of the coming kingdom, by proclaiming it, and helping others to enter into it.

¹⁷ A. McGrath, *Suffering*, London UK: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992, pp. 21-22.

With suffering comes hope for His servants at the end. This principle of suffering in mission is seen, through the Old Testament history to the New Testament, as God unveils His ultimate purpose for the world to be reconciled to Him.

SUFFERING IN MISSION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament is where the story of redemption begins, and it climaxes in the New Testament. The idea of God's mission begins in the Old Testament, starting with God Himself, and the concept of suffering in mission is part of that story. God calls out Abraham in Gen 12:1-3 to be a blessing to the world.

ABRAHAM'S EXPERIENCES

Abraham's world was filled with corruption, and yet God chose him out of an idolatrous people, for His purpose and glory. Despite being called, Abraham experienced some form of suffering in mission: the suffering of leaving his ancestral homeland in Ur (Gen 12:1), the suffering of his wife's barrenness (Gen 11:30). "His long sojourn from his ancestral homeland in Ur didn't exactly result in a brilliant missionary career . . . instead he . . . got thrown out of Egypt in disgrace",¹⁸ where, in fear of death, he denied his wife.¹⁹

One great experience, worth noting, is in the sacrifice of his son Isaac. How was God going to be glorified and acknowledged? The answer lies in His act of grace in Gen 12:1-3, which He repeats five times, to bless Abraham, his seed, and all the families of the earth. Despite Abraham's sufferings, more particularly his wife's barrenness, God made what was impossible to man possible with Him. Sarah gave birth to Isaac.

The second principle was that God was with him in his sufferings. The promise of the covenant is guaranteed by God's presence with Abraham, "Whoever curses you I will curse". In Abraham's sufferings, God was

¹⁸ S. Hawthorne, "The Story of His Glory", in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement A Reader*, revd edn, R. D. Winter, and S. C. Hawthorne, eds, Pasadena CA: William Carey Library, 1992, p. A-36.

¹⁹ See Gen 12:10-20.

with him, and saw him through. This is evident when Sarah was taken into Pharaoh's palace. The Lord inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household.²⁰

The third principle is, through suffering, there is growth and maturity. God's intention to test Abraham, in the sacrifice of Isaac, was to test his obedience, in the light of the covenant (Gen 12:1-3). In the execution of the test, Abraham was found to be genuine in his obedience to God (Gen 22:12).²¹ In his sufferings, Abraham matured, and his faith became full-grown.²² On the other hand, his son Isaac was seen to be submissive, even to the point of being laid on the altar of sacrifice.

Finally, the fourth principle here is that there is hope in suffering. Isaac's character, in the process of the sacrifice, has some similarities to the suffering Christ. Tidball explains the following features. Isaac is an only son, which Abraham loved so much (Gen 22:2), which has a parallel in Jesus' baptism, and the Mt of Transfiguration scene, where God spoke, "This is my Son, whom I love." Isaac carried the wood for his sacrifice (Gen 22:6), just as Christ carried His cross to the hill of Golgotha. Isaac's submission, all the way (Gen 22:9), is similar to Christ's obedience unto death. The rescue of Isaac, and his return home, correlates with Christ's resurrection and return to His throne in glory. The sacrifice of Isaac gives a glimpse of Calvary, which would be fulfilled later in Christ.²³

MOSES' EXPERIENCE

Moses is another great example of the divine-sending of an emissary on a mission to do the will of God. Moses, in his call and service to God, encountered suffering as well. Despite God's presence with him, suffering was a reality, with which Moses had to come to grips. Although there are many sufferings we could list, several notable ones,

²⁰ Gen 12:15-17.

²¹ D. Tidball, *The Message of the Cross*, Leicester UK: IVP, 2001, pp. 37, 39.

²² See Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 316.

²³ Tidball, *The Message of the Cross*, pp. 43-49.

for this purpose, are seen in Moses' encounter with his own people, to whom he ministered and led.

There was a suffering he experienced in being misunderstood, at the hands of the Israelite foreman, when he was trying to help (Ex 5:21). The people protested, and accused him, when Pharaoh and his army pursued them (Ex 14:11). They grumbled and quarrelled with Moses, because there was no water, and almost stoned him (Ex 15:24; 17:1-7). They worshipped an idol, in the shape of a calf (Ex 32:19). Although the Israelites had witnessed great miracles, they were blind to all God's blessings.

Through this, four basic principles are seen, in light of Moses' suffering. Firstly, God is glorified. In Moses' encounter with the Egyptian magicians, they acknowledged God's greatness. They said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God" (Ex 8:19). Even to an extent, Pharaoh confessed his sin, "I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you" (Ex 10:17). The entire Egyptian nation acknowledged the God of Israel.²⁴ According to Kaiser, "the events of Exodus . . . are not simply to eradicate the Egyptians, or their king, but so that 'the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord' (Ex 7:5, 17; 8:22; 14:4, 18)".²⁵

The second principle seen is that God was present with Moses amid his sufferings. Moses was just a man, who complained to God in his sufferings. "O LORD, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued Your people at all" (Ex 5:22-23). This is a question that those in great distress ask, the question of why? The only way to answer this is to remain open to the possibility that, behind the mystery, there is a wise and loving Father, who is in control.²⁶ The evidence of God's presence with Moses is seen in their daily communication.

²⁴ See Ex 12:31-36.

²⁵ Kaiser Jr, *Mission in the Old Testament*, p. 21.

²⁶ Hewetson, *Why Does a Good God Allow Suffering?*, p. 19.

The third principle is where Moses, in his suffering, experiences growth and maturity. He begins to understand, and realise, the ultimate purpose of God. Kaiser says that Moses wanted Pharaoh and the people of Egypt to understand and know, through the plagues, that all the earth is the Lords' (Ex 9:29).²⁷ Not only does he understand the purposes of God, but he carries the burden of his people, and he is willing to suffer for them, even to the extent of being blotted out of the book of life, or to suffer forever, for the sake of his people (Ex 32:32). Similarly, Moses' desire to be taught God's way, so that he may find favour, is a great evidence of his growth and maturity (Ex 33:13).

Finally, although Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land, God gave him a glimpse of hope in his suffering. "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" (Ex 33:14). Moses was shown the glory of God, and a place where there is no more suffering. Moses, at the end of his life, was resting, assured of his place with His Father.

THE PROPHET JEREMIAH'S EXPERIENCE

According to Carson, among God's people, it is the leadership that suffers most.²⁸ This pattern had already been set in the Old Testament, where most of the prophets faced opposition, and many lost their lives.

Jeremiah, like other prophets, had to come to grips with his call. He wrestled with the cost of being a prophet, as it demanded his life. He endured tremendous suffering, in the form of inner turmoil and outward affliction, which characterised his ministry. He was terrified of the opposition (Jer 20:10).²⁹ People did not believe his messages, and he was mocked by all levels of society. He was charged for disturbing the peace, beaten, and locked up. More than these, he was also charged with treason for prophesying God's coming judgment (Jer 20; 37:2).³⁰ Then, there was the suffering of being denied the privileges of private life, like not being allowed to marry, mourn, or participate in social gatherings.

²⁷ Kaiser Jr, *Mission in the Old Testament*, pp. 21-22.

²⁸ D. Carson, *How Long, O Lord?*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1992, p. 87.

²⁹ J. Goldingay, *God's Prophet, God's Servant*, (Exeter UK: Paternoster Press, 1984, pp. 17, 26-27.

³⁰ Carson, *How Long, O Lord?*, pp. 87-88.

How is the first principle, God's glory and name, portrayed in the suffering of Jeremiah? The judgment of Israel was due to her disobedience to God (Jer 11:9-13). God uses Babylonia to execute judgment. This is God's sovereignty manifested. The Nebuzaradan commander acknowledged the sovereign God, when he released Jeremiah, saying, "The LORD your God decreed this disaster. . . . And now the LORD has brought it about . . . because you people sinned against the LORD, and did not obey him" (Jer 40:2-3).

The second principle, here, is that God was present and involved with Jeremiah in his suffering. The suffering, experienced by Jeremiah, is attributed to God Himself. Jeremiah's suffering is not to do with his identification with Israel, but his identification with God. Since he comes to his people as the representative of God, what is done to him by men reflects their attitude to God. Hence, it is God who suffers, the one who is pushed out of His world onto the cross as the crucified one (Jer 1:5, 8-10).³¹

Amid the sufferings, there is a positive implication involved. The third principle is seen at work here. Jeremiah, in his suffering, is being moulded into the kind of person God wanted. He has matured and grown in the process. According to Goldingay, "He had already walked through the fires, and come out the other side, who now, through it all, stands confident, firm, unwavering, and resolute. Inner doubt is resolved, and strength of faith is triumphant."³² His growth and maturity also enables him to identify with his people. Although known as a prophet of doom, whose message was terror, he prays for them, on their behalf, and encourages them to pray.³³ He has understood God's way, and that is, being a servant, he has lost all his rights.³⁴

Finally, in the fourth principle, there is hope in suffering. Despite Jeremiah's message of judgment, the Lord had showed him hope, amid all these sufferings. " 'The days are coming', declares the LORD, 'when I

³¹ Goldingay, *God's Prophet, God's Servant*, pp. 41-42.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 16.

³³ See Jer 14:7, 9, 19, 22.

³⁴ Goldingay, *God's Prophet, God's Servant*, p. 23.

will bring my people Israel and Judah back from captivity, and restore them', . . . says the LORD" (Jer 30:3). "In the similar context, Jeremiah speaks of the renewing of the broken covenant between Yahweh and Israel, of its renewing, on a better and more permanent basis than before" (Jer 31:31-34; 32:36-41).³⁵ Kaiser says, "the nations will gather to Jerusalem to worship the LORD" (Jer 3:17).³⁶ For Jeremiah, personally, he finds freedom at the hands of his captors (Jer 40), after the fall of Jerusalem (Jer 39).

SUFFERING IN MISSION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Having seen some examples in the Old Testament, relating to suffering in mission, in the context of missions, with the four principles as guides, we turn to the climax in the New Testament, more particularly in Christ Jesus, and also in His apostle Paul. In the New Testament, the cross of Christ is the focal point of Christian understanding and suffering. Jesus left His throne in glory to accomplish the mission of God, and encountered suffering.

JESUS' EXPERIENCE OF SUFFERING

Jesus' encounter with suffering began before His birth, and continued afterwards. His suffering was already heralded throughout the Old Testament, even after the immediate fall of Adam and Eve. "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will struck his heel" (Gen 3:15). Furthermore, His suffering was foreshadowed in the experiences of the Old Testament characters, as seen in the few examples cited earlier. Even when He was being conceived, He encountered the suffering of being rejected by his earthly father Joseph (Matt 1:18, 19). Then, there was the rejection of a proper place for His birth.³⁷

His birth brought about the threat of suffering death at the hands of Herod. Moreover, He suffered opposition and death at the hands of His very people, the religious leaders, and the rulers. He was tempted and

³⁵ Ibid., p. 73.

³⁶ Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, p. 73.

³⁷ See Luke 2:7.

tested (Matt 4:1-11),³⁸ and rejected by his home town (Luke 4:14-30). Moreover, He was betrayed (Mark 14:10, 11),³⁹ denied (John 18:16-18, 25-27),⁴⁰ and deserted (Matt 26:55),⁴¹ by His very own disciples.⁴² Finally, the climax of all suffering was His death on the cross for the redemption of the people of the world.

The first principle, where God is glorified, shows that it was God's will that Jesus come into the world to reconcile the world to His Father, through Himself. Jesus was obedient to death, thus bringing honour to His Father. Jesus confirmed this, when He spoke of His cross of suffering, on more than one occasion.⁴³ According to Tidball, "The cross was to reveal God's glory, and, concurrently, be the means, by which God would confer honour on His Son."⁴⁴ It was through Jesus that the Father was glorified.

The second principle is where God is present, and in the midst of suffering. The issue of whether God was present or not has been argued by scholars. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). Tidball agrees with Moltmann that God abandoned Jesus in His death.⁴⁵ Ngien argues that "the sight of Jesus on the cross disclosed God as One who suffers within humanity . . . the human suffering of Jesus is really God's own suffering . . . the divinity was present in the cross, working out our salvation".⁴⁶ Whatever the arguments may be, the fact remains that God was grieved. He is a God, who feels for His people.

The third principle is where suffering brings about growth and maturity. The cross of Christ is the path to mature holiness. Jesus the Son of God learnt obedience through His suffering, and, therefore, was made perfect, enabling Him to become the source of salvation for all those who

³⁸ See also Luke 4:1-13.

³⁹ See also Matt 26:14-16; Luke 22:3-6.

⁴⁰ See also Matt 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:55-62.

⁴¹ See also Mark 14:50.

⁴² Tidball, *The Message of the Cross*, p. 145.

⁴³ See John 12:23, 27-28; 13:31-32; 17:1.

⁴⁴ Tidball, *The Message of the Cross*, p. 180.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁴⁶ D. Ngien, "The God who Suffers", in *Christianity Today*, 41-2 (1997), pp. 38-42.

believed. This does not mean that Christ was disobedient, so He had to learn to obey, but, rather, in His suffering His obedience was tested, thus resulting in it becoming fully-grown. So it is with us, that, through suffering, we are led to maturity, through our obedience for Christ (Heb 12:1-12).⁴⁷

Finally, the fourth principle shows there is hope in suffering. Christ, Himself, has become that hope, for all who believe in Him. Jesus, in His death, knew that the mission He came to do for His Father, was now completed. According to Stott, “Jesus clearly looked beyond His death to His resurrection, beyond His sufferings to His glory, and, indeed, was sustained in His trials by the ‘joy set before him’ ” (Heb 12:2).⁴⁸ Stott further adds, “The cross has made access to God available to all, irrespective of gender or race. The old private access road of Judaism has been closed. There is only one access route in the new age, and it goes through the cross. And, along that way, tread men and women, Jews and Gentiles, black and white, rich and poor, all on a level footing, carrying their own crosses, enjoying restored communion with God, and forming the new humanity.”⁴⁹

PAUL’S EXPERIENCE OF SUFFERING

Paul, unlike the Old Testament characters, is unique in his call and ministry. He seems to have accommodated the demands of his call, without much resistance.

For Paul, the first principle, where God is glorified in suffering, is seen in his boasting about the sufferings he endured, which is very uncommon. For Paul, it is only Christ that matters, and, if he may boast, it is only in the cross of Jesus (Gal 6:14). God’s purpose, in His choice of Paul, was to reveal His divine power, and to demonstrate the reality of the cross and resurrection of Jesus. Moreover, through the cross and resurrection of Christ, the wisdom and power of God, which was revealed earlier in

⁴⁷ Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 316.

⁴⁸ Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 322.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

Christ, is manifested in Paul's life, through his suffering (1 Cor 2:1-5; 2 Cor 2:14; 4:11).⁵⁰

The second principle, is where God is present, and in the midst of suffering. Paul no doubt knew that he was not alone in his suffering. "I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal 2:20). Paul knew that the old has been done away with, and now he had been raised to new life in Christ's power. Hence, Christ, in the person of the Holy Spirit, resided in him, and transformed him from inside.⁵¹

The third principle is suffering brings about growth and maturity. Hafemann states, "Paul's call was . . . linked to the fact that he would suffer greatly for the sake of (the Lord's) name. . . . Hence . . . Paul considered suffering to be a characteristic mark of his apostolic ministry."⁵² Paul grew deeper in the knowledge of God through Christ. According to Williams, "Paul valued suffering, above all, because it directed people to the grace of Christ (2 Cor 12:8-10)".⁵³ Carson adds that Paul, in his commitment to growth, declares, "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil 3:8). Paul further declares, "I want to know Christ, and the power of His resurrection" (Phil 3:10).⁵⁴

The fourth principle is there is hope in suffering. Paul, having embodied the cross and resurrection of Christ, understands the hope that is involved. He declares "I press on towards the goal to win the prize, for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:14). According to Hafemann, "Paul . . . encouraged his readers to be patient, and endure, in the midst of adversity, which is the outworking of their

⁵⁰ S. J. Hafemann, "Suffering", in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin, and D. G. Reid, eds, Downers Grove IL: IVP, 1993, p. 919.

⁵¹ Tidball, *The Message of the Cross*, p. 236.

⁵² Hafemann, "Suffering", p. 919.

⁵³ I. Williams, *Prayer in Pain*, Nottingham UK: Grove Books, 1985, p. 15.

⁵⁴ Carson, *How Long, O Lord?*, p. 80.

faith (Rom 12:12; 2 Tim 4:5) . . . only those who suffer with Christ, in the endurance of faith, will also be glorified with Christ (Rom 8:17).⁵⁵

Finally, Paul encourages them that they will all experience the power of God, made known in the cross of Jesus, and the resurrection power of God, which will be transmitted, through the process of suffering, to sharing in Christ's glory (Rom 8:35; 2 Cor 4:14; 2 Thess 1:7).⁵⁶

LESSONS FOR THE MELANESIAN CHURCH

What then is there for the church in Melanesia to learn from the issue of suffering in mission, in the context of missions? As the church begins to slowly accept missions, for the purpose of God's mission, it is important that the church must accept the reality of suffering. The four principles, again, should help the church analyse the issue in application.

The first principle is, in suffering, God is glorified. As the church develops, and desires to send missionaries, or train coworkers for His mission, it is important that those who intend to go have died to self. As Paul testifies, "I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God" (Gal 2:20). Those who go know that they have died, hence what they do manifests Christ. In the process of suffering, they participate in the suffering of Christ, where the power and glory of God is seen as a testimony and witness. "The world must observe that we suffer, not because of public scandal or vice, but because we hold to the Word of God, preach it, and practise it."⁵⁷ As ambassadors of Christ, we must demonstrate the cross, to bring honour and glory to our Master.

The second principle is, in our suffering, God is with us. Although we may not find answers to suffering, in the midst of serving God, we must be encouraged that Christ, through the Holy Spirit, is with us. Christ promised that He will be with us, to the ends of the age (Matt 28:20). Hence, we must know that Jesus did not forsake us, but shares in our

⁵⁵ Hafemann, "Suffering", p. 920.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 920.

⁵⁷ Ngien, "The God who Suffers", p. 41.

pain, and cries with us in our agony. According to McGrath, “God decided to be hurt by our pain. God allowed Himself to suffer, and share in our grief. . . . The cross is the supreme demonstration of God’s solidarity with us in this world of suffering. He chose to enter this world . . . to share its sorrow and pain, and . . . finally, to suffer death on a cross.”⁵⁸

For this reason, we as “the church of the suffering God must exist, in and for this world, accepting suffering, itself, as it cares for the needy, the sick, and the poor, and seeks the liberation of the oppressed”.⁵⁹ This is done through our expression of God’s love to the world.

The third principle is there is growth and maturity in suffering. This becomes possible only when suffering is offered to God, believing that he can bring us to new depths of faith and service. We need to stay open to God, and allow Him to minister in our situation. Part of our growth and maturity involves the refinement of faith. Isaiah stated that suffering is like a refiner’s fire, which removes impurities from faith (Is 1:25; 48:10). Similarly, for us, suffering removes all the worldly things, on which we have built our foundations, which have taken God’s place. Hence, suffering enables us to discover our God again. We are not only refined, but also pruned, to remove obstacles that hinder our relationship to Christ (cf. John 15:1-11).⁶⁰

Further to this, suffering humbles us, and reminds us that we are helpless. We cannot do anything in this situation. Apart from being humbled, suffering provides the opportunity for witness to the world. Christ was a witness to many, even unto His death on the cross.⁶¹ According to Matthew, the centurion, and those who were guarding Him, after witnessing His death and all the events that happened, confessed that He was the Son of God (Matt 27:54).⁶² Paul, in chains, saw it as the opportunity to advance the gospel (Phil 1:12). In light of these, suffering

⁵⁸ McGrath, *Suffering*, pp. 21-22.

⁵⁹ Ngien, “The God who Suffers”, p. 41.

⁶⁰ McGrath, *Suffering*, pp. 80-89.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-87.

⁶² See also Mark 15:39, Luke 23:47.

does not prevent us from affirming our faith in Christ. Tertullian, in his writing, remarked that “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church”.⁶³

Finally, the fourth principle is there is hope in suffering. In the midst of our suffering, let us be encouraged that there is hope in Christ, through His resurrection. “For God chose us in Christ, before the creation of the world, to be holy and blameless in His sight” (Eph 1:4), “and present us before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy” (Jude 24). This should be our motivation and hope, compared to our current sufferings, which are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us (Rom 8:18). More to these, “our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. All tears will be wiped. There will be no more death, or mourning, or crying, or pain” (Rev 21:4).⁶⁴

CONCLUSION

Suffering in mission, in the context of missions, is a reality for the church of God. For Christian coworkers, and missionaries alike, the way of the cross is the only option for them. Yet “the place of suffering in service, and of passion in mission is hardly taught today”.⁶⁵ Any message preached on victory, (power, prosperity, and health) without the element of suffering, or eliminates suffering, denies the suffering servant, and the power of the resurrection. The death of Christ, therefore, becomes unreal, and, in a sense, implies that Christ never died. Such messages can be known as a prosperity gospel. According to Ngien, “if God is found in the human suffering of Jesus, we should not then preach a triumphalist doctrine of health, wealth, and freedom from affliction, for those who believe”.⁶⁶

⁶³ Cited in McGrath, *Suffering*, p. 89. Note: Tertullian was a 3rd-century North African theologian.

⁶⁴ Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 323.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 322.

⁶⁶ Ngien, “The God who Suffers”, p. 41.

Stott clearly states that the “greatest single secret of evangelistic or missionary effectiveness is the willingness to suffer and die . . . the servant must suffer, if he is to bring light to the nations, and a seed must die, if it is to multiply”.⁶⁷ “Jesus remained a single grain, while He was doing limited ministry in one nation, Israel, but, after suffering, Jesus produced much fruit, whereby He expanded His ministry to all nations.”⁶⁸ “The Great Commission is given to His disciples, only after His suffering and death on the cross.”⁶⁹ It is suffering that must come first, before glory, for effective results to be achieved.

Jesus confirms suffering as a way for those who want serve Him. He taught His disciples that He was going to suffer and be killed, and, after three days, He would rise back to life again (Matt 16:21-28; Mark 8:31-32; Luke 9:22-29).⁷⁰ Jesus was also honest, by admitting that those who would follow Him will also suffer. He told His disciples the way of mission. “No servant is greater than his master. If they persecute Me, they will persecute you also.”⁷¹ Jesus, confirms the reality of suffering in mission. He accomplished His Father’s redemptive mission, through His suffering. Suffering, therefore, must be seriously accepted, and seen in light of the cross.

More to this, Christ has set for us a model. Van Engen says, “Jesus is the model, as 1 Pet 2:21 clearly indicates: “For you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in His steps.”⁷² Apart from setting the example, Christ has also assured us that He will be with us to the end of the age, through the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of mission. Therefore, with this, we must not be robbed, by prosperity gospel, which eliminates the power and the glory of Christ Jesus, our Lord, of the great privilege of knowing the cross of Jesus, as the way for mission.

⁶⁷ Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 322.

⁶⁸ C. Van Engen, *Footprints of God*, Monrovia CA: MARC, 1999, p. 94.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁷⁰ Van Engen, *Footprints of God*, p. 95.

⁷¹ John 15:20.

⁷² Van Engen, *Footprints of God*, p. 98.

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BOOK REVIEW: THE NEW FACES OF CHRISTIANITY

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Eric Schering (M.Div., D.Min.), and his wife Penny, currently serve with Pacific Island Ministries in the East Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea. Eric served as a pastor in the USA for 17 years, and served with Promise Keepers for four years. They have lived and ministered in the Sepik River Valley for six years. Eric is involved in leadership training, and writing resource materials for pastors in PNG.

INTRODUCTION

The New Faces of Christianity, by Philip Jenkins, Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 2006, 193 pp., \$26 hardcover.

We are living in a time of incredible harvest worldwide. Not since our Lord Jesus walked this earth, have we seen such a huge influx of humanity ushered into the kingdom. Philip Jenkins, Professor of History and Religious Studies at Penn State University, is an expert on the global expansion of Christianity. In an earlier, and equally-fascinating, book, *The Next Christendom*, Jenkins describes the explosive growth of the Christian faith in the global South. A central thesis in both books is that, since the centre of Christianity has moved southward, it is no longer correct to speak about Christianity as a Western religion.

The subtitle of *The New Faces of Christianity* is “Believing the Bible in the global South”, which more accurately reflects the author’s primary focus. The Word of God is, front and centre, in those countries experiencing dramatic growth. Jenkins conveys how the Word of God is viewed, used, and sometimes misused, in emerging churches. In the first paragraph of the book, Jenkins whets our appetite for this topic:

On one occasion, two bishops were participating in a Bible study, one, an African Anglican, the other a US Episcopalian. As the

hours went by, tempers frayed, as the African expressed his confidence in the clear words of scripture, while the American stressed the need to interpret the Bible in light of modern scholarship and contemporary mores. Eventually, the African bishop asked, in exasperation, “If you don’t believe the Bible, why did you bring it to us in the first place?”

The author does a masterful job describing how the Word of God has functioned as a powerful source of transformation in many less-developed countries. He details how, in “2004 alone, the United Bible Society distributed 25 million Bibles”. In Africa, the complete scripture is now available in 150 languages. He asserts how “Latin American nations – especially Brazil – are among the world’s largest producers and consumers of Bibles.”

One of the author’s weaknesses is his failure to recognise the Holy Spirit’s role in the efficacy of scripture. The great popularity of scripture, in the South, is due, as much to the Spirit of God, as it is to the Word of God.

Jenkins strikes an unusual balance between fully acknowledging the breath-taking growth of Christianity worldwide, and simultaneously doing justice to the acute poverty and suffering, experienced by the vast majority of global South believers. He relates that life expectancy for most sub-Sahara Africans is in the 40s. AIDS is taking a horrific toll. In six listed countries, Africans can hope to make it only into their 30s, raising the issue of whether these countries can still be labelled as “developing”.

The Word of God is being used in the global South, not only for evangelism and proclamation purposes, but also as a practical tool, to set free those who are bound by demon possession, witchcraft, fear of evil spirits, etc. In many regions, non-Christians and Christians alike come to worship services, searching for, and finding, help in dealing with the intimidating and paralysing fears of the spirit world.

We can take heart that many African believers hold a high view of scripture, which is not always the case in Western countries. In certain traditions, the perspicuity of scripture is being called into question. Enthusiastic African readers, on the other hand, are convinced that the message of God's Word is abundantly clear, with the only remaining question being whether it is to be believed.

In North America, a different dynamic has come into play in the minds of many. Scripture needs to be interpreted in the light of ever-changing moral values. Jenkins astutely observes that for "liberal, Western Christians, these evolving standards constitute a source of authority, quite as powerful as those orthodox values of tradition and scripture, and, sometimes, more demanding". People – such as Jenkins – who are instructors in secular universities, feel tremendous pressure to conform to these evolving standards. One of the great challenges for North American Christianity is whether *Sola Scriptura* will be our guide, in matters of faith and practice, or whether we're going to allow tradition and/or contemporary values to marginalise its message and power.

For those who enjoy tracking the rapid expansion of Christianity, Jenkins' earlier writing is the book of choice. For those interested in understanding the popularity, credibility, and functionality of scripture in the global South, this well-written book is a good read.