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MELANESIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

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

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

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

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

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EDITORIAL

During 2008, a number of Christian Leaders' Training College (CLTC) graduates embarked upon study towards a Master of Theology degree. From their work, we have chosen three of the major essays, which, we believe, will be of interest to readers. The fourth article comes from a CLTC student, who will complete his Bachelor of Theology degree this year.

In his article, **Moses Bakura** addresses the phenomenon of group conversions in Melanesia, in contrast to individual conversions, as experienced in Western countries. He then explores the relevant issues that group conversions create, and attempts to answer these from a Melanesian perspective.

George Mombi tackles an issue that is affecting many ministries at different levels across Melanesia. In cultures, which often desire technological and material gain, Christianity, coupled with prosperity theology, seems to be the ideal solution. George outlines why this theology is dangerous, and draws attention to the problems it causes.

Philip Bungo reviews the history of theological training in the Pacific region from the time of early missionisation onwards. In doing so, he considers the value of the Theological Education by Extension (TEE) model, but also challenges us regarding the relevance of much that is taught today.

Christian music plays a large part in the way that we worship, particularly for young people. **August Berita** is a talented young musician, who considers the issues involved in this very relevant matter.

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.

Graeme Batley.

TOWARDS A MELANESIAN PERSPECTIVE ON CONVERSION: THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNAL AND INDIVIDUAL DECISION-MAKING AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR A MELANESIAN COMMUNAL WAY OF LIFE

Moses Bakura

Moses was a long-serving member of the faculty at the Christian Leaders' Training College. In 2008, he resigned from his position as Dean of Studies, Lae Campus, to return to ministry in his home area of the Lower Ramu in Papua New Guinea.

INTRODUCTION

Communal participation and living was an integral part of Papua New Guinea's (PNG's) Melanesian way of life for thousands of years before the coming of foreigners, and the introduction of commerce, Christianity, and Western civilisation. People did things together. Equal sharing was the emphasis in Melanesia, and no one was left poor. In outlining the eight-point plan for our nation, Sir Michael Somare – who was the Chief Minister of our nation straight after self-government – did not fail to affirm emphatically that this practice must be preserved.[1] A closely-related practice to communal participation in Melanesia is the pervasive relationship to their spirits. The spirits of dead ancestors, and local geographical spirits, were embraced as part of their cosmos.

Given a glimpse of what communal life was like then, this article aims to discuss how the implications of conversion can have a positive effect on today's communal way of life. To do so, this essay firstly defines and

[1] Michael Somare, "New Goals for New Guinea", in *Pacific Perspective: Journal of the South Pacific Social Sciences Association* 2-1 (1973), p. 1.

contextualises the process of conversion, and then looks at some of its 19th-century dynamics. It then considers what conversion means for Melanesians in PNG today, and reviews Stilwell's study, "Towards a Melanesian Theology of Conversion".[2]

In the process, the essay will also discuss additional theological issues that currently face converts in Melanesia, and points the way forward, before concluding. It will also, by way of illustration, give selected snapshots of some 19th-century Pacific missionary movements' contributions to conversion in the Pacific generally. The essay will, at times, refer to PNG cultures, such as the Kire[3] cultural and language unit, for further illustrations.

CONVERSION: CONCEPT DEFINITION, PERSPECTIVES, DIFFERENCES, AND STAGES

CONCEPT DEFINITIONS AND WESTERN PERSPECTIVE

Various definitions of conversion are offered by Bock,[4] Snyders,[5] Weymouth,[6] Price,[7] and Barclay.[8] Without examining each of these, Hovey builds on Tippett's definition[9] in a most helpful way when he states that conversion is:

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[2] Ewan Stilwell, "Towards a Melanesian Theology of Conversion", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 9-1 (1993), p. 29.

[3] A geographical area comprising 12 villages that speak the Kire language in the Bogia District of the Madang Province of PNG. The author comes from this area.

[4] Darrell L. Bock, "Conversion", in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Walter A. Elwell, ed. (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 1996), p. 118.

[5] John Snyders, "The Best of Two Worlds", in *Catalyst* 1-2 (1971), pp. 50-51.

[6] Ross M. Weymouth, "The Gogodala Society in Papua and the Unevangelized Fields Mission 1890-1977", Ph.D. thesis (Adelaide SA: Flinders University, 1978), p. 161.

[7] David Price, "The Protestant Understanding of Conversion and its Implications for Missionary Obedience", D.Miss. thesis (Pasadena CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1979), p. 340.

[8] William Barclay, *Turning To God: A Study of Conversion in the Book of Acts and Today* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1964), p. 25.

[9] Allan R. Tippett, *The Deep Sea Canoe: The Story of the Third World Missionaries in the South Pacific* (South Pasadena CA: William Carey Library, 1977), p. 42.

> the process, by which a person turns from whatever was his/her primary allegiance, to place God in that position. This process, by the grace of God, begins long before the person is consciously aware of it, and continues throughout the whole of life. It is only made possible by Christ's death and resurrection, and is effective in a saving sense (regeneration) when that person consciously acknowledges that allegiance to God. From the time that primary allegiance has been changed, each decision and attitude will be subject to that allegiance, and the outward expression of this God-directed life, with all its ramifications, will, therefore, be in the forms that best express those meanings in that society.[10]

This description is well put, but very lengthy. It also seems very intellectual, and needs redefining for pragmatic Melanesian people. How would a rural Christian understand the concept, and its process, as expressed here?

Price cites Loffler and Cassidy in arguing that "the biblical study of conversion is complicated by the fact that there is no one word in the Old and New Testaments which covers the whole concept, so serious doubts about the validity of the term have been raised".[11] He also cites J. G. Davies' objection "to the term 'conversion' as a valid biblical expression".[12] It may be true that the continued use of the word conversion misleads many, and Price questions if conversion is a biblical concept, "is it an important one . . . and is it, therefore, correct to reject it?"[13] He further argues that a word-study approach, in the light of the above problems, is inadequate, if used alone, because both Old and New Testaments do give example of conversions. "There is no one word for it, because no one word can embrace its comprehensiveness sufficiently!"[14] Therefore, it is very clear that, though there is no one

[10] Kevin G. Hovey, *Before All Else Fails. . . Read the Instructions* (Brisbane Qld: Harvest Publications, 1986), p. 89.
[11] Price, "The Protestant Understanding of Conversion", p. 285.
[12] Ibid., p. 286.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.

word for conversion in scripture, the reality of the conversion event is seen everywhere in scripture.

However, the problem with these definitions is that they seem to be from a Western perspective, depicting individual conversion only. The expectation of an individual's conversion, in a Western society, sometimes differs from that of an individual's decision in Melanesian societies. In Melanesia, an individual decision, made in isolation to a group's consensus, always has a ripple effect on everyone associated with it, because of the vibrant communal network. So, how do we balance this in the definition?

Hanciles expresses the same concern that a definition of conversion needs not only include individuals, but groups as well. He believes that:

> writers lay themselves open to criticism by depicting conversion as essentially an *individual* and *psychological* (or "interior") experience. Perhaps, due to an evangelical predilection, neither makes provision for "group" conversion, an approach considered more efficacious in contexts, like Africa *and Melanesia*, where "religion" is communally regulated, while the "interior bias" ignores both the significance of "context" and the variability of the phenomenon.[15]

What Hanciles expresses is out of a genuine concern for a recognition and inclusion of group conversion in the definition. What then should a Melanesian contextualised definition of conversion look like? What words should be used to define conversion, so that any simple believer in a rural village will understand what it entails?

[15] Jehu J. Hanciles, "Conversion and Social Change", in *Christianity Reborn: The Global Expansion of Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century*, Donald M. Lewis, ed. (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), p. 158 (emphasis added).

Contextualised Definition

When attempting to define conversion within Melanesia, we must firstly consider two important steps. The first step is to redefine the Melanesian Pidgin words *tanim bel* or *tanim bel pinis*.[16] These phrases are very vague in their meaning, and do not truly describe the change, and the process involved. The terms might apply to exposed and committed sin only. They do not seem to include secret sin,[17] and the specific allegiance to spirits and other sins the Bible so clearly defines.

Neo-Melanesian language[18] has drastically changed, and continues to do so. Therefore, such phrases are outdated. If they are used, they are considered old fashioned. *Senisim olpela pasin* or *kisim Jisas long laip*,[19] are better alternatives. *Senisim olpela pasin* is more inclined towards the process of conversion, while *kisim Jisas long laip* challenges someone to conversion. Are these not better terms than *tanim bel* or *tanim bel pinis*?

The second step is that consideration must be given to defining the process of change in the individual, or group of individuals, who are turning from one allegiance to another. The new allegiance must become the only source of their lives, with a resolve to live by the principles and precepts of the new allegiance, and not to resort again to the old ways.

Therefore, any effort to define the term, and its process, must be done well, using helpful, practical terms so that people from various levels of our society will understand them. This is vital, as many people lack a proper understanding of the cognitive process of conversion, and what it involves. It explains why nominalism is rampant.

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[16] Frank Mihalic, *The Jacaranda Dictionary and Grammar of Melanesian Pidgin* (Milton Qld: Jacaranda Press, 1971), 192. *Tanim bel* is "to influence, to change someone's mind, repent", and *tanim bel pinis* refers to "one already converted".

[17] Stilwell, "Towards a Melanesian Theology of Conversion", pp. 30-31.

[18] Sometimes referred to as "Pidgin English".

[19] *Senisim olpela pasin* means "to change your old way of living", and *kisim Jisas long laip* means "to accept Jesus into one's life".

This essay, therefore, makes an attempt to provide a Melanesian understanding of conversion and its process: it is the individual, or a group of individuals, who firstly *turn from* their primary allegiance. This may involve turning from the worship of spirits (ancestral and others), together with the accepted, negative Western or cultural influence and attitudes they have towards other people, themselves, and material things. Secondly, they turn to God by the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ, *place* their lives upon God for their livelihood, and *adopt* His principles and precepts, for practical *living under His leadership*. They also *do things God's way, daily*, and think *no more* of resorting to their former way of life.

This may not be the best definition. It is open to criticism, even to the extent of being rejected outright, or of it being redefined towards a better definition. However, if no attempt is made, nothing will ever be done to give an indigenous description of the concept and its process. It is, indeed, a challenge to Melanesian theologians to seriously think and redefine the process of conversion, and its meaning for our context.

The next section deals with the difference between individual and communal conversion.

Conversion Differences

The London Missionary Society (LMS), in 1795, adopted its fundamental principle "that our design is not to send Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopacy, or any form of church government . . . but the glorious gospel of the blessed God to the heathens".[20] This was the motivating factor that drove them to commission missionaries to Africa, West Indies, India, and a year later, in 1796, to the Pacific Island of

[20] Andrew F. Walls, "Outposts of Empire", in *Lion Handbook: The History of Christianity*, Tim Dowley, ed. (Oxford UK: Lion Publishing, 1977), p. 550.

Tahiti, where "18 of their number remained",[21] with the objective to civilise and then Christianise.[22]

Those who remained were mostly artisans and labourers. They laboured and toiled for 16 years without any converts or church growth.[23] Some 36 years later, in PNG's Morobe District, the Neuendettelsau Mission was established, and later became the Lutheran church of Papua New Guinea. Wagner and Reiner note that the "first baptism took place in 1899, after 13 long years of missionary toil".[24] In the author's Kire area, it was reported that, in 1959, the Australian Churches of Christ's first missionaries moved to Pir from Tung:

> Pir proved to be an area where work was difficult, and often heartbreaking, and where response to the gospel was slow – after nine years of faithful ministry – there seemed very little sign of spiritual growth anywhere among the three villages that have received constant visiting. . . . In 1969, there were 26 baptisms.[25]

So, when we consider historical reports, such as these, the questions we may ask are: "Why were there no conversions seen in these places? What caused the delay for missionaries to see their first conversions, after so many years of toil? Were their evangelistic skills and missionary

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[21] Allan R. Tippett, *People Movements in South Polynesia: A Study in Church Growth* (Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1971), p. 10.

[22] John Hitchen, "Training 'Tamate': Formation of the 19th-century Missionary Worldview: The Case of James Chalmers of New Guinea", Ph.D. thesis (Aberdeen UK: University of Aberdeen, 1984), p. 775. Chalmers testifies to this in vivid terms with the challenge, "Nowhere have I seen our boasted civilisation civilising, but everywhere have I seen Christianity acting as the true civiliser . . . for God's sake let it be done at once! – gospel and commerce, but remember this, it must be the gospel first." See also Selwyn's perspective in David Hilliard, *God's Gentlemen: A History of the Melanesia Mission 1849-1942* (St Lucia Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1978), pp. 5-6.

[23] Tippett, *People Movements in South Polynesia*, p. 11.

[24] *The Lutheran church in Papua New Guinea: The First Hundred Years 1886-1986*, Herwig Wagner, and Hermann Reiner, eds (Adelaide SA: Lutheran Publishing House, 1986), pp. 41-53.

[25] "A Short History of Australian Churches of Christ New Guinea Mission", in Mission History Folder 2, Vertical File, CLTC Banz Library, nd.

endeavours ineffective? Were their conversion methods incapable of converting the indigenous islanders?"

The same concerns were raised by the many supporters of the early missionaries to Tahiti from England. They began to "wonder about this project, unto which they had put their funds for a decade and a half without any conversion returns".[26] Tippett explains that there were two reasons for this. The first was that lay people were sent, without any experienced missionaries being there to share, oversee, and advise. Their knowledge of the culture and environment came through the writings of seamen, and their only advice was from the Society's directors, and this was foreign. The second reason was that they did not have an indigenous agency to work with, and to later spearhead the gospel penetration.

The main factor that delayed conversion, then, was the "civilise to evangelise" policy, which gave civilisation priority over evangelisation. Certainly policies were made by a group of good-standing people, but, if souls are precious and are dying, would it not be possible to bend those policies to save them? Other factors also contributed to no conversions in Tahiti for 16 years, but it must also be noted that, unfortunately, the missionaries[27] found themselves in an environment of communal decision-making, and, to emphasise individual commitment or decision was something foreign to the islanders. So, conversions were slow.

The Western worldview of individual conversion has been the accepted norm in many Christian churches in Melanesia today, but it has its own strengths and weaknesses. One weakness is the imminent danger of the individual, who does not see the importance of being part of a family, or a community, and facing isolation from the group. Melanesian converts to Christianity must realise that they are not to be singled out of the community, but are to remain in the family, and the society. As Barclay states:

[26] Tippett, *People Movements in South Polynesia*, p. 11.
[27] Used generally to refer to missionaries from all missionary-sending organisations, such as Methodists, Lutherans, Catholics, and Anglicans (including the LMS).

> There is always a danger of making conversion an individualistic thing, in which a man is concerned with the saving of his own soul. It may well be said that conversion is the end of individualism, and the entry into fellowship . . . conversion is not only towards a certain kind of life; it is conversion into a fellowship.[28]

If an individual wants to destroy a family deity, consensus must be sought, otherwise it is not possible. The decision to dispose of the deity must come, firstly, from the group.

In Melanesia, communal conversion has not escaped negative comments. Some anthropologists, missionary historians, and theoreticians have often attached negative descriptions of mass movements they have observed as a "fearful, hysterical crowd, acting as an irrational mass".[29] One thing that these experts did not perhaps realise is that Melanesians are spiritual people. They did not appreciate that Melanesians have a genuine desire within to experience something completely satisfying, and that it is not "cargo", as is often referred to. St Augustine of Hippo said long ago that there is a vacuum in man that only God can fill. The desire to have this vacuum filled is perhaps their longing, and their search.

Communal conversion in Melanesia must be seen in the light of Tippett's terminology: "People movements or people's movements".[30] Or, as Whiteman puts it, a "multi-individual response . . . that is, individuals established the new norm for the group, which then led to

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[28] Barclay, *Turning To God*, p. 71.

[29] Tippett, *People Movements in South Polynesia*, p. 199.

[30] Ibid. Tippett further specifies the phenomena of people *movements* and *people's movements*, as the former suggesting the multi-individual character, and the latter the structural entity. The former is valuable for describing the conversion of a village or family; the latter for differentiating between, say, the Tongan and the Maori movements. See also Donald Anderson McGavran, *Church Growth and Christian Mission: A Pioneering Reappraisal of the Role of Christian Missions and the Prospects of the Church Around the World Today* (New York NY: Harper & Row, 1965), pp.69-86.

whole groups choosing to become Christian . . . where individuals could practise their understanding of Christian living, as a corporate entity".[31]

Within a Melanesian society, although a multi-individual response is usually the norm, the commitment each individual makes within the communal decision is a very crucial commitment. Therefore, it must be intact, and consistently maintained within the group. Without such a balanced emphasis, it is very easy for people, who were part of the decision-making, to slide into nominalism, and become mechanical, giving verbal support only, but unwilling to actively participate in community life and responsibilities. So, as discussed, whichever way conversion is experienced, the goal is for better living within a communal society, both for now and the future. It is a steady ongoing walk with Christ. It is just as important as the moment of becoming a Christian.

The act of conversion is vital, whether done individually or corporately. If conversion is a process, as has been seen earlier, then what are the stages? Are these important to know? The next point of our discussion will help us to look at the different stages of this process.

Conversion Stages

Communal conversion, or multi-individual movements, was not new, or limited only to the Pacific Islands peoples. Acts 19 tells how a number of those who practised sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. That was a multi-individual movement.

Tippett sees the Christian experience of conversion and commitment as going through four periods or stages: from **Awareness,** through **Decision-Making,** through **Incorporation,** and on to **Maturity**.

[31] Darrell Whiteman, *Melanesians and Missionaries* (Pasadena CA: William Carey Library, 1983), p. 186.

Each stage is directed by an experiential point.[32] Hovey further develops this process by adding what Kraft saw as the specific decisions that are involved in each stage. The process, he states, is only complete when the person physically enters into heaven.[33] Hanciles notes seven stages, and gives a very lengthy deliberation on each one.[34]

The different stages of conversion and commitment presented are very helpful to the intellectual mind. However, many Melanesians would not understand them. Melanesian theologians are, therefore, urged to see the importance of conversion, and to interpret and contextualise it for our people. Hosea, in the Old Testament, correctly said, "my people are destroyed because of lack of knowledge".[35] This lack of explanation has left so many members of churches in Melanesia, as well as in the Pacific, largely nominal.

So far, we have considered the different stages of conversion. The challenge now is to explain them clearly, so that the people can understand the process, and the commitment one makes. The attributes that contribute to conversion in Melanesia are discussed next. What are the dynamic factors that lead to mass and individual conversions in the Pacific?

DYNAMICS OF COMMUNAL CONVERSION

The missionaries of the early 19th century engaged in mission work at various locations, and identified different motivations for conversion. Whiteman identifies six dynamics of conversion in the Solomon Islands. They are the desire for education, which the indigenous people see as the passport to the Western world; the desire for material objects of European origin; the desire for peace; a connection to the outside world; the desire to adopt Christianity, because it is perceived to be a religion of

[32] Tippett, *The Deep Sea Canoe*, pp. 42-43.
[33] Hovey, *Before All Else Fails*, p. 86.
[34] Hanciles, "Conversion and Social Change", p. 160.
[35] Hos 4:6.

great practical use in the contact with foreigners; and, finally, because they were attracted to the influential individual personality of the missionaries.[36]

Beside those identified dynamics, Daimoi notes another reason that Melanesians "fearfully and positively"[37] embraced missionaries. It was not because of the ultimate desire for Christianity, but because they believed these missionaries were the expected dead relatives that had come from the land of the dead. The other noted motivating factors of conversion are what some have termed "power" and "cargo".[38] From these discerned motivations arose comments such as "often mass conversions resulted because they [Melanesians] expected the Christians' God to give them the white man's riches and abilities, in the same way as their former gods".[39] This comment, however, does not fairly represent every Melanesian society.

The main dynamic of conversion, as I see it, is through a demonstration of spiritual power. People began to see the powerlessness of their gods, as they were confronted by the God of the missionaries. King Pomare II of Tahiti,[40] and Varani of Fiji,[41] are examples of this. When King Pomare II, in 1809, was defeated by his political rivals, and the missionaries left, he was open for change. But it was not until a child died within the chiefly ranks that he openly made known his intention to the chiefly council to turn from his gods to the God of the missionaries. This was the normal Oceanic pattern of making decisions.

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[36] Whiteman, *Melanesians and Missionaries*, p. 188.
[37] Joshua Daimoi, "Nominalism in Papua New Guinea" Th.M. thesis, Pasadena CA: Fuller Theological Seminary (Ann Arbour MI: University Microfilms International, 1987), p. 32.
[38] Stilwell, "Towards a Melanesian Theology of Conversion", pp. 31-32. "Cargo" means the mythological anticipation of "goods" (more inclined towards the Western-type) coupled with an abundant life.
[39] Dorothy Tweddell, "Cargo Cults: a Search for Meaning", in vertical file, CLTC Banz Library, 1977), p. 15.
[40] Tippett, *People Movements in South Polynesia*, p. 16.
[41] Tippett, *The Deep Sea Canoe*, pp. 47-48.

The other dynamic factor was the influence of the leaders or chiefs of the people groups. On Lifou Island, in New Caledonia, the blind chief Bula, who was befriended by MacFarlane, had all those, who aligned themselves to him, embrace the Protestant LMS mission there. The opposite of this was the chief Ukenizo, who resisted the LMS mission, because of his rival, Bula, and embraced the Marists.

The strength of such an influential decision was that the people were likely to maintain peace, so long as their leader remained peaceful with others, and did what was needed for the mission. This strength can also bring an adverse effect on the community, much like George Taufa'ahau I, the King of Tonga, in 1885. Mr Baker, who was his adviser, convinced some Bible school students to give them support to unite the Free church and demolish the Wesleyan church.[42] The weakness to note, for conversion under leadership influence, is that when the leader fails to continue, and withdraws, it is unlikely that the followers will remain steady in their commitment.

Another forceful stimulus to conversion is the fear of hell, as Weymouth observed among the Gogodala people.[43] When the Australian Churches of Christ New Guinea Mission first went to the Pir, Temnung, and Minung areas in 1959, my uncle was the first indigenous evangelist of that mission. I can still remember him preaching about hell in our village. Because of the fear of hell, the whole village turned up the next day just to get baptised, in order to escape hell. The danger here is that decisions were made out of fear, and only time would tell if their commitment was authentic.

[42] Allan K Davidson, Semisi Na, ed., *The Story of My life: A Tongan Missionary to Ontong Java* (Suva Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies of University of South Pacific, 1996), p. 83.
[43] Weymouth, "The Gogodala Society in Papua", p. 170.

Another dynamic factor is the *wantok* system, which contributes to conversion. Unlike other Pacific islanders, the *wantok* system is a very strong system among Melanesians, and was a very dynamic factor in conversion. Through this system, people are able to propagate the gospel, but it can also have adverse effects on ministry.

The dynamics of conversion, listed above, are not exhaustive. They highlight only some of the motives for being converted. If these dynamics continue to surface, there is a danger that the reverse of what people claim this nation to be, a Christian country, will occur, as Kero has indicated.[44] Mass conversion has its limitations and weaknesses. Unless these are corrected, they can contribute to mass nominalism, as Daimoi, Kero, and Kendi have pointed out.[45]

THE MEANING OF CONVERSION TO PNG CHURCHES

In 1796, the first LMS missionaries landed in Tahiti and commenced work there, though without much success for 16 years, in terms of converts. In 1871, 75 years later, the LMS missionaries reached the largest island in the world, Papua New Guinea (PNG), then known as New Guinea.[46] Mission history tells us that, in PNG, the LMS entered southern Papua, and began their work in 1871. The Methodists arrived on the Duke of York Island in East New Britain in 1875. The Roman Catholics had landed earlier, on the Bismarck Archipelago, in 1847, but, unfortunately, their work did not progress. They later came to the southern part of the country in 1875. In 1876, the Neuendettelsau Mission began in Finschhafen along the north coast of New Guinea. In 1891, the Anglicans landed at Dogura, and commenced their work there. These are the major denominations that formed what we call the mainline churches today.

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[44] See Kero, "Nominalism", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 14-1 (1998), p. 57.

[45] Daimoi, "Nominalism in Papua New Guinea", pp. 1ff. See also Wayne Kendi, "The Doctrine of Justification: The Remedy To the Ills of The Melanesian Church", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 21-2 (2005), p. 82; and Kewai Kero, "Nominalism", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 14-1 (1998), p. 57.

[46] Throughout, I have mostly used Papua New Guinea (PNG), rather than New Guinea, to avoid ignoring areas like the New Guinea Islands and along the Papuan coast.

Each of these denominations had their own mission goals and objectives to fulfil, including the concern for the conversion of souls. Like their previous counterparts in the Pacific, these mission organisations unknowingly entered Melanesian societies of communal decision-making, which had a cosmological worldview that was entirely different to that in the West.

During the early stages of mission establishments, several misunderstandings of conversion were evident, because of, as Horndasch notes, the already existing common belief "in the coming of the Ultimate Future. The notion of the golden age has been present in their traditional myths, and has emerged from time to time in various religious activities."[47] Stilwell adds, "this meant a drive for abundant life . . . and to go on experiencing this life".[48] "Cargo cults, for instance, are a reflection of the common myth, present in the traditional religious beliefs, that anticipated a radical revolution in the future to fulfil the hopes of humankind."[49]

The reason for these misconceptions was probably because of some of the terminology used by the missionaries. In addition, the Bible contains words, similar to terms the indigenous people commonly held, like salvation, life after death, power, and the future. Whenever there was a revival or revitalisation movement, people often saw this as a means, by which the ancestors would usher in the expected cargo. To avoid this thinking, it is vital to explain what revival entails. True revival movements bring a hunger for God, and His Word, prayer, and a renewed zeal for evangelism.

Conversion, for the indigenous people, had connotations of education, the desire for power (*mana*), cargo, and so forth, with their fellow Solomon Islanders. Weymouth has perceived the Gogodalas' motivation for becoming Christians in this way, "Christianity was associated, in the minds of the Gogodalas, with social improvement and material

[47] Helmut Horndasch, "Theology and Christian Spirituality in the Melanesian Context", in *Catalyst* 28-2 (1998), p. 122.
[48] Stilwell, "Towards a Melanesian Theology of Conversion", p. 31.
[49] Horndasch, "Theology and Christian Spirituality in the Melanesian Context", p. 31.

advantage, and that this played a significant part in the early movement to Christianity, is beyond doubt."[50] Yet, within the church, it meant a personal commitment to become a member of a particular mission. Loyalty and allegiance were now on a denominational basis, rather than on the existing communal life in each setting. Kadiba deliberates, "in religious experience and religious symbols, Melanesian Christians have been alienated from their traditional ways. Hence there is a foreignness about their Christianity."[51]

Negatively, such gatherings of people – without due consideration of their allegiance to their social groups – have led to many separate groups today. What has this produced, but divisions? Who are we to blame, but ourselves, for what we have done? What implications does conversion have on a Melanesian convert? What theological issues confront him/her today? The next section helps us to see this.

REVIEW AND CRITIQUE ON "TOWARDS A MELANESIAN THEOLOGY OF CONVERSION" STUDY

REVIEW AND COMMENTS

Ewan Stilwell was once a lecturer at the Christian Leaders' Training College's Banz and Port Moresby campuses. With his five years' experience as a missionary in PNG, he was able to point to the direction in which indigenous conversion should go. In his study, he gives four basic parts of conversion. They are a radical turning which involves, firstly, a turning from [Repent]; secondly, a turning to [Believe]; thirdly, a turning into [Be baptised]; and finally, a turning for [Service]. We now look at each of these radical turns briefly.

First is the turning from sin, which is repentance. In this section, Stilwell gives a good scriptural basis, as well as defining sin. However, there are two terms he uses in this section that need some clarification.

[50] Weymouth, "The Gogodala Society in Papua", p. 169.
[51] John Kadiba, "In Search of a Melanesian Theology", in *The Gospel is Not Western*, Garry Trompf, ed. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1978), np.

The first is the term "cargo". There is no question about the idea of cargo in cult movements. However, to just generalise that all Melanesians align themselves to cargo is not a fair comment that represents every cultural and language group. Within the Kire culture of Madang, there seems to be no myths of any sort that indicate this, and no stories were told of people, who expected cargo to arrive. This may be because the idea has either been submerged, or has been done away with by leaders of the villages of Kire, which embraced Christianity.

The other term to clarify is the closely-related term "abundant life" (*gutpela sindaun)*. To merely see this from an anthropological perspective would lead one to arrive at negative assumptions. The opposite would be true, if seen from a theological perspective, as Stilwell correctly states: "Conversion . . . brings the promise of a real fulfilment of this deep Melanesian yearning for abundant life."[52]

For a converted Melanesian, life and worship are not segregated from the secular and sacred, as they are in the West. Also, to a Melanesian, this abundant life is not only one that is expected to be received, when one dies, or the Lord returns, but one that can be fully enjoyed here and now, within the communal life of people, where it is expressed in praise, worship, and sharing of the blessings received. In John 10:10b, Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." This life can be fully shared within a church, village, clan, or family. Boseto aptly said, "It is a life inseparable *from* community, *with* community, and *for* community."[53] Therefore, the expression of this life's joy is well represented in the worship, communal, and church gatherings.

The second turning, Stilwell describes, to believe is related to a power encounter. In relation to the access of this power, the desire sometimes can mislead people to seek power from God, in much the same way as they did in their past life. Prayer, itself, can be seen as a ritual for acquiring power for selfish use, rather than as a means of communication

[52] Stilwell, "Towards a Melanesian Theology of Conversion", p. 32.
[53] Leslie Boseto, "The Gift of Community", in *International Review of Mission* 72-288 (1983), pp. 581-583.

with God. Otherwise, I agree with Stilwell on this point, in every respect.

The third is a turning to become the people of God. This point is also significant, as Melanesians are communal people. Identity and personal significance come from family, clan, and the village. There is also another important aspect of personal significance and identity, where the person takes on the family, the clan, and the village name wherever he goes. What that person does as he relates to other people also reflects the family, the clan, and the village. So, being integrated into the people of God carries this important principle. Who we are in public, and what we say and do, represents God and His people. Sad to say, not many of those, who claim to be God's people, reflect God's actions among others.

Finally, Stilwell looks at turning for mission in the world: service. He puts it well, when he states that mission is related closely with the idea of service, and that any form of service, whatever it may be, must be done in a servant style. Unfortunately, for most Melanesians, misconceptions have led people to think that a missionary is the one who goes out to another country, rather than seeing that every Christian is a missional Christian. Therefore, many do not often see themselves as missionaries where they are.

Conversion is fundamentally a process of worldview change in an individual that ripples through group life, as seen in this study. It is a change from a focus on ancestral and geographical spirits to a focus on God, and involves the portrayal, by life and deed, in the community of this changed allegiance. As this is lived, questions come to mind about the implications of the converted life, and how one can deal with them for better living. The next section deals with this issue.

RELEVANT THEOLOGICAL ISSUES SURROUNDING CONVERSION IN MELANESIA TODAY

As people see multi-individuals make a response to the gospel, one might ask, "Are all these people saved?" Salvation is by grace alone, and it is the gift of God. Salvation is granted to those who personally make a commitment to God, within a group context, as seen in Acts 16:31. There is danger in assuming that, because people within a group are automatically registered by a church, they are saved, when the group, as a whole, responds to the gospel message. This must be avoided, and

There is also a question of whether or not the Spirit leaves the convert. Unlike traditional religions, where the spirits come and go, through a "shaman",[54] God the Holy Spirit is omnipresent. The moment a person aligns his life to Christ, the Holy Spirit enters, and resides with and in that person at that very time. In OT times, the Holy Spirit came and went, but now He resides with those who have aligned their lives with Christ.

Another implication of conversion upon a person, within a communal life, is the aspect of discipleship. When one is converted, he/she lives a life that is connected to Christ, as John 15 tells us. In this life, we represent God's community, Christ Jesus' clan, and belong to their group. It is a life of discipline, in a similar way as traditional initiation rites enable one to be integrated into the village as a mature person. Therefore, as God instructed Abram to walk before Him, and be blameless,[55] so must we.

Conversion of a Melanesian means also that the style of leadership changes. Whether achieved or ascribed, it must be changed to take on the servant-style leadership, expressed in the Bible,[56] and demonstrated by Jesus.[57] Pedi Anis and Ezekiel Waisale explore this form of

[54] See Raeburn Lange, *Island Ministers: Indigenous Leadership in 19th-century Pacific Island's Christianity* (Canberra ACT: Pandanus Books, 2005), p.25.
[55] Gen 17:1; 1 Pet 1:16.
[56] Matt 20:25-28.
[57] John 13:1-17.

leadership and decision-making in government.[58] The attitude towards others, as we lead them, must reflect who we are, and to whom we have aligned our lives. Continued submission to ancestral spirits,[59] and to other spirits, is another area, from which we need to be truly turned away. People once used rituals to manipulate the spirits for good or bad. The power that was once sought from these deceptive spirits must now be stopped. God must be given the priority. The fear of deceptive spirits must also be successfully dealt with.[60]

Conversion also requires that God must be given priority over clan or family allegiance. Though these allegiances are vital in our society, as part and parcel of our relationships, when decisions of loyalty to family or clan undermine the loyalty to God, loyalty to God must be given the priority.

The relationship between conversion and prosperity theology[61] is another matter that must be addressed. This bad theology has somehow got people giving to the work of God, above and beyond their limitations. It has caused unnecessary high expectations that God will bless them if they give abundantly. Christian converts, in present-day Melanesia, have no stable church base on which to rest. One cannot blame others for the dislocation of youth, and many others. Equally so, it is of our own making, as Kenilorea states.[62] Such motivations are dangerous.

Even the interrelationship between conversion and fellowship is inseparable. Within a communal context, fellowship always gives the

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[58] See Pedi Anis and Ezekiel Waisale, "The Bible in Decision-Making", in *Catalyst* 18-4 (1988), pp. 16-23 for a full description of what it means to be leaders, and making important decisions.

[59] K. Burridge, "Tangu, Northern Madang District", in *Gods, Ghosts, and Men in Melanesia: Some Religions of Australia, New Guinea and the New Hebrides*, P. Lawrence, and M. J. Meggitt, eds (Melbourne Vic: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 224ff. Burridge explains there are no strong ties to ancestors, except an immediately-dead member of the clan or family.

[60] Stilwell, "Towards a Melanesian Theology of Conversion", p. 32.

[61] Hanciles, "Conversion and Social Change", p. 172.

[62] Peter Kenilorea, "Cultural Values versus the Acquisitiveness of Man: A View from the Solomon Islands", in *Pacific Perspective* 5-2 (1976), p. 3.

sense of identity and influence. Deeper commitment and loyalty are found to be very strong within this family unit of belonging.[63] Development of this kind of environment provides opportunities for discipleship training, ministry together, receiving answers to pressing unanswered questions that are not given on Sunday mornings,[64] and to further help younger ones grow.

The implication of conversion on stewardship is another issue. A turning to God means that our resources, our money, our time, and our family are "baptised", and seen as the means to support the work of God, and to be used for His glory. Therefore, natural resources must be strictly protected against unnecessary exploitation.

Finally, conversion must affect the relationship one has with the Living Word. Jesus said that without Him we cannot do anything.[65] Boseto also sees the need for the Word to be concretely seen in Melanesia, and he challenges fellow Islanders to live the Word – "to 'incarnate' [make human] the word as we struggle together, share together, and care for one another. He is one of those who no longer looks for a conceptualised Word, but the incarnate Word in each place here and now."[66]

THE WAY AHEAD

"How deep-rooted is the Christian faith in this so-called Christian nation, which is also seeking to establish her own identity?"[67] Pre-independent church and national leaders have played an important role in the formation of our government. Our National Constitution reflects this involvement.[68] "The national leaders adopted our National Constitution,

[63] Leslie Boseto, "Mission and Development", in *Point* 1 (1978), p. 32.
[64] Paulias Matane, "Our Guiding Star", in *Catalyst* 18-4 (1988), p. 15.
[65] John 15:5.
[66] Leslie Boseto, "The Incarnate Word", in *Catalyst* 18-4 (1988), p. 78.
[67] John Guise "How Deep-Rooted Is the Christian Faith in Our Nation?", in *Christ in South Pacific Cultures*, Cliff Wright, and Leslie Fugui, eds (Suva Fiji: Lotu Pasifika, 1985), p. 12.
[68] *The Constitution Of The Independent State Of Papua New Guinea*, Port Moresby PNG: Legislative Council, 1975, p. 1.

which is one of the best in the world, truly."[69] The foundation was set, but, over the last 30-plus years since 1975, so much has changed, in terms of our national identity. We had no choice but to move towards globalisation in our political, economic, social, and even spiritual endeavours. So, where are we now? Do we have our own Christian identity, based on "valued traditions and ceremonies, involved with the whole of human life"?[70] Leana asks along the same lines, "What should the Melanesian church of the future be like?"[71] This and many other similar questions cannot be answered fully by other people. Church leaders and theologians in this nation, alike, must work together with a combined effort to develop that ideal Christian identity, desired by the late Sir John Guise. Leana's article is a step in the right direction, but how long this will take will depend entirely on our efforts.

Some positive signs are present today of what the future church of PNG will be like. The first is that churches have now moved towards working together. In Lae, this is done mainly through the Ministers' Fraternal. The second is that walls of denominational boundaries are now collapsing, due to revival and renewal experiences, and people have the freedom to engage in fellowship with others. If these current ministry forms continue, Christian members of different denominations will embrace each other, as one community of believers in this nation. Communal identity will still be maintained, and denominational tags done away with. We will also begin to see the rise of a national and missional church, which will be one, catholic, and apostolic.

CONCLUSION

This essay has emphasised that conversion, in a Melanesian context, is fundamentally a turning-about process from primal religions toward God. Whether conversion occurs individually or corporately, the difference is not really the concern. Decisions must be made towards the one goal of living together within a communal village, or city, as God's

[69] Matane, "Our Guiding Star", in *Catalyst* 18-4 (1988), p. 14.
[70] John Guise, "How Deep-Rooted Is the Christian Faith in Our Nation?", p. 12.
[71] Amos Leana, "What Should the Melanesian Church of the Future be Like?", in Melanesian Journal of Theology 19-1 (2003), p. 102.

people. This is the church redefined. This is where the real-life questions and queries dwell. This is where the incarnated Word can become a reality, and it will not be pretended in the weekly activities environment. At the same time, we must firmly maintain the one church, and many congregations, meeting, as is done currently in most of our cities.

The way forward to a better communal way of living is to work together now to involve converts in each community, through discipleship training and nurture, in growing towards becoming a national, but indigenous, missional church – a church which is one, catholic, and apostolic.

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IMPACT OF THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL IN THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD CHURCHES OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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INTRODUCTION

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is a developing country, rich in resources. It is the biggest island country in Melanesia and the South Pacific.[1] When combined with the West Papua Province of Indonesia, it is the second largest island in the world. PNG gained its independence from Australia on September 16, 1975, and has just celebrated its 33rd anniversary of independence.

In 1996, the economy of the country collapsed, and the people were severely affected.[2] The country has been struggling to recover ever since. The government was under pressure to reverse the situation. The church[3] also sought answers to the groaning and sufferings of the people. The answer that the church offered was the "prosperity gospel".[4] In

[1] Here the South Pacific covers Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.

[2] "The local currency (kina) dropped from par with the Australian dollar in 1996 to $A0.40 in 2002, and the per capita income only increased from $A1,200 in 1970 to $A1,340 in 1999. There has been a steady decline in infrastructure and services in recent years, particularly in rural areas." Philip Gibbs, "Papua New Guinea", in *Globalisation and the Re-Shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands*, Manfred Ernst, ed. (Suva FIJI: The Pacific Theological College, 2006), p. 87.

[3] Church spelt with a capital letter "C" refers to the body of Christ, while spelling with a small letter "c" refers to denomination(s).

[4] The terms "prosperity gospel" or "prosperity theology" will be used interchangeably throughout the paper.

2002, under the Somare regime,[5] the economy stabilised, and the country has experienced positive economic growth.[6] Even with this positive economic growth, the country is still poor.

What is the "prosperity gospel"? Saracco defines it as a "theological current that states that, if certain principles are followed, the expiatory work of Christ guarantees, to all who believe, divine healing, the riches of this world, and happiness without suffering".[7] The prosperity gospel seems to have the philosophy and the answer for the PNG people. The church has embraced the prosperity gospel, and felt its impact.

In this essay, I will discuss the impact of the prosperity gospel in the Assemblies of God (AOG) churches in PNG. The essay is subdivided as follows.

- Impact of Christianity and Western goods;
- Interpretation and contextualisation of the prosperity gospel;
- Evaluation and critique;
- Recommendations;
- Conclusion.

IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY AND WESTERN GOODS

In the South Pacific, the Polynesian societies were the first to receive the Christian gospel.[8] Before the arrival of the Christian missionaries, the local prophets and charismatic people of the tribal religions had

[5] In the 2002 elections, Sir Michael Somare's National Alliance Party won government. Somare was elected Prime Minister, and, together with the Integrity of Political Party, has provided stable government. As a result, many investors were attracted to PNG.
[6] Gibbs, "Papua New Guinea", p. 88.
[7] J. N. Saracco, "Prosperity theology", in *Dictionary of Mission Theology: Evangelical Foundations*, John Corrie, ed. (Nottingham UK: IVP, 2007), p. 322.
[8] The European sailors shipwrecked at Upolu introduced Christianity to the Samoans. This Christianity later became known as the "Sailor cult". See Lowell D. Holmes, "Cults, Cargo, and Christianity: Samoan Responses to Western Religion", in *Missiology* 8-4 (1980), pp. 472, 477.

predicted[9] the "arrival of the ships, and of new religious leaders, who would fulfil the old Pacific religions".[10] The arrival of missionaries to Tahiti from the London Missionary Society on the ship *Duff*,[11] and then John Williams to Samoa, in 1830, was according to these prophecies. They brought with them goods that were superior to those of the indigenous islanders, which "were naturally coveted".[12]

How did the Polynesians perceive the coming of the Europeans, the gospel, and Western goods? Were not the predictions, uttered by their prophets and charismatic people, fulfilled? Yes, Christianity was accepted, because it fulfilled the prophecies. One of the motives for responding to the gospel was to prove the supremacy of "the God, who seemed to be the source and controlling power behind a floating society of marvels",[13] and of all the superior goods. This perception led to the formation of two related cargo-cult movements – Mamaia and Siovili.[14]

A. MAMAIA MOVEMENT (TAHITI)

The Mamaia movement was formed in 1826 under the leadership of two dissident prophets, Teao[15] and Hue, in opposition to the dominance of the LMS[16] Anglo-Saxon church. The Mamaia cult was a "Christian heresy" that had some Christian elements combined with tribal elements in its practice. It was millennial in focus, looking forward to the "imminent return of Christ to endorse their cause . . . with its

[9] High Chief Tamafaiga prophesied "that, after his death, the people will hear of a new religion and a new god". Ibid., p. 472.
[10] John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars* (Suva Fiji: University of South Pacific, 1982), p. 5.
[11] Ibid, pp. 11-12.
[12] Ibid, p. 5.
[13] Ibid.
[14] J. D. Freeman, "The Joe Gimlet or Siovili Cult", in *Anthropology in the South Seas: Essay presented to H. D. Skinner*, J. D. Freeman, and W. R. Geddes, eds (New Plymouth NZ: Thomas Avery, 1959), p. 187. A footnote in this article gives various names used by different authors: John Williams, in his journal, used Joe Vili, Suavili, or Seauvili, while Peter Turner used Jovili. In 1836, most LMS missionaries adopted the name Siovili. Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, p. 85, uses Sio Vili.
[15] Freeman, "The Joe Gimlet or Siovili Cult", p. 189, spells the name "Teau".
[16] LMS stands for the London Missionary Society.

expectations of 'cargo from heaven'."[17] Tribal elements of Raiatean in the pre-Christian era were revived: "ecstatic behaviour . . . combining this with wild sexual conduct, . . . some of the great chiefs of Pomare II, who had adopted Christianity, veered toward the Mamaia. . . . The cult continued active until it finally died out in 1841."[18] However, Mamaia influence gave birth to the Siovili cult in Samoa.

B. JOE GIMLET OR SIOVILI CULT (SAMOA)

In the mid-1820s, Siovili travelled to Tonga, and then to Tahiti, "at the time when the Mamaia movement was at its height".[19] During this time of travels, the sailors gave him the name Joe Gimlet.[20] Siovili saw a lot of "Europeans, their ships, and their posts". In 1830, he returned to his village, Eva, as a hero, claiming to be knowledgeable in the Europeans' ways, and brought the seed of the Siovili cult from Tahiti. He pieced together knowledge acquired in his brief and limited contact with LMS Christianity and the Tahitian Mamaia heresy.[21] As a self-styled prophet and visionary, in a few years, he had a large following.[22]

The Siovili cult had all the features of the Mamaia cult. The Siovili cult practised Christian "rites and tenets. . . . they accepted Jehovah as their God, built chapels . . . held services . . . singing of hymns, . . . offering of prayers, . . . preaching of sermons . . . celebration of . . . Lord's Supper".[23] The adherents believed that Siovili had travelled to distant lands, where Jehovah was known, and he was chosen by Jehovah and Jesus to be their spokesman. It was appropriate to listen to him.[24] The Siovili cult also believed in a millennial dawn "coupled with the great desire to acquire the material wealth, apparently associated with the god Jehovah".[25]

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[17] Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, p. 254.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Barff, 1836, cited by Freeman, "The Joe Gimlet or Siovili Cult", p. 187.
[20] Freeman, "The Joe Gimlet or Siovili Cult", p. 187. Siovili was nicknamed Joe Gimlet on the ship.
[21] Holmes, "Cults, Cargo, and Christianity", p. 472.
[22] Freeman, "The Joe Gimlet or Siovili Cult", pp. 187-188.
[23] Ibid, p. 190.
[24] Ibid, p. 191.
[25] Holmes, "Cults, Cargo, and Christianity", p. 477.

The Samoan chiefs and their people accepted Christianity with mixed motives. They wanted the Europeans' material wealth, which they perceived was given to them by their God. Chief Malietoa Vai'inupo, in comparing their primitive items with European goods, reasoned that these goods were created and given to them by their God. He reflected, "I, therefore, think that the God who gave them all these things must be good, and that His religion must be superior to ours. If we receive this God and worship Him, He will, in time, give us these things as well as them."[26]

Garrett states:

> Samoan chiefs wanted to know what supernatural forces gave the white men their powers in navigation and war. . . . Such thoughts were in the mind of Malietoa Vai'inupo, holder of one of the country's highest titles, who was involved in fighting on Savai'i during the 1830s.[27]

However, Christianity, and the missionaries, did not meet the expectations of the people to provide the naturally-coveted items. The alternative that seemed available to the chiefs and the people was to veer towards the Siovili cult and its ideologies, which promised them the European manufactured goods they naturally coveted.[28]

From the above data, it is clear that the Mamaia movement and the Siovili cult philosophy are materialistic or cargoistic. By embracing Christianity, converts anticipated gaining material wealth from the Christian God. Cargo cults in PNG have a similar philosophy.

C. CARGO CULTS IN PNG

Mantovani has stated, "Melanesians were and are religious people. Traditional religions play an important role in the people's spiritual affairs, and the total life of the community."[29] Each tribe, clan, and

[26] Freeman, "The Joe Gimlet or Siovili, Cult", p. 187.
[27] Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, pp. 121-122.
[28] Ibid., p. 85.
[29] Ennio Mantovani, "Traditional Religions and Christianity", in *Point* 6 (1984) p. 1.

family displayed their religiosity, in the worship of their own gods or spirits.[30] This belief in spirits is classified as animism. These spirits were believed to be the source of their daily sustenance. They were like "clouds overshadowing", and were the "spiritual vitality of the community".[31] The totality of life depended on these spirit beings. In return, people worship them; otherwise the tribe, clan, or the family will suffer calamity.

Among the animistic beliefs, there are mythical beliefs in a "better life and material prosperity" that will be ushered in by an "ancestor". Myth is unlike animistic beliefs. The ancestor, in the mythical belief, is not consulted for daily living but is expected to return one day to make life better. Myths explain the reason for all the hardships and toils that people are currently experiencing – the ancestor(s) had not been careful with their actions in the past. Therefore, myth is a tribal way of explaining and understanding the millennium that is beyond their influence, which will be inaugurated by the ancestor – when a time of golden age will replace hardship and toil, forever. The myths provide the ideology for cargo cult movements.

The arrival of missionaries to Papua from Tahiti,[32] in 1871-1872, marked the initial introduction of Christianity. Bible stories were told to make converts. Some of the stories were similar to the myths people had, such as the Tower of Babel narrative. At this point, there was no known cargo cult movement. It was not until the presence of colonial government officials in many parts of Papua and New Guinea, explorers, and the Second World War, that cargo cults appeared. However, not all tribal religions or cults are cargo cults. Steinbauer divided these cults into three categories "according to their chief tendency: magico-mechanistic,

[30] These included the spirits of dead ancestors, rocks, trees, and rivers.

[31] Joshua Daimoi, "An Exploratory Missiological Study of Melanesian Ancestral Heritage from an Indigenous Evangelical Perspective", Ph.D. thesis (Sydney NSW: University of Sydney, 2004), p. 33.

[32] Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, pp. 206-229; and John Hitchen, "Roots and Shoots in the Pacific – Our Mission Heritage" (Class Notes, Banz: CLTC, May 2008), p. 35.

religio-spiritual, and political-social".[33] Strelan said cargo cults are the "irrational response" of the tribal people to "Western culture, with its technology and wealth".[34] To explain the new experiences, the tribal people turn to their myths to find answers, which, in turn, lead to the creation of cargo-cult movements.

The Polynesians perceived that the Christian God gave material wealth to the missionaries. If they accepted Christianity, the Christian God would give them material wealth, likewise. This is not so with Melanesians. Melanesians perceived that it was their ancestors who gave the Europeans the technology and wealth that was supposed be theirs, and not Jehovah God. With this worldview, and the desire for European-style wealth, Melanesians accepted Christianity, and revised their native cosmology to create a cargo-cult movement.[35] A cargo cult is the result of an indigenous struggle to rationalise Christianity and Western goods and the tribal religion.

Holmes identifies five similarities in Samoan and Melanesian cargo cults, where there is:[36]

1. a gifted or "charismatic leader, who assumes the role of hero or deliverer";
2. a strong emphasis on acquiring material wealth;
3. prophecies on "millennium without want";
4. a new revelation;
5. the practice of "rites and ceremonies, involving hysteria and states of trance".

[33] Friedrich Steinbauer, *Melanesian Cargo Cults: New Salvation Movements in the South Pacific*, Max Wohlwill, tran. (St Lucia Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1971), p. 2.
[34] John G. Strelan, *Search for Salvation: Studies in the History and Theology of Cargo Cults* (Adelaide SA: Lutheran Publishing House, 1977), p. 4.
[35] Dorothy Tweddell, "Cargo Cults: A Search for Meaning", in *Anthropology* 870 (1977), pp. 4-10. Tweddell gives five theories behind the causes of cargo cult movements: (1) oppressive/deprivation; (2) relative; (3) psychological stress; (4) cognitive; and (5) a psycho-cultural factor.
[36] Holmes, "Cults, Cargo, and Christianity", pp. 480-481.

He also notes one important difference. Melanesian cults look to the ancestors for cargo, while the Siovili cult looks to the omnipotent Jehovah, coupled with the Adventist belief of Christ's imminent return to set up His kingdom in Samoa.[37]

THE INTERPRETATION AND CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL

The prosperity gospel became popular in the mid-1990s, after the collapse of the PNG economy in 1996. Some world-renowned evangelists from the West[38] were invited to preach in PNG. During their visits, the prosperity gospel was introduced. The prosperity gospel took a foothold in the churches in Port Moresby, and spread through church networks across the country. Societies, influenced with cargo philosophy and the collapse in the economy, made the churches wonder what the likely impact of the prosperity gospel in PNG would be. I will answer this question, beginning with the biblical concept of wealth and then the prosperity gospel, followed by some examples of the contextualisation trends of the prosperity gospel in the church.

BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF WEALTH[39]

The English definition of wealth is:

> "the condition of being happy . . . prosperous" and "spiritual well-being". . . . The most common usage . . . involves the narrower sense of "abundance of possessions, or of valuable products". A large percentage of scripture focuses on right and wrong uses of this latter kind of wealth, while always subordinating to the former.[40]

Old Testament

Wealth originated from God, and it was given to humankind.[41] Sin has corrupted the process, but humankind's responsibility of managing and

[37] Ibid.
[38] Benny Hinn, Morris Cerelo, Cleflo Dollars, and Tim Hall from Australia.
[39] Craig L. Blomberg, "Wealth", in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Walter A. Elwell, ed. (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1996), p. 813.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Gen 1, 2.

using these blessings remains. God's covenant with Abraham was partly material blessing.[42] The patriarchs were blessed materially, as were the children of Israel at Goshen in Egypt,[43] during their exodus from Egypt, and throughout their journey to the Promised Land. On their way to the land of milk and honey, the Lord gave them rules to regulate wealth.[44] Canaan was the land of abundance. However God sternly warned them against accumulating unnecessary wealth, and ordered them to use their wealth to look after the poor. God promised the Israelites that, if they obeyed the Law, they would be rewarded with blessing, peace, and prosperity, but, if they disobeyed the Law, they would be conquered, disgraced, and oppressed. The promise, God made to Israel, was repeated on many occasions.[45]

Psalms and Proverbs give us "two-pronged riches and poverty".[46] Wealth can be accumulated as the result of being industrious or righteous,[47] or it can be accumulated through ill-gotten or wicked ways. Hence, it is better to be poor.[48]

The Old Testament (OT) concept of wealth is often seen as a blessing from God, and poverty is seen as a curse. It is linked with the land and the temple. This is not carried over to the New Testament, since no "piece of geography or architecture" is sacred any more.[49]

New Testament

The New Testament (NT) portrays Jesus as a carpenter, and the majority of His disciples were fishermen. Jesus taught that mammon is a major competitor with God. Wealth is deceitful.[50] The desire to accumulate wealth can make people godless in their thinking. Wealth can make it

[42] Gen 12:7; 15:18; 17:8; 22:17.
[43] Gen 24:35; 26:13; 30:43; 47:27.
[44] Ex 16:16-18; 2 Cor 8:15.
[45] Blomberg, "Wealth", p. 814.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ps 112; Prov 12:11; 13:21; 21:5.
[48] Ps 37:16-17; Prov 15:4-5; 16:8; 17:1.
[49] Blomberg, "Wealth", p. 814.
[50] Mark 4:19.

difficult for rich people to enter the kingdom of God.[51] Jesus did not disapprove of being wealthy, but, rather, advised people to use their wealth to honour God – providing for the poor, widows, orphans, and the needy. Jesus' disciples put these teachings into practice, as we see in Acts, and the writings of the Apostles.[52] To have material wealth is not wrong. The Bible warns us that the desire for wealth can hinder us from knowing God, and can disqualify us in the afterlife in heaven with God. Now, let us see what the prosperity gospel teaches.

PROSPERITY GOSPEL

There are several names given to prosperity theology. Names like "wealth-health-and-happiness gospel", "name-it-and-claim-it gospel", "success gospel", and "positive-confession theology".[53] Let us begin with the background of the prosperity gospel.

Background

The prosperity movement started in America in the early 20th century, and has spread throughout the world. It has been considered heretical by a number of Christian churches. It is the "expression of the so-called 'faith movement' ",[54] which has been mainly advocated by "E. W. Kenyon (1867-1948), Kenneth Hagin (1917-2011), and Kenneth Copeland (1937-)".[55]

Kenyon had a good relationship with the Pentecostals, and then got acquainted with the "New Thought" and "Christian Science" movements.[56] The major teaching of these two movements is that "positive thinking and positive confession" will create health and wealth, while negative thinking and confession will lead to poverty and illness.[57] This teaching has become the pillar of the prosperity gospel.

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[51] Luke 18:18-24.
[52] Blomberg, "Wealth", p. 815.
[53] Saracco, "Prosperity Theology", p. 323.
[54] Ibid., p. 322.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.

Hagin's view was that "the principles that made faith operative were believing with all your heart, confessing with your mouth what you believe, and receive what you have confessed".[58] He incorporated Kenyon's thoughts into his writings. Kenneth Copeland is now his successor.[59]

From this overview, it is obvious that the founders of the prosperity gospel movement propagated faith as positive thinking and positive confession, and this is the channel of prosperity for its adherents.

Major Tenets

Based on the spiritual principles or laws that function unalterably, these principles or laws operate through faith in God.[60] "Spiritual laws or principles" and "faith" set the platform for the five major doctrines of prosperity gospel, as stated by Saracco:

(i) The law of blessing. This is based on God's covenant with Abraham to bless him materially. Christians are the spiritual children of Abraham, and have inherited these blessings. It belongs to us here and now, and we must "prosper in all areas of life".[61]

(ii) The law of sowing and reaping. This doctrine is derived from Mark 10:29-30. We will receive from God 100 times what we give Him. "Whoever puts into practice this law would practically enter into a cycle of endless wealth."[62]

(iii) The law of faith. "In 'faith movements', faith operates by itself, just as a natural law. This is called *faith in faith*."[63] Mark 11:22, which says, "Have faith in God" has been

[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., p. 323.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.

rephrased as "have the faith of God"[64] that operated in creation. Act with faith, name what you want with certainty, and it becomes reality.

(iv) The law of proclaimed word. The formula is "proclaim to have".[65] The text used to support "this idea is Mark 11:23-24. According to this interpretation, the force of faith is released by words".[66] It is not enough by believing, you have to confess what you believe, and it will materialise.

(v) The expiatory work of Christ. Ours is "divine healing and material prosperity",[67] because it has all been given to us through Jesus Christ, who died and removed the curse of poverty and illness.

From this background of the prosperity movement and its major doctrines, it is clear that the prosperity gospel is more human-centred than God-centred. Scriptures are incorrectly interpreted to substantiate human ideas.

Christians in PNG have quickly embraced the prosperity gospel without careful examination from the clergy. With the given economic situation, and churches struggling financially, what a relief to know the secrets of prosperity. Give to God, and God will give you 100 times more, and your barns will overflow, because you are entering into "God's cycle of endless wealth". You hold the key to your prosperity. All you need to do is to have faith, think positively, confess what you need/want, and receive it. These were, and still are, the sorts of messages preached in churches.

CONTEXTUALISING THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL

The AOG church preaches the prosperity gospel without careful interpretation and contextualisation. Christian ministry groups, which

[64] Ibid., pp. 323-324.
[65] Ibid., p. 324.
[66] Ibid., p. 324.
[67] Ibid.

were formed to minister to people's needs, have drifted in the direction of the prosperity gospel, which is apparent in their contextualisation of their ideologies. Three, in particular, will be considered: the Joshua Operation, the Israel Ministry,[68] and the most recent being the Apostolic and Prophetic Ministry. The founders/directors of these movements may deny any links to the prosperity gospel, but that is not important. What I want to point out is that their ideologies are related. Besides these religious movements, there have arisen false money schemes, which are the making of the prosperity gospel. This will be also discussed.

Joshua Operation[69]

The Joshua Operation movement has no connection with the prosperity gospel. It came into being in the early 1990s, with a genuine concern to address social, political, economical, and religious issues affecting the nation and the church by uniting churches together. Marlin Starky, the founder of the Joshua Operation, and coordinator of the National Prayer Centre in Mt Hagen, initiated and ran conferences in different parts of the nation to encourage, motivate, and challenge the churches to take up responsible positions in the spiritual dimension, and to take back the land, before it was taken over by the forces of evil. The movement derived its name from the Book of Joshua, which provided the spiritual principles for taking the land.

The movement envisioned that the way forward for communities, churches, and the nation is through confession and repentance of sin, reconciliation and redemption.[70] It has taken the lead in strategising and

[68] The Israel Ministry is no longer a ministry, but a local church.

[69] The detail given here is from the author's general knowledge of the Joshua Operation. In 1999, he attended a conference organised in Lae (PNG) titled "Gate Keepers' Conference", and again, in 2007, at Maprik (East Sepik Province, PNG) titled "Joshua Strategy". In the latter conference, he witnessed some strange spirit manifestations, and heard from the participants of the hosting church and villages that soon there will be a material breakthrough in their churches and villages.

[70] Redemption, used in this context, has the meaning of taking back the things, culturally used for evil practices to glorify God. An example of this practice is the yam ceremony in the Maprik District. There the tribal gods, responsible for the planting of yams, were appeased in order to give a good harvest. However, this ceremony is being redeemed,

advocating these theological thoughts, as a means of releasing people from bondage, to inherit God's blessings in every area of life. Communities and churches that have facilitated the Joshua program have embraced it wholeheartedly, acknowledging that these teachings are the key to enter into an era of prosperity, which will be more materialistic. God's glory will be revealed, land will produce abundant crops, minerals will be discovered, and foreign aid will be channelled to develop communities.

The Israel Church (Ministry)

Another movement is the Israel Ministry, founded in 1996 by Paul Joe Sonumbuk, with the "desire to participate in fulfilling the prophecy of Is 49:22-23, about Zion's children being brought home".[71] It was part of the AOG ministry, but later broke away from that denomination, formed its own local church, and introduced Saturday Sabbath, to identify with Israel.

The philosophy of the Israel Ministry is to give to Israel, as this will result in abundant blessings. Israel is the key to all material blessings, as is being demonstrated in our spiritual blessings, which we share in Christ as a Jew. Therefore, Christians must give to Israel, and, in return, they will be blessed.[72]

Apostolic and Prophetic Ministry

The AOG clergy, without evaluating what has been happening, have embraced the Apostolic and Prophetic Ministry to raise their "water level" in ministry. This time they have turned to Dr Jonathan David[73] to instruct them to minister in the apostolic and prophetic dimensions. They believe that what is needed today in the church is apostolic and

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and, instead of paying homage to the yam gods, the worship and honour is being given to Christ.

[71] Gibbs, "Papua New Guinea", p. 123.

[72] The 2007 All-Pacific Prayer Assembly held in Port Moresby had a strong Israeli favour, which is an indication that Israel is the key to material prosperity.

[73] Dr Jonathan David is the Presiding Apostle of the International Strategic Alliance of the Apostolic Church (ISAAC) network. "Jonathan David", http://www.jonathan-david.org/bio, June, 2008.

prophetic worship[74] and leadership to connect into the movement of God on earth, to experience breakthroughs.

How will this happen? David has stated, "The foremost feature of this new move is a transformational paradigm shift of mentalities, migrating towards apostolic. . . . The church needs a clear change of philosophy and mentality of concept that have been handed down to the present generation."[75] He adds that, across the globe, the churches must return to "biblical norms and New Testament patterns . . . to build churches and believers, according to heavenly blueprints . . . willingness to go back to apostolic mentalities. . . . The apostolic mindset is a new configuration of the triumphant breakthrough."[76]

This emphasis on "apostolic mentalities", or mindset, is what is needed to see breakthrough believers, who will dominate the globe, but how? To answer this question, I will refer to what I have heard being preached in churches that have embraced the apostolic and prophetic movement. Christians, who flow in the apostolic and prophetic dimension, will see breakthroughs in every area of life. It is declared that it is now time for Christians to rise up and "dominate the globe". Consequently, in the last national and council election, many pastors contested, because they believed it is time for the apostolic and prophetic generation to take over and rule with God's authority.

The philosophy of the apostolic and prophetic movement is the restoration of the apostolic and prophetic offices in the church, as the key to "breakthrough believers". The language, used in the churches that embrace this movement, reveals its connection to the prosperity gospel. One clear example is that everything is locked up in humankind – think and speak positively, and you will see breakthroughs in your life.[77]

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[74] In so-called prophetic worship, speaking in tongues is a norm (without interpretation), from the start to the end of the service. Sometimes those unable to speak in tongues are taught to do so.

[75] "School of the Prophets", http://www.jonathan-david.org/bio, June, 2008.

[76] "School of the Prophets".

[77] David Dii (or David Dian Warep) is the founder of Covenant Ministries, which is widely known as Life in the Spirit Ministry in PNG. It has links with Jonathan David.

False-Money Schemes

The high propagation of the prosperity gospel in the churches has created a fertile ground for false-money schemes to germinate. Money schemes include Money Rain, U-Vistract,[78] Millennium, Money-Link, Nikong, and Papalain.[79] Some AOG church leaders envisioned the creation of a church financial institution.[80] They collaborated with Christian lay people, mobilising church congregations across the nation to make financial contributions toward the scheme, but, to date, they have not received anything in return.

Abel Haon comments:

> In the mid-1990s, a number of Quick Money Schemes (QMS) sprang up, primarily in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, with a large following in other Melanesian island nations. These QMS alleged that they were Christian organisations, and so had the strong backing of certain denominations and their leaders. After siphoning people's money, they vanished – together with the "investment"; a large proportion of which belonged to ordinary believers and Christian denominations.[81]

According to Gibbs, David has said "that if you give yourself completely to God, then God will give to you abundantly in return. If you give everything to God, then God will meet all your spiritual and physical needs." Gibbs, "Papua New Guinea", p. 120.

[78] Gibbs further explains, "Other movements include pyramid money schemes, such as U-Vistract, in which people contribute their savings, in the hope of getting incredibly large returns on 'their investment'. These money schemes promote a religious aura with rallies, including gospel music and the conspicuous presence of pastors from some conservative evangelical churches." Ibid., p. 132.

[79] One false money scheme still active today is Papalain, with active involvement of Christians, and those outside of the church.

[80] The AOG church was experiencing revival under the ministry of evangelist Joseph Walters. The church leadership perceived spiritual revival would lead to physical breakthroughs in the church. George Forbes, *A Church on Fire: The Story of the Assemblies of God of Papua New Guinea* (Mitcham Vic: Mission Mobilisers International, 2001), p. 265.

[81] Abel Haon, "The Church Impacting Melanesia: a Case for People-Centred and Participatory Ministry", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 24-1 (2008), pp. 20-21.

Eventually these False Money Schemes were curbed. The investors, who were promised 100 percent interest overnight, never got their money back. AOG churches, clergy, public servants, and grassroots people, who invested in those schemes, were defrauded, primarily due to their desire to find a quick way to prosper. Prosperity theology has created many dilemmas in AOG churches. It is an excellent illustration, and a warning for the clergy to carefully assess new theologies before embracing them. Unfortunately, it appears that there is still ignorance in the church.

EVALUATION AND CRITIQUE

Having looked at the cults in Polynesia, with a special emphasis on the Siovili cult, a general overview of the cults in PNG, and the prosperity gospel, I will tie the three together, firstly by identifying their differences, then their similarities, followed by a critique. An important observation to highlight is that, whenever and wherever Christianity and Western technology are being introduced, they spark waves of movements, either religious or non-religious, as the contact groups try to hold on to their cultural heritage, and make adjustments to accommodate the new culture, in order to find meaning, purpose, and equality.

DIFFERENCES

The main difference between the three sects is the source of their prosperity. The Siovili cult looked to Jehovah God, Melanesian cults looked to their ancestors, and the prosperity gospel is human-centred, with a strong emphasis on positive thinking and positive confession. Another difference is the cargo-cult movements that came about when Christianity and Western technology were being introduced. The prosperity gospel movement, however, came after PNG was Christianised, and denominations were indigenised and modernised. Also, cargo cults are the product of Christianity, with its Western technological influence, contacting tribal religion, while the prosperity gospel is the sole product of Christianity from the West, with its wealth.

SIMILARITIES

The main philosophy that stands out in the three sects is that of material prosperity in every area of life, and a utopia that will last forever.

Another similarity is that all three sects are trying to address the physical needs of individual people, which Christianity may have overlooked. All three sects express the key to prosperity, meaning that there are certain rituals and formulae for adherents to follow that will open the way to prosperity.

Having identified their differences and similarities, one must ask, what is it that makes people, whether in the past or present, seek material prosperity, and a life without infirmities? Where can we find real prosperity? How about the cross of Christ? I will attempt to answer these questions in the following critique.

CRITIQUE

When God created the first human beings, He placed them in a place of fellowship, wealth, and abundance. Everything they needed was provided, and they were given the responsibility of stewardship. However, they disobeyed God's command, and were banished from the place of prosperity. If this is the case, the quest for prosperity, expressed in cargo cults and the prosperity gospel, is the yearning of humanity to return to that state of originality.

The life of abundance, or the state of originality, is not decided by the acquired wealth of individuals, but is ultimately decided by the One who did the banishing in the beginning. Melanesian cargo cultists identify the terminator as his/her ancestor, prosperity gospel says it is the human being, while the Siovili cultist identifies the terminator as Jehovah God. Therefore, the terminator must be an ancestor, a man, or Jehovah God.

Is there someone like that in the history of humanity? Is He not the one called Jesus the Christ? Hebrews describes Him as the ancestor,[82] the prophet Daniel identifies him as the Son of Man,[83] and Mark's and John's gospels identify Him as the Son of God.[84] Matthew portrays Him

[82] Heb 2:10-18. For a more detailed explanation of Jesus being an ancestor, see Daimoi, "An Exploratory Missiological Study", pp. 136-176.
[83] Dan 7:13-14; Mark 1:1.
[84] Mark 1:1; John 1:14-18.

as the Messiah of Israel,[85] one who will bring prosperity to Israel, and to the whole world.

To gain a true insight and road map to prosperity, one needs to start at the cross of Christ. He suffered to give the fullness of life to humanity, and His suffering cannot be divorced from a prosperous life by His adherents. The seven "I am" sayings in John's gospel,[86] and the "seven last words" from the cross[87] are the sum total of prosperity – that Christ is the source of the prosperous life – made available through His suffering. Suffering is the terminator's preordained plan to lead His adherents to prosperity.

The prosperity gospel is man-centred rather than Christ-centred. It is an experience-based theology, and is emotionally appealing to the adherent, with a promise of material prosperity. On a positive note, the prosperity gospel helps the adherents to break free from emotional bondage, impart a positive self-image, and gain a new worldview to life.

However, the prosperity gospel is theologically unbalanced. The five major tenets reveal the subjectiveness of the scriptural interpretation, which needs balancing. This is vital, in the Melanesian context, because of its cargo cult history and occurrences. Here, I will endeavour to present the balance needed in prosperity theology.

Firstly, the Abrahamic covenant of material blessing[88] should be understood in the context of Israel as a nation. Abraham needed the material blessing, because God promised to build a nation out of Abraham's own seed. It is a national covenant, and is not universal. Contained in the covenant is universal blessing, and that is what needs to be sought,[89] not the material blessings of the Abrahamic covenant.[90] The

[85] Matt 1:1, 18.
[86] John 6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1.
[87] Matt 27:46; Luke 23:34, 43, 46; John 19:26-27, 28, 30.
[88] In Gen 12:1-5, before God called Abram, he had already accumulated great wealth. When he obeyed God's call, God's blessing was upon his whole household, livestock, etc., and he prospered.
[89] Gen 12:1-3; Rom 4:16-18; Gal 3:6-9.

material wealth should be recognised in the Adamic covenant of dominance,[91] which is for all humanity. Sin did not remove this, but hindered it.

Secondly, the law of sowing and reaping is manipulative, as if human beings can manipulate God to give them what they want.[92] Mark 10:29-30 should be understood as the cost and sufferings of being a disciple of Christ, more than the prosperous life. This text also talks about suffering, which should not be excluded from the prosperous life. In a reciprocal society like Melanesia, this teaching will hinder church support, if givers do not get anything in return.

Thirdly, the law of faith, which reveals that God has faith, based on Mark 11:22, is, again, an error. God is all-sufficient, and does not need faith. We need faith, but God does not. There is no other scriptural support for this doctrine.

Fourthly, the law of proclaimed word derived from Mark 11:23-24 is not about the words you speak, but faith[93] in God, who is omnipotent, able to do anything according to His will. Spoken words are mere words, but words spoken through faith in God can move mountains.

Finally, the expiatory work of Christ should be understood primarily in terms of His taking the guilt of sin, and bearing its punishment on the cross. Divine healing is made possible through faith in Christ; however, real-life experience is quite the opposite. Job, a righteous man suffered. The apostle Paul struggled with an infirmity, and prayed that God would heal him, but God replied, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power

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[90] Craig L. Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Material Possessions* (Leicester UK: Apollos, 1999), p. 36.

[91] The Hebrew word for "dominance" is רָדָה (*radah*). It means to rule over creation and people. It is not a right for exploitation or destruction of creation but the responsibility to govern, manage, and use it to the glory of God. See *The Revell Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "dominance".

[92] Saracco, "Prosperity Theology", p. 325.

[93] Ibid., p. 324.

is made perfect in weakness".[94] What we need is the all-sufficient grace of God, and not easy lives.

Regarding the prosperity tenets, Saracco states:

> There are . . . biblical interpretations, theological developments, and ethical positions that raise (*sic*) serious objections to this movement. Passages, such as Mark 10:30; 11:22; and 11:23-24 are key to the prosperity gospel, and interpreted by forcing their arguments on the translation.[95]

In comparing the major tenets of the prosperity gospel, we see that they are similar to rituals that were performed in tribal religions and cargo cults to appease the ancestral spirits, to make the people prosperous. Daimoi states, "For the community to obtain power and prosperity, contact with the spirit world is established through ritual in speech and action."[96]

Are a healthy life and material possessions the true definition of prosperity? Christians should define prosperity in terms of salvation from the bondage to sin, Satan, and death, more than physical prosperity. God is concerned for the physical well-being of humankind. Nevertheless, God is even more concerned that we "seek His kingdom and His righteousness".[97] When we become kingdom subjects, we rediscover our potential in the image of God to cultivate our gifts to make us prosperous.

God has given certain knowledge, skills, and abilities for everyone to use for their survival. He expects us to utilise our knowledge, skills, and abilities to meet our physical needs. However, we should strive to seek spiritual prosperity ahead of material prosperity, so that we develop a right attitude towards wealth. Hanson gives "Five principles for Melanesian believers" from Proverbs, regarding wealth. They are:

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[94] 2 Cor 12:9 (NIV).
[95] Saracco, "Prosperity Theology", p. 324.
[96] Daimoi, "An Exploratory Missiological Study", p. 49.
[97] Matt 6:33.

(i) God blesses all believers with spiritual wealth;

(ii) God blesses all believers with varying abilities, to gain material wealth;

(iii) Believers should focus on spiritual wealth, and not material wealth;

(iv) Believers should gain material wealth in a godly manner; and

(v) God commands believers to spend their wealth in a godly manner.[98]

Therefore, the correct definition of the prosperity gospel is seen in the work of Christ in reconciling us to God. We are to focus on becoming more Christ-like, rather than on accumulating material wealth. Christians should not use God as a means for material prosperity. This needs correction, for the church's good.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This section will provide practical and theological recommendations for the AOG denomination.

A. CONTEXTUALISE THEOLOGY

Contextualisation is not a new school of thought in theological education. However, it is an issue that every generation must wrestle with. Whenever and wherever we deal with the Word of God, contextualisation is unavoidable.

I see this as one of the weaknesses in AOG churches in PNG. Often, contextualisation is not done well, and theologising is done through a Western context. The church is indigenous in structure and identity, but its Christianity is still Western. Western contextualised theology is deemed superior and attractive, and is copied in the churches. Christians are made to feel that Western culture is good, and theirs is evil. What is

[98] Doug Hanson, "Wealth in Proverbs: Five Principles for Melanesian Believers", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 23-1 (2007), p. 81.

cultural is deemed evil, and is suppressed. There is little contextualised theology in the churches. This is one of the reasons for shallow Christianity in PNG, today, where there is a lot of backsliding and nominalism in the churches. There is a need for Melanesian theologians to reenter their cultures, in order for them to do contextualised theology "to express the reality of Christ in our context".[99]

As Guise says,

> our greatest weakness is our failure to enter deep down into the people's traditional faith and religious insight, understanding, and convictions, and then begin to build from there. . . . I am sure that the Christian teacher, who is not blinded by Western ideology (*sic*) will find, in his or her investigation of the traditional religious life and beliefs of this nation, . . . far from being incompatible with the Christian faith, there is a rich and fertile ground, ready and prepared to receive the Christian religion.[100]

The italic part of Hitchen's definition, below, provides the steps for doing contextualised theology:

> Contextualisation . . . is the task of representing, in a new cultural context, the message of God, so that it speaks the same message, as originally given in the biblical context. It impinges on, and in part, at least, embraces, the tasks of *biblical understanding (exegesis), interpretation (hermeneutics), translation and explanation (communication), and application (indigenisation and enculturation)*.[101]

This is either done poorly, or not at all. The easiest way for many clergy is to transplant into our context what is done elsewhere. Doing

[99] Leslie Boseto, "Foreword", in *Christ in South Pacific Cultures*, Cliff Wright, and Leslie Fugui, eds (Suva Fiji: Lotu Pasifika, 1986), p. 1.
[100] John Guise, "How Deep-Rooted is the Christian Faith in our Nation?", in *Christ in South Pacific Cultures*, pp. 12-13.
[101] John M. Hitchen, "Culture and the Bible – The Question of Contextualisation", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 8-2 (1992), p. 31. Underlining mine.

contextualised theology is a difficult task. Many clergy do not have the know-how. Contextualised theology will minimise transplanting of the message from a foreign culture, and will provide the way for Melanesian theology to bloom.

LAND – PRIMARY SOURCE OF WEALTH

In PNG, 97 percent of the land is owned locally, while the government owns only three percent.[102] It is an inheritance that is priceless.[103] This wealth is the source of material prosperity for Melanesians. In countries, where people do not own the land, their source of acquiring material wealth is in their skilled knowledge.

God gave the land to our ancestors.[104] It contains all the ingredients to make us prosperous. He gave us the gift of work. We are to work our God-given land to meet our needs, and those who have skilled knowledge must use their skills.[105] Material wealth, which is acquired through hard work and honesty, is a blessing. We must take our eyes off Western material wealth, which is accumulated through advanced technology, and fix our eyes on God and the land, for our advancement. With the availability of Western technology, and our skills, we can maximise our land potential to supply our needs.

CONCLUSION

The impact of Christianity and Western technology on tribal religions led to the cargo cult movements in Polynesia and PNG. The philosophy behind the cargo cult movements was material wealth and a utopia that will be ushered in by the god Jehovah/ancestor.

The prosperity gospel has a similar philosophy with cargo cult movements, but it propagates the view that the key to a prosperous life without suffering is humankind. You have to think and speak positively

[102] Gibbs, "Papua New Guinea", p. 84.
[103] Land inheritance is either through the matrilineal or patrilineal system in PNG.
[104] Leslie Boseto, "Do Not Separate us From our Land and Sea", in *The Pacific Journal of Theology* 2-13 (1995), p. 69.
[105] On the right attitude for work, refer John Stott, *Issues Facing Christianity Today* (London UK: Marshall Pickering, 1984), pp. 165-166.

to have a prosperous life without suffering. However, the biblical doctrine of wealth emphasises that the prosperous life is Christ-centred. Material wealth is accumulated through honesty and hard work, and is to be used to glorify God. The prosperity gospel is being interpreted and contextualised by various movements, but its impact is such that the church ought not to embrace it.

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LESSONS FROM 19TH-CENTURY PACIFIC PATTERNS FOR 21ST-CENTURY THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION BY EXTENSION

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INTRODUCTION

This paper will discuss how theological education was presented in the early 19th century in the Pacific, and the patterns that have been used, and provides analysis on whether the 21st-century Theological Education by Extension (TEE) program has some theological significance for the contemporary Pacific theological education context.

This study will be approached from three perspectives: firstly, from a theological perspective; secondly, from an indigenous Melanesian perspective; and thirdly, from an indigenous evangelical Christian perspective. Its argument will be that: *the 20th-century TEE is a vital teaching model for doing theological education across the Pacific in the 21st century.*

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Theological education has to begin with God. "The acid test of theology was well expressed by Thomas Aquinas, 'Theology is taught by God, teaches of God and leads to God.' "[1] Over the centuries, "churches have increasingly affirmed that theological training is central to their life and witness. It is assumed that theological education, in whatever way it is conceived and practised, is necessary for the training of those who, in

[1] *New Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. "theology".

turn, are called to mobilise and equip the people of God for ministry and mission."[2] This, of course, comes in many forms, e.g., "study centres, lay training centres, other decentralised programs, community-based theological learning, cell groups for Bible study, theological education by extension, etc.".[3] We will, therefore, firstly focus on the early 19th-century Pacific patterns of theological education.

EARLY 19TH-CENTURY PACIFIC PATTERNS OF THEOLOGICAL TRAINING

> The improvement of native society, and, above all, the communication of the Christian religion to the Pacific people, does not appear to have been thought of by those who either directed, or performed, the early voyages to the South Seas Islands. The published accounts of the voyages from Britain to the South Seas, in the latter part of the 18th century, produced a strong feeling of wonder and delight, and excited considerable interest on behalf of the inhabitants of the remote and isolated regions. The late Excellent Countess Dowager of Huntingdon was exceedingly solicitous that efforts should be made to convey to them knowledge of the Christian religion.[4]

"The first evangelical missionaries sailed on the *Duff* for Tahiti, and landed on its shores on March 7, 1797."[5] It was by their sacrificial effort that the gospel was deposited in the Pacific Islands. We shall now examine some of the theological education methods applied in their missionary endeavours.

NON-CENTRALISED LEARNING MODE

There are evidences of non-centralised learning in the early stages of the missionary penetration in the Pacific, which helped to groom the islanders in their knowledge of, and participation in, Christianity. Prior

[2] Ross Kinsler, *Ministry by the People* (Geneva Sw: WCC Publications, 1983), p. 1.
[3] Ibid.
[4] William Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, 4 vols (London UK: Henry Bohn, 1859), pp. 2:2-3.
[5] Ibid., p. 5.

to propagating the gospel to a new people, with diverse cultures, the early missionaries envisaged embarking on the following activities.

LEARNING NATIVE DIALECT

In order to evangelise, the early missionaries resorted to learning the islanders' tongue, by "mingling with them, hearing and asking them questions".[6] This was the only alternative, as, "not knowing the language of the people makes it hard for the people to understand them".[7] However, later missionaries in New Guinea realised the necessity, "when they were supposed to learn the local language, and bring the people under church influence"[8] before preaching the gospel. Ellis says the missionaries were "studiously endeavouring to gain an acquaintance with the native language, which was considered essential to the accomplishment of their objects".[9] A second-generation missionary, hearing the natives singing praises for the first time, was astounded, as Williams says, "In the evening, we heard the praises of God rise in the Tahitian tongue, from various dwellings around our residence."[10] Even to date, missionaries who have not learned local languages, find it hard to share the gospel.

Some methodologies of theological education in the early period were:

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES

The traditional avenue of receiving God's word was the Sunday morning worship service. Williams recalls:

> When we arrived at the islands, we were much struck with the attention, which the people paid, while the gospel was preached,

[6] John Williams did this when he came to Eimeo, Huahine, and Raiatea, as a means to learn the Tahitian language adequately. Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, p. 2:45.
[7] Herwig Wagner, and Hermann Reiner, eds, *The Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea: The First Hundred Years* (Adelaide SA: Lutheran Publishing, 1986), p. 36.
[8] Mary R. Mennis, *Hagen Saga* (Boroko PNG: Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies 1982), p. 71.
[9] Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, p. 2:13
[10] Ebenezer Prout, *Memoirs of Revd John Williams* (New York NY: M. D. Dodd, 1843), p. 35.

> our hearts were much affected. It rejoiced us to hear them singing the praises of Jesus. On the Sabbath morning after our arrival, we went and stood outside their place of worship, and heard one of the natives engage in prayer, he began addressing God as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob . . . and that the missionaries would soon attain their language, and teach them the word of truth.[11]

FAMILY PRAYER/DEVOTION

After the missionaries acquired a good command of the islanders' dialect, the islanders were then encouraged to interact with God in their own homes. Williams tells how "the inhabitants were engaged in family prayer, which is observed throughout the Islands".[12] Of course, this does not mean that the islanders had completely done away with their old ways. Their heathen state was still prevalent, as the divine word was yet to penetrate their hearts. However, the point here is that the missionaries realised that the family is an important force, from which theological education can be taught, by way of catechism, prayer, and the sharing of scripture.

MENTORING/APPRENTICESHIP

Mentoring was very effective in those early years. Some islanders were specifically mentored to take on the responsibility, as, "Iro, who has been mentored by Pitman, was put in charge of a large outstation at Ngatangiia, and proved to be a steady and excellent man",[13] in the execution of his duties. "Tauraki was appointed as an assistant teacher in the institution in his mid-teen years; he was mentored by Jane and James Chalmers, when he was ten years old."[14] These are some of the examples of effective mentoring. Although they may not have been qualified in other areas of ministry, they had proven their capability to be

[11] Ibid., p. 37.
[12] Ibid., p. 35.
[13] Raeburn Lange, "The Beginning of a Cook Island Ministry", in *The Origins of the Christian Ministry in the Cook Islands and Samoa*, Macmillan Brown Working Paper Series, No 6 (Christchurch NZ: University of Canterbury, 1977), pp. 5-9.
[14] John M. Hitchen, "Training 'Tamate': Formation of the 19th-century Missionary Worldview: The Case of James Chalmers of New Guinea", Ph.D. thesis (Aberdeen UK: University of Aberdeen, 1984), p. 12.

utilised, in whatever capacity, to ease the immediate need. "They [the Chalmers] also converted their home into a classroom to teach the student wives, which was a tradition established by Buzacott and Jane Hardie at the Malua Institute, Samoa."[15] Thus we see that specially mentored and apprenticed candidates are a useful means of ministry delegation.

SMALL-GROUP CATECHISMS/BIBLE STUDY

Sunday services were not the only method of teaching. Small-group Bible studies and catechisms were another means of providing theological education. "Without any direct encouragement from the missionary, most church members also gathered in the homes of one of their deacons for evening devotions."[16] It is interesting to see that the church members were involved, in the absence of the pastors and teachers, and "eventually some members were chosen as deacons",[17] to help in the work of the ministry.

EXTENSION MODE

The early missionaries also had gospel tracts printed, and circulated to the external students throughout the islands, which had a dramatic impact. Many islanders, who already knew how to read, had the opportunity to study and interact with the materials, at their own pace, and, at times, were tutored by teachers. Williams explains:

> To the rapid improvement effected at Raiatea, during the first year's residence of the missionaries on the island, it must not be overlooked that the printing press contributed its due share, that mighty instrument, set up by Ellis, who, with devoted zeal and labour, carried forward their good work. From this source, 800 copies of the gospel by Luke, and a supply of elementary books, early found their way to Raiatea, and were distributed by the

[15] Ibid., p. 6.
[16] Ibid., p. 7.
[17] Marjorie Tuaiaekare Grocombe, tran., *Cannibals and Converts: Radical Change in the Cook Islands* (Suva Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1983), p. 159.

> missionaries amongst numerous eager applicants. This gift had a most important influence upon the people.[18]

The missionaries saw the people's need. Ellis writes:

> An edition of 2,300 copies of the Tahitian Catechism, and a collection of texts, or extracts from scriptures, were also printed; after which Luke's gospel, which had been translated by Mr Nott, was put to press.[19]

Many came from their villages to the centre, and bought the materials. This method convinced the Islanders to learn more about the scriptures. However, while this gained momentum, the missionaries had other plans.

CENTRALISED MODE

As the ministry expanded, the missionaries realised the need for a centralised mode of training to further equip the islanders at a higher level, for further expansion of the gospel throughout Polynesia and the Western Pacific.

TRAINING INSTITUTION

> Williams found opportunities for promoting, by other means, the prosperity of the South Sea Mission. He submitted to the directors in England for an establishment of a self-supporting theological college in Rarotonga, which was approved.[20]

"Back at Rarotonga, the matter was further deliberated with the brethren, natives, Williams, and Buzacott for the establishment of a college to educate pious and intelligent young men for missionary work."[21] In the process, Takamoa Theological Institution in Rarotonga was established, and "by 1884, a total of 30 men and women had entered the

[18] Prout, *Memoirs of John Williams*, pp. 60-61.
[19] Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, pp. 2:18-21.
[20] Prout, *Memoirs of John Williams*, p. 284.
[21] Ibid., p. 365.

institution".[22] Over the years, the graduates were utilised in Polynesia and Melanesia. There were also other Bible colleges and institutions, which were established later.

We have identified and discussed some early 19th-century theological education methods that were applied by the missionaries. We will now focus, in the next section, on a new 20th-century model of theological education, which, in a very short time, became global.

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION BY EXTENSION: A NEW 20TH-CENTURY MODEL

What is Theological Education by Extension (TEE)? Mulholland explains "TEE is simply decentralised theological education; it is a field-based approach that does not interrupt the learners' productive relationships to society".[23] McGavran explains its value:

> Theological education in the rich, powerful denominations of Europe and America, which can readily establish a theological seminary, costing five million dollars, and be content to grow at the same rate as the general population, is a poor pattern for theological education demanded by expanding younger churches. The recent Western pattern of theological training has served to produce highly-trained and well-paid ministers and executives, but, as the church grows, as congregations multiply exceedingly, this type of minister is not needed.[24]

As a result, with the surpassing need in growing and expanding churches, TEE was born.

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[22] Lange, *The Origins of the Christian Ministry*, p. 9.

[23] Kenneth Mulholland, "TEE Comes of Age: A Candid Assessment after Two Decades", pp. 1-6. Provided by Pamela Harding, Entrust, Colorado Springs, March 21, 2007. Email address: pharding@entrust4.org, internet site: www.entrust4.org.

[24] Donald A. McGavran, "Foreword", in *Theological Education by Extension*, Ralph D. Winter, ed. (South Pasadena CA: William Carey Library, 1969), pp. 7-8.

HISTORY OF TEE

TEE began in Guatemala in 1963, a country in Central America, where there was a rapid growth of the Presbyterian churches in the rural areas. The seminary that was located in the capital city had come to realise that they were not able to train enough pastors to meet the needs of the fast-growing churches. Nevertheless those

> seminary graduates seldom wanted to go back to their rural areas, because they became accustomed to the city life. Also, the training they received was not relevant to the rural churches. Out of the 200 pastors, who graduated from the seminary in its 25-year history, only 20 were still active in the churches, while most were in the cities.[25]

Conflicts were also prevalent among the seminary graduates, and the experienced pastors, and lay leaders of the rural churches.

> The lay elders were actually acting as pastors. Though they had little or no formal training, they were carrying on a kind of tent-making ministry. They were serving their congregation without pay. To remove these lay leaders from their homes and occupations for a long period of seminary training would remove the natural, functioning leadership of the churches.[26]

Therefore, the seminary teachers decided that they were to take the teaching out to the rural areas, where most of the local churches were located. However, they soon came to realise that those who came were not interested in big textbooks, and a heavy academic program. The students that came were, indeed, the true church leaders, but many of them had little formal schooling, and even fewer had theological knowledge. Because of this, the seminary teachers changed their plans.

[25] David Rowsome, "The TEE Tutor's Guide", CLTC TEE Study Manual (Banz PNG: CLTC, 1998), p. 5.

[26] Richard Smith, "An Evaluation of Participants' Perceptions of the Value of Selected Aspects of TEE's Educational Methodology and Curriculum as Effective Preparation for a Selected Range of Christian Ministries in Bangladesh", M.Th. thesis (Auckland NZ: Tyndale-Carey School of Theology, 2008), pp. 2-9.

Firstly, they put aside all the big textbooks, and started writing materials, which would suit the pastors. Then, instead of bringing the pastors into the seminary to attend classes, the seminary teachers went out by foot, bicycle, motorbike, and truck, to take the teachings to the pastors and leaders in each local church.[27]

> By training persons where they lived, the seminary was able to reach into various subcultures, without uprooting people from their environment. Thus, it was able to enlist, and equip for ministry, those persons best suited and gifted to minister.[28]

TEE: A WORLDWIDE MOVEMENT

Since then, there has been much enthusiasm about TEE, and many churches and denominations have seen the potential for TEE in their part of the world. TEE was taken from Guatemala, and planted on every continent. It is still growing and expanding today, with many TEE programs around the world. Our current "TEE email network serves 146 recipients, representing many countries and distant-learning programs. We count it as an immense privilege to serve in this work".[29] TEE networkers around the world enjoy constant dialogue, partnership, and sharing. Could this be an ideal model for the Pacific? TEE was born in the Pacific three decades ago. Here is the story of how it happened.

FOUNDING OF THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS' TRAINING COLLEGE (CLTC)

John M. Hitchen, a pioneer missionary to Papua New Guinea in the early 1960s, and former Principal of the Christian Leaders' Training College, states:

> The Christian Leaders' Training College of Papua New Guinea, an evangelical, interdenominational Bible and Theological College, commenced teaching at Banz in the Western Highlands Province of PNG in 1965, serving the evangelical and mainline churches.

[27] Rowsome, "The TEE Tutor's Guide", pp. 5-7.
[28] Mulholland, "TEE Come of Age", pp. 1-2.
[29] Michael Huggins, email March 30, 2007. Huggins is the Field Director with Oxen Ministries (ORTA Russia, Increase, Matheteuo, and TEEN Net), based in the UK. His email address is michaelhuggins@binternet.com.

> . . . The College's beginnings can be traced to an initiative of George Sexton, the Field Leader of the then Unevangelized Fields Mission (later Asia Pacific Christian Mission, and now Pioneers). Following a UFM field leaders' discussion, Sexton circulated to other evangelical mission leaders, in March, 1959, a letter giving reasons for the suggestion: "*Would it not be possible for the evangelical missions to get together and establish a 'Central Bible Training School'?"* He proposed discussing this at the next Government-Missions Conference the following year.
>
> In the process, the Melbourne Bible Institute (MBI) Council accepted the challenge, and set up a subcommittee to explore the possibility. By 1963, the MBI had appointed Revd Gilbert McArthur as Principal-elect of the new College. A suitable location was acquired in the Wahgi Valley near Banz, confirmed to be the Giramben property in the Western Highlands District of PNG. Thus, in February, 1965, the first group of 18 students arrived at the College.[30]

BIRTH OF CLTC TEE

Hitchen continues to explain that:

> Alongside the core of the residential programmes, CLTC has developed alternative modes for delivering their educational ministry. In 1970, the then Dean of the College was deeply impressed by reading of the impact of the Theological Education by Extension movement in Central America. He prepared a staff study paper on the nature of TEE, and how it could supplement the College's residential ministries. Two years later, in 1972, the College presented the challenge of extension theological education

[30] John M. Hitchen, "Evangelicals Equipping Men and Women In Melanesia – CLTC Educational Ministries, 1965-2005", pp. 1-15. Paper prepared for the Evangelical Identities Conference, Auckland NZ, March 29-30, 2007. Also cited, "The Concept of Theological Education by Extension and its Relevance for Melanesia", a study paper presented by John M. Hitchen to the Evangelical Alliance Meeting, CLTC, Banz PNG, August, 1970.

as a topic for consideration at the annual meetings of the Evangelical Alliance.

No significant development took place until 1975, when the first TEE pilot course in English was conducted in the first half of the year in Mt Hagen, and then repeated in Port Moresby, and other centres in the second half, with a second pilot of the new course continuing in Mt Hagen. New staff member, Ian Malins, conducted that second pilot, and, from that point, took responsibility for the development of a TEE program to extend the ministry of the College around the country. The number of students, courses, and extension centres expanded rapidly each year, and the programme, now called Distance Theological Education, with extension centres in Port Moresby, capital of PNG, and Lae, continues to prove a very significant part of the work.[31]

THE IMPACT

Since its establishment in 1975, CLTC TEE has been instrumental in motivating, equipping, and enabling the people of God to develop their gifts, and give their lives in meaningful service to others. CLTC TEE has brought many TEE students from the spiritual darkness to the marvellous light, to have a closer walk with the Lord Jesus. Over the years, hundreds of TEE students have made personal commitments to follow Jesus Christ. This is the real achievement in meeting the overarching goal for which the ministry of TEE was established.

The table below indicates the statistics of total enrolments, and completion rates, from 1975 to 2007, inclusive, as demonstrated by the DTE database.[32]

[31] Hitchen, "Equipping Men and Women in Melanesia", p. 2.

[32] This statistical information is collected from the Distance Theological Education Database at CLTC, Banz PNG.

English: All Courses	**Started**	**Completed**
Isolated Students	4,472	2,305
Group Students	9,401	5,561
Tok Pisin: All Courses	**Started**	**Completed**
Isolated Students	637	498
Group Students	5,220	3,275
Other Countries	250	198

CLTC TEE is the provider of extension materials to Papua New Guinea, the South Pacific Islands, and the world. There is an annual enrolment of 1,000-plus students. A national TEE director oversees this program. Pacific Theological College in Fiji is also running an extension program, which is more academic in nature.

SCRIPTURAL PATTERNS OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

We have discussed how God has been training men and women in the Pacific, through the TEE models. These guiding principles for Christian workers in the Pacific may still be applicable today. However, is there any theological pattern for us to learn from the scriptures, since theological education is about learning to know God, and making Him known? We shall now discuss some of the biblical patterns of training.

OLD TESTAMENT PATTERN OF TRAINING

Moses, an Israelite, was raised in Pharaoh's royal household, receiving the best education. After killing a man, Moses was humbled during his years of hiding in the wilderness. God then called, commissioned, and enabled Moses to lead the Israelites from bondage. "This was the curriculum Moses followed."[33] Joshua, prepared as a leader under Moses' tutelage, took on leadership responsibilities at an early age. David took on responsibility as a musician and shepherd, learning to deal with failure and success.[34]

[33] John M. Hitchen, "Some Biblical Patterns of Ministerial Training and their Relevance for Melanesia Today", p. 2. Paper presented at the Study Institute of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools held at CLTC, Banz PNG, January, 1976. John Hitchen was Principal of CLTC at the time.

[34] Hitchen, "Some Biblical Patterns of Ministerial Training", p. 3.

From the training of the above three Old Testament servants of God, we see certain principles. God Himself chooses His workmen, and a personal encounter with the Lord leads to a wholehearted commitment. Personal knowledge of the burdens of people is essential for leaders, and personal apprenticeship under a proven leader is also an important aspect of training.

NEW TESTAMENT PATTERN OF TRAINING

As we turn to the scripture records, we find that the Lord Jesus followed many of the principles of the OT, but He also added new principles, in the ways He selected His disciples for ministry. Hitchen explains:

> Many people, from all walks of life, came to Him, some upon recommendation of others, some through the witness of others, and, on many occasions, Jesus Himself went and found individuals. At other times, people came with curiosity, or when they were in need. Nonetheless, the disciples, whom He himself had chosen, stayed with Him, and continued in His service to the end, except Judas.[35]

Prior to discussing the methods, we will identify some features that were true of Christ, in training His people.

Personal Fellowship With Christ

"Personal fellowship with Christ is at the centre of all the training Christ gives. In the Old Testament examples, we noted that a personal meeting with God was central to the workman's preparation."[36] Also, in the gospels, we find that, when Jesus trained someone, He first called that person to be with Him. The disciples lived with Him, ate with Him, talked with Him, and shared in all that Jesus did for nearly three years.

Instruction/Right Teaching

Hitchen notes: "Instruction or right teaching was central in all Christ's work of training. 'Rabbi' or 'Teacher' was the most common title

[35] Ibid., p. 8.
[36] Ibid., pp. 9-13.

people used in speaking to Jesus. 'Disciples' or 'student-learners' was the most common name given to His followers."[37]

In an age when we are uncertain about truth, and afraid of authority, we easily forget the central place Jesus Christ gave to careful regular teaching for those who would be His workers.

Making Clear the Nature of Mission

Hitchen again: "Jesus is careful to make the nature of Christian ministry clear; Jesus Christ was training His disciples for a distinctive kind of work. He was very concerned to make the nature of His work clear. Those who work for Him must become His servants."[38] That was the Lord's way.

LATER NEW TESTAMENT TRAINING

We read of Paul's encounter with the Lord on the Damascus road (Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-16). As with the many OT men of God, Paul clearly knew that the Lord had chosen him for a very special purpose. If we place these "hidden years", after his calling, in a Melanesian context: we look to "these years as traditional initiation periods, when the young men went into isolation for varying lengths of time",[39] prior to being recognised as mature individuals to participate in the affairs of the community. Likewise, Paul actually was going through what Fountain defines as a "spiritual formation"[40] for future ministry. For Paul, those hidden years were his in-service training. Afterwards, he immediately became involved in public preaching and witnessing. His religious upbringing, and formal education in the best educational school of his day, were of much help in his God-anointed ministry.

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[37] Ibid., p. 10.
[38] Ibid., p. 9.
[39] Joshua Daimoi, "Spiritual Formation in Bible and Theological Colleges", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 5-2 (1989), p. 46.
[40] Ossie Fountain, "Contextualisation and Globalisation in the Bible Training Ministry of the Christian Brethren churches of Papua New Guinea, Part 2 of 4", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 19-2 (2003), p. 59.

PAUL'S METHODS OF TRAINING BY EXTENSION

We can now learn some of Paul's methods by studying the way he trained his leaders in the early churches. Acts 14:21-23 tells us that local Christians were appointed as elders in each congregation. These appointments were made, in dependence upon God, to select the right people. Paul also wrote letters to the churches (Gal 6:6). They served to warn, rebuke, teach, and correct, and to give in-service training for the elders. Providing proper support was an important key to ministerial development. We notice that this method was used by the early missionaries in the Pacific.

The New Testament apostles made other missionary journeys, and selected young men for further training (Acts 15:36-16:5). Those, who selected the first leaders, were concerned to see how they were performing, and so conducted further in-service training. Likewise, we find that John Williams sent out island teachers, and he made follow-up visits to see how they were faring. In the same way, Paul arranged for Timothy, an itinerant Bible teacher, to spend some time with the young churches (2 Tim 4:10). Likewise, here at CLTC, the College receives personnel from Australia, New Zealand, and America to give in-service training, encouragement, and spiritual nourishment, in order to keep the program functioning at a steady pace.

We have seen that some of Paul's "extension" methods of training were prevalent in the early Pacific missions, and in our own context, too. That does not mean all training programs were perfect, as they also encountered disappointments, frustrations, and hindrances. Theological education in the 21st century is no exception, as already there are erroneous teachings in the villages.

PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

A local village church deacon interpreted Heb 10:24-25 like this: "Drinking with friends in a public bar, gambling with friends, or going to a 24-hour disco dance are some ways of meeting together, and enjoying

Christian fellowship."[41] This illustrates that, while theological educators are performing to their utmost ability, there are serious problems stemming from various aspects of life in the church and society. Most pastors, in rural and remote localities, who received theological training some 10 or 15 years ago, are in need of further formal theological training, while the more highly-qualified theological graduates are seeking greener pastures in urban churches, or going to higher-paying jobs. Perhaps, until now, our churches have not been able to offer formal training for lay people.

"Churches in the rural and remote localities urgently need sound biblical teaching. Many are drifting towards cultism, and many splinter groups are creating divisions in the churches."[42] This is posing a very serious threat to the evangelical churches. Perhaps Boseto was right when he said, "Stop introducing more religious groups into the Pacific, the Pacific is no longer a mission field."[43] But, sadly, it is too late to take heed of this warning. With a massive intrusion of wealthy cults, the evangelical churches have inadequate strength to withstand the assault, and their members fall prey to false philosophies. "There are avenues, where students and leaders may gladly do some study, if they could do it, while they live and work at their normal careers."[44] What then is the best strategy to help our grade 10 and 12 young people, who are without work in our congregations? The issues, observed some three decades ago in PNG, are still prevalent today. Observers have pointed out the neglect and inefficiency of theological educators, who have not produced quality theological students.

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[41] This incident happened in 1984, in a remote village in Chimbu Province PNG. A pastor present at the meeting reported the matter to the author.

[42] George Mombi, interview by author, June 30, 2008. Mombi is the Principal of the Assemblies of God Northern Region Bible College, Maprik, in East Sepik Province of PNG.

[43] Allan K. Davidson, "The Pacific is no Longer a Mission Field: Conversion in the South Pacific in the Twentieth Century", in *Christianity Reborn: The Global Expansion of Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century*, Donald M. Lewis, ed. (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), pp. 133-154.

[44] "Theological Education by Extension" (CLTC Banz PNG, April, 1976), pp. 1-6. The paper was circulated to PNG churches to encourage them to do TEE.

Tofaeono, responding to the issue of violence against women, stresses, "there is a problem with theological education, and the violence against women lies with the theological educators' inability to address the problem".[45] She emphasises that the cause is "deeply rooted in inadequate theological interpretation and assumptions, because theological students are not equipped with the analytical and pastoral know how".[46] Kadiba also points out that theological educators tended to "teach traditional theological subjects, and follow methods and approaches, inherited from Western models".[47] "It is sad to hear 'out of context' sermons and teachings in some PNG rural and remote local churches."[48] These are crucial issues. How they should be corrected needs urgent deliberation by theological educators.

Daimoi has identified one of the main causes of the dilemma. "Training, in Melanesia, therefore, must be deeply rooted in true spirituality. Biblically understood, this spirituality is rooted in Christ, through the mediatorship of the Holy Spirit."[49] As communal and relational people, "theological colleges in Melanesia must be flexible and innovative, if they are to keep abreast of the changing Melanesian situation, and to depart from traditional models of [t]heological education brought from outside".[50] These crucial issues demand answers from the Pacific people.

CRITICAL EVALUATION

In the early 19th century, in the evidence from extension methods of training, we see TEE was being used. The missionaries printed literature, and sent it out. The students, seeing that the materials suited their needs, came to purchase them at the centre. In most cases, the

[45] Joan A. Filemoni Tofaeono, "Cracking the Silence: The Churches Role in Violence against Women in Oceania", in *Ministerial Formation* 103 (July, 2004), p. 30.
[46] Ibid., pp. 30-31.
[47] John Kadiba, "In Search of a Melanesian Theology", in *The Gospel is Not Western*, Garry Trompf, ed. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1978), p. 142.
[48] The author has had the opportunity to visit many PNG churches. He has observed that much Bible preaching is out of context, and needs urgent attention.
[49] Daimoi, "Spiritual Formation", pp. 46-47.
[50] Kadiba, "In Search of a Melanesian Theology", p. 143.

missionaries revisited the native teachers for follow-up, and conducted in-service training. It is even more challenging to see that Paul used extension methods of training for the elders of the churches. He appointed elders in the churches to take care of them, he wrote letters of instruction, and he sent teachers to follow-up and to provide in-service training for them. The result was that it equipped, strengthened, and enabled them to grow in maturity, and provided spiritual energy for further gospel propagation.

It is sound biblical teaching that is needed. Tofaeono considers that an issue confronting the Pacific today is that theological institutions and Bible colleges have trained incompetent theological students for ministry – "incompetent" in the sense that much of what is taught is not rooted in Christ, and the implementation of such seldom occurs. If we ever want our students to grow to maturity, and handle theological, ethical, and social issues, at a more mature level, we need to think seriously about training that will enable a student to embrace Christ as the Head of the ministry.

Local Bible colleges are staggering and dying in the rural localities, with shallow biblical-teaching programs, and abundant misinterpretation in sermons, many of which are not rooted in Christ. With run down infrastructures, pursuit of self-gain, and mismanagement, which, perhaps, resembles our spiritual immaturity, and lack of mutual dialogue, support, and partnership with other evangelical denominations, the sustainability of the evangelical faith is at stake.

Mombi points out that, "there is a great lack of sound biblical teaching in our churches today; pastors are misinterpreting the gospel, which results in divisions and apostasy, causing splinter groups, because of the congregations' immaturity".[51] The church and theological educators are answerable for this dilemma. He asks, "What kind of training are we

[51] Mombi, interview, June 30, 2008.

giving our students?"[52] It is an onerous question for theological educators to ponder.

Having assessed the positive contributions of CLTC TEE, we see that there are also major weaknesses. In an earlier paper, the author wrote:

> Christian Leaders' Training College TEE has served PNG and the Pacific Islands for over three decades, but has lacked vision to upgrade its capacities to meet the 21st-century demand. Extensions of its centres to other Pacific Islands, and development of formal diploma/degree programs to meet the earnest desire of the seekers, are the prerogatives of the stakeholders. CLTC TEE needs directions for the future. There needs to be proper guidelines in place for how courses should be written, and changes done to the establishment. Some policies need to be put in place to ensure that there are standards set. TEE courses must be recognised by the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools (MATS). Even the issue of accrediting the TEE courses with the residential courses offered needs to be spelt out clearly. There is a need for a thorough evaluation of the TEE program, in order to effectively meet the needs of the users.[53]

The concern in theological training in the Pacific ought to be the concern for Pacific theologians; it is not for Westerners to dictate, but to provide assistance to develop Pacific theological education programs. Are Pacific theologians prepared to prove to their Western counterparts their capability, accountability, and management in this work? All potential Pacific theologians should pool their experience and knowledge in order to provide and train students with adequate theological training, appropriate and applicable to Pacific people.

In the research undertaken for this paper, the challenge remains that no significant Pacific theologian has developed TEE in this region. Non-Pacific people have been involved in developing TEE over the past

[52] Ibid.
[53] Philip Bungo, "Distance Theological Education", SWOT Analysis (Banz PNG: CLTC, February, 2008), pp. 12-14.

decades. Nevertheless, the vision exists. Kadiba spoke of the function of TEE when he stressed, "theological education should be a two-way process, it should educate the people at the grassroots level, and, at the same time, theological educators should be ready to be educated by folk in the villages".[54]

Boseto unconsciously recommended the principles applied in TEE when he said, "their time should not be limited to worship on Sundays, they [Christians] could also be given opportunity during the week to conduct Bible studies in groups".[55] My challenge to Pacific theologians is this: TEE was planted on our shores three decades ago. Now is the time for Pacific theologians to catch the vision of TEE, and develop it, as such, instead of looking to traditional Western Bible colleges. This is a call for reshuffling our training programs, and seeking partnership and collaboration with other evangelical theological educators, if evangelical theological educators want to reach a new milestone with input and vision for training, the TEE WAY will reverse the current trend.

HOW DO HISTORICAL COURSES HELP?

The new 20th-century TEE is the vital teaching model for 21st-century theological training in the Pacific. If it provided positive results in the 19th century mission, and proved effective in Jesus' and Paul's ministries, then, perhaps, it could be the pattern for the Pacific today. The TEE movement has "made available basic theological education, and Christian education, to an enormous number of people, who did not previously have these benefits. Many hundreds of pastors have been trained, who would never have been trained by residential methods. Thousands of evangelists have received basic Bible training, and many hundreds of thousands of lay Christians the same."[56] Two case studies from PNG are presented.

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[54] Kadiba, "In Search of a Melanesian Theology", p. 143.

[55] Leslie Boseto, "Towards a Pacific Theology of Reality: A Grassroots Response to Winds of Change", in *Pacific Journal of Theology* Series II No 12 (1994), p. 55.

[56] Stewart G. Snook, *Developing Leaders Through Theological Education by Extension: Case Studies from Africa* (Wheaton IL: Billy Graham Centre, 1992), p. 2.

Case 1. The author of this paper was converted in prison in 1982, after he did the CLTC TEE course "Come Follow Me", a course on discipleship. After being released from prison, he went home and shared his new-found faith in Christ, with the little knowledge he gained from the TEE studies. He had no formal degrees or diplomas, but the benefits grew. In the space of 14 years, six local churches were planted. All the pastors and leaders of the churches were trained, discipled, apprenticed, and mentored through TEE. This was their only means of receiving theological education. Most of them had a grade-6 level of education. After the author came for full-time theological training at CLTC for five years, the churches continued to prosper and thrive under the leadership of those ordinary men and women.[57]

Case 2. The Evangelical Brotherhood church (EBC) of PNG has caught the vision of TEE. Ulrich and Christina Spycher recall:

> Our first contact with the TEE program goes back to the 1970s. Ian Malins,[58] a lecturer at CLTC Banz, and his family stayed at our guesthouse in Goroka to await the new addition to their young family. It was there and then that Ian Malins was writing his first TEE course. I became interested, and arranged with him to run a pilot project. . . . [F]rom the initial pilot course, we moved on to regular TEE ministry, as part of our yearly program, with a rapid growth of EBC church work in the area. . . . Our commitments also grew, but time has shown that the TEE ministry produced a lasting impact in the lives of many students, and young people are attending these courses.[59]

[57] Philip Bungo, "An Evaluation of the Evangelical Christian Fellowship Church and Proposal for Its Future Development", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 16-2 (2000), pp. 40-77.

[58] Ian Malins wrote many TEE courses during his time as a lecturer at CLTC. Many are still very popular. He and his family are now based in Australia.

[59] Ulrich Spycher, Christina Spycher, *Singaut* magazine 157 (September-December, 2007), pp. 1- 15. *Singaut* is the magazine of the Evangelical Brotherhood church of Papua New Guinea.

The EBC has a national coordinator, who oversees the work of TEE in the EBC churches throughout PNG. Pastors and elders in their own local congregations, and in major prisons around the country, tutor TEE. As a result, the EBC church is one of the fastest-growing denominations in PNG, with firm support from the EBC National Mission Board.

CONCLUSION

Pacific people are unique, communal, and relational people. New 21st-century TEE could be ideal for Pacific people, but only if individuals and theological educators are serious and committed to embarking on such a journey. Sound biblical teaching in the Pacific is an urgent need today. Syncretism in the Christianity of Melanesia and the Pacific is often mixed with traditional religions. The tendency to drift towards syncretism, apostasy, cults, and the prosperity gospel is gaining momentum. These diversions can be halted by effective teaching of God's Word. The development of biblically-oriented leaders affects the degree to which these trends will be challenged.

Finally, the Bible declares the pattern and result of good training. It was demonstrated by our Lord, and His discipleship model was exhorted by Paul in 2 Tim 2:2 (RSV): "And what you have heard from me, before many witnesses, entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also." "Ideally TEE is suited to training leaders as links in a chain. Students are to faithfully teach others what they learn."[60]

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[60] Snook, *Developing Leaders*, p. 4.

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CONTEMPORARY MELANESIAN CHRISTIAN MUSIC

August Berita

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INTRODUCTION

These days, secular music seems to have a greater influence on many people's lives than Christian music. Unless Melanesian churches embrace a broader worldview of their changing culture, the world will continue to mislead their young people with things that are attractive and relevant to their context. In a changing world, Christian music must be willing to adapt to the times, as Christians use it in their worship of God. It must not be confined to a set of man-made traditions that serve as an encumbrance to church growth in the new era.

Melanesians have varying opinions about Christian music: the style, the type of instruments played, and the context in which it is used. To aid their understanding about the changes in music, this paper answers the question of what is Christian music. Then it identifies the factors that shape a person's perspective of Christian music, and will give realistic reasons for adopting contemporary music.

EVALUATING CHRISTIAN MUSIC IN MELANESIA TODAY

THE VALUE OF INDIGENOUS MUSIC IN WORSHIP

Indigenous music is the native music of a particular group of people, and an important part of their worship life. It is the "language of the heart of an indigenous person, in the best medium of communication between

people and spirits".[1] Different forms of indigenous music display the cultural identity of a particular group of people. People, who are not exposed to contemporary music, regard native music as more meaningful. In most remote areas, traditional music is more highly valued than contemporised music, because of its influence in their lives.

One factor that makes indigenous music more valuable is the skill of the local musicians in producing it, using their traditional instruments. Contemporary music may be admired by the people, yet, because of its foreign tunes, and difficulty in playing, the unskilled local musicians tend to ignore it. People have a tendency to like what they are more familiar with.

IS MODERN MUSIC ANTI-CHRISTIAN?

Because of church traditions, acculturated in people by some pioneer missionaries and church leaders, the question about using contemporary Western music in worship has created a much-debated issue among many Christians. Some say indigenous music is Christian, while Western music is secular. Many claim that contemporary music, like rock and jazz, cannot be accepted as Christian music, because it can destroy people's lives.[2] How do we correct this misunderstanding?

There is a famous proverb that says, "Do not judge a book by its cover". By observing the negative impact of modern music in the secular world, some people draw the line, and say that it is corrupted by evil, and cannot be used in the worship of God.[3] On the contrary, these pessimists do not see its constructive use when Christianised, nor can they identify any convincing disadvantages. They even accuse former secular music artists, who are now converted Christians, for bringing their secular musical styles into the Christian circle, claiming that they are soiling the

[1] Philip Manuao, "Communicating the Gospel in Meaningful Cultural Forms in Melanesia", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 16-1 (2000), p. 72.
[2] Dan Peters, and Steve Peters, *Why Knock Rock?* (Minneapolis MN: Bethany House, 1984), pp. 195-205.
[3] Ibid.

sacredness of Christian music.[4] This, too, is an invalid argument, because each musician is gifted in a unique way. One size does not fit all. David did not wear Saul's armour, because he was familiar with the slingshot.[5] These unique talents are from God, and it is fitting when they are consecrated and used for God. Moreover, how do we define Christian music, when both Western and local music have a history of animism and syncretism? It is best to solve this misunderstanding by looking at the origin of music.

Christians should not be fooled, but should know that music started with God in heaven.[6] God created music, before He made mankind. Since ancient times, people believed that music originated from God,[7] that it was purposely designed to accompany people's worship of God. Regrettably, that plan was soiled by sin, so music was deprived of its purpose. It is like computers, mobile phones, knives, and other important tools that were invented to make life convenient, but they are sometimes used wrongly.

Seeing human downfall, Satan took advantage of it – using it as an effective tool to lure people into worshipping him. Apart from the triune God, nobody knows music better than Satan. He was "the musical director of the universe . . . God's song leader, before he was cast out of heaven".[8] He knows the strong impact music can have on people's lives.[9] Christians today are afraid to claim and use what is rightfully theirs, because of the fear of its association with Satan. Luther once said, "Why allow the devil to have all the good tunes?"[10]

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[4] Melex Bosip, "A Tune Of Our Own: Developing Melanesian Church Music", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 22-2 (2006), p. 19.
[5] 1 Sam 17:38-40, 48-49.
[6] Job 38:7.
[7] Phil Kerr, *Music in Evangelism and Stories of Famous Christian Songs* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1962), p. 10.
[8] Ibid, p. 9.
[9] Ezek 28:11-19.
[10] Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), p. 189.

Since the time of Jubal, until today,[11] music has been changing. Historical information suggests that even though music had its origin in God, it had an earlier association with folk religions, because of the degeneracy of humanity. Melanesian music, like primitive music everywhere, is quite similar in natural history. Even the "most sacred vocal music of the Jews had its origin in folk songs",[12] and Western church music developed from a Greek influence.[13] Many early songs were used unofficially for long periods until they were finally accepted by the church. Luther and Calvin opposed new styles and forms of secular music introduced into the church, but later allowed them, because they could not stop the people from using them. They realised the effects of the changing culture on music, and had to make adjustments. Later, Luther borrowed popular secular tunes of his day to compose hymns. He claimed that music is God's gift to drive out the devil.[14] Charles Wesley also used common secular tunes in composing hymns. This kind of situation has always been, and is still, a factor in the development of Christian music. Although Christian music developed from secular influences, it becomes an effective evangelistic tool when Christianised.

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN MUSIC?

What makes music Christian? Is it the lyrics, the type of music, the record label, or the musician? Music is music, and cannot be branded in any way. It is the "heart, the lifestyle, the spirituality, and the worldview"[15] that affect the music. Christian music is music produced by Christians, and dedicated to God, regardless of its style, tune, or

[11] Gen 4:21.
[12] William C. Rice, *A Concise History of Church Music* (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 1964), p. 11.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Kerr, *Music in Evangelism*, p. 202.
[15] Jonathan Bellamy, "A Jesus Music Revolution: What Part Does Christian Music Play in Revival?", January 19, 2006, July 27, 2008. <http://www.crossrythm.co.uk/articles/lifeA_Jesus_Music_Revolution/18607/p1/.htm>.

origin.[16] Though Christian music differs in forms and definitions, according to the cultural context, it is written from an individual perspective and conviction about Christianity, focusing on Christ.[17]

There are two types of Christian music: church and general. Church music is particularly appropriate to be used in a church worship setting. The styles, tunes, and all its attributes assist the congregation in worshipping God. The general type is any Christian music, intended for entertainment purposes only. It may not be relevant to the church, because it could be too noisy, complicated, or similar to secular music in mode. Using the wrong type of music, in the wrong place, at the wrong time, to entertain the wrong people, may cause division among the musicians and the parishioners.

INFLUENTIAL FACTORS THAT SHAPE A PERSON'S PERSPECTIVE

CHURCH TRADITIONS AND FORMALITIES

Rice asserts, "Three groups of people have always been concerned with, and affected by, church music – the clergy, the musicians, and the congregation."[18] There are two factors that shape a person's musical taste. The prime factor is his/her church tradition and formalities. It is often assumed that, because missionaries taught a type of music in church,[19] or their forerunners used one particular form of music, it is the appropriate church music. Anything new, and outside of that, is regarded as secular. Evangelicals and mainline churches have a strong music tradition, while the Pentecostals do not. Many Evangelicals emphasise hymn singing as the only suitable style of church music.

The fashion of worship plays an important part in shaping a person's style of worship. Pentecostals tend to be open and passionate in their

[16] Yomi Daramola, "Christian Music as a Discipline: A Religious Appraisal of Christian Music in Nigeria Today", in *Cyber Journals for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* #17, July 27, 2008. <http://www.pctii.org/cyberj17/Daramola.html>.

[17] "What is Christian Music?", July, 2008. http://en.wikipedia.or/Wiki/Christian_music.htm.

[18] Rice, *A Concise History of Church Music*, p. 12.

[19] Bill Matthews. "Sacred or Secular: a Discussion Report", in *Point* 1 (1973), p. 106. Many pioneer missionaries introduced hymn singing.

worship of God, using whatever styles they see fit. A person, who is used to the Pentecostal way will find it quite boring to worship in an Evangelical church. Interestingly, Evangelicals, realising this, are now trying to improve from their traditional forms, and be flexible in adopting new styles that make worship services livelier.

Furthermore, the form and style in music play a key role in worship. With a good mixture of music, the worship becomes livelier and more enjoyable. Some churches consider preaching as more important than music, while others do not. Other churches prefer using simple instruments, like the piano, organ, keyboards, and acoustic guitars, while others experiment with a different range of instruments. Moreover, many churches debate about certain musical styles used to worship God. Some assume that the much-simpler styles, which are less stimulating, are spiritual, and those that excite people have secular features. Different assumptions affect people's thinking about music.

Whether people are aware of it or not, the environment in which the church is located also affects the form of worship. Without proper analysis of the environmental context, Arua comments, "some pastors do not emphasise Melanesian Christian worship . . . in the town churches".[20] His thoughts are reasonable, but narrow-minded. He incorrectly uses contextualisation to emphasise his idea of "indigenisation". Contextualisation is relevant in a particular culture.[21] A town is a modern environment, and is very different from a village. Contextualisation is necessary, but indigenisation may not be relevant because of the mixture of people in the church. Many short-sighted people falsely accuse Western missionaries of discouraging indigenisation in the past, without considering the genuine reasons why it was discouraged.[22] Some Melanesian church leaders tell others to indigenise music, while they, themselves, prefer modern music. This

[20] Ako Arua. "Christian Worship in Melanesian Churches", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 9-1 (1993), p. 27.
[21] Ledimo Edonie. "Syncretism in the Milne Bay Province of Papua New Guinea", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 16-1 (2000), p. 40.
[22] Arua, "Christian Worship in Melanesian Churches", p. 28.

shows that these people are only retelling what they were told in their classes on contextualisation, and not from their own convictions.

In a town church, people generally want to use the latest forms of music in worship. Where churches have high school and tertiary students involved in the youth programs, the music groups, time and again, want to apply the latest styles they have learned. Professionals in the church also want something that is relevant to their context. In contrast, those in rural churches would consider something that is not too old, but relevant, to be appropriate.

ETHNIC INFLUENCE

The second sphere of influence lies in the socio-cultural upbringing. People, who like music, grow up learning certain popular local tunes. A person may not be aware of his inclination towards certain musical tunes. However, you could ascertain his preference for a type of music when he whistles or hums the tune himself. Probably, in his earlier life, he has been involved with a music group. That group may have favoured a style that eventually won the musician's interest. If the group likes playing rock, their fans, too, will be led to love rock. A person, growing up in a contemporary culture, will probably prefer Western styles more than local music.

Some people instinctively have individual interests on what music they prefer. When they hear a style or tune, they feel good about it, and want to hear more of it. That interest may not be cultivated by other factors, like cultural upbringing, church, or any secular influences, but by their own individual interests. Some may attribute this to one's personality, though not all, necessarily, agree.

WHY ADOPT CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN MUSIC?

CULTURAL CHANGES AFFECTING INDIGENOUS MUSIC

Culture changes as people adopt new ways of living. Melanesian culture is changing very quickly, with the influence of the Western lifestyle. Development in the modern education system has paved the way for people to be exposed to Western influences. As a result, many educated

people are shifting from old ways of life to new ways. Those, who have access to better services, like electricity, education, roads, entertainment industries, and other daily services, prefer the new way of living. Contemporary music is also becoming popular, and in more demand than the traditional music of the past, owing to these changes.

The music desired in modern Melanesian societies today is heavily influenced by the Western lifestyle. No one can stop the tide. People, who complain about the changes that are happening, are like a person trying to stop the Sepik River flooding.[23] With the effects of modern development, our societies are moving towards a global community.

In the light of these changes, contemporary music has greater advantages than indigenous music. People, who live in towns, would prefer to use power instruments, like the electric guitar, keyboard, and drums, to aid their worship, rather than use *kundu* drums that may not be relevant to their context, even though they are Melanesians. In many village churches, people like to use guitars to produce music in worship services, rather than traditional instruments. This is due to the fact that people are beginning to understand the quality of the sounds these musical instruments produce. A guitar can produce a beautiful tune, and a good rhythm, as contrasted with a *kundu* or *garamut* that can give beats, but no tune. Many traditional instruments produce unnecessary noise.

A restatement of the Lord's commission is to "know Christ, and make Him known" (Matt 28:19-20).[24] To fulfil the Great Commission, certain approaches, which are relevant to the context of the present culture, should be used to aid the gospel. In the past, ancestors used traditional tools for work. Their work was hard and slow, and produced less harvest. Today, modern tools are preferred, because they make work easier, faster, and produce better results. Likewise, music is a ministry tool. Traditional music may have been effective in the past, but the modern generation would prefer the latest technology, because of its

[23] The Sepik River is a very big river in East Sepik Province PNG.
[24] CLTC Mission Statement.

mass impact. Clergy and musicians have to broaden their views, because, as time changes, it brings with it the force of change. The winds of change are blowing in every direction, and Christianity has to ride with the wind, or lose everything to the secular world. Gregory remarks, "Musical experiences, like religious experience, must grow if it is to live".[25]

THE GOSPEL MUST BE PASSED ON TO THE NEXT GENERATION

We should not only think of what is appropriate for us today, but also consider the important factors that can relay the message of Christ, in a meaningful way, to the next generation. Some people are too legalistic, and do not see the opportunities of passing the gospel to the next generation. To make Christian music meaningful and appropriate for them, we have to allow our children and young people to embrace the gospel, through whatever means that seems appropriate to their perspective. As Maeliau points out:

> Throughout the history of the church, theologians have always been dating, updating, and outdating their theologies . . . [they] have one thing in common, . . . and that is to make the gospel . . . address itself to the people of today in a meaningful and relevant way. Is this not our aim, too?[26]

Unless the music presented in our churches fits their standard, we cannot win their love for Christian music. Young people do not like outdated music.

Contemporary music is positively impacting churches today. Even in village churches, many people are not using traditional music, but are blending it with modern-day music, to create something new. On the other hand, Bosip asserts that some theologians have argued that

[25] A. S. Gregory, *Praises with Understanding* (London UK: Epworth Press, 1936), p. 163.

[26] Michael Maeliau. "Searching for a Melanesian Way of Worship", in *The Gospel is Not Western: Black Theologies from the South-West Pacific*, G. W. Trompf, ed. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1987), p. 121.

contemporary music is affecting the work of the church.[27] Their argument is bigoted and fallacious. With the introduction of contemporary music, churches have seen great changes in their worship services, and an increase in church attendance and membership. Churches that are growing most rapidly are those that have very fine contemporary music. People are not willing to come to church and hear the Word of God unless the church provides something that interests them. "Music that shapes the community will use many styles that invite greater inclusiveness."[28]

CONCLUSION

Music in worship is like the flesh that holds the bones and other body parts together. In the past, traditional music was highly valued by indigenous people. However, modern influences have changed people's tastes for beauty and relevance in life. The old ideas are being replaced by the new. Because contemporary music is foreign, it comes under fire from legalistic, orthodox Christians. This is due to the fact that people have different opinions about what Christian music is. By having a better understanding, changes and adaptations can be made to modern forms of music, in order to make Christian music relevant to contemporary Melanesian society.

Rice affirms:

> The present is exciting, and the future is bright. The day should soon come when sacred music will, again, be at least equal to secular music in quality and quantity. Beauty and holiness will exist in proper perspective, and the holiness of beauty will be a reality.[29]

[27] Bosip, *A Tune of Our Own*, p. 19.
[28] Dawn, *Reaching Out Without Dumping Down*, p. 178.
[29] Rice, *A Concise History of Church Music*, p. 115.

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