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Traditional and Present Day Values and Ethics in Melanesian Society

Ennio Mantovani

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This anthropological study of traditional Melanesian value systems and ethical practices and the new alternatives being created with the introduction of a money economy is of significance in understanding how conscience operates in societies without any knowledge of the gospel. It shows how motives and actions are good or evil depending on whether or not they advance the community, for the health and relationships of the community (based on blood marriage and land) is the supreme and final value for living. While the author does not discuss the issue of conscience or Divine Law, we are given insights on how conscience is shaped by the experience of pagan communities over the centuries.

We suggest that those engaged in church planting among such changing cultures will need to understand both the continuity and discontinuity between the Church as a new and alternative community and both the traditional community and the emerging secular communities. In the development of Christian values and biblical ethics, Christ as Saviour and Lord will become the determinative factor in reeducating conscience. The well known metaphor of the exchange of a 'peace child' is but one attempt to relate the gospel to traditional ways of re-establishing broken relationships within and between communities. Readers are invited to contribute their reflections on these issues.

INTRODUCTION

Often after a course on Melanesian Values and Ethics I am asked by the participants, both Melanesian and expatriate, for something in writing on this topic. As a matter of fact I have written an article on 'Traditional Values and Ethics'¹ but since then I **P. 262** further developed the theme to include present day Melanesian Values and Ethics. In this article I shall follow and quote the former one² and add what is new.

What I present here is a bare outline of my lectures and it is geared primarily to those who took part in the courses and asked for something in writing to remind them of what has been said. On the other hand this article might help other Melanesians, or expatriates

¹ Darrell Whiteman *An Introduction to Melanesian Cultures*, Point Series No. 5 1984, 195–212.

² The original article has been published again by the organisers of the 17th Waigani Seminar: *The Ethics of Development, The Pacific in the 21st Century*, by Susan Stratigos and Philip J. Hughes ed., UPNG, Port Moresby, 1987.

with Melanesian experience, to better understand and to order their daily (Melanesian) experiences.

What I write is the result of many years of observations and reflections. It represents the opinion of an outsider, but even the outsider's view has its value.³ I write and share my reflections on the Melanesian Value System for two reasons: to encourage Melanesians to find again pride in their past, help them understand the present, and to make the system known to other cultures as part of an enriching cultural dialogue.

Expatriates have a responsibility towards Melanesian cultures. Out of ignorance many expatriates misunderstood Melanesian cultures and confused Melanesians as well. To say 'sorry' is not enough, one must dismantle the western barriers which have been erected. It is necessary and fair that somebody from the same group undertakes to present an alternative view based on a different understanding of the Melanesian Value System. It might liberate the Melanesians to follow what they always felt to be right.⁴

Before going any further let me explain what I mean by culture and what I regard as the function of values within a culture.

Culture is what distinguishes a human from an animal. The animal has instincts which tell it how to answer its needs for survival. Humans have culture to perform the same task.

Culture is not just a bundle of customs but a system of ideas, an ordered whole, inherited from and shared with a group, through which people are taught how to answer their physical, social, and spiritual needs.

What one can see of a culture are the exterior forms, but what gives meaning to those forms are the underlying values. There cannot be true understanding and appreciation of a culture without knowledge of the value system.

Often there are customs in a culture which might have a high emotional content but which do not seem to make much sense today. Take the custom of shaking the right hand in western societies. These elements are often survivals from a past where they had a very practical purpose. One gave the right hand to [p. 263](#) show that one did not hide a knife, that one was not an enemy but a friend. Today nobody thinks about hidden knives when we shake hands but westerners feel that giving the left hand to somebody is not proper, that it is 'wrong'.

In Melanesia one might encounter similar customs which do not seem to make sense. Before passing judgment one should try to find out the history of that custom if at all possible.

It is not easy to find the meaning of the different customs. People themselves do not know the reasons for what they do. It is like asking many westerners why in the past we forced children to write with the right hand when nature had made them left handed. It had very important cultural reasons in the past but not everybody knows them. The same is in Melanesia. 'When asked about the reasons for certain actions and reactions, people would only say: "That is the way we do it", or "That is the way of the ancestors." People felt strongly about certain things but never had the time, it seemed, to analyse their behaviour and expose its underlying rules.'⁵

³ The jargon for insider and outsider view is emic and etic. See an Anthropology manual on the topic, e.g., Conrad Phillip Kottak: *Cultural Anthropology*, Random House, NY, 1987, 4th edition.

⁴ This has been a common experience during my courses to Melanesians. As one put it once: 'Today, for the first time, I feel Melanesian and Christian at the same time.' Whether this written outline will have the same effect on Melanesians, I doubt. No written word can substitute for the oral communication and interaction.

⁵ Mantovani, 197.

One might ask what guarantee I have not to have read into the customs what is not there. I am very well aware of this danger in my observations and especially in my interpretations. My answer is a parable. 'If one gives me a key, I try it: if it opens the door it was the right one. If it opens it, but with difficulty, then I know it is the right one but needs further filing.' It is the same with this system: 'If the principles I present clarify the ... Melanesian... actions and reactions, if they help to link apparent contradictions in behaviour, if they show logic and consistency, then it is supporting evidence that I am accurately describing objective interpretations of the situation.'⁶

One last clarification. What do I mean by values? Value is a quality in something which motivates people to acquire that object, to defend it if they already possess it. It motivates people to make sacrifices in order to obtain or keep it. Once they possess it, people, everything else being alright, feel relaxed and happy, but if they did not obtain it, people feel restless and tense.

Ethics is understood as the principles and rules of behaviour. The values give the motivation for the behaviour and the ethics present the way people usually act when motivated by these values.

TRADITIONAL VALUE SYSTEM

Community

One of the key values in Melanesia is the community. 'The shape and size of the community varies from society to society in Melanesia, but the group of people which is necessary for biological survival, for emotional support and for meaning is always of the greatest importance for Melanesians. In fact, the community seems to take precedence over individual personal likes and dislikes.'⁷

One of my lasting experiences regarding the community as a value p. 264 came the first year of my presence in PNG. One day I visited a place in the back of Gumine in what is now the Simbu Province. There I met a young lady who had a friend she wanted to marry. The community however wanted her to marry another man from Gumine, a man she had not seen. She had a chance of winning her case with the help of her brother who supported her, but she gave up her friend to marry the other man saying that if she did not, the community would suffer from the payback of the man she refused. She decided to marry the man she had not seen hoping that eventually she would find happiness. For her the community was the top value and to care for the community was the way to find eventual happiness and well-being.

For many years I was convinced that the community was the top value in Melanesia. But then I realized that the community was only a way, the only known way to a higher value. That higher value was the mainspring of all the community's activities. One could define it as the sum of everything positive the Melanesian heart desires and the absence of everything a Melanesian heart rejects. A Pidgin term for this value could be '*Gutpela Sindaun*' and it comprises security, health, wealth, growth, prestige, good relationships, meaning, etc. Negatively it implies lack of sickness, decay, barrenness, death. For the lack of a better English term I call this value 'life', the fullness of life.

Community over thousands of years was experienced as the only safe way to '*Gutpela Sindaun*'. To anticipate what I shall say later on, *experience* is here the key word. Community was not chosen for ethical reasons but because there was no other viable

⁶ Mantovani, 197.

⁷ Mantovani, 199–200.

choice! Those who tried other ways are not here to tell their story. They paid for their wrong choice.

Relationships

Looking at the community I realized that the western concept and the Melanesian concept were not identical. Melanesian community consists in a web of relationships. The principal factor of these relationships is that of blood, marriage, and land. Besides, the relationship to the relatives comprises both the living and the dead. The relationships to the dead relatives are very important.

These relationships build the community. The community consists of all of them. A Melanesian community consists of living relatives, of dead relatives, and of land: garden, bush, river, sea. This explains for instance the big problems PNG experiences with land. It is not primarily a question of money, it is an ethical question. In the same way as one cannot 'sell' one's mother, one cannot sell one's land. The land can be used but not sold.

Relationships mean much more than simple biological or legal links. They mean rights and duties, expectations and obligations. When a Melanesian says father he or she might or might not mean the one who gave the physical life to the one who is called his child, but for sure he or she means the one who has precise obligations to the one called child, who has clear expectations from the child, expectations which give physical and emotional security, p. 265 which give meaning to life. A 'brother' is not necessarily a sibling but a friend, somebody who is not going to let one down no matter what comes, the one who is going to stand by in time of trouble, the one a person can trust.

The same goes for the ancestors and the land: relationships mean expectations and obligations going both ways.

'In Pidgin, the term for this kind of relationship is "lo" and is obviously not synonymous with "law".⁸ Because proper relationships mean a healthy community, which in turn is the way to "life", "lo" can be taken to mean "life" itself. In Christian terms, "lo" can be taken to mean salvation for the same reason. Primarily it means "proper relationships". In the Solomon Islands, the concept of "custom" seems to have a similar meaning.'⁹

If all these relationships are well the community is well and so everybody can enjoy 'life', but if any of these relationships is broken or strained then the community is sick, the individuals experience a loss of 'life'. There will be strife, misfortune, sickness, death of people or domestic animals, failure of gardens, no catch of fish or game. All these are signs that something is wrong with the community, that some relationships are broken.

Exchange

If a community comes to that stage then the relationships must be mended. What establishes, mends, strengthens the relationships is the **exchange**: the giving and receiving of visible, tangible gifts.¹⁰ Relationships can be established and mended only through the exchange. Words do not suffice.

This is true not only about the community in the strict sense but of any relationship. If one wants to become the friend of somebody, that person must express his or her

⁸ See Ahrens (1974a, 1974b, 1978) and Fugmann (1977).

⁹ Mantovani, 203.

¹⁰ See: Forster, Robert J., 'Value Without Equivalence: Exchange and Replace in Melanesian Society.' *Man* 25 (1990): 54–69. Gregory, C. A., *Gifts and Commodities*, New York: Academic Press, 1982.

intention with a gift. If the other responds with another gift, one knows that the relationship has been accepted and established.

Gratitude follows the same rules. Any gift establishes a relationship. One cannot answer the first part of an exchange with words. One must **do** something. One must return a gift and that closes the process and establishes the friendly relationship.

If one offends a friend, i.e. breaks the relationship, it is not enough to say 'sorry', one must **do** sorry and give a gift. Eventually a gift will be returned and that is the final sign that peace has been made.

What has been said so far can be captured in the following diagram:

'life'

the way to it is the

community

blood

which consists in a web of

relationships

in-laws ancestors land

which are established,
mended, and strengthened
through

exchange

Sickness, crop failure, accidents, p. 266 etc., as we already said, are signs of lack of 'life'. If somebody gets sick, people will try to cure him or her. If the cure does not work then people will check the relationships. If a child is in hospital, for instance, the parents will say that they must go home to 'straighten out things'. The community will check every relationship to find which one has been broken. It is at this time that a 'general confession' could take place: who stole from whom, who slept with whom, etc. The community will check not only the relationship to the living but to the dead and to the land as well.

If one discovers the broken relationship one must mend it through an 'exchange'. One usually prepares a meal. Whether the broken relationship is with the living, the dead or the land, the remedy is always the same: an exchange. In the past, when Melanesians gave a meal to the ancestors or the land (the *masalai*: the spirits of the land), Christianity labelled it 'sacrifice' which means an action attributing to the dead or spirits a power which belongs only to God. Actually, seen from the value system, it is not a 'sacrifice' at all. It is an exchange aiming at mending a broken relationship with the community. According to the system I presented, what the Melanesians used to do is not a profession of faith in supernatural powers but a statement about the nature of the community, which comprises the living, the dead and the land handed down from the forefathers, and about the nature of sickness and misfortunes, which are seen as the consequences of a broken relationship.

As an example and explanation of the relationship to the bush let me recall an experience of one of my friends, *Mary MacDonald*. She was in the bush ready to go back to the main station the following day. In the house of the catechist they had eggs which Mary cooked. When she offered them to the people in the house they refused to eat them, because next day they had to go through the bush from which the eggs had been taken. The eating of the eggs would have broken the relationships because they would have enjoyed something from the bush without reciprocating. They fear exploiting part of the community because that would have meant a broken relationship ending in a fall and a broken ankle of some similar misfortune.

At the time, when Mary told me what happened, I did not understand the meaning of it and I would have said something like: 'Do you not believe that God is stronger than all the spirits and that he will protect you?' The real question actually is not whether God can protect us but whether God is pleased with egoistic exploitation and will protect us from the consequences of it. The ignorance of the value system hindered me from understanding the deep cultural issues of human egoism, of exploitation, of guilt. My reference to God would have tried to justify what cannot be justified. Christianity does not aim at liberating us from the fear of committing sin but from the slavery of sin, which is not the same.

The understanding of the Melanesian value system a century ago would have enabled Europeans to understand that the exploitation of [p. 267](#) the environment could lead only to sickness and misery. Unfortunately our ignorance of the Melanesian value system created problems of identity among the Melanesian Christians and prevented the Europeans from avoiding great damage to their whole life back in Europe. Wisdom does not have to be expressed in Aristotelian concepts: poetic imageries can be equally powerful if understood.

ETHICS

The law which directs the behaviour of the Melanesians seems to be: 'What helps the community is ethically good, what harms the community is ethically bad and what is indifferent to the community is indifferent.'

To understand this law one must remember that the community, for all practical purposes, stands for 'life', the absolute value. The only absolute seems to be the 'life' and what leads to it. Every human action takes its ethical value from the relationship to it. To kill, to steal, to lie are not bad in themselves. It depends on the motivation, on the aim of the action. If one kills an enemy to serve the community this is ethically good. If one steals for the community this also is good and so is lying to help the community and its members. But if killing or stealing, even if it is done for the community indirectly harms the community, this is ethically bad.

This explains many things which otherwise are difficult to understand. The chaplain of a jail once told me of an (very nice) educated young man who was serving a term for perjury. According to the story of the young man, there had been a robbery in town and the police were investigating and coming close to making an arrest. He went to the police and admitted committing the crime. He was sent to jail but the police were not fully convinced that he had committed the crime. Eventually they captured the real thief who turned out to be the brother of this young man. He had committed perjury to cover up for his brother and did not feel any guilt about it. Once I told this story to a group of people and a Melanesian church worker was overheard saying: 'That young man acted like Jesus who gave his life for us his brothers.' That the young man had committed perjury to save his brother seemingly did not bother the church worker.

A classical example comes from the recent history of Goroka. Goroka was raided pretty regularly by a group of people living in the mountains overlooking Goroka. The raiders brought the stolen goods home and distributed them to the community. The elders in the community kept quiet. The police from the helicopter could see people going around with some stolen uniforms but were not strong enough to be able to do anything about it. Eventually the Government sent a message to the people saying that if they continued to raid Goroka the Government would cut all the bridges leading to their place, take all the nurses and teachers out and stop them coming to the hospital. Suddenly the elders ordered the youths to give themselves up. 110 young people with their firearms and banners proclaiming who they were, marched peacefully into Goroka and gave themselves [p. 268](#) up. Up until the threat of the Government the raids were helping the community, but once the threat to cut the bridges and pull the nurses out was made, the raids became unethical because they were harming the community.

This shows the weak point of the traditional ethical system: the system cares only for one's own community. That the others must suffer for it, does not count. **It is communitarian egoism.**

Often Melanesians are said to have two standards of ethics: one for the 'big man' and one for the 'little man'. Actually, there is no double standard but a consistent application of the above mentioned principle of the good of the community. The big man is by definition the one who is **experienced** at helping the community in an outstanding way. The 'little man' is the one who does not do anything special for the community. When somebody harms the community, once the heat cools off, everything is weighed: the good deeds for the community as well as the harm. The real big man, who by definition is the great benefactor of the community, will pass the test most of the time, while the little man who never did anything outstanding for the community will be found wanting and will be punished for the harm done. It is not a double standard but the application of the principle of the good of the community.

If the big man persists in harming the community the community will punish him as well. History has a few classical examples of this. *Kawagl*, the big man who led the first whites into the Simbu, was such a person who had to run away to save his life from his community. His credit with the community had run out. When he met the missionaries he saw his chance to make up for the harm done to the community and without fear marched back from Bundi leading the missionaries into his territory and was recognized once more as a 'big man', a benefactor of the community.

The same goes for the members of the community. The community will defend them from punishment from outside but there is a limit beyond which the well-being of the community demands a strong action. One of my co-workers told me that one of his relatives was a person that got his community continuously into trouble. The community defended and fought for him but after the fights they beat him up for the harm done indirectly to his community. One day they had enough: they tied him up and brought him down to the border of their territory and called out to their enemies who came and finished him off. The wellbeing of the community is more important than the well-being of one individual member of the community.

ENFORCEMENT MECHANISMS

Experience was the strongest motivation for keeping the value system. People experienced the help of the community, believed in that value and therefore were ready to serve and to suffer for the community.

If that positive attitude was not sufficient there were negative measures.

The most common mechanism in a face to face society i.e. in a society p. 269 where everybody knows and meets everybody else, was 'gossip': people talked about the behaviour of the deviant and that pulled people back into line. The result of this type of 'gossip' was shame and the fear of shame kept people toeing the line.

The fear of getting sick if one broke the laws was another ever present motivation.

If the fear of shame or of sickness was not enough there was always the possibility of violence: either physical violence or black magic.

One should not sleep with the wife of one's brother. I remember a case in the Salt-Nomane area where I was working. Neither gossip nor explicit threat was able to stop a certain man from bothering one of his sisters-in-law. The husband one day saw the man entering his wife's house. He sat before the house with a bow and arrow and when the adulterer emerged shot him through the heart. The first 10 years I spent in the bush I hardly ever heard of cases of adultery. It was not a question of people being successful in hiding the fact: one did not want to risk one's life.

People should not steal either. Once two women found hospitality in a house in the area I was working. In that house, hanging from the rafters there was some pork. The temptation proved too strong for the two women who got up very early, took the pork and ran away. When the theft was discovered the men went after the women, found them, cut their hands and threw the women into the Wahgi river.

All these sanctions were not able to stop people completely from acting against their value system and their ethical principles, but were very effective in preserving order in the society.

PRESENT DAY VALUE SYSTEM

The present day situation is determined by the introduction of a new value into Melanesian societies. There are new values linked with Christianity and others linked with the new nationhood. I shall focus on only one: cash.

Cash in itself does not destroy the traditional value system. Money as a matter of fact can support the traditional value system. What cash does is to offer a feasible alternative (in the eyes of those who choose it) to the community as the only way to 'life'. The value is of too recent introduction for people to know whether in the long run it works or not.

In order to understand this ambivalence of cash let us briefly look at its nature and qualities and compare it with the traditional valuables.

THE NATURE OF VALUABLES

Melanesians had many valuables even before the coming of the Europeans but the valuables became such when they were distributed. A traditional valuable was effective only if given away. This gave a necessary communitarian dimension to a valuable. One needed a community to possess valuables.

Pigs in traditional societies became effective valuables when they were entered into an exchange which bound people together. The pig is valuable because of that function p. 270 within society: it is community building. (Community means not only the living but the dead and the land as well!)

Plumes and shells are very much sought after as decorations for the singsings. But, beside the decorative and aesthetic value, they are part of the exchange which binds people together: they symbolize and express new relationships. At marriage, for instance, the plumes which probably were the pride of the father of the bride in the last singsing might become the much admired 'bilas' (ornament) of the new husband at the next

singsing. But beyond their aesthetic value they are efficacious signs of the new relationship between the two lines and it is through that function that they become truly valuables. It is that communitarian sign character which makes them into valuables.

THE QUALITIES OF VALUABLES

If one looks at the qualities of valuables one discovers that they are perishable and in limited supply. Many of the traditional valuables were perishable. One preserved them by giving them away in an exchange. To keep a pig for oneself is to lose the pig: eventually one must kill it and that's the end of it. To enter the pig into an exchange keeps that pig 'alive' and moving around, binding people together.

Food, very much part of every exchange, is perishable, but once entered into the exchange it will keep. In the big exchanges in the Highlands, the amount of food and especially of pork which entered the exchange was unbelievable. Once I witnessed the slaughter of over 1,700 pigs in less than an hour. Not a single morsel was lost in spite of the heat and lack of refrigeration. The pork enters the exchange and comes back eventually. In traditional society one could never store that much food: it would rot away!

Cash on the other hand has its value independently of whether it is shared or not. As a matter of fact if one does not give money away, money will increase! Cash lacks the inherent communitarian aspect. It can be used very individualistically. Money does not perish if one hordes it: it brings interest. Cash seems to have no limits: the banks seem to be full of it. The more one asks the more one gets: see the compensation claims. They go higher and higher: Kaindi Teachers College, Okuk Highway, Panguna are examples from our daily experience.

Traditional Valuable

Modern Cash

communitarian in nature

can be used individualistically

must be given away to have value

if not shared brings increase

perishable

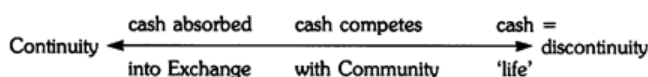
unperishable

limited in number

unlimited in supply

MODELS OF CHANGE OF THE VALUE SYSTEM

Cash can be used as a valuable and distributed to establish or strengthen relationships but can be hoarded egoistically to enrich an individual. The result is a continuum where on the one extreme one finds the traditional value system still working and on the other extreme one finds the total individualistic capitalism. Let us describe a few models. **P. 271**



CONTINUITY

The system continues without big changes

When the cash came into the bush where I was working, the notes (pounds then!) were used as part of the valuables in the various exchanges together with other western items such as axes and bush knives. One often used to barter to get what one needed but used the money in the exchange. The traditional system absorbed the new value,—cash—, reinterpreting it to fit the system which, for all practical purposes, was not changed.

Later on money became the means of access to all the goods of the West which were considered part of 'Gutpela Sindaun' and, as a consequence, people tried to get money. However, money was still used for the well-being of the whole community.

Changes within the system

Slowly, the well-being of the community was not seen primarily in the good and stable relationships, but in the possession of cash.¹¹ The ethical principle remained the well-being of the community, but money became the way to it. Ever so slowly, money took the place formerly held by the relationships. This had very serious consequences. **The money was not used anymore to establish relationships, but, on the contrary, relationships were used to get money. The money was not used for the exchange but the exchange was used to get money.** This represents a radical change.

DISCONTINUITY

The traditional system is given up and replaced by another one

The next shift came when individuals saw in cash the '*gutpela sindaun*', broke relationships, and forgot the community in order to get and keep money. Their security and meaning in life was not based on the community and its relationship, but on the steady flow of cash. Here we have reached the other extreme of the continuum.

A few examples to exemplify what we just said. The exchange at the time of marriage (bride wealth) was used not so much to establish and strengthen relationships, but to get cash as much as one could get. Bride wealth skyrocketed. Now people for the first time can really talk about Bride-price, about **buying** a wife.

The same happened with peace making (compensation). The exchange at peace making was not used to re-establish good relationships, but to get as much cash as one could get.

I witnessed a tragic example of this 'paradigm shift' in culture. In a certain locality in PNG two relatives [p. 272](#) went as labourers to a plantation. There they got involved in a game of cards. A dispute arose which deteriorated into a fight and one of the 'brothers' was killed. The immediate relatives of the one who died demanded compensation from the immediate relatives of the one who survived. The amount, as they were 'brothers', was set rather low (so they said) at only 12 000 Kina. If within a given time the money was not given they would fight to kill (not as brothers!). The community of the surviving labourer could not raise the money in the normal way so the women who did not want to see either their sons, husbands or brothers being killed, decided to prostitute themselves. Later I met the big man who had forced that situation. He had received the money and

¹¹ I am talking about a logical process and not necessarily a historical one. I witnessed behaviour which makes sense and is best explained in terms of this logical process. However, every community and every individual within that community have their own pace of change which makes them unique.

bought a Land Cruiser with it. His words pointing to the new Land Cruiser were: 'This is the fruit of my business.' The exchange for him had degenerated into an economic business.

Still, in spite of this radical shift the community remained at the centre and the cash was used for the community. The next shift came when individuals used the money for themselves and not for the community. They used the exchange for individualistic gain. Here we see the other extreme of the continuum.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLE

The example of the prostitution seems to show a possible shift in the ethical principle as well: 'what helps my community to **money** is ethically good, what deprives my community of money is ethically bad....'

The new value, cash, has contributed to the change of the composition of the community as well. It would lead too far to go into this aspect at the moment. One might be even more aware of the quotation marks around the terms 'community'. The traditional 'community' is often shrinking, as we saw in the example I just gave, but new 'communities' are developing: political ones (constituencies), economic ones (companies), social ones (wantoks). The traditional ethical principles seem to be applied to all of these new types of communities.

This partly explains the present day scene in PNG. To appropriate funds for one's community, whichever way that community is defined today, is ethically good. Several court cases for sacked high provincial officials seem to prove this principle. They did not feel guilty: 'The money was not stolen, it was used for their community.'

VALUES AND SOCIETY

One role of any society is to make sure that the values are not abused individualistically but serve the whole society. The traditional values were rather well protected and therefore society was well served by them. Even the big man had to serve the community or he would be eliminated.

Like any other value, and maybe more than many other value, money can be used egoistically either for one's 'community' or for individualistic purposes. It is the responsibility of society to make sure that cash is not abused to destroy society but is used to strengthen it. Legislation and [p. 273](#) policing is needed. However, when the new value of cash was introduced no protective system was erected against its abuse and therefore a whole village, as we just mentioned, could be forced to prostitute itself.

A few years back some Upper Simbus came to realize that they had to do something to prevent the abuse of money from destroying their society. Compensation was completely out of hand and was creating many problems in Highlands' societies. They discussed the matter in the mens' houses and then they decided to draw up some legislation which would bind all the clans in the Simbu. They called for the help of some of their young people who had studied Law at University of Papua New Guinea and drew up a set of 'laws' which were discussed by all and then approved. Unfortunately the Provincial Government was not ready to move and so the effort has not brought as yet all its fruits. Even so it remains a testimony to the insight of unsophisticated villagers who realized that society had missed out on a great responsibility and tried to remedy it.

The question one can raise is: if the Simbus were right, what can we do in supporting them and making others aware of their responsibilities in this regard? Should the church not stand up and in a prophetic voice remind society of its responsibility?

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The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and the Church

John R. Brinsley

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With great sensitivity the author shows how the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous often work effectively in a Christian atmosphere despite the fact that many of its members have never entered a church. The author suggests reasons why alcoholics often find the Church the most difficult place in which to find understanding and healing. He suggests how pastors who also suffer from dysfunctional behavioural characteristics, might learn by attending an open meeting of AA! He calls evangelicals to an awakened conscience on this widespread and crippling disease.

Editor

There is today a growing, seemingly secular ministry of healing and restoration to broken, addicted and alienated human lives which challenges my evangelical conscience.

THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Since the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1935, many groups, each with a different recovery focus, have requested permission to use the Twelve Steps.¹ Examples include ACoA (Adult Children of Alcoholics), p. 275 Alateen (Teenage Members of an Alcoholic Family), Gain-Anon (for compulsive gamblers) and NA (Narcotics Anonymous). George G. Hunter III of Asbury Seminary writes,

If many secular people are addicted and not in control of their lives, then the '12-Step Movement' is here to stay and has a growing future. Indeed, there is evidence that the 12-Step Movement is the 'underground revival of the 1990s,' that more people are now

¹ The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous: (1) We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable. (2) Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. (3) Made a decision to turn our will and lives over to the care of God as we understood Him. (4) Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. (5) Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. (6) Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. (7) Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings. (8) Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all. (9) Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. (10) Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. (11) Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out. (12) Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practise these principles in all our affairs.