



Vol 31, No 1

2015

MELANESIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

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Journal of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools



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ISSN 0256-856X Volume 31, Number 1 2015.

This journal is indexed in the ATLA Religion Database[®], a product of the American Theological Library Association, 300 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 2100, Chicago IL 60606 USA. Email: atla@atla.com; www: <http://www.atla.com>.

This journal is abstracted in *Religious and Theological Abstracts*, 121 South College Street (PO Box 215), Myerstown PA 17067 USA.
Email: admin@rtabstracts.org; <http://www.rtabstracts.org>.

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MELANESIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

Journal of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools

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

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

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

The journal is published semi-annually, normally in April and October. Articles may be submitted to the Editor at any time for consideration.

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EDITORIAL

The primary focus of this issue of the *Melanesian Journal of Theology* is on the third annual Conference and meeting of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools (MATS), held at the Christian Leaders' Training College (CLTC), at Banz, near Mt Hagen, July 7-10, 2014. The keynote speaker was Ma'afu Palu, from Sia'atoutai Theological College in Tonga. Many participants were attracted from around the country.

The first three papers in this issue of the Journal were presented at the Conference. The fourth paper is a master's thesis by Alan Sanga, a student at CLTC.

In the first paper, Scott Charlesworth gave a comprehensive Report on MATS 2014. He reviewed recommendations from MATS 2013, and their implementation at MATS 2014. His Report went on to list the various papers presented at the Conference, and commented very favourably on the fact that two women had presented papers. He believes this augurs well for the involvement of Melanesian women in theological education. He expressed the hope that MATS would continue to be a valuable forum for postgraduate students to experience an academic conference, present research papers, and meet other students and faculty from theological institutions around the country.

In the second paper, Peter Frost discussed the question of what is a just war, and how did it relate to tribal fighting. Tribal fighting within Papua New Guinea is not a new phenomenon. Often, warring parties could be closely related, speak the same language, and all claim strong allegiance to the Christian faith. He quoted Garry Trompf's observation, "Clan allegiance, once re-enlivened in all its demanding reality, can rapidly undercut all other ties, even those of the church".

Peter's paper made a thorough study of what the scriptures say about a just war. He then went on to discuss the difficulties of applying a just-war tradition in Melanesia, concluding with a call for reconciliation not retaliation.

In the third paper, Ruben Martello discussed a gospel response to payback. His paper examined the question of payback from the perspective of the life, work, and teachings of St Francis of Assisi. His paper concluded with the words of St Francis of Assisi, “They are truly peacemakers, who are able to preserve their peace of mind and heart for love of our Lord Jesus Christ, despite all that they suffer in this world”.

Allan Sanga was the author of the fourth paper, which sought to contextualise Paul’s expressions of community in Ephesians 2, for Melanesian Christians. His paper opened with, “The concept of community is like a backbone to the very existence of Melanesians”. While Melanesians are communal people, they find it daunting to conceptualise and transfer the meaning of Christian community into their Christian lives.

The basic worldview in Melanesian cultures has been influenced by animism, or primal religion, which has always provided an interpretation for the events and experiences in life. Flowing from this, fear now controls much Melanesian activity, which has led to the importance of *tambu*, or sacredness of persons, space, or objects, in an effort to control the spirits.

Allan then undertook a detailed analysis of the biblical concept of community in Eph 2. Because of a perceived lack of understanding of the biblical concept of community by Melanesian Christians, an understanding of the community of God needs to be taught. It is not about individual believers. It is more than that. It is about a community of believers that God Himself is bringing together. This calls for vibrant Christian leaders, in all denominations, to collaborate in creating the atmosphere of a Christian community

We hope that the articles in this volume will challenge you to think deeply about theological issues facing Melanesia and the South Pacific.

Robyne Hobson,
Assistant Editor.