

## EDITORIAL

The goal of the *Melanesian Journal of Theology* is to publish articles that address from a theological perspective issues facing the church in the South Pacific. We strive to publish articles authored by Melanesians or, more broadly, South Pacific islanders in an effort to create indigenous, biblically-based dialogue across the South Pacific for the benefit of readers of this journal.

The two articles in this volume focus on Vanuatu. Each of the authors comes from Vanuatu. Lionel Tom calls the island of Espiritu Santo home, while Tanna is home for Christopher Kouha. These two men have been involved with the master's program at the Christian Leaders' Training College at Banz for the past two years. They graduated in 2014. The following papers are copies of the theses written for their MTh degrees.

Lionel looks at folk religious practices and makes a thorough comparison between Christianity's biblical gift of healing, Christo-pagan healers, and the concept of traditional healing among the Akey people. The Akey of Vanuatu are Lionel's people group, so he is well qualified to research the whole question of biblical healing versus Christo-pagan and traditional healing.

In dealing with the Akey worldview, his research looks at the cultural question of the involvement of spirits in disease and steps that are usually taken to combat these spirits. Lionel also looks at the Akey syncretistic worldview, in which Akey people who attend church continue to perform healing, are performing healing, divination, and exorcism in the name of Jesus. These issues are discussed under the heading of those who are Christo-pagan.

In his comparisons between the Christo-pagan healer and the traditional healer with biblical healing, Lionel calls for a transformation of the worldview of the Akey people. There is also a need for spiritual transformation, so that the Akey people would better understand the relation between God and the spirits and follow a biblical view of sickness, health, and healing.

In his paper, Christopher seeks to conduct careful research on the Tannese primal gods, their nature, some characteristics of their relationship to humankind, and vice versa. These are then compared to the God of the Bible, for the purpose of educating and discipling Tannese Christians, as well as strengthening their faith in God.

He raises the question of traditional gods and their relationship to humans. The characteristics of traditional gods are discussed, with an explanation of how the Tannese people have tried to manipulate their traditional gods.

After discussing the relationship of traditional gods to humans, Christopher then proceeds to discuss God's relationship to humans. Discussion of God's relationship to humans covers the range of God's attributes and characteristics, including love, grace, and mercy, which all have the purpose of leading people to salvation.

In emphasising individual Christian intellectual growth, Christopher suggests that a possible course of action for Tannese Christians would be to understand their culture, understand their Bible, and, finally, to understand themselves.

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

Finally, the *Melanesian Journal of Theology* wishes to thank Doug Hanson for 16 years of editorship of the Journal. Doug took over as editor with issue 15-2 in 1999, and has worked hard to maintain the vision and aims of the Journal since then.

About six years ago, Doug shared with me his dream of making all back issues of the *Melanesian Journal of Theology* available online. This became a major project, because the text of the early issues of the Journal was typewritten, with proofs, literally, being cut and pasted together to prepare each issue.

In the process of making each issue available online, various errors, which had been noted after initial publication, were addressed, with notations by the revising editor against major corrections. Printed copies of the

*Melanesian Journal of Theology* ceased in 2012, and all issues, together with a progressive index of all issues, are now available online.

Doug has left the Christian Leaders' Training College and has taken up an appointment with a college in the United States which trains Native American Indians to minister to Native American Indians. Meanwhile, we welcome Scott Charlesworth who taught at Pacific Adventist University from 2008-2014. After a vote was taken by the current members of the MATS Executive Committee, Scott has accepted the position of Editor of the *Melanesian Journal of Theology*.

Robyne Hobson  
Assistant Editor