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Journal of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools

Published by the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools (MATS), the *Melanesian Journal of Theology* was established to stimulate theological writing in Melanesia and to provide a scholarly forum for faculty and graduate students of the MATS member schools. Article submissions in the areas of applied theology, biblical studies, missiology, and theology are also invited from anyone with an interest in Melanesia and the wider South Pacific.

Melanesian Journal of Theology is committed to the discussion of Christian faith and practice within the context of Melanesian cultures. Article submissions of up to 8,000 words (including footnotes) should be sent to the editor. All submissions are subjected to a double-blind peer-review process involving the editorial board and other international experts, designed to ensure that published articles meet appropriate scholarly standards.

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

The journal is published annually. Papers may be submitted to the editor at any time for consideration.

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ABBREVIATIONS

(This list should be used for submission to the journal and will be expanded each year as required)

ACR	*Australasian Catholic Record*
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
AFER	*African Ecclesial Review*
AJMS	*Australian Journal of Mission Studies*
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library, Manchester*
CCL	Corpus Christianorum, series Latina
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
CTR	*Criswell Theological Review*
EAJT	*East Asia Journal of Theology*
ERT	*Evangelical Review of Theology*
HJ	*Heythrop Journal*
IBMR	*International Bulletin of Missionary Research*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Int	*Interpretation*
IRM	*International Review of Missin*
IVPNTC	The IVP New Testament Commentary series
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JACT	*Journal of African Christian Thought*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JES	*Journal of Ecumenical Studies*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement series
LCNT	Lenski's Commentary on the New Testament
MJT	*Melanesian Journal of Theology*

MS	*Mission Studies*
MTh	*Modern Theology*
NAC	New American Commentary series
NAMZ	*Neue Allgemeine Missions Zeitschrift*
NIB	New Interpreter's Bible
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
PJT	*The Pacific Journal of Theology*
PL	Patrologia Latina
PNTC	The Pillar New Testament Commentary series
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SOTSMS	Society for Old Testament Studies Monograph Series
TJ	*Trinity Journal*
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TS	*Theological Studies*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplement series
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WS	*Wiener Studien*
WTJ	*Wesleyan Theological Journal*

EDITORIAL

This is the last of the volumes on which the previous editor had begun work before they were handed over to me. I take the opportunity once again to thank Tim Meadowcroft for his contribution to the journal and in particular to express my gratitude at his unfailing willingness to help me with my many enquiries and pleas for help during this transition period. I look forward to the opportunity to meeting members of the editorial board and contributors and promoting the journal when I can attend my first MATS conference.

REPORT ON MATS 2021 CONFERENCE: THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL ISSUES IN MELANESIA

Barrie Abel Jr
Sonoma Adventist College, Sonoma, Papua New Guinea

The Melanesian Association of Theological Schools (MATS) faced significant challenges to holding its annual conferences during the Covid-19 pandemic. The health crisis posed significant risks and restrictions, hence, it became impossible for participants to travel or participate in a physical gathering. This saw the cancelation of the 2020 MATS conference, which was supposed to be hosted by the Uniting Church of PNG at the Emmaus Centre in Port Moresby from 29 June to 1 July 2020.

Sonoma Adventist College gladly accepted the invitation by the MATS executive to host the 2021 MATS conference. The theme proposed for the 2020 conference was to be adopted: "Theology and Social Issues in Melanesia". Preparation for the conference was tough because of the continuous ambiguity associated with the unpredictable nature of the Covid-19 situation in the country. However, a solution was decided through the ongoing discussions between the host and MATS executives. The MATS conference 2021 was decided to be held virtually. Better still, it was going to be co-hosted! Several dates and venues were proposed, then finally locked in. The closing date for receipt of abstracts was set at the end of August 2021, and the MATS conference 2021, was held from 5 to 6 October 2021, in Sonoma Adventist College. Pacific Adventist University (PAU), and the Christian Leadership Training College (CLTC) were appointed to be co-hosts. This arrangement utilized the internet technology (Zoom), and heavily depended on the expertise of the IT staff on each venue.

The conference format was basic. As usual, there were little breaks in-between, at least 2 or 3 30-minute-sessions. The conference attendees in Sonoma were mainly the theology faculty and students, as well as a representative from Rarongo School of Theological and Mission. Attendees in PAU were mainly PAU presenters, a few postgraduate students, and faculty. There were also attendees from CTI and a representative from the Catholic bishops of PNG and Solomon Islands.

The theme allowed for a wide range of topics in the areas of Old Testament, New Testament, missions, and theology. The purpose was to encourage theologians to share theological responses to and reflect upon current social issues in Melanesia with each other and the Christian communities we represent. Theological students were given 20 minutes for presentation and 10 minutes of questions. Established theologians were invited to present 30-minute papers that were followed by 15 minutes of questions from the audience. It was unfortunate that a few papers were not presented. Still, the abstracts received are worth acknowledging in this report.

The first day began with a short welcome from the principal of Sonoma Adventist College, Dr Isako Esekia, and an opening address given by the MATS president, Dr Maxon Mani, who zoomed in with the group from CLTC. This was followed by the address from the keynote speaker, Fr Philip Gibbs, from Divine Word University (DWU). These presentations set the pace of the entire conference. Fr Gibbs' presentation pointed the participants to the archive he created, where one can find social concerns as reported in the daily news outlets since May 2012.

The abstracts received covered a wide range of issues, as well as providing pathways toward solutions and/or more research. Beginning from the Highlands region, Charles Dufour from Good Shepherd Seminary had two abstracts: "Peace: A New Paradigm in PNG" and "A Papua New Guinean Religious Perspective on Sorcery."

The papers from the co-host in CLTC came from Dr Maxon Mani and two Master of Theology students. Maxon Mani's paper discussed the Melanesian concept of *Nem* and its influence on maritalvViolence in PNG. It further proposed the biblical and theological concepts of 'service' and 'servanthood' as foundational principles for an alternative male-female power relationship.

Walokamu Vali, a Master of Theology student at CLTC, presented a paper on the on occult in secondary schools of Port Moresby, followed by a theological critique and response. Another MTh student, Kalmasing Tolish, presented a biblical response to the new spirituality in the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu, with reference to the Mewun people of South West Bay, Malekula. It was special to have a presenter from Vanuatu.

Exceptional contributions also came from the co-host in PAU. Brandon Zimmerman from CTI presented a paper on religious freedom as a

Christianity value, with some reflection on the Qu'ran, concluding with some remarks on communal benefits of inter-religious dialogue.

From the PAU team, Carol and David Tasker presented a theological and social investigation of the issue of absent fathers, especially the role of parenting in modelling children's ideas of God. Also, the team comprising of Unia Api, Joses Imona, and Clare Kokinai, presented a paper entitled "Perceptions and Experiences of Conflicts and Reconciliation among Seventh-day Adventists: Preliminary Findings of a Qualitative Study in Papua New Guinea." This presentation highlighted the value of engaging in research amicable approaches to address social issues and their solutions in twenty-first-century Melanesia, and from the context of the church in PNG.

Other fascinating presenters were Jason Siwat, who highlighted the issue of refugees and the Christian duty to care for them. Kemona Dereba, an MTh student, presented his research on bride price as a key Melanesian value of community and how it can be used as a tool for the Gospel. Newton Ekodia's paper was on pre-marital sexual practices. The paper proposed that sound biblical and theological education can effectively address this issue among the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea.

From the host, Sonoma Adventist College, Simon Davidson addressed the issue of poverty by identifying and discussing principles drawn from the creation account in Genesis, while Barrie Abel Jr and Malinda Philip's paper looked at perceptions of the Christians in the Susurunga area of New Ireland Province on their practice of using the Bible as an object to channel supernatural powers for purposes such as healing, protection, and evidently revenge.

Having the MATS conference virtually is a significant milestone in the history of MATS conferences. A significant advantage was the low financial expenses. It cost much less in terms of travel and hosting expenses. The three hosts were given a subsidy of K500 each.

Apart from the challenges of Covid-19, the technical encounters of black outs or internet outage became a hiccough a few times, but there were no significant misfortunes. The experience of 'going virtual' meant that physical presence was not available, and that posed a significant challenge in terms of presenters' engagement with their audience on the other co-host venues. Otherwise, it was an adventurous experience.

Acknowledgment to the MATS executives, especially Brandon Zimmerman, the secretary, and president Maxon Mani, for their continuous

guidance, and the various respective hosting institutions' administration. Special gratitude to the keynote speakers: Drs Carol and David Tasker, and Fr Philip Gibbs for their valuable input in the discussions. Also, the contributors who sent in and presented the various excellent papers, addressing the conference theme.

NATURAL THEOLOGY AND THE DIFFERENT BODIES OF THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL*

Part 2: History, the Resurrected Jesus Christ, and the Living Spirit

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Abstract
One key question evident through world Christianity concerns the continuity of the Christian faith with pre-Christian cultural and religious heritage. This concern is not benign: the failure of the faith to become local means that it remains foreign, that in becoming Christian we become detached from our histories and cultures. Where the previous essay addressed the proposed solution in natural theology, this essay looks at Christological and pneumatological proposals. Some argue that reference to "the Christ" or "the Spirit" as detached from the person Jesus enables a proper acknowledgment of God acting in local culture prior to western colonial expansion. But this grants too much: it grants that the history of Jesus Christ follows that of western civilisation. Though insufficient, these proposals do help a better diagnosis of the problem. The problem of continuity is a problem of history. The history of Jesus Christ is not bound with the history of the western church. The history of Jesus Christ is the history of the resurrection from the dead. This means the redemption of our own histories as basic to God's promised salvation.

Key Words
Resurrection, history, continuity, heritage, ancestors, contextualisation

A common lament evident within world Christianity concerns the erasure of cultural memories, the destabilisation of local social institutions, customs, and laws, and the anthropological poverty that follows as part of this. None of this speaks to a regret in becoming Christian. It speaks to a disconnect between being Christian and being who we are as children of this place. It speaks to the salvation of the whole person in Christ. One potential way to address this experience of fracture lies in "natural theology," in the idea of being able to demonstrate the existence of God in nature and apart from any particular act of God revealing Godself. Natural theology, because it grants

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that the different peoples of the world also have some experience of the divine, is understood to create space for some validation of the pre-Christian cultural and religious heritage.

Basic to this argument is the assertion of a universal experience that is true across times and across cultures. It is on this point that natural theology as a project of Christian apologetics falls down. The expected universal is itself culturally located, and its assertion in other cultures succeeds only in suppressing cultural difference, ignoring cultural practices and spiritualities that do not confirm to the expected universal. There exists no unmediated "nature." Nature is an interpreted reality, one built upon the particular languages, aesthetics, religions, spiritualities, accounts of history and places that constitute local culture. Reference to "nature" often serves as a canvas upon which a culture projects its own identity onto other cultures. To affirm the universals of a natural theology located within a western discourse is to affirm this western way of reading the world. Though natural theology claims to be interested in local accounts of the divine, it determines and polishes those local histories to conform to this prior "universal" expectation.

To deny the traditional project of natural theology is not to deny the evident wisdom that exists within the pre-Christian cultural and religious heritage. It is to deny that an account aimed at healing the experience of "anthropological poverty" begins on ground external to the Christian tradition. This essay does not think of local cultural heritage apart from God's acting in Jesus Christ; it considers how we might think of our past in terms of *the acting of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit*.

To begin, the essay addresses two approaches within christology and pneumatology which attempt to address this question of continuity but do so, in my opinion, by denying the agency of the acting Jesus Christ. They help, however, in reframing the concern by calling into question the binding of the history and person of Jesus Christ to European history and culture. This point to the need of "deterritorialisation," undoing the idea and practice that the Christian faith is a territorial religion, undoing the idea that to be Christian is to be western. Deterritorialisation allows us to affirm that the gospel can be and is to be properly localised in every language and culture. This is not a contested theological assertion: the gospel can and must be spoken in and through every tribe, tongue, and nation. But the significance of the position is not well drawn out: to speak in the language of every tribe, tongue, and nation is to speak though different histories. This means drawing multiple

histories into the history of Jesus Christ. The disconnect experienced between a Christian and a local identity is an issue of the embodiment of the faith; it is a question of what it means to be the body of Christ in this place. To be a body is to have a history. Talk of our cultural past, in other words, requires also talking about the nature of Christian history.

The Attempt to Validate Pre-Christian Culture by Departicularising the Christ and Universalising the Spirit

Of course, this question of the status of our pre-Christian past is an old one and so is the attempt to find solutions within christology.[1] The two positions outlined below are contemporary strategies developing amongst non-western theologians to create space for their local cultural traditions. Both of them, in my opinion, are problematic in that they create space for cultural traditions by separating the historical person Jesus Christ from a now abstracted notion of "the Christ" or "the Spirit." They appear here because they succeed in framing the problem in terms of history. The nature of this history is the key concern.

The first approach refers to "the Christ." As a transcendent entity detached from every particular time and culture, "the Christ" is able to appear within every time and culture. The benefit of this approach seems to lie in the validation of cultural histories prior to an explicit encounter with the person of Jesus. By way of example, Edmund Tang maintains that the development of a contextual Chinese theology needs first to overcome an identification between the gospel of Jesus Christ and the West. To do this,

[1] Take, for example, Justin Martyr and his idea of the *Logos spermatikos* or the "seed-bearing word." Through the use of reason, Christ the Logos is already at work in human beings, with or without an explicit faith in Jesus Christ the person. Christ, as the first-born of God, as Justin Martyr, *1 Apologia* 46 states: "… He is the logos of whom every race of men and women were partakers" English trans. Leslie William Barnard, *The First and Second Apologies* (ACW 56; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997). In *2 Apologia* 13, he further held that with this seed-bearing word, all peoples can "see realities darkly" As a consequence, all people who lived according to this word of reason "are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists ..." (Justin, *1 Apologia* 46). In this way, Justin seeks to redeem the wisdom of the Greek philosophers. For further on his position, see Eric F. Osborn, "Justin Martyr and the Logos Spermatikos," *Studia Missionalia* 42 (1993): 143–59; Wendy Elgersma Helleman, "Justin Martyr and the 'Logos': An Apologetical Strategy," *Philosophia Reformata* 67 (2002): 128–47; and Patrick Mwania, "The Justin Martyr's Concept of Logos Spermaticos and its Relevance to Theological Conversation in Africa Today," *Roczniki Teologiczne* 64 (2017): 189–204.

he suggests, one must clear the ground occupied by western history. By implication, he regards the person Jesus of Nazareth as bound to western forms of embodying the faith. Tang, drawing on Chao, relocates the "universality of Christianity" so that it is not attached to Jesus but to "the cosmic universality of God who has revealed himself in nature and in the various cultures through their sages and prophets."[2] The person Jesus intrudes upon an appreciation of the pre-Christian cultural heritage. Attention to "the Christ" turns attention to the wisdom contained within local cultures.[3]

The purpose of distinguishing Jesus from the Christ is to safeguard a cultural past, and this as a way of developing local embodiments of the gospel over-against a western form of embodiment associated with the person Jesus. There is an implied connection between the emphasis on the person Jesus Christ, the western theological tradition, and the processes of colonisation. But a couple of concerns attach to this position. First, this seems to inhibit the possibility that local wisdom might contribute to the wider Christian knowledge, not of a creator God, but that of the living Jesus Christ. Second, it seems to grant that the western church properly owns the embodied form of Jesus. Third, insofar as this is true, it retains the mode of the gospel's transmission championed by the West by locating the truth of

[2] Edmond Tang, "The Cosmic Christ: The Search for a Chinese Theology," *Studies in World Christianity* 1 (1995): 131–42, at 134. For further examples, see Philip J. Hughes, "The Use of Actual Beliefs in Contextualizing Theology," *EAJT* 2/2 (1984): 26–42; William Thompson-Uberuaga, "Cosmic Christ in a Transcultural Perspective," *Saint Luke's Journal of Theology* 21 (1977): 179–225.

[3] One sees the same sort of division of Jesus and Christ in the account of developing a Pacific theology in Horst Rzepkowski, "Stepping Stones to a Pacific Theology: A Report," *MS* 9 (1992): 40–61, at 46: "Several positive elements in the different island cultures such as the practice of hospitality, and corporate responsibility for one another, the principle of sharing and caring, the tradition of resolving conflict situations through processes of reconciliation have suggested the possibility of discerning the presence of Christ even before the missionaries had brought the Gospel. The missionaries did not bring Christ to the Pacific. They came to bear witness to Christ and brought the knowledge of Christ as revealed in Jesus of Nazareth." Two concerns may be suggested with this position. First, there appears little need for Jesus in this scenario. If human practices were able to achieve the gospel in practical living terms without reference to the acting of God in Jesus Christ, what does Jesus bring? Does his significance simply lie in naming traditional practices as belonging to life in Christ? Second and related, by virtue of this acting in creation, the Christ is the God of power. This opens the possibility that Christ is an unrevealed God behind the person Jesus, or even a God revealed in a number of "Jesuses" (Buddha, Gandhi, Mohammad).

the gospel in an essentialised and static culture. In other words, the contemporary embodiment of the gospel requires a certain type of validation of pre-Christian culture, one that rivals the assumed identity of western culture and the person Jesus of Nazareth.

A second approach inserts some distance between the Spirit and the person Jesus Christ. The Spirit becomes a universal present in creation, which morphs to mean present in cultures. For example, the 2013 World Council of Churches' mission statement *Together Towards Life* is intentional in developing a pneumatological approach and this in direct contrast to a Christological one. According to Jooseop Keum, former director of the CWME and drafter of the statement, "a Christocentric approach to mission" is "old fashioned."[4] The basis of this judgement is unclear from the statement, but perhaps a clue appears in §16 where a strong link between the Spirit and Jesus Christ produces a "missiology focused on sending out and going forth."[5] While no overt connection is made between this and colonial missions, later in the context of affirming the Spirit as the Spirit of Wisdom, *Together Towards Life* laments the way in which "mission activity linked with colonization has often denigrated cultures and failed to recognize the wisdom of local people."[6] The Spirit, by contrast, "inspires human cultures and creativity, so it is part of our mission to acknowledge, respect, and cooperate with life-giving wisdoms in every culture and context."[7] In contrast to this earlier period, the task today is to "lift up testimonies of peoples whose traditions have been scorned and mocked by theologians and scientists, yet whose wisdom offers us the vital and sometimes new orientation that can connect us again with the life of the Spirit in creation, which helps us to consider the ways in which God is revealed in creation."[8] The Spirit is contrasted with Jesus, on the one hand, and the Spirit brings out local wisdom in a way not true in previous eras, on the other.

Together Towards Life seeks to do justice to the experience of world Christianity, and to address questions such as social marginality, unjust

[4] Jooseop Keum, "Together Towards Life: An Introduction to the New WCC Mission Statement," *Svensk missionstidskrift* 101 (2013): 291–300, at 292.
[5] *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, 2013), §16.
[6] *Together Towards Life*, §27.
[7] *Together Towards Life*, §27.
[8] *Together Towards Life,* §27.

economic systems, religious and cultural pluralism, and ecology.[9] It accomplishes this, not by denying christology,[10] but by demanding a certain distance from Jesus Christ as the active agent through an implied nexus of christology, missionary method, and colonisation. The Spirit is portrayed as more interested in local wisdom and spirituality, due to a connection with creation.[11] Again, the gain is the validation of cultural heritage, but we should also consider the potential flow on consequences.

Indian theologian Michael Amaladoss provides a good summary of the logic to this point. In discussing how Christianity sought to relate to Indian tradition, Amaladoss notes the attempt to find "an adequate vocabulary to translate Christian philosophy and theology into a language intelligible to our compatriots."[12] This occurred via an acknowledgment of the value of Indian cultural traditions, while presenting Christianity as the fulfilment of this search for truth:

> We recognized Indian religions, as belonging to a cosmic covenant that preceded the Mosaic and Christian covenants. We searched for the "stepping stones" and the "seeds of the Word". The focus was really on points of encounter that could serve as springboards for the proclamation of the truth.[13]

All this should, by now, be familiar. But in Amaladoss' opinion it was insufficient when seeking an inculturated theology. Inculturation required recognising within Indian religious life "God-given riches, which are not merely imperfect and preparatory, but good and multiform, which we need to integrate into our Christian life and reflection."[14]

The reason Amaladoss gives for this lies precisely in the problem of deracination. A remedy to the conscious alienation within Christians from their cultural roots can only be found in a rediscovery of these roots, leading to a "new personal cultural integration."[15] This includes other religions

[9] *Together Towards Life,* §§5–9.
[10] See, for example, *Together Towards Life,* §27: "a pneumatological focus on Christian mission recognizes that mission is essentially christologically based and relates the work of the Holy Spirit to the salvation through Jesus Christ."
[11] *Together Towards Life*, §22.
[12] Michael Amaladoss, "Cross-inculturation of Indian and African Christianity," *AFER* 32, no. 3 (1990): 157–6, at 157.
[13] Amaladoss, "Cross-inculturation," 157.
[14] Amaladoss, "Cross-inculturation," 157.
[15] Amaladoss, "Cross-inculturation," 159.

because "[t]hey manifest some aspects of our religious patrimony: God's self revelation and offer of salvation to our forefathers. That patrimony is part of our historical being and experience."[16] With this link between cultural value, identity, and religious truth, Amaladoss notes how other religions "contain some elements of God's plan of salvation for the world."[17] Accepting this premiss, leads Amaladoss to ask a number of rhetorical questions: "How do we understand Christ as the unique and universal mediator of salvation? Can there be many incarnations? Can we distinguish between the cosmic and the historical Christ? Can we distinguish between Christocentrism and Theocentrism, or between the Holy Spirit and Jesus?"[18] His own answer is that orthodox Christianity has to change; that, in order to make space for our cultural heritage and so to bring about mature Christians, it is necessary to detach Jesus from the Christ, or Jesus from the Spirit.

But there is a related problem: that of supersessionism. This depicts Christianity as a replacement of the covenant given to Israel. In essence, it colonises the history of Israel by absorbing that history into the Christian faith and has stimulated Christian violence against the Jewish people through history. One can see in the story of Abraham a learning from local indigenous cultures, which is an important resource for informing how we might develop a theology of our pre-Christian cultural traditions.[19] But simply to regard our local indigenous histories as "Old Testaments" threatens supersessionism in two ways. First, it disregards the particular history of God with Israel, including the election of Israel. This history speaks not simply to God's acting in relation to a people like any other people. It speaks to how God acts (and so who God is) in calling a particular people and how that particular call relates to the whole, the universal. Nor is this an abstract particular to universal, it speaks to how God in Jesus Christ acts, and to so how through the histories of this particular person all histories are drawn into the history of God's acting. Second, in relation to local pre-Christian cultures and traditions, supersession maintains that Christianity is a replacement for those traditions, that the gospel overtakes them and they become simply pre-history. Instead of valuing our pre-Christian traditions, this approach

[16] Amaladoss, "Cross-inculturation," 159.
[17] Amaladoss, "Cross-inculturation," 162.
[18] Amaladoss, "Cross-inculturation," 162.
[19] See R. W. L. Moberly, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament: Patriarchal Narratives and Mosaic Yahwism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1982).

accomplishes the opposite: it devalues those histories in relation to Christianity.

TIME, HISTORY, AND EMBODIMENT

Though a marked distinction of the Christ or the Spirit from the person Jesus of Nazareth creates space for the re-entry of a cultural past and its heritage, it runs into the problem of setting limits on Jesus of Nazareth and the possibility of his acting today. Or, in these accounts reference to Jesus is understood as limiting a proper valuation of pre-Christian cultural traditions. This is a revealing assumption basic to both positions: what is the basis of this identification between the person Jesus and the western form of embodying the faith? Amaladoss sets the issue as one where "the trend in Europe and America seems to focus upon a Christology based on the historical Jesus Christ, we in Asia underline … the cosmic Christ."[20] Though not expressly mentioned, this very emphasis on the person Jesus of Nazareth is somehow seen to close cultural space—to the discredit of pre-Christian cultural traditions, and so to encourage the processes of colonisation. In response to this assumption, the key issue becomes one of liberating the history of Jesus from this particular western embodiment.

One does not need to become western in order to become Christian. The western embodiment of the faith is not "the final standard of Christian identity and practice."[21] While this may seem an obvious statement, the experience is often quite different. The discussion to this point has focused on the hollowing out of local cultures in favour of western political, economic, and religious practices. As to why the West established itself as the one embodied form of the gospel, this owes much to the development of "Christendom." Christendom in binding the faith to European identity and history established Christianity as a territorial religion.[22] This arrangement of the Christian faith and European culture lasted until the modern missionary movement. Dale Irvin summarising Lamin Sanneh, states that "Christian missions deterritorialized the Christian faith by taking the religion

[20] Amaladoss, "Cross-inculturation," 165.

[21] For the general argument found in this paragraph, see Dale T. Irvin, "Ecumenical Dislodgings," *MS* 22 (2005): 187–205, at 199.

[22] See Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200–1000* (The Making of Europe; Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

abroad, and cutting it free from Western culture and territory."[23] Deterritorialisation is the destruction of the identity between the Christian faith and western culture. Christianity is not a western religion, but properly a religion local to Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Oceania.

While this deterritorialisation amounts to a more faithful realignment of the Christian tradition, it, nonetheless, creates a type of problem. A territorial faith includes not simply a story about God in Jesus Christ reconciling the world to Godself, but a particular form of the faith, a vision of its embodiment. In undoing this territorial link, and so undoing the vision of the faith's embodiment, a fear emerges that the faith lacks form. The key question for Irvin is how Christianity might be seen as "a non-territorial religion which is not at the same time a non-material or a non-embodied form."[24] Irvin's observation offers us a significant clue moving forward because to be embodied is to be historical, and to be historical is to be contextual. To cite Robert McAfee Brown, "[t]here is no way in which a historical faith (one that has received embodiment in specific times and places) could be expressed other than through the cultural norms and patterns in which it is located. If it did not do so, it would fail to communicate … it would not be historical."[25] This concern with history points to an incomplete and ongoing part of the deterritorialisation process.

As Irvin elsewhere observes, while the diversity of the Christian communion is often celebrated, the same is not said of Christian history. "The history of Christianity remains captive to a grand narrative that situates Christianity during its first two millennia almost exclusively within a 'European' or 'western' historical context."[26] A picture develops whereby the faith follows a trajectory that begins in Jerusalem before moving to Rome, and then to Germany and England, and then to America, before spreading via the western missionary movement to become a world religion. "It is the master narrative that renders some churches 'younger' and makes them appear to have, instead of an immediate relationship to the sources of Christian faith, a relationship mediated by the missionary activity of modern

[23] Irvin, "Ecumenical Dislodgings," 198.
[24] Irvin, "Ecumenical Dislodgings," 199.
[25] Robert McAfee Brown, "The Rootedness of All Theology: Context Affects Content," *Christianity and Crisis* 3 (1977): 170–74, at 170.
[26] Dale T. Irvin, "From One Story to Many: An Ecumenical Reappraisal of Church History," *JES* 28 (1991): 537–54, at 537.

Western European churches."[27] One image for thinking of this approach to Christian history is as a great tree: its roots lie in the story of Jesus and the early church, its trunk as the growth of the church through European history, and the branches as the final blossoming into a diverse world communion. Whatever might be said of the branches, leaves, and blossoms, they all have to be nourished by the trunk because the trunk is the only link to the roots. With this image, in other words, whatever might be said of Christianity's cultural diversity it is always referred back to this western history with its direct and continuous connection to the life of Jesus. Or, to cite Irvin, "The dominant Western theological traditions have identified the religiocultural history of Europe as the continuation of biblical history."[28] Again, this time from Peter Brown, the "modern insistence on the 'Christian roots of Europe' has led to a subtle and dangerous slippage. Only too often, accounts of the Christianization of western Europe are written not as if Europe had 'Christian roots', but rather as if Christianity itself had only European roots'."[29] Because Jesus of Nazareth is subsumed into this history and its lineal course through western culture, Jesus is identified with the western form of embodying the gospel. The seeming need to separate Jesus from the Christ and the Spirit, in other words, is the result of this reading of Christian history.

In this schema, non-western churches are denied "the possibility of a history 'of their own'," and this "confines non-European contextual theologies to reshaping what is a European cultural religion."[30] Any diversity within the faith appears to "only be additions to or modifications of what is essentially a European or Western religious meta-narrative."[31] At this point, the very notion of a contextual theology becomes unhelpful, because it is reduced to an adjectival qualification, a filtering of a continuous and so a-historical and a-contextual tradition through local colour and metaphor. This approach, for Andrew Walls, is grounded in the "hidden assumption … that Christianity is essentially a religion of the West, and that the new theological task is to celebrate the achievements, insights and variant formulations of other cultures."[32] However, this notion of a lineal and continual path of the

[27] Irvin, "From One Story to Many," 541.
[28] Irvin, "From One Story to Many," 548.
[29] Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, xvii.
[30] Irvin, "From One Story to Many," 538.
[31] Irvin, "From One Story to Many," 538.
[32] Andrew F. Walls, "Of Ivory Towers and Ashrams: Some Reflections on Theological

gospel aligned to the history of Europe is not a history at all. It is a "theology of history" and one which privileges the West and those outside the West "from reflecting upon the direct relationship of non-European histories to God's redemption."[33]

In response to this approach to Christian history, Irvin observes how history and culture, while they can be described differently, are not separable. "[C]ulture is the manifestation of history, and history is the manifestation of culture."[34] Because of this intimate relationship, even though ecumenical theology might admit and reject the link to colonisation, this history reterritorialises the faith, it recreates a necessary link between the faith and the historical course of European culture and so those contingent forms of the faith. "Claims regarding the cultural diversity of the Christian faith and theology are contradicted by a narrative that limits church history to the European cultural context."[35] The ongoing project of the faith's deterritorialisation, the incorporation of a diversity of cultural forms, equally requires historical diversity.[36]

The local embodiment of the faith means that local history belongs to the faith. Conversion means the conversion of the pre-Christian past. To cite Walls, "the past cannot be suppressed, nor can it be left untouched by Christ. The past, with its identity shaping cultural traditions, has to be converted, turned toward Christ."[37] Redemption includes this redemption of history; conversion means cultural continuity. Salvation is itself an historical process.

The Resurrection of the Dead—The Redemption of Our Histories

This redemption of our histories in Christ draws our attention to a theology of time. Kosuke Koyama, for example, affirms as central to the faith the "purposefulness of history." History has meaning and a telos, a goal. He rejects, however, limiting this notion of purpose to a "linear history."[38]

Scholarship in Africa," *JACT* 3 (2000): 1–5, at 3.

[33] Irvin, "From One Story to Many," 548.

[34] Irvin, "From One Story to Many," 538.

[35] Irvin, "From One Story to Many," 539.

[36] Irvin, "From One Story to Many," 539.

[37] Andrew F. Walls, "The Rise of Global Theologies," in *Global Theology in Evangelical Perspective: Exploring the Contextual Nature of Theology and Mission* (ed. Jeffrey P. Greenman and Gene L. Green; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 19–34, at 26.

[38] Kosuke Koyama, "New World—New Creation: Mission in Power and Faith," *MS* 10

Linear history, in Koyama's opinion, underlies imperialism and "notions of manifest destiny." This is a singular history, one which incorporates everything into itself, driven by a triumphalism which drives empire and human pride. For him, "the image of straight line, the image of efficiency, and that of the Biblical *hesed*, steadfast love, cannot go together."[39] Based on the range of different experiences of time present in different cultures, Koyama argues that "[a]ll images, be it a straight line or circle or triangle or pendulum or zigzag or a point should be freely used to express the *shekhinah* of God in history."[40] Arguing along a similar line regarding a linear account of time, but in sterner terms, Johann Baptist Metz, rejects the claim that "the modern world, with its scientific-technological civilization" is "simply a rational universe." This is a universal grounded in the myth of "evolution," of development, of progress and civilisation. And underlying its claim to "rationality is the fiction of time as an empty, surprise-free continuum, in which everything and everyone is grace-lessly encompassed."[41] This account of time, I suggest, underlies the assumption of a dim knowledge of God which evolves to its fulfilment in its encounter with Christ, the approach basic to natural theology.

However, as Metz continues, with this account of time "[n]othing from the past can be saved from its graceless, indifferent continuity … God—the God of the living and of the dead, the God for whom even the past and the dead are not left to rest in peace—is absolutely unthinkable within this logic."[42] Here we reach the main point: the possibility of the redemption of our histories, the possibility of diverse Christian histories, lies with the God who raised Jesus from the dead. This is not a God who closes history, that limits our histories to the idea of pre- and post-, which gracelessly subjects creation to an empty continuum. This God overcomes death. The dead are those without a future and so without the possibility of a history. Their history is ended.

The resurrected Jesus Christ is the living God. The living God is a God who acts in history in creating, reconciling and redeeming. This God acts

(1993): 59–77, at 73.

[39] Koyama, "New World—New Creation," 73.

[40] Koyama, "New World—New Creation," 73.

[41] Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society* (trans. J. Matthew Ashley; New York: Herder & Herder, 2007), 159.

[42] Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 160.

now in our present, in our future—and in our past. God can act in this way because God in Godself is a history. This assertion, of course, takes us to the heart of trinitarian ontology, the being of God as Father, Son, and Spirit.[43] The redemption of history is possible only because of who God is. We do not secure our own histories by looking beyond this God to some ground in creation. The resurrection of the dead does not belong to nature; it is only ever an act of God. In raising the dead, in this acting of the living God, God brings the past into God's own presence. It is as a stone being thrown into a pool with the waves travelling in all directions: into the present and into the future, but also into the past. Or, the truth of our histories is only seen in the light of the promises of God concerning the redemption of the whole of creation in God. In this future which is true in the present we see the ongoing acting of God in our past.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is exactly where contextualisation begins. We, as people of this God, are called to live in that eschatological moment, in the promise of the resurrection.[44] It was in the resurrection that the ministry of Jesus Christ expanded to include all peoples. For the writer of Ephesians, the mystery of Jesus Christ is that "the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Eph 3:6). In terms of the prior dichotomy of the person Jesus from the cosmic Christ: first, it is necessary to reject the history and so embodied form which links the story of Jesus of Nazareth to a narrative of European history. The mystery of the living Son of God, Jesus Christ, is that the Gentiles belong also to the people of God.[45] Second, the

[43] For more on this, see John G. Flett, *The Witness of God: The Trinity,* Missio Dei, *Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 208–11.

[44] For more on this, see John G. Flett, "The Resurrection from the Dead as the Declaration of God's Eternal Being and the Christian Community's Eschatological Reality," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 31 (2011): 7–26.

[45] For this reason, locating the power of "translation" in the incarnation understood now as an historical pattern, as Andrew Walls, "The Translation Principle in Christian History," in *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 27, does problematically when he writes that this "first divine act of translation into humanity…gives rise to a constant succession of new translations." It is too static and tied to cultural progress and so development narratives. For Walls, the incarnation does not appear unique. Rather, the incarnation is an ongoing work which translates divinity into humanity. In translation (27), "the sense and meaning of God was transferred, was effected under very culture-specific conditions." Walls, "The Translation Principle in

cosmic Christ is nothing other than the resurrected Jesus. He is the person Jesus of Nazareth, born of Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was murdered, buried, and rose on the third day. It is not possible to separate the two. Anything that can be said of the cosmic Christ must be said of Jesus of Nazareth.

As the risen cosmic Jesus Christ, he is free to speak where, when, and how he wills. This changes the image of Christian history. No longer do we speak of a tree, but of a rhizome. A rhizome is a plant with roots underground that spread in every direction until a new shoot comes out of the ground and flowers on the surface. The roots are in the earth, nourished by the soil—every Christian body is immediately connected to Jesus Christ. The roots are interconnected and pass nutrients between each other—every Christian body feeds each other body. The flowers all belong to the root, and no one flower or root system is more important or more true than the other. Christian history is not lineal and singular and reducible to the course of a single cultural centre. It is a series of cross-cultural encounters, carried by strangers and locals, by refugees and travellers, which result in the local appropriation of the gospel. The faith is "polycentric," made up of many histories all of which contribute to the full stature of Christ. This applies also to Europe. Indeed, according to Brown, it was the "pre-Christian world, which pushed deep roots into the past and into the hearts of Christian believers, provided the populations of what we now call Europe with an invaluable 'structural reserve' … A Europe which grew only from 'Christian roots' would have been a sadly anemic Europe."[46] In other words, it is not simply that Christianity can appear in different soils, but that these soils themselves nurture the faith, contributing to its own life and well-being.

Christian History," While several comments might be made, this abstracts christology into an historical pattern and away from the acting of a living Jesus himself. Jesus becomes the "sense and meaning of God." Walls' intent is clear: he seeks a ground for Christian histories outside the Eurocentric accounts of the faith's continuity. However, with incarnation now an abstracted principle, it falls into the same problem of prioritising a western Christian tradition as having "had" the gospel for longer. Or, to cite Karl Barth, *Learning Jesus Christ through the Heidelberg Catechism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 19: "Now the good news of Jesus Christ is not a dead commodity handed over to us so that we can 'have' it. Beware of this capitalistic conception of Christianity in any form, old or new!"

[46] Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, xvii.

THE SPIRIT, THE LORD OF HISTORY

Pentecost is the foretaste of this promise of God. It fulfilled the words of the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28–32), and God's Spirit was poured out on all flesh. This is a new event in the history of God's relationship with humankind and consequent on what Jesus accomplished on the cross, the entrance into history of the new creation. The evidence of this "pouring out on all flesh" is that all present were able to hear and speak the word of God in their own language (Acts 2:1–12). Peter's fundamental lesson in the encounter with Cornelius the centurion, a servant of the hated empire, was that God had made Cornelius clean. "God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to God" (Acts 10:34–36).

Each language contains a history of thinking about the divine, of religious traditions and spiritualities. We do not take on another language or culture; we hear and speak of and to God through this cultural and spiritual heritage. Nor is language limited to words written and spoken. Ossie Fountain is quite correct: "God will speak to Melanesians in Melanesian ways. He speaks to us in our own cultural outlook."[47] God speaks in ways people can hear and recognise. This means that God speaks in dreams and visions, song and dance, testimony and story, Word and Spirit.[48] God called us—God calls us as we are—and no people exist without a history. God recognises our histories and saves also those histories. This includes the salvation of our ancestors because we are not who we are without our ancestors.[49] I am not saved without my ancestors because to ignore my ancestors is to ignore who I am. Kwame Bediako, for example, talks about the pre-Christian religious

[47] Ossie Fountain, "How God Speaks to Our Church and Nation Today," *MJT* 1 (1985): 126–37, at 130.

[48] See John D'Arcy May, "Editorial: Towards a Theology of Religious Experience for Melanesia," *MJT* 2 (1986): 5–8. For a summary article on dreams, see John M. Hitchen, "Dreams in Traditional Thought and in the Encounter with Christianity in Melanesia," *MJT* 27 (2011): 5–53.

[49] The difficult passage of 1 Cor 15:29 and the baptism for the dead might be read in these terms. According to Nicholas H. Taylor, "Baptism for the Dead (1 Cor 15:29)?" *Neotestamentica* 36 (2002): 111–20, at 116–17: "[t]he formation of communities of converts implies that members would have had deceased relatives who had not heard the Gospel proclaimed, and had not been initiated into the Church or into salvation as conceived in Christian terms. Kinship loyalties would have conflicted with the exclusive claims of the Church to salvation through Christ, and generated a dissonance which could potentially be resolved through contriving a vicarious and posthumous initiation ritual."

traditions as being part of "an 'ontological' past, which, together with the profession of the Christian faith, gives account of one and the same entity—namely, the history of the religious consciousness of the African Christian."[50] In naming it an "ontological past," the *past of our being*, Bediako identifies this past as properly part of the present existence of an African. The past is not forgotten, not abandoned, not consigned to darkness, but present in who we are in Christ. This is not to return to the fulfilment theory, the evolutionary idea that you must become more than you are (must become civilised) to become and be Christian. This past shapes and informs the human response to God's work. It is fundamental to the local embodiment of the gospel. Our cultural and religious past contributes to the fullness of Christ because it contributes to who we are in Christ.

The promise and gift of God is healing and wholeness, Shalom. God is not a foreign God, God does not call us only to disregard the deepest questions of our cultures, of our families, of who we are as part of God's creation. It is a darkest lie to maintain in word or deed that to be truly Christian means not to be truly Melanesian. God is love. In God there is no darkness. God's shalom includes the redemption of history, the creation of an integral Christian identity. The language of baptism often appears at this point. It is appropriate because to be baptised is to go through the waters of death and to be raised to new life. In like manner, it is necessary for our histories and cultures to die and be reborn.[51] This is the conversion of history and it sits between a particular span. On the one hand, John Mbiti observes how a "good number of Christian rites were originally borrowed from either Hebrew or pagan sources."[52] By extension, he considers it possible for Christians to "baptise" many traditional African rites by giving them "a Christian content and blessing."[53] On the other hand, Aloysius Pieris warns against the instrumentalisation of local cultures, a way of extracting certain aspects of the local culture in a way that turns that culture against itself. "This species of theological vandalism has been euphemistically expressed by a

[50] Kwame Bediako, "The Roots of African Theology," *IBMR* 13 (1989): 58–62, at 59.
[51] For more on this, see Aylward Shorter, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 83–84.
[52] John S. Mbiti, "The Ways and Means of Communicating the Gospel," in *Christianity in Tropical Africa: Studies Presented and Discussed at the Seventh International African Seminar, University of Ghana, April 1965* (ed. Christian G. Baëta; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 329–47, at 344.
[53] Mbiti, "The Ways and Means of Communicating the Gospel," 344.

new Christian use of the word 'baptism' … In its scriptural usage, baptism expressed the most self-effacing act of Christ … Now the word has come to mean Christian triumphalism, which turns everything it touches to its own advantage, with no reverence for the wholeness of the religious experience of others."[54] The spectre of using local cultural traditions to reinforce a colonial Christianity is always present.

As such, this notion of baptism leads not to an uncritical affirmation of this past. The gospel is only ever embodied because it is the history of God with God's creation. But, just as creation is subordinate to the creator, so culture is subordinate to the gospel: culture holds no sacral power. Culture and the religious heritage become, in the words of Sanneh, "our possession instead of our determiner."[55] This liberation from our histories occurs, first, because those histories are grafted into the history of Israel (Rom 11:17–24). For Andrew Walls, adoption into Israel ensures a form of critical historical dislocation. It "becomes a 'universalizing' factor, bringing Christians of all cultures and ages together through a common inheritance, lest any of us make the Christian faith such a place to feel at home that no one else can live there; and bringing into everyone's society some sort of outside reference."[56] Walls even suggests that "the test between indigenization and syncretism is the capacity to incorporate the history of Israel and God's people and to treat it as one's own."[57] Being ingrafted into the history of Israel, in other words, both relativizes and affirms our cultures.

The liberation from our histories occurs, second, because the redemption of our past is a result of the in-breaking reign of God, a result of the presence of the new creation. Our identity in Christ is a missionary identity. The church is a reconciled community only insofar as it is a reconciling community. There is no static Christian identity because it consists of always being hospitable to those who pretend to be enemies of God. Identity in the Spirit is the following of Jesus Christ into the world and so the encounter of ever new histories in him. Christian identity cannot be possessed, it is an

[54] Aloysius Pieris, *Towards an Asian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 85.
[55] Lamin O. Sanneh, "The Gospel, Language and Culture: The Theological Method in Cultural Analysis," *IRM* 84 (1995): 47–64, at 54.
[56] Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 9.
[57] Andrew F. Walls, "Africa and Christian Identity," *Mission Focus* 6 (1978): 11–13, at 13.

identity directed to the reconciliation of the world. It means both a valuing of contexts as the location of God's acting and our own embodiment, and a moving beyond our own contexts in the mutuality of becoming the people of God. This "moving beyond," however, is not out of context, for this is again to render context an abstraction and to become susceptible to confusing the faith with our particular embodiment of it. "Moving beyond" is, instead, the movement in which contextualisation occurs, the movement in which the people of God become local, responding both to the word of God and to the need of the world.

Joy in the Spirit: The Point of Contact of the Gospel

Much constructive theological work needs to be done—local work using local images and local histories.[58] Yet, we know this: the Spirit calls, the Spirit teaches, and the Spirit is known by its fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22–23). Such is the intelligibility of the gospel, a community living according to the truth of the new creation. It is a community that is local but is also somehow "unnatural," not living according to those natural rules of hate, violence, anger, malice, jealousy, and deception. It is an embodied faith structured by the surprise of the discovery of a pearl of great price, according to the joy that we ever discover anew. Such joy resides not in the loss of who we are, but in the knowledge that God first loved us and that God loves us as we are (1 John 4:19). God saves us. God saves all of us. God saves our histories because we are not who we are without our histories, without our ancestors. The point of contact between local culture and the Christian gospel lies not in some static past, a past destined to join a singular history which has European culture at its centre. The point of contact lies in the joy of the Spirit, in the abundance of the kingdom, in the redemption of our histories, in exposing all darkness to light, in the forgiveness that causes us to forgive, in the great love of God, in the eschatological promise of the new creation.

[58] As a suggestive example, see Steve Taylor, "Cultural Hybridity in Conversion: An Examination of Hapkas Christology as Resistance and Innovation in Drusilla Modjeska's *The Mountain*," *MS* 36 (2019): 416–41.

CATHOLIC AND SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST DIALOGUE IN MELANESIA: AN EXERCISE IN PASTORAL AND CONTEXTUAL PRAXIS THEOLOGY

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Abstract
The relationship between the Catholic church and the Seventh Day Adventist church in Papua New Guinea has been characterised by conflict and negative characterizations from both churches. This can be viewed as an "intractable" conflict. Both churches have the same position on ecumenical dialogue, that it can never mean compromise on fundamental aspects of biblical truth. The paper explores: the official or quasi-official stance towards ecumenism of each church, drawing on official or quasi-official statements, and the history of dialogue in Papua New Guinea. It will indicate areas of agreement and difference and point to a way forward.

Key Words
Catholic church, Seventh-day Adventist church, ecumenism, dialogue

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between the Catholic and Seventh-day Adventist churches in Papua New Guinea has been characterised historically by conflict and negative characterisations from both churches. The Catholic church has sometimes questioned the ecclesiological status of the Adventist church and the Adventist church has challenged the legitimacy of the Catholic church, especially the institution of the papacy and its place in salvation history, as well as other key Catholic practices. At times these and other doctrinal differences, such as the day of worship, dietary laws, and eschatology, based on highly divergent interpretations of key scriptural passages, have led to public and private disputes between the adherents of both denominations.

I do not intend to pursue these doctrinal issues, though I would love to engage in genuine dialogue about them rather than just debate. I take it as a given that of all the Christian denominations working in Papua New Guinea

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the doctrinal and historical divisions that divide the Catholic church from the Seventh-day Adventist church are the greatest.

Both denominations, however, hold to substantially the same Christian Bible, which should form the basis of respectful even harmonious relationships among those who profess that Jesus Christ is Lord. They are often close neighbours territorially and often have adherents from the same kinship group, district, or electorate. They have to work together in the provision of educational and health services in Papua New Guinea. In this article I explore the possibilities and limitations involved in overcoming a seemingly intractable conflict for the benefit of the Christian mission and the delivery of services under the gospel mandate.

I am aware that this is a sensitive topic, so I want to be careful to treat it sensitively and respectfully. I had great hopes to work on this paper with an Adventist colleague, but it seems that was not possible. As I worked on it myself, I came to a clearer understanding as to why such collaboration is probably not possible. However, I did share some of these thoughts with former Adventists and a local Adventist pastor (Malachi Yani of Mount Hagen) to make sure that I had the perspective right. I hope that this admittedly rather one-sided perspective may generate discussion to make it a little more balanced.

My History in Adventist Dialogue

Let me share my own history of Adventist dialogue.

Growing up in Australia, I had no contact with Adventists. If I knew anything about them, they would be associated with Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons. I did come to know that the Adventist hospital in Sydney served vegetarian food that looked like meat!

When I came to Papua New Guinea as a student in 1973, I was based in Sari, Enga province. I would often walk with people to the market on Saturdays. This took us past a large Adventist congregation in Tetemanda. We were always cautious going past them so as not to upset anyone. When I shared this story at the MATS conference, an Adventist pastor from Tetemanda told me that he felt the same way walking past the Catholic church on Sunday! At this time, I would have become aware of some key Adventist doctrines and how they differed dramatically from Catholic ones.

On completing my studies, I was ordained and returned to be parish priest of Kompiam in Enga Province. The main station where I lived was adjacent

to an Adventist community and church. Occasionally the Catholic people would complain about anti-Catholic teaching taking place there. On one occasion the issue was some rather graphic posters. I spoke to the pastor about this. I don't know what he did about it, but people were happy enough that I had conveyed our concerns. Then the Aussie Adventist pastor took to leaving his vehicle with us and dropping in for coffee on his way out. He assured me that Catholics and even popes could be saved. I began reading Adventist (and also Baptist, my other neighbours) material. Looking for such material I had an interesting experience in the Adventist bookshop in Sydney where my request was met with some consternation. At this time, I read Ellen White's *Desire of Ages* and *The Great Controversy* and some other material on health issues. This is difficult reading for a Catholic. I also read the Adventist author, Samuele Bacchiocci's thesis on the Sabbath from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.[1] I felt rather proud of this level of openness. The image of the Catholic church, especially in *The Great Controversy* was almost unrecognisable to me, but an eye opener to see myself as at least some others see me. It gave me a much better understanding of the strong grassroots reaction to any appearance of dialogue with the Catholic church and how it could be seen as a fundamental betrayal of the prophetic nature of Adventism. It could be seen as playing into the hands of a church perceived as wanting nothing less than total domination through the inevitable convergence of Catholicism and Protestantism against the faithful remnant of Sabbath keepers. During my time at Kompiam I also "lost" to Adventism John Pundari, currently MP for Kompiam-Ambum, whom I had known since he was a child. He would come asking questions and I would try to answer them as best I could. Then one time he came and I realised that he was no longer asking questions to find out the truth. He was asking questions to probe the weaknesses in my argument. He had gone. Although our paths have diverged in many ways since then we occasionally meet and recall those times.

I digress to comment also on my journey in dialogue with the Baptists. I became friends with the Baptist pastor and his family. The people commented: before we were united in our common religion; then the different denominations came and the pastor and the priest were arguing; and

[1] Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Biblical Perspectives 1; Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977).

eventually we also were arguing. Now the pastor and the priest are friends, but we are still arguing. It's about time that we caught up with them and got back to where we were before!

In 1997 I went to Divine Word University, a Catholic university open to all. Some of my students were Adventist. They came to DWU with some trepidation due to what some of their pastors had told them, but nearly always left with a different perspective. I understand that many Adventists like to come to DWU because of its academic excellence and its respect for their freedom of religion. Of course, they knew that we would draw the line at any overt anti-Catholic activities and they have always been respectful of that. I had many good discussions with them and some are friends till now.

When I became a bishop, we went on our *ad limina* pilgrimage to Rome. An Anglican bishop accompanied us as part of our covenant with them. We visited the department that looks after Christian unity and dialogue. After hearing of many initiatives in dialogue with many different churches, I asked them if there was any formal dialogue with the Seventh-day Advent church. The bishop in charge said that there was but it had to be done discretely as the Adventist interlocutors involved feared a backlash if it was not handled well. Subsequent events proved that the discretion was warranted.[2] There is a fine line between discretion and a perception of secrecy and even betrayal.

Now in Mount Hagen I have participated in several combined fellowships involving Adventists. I hear complaints about street preachers and stories of confrontation with them. Our Catholic people have a deep desire for an apologetic approach to explain the Catholic church's position on the issues that concern Adventists. Recently I had an invitation to speak at an Adventist camp hosting a foreign speaker.[3] I queried whether I would be truly welcome at such an event and was told that the Adventist complaint was against historical Catholicism but the Seventh-day Adventist church has great respect for the contribution of the contemporary Catholic church. I jumped at this chance to show that I did know something about Adventism and I wanted to outline the areas of agreement that could be built on. Unfortunately, the camp was badly washed out and we were simply unable to proceed through the crowd to get to the grandstand. Our fleet manager and my driver on this occasion was an Adventist and being stuck in traffic

[2] http://faithofjesus.to/Catholic-Adventist_Compromise.html

[3] https://record.adventistchurch.com/2017/04/13/doug-batchelor-marvels-at-gospels-reach-in-papua-new-guinea/

enabled us to talk a bit about it and I asked him why it was that so many Adventists had such a negative view of the Catholic church. He said, "Because they do not know you".

As head of the Catholic Church Agency I am happy to see Adventist students feel at home and confident in our schools since we follow the constitution and relevant Education Acts and our own principles to allow access of Adventist and other pastors to their adherents. Sadly, this is not usually reciprocated and sometimes people pressure me to repay in kind. But if we do not allow freedom of religion, including access of pastors to their own adherents, we fail to be truly Catholic.

INTRACTABLE CONFLICT

Why then pursue this topic? Surely it is an intractable conflict that does not lend itself to dialogue, analogous perhaps to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. It is for that very reason that I would like to explore the situation and see what if anything could be done to bridge this gap.

Intractable conflicts, broadly defined, are intense, deadlocked, and resistant to de-escalation or resolution. They tend to persist over time, with alternating periods of greater and lesser intensity. Intractable conflicts come to focus on needs or values that are of fundamental importance to the parties. Human needs theory tells us that fundamental human needs and values are non-negotiable.[4]

These conflicts usually involve a complete breakdown of trust. There is suspicion of the actions and even the overtures from the other side. There is a process of "enmification", caricaturising the other side in negative terms, which can justify their rejection and even elimination.[5] Stakeholders are mistrustful of high-level negotiations and fear betrayal. Leaders' attempts to broker peace are often rejected by the grassroots. And steps forward are often disrupted by incidents that can derail the process.

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[4] H. B. Danesh, "Human Needs Theory, Conflict, and Peace in Search of an Integrated Model," in *Encyclopedia of Peace Psychology*, vol. 2: *Eq–Po* (ed. D. J. Christie; Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012) https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470672532.wbepp127.

[5] Liora Sion, "Enemy Making," in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of War: Social Science Perspectives* (ed. Paul Joseph; Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2016) https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326040515_Enemy_Making

Responses to Intractable Conflict

Confidence Building Measures

Scholars and practitioners recommend certain responses to such cases. The first and most practical are what are called "confidence building measures". These involve attempts at cooperation in other areas that are not the areas of conflict (i.e., "non-theological" in this context), building informal personal relationships of trust, especially among leaders, mutual involvement in multilateral activities, proactive steps by peace champions, and partnering together with a third party (e.g., government, UN, Red Cross, etc.).

Areas of Agreement

In Catholic-Adventist relations an important area is our common commitment to freedom of religion. Although this is a shared value there are obviously different meanings given to the idea. For the Catholic church, there is no longer the doctrine of *extra ecclesia nulla salus* ("outside the church there is no salvation") understood exclusively. There is no longer the principle, *errorem ius non habet* ("error has no rights") to justify religious persecution. This shift of approach is spelled out clearly in *Dignitatis Humanae*, the "Declaration on Religious Liberty" from December 1965 from the Second Vatican Council.[6] Education is another area where our shared values may be able to build confidence, especially since most of our schools have adherents of these and other faiths as well. At Divine Word University for example, in 2019, 19% of students are Adventist. Students are encouraged to honour the Sabbath on campus and they seem to appreciate the freedom they experience. They like the peaceful ethical environment and academic excellence of DWU at lower cost. although some come with trepidation, they usually leave with a more positive view of the Catholic church. In the past, graduations have been held on Sunday partly out of respect for the deeply held views of Adventists. There is currently an Adventist member of the university council (as well as from the Lutheran and United churches).

Mutual confidence can also be aided by reflecting on the areas of biblical, doctrinal, and theological agreement that already exist, albeit with significantly different approaches:

[6] Austin Flannery (ed.), *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1975), 799–812.

- The expectant waiting for the *adventum* of Christ of which we know not the day or the hour;
- The realisation that salvation can be lost by effective apostasy;
- The urgency of the evangelical imperative: to be church is to evangelise;
- The value of family life and prayer overflowing into a dignified life;
- That ecumenism can never be about doctrinal compromise; and
- That education and health are profoundly Christian ministries undertaken as part of the gospel imperative, and not just as a "service".

In Papua New Guinea, the Churches Partnership Program has enabled cooperation in the provision of services for evangelisation through educational, health, and social programs.[7] There have also been multilateral agreed statements on a theology of development and gender equality to which both the Adventist and Catholic churches have subscribed. I wonder if this has happened anywhere else in the world?

For example, the agreement on a theology of development has "seven foundational Christian pillars" shared by Adventists and Catholics:

1. The incarnation of Christ is foundational;
2. The church is the locus for living out the love of God for all humanity;
3. Respect for the dignity of humanity is essential;
4. Empowering and investing in the people is a common value;
5. Humans are custodians of God's creation and stewards of God's economy for the common good;
6. Development must be integral (wholistic) and human (benefiting human persons); and
7. The church is an advocate for the disempowered.

A Comparative Approach to Ecumenism

Unitatis redintegratio ("The Restoration of Unity")[8]

The "Decree on Ecumenism" from November 1964 issued by the Second Vatican Council contains the Catholic principles on ecumenism, both

[7] Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Development Assistance in Papua New Guinea" https://dfat.gov.au/geo/papua-new-guinea/development-assistance/Pages/governance-assistance-png.aspx

[8] Flannery, *Vatican Council II*, 452–480.

theological and practical. There is a section dealing with churches and apostolic communities separated from the Holy See, with special consideration of the eastern churches and the separated churches and ecclesial communities in the West. It describes several levels of ecumenical activity: the dialogue of experts, the dialogue of life, and the dialogue of prayer. It asserts that to be Catholic is to be ecumenical (but longing for reciprocity).

In an address of November 2016 Pope Francis commits to continue the journey. Christian unity is one of his principal concerns and one that he hopes is the concern of every baptised Christian:

> … unity … is a gift that comes from on high … I like to say that *unity is made by walking*, in order to recall that when we walk together, that I, when we meet as brothers, we pray together, we collaborate together in the proclamation of the Gospel, and in the service of the least, we are already united. [9]

In an historic visit to the World Council of Churches in Geneva in June 2018 on the theme of "Walking, Praying, and Working Together", Pope Francis addressed the common issues faced by all people at this time: immigration, climate change, and global conflict.[10] Both the Catholic church and the Seventh-day Adventist church are not members of the World Council of Churches for similar reasons, but both cooperate with it where possible.[11]

Adventism and Ecumenism

The Seventh-day Adventist approach to ecumenism and the official leadership position on other doctrinal maters can be found at their key web site, "The Biblical Research Institute".[12] It is sometimes difficult to obtain a clear position on "official" Adventist doctrine as there are many splinter

[9] Francis, "Address to Participants in Plenary Assembly of Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity" https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/november/documents/papa-francesco_20161110_plenaria-unita-cristiani.html

[10] World Council of Churches, "Pope Francis affirms Catholic Church's Commitment to the Ecumenical Journey" https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/pope-francis-affirms-catholic-churchs-commitment-to-the-ecumenical-journey

[11] https://web.archive.org/web/20070108213734/http://news.adventist.org/data/2006/02/1141762525/index.html.en

[12] https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/

groups with extreme views as was explained to us by Dr Lemoni Manu, at the MATS Conference of 2018.[13]

The official Adventist approach to ecumenical dialogue and cooperation to be found at the Biblical Research Institute web site, is characterised by caution and reservation, in contrast to the more positive and active Catholic approach. Adventists hold that the church at the end of time will be a remnant, not a "megachurch". Their anxiety about ecumenism is due to the danger of the relativisation of belief, dangerously polite acceptance of heresy, compromising of biblical authority, weakening of evangelical mission, confusing the foundations of Christian sociopolitical activity, and a confused understanding of religious liberty.

Regarding the ecumenical cooperation with the Catholic church in particular, there are possibilities but it is just on the wrong and losing side of the Great Controversy.[14]

THE WAY FORWARD

Given these differing approaches, what is the way forward?

Formal covenants or agreements between the Catholic and Adventist churches on baptism and marriage, as accomplished with the Anglican, Lutheran, and United churches in Papua New Guinea, are very unlikely, as is bilateral formal worship or a joint statement on any issue. Theological agreement is unlikely on most issues but a better understanding is achievable. And there is still a need for Catholic theological work to address some of these Adventist concerns, a process which can be very helpful in clarifying Catholic theological thinking as well. Dialogue rather than debate is welcome and should be attempted where possible.

However, experience shows that multilateral activities are still possible, such as the conferences of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools, which have allowed even this humble contribution to happen. We can continue to work together in the Church Partnership Program and explore

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[13] See Limoni Manu, "*Early Davidian Seventh-day Adventist Apocalyptic Eschatology between 1929-1955: A Comparative, Historical, and Theological Investigation"* (PhD diss., Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 2006).

[14] An excellent Adventist appraisal of Catholic church history to the modern age that ends with this conclusion can be found at https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/Reflections%20%2359%20%287-17%29.pdf

similar options at the local level (many provincial Governments have established "councils" of churches, involving Catholic and Adventist churches, primarily to deal with grants). In the past we have had a shared role in peacemaking and related research sponsored by the International Committee of the Red Cross. Pacific Adventist University and Divine Word University, the only private universities in PNG, collaborate in the Vice Chancellors Committee. There can be a continuation of combined fellowships and working together on social issues, especially if invited by a third party. Adventist teachers in Catholic Agency schools generally feel welcome and are able to integrate (some for over twenty years) and this relationship can be continued. We can improve communication on areas of tension such as polemical street preaching and reciprocal access to students in Agency schools

Combined fellowships seem to work along the formula where each denomination leads the whole community for a day, and the thanksgiving contribution is shared equally. Some such fellowships have been running in WHP for over ten years very successfully. They usually need to be organised by a leader or businessman, not a church leader.

For Catholics to be able to address Adventist concerns more constructively, it would be good to integrate an Adventist clarification and response into this paper, use contemporary historical studies to add nuance to Protestant/Adventist perspectives on church history, reframe contentious issues by putting them into a bigger context, employing different (positive) perspectives, and rephrasing the old issues with fresh language.

Maybe a Scholastic principle can help. *Nunquam negas, raro concedas, oportet semper distinguere* ("if two conclusions appear incompatible, it is necessary to make a distinction"). We need to make some important distinctions and maybe find ways to recognise that biblical studies can bring together paradoxes, such as the biblical affirmation of both the Sabbath and the Lord's Day; and unity theology (John17:21) and remnant theology (Rev 12:17).

CONCLUSION

I hope that these reflections can contribute to greater understanding and respect between Catholics and Adventists. There is no doubt that the gap between us biblically, theologically, and historically, is enormous. But Christ came to bridge such gaps. If we all focus on him and his call, and truly try to

follow him under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, there must always be hope for a coming together around the table of the Lord in this life and certainly in the next.

THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST POSITION ON INTERFAITH AND ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE: A REFLECTION ON THE GOOD SAMARITAN OF LUKE 10:25–37

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Abstract
Roger Massey observes that "while our water-tight doctrines and lofty theology are necessary for the packaging and passing on of eternal, life changing truths, they have served as poor cement to hold people together. Doctrines and theologies help us and serve us, just as our denominations (or non-denominations) and traditions serve to define us … but they have not served to unite Christians." This definition identifies the limitation of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church's involvement in interfaith and ecumenical movement. However, SDA does not exist in isolation from other Christian communities. In that task, this article looks at the positive ecumenism that foster practical, on-the-ground, issue-oriented fellowship, and caring for other Christians, which is based on the biblical principle of our primary calling is to love God with our whole being and our neighbours as ourselves.

Key Words
Interfaith, ecumenical dialogue, Seventh-day Adventist church, doctrines, policy, Good Samaritan, love of God, neighbour

INTRODUCTION

The Seventh-day Adventist position on interfaith and ecumenical dialogue is to not hold membership in any ecumenical body that eradicates or erases the distinctive Adventist voice. Therefore, Adventists choose to accept and maintain observer status in such bodies. However, Adventists can still partner with other ecumenical bodies regardless of doctrinal boundaries based on God's love and human goodwill, which is based on the biblical principle of our primary calling to love God with our whole being and our neighbours as ourselves (Matt 22:37–39; Mark 12:30–31; Luke 10:27). This principle also contains one of the most told and retold parables in the entire Bible: the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). The directive of the Lord in this parable is "to go and do likewise."

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This parable illustrates those who do not want to expose themselves to human need based on doctrinal grounds, and those who see the need to expose themselves to human need regardless of doctrinal and cultural boundaries. If read carefully, this parable strongly underlines the need to acknowledge the common basis of human goodwill, which helps to place the doctrinal differences in their proper perspective.

Interfaith and ecumenism based on the principles to love God and neighbours as ourselves, illustrated by the Good Samaritan, should be the ethos of the dialogue. Emphasis on these principles would lead to SDAs partnering with other ecumenical bodies with an unreserved act of goodwill and mercy to human life, to make this world a better place for all human beings, contributing to better health, education, and humanitarian work in all dignity, freedom, justice, peace, and fraternity.

ADVENTISM AND INTERFAITH AND ECUMENISM

Pacific Adventist University (PAU) is a Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) run institution. And hosting the 2018 MATS Conference on the theme "Interfaith and Ecumenism" would be generally seen as a challenge by fellow Adventists. This challenge is based on SDAs' reluctance to be "officially involved in the organized ecumenical movement."[1]

The reluctance is decisively influenced by beliefs that often lead to "doctrinal and relational intolerance in reference to other Christians."[2]

Initially, SDAs believe they have a distinctive message to prepare the world for the imminent coming of Jesus according to Revelation 14. Thus, full participation in the ecumenical movement and certain types of interchurch relations would limit the church's distinctive message and mission in fulfilment of Revelation 14.[3] The reluctance also centres on the belief in the seventh-day Sabbath. The Sabbath provides "practical, historic, prophetic, and theological barriers to fully joining the modern ecumenical movement."[4] Also, there is the traditional SDA teachings on controversial

[1] Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, "Adventists and Ecumenical Conversation," https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/Adventists_-and_Ecumenical_Conversation_0.pdf.

[2] Nicholas P. Millar "Adventist and Ecumenism," *Ministry Magazine* (April 2013).

[3] John Graz "Ecumenism and the Adventist Church," https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/Ecumenism-and-the-Adventist-Church.pdf.

[4] Millar "Adventist and Ecumenism," 19.

issues. For instance, in looking back, SDAs see centuries of persecution and anti-Christian manifestations of the papal power. They see discrimination and much intolerance by state or established churches. And "Looking forward, they see the danger of Catholicism and Protestantism linking hands and exerting religio-political power in a domineering and potentially persecuting way."[5] This is sadly being overemphasised, which leads to apathy and disinterest toward other Christians, and to unwillingness to move beyond the doctrinal boundaries.

For example, this apathy and disinterest at a congregational level is displayed in the Facebook page called *Bible Discussion* that has 154,047 members at the time of the writing of this article. This page is a battle ground for Christians, and unfortunately SDAs and Catholics are at the forefront in this battle. I personally encourage MATS members, theology students, and practicing clergies to refrain from participating in this group discussion. For it deepens and widens hatred and disharmony.

Within this backdrop, an interfaith and ecumenical dialogue that involves ideological search for doctrinal and institutional unity can be seen as a negative ecumenism for it threatens unity, unless one is prepared to lose one's existing faith to embrace the other. It also threatens the mission of the Adventist church. For SDAs are concerned about this *nature of the unity* that is being sought and *the methods* that are employed in the attempts to accomplish it. Therefore, "the rule of thumb is to not hold membership in any ecumenical body that eradicates or erases the distinctive Adventist voice in reference to the sovereignty of God the Creator, the Sabbath, and the Second Coming."[6] That means SDA as a church is not part of the ecumenical organisations that require membership, but they do enjoy guest or observer status at meetings.

Roger Massey highlights the effect of doctrinal boundaries by observing that "while our water tight doctrines and lofty theology are necessary for the packaging and passing on of eternal, life changing truths, they have served as poor cement to hold people together. Doctrines and theologies help us and

[5] *Bert B. Beach,* "Ecumenical Movement," *Ministry Magazine* (June 27 1985). https://www.adventist.org/en/information/official.../article/.../-/ecumenical-movement

[6] Ganoune Diop, "Why Adventists Participate in UN and Ecumenical Meetings," *Adventist Review* (9 October 2015) https://adventistreview.org/news/why-adventists-participate-in-un-and-ecumenical-meetings.

serve us, just as our denominations (or non-denominations) and traditions serve to define us … but they have not served to unite Christians."[7]

In spite of this, I see the MATS conference on interfaith and ecumenical dialogue as a privilege to show that ecumenism after all is not a "distasteful" word when defined clearly. This conference demonstrates that a positive ecumenism does/can exist.

In policy ADM 10.10 of the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist church in relation to other churches, it is stated that:

> (1) We recognize those agencies that lift up Christ before the world as a part of the Divine plan for world evangelization, and we hold in high esteem Christian men and women in other communions who are engaged in leading men and women to be disciples of Jesus Christ.
>
> (2) When interacting with Christians of other denominations, other missionary societies and religious bodies, the spirit of Christian courtesy, frankness and fairness shall prevail at all times.
>
> (3) We recognize that true religion is based on conscience and conviction. It is therefore to be our constant purpose that no selfish interest or advantage shall draw any person to our communion and that no tie shall hold any member other than the belief and conviction that in this way the person finds true connection with Christ. If a change of conviction leads a member of our church to feel no longer in harmony with Seventh-day Adventist faith and practice, we recognize not only the right but also the responsibility of that member to change, without embarrassment, religious affiliation in accord with belief. We expect other religious bodies to respond in the same spirit of religious liberty.[8]

This policy, I believe, reflects John 10:16: "I have other sheep that are not of this fold" and highlights the fact that SDA church should balance out the equation by equally emphasising a positive ecumenism. In that task, this article looks at the positive ecumenism that fosters "practical, on-the-ground, issue-oriented fellowship, and caring for humanity".[9] We may now look more closely at the scriptural injunction for the love of God and neighbour as illustrated in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

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[7] Roger Massey, "Relationship as a Basis for Christian Unity and Fellowship ... A Question of Salt," *Kairos* 2 (2008): 129–33.

[8] Steve Currow, email message to Thomas Davai Jr, 10 July 2018.

[9] Millar "Adventists and Ecumenism."

Positive Ecumenism: A Reflection on Unity in Loving God

The first biblical principle of positive ecumenism, according to Luke 10:25–37, is to love God with our whole being: individually, denominationally, and within the wider Christianity. This should be the fundamental basis of positive interfaith and ecumenical dialogues. As stated in the parable, the lawyer's reading of the law to love God with "all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind" (v 27) is within a relational framework.[10]

The lawyer understands that to keep the law is not to keep isolated commandments, but rather to be in relationship with God, in which he is correct. However, his question "who is my neighbour?" (v 29) makes him fall back to a negative ecumenism. His question implies that only those who keep the law within the covenantal family to which the lawyer belonged will be saved.[11] According to Jesus, this is not the case. In response to his question, Jesus turns the lawyer's negative ecumenical concept around by stating that the purpose of the law is not to define who is within the boundary of covenantal relationship and who is not, but rather to give identity to God's covenant people, which is positive.[12]

Similarly, in the interfaith and ecumenical dialogues in Melanesia, our first primary purpose is to clearly define our identity as God's covenantal people. It is imperative to note that it is not about defining who is justified by being part of God's covenantal people, but what it means to be part of it. It is not to define who the member of God's covenant is, but to define what it means to be a member of God's covenantal family. It is not about who God's people are, but how to be God's people.[13] It is significant to note that regardless of doctrinal, cultural, or denominational boundaries, God is committed to the plan to redeem people of all nations and walks of life through the offspring of his covenantal family, Jesus Christ.

To be a neighbour is what it means to be the ethos of God's covenant people—to be a people who show mercy beyond doctrinal or denominational boundaries. This principle is further demonstrated in Mark 9:38–41:

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[10] The term "lawyer" refers to an expert in the Mosaic law, and it is the Mosaic law that is the issue in the encounter between him and Jesus.

[11] Colin M. Ambrose, "Desiring to Be Justified: An Examination of the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37," *Sewanee Theological Review* 54 (2010): 17–28, at 28.

[12] Ambrose, "Desiring to Be Justified," 28.

[13] Ambrose, "Desiring to Be Justified," 28.

> "Teacher," said John, "we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us." "Do not stop him," Jesus said. "For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us. Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward. (NIV)

According to this passage, the logic John had was, if there's an "us," there's got to be "them." Not everyone can be on "our side," so there's got to be an "other side." John says that this guy who performed a miracle by casting of demons in Jesus' name, because he was not one of "us," was told to stop. John doubtless figured Jesus would be pleased with his theological line-drawing. Jesus refused to accept John's line-drawing.

I like the way Michael L. Lindvall of the Presbyterian church, pens Jesus' response:

> First stroke, Jesus says that anybody who uses his name in a positive way will hardly be able to say much negative later on. Then Jesus simply says: "Whosoever is not against us is for us." And in the third stroke of White-Out, he declares that anybody – *anybody* – who does you an act of kindness – a drink of cold water for instance – will have their reward. So…, if there's an "our side," if there's the "Jesus side," exactly who *is* on the "other side? Jesus' answer is that it's not so simple.[14]

Here is an illustration by a Roman Catholic priest Anthony de Mello that clearly reflects the lawyer's and John's theology line-drawing. Mello tells:

> A Catholic priest, a Protestant minister, and a Jewish rabbi. They were engaged in a heated theological discussion, when, suddenly an angel appeared in their midst and said to them: "God sends to you his blessings: make one wish for peace and God will fulfill your dream." The Protestant minister said, "Let every Catholic disappear from our lovely land. Then peace will come." The Catholic priest said, "Let there not be a single Protestant left on our sacred soil." "And what about you, Rabbi?" the angel asked. "Do you have no wish of your own?" "No," said the rabbi. "Just attend to the wishes of these two gentlemen, and I shall be pleased."[15]

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[14] Michael L. Lindvall, "Who's on Our Side," https://www.brickchurch.org/Customized/uploads/BrickChurch/.../PDFs/.../09302012

[15] Andy Kinsey "A Caution against Bigotry: Mark 9:38–41," https://www.sc.fhview.com/sc_customplayer/getdownload/2011092006090190D515/.../pdf

Of course, we all belong to religious groupings that functions like "our side", "their side", and "your side"—Catholics and Protestants. I am a proud part of the Seventh-day Adventist church. It is this congregation that is the side I am on. I treasure this Adventist identity. It defines who I am, and it distinguishes me from people who do not share the Adventist faith commitments.

But, according to this passage, Jesus draws the line in a different way. He draws a bigger circle, one that includes people of mercy who offer to strangers a cool drink; a bigger circle that includes people of good will; a circle of covenantal family who love God and live together for God; a bigger coventual circle that clearly helps us to see God's goodness at work in others.

I believe that we should enter dialogue with our commitment to love God, which can transform our interfaith and ecumenical spirit. The love of God who is the creator and redeemer, primarily, should be the centre of our ecumenical identity.

POSITIVE ECUMENISM: A REFLECTION ON UNITY IN LOVING OUR NEIGHBOURS

The essence of Massey's argument is demonstrated by the lawyer's question "who is my neighbor?" in verse 29 seen earlier.[16] It also reflects an actual debate of the time when ancient cultures drew a line between insiders and outsiders for legal purposes, just like the doctrines and dogmas that draw lines between Christians among themselves and with people of other faiths. Brett Younger correctly says that "neighbor was a term of a limited liability."[17] By this, he illustrates:

> Pharisees excluded those ignorant of the law. Essenes included only Essenes. Exclusion of enemies was assumed (Matthew 5:43). No group was more unacceptable to Jews than Samaritans; they ranked lower than despised trades, Jewish slaves, Israelites with a blemish, and Gentile slaves. If a Samaritan volunteered the temple tax, it was to be returned.[18]

[16] In Jewish interpretation, various commentators restrict command to love one's neighbour. See Ambrose, "Desiring to Be Justified,"17–28.

[17] Brett Younger, "Luke 10:25–27—Preaching Like the Good Samaritan," *Review and Expositor* 90 (1993): 393–98, at 394.

[18] Younger, "Luke 10:25–27," 394.

While it is true that doctrines and dogmatic boundaries reflect the debates of the ancient cultures in the historical reading of Luke 10, the kindness of the Samaritan in this parable becomes an example of loving one's neighbor regardless of cultural, creeds, doctrines, and dogmatic boundaries.[19]

Jesus replies to the lawyer's question "who is my neighbour?":

> In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man in his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'" (Luke 10:30–35) (NIV).

In Walter Klaassen's case study on the paradigm of love using Luke 10:25-37, he asserts that love in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–34) is activity oriented, meaning, it is an action of love on behalf of others. He then observes, by taking into account that the Samaritan in the parable is the marked contrast to the personal, casual, self-oriented concern of the lawyer, just to create a legal argument (v 29).[20]

Klaassen further demonstrates that love is an action of sacrifice moved with compassion and pity. The Samaritan is moved with empathy and sympathy, ignoring the cultural norms and boundaries. Without hesitation, he spontaneously outflowed the act of love for the one in need.[21]

Personal Reflection

It is just possible that we are standing on the road to Jericho. The parable of the Good Samaritan symbolises applied Christianity and promotes acts of

[19] Though the whole parable is an exhortation to act in order to attain eternal life, loving one's neighbour beyond legal or religious boundaries is the dominant crux of the parable.
[20] Walter Klaassen, "A Case Study in True Love: Luke 10:25–37," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 9 (1991): 331–34, at 332.
[21] Klaassen, "A Case Study in True Love,", 333.

kindness beyond boundaries.[22] According to Ganoune Diop, it is "legitimate for all people of goodwill to unite to save lives, to protect lives, and to affirm the importance and sacredness of life." He further says that "it is even urgent for all people to partner to make this world a better place for all human beings, contributing to better health, education, and humanitarian work in all dignity, freedom, justice, peace, and fraternity."[23]

We may engage in creedal dialogues and contextualise these creeds into Melanesian perspectives, or we may assume the authority of our doctrines, dogmas, and creeds, but without partnering in the Good Samaritan spirit, we may be simply like the lawyer in Luke 10:29, whose intension was to simply create a legal debate.

In interfaith and ecumenical dialogue in Melanesia, I suggest we pursue the question with another query like Jesus' response to the lawyer by telling an illustrative story of the Good Samaritan and ending it with "Go and do likewise" (v 37). Instead of testing Jesus, we need to be tested by the Lord by not objecting to Jesus' neighbours.

Jesus words to "go and do likewise" is another feature of the parable that is vital. It challenges us to move away from a dogmatic and legalistic conditioned mindset to a life of concern for people beyond one's heritage and familiar surroundings.[24]

Conclusion

Adventist practice in relationship to other council of churches (national, regional, and world) is that of "observer-consultant" status. This helps the church to keep informed and better understand trends and developments. Ecumenism is seen differently in different contexts, and within the context of Adventist beliefs, it is seen that those ecumenical organisations are usually not "neutral." Adventists see that ecumenical movements often have quite specific goals and policies and play sociopolitical advocacy roles. So, there is little point to becoming only a halfhearted member.

However, in recent years, Adventist leaders and theologians have had opportunities for dialogue with other church representatives. These

[22] Peter Rhea Jones "The Love Command in Parable: Luke 10:25–37," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 6 (1979): 224–42, at 226.
[23] Diop, "Why Adventists Participate."
[24] Arland J. Hultgren, "Enlarging the Neighborhood: A Parable of the Good Samaritan," *Word & World* 37 (2017): 71–78, at 76.

experiences have been beneficial. Mutual respect has been created. Worn-out stereotypes and inaccurate and untrue doctrinal perceptions have been removed. In Melanesia, MATS is playing a huge part in this transformation.

This shows that Adventist church has not isolated itself from unity with other ecclesiastical bodies. The SDA church is positive in fostering communal love of God as the creator and redeemer, and loving and caring for humanity as our neighbours on practical and issue-oriented grounds. We expect other religious bodies to respond in the same spirit of religious liberty. This should be ethos of interfaith and ecumenical dialogues in Melanesia.

The Soul within Oceania*

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Abstract
This article treats different understandings of the soul throughout the region of Oceania, with attention to underlying constructs such as the belief system, worldview, and conceptions of the self. In many places, the soul is though to be apparent in one's shadow or reflection, and that it may leave the body during dream. Commonly, the soul survives death a a ghost or spirit of the dead, which links with the importance throughout the region of the continuing role of ancestors of the departed. The study refers to changes with the influences of colonialism and globalisation. Nowadays, the majority of indigenous people in Oceania profess to be Christian, yet many, perhaps the majority, continue to be strongly influenced by traditional cultural understandings associated with the human person, death, and the conduct of funerals. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of theological implications if one considers the Hebrew Bible view of the reversal of death in progeny as a functional equivalent of the soul, or the indigenous view of the place or state of ancestors compared with the Christian gospel understanding of heaven.

Key Words
Soul, spirit, Oceania, worldview, shadow, death, ghost

INTRODUCTION

Oceania, sometimes called the "liquid continent,"[1] covers almost a third of the earth's surface including Aotearoa New Zealand in the south, the Mariana Islands in the northwest, Papua New Guinea in the west, Rapa Nui in the southeast, and Hawaii in the northeast. Australia is sometimes included within the geographical context. Central to the region are the Pacific islands, which in turn are often divided into three cultural areas: Micronesia,

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[1] Glenine Hamlyn, *A New Voyage: Pacific People Explore the Future They Want*, The second consultation of Bread for the World Partners in the Pacific, November 2011 (Berlin: Bread for the World, 2013), p. 9. (https://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/fileadmin/mediapool/2_Downloads/Fachinformationen/Dialog/Dialog_11_a_new_voyage.pdf)

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Melanesia, and Polynesia, each with distinctive historical, political, linguistic, and social characteristics.[2] The cultures of Oceania are home to over 1,300 languages, which illustrates the cultural diversity of the region.[3]

Dealing with the "soul" leads to intriguing questions about life and death. What is the source of life in human beings and other animate beings? What happens at death? What aspect of the human person, if any, survives death? What ways can the living and the dead communicate? In this paper, I detail the different traditional understandings of the soul throughout the Oceania region, with attention to underlying constructs such as the belief system, worldview, and conceptions of the self. I will make mention of changes with the influence of colonial intrusion and globalisation, and close with a brief discussion of theological implications from the store of wisdom from the region.

Religious Belief Systems

Traditional belief systems in Oceania tend to be a combination of theism and animism. By theism I refer to belief in gods of some kind or a series of powerful spirit beings. By animism I understand the belief in a life-force found in humans, animals, plants, and in some cases, even inanimate objects such as stones.

Discussion of "religion" depends a lot on how one understands the term. Is one concerned with religion as belief in the supernatural or non-empirical dimension of life, or is it more helpful to focus on the function of religion as a symbolic meaning system? I consider both content and function as relevant to our discussion.

Accurate generalisations of Oceanic religion are difficult to make. Traditional Polynesian religion is polytheistic and animistic, with a belief in

[2] Today the Pacific Islands comprise twenty-five nations with varying political status reflecting colonial history from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: independent nations (Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Aotearoa New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu), a US state (Hawaii), US territories (American Samoa, Guam), free association with US (Marshall Islands), US commonwealth (Northern Mariana Islands), free association with New Zealand (Cook Islands, Niue), New Zealand dependency (Tokelau), Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, and territory of France (Wallis and Futuna, New Caledonia, French Polynesia). Rapa Nui is a dependency of Chile, Pitcairn Island a British dependency and West Papua is a state of Indonesia. The complex varied political status of these nations reflects a long history of global impact on the region.

[3] Papua New Guinea alone has approximately 840 living languages. Ethnologue.com

many deities and spirits, including the belief that spirits are found in non-human beings and objects such as animals, the waves, and the sky. They have elaborate origin myths and great depth in their genealogies. Polynesian people developed complex rituals as evidenced in the elaborately carved communal meeting houses (*wharenui*) in Aotearoa (New Zealand) or the huge stone figures or *moai* on Rapa Nui (Easter Island).

In Micronesia, religious ritual tended to be less lavish in display and ritual than that of their Polynesian neighbours. Micronesian religion includes sky gods, culture heroes, which anthropologist Jay Dobbin calls "patron gods", and nature spirits hiding in the jungle or on the reef along with ancestral spirits. People in Micronesia tend to lump all these spirits together under a single term such as the Chuukic *énú*. Dobbin notes how the greatest rituals involve the souls of the deceased relatives who in the transition between death and their final destiny, could be either troublesome or helpful to their living relatives.[4]

Polytheistic pantheons of Polynesia tend to be absent from religious belief in Melanesia, yet, as Professor Gary Trompf notes, "sometimes the gods appear fully-fledged with powers and creativity impressive enough for any missionary to use the name of one of these gods as the vernacular equivalent of the supreme being."[5] In other cases there is no clear distinction between deities and the dead. Anglican priest and anthropologist Robert Codrington noted the conceptual fluidity of terms associated with the spirit when he asked a Banks Islander (Vanuatu) what is a *vui*? and he was told, "It lives, thinks, has more intelligence than a man; knows things which are secret without seeing; is supernaturally powerful with *mana* [spirit effect], has no form to be seen; has no soul, because itself is like a soul."[6]

A common aspect of religion throughout the region is the special role of ancestors of the departed. Attitudes vary, from veneration of the dead to fear of ghosts. Some might be called upon for aid in battle or in a fishing expedition. Others are to be feared or rejected because of their reputed power of bringing others to join them (in death). Trompf notes, "Those released from this life take their natures with them for good or ill, and are rarely thrust

[4] Jay Dobbin, *Summoning the Powers Beyond: Traditional Religions in Micronesia* (Honolulu. University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 15.
[5] G. W. Trompf, *Melanesian Religion* (Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 1991), 13.
[6] Trompf, *Melanesian Religion*, 13.

out of the cosmos or the network of social relationships they leave behind."[7] Religion throughout Melanesia relies a lot on establishing relationships between humans and the spirit order, which in turn results in successful hunting, fishing, gardening, and the rest of life.

WORLDVIEW AND COSMOLOGY

Views of the universe also vary within the region. Traditionally, people in Kiribati, Banaba, and Nauru in Micronesia conceived of the universe as a huge clam that an eel helped the creator god to pry open, thus creating the earth and the heavens above. Dobbin notes how mourners wait for three to four days after a relative's death or burial for the soul of their kinsperson to leave the home and make its way up into the sky world, travelling on the smoke that comes from burning the deceased's moveable possessions on the grave. Access to the sky world is not guaranteed however, as there is a connection between the soul during life, especially in the way a person has been of service to the group, and its destination after death as a human spirit. The soul of the person that in life has violated community rules and taboos may not find an ancestor spirit to help it on its way to the sky world.

In Micronesian and Polynesian mythology, the final destination of the soul is often the end of a long journey and involves overcoming trials. Traditionally, people of Kiribati believe that in journeying to the mythic island of Matang, the spirit would first encounter an old woman:

> The hag looked for tattooing marks; if she found them, she let the spirit pass and, touching their eyes, gave the "vision of the spirits" so that the spirit of the deceased could see the way clearly. For those without tattoo makings, she tore out the pupils of the eyes and ate them, and they could never make it to Matang of Bouru.[8]

Māori have an ancestry that goes back to a formless void and the emergence of light from darkness. The void stirred and quickened and the stars were born.[9] Henare Tate writes on the Maori cosmic religious worldview:

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[7] Trompf, *Melanesian Religion*, 16.
[8] Dobbin, *Summoning the Powers*, 195.
[9] Mānuka Hēnare, "Tapu, mana, mauri, hau, wairua: A Māori Christian Philosophy of Vitalism and Cosmos," in *Living in the Planet Earth: Faith Communities and Ecology* (ed. Neil Darragh; Auckland, Accent Publications, 2016), 59–67.

> Worldview is at the heart of Maori culture. From this basic standpoint, they understand that all things in creation, whether material or nonmaterial, contain a life-force that is independent of the thing itself. This life-force has its origin from the original source of life itself, namely the Supreme Being, Io matua kore.[10]

For Māori, Hawaiki is the place their ancestors came from and the place to which the soul returns.

One will hear in chants for the dead, *Haere ki Hawaiki nui, ki Hawaiki roa, ki Hawaiki pamamao* ("Go to great Hawaiki, to long Hawaiki, to distant Hawaiki"). Hawaiki may be considered a physical place and a spiritual place. It is a place explaining a people's origin and their destiny. Considered as a *wahi tapu* (sacred) it is a place where the souls of the dead can find a resting place. The point stressed is that people meet again after death.[11]

The Human Person and the Soul

Māori do not see themselves as separate from nature, humanity along with the rest of the natural world having descended from the Earth Mother (Papatūānuku). In that way humans belong to the earth. The philosophy of vitalism is expressed in a number of terms: *tapu* (potentiality and power), *mana* (authority), *mauri* (life essence), *hau* (life force or breath of life), and *wairua* (spirit) that interact in a relationship of reciprocity. The *wairua* leaves the body during dreams and departs the body permanently at death.[12]

From the Māori perspective, a portion of a person's *hau* (vital essence) adheres to any place that person has sat upon or walked over.

> Another person could, by "scooping up" the invisible *hau* from that seat, or footprint, and performing certain magic arts over it, slay the one who had sat down or walked on that place. People have been known to avoid paths and to walk in water wherever possible, so as to avoid leaving any footprints from which their *hau* might be taken by enemies.[13]

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[10] Henare Arekatera Tate, "Towards Some Foundations of a Systematic Māori Theology" (PhD diss., Melbourne College of Divinity, 2010), 70.

[11] *Poluto* is the term used in western Polynesian mythology. Paul Geraghty, "Pulotu, Polynesian Homeland," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 102 (1993): 343–84.

[12] Elsdon Best, "Spiritual Concepts of the Maori," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 9 (1900): 173–99, at 177.

[13] Elsdon Best, *Maori Religion and Mythology*, part 2 (Wellington: Dominion Museum, 1929), 51 (http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Bes02Reli-t1-body-d2-d3.html)

In Oceania there is great emphasis on how the human being becomes complete. In the Samoan cosmogony the creator spirit Talanoa invested coral with life-force (*mauli*), which wedded a woman whose son obtained a people-producing vine. The vine produced a hapeless mass (*ilo*) of maggots, which the creator spirit moulded into human form, giving them heart and soul.[14] However, the human person (tagata) is only a bare human unless he/she is connected to a genealogy (aiga), which gives them personhood. In some areas of Oceania personhood is distinguished depending on whether the person is male or female. Karl Böhm tells how on Biem Island in Papua New Guinea, traditionally people believed that the souls of men go into the tubes of bamboo flutes, whereas women's souls go to the spirit places in the vicinity of the chief's house.[15]

In the Trobriand islands, what distinguishes humans from other entities is that humans include *nona* (mind) and *namasa* (thought), which distinguish persons (*tamota*) from other beings. Ghosts and flying witches qualify as persons because they have qualities of mind and capacity for thought and hence humans and spirits such as witches can communicate with one another.

Anthropologist Dan Jorgenson provides details of the relationship between humans and other beings among the Telefol people of Western Province in Papua New Guinea.[16] Humans have *sinik*, and domestic dogs and domestic pigs do too. This is evidenced in their ability to hear and respond when people talk to them, because the ability to hear and respond to speech is intrinsic to *sinik*.[17] Wild dogs or wild pigs cannot respond to human speech and this indicates that they do not have *sinik*. Taro and tanget plants also have *sinik*. This means that these plants also hear human speech and can respond to it. Tanget plants, for example, are planted near an important place and

[14] Brad Shore, *Sala'ilua, a Samoan Mystery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 130.

[15] Karl Böhm, *The Life of Some Island People of New Guinea* (Eng. ed.; Collectanea Instituti Anthropos, vol 29; Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1983).

[16] Dan Jorgenson, personal communication, 19 November, 2017.

[17] Similar ideas are found in other parts. R.B. Lane, "The Melanesians of South Pentecost, New Hebrides," in *Gods, Ghosts and Men in Melanesia* (ed. P. Lawrence and M.J. Meggitt; Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1965), 250–79, at 255, writing from Vanuatu, tells how many people there consider that the pig, which lives in a symbiotic relationship with human beings, has a soul. "In the New Hebrides no other animal is so endowed by nature and by man with personality. In view of this it is not surprising that they are sometimes considered to have souls."

instructed to keep watch and warn humans of trespass. Taro likewise has *sinik* and can understand humans, and that is why one must be careful to watch one's language in a taro garden. If taro hears angry speech, its *sinik* may flee, or runaway and leave the garden. In that case the taro stalks will look healthy, but they will produce no food. Nor should taro be handled roughly for the same reason. Jorgenson tells how he once saw some people accidentally drop freshly-cut taro stalks in a garden, and an old man present snatched them up, performed the same gesture mothers do to crying infants, caressing with soothing words. This was to make sure the taro's *sinik* did not run away.[18]

The *sinik* of infants is thought to be poorly developed and only tenuously connected with them, so startling an infant, or frightening it with loud angry talk could lead to a momentary loss of *sinik*, which flees and the infant wails uncontrollably. People say that the *sinik* grows as the heart does. When it gets larger and "opens up" there is more room for the *sinik* there, and this is evident in the maturation of infants when they respond to speech and spend more time talking or responding than crying.

Custom in Bougainville illustrates the belief that the infant's soul is only insecurely attached to its body, at the fontanelle, and clings to the mother much of the time.[19] During the first few months of the infant's life, its soul is so closely dependent upon the mother that the latter should not leave her child for long, lest its soul follow her and perhaps become lost. When a mother of a young infant must leave it at home to go to the garden or the stream, she wears a small soul-rattle made of shells. That way the infant's soul, which accompanies her, will then hear the sound made by the rattle and so will not become lost. To stray too far from the mother and never be able to find its way home again would result in the death of the infant. The attachment between the infant's soul and its mother is so important that measures have to be taken to separate it if and when the mother should die. Relatives place a banana pod in the dead woman's hands in order to deceive her soul-ghost into believing that she holds her infant. Otherwise, her soul-

[18] Dan Jorgenson, personal communication, 19 November, 2017.
[19] Douglass L. Oliver, *A Solomon Island Society: Kinship and Leadership among the Siuai of Bougainville* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), 182.

ghost would take along the infant's soul when she departs for the afterworld.[20]

Soul, Shadow, and Reflection

In many parts of Oceania people see a close connection between the soul, shadow, and reflection. The soul is also thought to leave the body during dreams. The Telefol people mentioned above use the term *sinik* for "image" or "resemblance", as in photograph or as a facial resemblance. Among the Huli in the Papua New Guinea highlands, the *dinini* is the immaterial part of human personality, which survives physical death and persists indefinitely in ghostly form. As a person becomes drowsy it is thought that their *dinini* gradually gravitates from the head to the heart. Thus, a sleeping person should be wakened slowly to allow time for the *dinini* to return to its normal position. The same term is also used for human reflections and shadows. Anthropologist, Robert Glasse adds that these are but images of the soul, for the true *dinini* is invisible.[21]

The same term used for shadows and reflections can also be used for photographs. Australian Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders destroy photos of the deceased, not wanting images of the deceased to remain, as a sign of respect, but also lest they interfere with the spirit going safely to the next world. Nowadays Australian television programs and films may include a title warning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders that "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander viewers are advised that the following program may contain images and voices of people who have died."

Anxiety at Funeral Rites

The ambiguity at funerals as to whether the spirit of the dead will help or hinder the living contributes of anxiety at funeral rites. The Enga of the Papua New Guinea highlands illustrate this point. Anthropologist Mervyn Meggitt explains the Mae Enga belief in a spirit (*waiyange*), which transform into a ghost at a person's death.

> The Mae believe that only some creatures possess an individual spirit or breath as well as a passive shade or reflection. These include people, pigs,

[20] Oliver, *A Solomon Island Society*, 182.
[21] R. Glasse, "The Huli of the Southern Highlands," in Lawrence and Meggitt, *Gods, Ghosts and Men*, 27–49, at 30.

> dogs, cassowaries and possums—all of which are socially, ritually, or economically significant in the culture. But only a human spirit can become an active ghost, able to consume or manipulate the spirits of the other animals when they die.[22]

The Enga believe that semen and menstrual blood combine to create a foetus, which after about four months (when the mother feels movement) is animated by spirit and given a personality. This spirit is not a reincarnation of any pre-existing person or ghost. Rather, in some way, it is implanted by the totality of the father's clan ancestral ghosts, which is located in the clan fertility stones or other centre of clan power such as a special pool inhabited by clan spirits.[23]

When a man dies his spirit leaves his body and becomes a ghost (*timongo*). It stays near the corpse until burial, after which it wanders freely around the clan territory. For the Enga, ghosts are dangerous, illness and death coming from a ghost "biting" the victim. Ghosts can know human thoughts and their presence can be detected by their soft whistling. They may also appear as fireflies or in dreams. During mourning, people may cut off fingers or slice their ear lobes to placate the ghost of the deceased. After killing someone the ghost goes off to join the group of clan ancestors.

It is notable that Enga traditionally believe that ghostly attacks occur within families. Hence one should fear the ghosts of close relatives such as father and mother or siblings and offspring who died. Meggit quotes an Enga man declaring, "The ghost of my father's father killed my father, and my father's ghost will kill me!" [24]

Not all cultures in Papua New Guinea have such a gloomy view of the spirits of the dead. With the Telefol, the bones of those who were good hunters or good gardeners were brought back from exposure platforms and installed in netbags in the spirit house. Their *sinik* remains with them (they were asked to remain by the living), and they were appealed to for assistance and protection.[25]

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[22] M. Meggitt, "The Mae Enga of the Western Highlands," in Lawrence and Meggitt, *Gods, Ghosts and Men*, 105–31, at 110.
[23] Meggitt, "The Mae Enga," 110.
[24] Meggitt, "The Mae Enga," 111–12.
[25] Jorgenson tells how in the conversion to Christianity, *sinik* was used as the gloss for spirit. A crucial decision elders had to make—following the Rebaibal (Revival) and conversions of the late 1970s—was whether they wanted to join their ancestors, parents, and deceased

Transition at Birth and Death

Polynesian myth highlights how the infant accomplished the transition into life by being born of a woman, while at the same time death is also seen as a transition through a woman. There is a well-known story of the death of the culture hero Māui who tried to bring eternal life to humanity. He intended to accomplish this by killing Hine-nui-te-po (the great woman of the night), the female personification of death.[26] Accompanied by his friends, the birds, Māui came upon her while she was asleep. His plan was to kill her by entering her vagina, passing through her body, and emerging at her mouth (the reverse direction of birth). He cautioned his friends not to laugh if they found the sight amusing, for fear of waking her. Naked, he proceeded to enter the sleeping woman. However, the birds found this so hilarious that they burst out laughing, which awakened Hine-nui-te-po who, discovering Maui attempting to enter her, clenched her thighs tightly together and crushed him to death, sealing the fate of all humans to die. But there is more to it because it was believed that human beings arrive at birth from the supernatural realm where they have a spiritual existence before birth, and at death they are thought to return to the spiritual realm as ghosts and eventually ancestral spirits.

Double Soul

Some cultures, particularly in Micronesia, explain life after death through the depiction of the double soul. Each living person has two spirits or souls—a good one and an evil one. "The good soul becomes the helping spirit, which can possess its living kin, choose mediums and in general divine and inspire for the living. Evidence for the dual soul comes from the Chuuk Lagoon, the Mortlocks, and Yap."[27] The Chuuk belief is that in late pregnancy the person develops a good spirit and then a bad spirit is born with the body and bound to it during life. Then at death the good spirit is released from the body and become *enu* (spirit of the dead). The good spirit makes its way up the layers of the sky ending up in a sky layer below the gods. During life, this good

siblings in the traditional Bagelam, or whether they wanted to join their wives and children in heaven. Virtually all chose the latter and converted.

[26] Maui Pomare and James Cowan, *Legends of the Māori*. Vol. 1: *Mythology, Traditional History, Folk-Lore and Poetry* (Wellington: Whitcomne and Tombs, 1930), 17–19 (http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Pom01Lege-t1-body-d3-d3.html)

[27] Dobbin, *Summoning the Powers*, 16.

spirit can temporarily leave the body, resulting in dreams. "The dream is a kind of window through which humans from this world are given a glance into the beyond and allowed to experience things and processes that could not be experienced without the dream."[28]

The bad spirit is bound to the life of the body and after death appears as something other than human (as a ghost). The struggle between good and bad spirit in life comes to a climax at death with the bad spirit trying to eat the good spirit. The bad spirit is thought to be afraid of light, so people light a fire or carry a lamp in order to protect themselves from the bad spirit.

Dobbin says that "the heart of the old death and mourning ritual was the soul."[29] It was a time of ambiguity. People were not sure whether the good soul would become a helping spirit for the family and lineage, remembered through a medium in the family, or whether it would rise from the body and go to a place in the sky world to join the ancestors. They also had to deal with the bad spirit and whether or not the house and land would have to be exorcised to get rid of it.

Anthropologist Charles Valentine reports how the Lakalai people of New Britain in Papua New Guinea have names for three soul-like entities. The individual human being is represented by one of each. First the *halulu*, usually best translated as "shade", is generally thought of as the shadow, reflection, mirror image, and in the modern context, the photographic representation of the individual. This soul is said to disappear at death.[30] The second soul-like entity is an invisible spirit double of the living person, called the *kalulu*. This double leaves the individual in sleep and unconsciousness, and goes and witnesses and participates in events experienced in dreams. It can be captured by spirit-beings that cause illness, and it is permanently separated from the individual's remains at death. This spirit double survives the death of the individual.

Third there is the *hitu*, which can be translated as "ghost" or spirit of the dead. All three soul-like entities are part of the living person. Nowadays

[28] Dobbin, *Summoning the Powers*, 33, citing Lothat Käser, *A Chuukese Theory of Personhood: The Concept Body, Mind, Soul and Spirit on the Islands of Chuuk (Micronesia). An Ethnological Study* (Eng. ed.; trans. Geoffrey Sutton and Derek Cheeseman; Nürnberg: VTR Publications, 2016), 240.

[29] Dobbin, *Summoning the Powers*, 37.

[30] C. A. Valentine, "The Lakalai of New Britain," in Lawrence and Meggitt, *Gods, Ghosts and Men*, 162–97, at 166.

people using Tok Pisin refer to all three as *teven* (*teven* blong man—"soul of man").[31]

REINCARNATION

In his PhD thesis, Christiane Flack tells of the experience of having a woman approach with great affection and then asking for her address and mobile phone number.[32] It seems that the woman though Christiane was her deceased son returning. This is not an isolated experience. Trompf tells of an experience at a Bena Bena village in the eastern New Guinea highlands, "… an old woman wept before me for half an hour, believing that one of my little daughters was the reborn soul of a child she had lost years before."[33] The belief in the return of the dead is also an essential part of the so-called cargo cults, which include the return of the dead.

An interesting case of reincarnation is found with the people of the Trobriand Islands of Papua New Guinea. Traditional Trobriand belief holds that people live in Boyowa, which is the visible, material world. However, there is also Tuma, which is a hidden, invisible dimension of reality. The two realms are like mirror reflections of each other and are not physically distant but coincide. "It is through this intimate, simultaneous, coterminous mystical connection of the two realms, the visible and the invisible, that living humans of Boyuowa are able to communicate and interact with ancestral and other spirits."[34]

Humans have *baloma* "souls", which upon dying enter the invisible world of Tuma to become immaterial but nonetheless human *baloma* "spirits" until such time as they are reincarnated and reborn in human form back into Boyowa where they are intimately involved in virtually all aspects of earthly life: magic, reproduction, kinship, chieftainship, sacrifice, mortuary ritual, and reincarnation.

In Tuma the *baloma* spirit's hair grows grey and it develops the features of old age. Eventually it is forgotten. Then the *baloma* sheds the aged forms

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[31] Tok Pisin *teven* is derived from the English "devil". Sometimes people use the expression *tewel* in Tok Pisin.

[32] Christiane Falck, "Calling the Dead: Spirits, Mobile Phones, and the Ttalk of God in a Sepik Community (Papua New Guinea)" (PhD diss., James Cook University, 2016).

[33] Trompf, *Melanesian Religion*, 46.

[34]Mark S. Mosko, *Ways of Baloma: Rethinking Magic and Kinship from the Trobriands* (Malinowski Mnographs; Chicago. Hau Books, 2017), 121.

in the manner of crabs, snakes, and prawns to emerge with new, youthful hair, teeth and skin. After undergoing several deaths and rebirths, the decrepit *baloma* desires to return to the visible material realm of Boyowa. It goes to the seashore to bathe, with the waves peeling off the aged skin once and for all. All that is left is the memoryless, watery, *waiwaia* spirit child ready to be transported from Tuma to the womb of a Boyowan woman. Thus, the internal *baloma* soul of a living person originates in the implanted *waiwaia* (spirit child).

A *waiwaia* fetus is essentially the detached residue of a *baloma* spirit that emerges from the spirit's decomposing body in Tuma. The *waiwaia* assumes a liquid form when it is transported by another *baloma* spirit of Tuma to be deposited into the womb of its human mother.[35] Once deposited in the mother's womb, during the pregnancy and even after being born, the *waiwaia* can be fed by various donations from the father to build and grow the fetus. Through his donation in sexual relations, the image (*kekwabu*) he imparts can shape or form the infant child so as physically to resemble him.[36]

Modernity and Globalisation

Christian evangelisation in the Pacific began in 1668 with Jesuit priests and brothers coming from the Philippines to Guam—what were then known as the Ladrones (Thieves) Islands. The missionaries lost no time and baptised 13,289 people within a year and 30,000 people by the beginning of the third year. The Spanish were supplanted in the Pacific by incoming merchants, explorers, and scientific expeditions, sent out by the Dutch, British, French, and Germans. The USA took over Guam after the Spanish-American war of 1898, and Spain sold the northern Mariana Islands and its other Micronesian "possessions" to Germany.[37] Global politics, mercantile manoeuvrings, whalers, traders, sandlewood buyers, beachcombers, with the accompanying spread of fatal diseases and the introduction of firearms meant radical changes for people of the Pacific. Christianity was established in Oceania in

[35] Mosco, *Ways of Baloma*, 221. This is the origin of the "virgin birth" theory associated with the Trobriand Islands, where a father is a "stranger" to his children.

[36] Bronislaw Malinowski, "Baloma; The Spirits of the Dead in the Trobriand Islands," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Northern Ireland* 46 (1916): 353–430.

[37] Vicente M. Diaz, *Repositioning the Missionary: Rewriting the Histories of Colonialism, Native Catholicism, and Indigeneity in Guam* (Pacific Islands Monograph Serie; Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010), 12.

the midst of these changes. Modern-day influence of globalisation reaches into even the most isolated islands. Nowadays the majority of indigenous people in Oceania profess to be Christian.[38] Yet, though lifestyle, and cosmology may change, many, perhaps the majority, continue to be strongly influenced by traditional cultural understandings associated with the human person, death, and the conduct of funerals.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION: SPIRITS AND ESCHATOLOGY

In the Hebrew Bible, the idea of an individual soul that survives death is a foreign concept.[39] A person's life force (*nepes*) was not immortal. However, if individuals are fundamentally embedded in their families, then their own deaths, however frightening to contemplate, lack the finality that death carries with it in comparison with a culture that has a more individualistic understanding of self.[40]

Modern individualism is grounded in modernity's location of the self in the inner depths of one's interiority rather than in one's social role or public relations. Life and death do not have the same meaning in a world that stresses social identity. The modern ideal has society composed of two entities: the state and the individual, with little room for family identities and roles. Fulfilling those roles is relegated to private choice. However, in the Hebrew Bible we see a different understanding, where God fulfils God's promises to Abraham or to Moses, long after both of them as an individual has died. One sees the individual, dying a good death, gathered with their kin. The functional equivalent of death would be loss of a descendent. Job (42:13) loses his children, but then has more. Admittedly they are not the same as the individuals who died, but in the highly collective family context, that is not quite so important. Birth is the reversal of death and the functional equivalent of afterlife or the resurrection.[41] With the continued importance of social identity in many parts of Oceania it would be worth considering the Hebrew Bible view of the reversal of death in progeny as a functional equivalent of the soul in Oceania.

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[38] The main exceptions are settler countries such as Australia and New Zealand, where an increasing percentage of the population claim to have no religion.

[39] Jon D. Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 112.

[40] Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israe*l, 109.

[41] Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel*, 116.

Māori theologians suggest that the idea of the Hawaiki as the place their ancestors came from and the place the soul returns to may be treated as a "seed of the Word" prompting us to relook at what Christians call "heaven". The inexplicable aspect of 'heaven' is summed up in scripture "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered the heart of men or women the things God had prepared for them that love God" (1 Cor 2:9). Christian faith refers to the resurrection of the body to life everlasting. Heaven, like Hawaiki, is understood as a place or state where we hope that our ancestors, and in our turn, we ourselves go after death as our final destiny. Māori historians tell how it was heaven as a state of eternal happiness, rather than some form of half-existence of the customary notion, that influenced many Māori to convert to Christianity. One cannot simply interchange Hawaiki and heaven, but surely Hawaiki helps one to develop and appreciate the gospel understanding of heaven. A similar reflection could be based on Tuma of the Trobriand Islands, and other places of final destiny for the soul.

Popular western Christianity tends to be dualistic, regarding life after death as the resurrection or ongoing existence of the soul. Classical Pauline theology and the creeds speak of the "resurrection of the body" or a "spiritual resurrection". While this concept is very difficult for western believers it is not so difficult for Oceanic ones where concepts of body/soul and alive/dead are much more permeable and where myths and narratives help envision the transition between such concepts. The ideal of having Christians who are truly Māori or truly Papua New Guinean is illustrated by a Māori saying: *Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou. Ka ora te manuhiri* ("With your food basket and mine, guests will be satisfied").[42]

[42] Philip Cody, *Seeds of the Word Ngā kōkomo o te kupa: The Meeting of Māori Spirituality and Christianity* (Wellington: Steele Roberts, 2004), 8.