

EDITORIAL

Towards a Theologically Balanced Diet

What are the ingredients of a good meal? A proper balance of the main essential food groups necessary for healthy growth, presented in a tasty and appetising way. What about a good theological diet? Surely we need a balance of solid biblical exposition, theological reflection, practical integration, and contextual dialogue.

The church in Melanesia is in need of such a balanced diet. Indeed, all churches need such a diet. As Christians, we all, regardless of our ecclesiastical traditions, hold our biblical heritage close to our spiritual hearts. David Hesselgrave, Professor of Missiology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, recently made this insightful comment.¹

“An underlying cause of the current weakness is discoverable at precisely the place of the (Evangelical) movement’s strength. If the source of our strength has been a high regard for the full authority of the Bible, then the source of our weakness is a relative disregard for its proper use.”

While this may be a worldwide phenomenon, the church in Melanesia must, as part of the world Christian community, be aware of the current trends. The *Melanesian Journal of Theology* cannot pretend to lead in the direction of returning to the biblical/theological “square meal”, but, certainly in this issue, we have endeavoured to present articles, which cover the essential areas of theological study – biblical exposition, theological reflection, pastoral and cultural studies, and inter-faith dialogue.

Theo Aerts’ article on the need to indigenise our theological language is a detailed study of the translation of biblical and theological concepts

¹ David J. Hesselgrave, “The Role of the Academy in the Current Evangelical Malaise”, in *Trinity World Forum* 20-2 (Winter 1995), p. 1.

between languages – ancient, ecclesiastical, European, and Melanesian. He outlines the uses and abuses of terms used in our ecclesiastical vocabulary.

My study of Gen 4 to 11 is an attempt to demonstrate some of the theological developments regarding the spread of sin in the primordial narratives.

The questions regarding the interface between Islam and Judeo-Christian religion, as addressed by Wanis Semaan, are timely for the Melanesian church. The points of contact and contrast between Islam and Christianity highlight the challenge, which Islam brings to PNG, at a time when its influence in this country is steadily increasing.

Gaius Helix brings before us a discussion on pastoral ministry in the PNG urban context. He outlines the needs of the modern pastor, and the resources he has to meet the challenge.

Kewai Kero's interesting study on the theological uses of the concept of water in the Book of Numbers highlights some currents in present theological exposition among Melanesian biblical scholars. He has delineated ritual, as well as physical, uses of water in the book, which demonstrate God as both Sanctifier and Provider – two important motifs for Melanesian Christianity.

The final article, by Gabriel Keni, is an attempt by a young Melanesian to tackle the age-old theological question of the fairness of God's election to salvation. He has brought some fresh insights to the question, particularly through the eyes of the PNG church.

The challenge before the Melanesian church is to take its place in the world Christian community. Our theological and biblical reflection on the issues, which face our church, are essential, as the Melanesian church faces the third millennium. Our congregations need leaders who are biblical and theological thinkers, who can apply the timeless truths to the present-day PNG situation.

It goes without saying that the opinions expressed within these articles are the opinions of the authors, and not necessarily those of the editors. We trust, however, that these papers will indeed stimulate healthy dialogue and reflective criticism, and perhaps inspire us to examine and “*guard the good deposit that was entrusted to us*” (2 Tim 1:14).

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