



MELANESIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

Vol 36 (2020)

Editorial

Geoffrey D. Dunn

Report on postponement of MATS 2020

Editor

Peer Reviewed Articles

Natural Theology and the Different Bodies of the Christian Gospel: part 1: What is the Problem for which Natural Theology Seems a Solution?

John G. Flett

Natural Theology and Theological Ethics: Applications in Melanesian Contexts

Paul Anthony McGavin

Knowledge of the Concept of God in Relation to Human Nature: Melanesians in Perspective

Modest Eligi Sangia, OFM Cap

Hapkas* Christology as Resistance and Innovation in *The Mountain

Steve Taylor

Speak of the Devil:

***Suanggi*, Satan, and Spiritual Healing in West Papua**

Michael J. Toy

Journal of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools



All issues of *Melanesian Journal of Theology* are available online and free of charge in PDF format on the Christian Leaders' Training College website (<http://www.cltc.ac.pg>) and click on the "Melanesian Journal of Theology" panel.

Individual articles can also be downloaded free of charge from <http://www.theologyontheweb.org.uk>.

Some early back issues are available in print. Please contact CLTC at PO Box 45, Banz Jiwaka, PNG.

Copyright © Melanesian Association of Theological Schools

ISSN 0256-856X Volume 36 (2020)

This journal is indexed in the ATLA Religion Database®, a product of the American Theological Library Association, 300 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 2100, Chicago IL 60606 USA.

See <https://www.atla.com> Email: atla@atla.com

This journal is abstracted in *Religious and Theological Abstracts*, 121 South College Street (P.O. Box 215), Myerstown PA 17067, USA.

See <http://www.rtabstracts.org> Email: admin@rtabstracts.org

Melanesian Journal of Theology grants permission for any article to be reproduced for educational use, as long as the material is distributed free and credit is given to *Melanesian Journal of Theology*.

ADDRESS:

Melanesian Journal of Theology
PO Box 45, Banz Jiwaka, PNG

MELANESIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

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.

Editor:

Geoffrey D. Dunn, FAHA

University of Pretoria, South Africa, and John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland

Email: gdd62au@hotmail.com

Associate Editors:

Charles Dufour, Good Shepherd Seminary, Banz, PNG

Unia Api, Pacific Adventist University, Port Moresby, PNG

Editorial Board:

Scott Charlesworth, Nungalinya College, Darwin, Australia

Thomas Davai Jr.

Allan Davidson, University of Auckland, NZ

John Hitchen, emeritus, Laidlaw College, Christchurch, NZ

Joses Imona, Pacific Adventist University, Boroko, PNG

William Longgar, Christian Leaders Training College, Banz, PNG

Maxon Mani, Christian Leaders Training College, Banz, PNG

George Mombi, Christian Leaders Training College, Banz, PNG

Ma'afu Palu, United Bible Societies, Sydney, Australia

Clement Papa, Archdiocese of My Hagen, PNG

Stephen Pattemore, Bible Society, NZ

Cathy Ross, City Mission Society, Oxford, UK

Sussie Stanley, Sonoma Adventist College, Kokopo, PNG

Nasili Vaka'uta, Trinity Methodist Theological College, Auckland, NZ

Joseph Vnuk, Catholic Theological Institute, Bomana, PNG

Douglas Young, SVD, Archdiocese of Mt Hagen, PNG

Brandon Zimmerman, Catholic Theological Institute, Bomana, PNG

CONTENTS

Contents	v
Abbreviations	vi
Editorial	Geoffrey D. Dunn, FAHA viii
<i>Conference Report</i>	
Report on postponement of MATS 2020 Editor.....	1
<i>Peer Reviewed Articles</i>	
Natural Theology and the Different Bodies of the Christian Gospel: Part 1: What is the Problem for which Natural Theology Seems a Solution? John G. Flett	9
Natural Theology and Theological Ethics: Applications in Melanesian Contexts Paul Anthony McGavin.....	33
Knowledge of the Concept of God in Relation to Human Nature: Melanesians in Perspective Modest Eligi Sangia, OFM Cap	57
<i>Hapkas</i> Christology as Resistance and Innovation in <i>The Mountain</i> Steve Taylor	81
<i>Suanggi</i>, Satan, and Spiritual Healing in West Papua Michael J. Toy.....	103

KNOWLEDGE OF THE CONCEPT OF GOD IN RELATION TO HUMAN NATURE: MELANESIANS IN PERSPECTIVE

Modest Eligi Sangia, OFM Cap

Catholic Theological Institute, Bomana, Papua New Guinea

Abstract

Throughout history, the human person has had a natural desire to know God. Among the created order, human persons alone have a capacity to inquire into God. By using the rational capacity, which is part of human nature, he or she is able to come to a concept of a being responsible for bringing into being all creatures. Understanding the history of philosophical thinking, will enable us to see how the human person is concerned with the concept of God. The human person is rational; and using this power he/she gets the concept of the creator. Using reason alone, the human person is capable of attain knowledge of the existence of God, as the creator of the universe. It is also possible through reason alone to know some of the attributes that pertain to God. Yet, the human person without revelation cannot know the nature and the will of God. Hence, though capable to know the existence of God as the creator of the universe, through reason alone, revelation is important to get into God's will and nature. Natural reason and revelation complement each other in our knowledge of God. This article shows the proofs of some philosophers on the existence of God using reason alone. I will classify them into cosmological, ontological, and unanimity of all cultures' arguments. I will also trace some verses in the Bible that support the human person's natural knowledge of God. Finally, I will show that in Melanesia, as well as in Africa, the existence of God is so obvious that it is not subjected to intellectual speculation, such that doubt about the existence of God has not yet been a subject of discussion in Melanesia and in Africa.

Key Words

concept of God, existence of God, natural theology, revelation, Melanesian culture

INTRODUCTION

The subject of this paper is the human person's capacity in coming to know God and the extent of that knowledge. In this paper I intend to show that Melanesian people are not left behind in having a natural knowledge of God. This will help demonstrate the universality of the natural human knowledge of God. The human person is capable of coming to the concept of God by his/her nature as a rational being. "... every human soul has, by reason of her nature ... contemplation of true being ..."¹ All cultures have manifested a natural knowledge of God, or at least of a supernatural world. Yet, with all people having the concept of God, this does not mean that God is a human construct. Rather, God exists as the source of this concept in the human person. The history of thought shows human inquiry into the concept of God. Christianity has had two ways of approaching knowledge of God: natural theology and revelation. Natural theology is a way of knowing the existence of God, and the divine attributes by using reason alone. However, this knowledge is limited and imperfect. Revelation comes to perfect it and is the knowledge of what we get through supernatural self-disclosure. This is sometimes called special revelation and is collected in the Bible. The two ways of knowing God are complementary in the Christian tradition. The human person using unaided reason can come to know the existence of God by reflection on the created order. Through reason too the human person can grasp some of the attributes of God, which reason can reflect by itself. However, knowledge of the essence or nature of God needs revelation.

Philosophers and theologians agree that the human being is capable to some extent of knowing God though reason alone. This seems to be universal in most cultures of the world. Reason is taken as the preamble for the reception of faith. However, revelation is essential for adequate knowledge of God. In this paper I would like to survey the history of philosophy on reason alone in coming to the knowledge of God. Then I will explore what the Bible says on the

¹ Plato, *Phdr.* 249e: ... πᾶσα μὲν ἀνθρώπου ψυχὴ φύσει τεθέεται τὰ ὄντα ...English translation of all Plato's works used here is in *Plato: The Collected Dialogues, Including the Letters* (ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns; Bollingen Series, 71; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961).

roles of reason in coming to the knowledge of God. Philosophers, using their power of reason, could make arguments to demonstrate the existence of God and the divine attributes. The arguments vary from cosmological to ontological. By cosmological arguments I mean those that start from creatures and infer inductively that God is responsible for the existence of those creatures. In other words, the created world gives us a clue to the existence of a creator. By ontological argument I mean those that start from the concept of God itself and infer deductively that a being that corresponds to this concept must necessarily exist. There is also the argument from the unanimity of all cultures, which suggests that, since all cultures of the world, whether isolated or connected, have a concept of God, a being that corresponds to this concept must exist. The Bible too attests that those who have no revelation still have a concept of a spiritual realm, where God is believed to be.

This paper has five sections. The first deals with human nature in relation to God. This section aims to affirm the human person's capacity to inquire about God, or the realm of God, the characteristics of this inquiry, and its universality in most cultures of the world, including Melanesia. Section two examines the philosophical approach to the concept of God. It is simply a documentation of what philosophers have said about God using reason alone. Section three deals with what the Bible says about human nature and its capacity to reach knowledge of the concept of God. Section four is the evaluation of that human capacity to attain such knowledge. Finally, section five considers the concept of God in Melanesia before offering a conclusion.

THE HUMAN PERSON'S NATURE IN RELATION TO GOD

In this section, I would like to explain what is meant by human nature and knowledge of God. Also, what is included in this unaided reason in coming to the concept of God? Natural knowledge of God is God known by human beings, through reason alone. Maurice R. Holloway says this knowledge is:

God in so far as he is knowable through the light of natural reason alone, apart from any revelation God may have made concerning himself. That is to say it will be God as knowable through the being

of creatures; in a word, God as the first principle and proper cause of being, as the pure act of subsistent existence.²

Holloway continues to give the characteristics of this knowledge. First, he says that it “is a science, since it concludes to a certain and necessary truths” concerning God. This is because God is seen as a being responsible for the existence of the created order. Second, it is “wisdom, and the highest of the natural wisdoms, since it orders all things and all knowledge through the first and highest cause, God.”³ When human person looks at creatures God comes in as the final cause of all. The third characteristic according to Holloway is “not ordered to the performance of any action or production of anything, but only the contemplation of truth”⁴ about God. This means that it is knowledge for its own sake. Fourthly, this endeavour is “the most perfect and highest of man’s powers.” This is because, the “intellect, is functioning in reference” to the supreme intelligence, that is God. The fifth characteristic, Holloway concludes:

... is the most satisfying and enjoyable of all natural sciences, for while what this science can tell us about the existence and nature of God may be small in quantity, the little knowledge that it does tell us affords the intellect greater joy and satisfaction and contributes more to its perfection than all the knowledge we can find out about creatures through the other sciences.⁵

We can say that the desire to know God is an activity that is within the nature of the human person. This activity makes the human person stand up with a special dignity that other animals cannot claim to have. The human person’s natural knowledge about God is therefore within his/her nature. It brings fulfilment and perfection to the human person. This kind of knowledge is available in most cultures, including the Melanesian culture, even though the extent and quality may differ from one culture to another.

² Maurice R. Holloway, SJ, *An Introduction to Natural Theology* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1959), 16.

³ Holloway, *An Introduction to Natural Theology*, 23.

⁴ Holloway, *An Introduction to Natural Theology*, 23.

⁵ Holloway, *An Introduction to Natural Theology*, 23–24.

PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACHES TO THE CONCEPT OF GOD

Ancient Period of Philosophy

There were several philosophers during the ancient period of philosophy, but I shall only mention a few. In this section I would like to refer to Homer, Plato, and Aristotle on rational knowledge of God. Even the writings of Plato and Aristotle are numerous. The few quotations presented here are an invitation for the reader to go to the original sources and discover more.

In Homeric times, no one questioned the existence of gods. The majority of people had an idea of anthropomorphic deities and demigods. *Odyssey* affirms that human being cannot live without God. Human actions, such as prayer and sacrifice of food and drink, manifesting belief in and a relationship with God existed long before there was special revelation. Homer wrote: "... when you have duly prayed and made your drink-offering, pass the cup to your friend that he may do so also. I doubt not that he too lifts his hands in prayer, for man cannot live without God in the world."⁶ This quotation shows a sense of people having a concept of the divine.

Plato affirms, in his writings, that "...everyone with the least sense always calls on god at the beginning of any undertaking, small or great."⁷ God is described as spirit or soul and the source of change in the universe. In *Phaedrus*, Plato says: "the mind itself has a divining power."⁸ This says it all. The power of the mind with capacity to come to the spiritual realm, where God is said to take abode, is able to prophesy to the existence of God. For Plato, the immortality of the human soul is derived from the immortal nature, and in this case; none other than God.

The soul of human person is the source of motion in a body. This soul is from a first principle which for Plato, it is characterised by

⁶ Homer, *Od.* 3.44–48: τοῦ γὰρ καὶ δαίτης ἠντήσατε δεῦρο μολόντες. λαὸν ἔπι ἡ σπείσῃς τε καὶ εὐξέαι ἢ θέμις ἐστί ἰδὸς καὶ τοῦτω ἔπειτα δέπας μελιηδέος οἴνου ἢ σπείσαι, ἐπεὶ καὶ τοῦτον οἴομαι ἀθανάτοισιν ἰεῦχέσθαι πάντες δὲ θεῶν χατέουσ' ἄνθρωποι. English trans. Samuel Butler, *The Iliad of Homer and the Odyssey* (London: William Benton, Publisher, 1952).

⁷ Plato, *Ti.* 27c: τοῦτο γε δὴ πάντες ὅσιν καὶ κατὰ βραχὺ σωθροσύνης μετέχουσιν, ἐπὶ παντὸς ὀρμῆ καὶ σμικροῦ καὶ μεγάλου πράγματος θεὸν αἰεὶ που καλοῦσιν:...

⁸ Plato, *Phdr.*, 242c: μαντικὸν γέ τι καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ

eternal motion, no beginning or end, imperishable, and immutable as he says:

...moreover this self-mover is the source and first principle of motion for all other things that are moved. Now a first principle cannot come into being, for while anything that comes to be must come to be from a first principle, the latter cannot come to be from anything whatsoever; if it did, it would cease any longer to be a first principle....⁹

This being is not only the source of movement in a living body, but for Plato, it is the principle of motion in the whole universe. Plato continues:

The self-mover, then, is the first principle of motion, and it is as impossible that it should be destroyed...otherwise, the whole universe, the whole of that which comes to be, would collapse into immobility, and never find another source of motion to bring it back into being.¹⁰

In *Timaeus*, Plato gave something like a creation story in myth form. Here is where he talks about the demiurge. The demiurge is taken as a workman, who seems to form the universe according to the ideal or patterns of a subordinate being rather than the supreme being. He says: “Now everything that becomes or is created must of necessity be created by some cause, for without a cause, nothing can be created...the world has been framed in the likeness of that which is apprehended by reason and mind and unchangeable...”¹¹ The god portrayed in *Timaeus* is not of God as the ultimate cause of all that exists. Rather, the demiurge works on the pre-existing material.

⁹ Plato, *Phdr.* 245d: ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὅσα κινεῖται τοῦτο πηγὴ καὶ ἀρχὴ κινήσεως ἀρχὴ δὲ ἀγένητον. ἐξ ἀρχῆς γὰρ ἀνάγκη πᾶν τὸ γιγνόμενον γίνεσθαι, αὐτὴν δὲ μὴδ’ ἐξ ἐνός· εἰ γὰρ ἔκ του ἀρχῆς γίγνοιτο, οὐκ ἂν ἐξ ἀρχῆς γίγνοιτο.

¹⁰ Plato, *Phdr.* 245d–e: οὕτω δὴ κινήσεως μὲν ἀρχὴ τὸ αὐτὸ αὐτὸ κινουῦν. τοῦτο δὲ οὐτ’ ἀπόλλυσθαι οὔτε γίνεσθαι δυνατόν, ἢ πάντα τε οὐρανὸν πᾶσάν τε γένεσιν συμπεσοῦσαν στήναι καὶ μήποτε αὐθις ἔχειν ὄθεν κινήθεντα γενήσεται.

¹¹ Plato, *Ti.* 28a–29a: πᾶν δὲ αὐτὸ υἰονόμενον ὑπ’ αἰτίου τινός ἐξ ἀνάγκης γίνεσθαι παντὶ γὰρ ἀδύματον χωρὶς αἰτίου γένεσιν σχεῖν. ὅτου μὲν οὖν ἂν ὁ δημιουργὸς πρὸς τὰ κατὰ ταῦτα ἔχον βλέπων αἰεὶ, τοιοῦτω τινὶ προσχρώμενος παραδείγματι, τὴν ιδέαν καὶ δύναμιν αὐτοῦ ἀπεργάζηται, καλὸν ἐξ ἀνάγκης...οὕτω δὴ γεγενημένος πρὸς τὸ λόγῳ καὶ φρονήσει περιληπτὸν καὶ κατὰ ταῦτα ἔχον δεδημιούργηται:

Plato also introduced an important attribute of the demiurge, which he referred to as goodness. As he says:

...the creator...was good, and the good can never have any jealousy of anything. And being free from jealousy, he desires that all things should be as like himself as they could be...God desired that all things should be good and nothing bad, so far as this was attainable.¹²

In the Aristotelian writings, the concept of God as a self-unmoved mover is elaborated. In his *Metaphysics* there is the argument for one non-material being as the cause of change and movement in the universe. Again, this being of Aristotle is not the creator of the universe because matter seems to have always existed. Also according to Aristotle, this being is not aware of the universe because it would diminish one's dignity to know lesser things than the divine self. The main activity of this being is the contemplation of thought itself. The unmoved mover according to Aristotle causes motion by desire. He says:

Now it is in just this way that the object of desire and the object of thought produce movement—they move without being moved. And indeed the primary objects of both are the same...Now the source of movement for the thought is the object of thought, and, of the two systoecheiae, one is intrinsically the object of thought. On this side, the substance is primary and, within substance, that which is simple and is in activation.¹³

According to Aristotle, heaven and earth depend on the unmoved mover. The relation of both heaven and nature to the unmoved mover is in the order of final causality. The doctrine of the unmoved mover is regarded as the basis core of popular religious traditions.

¹² Plato, *Ti*. 29e–30a: ἀγαθὸς ἦν, ἀγαθῷ δὲ οὐδεὶς περι οὐδενὸς οὐδέποτε ἐγγίγνεται φθόνος; τούτου δ' ἐκτός ὦν πάντα ὅτι μάλιστα ἐβουλήθη γενέσθαι παραπλήσια ἑαυτῷ...βουληθεὶς γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἀγαθὰ μὲν πάντα, φλαῦρον δὲ μηδὲν εἶναι κατὰ δύναμιν...

¹³ Aristotle, *Metaph.* Lambda 7, 1072a: κινεῖ δὲ ὧδε τὸ ὄρεκτὸν καὶ τὸ νομτὸν: κινεῖ οὐ κινούμενα. τούτων τὰ πρῶτα τὰ αὐτὰ...νοῦς δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ νομοῦ κινεῖται, νομτὴ δὲ ἡ ἐτέρα συστοιχία καθ' αὐτήν: καὶ ταύτης ἡ οὐσία πρώτη, καὶ ταύτης ἡ ἀπλή καὶ κατ' ἐνέργειαν... English trans. H. Lawson-Tancred, *Aristotle: Metaphysics*, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin, 1998).

In this section we see Homer, Plato, and Aristotle affirming natural knowledge of God or divinity in their own time, prior to most of the special revelation of God recorded in the Bible. In the next subsection, we are going to examine the contribution of European medieval philosophy. Although Christians held that special revelation had been completed in Jesus, philosophers in this period of history could still use natural reason alone to prove the existence of God.

Medieval Period of Philosophy

In the medieval period of western history of philosophy, the concept of a monotheistic God was well developed. The major concern at the time was to prove the existence of God. During this epoch, there were several philosophers who addressed this problem. In this regard, I would like to make reference to Augustine, Anselm, and Thomas Aquinas.

Augustine's reasoning about the existence of God is from eternal truths. He wrote:

A man who is not great-spirited or magnanimous still has a true spirit. In both cases the reason is that the essence or being of body and of spirit is not the being or essence of truth; but the trinity is, which is one, only, great God, true, truthful, truth.¹⁴

The first step in the argument from eternal truth as Augustine writes is "my certitude of my own existence."¹⁵ The starting point is the living personal soul. Augustine says since he is deceived, he must be there.¹⁶ Then Augustine continued to explain the degree of beings. "Some things simply exist; others exist and live; yet others exist, live and understand."¹⁷ A human person exists, lives, and

¹⁴ Augustine, *De trin.* 8.2.3(CCL 50.270): "Animum enim uerum habet etiam qui non est magnanimus; quandoquidem corporis et animi essential, non est ipsius ueritatis essential, sicuti est Trinitas Deus unus, solus, magnus, uerus, uerax, ueritas." English trans. E. Hill, *Saint Augustine: The Trinity*, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, part 1, vol. 5: The Trinity (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991).

¹⁵ Ralph M. McInerny, *A History of Western Philosophy*, vol. 2: *From St. Augustine to Ockham* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970), 3.

¹⁶ Augustine, *De ciu. Dei* 11.26 (CCL 48.345).

¹⁷ McInerny, *A History of Western Philosophy*, 2.35.

understands. Truth is higher than reason; consequently, truth is higher and more excellent than our minds. It is truth which makes us understand all good. The beauty of truth is above space and time. “All who behold it are changed for the better, and no one passes judgment on it, and without it no one can judge aright. Hence it is clear, beyond doubt, that truth is superior to our minds...”¹⁸ Augustine concludes that truth itself is God, who exists truly and perfectly. He went on to say:

But it is the one true God who is active and operative in all those things, but always acting as God, that is present everywhere in his totality, free from spatial confinement, completely untrammelled, absolutely indivisible, utterly unchangeable, and filling heaven and earth with his ubiquitous power which is independent of anything in the natural order.¹⁹

In light of the notion of eternal truth, Augustine saw God as the source of all good things and happiness. “God is the only source to be found of any good things, but especially of those which make man good and those which will make him happy; only from him do they come into a man and attach themselves to a man.”²⁰

Anselm introduced the ontological argument for the existence of God. Being a man of faith, he sought reconciliation between reason and faith. In one of his famous works, *Proslogion*, he attempted to develop an ontological proof for the existence of God. He understood the idea of God as that than which nothing greater can

¹⁸ Augustine, *De lib. arb.* 2.14.38 (CCL 29.): “...cernentes se commutat omnes in Melius, a nullo in deterius commutator; nullus de illa iudicat, nullus sine illa iudicat bene. Ac per hoc eam manifestum est mentibus nostris...” English trans. Robert P. Russell, OSA, *St. Augustine: The Teacher; The Free Choice of the Will; Grace and Free Will* (Fathers of the Church, vol. 59; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1968).

¹⁹ Augustine, *De ciu. Dei* 7.30 (CCL 47.212): “Haec utem facit atque agit unus uerus Deus, sed sicut Deus, id est ubique totus, nullis inclusus locis, nullis unculis alligatus, in nullas partes sectilis, ex nulla parte mutabilis, implens caelum et terram praesente potential, non indigente natura.” English trans. John O’Meara, *St. Augustine: Concerning the City of God against the Pagans* (Penguin Classics; London: Penguin, 1984).

²⁰ Augustine, *De trin.* 13.7.10 (CCL 50A.394): “Non enim quaecumque bona, maximeque illa quibus quisque fit bonus, et illa quibus fiet beatus, unde nisi a Deo in hominem ueniant, et homini accedant, inueniri potest.”

be conceived. Anselm argued that among all of us even the fool has the idea of something than which no greater can be conceived. He says:

Now we believe that You are something than which nothing greater can be thought. Or can it be that a thing of such a nature does not exist, since ‘the Fool has said in his heart, there is no God’ [Ps. 13:1; 52:1]? But surely, when this same Fool hears what I am speaking about, namely, ‘something-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought’, he understands what he hears, and what he understands is in his mind, even if he does not understand that it actually exists.²¹

He went on to give an example of a painter who has a plan of something he wants to come up with. The plan is in the mind of the painter but the portrait is not actually existing since it is yet to be realised. “However, when he has actually painted it, then he both has it in his mind and understands that it exists because he has now made it.”²² From the above analogy, Anselm asserted that the being of God cannot exist in the mind alone; otherwise it would not be greater. Anselm concludes:

And surely, that-than-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought cannot exist in the mind alone. For if it exists solely in the mind even, it can be thought to exist in reality also, which is greater ... Therefore there is absolutely no doubt that something-than-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought exists both in the mind and in reality.²³

Thomas Aquinas gives the famous five ways for the existence of God, known as the cosmological argument. According to him, the

²¹ Anselm, *Proslogion* 2.2: “Et quidem credimus te esse aliquid quo nihil maius coitari possit. An ergo non est aliqua talis natura, quia ‘dixit insipiens in corde suo: non est Deus’ [Ps 13:1; 52:1]? Sed certe ipse idem insipiens, cum audit hoc ipsum quod dico: ‘aliquid quo maius nihil cogitari potest’, intelligit quod audit; et quod intelligit, in intellectu eius est, etiam si non intelligat illud esse.” English trans. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans (eds), *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works* (Oxford World Classics; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

²² Anselm, *Proslogion* 2.2: “Cum vero iam pinxit, et habet in intellectu et intelligit esse quod iam fecit.”

²³ Anselm, *Proslogion* 2.2: “Et certe id quo maius cogitari nequit, non potest esse in solo intellectu. Si enim vel in solo intellectu est, potest cogitari esse et in re; quod maius est ... Existit ergo procul dubio aliquid quo maius cogitari non valet, et in intellectu et in re.”

existence of God can be proved in five ways using the created order or creatures:

The first is the argument from motion or change. This is a development and elaboration of Aristotle's argument about the 'unmoved mover'. Whatever is in motion is set in motion by another. If that which sets in motion is itself in motion then it must be set in motion by another and that in its turn by another again. But we cannot proceed to infinity; otherwise there would be no first mover. Therefore, we are bound to arrive at the first mover, which is set in motion by no other. For Thomas Aquinas this is what everyone understands to be God.²⁴

The second argument is from the nature of causes. By looking at what causes another, we would go to infinity, which is impossible. Aquinas concludes that there must be a primary cause, which causes all the rest, but itself uncaused. The first cause generally must therefore be inferred. This should be the cause of things and phenomena in general. The uncaused cause, for Thomas is none other than God.²⁵

The third Argument is taken from possibility and necessity. It is about contingency. Thomas says:

Some of the things we come across can be but need not be, for we find them springing up and dying away, thus sometimes in being and sometimes not. Now everything cannot be like this, for a thing that need not be, once was not; and if everything need not be, once upon a time there was nothing. But if that were true there would be nothing even now, because something that does not exist can only be brought into being by something already existing.²⁶

²⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1.2.3.

²⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1.2.3.

²⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1.2.3: "Invenimus enim in rebus quaedam quae sunt possibilis esse et non esse; cum quaedam inveniantur generari et corrumpi, et pr consequens possibilis esse et non esse. Impossibile est autem omnia quae sunt talia, semper esse; quia quod possibile est non esse, quandoque non est. Si igitur omnia sunt possibilis non esse, aliquando nihil fuit in rebus. Sed si hoc est verum, etiam nunc nihil esset; quia quod non est, non incipit esse nisi per aliquid quod est." English trans. Thomas Gilby, OP, *Thomas Aquinas: Summa Theologiae, vol. 1: The Existence of God, Part One: Questions 1–13* (New York: Doubleday, 1969).

The fourth argument is taken from the gradation found in things. In other words, it is about the degrees of perfection of beings. Aquinas says:

Some things are found to be more good, more true, more noble, and so on, and other things less. But some comparative terms describe varying degrees of approximation to a superlative ... There is something therefore which causes in all other things their being, their goodness, and whatever other perfectin they have. And this we call 'God'.²⁷

The fifth way is taken from the governance of the universe. In other words, it is called the teleological argument or design. Aquinas says:

An orderedness of actions to an end is observed in all bodies obeying natural laws, even when they lack awareness ... Nothing however that lacks awareness tends to a goal, except under the direction of someone with awareness and with understanding; the arrow, for example, requires an archer. Everything in nature, therefore, is directed to its goal by someone with intelligence, and this we call 'God'.²⁸

All five ways are taken from the effects of something from which we may infer to be God. God comes in as responsible for the effects we see around. The arguments from Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas are said to be cosmological arguments for the existence of God. This is because they are all derived from the cosmic order. Since the cosmic order is the effect, the human mind can infer the cause for these effects. For Thomas Aquinas, this cause is none other than what we call God. The

²⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1.2.3: "Invenitur enim in rebus aliquid magis et minus bonum, et verum, et nobile; et sic de aliis huiusmodi. Sed magis et minus dicuntur de diversis, secundum quod appropinquant diversimode ad aliquid quod maxime est ... Ergo est aliquid intelligens a quo omnes res naturales ordinantur ad finem; et hoc dicimus *Deum*."

²⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1.2.3: "Videmus enim quod aliqua auae cognitionem, scilicet corpora naturalia, opeerantur propter finem ... Ea autem quoae non habent cognitionem, non tendunt in finem, nisi directa ab aliquo cognoscente et intelligente, sicut sagitta a sagittante. Ergo est aliquid intelligens, a quo omnes res naturales odinanture ad finem; et hoc dicimus *Deum*."

medieval period in Europe is characterised by a strong belief in God. All the philosophers cited here shared in that strong belief; they were not questioning or criticising the existence of God but rather seeking to prove God's existence.

Modern Period of Philosophy

The modern period of western philosophy is marked by its emphasis on reason, empiricism, and positivism and was more critical, even sceptical, with regards to the existence of God. However, in this article I shall refer to René Descartes' works on the concept of God. Descartes shows the existence of God by using reason alone. He became aware of a thought or idea of a being more perfect than himself. This idea was put into his mind by a nature that was more perfect than his. According to Descartes, it is God who put this idea in his mind:

... reflecting on the fact that I had doubts, and that consequently my being was not completely perfect ... I decided to inquire whence I had learned to think of something more perfect than myself; and I clearly recognized that this must have been from some nature which was in fact more perfect ...²⁹

Hence, for Descartes, since he is mortal, finite, and imperfect and the idea of God in his mind is immortal, infinite, and perfect, he himself cannot be the author of this idea. God must exist as the transmitter of this idea. And for this way of thinking, he concludes God must exist. Descartes' and Anselm's arguments can be termed as ontological since they start from the very idea of God and go on to show God must exist in reality.

This first section of this article outlined the ideas philosophers have used at various points in history to argue for the existence of God using reason alone. The following section looks at what the Bible records about the human ability to come to some knowledge of God based on reason alone.

²⁹ René Descartes, *Discourse on Method* 4. English trans. F. E. Sutcliffe, *Descartes: Discourse on Method and the Meditations*, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968).

THE BIBLE AND HUMAN NATURE IN COMING TO KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

In this section I would like to trace some of the verses in the Bible that speak about the role of reason in the knowledge of God. This is on how the human person, using his or her rational nature, can come to the concept of God.

The psalmist says: “The heavens tell of the glory of God and the firmament proclaims the work of his hands” (Ps 18[19]:1[2]). Thus, nature can lead to the recognition of the existence of a transcendent God, creator of the universe. This is through the natural power of perception and intellect. Also, Psalm 8:4 speaks about seeing the greatness of the creator through creatures. The psalmist says “When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars you have established ...” The psalmist here sees obviously that creatures are the work of a creator, God.

The book of Wisdom seems to emphasise the precedence of human intellect when it comes to knowledge of God, by referring to its failure to be used. It says:

For all people who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature; and they were unable from the good things that are seen to know the one who exists, nor did they recognize the artisan, while paying heed to his works ... And if people were amazed at their power and working, let them perceive from them how much more powerful is the one who formed them. From the greatness and beauty of created things, comes the corresponding perception of their creator. (Wis 13:1, 4–5).

Paul brings in moral aspect besides the testimony of revelation. God imprinted certain knowledge of moral law upon the hearts of all human beings. Fidelity to this can lead to the salvation of those who have never heard the revealed word of God. This is a fidelity that involves not just the intellect but a human person’s whole personality. Paul says:

When Gentiles who do not possess the law, do distinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. They show that what the law requires is written in their hearts, to which their own conscience, also bears witnesses; and

their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them ...
(Rom 2:12–16)

The few verses I have traced from the Bible attest to the belief that creation speaks to the intellect of the human person. The intellect, through its reasoning power, is capable of inferring a being behind the existence of creatures. Hence, the Bible too acknowledges the knowledge of God arrived at through using reason alone.

EVALUATION OF THE NATURE OF THE HUMAN PERSON IN ACHIEVING KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

I have maintained that the human person is rational. This rationality allows him/her to come to the concept of the highest being. This being, in English called God, has been defined as supreme, absolute, “omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly good.”³⁰

I have also maintained that all cultures of the world, whether isolated on the periphery or connected with the rest, have a concept of a supernatural being. In this case, by his/her nature the human person is capable of having the concept of God. Since this knowledge is intellectual as it is from reason alone, the question arises: to what extent can this knowledge reach? Can human beings rely on intellectual knowledge to attain salvation? Or does the rational or intellectual knowledge of God have authority over revelation?

Alvin Plantinga on this issue says: “Part of our explanation of our so thinking ... lies in our views ...”³¹ This is in line with the position of Thomas Aquinas, that unaided reason can arrive at limited knowledge of God, for revelation is necessary for a human person to have adequate knowledge of God. Thomas Aquinas says:

For the human intellect is not able to reach a comprehension of the divine substance through its natural power. For according to its manner of knowing in the present life, the intellect depends on the sense for the origin of knowledge; and so those things that do not

³⁰ Stephen M. Cahn and David Shatz (eds), *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 3.

³¹ Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (eds), *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1983), 36.

fall under the senses cannot be grasped under the human intellect except in so far as that knowledge of them is gathered from the sensible things.³²

Thomas Aquinas continues to say that if the truth about God would be left on human reason alone, three consequences would follow. The first is that “few [people] would possess the knowledge of God”³³ According to him, there are three reasons as to why everybody cannot come to the knowledge of God through reason alone namely: “Some do not have physical disposition for such work ... however much they tried, they would be unable to reach the highest level of human knowledge which consists of knowing God.”³⁴ I agree with Thomas Aquinas since our IQs are not the same for everybody. Some are gifted more and others less. Others are too busy with daily activities. “For some [people] must devote themselves to taking care of temporal matters ... [and] would not be able to give so much time to the leisure of contemplative inquiry as to reach ... the knowledge of God.”³⁵ And finally he says, “there are some who are cut off by indolence.”³⁶ This is true since the search for knowledge is hindered by laziness and lack of curiosity.

The second awkward consequence of leaving knowledge of God to reason alone is that people could only “reach it after a great deal of time.” The reason is that this knowledge needs “a long training.”

³² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, 1.3.3: “Nam ad substantiam ipsius capiendam intellectus humanus naturali virtute pertingere non potest: cum intellectus nostril, secundum modum praesentis vitae, cognitio a sensu incipiat; et ideo e aquae in sensu non cadunt, non possunt humano intellectu capi, isi quatenus ex sensibilibus earum cogntio colligitur.” English translation by Anton C. Pegis (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975).

³³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* 1.4.3: “... paucis hominibus Dei cognitio inesset.”

³⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* 1.4.3: “Quidam siquidem propter complexionis indispositionem ... unde nullo studio ad hoc pertingere possent ut summum gradum humanae cognitionis attingerent, qui in cognoscendo Deum consistit.”

³⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* 1.4.3: “Oportet enim esse inter homines aliquos qui temporalibus administrandis insistent ... tantum tempus in otio contemplativae inquisitionis non possent expendere ut ... pertingerent, scilicet Dei cognitionem.”

³⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* 1.4.3: “Quidem autem impediuntur pigritia.”

He says, "... in youth, when the soul is swayed by various movements of the passions, it is not in a suitable state for the knowledge of such lofty truth."³⁷

The third consequence is that since human reason is fallible, it can make errors. He says, "... this is due partly to the weakness of our intellect in judgement, and partly to the admixture of images."³⁸ From this he concludes that revelation is necessary to help human person to come to the adequate knowledge of God.

Pope Pius XII agreed that reason can come to the concept of God and affirm the divine existence. But to understand the nature of this being needs another source of knowledge, which is revelation. He wrote:

Though human reason is, strictly speaking, truly capable by its own natural power and light of attaining to a true and certain knowledge of the one personal God, who watches over and controls the world by his providence, and of the natural law written in our hearts by the Creator, yet there are many obstacles which prevent reason from the effective and the relation between God and man ...³⁹

The human mind is limited in using reason alone to come to the knowledge of God for various reasons.

The human mind, in its turn, is hampered in the attaining of such truths, not only by the impacts of the senses and the imagination, but also by the disordered appetites which are the consequences of the original sin. So it happens that men in such matters easily persuade themselves that what they would not like to be true is false or at least doubtful.⁴⁰

³⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* 1.4.4: "... vix post longum tempus pertingerent ... longum exercitium ... tempore iuventutis, dum diversis motibus passionum anima fluctuat, non est apta ad tam altae veritatis cognitionem ..."

³⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* 1.4.5: "... propter debilitatem intellectus nostril in iudicando, et phantasmatum permixtionem."

³⁹ Pius XII, *Humani generis* (12 August 1950) 2 (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 42 [1950], 561–578, at 561–562). Quoted by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 37. English translation in *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Homebush, NSW: St Pauls, 1994).

⁴⁰ Pius XII, *Humani generis* 2.

Hence, if the search for the knowledge of God is left to reason alone, this knowledge would also be too human-centred. God had to intervene to complement the human reason.

The natural reasoning on the existence of God prepares the ground for understanding revelation. Some cultures, maybe because of the level of academic development, do not inquire into the realm of the spiritual purely for intellectual purposes. As we are going to see below, in the case of Melanesians, the spiritual realm is so obvious that people relate to it without much questioning. Yet, I would like to emphasise that the knowledge of this realm first comes from natural reason before any revelation. Melanesian people are part of the cultures of the world with a natural knowledge of God, or at last the spiritual realm, where God is believed to abide.

THE CONCEPT OF GOD AND MELANESIANS

Melanesian people appeal to a spiritual world where God is believed to be. Even before the arrival of the Christian missionaries to this part of the world, people had relationships with the spiritual realm. Bernard Narokobi said, “As Melanesians, we are a spiritual people. Even before Christians came onto our shores, we felt and knew the forces of a source greater than ourselves.”⁴¹ Narokobi went on to show the Melanesian understanding of this reality. “From our spirituality, we have communal vision of the cosmos. Our vision was not and still is not an artificially dichotomised and compartmentalized pragmatism of the secular society. Ours is a vision of totality, a vision of cosmic harmony.”⁴² Narokobi shows his concern about judging the Melanesian as godless using foreign criteria. He says: “Missionaries come to Melanesia and find an absence of church buildings, mitres and rich-priestly attire, ordained priests, hierarchy of bishops and angelic host of brothers, sisters, deacons, catechists and laity [sic!]. They conclude Melanesians lived under an atmosphere of godlessness ...”⁴³ For him, this is not the case, Melanesians are religious people, and they have a concept of the spiritual realm and sense of God.

⁴¹ Bernard Narokobi, *The Melanesian Way: Total Cosmic Vision of Life* (Port Moresby: Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, 1980), 4.

⁴² Narokobi, *The Melanesian Way*, 15.

⁴³ Narokobi, *The Melanesian Way*, 18.

As I wrote this article, I could see some similarities between the Melanesia and African concepts of God. In Melanesia as well as in Africa, there is an appeal to the spiritual world where God is believed to be for religious purposes. The existence of the supernatural realm, and thus the existence of God, and even life after death have not been subjected to doubt in either Melanesia or Africa. The existence of God is taken as so obvious that no one engages in giving arguments to prove the divine existence.

Like Narokobi, Ennio Mantovani described Melanesians as “religious people.”⁴⁴ John Mbiti described the Africans as “notoriously religious.”⁴⁵ These statements of Mantovani, Narokobi, and Mbiti affirm that Melanesians and Africans do not separate themselves from the supernatural world. They have a concept of God and a sense of religion. Traditional ways of relating to God are not questioned. Writing about Africa, Mbiti continues, “They saw limits of man’s powers and knowledge, and the shortness of human life ... But it seems impossible that the universe could simply have come to existence on its own. God is therefore, the explanation for the origin of the universe, which consists of both visible and invisible realities.”⁴⁶ The existence of God is obvious from the existence of the world as Metuh says about African people:

The mystery of the existence of the world, the coming into existence of man, the seasons ... the fundamental human institutions (lineages, marriage, market days and so forth), even the mystery of the unfortunate presence of death and evil in the world are so overwhelming that it becomes necessary to postulate the existence of God to explain them.⁴⁷

The African conception of God is related to the environmental setup. Natural features were seen by African people as ushering the abode of God. For example, for the Chagga people around Mount Kilimanjaro, the name given to God is *Ruwa*. The holy place where

⁴⁴ Ennio Mantovani, “Traditional Religion and Christianity,” in *An Introduction to Melanesian Religions: A Handbook for Church Workers* (ed. Ennio Mantovani; Point No. 6; Goroka: The Melanesian Institute, 1984), 1.

⁴⁵ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969), 1.

⁴⁶ Mbiti, *An Introduction to African Religion* (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1975), 31–32.

⁴⁷ Emefie Ikenga Metuh, *God and Man in African Religion: A Case Study of Igbo of Nigeria* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1981), 16.

this God is believed to take up abode is Mount Kilimanjaro. The same applies to the Kikuyu people of Kenya. The name given to God by these people is *Ngai*. *Ngai* is believed to stay on Mount Kenya. Sometimes we may say these people worship or take a mountain to be God. However, this is not the case. These geographical features are like a sanctuary where God is given a place; yet God is not located. “Families or individuals turn to God in acts of worship anywhere, without being bound to the feeling that God should be worshipped at a particular place. He is omnipresent, and for that reason they worship him at any place, at any time, where and when the need arises.”⁴⁸ In Africa as Mbiti testifies, “man lives in a religious universe, so that natural phenomena and objects are intimately associated with God.”⁴⁹

In this line of thought Bernard Narokobi writing about Melanesia sees religious experience as an encounter with the divine and it is holistic. He says “... Melanesians do not differentiate religious and non-religious experience. For them ... is a total encounter of the living person with the living person with the universe that is alive and explosive ... is the person’s encounter with the spirit, the law, the economics, the politics and the life’s own total whole.”⁵⁰

In this approach Narokobi agrees that it might be different from the rest of the world like Europe, Asia, and Africa. But he acknowledges and says, “Africans, Asians or others may have the same outlook ... Others may find similarities or parallels with the Melanesian experience.”⁵¹ Narokobi adds:

Melanesian certainly do not hold a secular belief that man exists of his own power and for his own ends ... he is born into a spiritual and religious order ... the Melanesian is born to the knowledge that he lives and works within a spirit world. His actions and his omissions are always being watched by the spirit world.⁵²

⁴⁸ John S. Mbiti, *Concept of God in Africa* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 243.

⁴⁹ Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 48.

⁵⁰ Bernard Narokobi, “What is Religious Experience for a Melanesian?” in *Living Theology in Melanesia: A Reader* (ed. John D’Arcy May; Point, 8; Goroka: Melanesian Institute for Pastoral and Social Economic Service, 1985), 69–77, at 70.

⁵¹ Narokobi, “What is Religious Experience for a Melanesian?” 70.

⁵² Narokobi, “What is Religious Experience for a Melanesian?” 71.

Anthropological studies show that Melanesian have their own concept of God. The concepts of God in Melanesia are culturally and environmentally rooted. People from different geographical locations have varied understandings of God. Thus, many of the coastal inhabitants, the highlanders, and islanders all have concepts of God according to their environment. The belief in the existence of underwater-world gods is typical of coastal and island dwellers. As culture differs from one place to another, several concepts of God have been found in Melanesia due to many different forms and expressions of religion. They include dema-deities, culture heroes (creator heroes), sky gods, Masalai, and Tambarans.⁵³ “The sky people from the myth of Hagen regarded the sun as a god, the god of healer. The underworld people believed that the earthquake was the powerful god, and they described him as the angriest of all gods.”⁵⁴ Norman Habel says:

Some deities of Melanesia are concerned primarily with the task of ruling and determining the life of society, albeit, often from a distant vantage point in the sky ... or a mountain. The name of this deity is often not revealed to the people. *Nanaranga awine of the Manam* ... for example is not the name of the deity but an expression meaning ‘*bikman god.*’ The spirit living in the cave of the Huli ... is designated ‘The one we worship’ by the elders of the clan. Among the Mekeo ... A’asia, who established the social rather than the physical order continues to preside over the world of the spirits and direct human life through the social structure he has ordained.⁵⁵

Another dimension of the conception of God around Melanesia is God as a provider of material possessions. This is manifested in the so-called ‘cargo cult’. Religious denominations that are blessed with material goods show that God exists in that religion. Probably this came about as a result of the missionary goods and services that

⁵³ Neville Bartle. *Death, Witchcraft, and the Spirit World in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea: Developing a Contextual Theology in Melanesia* (Point, 29; Goroka: Melanesian Institute for Pastoral and Social Economic Service, 2005), 22.

⁵⁴ Ulli Beier and Prithvindra Chakravandra, *Sun and Moon* (Port Moresby: Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, 1974), 6.

⁵⁵ Norman C. Habel, “Introduction,” in *Powers Plumes and Piglets: Phenomenology of Melanesian Religion* (ed. Norman C. Habel; Bedford Park, SA: Australian Association for the Study of Religions, 1979), 1–18, at 3.

came along with the Christian religion. Missionaries and foreigners in general came with the new faith and with that faith came goods and services which were superior to the traditional ones. Thus, the association of God with modern goods and services gave birth to the cargo cult. Garry Trompf says, “By cargo cult, I mean collective hopes and preparatory actions springing from the expectation of western-style goods, these items to be brought by God, gods or ancestors in considerable quantities.”⁵⁶ In this context God is seen as the provider of cargo and all other human needs. Garry continues:

the desire to be wealthy as well as provisioned as expatriates (or other more fortunate Melanesians); the need of the ‘have nots’ to assuage a jealousy against those who ‘have’; the urge to requite those who lord it over villagers with the apparently superior power and technology; the longing for the total salvation and the ‘good life’ to replace hardship and death; the impetus to adjust traditional fashions to embrace embrace modernity etc.⁵⁷

In accounting for the Melanesian concept of God, Narokobi pointed out some difficulties: “A fundamental problem for a Melanesian to describe the Melanesian religious experience is that he has to us non-Melanesian language and techniques to characterize and concretize and make real his cosmos.”⁵⁸ There is need for Melanesian themselves to put down in writing the concept of God found in traditional religion.

CONCLUSION

The existence of God or at least the existence of the spiritual realm seems to be universal in most cultures. People, who have not received any revelation or any missionary outreach, show some knowledge of God or the spiritual realm. Melanesians had invoked the spiritual realm where God is believed to abide long before the arrival of Christian missionaries. This natural knowledge helped the local people to understand what the missionaries were talking about.

⁵⁶ Garry Trompf, “What has Happened to Melanesian ‘Cargo Cults’?” in *Religious Movements in Melanesia Today* (ed. Wendy Flannery; Point, 4; Goroka; Melanesian Institute for Pastoral and Social Economic Service, 1984), 29–51, at 29. See also Garry W. Trompf, “God as the Source of Wealth,” *MJT* 3 (1987): 74–84.

⁵⁷ Trompf, “What has Happened to Melanesian ‘Cargo Cults’?” 29.

⁵⁸ Narokobi, “What is Religious Experience for a Melanesian?” 69.

This makes me conclude that a human person using the power of natural reason can come to the knowledge of the existence of God or the spiritual realm. The nature of God may be different; the will of God may be in total contradiction with what Christians teach but the concept is always there.

Some would say that atheists do not have the concept of God. However, atheism is the denial of the existence of God. Hence, atheists have a concept of God, that is why they deny it. Denial presupposes existence. If God does not exist, there would be nothing to deny and atheism would not exist. As far as we are human beings, our reason leads us to the concept of God. Reason is the ground where communication from the spiritual realm can take place. Since the human person has the capacity to arrive at the concept of God, we can say: “The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself.”⁵⁹ Even after these entire explanations one should not forget that God will remain a mystery to the human being. The human being is always called to that restless search for God.

I have presented the philosophical proofs for the existence of God. Every person can be convinced differently; some more, some less. When a proof for God’s existence is presented and defended believers become enthusiastic. Yes, what is needed for a relationship with God is a personal experience, an encounter of an individual person with God. To know the will of God and live according to this will is one of the signs of an encounter. The knowledge we have by the natural power of reason is only about the existence and some of the attributes of God. The nature of God as monotheistic and trinitarian and what God’s will is requires revelation. For this reason, natural reason and revelation have to complement each other.

⁵⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 27.