

EDITORIAL

This volume offers a variety of topics, related to Christian theology in Melanesia: servant leadership in Melanesia, the beginning of Christianity in Tonga, biblical principles of wealth for Melanesian Christians, and biblical mandates for caring for the environment in Papua New Guinea. Each topic, in its own way, adds to the on-going discussion of applying God's Word, in a Melanesian context.

Varieties of cultures abound in Melanesia. With over 800 languages, rugged mountains, and vast expanses of ocean, Melanesian cultures, and subsequently leadership models, vary in many ways. Common themes, however, run throughout the various models of Melanesian leadership: power, provision, and reciprocity. Dan Seeland evaluates the Melanesian concepts of "big man" and "great men" against a biblical background. He believes that church leaders must move towards becoming servant leaders, but, without throwing culture aside, be faithful to God's Word. Dan's article, as usual, is well researched, informative, and thought provoking.

It has been said that the best way to understand today is to look at yesterday. Finau Pila 'Aho takes this pithy statement to heart, and takes us on a riveting journey into the history of Christianity in Tonga, focusing on its beginning, and the contribution of a remarkable ruler, Taufa'āhau. Dramatic group conversions, burning of idols, demolishing of idol-worship sites, killing of a cultic priestess, and retaliation of heathens towards Christians, all contribute to a forceful and compelling article. Christianity in the South Pacific is indebted to the Wesleyan missionaries, who first reached the shores of Tonga 200 years ago, because, many years later, Tonga sent indigenous missionaries to neighbouring islands, eventually influencing Melanesia for Christ.

The belief that Christianity brings material blessings shapes the thinking of many believers in Papua New Guinea. The material blessings, which past and present missionaries enjoy, seem to reinforce this belief. In my article, I look at the use of the word "wealth" in the book of Proverbs,

and draw five principles concerning wealth. The hope is that, by following the principles, believers in Melanesia, and around the world, will maintain a biblical view of wealth, despite cultural pressures.

With the importance of mining and logging to the economy of Papua New Guinea, caring for the environment has risen to the surface, as a national issue. Recently, the Evangelical Alliance (EA) of Papua New Guinea published a book titled *Christian's Caring for the Environment*. Kirine Yandit gave the keynote address at the EA conference that launched the publication. We have captured the speech, in hope that it will motivate and educate you, the reader, to the importance of caring for the environment, biblically.

Not everyone will agree with the conclusions reached by the authors. However, we hope that, as you grapple with the issues, the thoughts of the authors will help you grow in your understanding of what God's Word says to your life and culture.

Doug Hanson.