

GUEST EDITORIAL

This volume covers a variety of topics related to Melanesia: a report on the MATS conference, the proclamation of Christ, conversion and identity, a study of “enmity” in Gen 3:15, and Catholic social teaching. Each topic, in its own way, adds to the on-going discussion of applying God’s Word in a Melanesian context.

Each one of these articles have been adapted from papers submitted to MATS 2011: the Inaugural Conference of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools, held at the Pacific Adventist University in Port Moresby PNG, between June 21 and 24, 2011. Other papers from MATS 2011 may be included in future issues of the *Melanesian Journal of Theology*

In the first article, Scott Charlesworth reports on MATS 2011, and expresses the hope that an annual conference might inspire theology-related research in Papua New Guinea.

John Hitchen’s article outlines the background to the formation of MATS. Using some of Paul’s prescriptions to correct false perceptions of leaders, he applies them to handle these same problems in our Melanesian context. He then concludes by saying that Paul’s teaching offers a set of criteria, around which we could greatly enhance how we address these issues, through the reestablishing of a Melanesian Association of Theological Schools

In his article, Franco Zocca considers the proclamation of Christ in the context of traditional Melanesian cultures. He believes there is a need for those proclaiming the gospel to be aware of the cultural aspects of the Christianity, from which they come, as well as of what is essential in the gospel message. Comparing the major characteristics of traditional Melanesian religions with modern Western Christianity, he concludes with suggested approaches to presenting the gospel as a “completion” of beliefs and practices already present in traditional Melanesian cultures and religions.

Uwe Hummel, in his article, examines the island of Mansinam, in West Papua, Indonesia, as a centre of pilgrimage, unity, and polarisation. He shows how the history of Christian missions on Mansinam has had an impact on mission work across West Papua. This article also touches on the presence of Islam in West Papua, and the impact of transmigration to this region.

John Skrzypaszek discusses conversion in the context of the Seventh-day Adventist faith tradition.

Thomas Davai then analyses the meaning of “enmity” in Gen 3. His study includes the meaning and interpretation of words and phrases in the Hebrew, as well as in the Greek used in the Septuagint of Gen 3.

Finally, David Willis reflects on 120 years of Catholic social teaching, as established by Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical, which takes its title from its first two Latin words, *Rerum Novarum*.

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.

Robyne Hobson,
Guest Editor.