

EDITORIAL

The Melanesian Spirit in Theology

It is part of our editorial policy to make use of the *Melanesian Journal of Theology* in intensifying our links with our Asian and Australian neighbours.

From a setting, both similar to, and different from, Melanesia, Don Carrington of Nungalinya College, Darwin (MATS's most-distant member), sends a paper on ministry, composed with the speech rhythms and thought patters of his Australian Aboriginal students in mind. Is it possible for the speech and spirit of Melanesia to be reflected in the way we retell the gospel story and write theology? This could be a challenge to local theologians. Fr Martin Wilson MSC, founder of the Nelen Yubu Missiological Unit on Melville Island, near Darwin, and editor of our companion journal *Nelen Yubu*, contributes a review of a book on understanding of Aboriginal religion. John Kadiba, the first Melanesian to teach at Nungalinya, also reviews a book on Aboriginal Christianity.

Turning to the Melanesian scene, we are providentially able to publish, together, an article by a Southern Highlands Christian, and one by a Southern Highlands missionary, on the encounter between Christian faith and Melanesian religion in that culturally-rich region. Mogola Kamiali has written his paper straight from the heart, yet out of an intimate knowledge of missionary history, while Ossie Fountain shares with us the profound reflections of a missionary, temporarily (we hope) retired from the field, after a very personal Christian encounter with Melanesian religion. Are these efforts to set the record straight, and map out the development of faith, after first contact, evidence of an emerging Melanesian spirit in our theology? Once again, we encourage readers' reactions.

In an important sequel to the paper on "The Law and the Sects" by Fr Theo Aerts MSC, in *Melanesian Journal of Theology*, 2-1, pages 76-105, his colleague, Fr Jan Snijders SM, sketches the outlines of a much-needed "religious map" of Papua New Guinea. Taken together, these articles

should be of immense value to those who trying to develop an ecumenical policy on the difficult problem of sectarianism.

Finally, as editors inevitably do, from time to time, we must offer some apologies. Firstly, for the late appearance of the last issue of the *Melanesian Journal of Theology*, due to teething problems with The Melanesian Institute's new word processor, together with heartfelt thanks to Ms Gretchen Mueller of Kristen Pres, Madang, who squeezed in the typesetting of the *Melanesian Journal of Theology*, despite other commitments, because, as she said, "I believe in it". That little testimony makes all the hassles worthwhile! Secondly, apologies for a slight price rise, which will affect mainly our overseas subscribers, effective in 1987. We hope these readers will appreciate that, in paying a little extra, they are helping to make the *Melanesian Journal of Theology* more financially independent of grants from donor agencies, and also to make it more affordable for Melanesian subscribers.

In our next issue, the theme for the 1987 MATS Study Institute will be announced; there will be a report on the Waigani Seminar, which discussed "The Ethics of Development"; and MATS's own anthology, with contributions from our member schools, *Living Theology in Melanesia: a Reader*, will be reviewed.

We wish our readers many blessings during the Christmas season and in the New Year.

John D'Arcy May
Executive Editor.