

Editorial

A Mouthpiece for Local Theology

The aim of the *Melanesian Journal of Theology* is to stimulate local theology. In this issue, the new Principal of Newton College, Fr Michael Hough, contributes the first part of a study of biblical exegesis. He begins by saying that, “The very first interpreter of scripture was scripture itself”, and, from this, he finds precedents from the Bible and from Jewish interpreters of biblical times for applying the Bible to the local context in a way that goes well beyond the apparent literal meaning of the text. We look forward to seeing how, in later articles, he will draw out, for local theology, lessons in how to be both faithful and creative in interpreting the Bible.

Next, we include two articles from students at colleges belonging to MATS, which have been forwarded by their lecturers, after appeals by the Editor for such material. It is to be hoped that other colleges will follow the example set here and forward student material they consider suitable. In the first of the two student articles, Ignatius Ketobwau, from Rarongo Theological College, asks what happens when people apply perspectives and purposes, inherited from traditional religion, to Christianity. Ignatius argues that one reason why traditional perspectives would be inappropriate would be because, he says, traditional religion had no concept of a personal relationship between the divine and the human. The Editor, himself, has, elsewhere, argued that the traditional myths and rituals of exchange between gods/spirits and humans implied the use of free will on each side, and so contained elements of an “I-Thou” personal relationship. However, Ignatius had posed a question very well that should be taken further. Meanwhile Ako Arua, from the Nazarene Bible College, has contributed an impassioned appeal for a Melanesian way of Christian worship.

In an article, written in 1984, by Ewan Stilwell, but only very recently submitted to the *Journal*, the author provides a critique for relating Melanesian thinking to Christian thinking, in a way that could be helpfully applied to papers, such as that by Ignatius Ketobwau. His handling of issues, such as respect for ancestors, is very sensitive. The indefatigable Fr Theo Aerts, though now retired from Holy Spirit Seminary, has been devoting the extra time he now has available, not only to fostering the growth of the religious studies programme at the UPNG, but also to promoting the ecumenical observance of the memory of the martyrs of all the churches of Papua New Guinea. As part of his activity in this respect, he

has contributed an article to the *Journal* to set the record straight, and so promote theological reflection on the significance of the martyrs.

The Editor still welcomes contributions of book reviews. For the present issue, he would just like to draw readers' attention to the recent publication by the World Council of Churches of John Garrett's *Footsteps in the Sea*, a sequel to his *To Live Among the Stars*, which takes further his very useful study of the history of missions in the South Pacific.