

# MELANESIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

## **Editorial**

Tim Meadowcroft

## **Report on MATS 2018:**

**Interfaith and Ecumenical Dialogue in Melanesia**

Thomas Davai Jr.

## *Peer Reviewed Articles*

**Male-Centric Biblical Literature and Marital Violence:  
Reading through Melanesian Interpretive Lenses**

### **Part 1**

Maxon Mani

**Aquinas on Polygamy**

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**Epistemology and Pastoral Practice:  
Applications in Melanesian Contexts**

Paul Anthony McGavin

Journal of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools



## EDITORIAL

I feel both grateful and apologetic with the appearance of this double issue of the *Melanesian Journal of Theology*. I am apologetic because there has now been something of a hiatus as the journal transitions editors. I took over in July 2018, but the last six months of last year became much busier than anticipated, and so the 2018 volume is only now just appearing. I apologise for its lateness. The plan is for the 2019 double issue to appear by the end of 2019, and from 2020, God willing, we will return to the rhythm of two issues per year.

But I also feel very grateful. First, I am grateful for the opportunity to be involved in this way with theological thought in Melanesia. Secondly, I am grateful for the sterling work done by my predecessor, Dr Scott Charlesworth. He set high standards for the journal and worked tirelessly with authors to enable their voices to appear in these pages. My gratitude, I am sure, is shared by the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools (MATS) community, whose journal this is. Readers will also note that we now have in place an editorial board, which brings together a range of skills and contexts and backgrounds in the service of the journal. The editor is able to work with the board to ensure that the journal continues to serve the theological community of Melanesia. Thirdly, then, I am grateful for the willingness of editorial board members to make their experience and skills available to the theological enterprise in this way.

Recently I re-read the editorial in the first ever issue of the *Melanesian Journal of Theology*, written back in 1985 by the first editor, John D'Arcy May. He wrote, expressing the hope that, "MJT could become an indispensable tool for theological discussion and research in the Pacific. We are still a long way from realising this vision. But the need for a community of theological discourse, a forum for critical collaboration in Melanesia is becoming urgent." The journal that began in 1985 has compiled an invaluable resource of theological reflection in and for Melanesia, that did not yet exist when May penned those words. But his words still speak into the context of 2019. There is still a need for "critical collaboration." The task remains "urgent" in the face of many challenges within both church and society. And it is no criticism of what has been achieved to say that we remain some

way from “realizing the vision” of excellent theological critique in the service of the church and the world of Melanesia—and beyond. In other words, this journal remains an important resource. I encourage the colleges and scholars of the theological schools of Melanesia to continue to make it their own.

In this double issue Thomas Davai supplies an account of the successful 2018 MATS conference at Pacific Adventist University. Since then, as this issue goes to press, another successful annual conference has been held at Christian Leaders’ Training College near Banz, and an account of that conference will appear in the next issue.

Paul McGavin reflects on the Melanesian worldview and its approach to matters that might be described as “metaphysical.” In doing so, he explains and explores epistemological matters. How might an appreciation of this worldview lead to good pastoral practice, he asks.

Two further articles then reflect in quite different ways on how an awareness of different epistemologies might inform the situation in Melanesia. Brandon Zimmerman writes on Aquinas and polygamy. At first glance, we do not naturally associate Aquinas with Melanesia, but in the hands of Zimmerman we find that Aquinas’s late medieval understandings of marriage have the potential to speak into issues of marriage and family in Melanesia.

Also on the matter of marriage and family, this issue includes the first part of a two part article by Maxon Mani on the urgent question of marital violence and how Scripture relates to this question. In his article Mani argues for a Melanesian epistemology as a means both to describe and to respond to issues of power and gender relations. Part two will appear in the next issue of the journal.

Tim Meadowcroft