

Editorial

What are the Denominational Restraints upon the Curricula of Theological Colleges?

The first three articles of this issue relate, directly, or indirectly, to the Study Institute on Curriculum Development, held by MATS in July, 1992. Review of the curriculum is an ongoing task for all colleges, as conditions change, and new staff bring new ideas, but, it so happened, that several colleges were engaged in a major curriculum review, and so, the topic of the Study Institute seemed an apposite one.

The talks of the Study Institute seemed to bring out the need for a person-centred curriculum, engaging the personal involvement of students and staff, in light of the personal needs of the laity to be served. Since persons become persons within social contexts, this naturally led to consideration of the need for contextualisation, and a small group at the Study Institute discussed the issue, in the light of two papers given at the recent inaugural meeting of the World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutes. The paper on contextualisation, included in the *Journal*, was not given at the Study Institute, but was forwarded by one of the participants in the discussion there. It provides a fine appraisal of the riches of the religious context of Papua New Guinea, and of how the Bible, itself, is, at once, contextualised, yet provides tests of contextualisation.

Comparison of the curricula of different colleges raised the question of the denominational restraints upon them. The colleges have a duty to serve the denominations to which they belong, but they also have a duty to serve theological truth. One way to resolve this tension is for the colleges, bearing in mind their respective traditions, to discuss how far they could apply common academic standards to their distinct curricula, and even work to a common examination. A small group at the Study Institute discussed the question of curriculum convergence, and the question is to be pursued through the MATS Executive. It had been hoped that the recently-appointed lecturer in religious studies at the UPNG, who had been due to speak at the Study Institute, would be able to take up his offer to work with the theological colleges to facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications. However, his resignation delayed any use of the University lectureship in religious studies in such a coordination role. Nevertheless, Fr Theo Aerts worked to ensure that the programme of religious studies was maintained, with the help of temporary lecturers, and he came to the Study Institute to

explain how a problem had arisen over the failure to sign the memorandum of understanding between the University and the churches. The memorandum has now been signed, and the programme for religious studies has two lecturers for 1993, one Roman Catholic, and one Presbyterian, to reflect its ecumenical nature.

Philip Cass's paper shows how, in their desire to communicate the gospel, missionaries may outstrip their secular counterparts in contextualising, and getting close to the people, in the area of journalism, but it also shows the damage inflicted by denominational bickering. Philip Cass's article is an overview of a much longer work for an MA thesis, and he would welcome further information, which should be sent to him at the Rockhampton Campus of the University of Central Queensland, Australia 4702.

The final article comes from the prolific and scrupulously-scholarly typewriter of Fr Theo Aerts, and represents his response to one in a collection of articles by Professor Gary Trompf entitled: "Melanesian Religion".

The Editor continues to invite contributions from members of theological colleges in Papua New Guinea, and Melanesia, as a whole, and, indeed, from anyone interested in Melanesian theology.