

## EDITORIAL

In June, 1993, from the side of the Seventh-day Adventist church, a Congress on Religious Freedom was held in Suva. On that occasion, some community leaders from Papua New Guinea did express their points of view about religious freedom in this country; they asked themselves, among others, what was the real situation here, and whether there a need to introduce changes for the future.

Then, in November 1993, the PNG Council of Churches held a workshop on the same topic, where four more contributions to the issue were presented. Yet, the issue of reviewing the Constitution in general, and the one about freedom of religion did not die, and up to very recently the matter has been aired via news items in the national papers. Only in June this year, the Port Moresby Ministers' Fraternal organised a first meeting between representatives from the government and from the churches, to take these same concerns at heart, concluding among others that more of these meetings will be called for. In short, the issue is very much alive and worth serious consideration.

Because more than once the PNG Council of Churches has been asked to prepare relevant background materials, we are happy that our theological desk has undertaken this task, and that the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools, too, has lent its support to it. We now are happy to present our contribution to the ongoing debate.

We have tried to give the word to people from various disciplines: philosophy, theology, history, actual law and proposed legislation. The contributors to the present volume do not only belong to the mainline churches: Roman Catholic, Evangelical Lutheran, and United church – who all are affiliated to the PNG Council of Churches – but include also other Christians, and members of the Muslim and of the Baha'i communities.

Finally, an excerpt from the 1990 census has been added to give the actual strength of these various groups in the country. We trust that the present publication is not only topical in Papua New Guinea, but also constitutes a useful documentation for the present and future theologians in the region.

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