



Colin Library – Te Kupenga Catholic Theological College

by Mark Hangartner

The library is named after the Venerable Jean-Claude Colin, S.M., a French priest (7 August 1790 – 15 November 1875) who became the founder of the Society of Mary (Marists).

Father Colin was elected Superior General on September 24, 1836, and on that same day the first Marist religious professions took place. Outside France, the first field of labour was the Vicariate Apostolic of Western Oceania, including New Zealand, Tonga, Samoa, Micronesia and Melanesia.

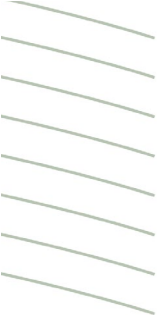
A phrase that was central to his understanding of religious life was "inconnu et caché en ce monde", translated as "unknown and hidden in this world". For Colin this sentence is exemplary for the way Mary lived the Gospel in a humble, modest, and simple way.

It is, of course, impossible to separate the life of Jean-Claude Colin from the history of the Society that he founded and led.¹ He is described as growing up in revolutionary France, a fervent catholic in a church deprived of its privileges



Portrait of Jean-Claude Colin by Lyons artist, Antoine (Tony) Tollet (1857-1953) based on photographs taken during the 1866 general chapter.

¹ Taylor, 2018, p. xix



under the *ancien régime*, facing persecution and rejection. He was described as a youth as small, shy, sickly and having a stammer.²

Nonetheless, he was vigorous in his efforts for the Society of Mary for which he was seeking recognition in Rome. By 1835, by happy coincidence, a mission territory being set up in the Western Pacific and the Society of Mary had links with its leader Bishop Pompallier. So the task of providing missionaries in Oceania fell to the society and responsibility to their superior general.

He sent the first Marist missionaries to New Zealand, as well as the islands, each with their own books mostly in French and Latin.

Father Colin advocated learning in his priests, encouraged them to read and study, and acquired books for them, including Migne's collections of Church Fathers and classic theologians and Scripture commentators.

When a Marist seminary was established, the library was named in his honour. The first books used for teaching originated with those initial missionaries. These volumes are now housed in the Marist archive.

In the 1990s the Holy Cross seminary and the Marist seminary relocated to Auckland. The academic works from both seminaries form the collection of the Colin Library.

Apart from the extensive collection, not all of it theological, the library boasts its own home-grown library classification system. Fr Kevin Bonisch, a Marist teacher of Philosophy at the seminary, reused the Dewey principle but allocated the numbers to serve Roman Catholic theology. This allows shorter numbers in some areas. The 300's, for instance, are all allocated to the Bible allowing each gospel to have its own 3-digit number. While it gains in brevity, it loses in simplicity (as users confuse it with Dewey), consistency, a lack of regular updates, relatively little thought to the passage of time, ecumenism or developments in theology. For all that, being unique does allow a certain amount of freedom so in recent years the classification numbers for NZ Church history, abuse, and Church Councils have been rearranged.

For church councils, for instance, a single number was used for all councils from Nicea to Vatican II (271.6). These are now separated into historical periods, allowing for 4 future councils:

- 271.6 History of the Councils (*see also 231.761*),
- 271.61 First seven councils (Nicea 325 to 2nd council of Nicea 787)
- 271.62 (4th Council of Constantinople 869 to 5th Council of the Lateran 1512)
- 271.63 Council of Trent (1545–1563)
- 271.64 Vatican I
- 271.65 Vatican II
- [271.66 – 271.69 Councils to come]

² Taylor, 2018, pp. 15-16

In the last 5 years there has been significant work updating the collection. Ebook and ejournal holdings have increased. The focus of the collection is on works relating to Theology. It supports the teaching of seminarians but also lay students and members of religious communities, and resources the wider Catholic church and community.

Bibliography

Taylor, J. *Jean-Claude Colin : Reluctant founder*. Adelaide: ATF Press, 2018.



Plaque above library entrance.