

Editorial: Signs of the Times

Revd C. J. Garland, Editor

How does God communicate with us? Through the Bible, through culture, through the big issues currently engaging the minds of the world, as a whole, through the lives of saintly men and women? Wherever He communicates with us, God has a message of love that can only be expressed by signs or symbols. These signs will need interpreting. Each of our articles reflects the tradition, from which they come and raise questions of interpretation. We trust that readers of an ecumenical magazine, such as, this will show respect for, and interest in, traditions different from their own.

The publication of the Tok Pisin Bible is a great event for Christians in Papua New Guinea, and we are glad to publish an article by Fr Jerome Crowe CP to mark the event. Fr Crowe provides a brief introduction to biblical criticism, with a special emphasis on the importance of oral tradition, to appeal to those with experience of oral tradition in Papua New Guinea.

Any attempt to dismiss the use of the behaviour of animals, as signs of future human events, as mere coincidence, stumbles against the frequency, with which they seem to work. Is it enough to say that they just alert us, and so make us more aware of what is going on anyway? Fr Spencer Kombega gives us a vivid account of a sign that worked, a firefly, and what it feels like, from a Papua New Guinean point of view. At the very least, interest and concern for animals should give us good practice for interest and concern for human beings.

The programmes of the World Council of Churches help us to focus our attention on the big issues of the world, in a Christian way. There may be a danger of specifically “ecumenical” contributions to the debate taking a bland, neutral approach, but the WCC does encourage participants in its discussions to contribute from the riches of their own traditions. The article on “Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation” is meant to provoke articles, papers, and comments for a MATS Study Institute on the theme. How are we to interpret Isaiah’s vision of a future time, when the lion will lie down with the lamb?

Sister Genevieve de Massignac provides us with a description of the life of Mother Marie-Therese Noblet. Her reception of the stigmata, and visions of the Virgin Mary, are seen as signs of the transformation of suffering by compassion, the victory of good over evil, and of complete obedience to the will of God. The example of Mother Marie-Therese Noblet has been the inspiration of the devoted service given by the Handmaids of the Lord in Papua New Guinea.

We also include some notes omitted from a paper by Fr Theo Aerts. [Now correctly included in *MJT* 5-1. –Revising ed.]

We congratulate Revd Dick Avi on his appointment as a Coordinator of Ecumenical Religious Studies. He will have the support of both MCC and MATS, as he carries out his work, which includes promoting the establishment of a Department of Religious Studies at the University of Papua New Guinea.