

# COLLECTING STAMPS OF RELIGIOUS INTEREST

by Trevor W. Hearl

Researching St Helena stamps that commemorate Saint Helena herself, recently alerted me to the many South Atlantic issues that have carried a religious theme, as befits an island of 'Saints', I suppose. In an appendix to his excellent book on "The Churches of the South Atlantic Islands 1502-1991", the late Bishop Cannan listed no fewer than 39 St Helena stamps with "local church interest" that were issued between 1934 and 1990. The other islands had issued 33 between them: Tristan 19, Ascension 9, and the Falklands 5. Considering the number of practising religious denominations on St Helena today and the growing number of churches - there must now be over twenty and others are planned to serve the dwindling population of well under four thousand souls - there would seem to be plenty of scope for many more such commemorative issues.



Figure 1: Guild of St Gabriel

Bishop Cannan's interest in this theme suggests that he may well have been a member of the Guild of St Gabriel, an international society for "collectors of postal material of religious interest". Although the Guild was founded pre-World War II by two German Franciscan friars who had been missionaries in Brazil, and its logo features the Archangel Gabriel as theme, as befits an island of 'Saints', I suppose. In an appendix to his excellent book on "The Churches of the South Atlantic Islands 1502-1991", the late Bishop Cannan listed no fewer than 39 St Helena stamps with "local church interest" that were issued between 1934 and 1990. The other islands had issued 33 between them: Tristan 19, Ascension 9, and the Falklands 5. Considering the number of practising religious denominations on St Helena today and the growing number of churches - there must now be over twenty and others are planned to serve the dwindling population of well under four thou-

sand souls - there would seem to be plenty of scope for many more such commemorative issues. Bishop Cannan's interest in this theme suggests that he may well have been a member of the Guild of St Gabriel, an international society for "collectors of postal material of religious interest". Although the Guild was founded pre-World War II by two German Franciscan friars who had been missionaries in Brazil, and its logo features the Archangel Gabriel as "God's Messenger", it draws its membership from every continent and creed, from India to the Argentine, and from the Nordic Guild of Scandinavia to South Africa. The USA is affiliated with the World Union of St Gabriel through COROS, Collectors of Religion on Stamps. Guilds have recently been formed in East European countries formerly under Soviet domination. A World Union Congress is held every four years, the last being in Belgium, in 2004. The British Guild holds monthly meetings, postal auctions and publishes "Gabriel", an illustrated quarterly Journal of information and articles that explore the many aspects of this rich and rewarding philatelic theme.

Afternote: Since writing my article on Saint Helena last year, I have learned that the Guild's booklet, "Faith, Art and Philately", mentioned therein, unfortunately is out of print.

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