

Killing With Kindness ?

Development Aid And The Church In Africa

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Vatican Council II and the post-colonial period in Africa dovetailed chronologically very neatly and the resultant euphoria witnessed the growth of funding agencies (hereafter F.A.) established by various national hierarchies dedicated to playing a role in alleviating poverty and ignorance in the less developed countries. The F.A.'s range from the small but effective Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund and the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development of the hierarchies of England and Wales, to the large and wealthy "Misereor" of the German Bishops and the even wealthier Catholic Relief Services of the United States. Apart from these there are other funds of a more private, voluntary and ecumenical nature. It is mainly through missionaries that the first group channel their funds, but the latter group also to a large extent, make use of missionaries. As a result, the traditional image of the poor missionary bringing the Gospel and ministering to the world's poorest is rapidly being challenged. In this article we would like to examine the effects that this is having on missionary activity, and some of the implications.

The operating procedure of the F.A.s is relatively simple, through advertising and appeals they collect funds from those Christians in the more developed countries interested in helping alleviate misery and encourage development in the Third World. This is mainly done through advertising and making appeals through the parish, school or other Christian groups in the hope that they will also be able to solicit not just a one-off donation, but a continuous commitment from interested parties. It should be stressed that the aim is not limited simply to collecting money but also to educate the Christian public of their responsibility to help the Third World more than just financially, and that their donations do not absolve them from cutting down on waste and attacking rampant consumerism in their own lives. Advertising is also used to assure the donors that their contributions are being correctly and wisely used. The F.A.s must therefore be able to present to their public tangible, visible and empirically provable instances of their work and depend on the missionary to supply this with photographs, progress reports, assessable results and evaluations. The missionary for his part knows only too well that if he wants funds he must present a concise, well prepared project, with plans, estimates, in-

dications of the way in which the beneficiaries of the project will profit in the short and the long term. Such projects must appeal not only to the F.A. but through the F.A. to the wider public.

All of this seems perfectly fair and reasonable, a system working for the benefit of all, and without doubt a great deal of good is accomplished. But it does raise certain difficulties, it encourages and fosters a project-centred approach to development; presumes certain criteria by which some projects are to be accepted and others rejected; and is conducive to paternalism and dependency. More seriously it constitutes a subtle, albeit unconscious and hopefully unintentional manipulation of missionary activity. Let us examine these in turn.

First of all it fosters a project-centred approach to development. People are wary about giving their money and want to be sure that it is going to worthy causes. One irate correspondent to the "Catholic Herald" in 1977 demanded to know whether or not Cafod was giving any money to help the "terrorists" in Rhodesia.¹ Hence the need for empirical evidence.

Efficiency and production conscious we need to see results that square with our own theories as to what constitutes and does not constitute development. Hard facts such as healthy babies, wells dug, tractors ploughing, buildings being erected, hospital dispensing European-style health services, crops growing, healthy animals, and above all a happy, smiling and grateful populace. Such evidence can always be produced, it can also be totally meaningless. When that baby leaves the care of the sisters and returns to the care of its mother in the village, will it still be plump and well fed? Does the mother understand the causes of the baby's ill health? Can she afford the feeding that the Sisters gave it? Can she give it the same time, care and attention. More likely than not, she is already pregnant again, and has another four or five children at home all claiming attention. European or American notions of what constitutes good child-welfare, nutrition, and health are particularly unsuited for Africa.² The well may be pumping out water, but who controls the well once it has been dug by 'father'? Who are allowed access to it? Formerly the women used to go to the well, the river, or the water-hole together (few villagers understand that it is the fetid water that makes them ill, rather it is the evil spirit dwelling in the well that causes sickness and all that is required is to offer sacrifice, and if that does not appease the spirit, then the well has to be abandoned). This created and strengthened the bonds of community, provided a meeting place where news, views and gossip were exchanged. It kept the villages in touch with one another. Will the new well maintain or lead to a breakdown of village community life? What alternatives can be offered to counteract this breakdown? Our attempts to introduce new

crops, soya or winged beans may well be rejected, because the farmers prefer the taste of their traditional bean and find the new bean unpalatable. Moreover having produced the local variety for generations, they can produce it in abundance, can one blame the peasant farmer for staying with what he knows rather than risk possible failure, famine and death because of what a stranger tells him? A stranger moreover who does not even eat these beans himself (or herself – women working in development work seem to be particularly ‘bean’ conscious) or whose very life does not depend on growing food. When such projects break down we are faced with the supreme irony that the project fails because of the unrefined attitudes and values of the people as if to say that the people are there for the success of the project, and not the project for the people. Development is usually presumed to have taken place if the project is successful.

The contrary however, is true, development takes place if there has been social change, that is if the community has attempted to liberate itself from whatever enslaves it. This is a slow, difficult and very often imperceptible process that cannot be shown on posters, films or in columns of figures. The developer rather than an agronomist, veterinarian, doctor, teacher or economist is an educator, and development is an educational process. By imposing our specialised world-view on the cosmic worlds of less developed people, we may well undo any existing good while teaching them to accept our vices.

Where the demand for funds is greater than the supply some form of selection has to be made. Most F.A.s state that they give their aid to “self-help” projects, but how do you define a “self-help” project? What are the criteria used to arrive at such a decision? What is the competence of those who sit in judgment? Let us take two examples from my own recent experience. I recently wanted funds for an adult education programme based on concepts of conscientisation. I presented the project to one F.A. who complimented me on keeping the amount requested to such a low figure, but unfortunately, they could not help as educational work did not enter into the scope of their agency, but they would be willing to fund any projects that arose as a result of such an educational programme. I took it to another where I got just the opposite reaction, they were highly enthusiastic. In their opinion, this was just the type of programme that was badly needed in Africa, but the drawback in this case was that they did not fund programmes in the country in which I worked. I finally went to a third, I am nothing if not persistent, they not only funded such a programme, but they also funded them in the country in which I worked but insisted on prior conditions that would involve interminable paper work, round trips of eight hundred miles, and will

entail a long delay before I can start. Fortunately, there is a lot that can be done without money.

Our second example involves the head of a F.A who held an informal meeting recently with some missionaries in Africa, in the course of which the missionaries suggested certain projects that would be of great service to their work and thereby to the people of the diocese. Unfortunately none of them fell within the scope of the F.A. After having to refuse them what they considered to be of real need, he unexpectedly offered them a tractor if they had any use for one. Until then, no one had even thought of one. But they are now the proud possessors of a tractor.

It would appear that the criteria used are purely material and based arbitrarily upon what a group of people working far from the grass roots would consider to be in the best interest of the people in the Third World, in areas where results can be the more readily demonstrated, usually of an agricultural nature, or some other of the projects that we outlined above. Rarely if ever, would someone receive funds for a project to preserve local arts such as pottery, weaving, ceramics, carving, dancing, singing, collecting or proverbs and stories, even though most agencies insist that they are interested in socio-economic development and not just economic development. Two friends who were interested in just such a project found it extremely difficult to raise funds from the F.A.s and were even considered slightly odd by their fellow missionaries: "there are far more important things to take care of, and we have not got money to spend on such things" seems to sum up the attitude. Man lives by bread alone?

Far more important than the results achieved are the methods by which they are achieved. If the work is done by the missionary without much participation by the people, brilliant though the results may appear on paper, and in the photographs or films, it is doubtful if any real development, apart from short-lived material development, actually takes place. Thus if I acquire funds to dig wells in arid areas, hire labourers to dig the wells, and provide all the material necessary because the beneficiaries of the wells cannot be motivated to help, or because I am in so much of a hurry that I cannot waste my time trying to motivate them, or because I consider that it is more important to provide water for such "poor" people, then it would be safe to say that results to the contrary, no social change has taken place, no awareness, the people having given nothing of themselves will return to 'father' when the well runs dry, and ask him to deepen it for them.

Unless people participate and take the initiative and control in their own development, no matter how much money is poured into a project the material benefits derived will last only as long as the missionary is there to direct, cajole, push things along. If the

people participate and the results prove to be less than expected, or even if the project appears a failure on paper, if something has been learned even though it is a negative lesson, then there has been development.⁴ More often than not, however, the latter will be less welcome to the F.A.s than the former.

This lack of participation leads us directly into our third problem, paternalism, dependency of the people on the ability of the missionary to achieve results. By depending on foreign financial resources and without clear ideas as to what does and what does not constitute true development we run the danger of trying to do everything for the community, creating a dependence upon ourselves and the money that we can raise to such an extent that "development work" will consist only of that for which funds can be obtained.

Thus there are missionaries who "working for the people" push their projects if not quite to macro-scale proportions, then certainly to some transitional phase between the macro-scale and the micro-scale. They apply for and receive ever increasing amounts of money to extend in area their own project, let us say a group farm, making it ever bigger, ever more capital intensive by acquisition of all manner of farm machinery and in the process creating a highly profitable venture, instilling a spirit of capitalism into a small elite who, thanks to the large grants made on their behalf, grants which they will not need to repay, earn many times more than the average income of their peers outside the project. Or there is the other who unable to be outdone continually increases the range of activities of the programme, and not content with building a hospital for example, also has to have a babies' home, a nutrition centre, a vocational training centre, a farm, grinding mills, resettlement schemes so that the mission compound looks more like a veritable town and the Church is lost somewhere in the middle of it all. One often wonders for whom we are really working, the people or for our own self-aggrandisement, and to maintain our own personal reputations to deliver the goods.

The missionary is being directed, manipulated, dictated to from the capitals of Europe and America, unconsciously and unintentionally in most cases, but very really all the same. He surrenders his independence by choosing to work in those areas for which there are funds available, areas dictated by those who hold the purse strings and who very often in their turn are dictated to by their donors who though sincere are sometimes the misguided victims of their own emotions and sensational journalism.

As an example of this the area of Northern Ghana suffers each year from drought and famine, as does much of the Sahelian region, although nothing like the catastrophic drought and famine that necessitated and received international aid in 1973 and 1974.

To a very great extent this famine is artificially created. For generations the farmers of the area produced grain in sufficient quantities to tide them over all but the most drastic drought periods. With the advent of the European colonialists and Arab traders came the demand among the Africans of the area for such consumer goods as radios, bicycles, watches, iron sheeting for roofs, bottled beer and canned food, for which the people had to have cash. This they raised by selling to the traders their grain, which, because it was plentiful at the harvest season, was bought by the traders for the lowest prices possible. Come the dry season the granaries are empty, the farmers are caught at both ends, they have to sell their radios, bicycles etc. back to the traders for cash, and naturally they will only get a fraction of their true worth. With the cash they will be able to buy back from the same traders their own grain, but this time for vastly inflated prices. One would think that they would rebel against such injustice, quite the contrary, in their eyes the traders are all good men. They buy their grain and sell them the consumer goods. In time of famine they buy back the goods and sell them back their grain.

Along come the missionaries with their food relief with corn, wheat, powdered milk, cooking oil which they will distribute to the people. In this way the missionaries are able to subsidise the consumerism, wean the people from a dependency on the traders to a dependency on themselves, all at the expense of self-reliance. There are times when hunger is the only teacher, but then out of kindness we sometimes kill the teacher.

I recently interviewed a missionary, since 1970 he has imported three tractors, a rice mill, a grinding mill, established experimental gardens and a small pig and rabbit raising project. In the process he had to abandon adult literacy classes and small-scale group farms. Now many headaches later he realised the mistake he made when he abandoned his latter type of work for the former, but when asked why he did so he replied simply that he had allowed himself to be persuaded that the future of the country lay in this direction and not in adult literacy or small-scale farming. When asked why he had gone to the bother of importing a brand new tractor, he objected, stating that he had not even asked for it, but was told that it was already on the ship and on its way, and he felt that there was nothing that he could do but accept, and make the best of a bad situation.

It is extremely easy to acquire the funds and set up a project based on a technology that is out of proportion to the level of development that the people have attained and by placing sophisticated technology in the hands of people who do not even understand the simple mechanics of the push-bike, we become easily discouraged by their failure to cope. In fact, this is not their failure but

ours, expecting the same understanding of techniques, attitudes, and values as we ourselves have, and as a result we become frustrated when they fail to measure up to our expectations.

Self-reliance has become the major victim. We missionaries become so totally dependent on funds from abroad that we no longer contemplate the possibility of low-cost alternatives. If we do not obtain them we will drop valuable and worthwhile projects in favour of less valuable projects simply because money is available for these and not for the former. In turn we create in the people an attitude of total dependence on ourselves. They see us as the limitless providers of all their needs, money, transport, food, shelter and expect to be paid for their loyalty to us. "What will you give us if we agree to be baptised?" By our actions we are destroying initiative among the Christians or catechumens, or those that we hope will become either of these, by becoming the bearers not only of the Gospel but providers of their material wants without their lifting a finger to help themselves. Result-orientated, we would rather do it for them than take the more difficult course of encouraging motivation.

Such expectations have a deleterious effect on the work of those who try to pioneer methods of development based on the encouragement of self-reliance, motivation, initiative, while avoiding large-scale paternalist enterprises which they see as wasteful and self-defeating. Very often they are misunderstood by the very people they desire to help and their simplicity and low-key approach is taken as a sign of unfriendliness and dislike, refusing as they do, to bring in and distribute money, blankets, clothes, food and the like.

Earlier, we mentioned that the manipulation of missionary activity is unconscious and unintentional. This is not always true, it is sometimes conscious and intentional as a missionary recently discovered to his cost. He asked a F.A. for a scale that the nuns could use to weigh babies in the villages. This, he was given but was told (by someone sitting in an office four hundred miles away in the capital – and who was only there on a two-year contract) that there was starvation in his parish and that he would have to agree to distribute free food. He refused, and as a result they made an eight hundred mile round trip to take the scales from him.

In all honesty, however, it must be admitted that in many cases too many missionaries are quite happy to be manipulated or do not even realise they are being manipulated until such examples as the one just quoted take place.

Recently a diocese in northern Ghana was granted a million dollars from the United States Agency for International Development, to be used for agricultural development mainly and any other form of rural development that could be covered by the gen-

eral heading of agriculture. This project has the blessing of the bishop and the support of practically all the personnel of the diocese who attended a meeting with a representative of U.S.A.I.D. and the Catholic Relief Services who would act as intermediary for the money. Through this programme the diocese will become the means whereby the farmers of the region will be able to purchase hoes, bush-knives, fertilisers which are the basic agricultural tools of the area and which because of Ghana's economic plight⁴ are no longer available to them through the ordinary commercial channels. Any well digging and building, for example, will necessitate the importation of huge quantities of cement which is at present available only on the black market at exorbitant prices. In other words, "for the sake of the people" the Church in the area is going into agribusiness in a big way, and to help co-ordinate such a complex programme they will be provided with a Peace Corps volunteer.

Such aid from Governments is no longer unusual, the Government of West Germany channels such funds through Misereor, the Dutch through an organisation named Cebemo, and in the UK there are plans afoot to do the same through Cafod and Christian Aid. This means that ever greater sums of money are available to the missionary and the Church in Africa, and the effects that we outlined above become even more serious. There is however, the even more serious problem of allying oneself, implicitly at least, with a political power, becoming party to its failures, and the Church becoming the only visible area of growth in a non-growth area, understandably if it was spiritual growth but in this case it is the encouragement of capitalist, economic growth under the guise of development.

Most missionaries are politically and economically conservative. Although one might be unable to agree fully with Weber's⁵ analysis of the bourgeoisie and the rise of European capitalism, there can be no doubting his analysis of the middle class attitudes of thrift, hard work, rational planning, honesty and frugality "inner worldly asceticism" as he termed it. To such a group one could add the peasant farmers of northern Europe (through the practice of just these virtues they have transformed themselves from peasants into highly successful farmers). These two groups have been the main support of the Church on continental Europe, and have provided it with most of its missionaries. Missionaries from North America, the U.S. and Canada, mainly French speaking Canada, are as one would expect them to be, coming from such societies, similarly conservative — although the evidence from Latin America would seem to indicate a sizable group of more politically progressive missionaries from these two countries. Missionaries from UK and Ireland, although from working class backgrounds in general, are no exception and appear happy in general to go along with the

crowd.

Such conservative attitudes are further reinforced by the seminary training which Church personnel receive, which is an extremely thorough and efficient acculturation process. One important missionary institution for the training of missionaries in the UK, for example, refuses to allow its student body to become fully fledged members of the National Union of Students, fearful no doubt of the influence of such a left-wing body upon the docility of their students. Although the Church tries officially neither to favour one side nor the other, excepting her condemnation of Communism, by the fact that she has to maintain a large curial and diplomatic staff she is obliged to invest large sums of money in the European and American capitalist money markets, which in itself constitutes an alignment.

It is not surprising therefore that missionaries, especially when encouraged to do so by their bishop see nothing wrong with accepting money and aid from "friendly" governments. But one cannot help asking oneself why it is that the U.S. in particular should be so generous and willing in its support of the Church in Africa when it refused to do the same at home, where the rigorously maintained policy of Church and State separation is forcing the breakdown, for better or for worse, of the Catholic school system in that country. One can only assume that it is for reasons advantageous to the U.S. government in its struggle against communism in the world and an attempt to maintain influence in Africa by using the Church which it presumes is its ally in the anti-communist struggle.

By accepting such funds we are abandoning our independence of thought and action and allying ourselves politically with one side in the cold war being waged at present in Africa. How can we maintain such independence taking the only logical option possible in the struggle by calling for a withdrawal of all forces when we ourselves are financially indebted to one side, a fact only too apparent to the opposing forces. The political implications of what at first sight seems to be disinterested aid are in fact extremely serious and go far beyond the boundaries of one small diocese, and it is a great pity, some would say a tragedy, that we have willingly succumbed to such enticements.

One point that has to be taken into consideration in the light of recent publications is the use that certain subversive agencies have made of the Church in the Third World for their own political and economic gain. The review of one such book which appeared in both Newsweek and Time showed a photograph of the author at work in Angola sporting a large crucifix around his neck evidently trying to give the impression that he was in some way connected with the Church. This kind of activity cannot but

trouble the conscience of any thoughtful missionary.⁶

When I first arrived in Uganda as a young and very green missionary in 1965, my parish priest had just suffered a complete reversal of fortune. Very patiently he had brought his youth club round to the idea of founding a group farm to grow maize, which would hopefully be sold at a profit thereby financing the bride-wealth of the members as custom in that part of Africa demanded. Unfortunately, just as the crop came on to the market there was a drought in neighbouring Kenya and an emergency shipload of grain was sent to Kenya to alleviate any suffering that might take place. The sudden influx of so much grain depressed the market price of grain throughout East Africa and as a result, our group farmers suffered severe losses. It would have been so much more helpful to all and probably far cheaper had the government concerned bought the grain in Uganda and Tanzania and distributed it in Kenya. Studies made in other parts of the world show that this is not an isolated example. Emergency food relief has in some cases destroyed neighbouring markets, created a dependence on free food, and set back self-reliance in some of the countries where disaster struck.⁷ European and American farmers are the ones who are really helped as such aid serves to rid them of their stockpiles of surplus food. Missionaries have traditionally been instrumental in the distribution of such relief, but more and more are giving it up as they become aware of its harmful effects.

Moreover, in a fascinating and intensive study carried out by Ms Denise Williams in Northern Ghana into the nutritional effects upon children benefiting from a food aid programme as compared with the feeding habits of children in villages where there was almost no contact whatever with outside influences, it was discovered that the beneficiaries of the food programme were nutritionally no better off than those who did not receive relief.⁸ A similar study carried out in Jamaica comes to similar conclusions.⁹

In countries where there is abject poverty; which suffer shortages of the very basic commodities of everyday life such as salt, soap, spares for bicycles; where hospitals have no medicines; where vehicles, machinery and building materials are unavailable or obtainable only on the black market at highly inflated prices or go to Government officials, army or police officers or wealthy businessmen who can afford the bribes; where the countryside is littered with the wrecks of cars, lorries, unfinished buildings and incomplete wells. the Church because she is independent of allocations of foreign exchange from Central Banks and through her international network of resources and contacts appears as the only organisation able to build, drive new cars, import tractors and machinery, dig wells and obtain those commodities the existence of which has become a vague memory for the average citizen.

What kind of an image does such a Church present? Is it enough to say that the Church does all of this solely for the good of the people?

Many will counter by saying that in Africa the situation is different from the situation in Europe or America, and the Church at this juncture has to present much the same image as it did in medieval Europe and that in Africa she will only be heeded if there is a show of strength, power and prestige. There may well be some truth to this, and peasant farmers may like the idea of their bishop driving a Mercedes and living in a large house competing on equal terms with the secular powers. But there can be no doubt that such a show of power, wealth and privilege provokes the jealousy and anger of many and instead of giving an example of evangelical poverty it encourages and promotes the trend to consumerism and approves the cult of power. No one is going to deny a bishop his power if he is the spiritual leader of thousands in his diocese who look to him for leadership and guidance. This is one thing, triumphalism based on foreign funding sources is quite another.

The inflow of increasingly large amounts of money and the ease with which it is available to the Church is greeted almost with joy, a sense of due justice and a vindication of our success at grass roots level. Such attitudes nullify and make a mockery of any attempt to encourage self-reliant basic communities, Christian or otherwise and fosters on the contrary a paternalistic dependence on foreign aid. In my opinion, this is rapidly becoming the single biggest obstacle to the Church's mission in Africa.

The development philosophy that is displayed is materialistic, result orientated and efficiency conscious. It places priority on the accomplishment of development projects rather than on the development of people living in communities, of the whole man and all men, in the words of *Populorum Progressio*.¹⁰ It avoids responsibility for creating social change, contenting itself with the capitalistic social mobility of a small section of the society in which it works.

Far more serious however, are the wider implications. By accepting more and more money from government organisations we risk the danger of surrendering our freedom and independence of thought and action while giving the impression that we are opting for a definite politico-economic ideology at an official level. We thereby implicitly align ourselves with one side in the neo-colonialist scramble now taking place in Africa be it on the side of the Americans, the British, the French, the Germans, the Belgians or whoever.

Financial aid and, by the same token, the F. A. have a role to play, as long as they do not interfere with development, and therefore can only be reactive to requests for help by local com-

munities who have taken stock of their situation and the need to tackle the problems which beset it. As St Paul says it is the duty of those Christians who are in a position to help, to come to the aid of their poorer brethren,¹¹ and one might add those who are not Christian, simply because they need help. This should not blind us to the fact that it is only through curbing the profligacy in the developed world that the injustices and inequalities can ever be hoped to be evened out. If certain aid agencies put as much effort into this as they did into advertising, and funding birth control programmes for the Third World, then the world might be a better place for all of us. Above all, in her desire to be of real help and assistance in alleviating the undoubted suffering that exists, the Church would do better to base herself on the Gospel and work independently from national, continental or sectarian influences, thereby able to call to task corruption, injustice and exploitation wherever they are found, and by whomsoever they are perpetrated. Not an easy task but an essential one none the less.

- 1 Writing this article as I am in the middle of the African backwoods I am basing myself on memory, but if pressed I could no doubt retrieve the exact reference.
- 2 For a fuller discussion on the question of the unsuitability of western health care in an African context cf. David Morely *Paediatric Priorities in the Developing World* Butterworth, 1973.
- 3 For a more complete treatment of the problems of participation in development projects established by the Church cf. *The Church and Rural Development in Africa: Patterns of Participation and Response* A. M. Visocchi, soon to be published as an occasional paper by the Institute for International Studies. College of Education, Michigan State University, East Lansing.
- 4 I have given a fuller description of the economic and political problems in Ghana in "A Tale of Two Countries: Church and State in Ghana and Uganda" Tony Visocchi *The Month*, June/July 1978. Recent reports indicate that similar conditions exist in other African countries besides Ghana and Uganda. Zambia for example, "Catch 22 for World's Copper Industry" by J P Smith *The Weekly Guardian*, 7 May 1978, Nigeria, oil-rich though it may be is in an equally difficult situation, "Nigeria's Unrest Goes Unreported" by Walter Schwarz *The Weekly Guardian*, 21 May 1978. And of course Zaire has had its dirty linen washed in the intercontinental press.
- 5 Max Weber *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Allen & Unwin, 1930.
- 6 *CIA Diary*, Phillip Agee, Penguin Books 1975. *In Search of Enemies: a CIA Story* John Stockwell, W W Norton & Co Inc. 1978. The reviews to which I am referring appeared in *Newsweek* 22 May 1978 and *Time* 22 May 1978.
- 7 "Food Donations after disaster and in relation to Agricultural Development" Frederick C Cuny (interviewed) 28 February 1977 who shows how disaster relief hits economies adversely in Biafra, India, Bangladesh, Israel, Lebanon, Burundi, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Peru." *PL Food Assistance in Guatemala*. Jo Froman, Bob Gersony, Tony Jackson 3 June 1977. "The relationship between PL 480 food distribution and agricultural development in Guatemala". Roland Bunch and William Ruddel 21 August 1977. These studies were funded by the Ford Foundation. The following newspaper articles were based on them: "Two Theories of Relief put into practice in Guatemala" by Jonathan Randel, *New York Times*, 15 May 1976, US food aid seen hurting Guatemala, Alan Riding, *New York Times*, 6 Nov 1977. "US must take a new look at disaster relief overseas", editorial. *The Miami Herald*, 8 Nov 1977.

- 8 "A comparison of the nutritional status of two Konkomba villages varying in degree of accessibility to Western influence with a special emphasis upon the nutritional status of vulnerable groups within the villages", Thesis presented for M.Sc. degree at the Faculty of Science, University of Ghana by Ms Denice Williams, 1978. Ms Williams' approach to her work is ideally suited to conditions in Western Africa, more so than most other rural development projects established by the Church and deserves to be better known.
- 9 "Food and Nutrition in Self-Reliant National Development: the Impact on Child Nutrition of Jamaican Government Policy", Thomas J Mardione, Medical Anthropology, University of Connecticut, Winter 1977.
- 10 Cf. CTS edition nn 14 and 15.
- 11 Romans 15:25-28.

Contemporary Christianity as a Religion of Nature

Adrian Edwards CSSp

While my cook is preparing chicken soup, to be followed by the actual chicken and some yam cakes, I ought to fill in the interval of anticipation by explaining my situation and my problem. I might perhaps equally well fill it in by drinking some sherry, but it might be better to keep that luxury for the guests who may come at the week-end.

My situation is this; I am a Catholic priest, with some training in anthropology, in charge of a mission in a rural area of the Rivers State of Nigeria. For the article I want to write, my library is extremely limited. I beg my readers not therefore to grumble at inadequate, nay minimal, footnoting, and the absence of exact quotations.

My problem is this; how correct is the claim that contemporary Christianity differs from all other manifestations of religion in being unconcerned with nature?¹ It may be seen, in an approach which goes back, I think to German Idealism, as a historical religion, the moment of the Incarnation marking the beginning of the end for the nature religions; or it may be seen as a religion essentially concerned with relations between persons, having, with the progress of science, sloughed off the cosmological ideas on such absorbing questions as the exact date of the Creation, the

1 To be honest, this article is intended as a counter-argument to those advanced by Professor Robin Horton, formerly of the University of Ife and now of the University of Port Harcourt (both in Nigeria). See Horton's essay in *Rationality* (edited B. Wilson), Blackwell, Oxford, 1970, which reprints two articles on "African traditional thought and Western science", which first appeared in *Africa*, 1967. If I were giving a detailed analysis of Professor Horton's work, I would wish to stress a number of positive elements of value.