

## Creating a Missionary Vicariate Economics in Catholic Missionary Culture.

Stuart C Bate OMI<sup>1</sup>

(2002 ‘Creating a missionary vicariate: Economics in Catholic missionary culture’.  
*Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 28,2:223-261.)

### Part 1. Settler society and the need for a new Vicariate in Natal

#### 1. Introduction

On 13 November 1851 the newly appointed Vicar Apostolic of the newly created Catholic Vicariate of Natal set sail from Marseilles together with four other companions. All were members of the congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate: a religious congregation of male Catholic missionaries established only some 25 years earlier.<sup>2</sup> According to his financial records the vicar had collected 13506,46 francs.<sup>3</sup> Of this 10000 was a donation from the “Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi”<sup>4</sup> (OPF) in Lyons and 2000 was a donation from the “Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith” (SCPF) in Rome.<sup>5</sup> The rest had been collected from private donors. Why a new vicariate in the land of Natal? How was this man chosen as Vicar Apostolic? Why was the mission confided to a religious congregation when the first two Catholic vicariates in South Africa were not? And how had he managed to get these two relatively large donations at the beginning when other

---

<sup>1</sup>This research was completed whilst the author was Visiting Research Fellow at the Department of Missiology of the University of South Africa. He is currently Professor of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry at St Augustine College of South Africa, Johannesburg; e-mail: scbate@aol.com.

<sup>2</sup> The congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate was formally approved by Rome on 17 February 1826.

<sup>3</sup>“*Recettes pour la mission de Natal depuis le 27 Mai 1851 jusqu’au 19 juin 1852*”. Folder, Vicariate of Natal OMI General Archives. The figure is the amount received up to 13 November 1851, the day of the departure. According to the same document this represented about £632 sterling.

<sup>4</sup> “Work of the propagation of the faith”. The organisation “*L’Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*” (OPF) was founded by a group of priests and lay people in Lyons, France in 1822 to assist, by prayer and financial support, the spread of Catholic missions throughout the world.

<sup>5</sup> These two organisations (SCPF and OPF) can be easily confused as both are sometimes referred to as “propagation of the faith”. The *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* (SCPF) was founded in 1622 to coordinate the missionary thrust of the Church and to respond to some of the difficulties experienced in allowing missionary work to be tied to Catholic colonial powers, the *padroado* system. It is now called the “Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples”.

vicars had to start with much less help? All of these questions have answers related to economic matters. The purpose of this study is to investigate these questions by examining some of the economic issues around the establishment of this vicariate. Economics and mission are intimately intertwined and this is particularly so when Westerners do mission. This is because economics is a major domain of Western culture and the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century missionary movement is clearly an initiative of the people of this particular culture. I contend that a cultural study of the economic aspects of Western missionary practice helps us to recognise that there is a worldview made up of beliefs, values, presuppositions and premisses which makes people do mission in a particular way. For Westerners the economic is an important aspect of that way. It is a Western inculturated<sup>6</sup> form of mission. Cultural analyses help us to “get behind” and examine peoples’ visions, strategies and motivations. For these reasons economics as a cultural domain is a particularly valuable heuristic tool for studying Western Christian expansion. This is particularly true when we look at settler societies since these were motivated into existence largely for economic reasons. The great settler societies of North and South America, Australasia and Southern and Eastern Africa were motivated more by economic factors than anything else.<sup>7</sup> Economic matters were powerful symbols in these societies.

The relationship between economics and mission is extremely complex. In order to bring focus to our study we shall limit ourselves to the exploration of a narrative coming from Catholic Missionary culture and then explore this narrative from an economic perspective. This narrative is a document drawn up by the SCPF in Rome in order to discuss the issues surrounding the establishment of the new vicariate of Natal. The document is useful because it comprises a number of separate texts written by different authors. The two principal authors are a missionary bishop in the settler society in the Eastern Cape and an official of the SCPF in Rome. Consequently, the document gives us access to Catholic Missionary culture from both the perspective of settler society and the perspective of Roman curial society: two poles, if you will, of Catholic Missionary culture.

Our task will be to abstract all the economic culture texts from this narrative and attempt to analyse these texts to see what they reveal about the vision, presuppositions, values and conclusions of their authors. By “economic culture text” we refer to a phrase, sentence or paragraph within the document which deals with a particular economic issue or which communicates a particular economic message within the culture. We call them cultural because they emerge from a cultural context and it is the articulation of this cultural dimension which interests us.

---

<sup>6</sup>Inculturation is a relatively new term in theology which is concerned with the cultural aspects of Christian praxis. In Africa and Asia it is currently an important theological category in informing the process of adapting the local churches there to aspects of the local cultures which were previously considered pagan. See Bate 1995:229ff.

<sup>7</sup> Whilst early settlers in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries often moved for religious reasons many also moved for economic reasons. But by the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the principal motivation was clearly economic. The colony/new world offered the promise of a better life for the settler. See Delavignette 1964:15-28.

The establishment of the Missionary Vicariate of Natal in 1852 has in fact been very well documented (Brady 1952, Kowalsky 1957, Brown 1960, Skhakhane 1974, Brain 1975). It is not the intention of this article to restate this narrative. What we are concerned with is understanding the cultural motivations of the various groups involved. Such may provide a different perspective on the missionary history of this part of the world. Inculturation is a new term but culture has always informed the Church=s praxis. Re-examining the Church=s missionary endeavour in the key of inculturation allows us to identify important cultural signifiers in the process. Culture is the fabric of our humanity. It is also useful, though dangerous, to cut this fabric and create cultural clothes for ourselves by prescribing cultural boundaries. We have done this here by speaking about a Catholic Missionary culture. This helps us clarify identity but can be problematic in that we introduce, also culturally, somewhat subjective boundaries to cultures which allow us to speak of cultural groups. The helpful part of this is that it responds to the fact that humans always exist in communities. But the problematic part of it is that it suggests an exclusivity in groupings that is rarely the case in reality. Only very few human groupings are really exclusive and cut off from outside influence. Naming cultural groups can, in the end, develop signs of being a somewhat arbitrary heuristic tool. With this caveat we now proceed to use it.

In this article we are particularly concerned with three cultural contexts or groupings which can be named as “Catholic Missionary culture”, “Roman Curial culture” and the “South African Settler culture”. The document we will investigate comes from a Catholic Missionary culture. Our investigation will reveal some of the views, priorities and concerns of that culture. The Catholic church is a strongly hierarchical church and at the centre or apex of this hierarchy are the Pope and the Roman curia.<sup>8</sup> The document was commissioned and prepared by the Roman curia and so it should reveal aspects of the preoccupations and priorities of the Roman Curial culture. It also contains a long report from the Vicar Apostolic of the Eastern Cape, Bishop Aidan Devereux, together with a subsequent letter from him. These texts provide insights into Catholic Missionary culture in settler society as well as some aspects of “British colonial culture”. The new vicariate of Natal was established to respond to the need for priests articulated by Catholics in settler society and so issues and priorities of this society are also found in the document.

The study will reveal some of the principal cultural symbols linked with the socio-political and economic issues of these various socio-cultural contexts. It will show how such issues were both interpreted and factored into the process of the establishment of the vicariate. Symbols of culture provide ways of articulating power within communities. This power drives the behaviour both of individuals and communities within the society in moods and motivations but also helps establish social trends and directions, priorities and preoccupations. In other words culture affects and prescribes behaviour. The world view, beliefs and values of a people both inform and are informed by its symbols.

The initial request for the establishment of a vicariate in Natal is found in the first report to Rome of Bishop Devereux, Vicar Apostolic of the Eastern Vicariate. Bishop Devereux is an important figure in this story. As a Vicar Apostolic he is part of the Catholic Missionary culture, originally coming from Ireland to work in the Cape of Good Hope Vicariate under

---

<sup>8</sup> In Catholic dogma Christ is the head of the Church the Pope is the “Vicar of Christ”.

Bishop Griffith. As a Bishop he is part of the Catholic hierarchy and responsible to the Cardinal Prefect of the Roman dicastery<sup>9</sup> of SCPF. Finally, he is located in The Eastern Cape amongst fellow settlers and so participates in this culture too. As a result of this request by Bishop Devereux the Cardinal Prefect decided to look at the question of the possible establishment of a new diocese and he commissioned the drawing up of a document to examine this question. This document, called the “*ponenza*” in Roman Curial culture, forms the object of our study and it is to the investigation proper that we now turn.

## 2. Procedures in Roman Curial culture: the *ponenza*

The way in which a new vicariate was set up by Rome followed a set of procedures which also applied to all issues and projects suggested from the churches under the control of SCPF. The first step was the receipt of a report (“*relazione*”) from a Papal Nuncio or Bishop, or even sometimes from a Religious Superior depending on the way the local church was structured and developed, in which a specific request or suggestion was made. The Cardinal Prefect of SCPF, at this time Cardinal Giacomo Filippo Fransoni, would then decide whether or not to go with the proposed project. If he decided to go with it, he would have a “*ponenza*”<sup>10</sup> prepared by the curia of the Congregation. This document was a collection of relevant papers together with a synthesis of the issue and questions surrounding it. He then appointed a “*Ponente*” who was a person chosen from among the members of the SCPF resident in Rome, either a Cardinal or Bishop, who would present the case to the ordinary meeting (“*Ordinaria*”) of the Congregation. The *Ordinaria* was made up of all the Cardinal and Bishop members of the Congregation in Rome. On the basis of this presentation at the *Ordinaria*, the members of the Congregation took a vote on each of the queries to be resolved. If their recommendation was positive the matter was taken to the Pope who then made the decision in a separate audience with the Prefect, and the date of that meeting was the date of establishment of the vicariate (or the appointment of a Bishop, or whatever the question).<sup>11</sup>

In August 1850 Cardinal Fransoni made himself the *ponente* “on the report of the Vicar Apostolic of the Eastern Province of the Cape of Good Hope and about some issues and questions raised by the same prelate”.<sup>12</sup> The *ponenza* is written in Italian though there are a

---

<sup>9</sup>The general name for a Curial congregation or department in the Roman Curia of the Church. The term is Greek and originally referred to a judicial body in ancient Greece.

<sup>10</sup>The word *ponenza* is not found on the title page of the document but is referred to in the text. The document is entitled “*Ristretto con sommario e nota di archivio*” (synthesis with a summary and archival note) which is merely a listing of the various documents within the whole. *Ponenza* is the general term used for such documents.

<sup>11</sup> I am indebted for this procedural information to a current official of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples. The procedure remains somewhat similar today.

<sup>12</sup> The *ponenza* is written in Italian and all translations are by the author. The original of this quote found on the title page reads: “*Sulla Relazione esibita dal Vicario Apost. della*

few texts in Latin including the requests and queries of Bishop Devereux and quotes of official documents in the archival notes. It is dated August 1850.<sup>13</sup> It contains the following papers:

1. *Ristretto*: A five page synthesis of the issues written by the Cardinal *Ponente* numbered as 20 paragraphs. This is followed by seven specific queries to which the cardinals of the committee were required to respond in the meeting of the *ordinaria*.
2. *Nota di Archivio*: A 17 page archival note giving background information on three of the seven queries (nos. 5, 6 and 7).
3. *Relazione*: The report of Bishop Devereux, Vicar Apostolic of the Eastern Vicariate. This is a ten page document in Italian being a translation from the English original.
4. *Sommario* A seven page compilation of five separate documents:
  - No. I A short memo on the Natal Colony given to the Prefect of the Congregation by Bishop Devereux in Naples during his visit in 1849.
  - No. II A letter from Bishop de Mazenod accepting the proposed mission for the Oblates of Mary Immaculate
  - No. III A letter from the Bishop of Limoges giving information regarding Father de Montaigut who had been proposed as a possible Vicar Apostolic of the new vicariate.
  - No. IV A further letter from Bishop De Mazenod proposing Father Allard as the Vicar Apostolic of the new vicariate.
  - No. V A document in Latin outlining the issues and questions posed by Bishop Devereux in his report.
5. A document entitled “*Foglio addizionale*” (additional document). This is a six page letter from Bishop Devereux, in French, received after the printing of the *ponenza*, which touches on some relevant issues. It updates the earlier report giving details of the new resources of personnel obtained as a result of his visit to Europe and the United States of America in 1849.

The *ponenza* reflects and casts light upon issues and themes coming from all three of the cultural contexts we have outlined. It is a document of Catholic Missionary culture since it comes from the Roman dicastery concerned with mission and its principal authors are officials of SCPF and Bishop Devereux, a Catholic missionary. The symbol “Catholic Missionary culture” is the overall cultural context that we will study. But within this overarching culture there are two poles. In Rome we find a Roman Curial culture. Catholic Missionary culture is influenced and informed by this culture. In South Africa we find a settler culture where Catholic mission was beginning to take root. Devereux’s report, as we shall see, is primarily concerned with issues of settler culture in South Africa and he, a participant in that culture also, reflects the views and concerns of that society. Analysis of the *ponenza* shows texts created within the Roman Curial culture and texts emanating from Catholic mission in settler society. Consequently we shall divide the study into two parts. In this first

---

*Provincia Orientale del Capo di Buona Speranza, e sopra alcune istanze e quesiti dello stesso Prelato”.*

<sup>13</sup>The printed version is dated July but this has been crossed out and replaced by August, the month when the *ordinaria* actually met to discuss the issues.

part we will examine the texts of Catholic Missionary culture from its settler source. In unpacking this we will focus on the three documents from Bishop Devereux found in the *ponenza* (*supra* papers 3, 4 nos. I & V, and 5). In the second part we will abstract the Roman curial narrative in the *ponenza*, focussing on the texts from that source (*supra* papers 1 and 2).

### **3. Catholic Missionary culture in settler society: economic culture texts.**

#### ***3.1 Culture text analysis of the Devereux narratives***

The first step of this analysis will be to discover the economic culture texts within the Devereux documents indicated above. Fifty such texts conveying financial or economic messages were identified. Though these culture texts emerge from the economic domain of settler culture they are not restricted just to that domain. This is because economic matters always have other social, political and religious dimensions to them. Part of our analysis will be to look at how these economic texts link to important issues within other semiotic domains<sup>14</sup> of settler culture. This will help identify the shape and structure of economic factors within the culture. In other words we should be able to reveal something of the way in which economic issues plug into other social issues of human life.

##### *3.1.1 The “Relazione”*

This report is undated in the Italian translation.<sup>15</sup> It is the report of Devereux’s administration since his episcopal ordination in December 1847. It is ten typed pages. An analysis of the document revealed the following 28 texts conveying economic messages.<sup>16</sup>

1. The soil of the Eastern Province is more fertile than that of the West (p.1-2).
2. Produce includes wheat, livestock, sheep giving high quality wool, all the fruits and plants of Southern Europe (p. 2).
3. Each civil district has a paid magistrate who collects taxes and hears cases (p. 2).
4. The Dutch Reformed faith has six ministers. Each receives £200 p.a. from the government (p. 2-3).
5. The Anglicans have 7 ministers who receive £1800 p.a. from the government (p. 3).
6. The Catholics have a bishop and three priests, two of whom receive £100 p.a. from the State (p. 3).
7. These are the only religious corporations recognised by the government as having the right to help for the building of their churches and the maintenance for their ministers (p. 3).

---

<sup>14</sup> By semiotic domain we refer to areas within the symbol system of the culture which cluster around a specific root metaphor. The economic domain, for example, clusters around the metaphor of markets, and the colonial domain around the metaphor “civilisation” The semiotic domains in the Devereux narrative will be identified from within the text itself.

<sup>15</sup>The English original was not available to the author at the time of writing.

<sup>16</sup> Here and elsewhere, the texts are presented in order of appearance in the narrative.

8. In the Eastern Vicariate there are not less than 120 of these agents [“sects” like Methodists etc...] <sup>17</sup> with abundant means ... (p. 3).
9. There are in this city [Grahamstown] and district about 1100 Catholics and we have a good church dedicated to St Peter (sic <sup>18</sup>) built without the help of the government for a cost of £2200. Up to now it has no school nor funds for its maintenance unless some are taken from those given by the faithful to support their pastor (p. 3).
10. Your Eminence and the Sacred Congregation will understand the difficulties which surround us. He [Devereux referring to himself] is without funds whilst the agents of more than 10 heretical sects with abundant means are always trying to induce Catholics to send their children to their schools (p. 3-4).
11. Against these enemies of the Holy Faith the following would be helpful: an orphanage, a good school under the influence of sisters, and a Christian Brothers’ school for the boys. I would also need a printing press to publish booklets (p. 4).
12. They have erected a beautiful church dedicated to St Augustine and a residence for the Priest (p. 4).
13. They need a school (p. 4).
14. When the land has been measured it will be sold by the government (p. 5) [referring to the recently proclaimed new districts of Albert, Victoria and Fort Peddie] .
15. whilst it is the most fertile territory perhaps in a few years it could also be the most flourishing in the Colony (p. 5) [referring to English Kaffraria] .
16. I asked the English authorities to give a monetary subsidy for provisions for priests but so far have had no response. In Ireland they give this help but so far in the Cape of Good Hope they have recused themselves (p. 5).
17. From these indications the SC <sup>19</sup> will see the poor state of the Eastern Vicariate. It has its own Vicar Apostolic without income, with three priests, for two of whom the government pays £100 whilst the other maintains himself by running a school (p.6).
18. In these unhappy times where to find funds? It is useless to go to the English government. I asked the Secretary of the Colony, Lord Grey, who replied that he would give whatever concession the State has agreed to but could not propose changes to the law to help them..When we are more stable the local government will blushinglly give us a few light stipends, but before the stability we cannot hope for more (p. 6).
19. All my hopes are in the Pius Work for the Propagation of the Faith. <sup>20</sup> And I hope that your Eminence will give me a strong commendation to this charitable society. Without appearing to be too bold I would request a letter which could also recommend my mission to all the bishops and faithful of the Church (p. 6).

---

<sup>17</sup>Texts in square brackets are my own explanatory comments.

<sup>18</sup>The church is actually St Patrick. It is unclear why this error was made. Perhaps it occurred in translation. The author did not have access to the English original. St Patrick, Grahamstown was established in 1838 (Source Catholic Directory 2001).

<sup>19</sup>Refers to SCPF.

<sup>20</sup> *Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*. See note 4.

Subsection entitled “Kaffir Tribe”<sup>21</sup>: *Relazione* p.6-8.

20. The riches of the Kaffir consist in the number of livestock he possesses (p. 7).
21. Women are in a kind of slavery (p. 7).
22. [The war in Kaffraria] cost the English about 2 million pounds sterling (p. 7).
23. The missionaries...did not merit their trust because they came for the own goals and interests (p. 8).
24. [Bushmen] was a race of pygmies...being expert thieves (p. 8).
25. This immense district now joined to the colony [North of the Eastern Province] will soon be occupied by European immigrants. The soil is fertile and the climate is salubrious (p. 9).

Subsection entitled “Land of Natal”: *Relazione* p9-10

26. The soil is quite fertile and the climate is salubrious. It is rich in vegetation which gives all kinds of things useful to maintain many inhabitants (p. 9).
27. Soon the colony will grow (p. 10).
28. The government will give a small salary to the priest in Pietermaritzburg (p. 10).

### 3.1.2 *The Sommario*

As we noted in section 2 this document has five parts to it. Only two of these parts (I and V in no 4) come from Devereux. These are the “*memoria*” (no I) and the “*Istanze e quesiti*” (no V).

“*Memoria sulla colonia di Natale*” (4 - I above).

This “memo on the colony of Natal” is a one page document. There are just six texts conveying economic messages:

29. Cotton and indigo are indigenous here but this wild cotton is not good for use; it shows, though, that the cultivation of cotton could be productive and useful here.
30. The thing that makes this district really precious is the abundant vegetation of almost everything necessary to maintain a large population. Millet and pumpkins grow spontaneously. The black livestock prospers very well in all parts except close to the sea so beef and milk are abundant.
31. The Kaffirs need nothing.
32. Indigo is a common plant in most places and being indigenous to the soil it always gives a good result as does cotton.
33. A considerable quantity of ivory and rubber can be procured from the Goolas [Zulus?] who are friendly and happy to enter into commerce.
34. A rough sketch of the bay of Natal has been made by a soldier of the 723<sup>rd</sup> regiment.

*Istanze e quesiti* (Applications and queries) (4 - V).

This is a two page formal document in Latin at the end of the *Sommario*. It contains seven applications and three queries the Vicar Apostolic wishes to put to the SCPF. Most concern

---

<sup>21</sup>The terms “native” and “kaffir” are retained where necessary in the text to reflect the state of things at the time. Today these terms, particularly the latter, are strongly pejorative. See note 29.

issues of church law but one has an economic component concerning conditions around the English government=s granting of stipends to priests.

35. When the English government gives a stipend to a Catholic priest in our vicariate it proclaims that the queen or governor has appointed such a priest for such a task. In fact the bishop nominates. The question is whether that proclamation so smacks of the “contamination” of civil power and “Erastianism”<sup>22</sup> that it can be permitted by the Bishop with a clear conscience without some expression of disapproval.

### 3.1.3 *The Foglio addizionale* (additional paper)

This “additional document to the *ponenza* on the report given by Bishop Devereux, Vicar Apostolic of the Eastern Province of the Cape of Good Hope”<sup>23</sup> comprises a six page letter written in French by Bishop Devereux from the Cape on 15 March 1850, together with a “prospectus” of the vicariate. The following fourteen texts bear economic content.

36. Our voyage [from France to the Cape] was long and painful; we suffered a lot as a result of the bad food and the parsimony with which it was distributed to us as a result of the avarice and bad faith of our captain whose aim was clearly to force us to buy our provisions from him at a high price (p.1).
37. The bad treatment aboard reduced some of us to veritable scarecrows (p. 2).
38. At Grahamstown I possess neither house nor any kind of shelter. (p. 2).
39. I found a comfortable house for the religious women. The one I had to buy cost me 25000 francs but they gave me three years to pay (p. 2).
40. The sisters have opened, besides their boarding establishment, two schools: one for the children of the rich and the other for those of the poor. They now have nine boarders and 21 day pupils who also pay a small boarding fee. There are 90 in the school for the poor (p. 2-3).
41. [concerning Natal] Both from Europe or from different points of the continent immigrants arrive without ceasing in Natal (p. 3).
42. [Concerning the recent “discovery” of a lake in central Africa] Already business men (“*commercents*”) are preparing to make the journey for purely commercial reasons (p. 4).
43. Please recommend my mission to the councils in Paris and Lyons [of OPF] (p. 4).
44. Grahamstown: The Church of St Patrick cost 50000 francs but is not yet complete (p. 5).
45. Bishop Devereux has neither house nor means of subsistence apart from what he receives from the work of the propagation of the faith (p. 5).
46. Father Murphy has a small house and receives 2500 francs p.a. from the government and 2500 p.a. from the Catholic community (p. 5).
47. St Augustine’s church cost 25000 francs (p. 5).

---

<sup>22</sup> The doctrine that the state is superior to the church in ecclesiastical matters. It is named after the 16th-century Swiss physician and Zwinglian theologian Thomas Erastus, who really never held such a doctrine (Source: Encyclopaedia Britannica).

Translation of “*Foglio addizionale alla Ponenza sulla relazione esibita da Monsig. Devereux Vic. Ap. Della Provincia Orientale del Capo di Buona Speranza*”.

48. Father Corcoran receives 2500 francs p.a. from the government and about 1850 francs p.a. from his congregation (p. 5).
49. The mission of Graaff-Reinet should be supported by the Work of the Propagation of the Faith [OPF] for some time still. There is neither house nor church (p. 5).
50. Cradock: neither church nor house. Father de Saucy only receives what he can make himself (p. 6).

Our initial analysis of the Devereux documents reporting on the conditions in Southern Africa have revealed fifty separate culture texts within the economic domain. They reveal the economic concerns of Catholic Missionary culture in the settler context. But they also go beyond economic matters. A look at the texts shows that they link economic issues to other issues and concerns within the culture. In other words, investigating the texts from the economic domain allows us an insight into other domains of the culture. It is possible to identify these domains by investigating how the economic culture texts cluster around different non-economic matters. These areas of concern may themselves be semiotic domains within the culture, particularly if they are informed by a prevailing root metaphor or central symbol of power within the culture. So our next task is to identify the various ways in which the texts cluster within the culture and then to see if we can identify some organising metaphors within these clusters. In this way we should learn something of the structure of Catholic Missionary culture in a settler context. We should also be able to distinguish the ways in which the power which motivates human behaviour is articulated within the world view or mind set of the settler culture on which Devereux reports and largely identifies with. Such an articulation provides an entry into the meta-narratives of culture which leads to its received wisdom, common sense and assumptions. Understanding these can help us formulate some reasons why mission took the directions it did when carried out by the people of this culture. Revealing these should caution us to the somewhat simplistic, often politically correct, but nonetheless anachronistic judgments of missionary motivation which are made in terms of our own set of culturally conditioned meta-narratives today. In other words, by becoming more understanding we might become less simplistic and less culturo-centric in our judgments about the past.

### ***3.2 Semiotic clustering of the culture texts: Identifying some principal symbols, messages and metaphors in Settler culture***

#### *3.2.1 The settler myth of El Dorado: A bright economic future for the colony*

South African settler society reflected much of European settler consciousness throughout the world. Central to this consciousness was the belief of a better life out there in the “new territories”. Settlers from Europe usually left behind a world where life was not so great and lived in hope of a better future. The story of El Dorado seems to be a good myth<sup>24</sup> informing this kind of behaviour. El Dorado<sup>25</sup> was supposed to be a mysterious city built completely of gold. Indigenous Americans used the story to motivate the Spanish to keep moving in their

---

24 I use myth in the sense of a truth. People believe in the myth because they consider it to be true. Only other people’s myths are false.

25 The fabulous country of gold that the Spanish explorers and colonists searched for.

search for it. Whilst it is specifically a myth of the Spanish colonial period in America it seems to fit the whole of the settler consciousness which was continually motivated by the search for riches and a better life. Indeed, Delavignette (1964: 28) pointedly applies it to European settlement of Africa. Devereux follows the trajectory of this myth in his overly optimistic relation of the positive economic aspects of the new territory and his relative blindness to its downside. In the list presented in 3.1 above culture texts 1, 2, 15, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 41, 42 paint a picture of a rich and fertile land with a pleasant climate which is attracting immigrants “without ceasing”. The principal message here seems to be hope and optimism for a better future. Here we plug into the optimistic discourse of the colonists whose motivation in coming to the new lands was the hope of prosperity and a better future (Delavignette 1964: 26-28; Crais 1992:88). In fact when Bishop Allard arrived some three years later, the colony had moved into depression as

the economic position in Natal...had already begun to deteriorate. Many of the settlers who had arrived from the British Isles between 1848 and 1851 had found the farms allocated to them were uneconomic, the soil unsuited to crop farming or that distances from the nearest market made vegetable and dairy enterprises unprofitable. When it was announced that gold had been found in Australia, many immigrants left Natal in 1852 and 1853 to seek their fortunes there. (Brain 1975:32)

El Dorado, as in the original myth, was always somewhere else.

### 3.2.2 *British colonial government as organising principal of settler society: the ambiguity of the Catholic position*

The earlier European settlements of the Cape were linked with the Dutch East India company. The first permanent colonial settlement occurred with the appointment of Jan Van Riebeck in 1652 as governor “and from the first no Catholic settlers were allowed there” (Brown 1960:5). In 1795 the British occupied the Cape and, apart from the brief period of the Batavian republican control between 1802 and 1806, were to retain control throughout the modern period. Anti Catholic feeling amongst the British colonial government ensured that Catholic priests and the Bishop appointed Vicar Apostolic in 1818, as well as his successor, were refused entry.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, “one Catholic official was forced to resign because of his faith” (Davenport 1997:52). Only with the appointment of the third Vicar Apostolic in 1837, some eight years after the Catholic Emancipation Act was passed in Britain, did the history of the Catholic Church in South Africa really begin (Brown 1960: 6-7). But even so, the Catholic Church continued to find itself in a somewhat ambiguous position with regard to this administration. Whilst the colonial policy was one of religious tolerance, the power of the established church and the composition of the settlers with relatively few Catholics amongst them meant that the ethos of the society was not particularly conducive to Catholicism. Devereux’s narrative confirms this ambiguity. It is well summed up in the following sentence from his report (*Relazione* p7): “In the colony we are weak, with many enemies and

---

26 Brown (1960: 9) notes that sometimes these expulsions were done by a governor “acting on his own whim and authority, and apparently without informing London”. Such indicates the depth of antagonism to the Catholic church in the consciousness of at least some influential non Catholic settlers.

few protectors”. The positive aspect of this ambiguity was the fact that support from the colonial government was available for some Catholic clergy mainly for their work with Irish Catholic soldiers in the colonial army. In fact, Catholics were quite privileged in this regard since only they, together with Anglicans and Dutch Reformed, were churches recognised by the colonial government for financial help. Statements 6, 7, 17, 28, 46 and 48 show how this happened in practice. Unfortunately we also discover that the Catholics receive less than the others (4, 5, 6,) and also that this help rarely extends to church buildings as it was supposed to (7, 9). Nevertheless Devereux continues to make requests for monetary subsidies to the government and wait on the results (16). He finds the attitude of the English authorities often difficult. Texts 16 and 18 suggest that the colonial authorities do not seem that keen to help and avoid doing so if they can. We shall see later that there is more to this matter when we discover how the Roman curial narrative proceeds with great caution against English colonial offers of help seeing them to be tied up with other interests and agendas which are not those of the Church (part 2 section 2.5). Ambiguity is a good description of Devereux’s experience of the Colonial administration.

### 3.2.3 *Sheep amongst wolves: inter-confessional antagonism*

Another set of economic culture texts appears to cluster around the perception of antagonism between the various Christian confessions in the colony. Such are texts 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,10,11 and 23. This prevailing mood of Colonial Christian rivalry and ecclesial tension is expressed by Devereux in terms of the metaphor of wolves and sheep. The poor Catholics are the lambs surrounded by marauding wolves who seek to steal the flock. “It is a sad fact, eminent prince, to have to watch the damage made by the wolf without having the means to defend the lambs against him” (*Relazione* p 6). There are two important signifiers emerging from the metaphor. The first is the essentially confrontational and aggressive relationship between the churches and the second is the response of Catholic defensiveness. Much of the confrontational relationship between the churches was rooted in the establishment of the English church which “protected its privileges by laws restricting the political rights both of Free Church members and of Roman Catholics” (Davenport 1997:52). The nineteenth century was also a period of theological fluidity with the influences of modernism, humanism, pietism, neo Calvinism, and evangelicalism influencing Protestant churches whilst the ultramontanism of the reign of Pius IX tended to increase the rift between Catholics and Protestants (Davenport 1997: 56-58; Brain 1997:195-197). Devereux sums up the situation as follows: “Whilst among themselves they are always at war, against us they are always united”(*Relazione*: 6), indicating by this his sense of double persecution by the other Christian groups. His perception of the relative wealth of these churches compared to the poverty of the Catholics is expressed in texts 4,5,6,8 and 10. Resources are required to survive the onslaught of the wolves and in text 11 he indicates his immediate major requirement: a “printing press” to provide Catholic publications which could respond to the circulating anti-Catholic literature. The second letter written on his return from Europe happily reports the acquisition of more priests, some sisters and more funds (texts 39 and 40). This “war” between the churches was to be exacerbated when churches moved into black evangelisation as land was confided to churches by confession and areas of regional confessional exclusivity were set off (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 1-3). Mission stations and the surrounding land were American board, Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, or Dutch Reformed, and tenants were usually required to join the Church.

The response of the small, late arriving Catholic church to all of this was defensiveness in the face of a perceived threat: lambs amongst wolves. In Catholic dogmatic theology at this time all non-Catholic groups were either schismatics or heretics: “heretical groups abound in the vicariate” (*Relazione* p. 2) and for Devereux these groups were “always ready to pervert poor Catholics and their children” (p. 3). A defensive attitude has been a rather typical Catholic attitude throughout almost all of South African history, especially of course in the apartheid period when combatting *die Roomse gevaar*<sup>27</sup> was part of government policy (Bate 1999:12). Amongst the Dutch and Huguenot settlers who escaped from Catholic persecution in Europe Catholicism was seen as the principal evil and the religion was always proscribed in the early history of the country when these groups were in power. The attitude of the British has already been mentioned. Consequently, the ethos of Christian settler society was strongly anti-Catholic. A Transvaal newspaper referred to priests and nuns as “liars, murderers and doers of everything that is abominable” (Brain 1997:197). What was experienced was an “active propaganda of personal libel against Catholics...” (Kolbe in Brain 1997:197). Devereux wished to provide a Catholic voice within this civil society and hence the request for a printing press (text 11). *The Cape Colonist* newspaper was established in 1850 as soon as he had the press (Brown 1960:47) and in 1897 the *Catholic Magazine of South Africa* was also established (:271). These two publications attempted to respond to these threats and to present a Catholic perspective on society. Besides this, Father F. Kolbe, a convert and active Catholic intellectual, “rebutted anti-Catholic outbursts from what he called ‘a narrow clique’ of Dutch Reformed churchmen” (Brain 1997:197). On the other hand, the Catholics were not shy to do a bit of Protestant bashing when they got the chance. Devereux remarks with apparent glee that the reason the English missionaries were thrown out of Kaffraria by the Xhosas was that they had their own interests at heart and not those of the people (text 23).

### 3.2.4 *European civilisation and African Savagery.*

Whilst Devereux and the Catholics often found themselves in ambiguous and constrained relations with the other settlers as indicated above, the economic texts of his narrative demonstrate a general agreement with them regarding the “natives”.<sup>28</sup> The following economic culture texts relate to this cultural domain: 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 31 and 33. Settler consciousness about human life in Southern Africa may be articulated as the existence of two forms of human life found there: Settlers and natives. These two forms of human life can be expressed in terms of the two metaphors of European civilisation and African savagery. European civilisation informed settler consciousness regarding itself and African savagery informed settler consciousness regarding the indigenous inhabitants. These two metaphors were the twin poles of the greater myth which helped to justify European colonial expansion and which supplied the power to motivate colonial behaviour in conquering the land and its peoples and settler behaviour in exploiting both. Olive Schreiner’s (1923) *Thoughts on South Africa* provides some telling reflections on Boer and Brit consciousness regarding the native, suggesting “four attitudes among white men [sic] as regards the native” (:304). The first was that of the white farming population who are “thrown into close contact

---

27 Roman danger

28See footnote 21

with the native in his most *crude and primitive* form” (:304, my italics) and who had a long history of struggle and conflict for the land. These experience “not so much scorn and indifference...as of keen, bitter resentment...” (:305). Amongst “men newly arrived from Europe... their attitude is generally far less human, and has in it *an element of complete callousness and cold contempt...*” (:307) [italics in original]. The second attitude was that of town dwellers where “the element of intense racial bitterness is wholly lacking...the townsmen treats his civilized servant...as men of all European nationalities treat their domestics and dependents” (:309). The third was a “ financial and speculative attitude.... towards the native.... [where] the native is *not* a person hated or beloved, but a commercial asset... ‘cheap labour’ (:310). Fourthly, for some whites “small in number” there is the attitude of “Noblesse oblige...if the native be his equal in mental power and moral vigour, his place is beside him; but if the African native be not his equal in mental power then there rests upon him the mighty obligation of all strength towards weakness, of all wisdom towards ignorance, of the God towards the man” (:318). Devereux’s text largely corresponds to the second and fourth of Schreiner’s categories.

The colonial praxis was expansion by establishing territories and lands. This is reflected in Devereux’s account that the British have conquered Kaffraria and will sell the land (*Relazione* p5). Settler society and European civilisation grew as land was obtained and sold to whites. Text 14 shows this process in operation in the recently set up Kaffraria districts of Albert, Victoria and Peddie as the colony’s border moves from the Fish to the Kei river. Text 25 shows the economic motivation for the process and text 22 indicates something of the military cost of conquest. Text 3 shows how social structure, manifest in civil districts, law and taxes, soon follows. The vicariate itself takes on the settler structure as it “corresponds exactly to the civil divisions called *Eastern Province*” (*Relazione* p2).

Devereux’s report shows an ethnocentric European view of African society which is only mentioned in a second part of the list of the peoples of the vicariate: “Apart from the English city of Port Elizabeth, the inhabitants of the western part of the vicariate are almost all of Dutch extraction, whilst in the east the colonists are English, Irish, or Scots.... There are also many blacks, Hottentots, Kaffirs, or Bushmen or sons of ex slaves who form a kind of working class and live in the institutions of the Protestant Missions or in their own hamlets and villages” (*Relazione* p 2). The “kaffirs”<sup>29</sup> are referred to as “these savages” (*Relazione* p8) whose riches consist in their livestock (text 20). But they want for nothing (31) although the women are in a kind of slavery (21). The bushmen are “expert thieves” (24). The Zulus are open to trade and commerce (33) as is the case in newly opened up central Africa (42).

As for their religion: “they are in the dark not having seen the light of the angel of peace” (*Relazione* p 8). They practice witchcraft and incantations but do not worship idols (p 7), and

---

<sup>29</sup>The term Kaffir (from the Arabic for “infidel”) was originally used by settlers to refer only to the Xhosas: those ones who participated in the frontier (Kaffir)wars. Kaffraria was the original name of the British colony set up in 1847 and referred to in Devereux’s text. He makes a distinction between “Xhosa or Kaffir”, Zulu, Barolong and Hottentot. The term was quickly to become the Settler term for all South African blacks. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century the term was pejorative and in South Africa today its use can be grounds for litigation.

they have a vague notion of evil which oppresses them (p7). At the same time he praises them for their astuteness in realising that the Protestant missionaries have their own interests at heart and not those of the people in setting up their missions (text 23).

### 3.2.5 *The Vicar and the Vatican: Catholic hierarchical culture*

Bishop Devereux was a prelate of the Roman Catholic Church and as such participated in the governing structure of the Church. Here too is a culture. It will be the subject of deeper investigation in the second part of this study. The symbols and myths of this culture are quite different to those of the South African settler culture. This is a world of strong Mediterranean symbolism with roots going far into the past sometimes to the culture of the Roman empire of the time of Christ. That empire is only one of a number with which the Catholic Church has been associated throughout its history. As a result of these relationships with empires, a large body of tradition incorporating the diplomacy and methods of Mediterranean and Near Eastern cultures has built up. The *ponenza* itself and the rules and procedures for setting it up, as well as its structure and the processes around its use are very old yet endure even today. Bishop Devereux had to operate within this world in order to carry out his duties as a prelate successfully.

Hierarchical structure is an important part of the culture of the Catholic Church. Here we are concerned with Catholic Missionary culture which refers to that part of the church under the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (SCPF usually referred to as *Propaganda*) in Rome. It is necessary to understand some of the cultural codes around hierarchy in this culture. In the “the missions” hierarchical structure was a little different to that in the rest of the Catholic Church. All missionary vicariates were directly under the pope who was their juridic ruler. This territory was administered by a “vicar” appointed by the Pope and sent to reside there. The “Vicar Apostolic” was always ordained a bishop. This hierarchical structure meant that the vicar was responsible to the Pope and to the Roman dicastery, *Propaganda*, for all things regarding his vicariate. Moreover Devereux was not the Bishop of the Eastern Cape of Good Hope to which he was sent as it was not yet a diocese only a vicariate. He was Titular Bishop of “Paneas”, a diocese which had existed in the history of the church but was no longer operating.<sup>30</sup> Many of these dioceses are from the time before the 7<sup>th</sup> century Islamic incursion into Europe and North Africa. This ecclesiastical procedure provided a way in which a man could be ordained bishop, a status and function reserved for Pastors of local churches, without being given the responsibility of an already existing local church, but, rather, some other function in the Church also requiring episcopal powers and dignity. Being a missionary vicar was one such function. The complexity of this state of affairs reflects an important aspect of Catholic Missionary culture which should be understood rather than dismissed since these symbols remain powerful motivators of behaviour within this society.<sup>31</sup> It should be noted that many of these processes and procedures continue today.

---

30The *Annuario Pontificia*, the official Vatican Yearbook, gives a full list of these “*sede titolari*” (titular sees).

For more detail on this see Winslow 1924.

We see from the above that the relationship of Devereux both to the Pope and to Cardinal Fransoni, Prefect<sup>32</sup> of the SCPF, was essentially filial and subordinate. This relationship was reinforced by ecclesiastical rank since Devereux was a bishop and Fransoni a Cardinal. Within Catholic Missionary culture, vicars were required to make reports on an ongoing basis and to make regular *ad limina*<sup>33</sup> visits to Rome. Such a visit was made by Devereux in 1849. The report (*Relazione*) in this study was the first Devereux wrote after his appointment as Vicar Apostolic. Reading this report we are immediately struck by the style and here too we meet up with another set of cultural codes. These influence the use of language and style forms in interpersonal contacts. Ecclesiastical language of the time was extremely embellished in a style we might consider flowery and obsequious. But this was the way of such discourse. Devereux “humbly offers to His Eminence and the Sacred Congregation some indications of the state of our holy faith in that distant land” (*Relazione* p1). The Catholic Church is referred to throughout as the “Holy Faith”. Cardinal Fransoni as “Your Eminence” and in one place “most eminent prince” (*Relazione* p6). The relationship with him is one of humility (p. 2) and grateful thanks “for the benevolent protection that you have given me and for all the interest you have taken in this mission” (*Relazione* p10). It is the language of politics and diplomacy especially in the Mediterranean world.

Another manifestation of this culture is the culture text “recommendation”. Devereux requests a “recommendation” from Fransoni, both with regard to the Pious Work of the Propagation of the Faith (OPF) (text 19) funding organization and to all the Bishops and faithful of the Church (texts 19 and 43). Letters of recommendation were an integral part of diplomacy and of doing business in the Mediterranean and near eastern cultures. The letter from a well known and honoured person could open many doors for those seeking favours. Devereux is aware of this and so his solicitude in seeking this favour.

Finally and most importantly is the way in way the process is conducted. There is a strict formality in procedures. As explained in 2 above, the issues raised by Devereux would only be discussed in Rome if the Cardinal Prefect considered them to be important. Only then was a *ponenza* drawn up. The issues have been formulated by Devereux as “*Istanze e quesiti*” (applications and queries) (*Sommario* p 6). These were written in Latin. Only one of these is an economic culture text (no. 35). This procedure is an example of the management culture of SCPF which illustrates the control retained over the vicariates. The members of the *Ordinaria* meeting would be asked to give their opinion on all of these issues (part 2 section 3). The results would be communicated back to Devereux.

The economic culture texts which impinge upon this cultural domain are concerned with three issues: Reports of funds raised locally or disbursed successfully (9, 12, 39, 44, 46, 47, 48); the poor financial state of the vicariate (9, 10, 17, 38, 45, 50); and requests for access to more funding (10, 11, 13, 19, 43, 49) sometimes couched in the rhetoric of religious persecution by the Protestants (10, 11). The list of urgent needs presented include schools, a printing press, priests, of which one third should be Dutch speaking, and religious sisters and

---

32Chief administrative officer.

33Literally to the threshold.

brothers. The principal financial strategy presented comprises a request for a letter of recommendation to Work of the Propagation of the Faith (OPF) and a request for a letter of recommendation to all bishops he might visit for financial help.<sup>34</sup>

### *3.2.6 Other religious narratives*

The specifically religious discourse in Devereux's narrative is mainly in the domain of interreligious antagonism and structural relations within the Catholic Church as we have indicated in 3.2.3 and 3.2.5 above. This section looks at the specifically religious dimensions of the economic culture texts. These texts are strongly ecclesiological which could perhaps be expected since economic concerns link more easily to practical structural issues of church implantation. Church implantation requires missionary outreach into new territories, the building of churches and personnel who will do the work. This missionary dimension of the extension and plantation is found in texts 8,11,19,43,49. A number of texts relate to the building of churches (7, 9,12, 44, 47). A large number of texts refer to missionary personnel, bishops, priests, religious brothers and sisters as well as ministers of other churches (4, 5, 6, 12, 16, 17, 23, 28, 35, 39, 40, 45, 46, 47, 48). There is one text which refers to an important attitude of missionary spirituality: that of trust (23). The sweepingly negative judgement Devereux makes of Protestant efforts amongst black people nevertheless recognises the importance of trust in missionary effort. Finally we note the use of religious symbols in Devereux's language. Many of these terms follow Catholic cultural practice which uses sacral terms to refer to institutions and persons within the Church and its self understanding. Such a practice can be understood as an aspect of incarnational theology and is very common in Catholic praxis. Here it manifests in many ways. Churches are dedicated to saints: St Peter (9), St Augustine (12) and St Patrick (44). Persons are "eminent" (10, 19) and institutions can be sacred like the "sacred congregation" (10, 17,) and pious like the OPF (19, 43). It is applied also to the Catholic religion which is the "Holy faith" (11). On the other hand civil power can "contaminate" (35) and other churches are just plain bad: "enemies of the Holy faith" (11) and heretical sects (8, 10). This use of religious language comes from a vision of the Church as the "perfect society". Catholic doctrine of the time saw the church as the manifestation of the Kingdom of God on earth: God's holy society here. This is why things to do with the Catholic Church are holy whilst those which are outside are either polluting or evil. The theology comes from Augustine but was developed in this form by St. Robert Bellarmine. This theological vision was increasingly challenged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Catholic circles. The vision of Vatican II, whilst retaining elements of this view, is more likely to see the Church as a leaven for change in the world, called to dialogue with it rather than create alternatives to it.

## **4 Some cultural conclusions and implications for the study of missiology and inculturation.**

### *4.1 Abstracting an underlying narrative*

---

34 For more on how the vicars raised funds for their mission and the cultural dimensions of this, see Bate 2000.

Abstracting economic culture texts (*supra* 3.1) from the Devereux side of the *ponenza* has led us to identify a number of different cultural domains (*supra* 3.2) in his narrative. This has provided us with a kind of semiotic map of the Devereux side of Catholic Missionary culture as reflected in the parts of the *ponenza* authored by him. This culture contains influences from Catholic culture, settler culture and colonial culture in the way we have identified them in sections 3.1 and 3.2. References to the work of other authors leads us to believe that these domains describe some general cultural signifiers for the various groups of people found within each domain. Each section is somehow informed by one or other set of myths, presuppositions and assumptions which serve as the fundamental premisses accepted by those found within the domain. Collecting these together allows us to describe something of the meta-narrative underlying Catholic missionary culture in the settler context.

1. The original inhabitants are primitive people
2. The colonial government is opening up this place to civilisation and into the light.
3. The economic future looks bright; the land is fertile and the climate is healthy for Europeans.
4. The church is bringing the message of the Angel of light to those in darkness
5. There are sinister heretical forces like wolves also operating here.
6. The Catholic Church is the holy presence of God's kingdom on earth.
7. The Catholic Church must establish a presence in Natal to counter the heresy, to take advantages of the prosperous future and to bring light to the savages.

Clearly these seven statements provide only a simple view into the meta-narrative of the settler pole of Catholic Missionary culture. The meta-narrative helps set up the paradigm of a culture. But it is not the exclusive property of any particular culture. Some of these texts would be shared by other settlers, some by colonials in other parts of the world and some by Catholics elsewhere. This is why the notion of culturally bounded exclusive groups is so unhelpful in trying to understand human agency. Human agency in praxis whether as an individual, a small group, or a larger society, is always informed by a whole series of cultural domains each of which is not particular to the agent but shared by this or that different grouping of people who may not be involved in the particular praxis. This partial identification of a meta-narrative demonstrates that it is possible to get to cultural motivations for human activity. It is in part a Catholic meta-narrative, in part a missionary meta-narrative and in part a settler meta-narrative. It is presented not to give a tool to engage in missionary bashing or Vatican bashing or settler bashing which have all been popular of late in some circles but rather to help us recognise the conditioned-ness within which every human society works: its culture. This includes our own today. All cultures have aspects which are compatible with the gospel and those which need to be transformed. This is as true for the settler and Roman Curial cultures as it is for indigenous cultures of Africa and Asia, for whom inculturation is so popular today. Identifying these factors helps us to understand why mission went the way it did within a particular context, as well as to see the ways that culture influence both the priority and the strategies in the execution of vision.

## **4.2 *The role of economic texts within the Devereux narrative***

### **4.2.1 *Pervasiveness***

The first conclusion we can make from this analysis concerns the pervasiveness of economic culture texts within the three papers authored by the Vicar Apostolic. They run to some 17 pages in their typed Italian translation as found in the *ponenza*. Within these 17 pages we

identified 50 economic culture texts ranging from one to four sentences in length. That is an average of three per page. They are found in all three documents and are widespread throughout each. This alerts us to the somewhat obvious though often overlooked fact that economic issues are pervasive throughout Christian mission.

The analysis performed in 3.2 shows us that economic culture texts are not restricted to a specific “economic domain” but that they permeate a number of different cultural domains carrying power which both informs and creates culture within the society. So we find economic issues as part of the discourse around settler optimism for the new societies they are creating. We find them influencing and being influenced by the discourse around the ambiguity of the Catholic position within colonial settler society. Economic issues also enter into interconfessional Christian relations where they describe and feed the principal symbol of antagonism which exists there. Economic culture texts are also found as descriptors of the polarity between “European civilisation” and “African Savagery”. Finally, economic culture texts play an important if not central role in the missionary discourse within a Catholic Hierarchical culture.

Clearly economics plays a central role in this missionary document. This is not to say that the simplicity of Marxist materialist analysis can decode all that is going on here. The type of symbolic analysis we are promoting here wants to examine the role of these texts within the symbol system of the partners in the discourse. George (1990:341-355) has highlighted the model of “conversation” in dealing with questions of the cultural dimension of the Church. The principal partners in this conversation are the Vicar Apostolic and his superiors in Rome especially the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda Fide, Cardinal Fransoni. This conversational discourse is a profoundly religious and confessional one. It operates within Catholic Missionary culture as we have indicated. Nevertheless it is a discourse which situates both partners within their own “local” communities: Devereux in the Eastern Cape and Fransoni in the Roman curia. The conversation occurs within a cultural world which sees Devereux’s vicariate as part of the Roman curia’s outreach into the world. It is juridically governed by the Pope whose vicar Devereux is. The vision and mission of the Vicar Apostolic are also rooted in SCPF of which Fransoni is Prefect. Thus, whilst on the one hand we can speak of two local communities in conversational discourse, on the other we have to see the filial relationship of the Eastern Vicariate as represented by Devereux and the Roman curial community as represented by Fransoni. Identifying the signifiers of power within this conversation by means of a cultural analysis and indicating the role of economic signifiers within the greater whole of Catholic Missionary culture is the framework within which our analysis has been conducted. We have discovered that within this greater whole there is an interpenetration of various cultural domains which impinge upon the conversation. Those from Devereux’s side have been identified in section 3.2. Those from Fransoni’s side will be investigated in part 2.

#### *4.2.2 Layering and texture*

We can also identify a certain layering of these cultural domains which creates a cultural depth to the settler side of Catholic Missionary culture. This layering represents the relative importance of the various cultural domains within the culture. This cultural texture, comprising both width in structured domains and depth in layered domains, can be equated to what is often called “culture”: like Western culture or Settler culture or Zulu culture. These are somewhat wider cultural regions which are then named as “cultures”. Each of the cultural

regions has its own set of layers and some of these layers are common, like the colonial discourse on indigenous peoples and the culture of settler optimism which find expression, for example, in cultural regions like British colonial culture, settler culture and Catholic Missionary culture, as well as many others. But the depth of a particular cultural domain will change from cultural region to cultural region. So settler optimism operates at a much deeper level in the settler cultural region than it does in the Catholic cultural region. This is because it is much more the essence of what settler culture is about than what Catholic culture is about. On the other hand, interconfessional antagonism is deeper in the latter than the former following the same reasoning. This is why hermeneutic lenses based on only one standpoint be it economic materialism, Christian apologetics, or worldview analyses will only reveal a partial picture. Judgements based exclusively on this will overly simplify the situation resulting in apparently elegant solutions which, whilst helpful if taken in context, are dangerous when applied generally as they usually are. Strayer's (1976) helpful article has shown the strengths and weaknesses of these unilateral approaches in his analysis of mission history in Africa. The complex cultural analysis presented here is proposed as a way to avoid the simplifications criticised by him.

I contend that a semiotic cultural methodology of the type used here has the advantage of allowing an analysis throughout the breadth and the depth of a narrative before coming to hermeneutic reflection and judgement. It also allows for a way of developing a more three dimensional hermeneutic by identifying both areas and layers within a socio-cultural region. Of course the rational step of judgement is always itself culturally conditioned. But as we have indicated elsewhere (Bate 1998:165-175), an identification of the criteria for judgement at least allows the reader to stop and choose her own should she wish to do so. The cultural region identified in this article has been named as Catholic Missionary culture. The pervasiveness of the economic culture texts operates both in the breadth and the depth of the Catholic Missionary culture which both Frasoni and Devereux can be said to share. The *ponenza* we are studying is clearly a construct of this particular culture. It is a symbol within this culture and particular to it. Whilst other Christian groupings clearly had their own ways of establishing missions, none had the *ponenza* in the way it has been described here.

#### 4.2.3 *Structure and function of the economic texts in the various cultural domains*

Having established the pervasiveness of economic issues within Catholic Missionary culture and also given an identity to this cultural region it is now time to enter within the region to examine its constituent domains as well as the role of the economic culture texts within those domains and hopefully to give some indications of the depths at which they operate. In other words we want to examine the relative importance of each of the cultural domains we have identified within the region of Catholic Missionary culture.

Our analysis of the *ponenza* has led us to name a Catholic Missionary cultural region. It also helps us to identify human exchange or relationship within this region, represented by Bishop Devereux on the one hand and Cardinal Frasoni on the other, as a cultural conversation. We have also been able to situate these two partners engaged in human exchange each within his own human locality within the Catholic missionary cultural region. Devereux in the Settler colony of the Eastern Cape and Frasoni in the Roman curial community in Rome. We have also identified the nature of the relationship between these communities as filial or subordinate on the part of Devereux's group which was conceived and established by Frasoni's community as a form of propagation. For this reason we suggest that the cultural

domain we identified as Catholic Hierarchical culture in 3.2.5 is operating at one of the deepest levels within the Catholic Missionary cultural region. Evidence for this is also found in the number of economic culture texts impinging upon this domain. These fifteen culture texts comprise almost one third of the total. Further evidence is seen in the power generated by many of the economic culture texts found in this domain. One of the ways this power emerges is through emotive terms. There are many of these in the fifteen texts associated with this domain. The strong emotion associated with them attests to their importance.

The filial relationship between the vicariate and the Vatican is clearly seen not only in the language employed but also in the content. Three things are evident in the language style. It is most respectful indicating the nature of the relationship of Devereux to Frasoni but also of the vicariate to the Vatican: subordinate to superior. There is often a slight note of pride when things have gone well: “We have a good church dedicated to St Peter(sic) built without the help of the government for a cost of £2000....They have erected a beautiful church dedicated to St Augustine and a residence for the Priest” (9 and 12). Finally the predominant tone for the majority of texts in this domain is one of supplication. Frasoni is seen as a powerful personage whose patronage within this culture can open doors to assistance which will respond to the urgent needs that Devereux has.

When it comes to the content of the texts we see three types of issue: reports, urgent needs and requests for recommendations to possible sources of finance. Producing a report for Rome is an essential duty for a missionary vicar. Whilst all the details regarding duties and obligations of vicars apostolic were not fully clarified until the code of Canon Law of 1917, Winslow (1924:34-35) indicates that vicars were responsible to submit annual reports to Propaganda: an obligation going back to at least 1749. The needs are clearly outlined in 3.2.5 and are practical. They just require funding. Such funding was not easily available from *Propaganda* itself and it was the responsibility of the vicar to find his own sources (Bate 2000:141-144). However the Cardinal Prefect of *Propaganda* was a powerful personage. Indeed he was second only to the Pope within the Catholic Missionary culture. This is the reason Devereux seeks his patronage. The Work for the Propagation of the Faith (OPF) was becoming a powerful source of funding for the Church’s missions. Each missionary vicar was by this time allotted a certain sum but a word from the Cardinal could increase the donation in worthy cases. One suspects that Devereux was aware that every missionary vicar probably felt that his case was special and so it was important to impress Frasoni concerning the particular difficulties in his territory. In this regard perhaps a lot of the reported interconfessional antagonism was used by Devereux in order to emphasise the urgent need for Catholic schools and the printing press in particular.

The question of interconfessional antagonism is another cultural domain operating on a deep level on Devereux’s side of Catholic Missionary culture though not as deep as the previous domain. The cultural domain of interfaith antagonism has nine economic culture texts in Devereux’s narrative: one fifth of the total. As we noted in 3.2.3 they all contain a note of threat, persecution and antagonism. Safety needs are at stake. The importance of this domain is indicated by the high power levels within the text. Almost all of them contain signifiers of conflict. And the metaphor of lambs pursued by marauding wolves indicates the seriousness with which Devereux takes these matters. It seems that Devereux’s immediate needs and

requests are focussed on countering this attack. So Religious<sup>35</sup> are a priority in order to open Catholic schools, as is a printing press to publish Catholic literature and pamphlets responding to anti Catholic publications that were circulating. In his subsequent letter (*Foglio addizionale*) we see that already after his trip he has secured sisters and intends opening schools. So this is the first priority for him and shows once more the depth of this cultural domain within the Catholic missionary cultural region.

The cultural domain of interconfessional antagonism has this particular structure for a number of historical and theological reasons. Firstly, Catholics arrived late in the colony.<sup>36</sup> Secondly, they were dealing with Christians especially the Dutch Reformed, whose ancestors had suffered under Catholic persecution, one of the principal reasons for the arrival of the Dutch settlers some 200 years earlier. Thirdly, they were dealing with Anglicans who had their own history with Rome and who were the established British religion. Fourthly, the many independent groups that arose out of evangelical and enthusiast movements of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries such as Methodism employed anti Catholic rhetoric as an essential part of their discourse. Brain (1997:197) notes that “[t]hroughout the nineteenth century the Catholic Church was regarded as a foreign institution in South Africa....Prejudice against Catholics existed in many quarters...”. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Roman Catholic Church considered itself the only true church of God founded by Jesus Christ himself and the others were considered just man made heretical sects. Such a history was unlikely to lead to peace in the new Christian world of settler society.<sup>37</sup>

At a different, less important level of power relations we find the domain of settler optimism and the domain of the Catholic Church and the colonial government. The domain of settler optimism has 13 texts within it: just over a quarter of the total. Whilst this is more than the previous domain the issues are less urgent, though urgent nonetheless. The settler domain is the most widespread of all the domains operating in this society. In a certain sense it can be said to contain all the others. It is the general context hence our use of the term in the title of this study. Settler optimism projects growth and success within the colony values we have already established as being important in settler culture. But in fact such optimism was often misplaced. Brain (1975:21) writes “Natal in the 1840's and early 1850's was enjoying a period of rapid growth”. Farms were set up and were successful. But “When Bishop Allard and his party arrived [1851] the economic position in Natal had begun to deteriorate...Many of the settlers ...had found the farms allotted to them were uneconomic....When it was announced that gold had been found in Australia many immigrants left Natal in 1852 and 1853 to seek their fortunes there.” (:32). Indeed, coupled with settler optimism was another important indicator of this culture namely settler mobility. In the name of *El Dorado*, wherever it was to be found, settlers were always willing to move on, a fact that Devereux

---

35The term refers to those who take vows of religion in an approved community.

36 See Brain 1975: 1-20 for a synopsis to 1850.

37Even as late as 1960 articles were being published positing the Roman Catholic Church as an intruder in South Africa. See De Wet 1960.

seems to have neglected. Once established, the Vicariate of Natal was to struggle considerably from poor economic conditions for a number of years.

The domain of colonial government was important within Catholic Missionary culture because it provided the organising principal of settler society as we noted in 3.2.2. In this way it provided the condition for which the opening of a Catholic mission was made possible. Apart from that however it seems to play a relatively unimportant role in this culture. The ethos of colonial culture was English whereas the ethos of the Catholic church was mainly French and Irish. These two groups had their own set of antagonisms towards the British. Here is another reason why Catholic Missionary culture did not sit too well with the so called English settler churches. The colonial authority for its part provided some help in giving stipends to priests who helped with its own soldiers but there seemed to be little hope on the side of Devereux for much more to come from it. However we have seen that in later years as more Catholics formed part of the colonial authorities the vicars were to make use of them to attempt to achieve their goals (Bate 2000:147-151).

Finally, and probably least importantly at this stage, is the domain which informs the settler narrative about the indigenous people of South Africa. Devereux seemed quite well informed about this narrative and the eleven economic culture texts reflect common settler views about the indigenous people of the time and settler hegemony. There is no evidence from these sources nor from other published works that Devereux had access to indigenous sources of information. Four of the economic culture texts in this domain describe and express the rights of the colony to conquer lands and sell them off to European settlers. The other seven texts provide very basic settler views of indigenous economic behaviour. Two of these indicate moral judgements. One is negative, that bushmen are “expert thieves” and the other more positive, praising indigenous people’s astuteness in recognising that Protestants set up native missions for their own interests and not those of the local people.

## **5. Creating a New Vicariate in Natal**

Only nine of the 50 economic culture texts refer to Natal. Of these six are within the cluster we have called “the settler myth of Eldorado” (3.2.1) painting a rosy picture of the economic situation and future possibilities (26, 27, 29, 30, 32, 33). Three are within the colonial organisation cluster (3.2.2) indicating that with colonial rule and organisation settlers are pouring in and that the government will help with the salary of a priest (27, 28, 40). Two are within the Settler narrative about indigenous peoples (3.2.4). These paint a picture of friendly, happy, contented natives who are willing to trade (texts 31 and 33). Unsurprisingly Devereux paints an overly positive picture. There are no negative economic texts about Natal. Clearly he is intent on persuading the SCPF of the value of immediately establishing this vicariate. When Allard and company were to arrive they would find a very different situation from what emerges here (Brain 1975:32-33).

Was Devereux a liar? Clearly this is the wrong question. The point of cultural analysis like this is to allow deeper and more hidden assumptions and presuppositions to emerge and to see how such underlying meta-narratives and assumptions within worldview influence the way we make judgements. Besides this we know that there was a big change in the circumstances in Natal between 1849 and 1852. One of the characteristics of settler life and

culture was its fluidity. Settler societies were only in the process of formation and so with shallow roots people were prepared to move on to follow the prevailing myth we have called *El Dorado*. On a conscious level we can be sure that Devereux was doing the best he could to bring about the next right thing. Only later when we unmask some of the cultural domains which influenced his thinking can we see something of why he did what he did. Devereux grew up within a culture which influenced his value system, perception system and judgement process. His decisions were made within these frameworks. Analysis of the frameworks allow us to see how he came to his judgements and to avoid the rather simplistic unreflective colonial bashing and missionary bashing which is so popular today in third world and indeed many first world theologies, something which Porter (1996) has criticized in his insightful article.

Devereux's request and decision was most likely made in good faith and prayer, using his reflective judgement and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It was a Christian act. His judgements were, however, strongly influenced by the five aspects of his settler pole of Catholic Missionary culture that have emerged from this analysis (*supra* 3.2). Like all churches his was a church of people in a world of culture. Much of this culture from the past needs to be deconstructed as churches in South Africa move into the future. Let us recognise the danger of absolutising our own cultural truths and systems and then unreflectively calling them the gospel.

## **6. Some conclusions from the Devereux narrative**

A number of conclusions can be made from our analysis of the Devereux part of this conversation. They provide cultural, missiological and economic information about Catholic Missionary culture in South African settler society. They can be expressed as follows:

1. All missiological narratives and indeed mission itself are also cultural discourses.
2. The cultural dimension of these narratives is complex and cannot be expressed in traditional popular notions of cultural groups. It is better analysed in terms of cultural domains clustering around root metaphors or predominant messages which operate at different levels and in different areas of a larger cultural region which should only be identified and named after analysis.
3. Mission can be described as culturally mediated pastoral responses to culturally mediated human needs. These human needs are hierarchical with more basic ones usually taking priority until they are filled.
4. An "evangelical essence" within the missionary narrative does not exist as a separate entity which can be abstracted from the narrative but is always intimately mingled with it. This is parallel to the conclusion that the essence of humanity cannot be abstracted from the culturality of human beings since culture is part of what it means to be human. On the theological level this corresponds to the category of the incarnation.
5. An analysis of Devereux's narrative suggests that his mission was primarily articulated as the establishment of the Catholic Church: "our holy faith", in the Eastern Province of the Cape, rather than the specific preaching of the Gospel. There is little about that in his documentation. This reflects the fact that "the Church" is a powerful symbol in Catholic culture. Besides this, the *ponenza* is an ecclesial document and thus reflects ecclesial preoccupations.
6. The missionary priorities were providing schools in the major centres so that

Catholics could fulfil their duty of sending children to Catholic schools and of providing priests to work in the major population centres. Also important was the provisions of Dutch speaking priests to minister to Dutch speaking people. Of less priority at this stage was the mission to indigenous peoples.

7. Economic matters are an essential part of establishing and continuing Catholic mission.
8. The erecting and establishment of the Vicariate of Natal was seen as continuing the expansion of the Catholic Church as the Colonial government provided an acceptable social structure within which this could be done.
9. When anachronistic judgements reduce the missionary praxis to an adjunct of colonialism they ignores the complexity of the cultural dynamics around the missionary effort. More sophisticated cultural analyses of missionary motivation and praxis are required. This study shows that whilst the missionaries participated in the colonial and settler cultural domains these were only a part of the social and cultural dynamics motivating missionary praxis. This point will move into greater focus in the part of the study where we consider the dynamics of the Catholic Missionary culture from a more specifically Christian perspective by examining the Roman curial narrative.

In this second part of this study we will focus on the other pole of Catholic Missionary culture found in the ponzona, namely, Roman Curial culture.

## Works Consulted

- Bate, S C 1995. *Inculturation and Healing: Coping-Healing in South African Christianity*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster.
- Bate, S C 1998. Method in contextual missiology. *Missionalia* 26,2:150-185.
- Bate, S C 1999. One mission, two churches, in Brain, J & Denis, P (eds.), *The Catholic Church in Contemporary Southern Africa*, 5-36. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster.
- Bate, S C 2000. Points of contradiction: money, the Catholic church and settler culture in southern Africa: Part 1 The leaders of the Mission. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 26,1: 135-164.
- Boner, K 1998. *Dominican Women: A Time to Speak*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster.
- Brady, J 1952. *Trekking for souls*. Cedara: MAMI.
- Brain, J B 1975. *Catholic beginnings in Natal and beyond*. Durban: T W Griggs.
- Brain, J 1997. Moving from the margins to the mainstream: The Roman Catholic Church, in Elphick, R and Davenport. R (eds.) *Christianity in South Africa*, 195-210. Cape Town: David Philip.
- Brown, W E 1960. *The Catholic Church in South Africa*. London: Burns & Oates.
- Catholic Directory 2001. *The Catholic Directory of Southern Africa 2001-2002*. Pretoria:2001.
- Comaroff, J & Comaroff, J 1991. *Of revelation and revolution: Christianity, colonialism and consciousness in South Africa*. Chicago: Univ. Chicago press.
- Crais, C 1992. *White supremacy and black resistance in pre-industrial South Africa*. NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Cuthbertson, G 1987. The English speaking churches and colonialism, in Villa-Vicencio, C (ed), *Theology and Violence*,15-30. Johannesburg: Skotaville.
- Davenport, R 1997. Settlement, conquest and theological controversy; the churches of nineteenth century European immigrants, in Elphick, R and Davenport. R (eds), *Christianity in South Africa*, 51-67. Cape Town: David Philip.
- Delavignette, R 1964. *Christianity and Colonialism*. London: Burns & Oates.
- Denis, P 1998. *The Dominican Friars in Southern Africa: A Social History (1577-1990)* Leiden: Brill.
- De Wet, J I 1960. Die Roomse indringer in S.A. *Almanak nederduitsch hervormde kerk* 5, 4:83-95
- Elphick, R 1997. Christianity in South African History, in Elphick, R and Davenport. R (eds), *Christianity in South Africa*, 1-15. Cape Town: David Philip.
- George F. 1990. *Inculturation and Ecclesial Communion*. Rome: Pontifical Urban University.
- Kowalsky, N 1957. L'erection du vicariat du Natal. *Etudes Oblats* 10: 283-287
- Porter, A 1996. 'Cultural Imperialism' and Missionary Enterprise. North Atlantic Missiology project Position paper number 7. University of Cambridge.
- Schreiner, O 1923. *Thoughts on South Africa*. London: Fisher Unwin.
- Skhakhane, J 1974. The Catholic pioneer attempts to evangelise the Zulus. Rome : Pontifical Gregorian University. Unpublished STD thesis.
- Strayer, R 1976. Mission History in Africa: New perspectives on an encounter. *The African Studies Review* 19,1 1-15.
- Winslow, F J 1924. Vicars and Prefects Apostolic. Unpublished JCD dissertation Catholic University of America.
- Veuillot, F 1922. *L'oeuvre de la Propagation de la foi*. Paris.

Young, M 1989. *The Reminiscences of Amelia de Henningsen (Notre Mere)*. Cape Town:  
Maskew Miller Longman.