

# **Points of Contradiction: Money, The Catholic Church and Settler Culture in Southern Africa**

## **Part 2: The Role of Religious Institutes**

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### 1. Introduction: the role of religious institutes in the life and mission of the Church

Religious institutes are societies in the Church comprising people who take public vows and live together in community. They live in formally constituted houses, called by various names like convent, monastery, priory and so forth under the authority of a superior. Some religious institutes are very old. The Benedictines were founded around 530 AD, the Franciscans in 1209 and the Dominicans in 1215 the Jesuits in 1534 and the Trappist Cistercians in 1664. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, often called the missionary century or the great century (Latourette 1943) many new religious institutes were founded for the purpose of missionary endeavour. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1826, the Oblates of St Francis de Sales in 1871, the Holy Family Sisters in 1865, and the Holy Cross Sisters in 1844 are some of the important ones in Southern Africa. The Congregation of Missionaries of Mariannhill is a congregation founded in South Africa in 1909 when it became clear that the demands of the Cistercian (Trappist) rule could not be fulfilled in the missionary circumstances in which the religious found themselves. The Assumptionist sisters also broke from their mother community in France for somewhat similar reasons and the Missionary Sisters of the Assumption were founded as a separate congregation under the vicar apostolic of the Eastern Vicariate in 1853 (Young 1989: 43-46). Religious institutes have a certain measure of autonomy within the Church but fall under a competent ecclesiastical superior. This may be the local bishop if the institute is diocesan but more usually, for the larger institutions, it is the Pope or Apostolic See. This gives religious institutes a certain measure of independence from the local bishop which sometimes led to tension but also allows for creativity and variety in the Church's endeavour. Sometimes the rifts between bishop and religious superior were great and this led to a parting of the ways. This was the case between Pfanner and Ricards in the Eastern Cape (Brown 1960:106-107) as it was between the Kingwilliamstown Dominicans and Bishop Jolivet in Natal

which led to the foundation of the Oakford Dominicans as a separate congregation (Brain 1982:98-99).

Each institute is founded according to a particular charism or spiritual gift which disposes it to particular forms of ministry. For some this is prayer<sup>1</sup>, for others teaching, for others healing and for others missionary work and so on. Each institute thus brings a particular giftedness to the Church=s praxis.

In Southern Africa, one of the great strengths of the Catholic missionary endeavour in the period under review is the fact that the vast majority of its human resources were religious. Religious institutes performed two different, though related, roles within the Church=s mission. In the first place there were those institutes of men to whom particular territories were confided. With the exception of Cape Town (Cape to 1939) and Port Elizabeth (Eastern Cape to 1939) every vicariate in South Africa, Namibia (South West Africa), Swaziland and Lesotho (Basutoland) was confided to religious and largely staffed by religious both men and women. Up until the changes of the 1920's, the arrival of religious men to whom territories were confided was in the following order: The Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI: 1852); The Societe des Missions Africaines (SMA: 1874 left 1882), The Jesuits (SJ: 1875); The Oblates of St Francis de Sales (OSFS: 1884) and the Benedictines (OSB: 1910). However the Jesuits originally arrived to work in the Eastern Vicariate and it was only in 1884 that the Salisbury mission was established and confided to them.

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<sup>1</sup>The two patron Saints of Mission in the Church are St Theresa of Lisieux who never left the convent but prayed unceasingly of the missionary endeavour and St Francis Xavier the great missionary adventurer who travelled throughout the world and made many thousands of converts wherever he went. They were both religious: Theresa a Carmelite nun and Francis a Jesuit.

There was another type of religious institute which came to the country to help in the work of implanting the church. They came to help in already established ecclesiastical territories at the request of the vicar apostolic or prefect. These were institutes of both men and women although there were far more of the latter. Amongst the men were the Marist Brothers who arrived in 1867, the Jesuits who arrived in 1875, the Trappists who arrived in 1882 and the Christian Brothers who arrived in 1897. Regarding the women, the Assumptionist Sisters arrived in 1848, the Dominican Sisters in 1863, the Holy Family Sisters in 1865, the Loreto Sisters in 1878, the Holy Cross Sisters in 1883, the Augustinian Sisters in 1891 and the Ursulines in 1895.<sup>2</sup> Whilst numbers were small there was already a varied presence of religious institutes in the region by the end of the nineteenth century. These religious usually came for specific purposes related to their charism. Some like the Marist brothers and the Assumptionist sisters came to establish schools. Others like the Augustinians came principally to establish hospitals and clinics. Many of the institutes were involved in both of these endeavours to respond to the urgent needs of the situation.

## 2. Sources of Finance

When a vicariate was confided to a religious institute two structures were set up: the ecclesial structure and the religious structure. Each of these had to have its own area of responsibility and indeed its own financial structure. The ecclesial structure comprised everything to do with the establishment of the Church in that area and was the responsibility of the vicar apostolic. The religious structure comprised everything to do with the religious life of the members of the institute including their residence, their sustenance and their spiritual exercises as laid down by their particular rule. These were the responsibility of the religious superior. Initially, of course, these two structures were difficult to separate and the vicar apostolic was usually also the religious superior. But they did eventually emerge as different entities. The first separation in Southern Africa occurred when a religious superior was appointed for the OMI=s in the Transvaal and Kimberley areas in 1907 (Brain 1991:121). In the Natal mission the separation did not occur until as late as 1935. But before that, in 1871, there was a visitation of the Natal mission from the Oblate General community in France. The Oblate visitator emphasised six points (Brain 1975:133-134) including the decision that the interests of the religious vicariate should be kept separate

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<sup>2</sup>See Siebert 1999:91-96 for a set off statistical tables indicating the years of arrival or establishment of all religious institutes in South or Southern Africa.

from those of the vicariate apostolic and that the necessary books for the control of finance were to be opened and kept in all the houses<sup>@</sup>. The religious institute was concerned for the spiritual and material welfare of its members in all areas of life (Brain 1991:122) whereas the vicariate was concerned with the establishment of the Catholic faith in the area and the members of the religious institute were assigned to the bishop for this task.

Religious institutes were themselves responsible for the financing of their own endeavours. They had to look for their own sources of finance both for sustenance and for the various apostolic works they undertook. Like the vicars they had to develop their own sources of funding and they had to develop various approaches to meeting their needs. The sources available to them were of three basic types: the local ordinary (vicar or Prefect apostolic), their own religious institute and various local or personal sources including the family and friends of the missionaries.

### 2.1 *The local ordinary*<sup>3</sup>

Those religious who came out as part of a group to whom a particular territory had been confided were usually the responsibility of the vicar or Prefect apostolic who was usually also their religious superior. Such religious tended to be financed by the bishop in the way described in part 1 of this article. He was largely responsible for the ways in which funds were acquired to effect the missionary activity under his responsibility. At the same time they often used some of the methods we shall describe below. We have already seen how funds from the Society of the Propagation of the Faith were channelled through the religious congregation for the work of Bishop Allard. And we have also considered the other ways in which vicars were able to access sources of funding for their works.

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<sup>3</sup>An ordinary is a person in charge of an ecclesiastical territory whether a diocese, vicariate or prefecture. See Coriden et al 1985:95.

Of more interest in this section are those religious who came to the country not to be responsible for a new ecclesiastical territory but in order to assist a local ordinary in achieving his goals. They were brought to the country because of their own particular style, expertise and religious charism. And the bishop considered that these precise talents were required in his vicariate. Amongst the men this group included the Trappists<sup>4</sup>: later to become the Mariannhill congregation, the Jesuits who accepted the School at St Aidan's in Grahamstown and the Marist Brothers and Christian Brothers who set up schools in many urban areas. There were many more religious institutes of women whom we have already listed. The institutes of women specialised either in education or in caring ministries. The Assumptionist sisters, the Cabra Dominicans, the Holy Cross, Loreto and the Ursulines focussed mainly on education. The Augustinians and the Nazareth Sisters focussed on caring ministries like hospitals, old age homes and orphanages. Some, like the Holy Family Sisters and some of the Dominicans, did both.

When religious institutions were requested to come to a territory by a bishop for the purpose of missionary activity, a contract was drawn up and agreed to by the bishop and the responsible authority of the institute (Brain 1991:82). In this way Bishop Ricards obtained the services of the Jesuits through the Provincial of the English Province, the Dominican Sisters of Augsburg through the bishop of the Augsburg Diocese (Brown 1960:102-103) and the Trappists through a General council of the order in France (:105). In a similar fashion Bishop Grimley brought out the Marists in Cape Town (:70) and Bishop Allard the Holy Family Sisters and the Augustinian Sisters for Natal (:301). Brain (1991:82) explains the procedure as follows:

Arrangements for bringing a community of sisters to a new mission area required that a contract be drawn up and signed by the superiors of the missionary priests and of the sisters. As a general rule the bishop or the missionary Order or congregation provided some kind of accommodation and built the school before the sisters arrived. The sisters had funds made available by their mother house and they could provide for themselves until their new foundation -whether school or hospital - was self supporting.

Sometimes contracts were formal written documents and sometimes they were less formal notes. The latter was the case between Bishop Ricards and the Trappists and this was to cause real

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<sup>4</sup>The term is incorrect the Trappist reform of the Cistercian order lasted from 1664 to 1892 when they were absorbed into the Cistercian of the More Strict Observance, to whom, however the name Trappist is commonly given (Attwater 1997:499). The Trappists came to South Africa in 1882.

problems in their relationship. The bishop paid their passage and he even had to lend Prior Pfanner , 2000 to pay off a debt at his monastery in Bosnia (Brown 1960:105). But his promise to support them until they could farm enough for themselves was interpreted widely by the monks who then began by building a monastery before cultivating the land. The expenses to the bishop were much more than he expected and eventually the dispute had to go to the General Chapter of the order and to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda. The story is related fully in Brown (1960:104-111) and also in Balling (1980:49-54). It ended with the move of the Trappists to begin again in Natal where Bishop Jolivet allowed them to make a settlement in his vicariate, but at their own expense (Brown 1960:108). Indeed the beginning of the Trappist endeavour was fraught with financial and contractual problems. However more disturbing to them was the poor quality of the land and after struggling for two years they decided to move to greener pastures.

A more formal arrangement was that between Bishop Gaughren and the Christian Brothers in Kimberley. This agreement spelled out that their travel costs to Kimberley were to be paid, and the land on which the school was to be built, as well as a furnished house and school buildings, was to be handed over to the Christian Brothers. They were to receive financial support for the first three years and to be free to accept voluntary contributions towards the running and development of the school (Brain 1996: 73).

## 2.2 *The religious institute*

The mother house of the institute would often pay the passage to South Africa and the bishop would arrange for some accommodation for the religious missionaries. A good example is provided by Young (1989:18-19) when the Assumptionist sisters agreed to Bishop Devereux's request to establish two schools in his vicariate.

Immediately after the decision had been taken to establish the mission, preparations were begun. The whole community at the rue Chaillot were enthusiastic. Mère Eugénie, wrapped up heart and soul in the enterprise, began negotiations with the French government in order to procure free passage for the missionaries and a subsidy to assist in establishing a French school in the Cape colony. She busied herself, also, in trying to get donations of gifts that would prove useful on the Mission....Sr Gertrude undertook to collect gifts for the mission from her many and distinguished friends.

The mother house often had to put a lot of money into a new foundation to set it up. The Cabra foundation in the Cape was one which required some funds from the parent institute and Boner

(1998:41) notes that AIn the event, the cost to Cabra of the initial missionary contingent to the Cape was , 1800...@. Support from the home institute was even more vital in Umtata where the Holy Cross sisters found themselves in 1883 alone and with no support neither from the bishop nor any benefactors. The town was small and unable to provide much support for them. AMoney to support them had to come all the way from Switzerland...where the Convent bursar was >pouring= thousands of francs into the Umtata mission without, apparently, easing the situation at all@ (McDonagh 1983:680).

The Trappists when they came to Natal were able to set up a foundation which is the present day Mariannhill. Bishop Jolivet insisted that he would bear no costs for the enterprise (Brown 1960:232) and Abbot Pfanner probably as a result of his financial difficulties and misunderstandings in the Eastern Cape had been on an extensive fund raising campaign in Europe. He describes his campaign as follows:

I travelled from the North Sea to the Mediterranean, from the Black Sea to the Atlantic, from Serbia to England, sounding off everywhere, preaching and begging...In Cathedrals and village churches, in chapels and farmhouses, in clubs and associations of every persuasion, often preaching and making speeches three or four times a day. I appeared before many Catholic organisations and associations. (Balling 1980:53).

Between 1882 and 1884 the Trappists created the Mariannhill village and A had made 188 acres of waste arable, had three and a half miles of roads completed, and as much half ready, and 1300 square yards of buildings@ (Brown 1960:232). From then on Abbot Pfanner was very active in building up a network of overseas funders for his various enterprises in South Africa. These were developed as Acircles of supporters...in several cities of Austria and Germany@ (:234). Magazines and pamphlets were distributed to them informing them of progress and Aat the same time the abbot began to send a >collecting brother= to Europe with a letter soliciting help for the missions@ (:234). But the Trappists were also concerned to make themselves self sufficient and self reliant in their endeavours. This was the goal of all religious orders and congregations as they established themselves: Ait was the rule of every religious order that each house must in the long run support itself, and usually it was required to pay the costs incurred@ (Brown 1960:304). The main way they did this was through the various institutions<sup>5</sup> they set up. These were principally the

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<sup>5</sup>Note that the word AInstitute@ refers to religious orders and congregations whereas the word Ainstitution@ refers to their particular works like schools, hospitals and orphanages.

mission farm, the school, and the care based institutions such as hospitals, clinics and orphanages. We now turn to these.

### 2.3 *Local and personal sources*

The local sources available to a religious institute were almost entirely related to the apostolic work that they carried out in the community. To be supported locally the religious had to supply some kind of need (want) which was generated from within the local society.

Once a religious institute had arrived in the country and was accommodated, the principal concern was to become as self sufficient as possible in the new mission. Boner (1998:41) captures this fact as follows in the history of the arrival of the Cabra Dominican Nuns in South Africa in 1863. AThe sisters who arrived in Cape Town in 1863 and Port Elizabeth in 1867, while from time to time they received small financial donations from their former communities, had perforce to fend for themselves. @ There were many ways of Afending for themselves@ but these tended to be of two types. In the urban areas the religious relied on the foundation they had come to establish in the place. During these years this was either an educational establishment, usually a school, or a caring establishment, usually a hospital, old age home or orphanage. Fees were charged for the services provided by the sisters or brothers and in that way the relatively simple needs of the initial community were soon met.

In the rural areas, the procedure was somewhat similar but because resources were less available here it was quite important for the religious to look for ways to become self sufficient in food and shelter. This often meant doing their own building and having land available on which to grow crops and tend animals. In some cases this meant the purchase of a farm which became the centre for the mission.

The endeavour of the religious institutes in this period was crowned with a large measure of success. Religious had the ability to become quickly self sufficient. They were also able to establish foundations which responded well to local conditions so that they were soon effective. The schools, hospitals, clinics, orphanages and old age homes founded by the sisters and the brothers grew rapidly during this period and despite setbacks from time to time as a result of social and economic crises they were to be flourishing by the end of this period in the 1920's. The success of these two approaches from a financial perspective requires that we spend some time focussing on them.

### 2.3.1 Living off the land

In order to be self subsisting, the primary requirements are food, water and shelter. A piece of land with water provides the easiest way of fulfilling this need and it comes as no surprise to see that many religious institutes purchased farms during this period with at least a partial motivation of becoming self sufficient in food. In 1896 Fr Rousset received 10 acres of land from the government at Entabeni (Brain 1982:117) which he used for his subsistence (227). By 1905 he was looking to extend his farming activities in the region. Many attempts were made to make the farm viable but the lack of experienced brothers in the Oblates meant that the farm was never successful. On their property at Vleeschfontein the Jesuits kept cattle and grew crops on the farm (Brain 1991:29). The Cabra Dominican<sup>s</sup> bought a property in Wynberg in 1871 and established a second convent with a school which opened the same year. On the property, a farm was established to provide fruit vegetables, milk and eggs for the community and boarders, and as a source of revenue (Boner 1998:54).

On the Western side of the Cape Colony, the Oblates of St Francis de Sales also made some use of this approach buying and managing a number of Farms in the Namaqualand area. Crops were grown and harvested on the properties in Pella, Vredendal (Vergenoeg), Onseepkans and Kiemoes.<sup>6</sup> In Pella the original missionary, Fr Gaudeul, was able to obtain the abandoned Lutheran property which was described in the following terms: Awater is abundant there and you will be able to have a whole garden around you (Simon 1959:29). When Father (later Bishop) Simon came to begin the Oblate mission he spent the early years of his mission reliant on provisions from Springbok but also on Awork in the garden and hunting...the many partridges that came to drink at the springs of Pella (40). The conditions in Namaqualand were very difficult and during the drought years from 1894 onwards many animals died. For several reasons the missionaries Aconcluded that it was far better and more fitting to do entirely without goats, sheep and oxen (105). This was not only for reasons of drought for even in the good years the Aexpense of caring for the animals ate up all the profits. Besides the larger our herds the fewer people we could keep on the mission (105). As a result, the Oblates went in Afor the cultivation of crops wherever it is possible (106). Grapes were a valuable source of income. Besides this the

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<sup>6</sup>Information supplied by Bishop Minder of Kiemoes Upington Diocese and from *Thirstland Epic* 1975.

Oblates continued hunting for game meat which Father Simon describes in great detail in his book. On the spoils of one successful hunting expedition he writes: 'Since we had too much meat to be consumed fresh, we made what is known as >Belongs= (sic). That is to say, we salted the best pieces to be used as ham and filets, and we dried them in the open air.' (:109).

The Rooipad property close to Pella began to supply an abundance of food after it was irrigated in 1908. The first crop was described by Bishop Simon (1959:215) in the following words: 'We harvested seven sacks of wheat from the half-sack we had sown; in short, a yield of fourteen to one. Lentils and peas yielded a hundred to one, as did our crop of string beans. We also harvested sweet potatoes, corn and watermelons. We were completely satisfied, for we were expecting much less during that first year of trial'. Fr Giraudet was to spend almost 25 years at Rooipad building this fertile property into a flourishing parish and farm (*Thirstland* 1975:14).

Perhaps the most heroic account of how religious went about procuring these resources is the story of the Holy Cross sisters in Umtata. Originally recruited by Abbot Pfanner, they thought they were going to help him in his mission work. However the Abbot had not secured Bishop Jolivet's permission for this and he decided to send them to Umtata. The sisters had no inkling of this and 'the difficulties began on the sisters arrival in Durban, 12 July 1883. They then learned from Bishop Jolivet that their home was not to be in the rich and fertile land of Natal, under the kindly care of the now familiar Abbot Pfanner, as they had believed, but in the inhospitable and wild interior on the border of Western Pondoland, a territory then not annexed to the British crown.' (McDonagh 1983:63). There was no permanent Catholic mission in the town and they found themselves in a place where 'food was scarce and, for those days, expensive' (:67). For accommodation they originally rented a 'small house' and then bought a piece of land in 1894 which comprised 'five native huts into three of which the Sisters moved with their few belongings' (:66). The bishop had made it clear to them that he 'could promise them no material assistance but told them they would have to rely, under God, on their own efforts' (:68). Abbot Pfanner sent them a brother from Mariannahill who helped the Sisters build their first school but 'Contrary to Bishop Jolivet's prognostications, school fees alone provided little source of income and the Sister's small capital dwindled rapidly' (:69). Many of the pupils were from poor families or orphans and were educated for no charge. Those who could afford the fees were few in number. In order to fulfil their primary requirement for self sufficiency, the sisters bought a farm some six miles out of Umtata 'in order to produce their own vegetables, eggs, milk and

butter....The Sisters with the help of African labour worked the farm themselves, initially walking daily to and from Umtata, morning and evening@ (:69). Whilst the farm provided them with food it continued to require funding from Switzerland for a number of years.

### 2.3.2 The Mission Farm

Whilst the land was a source of sustenance and even financial gain for the missionaries it was also used by some as a form of missionary activity. This kind of approach was not new and it had found two major expressions in the Church=s history. The first was the monasteries which during the middle ages had tracts of land worked by religious. They became centres of learning and faith allowing Christianity to initially survive the Adark ages@ and then flourish in the later part of the middle ages. The second approach was that adopted by the Jesuits in their missions in Latin America. Christian farms or *Reduccioness*@ were a major form of Christian expansion in Latin America from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The approach of Jesuit Christian villages had also been used effectively in the Ndongo kingdom during the early 17<sup>th</sup> century in the northern area of modern day Angola (Baur 1994:73-74). However the ADutch occupation of Luanda (1641-47) ...destroyed everything that had been achieved@ (:74).

In the Southern African mission both of these methods were used with some adaptation. The Jesuit mission in Rhodesia was eventually to centre on the area of Chishawasha, farm Asome fourteen miles outside Salisbury@ (Linden 1980: 13). The main missionary approach was to develop Christian farming communities amongst the local people. The aim was to accept tenant farmers and create Aself-sufficient Christian farming communities@ (:12). In South Africa, the Jesuits had two farms. One was in the Western Transvaal area since they Awere in need of a stop over point between Grahamstown and the Zambesi mission@ (Brain 1991:28). They had many Black Atenants@ for whom they Aheld Sunday services, provided a school and made regular visits to the tenants to preach and in the expectation of converting them to Christianity@ (:39). They also took over the running of the farm ADunbrody@ in the Eastern Vicariate after the Trappists left. Here too they had tenant farmers and developed their own farm too. They also used the place as a novitiate and a language learning centre for missionaries to Nguni speaking peoples.<sup>7</sup>

However it was the Trappist monks who were to make by far the biggest impact on the

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<sup>7</sup>Information supplied by Fr Chris Chatteris SJ

Southern African context using the method of the mission farm as a means of missionary endeavour. In accordance with their tradition the model was the monastery as a centre of Christian civilisation in an context of human sin and weakness. They wanted to show how through Prayer and work<sup>8</sup> God's kingdom could be realised in the soil of Africa as it had been in the dark ages of Europe. Here then was an early expression of what was to become a particularly Southern African Christian expression: the land as Zion.<sup>9</sup>

Between 1882 and 1909 eighteen properties were obtained by the Trappists for mission development (Consultation 1998: 15). The intention of the missionaries was to develop the farms both for their own sustenance and finance as well as to train the people already living on the land in farming methods. Tenants were supposed to develop skills and become Christians (:15). In this initial phase the vision of the missionaries was a monastic one where centres of flourishing Christianity could be set up in a rural context around the monastery as had been done in Europe of the mediaeval period. Their intention was to train a black peasantry who could work the land and eventually take ownership of portions of the land, thus establishing a Black middle class (Diocesan Land: 4). The farms bought by the missionaries usually had indigenous people living on them. They were allowed to stay on condition that they converted to Catholicism (:3).

The Trappist method depended for its success on the number and quality of experienced brothers. These farms not only provided food for the missions and for the market but also allowed Black Catholic families to settle on the land close to church and school (Brain 1982:229-230). The vision of the Trappists who subsequently became the Congregation of Mariannhill Missionaries (CMM) was to establish Christian rural settlements around the mission where the local people were attracted to the Christian lifestyle through the advantages it offered: Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts was the way this vision was articulated by Fr Bernard Huss (Brain 1991: 208). Often this vision was linked with the idea of eventually providing the tenant farmers with some kind of freehold something which was to be continually thwarted by the political authorities. Sometimes farms were acquired just for the sake of providing tenant farmers

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<sup>8</sup>*Ora et labora* (Pray and work) is the motto of the Benedictine Tradition of which the Cistercians form a part. It is still the motto of the Mariannhill congregation.

<sup>9</sup>Many African independent churches use the word Zion in their name. The term was also applied to land owned by the churches as a place where the kingdom of heaven touched the earth.

with land to work or even with the aim of giving them freehold in the hope that being close to the mission they would use the mission facilities of worship and education.

But the missionary aim was to provide a centre which could win people over to Catholicism. To achieve this purpose a mission station was set up on the farms with a school and in some cases a hospital or clinic. The brothers were also active in training the local people in agricultural skills. The initial funding for these farms was from overseas but many of them soon became very productive and so provided a source of income. The Mariannahill missionaries were the greatest exponents of this missionary approach. Their mission approach can be described as an attraction paradigm. The people of the surrounding areas were attracted by the fact that the missionaries had better crops and better livestock. They provided health facilities as well as schools and some skills training centres. .

The farms were financially very successful. The brothers were skilled at all kinds of crafts and soon turned the properties they bought into thriving commercial enterprises which allowed the missions to be self supporting relatively quickly.

### 2.3.3 Apostolic institutions and works

The apostolic institutions founded by the religious institutes included schools, hospitals, orphanages and hospitals amongst others. The most numerous were the schools. It should be remembered that bishops were bound by the Canon Law of the time to provide church schools in their dioceses whilst parents >were under grave obligation= to send their children to such schools@ (Brain 1982:55). Consequently they tried to look for ways to set up and staff these schools. Soon then, the vicariates also had members from other religious institutes brought into the mission because of their specialised gifts usually in education but also to provide caring services in short supply such as hospitals, orphanages and care for the elderly. These were largely but not exclusively congregations of women religious. These too were able to own property and administer financial resources.

The establishment of the Catholic school meant the need to cooperate with a community of teaching sisters and most of the active missionary congregations and Orders had unofficial agreements with communities of nuns who undertook to supply teaching or nursing sisters in the mission fields assigned by the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda. It also meant close cooperation with the Catholic laity who were generally willing to pay for their children to attend Catholic schools. (Brain 1991:79).

The various religious institutes of women set up a large network of institutions particularly schools and hospitals. These usually belonged to the religious institute and the setting up of these structures involved a major financial contribution to the Church's mission in South Africa. Institutions were set up in a simple way usually with a small capital injection to build a rudimentary building. The source of this capital was varied. Sometimes it was sourced from overseas, sometimes from a local donation and sometimes from within the local institute's own resources.

The Dominicans of Cabra arrived in Cape Town in 1863 and in Port Elizabeth in 1867. The mother house continued to help the Cape foundations financing passages to the Cape, clothing and other expenses (Boner 1998:41-42). By 1865 the sisters in Cape Town had opened a number of schools some catering for the poor and others for 'young ladies' or the 'select'... and it was on the fees provided by these small private institutions that the Dominican community lived' (:47). Indeed the sisters were very quickly able to become self sufficient from the income they received from teaching and already by 1885 in the Cape Vicariate 'Bishop Leonard was to boast that the Dominican institutions in his vicariate cost him on average only , 10 per year' (:116). And up until the present time Boner notes that 'the schools have remained their only stable source of livelihood in Southern Africa for about 135 years' (:116).

Another Dominican community arrived in the Eastern Vicariate from Augsburg in 1877. A 'simple contract was drawn up' (Brown 1960:103) in terms of which the bishop agreed to 'provide the convent building and grounds and to lend the passage money' (:103). This establishment was to lead to an extraordinary growth in a short period of time. After a year during which 'the bishop kept them going with the proceeds of his lectures and pamphlets, the school was self supporting' (:103). By 1923 they had expanded to twenty separate houses with almost 500 sisters. Their ministry and their institutions were mainly educational, especially schools including those for handicapped children, but also setting up training colleges, hospitals and orphanages. New enterprises were financed from the profits of already existing successful institutions as well as from government grants (:300). 'Naturally there was bargaining with every development; the education departments wanted to secure control in return for the expenditure of public money, and the sisters wanted to preserve what Scots law calls >use and wont=' (:300).

The Augustinian sisters arrived in Natal as a result of a visit of Bishop Jolivet to his home diocese in France in 1885 where he persuaded the sisters to set up a hospital in Durban and the

local bishop to help with finances. Unfortunately by the time they were ready to leave in 1891 the bishop had died and his successor was less enthusiastic and had clamped down on the finances to be made available (Hurley 1991 :1). As a result the Durban project was shelved and the sisters began in Estcourt where by 1892 they were running a hospital with a few beds and a small school (:1) . Later the same year four sisters were sent to Durban and a small sanatorium was opened and communities quickly followed in Ladysmith (1895) and Pietermaritzburg in 1897 (Mary Paul 1987:1-3). The sisters were dependent for their livelihood on the fees paid by their patients (Brain 1982:35).

The major role of women in financing and funding the growth and development of the Catholic Church and controlling much of its infrastructure and evangelisation is something which sets this church apart from all others in the process of evangelisation in South Africa. It is a story which still needs considerable research and uncovering as much of this effort was hidden behind the official patriarchal structures of the Church. Often the school and community of sisters provided a base from which the priest could carry out his evangelising mission in the surrounding area. This led to a two pronged approach to mission. The attraction paradigm whereby the sisters set up a school, clinic or hospital which attracted people to make use of the service provided and an insertion paradigm whereby the missionary went out to visit and celebrate the sacraments in the surrounding area setting up outstations and making use of catechists where possible.

In Cape Town Bishop Grimley persuaded the Marist Brothers to come to Cape Town and set up two elementary schools for boys (Brown 1960:70). In the Eastern Vicariate the Jesuits were persuaded to take over St Aidan's school in Grahamstown and a mission in Graaf Riet. In Kimberley the Christian Brothers school opened in 1897 was soon one of the best known and most generously supported Catholic schools in South Africa... (Brain 1996:73).

The Trappists had set up 78 schools by 1909 (Brown 1960:245). Most of these were residential and trade based including a lot of practical labour in the fields and workshops set up by the brothers and sisters. Typically this practical work was held during the day and more formal lessons in the early morning and evening. In this way even the pupils contributed to the production of the enterprise. (Brown 1960:245-6). In this way the girls should be prepared to become good wives and mothers, not servants. The boys should be trained to farm for themselves, and to make their clothes and implements and houses for themselves (:247).

Catholic schools were sometimes given government grants. The Trappist schools above

were given the normal government grants from 1889 onwards. However conditions for these grants to be received changed from government to government. In the South African Republic the grant was , 5 per student in the 1880s. However to qualify for a grant, Aa school had to undertake to teach the Dutch language and the history of the country for a minimum of 5 hours each week@ (Brain 1991:84). And in 1892 Dutch became the sole medium of instruction and ASubsidies were removed from private schools except where Dutch was the medium of instructions@ (:84). In Natal, the Oakford Sisters established themselves in 1889 and began a school for black children. They received a government grant of , 36 per annum for this (Brain 1982:98). Brown (1960:300) writes that *per capita* payments were made for all mission schools in the Cape and in Natal and from 1906 a small grant A...was also made in the Transvaal@.

The same applied for some of the caring institutions set up. The Durban corporation, for example, provided an annual grant to the Nazareth Sisters (Brain 1982:35) and in Johannesburg the Holy family Sisters were employed to staff the new Johannesburg hospital by one account because Athe staffing of the hospital was put out to tender and the Holy Family Sisters= tender was the lowest@ (Brain 1991:88).

#### 2.3.4 Other sources

Finally we make mention of some sundry other sources of finance that religious were able to use. In the first place it should be remembered that many religious women usually brought a dowry into the community they joined at the time of their profession.<sup>10</sup> Choir sisters were required to bring a dowry upon entering the convent. This together with income raised from the works of the sisters had provided a major sources of wealth for convents in Europe. This system of dowries was gradually discontinued and had gradually disappeared in most places by the 1960's. This money was not usually available for the apostolic work of the congregation but it could be used for expenses relating to the religious life of the community. There were some instances where this money was made available for use in the South Africa even though there were a number of rules about the way it could be used. Brown (1960:305) notes that the dowries Adid provide a small revenue (the capital was never large) for a new convent after it was established...@. And Boner

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<sup>10</sup>Those who payed this became choir sisters and those who did not were deemed lay sisters and usually did the menial work in the convent (Boner 1998:156). This division amongst Dominicans in South Africa was abolished in 1920.

(1998:41) points out that Aa nun=s dowry was invested and only the interest on the capital could be used during her lifetime@. However sometimes the money was a help in other ways. Even the bishop=s house in Grahamstown Awas raised, at the suggestion of Mother Gertrude, by Mr Mandy and by borrowing from the dowry of Sister Agatha Bertram@ (Young 1989:50). On repayment of this loan the same money was again used and ASt Catherine=s High School classrooms were built in 1865@ (:50).

A second source of finance was from gifts which religious received from families and friends. This was somewhat similar to the approach of the vicars apostolic as noted in part 1 of this article. To give one out of many examples of this approach, the Holy Cross sisters received contributions from a benefactor in Switzerland which helped pay for their convent in Cwele (McDonagh 1983:119). Friends and family also contributed to their bazaars and sales of work (:90).

Finally we should note that religious were extremely resourceful in using their talents to create sources of finance. Many of them organised sales of their own work. The Holy Cross sisters were very adept at this and McDonagh (90-91;122) refers to a number of these noting that eventually they were to make great progress in the town and AThe money for all this development seems to have been raised by annual school concerts, bazaars, exhibitions of work@ (:90). The Assumption sisters also relied on this source of finance: AMoney had to be earned, hence the needlework, the late hours, the growing and selling of vegetables@ (Young 1989:43). The Cabra Dominican, Sr Francis Sherwin, was to use her needlework talents not only for the convent but to help in raising money for the building of a new church close to Sacred Heart convent in Cape Town in the late 1880's (Boner 1998:126-127).

Clearly these examples merely scratch the surface of the monumental effort involved in carrying forward the Catholic missionary endeavour in Southern Africa. They do serve, however, to illustrate the fact that finance and enterprise were not peripheral to the success of that endeavour. In religious life, as in all human life which interfaced with Western culture, money was an essential part of the life equation. It is now time to reflect on the meaning of money in a lifestyle which seemed to want to deny its very existence.

## **1. Religious life and money**

### *3.1 The vowed life*

We have seen in part one of this article how the symbols, or *Aculture texts* of *Amoney*, *Aenterprise* and *Afinance* operated in the settler society and the emerging Catholic culture during the period under review. In this section we will focus on aspects of these culture texts which are particularly important in religious life and which are in some way particular to this life style.

Religious life is also a culture. It brings people together in a lifestyle which is focussed on dependence in faith and hope in the power of God in a persons life and the living out of charity to others. The lifestyle is one in community living vows usually of poverty, chastity and obedience. These vows are also referred to as the *AEvangelical counsels* and the *Apursuit of perfect charity* by means of the evangelical counsels traces its origins to the teaching and example of the Divine Master, and that it is a very clear symbol of the heavenly kingdom (PC1). The cultural demands of religious life are also seen in the meaning of the vows. It should be remembered that religious life implied complete and total dedication to the life of the community and its enterprises. The vow of poverty ran counter to the worlds value of well-being and wealth. It substituted dependence on the community for the independence which wealth could bring. The vow of chastity was counter to the human value of marriage and family life. It substituted dedication to the mission and work of the church for commitment to ones spouse and one=s family. For women religious life was seen as a *Amarriage* to Christ and, as we have seen, a dowry was required for such marriage in accordance with the demands of medieval culture. Finally, the vow of obedience was seen as the surrender of one=s own will and personal choices about the future to the demands of the group. It was counter to the autonomy and self-actualisation increasingly supported by the modern society. Consequently the religious was considered to be someone who was expected to be totally dedicated to the Church as expressed in the community life and mission of the religious institute within which they took vows. This means that many demands could easily be placed on the religious through recourse to the cultural demands of these vows in the culture of religious life within the Catholic culture. Practically this had many consequences. For example, as we have seen, missionaries often built their own houses and own churches. In this regard the Mariannahill founder Abbot Pfanner is quoted as saying: *ANo missionary, be he priest or superior, should despise manual work* (quoted in Baur 1994:194). In this regard he was critical of Protestant missionaries who *Ahad all the manual work done by Africans* (:194). The same spirit of self

denial is found amongst women religious. The Holy Cross foundation in Umtata is a good example. AUntil 1891 three native huts formed their first convent. Food was scarce...There is no mention of meat...@ (McDonagh 1993:67-68). They continued to struggle for years Ain extreme poverty, merely to survive@ (:72).

At the same time whilst, on the one hand, members of religious institutes were far removed from the life of the world around them and its value system by the vows they took, on the other hand, they had to deal with the ways of the world in acquiring and using financial resources in order to set up their various institutions and ministries. In this respect much of what was said about the apostolic vicars in part one of this paper also applied to them. They were to suffer similar kinds of tension and compromises as the bishops did in their work. But this interface with human endeavour was precisely what contributed to their effectiveness. It was often an immediate and intimate contact with people. In times of war it was the nuns who nursed. During the Anglo-Boer war in Johannesburg, the AHoly family sisters continued to staff the hospital throughout the war, assisted by volunteers@ (Brain 1991:91) after the English nurses were told to leave. And in Estcourt and Ladysmith the Augustine sisters nursed the victims of the same war there (Brown 1960:301). In the orphanages and old age homes they had contact with the poor and the suffering and in the schools they had daily contact with the children of both the rich and the poor. It was this daily contact with people from all races and walks of life which gave the Catholic endeavour a wide interface with the people of southern Africa and which surely enhanced the effectiveness of the Catholic missionary endeavour. About two thirds of the pupils at Catholic schools in 1900 were not Catholic and similarly in Catholic hospitals the patients reflected the religious demographics of the country (:308) Brown (1960:298)writes as follows: AAn informed Catholic of the 1920's would have chosen the work of the nuns as the best example of what the Church had been doing for Awhite= South Africa@. Brain (1991:83) also points out that the sisters exerted strong influence Ain breaking down the antagonism towards Catholicism in the predominantly Protestant society of the time...@ and this as well the teaching and nursing they did meant that a Awell run convent then was serving the mission and vicariate in a meaningful way@ (:84).

### 3.2 *Money and the vow of poverty*

Perhaps the most powerful symbol within the Catholic Missionary culture text *Money* was the religious vow of *Poverty*. The purpose of this vow in Catholic culture is to provide a workable lifestyle within which the access to wealth is undermined as a goal for life. In the Modern Western culture money was seen to provide a means to satisfy almost all of Maslow's hierarchy of needs: physiological, safety, belonging, esteem and even self actualisation. In the culture of religious life it is the community which is responsible for these and the transcendent value of self actualisation through faith in God and the *sequela Christi*. Money is then the concern of the community and not the individual. Besides this, the cultural codes surrounding this vow were intended to elevate a detachment from worldly needs to a value to be cherished. This had the effect of reducing the power of money in the life of the missionaries to that of a means to fulfil the goals of the mission only. The missionaries themselves were prepared to accept great personal privation for the sake of the mission.

Examples of the seriousness with which this vow was lived abound. Regarding Fr Sabon a member of the first Oblate group to come to Natal in 1852 and the founder of the Church in Durban, Brain (1975:176) quotes a lay writer of the time: *His self denial was so well known that to conserve his health his friends used to plot to ensure his attendance at meal times. There is an authentic story that he refused a new coat and hat, lest the splendour should be attributed to vanity and so give offence*. The first Oblate visitor to Natal complained about the poor quality and soiled condition of their clothing, the lack of household linen, the shortage of reading matter, and the overuse of priests who should be doing ministry in manual work (Brain 1975:134). Another example was that of Fr Bold who worked in the Natal Midlands area in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Bold gave an excellent example to his converts, living in extreme poverty and using every penny he received to pay his catechists* (Brain 1982:203). We could also give the example of Father Law who died of starvation in Rhodesia on the first Jesuit expedition there (See Young 1989: 199n371). With regard to the women religious have already given the example of the trials of the Holy Cross Sisters and the Assumption sisters in the early years.

### 3.3 *Points of contradiction*

Religious institutes created points of cultural contradiction within settler society. We have already shown how the ethos of religious life as represented by the vows was in stark

contradiction to the prevailing values of the society. Yet because of the root of Christian tradition in this culture they were also seen as important, though impractical values in the real world. The fact that the religious oriented their lives around the keeping of them was a source of both admiration, surprise and praise. Most of the institutions established and maintained by religious were successful enterprises and so earned the praise of the settler society by the effectiveness of what they did in a society which as we have seen valued success in the enterprise. Brown notes that from the frequent journalistic praise of nuns and brothers it seems to follow that people willing to work for God under rule, without hope of personal gain, were still news@ (:309)

The lifestyle created a sense of mystique in a society which was largely quite prosaic. Religious were considered special and mysterious. A Meeting the nuns or brothers was not like talking to a lay teacher; it could satisfy a natural curiosity about a strange culture which produced some attractive types@ (Brown 1960:309). People tended to project a perfection onto religious of what they could only struggle to do half heartedly some of the time. Religious were seen in a certain sense as symbols of the presence of the heavenly kingdom in a stark and harsh human reality of settler society. On the other hand the mystique could give rise to suspicion and rumour especially in the eyes of those opposed to Catholic culture in general. The story of Maria Monk<sup>11</sup> was still circulating in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was used to by some to discredit the religious lifestyle.

In many ways settler society created religious into liminal people in their culture. They symbolised a gateway to other forms of life which were better than the day to day experience of their own lives. In the isolated and rather prosaic settler culture, religious were sometimes created into icons in a society which had very limited options. Religious were *expected* to be their nursing the sick in war when others had been left; to be praying when others were too busy or too tired; to be providing schools and hospitals when the ordinary society could not yet do so; to be totally dedicated to God when others were busy with their families and their future; to be sacrificing so that others could have a better life. When they achieved these expectations, the public was often made aware of it and the press was very generous in its coverage of them as we have seen above.

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<sup>11</sup>A woman of loose morals who claimed to have been a nun in a Montreal convent and wrote an account of the debauchery, violence that went on there. Her claims were later proved false but the story served to heighten the mystique of life behind the convent walls and to be used by those who wished to discredit the work of Catholic religious institutes.

The dress of religious was especially important at this time. It was a symbol of these expectations, a sign of their specialness, their nature to be different and to be set apart. The use of money was perhaps the best expression of this for they did collect and use money as everyone else in society did but the vow of poverty meant that it was not for them but the society they came to serve.

All of these expectations were clearly unrealistic but they were expectations the society needed to place on them at that time. As the society became more developed and more able to take care of its own needs including those for the transcendental, this liminal role of religious declined and they became more ordinary members of society playing their role with others. But at this time and in this context they were very special.

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