

## PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

## A Lesson in Fakery

In a reflective mood I write this column about the common sadness that has afflicted the hearts of all who love our country. We may rejoice, as I surely do, in Mr. Nixon's decision to resign the Presidency. We rejoice, as I do, in the Constitutional process that has insured for us that justice would eventually triumph. And we may rejoice, too, in the inauguration of his successor, President Gerald Ford, who we are assured has a proven reputation of personal integrity. But, we cannot rejoice in the events of the past two years that have eroded the stature of a man from a position of trusted leadership with popular acclaim to one of general mistrust. The man who invoked God five times in his first inaugural address, and who spoke of the crisis of the spirit in America and of the need to "build a great cathedral of the spirit," had lost the human support needed to build anything, and all his energies had become exhausted in concern about his own personal crisis of spirit.

Yale professor, David Barber, commenting on the value of the moral leadership of a President of the United States, had this to say: "The President is expected to personify our betterness in an inspiring way. He

ought to inspire our higher selves with an example of principled goodness."

Surely, we have a right to look to leadership for inspiration. And we have a right to express our disappointment when it has failed us. But it would be more to our advantage to use the Watergate crisis to search more deeply into the causes of our present sad plight. We cannot let one man be the scapegoat for the sins of a whole nation.

An editorial in the Nov. 25, 1972 issue of the New Yorker spoke of our common responsibility for a morally healthy country: "the average American is not a child not a chastened, obedient child. Nor is the government his parent or the guardian of his character and morals. The average American is a grown man or a grown woman. It is he who is the guardian of his own morals, and the guardian, too, of the government he elects to serve him."

I believe that all of us who have been guilty of deception and manipulation deserved a Watergate. It will be a blessing now if we turn our indignation on ourselves. Public acceptance of our immorality or amorality had become our expected course of conduct in America. I wrote about this in September of 1973 in a column, "The Draining of America."

Now we are alarmed because it has

focused on our President and the men with whom he was surrounded by personal appointment in his administration.

I hope our righteous indignation will leave some room for some **personal indictment** for our own failure to accept **personal responsibility** for the transmission of values reflecting the highest standards of morality.

It was such projection of blame that our Lord contrasted to the meaning of integrity and honesty: "Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the plank in your own? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the splinter that is in your eye,' when you cannot see the plank in your own? Hypocrite! Take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take out the splinter that is in your brother's eye."

Would you believe it? As I write this column, a young father is a few yards away from my study, saying to his young son of six or seven years, "Son, now I am going to **show you how to fake.**" Though relieved to discover it is only a lesson in basketball maneuvering, I am sure we have all, in some degree, offered lessons in fakery. More of us than Richard M. Nixon need to admit our guilt. Reconciliation must be accompanied by an oft-repeated and sincere *'mea culpa mea maxima culpa.'*

## Bishop Peter Sarpong:

## The West, Christianity Have Divided Africa

St. Paul, Minn. [RNS] — Citing Portugal's continued holdings in Africa as an example, an African Roman Catholic bishop said here that Western nations and Christianity itself have "completely disregarded" Africa's culture and brought "division, dissension and rivalry" to that continent.

He said the Portuguese situation is especially embarrassing to African Catholics because Portugal "tenaciously hangs on to Africa in the name of a concordat with the Papacy."

Bishop Peter Sarpong of Kumasi, Ghana, made his remarks in a major paper prepared for the 1974 American Jesuit Missions Conference here. He declared that he was "admittedly negative" and critical of "what the West has done to Africa in education, politics, economics, social life and religion."

Focusing on Portugal (which is reportedly in the process of granting freedom to its African colonies of Guinea-Bissau, Angola and Mozambique) the bishop said the Vatican concordat with Portugal, renewed in 1942, "is supposed to entitle Portugal to a civilizing mission in Africa."

"In actual fact, Portugal is interested in Africa because of its wealth and cheap black labor," he stated.

Bishop Sarpong said the African Catholic bishops had petitioned the Vatican to disassociate itself from the Concordat. "We do not understand why the Papacy does not say anything about this."

In charging Christianity with bringing "division, dissension and rivalry" into Africa, the prelate said the Church, "through sectarian bigotry, has done its best to split families which, otherwise, would be closely knit."

Bishop Sarpong also charged that the Church has "completely

disregarded the African's culture," contributing largely to its deterioration and, in some cases, its demise.

"The African's religious sense, which could have been the bottom rock on which the edifice of Christ's message could have been constructed, was disregarded," he added. "Instead, the sentence of 'superstition' was passed on Africa's religious, which contained a commendable natural revelation to which the Christian dimension should have been added."

"In the absence of such a natural marriage between the existing faith and the new, it is no wonder that the incidence of hitherto unknown crimes is keeping steady pace with the numerical growth of the Church, contrary to its teaching and wishes," the bishop said.

"Western-type education, Bishop Sarpong observed, has uprooted the Africans from their culture and historical background and has deposited them in an alien world of iron towers where they are groping in the dark for survival. It has tended to estrange the Africans from their people and their values. It tended to pump as much information about Europe as possible into cranial receptacles of the African student."

"The results of such an education are understandably frightening," the prelate said. "Africa is fast losing its own values of Godliness, kindness, gratitude, hospitality, hard work, honor, purity, communal spirit — in short, its humanity, probably the best contribution it could make towards the uplifting and conservation of a world so sick from science-cum-technology syndrome and selfish individualism."

Bishop Sarpong said the introduction of Western-style politics has resulted in near chaos everywhere in Africa.

"In not less than 13 African

nations," he noted, "the military has deemed it necessary or expedient in the interest of the nation to take over power from civilians, mostly schooled in Western political thought on the grounds of alleged mismanagement of affairs of the nation."

The bishop said misunderstanding of the political party system has given birth to tribal warfare, "resulting in inhumanities and atrocities of all kinds."

He noted that when "imaginative" African leaders like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania boldly experiment with systems that combine the best in the traditional and the best in the new, so as to preclude the likelihood of constant tribal antagonism and achieve national unity, they are branded by the West as Leftists or Marxist Socialists.

"What is not a carbon-copy of what our former masters practice, is, at best, suspect," he observed.

But Bishop Sarpong pointed out that it is in the economic sphere that the African most feels "the pinch of global injustice."

He said the "spoliation" of African wealth in the pre-independence era had forced self-governing Africa nations into nationalizing foreign concerns. "There appears no other way of restoring justice."

He said the Africans are denied a decisive vote in fixing prices of the raw materials they produce. An international agreement was reached in 1972 to stabilize the price of cocoa, which had been subject to savage fluctuations and which comprises 65 per cent of Ghana's economy.

The United States, the largest single consumer of cocoa, has "blatantly refused to sign it," thus "cruelly sabotaging the economic effects of a small and weak state," the bishop declared.

The bishop said African currencies are closely bound up with the monetary systems of the big powers, "yet those powers take decisions about their money (such as devaluation) which vitally affect us without the slightest regard to the consequences they will have on our economies."

Bishop Sarpong lauded the willingness of China to build a railroad for Zambia so it could export its copper via ports in Tanzania when Rhodesia closed its ports to her.

He said the World Bank and several nations had refused to finance the project, but the Chinese provided an interest-free loan. They brought in thousands of workers from China whose conduct has been exemplary, he said, adding that they are 12 to 24

months ahead of schedule.

In his paper, Bishop Sarpong also cited racial discrimination that confronts Africans in countries like South Africa, saying they are "regarded and treated as third class human beings."

"The ideology of the South Africa system of apartheid, by which the quality of human beings is judged by the color and their skin is, in the eyes of the African, a negation of God's existence and an affront to nature," he said.

The Jesuit Missions Conference was held at St. Paul Seminary and St. Thomas College and opened with a keynote address by Father Horacio de La Costa, SJ, of Rome, who is general assistant to the general of the Jesuit Order.

## Mennonites Also Slate Holy Year

St. Catharines, Ont. [RNS] — Delegates to the triennial meeting of the General Conference Mennonite Church here proclaimed 1975 as a year to inaugurate "jubilee living" in the denomination.

They based the proclamation on the Biblical concept of a "jubilee year" (Leviticus 25: 10-11), in which the Hebrews liberated slaves, canceled debts, let the soil lie fallow, and returned land to its original owners every 50 years. In calling for the observance of a Year of Jubilee in Mennonite congregations, the delegates suggested such forms of involvement as Bible study, resolving of labor-management conflicts, becoming an advocate of Indian land and resource

rights, canceling or reducing debts, and enlisting one additional person for every hundred members for North American or overseas mission/service work.

Other statements adopted at the conference endorsed amnesty for Vietnam war resisters and action to combat world hunger. The amnesty statement, which had been adopted earlier by the Peace Section of the Mennonite Central Committee, asked congregations to welcome back persons who had violated the U.S. Selective Service Act or military law to avoid military service for reasons of conscience. It called on the U.S. government to restore full civil rights to such men, and commended governments such as Canada which admitted draft resisters.