

A Church Self-Reliant and Missionary : Apostolic and Patristic Models for Africa By A. Mavenka. Gwelo, Mambo Press, Occasional Paper, Missio-Pastoral Series No. 9, 1978, 120pp., ZR\$1,10.

This essay by Fr Mavenka, a Catholic secular priest of the Gwelo Diocese, was originally presented as a minor dissertation in partial fulfilment for the licentiate degree in Theology at Maynooth, Ireland in 1975. The work takes as its starting point the Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church of Vatican II, and in particular its direction that the episcopal conferences 'pursue this programme of adaptation with one mind and with a common self-reliant Churches.

plan' with the aim of transforming dependent missions into independent.

The basis of the essay is in a nineteenth-century Protestant, three-fold definition of self-reliant as self-leading, self-supporting, and self-propagating. Self-reliance has radical social implications for the Church, involving a drastic lowering of standards in its economic life 'because a rich Church cannot witness to poor people'.

Through a careful and scholarly documentary examination of local churches in the New Testament and Patristic periods the writer concludes that the early Church did not organize foreign missions but founded the Church directly in the different places which it evangelized, 'building it up in each place with local elements: Bishops, clergy and laity. It accepted a popular liturgy and used the arts which flourished on the spot.'

The proper aim of evangelism is thus not to found missions but to establish Churches with a mission.

The shortage of priests in Third World countries stands in the way of the implementation of these radical changes, and a much greater emphasis must be placed on the providing for the needs of the Church from local resources rather than on an over-dependence on outside help.

Protestant churches may, without ordination, specially commission laymen to dispense the sacraments in particular circumstances and for limited periods. This solution is presumably unacceptable to Roman Catholics because of their view of priesthood and sacrament. Fr Mavenka sees the solution of the problem in 'the diversification of the priesthood', i.e. in conferring ordination to the priesthood on those lay-leaders who are in many places performing those functions which are traditionally reserved to the ordained minister.

This reviewer suggests that, following the recent report of the Roman Catholic Commission for Priestly Functions (*The Daily Telegraph*, 15 August 1979), a partial solution to the problem may be found in fuller and permanent use of deacons, who hitherto have been regarded as occupying a step towards the priesthood. The report notes that permanent Roman Catholic deacons have already been ordained, some of them married men. A policy such as this might go a long way towards the realization of the true objectives so ably expounded by Fr Mavenka in his essay.