

THE WIND OF CHANGE

By Bishop James Moynagh, Calabar Diocese.

(It is a privilege to print this article written especially for *The Pylon* by His Lordship. As a young priest he went to the Nigerian Mission field with the first group of Holy Child Sisters. He has been friend, adviser, director and father to the S.H.C.J. Missionaries ever since.

No one is more conversant than Bishop Moynagh with the need for educating leaders among the young African Catholics – and no one has done more to promote such education.)

The “wind of change” has come to such a gale force in Africa – and the needs are so urgent and varied – that there may be the temptation to rush the work of training those who will guide the destinies of the new Nation.

In the training of women there are no short-cuts and however we multiply staff and school facilities there can be no mass modulation. The greatest need of the new Nation still remains the Christian Family. It is only there that woman's true place and true dignity can be recognised. I exclude of course, the favoured few (happily increasing steadily), whose vocation is to the higher call of religious dedication.

The greatest loss to Africa has been the absence of any recognition of woman's enormous dignity and rights. These were simply denied in the pagan system as indeed they must be in any polygamous society, such as the modern society.

The raising of woman to her rightful place and honour in the home and in society can only come about when the young women of Africa are trained to have a true idea of their own dignity and vocation. Only true Christian education is the key to women's rightful status.

African women can play a decisive role in the future Society. There will be a strong temptation

to enlist the services of educated young women in all sorts of work opposed to woman's true vocation. There is already a demand for women in clerical and typist jobs, as telephonists, even in car service stations! Commercialism which is so rapidly expanding, will try to exploit the cheaper labour of women – even when there is large unemployment of male workers. And of course, through films, radio, magazines, etc. the notion of careers bringing “independence” to women will hold a false glitter before unthinking people. We even hear talk of labour brigades which include girls in a newly independent state!

Hundreds of young Nigerian girls have trained here to be teachers.





His Lordship Bishop Moynagh and Father Matthew McGrath (left), rector of the Sacred Heart Cathedral, Calabar.

Woman's true vocation is to love in the home, in schools, hospitals, in Welfare Services - everywhere in fact where she can exercise her God-given faculty of love in dealing with her fellowman. She can never exercise such influence in impersonal jobs.

Paradoxically, African Society has supplied an excellent natural basis for the exercise of this supremely womanly influence. The polygamous system left the child very largely in the care of the mother. She usually had her dwelling apart from the husband and the daily care of the child devolved on her. The father might supply material aid and might often take a very special interest in a favoured child but mainly it was the mother who loved and cherished the young child. So one finds that the bonds binding the child to the mother are surprisingly strong in Africa. And the greatest social stigma is usually attached to those children who fail to care for their mother in her old age.

The Christian family with its basic concept of love in the home

has then a firm basis on which to build in Africa, and this is evident enough to those who work with African women.

The insistence should be on fostering those vocations for young women where that natural facility will have greatest opportunity. Young African girls make excellent teachers, nurses, social workers. They need further and higher education to bring these gifts to the service of their people.

The danger will be that in contact with a culture which has to a large extent lost that precious Christian heritage, the supposed glamour of "progressive careers" for women may be exalted. Even while the young African woman achieves freedom from the old bondage of paganism, she may be drawn by apparent material advantages into the insidious bondage of a career where there is no place for Christian love.

It is evident that religious women dedicated to this training have a decisive role to play. No one else can do this task as they can, and African leaders gladly acknowledge this.