

Bob Barron asked Bill Webber, who asked me, to answer Johnson C. Montgomery's THE ISLAND OF PLENTY (23 Dec 74 NEWSWEEK, p.13), which is against sharing basic resources (chiefly, food) with the rest of the world. Barron says "...in many ways what he says makes sense, but from a Christian standpoint what can you say?" Banker Barron is disturbed by Lawyer Montgomery.

1. Trying to answer this is the most foolhardy thing I've done at least since last Thursday. I don't know how to answer. The rest of this thinksheet is probably not worth reading—except as a refreshing contrast to all the other thinksheets, in which I did know how to answer.

2. The chief hindrance to answering is hearing: our "Christian," kneejerk compassion takes umbrage at any proposal that bypasses hungry mouths in order to (1) protect the resources of one's own nation and children, (2) impress the governments of the hungry with the need for reducing population, and (3) let nature (i.e., famine) take its course, restoring the eco-cycle (the synergistic balance of the human/nonhuman world). I'm sure this pseudoChristian mindlessness is ignorance if not also arrogant. Whew! At least I'm sure of something!

3. Montgomery's anxiety does not allow for the appearance of novelty, of emergents in the short run that cannot be foreseen, either by projection or by imagination, in the present. If we act on simple, mindless, evangelical charity ("If your neighbor hunger, feed...."), a soon solution of the long range problem may appear in the short run: God may bring "the early rain out of season." This direct, mindless charity is an act of trust, and "mindless" in the good sense, i.e. uncalculating. Montgomery's article is nothing if not calculating, cold calculation, animal offspring-protection, defense of earth-soil against humankind. It's straight out of the rational, the brain's left hemisphere. I'd agree with it if Jesus would, which he wouldn't: he'd expect the "kingdom of God" to intervene.

4. I'm stuck with this intervention-of-the-kingdom-of-God business: I'm a Christian. I think it's daft when American ecclesiarchs appeal to Congress to go all out to feed the starving Indians and subSaharans; it angers me, it's so irrational and, in the long run, canceling of human interests by (1) depleting us and (2) making our benefactees dependent on us. I've got a mind/gut split: my mind is with Montgomery, my heart—and I think Jesus'—is with the ecclesiarchs. I'm a mess.

5. In thinksheet #338 I tried to do something with "'Poverty' and Programming." I'm more comfortable talking about poverty when there are no hungry folks close by. The trouble is, with television and photography there's no place any more to be where hungry folks are not close by. I'm miserable.

6. Eze.11, which I chose for the first reading in the 1975 Kirkridge Lectionary, talks about getting rid of "a heart of stone" and letting God give us "a heart of flesh." Flesh eats, stone doesn't. When flesh eats insensitivity, flesh turns to stone: that's the point of thinksheet #471, a cartoon self-examination on wealth's power to entrap and harden. Flesh can squeeze through the needle's eye, stone can't—but (M.10.27//Mt.19.26) "with God all things are possible."

7. Our one positive correlation here is negative: up the education of peasant women, down the birthrate (on which see the excellent work of Dick Fagley, WCC expert on population/demography). A coalition of "missions," political and religious, is needed here, under UN auspices. But persuasion cannot work soon enough: the world needs also coercion, the automatic sterilization of women at (in my opinion) the third birth—the plan I presented to the Government of India in 1961, and got a 30% favorable vote in parliament. (After the failure, the Minister of Health wrote me, "Cheer up. Try it in New Jersey first.") But 30% is high...coming....

