



CHURCH AND MISSION IN MODERN AFRICA, by Adrian Hastings. London, Burns and Oates, 1967. Pp. 263.

If the problems of individual nations are today difficult and complex, those of a continent taken as a whole look appalling. Africa, a fastly emerging continent in a changing world, is experiencing most of the human and social problems of modern times. Because of them, the Church is confronted there with a very critical present and an uncertain future.

The Ecumenical Council has called for scientific research in missionary adaptation to the times and for a more intelligent missionary policy. A response to this call, and partly anticipation to it, is the book of Fr. Adrian Hastings. Asian by birth, trained in England and Rome, and with eleven years of missionary experience in various countries of Africa, Fr. Hastings has an outstanding capacity to understand peoples, analyze human problems and offer solutions to them. His many articles and conferences on the African Church have been ably assembled in this book to form one of the most important contributions in recent years on the prospects of Christianity in Africa.

The character of the Church in Africa must be viewed, of course, in reference to its past. Its youthful vitality, undeniably enormous, is the fruit of the spiritual vigor of heroic missionaries who left a deep imprint in the African soul by their self-sacrifice and devotion. But their age is gone.

Africa has a new face today, the face of new nations, new social patterns, new leadership, new ideology. To be sure, the new situation has been moulded by forces outside the Church: nationalism with emphasis on African values; social transformation, from tribal societies to national fulfillment and international standing; a population explosion that may produce 800 million people by the end of the century; and conflicting ideologies between the old order and the new generations educated there or abroad. But far from keeping aloof, the Church must confront the situation with new methods of approach and new techniques in apostolic action.

The problems of the Church are not of the same character or gravity in all the African countries. But Hastings, adding personal observation to informative materials of other experts on the African scene, has achieved

a realistic general view of the most pressing needs of the Church. And his book proves that old structures do not respond any longer to the present reality, and that unless drastic changes are made, the Church will be unable to maintain its position, let alone convert the continent's 170 million pagans.

The changes will have to affect almost every aspect of ecclesiastical and religious life. Some of them can be mentioned here: Less authoritarianism and more freedom of action within the bounds of truth and authority; the treatment of Africans as adults; laicization of the institutions; africanization of the institutions; africanization of the liturgy, art music and leadership; the going out of the present watertight compartments to be more truly universal; a massive approach to other Christian denominations and to Islam; a revised approach to marriage in the context of African social and legal customs, polygamous unions not excluded; a more diversified ministry; overhaul of the seminaries; university-trained priests as well as an adequate number of priests for the rural apostolate; and due to lack of priests, a greater cooperation of the laity, with more catechists, whether full-time catechists, unpaid ones from the professional classes or clerical deacons; restoration of the separate order of deacons.

These are the needs of the African Church today, briefly and incompletely enumerated. Hastings discusses them at length in their theological and sociological context. His knowledge of the field and of the current conciliar trends is only matched by his avowed sympathy for, and spirit or understanding of, the African peoples, their idiosyncrasy, way of life and aspirations, and their continent's gigantic struggle as it looks out through new windows to the modern world. The author's devotion to the Church and to Africa are contagious, his judgements balanced, his frankness and sincerity beyond question. At times, however, his urge for reforms may sound iconoclastic in tone, as when he calls for the "declericalization" of of everything, Scripture, the parish organizations, the apostolate, marriage and, most difficult of all, the ministry (p. 186).

Church and Mission in Modern Africa succeeds in its attempt to assess the reality of Africa and of the African Church today. We may add that many of the problems of that continent, as well as Fr. Hastings solutions are of universal application and particularly valid for the predominantly non-Christian countries of Asia.

● Fidel Villaruel, O.P.

JOY: by Louis Evely. 96 pages. Herder and Herder. \$3.50

Why wear daily a good-friday face, when Christ had only one Good Friday, and an eternity of joy? Why beat ceaselessly and suffocate the breast with mea culpas, when one can breathe with ease the soothing, peaceful joy as filtered in from God's love and forgiveness? Why shrink beneath the shroud of gloom, when one can bask under the invigorating sunbeams of a christian joy?

Fr. Evely, in his book, brings up another triumphant aspect of christian life: Joy. Joy in God's real presence in our soul. A joy born of strong faith, a faith that removes the film of unbelief from our inner eye. A joy born of love, a love for God who loves and forgives us. It is this christian joy that gleams in the countenance of a bed-ridden, pain-racked cancer patient.

This book is easy to read. Not jarring, much less jolting one's conscience, it flows with tenderness and soothing persuasion, and unconsciously lifting up your soul to God's love; a love that engenders peace and joy.

Spiritual directors and confessors will find JOY a great help to draw the melancholic and the hopeless away from the slow centripetal motion of despair, suicide and death, to a life of faith, love and joy.

Priests, religious and laymen should read this spiritual classic.

● Jephthe M. Lucena, O.P.