

**Wilson, William J. (Ed.):** *The Church in Africa*. Christian Mission in a Context of Change. Maryknoll Publications/Maryknoll, New York 1967; 177 p., \$ 2,75

This is a very light-weight little book. Its contents were provided by a seminar held in Washington in September 1965. To be honest, it was not worth publishing. The first paper — that by JAMES O'CONNELL — is of value, but it has already been published in the *African Ecclesiastical Review* (1966, 134—145). The other papers are totally insignificant. The best bits of the book are two short comments on the status of women by Sister MARIE-ANDRÉ DU SACRÉ-CŒUR and Miss ANGELA CHRISTIAN, a Ghanaian. The second half of the book is devoted to reporting on a survey of the participants in the seminar. This too is of next to no interest. Some concluding remarks by Father COTTER S.J. are worth quoting: «We Americans have learnt a few lessons from Latin America. To speak personally of my own organization, the Jesuits, the American Jesuits went into Latin America, into Chile, Peru, Brazil, and Argentina, within the last seven or eight years. Watching them go, one would think that there had never been another North American missionary working in Latin America. We never asked anyone what we could do or should do, or how we might work with someone else» (84). That sort of thing is still happening today. A book like this will not alter that, though it could provide people with the sensation that they are now informed. Its one practical conclusion, however, is that the greatest missionary need today is for far better orientation courses in the sending countries, and this is not only true of the United States.

Kitwe (Zambia)

Adrian Hastings

## RELIGIONSWISSENSCHAFT UND VÖLKERKUNDE

**Bischofsberger, Otto:** *Tradition und Wandel aus der Sicht der Roman-schriftsteller Kameruns und Nigerias*. Auslieferung: Neue Zeitschr. für Missionswissenschaft/Schöneck-Beckenried (Schweiz) 1968; VIII u. 235 S.

What we really have here is two books, with a short concluding section devoted to a comparison of the two. B. uses 78 pages for his treatment of Cameroon novelists, and some 120 for Nigerian novelists. His concluding comparison uses up 15 pages. Since the phenomena highlighted by the author in his first two sections are likely to be familiar in their broad outlines to most of his readers, the real value of the work seems to lie in the third, comparative section.

An overview of their historical and socio-cultural background is given for both the Cameroon and Nigerian groups of authors, their lives and works are briefly discussed, and then, in what is quantitatively the most important part of his book, the author concentrates on the interpretation these novelists give to various aspects of the interplay between tradition and change. These comprise the traditional society and culture, the colonial factor, Christianity and missions, and nationalism.

The text is richly interspersed with quotations from the authors under discussion. Quotations are never translated, but always given in French or English. This makes one suspect that the book is intended for specialists, though the



author does not state so explicitly. Footnotes are at a minimum. But this is deceptive as there are a multitude of references to pertinent literature laced into the body of the text. It is a pity that its format makes it unlikely the book will be read by anyone but a few specialists in the academic world. It contains a great deal of information that could be extremely valuable orientation for missionaries in any part of Africa.

Yet one wonders if the work really is meant for academic specialists. For there is no quantification of the data, something hardly possible in this sort research. And the insights author deduces from the examination of his material can scarcely have the force of discovery for genuine Africanists. He tells us, for example, that: sexual freedom among the unmarried is on the increase, that tribal elders frequently compromised themselves by joining forces with the colonial powers, that the African has a very strong desire for offspring, that the African man feels it is the role of woman to do heavy work and that she has few rights, that Africans feel polygamy is legitimate despite church strictures to the contrary, that the white man's apparent lack of respect for Africans is resented, that young people are alienated from their traditional society by going to school, etc.

Certainly the author has succeeded through his survey in pushing forward a bit the frontiers of knowledge. The reviewer has found the book interesting to read. Yet he can't help wondering if the author could not have better spent his time and energies on another area of investigation, one bearing more immediately on nation-building, which every African nation is preoccupied with today. For the overall features of the investigation pursued are already familiar to those of us who have been interested enough to make an attempt to discover them heretofore.

It is later than we think in Africa. The African nations are badly in need of the tools and talents scientific investigators can put at their disposal to help them to know themselves better and solve their problems. It is high time to establish research priorities in view of the needs of African nations and formulate them by engaging in dialogue with them. There is no reason why the work of the professional researcher should not be part and parcel of the dialogue and exchange between nations. If he plies his trade in the service of African nations in their quest for a better life, he will be playing a vital role in the building of universal brotherhood and world peace.

Those interested in the place of Christianity in African life will find the citations on pp. 66, 67, 68, 72, 175, and 180 quite informative. Here in bold terms we are told the following: to become a Christian through a priest pouring water on one's head is of little importance; the missionary because of his cultural arrogance has failed hopelessly to understand Africa despite his sincere efforts to do so; Christianity has been badly presented and must be restudied for Africa; by their linking reception of the sacraments with money missionaries have been put in the same category as Greek merchants; missionaries are invariably cast in the role of men who either have no understanding of or no patience with traditional culture. Of course it should not be forgotten that what we have here is not the point of view of the ordinary, rural African, but rather of the urbanized *évolué*. It is also noteworthy that in novels concerned with city-life missionaries and mission are hardly mentioned. This is sign that there is no significant presence of the church in the urban areas that are moulding the African of the future.

Mwanza (Tanzania)

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