

as arresting as the full-blooded pictures of action, which reach their climax in a great battle when the King, left by his army, 'stood alone like a firm foundation, like a wall of hard stone', rallied his troops, 'bounded like a leopard and leapt like a lion', fighting until his hand 'stuck to his spear by reason of the blood, for he had killed a great number of men; and they loosed his hand by force and took the spear from it'.

The emphasis of the chronicle is naturally upon the valour of its hero, and in soldiers' songs of the late sixteenth century (four of which are also here translated) 'Amda Seyon is still remembered as the creator and protector of the frontiers:

'Who is left at the frontier?

Whose face have you not disfigured?

Whose wife and child have you not captured?'

Courage and tenacity in warfare have played by no means an inconsiderable part in the survival and persistence of Christianity in Ethiopia; yet the deep hold that the Faith has on the lives of the people is due at least as much

to the piety and aspirations of its Saints and priestly leaders, summed up here in the final words of the author:

'As for me, miserable sinner that I am, who wrote this book, do not forget me in your prayers (O my readers). May God lengthen your days, both great and small. May He bring safety and peace to your country. May He give your king power over his enemies. May He endue your Governors with wise counsels. May He hear the prayers of your patriarch whenever he performs his duties for you. May He give purity to your priests, patience to your monks, glory to your old men, old age to your infants, strength to your men, honour and faith to your women. May He provide a firm foundation for your churches, abundance in your treasures and protection for your flocks, through the prayers of our Lady Mary the Mother of God, through the prayers of the angels and archangels strong and renowned, and in the names and through the prayers of all the holy martyrs, world without end. Amen.'

RICHARD GRAY

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN MODERN AFRICA, A Pastoral Theology, by J. Mullin. *G. Chapman*, 1965, 256 pp., 30s.

This book has been written as a pastoral guide for priests in Africa, and in that capacity one can be grateful for it. Most of it may seem rather obvious when put in black and white: but anyway it is obvious sense, rather than obvious nonsense, and priests do need a reliable guide to help them in their varied tasks. Doubtless there are similar manuals for other lands and their adaptation to African conditions in this one – so far as it goes – will render its use there preferable. However, when going beyond the level of 'It is recommended to leave the door ajar when hearing the confession of a sick woman', or 'The tabernacle should be immovable, i.e. very difficult to move (*moraliter immovibile*) . . .', the author is less satisfactory. The dust cover tells us (what is true) that the task facing the Church in Africa is immense; that she must adapt herself, rethink her work effectively, and the rest. This book is meant to provide a thorough study of all this. In fact for the most part it offers no such thing. The author is so wonderfully cautious. Even little problems, such as which should come first: first confession or first communion? finds him too prudent to commit himself: 'we would

prefer not to comment at all upon this opinion'. Or again: 'Pending guidance from authority, we reserve any comment'. This is hardly the way to set about a profound re-think.

On the subject of institutions he has some pertinent things to say, though why a hospital should be classed as a 'power institution' I do not quite see. He realises that in today's circumstances the pattern of apostolate through the school may well have to be largely abandoned. Elsewhere he more or less comes down against the monstrous practice of refusing the sacraments to those who have not paid up their church tax, but finally hedges. Throughout, the author avoids really serious discussion of almost all the African Church's deepest and most characteristic problems, for example, the failure of so many Christians to marry in church and hence their remaining for years and years without the sacraments. One of the reasons for this situation, to which Mgr Mullin does not even advert, is the prevalence of mixed marriages, which are quite inevitable in the social conditions of many areas but which, as the Church mostly refuses to grant any dispensations, forces thousands of new christians,

married monogamously, out of her communion, and makes all their children technically illegitimate and therefore not admissible to the seminary. The core of Mgr Mullin's contribution to this very grave problem is: 'With regard to mixed marriages, we may recall the words of the Code: *Severissime Ecclesia ubique prohibet.*' Almost everywhere the author misses an appreciation of the real human factors involved. A good example is the section on minor seminaries – institutions of enormous importance in the African Church, but ones where quite obviously something is just failing to click. All we get from the author is the time-honoured stress on chastity and piety, when the real problem is the sheer boredom of young boys expected to undergo years of semi-priestly life before they have had a chance of

realising what is involved or making a free decision.

Perhaps the chief fault in the book lies with the publisher, not the author. If it had been left, as first intended, as a diocesan pastoral guide for African parish priests, it would have been – within its own limits – of value. It is when it is blown up by title and blurb into an original study of church problems, that it is seen to fail so lamentably. The picture on the front, incidentally, seems to illustrate effectively both one of Africa's chief pastoral problems and the character of the book: masses of children are shown going into church but there is hardly an adult in sight. How common that is in Africa, even on a Sunday morning! It is not a problem upon which Mgr Mullin throws much light.

ADRIAN HASTINGS

WITCHCRAFT, EUROPEAN AND AFRICAN, by Geoffrey Parrinder. *Faber, 1963, cloth 25s., paper, 8s. 6d., pp. 215.*

Professor Monica Wilson wrote, 'I see witch beliefs as the standardized nightmares of a group, and I believe that the comparative analysis of such nightmares is not merely an antiquarian exercise but one of the keys to the understanding of society'. Dr Parrinder has provided an overall picture of European beliefs as they emerge in the records of legislation and of witch-trials; a brief statement of such beliefs as they be found in the Bible and the Near East; and a broad selection of anthropological accounts from Africa. That Faber should be able, five years after its first publication, to take over such a book from Penguin is evidence of the wide interest in 'witchcraft' which now exists in this country.

But definitions are necessary. Dr Parrinder adopts the distinction, now general among British anthropologists, between *witchcraft* – the power to harm others by simply willing – and *sorcery* – the use of material means (whether 'magical' or physiologically efficacious) to the same end. As becomes clear in Middleton and Winter's symposium on *Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa*, this distinction is not useful in all African societies; and Dr Parrinder's material suggests that it is no more useful in Europe – at least as it appeared to contemporary chroniclers. Much of what was recorded must surely come under the heading of *sorcery*; and this confusion tends to vitiate the discussion. If European witchcraft was different from

African witchcraft, it is not possible to use the latter to refute Dr Margaret Murray's hypothesis that it was the survival of an earlier religious cult. There is a traditional spirit-initiation cult in Ankole, driven underground by mission and government and practised now at night instead of, as traditionally, in broad daylight. It is not difficult to see how, thus forced into disrepute, it might draw to itself some of the old, less reputable, beliefs and become a cult akin to the legend of European witchcraft.

A further disappointment is the lack of East African material. Middleton and Winter have crept into the bibliography. But Monica Wilson's *Good Company* is not there. Either of these must have modified Dr Parrinder's emphasis on the attribution of witchcraft mainly to women and its consequent interpretation in terms of sex antagonism (Lugbara witches are almost all men. While the Pondo see witchcraft in sexual terms, the Nyakyusa find it in jealousies over cattle). He would have had doubts seeking its origin in kinship stresses; and he could not have written (p. 129), 'most mysterious deaths and diseases were attributed to witches'. In many societies ancestral ghosts were at least as likely to be responsible for the latter; and witchcraft might play no part in kinship (as distinct from affinal) relationships. This is simply to say that it is a mistake to generalise, to speak of 'African beliefs', when