

not a bad book of its own kind, and after all it is unjust to blame Mr Todd for not writing a different sort of book. It will do nobody any harm and if it is read with a realization that

beneath Mr Todd's charity and urbanity lie many profound and excruciating problems it will do a lot of good.

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MISSIONARIES TO YOURSELVES, edited by Aylward Shorter and Eugene Kataza. *Geoffrey Chapman*, London, 1972. 212 pp. £2.50.

If you had been a missionary priest going to East Africa a hundred years ago in order to spread the gospel in this vast unevangelized area one of the first things you would have done would have been to train a catechist. What, you might ask, is a catechist? A hundred years ago he was the local African convert who could do practically everything the priest could do except say mass and hear confessions. Today the catechists spends his time in the following activities: 'Teaching religion or giving instruction; visiting Christians, or the sick, preparing adults for the sacraments; presiding over Sunday Services; collecting church tithes; preparing lessons; keeping registers and reporting regularly to the parish priest'. His role has not changed a great deal; his job grew up in an emergency situation when catechists were a necessity in those pioneering days of the first missions. The question which this book *Missionaries to Yourselves* asks is whether they are still a necessity today. In fact the title of the book is taken from a speech delivered by Pope Paul on his visit to Uganda in 1969. It implies that now the Church in Africa is independent and can evangelize itself, and yet if we examine the list of contributors to this book the majority are still expatriate priests.

The first chapter is an interesting survey of the history of the catechist in East Africa. In it, Frank Nolan, w.f., emphasizes both the indispensable role the catechist played and also the diversity of the forms which it took. The rest of the book consists of essays which reflect on the results of a survey carried out in East Africa on the role of the catechist, his status, his training, his remuneration, etc. A questionnaire was sent out to bishops, priests and catechists and they were asked to give answers to many detailed questions about the role of the catechist. These answers give a fascinating insight into the world of the catechists and their employers. One of the subjects which looms large is money. The catechist is dissatisfied with his pay and so suggestions about how this situation might be remedied were asked for. The answers range from the fairly obvious, 'raise salaries', to the more ingenious, 'loans for sewing machines'.

But a fairly clear picture emerges and the conclusion is that catechists are still very important for the work of the Church.

Many of the essays deal with immediate practical problems. Adrian Hastings' chapter on the theological understanding of the catechists is perhaps the most rewarding. He asks whether catechists exist only because there is a shortage of priests: this seems to be the unconscious assumption of many of those who replied, and he points out that it would seem to be a dangerous form of clericalism. But the Church in East Africa does seem to be tied too closely to an inflexible approach to the ministry. The role of the catechist needs to be examined together with the role of the priest; both must be seen in terms of the needs of the local church which they serve. It was an early emergency situation which deprived many communities of a regular celebration of the eucharist, but today this seems to be accepted as normal. If the local communities are really going to be centred on a regular weekly or even daily celebration of the eucharist then it will be necessary first to recognize the catechist as having a ministry in his own right, and not as a substitute priest. This, in turn, would involve 'not merely the upgrading of catechists in training and competence but the qualitative change of at least some of them from being non-eucharistic ministers to being eucharistic ones'.

This collection of essays should be of great interest to anyone in the Church in East Africa, but it can also offer help to other Churches in two respects. First, it offers an example of a very professional approach to a particular problem. It carried out a detailed survey (with all the latest IBM equipment) so that changes could be based on real information and not on just guess-work. The same example might be followed in this country on such a topic as Catholic education. Secondly, it does offer some suggestions for a new pattern of Catholic ministry in a society with rather few professional, full-time presbyters. It might be useful reading, therefore, for many a promoter of vocations.

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