

process and recent changes in papal instructions. He then outlines landmark features from papal elections of the past two centuries and the lessons one can draw from them. One chapter deals with the election of Karol Wojtyła and his pontificate as John Paul II, particularly in relation to the Second Vatican Council and certain key encyclicals.

By far the most intriguing sections of the book are Hebblethwaite's speculations about who is or is not *papabile* and why. Readers will be surprised, pleased, and worried by the candidates put forth. He also examines the issues that will most likely influence the next conclave's decisions, including the cardinals' nationalities, the alienation of theologians, and the ordination of women.

The result is an engaging and informative account of the mystery-shrouded process in which some 120 cardinals, literally sealed off from the rest of the world, will elect the 265th pontiff.

Whether such a study is premature or not is debatable. Yet thinking Roman Catholics and millions of others ought to be considering the directions that the Roman Catholic Church could take in the third millennium. Hebblethwaite states: "A conclave is a moment of freedom, a chance for the church to make a fresh start" (172). Reading this book should assist one in facing, discussing, and evaluating the next papal election more knowledgeably.

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Isichei, Elizabeth. *A History of Christianity in Africa*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; London: SPCK, 1995. xl + 410 pp. Paper, \$19.90.

This new book on the history of Christianity in Africa is a remarkable achievement. In just over 400 pages the author succeeds in giving a well-organized, well-researched, and well-written account of the history of Christianity on the entire African continent, from antiquity to the present. The material is presented chronologically and regionally. The first chapter sketches the birth and development of the church in North Africa, Egypt, Nubia, and Ethiopia, and the near-eclipse of the church in the Maghrib. Except for Egypt and Ethiopia, it was not until ca. 1500 that any further African church history can be reported. Thus the second chapter deals with the "Churches of the Middle Years" and covers the period of 1500-1800, while the third chapter describes the outburst of missionary activity in the nineteenth century. This is followed by a few chapters which, in more detail, sketch the developments in Southern Africa, East and East-Central Africa, and West Africa until ca. 1900. Chapters 7 and 8 focus on West-Central Africa and North Africa, but take the reader beyond the *terminus ad quem* of the preceding chapters to more recent times. Chapters 9, 10, and 11 bring the reader back to Southern Africa, East and East-Central Africa, and West Africa and cover the 1900-1960 period. This is followed by a final chapter about post-1960 developments. The thirteen maps are extremely helpful.

Most African church history has been written by non-Africans and has tended to emphasize the role of mission organizations and mission churches. Having lived and worked in different regions of Africa for 16 years, Elizabeth Isichei has by and large succeeded in avoiding this unfortunate bias. Her observations about

missionary achievements, and also about the shortcomings of many missionary endeavors, give praise where praise is due, but also remind us of some missionary methods and philosophies which in retrospect are cause for embarrassment rather than pride. Quite correctly the book emphasizes the enormously important role of African evangelists or "missionaries."

If any part of the book must be singled out for its superb quality, it is possibly the treatment of the post-1948 period in South Africa (chap. 11).

No doubt the author has tried hard to maintain a balance in her treatment of the various periods, the different regions, and the large number of organizations, churches, and currents. That she has not fully succeeded could only be expected, considering the complexity of the topic. Nonetheless, I venture to suggest that the earliest phase of African Christianity should perhaps have been dealt with a little more extensively. Also, I feel that some areas (Nigeria, East Africa) have received more than a fair share of attention, whereas the Francophone and Lusophone areas have been underreported. The same is true for the work of the church in the large cities.

The author is to be commended for the even-handed treatment of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, and for the attention she has given to "African" Christianity as manifested in the independent churches. But when referring to the spread of Protestant Christianity over the African continent, she has not shown the same impartiality: the traditional ("mainline") churches and their mission outreach receive the bulk of her attention, while other Protestant mission organizations and churches are mostly only mentioned in passing (if at all). And where they are mentioned, there is at times some confusion on the part of the author. How else would one explain the greater attention for the role of the Plymouth Brethren and the Watchtower Society, than, for example, for the Seventh-day Adventists and the Pentecostals? And to classify the Wycliffe Bible Translators among the "extreme right wing" of Protestantism is clearly an injustice (336). It might also be added in this connection that the reference to the influence of the American "New Religious Right" on the African Continent betrays a lack of familiarity with the American religious scene (335ff).

A History of Christianity in Africa offers a wealth of information. One could argue, however, that the reader would not have lost much if fewer facts and names had been mentioned, and a number of themes had been more fully developed. Some fascinating questions remain unanswered. Just to mention three of these: 1. How must it be explained that Christianity disappeared from the Maghrib and Nubia, while persisting in Egypt and Ethiopia? Recently this problem has received considerable attention from missiologists, and a somewhat detailed answer to this question would have been welcome. 2. The book repeatedly points out that African women have been much more open to the Christian message than African men. Why is this the case? The problem is stated but no attempt is made to answer it. 3. Christianity has been extremely successful in Africa. Often it has been suggested that the traditional African religions provided the fertile soil in which the Christian plant could grow. Unfortunately, once again the author does not attempt any explanation.

Although the text of the book is enriched by many endnotes, a separate bibliography would have been helpful. It is clear that Elizabeth Isichei is

acquainted with most relevant literature. At times one may wonder why a particular source has not been referred to. One such example is her failure to mention the outstanding (published) dissertation about the life and work of Jacobus Capitein (David Nii Anum Kpobi, *Mission in Chains*. Zoetermeer, 1993), when she briefly discusses the fascinating life story of this 18th-century Dutch-trained Ghanaian theologian. Much more mysterious is the fact that she only once refers to Adrian Hastings' works on the history of the church in Africa. His recent masterpiece (*The Church in Africa, 1450-1950*; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) was probably too late to have been incorporated in Mrs. Isichei's research, but that was certainly not the case with his earlier work (*A History of African Christianity, 1950-1975*; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

However, in spite of some weaknesses, *A History of Christianity in Africa* is an excellent book and is to be highly recommended, not only for readers who want to be initiated into the subject, but also for those who already have a solid background in this area.

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Kern, Kathleen. *We Are the Pharisees*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1995. 160 pp.. Paper, \$9.95.

Kathleen Kern proposes to do two things in this small volume. Initially she intended to alert the reader that the Pharisees "had gotten a bad rap historically" (11), and that Jesus' criticisms of that group are in reality criticisms of us. Ultimately, she hopes the book will facilitate better relations between Christians and Jews.

In chapter 1, "We are the Pharisees," she proposes five reasons why we need a better understanding of the Pharisees. First, by studying centuries of Jewish culture before the time of Jesus, we understand more clearly how the New Testament came into being, and thus grasp God's revelation in it. Second, all Pharisees are not alike. Not all are guilty of our stereotypical rigidity, legalism, self-righteousness, and pride. Third, the harsh words of Jesus are not only relevant to a Jewish sect of the first century, but also to us. Fourth, the words of Jesus have been used as anti-Semitic propaganda to hurt and destroy, instead of to help and empower others. And fifth, historic Anabaptist churches can find in their own history parallels to the Pharisees that can help them be more loving and humane in dealing with Jews.

The next six chapters flesh out the above reasons. Chapters 2 through 4 are historical or biblical; chapters 5 through 7 focus on application. In the first of the historical chapters, "First-Century Palestine," a birds-eye view of the background of the Pharisees within Judaism is given. The next two chapters analyze the biblical portrayal of the Pharisees. Chapter 3, "The Overlooked Pharisees," constitutes a positive look at them, while Chapter 4 studies "Negative Accounts of Pharisees in the Gospels."

Chapter 5 sets forth "How Jesus' Critique of the Pharisees Applies to Us." In this chapter, Kern admits that the comparisons between Jesus' accusations against