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Transformation of Church, edited by Cariño

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TRANSFORMATION OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY. (Vol. VI, No. 2 of TUGON). Edited by Feliciano V. Cariño. Quezon City: National Council of Churches in the Philippines. vi, 141 pages.

Unusual as it may be to do a 'book' review of an issue of a periodical, what recommends this number of *Tugon* for review is the fact that it is a special issue. Its contents bracket the February 1986 revolution in the Philippines. The first part is, in the words of the editor (p. v), "the official report, the presentations, and proposals of the Ecumenical Theological Commission on the Transformation of Church and Society which was convened by the National Council of Churches in the Philippines early this year." While the precise dates of the consultation are not given, it was in January or early February of 1986—before the participants, or anyone else, had the faintest suspicion of the tidal wave soon to swamp the Marcos regime. Since the reports and speeches appear to be printed just as they were then given, this first part (pp. 1-74) speaks in an accent which is peculiarly remote and dated today. The specter of the Marcos dictatorship haunts virtually every page, and the primary concern is the role and responsibility of the Churches in opposing it.

What contemporary relevance does the editor see in this prerevolution consultation? As he admits: "Within a few months, the situation changed so drastically, and what was almost considered the permanent political fixture of the 'Marcos presidency' was gone" (p. v). We are told, however, that it is "instructive that the issues raised at the theological consultation and the analytical perspectives that were enunciated be seen in the light of subsequent developments. 'The Transformation of Church and Society' is, after all, the adopted theme of the National Council's existence and programmatic work in the coming years ahead. . . . The 'transformation of Church and society' in other words remains an urgent theme to which the Churches must address themselves even after 'people's power' has come to the fore. . . ." (p. v).

This is a valid point, one that has been made by many reflective Filipinos. And yet I feel that the present volume fails to perform the task intended for it. To begin with, I have quoted extensively from Cariño's, one- page editorial introduction because it is the only place where any attempt is made to synthesize the two parts of the book. As noted above, the consultation proceedings are simply presented as originally delivered. And the second part of the volume (pp. 77-122), entitled "People's Power, the February Uprising and the Church," makes no reference, as far as I could tell, to the documents in the first part. The first two articles in part 2 are by the editor, Feliciano V. Cariño, a member of the UCCP who teaches ethics at the Philippine Christian University. The second of these was written "after a month of the Aquino presidency" (p. 87), whereas the first seems to have been composed even closer to the event. They do raise some good and challeng-

ing questions for the new regime—but there are signs that the second article is just a reworking and extension of the first. For example, the same Doronila quote from the *Manila Times* of 26 February 1986 appears in the same context, on page 80 (2.4.3) and on page 87 (1.2.6). Also 4.1.1 on page 83 is recast as 2.1 on page 87. It is hard to see why the first draft was included in this volume. Furthermore, despite the title of the second article (“Some Notes and Reflections on the Political Context of the Church’s Mission”), the Church only appears on page 90, almost two-thirds of the way through the article.

The remaining contributions in part 2 are a mixed bag of the philosophical, the journalistic and the hortatory. Most come from the first six weeks after the February revolution, although there is a Pentecost sermon (for the silver jubilee of six I.C.M. sisters) of Bishop Julio X. Labayan, O.C.D, of Infanta, Quezon. There is also a reprint of an article from the 2-9 July 1986 issue of *The Christian Century*, by Audrey C. Smock (who appears as Audrey Chapman on the back cover) and Jay Lintner. The last-mentioned article, “The Church in the Philippines: Will it Complete its Transformation into a Church of the Poor?,” was one which I found most helpful—perhaps because it was written long enough after the event to provide some perspective and analytical depth.

Also valuable is an article in the first part entitled “Commitment to a Glorious Vision,” by Johnny V. Gumban (pp. 25-31). Dr. Gumban, a Baptist, is chairperson of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines. His article—actually the keynote address of the prerevolution consultation—is a refreshing antidote to the Marxist terminology (jargon?) of several other entries, and to the less frequent apolitical fundamentalism of a few. Dr. Gumban speaks with the voice of Christ in a polarized religious situation, a voice which is just as relevant today as it was in early 1986.

Thus there are treasures to be found in this volume. And it is fascinating and instructive to see the various Christian traditions in dialogue concerning the crucial issues of these critical times. As stated earlier, however, the whole volume lacks integration and critical focus. It will be of value to NCCP members seeking documentation of their earlier dialogues. And it may provide raw material for some future historian of the Church in the late Marcos and early post-Marcos era. But as it stands it remains undigested. The work of synthesis and evaluation remains to be done.

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