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Contemporary Perspective of the Bible: Mission and Change

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He is far and away the most vital of the factors of production. The idea of "investment in human resources" is by no means new. Myrdal can be credited with giving it a fresh emphasis and a deeper comprehension.

A final word needs to be said about the depressing impact of the book. The melancholy tone of its subtitle — an obvious twist of Adam Smith's title — continues to reverberate in the conclusions the reader forms as he works his way through *Asian Drama*. Just as the poor have learned to live with poverty and have grown used to it, so must we all. For fully ninety per cent of Filipinos, though in widely differing degrees, it is normal. It is all they have ever known, all they will ever know. Its roots are so deep and sturdy that we have to acknowledge realistically that it won't come out like a loose tooth. Poverty is a scandal and an offense where there is a practical alternative to it, where poverty is unnecessary, contrived, man-made. Some of it is, to be sure, but not that much. We simply lack the power to produce enough to support in comfort people who are multiplying so fast as to double in twenty years. This is not to be blamed on the rich or the landlords or the hierarchy — not even on the politicians. It would be madness to react to chronic poverty as we do to a crisis, with panic and frantic actions; yet we are not allowed to relax our efforts to conquer it. Myrdal offers us a piece of sage advice. Be more concerned over nutrition, health and schooling than over squatter-settlements and shanty-towns. These are bad, admittedly; but hunger and ignorance are worse. To serve your fellow man wisely and well, teach him. Better still, teach his teachers and guides.

MICHAEL MCPHELIN

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE OF THE BIBLE

MISSION AND CHANGE, by Emerito P. Nacpil Ph.D. Manila: The East Asia Christian Conference, 1968. IV, 142 pp.

After reading this book of Bible studies published by the East Asia Christian Conference for use among its member churches, I can say that I fully agree with the words written in the Foreword by D.T. Niles, Chairman of the same Conference: "Dr. Nacpil teaches in the Union Theological Seminary in Manila and is one of the most forceful younger theologians in Asia. His book will commend itself by its own intrinsic merit."

In the Preface, the author explains that the material published in this volume consists of Bible study lectures which he gave in Galveston, Texas, in 1968, about the topic: How God effects change in

the history of his people. Actually the book contains seven Biblical lectures, the first three about a theme taken from the Old Testament, the last four about New Testamentary topics. The seven topics form together a unity; they focus on God's activity in history, bringing about change for the sake of mission.

The author starts from the story of Abraham's calling out of Ur. Here God reveals himself as a God who calls man. He calls us out of our tribal solidarities, out of the tyranny of custom, to some unknown future. Thus the attitude of the one answering God's call, the attitude of the believer, is shown to be an orientation towards the future, a pilgrimage between promise and fulfillment.

The next two lectures present a commentary on Jeremiah 29, 1-14 and on Isaiah 43 and 49, and illustrate how God effects change by his work of demolition and rebuilding, by redemption and restoration. The history of Israel teaches us that God's calling is not just a personal privilege, but aims at involvement and mission. Through Israel God wants to change the nations.

In the New Testamentary section the author sets out from the Resurrection. He shows very well that mission follows inevitably from the Resurrection in the sense that it is the action by which the Risen One reveals himself historically to the world, as Lord. The next great founding act of mission is Pentecost, the outpouring of the Spirit of Christ. God is present in the Church and moves her toward encounter with the world, to give witness. The Church is structured toward that purpose. The author goes shortly through the various stages of this mission as indicated in the Acts: Jerusalem, Samaria, Galilee, the ends of the world. At present we are still in this last stage.

Chapter 6, "No longer a slave but a Son," explains that the gospel brings about a change in the status of man. Under the Law, under the sovereignty of cosmic deities, man was a slave. But Christ frees us from this slavery and gives us the freedom of sons, the world being our heredity. Here the connection between mission and secularization is treated.

In the last chapter the author concludes that from a religious city, passing through the stage of the secular city, we are moving toward the Holy City, which will come from heaven as a grace. We must clear the grounds for its coming; we must prepare ourselves for it by expectation.

This book is a solid Biblical work. It contains quite a few remarkable and beautiful pages. The author is well informed about modern bibliography, and refers frequently to authors like Pennenberg, Bornkamm, Hahn, Käsemann, Ebeling and Bonhoeffer. It is not a work of Biblical Theology in the usual sense of the word.

The author indicates first the theological meaning of a certain passage, and applies it then to some contemporary problem, and he shows himself a master in this procedure.

Though we notice, of course, here and there the accent of our Protestant Brother, I must say that as a catholic I can fully agree with all that is positively said, and I have no hesitation in recommending the book fervently also to the catholic reader. A very modern and inspiring book on our mission as christians in the world.

J. BOVENMARS, MSC

THE O.T. EXODUS: A CULTIC APPROACH

THE GOD OF EXODUS, by James Plastaras, C.M. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1966. ix, 342 pp.

Israel was a people with a unique religion which has perdured in so many essentials for three millennia and which is still at the basis of the modern Judaeo-Christian world view. But Israel is wholly incomprehensible without the historical and religious events that brought her into existence: the remarkable escape from oppression in Egypt by the unknown God Yahweh, and the covenant made at Sinai with Yahweh that formed the group of slaves into a people. For over a thousand years the same people relived that initial experience with this merciful and saving God in liturgical celebrations. Israel's continuance as a people depended directly on the original exodus events as they were reenacted and reexperienced in cultic rites.

It is surprising, therefore, that no work has appeared in English dealing in a popular way with these important historical and liturgical events narrated in the biblical Book of Exodus. This theological study on the God of Exodus and His people of Israel fills a real need in the Old Testament field. Teachers of theology and the general reader as well can indeed be grateful to Fr. Plastaras for a lucidly written and thoroughly modern approach to a fundamental OT book. The author has succeeded admirably in presenting the results of the latest scholarship in a semi-popular work; his frequently bibliographical references will help those interested in more detailed treatment of the questions raised.

This is not a complete commentary on the Books of Exodus and Numbers, but it does treat the high points in the narratives of Israel's passage from Egypt to the Promised Land, and develops the