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Going Forth

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The seven appendices at the end of the book—Key World Events (1945-1969), Key World and Asian Events (1970-1982), Other Events related to Asian Social Protest (1965-1982); Asian National and National Christian Populations Circa 1980; Distribution of Roman Catholics and Other Christians Circa 1980; Relative Institutionalization of Catholicism in Asian Nations; and Notion of Transnational Relations—provides invaluable data and figures for any researcher and student of Asian Christianity. The book also contains a representative bibliography and an author-subject index. This scientific, scholarly, perceptive, insightful, analytical and interpretative study by a highly competent social scientist and historian is highly recommended to all Christian Church leaders and to all rank and file educated Christians who belong to the social protest movement in the Philippines.

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GOING FORTH: MISSIONARY CONSCIOUSNESS IN THIRD WORLD CATHOLIC CHURCHES. By Omer Degrijse, C.I.C.M. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1984. xi, 98 pages.

A major event for Asia and for the Philippines was the International Congress on Mission (ICM) in Manila, 2-7 December 1979 at which the final message contains the following significant words quoted by the author of this book (p. 41):

“Mission” is no longer, and can no longer be, a one-way movement from the “older churches” to the “younger churches,” from the churches of the old Christendom to the churches in the colonial lands. Now—as Vatican II already affirmed with all clarity and force—every local church is and cannot but be missionary. Every local Church is “sent” by Christ and the Father to bring the gospel to its surrounding milieu, and to bear it also to all the world. For every local church this is a primary task. Hence, we are moving beyond the vocabulary and the idea of “sending” and “receiving churches,” . . . *every local church must be a sending church* (Italics supplied).

These final words of the ICM sums up the central thesis of Omer Degrijse’s well-documented book on the emergence and evolution of missionary consciousness in the Catholic churches of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The author collects all the available facts and statistical and documentary evidence to date to show that “the center of gravity within the church is moving very quickly from the Western churches to the churches of the South and the

East—that is, to the third church, to the churches of the poor nations” (p. 12). The Church’s missionary activity which has been the monopoly of the First World Church has now become the primary commitment and task of the Church in the Third World.

A new understanding of mission (ch. 1) came about from many historical and doctrinal influences, the major ones of which are Vatican II and the 1974 synod of bishops on “Evangelization in the Modern World” as well as the growing missionary consciousness of the episcopal conferences. Degrijse, in this chapter (as well as in ch. 2-4) does a service by collecting from many sources all the data and statistics to show the growth of both Third Church diocesan clergy and religious whose institutions are committed to mission.

Ch. 2 to 4 follow more or less the same format of presentation and provide both a general (regional) and particular (by countries) survey of the rise of missionary consciousness in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Of particular interest to the Philippine reader is the short section on the Philippine Church which gives prominence to the 800 Filipino missionaries (1982 figures) and the contribution of the ICM to the new theology of mission.

As professor of Missiology at the Catholic University of Louvain and National Director of the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies in his native Belgium, Degrijse is highly competent to give an objective interpretation of the facts and data surveyed in each of the three regions of the Third Church. In the last and most important chapter of the book, he sums up his valuable findings and the consequences of this novel phenomenon of missionary consciousness of the Third Church for *evangelization* which is the new name for mission, for evangelizers (missionaries), and evangelizing (mission) institutes.

To mention a few of Degrijse’s final considerations: among the advantages of Third World evangelization is the process of decolonization and de-westernization of the Christian Gospel. In the past, Western missionaries have “transplanted a Western church model, liturgy, catechesis, morality and pastoral methods” (p. 74). Today, inculturation, indigenization, contextualization of the Gospel from within each culture is an indispensable element of evangelization. Up to now Western missionaries “are not sufficiently aware of leaving a strongly secularized and desacralized world to move into a deeply religious society in which religion, culture, and everyday life are closely integrated (p. 75). As a consequence the “religion of the people” or “popular Christianity” was neglected, if not considered fatalistic and superstitious. But today Christian elements in “popular religiosity” are being rediscovered, purified, and enriched by the Christian faith. Most of the Third World peoples are poor, oppressed, exploited, and marginalized. “Yet we observe that among the clergy of Third World countries there is often a great difference between declarations of poverty and the practice of poverty” (p. 76). Third World missionaries “should be inclined to be not only “for” and “with” the poor, but to live “as” the poor and to commit themselves

to social justice for them" (p. 76). The author selects a few witnesses from the Third World to drive home the point that a "church for the poor" in the midst of massive poverty, a "prophetic church" in the face of grave social injustice, call for "religious of the poor" (p. 77). Where else will these evangelizers come from, if not from the Third Church? These are some of the author's bold conclusions.

In the view of Degrijse a deepened and renewed vision of evangelization demands a mutual contribution of all cultures and religions of each continent to the Christian faith, a mutual process of "giving" and "receiving" between the old First World "older churches" and the Third World "younger churches" because universality, solidarity, and reciprocity have become inseparable dimensions of inter-church transnational relations. Although the author is strongly in favor of the continuation of international and local mission institutes and the internationalization of their mission personnel, he does not fail to come to grips with the nagging question: if we have reached a turning point in the mission history of the Third World, will there still be need for foreign missionaries? Will evangelization by established churches still be necessary? Degrijse's answer, of course, is that evangelization is the vocation of the whole people of God. "Every local church must be missionary if it intends to be a true church" (p. 89). Hence, it remains the responsibility of the missionary institutes "to safeguard or to reawaken the missionary consciousness of the Western churches" (p. 89), which at all cost must remain missionary not only within but outside one's native country.

Inasmuch as all Christians and in particular Filipino Christians are "sent" to "GO FORTH" and be evangelizers of the Good News of Jesus Christ especially in Asia, they will find this book informative and inspiring. Although the author limited his survey to *Catholic* missionary consciousness, he recognizes the great missionary consciousness and contribution of other Christians especially the Evangelical and Anglican young churches (p. x) to the spread of the Christian Gospel. Hopefully, they too, will find this book profitable reading.

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THE BALD MOUNTAINS AND OTHER STORIES. By Godofredo M. Roperos. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1984. 105 pp.

The stories in Godofredo Roperos' collection are centripetally arranged to unwind a variety of themes which are framed by his rustic experiences. His technique blends the sentimental, the imaginative and the tragic with cathar-