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## **Faith for the Unbeliever: Abraham, Father of Believers**

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## FAITH FOR THE UNBELIEVER

ABRAHAM, FATHER OF BELIEVERS. By Angel Gonzalez. Translated by Robert J. Olsen. New York: Herder and Herder, 1967. 157 pp.

In this age of renewal there is no dearth of books as authors pour out their ideas on problems and facts in every field of biblical studies, liturgy, systematic, ecumenical and pastoral theology. Today scientific and popular books attempting to illuminate the background of the Bible and to clarify the message intended by the human, and thus also the divine, author, are in abundance. Introductions to the Bible, dictionaries, atlas and histories, commentaries in pamphlet form and in huge volumes, new annotated translations are all welcome and indispensable aids for an effective biblical renewal. But the people of God also need books that highlight the enduring religious values and present relevance of the biblical message.

The Fathers of Vatican II had such works in mind when in the final climactic chapter in the Constitution on Divine Revelation they exhorted exegetes and others to devote their energies "to an exploration and exposition of the divine writings." In this way many would be able "effectively to provide the nourishment of the Scriptures for the people of God, thereby enlightening their minds, strengthening their wills, and setting men's hearts on fire with the love of God."

The modest but valuable book written by Fr. A. Gonzalez, a Spanish exegete, belongs to this category. It is not intended for those interested in archaeology, history, philosophy, or even exegesis for its own sake, but rather for the religious man, "anyone who believes or has difficulties in believing." Dealing with the great religious themes, "faith and hope, trust and prayer, election and providence, the call to a credo and the ultrasensible significance of life," the author sees them exemplified in the biblical stories of Abraham and develops them with a view to believers who come after Abraham.

Five chapters deal with the call of Abraham, his travels, his wife's maid Hagar, his prayer for the Sodomites and his sacrifice of Isaac, the child of promise. Biblical passages are quoted, generally in the beginning of each essay; the historical and literary background is then briefly reconstructed, as a visual aid and starting point for a deeper reflection on the religious and theological significance; suggestions, more often than not implicit, link Abraham with the believer. The leitmotif of the book is faith. The stories about Abraham derive their religious vigor — and their relevance — from the confession of faith, implicit in the ancient author's account, before peo-

Frisbie Hoar, who led the fight both before the American public and in the halls of the American Senate. Finally in January 1902 Hoar was able to goad the chairman of the Philippine Committee of the Senate, Henry Cabot Lodge, into holding hearings on the war in the Philippines, its origin, the way it was being conducted, and above all, the future destiny of the Philippines. Together with a number of ordinary soldiers and other lesser figures, General Ewell S. Otis, Admiral George Dewey, General Arthur MacArthur, and Governor William Howard Taft were interrogated at length and in detail.

The book under review, part of a series entitled: "Testimony of the Times: Selections from Congressional Hearings," reproduces selections from the transcripts of these hearings, which lasted from January to June 1902, grouping them under four headings or topics. These are: 1. *Was there a Deal with Aguinaldo?* 2. *Independence or What?* 3. *Counter-Insurgency*; 4. *The Filipinos: Their Capacity for Nation-Building*. The transcripts are preceded by a short introduction by Henry F. Graff, and followed by a brief epilogue, apparently intended to make these selections usable by college history students as a means of introducing them into the sources.

Though scholars will no doubt wish to go to the original reports of the hearings for the complete text, the selection of testimonies recorded seems to be a reasonably representative one, and provides a handy collection of contemporary opinions and facts (as seen by the principals involved) of the events dealt with. An intelligent reader will get an insight into how the narrow perspectives which circumscribed the uprightness and sincerity of Otis involved him in what may have been unnecessary friction with many parties, Filipino and American, even apart from military necessity. Conversely, though the modern reader may be somewhat cynically amused or annoyed by the messianic complex of MacArthur as to the civilizing mission of the American nation, he will be able to see why MacArthur was more successful in dealing with Filipino leaders on the personal level than was his predecessor. In this reviewer's opinion, it is Taft who emerges well above any of his contemporaries in his statesmanlike stature in dealing with the problems of an American colonial venture he had originally opposed. No doubt Taft shared something of the prejudices and even obtuseness of his contemporaries, but he appears here as one imbued with a true respect, affection, and concern for the welfare of the Filipino people.

My only reserve about the book is that a work of this type is of somewhat dubious value for the ordinary college student or general reader for whom it is presumably intended. Without a more thorough knowledge of the events of 1898-1902 in the Philippines

than that supplied by the few pages of introduction, the reader is scarcely in a position to weigh the respective value, or even the real significance, of the testimonies selected here. The issues were passionately-debated ones, and both the questioning senators of both sides and the witnesses themselves were often tendentious in questions and replies. The informed student of the period, however, may find the book a handy compilation for its selected topics. It might have been more useful had page references to the original U.S. Senate publication been given.

JOHN N. SCHUMACHER

## AN ANONYMOUS CHRISTIANITY

THE WIDER ECUMENISM. By Eugene Hillman, C.S.Sp. New York: Herder and Herder, 1968. 159 pp.

This book combines traditional Roman Catholic missiology with a bold theological posture toward men of other faiths. On the one hand, Father Hillman holds to the notion of missions as the church's activity in the non-Western world, while, on the other hand, he believes that "the citizenship of heaven is made up largely from that vast majority of human beings who did not belong juridically to the church on earth" (p. 58).

Affirming Karl Rahner's statement that "grace works for the most part anonymously," Hillman's thesis is that, "Surely then, if grace works for the most part anonymously, and all grace is always and only the same grace of Christ, we may speak of an 'anonymous Christianity,' an authentic life of grace (and not entirely hidden), among those whose historical situation makes it impossible for them to have more than an implicit faith in Christ" (p. 38). "The opportunities [of salvation]," he says, "are commonly, and indeed overwhelmingly, available to all, by reason of the universally victorious and superabounding grace of Christ" (p. 58). The author believes that "Every religion serves God's saving purpose in history... Every religious act is a saving act, in so far as it directs men to a greater love for one another" (p. 71). "The world," he says, "will never be 'more saved' than it is right now. For Jesus is the Lord of all" (p. 124).

Why then the urgency of the Christian world mission, of witnessing to Christ and planting the church among men of other faiths in all the nations? This, of course, is the crucial question, and it is the point at which Father Hillman's study falls short. He believes that everyone is already redeemed (p. 85). Why then the need for