

# philippine studies

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## **Philippine Protestantism on the Pastoral Level: A View: Selected Philippines Sermons**

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Catholic opinion is presented here, namely, that represented by the three Catholic newspapers, together with occasional articles from certain Catholic magazines. Since the three papers used were generally quite critical of the Republican administration, they do not necessarily represent American Catholic opinion as a whole. Nonetheless, since they were vocal, often stridently so, they were of concern to the Republican administration and do provide evidence of considerable efforts, particularly under Roosevelt, to satisfy their complaints.

Though the book proposes to deal directly with American rather than Philippine history, the historian of the Philippines will find brought together here a considerable amount of information, much of it already known, on the American background of Philippine affairs. Nonetheless, the author has not made use of some published works of considerable importance for his subject, notably the biography of Fr. William McKinnon by McDevitt [cf. *PS*, 9 (1961), 194-197]; and the articles by Farrell on the background of the Taft mission to Rome on the Friar question [*Catholic Historical Review*, 1950-1951].

The author's lack of direct familiarity with Philippine history is frequently evident in the misspellings of Philippine personal and place names, and a considerable number of minor errors of fact. These are in part due to the use of such inaccurate compilations from the early years of the American occupation as the *Report* of the Schurman Commission, but more often result from the author's misinterpretation of such works, quite distorting their meaning in his effort to summarize.

The book then will be of real, but somewhat limited, usefulness for the American background of Philippine history. Its treatment of events in the Philippines cannot be recommended, and this failure is one of the limits to its value even for American history.

JOHN N. SCHUMACHER, S.J.

## PHILIPPINE PROTESTANTISM ON THE PASTORAL LEVEL:

### A VIEW

SELECTED PHILIPPINE SERMONS. (Christian Leaders' Series, no. 6). Published by the National Council of Churches in the Philippines for Union Theological Seminary, 1967. vi, 110 pp.

The eleven sermons included in this small volume have been collected and published "to provide a record of the place and direction

of preaching among Protestants after sixty-eight years of Protestant history in the Philippines, and also to encourage a new emphasis and urgency in the preaching of God's Word." The collection includes sermons from preachers in the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, The Methodist Church, and the Philippine Episcopal Church.

The sermons presented here have been preached on various occasions and to different types of congregations, and therefore deal with many different topics in their efforts to expound the Word of God. Nonetheless, one is conscious in reading the book of the recurring theme that it is not sufficient to worship God faithfully to be a true Christian. Rather to receive the Word of God necessarily implies the expression of our Christian faith in love for our fellow-men, a love to be expressed not merely in personal acts of charity, but in service of our people and work for the nation as a whole.

The second feature common to almost all of the sermons is their endeavor to make the Word of God immediately relevant to the life of a Christian living in the Philippines today. There is a conscious effort not only to illustrate the teaching of Scripture with examples taken from daily life, but likewise to show how Christ's teaching must be carried out by a Filipino Christian facing the problems of today's society. To be sure, not all are equally successful in this regard, and there are a few instances of what this reviewer would consider to be over-technical exegesis of Scriptural passages, or of technical theological language, but these are rather exceptional in the collection as a whole.

The Roman Catholic reader of this collection cannot help but be struck by the realization that in the sermons strictly so-called (one is a message to a Protestant missionary conference rather than a sermon), there is not a sentence or even a phrase which could not have been preached from a Catholic pulpit. The only hint that a Roman Catholic listening to these sermons would have that he was not hearing a sermon by a priest of his own Church might be the names of Protestant authors who are cited in the sermons, and even among these, we find a quote from Pope John XXIII. It is difficult to say just how typical the sermons presented here are of Protestant preaching in the Philippines, even within the churches represented here. For it should be noted that almost all of the preachers are seminary professors or hold high positions in their churches. Nonetheless, if they are in any way typical by their content and doctrine, it is a fact of considerable ecumenical importance for the dialogue between our churches here. It has been the experience of this reviewer in theological discussions carried on with Protestant theologians that though our discussions at times reveal certain theological differences which

seem irreducible, on the practical, pastoral level, the differences very frequently disappear. In other words, though one should not deny the real theological differences which do exist, it is important to realize that the message of Christ which is being preached in Protestant and Roman churches is more one and the same than one might think by examining the theological manuals and the technical theological statements of the confessions. Surely the agreement in preaching God's Word which exists in the churches is far more important than the differences in its technical explanation by theologians, and perhaps the latter needs to be further re-examined in the light of the real practical unity which is shown to exist. The Roman Catholic who reads this small volume will be made conscious of the extent of that unity.

JOHN N. SCHUMACHER, S.J.