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The American Revolution: Its Meaning To Asians and Americans

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THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION: ITS MEANING TO ASIANS AND AMERICANS. Edited by Cedric B. Cowing, Honolulu, Hawaii: East-West Center, 1977, x, 334 pages.

In 1776, American colonials declared their independence from oppressive British imperial rule. Using words with electrifying effect, they affirmed their right to enjoy self-government, virtually plagiarizing John Locke as they proclaimed it was their inherent right to overthrow a government which did not promote their welfare, did not satisfy their felt needs, and did not protect their individual liberties. Moreover they sincerely believed it was their moral duty to institute a new form of government which guaranteed the promotion of their welfare, the satisfaction of their felt needs, and the protection of their individual liberties. After a protracted and bloody anticolonial war for emancipation from British imperialism, followed by a brief but critical period characterized by political instability under a loosely-structured confederation system, the American colonials wrote and adopted a constitution enshrining lofty democratic ideals which more or less guided for the next 200 years the American republic, firmly established with the ratification by 1789 of the new nation's fundamental law. Despite American involvement in culturally insidious imperial ventures late in the nineteenth century and in neocolonial enterprises during the present century, Americans claim they continue to be guided by the elevated principles of justice, equality, and representative government enunciated by their Founding Fathers.

In 1976, two centuries after the momentous declaration of independence, the Americans staged a lavish as well as a colorful commemorative nationwide observance of the event which launched and propelled them to full nationhood. In keeping with this bicentennial celebration, even if sedately, the East-West Center and the University of Hawaii jointly sponsored an international conference held in Honolulu from 28 June to 1 July 1976. The organizers of the gathering selected the topic, "The American Revolution: The Meaning to Asians and Americans," as the theme of the conference. A small but apparently high-caliber group of Asian and American scholars participated in the conference at the invitation of its steering committee. Each participant presented a working paper for the discussion periods during the plenary sessions. The topics were naturally assigned to the participants beforehand so they could write about them respectively, thus ensuring that the conference would run smoothly.

This book, published under the editorship of Cedric B. Cowing of the history faculty of the University of Hawaii, constitutes the proceedings of the scholarly meeting. It contains an "Introduction" by Cowing himself, and the following papers: "Asia and the American Revolution," by Richard B. Morris; "Beyond the Neo-Whig Paradigm: Recent Trends in the Historiography of the American Revolution," by Jack P. Green; "The Revolution, Modern-

ization, and Man," by Kenneth Lockridge; "The Asian Dimension in the American Revolutionary Period," by James McCutcheon; "Japanese Interpretations of the American Revolution," by Tadashi Aruga; "Koreans' Education and Understanding of the American Revolution," by Woong Choi; "Influences of the American Revolution in Asia," by Mohammed Chaudhri; "India and the American Revolution," by P.J. Philip; "American Democracy: An Asian Appraisal," by A.F. Salahuddin Ahmed; "Education, Elites and the American Revolution in Malaya," by Kristen Jit; "The Impact of the American Revolution on the Philippines," by Romeo V. Cruz; "Some Influences of America's Past on the Indonesian Independence Movement," by Abdurrachman Surjomihardjo; "Echoes of the American Revolution: The Realization of its Ideals and Goals," by Rolet C.S. Chen; "Echoes of the American Revolution: Thailand as an Asian Case Study," by Thamsook Numnonda; and "From Lexington and Concord to the Imperial Republic and the Imperial Presidency," by Walter Johnson. Each of the articles is preceded by a précis written by the book's editor.

As should be expected in an essay collection of this nature, the quality of the articles included in the volume is uneven in character, ranging from mediocre to superb, or from outrightly deadening to highly absorbing. Moreover, there is a diversity as well as a divergence of opinions expressed on the meaning of the American Revolution to Asians and Americans. There is no question the Revolution holds a deep meaning for Americans regardless of their national actuations yesterday and today. However, on the question of its impact to Asian peoples, the scholars, particularly from Asia, vary in their views. For example, the Malaysian delegate says the impact of the Revolution on Malaya is nil. Sharing the same view, the Pakistani participant asserts that in all of Asia during the nineteenth century, American influence is negligible and that in his own country, Pakistani adherence to American revolutionary ideals did not concretely take place until the early years of the 1970s, and even then in a desultory manner as subsequent events demonstrated.

The participants from India, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines, not to mention Korea and Japan, on the other hand, take the opposite view, at least insofar as the impact of the American Revolution on their respective countries is concerned, although the Korean delegate laments that many Korean students know very little about a country that has influenced Korea so much. Of interest to the Filipino readers of *Philippine Studies* is the paper of Romeo V. Cruz, a Filipino historian connected with the University of the Philippines. In this paper, Cruz develops the thesis that the ideology of the American Revolution influenced simultaneously the self-serving Filipino elite, whose manipulative egoism was congenial to their *cooptation* into the American colonial order established in the Philippines supposedly to mother the Philippine national revolution; and the lower orders of the Filipino society who ironically used the revolutionary ideology of the United States

in opposing American political tutelage over the Philippines and vainly waged a guerrilla struggle to topple the American colonial regime in the Islands and at the same time to institute a system of social and economic equality in the indigenous society. He concludes that the contradictory impact of the American Revolution largely explains the love-hate relationship between the Filipinos and the Americans today.

By and large, the Asian contributors indulged in generalities concerning the meaning and the legacy of the American Revolution to the nations and peoples of Asia. Their facile generalizations amounted to platitudes. In the end, the American impact is really difficult to measure. While many of them found fault with America's imperial ventures, they nevertheless recognize that the democratic ideals espoused by the American Founding Fathers offer the best hope for the salvation of mankind. They admire the ideal of equality and the right to express a dissenting view enjoyed by the Americans (although equality is only for the whites, not for the blacks and the Indians); equality and the right to express dissenting views are worthwhile aspiring for by the Asians in particular.

The most refreshing and stimulating appraisal, because it is the most constructively critical and candid paper, is made by no less than an American scholar, Walter Johnson, whose paper comes at the end of the book. His interpretations differ sharply from the paper of Richard B. Morris, which appears at the beginning of the volume. While Morris takes the position that America is basically anticolonial without ignoring America's colonization of other peoples late in the nineteenth century and her neocolonial manipulations in this century, Johnson on the other hand argues convincingly that America became imperial-minded from the moment of the establishment of the United States as an independent republic. He attributes this imperial-mindedness to the achievement ethic fostered by Calvinism which has exercised such a pervasive influence on American society. This Calvinistic ethic puts into bold relief American efforts to transform the world in accordance with the American model, consequently leading to the crusade to eradicate international communism, and enhancing in the process the powers of the American presidency — referred to as the imperial presidency in an imperial republic — which in turn led the nation to the quagmire that was the Vietnam War and which bred the disgraceful Watergate scandal. Johnson says the Americans must take a hard look at their achievement ethic if they are to succeed in reviving the lofty ideals of the American Revolution and thus restore the credibility of the American nation before the eyes of the world.

Clearly, the book is intended primarily for those who are supposed to have some knowledge of American history and politics. It is not for general readers like the man in the street. Nevertheless, each college library will find it useful to have the book in its book shelves. While the papers were written within the overall framework of the conference theme, the book does not appear

to have deliberately a single thesis to develop because the authors or contributors freely wrote on the topics assigned to them, although the topics are not unrelated to each other. By not having a thesis, the organizers wisely avoided prejudging the outcome of the discussion. However, insofar as the theme is concerned, the book succeeds in shedding light on the attitudes of Asian and American intellectuals toward the American Revolution and what it means to them, even if a few of the papers are utterly unpersuasive and uninteresting from beginning to end.

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DER BETENDE JESUS ALS HEILSMITTLER NACH LUKAS. By Ludger Feldkämper, S.V.D., Veröffentlichungen des Missionspriesterseminars St. Augustin bei Bonn, 29, Steyler Verlag, 1978.

Of late many books and articles have been published on the topic of prayer, presumably because of what was called a "crisis of prayer." Not all these publications have been of the same quality.

It has always been clear that prayer was a central theme in the gospel of Luke. For Luke prayer was a "to be or not to be" question for a Christian. A number of monographs have appeared on the subject of "Prayer in Luke," (e.g. W. Ott and L. Monloubou). It cannot be said, however, that these studies were complete and comprehensive.

Fr. Feldkämper has filled this gap in a superb way. He submitted all the Lukan texts (or at least nearly all!) to a rigorous diachronic and synchronic study. We read his book with a growing admiration for his skill in literary and compositional analysis. We were happy to see how much attention he paid to those Lukan texts in which it is said that Jesus prays, without any direct indication of the content of that prayer. Usually exegetes were content to say that according to Luke Jesus prayed, even spent a whole night in prayer at decisive turning points in His life. Fr. Feldkämper shows how these texts function in the context of Luke's composition. The content and the meaning of Jesus' prayer is drawn from the immediate context and from the wider context of the total work of the third evangelist. Thus Fr. Feldkämper manages to fill in, so to speak, the content of these prayers of Jesus. It becomes clear that Jesus prays as the "Heilsmittler," to use the phrase from the title of the book. Jesus prays as the mediator of salvation, and particularly as the *suffering* mediator of salvation. At the same time he was not only the model of prayer for his followers. He was also He who enabled them to pray, that is, He was the mediator of prayer too.

It would be impossible to discuss in this review in any detail Fr. Feldkämper's exegesis of every single Lukan text about prayer without doing injustice