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Roo: The Mystery

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THE MYSTERY, by William A. Van Roo, S.J. Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1971. VIII, 386 pp.

Any reviewer would be grateful to an author who provides in the introduction to his work useful data for a review of the work itself. Fr. Van Roo is such an author who acquaints his reader with the content, method, and intent of his book.

The Mystery, representing a multi-dimensional consideration after many years of reflection, is about the mystery of man and of human, Christian life. It is about the mystery of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; about the mystery of Jesus Christ, in and through whom man, the Christian, encounters the mystery of the meeting and dialogue between God and man. The setting of the *Mystery* is the history of salvation—the setting of the great events of salvation history against which all these mysteries somehow become intelligible.

The book begins with the story of Abraham, the “beginning of classical salvation history,” traces the principal themes of Old Testament salvation history (Promise, Covenant, People, Yahweh as Savior, His Spirit, Word and Wisdom, Sin and Salvation, etc.), and shows how the Christian finds in Christ the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham.

The Mystery offers the reader a wealth of scriptural material which serves as a base for a biblical-exegetical-theological exposition of various soteriological themes in the Old and the New Testament. In one sense it is an *easy* book to read; yet in another sense, it is a *hard* book to read—easy in the sense that the Christian reader treads on familiar ground, salvation history and salvation themes in Sacred Scripture; but hard in the sense that one is overwhelmed with a consideration of so much biblical data from so many sources that the reader can easily lose the main focus and direction of the work. One can get the impression of plowing through some kind of encyclopedia on salvation history. So vast and so dense is the area covered by this reflection.

The method which the author calls “structural” is successful only to a certain point because in considering a dynamic structure and a developing pattern running through the Israelite and Christian experience of salvation V.R.’s thesis is somewhat obscured by expositions of biblical data which may always be of interest, but do not directly reinforce the impact of the author’s treatment of the *Mystery*.

This book, according to the author, has been written “for any man interested in the phenomenon of man and the mystery of the human person,” but the author cautions that the intelligibility of his approach “will depend on a certain familiarity with the Bible and on personal religious experience.” He likewise suggests that “the subject matter should be accessible to any intelligent reader with enough curiosity to sustain

him in a rather long search for the meaning of human life and its potential." Let this word to the wise be sufficient.

If this work reveals itself as somewhat of a mystery to the reader, one reason may be that it is so immersed in God's saving Word and so concerned about a Reality so rich that only after much sustained reflection can one really appreciate the fullness of this work. But perhaps even an initial encounter with it will prove enriching.

RENATO C. OCAMPO

PHILIPPINES SCHOOL LIBRARIES: Their Organization and Management, by Concordia Sanchez. Manila: MCS Enterprises, 1971. xi, 172 pp.

Philippine librarianship suffers for lack of an adequate home-grown literature, and the book under review supplies valuable applications to the Philippine milieu of the author's knowledge of theory from abroad and of her long experience in library work at home.

As a text for undergraduate classes and as a handy manual for the beginner in the field, this book will be useful. Not least of its values is that on a larger scale it illustrates many of the dilemmas of the library profession in the Philippines today. Presentation of so many clerical operations as part of library management, for example, could well be held against the profession. The situation is, however, that even by college time, many librarians-to-be have not experienced standard library practices. And so, librarianship itself looks like little more than special clerical operations. If in fact, as noted by the author more than once, final authority in selection, disposition and most administrative provisions is reserved to some other official, v.g. the principal, the librarian can be seen only as an underling. Yet the latter must not only be *the* expert on books and the use of books; the school librarian must also know the curriculum, child psychology, teaching methods, advertising, public relations and a host of arts in dealing with faculty, parents, businessmen, students and volunteer workers!

Other dilemmas stare out from the book. The expectation is that each is an expert from the beginning and there are no specializations within librarianship. Librarians do not do enough if they specialize in one line, v.g. readers' counselling; they must be expert in everything. Usually, too, only one librarian is provided, when specialists of several types are essential from the beginning. Again, "standards" in library practice can only be "suggested" and yet everyone knows that even these are not met in practice. This book makes it clear that only the courageous should choose librarianship as their career!