

# philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University · Loyola Heights, Quezon City · 1108 Philippines

---

## **Textbook For Novices: A Synthesis of the Spiritual Life**

Review Article: Kenneth C. Bogart

*Philippine Studies* vol. 10, no. 4 (1962): 717–722

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

---

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at [philstudies@admu.edu.ph](mailto:philstudies@admu.edu.ph).

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>  
Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

the barrios. The road does not cause barrio people to cart their produce out over the road; out over the road go the barrio people instead, and when they come back from town they carry in with them the little luxuries on which they have squandered their pittance. It is equally a mistake to electrify rural areas; the common *tao* does not use electric power to increase production but to increase consumption. And so forth.

Boeke had an even stronger opinion about the sheer futility of measures *imposed from above* for the good of the masses. His sentiments are warmly shared by Jeremias Montemayor, who early pointed to this as the specific defect of the ACCFA and the FACOMAs right here in the Philippines. These institutions did not grow out of the exertions of the people; rather, the people were given them as a bounty from on high. The thing to do is to pick out the economic climbers from among the populace. Concentrate upon selected individuals who are working their way upwards and do not be immediately concerned about the masses. Leave them to a process of social evolution set in motion as a consequence of the aid given to the vigorous, energetic and advanced elements among the people. In time the common peasant will find himself in a position where he can help himself—the one and only mark of a successful program of aid. But it is clear that even this long-term, patient policy takes it for granted that the gap can be bridged.

The Editors expressed the hope that their volume would be "a contribution to the discussion... regarding the type of welfare policy to be followed in socially and economically underdeveloped areas." Life will be kind to them all their hopes are realized so fully.

MICHAEL MCPHELIN

## TEXTBOOK FOR NOVICES

A SYNTHESIS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE. By Dom Wulstan Mork, O.S.B. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1962. x, 283 p.

This work had its origin in outlines given on the occasion of a series of conferences to Benedictine novice mistresses of North America. In its present form it is intended primarily as a textbook for novices. These two points should be kept in mind by the reader. They help to emphasize the fact that this book is meant chiefly to be taught.

As a textbook, this book has a number of good features. The organization of matter is clear and logical; the summaries at the beginning of the chapters, pointing backward and forward, tell one exactly where he is; the suggestions for individual practices and group activities are a help to the teacher—provided he or she knows well both the matter and the group being addressed; the select reading list at the end of the book is handy and solid. The book could be improved, however, to increase its usefulness and attractiveness as a text: the table of contents, with its thirty-two chapters, could indicate major divisions by format at least; the pages are too crowded to be easy on the eyes; and the italics in the text, wherever they serve a real need, should be made to stand out more clearly.

In content, this synthetic presentation of the spiritual life intends to favor no particular school of spirituality. It draws from all the major schools, stressing basic similarities, and it gives many applications and suggestions that are common to the various spiritual ways. In this it is generally fine. But such a synthesis is a difficult task, particularly within the confines of 300 pages. The author's handling and interpreting of the spiritual doctrine of some important figures is almost bound to be weak. Such, for example, is his summarizing and interpreting of some of St. Ignatius Loyola's thoughts (e.g., pp. 196, 225). But he is accurate when he quotes a Jesuit author's interpretation of Ignatius (e.g., p. 150).

In our speaking of the final purpose of God in His own internal life and in His activities with respect to creatures, there are no major doctrinal difficulties but there are some semantic and psychological ones. Some of the author's expressions seem unbecoming, for they convey the impression of a possible selfishness or self-centeredness in God: for example, "God has one occupation—glory to Himself . . . The Holy Spirit is self-less, for He is Love (p. ix) . . . God's primary end in creating man is that man might give Him glory (p. 14)." The God-centeredness and "God-selflessness" that form the doctrinal basis for the spiritual life is stated in a better way when St. Thomas is quoted as saying that God created man "only to communicate His perfection, which is His goodness" (p. 13); concerning the internal life of the Trinity infinite selflessness is expressed in Christ's words, "Whatever the Father possesses is mine." (Jn. 16:15. p. 7).

A few lesser points might also be cleared up in a future edition of this work: what is needed for a virtual intention (p. 43); in what sense is sanctifying grace the "principle of the Mystical Body (p. 49). whether prayer is accepted as any "loving thought of God" (p. 138) or as any "desire for God" (p. 136)—since the

latter seems compatible with doing intellectual work at the same time (cf. p. 138); how the norms for mortification may differ for novices, for those in studies or other technical training, and for formed religious (pp. 176-81).

This book, as mentioned above, can be of help to a good teacher. But like most books of its kind, it has shortcomings that cannot be ignored in introducing novices to the spiritual life.

KENNETH C. BOGART

## NEW LITTLE MAGAZINE

PHILIPPINE WRITING 1. Ed. by N. V. M. Gonzalez. Bookmark, Inc., 1962. 77p.

Once upon a time, the little magazine was identified with the literary avant-garde. As such, it was notorious for the belligerence of its editorial tone and for the brevity of its life span. However, taste and economics have a way of taming even the most rebellious of artists and editors. And so it came to pass that the more knowledgeable of the rebels found themselves on the faculty staff of colleges and universities, teaching American literature or conducting writing seminars so that they could write. Soon, even the little magazines had gone to college, where they became semi-scholarly journals or academic literary outlets. "Rebellious" little magazines still pop up now and then in San Francisco or New York, to fulminate truculently against campus-bred little magazines, spend their vigor and funds, and die.

*Philippine Writing* belongs to the latter-day class of little magazines which is sustained by writers from the academic profession. Its editor, fictionist N. V. M. Gonzalez, teaches at the University of the Philippines where the majority of the contributions to the first issue originate. Published by Bookmark, Inc., the magazine promises to come out twice a year, in January and June, with "fiction, verse, essays, and articles of general literary interest... by writers of the Philippines." The manifesto, which one always associates with the earliest crop of a little magazine, is missing, but a ready of the first issue sufficiently marks out the direction editorial taste is going to take in future issues. All the contributors are "schooled" writers; they are academic in the sense that they know what they are doing and saying. If one is optimistic, he can take this as an indication that *Philippine Writing* will lean toward writing that is craftsmanlike and disciplined.