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Tagalog Without Tears: Basic Tagalog

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Book Reviews

TAGALOG WITHOUT TEARS

BASIC TAGALOG. By Paraluman S. Aspillera. Manila: Phil-Asian Publishers, Inc., 1959. xiv, 233p.

This language book fulfills the aims outlined in its introduction and foreword. Any person with only ordinary talent for languages, if he will follow the lessons in the order given and devote to them the suggested two hours daily, really ought to be able to use a fair amount of Tagalog after only four months. Of course this means earnest work and practice, but the foundation will have been laid. *Basic Tagalog* is a great improvement over earlier texts.

Proof that it can be done is given by the sample exercises on pp. 189-192, written by students who have taken the course. While it is evident that these sentences are translations by foreigners yet they are correct and intelligible and even well done. These students will soon be able to think in Tagalog instead of merely translating.

The lessons are carefully planned, as the introduction rightly claims, following a practical rather than the usual grammatical order. The selection of idioms is very good. Unfortunately many words are lacking in the vocabulary, especially in "Reading Materials in Basic", p. 185 and following. While this is a good textbook, the claim made in the press release announcing that it is devised for self-study is, in the opinion of this reviewer, exaggerated. The English-to-Tagalog exercises at the end of each lesson certainly need a teacher to check them.

There are occasional printing errors, as *nagatal* for the present in the paradigm on p. 45. Again, on p. 92, in the third set of examples, *itinuro* is given as the correct form for *pinunas*—clearly a line has been dropped. "Miyercoles", "Biyernes", "Huwebes", "Tundo", may be the official spelling adopted by the Institute of National Language, but they will surely create difficulties for learners when they come across the popular spelling current outside official texts.

In any case a book for beginners should mention this difference between official and popular spelling.

A kind of fore-foreword entitled "The Tagalog Language" contains gratuitous assertions which may be offensive to non-Tagalog Filipinos. That Tagalog is "the most euphonious" among Philippine languages and Tagalogs "the most energetic" of Philippine racial groups will surely be questioned and, true or false, such statements seem unnecessary and impolitic.

That Tagalog has been "taught in all schools for eighteen years" is simply not true. The pertinent legislation (1940) did not actually become effective in the more remote provinces until several years after the last War. There were no textbooks, and not only were qualified teachers lacking but in many places there were not even Tagalog-speaking personnel. The Bureau of Education inserted National Language periods in the official class schedules, but these periods were used for reviewing matter taken in other classes. This reviewer knows because he was there and had frequent dealings with public school officials. But that is beside the point. This is a good textbook. It serves its purpose well and can be highly recommended.

JOHN A. POLLOCK

TEACHERS AT PRAYER

AS STARS FOR ALL ETERNITY: Meditations for Teachers. By the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1959. 255p.

If teachers fall out of love with their profession it is because they have not sufficiently meditated on its dignity and excellence. While volumes and volumes about the different aspects of education have flooded book stores, few have been written to satisfy the spiritual needs of a teacher. True, books of meditations for priests and nuns abound, but there is a felt need for similar books for teachers who have a similar dignity of calling.

It should therefore be a cause for joy that here at last is such a book. Written by the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the book is divided into fifty-two meditations on the purpose of Christian education, the nature and mentality of the pupils and the virtues necessary in a teacher.

Most teachers realize that their work is a mission, an apostolate. But do they realize that their ideal can quite often be blurred by the many difficulties and the deadening routine of daily teaching? The meditations on the purpose and the excellence of the work of Christian education found in this book will always bring back to them the