

# philippine studies

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

---

## **The Church Today: The Collected Writings of Emmanuel Cardinal Suhard**

**Introduction by John J. Wright, D.D.**

Review Author: Ralph B. Gehring

*Philippine Studies* vol. 1, no. 2 (1953): 200–202

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>

man of business or politics, will find precisely that—an expression, often strikingly clear and incisive, of the Catholic attitude on the concrete problems that crop up from day to day in our modern world.

J. J. KAVANAGH

---

THE CHURCH TODAY. The Collected Writings of Emmanuel Cardinal Suhard. Introduction by John J. Wright, D.D. Fides Publishers, Chicago, Illinois. 1953. pp. xvii - 371. \$4.75

When Emmanuel Suhard died in 1949, the Church Militant lost one of her greatest contemporary figures. Born in Brittany in 1874, he was consecrated Bishop of Bayeux-Lisieux in 1928, Archbishop of Rheims in 1930, Cardinal in 1935, Archbishop of Paris in 1940. He was the founder of the controverted *Mission of France* and *Mission of Paris*, the former a unique seminary and the latter an equally original organization of lay-garbed priests working among the de-Christianized laborers of that capital. Cardinal Suhard risked his life interceding for Jews, hostages and deportees during the Nazi occupation of his country, while constantly supporting Catholic Action movements and the clandestine newspaper *Témoignage Chrétien*, both driven underground by the invaders.

*The Church Today* transmits to the world an intellectual and spiritual legacy worthy of a Prince of the Church. It consists of excerpts from the Cardinal's spiritual diary and of seven pastoral letters. These letters, however, are no ordinary pastorals; they are filled with the profound and personal reflections of a modern man rethinking the traditional doctrines of the Church in their application to an apostate France in a war-torn and, later, only half-liberated world. What St. Augustine did for Christendom in the fourth century, Suhard did for France in the twentieth, and for all who are willing to profit by her lessons.

And there are indeed lessons for all, including the Philippines, herself invaded so recently and likewise in danger of de-Christianization. In 1941-44 the Cardinal's letter on "Providence" (pp. 3-14) would have brought courage to many a Filipino heart, and it may again be needed in the future. In the letter on "The Parish Community" (pp. 17-28) are lessons specifically for Catholics; Catholics and non-Catholics alike have much to learn from "The Church on Private Property" (pp. 31-61).

It is the post-war pastorals, however, which fully reveal the stature of Emmanuel Suhard. His experience, his assimilation of the Fathers, especially Augustine, of the Catholic intellectuals of France and Belgium, of the encyclicals of recent Popes, of the meaning of

the good and evil in the swirling isms and ideologies of contemporary life, now blossom freely into full and perfect flower. "Who will make the synthesis of the new universe? What will be its principle and its inspiration?" asks Suhard in "Growth or Decline?" (pp. 93-170) and then proceeds to answer those who say the Church is dying, as well as those within her ranks who wish to mitigate her doctrines or tend to stand aloof from the world's affairs. The Church is not dying, says Suhard, but has reached a new crisis in her growth, as has the world itself. "The re-emergence of the Church" demands "the primacy of the Spiritual, and insertion in the Temporal" (p. 143). The Church is transcendent, but she is incarnate as well, and "without incarnation (participation in human affairs) the Church ceases to exist" (p. 156). The building of the future City (human society) is the work of all Christians, but especially of intellectuals, and many Catholic intellectuals have found their *Magna Carta* in the words:

Your research will deal first of all with Truth simply and solely, and with disinterested knowledge . . . You will allow no consideration of interest, not even of apologetics, to enter in; you will seek only for what is. Your loyalty will be equalled only by your openness of mind and the effective co-operation you show with all those, believers or non-believers, who pursue Truth "with all their mind". You will have no hesitation in devoting yourselves, with all your powers and "in the delight of knowing" to your "vocation of scholarship" (p. 160).

"The Meaning of God" (pp. 173-215) is the natural complement of "Growth or Decline?" Our age is an age without God, says Suhard, and Christians unavoidably breathe its pernicious atmosphere, not without harm to themselves. The nominal Catholic, Filipino as well as French, will see his portrait on p. 174, and many practicing Catholics may well tremble at the indictment:

. . . in their lives as a whole, God has ceased to be a personal God; he is a principle, a colorless abstraction. The awful and overwhelming words of Christ fall unheeded on their ears, the Gospel does not enter into their lives. Need we be surprised if the lives of so many Christians, which proclaim Christ so slightly or so badly, are barren or a scandal to the unbeliever?

There is a remedy, however, for ourselves and for the world: it is to remember that the Son of Man is also Son of God; the transcendence and immanence of the Church in the world are based upon the Transcendence and Immanence of God; to forget that God created the world out of love, and saved it out of love, would be to lose the meaning of both God and Man.

A reviewer cannot say everything about a book such as *The Church Today*. The Christian economist will praise it for its exposé of the doctrine of the Popes on private property. The priest may

think his mission in the social order nowhere better described than in the inspiring "Priests Among Men" (pp. 219-344); he may even rank it higher than the papal encyclical on the priesthood. Laymen will receive an insight into the soul of a Cardinal-Archbishop, and religious recognize a kindred spirit in the "Spiritual Diary" (pp. 347-371), whose message may be summarized in Suhard's words: "I must be a saint in order to be a good archbishop of Paris." Certainly Fides Publishers have done the English reading world a great service in producing this work, and the Catholic Book Club of the United States was justified in making it its July selection.

RALPH B. GEHRING

---

*Contributors and Reviewers—(Cont.)*

He has been awarded the Cardinal Spellman award for outstanding work in the field of theology. He contributes numerous articles to American magazines, especially *Thought*, *Social Order*, and his own *Theological Studies*. Father Murray spent three years in the Philippines (1927-1930) on the staff of the Ateneo de Manila.

REV. ARTHUR A. WEISS, S.J. is assistant to the Vice-Provincial of the Society of Jesus in the Philippines. Father Weiss is currently lecturing on Communism in the Institute of Social Order.

FERNANDO ZOBEL DE AYALA has studied in the Philippines, Spain, Switzerland and the United States. He is A.B. *magna cum laude*, Harvard, 1949. He also made graduate studies in the Department of Graphic Arts, Harvard University. Mr. Zobel has painted professionally since 1949, and exhibited in Boston, Cambridge (Mass.), New York, Manila and India. In the recent Philippine Art Association exhibit his *Carroza* was adjudged first among the modern pieces. He is at present forming a collection of photographs, books and objects relating to Philippine art and architecture, with a view to publishing a work on the subject at some future date.