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Ethics of Journalism: Valiant Heralds of Truth

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For bibliographers and Filipiniana collectors the *Catalogue* constitutes an important contribution, both as a work indicating what is available in the Newberry Library and as a list against which Filipiniana holdings in the Philippines can be checked. The critical evaluation above does not detract from the usefulness of the *Catalogue*, and its importance for research student, bibliographer, and librarian will no doubt demand its presence on the shelves of most schools of higher learning and institutional libraries, as well as of individual collectors, in the Philippines. All concerned are indebted to, and appreciate the work of, Miss Welsh and the Newberry Library in the publication of the *Catalogue*.

ERNEST J. FREI

ETHICS OF JOURNALISM

VALIANT HERALDS OF TRUTH: PIUS XII AND THE ARTS OF COMMUNICATION. Compiled with a commentary by Rev. Vincent A. Yzermans. Foreword by the Editor. Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1958. xi, 201p.

In 1947, the University of Chicago press put on the bookstands a thin volume purporting to deal with "the responsibilities of the owners and managers of the press to their consciences and the common good for the formation of public opinion." The authors of this volume comprised the Commission on Freedom of the Press, an impressive array of scholars hand-picked from all over the United States and chaired by Robert M. Hutchins who was then president of the university. The book was something of a milestone in the history of American journalism, for among other things it directed the attention of newsmen to the need in our times of a definitive "philosophy" of the communication arts.

After the book's appearance, journalists and students of journalism soon discovered that not all could always agree on the meaning of such loosely worded phrases as "the right to be in error," or for that matter, on such basic notions as the "common good" and how this common good relates itself to the private natural needs of individuals within a society. To crystallize their thoughts on such matters journalists soon found it necessary to appeal to the classic "philosophers" of the profession, but these men were seldom helpful on account of the limited scope of that part of their writings which applied specifically of journalism. William Blackstone, writing his famous commentaries on the laws of England; John Milton, attacking pre-publication censorship in the *Areopagitica*; and John Stuart Mill, singing praise to freedom in the essay *On Liberty*: all had definite objectives

in mind and were fighting for specific causes. Not one, furthermore, had experienced, nor perhaps envisioned, the beleaguered position of men whose every waking hour is, as in our day, the perpetual target of relentless sallies by the different agencies of mass communication.

Obviously, a more extensive, more contemporary treatise on journalism's first principles has become a necessity. There are today special ethical questions which need answering, and as mass communication enters the era in which highly specialized channels are employed within increasingly diversified media, the nature, functions, responsibilities, and objectives of each channel and each medium begin to demand stricter definition.

The book under review should therefore be welcome not merely to sober newsmen but also to all those interested in the serious study of mass communications, for while it is not meant to be the last word in the philosophy of journalism, it could well represent the framework of a body of thought which may someday be called *the philosophy of journalism*. The book is first of all contemporary; therefore extremely useful to journalists who must again and again wrestle with problems of a topical nature. It is, secondly, directed to no specific objective other than the facilitating of speculative thinking in the area of communication. As such, it covers a field far broader than has ever before been covered by any single work of the same nature. Thirdly, the book is really a compendium of the pronouncements made by the late Pope Pius XII with reference to the media; therefore worthy of examination and of repeated reference, especially for Catholic journalists, both clerical and lay, who work with periodicals. Finally, apart from the words of Pius XII, the book contains a chapter summarizing the papal attitude towards the media, plus a complete text of the 1957 encyclical *Miranda Prorsus* (On Motion Pictures, Radio, and Television), and also the following appendices: (a) a listing of Pius XII's statements concerning mass communications, accompanied by data showing when such statements were given and where transcripts can be found; (b) a selected bibliography on mass communication from Catholic periodicals dating back to 1933; and (c) the 1957 statement of the bishops of the United States on censorship. If for the appendices alone the book is well worth keeping; but the manner in which Father Yzermans marshalls the Pope's statements under logical headings represents a commendable job of indexing and makes the book indispensable to Catholic journalism.

In presenting the mind of Pius XII on the arts of communication, Father Yzermans did not choose merely to catalogue the more than forty documents issued on the subject during the last pontificate. Instead he quotes excerpts varying length from these documents and he classifies them under four general headings: The Press, Radio, Motion Pictures, and Television. Under "The Press," for in-

stance, there are sub-classifications, e.g., Books and Publishers, Critics and Translators, Creating Public Opinion, The Catholic Press, Rights and Duties of the Press, etc. In turn, there are numbered subject titles under these sub-classes. Among those under "The Catholic Press," to mention two, are "No. 40. Aims for the Catholic Press" and "No. 45. Three demands which the Catholic press must fulfill if it is to remain the guide and leader of the Catholic people." Then follow the exact words of the Holy Father.

Needless to say, this manner of presentation will prove helpful to researchers, teachers, editors, and other practitioners who are in immediate need of authoritative Catholic views on the many aspects of mass communication. But the book is not for Catholics alone. It is meant for all who would seriously seek guideposts both for thought and action in the journalistic field. And it is perhaps for this reason that the editor has seen fit to devote his entire second chapter to testimonials from recognized leaders of the communication industries, non-Catholic as well as Catholic, who unreservedly affirm their dependence on the late Pope for guidance in the discharge of the duties of their various professions. Informed Catholics will probably find this chapter impressive but superfluous, for more than anyone else within the Church, the late Pope took such an interest in mass communication as to earn for himself, at least in some circles, the title of "Pope of Communications."

It is fitting that Father Yzermans should end his book with his own evaluation of the Pope's attitude toward the media since the assistant pastor of the Cathedral of St. Cloud is himself an editor and an indefatigable student of the Holy Father's public addresses. His work on *The Unwearyed Advocate* and his contributions to many Catholic periodicals are articulate witnesses to this. According to him, three conclusions may be drawn from his survey of the late Pontiff's thinking, and these are: (1) that mass media are neither good nor evil in themselves; (2) that one must enter the field of communications with sympathy, understanding, and good will; and (3) that the concern shown by Pius XII for the responsibilities and duties of the media has no relation whatever to Puritan censorship, nor is it in any degree comparable to "the witch-hunting spree that some Americans indulged in a few years ago," but this Pope was rather one with John Peter Zenger, Thomas Jefferson, Joseph Pulitzer, and Josephus Daniels in "that noble line of publishers and thinkers that have grasped the intimate relationship between freedom and responsibility."

ANTONIO G. MANUUD