

philippine studies

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

Philippine Church, by Kroeger

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Philippine Studies vol. 36, no. 1 (1988) 122–123

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Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

THE PHILIPPINE CHURCH AND EVANGELIZATION, 1965-1984. By James Kroeger, M.M. Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1985. 467 pages.

This book comes from a doctoral dissertation entitled, "Human Promotion of the Church Mission of Evangelization, A Philippine Experience Since Vatican II, 1965-1984." The author states his goal as follows: "... to elucidate the two-decade EXPERIENCE [capitals the author's] of the Filipino people and that of the Catholic Church in the Philippines. ... In short this work emerges from a particular focus: 1) the EXPERIENCE and PERSPECTIVE of the LOCAL CHURCH in the Philippines; 2) the emphasis on HUMAN PROMOTION as INTEGRAL to the holistic approach of EVANGELIZATION, and 3) a time-frame of the twenty-year period after the Second Vatican Council" (p. 5).

Since this is a doctoral dissertation it follows a dissertation format. The first section, pp. 5-60, is devoted to the methodology employed. The second section deals with the contextualization of the Church's tradition and social teaching (pp. 62-274). This section deals with the tradition and social teaching of the universal Church, and the historical realities in the Philippines. In the last part a brief summary of Philippine history from 1556-1984 is given with emphasis on the Philippine Church.

The third section, the heart of the study, deals with pastoral, theological and missiological aspects of Philippine Church teaching as derived from statements of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), statements of a Bishop's Group, and those of individual bishops and religious groups. The basic themes are examined according to their theological-biblical foundations, the opera-ecclesiological vision and the moral imperatives. The themes that emerge in the section on theological-biblical foundations are: the dignity of the human person (the order of creation); Christ as central in the process of evangelization (the order of redemption); and the biblical vision of the reign of God.

In the section on the operative ecclesiological vision, the study deals with human promotion as integral to the Christian mission; the Church's specific contribution within integral human promotion, and the concretizing of the ecclesial vision in the Basic Ecclesial Communities. Examples of the Church's specific contributions in integral human promotion are cited as: societal vision, the Church as a moral force; formation of conscience of the people; the problem of critical collaboration with the Martial Law regime; proper independence and coordination of various sectors of society; the clarification on political involvement versus partisan politics and the Church as an instrument of reconciliation.

Regarding moral imperatives, the study lists the following: the need for discernment of the signs of the times leading to action; concrete involvement

and guiding norms; the question of ideologies, and the spirituality of integral human promotion.

The final section is a summary, synthesis and critique. There is a companion volume, a bibliography containing references to general works, Roman and Episcopal Documents, various authors on the theme of the Church's social teaching and human promotion, studies on the Philippine historical situation, and writings on the contemporary situation from both Philippine and international sources. There follows a bibliography of the Documents of the Philippine Bishops, listed according to the date of publication, and then selected documents of Filipino Cardinals and the CBCP presidents arranged in chronological sequence, and finally some masters' theses and doctoral dissertations.

While the main sources of the study are official Church documents, the author examines the documents against the national, political and economic background. Since this is a theological rather than a sociological study, the main interest of the work is in the ecclesial teaching. In this effort the author clearly traces the growth of the social teaching of the Philippine hierarchy over a period of twenty years. This is a valuable contribution. However, as quoted above, the author's specific aim was "to elucidate the two-decade EXPERIENCE of the Filipino people and the Catholic Church in the Philippines." I do not think that this was achieved in this work. Granted that there is a connection between the consciousness of the people who along with their pastors are the Church of the Philippines, and their Bishops, yet when the Bishops fulfill their official teaching role, this cannot be equated with the experience of the Filipino people. There is no identity between teaching and reception of the teaching. The laity may either lag behind or be in advance of the social teachings of the bishops, or they may interpret them in a way not in line with the intention of the teachers. Thus, there is bound to be a gap between the two, the teaching and the experience. While the author would agree with this, the impression does come through that they are the same.

Secondly, there can be serious problems in the Church, not mentioned prominently in Episcopal Documents, and thus not prominent in this presentation. One example is the polarity of the Church as represented by the ecclesial documents presented and the so-called "church of the left." This is a serious problem, but only receives a passing comment from the author. While the problem has existed for years, for practical reasons the problem could not be publicly dealt with until the end of the Martial Law regime. Consequently it was only at the last CBCP conference that the question of the active participation of clergy and religious was clearly discussed. This ambiguity might have been avoided had the author limited the scope of his goal to the study of ecclesial documents as against the background of Philippine events, and left the experience of the Filipino people to a social-

cultural study. All in all, however, the Kroeger book is a valuable work since it clearly shows the progression, linked to events, of the official teachings of the Philippine Church over the past twenty years.

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FORTRESS IN THE PLAZA. By Linda Ty Casper. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1985. 113 pages.

Linda Ty Casper has been writing (mostly historical fiction) for many years. Her contribution to Philippine writing in English is solid, enduring—and growing. She has two collections of short stories (*The Transparent Sun*, 1963 and *The Secret Runner*, 1974), three historical novels (*The Peninsulars*, 1964, *The Three-Cornered Sun*, 1979, and *Ten Thousand Seeds*, 1987) and a number of other works set in more contemporary times (*Dread Empire*, 1980, *Hazards of Distance*, 1981, *Fortress in the Plaza*, 1985, *Awaiting Trespass*, 1985, and *Wings of Stone*, 1986). These ten works in twenty-five years have earned her a significant place in postwar Philippine writing in English. They are carefully crafted and reach for the human heart in a way that many other Philippine writings in English do not. In a perceptive article in *Philippine Studies* [28(1980):59-73], Mrs. Casper wrote that "literature is one way history, which too often reduces life to dates and events, can animate life so that man is returned to the center of human existence." The remark is both descriptive and prescriptive of her own writing, for she says in the first pages of this new novella that *Fortress in the Plaza* "attempts to show how, faced with dark choices, it is possible to live with dignity, courage and grace" (p. 4).

The basic symbol of the novel is the fortress, which ambivalently stands for both the fortress of Philippine society under Martial Law and for the fortress of the Honorio family, as well as for the fortresses that individuals erect within themselves, a theme that goes back to *Hazards of Distance*. Mrs. Casper says quite clearly that "*Fortress* is about the successive fortresses individuals, families and nations erect about themselves" (p. 3). The intentional ambivalence of the basic symbol thus underlines an idea which has occupied Mrs. Casper in almost all her works—the individual is the family is the nation. It is both fortresses and distance which threaten all three of them.

The novel is a magnificent portrait of individuals. There is, at the center, Maxima Ilustre de Honorio, the matriarch, known as Inay to her children and the servants, Imang to relatives and friends, Doña or Impo to others. There is Miguel Honorio, her politician son; and Jess, the would-be priest, her grandson and philosophizing activist; as well as a host of other characters