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This Transcending God: The Teaching of the Author of “The Cloud of Unknowing”

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Such generalizations naturally do not help for a proper understanding of the Spanish colonial experience in the Far East. Furthermore, certain developments were hardly mentioned or discussed at any length. What about the growth of towns in the provinces? What about the development of Filipino culture, the impact of the introduction of the Spanish language? The appearance of vernacular literature in the nineteenth century certainly cannot be explained unless one points to its roots in the preceding centuries, even if these may not have been years that favored Filipino articulation or expression.

A few of several minor details that one hopes would be attended to in a second edition: Fr. Cushner repeats himself on at least two occasions (p. 67, 112), and on page 205, Sual in Pangasinan is mentioned as a port. An unpublished *Memoria de Pangasinan* (1886) by Father Carrozal, the Dominican parish priest there, mentions *Dagupan* as the place where the big English commercial house, Heald and Co., was located. Sual had been separated from its mother town and given independent status as a *pueblo civil* in 1806. Even with the advent of foreign shipping, Dagupan remained the main port, while *Sual* continued only as a "cluster of houses along the shore." On page 221, the proofreader overlooked the passage "*esta archipiélago*." And, one is intrigued that after his review of Coates' *Rizal: Philippine Nationalist and Martyr* (London, 1968) in *Philippine Studies* 18:1 (January 1970), pp. 207-9, Father Cushner refers to it in note 624!

One could, of course, pick out many other shortcomings, but one should not be blind to the real contribution of this book to Philippine historical scholarship. Despite its lack of balance, therefore, the monograph is recommended to all interested in the history of the Philippines.

JOSÉ S. ARCILLA

THIS TRANSCENDING GOD: The Teaching of the Author of "The Cloud of Unknowing." By Constantino Sarmiento Nieva. London: The Mitre Press, 1971. xxiv, 274 pages.

Interest in spirituality and man's approach to God has shown signs of new life in the past few years, of which Pentecostalism and the new "Jesus movements" are some indications both here at home and elsewhere in the world. A scholarly treatment of the work of a medieval English mystic is therefore not irrelevant. And the fact that the scholar is a Filipino serves not only the pride of the English in their mystical past but also the universality of the matter.

Fr. Nieva's study of the mystical teaching of the author of the famous work, "The Cloud of Unknowing," focuses on what must be basic for

any spirituality, the contact that man has with God resulting from God's action on man. It is worthwhile to point out even to today's man that the God who acts on men is the absolute, the "transcending" God. As man responds to this God, therefore, it is to be expected that he will experience much "unknowing" and the realization that what God *is* is not any of his creatures. Augustine realized this as he sought for God through the creaturely reflections of God; Thomas Aquinas explained it in his negative theology.

In Fr. Nieva's book, the reader is offered an introduction to the problem of identifying the authorship of "The Cloud." Unfortunately, almost as if this were the main concern of the study this same problem continues to surface throughout the whole book, although the main chapters of the book do give an account of the doctrine contained in the work under study.

The general picture that is presented is one of a spiritual teaching that is based on genuine contact with God in a personal relationship that involves more than merely knowing many things *about* God. The author of "The Cloud" emerges from this study as a man who has had much experience in dealing with his fellowmen and who is therefore a wise guide in the field of spiritual direction.

Granting the merits of the book cannot blind one to its defects. It is too obviously a dissertation. A thorough job of re-editing should have been done before the book was offered to the general public. It might have been advisable to have omitted the whole first and second chapters. Despite the claim that the teaching of the mystical author would be presented by letting him speak for himself, there are too many instances where secondary sources do the speaking without any direct references to the text itself. Unfortunate also is the heaviness of the prefatory matter. The dedication "to my Lord Bishop" and the bishop's letter of acceptance of the dedication seem overly medieval. Three forewords give the impression of obsequious padding. In the "Author's Preface," the list of persons to whom the author is indebted seems much too long. The "Author's Note" seems to be a lengthy extension of the "Author's Acknowledgments." In general, a much simpler presentation of the matter would have done more service to the very simple but profound teaching of the humble author of "The Cloud of Unknowing."

THOMAS H. O'GORMAN, S.J.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND THE PHILIPPINES, 1897-1909. By Oscar M. Alfonso. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1970. xiv, 227 pages.

Theodore Roosevelt, then Assistant Secretary of the Navy, probably did as much as any single individual to bring about the first