

# philippine studies

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

---

## Theodore Roosevelt and the Philippines, 1897-1909

Review Author: John N. Schumacher

*Philippine Studies* vol. 20, no. 4 (1972): 668–671

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>  
Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

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

steps in American imperialistic expansion into the Philippines, by his order to Admiral George Dewey in February 1898 to be prepared for offensive operations against the Philippines the moment that the United States should declare war against Spain over Cuba. When the assassination of William McKinley in 1901 made him President of the United States, he became the man with ultimate responsibility for the creation of American colonial policy, and his presidency spanned the crucial years in the establishment of a new governmental structure in the Philippines. No detailed study of Roosevelt's role in the formation of American Philippine policy, however, had appeared before that of Dr. Alfonso here being reviewed.

Roosevelt has generally been considered a strong president by American historians and political scientists, the first in modern times to take a major role in influencing the course of legislation by Congress. He was likewise a pioneer by the strong role he took in the solicitation of public opinion in support of his policies. It is in this light that Alfonso examines Roosevelt's activity on Philippine political, economic, and religious affairs as well as the independence question. He shows that though Roosevelt substantially influenced Congress in passing a number of laws of importance to the Philippines, none of them were such as to call for extraordinary efforts on the president's part, for none of them was, or was thought to be, injurious to any major American interest. On the other hand, the bill providing tariff exemptions for the Philippines, though enjoying his continued and firm support, ran counter to powerful American sugar and tobacco interests. Alfonso points out a telling contrast between the sustained efforts and leadership skill employed by Roosevelt to secure passage of the American railway regulation bill in the face of strong opposition from vested interests with his failure to bring similar leadership to bear on the Philippine tariff bill. Admittedly, says Alfonso, the difficulties were greater, given the fact of it being an election year, and the general apathy of American public opinion by this time with regard to Philippine affairs, but these difficulties were precisely the test of Roosevelt's leadership. Ultimately the answer was that the Philippine tariff bill involved no vital interest of the American people which he must salvage at the cost of any effort. Such a measure as the American railway regulation bill, on the other hand, was seen by Roosevelt as of great importance for the welfare of the American people as a whole, and he spared no effort to overcome the lobbies of vested interests. Measures on behalf of the Philippines other than the tariff, even if opposed by some, had at least fallen within larger American purposes; such strenuous efforts had not then been necessary to secure passage. The basic problem was that of the colonial relationship—however benevolent the colonial relationship may be, the colony must always compete on uneven terms with the domestic interests of the colonial power.

This conclusion seems to me unassailable, though I would not term it a "weakness of the presidential leadership of Roosevelt in Philippine policy" (p. 213). Rather, as Alfonso points out elsewhere, the interest of Roosevelt and (of other American expansionists for that matter) in acquiring the Philippines was not to promote Filipino welfare, but American interests. Though, as Alfonso points out, Roosevelt was no racist, as were so many of his contemporaries both imperialist and anti-imperialist, and was sincerely interested in promoting the development of the Philippines, this was only within the framework of American vital interests. Hence I do not think that Roosevelt ever conceived himself to have a role of presidential leadership for the *Philippines*. The same of course could be said of every other president of the United States or government of any other colonial power. I do not believe this is in substantial disagreement with what Alfonso says in the course of his book, but it seems to me that the use of the criterion of "presidential leadership" can be misleading in dealing with a colonial relationship.

The above remarks really concern only the framework within which the study is cast and in no way affect the detailed and dispassionate factual account given by the book of the intricacies of American policy toward the Philippines during the Roosevelt years. The treatment is clear and informative, and the facts are presented in a way which cannot be found elsewhere. It is this careful study of large amounts of primary documentation that makes the study so valuable, for it provides much material for an objective evaluation of the American colonial record in the Philippines.

My only other difference with Dr. Alfonso's conclusions is the weight given to Roosevelt's personal action and thought on the formation of American colonial policy. As noted in the book, Roosevelt placed great reliance on his subordinates who were on the spot in the Philippines, Taft in particular. My own reading of the evidence presented here convinces me that Taft was actually the major force in determining Philippine policy, and when Roosevelt did formulate policy, it was very largely determined by Taft's views, in which the president placed very full confidence. I would agree with Alfonso that Roosevelt "took counsel regarding the Philippines from those whose views coincided with his, sometimes, if not often, to reinforce a mind already made up" (p. 212). But given Roosevelt's general ignorance of the actual situation in the Philippines, it seems that it was on Taft's views and information that he had almost always depended in making up his mind.

It is a proof of the thoroughness and objectivity with which Alfonso has explored the actuation of Roosevelt in Philippine affairs that one can find in the book itself the evidence on which to base oneself for a difference of opinion on its meaning. The book will remain

a valuable contribution to the still all-too-meager number of scholarly studies on twentieth-century Philippine history.

JOHN N. SCHUMACHER

L'ESPRIT DE LA CROISADE. By Jean Richard. Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1969. 203 pages.

The first part of the book (pp. 1-54) gives a short but penetrating analysis of what the medieval crusades were all about. Because of the many meanings that the word can signify, the author restricts his definition to the original or "authentic" crusades which took place between Pope Gregory VII's summons in 1074 to the Christian princes to come to the aid of the Christians of the East and the final resistance of the Latin Christians when Acre fell in 1291. During this period the crusades gradually became an integral part of the whole fabric of the way of life of the Middle Ages. But most of all, the crusades were a religious movement,

The crusades were in reality an institution of the Church, an institution born by the will of the Holy See, encouraged by many ecumenical councils to respond to the needs of the world at that time. It was also an occasion for numberless Christians to live their faith, not in ease but through the trials of suffering and death (p. 1).

Such a movement was bound to be complex and fraught with ambiguities. And to understand the full impact of the crusades, we have to dig deeper than just the catalogues of the external events. It is easy but quite superficial simply to deplore from our historical vantage point, either the *naïveté*, or the political intrigues of some of the crusaders. And it would be *simpliste* to evaluate the true significance of the crusades by limiting judgment to the grotesque spectacle at times of Latin and Byzantine Christians slaughtering one another as well as the "infidels" in the name of the cross. The whole movement is far more involved than a power struggle between East and West.

The first surprise that might come to one who wishes to write off the crusades with such sweeping generalizations is that the call to the crusades was motivated by fraternal charity. The reason for the organization of the crusades was not the fact that Jerusalem had fallen to the Turks. As a matter of fact, the Holy City had been taken by the Moslems 400 years before. It was rather that the Turkish invasion of the Christian Byzantine territories was inflicting great sufferings on the Christians. And in the West, at the end of the eleventh century, the Church was preoccupied with the establishment of "the institutions of peace." The crusades, then, at their inception fitted into a whole