

impression that Beyer supports a Marxist resolution for struggle. Still, he clarifies that the goal of this struggle for justice in Catholic Universities and Colleges “cannot be the annihilation or forceful suppression of the oppressor.” (p. 77) In any case, wherever necessary, Beyer provides extensive notes to lessen the gap and possibility of misconceptions. This book is prescribed mainly to the administrators of Catholic Higher Institutes who may be practicing *corporate* methodologies without them noticing its inhumane effects on the stakeholders.

Without a doubt, future readers of this book will surely learn that it is only when Catholic Higher Learning Institutions place their trust and thrust to the integration of Catholic Social Teaching that the Catholic Church succeeds in leading its learners to a genuine *conversation* towards conversion.

Blaise D. Ringor

More, Justy Felix. *For God's Sake: The Friar Missionaries and their Evangelization in Aklan (1659-1794)*. Quezon City: Central Book Supply, Inc., 2022. pp. 182. ISBN: 978-621-02-1892-3.

Fr. Justy More's book, *For God's Sake: The Friar Missionaries and their Evangelization in Aklan (1596-1794)*, which deals with the evangelization of the province Aklan spearheaded by the order of San Agustin and continued by the Recollects from 1569 to 1794, spotlights on a neglected topic in Philippine History today. This neglect shows a bias that leans on the Black Legend or “La Leyenda Negra.” The book is therefore a stark counterpoint to the heavy writings on the political-economic aspects of Spanish colonization of the Philippines that is witnessed today, and exposes heavily the ugly face of colonization, forgetting its brighter side, that is tackled by this book in review.

Fr. More's opus describes, in a moving narrative, the laying of what John Ledy Phelan calls the “spiritual district” in the province of Aklan. It is a welcome contribution to the scanty literature on the matter that awaits similar writings by lay as well as religious historians.

The laying of the spiritual districts was an important prerequisite of Spanish colonization, for without them, the mantle of Spanish bureaucracy could not have been effectively laid down. That is why, Spanish colonialism in the country is symbolized by the symbiotic relationship between the Sword and the Cross, that represent the mutual relationship between the state and the church. For in the history of Spain, Catholicism was a catalyst in the achievement of political unity that found glorious expression in its “Siglo de Oro” or Spanish Golden Age. The expulsion of the Moors facilitated by the marriage of King Ferdinand II of Aragon and Queen Isabella I of Castille, signaled Spain's unity and commitment to the Catholic faith.

Out of this, the concept of Royal Patronage was born, and became a strong foundation for the colonization of the Philippines. The formation of towns was a task given

to the friar missionaries whose expenses were shouldered by the Crown. To effectively lay the foundation of Spanish colonial rule, the Philippines was divided into spiritual districts for each of the five friar orders to transform into towns, as outlined by the Royal Decree issued by King Philip II, on April 27, 1594. The Augustinians, were the first missionary order to have arrived with Legazpi in 1565, and the Recollects in 1606.

It was the missionary zeal that served as the engine for the missionary friars to undertake their voyages to the country. Fr. More's book has discussed this phenomenon extensively illustrating in particular the transformation of Kalibo from an encomienda to a pueblo. Kalibo's transformation into a town in 1581 was followed by two more towns of Aklan's province, namely, Ibayay (1596) and Batan (1601), the author's hometown. At the end of Spain's colonial government, as reported by Fr. Valentin Morales Marin O. P., the Augustinians had founded some 231 parishes while the Recollects some 203 parishes in both Luzon and the Visayas.

By and large, the friars blazed the missionary trail so to speak. They were loved by the people, for they preached in their native tongues. The church, said Fr. More became the "real chair of learning the languages." The acid test that the missionary had to pass to become a parish priest then was to pass the "strict language fluency examination of their work apostolate." Out of this learning came the writing of dictionaries that was necessary for preaching in the language of the natives. The process of spreading the faith was greatly aided by catechetical books such as the *Hiligaynon Catecismo de Doctrina Christiana en Lengua Bisaya* by Fray Alonso de Mentrída, O.S.A. in 1627 that came a generation after the publication of the Dominican's *Doctrina Christiana* in 1593, the first book ever printed in the country.

The friars also served as comforters of the people apart from undertaking the task of building towns. Where the church was built, so was the town situated. The Augustinians were noted church-builders, and the town proper is built around the church, thus occupying such a prominence to define the center of the town proper.

They shielded too the natives from the cruel impositions of some encomenderos, and the fearful Moro raids.

It was out of the encomienda, a "trust territory" that Kalibo became a town averred Fr. More, only because a "doctrina" or a "mission" was established there. Kalibo's founding as a town did not issue from its being an encomienda but from its becoming a parish, the center of the mission, that grew in time, counting among others a town-hall, an exclusive schools for boys and girls, well-laid out roads and streets, and many other amenities.

The devotion to Sto. Niño, popularly known in the place as "Ati-atihan," is a liturgical activity that is firmly rooted in this bucolic town of Kalibo. It is an activity that was introduced by the Augustinians that publicly demonstrates the people's faith in the child Jesus. It is a religious activity that has kept the faith burning and gone beyond Kalibo to become a dynamic part of the country's living religious expression.

Fr. More's historical narrative is generated by an analytical perception of the events that are drawn from primary sources. These sources serve as "texts" that are critically examined and framed in his contemporary milieu, that veritably serve as his context. He fuses his horizons, to borrow Hans-Georg Gadamer's phrase, as he brings the past into the consciousness of the present. In other words, he interpreted past phenomena in the consciousness of the present that follows the dictum specified by phenomenological hermeneutics that frames his narrative. And in so doing, he invokes the important priestly role that men who wear the habit are expected of, namely, the pursuit of the task of evangelizing, of keeping and spreading the faith with dynamic fervor.

Precisely, the book cogently illustrates the Catholic dynamism bequeathed by the friar-missionaries who planted the seeds of Catholic beliefs in the province of Aklan. Their missionary zeal had yielded concrete results exemplified by the priestly vocations that had been generated, counting exemplary persons among them such as the late Archbishops Gabriel M. Reyes, the first Filipino Archbishop of Manila and later, Jaime Cardinal Sin.

In time for the diocese of Kalibo's celebration of its Golden Jubilee come 2026, the book is a veritable source of inspiration of the missionary zeal that went with the foundation of the towns that comprise the diocese and a biting reminder of keeping the catholic faith alive today, all for God's Sake!

Written in a flowing narrative, the book is a must-reading for everyone! It is a significant contribution to Philippine historiography.

Antonio C. Hila

