

Reviews & Notices

de la Rosa, Rolando V, O.P.. *We Become What We Love: A Frank and Tender Look at the Values We Hold dear and The Values We Despise*. Manila: University of Santo Tomas, 2014. 219pp. ISBN 978-971-506-739-3.

Rolando de la Rosa, OP is not unknown in the academe. His leadership of the University of Santo Tomas has garnered him the admiration of many people. He is also a well-known scholar and professor. As a writer, he has popular weekly column in a national broadsheet. If one is an admirer of de la Rosa's essays, there is good news for you.

De la Rosa's new book entitled *We Become What We Love: A Frank and Tender Look at the Values We Hold Dear and the Values We Despise* is a compilation of his essays during his stint as columnist in *Manila Bulletin*. The book is about values, and the intention of the author is to help readers, especially the youth, in discerning which values to appreciate and which to ignore.

The book is composed of four divisions. The first part focuses on faith and life. The second part is a work on marriage and family. The third is a critique of contemporary values, and the fourth part is about the people who personify values.

For the first part, de la Rosa wrote essays about sinning in the bravest manner. He also wrote about the importance of prayer and the relevance of the parable of the Good Palestinian. The presence of God was also explored in the Liturgy of the Eucharist as a contrast to the fast food experience.

For the second part, de la Rosa focused on the vitality of marriage and family. In this section, an essay explored the importance of healing a person by primarily healing the family that has been jeopardized by its members. More than healing the family, another essay about wedding photographs is a good read as well. The essay *Believe me, you don't need this*, is a fair critique of the radical feminism engulfing the world today.

The third part was about his essays on cleanliness, thinking, fashion, intelligence, and population. This biggest part of the book is an evaluation of long-held values in Philippine

culture. It is a critique of the pros and cons of the values we deem as normal in everyday setting.

The fourth part presents the people who embody values. The author present such people from the highest accolade of sanctity down to the virtuous mortals. The essays focused on the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Thomas Aquinas, Chiara Lubich, F. Sionil Jose, Lola Upeng (the oldest catechist of Quezon City) and many more. His essays pay homage to such people who were not just given grace but also exhibited virtues for others to emulate.

The essays are short but substantial. The author is a weaver of thoughts that can cater to everyone. He conveys his essays with a story or experience. His works are never abstract since the conception of values is always portrayed through images. His treatment of values starts from the senses, a character of his Thomistic educational upbringing. As a whole, the book provides a bright avenue of understanding values. It is a holistic treatment of the values we hold dear or abhor in our lives. Fr. de la Rosa provided a meticulous look at values without losing the essentials of our everyday living experience. He showcases a genuine Catholic mindset which knows the intricacies and critical issues besetting man in the world. Fr. de la Rosa is a *rara avis* of his time.

Beaujorne Sirad A. Ramirez

Gould, Meredith. *The Social Media Gospel: Sharing the Good News in New Ways*, 2nd Ed. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015. 180 pp. ISBN 978-0-8146-4707-3.

That the second edition of Meredith Gould's *The Social Media Gospel* comes only two years after its initial publication is indicative of both the timeliness and elusiveness of its topic: social media and how it relates with evangelization today.

It is timely in the sense that social media have emerged to be one of the most important pastoral frontiers at present, with more and more of our flock spending more and more of their day online. For Asia and the Philippines alone, the Internet and social media penetration figures presented in the *Digital in 2017 Global Overview* are quite revealing. According to the study, Internet penetration in the Asia-Pacific Region has reached 46% (1.909 billion) while social media penetration has reached 36% (1.514 billion) of the population. In terms of Internet usage, the Philippines recorded the highest number of hours spent daily, with an average of nine hours. It is closely followed by Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia at the third, fourth, and fifth places respectively. Meanwhile, in terms of social media usage, Asian countries, namely United Arab Emirates, South Korea, Singapore, Hongkong and Malaysia, occupied the top five places while the Philippines emerged as the top country when it comes to time spent on social media, registering an average of four hours per day. Given these statistics, it becomes very clear that it is no longer optional for pastors today to harness the Internet and social media for evangelization.

Likewise, as social media itself continue to evolve, the question of how to make use of it for the sake of the Gospel becomes very elusive, presenting new pastoral opportunities as

well as challenges. For instance, in *Redemptoris Missio*, Saint John Paul II called these modern means of communication like the Internet as the “New Areopagus” where the Gospel must be preached in the language of today’s generation. On the other hand, in *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis alerts us to some potential dangers posed by what he calls the “omnipresence” of media and the digital world, the influence of which “can stop people from learning how to live wisely, to think deeply, and to love generously” (p. 47).

It is in this context that Meredith Gould’s elusively timely opus becomes a “must read” for all pastors today. It not only offers tested and proven strategies and techniques in using social media but aptly begins in Section I (pp. 3-30) with important frameworks for understanding what social media is and how it works. This is developed from various angles - including the technical, theological, developmental, pedagogical, psychological, and sociological. At the same time, important concerns and issues are raised. For example, the Visual-Auditory-Kinesthetic (VAK) learning model is brought up and possible accommodations that might seem irreverent at first glance are floated, such as ‘visual-kinesthetic’ members of the congregation being allowed to knit a prayer shawl or post tweets while listening to preaching. Gould also challenges the distinction between real and virtual, arguing that “virtual community is real community” (p. 30).

These and other conversation points in this section serve as potent triggers for reflection and discussion. Perhaps they might also serve as springboards for debate around questions of incarnational and sacramental theology, liturgy, ecclesiology, even inculturation. Given the fact that the majority of our present crop of pastors are “digital migrants” who are called to minister to flocks which are more and more taken over by “digital natives,” how open are we in expressing the Good News in the language, medium, and context of the people of our time? In the first place, how well do we know this language, medium, and context? In which direction does the Spirit tweet today, opening new paths for the proclamation of the Gospel? Can the Word made flesh be now made meme?

Section II (39-100) presents important considerations in formulating a concrete pastoral strategy as well as designing effective tactics for using the social media in evangelization. For instance, it emphasizes “quality content” that not only “easily and consistently generates interaction” but can also “enhance your audiences’ knowledge, deepen their understanding, strengthen their faith, stimulate conversation, and build community” (p. 53). Another important point in this section is that ‘digital’ media does not necessarily mean social media. What we want is not only to use technology to disseminate information efficiently but to animate communication, thus building up the communion of the Church. This section concludes with a comparative appraisal of the different social media platforms available now, from blogging all the way to Snapchat.

Section III (105-134) tackles special issues such as the use of jargon or ‘Church speak,’ some technical aspects in writing online content, as well as managing online conflict. This final section ends with a list of best practices, which is really a set of pointers culled from the author’s patently rich experience in using social media for ministry. Not to be missed

are the helpful appendices that include strategic questions for planning and deliberation, pointers in crafting a social media policy and doing a communications and digital audit, boilerplates of online policies that can be used or tweaked, even job descriptions for basic social media positions in the Church.

All of these respond to a concrete need in the Church today that Gould in this book addresses not only with competence but with the wisdom that comes from experience, combined with a discernment that is at once audacious and visionary as it is prudent and grounded. What surely helped is her conscious effort to keep the use of jargon to a minimum and make her points accessible. This in itself is a valuable lesson for Church communicators whose knowledge and expertise is sometimes wasted when they cling to the high language of their theological discourse instead of daring to “put out into the deep” (Lk 5:4) and explore new means of expressing timeless truths. What is lost when the Gospel for this Sunday is translated to a 140-character tweet? What is gained?

Leo-Martin Angelo R. Ocampo

Ratzinger, Joseph. *The Unity of the Nations: A Vision of the Church Fathers.* Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2015. 122 pp. ISBN 978-0-8132-2723-8.

We are offered here a small but rather dense book from one of the leading figures in the world of the Academe. We call it ‘dense’ because its content is not an easy reading for those who are not initiated to the thoughts of the Fathers of the Church. The text was originally delivered as a lecture during the Salzburg University Week of 1962 where the then Fr. Joseph Ratzinger was invited as a theologian. In this lecture, the future Pontiff speaks of a theme that remains close to his heart: ‘political theology.’ Reading this book allows us to say that the recent debates on religion and secularism (like the one he had with the philosopher Jurgen Habermas), which the now Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI participated, has already been his interest since the start of his career as a theologian. In this work, Ratzinger toiled on the theme ‘political theology’ as sketched in the works of the Church Fathers, Origen, and St. Augustine. We thank Fr. Boniface Ramsey, who has himself published a well-received work on the Fathers of the Church, for the translation that makes this work available to the English-speaking world.

One important claim made by this book is the ‘revolutionary’ character of Christianity when it inserted itself in history, particularly within the Roman Empire. The Christianity of Origen’s era has revolutionized the Roman idea of the *cosmopolis* as the locus for the unity of humanity. Whereas the Romans were united because of their national identity, Origen pointed out that Christians, following the Jewish people, possess an identity that is not of this world. Christianity’s radical contribution, Ratzinger tells us, is to show us that what really binds us all is our ‘humanity that is in a direct relationship with God.’ For Origen then, Ratzinger would say, a ‘national identity’ which the Romans have boasted for themselves, is in fact a prison that hinders their ‘direct relationship with God.’ The Christians

of Origen's time, on the other hand, are revolutionary in their fidelity to such a relationship. Ratzinger would however say that 'such revolutionary view on national identity' does not also end up with the call to give up the world, which was a gnostic conclusion. He instead said that 'faith in Christ, to be sure, revolutionized the present form of the world, but it was not opposed to the *cosmos* as such; rather, it disclosed its true meaning for the first time.' The thoughts of Origen, Ratzinger would then say, directs our sights to a new order, even if that direction, if we are to rely on Origen's texts, remains to be 'unclear and murky.'

The talk about the 'new order' that Origen was gesturing to has led Ratzinger's discussion to the thoughts of St. Augustine. Immediately, Ratzinger alludes to Augustine's defense for Christianity who took upon themselves the blame for the fall of the Empire. Augustine has argued that the 'fall of the Empire' was instead brought about by the 'untruthfulness of Rome's political religion,' which was concerned with canonizing customs instead of the truth. In contrast, Christian faith is 'freeing – namely, a freeing from the tyranny of custom for the sake of the truth.' The truth then provides the direction for the journey of the Church. Christians need not abandon the world, but they are always aware that they are not of this world. They are in a 'pilgrimage' towards the Truth which is absolute. Ratzinger then describes the Christianity that was presented by Augustine's texts: "To that extent, the Christianity that was now lawful by intention was also revolutionary in an ultimate sense, since it could not be identified with any state but was, rather, a force that relativized everything that was included in the world by pointing to the one absolute God."

While working on the thoughts of the Fathers of the Church for a lecture that was delivered decades ago, Ratzinger's insights in this work remain relevant to the present. Surely, identity has now been closely linked - if not equated - to race, ethnicity, and citizenship. We have moreover seen the divisions, often bloody, that such equation has resulted to. While our present world is no longer adept to the language of the Fathers of the Church – like the vocabulary on angels and demons – we have things to learn from Ratzinger's allusion to *divisions* seen by these Fathers as the work of demons (or the angels of the peoples, the fallen ones), and are ultimately the result of sin. Divisions are brought about when humanity breaks their ties with God and begins to rely on their own strengths.

In a world where not only angels and demons are no longer thought to exist, but even God, this book by Ratzinger still brings us to an important question: 'will it make a difference if we entertain the possibility of something that is beyond: beyond this world, beyond our humanity, beyond our strengths? Perhaps, we become obsessed with what we have and who we are – where such obsession makes us offenders of what *others* have and of who they are – because we are imprisoned in the 'here and now' and have failed to appreciate that which is beyond. Will it matter more for us if instead of insisting on our dwelling and abode in this world, we become more attentive on our pilgrimage to the world beyond? We realize of course that, as with Origen and Augustine, our view of that which is beyond would still be 'murky and unclear.'

Joel C. Sagut

MacCosker, Philip and Denys Turner, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to the Summa Theologiae*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016. 368 pp. ISBN 978-0-5217-0544-8.

What more can be said about Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*? So much ink has been spilled and many minds have already commented on it but here again in the year 2016, another book is published to be its companion.

The above claim is not meant to show exasperation but instead admiration and amazement: Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* is as rich as a deep ocean. That another companion has to be printed besides the other books which appeared before proves that Aquinas' thought has to be pondered constantly and prayerfully.

A companion is someone who is an intimate friend and a close associate. The book for sure is a companion for the reader who is trying to find a clear path to the dense text of the *Summa Theologiae*.

As a companion, the book is very much at home with the pluralistic world we find ourselves in. It does not present Aquinas in a rigid way. But true to its name as a companion, it tries to present as many viewpoints as possible to Aquinas' opus. It leads the reader to critically assess for himself the many explanations he finds in the book. A companion does not coerce but leaves his friend a space to think and decide for himself. This is the first feature of this book.

Second is the spirit of dialogue present in the articles. The book presents the articles in a way that invites friendship and strong relationships. Just by looking at the Table of Contents, one will realize that the three divisions of the book reflect a movement that is not confined to a narrow circle but moves outside, even to those who are not within the faith. The article authored by Fr. Timothy Radcliffe, OP presents perhaps the basis of this movement. Aquinas is so connected with God that he cannot but reach out to others even those which are not of the faith. The topics are well placed, starting with context, structure, and method of the *Summa* followed by themes beginning with God and ending with the sacraments. The third part relates Aquinas' *Summa* within and outside the Catholic tradition.

The contributors are experts in their own fields and their aim is to dialogue. They do not impose but propose an Aquinas that is as relevant today as he was centuries ago.

The influence of Aquinas is stressed even outside the confines of the Catholic tradition, something that present-day scholars of Aquinas must consider seriously. If Aquinas' message in the *Summa* is both timely and timeless, then even those who are outside the Catholic tradition can benefit positively from his thinking. This can lead the reader to consider the thought: what could be the impact of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* to an oriental, in particular the Philippine society, whose culture is basically visual? The book as a companion comes in handy. Besides, an expert in Aquinas coming from the East can surely bring a distinctive angle to the *Summa Theologiae*.

Over all, the book is truly a companion and does detract the reader from going directly to the text of Aquinas. It leads the reader to appreciate the Angelic Doctor's message. The editors and contributors deserve a sincere tap in the back.

Jose Adriand Emmanuel L. Layug

Vilaró, Ramón. *Mabuhay. Bienvenidos a Filipinas*. Barcelona: Ediciones Península, 2017. 270 pp.

Aunque no muy abundante, la bibliografía española sobre Filipinas presenta algunos títulos de interés. Con el riesgo de olvidar o desconocer, quisiéramos ofrecer algunos títulos y sobre todo presentar la que nos parece última producción sobre el particular, la obra de Ramón Vilaró, *Mabuhay. Bienvenidos a Filipinas*, Ediciones Península, Barcelona, 2017.

He aquí pues algunos títulos, más o menos recientes: Patricio Hidalgo Nuchera (editor), *Los primeros de Filipinas: crónicas de la conquista española del archipiélago San Lázaro*, Ediciones Miraguano, Ediciones Polifemo, Madrid, 1995 (367 p.); Saturnino Martín Cerezo, *La pérdida de las Filipinas*, Dastin Historia, Madrid, 2002 (220 p.); J. Moya-Angeler, *¡Olvidad Filipinas!*, Cinco, Barcelona, 2003 (318 p.); Pedro de la Peña, *Los primeros de Filipinas (VIII premio de novela ciudad de Salamanca)*, Editorial Algaida, Sevilla, 2004 (314 p.) y naturalmente la obra que citábamos al inicio, Ramón Vilaró, *Mabuhay. Bienvenidos a Filipinas*, Ediciones Península, Barcelona, 2017 (268 p.). No se trata ni con mucho de una recensión exhaustiva, pero creemos que estos títulos podrían figurar en el catálogo de la Universidad de Santo Tomás de Manila.

Ramón Vilaró es periodista y escritor. Ha sido corresponsal de *El País*, en Bruselas, Washington y Tokio. Ello le ha dado pie para escribir algunos libros fruto de su diverso conocimiento de países, gentes y costumbres. Por lo que se refiere a Asia, y más concretamente a Filipinas tenemos los siguientes títulos: *Dainichi, la epopeya de Francisco Javier en Japón* (2001), *Tabaco, el imperio de los marqueses de Comillas* (2003) y *La última conquista* (2005).

El libro que presentamos hoy es fruto de los numerosos viajes de Vilaró a Filipinas y de su creciente amor y admiración por ese país.

El libro está organizado en 32 capítulos más bien cortos y en un cierto desorden. Todos son fruto de viajes, experiencias y encuentros personales del autor. Destacamos desde el principio el interés culinario de Vilaró. En casi todos los capítulos hay una minuciosa descripción del menú degustado en un restaurante o en una casa particular. El estilo es típicamente periodístico: relatos cortos, detalles históricos y ambientales que ayudan a entender el relato, alguna conversación y un especial interés por conectar con españoles, hispano-filipinos o descendientes de españoles. El lector español, y especialmente catalán, se siente pues sumergido en un ambiente que le resulta familiar, al mismo tiempo que capta las numerosas relaciones existentes entre el archipiélago y España.

Empieza por “la bahía más bella del mundo”, o sea “Maynila, para continuar luego por otras ciudades y regiones, como Baler, donde se realizó la gesta de los “últimos de Filipinas”. No falta un detallado viaje hacia Baguio y La Cordillera, con sus célebres terrazas, Vigan, herencia hispana, y Batac, territorio nativo del Ferdinand Marcos. Siguen a continuación, un paso por algunas islas particulares – Palawan, Hayaan, Siquijor, Boracay – y la obligada visita de Cebú y el Santo Niño, así como una rápida descripción de Zamboanga y del problema de los “moros” en Filipinas, con una alusión al “chabacano” la lengua más cercana al español entre todas las habladas en Filipinas.

Un última parte más histórica nos lleva de nuevo a la capital. Vilaró evoca la terrible batalla de Manila en 1945, cuando los americanos, bajo las órdenes de McArthur lucharon contra los ocupantes japoneses que se defendieron de manera terrible y despiadada. Un monumento – *Memorare* – en el “intramuros” del período colonial, recuerda a las numerosas víctimas de la Segunda Guerra Mundial.

No falta luego una detallada narración de la caída de Fernando Marcos en 1986. El autor estuvo presente en los hechos y los describe con entusiasmo, dando a conocer sus visitas a Malacañán, el palacio presidencial. Sólo faltaba una pequeña descripción de Makati, el lujoso barrio de negocios de la Manila actual, que aparece al final.

Hemos omitido los nombres de los numerosos personajes entrevistados por Vilaró, que sin duda conoce ahora las Filipinas de modo casi exhaustivo. El libro tiene también una bibliografía en inglés y español, que completa ampliamente los títulos dados al principio y algunas interesantes fotografías.

En fin, un libro-crónica, agradable de leer y que probablemente ayudará a algunos españoles a visitar ese archipiélago que fue un día la avanzadilla del imperio y que no ha perdido su encanto natural, después del período americano y la actual independencia.

Fernando P. Guillén, sch.p.

