

9-29-1964

Cultural Anthropology and the Apostolate: The Church and Cultures

John F. Doherty

Follow this and additional works at: <https://archium.ateneo.edu/phstudies>

Recommended Citation

Doherty, John F. (1964) "Cultural Anthropology and the Apostolate: The Church and Cultures," *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints*: Vol. 12: No. 3, Article 17.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.13185/2244-1638.2675>

Available at: <https://archium.ateneo.edu/phstudies/vol12/iss3/17>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Ateneo Journals at Archium Ateneo. It has been accepted for inclusion in Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints by an authorized editor of Archium Ateneo.

philippine studies

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

Cultural Anthropology and the Apostolate: The Church and Cultures

Review Author: John F. Doherty

Philippine Studies vol. 12, no. 3 (1964): 543–545

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.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

make for stimulating reading. Their references to familiar details of daily living—such as a housewife's never-ending chores with children and husband, picking up after them, doing the dishes; their confessions of all-too-human feelings—disappointment with self, lack of interest in housekeeping routine—"Whew! Are you as tired as I am? I've spent so much time on this letter that the housework and ironing and even my piano practicing (!) have been neglected; I'll be happy to get it in the mail."—these charm the reader. The warmth of their mutual regard permeates the book. And when the last letter is written, the hymn with which Mrs. Juliana chooses to end it sums up the sentiment of the entire dialogue.

Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.

Before our Father's throne
We pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
Our comforts and our cares.

We share mutual woes
Our mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear.

When we asunder part,
It gives us inward pain;
But we shall still be joined in heart,
And hope to meet again.

It is true that theologians may have more precise and penetrating analyses of the differences between the Christian churches. But the average individual may never have access to such work. And even if he had, it is not too certain that he would react to it. To such a one, *The Wall Between Us* may have more meaning than a thousand theological treatises. For in it, one gets the distinct impression that he shares the problems and the joys of people like himself.

MARIA TERESA COLAYCO

CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE APOSTOLATE

THE CHURCH AND CULTURES. By Louis J. Luzbetak, S.V.D.
Techy, Ill.: Divine Word Publications, 1963. 417 pp.

The Church and Cultures is as the sub-title suggests, "An Applied Anthropology for the Religious Worker." As such it represents a significant first. Drawing on his own wide experience as an anthropologist and missionary, Fr. Luzbetak locates the missionary apostolate in the cultural context and gives a sound theological justification for emphasizing the natural and human side of a basically supernatural endeavor. The core of the book, however, is devoted to a discussion of culture, its nature, organization and dynamics. The scientific explanations are clear and simple and supported by a wealth of interesting examples and practical suggestions. Each chapter concludes with selected readings, review questions, and a list of topics for discussion and further research. The extensive bibliography at the end of the book is a very valuable guide for those interested in building a mission library on topics of general or special interest. Though written for classroom use the book can very easily be used for private study even by busy missionaries in the field.

Throughout his work, Fr. Luzbetak insists on the necessity of studying the whole culture and culture as a whole. To the anthropologist, this principle is basic. Unfortunately, it has often been neglected in missionary endeavor. Too often Christianity has been identified with Western culture with the result that missionary zeal in spreading the Gospel has been expended on achieving a uniformity which has at times all but crippled the natural genius of many non-Western peoples. Mistakes have been made in the past and are being made at present because missionaries are unaware of the basic findings of cultural anthropology and of how these findings can be applied to the missionary apostolate. Fr. Luzbetak's book may not provide ready answers to all the problems faced by the missionary on entering a new culture but it will give him a healthy respect for 'ways of life' different from his own and help him to evaluate "strange" customs in their own setting rather than in terms of the missionary's own Western orientation.

In an otherwise very practical work, it is to be regretted that the author's analysis of "missionary accommodation" leaves much to be desired. Though he admits that "one of the chief problems facing the Second Vatican Council is to spell out in unmistakable terms the proper relationship between the Church and local cultures," he leaves little doubt that he considers this relationship to be one of adapting to local cultures that which brings its own proper form from elsewhere. To speak of accommodation in such terms seems to put him in the position of admitting that the Western garb of the Church is in some way native to it—which is certainly not the case.

One final point, the frequent comparisons with communist tactics to illustrate the need for cultural adaptation made this reader wonder whether the emphasis on understanding culture was valid in itself or only as a means for combatting Communism in mission areas. The

point may seem trivial but Catholics all too often have committed themselves to a course of action against something rather than on its own intrinsic merits. One would hope this is not the case in the present work.

Despite these limitations, *The Church and Cultures* is an excellent work which should be required reading for every missionary.

JOHN F. DOHERTY

CIVIL LAW FOR THE COMMON MAN

ANG KODIGO SIBIL NG PILIPINAS. Salin sa wikang Pilipino ni Cezar C. Peralejo. Quezon City: Mars Publishing House, 1964. xv, 236 pp.

Article 3 of the Civil Code states that "Ignorance of the law excuses no one from compliance therewith." This was apparently the purpose of Atty. Cezar Peralejo in translating the Civil Code of the Philippines into Pilipino. This volume is a classic example of aiming at a noble purpose and falling short of it.

The purpose is a good one. Too many of our masses do not know their rights and obligations under the law. The Civil Code is in Spanish and English, languages which a great number of our people know little of. To inform them of their rights and obligations, the translator has put out this volume. It is an impressive piece of work if one considers chiefly the effort, patience and language skill that went into its production. It is difficult enough to translate something from English to Pilipino; it is even more difficult to translate the Civil Code (or any other legal code for that matter) into Pilipino. Atty. Peralejo deserves commendation for his aim and his effort.

Translating the law, however, is a dangerous occupation. Legal codes are such that a single mistake can lead to numerous misinterpretations and misconstructions. Every single word of the law counts. Sometimes even the positions of punctuation marks count. This translation is dotted with words apparently derived from Spanish originals, such as "Rehistro Sibil," "Pamumusisyon," "Usuprukto," and "Serbisyo," which are some of the equivalents given to the titles in the Civil Code.

The difficulty is at once understandable. The Pilipino language does not contain all the equivalent words necessary to translate a legal code in its entirety. The translator is thus faced with the problem of minting new words in the process of translation. Rabid exponents of Pilipino may perhaps dispute some of the meanings, but that is a matter for our language purists to debate on.