NEW CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA
Edited by Berard L. Marthaler, OFMConv. (Executive Editor)
New York: Thomson-Gale in association with
Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America
Reviewed by Miguel A. Bernad

The publication of a new edition of the New Catholic Encyclopedia is a major publishing event and invites comparison with the first edition published thirty-five years earlier in 1967 after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council.

There is a new publisher, but the editorial supervision has remained with B. Marthaler and top dignitaries of The Catholic University of America. The fifteen-volume 1967 edition was published by McGraw Hill, a multinational firm with several world-wide branches. This new edition is published by The Gale Group Inc., a division of Thomson Learning Inc. of Farmington Hills, Michigan. The copyright holder for both editions is The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. The 1967 edition was augmented over the years by supplement volumes 16-19 and a separate addition called "The Jubilee Volume: The Wojtyla Years," which deals not only with the personal biography of Pope John Paul II but also with various issues, events, and documents of his pontificate.

Of particular interest to the Landas readership are, of course, the Philippine entries. The earlier edition gave extensive coverage to the Philippines in three main articles found in volume eleven: "Philippines" (H. de la Costa), "Philippine Literature" (A. Manuud), and "Philippine Independent Church" (P. Achútegui and M. Bernad). In addition, scattered through the various volumes were individual articles on each of the Philippine archdioceses, which put the Philippine Church on a level of equality with other countries of the world.

That honorable treatment is revised in the new edition. The individual articles on the Philippine archdioceses have been omitted; however, a table of all the metropolitan sees with their suffragans is
provided. The original "country article" and the "Philippine Literature" piece also do not appear separately; the editors chose another approach, which integrates the country material within the current much longer article entitled "Philippines, the Catholic Church in" written by Maryknoll Missioner James H. Kroeger of the Loyola School of Theology in Manila. The article reaches the very respectable length of nineteen columns, covering ten pages, along with maps, photographs, and an extensive, current bibliography.

One article is retained from the earlier edition, that on the Philippine Independent Church by P. Achútegui and M. Bernad. This reviewer (as co-author) is of course gratified to see that the article is retained in the new edition, but it would have been better if the editors had called for a new article on the subject. In the four decades since the publication in 1960 of volume one of the four-volume Achútegui-Bernad work on the Religious Revolution in the Philippines, much has transpired to warrant a fresh approach with new perspectives.

The omission of much international material is one difference between this new edition and the earlier one of 1967. That first edition gave the impression of being concerned with the Church throughout the world. It had an international look. The new edition seems to have a more domestic outlook.

There are, however, several articles in this new edition of more general interest and in some cases there has been an improvement over the older edition. One example is the entry on the man commonly known as the "apostle" of what is now Vietnam (in older times the separate kingdom of Tongking, Annam and Cochin China), namely Alexandre de Rhodes, SJ. The brief and unsatisfactory article in the first edition has been replaced by a longer and more scholarly one by Peter C. Phan, who authored a book on de Rhodes and Inculturation (Mission and Catechesis, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998) [reviewed in Landas 13:2 (1999)]. This article acknowledges that although de Rhodes was not the first missionary in that region, he "deserves the accolade" of being called "the founder of Christianity in Vietnam."
The article mentions de Rhodes’ published works and his role in bringing about the establishment of a hierarchy in Vietnam. But even this article, with its obvious merits, leaves much unmentioned: de Rhodes is acknowledged by the Vietnamese as the author of what is called “the national language,” meaning the peculiar romanized script that includes tones, which linguists have characterized as a brilliant and unique contribution to linguistics. Also unmentioned is the role played by de Rhodes in the establishment of the Congregation de propaganda fide as well as his foundation of a society of catechists to multiply his effectiveness throughout the country (from that society of catechists came the protomartyrs of Vietnam).

On balance, our dissatisfaction with this or that article should not becloud the outstanding fact: a new edition of a great encyclopedia is a major event, for which we congratulate the editors and publishers.