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On the Greatness of Rizal: The First Filipino

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welcome book, with helpful footnotes and references, for the general public and especially for the student of the religious, cultural, and social frontier that is Philippine Muslims.

ERIC S. CASIÑO

ON THE GREATNESS OF RIZAL

THE FIRST FILIPINO: A Biography of José Rizal. By León Ma. Guerrero. Manila: National Heroes Commission, 1963. xxiii, 549 pp.

There has been no lack of biographers of Rizal, both Filipinos and non-Filipinos, yet very few of them till now have produced a biography which was successful in bringing together the historical facts, and at the same time making these facts come alive in the real human being José Rizal was. The years since the war, moreover, have made many new sources available of writings of Rizal—notably the letters to his family, the *Memorias*, the diaries, and the Rizal documents donated by the Spanish Government. Likewise there have appeared important background studies such as those of Professors De Veyra, Agoncillo, and Majul. The time was ripe then for a fresh biography of Rizal.

Ambassador Leon Ma. Guerrero has brought an extraordinary combination of qualifications to the writing of this biography, which was awarded first prize in the Rizal Biography Contest sponsored by the José Rizal National Centennial Commission in 1961. Guerrero possesses an acknowledged mastery of vivid English prose, a broad, cosmopolitan cultural background, reminiscent of that of his subject, and an intimate acquaintance with the writings of Rizal, born of several years work in the translation and editing of these writings. All these qualifications have contributed to making this biography, as Director of Public Libraries Carlos Quirino, himself outstanding among Rizal's previous biographers, says in the introduction, "undoubtedly the best biography of the national hero of the Philippines."

Guerrero's broad acquaintance with Spanish and Philippine history is supplemented by an often penetrating and imaginative psychological insight in his interpretation of Rizal. Worthy of particular note are his analysis of the motives in the quarrel between Rizal and Del Pilar over leadership of the Filipino Colony in Madrid (pp. 262-270); his reassessment of Governor-General Eulogio Despujol and the latter's deportation of Rizal (332-338); the understanding of the role of the Friar in Philippine history as "The Last Spaniard" (xii-xviii); the analysis and evaluation of Rizal's enmity toward the Friars (134-136).

The discussion of Rizal's attitude toward the independence of his country and the means by which this was to be obtained is handled with the careful nuances and distinctions necessary. Guerrero rejects the notion, expounded by Retana and others since, that Rizal never really sought independence for the Philippines, but merely reforms and rights within the Spanish system. At the same time, he points out that Rizal clearly opposed the Revolution of 1896, not because he considered it unjustified, but unlikely to achieve the true independence he dreamed of for his people. But it was his revolution nonetheless, inspired and prepared for by him, as he worked to create the Nation which made it.

Recognizing the contribution made by Agoncillo in his study of the Katipunan, Guerrero goes on to show the limits of the thesis of an opposition between *ilustrados* like Rizal and the Revolution of peasants and workers of Bonifacio. In spite of the differences in background and outlook between the two men and in spite of the different class from which their followers came, both men were fighting a political, not a class war.

Guerrero carefully avoids the excesses of hagiographers who would see in Rizal a full-blown nationalist almost from his mother's womb. Yet this reviewer feels that he plays down too much the youthful nationalism of "A la juventud filipina" and "El amor patrio". The notion of a *patria* which was not Spain in Rizal's youthful ode was not merely an over-keen perception of Retana's (who admittedly has shown himself over-ingenious in this matter). Pastells, for instance, had already noted the point years before with disfavor. It is probably true that Rizal had not rejected Spain at this early stage of his career, but rather he saw her as the country to which the Philippines had associated her destiny—but as a partner, not a subject. From this point of view, it seems that Rizal had something more definite in mind when he left for Europe than merely to make his name abroad as a writer. This reviewer's study of the young Rizal would incline him to think of Rizal's purpose as directed toward preparing himself for action rather than mere writing—not political action, but action in educating his people. The role education, in its broadest sense, played in the mind of the nationalist Rizal can scarcely be emphasized sufficiently. Much as he would later be reluctantly drawn into political activity, even his political writings aimed more at forming the minds and hearts of his countrymen than at winning reforms and concessions from Spain or castigating abuses.

The author's dispassionate treatment of that ever-controversial point of Rizal's retraction of Masonry is eminently sensible and sound. As to the fact of the retraction's existence, he notes, there is no court of law which would not accept the evidence. The testimony of handwriting experts to its authenticity has been challenged by no one with

claim to similar professional competence. The testimony of the witnesses is likewise such as would be acceptable to any court, unless one adopts the premise, as yet unproven, that all Jesuits are untrustworthy witnesses. (It may be noted, incidentally, that there is an abundance of documentation of the retraction in the Jesuit Archives of Spain in contemporary correspondence, which, if the thesis of Jesuit forgery propounded by some is to be maintained, must have taxed the ingenuity of a massive corps of Jesuit forgers.) On the other hand, Guererro rightly points out that it is highly unlikely that Rizal would have been convinced by the mere arguments of Balaguer, all of which he had heard before, not only from Balaguer in Dapitan, but from others like Pastells and Sánchez, who undoubtedly proposed them with greater force and learning. Why then did Rizal finally yield? One who believes in the reality of God's grace will see the answer here. The rationalist cannot accept this. "...But no one can assert that Rizal could not have humbled himself...until he himself stands on the brink of eternity, and, beating the feeble wings of human reason, wonders if they will carry him across" (p. 471). The intimate motivation of Rizal stands outside the reach of historical method, which is incapable of either proving or disproving the action of grace.

There are some minor inaccuracies of fact in the book, none of which really affects the story of Rizal. The Colegio de San José was not a seminary in the time of Rizal (p. 37); the tobacco monopoly was abolished in 1881 rather than 1884 (p. 176); (Celso) Mir Deas was the real name, not a pseudonym, of Luna's opponent (p. 257); Father Pablo Pastells was the anonymous compiler of *Rizal y su obra*, García Barzanallana was merely the editor of the review *La Juventud*, in which it first appeared (p. 525, n. 6); Pedro de Govantes was never Minister of Justice (p. 383); Doroteo Cortés does not seem to have been a Mason yet at the time of the Manifestation of 1888 (p. 187), though he did become one later. The "version of the Seventy" (p. 455 and n. 44) refers to the so-called Septuagint translation of the Old Testament into Greek, done, according to the legend, by seventy translators.

This reviewer finds some difficulty also with the use of a few sources of doubtful reliability, such as Foreman (pp. 21-23); the second- or third-hand reports of Retana, through Isabelo de los Reyes, on supposed printing of antireligious leaflets by Friars and the planting of them in Rizal's baggage by a relative of Archbishop Nozaleda (pp. 337-338); the scarcely credible bribe said to have been offered by Friars to Rizal in Dapitan (p. 376); the improbable anonymous letter of "A Friar" threatening Rizal's life (pp. 148-149). None of the incidents narrated are impossible, but the sources from which they come being so critically unreliable, and the intrinsic probabilities being so dubious in most of them, one wonders if the historian ought even to give them the attention of reporting them as rumors.

But none of these minor defects concerns points of importance or affects Guerrero's interpretation of Rizal himself. This is a biography solidly based on historical fact, written in a style which makes it a pleasure to read. Though the author expresses some half-doubts in his preface as to the ability of any Filipino being able to write objectively of his people's national hero, he has succeeded in achieving that objectivity, blended with sympathy and admiration for his subject. His acceptance and presentation of Rizal as he was, "...not perfect...not always right..." will enable his readers to perceive, as he hopes, "...that his humanity is precisely the secret of his greatness."

JOHN N. SCHUMACHER

NEW LIGHT ON COLET AND PLATONISM

JOHN COLET AND MARSILIO FICINO. By Sears Jayne. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963. 172 pp.

This book is an attempt to examine how much light is shed on John Colet and his thought by the recent "rediscovery" of a copy of Marsilio Ficino's *Epistolae*, containing Colet's manuscript marginalia and some correspondence between the two. Professor Jayne's work, without doubt, has accomplished its purpose. *John Colet and Marsilio Ficino* provides students of the Renaissance with the definitive solution to the problem of Colet's Platonism, casts in considerable doubt the traditional place given Colet among protestant reformers, and, above all, explains Colet's thoughts in their proper setting, the intellectual-voluntarist debate that dominated medieval and Renaissance thinking. In describing the intellectual milieu of John Colet, Professor Jayne has done excellent service to Renaissance scholarship: he has written a brief but adequate survey of the theological and philosophical climate of the age in its own terms, thereby avoiding the dangerous, because misleading, practice of labelling the Renaissance with post-Renaissance terms pregnant with connotations totally modern or contemporary.

The work is divided into three parts: a lengthy introduction which traces the relations, biographical as well as intellectual, between the Dean of St. Paul's and the head of the Platonic academy in Florence, and discusses the intellect-will problem in relation to Colet and Ficino; the texts and translations of the marginalia and the correspondence; and appendixes of much value treating (A) the identification of Colet's handwriting, (B) the passages marked for reading in Ficino's table of contents, (C) the passages underlined in Ficino's text, and (D) the texts of Colet and Ficino's *De raptu Pauli*. Also appended is a