

philippine studies

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

Tribute to Aguinaldo: The Young Aguinaldo

Review Author: Miguel A. Bernad

Philippine Studies vol. 17, no. 3 (1969): 637–640

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.

by Msgr. Pospishil, we owe him a debt of thanks for forcing us to consider the problems of divorce and the manner in which it is beginning to affect Catholics. Hopefully the Catholic people, both clergy and laity, will begin to look more seriously at the problem and will try to offer some real rather than ethereal solutions.

SAMUEL R. WILEY, S. J.

TRIBUTE TO AGUINALDO

THE YOUNG AGUINALDO: FROM KAWIT TO BIYAK-NA-BATO. By Carlos Quirino. With a Preface by Nick Joaquin. Aguinaldo Centennial Year. Manila: Bookmark, 1969. xii, 230 pp.

In 1963 the present reviewer had the privilege of collaborating with Carlos Quirino (at that time Director of the National Library) in a book which we at the time thought (and still think) was of great national interest. It was the publication in photostatic facsimile of the original manuscript documents relative to the trial of Andres Bonifacio. The documents were in Tagalog, but an English translation was also provided by Mrs. Virginia Palma Bonifacio. Director Quirino, besides providing the photostatic copies of the documents, also provided a historical introduction.

That biographical essay originally published in 1963, has now been expanded into the book under review. It is intended as the first of a two-volume biography of the great leader of the Revolution, the centenary of whose birth is celebrated this year.

Aguinaldo was born in 1869, the year of the opening of the Suez Canal. The two events have a symbolic relation: for the Suez Canal hastened the economic and intellectual development of the Philippines by bringing the Islands closer to Europe; Aguinaldo's role was to hasten the national development of the Filipino people by overturning the old order and attempting to set up the first independent republic in Asia. The experiment did not succeed, not because the Filipinos were not ready for self-government, but because American imperialism stepped in to rob them of their hard-earned independence.

The story of that experiment is one of the most absorbing in the entire history of the world. Carlos Quirino, in the present volume, tells only the first part of the story: from the Cavite meeting of 1872 (which resulted in the martyrdom of the three priests, Fathers Burgos, Gomez and Zamora) to the Pact of Biak-na-bato of 1897. It is a fascinating story, and Carlos Quirino tells it well.

In telling this story, he follows the standard authors: Sastrón, Monteverde, Foreman, and the Memoirs of Aguinaldo and Ricarte. But in addition, he has had the advantage of personal conversations with General Aguinaldo, who, in his declining years, could still recall vividly the details of those stirring days of his youth, when, at the age of 28, he became his country's first President and commander in chief.

It will not detract from the obvious merits of this book to point out some of its defects. Admittedly, some of these defects are trivial, but they can be annoying to a reader.

For instance, why must a "calesa" be called a "rig"? Or why must a "carabao" be called a "water buffalo"? Is it not better to call native objects by their native names?

Another point: why must Aguinaldo be called by so many names? "Kapitan Emilio"; "Heneral Miong"; "General Aguinaldo"; etc. Is it not simpler to call him by one name: Aguinaldo?

A third point is the occasional imprecise use of words which have a precise meaning. For instance, a "concerted attack" can not be made if only one column is attacking. Perhaps "a determined attack" would be more accurate.

A fourth point concerns the bibliography. There is no doubt that Director Quirino has used his bibliography well: but he has not listed it well. Teodoro Agoncillo's *The Revolt of the Masses* can not be considered a "primary source." Nor can Zaide's *The Philippine Revolution*. These and similar books may be useful, but they are not "primary."

There are some passages that may strike the reader as somewhat naive. Did Crispulo Aguinaldo (who died a hero's death in the defense of Imus) really address his brother as "My General"?

Or was Aguinaldo really "taken aback" by the verdict recommending Bonifacio's death?

There is also the failure in some instances to probe into Aguinaldo's state of mind where moral issues were involved. This may be illustrated by one concrete case, namely the duplicity described by Aguinaldo himself in his Memoirs: secretly, he was a Mason and a member of the Katipunan; outwardly, he showed himself so friendly to the authorities, and in particular to the friars, that they trusted him as being on their side. Quirino calls Aguinaldo's situation that of a double agent: but how does a double agent feel about his duplicity? Is there not an anguish in honor—if not in conscience—in being one thing while posing as something else?

It is not necessary for the biographer to be a moralist: but he should at least alert his readers to the fact that there is a moral issue involved.

Quirino in fact does this with admirable insight in the case of Bonifacio. Of Bonifacio's ruthlessness he says:

"Bonifacio possessed a fanatical mind that could not be swayed by awful consequences in case of failure, or frightened by possible reprisals by vengeful authorities. He typified the man of action who was not the least bothered by philosophical arguments or plagued by Hamlet-like indecision. He had no scruples in implicating the rich and the educated among his countrymen, which he did by making it appear that they were members of his organization. He hung their pictures in meeting places and even manufactured documents linking them to the Katipunan. Thus, the enlarged photograph of Rizal appeared in all their meeting places, and the members were told — without Rizal's knowledge and much less his consent — that he was the honorary president of their association. Later on, these *ilustrados* who were thus implicated were arrested, tortured, and either exiled or executed, because of these documents. We do not know if Bonifacio was ever bothered by what he had done, but he must have been convinced that all Filipinos — rich or poor, educated or not — should be united, for better or for worse in this struggle for human rights and national freedom. Since the intellectuals and the middle class had spurned him, let them be tarred with the same feathers he wore. He probably derived sardonic satisfaction from the thought."

With equal insight Quirino analyzes Bonifacio's tragedy: "And this is the tragedy of Andres Bonifacio, founder of the Katipunan which initiated the Philippine Revolution. Having fathered the most successful revolt in the history of our country against a foreign power, he became a victim of the group who had appropriated the movement for their own."

One point might be mentioned with regard to dates. From Magaondon in the western end of Cavite, Aguinaldo traveled through mountain trails to Talisay in Batangas, then northward across the Pasig and on to Biak-na-bato. How long did this journey take? When did he get to Biak-na-bato? According to Sastrón, Aguinaldo left Cavite on 10 June and was in Biak-na-bato by the 14th — a physical impossibility in those pre-automobile and pre-helicopter days. Ricarte in his Memoirs gives a more detailed account of the route taken, but leaves out the dates. So does Quirino.

The dates actually can be fixed with some accuracy from the entries in Aguinaldo's day-book listing his expenses. The book is on file in the Philippine Insurgent Records. It opens with an entry

on 25 May 1897. He is already in Talisay by then. He is there till the 4th of June, when he moves to Paliparan. Thence to Minuyan where he stays a considerable amount of time in July. He does not get to Biak-na-bato till the 2nd of August. Sastrón's claim therefore that Aguinaldo was not involved in the battle of Puray (14 June) because he was already in Biak-na-bato by then, anticipates his arrival in Biak-na-bato by six weeks.

One passage in Quirino's book is particularly well done. It is his description of Aguinaldo's journey from Biak-na-bato to Sual for transportation to Hong Kong. It was a triumphal march in which Aguinaldo was acclaimed by both his countrymen and his former enemies. This was (as Quirino points out) "Spain at her best."

Quirino's second volume, dealing with the Malolos Republic and the Philippine-American War should prove equally interesting. We hope that it will be as good — if not better — than the first.

MIGUEL A. BERNAD

NORMS FOR THE NEW THEOLOGY

THE CONCEPT OF TRUTH AND THEOLOGICAL RENEWAL
(THEOLOGICAL SOUNDINGS 1/2). By Edward Schillebeeckx,
O.P., translated by N.D. Smith. London: Sheed and Ward,
1968. x, 212 pp.

This is the second volume of a projected series of a selection from the writings of the well-known Flemish Dominican theologian, a series which has much in common with the *Theological Investigation* of K. Rahner, S.J. In the Preface to the first volume the author notes that the series, to be called *Theological Soundings* (*Theologische Peilingen*), will comprise eight main volumes: 1. Revelation and Theology, 2. God and Man, etc. The book here reviewed is the second part of the first main volume. It would have been less confusing to have entitled it *Revelation and Theology II*, as it is called finally on p. 1, after pp. i-x.

There is little fault to be found with this generally smooth translation, although the definite article does not help the English in expressions like "the Transubstantiation" and a few errors may be noted, like the incorrect grammatical construction on p. 80 and the rendering of *derivatio boni* as "the diverting of the good", instead of the "derivation" or "communication" (p. 163). There are several typographical errors in the Latin citations and p. iv stands in need