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## **New Light on Colet and Platonism: John Colet and Marsilio Ficino**

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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

bibliography rich in primary and secondary materials in Colet scholarship.

Two relatively minor flaws, however, mar, even if in a small way, this otherwise first-rate study. The first lies in Professor Jayne's description of Catholic doctrine concerning Hope; the second in his discussion of Ficino's intellectualism. "The standard Roman Catholic position," he writes in his treatment of the numerous claims that Colet was, in mind at least, a protestant reformer, "is that faith is an intellectual virtue and hope is a moral one, that the soul proceeds from faith in God to hope of God, and that hope is a necessary stage in the progress of the soul toward God because, in depending upon works as well as faith to achieve salvation, one hopes that one's works will find favour in the sight of God" (p. 66). About Ficino, Professor Jayne writes, "Thus for Ficino the doctrine 'know thyself' means 'to study in order to know God,' that is, by intellectual introspection penetrate the word within the word until the word becomes God; contemplate the idea of the Good, and find inside it God. Repeatedly in the *Epistolae* Ficino urges his correspondents to the study of Philosophy as the road to wisdom" (pp. 71-72).

It must be noted that standard Catholic doctrine, in order to emphasize and safeguard the specific character of Faith, Hope and Charity as grace, prefers to label these virtues as theological. Where they are considered as intellectual or moral virtues, they are always qualified as 'supernatural' or 'infused'. Faith, Hope and Charity perfect man supernaturally; that is, their object is God considered as the Beatitude which is beyond man's natural ability to attain (See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I-II<sup>o</sup>, 62, 2). In the discussion of the Catholic teaching on justification and good works, over-simplification is always dangerous. Catholic doctrine has always held that good works are of value to salvation and meritorious before God, if they are done in and through divine elevating and prevenient grace. For first justification, good works done by the power of God's elevating grace merit ('congruously,' scholastic theologians tell us); for the *increase* of justification, good works are called by Trent 'causa iustificationis', i.e. they increase sanctifying grace, flowing as they do from the infused virtues and from God's prevenient influx. In every case, the good work that is of avail before God and unto salvation is grounded in the prevenient grace of God and the merits of Christ (*sessio* VI, *can.* 3). It is not without reason that the first canon on justification (*Sessio* VI) declares that whoever claims that man can be justified before God through the efficacy of his own works which are done either through the powers of human nature alone or through the teaching of the law, without the causality of divine grace given through Christ Jesus *anathema sit*. Professor Jayne's over-simplified formulation of Catholic doctrine tends to mislead the reader in the direction of Pelagianism,

with which the Roman Catholic position has been associated by protestant reformers, and which the Council of Trent took great pains to avoid.

It is clear that in describing as intellectualist Ficino's doctrine that one should "study in order to know God" or that "the study of philosophy... [is] the road to wisdom," Professor Jayne is reading Ficino in terms of an abstract dialectic, a dialectic characteristic of an Aristotelian or a scholastic method of study. But there is another dialectic. It is that which Augustine learned from Neoplatonism, whereby the ascent towards God in knowledge is identically the same as the ascent in virtue (See M. de Corte, *Aristote et Plotin* [Paris, 1935], ch. IV, especially pp. 229-232). Only in the context of this Neoplatonic dialectic can we begin to understand why, though Ficino often writes of man's movement toward his *summum bonum* as an ascent in contemplation, he also describes that state of ultimate blessedness as a 'mixture of wisdom and delight' (Ficino, *Comment. in Platonem* [*In Platonis Philebum*], in *Opera* [Basel, 1576], p. 1206). In another place Ficino writes that our end is to see God by means of our intellect and to delight in God by means of our will (Ficino, *Theologica Platonica*, XIV, 2 in *Opera*, p. 307). In the *De christiana religione*, Ficino's Neoplatonic dialectic is manifest; he writes, for example, that no one can attain beatitude, which consists in the contemplation of God, unless he loves God ardently, that no one can love God ardently, unless he hopes in Him; and that no one can hope in God, unless he first believes in Him; then only can one be united with God (Ficino, *Opera*, p. 22).

Though these weaknesses seem considerable out of context, in Professor Jayne's work they are minor; they do not negate his thesis at all, nor do they lessen the effectiveness of his evidence. *John Colet and Marsilio Ficino* remains a milestone in Renaissance studies and, indeed, a monument in Colet scholarship.

ANTONIO V. ROMUALDEZ

## HOUSEWIVES IN ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE

THE WALL BETWEEN US: A Protestant-Catholic Dialogue. By Betty King and Lorraine Juliana. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, [c1964]. 173 pp.

*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (1961) defines dialogue as "a written composition representing two or more persons as conversing or reasoning." This definition well describes *The Wall Between Us*: an