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## The Historical Cancer

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take if we concluded that this sort of cooperation and approval means any real progress in the things of Christianity that count.

L. A. C.

## The Historical Cancer

AMONG THE BOOK REVIEWS in this issue of PHILIPPINE STUDIES will be found one on Father Cavanna's *Rizal's Unfading Glory*. This book is such an overwhelming presentation of evidence for the retraction of Dr. Jose Rizal, that it seems here at last is an end of the controversy.

But anyone who surrenders to the temptation to draw such a conclusion will prove himself unfamiliar with the longevity of historical error and with the versatility of religious scepticism.

In the January 1953 issue of *Études*, Paul Doncoeur has an interesting article concerning another historical error which has been completely overthrown a dozen times, but has a dozen times risen to demand new refutation. And Doncoeur refutes it again! It is also about the edifying death of a national hero.

The story of Joan of Arc is a very familiar one to the Philippine public, especially since the showing here of the excellent moving picture portraying her life and death. Pere Doncoeur, the author of the article under discussion, spent sometime at Hollywood as "historical adviser" for this picture. What is not so generally known about Joan of Arc is, that from time to time writers who represented themselves as historians (or at least their publishers so represented them) have produced books attempting to establish an entirely different version of the Maid's life. She was not born in Domremy of Jacques Darc and Isabelle Romee but was a bastard born of Elizabeth of Bavaria and Louis of Orleans. She was not burned at Orleans, but because of the influence commanded by her high (if low) birth, escaped the stake (through the good offices of Pierre Cauchon and the English!), married a certain Robert of Armoises, and had two children.

Doncoeur shows how a recent book, *Was Joan of Arc Burned?* is simply a revival of this old misrepresentation. Forty years ago a similar book had appeared written by Save and called *Joan of*

*Armoises, Maid of Orleans*. A learned medievalist at that time G. Lefevre-Pontolis was moved to refute this book, not because he judged it serious history, but because "there was danger that ill-informed readers might consider it a new discovery."

In spite of Lefevre-Pontolis' refutation, the same tale appeared twenty years later under the title *The Survival and Marriage of Joan of Arc*. Then again in 1932 a Jean Jacoby wrote *The Secret of Joan of Arc*. Of this book a contemporary critic said: "The book of M. Jacoby . . . cannot affect historians. It is not addressed to them. But it is capable of disturbing readers who are ignorant of the sources of the history of Joan."

And now the latest of the series appears, after another twenty years: *Was Joan of Arc Burned?* written by J. Grimod. The publishers hail it as "revolutionary" "a masterful work" which will be the "event of the season in the field of history." It is an "extraordinary revelation of archival documents." The author is a "scrupulous" historian who has "overcome his feelings" and gone to his task "armed with a critical sense."

Doncoeur shows that the "revelation of archival documents" does not bring to light one document that was not already well known; in fact that Grimod seems to have simply copied out and reprinted lists of documents gathered by other authors in their bibliographies.

Doncoeur also reveals that Grimod (the "scrupulous" historian) brings as witnesses of his version, first a lady who was dead six years before the events she is cited to support, and secondly, the letter of an archbishop who was dead eleven years before the letter was written. Doncoeur remarks that after such thaumaturgy it is not surprising that Grimod is able to raise Joan of Arc herself to life five years after her execution.

Doncoeur then concludes: "It is difficult to conceive how after refutations . . . by so many of Joan's historians, anyone could have the hardihood to assert again falsehoods of this nature before an abused public."

Which is the point of these remarks. It is difficult to conceive how after a book like Father Cavanna's anyone will have the hardihood to deny again the retraction of Rizal. But someone will. That is historical cancer.

L. A. C.