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## **The Gift of Nationalism: Comments on Fr. John Schumacher's "The Burgos *Manifiesto*"**

Vicente L. Rafael

Despite the author's modest conclusion of the "exiguous," perhaps even "disappointing," results of his long essay on the Burgos manifesto of 1864, I found much that was useful and highly suggestive in the material he has presented. In his painstaking untangling of the evidence relating to the authorship of the manifesto, Fr. John Schumacher, S.J., sheds light on the complicated history of the Secularization Controversy. Filipino historians are generally familiar with the broad outlines of the struggle of Filipino seculars to counter their marginalization, if not "extinction," by Spanish friars, and the manner by which such struggles would come to influence key members of the Propaganda Movement. However, precious few scholars have the kind of access to and familiarity with the vast archival reservoir from which the full range of issues—ecclesiastical, economic, and political—can be told. Even fewer have been trained in Church history and the languages of primary documents necessary to make sense of various technical terms, legal discourses, and theological nuances informing different phases of the secularization debate. Father Schumacher has long been regarded to be among the most respected in this select group of scholars.

An extended examination of the multiple authorship and singular significance of the *Manifiesto* reinforces what Schumacher has long maintained: that there is a direct line of descent from the writings of Peláez to that of Burgos, then to Rizal by way of his older brother, Paciano, who had been, as Schumacher points out, a "protégé" of Burgos. A

close reading of the 1864 manifesto reveals startling continuities in the political sensibilities and rhetorical styles between Burgos and Rizal. Some of the passages of the manifesto seem to anticipate, for example, parts of Rizal's *Noli* and *Fili*. The moral outrage expressed by the writer(s) of the 1864 text at the insults leveled at the good father Peláez by the bad fathers, the Spanish friars, echoes those spoken by Ibarra and later Simoun when referring to the abuses of the likes of Damaso and Salvi. The specter of rebellion that hovers around the manifesto and the vigorous denials of subversive intentions on the part of Filipino seculars undoubtedly set the stage for dramatizing anxieties about *filibusterismo* that haunt Rizal's writings. In helping José María Basa to republish an expanded version of the *Manifiesto* in 1889, Rizal also made numerous interpolations. His "hand," as Schumacher points out, was evident in highlighting and expanding Burgos's critique of the regular orders. In this way, Rizal not only retransmits Burgos's text, he also supplements it, translating, as it were, the secularization controversy into the nationalist terms of the Propaganda Movement.

Seen retrospectively, Rizal's 1889 interpolations make him as much an author of the 1864 manifesto as Burgos and his colleagues. Evidence of the collective authorship of *both* texts thus reveals something about the conventions of authorship in the context of early nationalism. Rather than indicate individual and undisputed ownership of their writings, the names "Burgos" and "Rizal" signal instead potent points from which emanated a shared expressive force circulating across geographical and temporal boundaries to create ineluctable political effects. The power of their writings was such that they encouraged readers to become authors themselves. Reading "Burgos" or "Rizal," readers, whether sympathetic or hostile, would respond by amending and supplementing their texts, at times falsifying and distorting their meaning, at others amplifying their arguments and insights, but always retransmitting their writings, further fueling their communicative reach.

In showing the lines of filiation between Filipino seculars and Propagandists, Schumacher also highlights the mediating role of the generation of student activists of the 1860s, many of whom suffered persecution alongside seculars in the aftermath of the Cavite revolt of 1872. Among

these students, Paciano Mercado, José's older brother, has been the most overlooked. Not least of the significance of Schumacher's essay is the way in which he shows the key role played by Paciano in relaying the Burgos manifesto to his younger brother. He is thus the essential link between Burgos and Rizal: the second father, as it were, of José, who makes possible the transmission of the secular father's legacy. In Schumacher's reconstruction of events, one gets the idea that nationalism was forged by the lines of filiation linking fathers to sons; and that such filiations were prior to and furnished the conditions for affiliation with the larger imagined community that would come to constitute the nation. The son inherits the father's legacy, one that looks in two directions: the past and the future. Both past and future are steeped in promise, one consisting of vengeance, the other of redemption. As the dedication of Rizal's *Fili* indicates, nationalist writing was in part conceived as an act of revenge, an attempt to answer the violence of Spanish insults and persecution with the rhetorical violence of parody and feverish plots of terrorist attacks and armed uprisings. Dead or disempowered fathers litter the landscape of Rizal's novels, echoing the specter of Gomburza's death and calling forth sons to exact vengeance. But, as the exchange between Padre Florentino, a Filipino secular, and Simoun, the *ilustrado* turned *filibustero*, shows in the final chapter of the *Fili*, revenge is never sufficient and must be sublimated by "sacrifice" and "love." Both imply unconditional giving to the point of death, which makes conceivable the redemption of the future rather than the mere recurrence of the corrupted past. However, as with Padre Florentino's gesture of hurling Simoun's jewels, which were used to corrupt officials and natives alike, to the sea, the means by which to carry out this redemption is constantly deferred. Freedom and justice are always yet to come, lying beyond the apprehension and comprehension of mere human beings. It is this messianism of Filipino nationalism that continues to be felt so palpably in the contemporary history of the country. The longing, which is to say mourning, for a moral community takes place against the backdrop of untold sufferings and unaccounted deaths, of promises betrayed calling forth vengeance, spawning reforms, revolutions, reaction, letting loose violence, and bringing forth corruption.

Such is the complicated and contaminated gift of nationhood that Filipinos have inherited from Burgos and Rizal.

It is not difficult to see a recapitulation of the central story of Christianity in this telling of nationalism's origins. Schumacher's story about Peláez begetting Burgos begetting Rizal by way of Paciano is the logical—one is tempted to say prophetic—complement to Rey Ileto's structuralist account of the *Pasyon* as the matrix for shaping lowland Christian Tagalog consciousness by the nineteenth century. The ethos of ilustrado nationalism and peasant struggles for *kalayaan*, or "freedom," are both grounded on an economy of sacrifice that remakes death into an element of some version of an afterlife. But it is a process that occurs against the unfailing recurrence of corruption and sinfulness. Such in turn calls for confession and repentance, which entail the reiteration of a promise of fidelity. But, given the constitutive imperfection of humans, such a promise is bound to be betrayed, requiring more confession, and so on around the circle. It is only the coming of the messiah that offers the hope of radically breaking with this circularity and fulfilling the promise of a perfect correspondence among justice, law, and freedom. Yet, it is a coming that remains fundamentally unknowable and open-ended—a coming that keeps coming, so to speak—and so a matter of faith before the possibility of knowledge. The argument that the Secularization Controversy furnished the soil in which the seeds of nationalism and perhaps revolution were planted resonates with the notion that *Pasyon* performances were rehearsals for radical transformations of thinking and acting in response to altered social conditions in the colony. As an occasion for reiterating while amplifying the Christian-colonial genealogy of Filipino nationalism, Schumacher's essay (like his earlier books) walks along a path parallel to and at times intersecting with the *daan* of Ileto's own scholarly *lakaran*.

Beyond the matter of Philippine history, this essay also has much to contribute to the comparative study of nationalism. A recurring contention of Schumacher in this and other writings is that the term "Filipino" would come to designate and define those secular priests enmeshed in the Secularization Controversy. The "first Filipinos," it is widely assumed, were Rizal and his generation. But Burgos and *his* generation were already beginning to lay claim, albeit tentatively, to this name. The 1864

manifesto underlines this ambivalence. For, while seculars might come to sign their name as “Filipino,” they did so in order to assert their loyalty to Spain (as the title of the manifesto indicates), not to declare their difference. In effect, “Filipino” here comes across as a kind of overseas Spaniard; not a foreign presence but a familial figure in the Spanish *patria*. Furthermore, the assimilationist impulse that animates the manifesto—its insistence, for example, that chaos would ensue should the Philippines separate from Spain, that rebellion was farthest from the minds of seculars, and the urgency to deny charges of “anti-españolismo” leveled against them by the friars—shows that, if secular priests were nationalists of a sort, their patriotism was very much in the style of what Benedict Anderson would call creole nationalism. As with creole nationalists in the Americas, their identity (now pregnant with a sense of destiny) emerged from a sense of entitlement colliding with a keen experience of exclusion. Secular priests by the mid-nineteenth century, as Schumacher points out, were some of the most accomplished, educated, and locally respected figures in the colony. As organic intellectuals who felt every bit as qualified as Spanish friars to assume positions of power and influence, they were constantly turned back by Spanish regulars and their political allies in the colony.

Spanish friars, for their part, increasingly identified themselves in the nineteenth century as defenders of Spain and what remained of its empire. Persecuted and marginalized in the homeland, they were invested with enormous power by the colonial government in the Philippines. Not content to see themselves as representatives of a universal, transnational faith, they tended to regard themselves as patriotic Spaniards whose primary duty was to prevent the loss of the colony. Such meant turning back the demands of Filipino seculars for greater control over parishes (and, by extension, over the administrative and political culture of the colony). Schumacher’s detailed narrative of the conflict between regulars and seculars implies that the “filipinization” of the latter’s identity was arguably in direct relationship to the intensified “hispanization” of the former. As the regulars became more self-consciously Spanish, seeing in that term a set of superior racial attributes, they also came to separate themselves from “Filipinos” who in all their heterogeneity were regarded to be always already imperfect versions of Spaniards. Hence, the irony

of the seculars' emergent Filipino identity: precipitated in a state of emergency, it was crystallized in close relation to Spanish friar nationalism that insisted on defining what it meant to be Spaniard as precisely anything but Filipino. It was left to Rizal's generation to wrestle with the insoluble conundrums of this legacy. Their task was precisely one of seeking to counter the negative attributes of "Filipino" by defining it both in terms of its commonality with, if not superiority to, "Spanish," while at the same time—and in imitation of the latter—holding it superior to the identity of non-Christian groups in the colony. Here then lies the other side of nationalism's Christian-colonial origins: it is infused as much by an originary cosmopolitanism—the sense of a certain foreignness at its foundation—as it is contaminated by an intractable racism.

Related to this paradoxical aspect of nationalism is its paternal construction that furnishes the basis for fraternal association—of sons coming together to receive and disseminate the fathers' legacy as I had retraced above. What is missing is the sense of the maternal and sororal, or rather their decisive subordination to the affairs of fathers and sons, uncles and brothers. As with the Church so with the nation: both seem to be worlds made solely by men with women playing at best supporting roles. Yet, close attention to the writings of nationalists will readily reveal the crucial role of women in various capacities for enabling as well as disabling nationalist identity. Indeed, the nation itself is imagined in maternal terms in *ilustrado* literature. Does the question of gender ever figure in the Secularization Controversy as much as it does in nationalist history? Even and especially when there are no recognizable women in the documents, would it make a difference to ask about this normalizing exclusion, and the kinds of corporeal and social identities that such exclusions make possible? If in fact the Secularization Controversy is a history of men dealing with other men, how does the overwhelmingly masculine quality of this history shape the tenor and substance of debates over rights and recognition, entitlements and exclusions? Is the androcentrism of the Secularization Controversy homologous with the emergent ethnocentrism of nationalism? What other sorts of historical perspectives might emerge if such questions were taken into consideration?

That I end with questions which were never part of Schumacher's essay is a tribute, I think, to its effectiveness. It has the capacity to provoke thought not only within the boundaries of his investigation but well beyond them. It thus invites future readers to follow his steps, explore the archives he has opened up, and perhaps find in them the beginnings of other paths and rumors of other destinations.