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Rome at its Height: Roman Imperial Civilization

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problems elaborated by the latter in *El Filibusterismo* were "clearly perceived by minds accustomed to think, but cannot be understood by those just coming into the light, as are those of our people." Hence he suggested that Rizal "write another novel setting forth an immediate solution to the problem, in order to hasten the beautiful day of our redemption." (*Epistolario rizalino* III, 239).

The pamphlet under review tries to carry out this suggestion as Rizal might have done it by piecing together statements and proposals from Rizal's works, notably the Constitution of the Liga Filipina and the two novels. The patchwork picture that emerges is that the "immediate solution" desired by López Jaena was not to seek reforms from Spain or to assimilate the Philippines into Spain or to detach the Philippines from Spain by revolution but to build up the Philippines as a truly national community.

Prof. Majul points out that according to Rizal the Philippines of his time was not yet a nation but simply a people held together as a community by Spanish rule and the Christian religion. What Rizal wanted it to become was a national community united not by these two existing bonds but by a principle of nationality distinct from either. He intended the formation of the Liga Filipina to be a preparatory stage in this development. Once the national bond emerged it would inevitably take the place of the artificial unity which Spain had imposed from without.

Prof. Majul interprets "encouragement of instruction", set down by Rizal as one of the Liga's aims, to be a challenge flung at the Church's monopoly of education (p. 15). There is no warrant for this. All that Rizal meant was that people should be encouraged to desire an education and teachers should be encouraged to improve their teaching methods. The usual fallacy of taking the part for the whole appears in the statement that "since the Spanish Church in the Philippines was usually under the control of the friars, the incompatibility between Friars and the Colony was nothing else but that between the Spanish Church and the Spanish Colony" (p. 18). Prof. Majul obviously failed to notice that in the *Noli* Rizal took care to have his hero, Ibarra, say that "all of them [the friars] are not like the persecutor of my father" (Derbyshire's translation, pp. 199-200). However, the work as a whole is a creditable performance.

GLICERIO S. ABAD

ROME AT ITS HEIGHT

ROMAN IMPERIAL CIVILIZATION. By Harold Mattingly. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1959. xxii, 374p. Illus.

"And it may well be that the absence of the fabulous from my narrative will seem less pleasing to the ear; but whoever shall wish

to have a clear view, both of the events which have happened and of those which will some day, in all human probability, happen again in the same or a similar way—for these to adjudge my history profitable will be enough for me. And, indeed, it has been composed, not as a prize-essay to be heard for the moment, but as a possession for all time." (Thucydides, Bk. I, chapter xxii. Loeb Translation). With these words Thucydides tells why he wrote his classic account of the Peloponnesian War. The same theme is played on a different scale and in a different key by Harold Mattingly in *Roman Imperial Civilization*, published in 1957 but here reviewed in the paperback reissue of 1959. The Roman Empire can be viewed in a more hopeful way than as a civilization in the process of decay. We can "follow the fortunes of the Empire in its diverse manifestations with something more than vague curiosity, blended with pity; we shall find in it lessons for the future—both as to what to seek and what to avoid" (p. 60).

The infiltration of the barbarians, according to Mr. Mattingly, is an example of what our modern civilization must avoid if we are to survive. The barbarians were allowed to join the Roman army and thereby changed its time-honored methods and traditions. This internal decay of the army contributed considerably to the final collapse of the Empire. The modern barbarians are not people but unbridled scientism and materialism. Our author is right in saying that "atom-bomb warfare is just about as barbarous as anything could be"; and "a society that gives everything for material wealth, that shrinks from nothing in the pursuit of power, is barbarous, however great its mastery of nature" (pp. 132, 133). If we recognize this internal barbarism of our civilization, Mr. Mattingly argues, and overcome it, we can survive as Rome failed to do.

The study of Roman imperial civilization, however, serves as more than a negative norm. The Empire attempted to create peaceful cooperation among nations. If it ultimately failed, at least we can learn from its attempt. It is true that Rome exacted the staggering and extravagant price of personal freedom as the cost of stability of government, but "we may still need to go back to Rome if we would learn how the nations may dwell together in peace" (p. 349).

Mattingly's credentials for guiding us through the labyrinthine ways of the history of Rome from Augustus to its fall in the West and translating its meaning for us today are more than adequate. For almost forty years he was Assistant Keeper of the Department of Coins and Medals in the British Museum, and for six years President of the Royal Numismatic Society. His survey of imperial Rome is not a chronological one. After a very brief historical sketch of the Empire he treats ten different aspects of the civilization of Rome. Since the survey is not too long (374 pp.) and Mr. Mattingly wishes us to see

the whole of the Empire, we are whisked along at a great pace, and only cursory treatment can be given to many important points. Lengthy discussion is foregone and footnotes omitted.

As might be expected, our guide is at his best where he is most familiar with the area. The essay on the economics of the Empire is one of the most detailed and valuable in the book. Sprinkled throughout are interesting remarks on how history is gleaned from ancient coins. Incidentally, the reproductions of coins in the plates are adequate but do not measure up to the excellent ones in the 1957 hard-cover edition.

Certainly one of the most significant phenomena of the history of the Empire was the birth and spread of Christianity. And it is reassuring at first to see the balanced way our author treats of it. Gibbon is duly criticized for his bias against Christianity. "Gibbon has accused Christianity of being, with the barbarians, the destroyer of Rome. The charge is obviously overstated. The Church survived in Rome; if the Empire could not survive with it, the fault will have to be laid on the State" (pp. 46, 47). On the other hand, one is confused to find the following observation by Mattingly himself: "It must occur to every careful observer, whether he be Christian or not, that the energy of the Church might have been better spent on reforming the worst abuses [in the imperial civil service]. Perhaps it was easier to hold Councils" (p. 156). It is regrettable too that Mr. Mattingly repeats the distasteful and erroneous comment of Fowler that the Egyptian goddess Isis is in many respects the prototype of the Virgin Mary. Another point which may be misleading is his unqualified statement that the gospels were written after the epistles of St. Paul. The exact date of the gospels' composition is still open to discussion. But in any case they depend on oral tradition earlier than the epistles.

In spite of these biases and blemishes, *Roman Imperial Civilization* has great value for one who wishes to get acquainted with a fascinating period of history. It often happens that a scholar will spend his life in a field and then fail to record his findings. This has not been the case with Mr. Mattingly. Whether or not we agree with his Thucydidian interpretations of history and his parallelisms between our age and Rome's, we can thank him for many of his insights and his readable presentation of them. And his apologia for a life spent on the study of history is worth quoting: "History is concerned with the affairs of human beings like ourselves and that is why it ever claims our interest. That is why we are willing to project ourselves into the past, to imagine ourselves living the lives of the ancients, feeling their emotions, thinking their thoughts. We cannot do this without expanding our own sympathies—and that alone should be reward enough for the effort." (p. xxii).

WILLIAM J. MALLEY