
Fr. Noone has written what he calls the story of Archbishop Michael J. O'Doherty who shepherded two extensive sees of the Philippines at a time of important changes in the country. Born in Ireland in 1874, he arrived in the Philippines in 1912 as Bishop of Zamboanga, an immense diocese that stretched across the entire southern half of the island of Mindanao, today divided into several episcopal sees. Four years later, in 1916, he succeeded Archbishop Jeremiah J. Harty of Manila, and until his death 32 years later, he was a "leading figure of the Church in the Philippines ... who influenced its direction in a crucial way" (p. xxiv).

The story is conveniently divided into four chronological "parts," the fourth naturally covering the years when the Archbishop was the primate of the Philippine Church. MJN believes the key to prelate's life is the latter's conviction that the Church includes the laity who should also shoulder "their responsibilities as members of the Mystical Body of Christ." Long before the formal papal endorsement of Catholic lay action, OJD had already been convicted of its need, not improbably because of personal experience in his youth in Ireland when, "confronted with an unjust society," priests and laity were united in one common purpose.

It is of course open to question whether fifty years after a man's death his place in history can be properly evaluated. Contemporary witnesses are still around, diaries and letters are still fresh; but is a fair assessment possible of the impact on history of the events recalled in them?

Archbishop O'Doherty was the bishop of Zamboanga when there were only 20 Jesuit missionaries for the entire southern half of Mindanao! Not only that, by 1912, those born during the revolutionary years were now teenagers who had grown up untaught in their Catholic faith. Those born twenty or fifteen years earlier were the parents, who likewise had hardly had any real instruction in their Catholic faith. For when the Spanish government fell at the end of the nineteenth century and there was no guarantee the missionaries in Mindanao would remain unharmed, they were recalled. With the change of governments, only a handful returned to Mindanao, when an army was needed. In the meantime, both Protestant proselytizers and adherents of the Aglipay-led Philippine Independent Church covered the breach. Thus it was that when Bishop O'Doherty arrived in Zamboanga, he was faced with the problem of lack of clergy and a generally un instructed faithful who were easy victims of any glib preacher offering another creed. Furthermore, because under the Spanish patronato, the Church in the Philippines had been financed by government funds, the people had not been
accustomed to support their Church, adding the problem of material poverty when the Church in Mindanao needed resources to rehabilitate and rebuild the Faith.

The difficulties faced by the Church in Mindanao in the first quarter of the present century are reflected in missionaries' letters which are frequently near-desperate appeals for financial help to counteract the well-funded projects of the Protestants from the United States. Having stayed in Mindanao for only four years, it is hard to say what impact, if any, OJD had on the Mindanao church. One may argue his appointment to the primatial see of the Philippines, especially at a time when some Filipinos were openly agitating for Filipino bishops, is a gauge of the man. MJN, however, offers no clue why he was chosen, and the reader is that much disappointed.

The same observation can be made about the archbishop's career in Manila. As in Mindanao, he was faced with a woeful lack of clergy, an unenlightened faithful, a lack of Catholic schools, etc. Fortunately, the archdiocese of Manila had sufficient funds, the legacy from Spanish times. But OJD was not a financial wizard, and he was victimized by the few men he had trusted, unscrupulous entrepreneurs who cared only to line their own pockets and almost ruined the archdiocese. To his dying day, the financial bog in which he had mired the archdiocese hung like a millstone around his neck.

Finances were not his only worry. To many Filipinos, the fall of the Spanish government in the Philippines signalled the end not only of a political system, but also of a culture that was considered outdated, obscurantist, and unprogressive. The fashionable thing was to be numbered in the ranks of the freemasons, and a sizable number of the educated had joined them, not infrequently becoming powerful enemies of the Church. Not surprisingly, the new Archbishop of Manila saw that the solution was to enlist zealous Catholics to counter the anti-Catholic program the masons had initiated in the Philippine legislature, the public schools, business circles, etc. His insistence, therefore, on Catholic lay action, or his dependence on the Apostleship of Prayer, is understandable. He was not, of course, its initiator, for the Catholic laity in Manila had already been cooperators in the work of the Church. The Apostleship of Prayer, for example, had been introduced during the Spanish period, and a number of the students at the Jesuit college, the Ateneo Municipal, had been members of the Sodality of the Virgin Mary, a pious association which encouraged — avant le mot — Catholic action. The book, however, gives another impression.

Biography is never easy, and the problem is compounded when the subject, as the present, is almost contemporary to the writer. Sources are hard to come by, and, as MJN explains, the loss of several volumes of the Archbishop's personal diaries is truly regrettable. For, even if other contemporary sources can help, the picture is incomplete. At most, we get an external pic-
ture, but we cannot enter the heart and mind of the person. What we have, fortunately, is more than a mere calendar of the life of Archbishop O'Doherty. To his credit, MJN situates the Archbishop's career in its proper context, briefly alluding to the delicate political situation he had to contend with, the wily politicians he had to cooperate with. Even his "quarrels" with some churchmen were included, although one would have wished a more detailed treatment of their causes.

This is an important book, unfortunately with an inordinate share of printing errors in almost every page! It is not clear where quotations begin or end. A number of slips should be pointed out. The Society of Jesus was restored in 1814, not in 1859 (p. 48), the year the first band of Jesuits returned to the Philippines. A more accurate date for the Bonifacio uprising (p. 50) would be 1896. One would hesitate to call Isabela de los Reyes the "mentor" (p. 55, n. 19) of Aglipay, even if he had founded the Philippine Independent Church, formulated its doctrines, and "appointed" Aglipay as its first Obispo Maximo. The first Filipino bishop was Jorge, not Jose (p. 58), Barlin. The Jesuits mentioned were Frs. Sambola, not Sambolan (p. 65), Vila, not Vilo (p. 67), Villalonga, not Villalonga (pp. 71, 138, 168), Andueza not Anduiza (p. 75), Sauras, not Saurias (p. 107), Jose Ma. Siguion, not Miguel Siguion (p. 213, n. 1). The Congregation of the Religious of the Virgin Mary (R.V.M.) was founded NOT by the Jesuits (p. 171), but by Mother Ignacia del Espiritu Santo who had for spiritual guide the Jesuit Paul Klein. And the Sakdal movement was founded in Manila, not in central Luzon (p. 248).

These main versions by no means detract from the value of this biography. It is not yet the definitive work on the Archbishop's life, but it certainly is an important guide, not only for Philippine church historians, but also for those interested in recent Philippine history. Quezon, Osmeña, O'Doherty: few realize that these three were the leaders who directed the fortunes of the Filipino people in the first half of the twentieth century. The present biography is a necessary key to those years.

Jose S. Arcilla, S.J.


Niall O'Brien is a wonderful story-teller. His book is a great story. It is a forceful drama of his religious experience and growth as a Columban missionary, as a priest, as a disciple. It is an absorbing story about people in the small Christian communities in Negros.

In 1964, enthused by the fresh winds of the Second Vatican Council, O'Brien sets foot in Negros Occidental. Little is he aware that he set foot on a