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Theology as Narration

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him for what he does not claim to do. Still, I may be permitted to comment on a few points.

Perceptively, he shows on a number of occasions that the "segregation policy" for which the American community in prewar years was often castigated, was frequently due not to racism but to different language, customs, and cultural norms in the Filipino and American communities — particularly in the early years — or to different needs. But on the other hand, it is also clear that racist attitudes did exist on the part of many, perhaps most, of the American community in those years. That "community" was made up of different kinds of people, and some were very obnoxious racists, just as were many back in the United States. Gleeck too would admit this, but I feel that while making a valid point about the accusation of racism being too freely applied, his treatment of the whole question is occasionally too apologetic and defensive, about something which was at times very real and fully unjustifiable, even given the historical circumstances in which it occurred.

Those who are not familiar with the prewar American community will find, as I did, a host of names which means nothing to them. Some chronicle falls into the trivial at times. And many will disagree with his interpretations of the Filipino-American irritants related to economics and nationalism in the post-independence period. This part of the book seems to me the weakest, because it moves out of the category of memoirs into that of a wider history without having all the resources of an objective historical study at hand, and there are a few unsubstantiated generalizations (pp. 322-23, 345). Indeed, one may raise the question, should a distinctive American community have continued to exist at that point in an independent Philippines? Is there any place in an independent nation for an ethnic group which is neither aiming at integrating itself into the national society nor willing to consider itself simply as individuals who are friendly guests of the Filipino people, with no privileges beyond what Filipino hospitality may bestow?

Be that as it may, Lewis Gleeck deserves to be congratulated, both for a book which will interest many — Americans and Filipinos, historians and general readers. Not the least of its contributions, as in his earlier volumes, is the large number of photographs of life in the Manila of days gone by. It is a fitting conclusion to the tetralogy.

John N. Schumacher, S.J.

THEOLOGY AS NARRATION: A COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF EXODUS. By George A.F. Knight. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976. xiv, 209 pages. \$5.95.

Exodus, a fundamental book in the Old Testament dealing with the historical and religious origins of Israel as God's people, has been the topic of three

moderate sized commentaries in English in the past dozen years. *The God of Exodus* by James Plastaras (1966), though not a complete commentary, treated all the high points with emphasis on the liturgical usage and background out of which the Exodus and Sinai traditions arose, and which left on them an indelible impression. The commentary by Brevard Childs (1974), comprehensive, scholarly, and theological, stands in a class by itself. The present work by George Knight represents a popular, standard type of commentary, with the emphasis, however, on the author as a theologian who collated and arranged the ancient traditions, edited and narrated them from the theological vantage point of the second temple which was completed in 515 B.C.

In the brief introduction, Knight describes Exodus as a "theological essay in the form of a narrative," rejecting legendary and mythical as incorrect attributes, preferring saga and emphasizing its characteristic of kerygma, "Good News about God." He disagrees with the idea of Exodus growing over the centuries, through the fusion of the traditions, though he accepts the documentary theory as the most satisfactory explanation of the Pentateuch. He insists the book was written by one person, different from the priestly colleague who had written Genesis, whom he calls "Ex" throughout the volume. His emphasis on the final, canonical form of the book is a healthy, welcome approach, paralleling that of Childs in his weighty commentary. The constant use of "Ex" as the actual writer conveniently highlights the final form of the book, even if one is forced to recall frequently that the abbreviation refers to the writer, not to the book. He adds an ecumenical note in touching on the importance of Exodus for Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

This is a chapter-by-chapter commentary on the book of Exodus, with each chapter appropriately and often imaginatively entitled: chapter three is called The Bush; seven, The God of Science and of Grace; thirteen, Israel's Birthday; seventeen, Rock of Ages. Most verses are explained, though the explanations frequently cover matter that goes much beyond the verses. The author's erudition enlivens the commentary with vivid pictures of the Egyptian background, palace, plagues, charioteers. One can regret but overlook some gaffes that slipped through: the Egyptian creator God Atum is called the sun deity; Hatshepsut is said to have reigned between Thutmose I and II; Ex. 12:1-10 seems to be called historical material.

The value of this book lies in its unabashedly theological orientation. The author emphasizes the religious significance of each episode or cluster of verses to Israel as a people, and constantly makes application to the New Testament and the Christian life in today's world. Much of the biblical text is not explained; some selectivity would be necessary so that adequate space could be provided for the theological interpretation of principal verses and their relevance to present-day readers. (But it is surprising that not a word is mentioned about unleavened bread in 11:14-20.)

With homiletic comments, there is always the risk of applying the biblical text beyond its authentic meaning. Such an application is, I feel, a drawback in this otherwise interesting and helpful commentary. Here are some instances, at least in the reviewer's opinion. In the paschal lamb ritual, we are reminded that all were "the lost sheep of the house of Israel"; that since the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was with them at the feast, so too must Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob be with them (pp. 87 f.). In the sea episode, the passage about the angel of God witnesses that "the work of the incarnate word does not begin with Jesus of Nazareth" (p. 104). The words of Ex 19:3-6 are considered the Bridegroom's, with the Bride Israel responding (p. 156). Similarly, the great Lover and his bride Israel appear in the covenant renewal (p. 202). Is it correct to see Israel as "God's corporate priest to all mankind" in Ex 19, as in Is 49:6 (pp. 130 f.)? Is it theologically precise to find eschatological significance in the burning bush, the land of Goshen and Israel's cattle protected from the plagues, God's promise of salvation at the sea, the thunder storm on Sinai, God's self-revelation to Moses, the renewed covenant? Eschatology seems strangely applied to the beginnings of salvation history for Israel.

These stimulating ideas are certainly all biblical and pertinent to other books and texts; they do not seem to have direct relevance to the Exodus texts under discussion, nor to be the message of Ex. Rather than an exegetical or theological commentary, the work tends to become homiletic. In homiles, prayer meetings, devotional reading, all sorts of applications and references can be made. In a commentary, one expects a more careful and precise exegesis.

There are also seemingly inaccurate statements, intended presumably as paradoxes, but crying out for greater nuance or explanation. Since Moses submits to God's word in using the rod, "he is in fact no longer 'religious'; he is now as non-religious and as sober as any modern scientist in his field," like the trained entomologist, botanist, meteorologist (p. 55). As an explanation for God as destroyer in the Passover event, we are told that God must "create" evil, for evil is not "of himself" — with references to Gen 1:1-2 and Is 45 (p. 91). Also, "as the book of Exodus reveals" (where?), God himself suffers with babies who die through the freedom given to nature (p. 92). The reviewer is also baffled by the picture of Moses in rubber boots as protection against the highly charged Mount Sinai (p. 132).

Such statements are not necessarily indefensible, but they require better explanation for a convincing presentation. In a popular commentary, clear, self-evident propositions would seem to be more helpful than thought-provoking paradoxes, without adequate exposition.

Attention to the popular audience might have led the author to emphasize the historicity of certain passages. The leprosy of Moses, intended as a sign (4:6 f.), is given a rational explanation. That there was an actual desert

apostasy with the golden calf and an ornate tabernacle built by Moses, not many modern scholars would agree.

Although occasionally disappointing, the commentary has value in its theological orientation and its many solid, even paradoxical insights. Professor Knight is to be commended heartily for providing an interesting book that helps to make the biblical message of Exodus more intelligible and meaningful for God's people today.

P. J. Calderone, S.J.

JOSE RIZAL: HISTORICAL STUDIES. By Nicolas Zafra. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1977. ix, 215 pages.

Because of his multifaceted genius, Rizal as a subject of study is inexhaustible. In the hands of competent scholars Rizal can be presented in refreshingly new light. Such is the feat of Prof. Nicolas Zafra, former chairman of the Department of History at the University of the Philippines, whose volume of historical studies on Rizal is the subject of the present review.

The author's purpose in presenting his essays in permanent book form was "to help make Rizal better known as a figure in Philippine history thereby enhancing his usefulness as a factor in nation building." This, in fact, was his purpose when he undertook each individual study.

The reader gathers the impression that the thread that holds the essays together is the national hero and that the main theme is the relevance of Rizal to the youth and to his country as a votary of Clio. For Rizal, although not a professional historian, was a dedicated student of history and made significant contributions to Philippine historiography, among which were the annotated edition of Dr. Antonio Morga's *Sucesos*, and the essays "Filipinas Dentro de Cien Años" and "La Indolencia de los Filipinos."

"The Historicity of Rizal's Retraction" (1950) attempts to establish the historical reality of Rizal's controversial retraction and abjuration of Masonry. Adhering strictly to historical methodology and applying the rules of evidence, Professor Zafra confidently asserts that Rizal did retract from masonry and return to the Catholic faith.

The essay on "Rizal on the Location of the Kingdom of Princess Urduja" (1952) questions the claim that Princess Urduja's kingdom was in Pangasinan. Like all the other scholars before him, Professor Zafra holds that the key to the mystery regarding the location of Urduja's kingdom lies in the identification and location of Tawalisi. He examines the hypotheses of scholars, including that of Rizal, and finding them implausible, proceeds to offer his own findings through a systematic rational analysis of geographic distances and sailing time. He argues that Tawalisi is not in Luzon but in the southeastern part of Indochina; that the evidence does not warrant the claim that