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Jose Rizal: Historical Studies

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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

Princess Urduja's kingdom was in Pangasinan; and that there is no evidence that conclusively establishes the claim that Urduja lived in the Philippines; he therefore concludes that she cannot be regarded as an authentic historical character in Philippine history.

The historical question as to when and where Rizal wrote his untitled farewell poem led Professor Zafrá to embark upon writing "The Place and Date of the Writing of Rizal's *Ultimo Adios*." The essay is the shortest in the collection, consisting of only three pages. It is much to be wished that while the author was motivated to make the historical study because of "differences of views and opinion" among Rizalists as to the place and time of composition of the poem, he should not have limited himself to giving the historical background and importance of Rizal's valedictory poem and to presuming that it was written between 26 and 28 December, 1896. Because of its unusual brevity the paper cannot be properly classified as an "historical study."

The longest historical essay in the volume is the first one presented, "Rizal and His Times," first published in 1961. The mainstream of the study is biographical, supported by historical developments in various parts of the world. Evidently the author's intention is to present the milieu in which Rizal lived, the environmental changes that shaped the currents of thought in his time.

Professor Zafrá takes issue in his study "Rizal and the Philippine Revolution" with a certain school of historians who claim (1) Rizal approved and endorsed the Katipunan and its preparations for an uprising, (2) the existence of a proposed plan to effect Rizal's escape from Dapitan, and (3) the readiness of Rizal to assume the leadership of the revolution. Zafrá presents the writings and utterances of Rizal himself, while the contrary school relies on the testimony of Pio Valenzuela, giving his recollections of an incident that happened almost half a century before. In other words, the issue is one of credibility and reliability. On this matter Zafrá appears to have an edge.

The essay is not all polemical. The author's conclusion beautifully sums up Rizal's attitude towards the Filipino struggle for dignity, integrity and freedom. "Rizal's ideas and ideals," Professor Zafrá says, "are as valid to the conditions of our time as they were to those of his generation. Righteousness, honor, duty, sacrifices, civic virtues can provide for the Filipino people and for any nation for that matter a strong and durable foundation for national greatness." History is philosophy teaching through Rizal by example.

"Rizal and the New Filipino" is of recent (1974) vintage. It relates the thoughts and deeds of Rizal to the aims and objectives of the New Society. The author believes that "for the success of our efforts to build up the New Society, it is imperative that we rededicate ourselves to the ideas and ideals of Rizal. We should intensify our efforts to put into actual practice his teachings on nation building." Zafrá drives home the point that national

greatness is inseparable from moral integrity. This was a lifetime obsession and teaching of Rizal, "the citizen *par excellence*," whom the youth of today should emulate.

Among Filipino votaries of Clio, Zafra has earned for himself an eminent degree of respectability for his candidness and objectivity, his dispassionate approach to historical issues, his frequent recourse to the rules of evidence and the standard of scientific analysis, as well as for his clarity of language and readable style. His slim volume of historical studies on Rizal testifies to these virtues, which make him the respected historian that he is.

Celedonio Resurreccion

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