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de Arbeiza: Reseña Historica de los Capuchinos on Filipinas

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Book Reviews

RESEÑA HISTÓRICA DE LOS CAPUCHINOS EN FILIPINAS. By Bienvenido de Arbeiza, O.F.M. Cap. Pamplona: PP. Capuchinos, 1969. 406 pp.

It is ironic that though almost all Philippine historiography for three centuries after the Spanish conquest was due to the chroniclers of the religious orders, there still exists no comprehensive scholarly history of the Catholic Church in the Philippines. What is worse, relatively little has been done to provide critical histories of the religious orders themselves for the period after the early chronicles, and the history of the church in the twentieth century is all but untouched. Hence an account of the work of the Capuchin order in the Philippines, till now unchronicled, and one dealing almost totally with the twentieth century should be welcomed by historians of the Philippines.

It should be said that the book under review is not a definitive and critical history of the Capuchins in the Philippines. This is not to say, however, that the book cannot be of considerable value to historians. Written by a veteran Spanish Capuchin missionary who worked for twenty years in the Philippines and was Superior of his order here from 1945 to 1951, it contains not only numerous original documents from Capuchin archives, but the personal recollections of one active in the work of his order both in Manila and the provinces during many years. Begun in 1937, the history was partially lost in the looting of the early days of the War, rewritten during the Japanese occupation, and saved from the destruction of 1945 by being buried and salvaged after the War. The author returned to Spain in 1952, and he has added a brief appendix on more recent events.

First destined for the Carolines in 1882, the Capuchins established a small house in Manila to take care of the needs of the Caroline mission, inasmuch as those islands then depended on the Governor General of the Philippines. When Spain sold the Carolines to Germany in 1899 and the Spanish missionaries withdrew shortly thereafter, they transferred the field of their apostolate to the Philippines. Here they were called on

from many sides to fill the gaps left by the departure of the majority of the friars of the older orders as a result of the feelings created by the Revolution. Numerous parishes had been abandoned for lack of Filipino priests to fill them and because of the unwillingness of the American occupation authorities to allow the return to their parishes of the remaining friars for fear of disturbances. Though the Capuchins themselves were at times the target of hostility, generally due to local political intrigues, they were able to achieve a great deal in various places to help fill the desire of the people for priests, in spite of many initial uncertainties and false starts. The author's narrative of these early years is of much broader interest than for the private history of the Capuchins, for it gives many insights into the generally demoralized and chaotic situation of the Church during the first two decades of the American occupation.

A more systematic and critical history of the Capuchin order in the Philippines still remains to be written. The present work is often anecdotal, and contains opinions and judgments on general Philippine history which are disputable. Nonetheless, the historian of twentieth-century Philippines will find valuable materials in this book. The author has incorporated information stemming from pioneer Capuchins in the Philippines with whom he had checked his narrative before the War, and he has reproduced in whole or in part numerous documents which are lost forever after the destruction of the Capuchin archives in Intramuros in 1945. He has likewise generally narrated events with a frankness and objectivity not always found in historians of recent events. For scholarship as well as for edification, this book can be useful.

JOHN N. SCHUMACHER, S.J.

A HISTORICAL AND JURIDICAL STUDY OF THE PHILIPPINE BILL OF RIGHTS.

By Joaquin G. Bernas. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1971. xv, 339 pp.

The science of law cannot be properly studied without a historical consciousness. The legal scholar and the jurist, the legislator, the codifier, anyone in fact who dedicates himself to juridical study, will find history an indispensable handmaid of his profession. How else can he find the function and relevance of the law but by trying to discover its temporal and cultural coordinates among the people whose legal system he is dealing with? Law quite obviously does not exist in a void; it is not a floating set of maxims and principles hovering in an empty space; it is certainly not, in the words of Ortega y Gasset, "a hermetically sealed architectonic unit."