

The Nineteenth-Century Thomist from the Far East: Cardinal Zeferino González, OP (1831–1894)

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Abstract: In light of the celebration of the five centuries of Christianity in the Philippines, this article hopes to reintroduce Fr. Zeferino González, OP, to scholars of Church history, philosophy, and cultural heritage. He was an alumnus of the University of Santo Tomás, a Cardinal, and a champion of the revival of Catholic Philosophy that led to the promulgation of Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris*. Specifically, this essay presents, firstly, the Cardinal's biography in the context of his experience as a missionary in the Philippines; secondly, the intellectual tradition in Santo Tomás in Manila, which he carried with him until his death; and lastly, some reasons for his once-radiant memory to slip into an underserved forgetfulness.

Keywords: Zeferino González, Thomism in Asia, *Aeterni Patris*, Christian Philosophy, History of Philosophy

In the 1880s, the University of Santo Tomás had two grand celebrations that were associated with Fr. Zeferino González, OP (1831–1894). The first pompous festivity was held in 1880 when the University received Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris*;² the second was when Fray Zeferino (as how

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This study was funded by the 2020 National Research Award given by the National Commission for Culture and Arts (Philippines).

² Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris* decreed the revival of Christian Philosophy, especially

he preferred to be called) was raised by the same Pope to the dignity of a Cardinal in 1884.³ Not many people today are familiar with the person of the Thomasian Cardinal, but his name was a roaring thunder that ushered many Church thinkers into the twentieth century. And like a lightning, the brilliance of his mind repeatedly cut through the murky clouds shrouding the Catholic Church during that time.

Promulgated on August 4, 1879, *Aeterni Patris* was the encyclical that restored Catholic philosophy. It somehow institutionalized Thomism or the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas as a clear guide to philosophically understand and talk about the world. In the West, this papal letter addressed the growing gap between the modernized society and the Catholic Church, whose traditions and worldview draw from teachings that were developed in the Medieval Ages. This gap was supposedly caused by a series of events, which started in the sixteenth century. Among these were the advent of Protestantism and the Galileo affair, where the scientific findings of Galileo Galilei were adjudged heretical. When the French media published reviews of the scientist's trial, it started a public outcry to separate faith from positive sciences.⁴ Following these events, the Cartesian doubt in philosophy, which spread throughout the Western continent by way of reactions to it, has since posed unrelenting challenges to the influence and authority of the Church. So, when the *Aeterni Patris* was issued, it brought with it hope in reconciling catholic teachings and the scientific developments of the modern world. Moreover, it had the promise of healing the scarred reputation of the Church. In the encyclical, we find these words:

Again, clearly distinguishing, as is fitting, reason from faith, while happily associating the one with the other, (St. Thomas Aquinas) both preserved the rights and had regard for the dignity of each; so much so, indeed, that reason, borne on the wings of Thomas to its human height, can scarcely rise higher, while faith could scarcely expect more or stronger aids from reason than those which she has already obtained through Thomas.⁵

St. Thomas has been the patron saint of the University since the 1600s, so it is understandable why the institution rejoiced when she learned of the Pope's *Aeterni Patris*. But one particular reason for the grand celebration was that the

the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas. See Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris*, encyclical letter, Vatican website, August 4, 1879, http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_04081879_aeterni-patris.html.

³ Fidel Villarreal, OP, *A History of the University of Santo Tomas: Four Centuries of Higher Learning in the Philippines, 1611–2011*, Vol. 2, Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2012, 166.

⁴ The *Gazette de France* (today *La Gazette*) published in France reviews of the trial of Galileo in the seventeenth century. It started the debate about the separating the sciences from religion. See Jane Tolbert, "Censorship & Retraction: Théophraste Renaudot's Gazette and the Galileo Affair, 1631–33," *Journalism History* Vol. 31, No. 2 (2015): 98–105.

⁵ Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris*, N^o. 18.

encyclical affirmed the centuries-worth of missionary labor and evangelization in the Far East. The successes of the Dominican Order were, for the most part, due to their commitment to education. In the Philippines, Santo Tomás had truly been instrumental. Generations of churchmen, both secular and religious, received scholastic education in this university. Those they learned were grounded on the teachings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, especially St. Thomas, whose *Summa Theologiae* was used as a main resource for the study of Theology.

Fray Zeferino studied and taught in Santo Tomás. In the same institution, he wrote his three-volume work on the teachings of the Angelic Doctor which had the title *Estudios sobre la Filosofía de Santo Tomás* (1864). Fifteen years after its publication, Fray Zeferino had already returned to Spain and was already the Bishop of Córdoba. By this time, he had four more book series added to his publications. Two had been widely used as textbooks on philosophy in seminaries across the European continent, but all his books were based on the teachings of St. Thomas. Moreover, his works are said to have paved the way for the official restoration of Catholic philosophy. While Fray Zeferino was not directly mentioned in *Aeterni Patris*, a number of scholars have noted that he influenced Pope Leo XIII's appreciation of Thomistic philosophy that when the *Aeterni Patris* was written, it was as if González's *Estudios sobre la Filosofía de Santo Tomás* (1864) were present (González Pola, 41).

Having been an alumnus and professor of Santo Tomás, Fray González gave his alma mater a reason to celebrate with "extraordinary expressions of joy" (Villarroel, 1984: 55-56). The campus in Intramuros was profusely decorated with tapestries, flags, and electric lights. There were literary programs. The Rector himself, Fr. Joaquin Fonseca, OP, wrote a hymn which was sung during the university festivities.⁶ Religious services were a highlight, especially the mass celebrated on March 7, 1880 inside the historic Santo Domingo Church in Intramuros. During the mass held on the feast day of St. Thomas, the Vice Rector and Canon Law professor Fr. José Cueto, OP delivered a thirty-page sermon of praise about the Angelic Doctor. The encyclical was printed by the university press and sent back to the Holy See with a message of gratitude signed by Archbishop Pedro Payo, OP of Manila and the UST Rector, Fr. Fonseca. The Pope responded with a cordial acknowledgment of the purpose of Santo Tomás in educating the youth of the nineteenth century (Leo XIII, 1880: 229-230).

The festivities carried on to the following academic year. In delivering the

⁶ The lyrics of the hymn reads: "De Alcalá y Salamanca las aulas/ Ya despiertan cantando victorias/ Aspirando las auras de gloria/ Que Tomás a la Iglesia dará./ De Legazpi la perla preciosa/ Y su ilustre Academia repite/ Ese canto triunfal que transmite/ Armonioso a las brumas del mar./" in *Boletín Eclesiástico*, IV, No. 10 (March 12, 1880): 85-86.

traditional *Discurso de Apertura*, Fr. Matias Gómez Zamora talked about *La verdad en el hombre* (The truth of man).⁷ Notably, Fr. Gómez was a professor of Natural History. While he discussed natural human existence using Thomistic philosophy, Fr. Gómez made several references to the teachings of Fray Zeferino: Firstly, on the discourse on the Spirit that flows from the First Cause to all creations in the world (Gómez, 746);⁸ secondly, in his criticism of modern thinkers who rejected causation and metaphysics, including the providence of God, the immortality of the soul, and predestination based on nature (Gómez, 770);⁹ thirdly, in underscoring the rudeness of communism and the denial of the right of property (770); and lastly, in lashing out at Immanuel Kant's deification of the "I" and man's substitution for the true God (770-71).¹⁰

Meanwhile, from 1884 to 1886, the other series of stately celebrations were due to the promotion of Fray Zeferino to the Cardinalate.¹¹ He was the first member of the university *claustr* to have been honored with such an ecclesiastical dignity (Villarreal 2012, II: 166). This event showed the admiration of Pope Leo XIII for Fray Zeferino's contributions to the Church. The highlights of the celebration were a literary program, which included competitions in both poetry and prose, and a soiree held during the feast day of St. Thomas on March 7, 1886. In this event, the winning pieces from the earlier competition were publicly read. This particular occasion was documented in a book titled *Certámen Científico-Literario Y Velada: Celebrados en honor del Emmo. Sr. Dr. Fr. Zeferino González, Arzobispo de Sevilla con motivo de su Elevación al Cardinalato* (1885).¹² Included in the publication were the address of the Dominican Archbishop of Manila, Fr. Payo, who inaugurated the event; the review of the festivities by Blas Alcuaz, Vice Secretary of the University; the winning entries in the competition authored by Juan Calatrava y Aguilera and Manuel Valls y Merino (for prose) and Jose M. Garcia y Collado and Juan Miciano y Zulueta (for poetry); and other poems and essays in honor of Fray Zeferino, which dealt with topics such as the Cardinal's biography, his being an economist, his writings concerning natural

⁷ See the republished text of the *Discurso de Apertura* in Fr. Matías Gómez Zamora, "La verdad en el hombre," *Philippiniana Sacra* Vol. LII, No. 156 (May–August 2017): 741–786.

⁸ In this part, Fr. Gómez uses Fray Zeferino's discussion on the gradation of perfection in the prologue of his *Filosofía Elemental*, Madrid: Imprenta de Policarpo López, 1873.

⁹ In this part, Fr. Gómez cites from Z. González, *Historia de la Filosofía*, Vol. III (Madrid, 1878).

¹⁰ In the footnotes on p. 771, Fr. Gómez cites how Hegel, Schelling, Fichte, and Kant have an affinity to sideline God as they glorified the human person. See this discussion in Z. González, *Historia de la Filosofía*, Vol. III, 281–282.

Other cited discussions on this topic include Hume's skeptical positivism (González, 1878, III: 175), and Locke's critical ideology and Berkeley's idealism (González, 1878, III: 160).

¹¹ Fray Zeferino was raised by Pope Leo XIII to the dignity of Cardinal on November 10, 1884.

¹² See *Certámen Científico-Literario y Velada: Celebrados en honor del Emmo. Sr. Dr. Fr. Zeferino González, Arzobispo de Sevilla con motivo de su Elevación al Cardinalato* (Manila: Imprenta del Real Colegio de Santo Tomas, 1885).

sciences, the revival of scholasticism, and the “alliance” of science and faith.¹³ The last entry in the book is the musical score composed by poet Fr. Evaristo Fernandez Arias, OP and Manuel Garrido y Rabé, which was performed to close the *velada*.

These celebrations were not a mere lip service to praise an alumnus of Santo Tomás. Even after these years (1881 to 1886) of honoring Fray Zeferino, his name would still be recalled whenever there was a need to interpret St. Thomas. To cite, the succeeding *Discursos de Apertura* would always have a “Thomistic criterion” regardless if the main topic was on natural sciences, such as zoology, or social sciences, such as economics (Villarreal, 1984: 56-57). This criterion was noted even by the harshest critics of the Church, like the Spanish statesman and historian Wenceslao E. Retana. However, what they failed to see, if not intentionally ignored, was that the Philippine society was not exactly the same as any other Western community. It did not simply follow the ways of the West. And, the sincere labor of missionaries like the Dominicans may have effected this deviation. Miguel de Unamuno, former Rector of the Universidad de Salamanca, who had also been a renowned poet, philosopher, and political leader in Spain, keenly painted the image of the Dominicans of Santo Tomás when he questioned the patriotism of Archbishop Bernardino Nozaleda, OP. According to Unamuno, the missionaries should have never espoused human culture because that was the reason why the colonies, especially the Philippines, were lost (Unamuno, 1904).¹⁴ Despite the cantankerous reproach by Unamuno, he deserves credit for noticing a scholastic tradition that evolved in the university in Manila—a tradition wherein Fray Zeferino matured as a philosopher.

Heir to a distinct Thomistic tradition

The academic environment of Fray Zeferino in Manila during his formative years was molded for about two centuries. It was inspired by events that happened even before the foundation of the university in the 1600s. When the Dominicans started arriving in the archipelagic colony of Spain in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, they carried with them the resolve to adhere to the scholastic teachings of the Church.¹⁵ These men were a mix of Dominican professors and students,

¹³ Among the other authors, who were also published in the book, were Vicente Barrantes; Joaquín Sánchez García; the Augustinians Fr. Miguel Rubin de Celis and Fr. Francisco Valdés; José Alvarez Cienfuegos; Fr. Juan Marín y Alonso, OP; Juan Álvarez Guerra; José Moreno Lacalle; D. Elias M. Martínez Nubla; Fr. Matías Gómez, OP; Fr. Norberto del Prado, OP; Fr. José Álvarez Cienfuegos; Juan Álvarez Guerra; and Fr. José M. García.

¹⁴ This is interesting: In Spain, the Dominicans had been short of being accused of treason for encouraging Filipino culture to flourish, while in the Philippines, anti-church writers and historians would continuously condemn the Dominicans citing “injustices” against the heroes connected to the Philippine Revolution.

¹⁵ Among the first Dominicans in the Philippines were Domingo de Salazar, first bishop of Manila;

who committed to evangelize the territories unknown to the Western world. They were academicians, whose fervor for the mission was somehow reinforced by the resolutions of the Council of Trent. It can be recalled that this Council also decreed the assiduous study and teaching of the truths taught by the Church.¹⁶ Of particular interest to this study were Fr. Domingo de Salazar, OP, the first bishop of Manila, and Fr. Miguel de Benavides, OP, founder of Santo Tomás in 1611.

When Bishop Salazar arrived in the Philippines, he immediately convoked the Manila Synod to address the abuses by the Spanish soldiers and landlords against the natives of the archipelago. Despite being advanced in age, he travelled back to Spain to personally ask Philip II to decree the recognition of the rights of the indigenous peoples (*naturales de las islas*) in the Philippines. Unfortunately, the Dominican Bishop died in Madrid. But his confrere, Fr. Benavides, continued his initiative and received the king's decree for an election to be held in the archipelago. When Fr. Benavides returned to the Philippines, he was named Bishop. He fulfilled the objective of Bishop Salazar in 1599, when the Spanish authorities held the referendum to decide whether the natives would accept or reject the King of Spain as the sovereign of the land. According to the Manila Synod, only after the people elected to acknowledge the King can the Spaniards collect tributes from them (Villarroel, 2000). Fr. Benavides shows the regard that the Church accorded to the natives of the archipelago in his work titled *Instrucción para el gobierno de las Filipinas y de cómo los han de regir y gobernar aquella gente*. He writes that proclaiming the Gospel must not be accompanied by military force, tributes must not be imposed on non-Christians, those who do not contradict the Gospel are not enemies of religion, and all wars aimed at subjugating the natives are evil.¹⁷

This appreciation of human dignity has since been deep-seated in the philosophico-theological formation in Santo Tomás, the university which Fr. Benavides founded. The first Dominicans in the Philippines share in this honor. They

Miguel de Benavides, lector at the Colegio de San Pablo in Valladolid; Juan Cobo, lector of arts at the University of Alcalá de Henares; Bernardo Navarro de Santa Catalina, professor of philosophy at the Convent of Trianos in Leon; Juan Maldonado de San Pedro Martir, lector of philosophy at the Colegio de San Gregorio in Valladolid; and Juan Ormaza de Santo Tomás, lector of philosophy at the Convent of San Pedro de Dueñas in Segovia. See Villarroel 2012, I: 22.

¹⁶ The Council of Trent (1545–1563), held to address Protestantism, decreed the institution of lectureships on Sacred Scripture and the Liberal Arts. This reinforced the need to deeply study the teachings of the Doctors of the Church in universities and convents. See the fifth session of Council of Trent, titled “Decree on Reformation.”

¹⁷ See M. Benavides, “Instrucción para el gobierno de las Filipinas...,” *Cuerpo de Documentos del Siglo XVI sobre los derechos de España en las Indias y Filipinas*, eds. Lewis Hanke and Agustín Millares Carlo (Mexico, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1943), 193–270. Also, see M. Benavides, “Ynstrucion para el Gobierno de Las Filipinas, De Fr. Miguel de Benavides, O.P.,” with annotations by Fr. Jesús Gayo, O.P., *Unitas* Vol. 22, No. 3 (July–September 1949): 603–649.

created a firm missionary tradition anchored on the notion of human dignity and each person's intimate relation with God. A few decades before the foundation of Santo Tomás, the Dominicans had already envisioned teaching as one of their most crucial missionary agenda. They learned the languages in the archipelago. By 1593, the missionaries already published three important works: the *Doctrina Christiana en Lengua Española y Tagala*, the *Doctrina Cristiana en Lengua y Letra China*, and the *Pien Cheng-Chiao Chen-Ch'uan Shih-Lu* (Mojarro, 2020).¹⁸ These works had been used to communicate and discourse with the Filipinos in Manila. In 1610, Fr. Francisco Blancas de San Jose, OP and Filipino printer Tomás Pinpin published the *Arte y Reglas de la Lengua Tagala*, a philosophical work on Tagalog grammar (Retana 1906, I: 550; Retana 1911, 78-81). By the time the university opened, it already had literature with which it could teach students about the culture and psychology of the natives of the Philippine island. As it was, the Dominicans had to appeal to reason when they talked about faith, and that they must not resort to forcing the people to accept what they professed. As regards the scholastic tradition, the university concentrated on the teachings of St. Thomas, Aristotle¹⁹ and Peter Lombard.²⁰ Supplementary readings included the works of Francesco Ferrariense, Tommaso de Vio Cajetan, and Paulus Barbus (or Paul Soncinas).²¹

The centuries that followed showed the influence of the intellectual tradition, which flourished in Santo Tomás. Archival documents today would show that churches functioned as shelters during calamities and refuge during violent invasions for the natives, that missionaries entered into legal agreements with the indigenous peoples, and women had the right to own, sell, and donate lands. The daily encounters with Asian people gave the Dominican missionaries in the Far East a distinct and astute sensibility toward different races and social classes. This was the kind of environment, when the eighteen-year-old Fray Zeferino arrived in Manila in 1849.

¹⁸ See the following: Edwin Wolf (ed.), *Doctrina Christiana en Lengua Española y Tagala* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1947); Jesus Gayo, OP (ed.), *Doctrina Christiana en Lengua y Letra China* (Manila: UST Press, 1951); and F. Villarroel (ed.), *Shih-Lu: apología de la verdadera religion* (Manila: UST Press, 1986).

¹⁹ Archival records show the use of three books of *De Anima*, eight books of *Physica*, the *Praedicamenta*, the *Posteriora*, two books of *De Generatione et Corruptione*, and the *Praedicabilia Porphyrii*. These were collected in a compendium known as *Libros de los piques*, which was used during the final examination of applicants for graduation in the university.

²⁰ For Theology, Peter Lombard's 1564 edition of the *Sententiarum Libri Quattuor* and also the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas were used. See Santamaría, 582.

²¹ Other Thomistic studies, found in the Archivo de la Universidad de Santo Tomás, were written by Dominicans Bartolomé de Medina (1580), Domingo Báñez and Domingo de Soto (1590–1593), Pedro Cabrera (1602), Didaco Núñez (1604), Pedro de Lorca (1609), Pedro de Ledesma (1615), and Gregorio Martínez (1622). The works of Jesuits Francisco Suárez (1595) and Luis de Molina (1602) were also present in the collection.

As regards the background of Fray Zeferino before he travelled to the Philippines, these are what we know: He was born on a Friday, January 28, 1831, to a humble family of farmers. His parents were Manuel González and Teresa Diaz Tuñón. They lived in the Asturian village of Villoria in Spain. Despite its bucolic green landscapes, mountain range, and coast, Asturias offered limited opportunities to the parents of Fray Zeferino for them to fully support all their children. So, the education provided by the Church was a welcome option for the children of the González family. To note, aside from Zeferino, the family also had José Ramón González, who also professed to the Order of Preachers, served as provincial of the Holy Rosary Province of the Dominicans, and, like Fray Zeferino, became a Professor of Philosophy in Manila. Meanwhile, another brother of his, Atanasio González, studied in the seminary of Oviedo before becoming a priest in Spain. At thirteen, young Zeferino entered the Dominican convent in Ocaña on November 28, 1844, following his older brother José Ramón who joined the religious order three years earlier (Álvarez, III: 810). To put context to his ecclesiastical formation, studying in a convent during the time of young Zeferino was not a convenient choice. There had already been animosity toward the Church. Friars had been massacred in Madrid and Barcelona.²² The anti-Church policies of the Spanish Prime Minister Jose María Quiapo de Llano, the “Conde de Toreno,” closed convents and religious services, except for a few which were for the care of the sick, the education of children from poor families, and the formation of missionaries, who were particularly meant to be sent to the Philippines.²³ Also, after the reign of Quiapo de Llano, his successor Juan Álvarez Mendizábal ordered the confiscation of the properties and most of the resources of the Church in Spain.²⁴

Four years after entering the convent, young Zeferino solemnly professed to be part of the Order of Preachers. When he did, it was recorded that he chose to be named Antonino de Florencia (Ocio, Neira and Arnaiz, II: 63-65), a name he would not use nor would be used to refer to him in future documents. Curiously, he also solemnly professed twice. The first was said to be invalid because he had it before he reached the required age. According to his biographer and friend, “an inconceivable mistake tested young Zeferino’s vocation. But he triumphed over it, thus confirming his invincible love for the religion of St. Dominic de Guzman” (Pidal y Mon, 574). Meanwhile, because of the looming threat to the religious, Fray Zeferino and other professed brothers were advised to continue their studies in Manila. They left Spain on June 5, 1848. Their voyage was full of challenges: In the first part of their

²² After Fernando VII died, violence against the churchmen erupted. This led to the massacre of friars in Madrid, on July 17, 1834, and Barcelona, on July 25, 1835. See Bueno Sánchez, 1989.

²³ See the Conde Decree of October 11, 1835.

²⁴ See Abend, 2004.

journey, strong storms battered them, aggravating the sickness that many of them were already experiencing. Fortunately, they were still able to reach Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. Meanwhile, on their way to Manila on board an English ship, a fire and a riot were among the events that the Dominicans had to survive until they reached the Philippines on February 9, 1849. When Fray Zeferino saw the Philippines, he might have been surprised how the Dominicans had good relations with many of the natives despite the differences in their physical features and psychology. Later, he would be writing something related to this harmonious relation in his work *Historia de la filosofía* (1878), which was published a year before the promulgation of *Aeterni Patris*.

Fray Zeferino had already finished his Philosophy program in Ocaña. While studying Theology in Santo Tomás, he was also tasked to be the Lector of Humanities. He was ordained in January 1854, a year after he obtained his degree in Theology. After his graduation, he immediately served as Lector of Philosophy (1853–1857) and later Vice Rector (1855–1857). Around this time, Fray Zeferino became a professor of Fr. Jose Burgos, who also became a faculty member in Santo Tomás and a hero of Filipinos (Villarroel, 1984: 50).²⁵ In 1857, Fray Zeferino wrote his first research papers *Los Temblores de tierra* and *La electricidad atmosférica*. These were on natural sciences, not philosophy or theology.

After spending much of his life as a religious in the academe, his missionary heart prevailed over Fray Zeferino. He wanted to evangelize in regions where his confreres sacrificed their life, such as in Tungkin (known today as a part of Vietnam). Later that year, before he celebrated his twenty-eighth birthday, Fray Zeferino was assigned to San Carlos, Pangasinan, a mission site of the Dominicans in the northern part of the island of Luzon. However, the delicate health of the zealous friar discouraged the Holy Rosary Province to send him to Tungkin, Formosa (Taiwan) or Japan. Instead, he was summoned back to Santo Tomás to be its Lector of Theology (Bueno Sánchez, 40). He was prepared to become a martyr of the faith, but God graced him with a different path. In Alejandro Pidal y Mon's words, "we lost a possible missionary martyr, but we won a philosopher" (Pidal y Mon, 575).

When Fray Zeferino returned to the university, he served other important positions, such as being the Director of the *Venerable Orden Tercera* (Dominican Laity), Secretary and Socius of the Prior Provincial, the Chronicler of the Holy Rosary Province, and Vicar of the Beaterio de Sta. Catalina. In 1868, he also received the appointment to be the "Inspector of Private Schools." His main task was the

²⁵ Fr. Burgos was the third of the martyred Filipino priests in 1872. Years before being killed, Fr. Burgos was entrusted the honor of being an "Inspector of Latinity" of the *Segunda Enseñanza*, an important chairmanship vacated by Fray Zeferino before he was sent back to Spain.

supervision of the *Segunda Enseñanza* (secondary schools). About this time, Santo Tomás had the function similar to today's Department of Education. Despite all these occupations, Fray Zeferino was still able to publish his three-volume collection titled *Estudios sobre la filosofía de Santo Tomás* (1864). However, on December 8, 1866, the Holy Rosary Province sent Fray Zeferino back to Spain due to serious ailments.

Fray Zeferino's return to Spain

In 1867, Fray Zeferino was already back in his country of birth. With him were the three volumes of his *Estudios sobre la filosofía de Santo Tomás* and drafts of his lessons when he was teaching at Santo Tomás. Later, the notes became his second book series, which was titled *Philosophia elementaria ad usum academicae ac praesertim ecclesiasticae juventutis, opera et studio* (1868). Having entered the convent at thirteen and then spending the most of his life in the Philippines, Fray Zeferino was not known within the public circles of Madrid. His renown supposedly started with a tense public discussion, which followed a lecture delivered by Segismundo Moret, then a young rising scholar. In his lecture, Moret criticized the Church, especially as regards her teachings on the relation between philosophy and faith. After speaking, the hall was filled with applause. But it was not enough to drown a voice asking to be heard. Fray Zeferino refuted the propositions made by Moret. But the truth in Fray Zeferino's words triumphed over the tension (Álvarez, III: 813-814).

In Madrid, Fray Zeferino stayed in the Dominican convent along the street of Pasión (today Calle Fray Zeferino). His lifelong vocation to educate the youth urged him to organize a regular discussion group on philosophy and theology in the convent. Part of the group were university students, fellow priests, journalists, and a few more dignitaries of Castile. They gathered three days every week. In each meeting, Fray Zeferino "exposed the important question of categories, the admirable theory of truth, of reason, and all empirical psychology and almost all rational."²⁶ After a year of settling in Madrid, Fray Zeferino became Rector of the convent in Ocaña (1868–1871)²⁷ and Procurator in Madrid of the Holy Rosary Province, the missionary province that was then based in the Philippines. Also, around this time, Fray Zeferino published his collection of articles titled *Estudios religiosos, filosóficos, científicos y sociales*. The collection featured old and new articles such as the *La*

²⁶ "We are very sure that everyone who attended [the discussions] will always be in his heart. In his head, printed are the memory of those fleeting inscriptions, so useful and so dear. . . that radiating light from its highest lighting illuminated our minds with clarity, precision and simplicity eloquence of [Fray Zeferino's] explanations" (Pidal y Mon, 579–580).

²⁷ When he was Rector, Fray Zeferino introduced to the center of education museum-laboratories for Physics and Natural History. Also, during his term, there came an unusual surge of students (around 300) who would be ordained in the dioceses of Spain (Neira, Ocio and Arnaiz, II: 63–65).

inmortalidad del alma y sus destinos según una teoría krauso-espiritista, *La economía política y el cristianismo*, *El positivismo materialista* and *La filosofía en la historia*. On January 23, 1873, Fray Zeferino was elected into the Real Academia de Ciencias, Morales y Políticas. His acceptance speech, which was delivered ten years later, was critical of anti-church sentiments and philosophies. According to him, the denial of God had been the principle that continuously generated evil in all its forms, causing society to be derailed from the path of goodness.²⁸

The Church proclaimed Fray Zeferino as Bishop of Córdoba in 1875, a dignity he held until 1883. During this time, he was able to revise previous works to republish them in new editions. Also, he wrote his collection *Historia de la filosofía*, which today will find significance in a time when philosophy is pivoting toward cultural dialogue. This work was the most complete and extensive history of philosophy of his time, where both the history of consciousness in the East and West were somehow documented. Among the remarkable achievements of Fray Zeferino as Bishop included the organization of the *Circulo Obreros* to support the laborers in Spain and the promotion of ecclesiastical seminars in civil degree programs.

Fray Zeferino became Archbishop of Seville in 1883. On November 10, 1884, Pope Leo XIII elevated him to the dignity of a Cardinal with the Santa Maria sopra Minerva as his titular church. From 1885 to 1886, Fray Zeferino was shortly seated as Archbishop of Toledo.²⁹ But he returned to Seville to serve as its Archbishop in 1886. On December 30, 1889, he announced his retirement due to health concerns. After two years, he published his last work *La Biblia y la Ciencia* (1891). Fray Zeferino succumbed to maxillary cancer, which he endured for a few more years after he retired. He died on November 29, 1894 in Madrid in the convent along la Calle Pasion. His remains were entombed in Ocaña, but his mausoleum was destroyed using dynamite during the Spanish Civil War (Bueno Sánchez, 49).

Undeserved Forgetfulness

Despite the magnitude of his influence during his time, Fray Zeferino seemed to have been forgotten. It is perplexing to find no one mentioning his thoughts at a time of heightened cultural and racial issues, or of intense academic debates concerning the divide between positive sciences and the humanities. So, this part is devoted to investigate the unfortunate fate of the Thomasian Cardinal's legacy.

²⁸ See Z. González, "La causa principal originaria," Proyecto Filosofía en español, <http://www.filosofia.org/zgo/zgcausa.htm>, last accessed Sept. 12, 2020.

²⁹ During this time, he became the Patriarch of the Indies, a dignity resulting from the agreement between the Vatican and Alfonso XII of Spain.

The probe starts with his writings. These are no longer in circulation for more than a hundred years now. Academic journals and books in English say little about the Cardinal. Language barrier could be a factor since he only wrote in Latin and Spanish. Only the *Estudios sobre la filosofía de Santo Tomás*³⁰ and the *Historia de la Filosofía*³¹ had been translated in German and French, respectively. Considering these circumstances, Spanish academic sources were consulted, but data are still scarce. In earlier records, findings are mostly notes on his biography. Only two scholars have written extensively about him: Franco Diaz de Cerio, SJ in 1969 in Rome, and the Spanish philosopher Gustavo Bueno Sánchez from the Universidad de Oviedo in 1989.³²

There indeed is a gap, which is unsettling. From the last two decades of the nineteenth century up to the first decade of the twentieth century, tributes and commentaries show that Fray Zeferino's works had been widely read in Europe and the Far East. He was even associated to two encyclicals, which had significant effects on the Church, namely *Aeterni Patris*, which effectively restored Christian philosophy, and *Providentissimus Deus*, which encouraged the study of the Holy Scriptures in terms of history and archaeology. And then, for some reason, he suddenly disappeared in discussions. It is difficult to imagine how historians and philosophers have become silent about someone or something held as important without the merit of reason. From the biography of the Cardinal, four groups or institutions come to mind to draw a picture of what happened. These are the Catholic Church, Spain, the Spanish-speaking world, and the Philippines, especially Santo Tomás.

After the restoration of Christian Philosophy ushered the Catholic Church into the twentieth century, Pope Pius X, who succeeded Leo XIII, issued an encyclical titled *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* in 1907. The papal letter was meant to monitor and act on the "doctrines of the modernists." While González had already died during this time, it could be true that some of his writings were "too modern" for the time.³³ To

³⁰ For the German translation of the three volumes of *Estudios sobre la filosofía de Santo Tomás*, see Z. González, *Die Philosophie des heiligen Thomas von Aquin, dargestellt von Franz Zephyrin González*, trans. Karl Joseph Nolte (Regensburg: Verlagsnst., 1885).

³¹ For the French version of the four volumes of *Historia de la Filosofía*, see Z. González, *Historie de la Philosophie*, trans. G. de Pascal (Paris: Lethielleux, 1890-1891).

³² See Díaz de Cerio, 1969, and the thesis by Bueno Sánchez, 1989.

³³ In his encyclical, Pius X gives an analysis of the "Modernist Teaching," which he warns against: "To proceed in an orderly manner in this recondite subject, it must first of all be noted that every Modernist sustains and comprises within himself many personalities; he is a philosopher, a believer, a theologian, an historian, a critic, an apologist, a reformer. These roles must be clearly distinguished from one another by all who would accurately know their system and thoroughly comprehend the principles and the consequences of their doctrines." These descriptions notably depict Cardinal González. See Pius X, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, encyclical letter, Vatican website, September 8, 1907, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-x/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_19070908_pascendi-dominici-gregis.html, sec. 5.

note, his *Philosophia elementaria*, then a widely used textbook, shows his openness to dialogue with the sciences and with non-European cultures, philosophies, and religions. This was the last printed edition among Fray Zeferino's books, which had last run of printing in 1907. He was also identified as a Catholic thinker hoping to reconcile catholic teachings with evolution, as mentioned earlier. The modernist crisis in the Church only ended in 1965 after the Second Vatican Council, when the "Oath against Modernism" ceased to be imposed on Catholics. After Vatican II, Thomism declined again.³⁴ Some leaders thought that Thomism had become a closed ideology. They were probably not aware anymore of how Cardinal González presented and developed the thoughts of Aquinas.³⁵ European universities and formation houses had probably stopped using Fray Zeferino's works decades before Vatican II. Catholic institutions, which had kept their Thomistic studies program strong, would even miss the name and philosophy of Cardinal González. For example, in *Thomistic Psychology: A Philosophic Analysis of the Nature of Man* (1941), Robert Edward Brennan, OP would connect Cardinal Désiré-Joseph Mercier to the restoration of Thomism and would fail to mention Cardinal González. In the same book, Fr. Brennan writes: "Modern scholastic philosophy, as, in fact, all the rest of modern education, has been almost ruined by bad textbooks, which have come between the student and the primary sources of his instruction—the great books" (Brennan, xiii). He did not identify the textbooks, but it would have been better if he did, and best if he discussed why these textbooks "ruined scholastic philosophy."

In Spain, Fray Zeferino's country of birth where he served esteemed positions in the Church, commentators focused more on his person than his philosophy. Some discussions in philosophy centered on whether he actually learned the teachings of St. Thomas since he spent more than two decades of formation and continuous learning in the Far East, and not in any European university. One biographer would also insist that Fray Zeferino was self-educated.³⁶ It is rare that any credit would be given to the programs on Philosophy or Theology, or even to Fray Zeferino's life experiences at Santo Tomás in Manila, where he started *philosophizing*.

³⁴ See Norris Clarke, 1990.

³⁵ As already explained, González was open to studying truths taught by cultures and philosophers from different nations. He advocated that they be evaluated and understood first before one passes judgment on them. However, this judgment must be based on a philosophical perspective, which González's historian-philosopher understands, subscribes to, and preserves. With this dialectic, human consciousness would rise above the madness of closed-mindedness and eclecticism.

³⁶ "We do not know the names of his professors, but there would be no one who stood out in a notable degree, neither in Spain, troubled at that time with political disturbances, with its studies in a lamentable state of collapse, nor was there in the distant Philippines much help to acquire even a decent knowledge of philosophy. And so the formation of Zeferino was properly speaking that of a self-taught man" (Fraile, 466–467).

There would be a discerning group in Spain who would have contemplated on the life and works of Fray Zeferino. Perhaps, its most prominent representative was writer-scholar Miguel de Unamuno, who also became rector of the Universidad de Salamanca (1901–1914). He had three remarks that pertained to both Fray Zeferino and his works: firstly, Fray Zeferino was “one of the people who have written the most stupidities in Spain;”³⁷ secondly, that Cardinal González and other Thomists “have made philosophy into something that turns the stomach” (Unamuno, 1984: 103);³⁸ and lastly, in a more general sense, the missionaries should never be the organs of human culture, and that the colonies were lost because of their missionary efforts (Unamuno, 1904). To be true, since the 1600s, as mentioned in the earlier part of this essay, many missionaries had already raised arms against the abuses committed by Spanish soldiers and landlords, who were sent to the colonies. It would then not be surprising that missionaries would receive the ire of persons, like Unamuno. His rhetoric reflected the prevailing sentiment of that time in Spain. Religious missionaries were somehow pictured as traitors, who contributed to the poverty that struck the country after losing many of its colonies. This ugly portrait of the friars, coupled with European liberalism and civil unrest due to poverty, resulted in the most brutal setback against Catholic thought in the Iberian Peninsula. Bishops, priests, nuns, missionaries, seminarians, and practicing Catholics were massacred during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). Many of the confreres of Fray Zeferino in the Order of Preachers were among the martyrs, who have now been canonized. Among them were fellow Thomasians: Fr. Buenaventura Garcia Paredes, OP, Fr. Jesus Villaverde Andres, OP, Fr. Pedro Ibañez Alonzo, OP, Fr. Manuel Moreno Martinez, OP, Fr. Maximino Fernandez Marinas, OP, and Fr. Jose Maria Lopez Carillo, OP.³⁹ For the next forty years, those who initiated the killings remained in power in Spain.

Other former Spanish colonies stayed Catholic. Despite this, the teachings of Fray Zeferino did not take root in these lands. After all, he was still associated with the former masters. It is telling however that, a few decades later, many of these former colonies of Spain would find their champion in the person of the French Neo-Thomist Jacques Maritain, who like Fray Zeferino, used Thomism to discuss culture, human dignity, and the common history of humanity.⁴⁰

In the Philippines, the commemoration of the contributions of Fray Zeferino was cut short by the departure of the Spaniards from the new republic in 1898 and the

³⁷ M. Unamuno, as directly quoted in Curtius, 233.

³⁸ See also Unamuno, 2017: 348.

³⁹ The exact number of martyrs of the faith during the Spanish Civil War is unknown. The record shows “almost seven thousand priests, twelve bishops, many sisters and thousands of lay leaders and laymen and laywomen were imprisoned, horribly tortured, and executed.” The Catholic Church has beatified about a thousand of them. (Villarreal, 2012, II: 367).

⁴⁰ See Ramos-Reyes, 1999; Methol Ferre, 1981; Amoroso Lima, 1972: 83.

arrival of the Protestant Americans. The new colonizers revamped the educational system.⁴¹ For the first half of the twentieth century, education struggled to adapt to the new changes in society, the new curriculum, and the new medium of instruction. In 1902, Santo Tomás was officially declared a “pontifical university” by virtue of the *Quae Mari Sinico*, an apostolic constitution signed by Leo XIII on September 17, 1902.⁴² Spanish missionaries remained to run the centuries-old university in Asia. However, the change in the medium of instruction dealt a blow to the continuation of teaching using the works of Fray Zeferino.⁴³ As already said, when the Spanish Civil War broke out, the number of Dominicans in the university decreased even more. Soon after that, the Second World War also hit the Philippines. By the time the tensions had eased, there was already little chance that Fray Gonzalez would be in the consciousness of scholars of philosophy. The fresh trauma of the past decades would be overwhelming to trace steps back.

Also, for new republics or the former colonies, the second half of the twentieth century would be marked by the search for national identities apart from the colonizers. The two landmark events for this postcolonial initiative were the Bandung Conference,⁴⁴ which was held in Indonesia in 1955 and where the “Third World” was

⁴¹ The American colonizers wanted to take over all educational institutions. However, it did not happen. The Americans thought it wise to let the religious congregations continue to operate their schools. By doing so, it would be economically and logistically advantageous for them. See the Report of the Monroe Commission Shumacher, 1979: 361–364.

⁴² The *Quae Mari Sinico* reads: “The efforts of the Bishops should certainly not be limited to the care of the Seminaries alone, for they must consider as commended to their care and providence the young laymen who frequent other schools. It is therefore the duty of the Prelates of the Church to see with all diligence, that the minds of the youths who attend the public schools be not deprived of religious training. Therefore, in order that this be properly attended to, let the Bishops take effective measures that the books used be not tainted with error, and since We are speaking, of public schools, We cannot pass by without bestowing merited praise on the great Lyceum of Manila, founded under the authority of Innocent X by the Dominicans. This school has always shone in the integrity of its doctrine, in the excellence of its doctors, and has rendered great services, We now not only desire that all Bishops look upon it with favor, but moreover We and Our Successors take it under Our patronage. Hence, We confirm in all their plenitude the privileges and honors conferred on the same by the Roman Pontiffs Innocent X and XI and Clement XII, and We endow it with the title of PONTIFICAL UNIVERSITY, and desire that the academic degrees that are conferred by it, shall have the same values as those of other Pontifical Universities” (Leo XIII, 1902: 9–10).

⁴³ It could have been translated to English. But as presented earlier, his works were written in volumes with hundreds of pages. The Spanish friars became very few, and they were facing uncertainty with the expulsion of their compatriots in the archipelago. They also had to ensure the continuous operations of Santo Tomás, which was declared a pontifical university by the pope himself. Decade after decade, it would become harder for the Spanish Dominicans to bring back the works of González.

⁴⁴ Held in Indonesia in 1955, the Bandung Conference gathered twenty-nine Asian and African nations to discuss their governments’ commitment to peace, economic development, and efforts for decolonization. Their main agenda were “political self-determination, mutual respect for sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in internal affairs, and equality.” See the “Final Communiqué of the Asian-African conference of Bandung (24 April 1955),” *Asia-Africa speak from Bandung* (Jakarta: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Indonesia, 1955).

born, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's Asia-Pacific meeting in 1983.⁴⁵ Revisiting the teachings of Fray Zeferino would be far from the consciousness of Filipino scholars back then.

Fray Zeferino's Bequest

The lasting legacy of Fray Zeferino would be in his books, in the thousands of pages he had written about Christianity, the truth about human existence, and the relation of God to the world. In closing this essay, this researcher intends to present a glimpse of the lifework of the Thomasian Cardinal.

Fray Zeferino's admiration and confidence in the philosophy of St. Thomas was already shown in his first book collection published in 1864, the three-volume work titled *Estudios sobre la Filosofía de Santo Tomás*. He was only thirty-one when it came off the press. The three volumes had a total of 1,847 pages, and were published by the Establecimiento Tipográfico del Colegio de Santo Tomás (UST Press). This work was translated as *Die Philosophie des heiligen Thomas von Aquin, dargestellt von Franz Zephyrin Gonzalez* by Karl Joseph Nolte in 1885.

Noticeably, Fray Zeferino's way of doing philosophy had departed from the polemic of earlier apologists. While he succeeded Francisco de Alvarado, OP, the *Filosofo Rancio*, as the most influential Thomist among the Dominicans in the Philippines, Fray Zeferino did not adopt the method of Alvarado, which was quite dismissive toward contrary opinion. This becomes more evident in his next publications. He embraced openness to contrary positions, while maintaining prudence in his judgments.

His second book series was titled *Philosophia elementaria ad usum academicae ac praesertim ecclesiasticae juventutis, opera et studio* (Matriti, 1868). This textbook, although printed in Madrid, was a collection of the materials used by Fray Zeferino while teaching in the Philippines. It had three volumes with a total of 1,451 pages, and was intended for the use of seminarians. Since its first publication, this book had seven editions in all, with the last one being published in 1907.

The book *Filosofía Elemental* (Madrid: Imprenta de Policarpo López, 1873) was supposed to be the Spanish translation of Fray Zeferino's *Philosophia elementaria*. However, several doctrinal discussions were omitted in this book. Moreover, this

⁴⁵ On February 21–25, 1983, the UNESCO hosted experts in philosophy in the Asia-Pacific. According to one representative, "UNESCO did not legislate as to what philosophy should or should not be, but it maintained that whatever is accepted as philosophy in a region is indeed philosophy" (Quito, 1983: 13–14).

two-volume work was meant to be used in public educational centers and universities by those interested in philosophical questions. Its two volumes combined for 1,122 pages. Like the *Philosophia elementaria*, it had seven editions.

The *Historia de la Filosofía*, Fray Zeferino's fourth major work, was conceived in the Philippines. It holds a significant place in intellectual history because it was the first complete documentation of the philosophies in the world and across continents. Its first edition, released in 1878, had three volumes with 1,520 pages in all. However, its second edition had an additional volume when Agustin Jubera published the collection in 1886. G. de Pascal translated this work in French (c. 1890–1891) with the title *Historie de la Philosophie*.

Fray Zeferino's last work was *La Biblia y la Ciencia* (1891). This work saw itself involved in a controversy still regarding the relation between the Church and the sciences, which Leo XIII resolved with the encyclical *Providentissimus Deus*.⁴⁶ It can be remembered that the École Biblique, the Dominican school for the research and study of the scriptures in Jerusalem, started with the publication of the journal *Revue Biblique*. Its founder Fr. Marie-Joseph Lagrange, OP published as introduction to the maiden issue of the journal lengthy quotations from Fray Zeferino's *La Biblia y la Ciencia*. These were questioned by a number of Church authorities. Perhaps, with his work, the vision of the Cardinal was looking far beyond the horizon of his time.⁴⁷ A few decades later, one scholar would praise the Thomasian Cardinal for offering "a whole program of renewal of biblical studies, in which a healthy modernity is paired with the tradition of nineteen centuries."⁴⁸ Meanwhile, Fr. Lagrange also admits his indebtedness to Fray Zeferino in his book *Monsieur Loisy et le Modernisme: A propos des Memoires*, which was published in 1932.

Fray Zeferino would have other publications, such as articles. Many of these were collected in *Estudios religiosos, filosóficos, científicos y sociales* (1873), which was published for the Cardinal by his student Alejandro Pidal y Mon in 1873. Many of his pastoral letters as Bishop and Archbishop had also been preserved in ecclesiastical or cultural archives in Spain.⁴⁹ But to provide a preview of the extent of work that Thomasian Cardinal had done throughout his academic life, this essay would culminate with indexes of some of the topics that Fray Zeferino discussed in his major works.

⁴⁶ *Providentissimus Deus* is also an encyclical by Leo XIII, which was issued on November 18, 1893.

⁴⁷ Fray Zeferino was among those identified Catholic thinkers who sought to harmonize Catholic doctrine and natural evolution. See Appleby, 192.

⁴⁸ For the relation between *La Biblia y la Ciencia* and *Providentissimus Deus*, see Larrañaga, 1948.

⁴⁹ For the most complete list of the works of Fray Zeferino, see Bueno Sánchez, 549–558.

Conclusion

Fray Zeferino, the Thomasian Cardinal, was a philosopher of history. He would be the kind who would argue against Gottlieb Tennemann⁵⁰ and Alfred North Whitehead,⁵¹ who declared that all of human thought, and the good therein, could have only originated from a Western tradition. Fray Zeferino's appreciation of human thought, goodness, and consciousness would not be possible if not for the two important decades of his formative years in the University of Santo Tomás in Manila. Yes, as a student, he probably read the same books, which were used in Europe. His professors, like Fr. Fonseca, would be among the best Dominican teachers of scholastic thought of the time. But Fray Zeferino possessed a distinct experience, which the philosophers of the West did not have. He became part of a tradition, where the Church and the natives thrived together despite being a mix of origins and races. For centuries, the encounters with different peoples, customs, and the physical environment had been constant in the experience of the missionaries, who came before Fray Zeferino. And, it would not be hard to think that the psychology of the Thomasian Cardinal had been influenced by this tradition of constant dialogue.

Fray Zeferino was already exemplary. Throughout his life, the wise Dominican from Asturias indeed occupied difficult positions but his passion for truth enabled him to follow the Thomistic teaching *Contemplare et contemplare aliis tradere* (To contemplate and to share the fruits of one's contemplation). In the Philippines, he was Professor of Humanities, Philosophy and Theology; Vice Rector of Santo Tomás; Rector of the Colegio de San Juan de Letran, Socius of the Prior Provincial; Inspector of Latinity; Vicar of the Beaterio de Santa Catalina; and Director of the Dominican Laity. But this did not hinder him in writing thousands of pages for his *Estudios sobre la Filosofía de Santo Tomás* and a few other articles, which would be published in Madrid. In Spain, he became Rector of the Dominican Convent in Ocaña, Bishop of Córdoba, Archbishop of Seville and Toledo, and Cardinal. But he willed himself to publish more book series about the truth of the Church. In these books—*Philosophia elementaria*, *Filosofía Elemental*, *Historia de la Filosofía*, and *La Biblia y la Ciencia*—as well as in his first works, embedded are reflections that radiate truth from experience.

Perhaps, it is about time that the missions in the Far East were not framed only by the martyrdom of missionaries. There has since been an intellectual tradition, from which the Church today can draw inspiration, especially in her attempts at ecumenism and dialogue.**PS**

⁵⁰ Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann, *Manual of the History of Philosophy*, trans. Arthur Johnson. Oxford: D.A. Talboys, 1832, 8.

⁵¹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*. New York: The Free Press, 1978, 39.

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