



Historical Interpretation: Rizal's Retraction

By Group 5

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The background is a detailed, sepia-toned map of Asia, specifically focusing on the northern and central regions. It shows the Arctic Circle, the Turgusk, Lena, and Yenisey rivers, and various mountain ranges like the Stanovoy Upland, Hentiyn Mts, and Mongolian Plateau. A small square on the map marks the '1908 Tunguska Explosion'. In the bottom left corner, there is a circular inset featuring a portrait of a man with a beard, identified as 'THE WENTWORTH Earl of STRAFFORD, Born April 13 2 H. 22 M. P.M. 1593.' The map is surrounded by decorative elements: a globe in the top left, a torn map fragment in the top right, and a compass rose in the bottom right.

The Enduring Debate on Dr. José Rizal's Final Hours

Key Content

Topic: The alleged document signed by Dr. José Rizal hours before his execution (December 30, 1896) retracting his Masonic views and affirming Catholic faith.

Course: Reading in the Philippine History



The Core Controversy and Context

Why Does the Retraction Matter?

The Controversy

The issue centers on whether Rizal died a Catholic (having retracted his anti-clerical and Masonic views) or a Mason/Freethinker (dying unrepentant for his beliefs).

The two versions of Rizal's retraction document, cited by Hessel (1965) in a paper presented at Siliman University, are shown below

*Text of the Retraction Discovered by Fr. Vicente Garcia
in the Archives of the Archdiocese in 1935*

Me declare catolica y en esta religion en que naci y me eduque quiero vivir y morir.

Me retracto de todo Corazon de cuanto en mis palabras, escrito, impresos, y conducta ha habido contrario a mi cualidad de hijo de la Iglesia Catolica. Creo y profeso cuanto ella enseña y me someto a cuanto ella manda. Abomino de la Masoneria, como enemiga que es de la iglesia y como sociedad prohibida por la Iglesia Puede el Pareledo Diocesano, como Autoridad Superior espontanea mia para reparar el escandalo que mis actos hayan podido causar y para que Dios y los hombres me perdonen.

El Jefe del Piquete El Ayudante Uplaze: Juan del Fresno Eloy Moure

*Text of Retraction As Reported by Fr. Balague
with His Notarial Seal of August 8, 1919*

*Me declare catolico y en esta religion en que naci y me eduque quiero vivir y morir.
Me retracto de todo corazon y conducta ha habido contrario a mi cualidad de hijo de la*

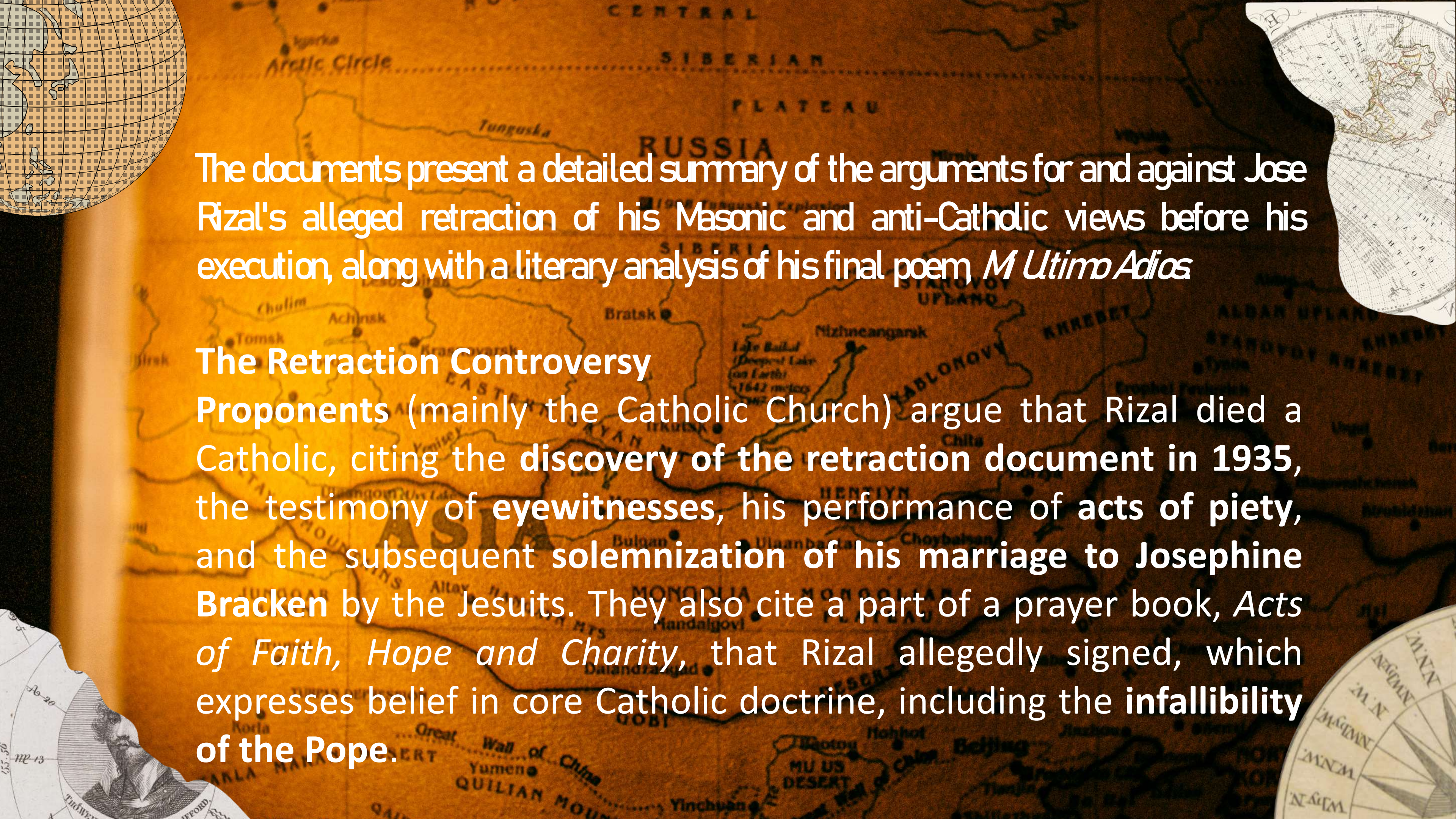
Iglesia. Creo y profeso cuanto ella enseña; y me someto a cuanto ella manda. Abolino de la Masoneria, como enemiga que es de la Iglesia y como sociedad prohibida por la misma Iglesia. Parelado Diocesano como autoridad Superior eclesialstica, hacer publica esta manifestacio, espontanea mia para reparar el escandalo que mis actos hayan podido causar y para que Dios y los hombres me perdonen.

Manila, 29 de Diciembre 1896

Esta retraccion en firmaron con el Dr. Jose Rizal, el Señor Fresno, Jefe del Piquete y el Señor Moure.

Ayudantede la Plaza.

The Roman Catholic Church is, of course, a



The documents present a detailed summary of the arguments for and against Jose Rizal's alleged retraction of his Masonic and anti-Catholic views before his execution, along with a literary analysis of his final poem, *M Ultimo Adios*.

The Retraction Controversy

Proponents (mainly the Catholic Church) argue that Rizal died a Catholic, citing the **discovery of the retraction document in 1935**, the testimony of **eyewitnesses**, his performance of **acts of piety**, and the subsequent **solemnization of his marriage to Josephine Bracken** by the Jesuits. They also cite a part of a prayer book, *Acts of Faith, Hope and Charity*, that Rizal allegedly signed, which expresses belief in core Catholic doctrine, including the **infallibility of the Pope**.

The background of the slide is a collage of historical and geographical elements. It features a large, sepia-toned map of Asia, specifically focusing on the regions of Siberia, Mongolia, and the Great Wall of China. The map includes labels for various geographical features such as the Arctic Circle, the Turguska Explosion, the Gobi Desert, and the Quilian Mountains. In the top left corner, there is a small, circular inset showing a globe with a grid of latitude and longitude lines. In the bottom left corner, there is a small, circular inset showing a portrait of a man, identified as the Earl of Strafford, with text indicating he was born in 1593. In the bottom right corner, there is a small, circular inset showing a compass rose with the cardinal directions labeled. The overall aesthetic is historical and academic.

Legislative Context: The Rizal Law (RA 1425)

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Mandate: Requires all schools to teach Rizal's life, works, and writings, especially the anti-clerical novels, *Noli Me Tángere* and *El Filibusterismo*

Connection to Retraction: The Catholic Church strongly opposed the Rizal Law. The Retraction document is seen by the Church as a means to neutralize the anti-clerical impact of his novels, proving Rizal ultimately returned to the Church.



Analysis of *Mi Ultimo Adios*

The poem is viewed as Rizal's final expression of his **patriotism** and **spirit of fairness and justice**.

It is his farewell to his family, his native land ("**Gem of the Sun Caressed, Pearl of the Orient Seas**"), and to his wife, **Josephine Bracken**, whom he calls his "dulcet extranjera".

The final stanza asserts Rizal's **Masonic and religious fervor**, stating that he faced death calmly because the spirit is immortal, and he was going to a world where "faith does not slay".

Rizal's philosophy of life is summarized in the last line: "**In death there is rest**".



A. Arguments for Retraction (Pro-Church Stance)

The Roman Catholic Church, represented by Cavanna (1956), relies on the following key points:

The Document: The signed retraction document itself is the "**chief witness**," especially after its **discovery** in 1935. The Spanish text includes an explicit statement: "**I retract with all my heart... I abominate Masonry**".

Witnesses: The testimony of the press and **eyewitnesses**, including the head of the Jesuit order, attested to the signing.

- Marriage:** The Jesuits solemnized Rizal's marriage to Josephine Bracken, which the Church would not have done without a retraction.

- Piety:** Rizal performed acts of piety and signed the prayer book, Acts of Faith, Hope and Charity.



B Arguments Against Retraction (Anti-Church Stance)

Those who believe Rizal did not retract cite the following counter-evidence (Hessel, 1965):

Forgery Claim The document is believed to be a forgery. Pascual (1950) questioned the handwriting, a claim supported by the alleged confession of the forger, Antonio Abad (Runes & Buenafe, 1962).

Contradictory Facts Several facts do not align with the story:

- The document was not made public until 1935.

- No effort was made to save Rizal from execution.

- His burial was kept secret and was placed on a special page of the Paco Cemetery entries.

- There is no marriage certificate or public record for the marriage to Josephine Bracken.

- His final writings (*Ultimo Adios* and letters) do not show conversion.

Out of Character. The retraction is deemed "out of character" and incongruent with Rizal's known principles and religious thought.

Conclusion: The document concludes with the quote from Hessel (1965) that despite the debate, "Catholic or Mason, Rizal is still Rizal", a hero whose greatness is defined by his willingness to die for his beliefs.



The Pro-Retraction Arguments (Affirmative Position)



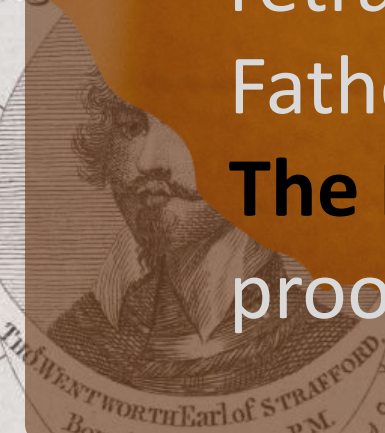
Evidence for Authenticity

Core Evidence: The Document and Witnesses

Primary Document: The **Retraction Document** itself, allegedly signed by Rizal, and discovered in 1935 by Fr. Manuel Garcia, S.J.

Eyewitness Testimony (Jesuit Account): Fr. Vicente Balaguer, S.J., claimed to have personally witnessed Rizal sign the retraction and administered the sacrament of marriage to Josephine Bracken. According to a testimony by Father Balaguer, a Jesuit missionary who befriended the hero during exile in Dapitan, Rizal accepted a shorter retraction document prepared by the superior of the Jesuit Society in the Philippines, Father Pio pi

The Marriage: The solemnization of Rizal's marriage to Josephine Bracken is cited as proof, as the Church required a retraction for the sacrament to take place.





Historian Viewpoints (Secondary Sources)

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Fr. Vicente Balaguer: Claimed firsthand knowledge of the conversion.

Nicolas Zafra: Called the retraction a "plain unadorned fact of history." — a prominent filipino historian and educator.



The Anti-Retraction Arguments (Skeptical Position)

Evidence for Fabrication

Core Counter-Evidence: Inconsistencies & Context (Primary Sources & Circumstantial Evidence)

Forgery Claim: Dr. Ricardo Pascual's (1950) handwriting analysis suggested the document was suspect, and others cited the confession of a supposed forger.

Questionable Provenance: The document was **hidden for nearly 40 years** (found in 1935) and not shown to Rizal's family.

Incongruence with Character: Historians like Rafael Palma argued it was "illogical" for a man of Rizal's strong, lifelong principles to betray his convictions hours before death.

Circumstantial Evidence:

No public record or certificate exists for the marriage.

Rizal's **secret burial** outside the inner wall of Paco Cemetery and the special page in the burial records suggested he died an **admitted non-penitent**.

The content of his **Mi Último Adiós** (written hours before) shows no indication of a spiritual conversion.





Conclusion & Modern Consensus

The Ongoing Historical Challenge

The Challenge

The debate remains unresolved because the primary sources are few, biased (clerical accounts), and contradictory.

Modern Historical Consensus (Secondary Analysis, e.g., Ambeth Ocampo)

The focus has shifted from *proving authenticity* to understanding the *historical significance*.

Impossibility of Proof: It is virtually impossible to conclusively prove or disprove the retraction given the nature of the sources.

Historical Impact: The controversy fundamentally shaped Rizal's image—either as a religious hero (by the Church) or as a secular martyr (by nationalists).

The Importance of Context: The retraction served a political/theological motive for the colonial and clerical structures to delegitimize Rizal and the anti-colonial cause.

Final Summary

What endures is the historical impact: Rizal remains an enduring symbol, seen either as a Catholic hero reclaimed by the Church or as a secular martyr for nationalist ideals.



Thank you