

“IMPUGNACIÓN DEL ESPIRITISMO”

DISCURSO

PRONUNCIADO

EN LA APERTURA ANUAL DE LOS ESTUDIOS

DE LA

UNIVERSIDAD DE MANILA

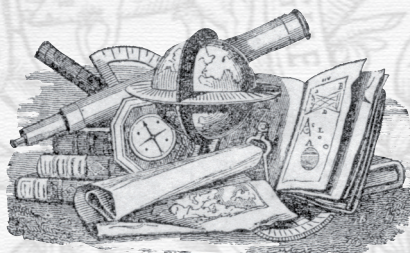
EL DÍA 2 DE JULIO DE 1877

R. P. FR. JUAN VILÁ

DEL ORDEN DE PREDICADORES

PROFESOR EN LA MISMA UNIVERSIDAD

*Frequenter dæmones simulant se esse
animas defunctorum ad confirmandum gentilium
errorem, qui hoc credebant. Div.Thom. 1.º part.
quest. 117. art. 4. ad 2^{um}*



MANILA

IMPRENTA DEL COLEGIO DE SANTO TOMÁS

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FOREWORD

ON REFUTATION OF SPIRITUALISM

Belén Lorezca-Tangco

The opening lecture delivered by Rev. Fr. Juan Vilà, O.P. commences with his appreciation of the goodwill shown to him in being invited as the inaugural lecturer of academic year 1877-1878.

He mentions the healthy competitions among students and professors alike in the performance of their respective duties distinguishing their work with their diligence and assiduousness. The students of the Royal and Pontifical University had not been unworthy of the examinations they took. There was a considerable number of surveyors, mercantile experts, bachelors of arts, bachelors and masters from various Faculties whose brilliant works had been in display. He also mentions some improvements in teaching and in the academic programs which had been regularized and attuned to the mother country with the end of not allowing delay to the studies of those from the mainland who wanted to continue studies in the archipelago, nor to the studies of the Filipinos who wanted to finish courses in the Peninsula.

Father Vilà dwells on the theme, Spiritualism and its Refutation. The works of spiritualism are a sad reality, recognized as caused by the intervention of bad spirits and which produce greatest sorrow to the individual, the society and the religion.

There was a time when the immense majority of towns and nations — that the civilized ones were in a pit like the most degrading barbaric — were completely subject and offered the palpitating blood of the victims and the velvety perfume of incense dedicating to Satan temple and consecrated and deputized these for the cult rituals of the priests, augurs, pontiffs, sibyls and witches. Until Jesus Christ came to break the chains under which human misery budded out and to destroy the reign of Satan over souls, as this resulted from the lineage of Adam.

When the power of the angel of gloom was cut off and his empire and domination over souls went on a descending scale, there was an evident day-by-day loss of territory, and, on a firm precision of abandoning nations which opened eyes to the splendor of the revelation of true civilization, a seeking of refuge behind mountains among people, owing to the destructive radiance of the Catholic faith.

Accordingly, Catholicism from the beginning has been the most incarnate antagonist of idolatry, superstition, magic and fanaticism. All these diverse phases of error can be considered as ways by which the father of lies pretends at all times to be worshipped by men. It was constantly noted that wherever the Catholic beliefs had

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been purely preserved, the angel of gloom could not implant his mundane seeds nor spread out his long time magic or superstition; that in nations where the Catholic fervor had grown cold and Catholic beliefs had been altered, the fanatics and the superstitious men multiplied with extraordinary speed.

This gives the true cause for the proliferation of *magnetism*, *sleepwalking* and *spiritualism* in nations with an amazing speed in a century. There were innumerable converts among children of impiety and of persons of doubt from all classes of modern society. In the century of progress and advancement, of incredulity and skepticism, there have been necromancy, trading with the demon, fortune telling, and witchcrafts which have caused the laughter of philosophers of previous century. They who had negated the truth in miracles, believe blindly today the wonders of spiritualism. They who had laughed off the prophecies, give now entire credit to predictions and revelations made which in the language of spiritualism is called medium. They who only admitted years before the existence of the matter go out these days from an entire magnetic session fully convinced and confident of having conversed for a long while with the spirit of their parents, friends or associates.

The reality of the existence of the works of spiritualism has been attested by illustrious witnesses: Cuvier, Laplace, Franklin, Berzelius, Orilla, Broassais, Arago, De Jussieu, Claproth, Cardinal Gousset, Mons. Sibour archbishop of Paris, Sr. González then incumbent bishop of Córdoba, P. Lacordaire, P. Felix, P. Matignon, P. Ratifica, P. Gury and P. Perrone. These notables were cited by Fr. Vilà who asserted their authority in pronouncing the authenticity of the works of spiritualism.

The lecturer presented the two classes of phenomena observed in spiritualism as noted by an erudite author on the columns of a French newspaper, *L' Ami de la Religion*, January 24, 1854. Some phenomena are simply mechanical, others are significant or meant to indicate something. Among the simply mechanical are (as enumerated by city dwellers in North America, 1853) the rotation of tables, the elevation and movement of chairs, candles, pieces of furniture, dances and suspension on air of huge bodies, defiance of laws of gravity and equilibrium. There are also luminous phenomena which in splendor and clarity in various forms and color light up a dark living room where there is no luminous body or instrument capable of producing electricity. There are the acoustic phenomena such as noise and sounds, shouting, singing, music, sound of a hurricane, etc.

Finally, the physiological phenomena: the interruption in sensations, transposition of bodily organs, the cessation of circulation or respiration for long hours or days, the presence incurable diseases, sudden deaths, violent convulsions, most painful spasms and other similar manifestations. As regards the significant phenomena, Fr. Vilà presents the species depending on the diverse media adopted by the agents of spiritualism for them to understand: a) spirits occasionally respond to the questions posed conventional strikings; b) spirits violently get the hand of the medium, fix it successively over many letters of an alphabet prepared beforehand to form dictions and complete sentences; c) spirits grab the hand of the medium

after acquiring an extraordinary rigidity and; d) spirits write full pages on different materials or draw with mastery, which imitate the work of renowned artists and painters.

St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that the souls, once separated from the bodies, are found to be incapable of moving a body by its own proper virtue. He proves it by saying that it is evident to all that in the state of union of soul with the body, a soul could only move a body it vivifies. It is equally certain that a soul separated does not come back to vivify any other body (St. Thomas, part I, q. 117, art. 4).

According to the Catholic doctrine, the souls of the deceased ones can be encountered in three states: a) they are beholding in glory the fruit of their works and receiving the reward owing to refined virtue; b) they are being purified in the place of expiation for the little stains contracted in this world and satisfying divine justice; c) they are experimenting in hell the fullness of ire of a God in vengeance, brought about by this enormous crimes, atrocious misdeeds and the final impenitence and diabolical obstinacy in remaining in sin till the last breath of life.

In whatever state the souls of the deceased are found, these could not intervene nor be the agents of the effects of spiritualism. All the time that the soul is separated from the body, whichever condition and state of its destination, it is completely subject to the will of God and is separated from the power of any other creature.

The Angelic Doctor has two very rational hypotheses in the *Summa* (Part I, q. 89, art. 8, reply to 2nd argum.) 1) God, working supernaturally over ordinary laws, can augment in a wonderful way the natural powers of said souls and concede to them a dominion over the matter much greater than it had in the state of union with the body; but it is noted that neither those forces, nor that dominion are natural to the souls of the deceased, but are greatly added by divine dispensation to those by their nature are concerned; 2) it may well happen that those who appear or invoked are not the deceased but good or bad angels who take the appearance of the deceased, as well as form, color, voice, manners and other individual qualities. In this, any reason of impossibility is not seen for it is known that the power of angels over matter is incomparably greater than that of the souls which occupy the last step in the immense ladder of register of spiritual beings.

In his address, Fr. Vilà enhances a systematic, logical style in his presentation of data and arguments. The academic community then must have been treated to precious moments of listening to grandiose exposition and veritable refutation of spiritualism.