

“PROPONE LA DOCTRINA DE SANTO TOMÁS COMO UNO DE LOS
REMEDIOS CONTRA LOS ERRORES DE NUESTRO SIGLO”

DISCURSO

PRONUNCIADO

EN LA APERTURA ANUAL DE LOS ESTUDIOS

DE LA

UNIVERSIDAD DE MANILA

EL DÍA 3 DE JULIO DE 1876

R. P. FR. MANUEL PUEBLA

DEL ORDEN DE PREDICADORES

Nemini certe res litteraria discipli-naque altiores totaque qua late patet scientia commendaretur aptius, quam Sancto illi Doctore, qui, angelico ferme intellectu ditatus, ita scripsit de humanis divinisque rebus, ut ab ipso Domino Rostro diserte probari meruerit.

Pio IX al Arzobispo de Nápoles en 3 de Mayo de 1875.



MANILA

IMPRESA DEL COLEGIO DE SANTO TOMAS

1876

FOREWORD

**A PROPOSAL ON SAINT THOMAS' DOCTRINE
BEING ONE OF THE REMEDIES AGAINST THE
ERRORS OF THE CENTURY**

Belén Tangco, OP

In this inaugural address delivered on July 3, 1876 at the University of Manila and printed by the Colegio de Santo Tomas printing press, the lecturer, Rev. Fr. Manuel Puebla of the Order of Preachers, acknowledges the littleness of his faculties to have merited the presence of an august body to listen to his address. Recalling the accomplished tasks of the students in the previous year would be feeling the joy the students had, savoring the fruit of their hardwork and diligence. It would also be the moment of acknowledging the love and sacrifice of their parents who provided them good education.

He recalls that months earlier, a political speaker well noted in the country, with vigorous imagination but with misguided intelligence, talked about a youth movement geared toward materialism. The speaker pointed out an efficacious remedy to such bad development in society — the rehabilitation of some zealous professors supporting them with “idealistic principles, spiritualists or mouthpieces of the new philosophy.” It was inconceivable that there were men so blinded whose audacity reached the extreme of proposing as a remedy to something bad the same cause which produced and maintained it.

The nebulous teachings could not be the panacea being sought to fight the evils of the day. When the proposal would have been realized, i.e., the re forging of Catholic doctrine in all spheres of life, then the sunset of materialism and all modern aberrations could then be announced.

When the marvelous genius of Thomas returns to occupy with his flights of angelic intelligence all the horizons of knowledge, then the hour of victory of truth over the fundamental error of the century shall have come. Father Puebla proposes that the teaching of St. Thomas be one of the remedies against the errors of the century.

He lays out the evil images that lurk: Pío IX, in his allocution of June 9, 1862, states that the period then obtaining was different from the days of Arius and

Nestorius who were fighting a specific dogma. It was a time when error and truth fought not only in school nor books the only means to record the conquests of evil. The invasions of error and evil penetrated the terrains of religion, science, literature and the governance of states. It was strange that the supernatural revelation — divulged by the four winds of the earth — that human nature did not need assistance from the outside to reach her supreme destiny, was proscribed. The objective of the innovators was not only to eliminate the positive religion, but to finish off with any religious idea as well.

In totality, the ideal of modern errors was to convert in a work the plan designed by Federico de Prusia, a model which worried the infamous Voltaire throughout his life: to destroy the Church of Christ and her Divine Founder. In the gory battle raised against the entire Catholicism, the lineage of monstrous errors was sourced out from the profound ignorance. The errors “pervert whole science, foment unbridled license of living and all kinds of evil passions, perturb the religious and social order and head towards extinguishing all the idea of justice, truth, law, honesty and religion,” as Pio IX put it.

These old errors, reproduced and pulverized on thousand occasions, were baptized with pompous names, such as, progress, modern civilization and with her the Church of Jesus Christ, constant protector and sustainer of true civilization, seems to translate and get reconciled.

Fronting these principles, supreme reason of modern errors, we put the luminous and profound doctrine of the Angel of Schools and that which is proposed to be shown remains elucidated; the knowledge effect produced by the truth, according to what St. Thomas had said, carries to the cognitive faculty the possession of this rich treasure, natural aspiration of all men. The truth as a transcendental property of all being “is what it is;” it is the reality itself of things as soon as an idea relative to an understanding is enfolded in its bosom, that which has given him the being by which he could be known. All of the natural beings which form the universe are works of God, which He has freely produced in time, like the prototype ideas that exist in eternity in the divine intelligence.

From conformity properly come the denomination of truths. While the whole universe came out of nothing and fixed by laws which only the Supreme Creator could suspend when convenient to His ends, man is a procreator with the Primary Being in the world, though he has not yet gone out from the depths of nothingness. Nevertheless, God, who in His goodness has looked at man with special care and attention, breathed into him the breath of life, and animated his body with an immortal soul radiated with His divine intelligence. With this, man

comes to recognize the reality of natural things in their proper ends. The ideological doctrine of St. Thomas — based on the study of man's faculties and in the analysis of the psychological works that are experimented in man himself — closes the door to the materialist and pantheistic schools, upon entrance to the knowledge of the active and passive principle.

Knowing the weakness of man's understanding, God made revelation of truths understood from within the proper object. Such understanding could have been claimed by just a few, but after much time of study and meditation, and exposition, many errors could possibly be incurred. Man has been raised to a supernatural order by the grace of God. To him, truths belonging to a superior sphere have been manifested. These exceed the natural capacity of human reason. This revelation has not been entrusted to the fallible judgment of man, but to the Church whose authority principally resides in the Supreme Pontiff, infallible teacher of religious truth, faithful depository also of knowledge principles, as shown in the experience through centuries and particularly in then current days.

The lecturer cited Pope Innocent VI, saying the doctrine of St. Thomas "is one who[sic] has most exactitude in words, methodology in speech, and truth in statement... he who follows it never goes out of the footpaths of truth." St. Pius V remarks, we fix our intellectual gaze upon the writings of St. Thomas because he "illumined the Church, destroyed an infinity of heresies and thereafter became honored with the cult of the Saints, and with the force of his teaching destroyed the heretics of all ensuing ages." He who studied Thomas' books has drunk from the fountain of wisdom, and does not have to fear the poison of any error... so, the water of this wisdom is not only clear... but also the most effective remedy against all species of poison.

There is no error which this saintly Doctor had not refuted directly... The name of Thomas is like the sun, center of a system. The most powerful stars of science worked on orbits more or less huge but always geared towards Thomas, always gravitating towards Thomas lest they would get lost in the vacuum and precipitate in the abyss into a horrifying fall and miserable ruin.

Fr. Puebla in his scholarly address prayerfully wished that the Lord would not allow the academe to break the tradition of the University and that the academic community adhere firmly to the teachings of the professors and faithful imitators of his heroic virtues, and that one day, not so remote a day, the ties of mortality be broken and understanding fortified with the light of glory, and contemplate upon finishing the Primary Truth, which is ultimate aspiration of man's life.