

“VERDADERA NOCIÓN DEL PROGRESO SOCIAL.”

DISCURSO

LEIDO EN LA

APERTURA ANUAL DE LOS ESTUDIOS

DE LA

REAL Y PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD DE SANTO TOMAS DE MANILA

EL DÍA 2 DE JULIO DE 1883

POR EL

R. P. Fr. José Álvarez Cienfuegos

DEL ORDEN DE PREDICADORES

PROFESOR EN LA MISMA UNIVERSIDAD



~(EDICION OFICIAL)~

MANILA

ESTABLECIMIENTO TIPOGRÁFICO DEL COLEGIO DE SANTO TOMÁS

A CARGO DE D. GERVASIO MEMIJE

1883

FOREWORD

TRUE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL PROGRESS

Belen Lorezca-Tangco, OP

The esteemed Professor, Rev. Fr. Jose Alvarez Cienfuegos, OP, commenced with a propitious backdrop for his awaited Opening Lecture on the Annual Opening of Academic year, July 2, 1883. With an august assembly of learned faculty and intelligent students as listeners, a hearty courage, and an authentic understanding of all and every branch of human knowledge would be necessary. The epoch being traversed was of battle, a gigantic battle, a colossal one, which had never been seen in centuries. A fight for the Truth. A fight that starts discussing the principles that are most rudimentary in science, ending the seeding of doubts in knowledge and the most desolating in hearty tranquility. In so horrible confusion, in so enfleshed encounter of ideas and passions, of contrary propensities and of opposing ends, the learned Catholic who aspires to fulfill the mission that God had entrusted him, ought to present himself fully armed to come out as winner of talents of some, as conqueror of ignorance of many, and of everyone's pride, thus giving rise, out of dark chaos, to the pure and brilliant light of the Christian truth, emanation of the eternal Sun, the Truth itself. With the brilliant results of students' examinations in the University, trees in the field of science had been won, abundance of which were picked up in the fields of charity, the sister and faithful companion of Christian truth, akin to the Divine Master who sacrificed His life in the interest of love for humankind. The devastating epidemic- cholera- which desolated all provinces, bearing grief to the families, and plunging the Capital into profound consternation, had caused for this literary center to give public testimony. The literary center was catapulted into this random circumstance that demanded public testimony to its being first a refuge for charity.

The University, converted into a hospital, under the care of a religious corporation, consecrated from its beginnings to education, had given an eloquent example that

humanitarian help to the sick for it to be useful not less to the corporal health of the suffering, than the interests of his soul, should always be sheltered in the holy tree of Religion, named as the mother request of the poor and the supreme comfort of the afflicted.

In this solid way, albeit gradually, this University, with certain step to the route of legitimate progress, educates both the heart and the intelligence of the Filipino youth, inculcating ideas, and forming habits, strengthening on religious basis the cultivation of the sciences, so exposed to the seductions of pride and to the ravings of a disbelieving reason.

Those were the times of battles: for the good, for the truth, for noble causes. Times of perverse spirits that intended to precipitate in the rich portion of Malaysia an abysmal call to bad progress. It was up to the Royal and Pontifical University, the Lecturer remarked, to courageously resist the attacks of those collaborators of error, inculcating the sublime lessons of Catholic progress in the hearts of the youth since they were shown as docile to the University teachings, keeping like a sacred deposit in the breast the faith and the religion of their parents, firm support, and impregnable stronghold of all social interests.

For this reason, and because ideas precede customs, and from these they take strength and firmness, he proposed that the true notion of social progress against positivist and socialist theories that each day managed to hallucinate not a few minds, take a seat on the Catholic principle.

The aspiration to progress is the most legitimate propensity, the most noble impulse that a man feels from the bottom of his heart, the most powerful mobile that obliges him to go and look for what is grand, for what is perfect, for what is infinite, which idea is engraved in his soul. The first source of progress ought to be found in God, the purest ocean of kindness that raises and takes care of man. God inspired man with the breath of intelligence, and sparked up in man's heart the call of His love so that as towering in God's creation, man could animatingly reach the destinations that would demonstrate God's providence. Progress comes from God who wants that man carve out his own perfection, in which he finds joy as a warrior finds joy in victory, and as the sovereign rejoices in his throne whose value he had earned.

In the words of the God made-man, "Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect," human progress was made sublime to the summits of Divinity, and in her located, like in the sanctuary, the final end of all human aspiration. We come from God, and to God we direct ourselves, and in God we look for the satisfaction of the most noble aspirations of our soul; so, our progress is divine, and our efforts for what is good obtain the sovereign sanction of infinite justice.

If man has to progress, he has to relate himself with good, and for him orders do not exist other than good of understanding which is truth, good of the will which is virtue, and the good of inferior faculties which is the abundance in means to conserve the material subsistence and live in decency.

The following are the three ways to know the truth: individual reason by itself, sole revelation, and revelation seconded by reasoning. Individual reason drives man to the abyss of innumerable errors. The exclusive use of revelation undermines the rights of man, who is intelligent and free to reasonably believe the revealed truths, supported by reasons which are admissible to right reason. And, the union and embrace of revelation and reasoning help themselves in the limitation of human intelligence and, recognizing at the same time his nobility, drives it to a sure way to the knowledge of the truth without undermining the respect due to God and with great benefit to proper intelligence.

Without God there cannot be right, justice, nor society.

What signifies a vain social respect for a man who does not see in his likeness the image of God, and uses the name of God in vain?

The moral order therefore known by the light of reason, and illustrated and secured by revealed truths, is the fundamental and suitable principle of social progress; Science without virtue is light, but, light that burns and destroys many objects that light up. Virtue is the only one that ennobles and invigorates the intelligence, containing it in its legitimate object: virtue is that which makes the sword of justice and the weapon of a soldier respectable; virtue is that which makes the authority amiable and his dispositions easy to his taste; virtue is the only one which consecrating the material interests, make them serve for the benefit of the common welfare, and make them fecund in the fruits of morality and justice. Virtue is the fixed sovereign norm to man to direct his steps to reach his destination.

From this supreme law derives the constant obligation of individuals, especially from societies, to incessantly procure the moral good in all and in each of their acts. It is a monstrous contradiction to suppose that what the intelligence admits as true and good is translated into practice by societies as indifferent with respect to the progress of their legitimate interests. It is an expression, or senseless, or evidently absurd to say “the State has no soul.” Why, is it the State being an abstract entity, a form without subject, or it should sustain and protect the sacred interests of virtue and of justice; not being other than the origin of man is the origin of the State because that is but the association in conformity with the individuals that form it, as St. Augustine says. Or, as St. Thomas says, restricting the word State, “the reason that presides and the force that governs for the greater good of the associated ones.”

Above this sensible life subject to the influences of matter, there is another life, superior in that it does not obey physical law nor chemical one, nor alibi by time and space: the life of the spirit, the life of the rational creature that has sovereign laws to comply with and noblest necessities to satisfy, while dragging the fragile wrapping of the flesh.

In vain do the States would wish to dispense with those laws and those necessities; a body without soul is a piece of matter which looks for the mud by which it was formed; and,

a State without virtue is a fort which crashes down by itself, mined by the dissolution which it has voluntarily prepared with its own ravings.

Social perfection cannot be obtained without religious unity; but this perfection would be a senseless word if religious unity would not be inspired in principles of the only true religion. There cannot be more than one moral and one law; there cannot be more than one religion; it is religion which consecrates all tasks and all laws making them derive from eternal goodness and from eternal justice; resulting from this intimate bond is a moral order, fundamental principle of progress, a principle without any force when the inspirations of the true religion are wanting.

The harmonious union of the Church and State based on religious unity, conserving their respective laws, working in their respective spheres with some relative independence which does not exclude the subordination of the temporal to the spiritual, as then proclaimed by the Supreme Pontiff Leo XIII, as the only redeeming table to save the moral order, is the only support of the societies from so many dangers. That was asked by Jesus Christ of His Apostles: give to Cesar what belongs to Cesar, and to God what belongs to God.

Do not be afraid of the State in that obstacle to man's free action or some harm would result from the union and concord. The Church in her relations with society directs herself with all conditions of a mother. The Church is not an oppressor, but a redeemer; she does not generate servitude, but Liberty; she does not promote ignorance, but science; and in all places and at all times, as history tells, she presents herself with a sacredness, sent by God, in sanctity and in love to save and sanctify the nations. **PS**

JOSE ALVAREZ CIENFUEGOS, P.
(1837-1872)

A native of San Esteban de Cienfuegos, Council of Quiros (Asturias), he was born on February 18, 1837, obtained his habit on December 16, 1855 in the Convent-College of Sto. Domingo de Ocana, where he professed on December 18, 1856. He was a First Year student of Theology when he arrived in the Philippines, and in December of 1861 he received in Cebu (which was the seat of Manila owing to the vacancy created by the death of the Archbishop) all the Sacred Orders, including Presbyterite. Due to a grave sickness, it was impossible for him to be examined as a Confessor. He got assigned in Pangasinan, designated first to Mangaldan and later to Calasiao. In 1871, he returned to the Sto. Domingo Convent of Manila where he died on August 21, 1872.

