



PROGRESSION IN KNOWLEDGE BEYOND THE GRAVE.

A correspondent asks: First, is the doctrine of endless progression in Heaven compatible with Catholic philosophy?

Second, Will the saved ever advance in knowledge of the Infinite throughout eternity?

1. We assume that by "progression" you mean here an advance or increase in the soul's knowledge, and with that increase in knowledge an increase in the power of the knowing faculty to know more and know better what it knows already to a limited degree; and with this increase in knowledge and in the power of knowing, a corresponding increase in the power of joyful admiration and love.

In this progression you will observe that the soul always remains its individual self, never loses its conscious identity in passing from one state of knowledge and consequent happiness to a higher state of knowledge and happiness. The soul changes not in nature or essence in this progress; just as a man who passes from a state of ignorance and becomes learned is always the same conscious self. His increase in knowledge and in the power of knowing makes no essential change in him, as man. In the first case he was an ignorant man; in the second he is a learned man, but in this change he has always remained the same man, and conscious of his self-sameness.

This continuity of conscious self is necessarily implied in personal continuance in happiness, as well as in the increase of knowledge and happiness.

This explanation is necessary in order to disassociate the word "progress" from the atheistic or pantheistic sense given to it by modern agnostic evolution. In this pantheistic sense "progress," in its last analysis, is a movement from individual, personal, conscious self toward utter absorption, is nothing less than the annihilation of the individual, the person and personal consciousness.

It is needless to observe that Catholic philosophy never uses the word "progress" in this pantheistic sense which denies the existence of a free personal God and Creator.

Individual progress in the sense of Catholic philosophy is a movement from a less perfect to a more perfect state. Every step in this movement brings the individual nearer to the ultimate end which his Creator had in view when He created him. The catechism tells us that God created man that he might know, love and serve Him in this life and be happy with Him forever in the next. This answer of the catechism throws its luminous rays on the line of true progress. Any movement of man deviating from this line is vagrant or retrogressive. In the light of those rays we may venture to answer our correspondent's first question. There is nothing in Catholic philosophy, so far as we understand it, to militate against the hypothesis of endless progress, in the sense we have explained that term. On the contrary, in view of the revealed truth that God created man to know and love Him forever, it would seem that a soul that has gained eternal happiness in the next phase of existence by faithfully serving God in this, will continue endlessly to increase in knowledge, admiration and love of God, and in happiness as a consequence.

Father Rickaby, S.J., in his "Moral Philosophy," says:

"The object of happiness—the objective last end of man—will be that which the soul contemplating in the life to come will be perfectly happy in so doing. The soul will contemplate all intellectual beauty that she finds about her, all heights of truth, all the expanse of goodness and the mystery of love. She will see herself: A vast and curious sight is one pure spirit; but that will not be enough for her—her eye travels beyond. She must be in company, live with myriads of pure spirits like herself—see them, study them, admire them, and converse with them in closest intimacy. Together they must explore the secrets of all creation even to the most distant star: They must read the laws of the Universe, which science laboriously spells out here below. They must range from science to art, and from facts to possibilities, till even their pure intellects are baffled by the vast intricacy of things that might be and are not; but yet they are not satisfied. A point of convergency is wanted for all these vistas of being, whence they may go forth, and whither they may return and meet; otherwise the soul is distracted and lost in a maze of incoherent wandering, crying out, Whence is all this; and what is it for? And above all, Whose is it? These are the questions

that the human mind asks in her present condition. Much more will she ask them then, when wonders are multiplied before her eyes; for it is the same soul there and here. Here men are tormented in mind if they find no answer to these questions. They will not be happy there without an answer. Their contemplation will still desiderate something beyond all finite being, actual or possible. Is that God? It is nothing else."

The soul in her journey through the vistas of being comes at last to the source from which all existences proceed, the Creator, the infinite Being, Whom, by the beatific vision, she sees face to face.

Now comes the important question: Does the saved soul, coming thus in the presence of God face to face, know, that is, comprehend Him as He is, or as He knows and comprehends Himself? The knowledge which the soul receives is measured by her capacity to receive. This capacity of the soul or mind is finite, and hence she can know at any given time only what is proportionate to her capacity to receive at that time. The saved soul is finite when she comes face to face with God, and her capacity of knowing is finite, and will remain so forever. This does not exclude the hypothesis that the soul's capacity of knowing may increase forever, and her knowledge increase forever, since the object of her knowledge is the Infinite. By the beatific vision the soul receives an indescribable and unimaginable increase of power of perceiving, knowing, comprehending, but she is still finite and potential to still greater knowledge if her power of knowing be enlarged. We know no reason that bars the possibility of such an increase of this power, which may be said to stand in relation to the Infinite as the asymptote of the hyperbola stands related to the hyperbolic curve; that is to say, the finite capacity or power to know may be increased forever and yet never be able to fully comprehend the Infinite, just as the asymptote and the curve, though extended forever, can never meet.

The saved soul coming face to face with God does not lose her activity, and rest forever in the paralysis of inertia. Such inaction is contrary to her nature, contrary to the nature of happiness. The soul is not like a mirror that reflects an object without consciousness of the presence of the object it reflects, and without pleasure in reflecting it. Her happiness is not in passivity in the presence of the Infinite before her, nor in the latent or quiescent ability to see and contemplate the Infinite present to her, but in the exercise of that ability in the act of seeing, contemplating the Infinite. When heaven is spoken of as a place of rest it does not mean that the soul will fall into a state of inaction or become inert, but that its actions lose the nature of toil, are freed from weariness, pain, and anxiety from uncertainty of result. She finds her highest happiness in this act of contemplation, knowing, admiring and loving God, the Supremely True, Beautiful and Good.

Now since the soul's knowledge of God is finite and God is infinite, and since the soul's happiness consists in knowing God, at every instant of her post-mundane existence, to the full extent of her capacity of knowing, what is there to bar the hypothesis that her knowledge of God may increase forever, and that every increase in knowledge increases still further the capacity to know more; and with this increase of knowing-power and knowledge the soul's happiness and capacity to receive happiness increase and all forever reach out in all directions toward the infinite, until the soul of the saved man becomes in knowledge and power greater than pagan minds ever conceived their gods of Olympus to be?

2. The second question is answered, so far as we can answer it, in what we have said.—New York Freeman's Journal.

THE LIE INFERNAL.

To Touchstone's category of degrees of denial, when some one affirms "the thing which is not," modern usage has contributed a superlative of which Shakespeare had no provision. To the "countercheck quarrelsome," the "lie circumstantial," and the "lie direct," the prevalent tendency toward forceful expletive has added the seemingly sulphurous epithet, the "lie infernal." Recently we saw a report attributing the use of this extreme resource of logic to no less a

personage than Bishop Blenk, in the heat of an argument in Puerto Rico; and we hesitated to take the story as true. Now that we have the full report of the occurrence—which we give in another portion of this issue—we have no doubt of its accuracy, and when our readers have perused the story for themselves they will admit that this strong phrase was the proper one—the very word that fitted the occasion. The Bishop did not use it in its ordinary banal sense; he selected it from his dialectic armoury just as a skillful bowman of old would select a certain kind of arrow from his quiver to wing its way most surely to its mark. The Evil One is properly styled the father of lies; and the place where he keeps his factory is the Inferno. The particular lie which aroused Bishop Blenk's righteous indignation is an ordinary one in the mouth of slanderers of the Church. What made it extraordinary was the fact that it was uttered in the presence of an authority well prepared to refute it did the circumstances of the controversy permit of leisurely disproof. But such not being the case, it was uttered manifestly to insult and inflame, and to endeavor to have assertion usurp the place of truth. Therefore the lie was deliberate and of material aforethought, and Bishop Blenk did exactly the right thing in throttling it there and then and daring the insulter beard to beard to sustain his foul libel against the Catholic Church.

It was at an educational conference in Puerto Rico that the dramatic incident occurred. Representatives of various denominations were present on invitation. Bishop Blenk was among the number. A firebrand Portuguese proselytizing minister, named Vallmer, who has for years been keeping Brazil in a state of hot water, got up to give his views upon the question whether religion should or should not be taught in the schools, and wound up with a bitter diatribe against the Catholic Church by turning to Bishop Blenk and telling him that the church to which he belonged was responsible for the backward state as regards education and material progress of the countries peopled by what is called the Latin race—Italy, Spain, France and the Philippines, Cuba and Puerto Rico. The insult was so calculated and cold-blooded that Bishop Blenk saw no other course open to him but the strong one he at once took. He rose from his seat and, confronting the slanderer, brought his hand heavily down on the table and thundered forth his denial: "It is an infernal lie." And a lie infernal it certainly is—a lie that is being constantly reiterated and flung in the face of Catholics every day since the "damnosus haereditas" of Spanish colonies came to the American people.

The press and the whole public opinion of Puerto Rico sustains the course taken by Bishop Blenk. It was entirely effectual. It staggered the wretched Portuguese trader in slander. He was as much non-plussed by it as was the English House of Commons when Daniel O'Connell told the Speaker who tendered him the oath against Transubstantiation that one-half of it he knew to be false, and the other he believed to be untrue.

The incident seems to have had much the same beneficial effect upon the religious conditions in Puerto Rico as a great thunderstorm upon a sultry atmosphere.

The secular press to a unit, with the exception of the "San Juan News," is with the Bishop, and editorially and locally condemn Vallmer's conduct and abuse. "La Discussion" says: "The scandalous incident, far from harming Catholicism, has only given it fresh strength and life. Judging from the letters and telegrams that have flooded this office, it has brought about a great awakening of Catholic thought throughout the island, and far from being intimidated by the insults which Mr. Vallmer flung at the ancient religion of Puerto Rico and the Latin race generally, the attack has roused the people and has given them fresh strength to resent such insults. As long as the Catholic faith has such a representative as Bishop Blenk in Puerto Rico the Catholic religion can lose nothing, but, on the contrary will only appear more radiant and glorious. The press, through its leading and representative papers, has judged this incident in the right way. Bishop Blenk deserves nothing but admiration and loyal support."

Men like Vallmer and Borton and Diaz, who earn their living by going among Catholic populations for the purpose of

proselytizing, have no stock-in-trade but the hardware turned out of the factory below. When they stir Catholics to indignation by the audacity of their falsehoods they believe they are doing good business for themselves and their confreeres. This is the sole explanation of the policy of insult and malignant spite which they attempt to palm off as Gospel charity.—Catholic Standard and Times.

THE CENTRE OF THE UNIVERSE.

BY AN ENGLISH BANKER.
Written for the "REVIEW."

Resting placidly on a grassy slope in quiet contemplation of some tranquil and reposeful scene, it is difficult to realize that we are not only gyrating round at the rate of over a thousand miles an hour, but that we are also rushing along in two other separate directions, at a still greater velocity; in one, round the sun, at the astonishing pace of about nineteen miles a second; in another direction at a terrific speed, estimated at more than a hundred miles a second, towards the brilliant star Vega, whither our sun is hastening, with all his surrounding planets. And yet so quietly and orderly are all these several movements regulated that it is impossible to detect the slightest indication of any one of them.

And each one of all the ten millions times ten million, and millions of millions, of starry and planetary orbs, of cometary bodies, of large and small fragments of broken up suns and planets, of which there are such vast and untold myriads, of stellar nebulae, and of all other wandering bodies in space, all are speeding forward at a terrific speed such as our finite comprehension cannot apprehend; all revolving round their own axis, all without doubt revolving round a primary, greater than themselves. With one great and notable exception, nothing in space can be absolutely without motion, no one of all the unnumbered myriad host resting still in the ether for one instant, or pausing for a moment in its eternal onward flight.

But all in absolute order; all regulated with an unerring exactitude so precise and astounding that we must stand amazed at such marvellous, unalterable accuracy. For example, our earth itself, a sphere weighing 6,069,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 tons (exclusive of the air which weighs more than five thousand million million tons) performs its annual circuit round the sun, a journey of five hundred and seventy million miles, year after year, century after century, with a punctuality so exact and infallible that it has never been known to be either a second early, or a second late; and astronomers are able to point out with absolute certainty the exact spot where she will be at a given time hundreds of years hence.

Now as satellites revolve round planets, and planets revolve round suns, and suns we know are also moving along at an inconceivably rapid pace, the question arises—Whether are all these serried ranks of solar systems, these untold hosts of bright stellar worlds, with their attendant planets, all speeding? We may be sure that they are not impetuously rushing about, haphazard, in all directions, for such an irregular and erratic movement must be contrary to the fixed laws of nature, which are the essence of

symmetry and of method. Therefore we must be forced to the conclusion that there must exist, suspended in some remote part of the eternal space, a central attractive point, of extent so vast and illimitable that it must infinitely surpass any sun in the whole celestial universe, both in colossal magnitude, and incalculably prodigious material gravity, around which that entire universe is revolving in fixed regular order, as its central sun.

And what can that mighty parent-orb be but the vast supernal realm of the Great Creator of all, the glorious celestial palace whence the Eternal rules the Universe; the abode of the heavenly hierarchy, and the home of those redeemed or translated from every planetary body in space upon which beings like ourselves in the image of God, exist, or have existed. Surely then the great Centre of all must be no less than the very Heaven of Heavens itself!

SPAIN IS PROSPERING.

(Duluth Herald.)

Surprising news has come from Spain. Prosperity, instead of ruin, has come to the Spaniards as a result of the war with this country. The news runs thus: "No longer drained of her young men to maintain a colonial empire, and free from the annual expense of \$100,000,000 which it was costing to maintain the colonies, Spain is prospering. The government asks for a loan of \$200,000,000, and the Spanish people subscribed \$600,000,000. New factories are being built, even electric cable works; electric traction is being introduced in the Spanish cities, and at Madrid, such is the increased activity in business and travel, two fine new modern hotels are to be built at once. Every improvement known to modern hotels will be introduced. Today Spain, once more thriving, is buying heavily of machinery and sending large orders to the United States." And the burden which has been removed from the shoulders of the Spanish people the McKinley administration would put upon this country. The expensive colonial system is part of the Republican party's imperialistic program. It means that the whole country is to be taxed heavily to enable a few capitalists to make money by trading in colonial franchises.

England to Canada.

I've taken up my burden,
I've sent the best I breed,
I've bound my sons to exile
To serve you in your deed,
To teach, with patient kindness,
What age-long practice brought,
The art of self-repression,
The speech that waits on thought.

I've trained you up to freedom,
To make and keep your laws—
No iron rule of despots,
Paternal though its cause.
I've planted Saxon methods,
In village and in town—
The led to choose their leader
And fear no tyrant's frown.

Right well you've learned your lesson,
Canadian daughter free,
You've boud up French and English
In friendly rivalry;
Best blood of Gallic kingdom,
Deep tinged with Christian zeal;
Most loyal sons of Britain,
Self-banished for my weal.

Full gallantly to battle,
For African domain,
Your stalwart sons have gathered
From mountain and from plain.
They fight, they bleed, they perish,
At duty's glorious post;
To their bold rush surrenders
The death-dispensing host.

L. H. D.