

## MODERNISM

(By His Grace the Archbishop of Wellington.)

(Concluded from last week.)

### V. CRITICISM OF MODERNISM.

Every fresh operation, every change, is not progress, and, therefore, every evolution is not so either. A blasphemy is a fresh operation; a toothache is a change; the unseemly excrescence of a boil is an evolution. Nothing of all that is good; or rather, it is: all these novelties, viewed in the narrow framework of their proximate causes, are, if you like, in themselves 'actuations' (as philosophers say) of the perfections exhibited in the exercise of the faculty of speech for the blasphemer's tongue, of the faculty of exerting their activity for the microbes bringing on caries or anthrax. Yet no Modernist, no man in his senses, will hesitate to say that all such things are ultimately evil, inverted progress, a recoil movement in the way of perfection. Why? Because, as the perfection of a whole results from the harmonious balance of its parts, the hypertrophy of the latter, far from being a progress, is an evil for the whole. When, therefore, you speak of progress, you must perforce separate into two parts (1) the partial progresses which contribute to the perfection of the whole human composite; and (2) the partial progresses which, on the contrary, are an obstacle to it. We purposely leave out such as are indifferent or neutral. Now, is it a human progress, is it simply progress at all, to procure the well-being of the body while it stifles reason, and vice-versa? Is it progress to promote the exaltation of the senses and the gratification of their appetites at the expense of morality—let us add for Catholics, at the expense of their faith and eternal salvation? Therefore, in the human order,

#### The Idea of 'Progress'

is a-priori inseparable from the idea of rule, of measure, drawn from the deep requirements of the whole person, which fixes the just proportion of the developments of the parts for the greater good of the whole.

Therefore, don't talk of 'progress' all short, but of 'human progress.' The latter alone is good, desirable, because alone it responds to the exigencies of the most elementary philosophical good sense. **FIRST POINT:** True progress can be but a HUMAN PROGRESS.

Philosophy, again, teaches this, and it is confirmed by faith and theology: The last end, the supreme directive rule, of human actions, of the possible evolutions and progresses of the human person intelligent and free is (1) not here below, but in heaven, after death; (2) does not consist in the plenitude of the vegetative or animal life, but in the plenitude of rational life harmoniously co-ordinated with the lives of an inferior order. Therefore, we must consider as bad, unreasonable, anti-rational, all so-called progress which tends to subordinate the soul to the body, morality to passion, the mind to the stomach.

Now, all sorts of modern progress are far from respecting the supremacy of the intellectual order over the material order. And the fanatics of the 'modern mind' never distinguish what is good and what is bad, in this respect, in progress alone, which is invariably presented by them under the vague form which best hides the terrible equivocation dissembled in its bosom. When, therefore, men talk of human progress, they should clearly separate into two classes: (1) the partial progresses which contribute to the perfection which is intellectual and moral, and (2) the partial progresses which, on the contrary, impede it. The first are good, the second bad. Is not this true? **SECOND POINT:** True and good human progress must be a MORAL PROGRESS.

Here come in revelation, faith, and the Church. It suffices to here apply, for the use of Catholic thinkers, the principles of philosophy which enabled us to show why and how the term 'progress,' alone, is a mere equivocation, which resolves itself fatally into two ideas:

#### Good Progress and Bad Progress.

The primary good of the human person is to attain man's last end—not the last end understood in any philosophical fashion, but such as God the Creator and Redeemer has positively determined and imposed on man's conscience. Surely, no moderate Modernist will deny that. Well, then, the conclusion is that you must hold as false and bad progresses all those which avert man from his faith, his supernatural end, from the Catholic Church and her teaching authority, and even those which simply impede the supernatural movement of the soul towards that last end by the means

of grace and sanctification which the religion of Christ puts at the soul's disposal.

This is of vital importance. Let Modernists look to it. One must either deny his faith, or deny the progress which ruins faith. No 'via media.' When, therefore, people talk of the idea of human progress, which for a Catholic can only be HUMAN-SUPER-NATURAL progress, they should clearly separate into two classes—(1) the partial progresses which contribute to the perfection of the life of faith and grace in man and in society, and these are good; and (2) the partial progresses which, on the contrary, are an impediment thereto, and these are bad. **THIRD POINT:** True and good human moral progress must be CATHOLIC PROGRESS.

That's enough. We now know what we have to estimate as good or bad progress. We now know why there are two modern minds—the one good, which passionately loves good progress, even to the extreme limits where it becomes bad, and the other bad, sufficiently characterised by its opposition to the other.

In a less exalted region, and as a detailed application of the principles we have recalled, let us add that a Catholic has other sure criteria to appreciate the character, good or bad, of modern progress. Are not 'liberalism,' 'naturalism,' 'rationalism,' 'materialism,' 'religious indifference,' etc., etc., errors expressly and in many forms condemned by the Church? Does not the modern mind, if it is not their source, logically lead to these aberrations? Is not the mere establishment of this simple fact quite sufficient to put a Catholic Modernist on his guard against the wholesale seduction of so-called 'progress,' and to turn him away from it, if he finds himself too deeply impressed with it? As for

#### The Theory of Evolution;

two words about it, after what has already been said, are amply sufficient. There again we must distinguish: reason and faith do largely condemn the hypotheses of universal indefinite evolution of ideas and things. In particular, in the intellectual order, the evolution of truth is nonsense. The true develops, completes itself—nay, deifies itself, if you like, by interpretations; but all that is not evolution, nor in any way the passage from one extreme of contradictions to the other. What is true cannot but be so, and is therefore so eternally. Now, dogmas are as surely true as the most evident principles of the rational or mathematical order. You may broadly open the way to the evolutionary hypotheses on the ground of concrete and contingent beings, well and good. But no Catholic can, 'salva fide,' no man can, 'salva ratione,' allow all the domain of thought and faith to be ravaged by the hypothesis of a universal 'relativism,' which is verily but the old sceptic theory of the impossibility of any stable, objective, certain knowledge for the human mind. It is with evolution as with progress: unless proper distinctions are made, you are drowned in the depths of equivocation.

Let us now return to Modernism. In some men it is a simple tendency, in others a tissue of errors. There may be, according to the case, either an amorphous, badly characterised evil, or a formal error. Among the radicals of the group, it is error; far from as well as for 'modern' miscreants, the state of mind they have reached strikes its roots more or less into philosophical and theological falsities which are the whole groundwork of the bad modern mentality of the enemies of God and His Church.

Among the 'moderates,' Modernism arises—we admit—from good and laudable intentions. But it also arises from

#### The Equivocal Illusion

which we dispelled regarding the common, false idea formed about progress and its adjacent notions. So that, at bottom, it happens that error, at least unconscious, is found in Modernism at the start, in the middle, and at the end. Another illusion, and quite a special error, regarding Modernism must be noticed: it explains and excuses largely the hardihood of its advance with the worst 'modern' mind. This illusion is the dream of the TRIUMPH OF THE CHURCH in or by modern society. Where was any prophecy of this triumph ever seen, and why is it understood in so purely worldly a manner? Nowhere does revelation speak of this kind of universal apotheosis of the Catholic Church over the human, earthly world. No page of history, not even in the most Christian ages, ever shows her to us so glorified. Always, on the contrary, more or less, she is suffering here and there in the world. It is well to passionately love the Church; yet must we not frame in too subjective and fanciful a manner the object of our love. What right have we to conceive her more beautiful, or differently beautiful, than her Divine Master would have her, Who first and foremost wished her to be especially and exclusi-