

# GOD THE AWARDER

## CHAPTER 19

### THE LAST THINGS

#### *Summary*

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- VI. The end of the world. The resurrection of the body. All men will rise from the dead: proved from Sacred Scripture and Tradition, shown to be not in opposition to reason. The nature and properties of the risen body.
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#### I

**The solemn teaching of the Church.** The Church teaches solemnly that:

- (1) Death is a punishment for sin.<sup>1</sup>
- (2) The just who depart this life free from all debt of temporal punishment are at once admitted, but not all in the same degree, to the Blessed Vision of God in Heaven.<sup>2</sup> They have a clear and direct knowledge of the Divine Essence and attributes and of the Three Divine Persons.<sup>3</sup> Their happiness will last for all eternity.<sup>4</sup>
- (3) Demons, and men who die in the state of mortal sin, suffer eternal punishment in Hell.<sup>5</sup>
- (4) The souls of the just who have not fully discharged their debt to God's justice are cleansed in Purgatory after death before their admission to Heaven.<sup>6</sup>
- (5) The souls in Purgatory can be relieved by the suffrages of the living<sup>7</sup> (i.e., by Masses, prayers, alms-deeds and other good works).
- (6) On the Last Day, all men will rise from the dead in the bodies which they had in this life.<sup>8</sup>
- (7) Jesus Christ will return to earth gloriously on the Last Day.<sup>9</sup>
- (8) Everyone will be arraigned before the judgement seat of Christ, and sentenced by Him according to their deserts.<sup>10</sup>

#### II

**The purpose of man's creation. Death. The Particular Judgement. Eternity.**

THE PURPOSE OF MAN'S CREATION. God has placed us in this world to know, love, and serve Him, and thus to merit Heaven. He has taught us that from Him we have come, that to Him we go, and that in Him alone we can find the happiness for which we long. We are here in a state of trial, doing battle. God, by His Sacraments and His graces, has given us the weapons we

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<sup>1</sup> Trent: DS 1512

<sup>2</sup> Pope Benedict XII in the year 1336: DS 1000

<sup>3</sup> Florence: DS 1304-5

<sup>4</sup> DS 1001

<sup>5</sup> Athanasian Creed; DS 858, 1002; Florence: DS 1306

<sup>6</sup> Trent: DS 1580

<sup>7</sup> Florence: DS 1304; Trent: DS 1820

<sup>8</sup> Lateran IV: DS 801

<sup>9</sup> The Creeds

<sup>10</sup> The Creeds

need, the strength to use them, and the desire of victory. He has created us and destined us for Paradise,<sup>11</sup> not to enrich Himself but to manifest His goodness.

DEATH. Through sin, death has come into the world.<sup>12</sup> All men must die, since all have sinned in Adam: “you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”<sup>13</sup> But though death is certain for all, no one knows *when, where, or how* he will die. We must, therefore, be prepared at all times: “You also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”<sup>14</sup> You can live and die but once: “it is appointed for men to die once”.<sup>15</sup> With death, the time for merit is at an end: “night comes when no one can work.”<sup>16</sup> *You will die either as the friend or foe of God, and will continue to be His friend or foe for all eternity*: “if a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it will lie.”<sup>17</sup> But Christ, by taking away the sins of the world, has robbed death of its terror. There is nothing in Christian death to make us tremble: “by dying He has destroyed our death; by rising again He has restored our life.”<sup>18</sup> He has made it the gate through which we must pass to Him. Death is only fearful for those who bear the thought of having to face God in a state of mortal sin—for “the sting of death is sin”.<sup>19</sup>

THE PARTICULAR JUDGEMENT. Immediately after death, the Particular Judgement takes place at which each one’s eternal destiny is decided: “it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgement”.<sup>20</sup> When your soul has left the body, it will be brought before the throne of God, who will pass sentence on you. If you died in a state of grace, you will be saved; otherwise, condemned. The good and evil you have done during your life will be examined in the light of His justice. He will give you reward or punishment, according to your deserts; He will cast you into the Hell of the damned or summon you to share with Him in the happiness of Heaven, either at once or after you have been cleansed in the fire of Purgatory.

ETERNITY. After death the soul enters eternity, a form of duration that never comes to an end. It is not a multiple of time: we may set down a million years for every grain of sand on the shore, for every leaf of the forest, for every drop of water in the ocean; we may multiply these millions together as often as we please, but at the end of our calculation we are no nearer to understanding eternity than we were when we began. No number of squares superimposed will give a cube: no number of centuries added together will give eternity. A square is no part, no measure of a cube: a century of years is no part, no measure of eternity.

### III

**Heaven, an abode of perfect and everlasting happiness.** The souls of those who die in the grace of God are admitted into Heaven either immediately or after their release from Purgatory. There in that abode of His blessedness they shall enjoy in company with the angels and saints a perfect and everlasting happiness: “they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.”<sup>21</sup> Their happiness shall never be clouded by grief: “God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.”<sup>22</sup> Their happiness shall never end: “the righteous will go into eternal life”;<sup>23</sup> they shall

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<sup>11</sup> “Paradise” sometimes refers to the Garden of Eden, but here means Heaven: cf. Lk 23:43; 2 Cor 12:3; Rev 2:7.

<sup>12</sup> Rom 5:12

<sup>13</sup> Gen 3:19

<sup>14</sup> Lk 12:40

<sup>15</sup> Heb 9:27

<sup>16</sup> Jn 9:4

<sup>17</sup> Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth) 11:3

<sup>18</sup> Easter Preface

<sup>19</sup> 1 Cor 15:56

<sup>20</sup> Heb 9:27; see also Florence: DS 1304-6; Trent: DS 1545-6.

<sup>21</sup> Apoc 22:4-5

<sup>22</sup> Apoc 21:4

receive from the “Prince of Pastors” “an imperishable wreath”,<sup>24</sup> “the unfading crown of glory.”<sup>25</sup> They cannot themselves destroy their happiness by sin: in this world men crave for happiness but never find it; they commit sin because to their dark understanding it seems to promise the fulfilment of their desire; but, in Paradise, the blessed do not seek for happiness, because they have found it in its perfection. Their longings and desires are at rest in God, so that even the thought of turning away from Him by sin can never approach them. The Church celebrates the glory of all the saved on November 1, All Saints’ Day.

**The happiness of Heaven comes from the immediate vision of God.** “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood.”<sup>26</sup> Now we know in part; for through our natural faculties we see God as in a weak and blurred reflection: all the power and majesty and beauty we behold in the wide world about us, from the stars in heaven to the flowers of the field; all the high and noble achievements of men in science, literature, and art; all the love and devotion that have ever burned in the human heart, and all the joy that has ever shone there—all drawn together and intensified indefinitely—is so far below the inexhaustible Source and Author of all as hardly to deserve the name of image or shadow. Now we know in part; for in all that God has told us of Himself in the many precious revelations He has vouchsafed to man, we see Him but obscurely. Even the great unfolding of His love manifested to us in the life and death of His own Divine Son gives us only an imperfect vision: faith sets us within a narrow circle of light, while above and all around, the impenetrable darkness of mystery baffles our reason. “But then I shall know even as I am known.”<sup>27</sup> We shall pass into a state utterly unlike the present. We shall see God as even as He sees us—immediately, clearly, with nothing to intercept or obscure the vision: “Beloved, we are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”<sup>28</sup> In Beatific Vision, the veil shall be withdrawn from the truths of faith.<sup>29</sup> We shall know the mystery of the Creation, why God made the world, how He sustained it in being, how He guided its every movement, linking it all together in perfect unity, triumphing and manifesting His glory even in His rebellious creatures. We shall know the true nature of Grace and its wondrous workings in the mind and heart of every man. We shall know the mysteries of the Trinity,<sup>30</sup> the Incarnation, and the Redemption. We shall see down into the depth of God’s wisdom, justice, power, beauty, and love. (To know God and His Mysteries is not the same as to comprehend them fully. Because He is infinite, God can be fully known only to Himself). Thus clasped to Him for all eternity, each soul will find a complete happiness, living in Him as it were, living a life of ceaseless and varied activity, passing from knowledge to knowledge, and from joy to joy, and united in loving association with Mary ever Blessed, with the Angels and Saints.

**The happiness of Heaven cannot be adequately described.** It is difficult to describe to another a pleasure which he has not actually experienced, to convey to him, for instance, in words alone the sensation produced in us by the fragrance of a flower or the taste of a fruit. Still, we may succeed to some extent by telling him it is like such and such a perfume or flavour with which he is already familiar. The task is vastly more difficult when we deal with one who does not possess the use of that sense through which the pleasure has come to us. Such is the case when we try to tell a blind man of our delight in looking at a great stretch of landscape in the hour after sunset. He hears us speak of the objects within sight, of mountains, woods, and water, of the play of light and shade, of the richness of colour, the verdure of the rolling plain, and of the peace that seems to breathe at that hour from earth and sky. But all our rapture tells him no more than this: that, if he had his sight, he would enjoy a new and great pleasure which may be compared in some vague way to that which he feels when he listens to a beautiful harmony. We, however, when we try to understand the happiness of heaven, are in a worse case even than the blind man trying to understand colours. He knows at least that

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<sup>23</sup> Matt 25:46

<sup>24</sup> 1 Cor 9:25

<sup>25</sup> 1 Pet 5:4

<sup>26</sup> 1 Cor 13:12

<sup>27</sup> 1 Cor 13:12 (Douay)

<sup>28</sup> 1 Jn 3:2

<sup>29</sup> Solemnly taught by Pope Benedict XII, who says that “the vision and the enjoyment of the Divine Essence put an end to acts of faith and hope”: DS 1001

<sup>30</sup> The Trinity is expressly mentioned in the solemn teaching of the Council of Florence: the just in Heaven “clearly behold the One and Triune God Himself, as He is”: DS 1305.

though the pleasure of seeing is quite dissimilar from that of hearing, yet in intensity both pleasures are much the same. We, on the other hand, are endeavouring to conceive a happiness which is not only altogether unlike, but infinitely beyond anything we have ever felt, for the Holy Spirit tells us that “what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, *nor the heart of man conceived*, what God has prepared for those who love Him.”<sup>31</sup> Still, though it is plain that anything like an adequate idea of Heaven is impossible, we may form some conception of it from considerations such as the following:

(1) *The sufferings of this life are but a poor price to pay for the happiness of Heaven.* Once we begin to know the greatness of God, we can appreciate the saying of St Alphonsus Liguori: “God is cheap at any price.”<sup>32</sup> Christ told His followers that they would be like lambs among wolves, calumniated, reviled, persecuted, imprisoned and scourged. Yet He said to them, “Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on My account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in Heaven.”<sup>33</sup> All that is hard to flesh and blood was to be their portion—yet they were to make light of it. They were to rejoice at it, because it was but a little price to pay for the reward of Heaven. St Paul tells us what he endured for the Gospel of Christ:<sup>34</sup> five times he received the scourging of thirty-nine lashes; thrice he was set upon and beaten with rods; stoned once; three times he was shipwrecked; “a night and a day adrift at sea”; his life was at the mercy of the robber, the Jew, the Gentile, and, cruel thought, the traitor within the fold; cold and ill-clad, he was worn with pain, labour, scant sleep, hunger, and thirst; and besides all this, his mind and heart were ever on the rack, fearing, praying, and planning for the welfare of so many widely dispersed Christian communities. *He* knew what suffering was; yet, what does he say? “The sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us”<sup>35</sup>—not even worthy of mention when set beside the reward promised by God to His faithful servants.

(2) *The blessed in Heaven have outgrown the pleasures of this world.* Toys and childish games were a source of pleasure to us in our early years. When we grew up, we turned to other amusements, and perhaps wondered how we could have taken our early pastimes so seriously: “When I was a child”, says St Paul, “I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways.”<sup>36</sup> So will it be with those who enter God’s Kingdom. They will realise that at last they have arrived at true adulthood, that they have outgrown all the pleasures that fastened them so passionately to earth and made the leaving of it so bitter to them. They will cast from themselves all the trivial things of their past. They will have gone out of the land of shadow and darkness. Within their minds there will be a great out-flashing of light. They will have found Him who alone is Truth and Beauty and Omnipotence, and who will use His very Omnipotence to fill them with every joy.

**The Light of Glory.** Sanctifying Grace alone does not enable the soul to see God. If it did, the just in this life would behold Him. Something further is therefore required, which is called the Light of Glory. It is a force or power imparted to the intellect of the blessed in Heaven, like a new eye, enabling them to see God as He is. Its intensity will depend on the degree of Sanctifying Grace which each one possesses at death. Each soul will therefore receive all the happiness it is capable of receiving; and no soul can envy another that receives more: Illustrations: (1) The small cup and the large cup are both filled to the brim by the torrent. One contains more than the other, yet both are equally full. (2) Suppose several people look at a beautiful picture or listen to a great musical work; all go away thoroughly delighted, yet owing to differences in capacity and training, some will see or hear more in the work than others, and derive a greater pleasure from it.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> 1 Cor 2:9

<sup>32</sup> *Practice of Love of Jesus Christ* (maxims at end) & *al. loc.*

<sup>33</sup> Matt 5:11-12; Lk 10:3

<sup>34</sup> 2 Cor 11:24 ff.

<sup>35</sup> Rom 8:18

<sup>36</sup> 1 Cor 13:11

<sup>37</sup> The analogy of two different vessels being both full to capacity is at least four centuries old: cf. James Boswell, *Life of Samuel Johnson*, Everyman ed. 1946, Vol. I, footnote at pp.315-6 (A.D. 1766 Aetat. 57).

**Degrees of glory in Heaven.** Our Lord Jesus Christ is King of Saints; second to Him in glory is the Blessed Virgin, the Queen of Saints; after them comes Saint Joseph, the Head of the Holy Family. Each saint is ranked according to the degree of charity and merits that he possessed at the end of his life. The Council of Florence declares that the souls of the just, “clearly behold the One and Triune God Himself, as He is, but in accordance with the difference of their merits, one more perfectly than the other.”<sup>38</sup> Our Lord told parables in which servants of the same Master received differing rewards for different responsibilities.<sup>39</sup> He spoke of those who are greater and lesser in the Kingdom of Heaven.<sup>40</sup> He declared He would reward each one according to his works,<sup>41</sup> and told the Apostles, “In my Father’s house there are many mansions.”<sup>42</sup>

Note. *Borrowed or transferred expressions.* Of all the senses, sight is the noblest, because it seems to give us the clearest and most definite knowledge of material things. Hence, we are prone to use the terms proper to it of the higher faculty, the intellect, and to speak as though the intellect had “eyes” and could get from God “light to see” the truth. All such expressions are borrowed or transferred: they have been borrowed from the sense of sight, and given to the intellect to which they do not strictly belong. They represent our weak efforts to convey a meaning too deep for human language.

*The ‘lights’ given by God; the ‘vision’ of God.* ‘The light of Reason’ is the natural power given us by God the Creator to distinguish between right and wrong. ‘The light of Faith’ is the power given to the soul by God the Sanctifier to know and embrace the truths of faith; ‘the light of Glory’ is the power given to the intellect by God to know Him with an intimacy of which no creature, without His special aid, would be capable. But ‘light’ strictly understood is something material, and can only vaguely describe a movement or power of the understanding. So, too, when we speak of the ‘vision of God’, of ‘seeing Him face to face’, our words are not strictly exact; still, they are the least imperfect we can find. Using his natural reason, even at its highest level, man knows God only through His works, knows Him only ‘at a distance’, or ‘as hidden under an impenetrable veil’. But the souls of the blessed enjoy a direct knowledge of Him. They share in some way in the knowledge which He has of Himself. So we say that they ‘stand in His presence’, that they ‘gaze upon Him in His unveiled Majesty’, that they ‘behold Him face to face’.

#### IV

**Hell, an abode of eternal suffering.** Salvation is not automatic upon the death of Christ. The Council of Trent declares, “Although it is true that ‘He died for all’ (2 Cor 5:15), not all, however, receive the benefit of His death, but only those to whom the merit of His Passion is communicated.”<sup>43</sup> The souls of those who die in mortal sin are cast at once into Hell. Each will suffer according to its deserts—some more than others, therefore.

(1) *In Hell, the wicked will suffer the pain of loss.* St Alphonsus says, “If God is lost, all is lost.”<sup>44</sup> In this life, sinners rejected God for sin; in Hell, they will know what they rejected. They will see that they have missed the one thing that can make them happy, the one thing which they need and can never obtain. That the living man needs food, air and water, is a truth only too distressingly illustrated in authentic narrative: we have read many a time, how a group of castaways after days in an open boat under a blazing sun, driven mad with hunger and thirst, have thrown lots to see which of them should be put to death, so that the others might eat his flesh. We have heard of how desperate passengers on sinking ships have fought and scrambled and trampled one another to death in the race for the passages to the surface. These incidents, which one shudders to record, are our comment on the simple statement that man needs food and air; but how shall we illustrate the truth that man needs God? Man’s desire to eat and breathe is a desire of his animal nature, while his desire for God is a desire of his whole being. In the living man, the desire for air and sustenance is always present, always more or less awake, and, if frustrated, leads to dreadful suffering. In man after death, the desire for

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<sup>38</sup> DS 1305

<sup>39</sup> Matt 25:14-30; Lk 19:11-27

<sup>40</sup> Matt 5:19; 18:4; Lk 7:28; Mk 10:31

<sup>41</sup> Matt 16:27

<sup>42</sup> Jn 14:2 (Douay)

<sup>43</sup> DS 1523

<sup>44</sup> *Practice of Love of Jesus Christ* (maxims at end) & *al. loc.*

God which he now can hardly feel, will suddenly spring into full activity. His whole being will flame up with an intense craving, with a hunger and a thirst for God, of a force and vehemence infinitely beyond anything within mortal experience. After judgement, the sinner will feel himself fiercely, madly, borne and swept onwards by every faculty within him towards his Creator; but, held down pitilessly with his guilt, he will struggle in an agony of suffocation. He will rage with the frenzy of a parched and famished beast in sight of the food and drink that cannot be reached. St John Chrysostom says: “Unbearable is the fire of Hell—who does not know it?—and dreadful are its torments; but, if one were to heap a thousand hell-fires one on the other, it would be as nothing compared with the punishment of being excluded from the blessed glory of Heaven ... and of being compelled to hear Christ say, ‘I know you not’.”<sup>45</sup>

(2) *They will suffer the pain of sense.* In this life they rejected God for a created thing; in Hell, God will employ a created thing to punish them. They will be tortured by a physical agency which the Sacred Scriptures call fire. Our Lord says that at the end of the world, “the Angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous, and throw them *into the furnace of fire*; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.”<sup>46</sup> “If your hand causes you to sin”, He says, “cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go to Hell, *to the unquenchable fire.*”<sup>47</sup> He tells us too of the rich man and of the beggar Lazarus who lay at his gate: “The poor man died and was carried by the Angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; and *in Hades*, being *in torment*, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus in his bosom. And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and *send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.*’ But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things, but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’”<sup>48</sup> St John writes in the Apocalypse that the wicked “shall drink the wine of God’s wrath”, that they “shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy Angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever; and they have no rest, day or night”.<sup>49</sup>

The pain of sense includes not only the pain of fire but every pain distinct from that of loss. It includes, therefore, all that the damned soul will suffer from remorse of conscience, from the memory of lost opportunities, from the thought of the wretched pleasures of this life purchased at the price of eternal happiness. It includes all that it will endure from association with demons, hateful to the soul as the soul is hateful to them. There is no sufferer on earth we pity more than one who is unloved and never hears a kind word. Yet, unknown to us, God may give such a person many consolations. But what of the soul in Hell? It will never again hear the voice of pity. It is left to brood on its misery, alone and for ever.<sup>50</sup>

(3) *They will suffer for all eternity.* Christ speaks of Hell as the place “where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.”<sup>51</sup> He calls it “Gehenna”,<sup>52</sup> Greek for “Valley of Hinnom”, a deep ravine on the south-west side of Jerusalem, long a dumping ground for corpses, human waste, and rotting matter—hence a place most apt to symbolise incessant fire and everything repulsive. He tells us that God will pass sentence on the wicked, saying to them: “Depart from Me you cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels”.<sup>53</sup> He contrasts the fate of the bad and the good in the words: “And they will go away

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<sup>45</sup> *Homilies on Matthew*, 23, 9

<sup>46</sup> Matt 13:49-50

<sup>47</sup> Mk 9:43

<sup>48</sup> Lk 16:19-26

<sup>49</sup> Apoc 14:10-11

<sup>50</sup> Dante depicts on the entrance into Hell an inscription, “Abandon all hope, ye who enter here”: *The Divine Comedy*, Inferno III, 9.

<sup>51</sup> Mk 9:48

<sup>52</sup> e.g., Mk 9:43; Matt 23:33; cf. 2 Chron 33:6.

<sup>53</sup> Matt 25:41

into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”<sup>54</sup> “Eternal” or “everlasting” is sometimes used loosely in Sacred Scripture to denote a long, but not endless, period. This, however, as St Augustine points out, is not its meaning here. It must, he says, mean “eternal” in the strict sense, and for the following reason: the two expressions “everlasting punishment” and “everlasting life” occur in the same sentence; “everlasting” must, therefore, bear the same meaning in both. All admit that “everlasting life” means “never-ending life.” All must therefore admit that “everlasting punishment” means “never-ending punishment.”<sup>55</sup>

*Note on the Parable of Lazarus.* The parable of the rich man and the beggar is Our Lord’s impressive illustration of the truth that He punishes the grave abuse of worldly wealth with unending torments. But He does not intend us to accept all the dramatic details as literally true. He does not require us to believe that there could have been a respectful interchange of words between Abraham and a soul in Hell, nor that a disembodied spirit could have cried out for “a drop of water” to cool its “tongue”, nor that a damned soul is solicitous for the salvation of its surviving relatives. What He *does* require us to believe is that, even if, *on an impossible supposition*, a lost soul could make a piteous appeal for the very slightest relief, its request would be denied. (The contention by some that the rich man is in Purgatory is untenable. His sin of hard-heartedness was mortal, not venial. In the parable, Abraham says there is a great chasm between them that “none may cross from there to us”. If the rich man is saved and awaiting Heaven, then the whole point of the parable is lost).

*Attempts to circumvent the doctrine of Hell.* Origen in the 3rd century, and some others who followed him, held that at the end of time there would be a universal restoration, in which all the devils and the damned would also be saved. This error was condemned at the Synod of Constantinople in 543, and on other occasions.<sup>56</sup> A different form of the error has been proposed by some, who say that Christ’s descent to the dead included the damned, to offer them salvation. This error is contrary to the Church teaching already given. It makes nonsense of Hell, and it is specifically ruled out in the Catechism: “Jesus did not descend into hell to deliver the damned, nor to destroy the hell of damnation, but to free the just who had gone before Him.”<sup>57</sup>

The same, and others, have proposed that while Hell exists for demons, possibly no human being has gone or ever will go there, for, as St Paul says, God “desires all men to be saved”.<sup>58</sup> But the same Apostle tells us that the condemned “shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord”.<sup>59</sup> Numerous other texts could be cited. It will suffice to quote Our Lord: “all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and *those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgement*.”<sup>60</sup> “Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and *those who enter by it are many*.”<sup>61</sup> The fate of one man, Judas, was specifically declared by Our Lord, on two occasions: “I have guarded them [the apostles], and none of them is lost but the son of perdition”,<sup>62</sup> “woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.”<sup>63</sup> These dreadful words of Our Lord cannot refer to the sin of betrayal, which His infinite mercy would have been willing to forgive, but to the eternal damnation of Judas who despaired instead of seeking forgiveness. Look closely at the words of Jesus: these words could never have been uttered about a man who reached eternal salvation.

Some in their naiveté and false compassion assure us that God will give the damned a second chance. Will He? No, He will not; He has told us so Himself. They have had their chances in this life. God gives every person sufficient grace for salvation. It is a revealed fact that upon death the human will is fixed. It is sheer delusion to hope for a repentance in the next life: “there is no repentance for men after death”, says the Catechism.<sup>64</sup> “Immediately after death the souls of those who die in actual mortal sin descend into Hell”.<sup>65</sup> The only way open to salvation for the damned is by the path of humility and

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., v. 46

<sup>55</sup> *The City of God*, Bk 21, ch. 23

<sup>56</sup> DS 409, 411, 485, 587, 1011, 1077. The heresy is known as *ἀποκαταστασις* (apokatastasis: universal restoration).

<sup>57</sup> CCC 633

<sup>58</sup> 1 Tim 2:4

<sup>59</sup> 2 Thess 1:9

<sup>60</sup> Jn 5:29 Here “judgement” means “condemnation”.

<sup>61</sup> Matt 7:13

<sup>62</sup> Jn 17:12

<sup>63</sup> Matt 26:24. Cf. Acts 1:25.

<sup>64</sup> CCC 393, quoting St John Damascene.

<sup>65</sup> DS 1002. Cf. CCC 1035.

contrition—but this they will not and can not take. Our Lord’s numerous parables warning us to be ready for a judgement by the Master—a judgement which comes suddenly and admits of no appeal—have been given to us so that we may be ready, because after judgement *it is too late*. To cling to the wishful thinking that God in His mercy must offer us a second chance is to destroy the meaning and purpose of all these parables spoken by Divine Truth Himself.

**The fire of Hell.** The fire of Hell is something real. Yet, as the Fathers tell us, it is not identical with the fire of this world. Lactantius says: “The nature of that everlasting fire is different from this fire of ours which we use for the necessary purposes of life, and which ceases to burn, unless it be sustained by the fuel of some material. But that divine fire always lives by itself, and burns without nourishment.”<sup>66</sup> St Ephraem<sup>67</sup> and St Basil<sup>68</sup> declare that the fire of Hell causes darkness, and incessantly torments its victims without destroying them. St Augustine says that, while not corporeal, it resembles a corporeal thing.<sup>69</sup> Whatever its nature, God has given it the power of acting on pure spirits and disembodied souls. Though we know it only from its effects, and though we know these effects themselves very imperfectly, we may be assured that “fire”, the name given to it by Christ, conveys to us the best idea of its nature that we are capable of conceiving.

**The torments of Hell cannot be adequately described.** No tongue can describe the happiness of Heaven: no tongue can describe the horrors of Hell. It is a grievous mistake to suppose that the dreadful pictures of Hell drawn by preachers, writers and artists are mere fabrics of the imagination, mere senseless exaggerations with no relation to the truth. The details presented may not indeed correspond with the facts, but they help us to stretch our mind towards the awful reality. They put before us sufferings we know of, so that we may get some idea of sufferings similar in their nature, but far more intense (*the pain of sense*), and of other and inconceivably greater sufferings of a different and higher order (*the pain of loss*). Ponder over the words of our Saviour Himself: they are the most appalling ever uttered by human lips, and He that spoke them did not exaggerate. His description of the damned as separated from happiness by an impassable chasm, as gnawed by the undying worm, as afflicted with burning thirst, as tortured in flames, as flung into unquenchable fire, as sent away to unending Hell, gives us, when fully understood and expanded, more than all we find in sermons and religious epics.

St Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938) describes Hell thus: “the first torture that constitutes Hell is the loss of God; the second is perpetual remorse of conscience; the third is that one’s condition will never change; the fourth is the fire that will penetrate the soul without destroying it—a terrible suffering, since it is a purely spiritual fire, lit by God’s anger; the fifth torture is continual darkness and a terrible suffocating smell, and, despite the darkness, the devils and the souls of the damned see each other and all the evil, both of others and their own; the sixth torture is the constant company of Satan; the seventh torture is horrible despair, hatred of God, vile words, curses and blasphemies. These are the tortures suffered by all the damned together, but that is not the end of the sufferings. There are special tortures destined for particular souls. These are the torments of the senses. Each soul undergoes terrible and indescribable sufferings, related to the manner in which it has sinned. There are caverns and pits of torture where one form of agony differs from another...”<sup>70</sup>

### **Replies to difficulties against the doctrine of eternal punishment.**

A GENERAL REPLY TO ALL DIFFICULTIES. Many who deny the existence of Hell have no difficulty in believing in Heaven; but on what basis do they believe in Heaven? “Why”, they would say, “it is in the Bible, it is taught by Christ and the Church”. So, too, is Hell taught by the Bible, by Christ and the Church. Heaven *and* Hell: it is both or neither. We cannot believe Christ when He speaks of things we are glad to hear, but disbelieve Him when He tells us things we would rather not know. God commands us to believe in the eternity of Hell. We admit the doctrine raises many difficulties; so does the doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity; so does the doctrine of the Blessed Eucharist. Yet it is precisely because the doctrine is difficult to our feeble understanding, our faltering reason, that we glorify Him in accepting it. - Any denial of Hell entails a denial of free will: it means that souls are saved even against their will. It means that God coerces them into the Kingdom of Heaven. Salvation is a gift—and like all gifts, it can be refused.

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<sup>66</sup> *The Divine Institutions*, 7, 21

<sup>67</sup> *Opera* (Works, ed. Assemani) Vol. II, p.354

<sup>68</sup> *Homilies on the Psalms*, 28, 7:6

<sup>69</sup> *Commentary on Genesis*, XII, 32, 61

<sup>70</sup> *Diary of St Faustina Kowalska*, Marian Press, Massachusetts 2003, par. 741. Cf. St Teresa of Jesus (of Avila) *Life*, ch. 32.

A. “*Eternal punishment seems opposed to Divine Justice.*”

1. “How can a sin committed in a moment of time deserve an eternity of punishment?”

REPLY: (a) It is not reasonable to hold that the duration of the punishment should be determined by the length of time it took to commit the offence: theft, forgery, or manslaughter may be committed in an instant, and yet such crimes are justly punished by imprisonment for many years. (b) The suggestion that a good man may at the end of a long life be surprised into a single mortal sin and be cast into Hell, need cause no apprehension. Mortal sin is a violation of the law of God committed (1) in a serious matter; (2) with clear knowledge, and (3) in full freedom and with full consent. Sometimes we see a man who has long been honoured for his virtue, die apparently the death of the unjust; but what to us seems a grave sin may be due to some merely physical weakness, break-down, or aberration. God reads the heart; He will send no man to Hell who does not fully deserve it. But if he who has all his life enjoyed the blessings of God’s friendship turns against Him in the end knowingly, freely, and deliberately, he is guilty of the blackest ingratitude and can expect no forgiveness after death.<sup>71</sup> The supposition is indeed improbable, and might never be realised in fact. (c) God does not suffer from ignorance like a human judge; He knows us through and through. He will make full allowance for the obstacles in our path, for human frailty and ignorance, for evil surroundings, and for inherited tendencies to sin. He will judge us with perfect but humane or kindly justice. - St Thomas says, “God judges men through the Man Christ, so that judgement may be milder for men”.<sup>72</sup> God judges men in His human nature, not because He as Man has more pity for them than He has as God, but because He desires to remind them that, in Him, they have a Judge who has felt all their weaknesses—who has felt the stress of temptation and the edge of suffering.

2. “Is not all punishment designed for the correction of the wrongdoer? If so, is not eternal punishment unjust?”

REPLY: (a) There are four purposes of punishment, not simply one: expiation, protection of society, rehabilitation, and deterrence. Not all punishment is designed for the correction of the offender. The State will sentence a man to life imprisonment or even execution. In such a sentence, the primary object is obviously not that of reforming the criminal. Nor can it be said that the sole object is to offer his example as a warning to the evil-minded. The State has something further in view: it intends to make him expiate his crime, to do to him somewhat of what he has done to another; and citizens approve, saying, “That is right. Justice has been done.” Even in the lesser punishments inflicted by the civil arm, this element of expiation enters in: for instance, when a thief is sent to prison for ten years, the object is not merely to deter others from crime or to hold the malefactor in detention for a period nicely calculated as sufficient for his reform, but to make him pay for his guilt. Crime disturbs the balance of justice: punishment restores it. The criminal owes a debt to justice: he must pay it to the last penny. Apply this to the doctrine of eternal punishment. A man dies in rebellion against God: he must suffer a penalty equal to his crime. But how are we to estimate the penalty? Only by humbly taking the words of God Himself: He has issued a most solemn and emphatic warning that the impenitent sinner deserves eternal punishment, and we must believe it. In this life, we walk by faith, and believe God is just. In the next, we shall *know* He is just, and perhaps there may be many who, to their cost, will know it too late. (b) The objection assumes that lost souls are capable of reform. This is false. As we say below in our reply to the next objection, the will of the sinner, for reasons which we cannot fathom, is, as a consequence of its very nature, fixed after death in perpetual hatred of God; and this perpetual hatred demands in justice a perpetual punishment. To ask God to refrain from punishing the wicked in Hell would be like asking Him to deny the truth that they died in rebellion against Him.

B. “*Eternal punishment seems opposed to Divine Goodness and Mercy.*”

1. “How can we reconcile Divine Goodness and Mercy with the doctrine of eternal punishment?”

REPLY: (a) If God were to release the damned, His Mercy would be stultified. The wicked could defy Him, saying, “We trampled on Your Law. We had our own way in spite of You. We knew that Your Mercy would not allow You to punish our defiance of You with the eternal torments of Hell. We have triumphed over You.” (b) By dying in mortal sin, the damned have eternally disqualified themselves for deliverance. When a man commits a mortal sin, he deliberately thrusts God and His commandments aside. He is no longer God’s servant. He has chosen himself as his own lord and master. And if he dies without reversing his choice, that choice becomes final for all eternity. He will never cease to be a rebel against God; he will never cease to be unfit for the Kingdom of Heaven. The Divine Mercy, therefore, cannot release him. (c) The lost soul is no object of pity. It is fixed in eternal selfishness. It regrets its sins, merely because they have made it suffer, but not because they were offensive to God. It will never bow its will to say: “Father, forgive me”. It will never appeal to the divine mercy for relief. It would gladly be rid of its suffering, but only on condition of retaining its attitude of independence of God. (d)

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Ezek 18:23-26.

<sup>72</sup> “ut sit suavius iudicium hominibus” *Summa Theol.*, III, q. 59, a. 2; see Heb 4:15-16.

The doctrine of Hell does not misplace the doctrine of the infinite Mercy of God. God in His Mercy offers souls the chance of salvation, without coercing them against their will. Those who resist His Mercy will receive His Justice.

2. “Why cannot God break the rebellion of the lost soul by giving it an overwhelming grace of repentance? Or why does He not of His pity annihilate it and end its misery?”

REPLY: God can do neither of these things because they are absurd. When all that is now hidden is revealed, we shall see that to convert or annihilate a lost soul would involve an absurdity comparable to that of constructing a square circle. In this present life, we can see clearly that a figure ceases to be a circle if it is transformed into a square. After death, we shall see that God’s release or annihilation of a lost soul would demand such a change in Him that He would cease to be God. For God has pledged Himself not to deprive man of his liberty and existence, even if he misuses these gifts. God in His justice will not destroy the integrity of human choice. After death we shall see also, as St Thomas says, that the divine mercy extends even to the wicked in Hell by making their punishment less than their deserts.<sup>73</sup> People often presume that the damned will do anything to be delivered; yet the only way open to salvation is by the path of humility and contrition—but this they will not and can not take.

C. “*It would seem that the contemplation of eternal suffering must destroy the happiness of the Blessed.*” “How can the Blessed be happy if they see those whom they loved on earth suffering eternal punishment?”

REPLY: The happiness of the Blessed in Heaven cannot be marred by the sufferings of those who were their friends on earth. The friendships of this life are not proof against grievous wrong: if, for instance, a man learns that his parents have been robbed and murdered by one whom he thought his dearest friend, is not the bond of friendship broken? Such a crime we recognise as destructive of affection, but the crime of one who dies as God’s enemy will appear far more heinous to the Blessed in Heaven. For them, it will bear the character of a most grievous personal wrong utterly extinguishing every claim to their regard. They will perceive the obstinacy and black ingratitude of the sinner. They will see how he spurned God’s graces, and how he hardened his heart against the sufferings of Christ. They will behold him after death with his will set in eternal hostility to his Creator. So the very thought of retaining any vestige of friendship for such a one will seem to them to be an insult to the God they love. They will feel as little pity for a lost soul in Hell, as men on earth feel for the sufferings of Satan. They will be united to God more closely, more lovingly, than a child is united to its parents; His honour will be their honour; His friends, their friends; His enemies, their enemies; His affections will be their affections, and they will see all things with His eyes. For the saints in Paradise, earthly ties have been transformed, and are as nothing compared to heavenly ties. They are just as happy to see in Heaven people from different nations and epochs, as their own family members. They look upon the other saints as their true brothers and sisters, united by supernatural bonds in consummate happiness. The absence of a onetime family member who is not saved can only appear to them as the absence of an uninvited and unwelcome guest, the absence of an alien who has no place there, of one with whom there is no real basis for contact or unity. Even if—on an impossible supposition—one of the damned could join the Blessed in Paradise, the saints could only say with Our Lord, “I do not know you.”<sup>74</sup>

Boswell: “One of the most pleasing thoughts is, that we shall see our friends again.”

Johnson: “Yes, Sir; but you must consider, that when we are become purely rational, many of our friendships will be cut off. Many friendships are formed by a community of sensual pleasures: all these will be cut off. We form many friendships with bad men, because they have agreeable qualities, and they can be useful to us; but, after death, they can no longer be of use to us. We form many friendships by mistake, imagining people to be different from what they really are. After death, we shall see every one in a true light. Then, Sir, they talk of our meeting our relations: but then all relationship is dissolved: and we shall have no regard for one person more than another, but for their real value. However, we shall either have the satisfaction of meeting our friends, or be satisfied without meeting them.”<sup>75</sup>

**The moral value of the doctrine of eternal punishment.** God has created no one for Hell. Thus, we may put the Catholic doctrine of Eternal Punishment in a homely way by saying that He did not make Hell to put us into it, but to keep us out of it. He has created every one of us for Heaven, and He has

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<sup>73</sup> *Commentary on the Sentences*, IV, d. 46, q. 2, a. 3, ad 1: etiam in eis [sc. damnatis] misericordiae locum habet, in quantum citra condignum puniuntur. - “even in them [the damned], He shows mercy, insofar as they are punished less than they deserve.” = *Summa Theol.* Suppl. q. 99, a. 2, ad 1. Cf. *ibid.*, a. 3, ad 4; a. 5, ad 1; *Summa Theol.*, I, q. 21, a. 4, ad 1.

<sup>74</sup> Matt 25:12; cf. 7:23; Lk 13:27.

<sup>75</sup> J. Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, Everyman 1946, Vol. I, p.419, A.D. 1772, Aetat. 63

given us every help to get there. Among these helps, one of the greatest is His revelation of the eternal torments of Hell. He has shown us that sin leads to Hell, so that knowing this we may, by our own free-will, and aided by His grace, learn to shun and hate what would bring us there. If someone of agreeable manners sought our society with no other object than to rob us and ruin us, we would avoid him and come to hate the attractions with which he sought to ensnare us. In like manner, we come to detest sinful pleasure, knowing that it is but the bait that tempts us into the dread trap from which there is no escape. The more we meditate on Hell, the nearer we shall be drawn to God. We should pray for a salutary fear of the divine judgements: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”; “by the fear of the Lord a man avoids evil.”<sup>76</sup>

After meditation on the Passion, there can be no more profitable meditation than that on the four Last Things: Death, Judgement, Heaven, Hell.<sup>77</sup>

Death: than which nothing is more certain;  
Judgement: than which nothing is more strict;  
Hell: than which nothing is more terrible;  
Heaven: than which nothing is more delightful.<sup>78</sup>

## V

**Purgatory, an abode of purification.** Purgatory is a place or state of punishment where the souls of those who have died in the state of grace, but who still owe something to divine justice, suffer for a time before they are admitted into Heaven. The debt to God’s justice may arise from venial sin unrepented of, or from satisfaction still due after the guilt of mortal sin has been remitted. Its duration and intensity differ for each soul. St Thomas says that the length of time is according to the degree of attachment to sin, and the intensity of pain according to the degree of guilt.<sup>79</sup> (By analogy: in this life, deeply rooted vices take *longer* to eradicate, and major transgressions are punished with *harsher* penalties). The souls in Purgatory are called “Poor Souls” because they do not have the resources to help themselves. They are called the “Holy Souls” for they are the souls of those who died in a state of grace or holiness. At every Mass, during the Eucharistic Prayer, the Church prays for the dead. On All Souls’ Day, November 2, she has the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed. On that day the Church concedes her priests the privilege of saying three Masses for the dead.<sup>80</sup>

*The pains of Purgatory.* The poor souls in Purgatory suffer the pain of loss, because, while detained there, they are deprived of the Beatific Vision of God. This temporary deprivation is a most severe punishment. The consciousness of being so close to God, now loved with an intense ardour, and of being unable to go to Him, causes dreadful suffering, which is enhanced by the sense of unworthiness and by regret that the opportunities of purging the soul before death were not availed of. Nevertheless, the suffering of souls are cheered by the light of hope, by the certainty of release. Their agony is not the agony of the damned, not an agony of rage and despair, but an agony accepted with perfect resignation, borne with unyielding patience, an agony of love.

It is commonly taught, but it is not of faith, that the poor souls suffer also a pain of sense, caused by some agency similar to the fire of Hell. How their sufferings compare with the sufferings of this world, we cannot tell: St Bonaventure says that “the severest pain of Purgatory exceeds the most violent known on earth”.<sup>81</sup> St Augustine says, “though we be saved by fire, that fire will be more severe than anything a man can suffer in this life.”<sup>82</sup> St Thomas, following him, asserts that “even the slightest suffering of

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<sup>76</sup> Prov 9:10; 16:6

<sup>77</sup> Study of the Last Things is called “eschatology”, from the Greek word εσχάτα (eschata): last things.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Bl. Pope John XXIII, *Journal of a Soul*, p.448.

<sup>79</sup> *Comm. on the Sentences*, IV, d. 21, q. 1, a. 3, qcla. 3, ad 1: “acerbitas poenae proprie respondet quantitae culpae; sed diuturnitas respondet culpae radicationi in subjecto.” = *Summa Theol.* Suppl. appendix, q. 2, a. 8 [or 6], ad 1

<sup>80</sup> *Incrumentum Altaris*, Apostolic Constitution of Pope Benedict XV, 1915. Cf. *Ordo pro anno liturgico*, Vatican City 1998-99, at 2 Nov.

<sup>81</sup> *In IV Sent.*, d. 20, a. 1, q. 2

<sup>82</sup> *Commentary on the Psalms*, 37, 3

Purgatory exceeds the worst suffering of this life.”<sup>83</sup> - From all that is written above, one can see how absurd and mistaken is the view of some that Purgatory simply means the final agony before death.

**Proof of the doctrine of Purgatory.** PROOF FROM THE SOLEMN TEACHING OF THE CHURCH. The Church teaches as a revealed truth that the souls of the just who have failed in this life to pay in full their debt to God’s justice are cleansed in Purgatory, to fit them for admission to Heaven. The Church says this infallibly in the name of God. Hence, God Himself testifies, through the Church, to the existence of Purgatory. This proof suffices for Catholics. The following proofs are added for fuller instruction.

PROOF FROM S. SCRIPTURE. *Preliminary note.* The word *Purgatory* is not found in the Bible; nor are the words *Incarnation, Trinity, consubstantial, omniscient, miracle, or Bible* itself. What matters is not the word itself, but the content and meaning of the word.

The Bible is replete with evidence for Purgatory:

- (1) When Judas Maccabeus, after his victory over Gorgias, went to bury the few Jews who had fallen, he found under their coats tokens of the idols of Jamnia. In seizing this booty, they had probably been actuated by mere greed, never thinking of the contamination they suffered by appropriating objects connected with idolatrous worship. Still, such objects “the law forbids the Jews to wear. And it became clear to all that this was why these men had fallen. ...[Judas Maccabeus] took up a collection ... to the amount of two thousand drachmas of silver, and sent it to Jerusalem to provide for a sin offering.” Obviously, he believed that these men were not lost eternally, but that they were in some state or abode of temporary detention, and could be relieved by the prayers of the living. The Holy Spirit through the inspired writer approves of his action and the belief that prompted it, saying: “it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin.”<sup>84</sup>
- (2) Matt 12:32: Our Blessed Lord said: “whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.” “The age, or world, to come” means life after death. Hence, according to our Saviour Himself, there are other sins that can be pardoned after death. This is the interpretation of St Gregory the Great.<sup>85</sup> Note, too, that the Lord presumed that His Jewish listeners already knew what He meant by forgiveness in the next life.
- (3) Matt 12:36: “on the day of judgement, men will render account for every careless word they utter”. This follows the passage just cited about words that will not be forgiven at all. Manifestly, “careless words” do not merit Hell, but there will be a penalty for them, the Saviour warns. Hence, after judgement, and in the next life therefore, there must be a place of temporal punishment for minor faults.
- (4) Matt 5:21-6: Christ warns about the coming judgement and its severity. He warns, in the language of a parable, that it is like a court case, and so we are advised to be reconciled and repentant here on earth, lest we be forced to undergo the full rigour of the law, for, “put in prison ... you will never get out till you have paid the last penny”.<sup>86</sup> This is a clear reference to the payment which must be made here or hereafter. Note that the detention is temporary, for at the end there is a release. It can, then, be neither heaven nor hell.
- (5) Matt 18:23-35 is a parable about an unforgiving debtor whom the King “handed over to the torturers till he should pay all his debt.” The King, as in so many parables, is an image of God, who expects us sinners, like the man in the parable, to forgive others as we have been forgiven, but who will make us pay our debts in full here or hereafter, if we demand full justice from others. The analogies of torture, prison, and debts—however unpleasant—fit Purgatory perfectly!
- (6) Lk 12:42-8 is a parable about judgement and differing rewards and punishments. The servant found faithful at his Master’s return, “his Master will set over his household” (= reigning with Christ in *Heaven*); the servant who beat the others and is drunk, the Master “will punish him and put him with the unfaithful” (= dismissal, permanent exclusion from the household, i.e., *Hell*). “And that servant who knew his Master’s will, but did not make ready or act according to his will, shall receive a severe beating” (= the severe temporal punishment of *Purgatory* for the repentant but guilty, after which one is restored to the Kingdom again). “But he who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, shall receive a light beating.” (= a less severe purgation because of ignorance, followed by reconciliation with Christ the Good Master: a hint of how God may deal with those in invincible ignorance).

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<sup>83</sup> *Comm. on the Sentences*, IV, d. 21, q. 1, a. 1, qcla. 3 (= *Summa Theol.* Suppl. appendix, q. 2, a. 3 [or 1])

<sup>84</sup> 2 Macc 12:40-43,45

<sup>85</sup> *Dialogues*, 4, 41; cf. CCC 1031, Mk 3:28-30; Lk 12:10.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Lk 12:57-9.

- (7) 1 Cor 3:14-5: St Paul says, “If the work which any man has built on the foundation [i.e., on Christ, v.11] survives, he will receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.” St Paul is speaking of the judgement of believers. (Unbelievers do not build on the foundation, namely, Christ, so he does not mention them here). Faithful Christians who have built on the foundation “will receive a reward”, since their work “survives” the test. Faulty Christians, whose inferior work cannot withstand searching scrutiny, “will suffer loss”—not eternal, but only temporary, for they too “will be saved, but only as through fire.” Again, a clear reference to the temporary punishment of Purgatory.
- (8) 2 Tim 1:16-8: St Paul prays for the household of his onetime helper Onesiphorus, who has obviously died. Then he offers a prayer for Onesiphorus himself: “may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day”. Here we have an example of prayer for the dead.
- (9) Behind the Protestant rejection of Purgatory are two notions: (a) since *Christ’s* sacrifice has made expiation for sin, then *we* need not suffer or expiate anything ourselves; (b) forgiveness by God means no reparation is required. - We will answer these two notions in turn. As to (a): Christ told His Apostles that as He was persecuted, they too must face persecution.<sup>87</sup> He said that anyone who wants to follow Him must take up his cross.<sup>88</sup> The Apostles said that “through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God.”<sup>89</sup> St Paul said, “in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of His body, that is, the Church.”<sup>90</sup> Hence, the baptised, precisely because they are baptised into Christ’s *death* and resurrection, must participate in His Passion in various ways according to their age and vocation. Sins committed before Baptism are completely remitted as to guilt *and* penalty, but for sins committed after Baptism, there is not the same indulgence. Pardon will come, but atonement must still be made. It is not that our prayers and sufferings have any intrinsic value, but that they have a value before God insofar as they are joined to the one Mediator’s intercession and atonement.<sup>91</sup> As to (b): this is contrary to reason and Revelation. Forgiveness does not necessarily mean cancelling the penalty to be suffered or compensation to be made. On the *human* level: a man may forgive, and restore to friendship, his neighbour who maliciously broke his window, but can still demand payment to repair it. In *S. Scripture*, there are numerous examples where, even after repentance, the sinner must pay the price and suffer a penalty for his actions. In 2 Sam 12:13-4, Nathan informs King David that God forgives his sin, but because of his sin, the child born to him must die. Later, David takes a census of the people against the will of God, repents of it and begs God’s pardon, but the next day God tells the prophet Gad to tell David that he must choose one of three punishments for his sin.<sup>92</sup> Other examples could be recounted.<sup>93</sup>

PROOF FROM TRADITION.

(1) *Jewish belief.* Though Protestants deny the inspiration of the Books of Maccabees, the quotation given above, regarded merely as a statement of secular history, proves that the Jews believed in Purgatory. Moreover, in another book, recognised by Protestants, we read of King David and his men fasting for the dead: “they mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son and for the people of the Lord and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.”<sup>94</sup> Prayer for the dead has been practised by Jews uninterruptedly to the present day. When Jews from around the world gathered at the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp on 25th January 1995, fifty years after its closure, they offered prayers for the victims who had died there.

(2) *The Early Church’s prayer for the dead.* The belief of the early Church is evident from the immemorial custom of praying for the dead: e.g., (a) Tertullian (c. 215) bids a widow “pray for [her husband’s] soul and ask that he may, while waiting, find rest ... and have sacrifice offered for him every year on the anniversary of his death.”<sup>95</sup> In another work, dated the year 211, he says, “We offer sacrifices for the dead on the anniversaries of their death.”<sup>96</sup> (b) The Sacramentary of Serapion (c. 350), in its

<sup>87</sup> Jn 15:20

<sup>88</sup> Mk 8:34

<sup>89</sup> Acts 14:22

<sup>90</sup> Col 1:24

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Trent: DS 1690-1, 1693, 1713.

<sup>92</sup> 2 Sam 24:10-16

<sup>93</sup> *Adam* in Gen 3:17-9; *Miriam* in Num 12:9-15; *Moses* and *Aaron* in Num 20:12; 27:12; *Ahab* in 1 Kgs 21:20-9; *Hezekiah* in 2 Kgs 20.

<sup>94</sup> 2 Sam 1:12 (= Vulgate 2 Kgs 1:12)

<sup>95</sup> *On Monogamy*, 10

<sup>96</sup> *On the Crown*, 3, 3

Anaphora (Eucharistic Prayer), prays, “We beseech Thee also on behalf of all the departed, whom we commemorate here also ... grant unto them a place and dwelling in Thy Kingdom.”<sup>97</sup>

(3) *Belief of the Fathers.*

- Origen (d. 254), commenting on St Paul’s desire to die that he might be with Christ (Philipp 1:23), says, “For my part, I cannot speak thus, for I know that, when I go hence, my wood will have to be burned.”<sup>98</sup>
- Tertullian says, “we understand that ‘prison’ indicated in the Gospel to be the underworld, and interpret ‘the last penny’ (Matt 5:26) as meaning every small sin which has to be expiated there in the interval before the resurrection”. He repeats the same thought elsewhere.<sup>99</sup>
- St Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386) explains the ceremonies of the Church to new believers, saying, “we also make mention of those who have already died ... for we believe that it will greatly benefit the souls of those for whom the petition is offered up, during the presentation of this holy and solemn Sacrifice.”<sup>100</sup>
- St Augustine of Hippo (354-430) wrote a special treatise, “On the Care to be Exercised for the Dead.” He says that “the universal Church ... observes the custom of giving a place to the commemoration of the dead in the prayers of the priest at the altar.”<sup>101</sup> His mother, St Monica, on her death-bed said to him: “This one request I make to you, that, wherever you be, you remember me at the altar of the Lord.”<sup>102</sup> (She was buried originally in Ostia, where she died, and later her body was taken to the Church of St Augustine, Rome). In his *Enchiridion* of 421 A.D., Augustine says, “some of the faithful may be saved through a certain purgatorial fire, some more slowly and others more quickly, according to the greater or lesser degree with which they loved corruptible goods.”<sup>103</sup>
- St Caesarius of Arles (d. 452) says in a sermon, “If we neither give thanks to God in tribulations nor redeem our own sins by good works, we shall have to remain in that purgatorial fire as long as it takes the aforesaid lesser sins to be consumed”.<sup>104</sup>
- St Gregory the Great (d. 604): “We are bound to believe that for certain lesser faults there is a purgative fire before the final judgement”.<sup>105</sup>

(4) *Ancient inscriptions.* The inscriptions in the Catacombs, some dating from the second century, are exactly like those we find in any Catholic graveyard. They beseech the mercy of Christ for the dead, and appeal to the living to pray for them. The most ancient epigraphs are in the Catacombs of Priscilla, Rome. Among countless examples there: “Peace to you, Octavia, in peace”; “Peace, Celestina”; in the Catacombs of St Callistus, Rome, “Felicola, peace to you in the Lord”.<sup>106</sup> The famous monument known as the Epitaph of Abercius, erected c. 200 A.D., in Phrygia, Asia Minor (now Turkey), concludes with the words: “Let every comrade who understands this pray for Abercius.”<sup>107</sup> Other examples from the Catacombs: “May you live in peace”; “May you live in God”; “I do not deserve to be united with the Lord. By your prayers obtain for me that God pardon my sins.”<sup>108</sup>

(5) *The non-Catholic Eastern Churches.* All of these Churches have prayers and suffrages for the dead. E.g., the Assyrian *Liturgy of Theodore of Mopsuestia* prays, “that by Thy grace, O Lord, Thou wouldst grant pardon to all the children of the holy catholic Church who have passed from this world in the true faith, for all the sins and offences which they committed in their mortal bodies in this world”. A Syrian Jacobite liturgy prays, “Remember, O Lord, those who have died, and grant rest unto them who were clothed with Thee at Baptism and received Thee from the altar.”

We may argue, as we did for the Apostolic origin of the seven sacraments, that without the definitions of the Councils of Lyons, Florence and Trent, the doctrine of Purgatory could still be inferred with certainty from the facts of history. The Assyrian Church, whose separation dates from the fifth century, the oriental orthodox Churches (Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian, Syrian, Malankara), whose separation dates later in the fifth century, the other Orthodox Churches, whose separation dates from the eleventh century

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<sup>97</sup> F.X. Funk, *Didasc. et Const. Apost.*, Vol. II

<sup>98</sup> *Homilies on Jeremiah*, 20, 3. Cf. H. Crouzel S.J., *Origen*, Harper & Row, San Francisco 1989, pp.242-6.

<sup>99</sup> *On the Soul*, 58; cf. *Ibid.*, 35; *The Resurrection of the Flesh*, 42.

<sup>100</sup> *Catechesis* 23:9, *Mystagogia* 5

<sup>101</sup> *On the Care to be Taken of the Dead*, I, 3

<sup>102</sup> *The Confessions of St Augustine*, Bk 9, ch. 2

<sup>103</sup> *Enchirid.* 69

<sup>104</sup> *Sermon* 179, 2 (ed. Morin). (104 in PL 39)

<sup>105</sup> *Dialogues*, 4, 41; cf. CCC 1031.

<sup>106</sup> A. Ferrua S.J., *The Unknown Catacomb*, Geddes & Grosset, Scotland 1991, pp.16-7

<sup>107</sup> The two fragments of this monument, discovered in 1883, were presented to Pope Leo XIII on the occasion of his Episcopal Jubilee by the Sultan of Turkey, Abdul Hamid. The inscription refers also to the Primacy of the Roman See and the Real Presence in the Blessed Eucharist.

<sup>108</sup> L. Hertling S.J. & E. Kirschbaum S.J., *The Roman Catacombs and their Martyrs*, DLT, London 1960, p.194

on—all have public and official prayers for the dead,<sup>109</sup> asking that God in His mercy “would grant them a place of refreshment, light and peace”, as the Roman Canon (4th cent.) puts it. The tension between these Churches and the See of Rome over the centuries excludes the possibility of their having borrowed any doctrine or practice from Rome since their separation. In East and West, therefore, in the first millennium, the doctrine with its practical expression in the Divine Liturgy and Christian monuments was recognised as an essential part of the true religion. Such agreement in belief and practice, in many and diverse countries, over an entire millennium, puts its Apostolic origin beyond question. - The sixteenth century Protestant Reformers, by attacking the doctrine of Purgatory and forbidding prayers for the faithful departed, denied many Christians what is one of the most natural and consoling practices for those who mourn the dead. It is no surprise that among Protestants the practice has made a steady return.

ARGUMENT FROM REASON. The Holy Scriptures tell us that “nothing unclean shall enter” into Heaven,<sup>110</sup> and that “on the day of judgement men will render account for every careless word they utter.”<sup>111</sup> From what we know of human nature, is it not reasonable to say that, of those who die in the grace of God, very many are still bearing venial sin? Such cannot enter Heaven, for they are not undefiled; nor can they be cast into Hell, for they are not enemies of God. There must, therefore, be a middle state in which they can be purified.

**Succouring the dead.** (1) It is the faith of the Church that we who are on earth can relieve the souls in Purgatory by Masses, prayers, good works, and indulgences. The Mass produces its effect of its own efficacy, and does not depend for its value on the piety of the earthly priest who offers it. On the other hand, prayers and good works are of no avail for the suffering souls, unless offered by one in the state of grace. When a person who is in the state of grace says a prayer devoutly or performs some good work with a supernatural intention, his act bears a threefold fruit, *meritorious*, *impetratory* and *satisfactorial*: (a) *meritorious*, i.e., it merits an increase of Sanctifying Grace and eternal glory: this fruit is for himself alone; (b) *impetratory*, i.e., it works as a petition for God’s graces: this he can apply for the benefit of others; (c) *satisfactorial*, i.e., it helps to blot out the temporal punishment due to sin: this, also, he may surrender in favour of another. It is the satisfactorial fruit which God accepts for the relief of the souls in Purgatory (not that we can be certain that He will apply it fully for the relief of the particular soul for whom we pray). On Indulgences, see p.\*\*\*.

(2) The prayers in the Missal show that the dead are helped by the intercession of the Angels and Saints, and especially by the powerful advocacy of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Michael the Archangel.

(3) It is certain that the poor souls cannot shorten their purgatory by their own prayers. It may be that they can pray for us. The Church in her liturgy never appeals for their intercession; but, on the other hand, she has never censured the practice of asking them for help. But whether they can help us or not while still in Purgatory, God will reward our charity in praying for them. For He has said: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”<sup>112</sup> “It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins.”<sup>113</sup> Once in Heaven, they will, no doubt, gratefully intercede for those who prayed for them. “Our prayer for them is able not only to help them, but also to make their intercession for us efficacious.”<sup>114</sup>

TIME IN PURGATORY. Time is the measure of change, and since souls in Purgatory are undergoing purification, we can say that there is time there—not a time of this world, however. It is purgatory-time, if you will, of a different dimension, in which each soul passes through spiritual instants, which do not

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<sup>109</sup> The evidence is presented fully in M. Jugie, *Theologia Dogmatica Christianorum Orientalium ab Ecclesia Catholica Dissidentium*, Paris, Tom. IV, 1931, pp.166-70; Tom. V, 1935, pp.341-4, 774-82.

<sup>110</sup> Apoc 21:27

<sup>111</sup> Matt 12:36

<sup>112</sup> Matt 5:7

<sup>113</sup> 2 Macc 12:46 (Douay)

<sup>114</sup> CCC 958

correspond to earthly time.<sup>115</sup> An indulgence of 300 days, for example, as one sees in prayerbooks or on holy cards, does *not* mean “300 days off Purgatory”. (See “Indulgences” p.\*\*\* for explanation).

THE END OF PURGATORY. Purgatory will cease at the Last Judgement. How, then, shall those alive at the end of the world be purified? St Thomas answers that the final sufferings and the fire of the general conflagration at the end of the world<sup>116</sup> will serve as a purgation, and its intensity will compensate for its short duration.<sup>117</sup>

REINCARNATION. A human being lives an earthly human life only once: there is no reincarnation after death. A soul cannot return to its human body except by a miracle and divine intervention. It is impossible for a human soul to inhabit an animal body. Nor can a human person reappear later as another person; this is a contradiction in terms. Reincarnation is contrary to reason and the Bible.<sup>118</sup>

## VI

### **The Last Things of the World:**<sup>119</sup>

- The end of the world, time and history by the general conflagration;
- The general resurrection;
- The return of Christ in glory;
- The general judgement;
- The final exclusion of the damned;
- The glory of the blessed in a new heaven and a new earth.

**The end of the world.** St Peter says: “the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up. ...all these things are thus to be dissolved”.<sup>120</sup> Science admits the possibility of such a dread conflagration, and mentions several causes that may bring it to pass; divine Revelation assures us of its certainty. The exact day is known to God alone.<sup>121</sup>

**All men will rise from the dead.** The Church teaches solemnly that on the last day all men will rise from the dead in the same bodies which they had in this life. The Apostles’ Creed says, “I believe in ... the resurrection of the flesh and life everlasting.” The Nicene Creed says, “I await the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.” This is one of the chief doctrines of the Christian faith. It is the plain teaching of Sacred Scripture and Tradition, and it can be shown to be not in opposition to reason.

PROOF FROM SACRED SCRIPTURE. Our Saviour said: “The hour is coming ... when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God ... and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgement.”<sup>122</sup> Christ refers particularly to the resurrection of the wicked when He warns: “fear him who can destroy both soul and *body* in hell.”<sup>123</sup> St Paul says that as surely as Christ rose from the dead, so surely also shall we: “Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your

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<sup>115</sup> Cf. St Thomas, *Comm. on the Sentences*, IV, d. 44, q. 2, a. 3, qcla 3, ad 5 (= *Summa Theol.* Suppl. q. 84, a. 3, ad 5).

<sup>116</sup> “the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up.” 2 Pet 3:10

<sup>117</sup> *Comm. on the Sentences*, IV, d. 47, q. 2, a. 3, qcla 2, ad 5 (= *Summa Theol.* Suppl. q. 74, a. 8, ad 5)

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Heb 9:27; CCC 1013.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. CCC 668-82, 1038-44.

<sup>120</sup> 2 Pet 3:10-11

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Mk 13:32.

<sup>122</sup> Jn 5:25-29

<sup>123</sup> Matt 10:28

faith is in vain.”<sup>124</sup> He says moreover, “there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.”<sup>125</sup>

PROOF FROM TRADITION. Abundant evidence from the Fathers is available to prove that the early Church believed in the Resurrection of the just. As to the Resurrection of the wicked, let the testimony of Tertullian suffice, who says that Christ will come in glory to reward the good and punish the wicked, “after both have risen and resumed their bodies.”<sup>126</sup>

THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION IS NOT OPPOSED TO REASON. (1) *The Resurrection is not impossible to God’s Omnipotence.* St Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386) says: “God created us out of nothing; why should He not be able to re-awaken that which is destroyed?”<sup>127</sup> (2) *It is fitting that the good and the wicked should rise again.* Of the good, St Irenaeus (d. 202) says: “How can it be asserted that the flesh which is nourished with the Body and Blood of our Lord shall not partake of His life?”<sup>128</sup>

Of both the good and the wicked it may be argued that their bodies which in this life served as the instruments of their virtues or vices should also share in their rewards or punishments in the life to come.

THE NATURE AND PROPERTIES OF THE RISEN BODY. The Church, as already stated, solemnly teaches that all men will rise from the dead in the same bodies which they had in this life. But in what sense the same? “An objection might be made”, says Newman, “that since the component particles of our body are ever changing during life, that since on death they are dissipated to the four winds, the *same* body cannot be raised; what is *meant* then by its being called the *same* body?”<sup>129</sup> He lets St Paul answer, who, speaking of the resurrection of the just, says: “And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat”.<sup>130</sup> The Apostle compares the earthly body to a seed, the risen body to the plant that springs from it. Look at a tree with its stem, branches, foliage, flowers, and fruit. All that you behold is contained in some way in the little seed from which it grew; yet how noble is the one, how insignificant the other! The tree is the same as the seed, yet how different! Such, according to St Paul, is the relation of the risen body to the natural body. It is the same body, yet how changed by the power and love of God! “What is sown”, he says, “is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body.”<sup>131</sup> As in this life the soul has the power of transmuting mere senseless things, food and drink, into the substance of the living man, and of making them co-operate in noble thought and action; so, at the resurrection of the just, the soul enraptured by the vision of God will have the power of transforming and ennobling the body, so that it will become a worthy associate in an infinitely higher life. The body will shed its imperfections like a husk; it will become inaccessible to pain, disease, or death; its senses and faculties will be raised to nobler capacities. St Thomas says that the full happiness of the soul will overflow to the body, perfecting the senses in their operations.<sup>132</sup> While remaining a true body, it will be given powers which will make it resemble a spirit. It will shine for ever in beauty and radiance like the glorified Body of our Saviour, “who”, as St Paul says, “will change our lowly body to be like His glorious body”.<sup>133</sup> That wonderful change which the Apostle compares to the development of the plant from the seed may also be illustrated from nature’s transmutation of carbon into a diamond. What once was carbon, resembling nothing better than a thimbleful of coal-dust, is now a flashing gem, fit for a royal diadem.

What is true of the resurrection of the just is true also, but in a very different sense, of the resurrection of the wicked. They too will rise with the same bodies they had in this life, but they will rise in dishonour. In their case, the natural body will not reveal its capacity for ennoblement, but for utter degradation. Their hatred of God will manifest itself in their appearance, making them hideous and repulsive like the demons with whom they must consort forever. The fire of Hell will burn their bodies without consuming them.

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<sup>124</sup> 1 Cor 15:12 f; cf. Rom 6:3 f; 8:11; Acts 17:18; 24:15; 26:8, 23

<sup>125</sup> Acts 24:15

<sup>126</sup> *On the Prescription of Heretics*, 13

<sup>127</sup> *Catechesis* 18

<sup>128</sup> *Against the Heresies*, IV, 18

<sup>129</sup> *Lectures on Justification* (3rd ed. 1874) IX, p.211

<sup>130</sup> 1 Cor 15:37

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, vv. 42-44

<sup>132</sup> *Summa Theol.*, I-II, q. 3, a. 3

<sup>133</sup> *Philipp.* 3:21

The *Roman Catechism*<sup>134</sup> sets forth these properties of the risen body under six headings. The first two are common to all the risen, while the next four are enjoyed only by the saints, i.e., all those in Heaven:

- *Integrity*: the bodies of all will be restored in their integrity, complete with all their members and faculties. Infants and unformed babies, as well as the aged, will all rise again in completeness, in full bodily maturity and perfection.
- *Immortality*: “before the resurrection they were subject to the law of death, but once restored to life, they shall, without distinction of good and evil, be invested with immortality.”
- *Impassibility*: “shall place them beyond the reach of suffering anything disagreeable or of being affected by pain or inconvenience of any sort.” St John declares, “death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more”.<sup>135</sup>
- *Clarity* (Splendour and Beauty): “the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”<sup>136</sup> “This brightness is a sort of radiance reflected on the body from the supreme happiness of the soul.”
- *Agility*: “the body will be freed from the heaviness that now presses it down, and will be capable of moving with the utmost ease and swiftness, wherever the soul pleases”.
- *Subtily*: “by which the body shall be completely subject to the dominion of the soul, and serve her, and be ever ready to follow her desires.”

These qualities can be deduced from St Paul, 1 Cor 15:37, 42-44: “what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel” [the dead body, like a seed planted, comes up with all its hidden possibilities brought to fruition, in *integrity*]. “What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable [*immortality & impassibility*]. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory [*clarity*]. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power [*agility*]. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body [*subtily*].”

DIFFICULTY: “What of those whose bodies have been devoured by cannibals, or in some way become part of others’ bodies? How can they receive their own bodies again?” REPLY: In this life, our body cells are always being renewed; we do not retain the same particles of matter all through life. The matter of our body is ours by virtue of its present union with the soul. Similarly, at the resurrection, the matter joined to our soul will thereby be constituted our body.

Note. We profess in the Creed, “He shall come again in glory to judge the living and the dead”. By “the living and the dead” is meant all people: those who will have died already, and those alive at the end of the world. Will those then alive be exempt from the general law of death? The *Roman Catechism* answers that those alive shall then die, and at once rise again.<sup>137</sup>

## VII

**On the Last Day, Christ will come again to earth to judge and sentence all mankind.** It is the faith of the Church, expressed in the Apostles’ Creed and other early professions of belief, that after the General Resurrection, Christ will come again in glory to judge the whole human race. Few truths are more prominently set forth in Sacred Scripture than this. Time and again the New Testament speaks of the “Second Coming” of Christ as the universal Judge, in contrast with His “first coming” as the Redeemer.<sup>138</sup> In St Matthew’s Gospel, we read His own words: “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. Before Him will be gathered all the nations, and He will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and He will place the sheep at His right hand, but the goats at the left.”<sup>139</sup> All that is hidden will be revealed. The deeds of every man will be made known, yet the sins of the just will not be revealed in such a way as to cause them shame or unhappiness,<sup>140</sup> for as St Gregory says, it will be to sing of the

<sup>134</sup> Promulgated by Pope Pius V in 1566, three years after the closure of the Council of Trent (i.e., the Tridentine Council); hence often called the *Catechism of Pius V* or *Catechism of the Council of Trent*. The teaching and quotations following are taken from Part I, art. 11.

<sup>135</sup> Rev 21:4

<sup>136</sup> Matt 13:43

<sup>137</sup> Part I, art. 11. Cf. St Thomas, *Comm. on the Sent.* IV, d. 47, q. 2, a. 3, ad 3; d. 43, q. 1, a. 4 (= *Summa Theol.* Suppl. q. 74, a. 7, ad 3; q. 78, a. 1).

<sup>138</sup> See e.g., Acts 17:31; 24:15; 1 Cor 15:23; 1 Thess 2:19; 2 Thess 1:7; 2:8; 1 Tim 6:14; 2 Tim 4:1.

<sup>139</sup> Matt 25:31-33

<sup>140</sup> St Thomas, *Comm. on the Sent.* IV, d. 43, q. 1, a. 5, q. 2, ad 3 (= *Summa Theol.* Suppl. q. 87, a. 2, ad 3)

Lord's mercies forever.<sup>141</sup> And Christ will pass sentence. To the just He will say: "Come, O blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world", and to the wicked: "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels". Straightaway the sentence will be executed: "And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."<sup>142</sup> The wicked shall be cast body and soul into hell and buried for ever there. The elect, clothed in the glory of their resurrection, shall join the company of angels, and enter with Jesus into the eternal Kingdom of the blessed. St John in the Apocalypse, relating his vision of the General Judgement, says, "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it ... And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done. ... And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." And he was shown the home of the blessed, the City of Light: "And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light shall the nations walk. ... But nothing unclean shall enter it ... but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life."<sup>143</sup>

**The purpose of the General Judgement.** The General or Universal Judgement will not change the judgement already given to each person upon death. The Particular Judgement will reveal to each individual the wisdom and justice of God's dealings with him personally. The General Judgement will reveal to him the wisdom and justice of God's dealings with every member of the human race. Further, it will reveal to all the majesty of Christ and the glory of the elect. On the Last Day, Christ who was once spurned, spat upon, nailed to a cross, rejected by faithless children whom He had fed with His doctrine and helped with His graces, will appear before all mankind in the might of the Godhead, compelling every knee to bend in homage to Him. On that day also, the elect will shine as the stars of heaven: they who were once belittled and despised by sinners, they who were once clothed in the infamy of their Master, will now share in His triumph. The Holy Spirit declares that the wicked, seeing them, "will be shaken with dreadful fear ... They will speak to one another in repentance, and in anguish of spirit they will groan, and say, 'This is the man whom we once held in derision and made a byword of reproach—we fools! We thought that his life was madness and that his end was without honour. Why has he been numbered among the sons of God? And why is his lot among the saints? So it was we who strayed from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness did not shine on us, and the sun did not rise upon us. We took our fill of the paths of lawlessness and destruction and we journeyed through trackless deserts, but the way of the Lord we have not known. What has our arrogance profited us? And what good has our boasted wealth brought us? All those things have vanished like a shadow, ... like a ship that sails through the billowy water, and when it has passed no trace can be found, nor track of its keel in the waves; ... So we also, as soon as we were born, ceased to be, and we had no sign of virtue to show, but were consumed in our wickedness.' Such things as these the sinners said in Hell ... Because the hope of the ungodly man is like chaff carried by the wind ... But the righteous live for ever, and their reward is with the Lord; the Most High takes care of them. Therefore they will receive a glorious crown and a beautiful diadem from the hand of the Lord".<sup>144</sup>

**A New Heaven and a New Earth.** After describing the General Judgement, St John says: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a great voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them; He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.' And He who sat upon the throne said, 'Behold I make all things new'."<sup>145</sup> Will the earth, then, be utterly destroyed? In what sense are we to interpret God's promise to "re-establish all things in Christ",<sup>146</sup> to make "new heavens and a new earth"?<sup>147</sup> Will the earth which, as St Anselm says, "once harboured in its bosom the Body of Our Lord",

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<sup>141</sup> *Moral Teachings*, IV, 36

<sup>142</sup> Matt 25:34, 41, 46

<sup>143</sup> Apoc 20:11-15; 21:23-27

<sup>144</sup> Wisdom 5:2-17 (v. 14, Douay)

<sup>145</sup> Apoc 21:1-5

<sup>146</sup> Eph 1:10

<sup>147</sup> 2 Pet 3:13

which was watered by His precious Blood and by the blood of the saints, be made anew so as to be a fit residence for the innocent and the blessed? Or will all the matter of the universe be at length united, every particle of it, to living spirits, and thus actively participate in manifesting the justice and wisdom of God? These are questions which no man can answer: revelation is silent, and it is idle to speculate.

“TO THE ONLY GOD, OUR SAVIOUR  
THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD,  
BE GLORY, MAJESTY, DOMINION, AND AUTHORITY,  
BEFORE ALL TIME AND NOW AND FOR EVER. AMEN.”

Jude, v.24