

ESCHATOLOGY



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Contents

1. Eschatology: Introductory Observations	5
2. Theological Analysis of Human Death	13
3. Particular Judgment	28
4. General Judgment	35
5. Resurrection of Bodies	43
6. When Does the World End?	55
7. Purgatory	69
8. Hell	86
9. Heaven	103
10. Fourteen Questions About Heaven	119
11. Omega Point Theory of Chardin	134

Eschatology: Introductory Observations

The branch of systematic theology which deals with the doctrines of the last things (taeschata) is called eschatology. The Greek title is of comparatively recent introduction, but in modern usage it has largely supplanted its Latin equivalent De Novissimis. As the numerous doctrinal subjects belonging to this section of theology will be treated exprofesso under their several proper titles, it is proposed in this article merely to take such a view of the whole field as will serve to indicate the place of eschatology in the general framework of religion, explain its subject-matter and the outlines of its content in the various religions of mankind, and illustrate by comparison the superiority of Christian eschatological teaching.

As a preliminary indication of the subject-matter, a distinction may be made between the eschatology of the individual and that of the race and the universe at large. The former, setting out from the doctrine of personal immortality, or at least of survival in some form after death, seeks to ascertain the fate or condition,

temporary or eternal, of individual souls, and how far the issues of the future depend on the present life. The latter deals with events like the resurrection and the general judgment, in which, according to Christian Revelation, all men will participate, and with the signs and portents in the moral and physical order that are to precede and accompany those events. Both aspects - the individual and the universal - belong to the adequate concept of eschatology; but it is only in Christian teaching that both receive due and proportionate recognition. Jewish eschatology only attained its completion in the teaching of Christ and the Apostles; while in ethnic religion eschatology seldom rose above the individual view, and even then was often so vague, and so little bound up with any adequate notion of Divine justice and of moral retribution, that it barely deserves to be ranked as religious teaching.

Ethnic Eschatologies

Coming to the higher or civilized societies, we shall glance briefly at the eschatology of the Babylonian and Assyrian, Egyptian, Indian, Persian, and Greek religions. Confucianism can hardly be said to have an eschatology, except the very indefinite belief involved in the worship of ancestors, whose happiness was held to depend on the conduct of their living descendants. Islamic eschatology contains nothing distinctive except the glorification of barbaric sensuality.

Indian: In the Vedic, the earliest historical form of the Indian religion, eschatological belief is simpler and purer than in the Brahministic and Buddhist forms that succeeded it. Individual immortality is clearly taught. There is a kingdom of the dead under the rule of Yama, with distinct realms for the good and the wicked. The good dwell in a realm of light and share in the feasts of the gods; the wicked are banished to a place of "nethermost darkness". Already, however, in the later Vedas, where these beliefs and developed expression, retribution begins to be ruled more by ceremonial observances than by strictly moral tests. On the other hand, there is no trace as yet of the dreary doctrine of transmigration, but critics profess to discover the germs of later pantheism.

In Brahminism retribution gains in prominence and severity, but becomes hopelessly involved in transmigration, and is made more and more dependent either on sacrificial observances or on theosophical knowledge. Though after death there are numerous heavens and hells for the reward and punishment of every degree of

merit and demerit, these are not final states, but only so many preludes to further rebirths in higher or lower forms. Pantheistic absorption in Brahma, the world-soul and only reality, with the consequent extinction of individual personalities - this is the only final solution of the problem of existence, the only salvation to which man may ultimately look forward. But it is a salvation which only a few may hope to reach after the present life, the few who have acquired a perfect knowledge of Brahma. The bulk of men who cannot rise to this high philosophic wisdom may succeed, by means of sacrificial observances, in gaining a temporary heaven, but they are destined to further births and deaths.

Buddhist eschatology still further develops and modifies the philosophical side of the Brahministic doctrine of salvation, and culminates in what is, strictly speaking, the negation of eschatology and of all theology - a religion without a God, and a lofty moral code without hope of reward or fear of punishment hereafter. Existence itself, or at least individual existence, is the primary evil; and the craving for existence, with the many forms of desire it begets, is the source of all the misery in which life is inextricably involved. Salvation, or the state of Nirvana, is to be attained by the utter extinction of every kind of desire, and this is possible by knowledge - not the knowledge of God or the soul, as in Brahminism, but the purely philosophical knowledge of the real truth of things. For all who do not reach this state of philosophic enlightenment or who fail to live up to its requirements - that is to say for the vast bulk of mankind - there is nothing in prospect save a dreary cycle of deaths and rebirths with intercalated heavens and hells; and in Buddhism this doctrine takes on a still more dread and inexorable character than pre-Buddhistic Brahminism.

Biblical Eschatology

Without going into details either by way of exposition or of criticism, it will be sufficient to point out how Old Testament eschatology compares with ethnic systems, and how notwithstanding its deficiencies in point of clearness and completeness, it was not an unworthy preparation for the fullness of Christian Revelation.

(1) Old Testament eschatology, even in its earliest and most imperfect form, shares in the distinctive character which belongs to Old Testament religion generally. In the first place, as a negative distinction, we note the entire absence of certain erroneous ideas and tendencies that have a large place in ethnic religions. There is no pantheism or dualism no doctrine of pre-existence (Wisdom 8:17-20

does not necessarily imply this doctrine, as has sometimes been contended) or of metempsychosis; nor is there any trace, as might have been expected, of Egyptian ideas or practices. In the next place, on the positive side, the Old Testament stands apart from ethnic religions in its doctrine of God and of man in relation to God. Its doctrine of God is pure and uncompromising monotheism; the universe is ruled by the wisdom, Justice, and omnipotence of the one, true God. And man is created by God in His own image and likeness, and destined to relations of friendship and fellowship with Him. Here we have revealed in clear and definite terms the basal doctrines which are at the root of eschatological truth, and which, once they had taken hold of the life of a people, were bound, even without new additions to the revelation, to safeguard the purity of an inadequate eschatology and to lead in time to richer and higher developments. Such additions and developments occur in Old Testament teaching; but before noticing them it is well to call attention to the two chief defects, or limitations, which attach to the earlier eschatology and continue, by their persistence in popular belief, to hinder more or less the correct understanding and acceptance by the Jewish people as a whole of the highest eschatological utterances of their own inspired teachers.

(2) The first of these defects is the silence of the earlier and of some of the later books on the subject of moral retribution after death, or at least the extreme vagueness of such passages in these books as might be understood to refer to this subject. Death is not extinction; but Sheol, the underworld of the dead, in early Hebrew thought is not very different from the Babylonian Aralu or the Homeric Hades, except that Jahve is God even there. It is a dreary abode in which all that is prized in life, including friendly intercourse with God, comes to an end without any definite promise of renewal. Dishonour incurred in life or in death, clings to a man in Sheol, like the honour he may have won by a virtuous life on earth; but otherwise conditions in Sheol are not represented as retributive, except in the vaguest way. Not that a more definite retribution or the hope of renewal to a life of blessedness is formally denied and excluded; it simply fails to find utterance in earlier Old Testament records. Religion is pre-eminently an affair of this life, and retribution works out here on earth. This idea which to us seems so strange, must, to be fairly appreciated, be taken in conjunction with the national as opposed to the individual viewpoint [see under (3) of this section]; and allowance must also be made for its pedagogic value for a people like the early Hebrews.

Christ himself explains why Moses permitted divorce (“by reason of the hardness of your heart”, Matthew 19:8); revelation and legislation had to be tempered to the capacity of a singularly practical and unimaginative people, who were more effectively confirmed in the worship and service of God by a vivid sense of His retributive providence here on earth than they would have been but a higher and fuller doctrine of future immortality with its postponement of moral rewards. Nor must we exaggerate the insufficiency of this early point of view. It gave a deep religious value and significance to every event of the present life, and raised morality above the narrow, utilitarian standpoint. Not worldly prosperity as such was the ideal of the pious Israelite, but prosperity bestowed by God as the gracious reward of fidelity in keeping His Commandments. Yet, when all has been said, the inadequacy of this belief for the satisfaction of individual aspirations must be admitted; and this inadequacy was bound to prove itself sooner or later in experience. Even the substitution of the national for the individual standpoint could not indefinitely hinder this result.

(3) The tendency to sink the individual in the nation and to treat the latter as the religious unit was one of the most marked characteristics of Hebrew faith. And this helped very much to support and prolong the other limitation just noticed, according to which retribution was looked for in this life. Deferred and disappointed personal hopes could be solaced by the thought of their present or future realization in the nation. It was only when the national calamities, culminating in the exile, had shattered for a time the people’s hope of a glorious theocratic kingdom that the eschatology of the individual became prominent; and with the restoration there was a tendency to revert to the national point of view. It is true of the O.T. as a whole that the eschatology of the people overshadows that of the individual, though it is true at the same time that, in and through the former, the latter advances to a clear and definite assurance of a personal resurrection from the dead, at least for the children of Israel who are to share, if found worthy, in the glories of the Messianic Age.

It is beyond the scope of this article to attempt to trace the growth or describe the several phases of this national eschatology, which centres in the hope of the establishment of a theocratic and Messianic kingdom on earth. However spiritually this idea may be found expressed in Old Testament prophecies, as we read them now in the light of their progressive fulfillment in the New Testament Dispensation, the Jewish people as a whole clung to a material and political interpretation of the kingdom, coupling their own domination as a

people with the triumph of God and the worldwide establishment of His rule. There is much, indeed, to account for this in the obscurity of the prophecies themselves. The Messiah as a distinct person is not always mentioned in connexion with the inauguration of the kingdom, which leaves room for the expectation of a theophany of Jahve in the character of judge and ruler. But even when the person and place of the Messiah are distinctly foreshadowed, the fusion together in prophecy of what we have learned to distinguish as His first and His second coming tends to give to the whole picture of the Messianic kingdom an eschatological character that belongs in reality only to its final stage. It is thus the resurrection of the dead in Isaiah 26:19, and Daniel 12:2, is introduced; and many of the descriptions foretelling “the day of the Lord”, the judgment on Jews and Gentiles, the renovation of the earth and other phenomena that usher in that day while applicable in a limited sense to contemporary events and to the inauguration of the Christian Era, are much more appropriately understood of the end of the world. It is not, therefore, surprising that the religious hopes of the Jewish nation should have become so predominantly eschatological, and that the popular imagination, foreshortening the perspective of Divine Revelation, should have learned to look for the establishment on earth of the glorious Kingdom of God, which Christians are assured will be realized only in heaven at the close of the present dispensation.

(4) Passing from these general observations which seem necessary for the true understanding of Old Testament eschatology, a brief reference will be made to the passages which exhibit the growth of a higher and fuller doctrine of immortality. The recognition of individual as opposed to mere corporate responsibility and retribution may be reckoned, at least remotely, as a gain to eschatology, even when retribution is confined chiefly to this life; and this principle is repeatedly recognized in the earliest books. (See Genesis 18:25; Exodus 32:33; Numbers 16:22; Deuteronomy 7:10; 24:16; 2 Kings 24:17; 2 Kings 14:6; Isaiah 3:10 sq.; 33:15 sqq.; Jeremiah 12:1 sq.; 17:5-10; 32:18 sq.; Ezekiel 14:12-20; 18:4, 18 sqq.; Psalms, passim; Proverbs 2:21 sq.; 10:2; 11:19, 31; etc.) It is recognized also in the very terms of the problem dealt with in the Book of Job.

But, coming to higher things, we find in the Psalms and in Job the clear expression of a hope or assurance for the just of a life of blessedness after death. Here is voiced, under Divine inspiration, the innate craving of the righteous soul for everlasting fellowship with

God, the protest of a strong and vivid faith against the popular conception of Sheol. Omitting doubtful passages, it is enough to refer to Psalms xv (A.V. xvi), xvi (A.V. xvii), xlviii (A.V. xlix), and lxxii (A.V. lxxiii). Of these it is not impossible to explain the first two as prayers for deliverance from some imminent danger of death, but the assurance they express is too absolute and universal to admit this interpretation as the most natural. And this assurance becomes still more definite in the other two psalms, by reason of the contrast which death is asserted to introduce between the fates of the just and the impious. The same faith emerges in the Book of Job, first as a hope somewhat questionably expressed, and then as an assured conviction. Despairing of vindication in this life and rebelling against the thought that righteousness should remain finally unrewarded, the sufferer seeks consolation in the hope of a renewal of God’s friendship beyond the grave: “O that thou wouldst hide me in Sheol, that thou wouldst keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time, and remember me. If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my warfare would I wait, till my release should come” (xiv, 13 sq.). In xvii, 18 - xvii, 9, the expression of this hope is more absolute; and in xix, 23-27, it takes the form of a definite certainty that he will see God, his Redeemer: “But I know that my Redeemer liveth and that he shall stand up at the last upon the earth [dust]; and after this my skin has been destroyed, yet from [al. without] my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold, and not another” (25 - 27). In his risen body he will see God, according to the Vulgate (LXX) reading: “and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skill, and in my flesh I shall see my God” (25 - 26).

The doctrine of the resurrection finds definite expression in the Prophets; and in Isaiah 26:19: “thy dead shall live, my dead bodies shall rise again. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust” etc.; and Daniel 12:2: “and many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake: some unto everlasting life, and others to everlasting shame and contempt” etc., it is clearly a personal resurrection that is taught - in Isaias a resurrection of righteous Israelites; in Daniel, of both the righteous and the wicked. The judgment, which in Daniel is connected with the resurrection, is also personal; and the same is true of the judgment of the living (Jews and Gentiles) which in various forms the prophecies connect with the “day of the Lord”. Some of the Psalms (e.g. 48) seem to imply a judgment of individuals, good and bad, after death; and the certainty of a future judgment of “every

Eschatology

work, whether it be good or evil”, is the final solution of the moral enigmas of earthly life offered by Ecclesiastes (xii, 13-14; cf. iii, 17). Coming to the later (deuterocanonical) books of the OT we have clear evidence in II Mach. of Jewish faith not only in the resurrection of the body (vii, 9-14), but in the efficacy of prayers and sacrifices for the dead who have died in godliness (xi, 43 sqq.). And in the second and first centuries BC, in the Jewish apocryphal literature, new eschatological developments appear, chiefly in the direction of a more definite doctrine of retribution after death. The word Sheol is still most commonly understood of the general abode of the departed awaiting the resurrection, this abode having different divisions for the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked; in reference to the latter, Sheol is sometimes simply equivalent to hell. Gehenna is the name usually applied to the final place of punishment of the wicked after the last judgment, or even immediately after death; while paradise is often used to designate the intermediate abode of the souls of the just and heaven their home of final blessedness. Christ’s use of these terms shows that the Jews of His day were sufficiently familiar with their New Testament meanings.

For systematic treatment it is best to distinguish between (A) individual and (B) universal and cosmic eschatology, including

under (A)

- death;
- the particular judgment;
- heaven, or eternal happiness;
- purgatory, or the intermediate state;
- hell, or eternal punishment;

and under (B)

- the approach of the end of the world;
- the resurrection of the body;
- the general judgment; and
- the final consummation of all things.

The superiority of Catholic eschatology consists in the fact that, without professing to answer every question that idle curiosity may suggest, it gives a clear, consistent, satisfying statement of all that need at present be known, or can profitably be understood, regarding the eternal issues of life and death for each of us personally, and the final consummation of the cosmos of which we are a part.

Chapter 2

Theological Analysis of Human Death

The Bible portrays death as the consequence of human sin. Death was the sanction that God tied to the Garden of Eden stipulation: “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:16-17). And God’s expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden on account of their covenant breach and treason demonstrated that His threats were not empty. Death became the lot of Adam and his posterity. To borrow the apostle Paul’s language in Romans 6:23: “The wages of sin [became] death.”

What did God have in view when He issued His death-threat to Adam? What is the meaning of “death”? How would Adam, Eve, and their offspring come to experience this consequence for human sin? And what purpose does death serve in God’s sovereign plan for humankind? These are the questions that we will attempt to answer in the article below.

Biblical Understanding of Death

The common Hebrew terminology used for death is related to the verb used in God's death-threat. The phrase "you shall surely die" combines the infinite absolute and the finite verbal form of the Hebrew. From this verbal root comes the cognate noun. The common Greek verb for death, *apothnesko*, and its related noun, *thanatos*, share a similar semantic range with the Hebrew counterparts. The terminology for "death" is often used in antithetical parallelism with the Hebrew and Greek terms for "life" (Deut. 30:19; 2 Sam. 15:21; Prov. 18:21; Jer. 21:8). Therefore, at the most basic level, "death" denotes the opposite of "life." In a certain sense, we may define death as the cessation or deprivation of life.

However, we must not construe the meaning of death in purely naturalistic terms. Death is not merely the functional cessation of our vital bodily organs, such as the heart, lungs, and/or brain. On the contrary, the Scriptures accord "death" a larger theological significance. Consequently, we cannot properly understand human death apart from man's relationship with God. With this theological perspective in view, we will examine the biblical meaning of "death" under three headings: spiritual death, physical death, and eternal death.

Spiritual Death

The first dimension of death experienced by Adam, Eve, and their offspring by ordinary generation may be termed "spiritual death." By spiritual death, we are referring to *the cessation of covenant fellowship between man and God*. This rupture in communion between man and God has both a human and also a divine component. In other words, the alienation is two-sided.

1. Man Estranged from God

The first thing Adam and Eve experienced when they ate the forbidden fruit was the opening of their eyes and an immediate urge to cover their nakedness (3:7). These metaphors are indicative of the presence of a bad conscience and a consequent feeling of shame. Moreover, in addition to a bad conscience and feeling of guilt, Adam and Eve experienced a dread and aversion to God's special presence (3:8, 10). As a result, they not only attempt to hide from God (Gen. 3:8b, 10b), but they also try to mitigate their guilt through blame shifting (3:12-13). Furthermore, Adam and Eve's fall into sin consisted of

disaffection toward their heavenly Father. God alludes to this disaffection when He promises to reverse it in His curse upon the Serpent: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed" (Gen. 3:15). To summarize, Adam and Eve's initial estrangement from God consisted in a bad conscience, as well as the feelings of shame, fear, and disaffection toward God.

The rest of Scripture confirms that this spiritual deadness or moral estrangement has been inherited by Adam's offspring. One of the key texts that highlights the continuance of "spiritual death" is found in Ephesians 2: And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind (ESV).

Paul describes men before conversion as "dead in trespasses and sins." This spiritual deadness does not just refer to our moral corruption and inability. It also refers to the fact that our allegiance and affections were aligned with Satan rather than God. We did not merely carry out our own lusts, but we followed "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who is now at work in the sons of disobedience." Thus, death, in this context, conveys the idea of estrangement from God.

Jesus also alludes to this spiritual death when He declares to a Jewish audience, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24). Conversion, Jesus argues, results in a transition "from death into life." The "life" Jesus has in view does not merely consist in the prospect of existence after death. The tenses of the verbs indicate that Christ is speaking of realities experienced in this life. The moment a person believes in Christ, he "has passed from death into life." And what kind of life does Jesus have in view? Listen to his answer in John 17:3: "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." Eternal life experienced in this life is equivalent to communion with God. Conversely, spiritual death experienced in this life is equivalent to estrangement from God.

It is also important for us to note that there are degrees of spiritual death or estrangement. All men are born with a conscience that testifies of their estrangement from God (Rom. 1:18-21, 32; 2:14-15). It is possible, however, for men to harden their conscience and to intensify their enmity toward God. Think, for example, of Pharaoh's response to Yahweh. Ten times God commanded Pharaoh to release the people of Israel from bondage; and ten times Pharaoh hardened his heart against God's command (Exod. 7:13-14, 16, 23; 8:15, 19, 22; 9:7, 12, 34, 35; 10:1; 11:10; 14:8). Consequently, when men harden their conscience against God, God in turn gives them over to a reprobate mind (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28), that is, a heart that is more deeply estranged from God.

2. God Estranged from Man

We must not limit the alienation between man and God to a merely human estrangement from God. The Scriptures also teach that God himself is estranged from man. It was not Adam and Eve who left the Garden because they no longer enjoyed God's fellow-ship. God himself expelled them from the Garden (Gen. 3:22-24) as act of judgment and expression of divine wrath. As the sin of Adam's offspring increased (Gen. 6:5), so God's grief and righteous indignation grew in proportion (Gen. 6:6-7) until he executed the judgment of the Flood (Gen. 6:13ff.).

Perhaps one of the greatest indications of God's estrangement from man is the fact that of all the divine emotions portrayed in Scripture, God's anger, wrath, and displeasure occur most frequently. In his study of the divine emotions, Greg Nichols counts at least 459 explicit references to God's anger in the Old and New Testaments. Then he concludes, "No other divine affection even begins to approach this massive testimony." David writes in Psalm 7:11, "God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day." As we noted earlier in Ephesians, spiritual death does not merely constitute us as the followers of Satan (Eph. 2:2) but also as "children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3).

Ironically, the most poignant display of God's estrangement towards humankind is seen in God's abandonment of Christ upon the cross. Recall the words of Jesus as he cried out under darkened sky, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why

have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46). Not more eloquent testimony to the alienation God felt towards man was ever heard!

In summary, the first consequence of sin is "spiritual death." This kind of death consists in what might be called "covenant-estrangement." The sinner is alienated from God (Eph. 2:12; 4:18; Col. 1:21), and God is alienated from the sinner (John 3:36; Eph. 2:3). Only the gospel of Jesus Christ can bring about the reconciliation (Rom. 5:11; 11:15; 2 Cor. 5:18-19).

Physical Death

Not only did God's curse upon humanity entail a spiritual death; it also resulted in physical death or the dissolution of the body. You may recall God's judicial pronouncement on Adam: Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, "You shall not eat of it": "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Gen. 3:17-19).

So in accordance with God's curse Adam's body would eventually succumb decay and dissolution. He was created to rule over the earth, but as a result of his sin, the very earth from which he was taken would eventually "rule over him"!

Under this heading of "physical death," we need to include the processes and factors that lead up to death: harmful environmental threats and disasters, genetic defects and deformities, injuries and diseases, and the general aging process that eventuates in the failure of the body's vital organs and results in physical death. So we will consider physical death both as a process and as a discrete event.

1. The Process of Physical Death

Some theologians have attempted to find an explicit reference to the process of dying in God's death-threat given to Adam in the Garden of Eden. The final phrase in Genesis 2:17 can be literally rendered, "In the day you eat from it, dying you shall die." The inference drawn from this literal rendering of the passage is that God was actually

threatening *the beginning of a process* rather than a discrete event. “In the day that you eat from it, you will begin the process of dying,” is how some read it.

However, the Hebrew construction of an infinitive absolute followed immediately by the cognate finite verb affirms *the certainty of the verbal idea* rather than *its beginning or duration*. Accordingly, most translations are correct when they render the passage, “In the day that you eat from it, you shall surely die.” So the passage is not explicitly underscoring the process of death but rather the inevitability of death. The certainty of Adam’s death would be predicated upon the irreversible factuality of his eating the fruit.

But we do not depend upon a dubious reading of Genesis 2:17 in order to establish the reality of a process of physical death. God seems to allude to this process in his judgment upon Adam and Eve. To the woman God threatens an increase in physical and emotional pain connected with her role as childbearer (Gen. 3:16). To the man God portends hardship, toil and pain, which would eventuate the physical dissolution of his body (Gen. 3:17-19). And by banishing the couple from the protective environment of the Garden (Gen. 3:22-24), God would expose them to a harsher environment that would contribute to the mortal injury or eventual aging and death of their bodies (Gen. 4:8, 23; 5:5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 27, 31; 6:11-13).

Not surprisingly, soon after the Flood we find a fast and significant decline in human longevity. Noah, like most of the other antediluvians identified in Genesis 5 lives to be over years 900 years old. However, by the time we reach the patriarchal narratives, the lifespans of the patriarchs average 153 years and that of the Israelites in Moses’ day 70 to 80 years (Ps. 90:10). Moreover, we also find scattered references throughout the Old and New Testaments to physical deformities, genetic defects, injuries and diseases. Furthermore, a number of passages describe individuals who are sick and in the process of dying from their ill-ness.

2. The Event of Physical Death

The Scriptures also describe physical death as a discrete event. In Genesis 5, we hear the repeated refrain, “and he died” (vv. 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 27, 31). Breathing one’s last breath is one of the most common biblical expressions used to depict the actual moment of

death (Gen. 28:8, 17; 35:29; 49:33; Mark 15:37, 39; Luke 23:46; Acts 5:5, 10).

The Bible attributes to God the power and prerogative to determine the precise time of one’s death. Through Moses, God declares, “Now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; nor is there any who can deliver from My hand (Deut. 32:39). The Psalmist writes, “You hide Your face, they are troubled; You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust” (Ps. 104:29). In the language of Job, “[Man’s] days are determined; the number of his months is with [God]; [God has] appointed [man’s] limits, so that he cannot pass.”

And true to God’s judgment upon Adam (Gen. 3:19), man’s body begins to decompose and return to the dust once his physical life expires (Job 17:14; 24:20; Pss. 16:10; 90:3; 104:29; Eccl. 3:20; 12:7; Isa. 66:24; Dan. 12:2; John 11:39; Acts 2:27-31; 13:36; 1 Cor. 15:42, 50).

Eternal Death

There is one more dimension of death that we must consider before we move on to address the nature and purpose of human death in the Bible. This is what theologians often refer to as “eternal death,” or to use the phrase employed by the apostle John in the book of Revelation, “the Second Death” (2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8). This is the *ultimate* form of death - eternal separation from God and His blessings.

The OT does not provide us with a lot of explicit and detailed teaching concerning this dimension of death. Of course, we cannot conclude from this fact that the OT redemptive community was completely unaware of its reality. According to Jude, Enoch, the seventh from Adam, preached a final judgment (Jude 14, 15). According to Peter, the universal flood provided the people of the ancient world a foretaste of this final judgment (2 Pet. 3:5-7).

Not surprisingly, David alludes to this day in the Psalms (Pss. 9:17-20; 37:37-38; 49:12-15). King Solomon also spoke of this day when he concludes Ecclesiastes with the famous words, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His command-ments, for this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil”

(12:13-14). Solomon cannot be referring to a temporal judgment in this life since he has already concluded that such a universal and complete judgment does not happen in this life (Eccl. 3:16; 8:14; 9:1-3). Hence, he must be alluding to a final assize.

Daniel provides the most complete OT description of this great Day of Judgment in a vision: I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened (Dan. 7:9, 10). Later, Daniel speaks of a general resurrection in which “many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2). So there seems to have been a general belief among the OT community in a final judgment and an eternal separation from God that would follow physical death.

In the NT, however, we find clearer and more explicit teaching. Jesus, for example, distinguishes between mere physical death and eternal death when He cautions His disciples, “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul [i.e., mere physical death]. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell [i.e., eternal death]” (Matt. 10:28). This eternal destruction of “soul and body in hell” will commence after a Final Judgment to which all mankind will be summoned (Matt. 7:22; 11:22; 13:40-43; 25:31-46; John 5:27; Acts 10:42; Rom. 2:5, 16; 14:9; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Thess. 1:10; 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:1; 2 Pet. 3:7). Not only will this death entail unending pain and torment (Matt. 8:12; 13:42; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28; 16:23, 28; Rev. 14:11; 18:10, 15). Most frightening will be the reality of eternal banishment from God’s presence and any possibility of hope (Matt. 7:23; 25:41; Luke 13:25, 27; Thess. 1:9; Rev. 22:15). The phrase “second death” serves to highlight the ideas of ultimacy and finality.

- ♦ The Nature of Death: In addressing the nature of death in its three dimensions, we are simply highlighting the fact that human death is not just a natural process or a mere product of chance. On the contrary, the Scriptures clearly portray human death as an expression of God’s righteous wrath and judgment (Rom. 1:18-

3:20; 2:5, 8; 5:9; 9:22; Eph. 5:6; Col. 3:6; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9; Rev. 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19; 19:15).

- ♦ The Purpose of Death: In general, the purpose of human death, in all three of its dimensions is the satisfaction of God’s justice and pacification of God’s wrath. When God warned Adam not to eat of the forbidden tree upon the pain of death (Gen. 2:17), he bound himself to act in accordance with his just and holy nature. So when Adam sinned, God had no other recourse but to punish sin. The soul that sins must die (Ezek. 18:4, 20). The “wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). This need for the satisfaction of justice and pacification of wrath does not change under the dispensation of grace. The soul that sins must *still* die. But thanks be to God that he has provided a substitute! Jesus Christ has taken our sins and propitiated God’s wrath so that God can remain just and also the justifier of the one who believes in Jesus (Rom. 3:24-26; 5:9-10; Gal. 3:13). If Jesus Christ has suffered God’s wrath in our stead delivering us from eternal death, and if the Holy Spirit has regenerated our hearts delivering us from spiritual death, why must we still experience physical death? Why must Christians experience suffering and physical death?

The Purposes of Physical Death for the Christian

The writer to the Hebrews informs us, “It is appointed for men to die” (Heb. 9:27). Don’t we wish that we could be an exception to that general rule, like Enoch (Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5), Elijah (2 Kings 2:1, 11), or those living when Christ returns (1 Thess. 4:17)? Why does God allow the Christian to experience physical death? In addition to some of the same benefits listed under suffering, let me suggest two reasons why God allows us to experience physical death.

- ♦ First of all, anticipating and experiencing physical death serves to conform the Christian to the pattern of Christ. Before Jesus could enter into glory, He had to suffer and die (Luke 24:26, 46; 1 Pet. 1:11). So too, believers are called to follow in his steps (1 Pet. 2:21). Suffering first, then glory (1 Pet. 4:12-13; 5:8-10). Thus, the apostle could aspire to “know [Christ] and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” (Phil. 3:10).

- ◇ Secondly, it may be that God has chosen ironically to use the penalty for sin as very event by which He completely frees His children from the power and presence of sin forever. As Gregory Nichols remarks,

Thus, the very thing which was unto our ultimate consignment to hell, death, is now the gateway to glory. And God, as it were, in the irony of his saving purpose, makes that which was to be the vehicle of our destruction the vehicle of the destruction of our indwelling sin.

So just as God's curse declaration upon the Serpent contained an implicit blessing of redemption, so the experience of physical death for he Christian has been transformed into a vehicle of ultimate blessing and unending joy. Not surprisingly, the apostle Paul can declare, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

Pope Benedict XVI On the Meaning of Death

Vatican City Nov. 6, 2006

During these days that follow the liturgical commemoration of the dead, many parishes celebrate the octave of the dead, an appropriate occasion to remember our loved ones in prayer and to meditate on the reality of death, which the "civilization of comfort" often tries to remove from people's conscientiousness, immersed in the concerns of daily life. To die, in fact, is part of life and not only of its end, but, if we pay attention, of every instant. Despite all the distractions, the loss of a loved one makes us discover the "problem," making us feel death as a radically hostile presence contrary to our natural vocation to life and happiness.

Jesus revolutionized the meaning of death. He did so with his teaching, above all by facing death himself. "Dying he destroyed death," says the liturgy of the Easter season. "With the Spirit that could not die, Christ defeated death that was killing man," wrote a Father of the Church (Melito of Sardis, "On Easter," 66). In this way, the Son of God wished to share our human condition to the end, to open it to hope. Ultimately, he was born to be able to die and in this way to free us from the slavery of death. The Letter to the Hebrews says: "that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone" (2:9).

Since then, death is no longer the same: It has been deprived, so to speak, of its "venom." The love of God, acting in Jesus, has given

new meaning to the whole of man's existence and in this way, has also transformed death. If in Christ human life is a departure "from this world to the Father" (John 13:1), the hour of death is the moment in which this departure takes place in a concrete and definite way. Those who commit themselves to live like him are freed from the fear of death, no longer showing the sarcastic smile of an enemy but offering the friendly face of a "sister," as St. Francis wrote in the "Canticle of Creatures." In this way, God can also be blessed for it: "Praise be to you, my Lord, for our Sister Bodily Death." We must not fear the death of the body, faith reminds us, as it is a dream from which we will awake one day.

The authentic death, which one must fear, is that of the soul, called by the Book of Revelation "second death" (cf. 20:14-15; 21:8). In fact, he who dies in mortal sin, without repentance, locked in prideful rejection of God's love, excludes himself from the Kingdom of life. Through the intercession of Mary Most Holy and of St. Joseph, let us pray to the Lord for the grace to prepare serenely to depart from this world, when he wills to call us, with the hope of being able to be with him eternally, in the company of the saints and of our deceased loved ones.

Theological Meaning of Death

Physical death can be defined from both a medical and theological perspective. Medically speaking, death is the total and permanent cessation of all vital bodily functions. It happens when a person's heart has stopped beating and the electrical impulses of the brain have permanently ceased, thus indicating that the last evidence of aliveness has irreversibly left the body. From a theological perspective, this is also the time that the person's body is separated from their soul (the immaterial part of humans). Ecclesiastes says concerning death: "then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it" (Eccles 12:7). After death, the physical body decays and thus is resolved into its constituent elements.

Physical and Spiritual Death When the Bible talks about death related to human beings, it makes a distinction between physical death and spiritual death. Even while alive physically, a person can be dead spiritually. Spiritual death is a state of being in which the human soul is separated from God and has not been enlivened by his Spirit. A

number of Bible passages are instructive in this regard. Ephesians 2, verses 2 and 5, mention that before we were Christians we were dead in our trespasses and sins, but God made us alive together with Christ. The Apostle Paul further explains this spiritually deadened state in Ephesians 4:18 as being “alienated from the life of God.” In 1 Timothy 5:6, he makes this contrast between physical and spiritual life even more explicit by declaring that a person was “dead even while she lives.” As a normal course of experience, every human being will experience physical death. If a person has not been spiritually enlivened, after their physical death they will be separated from God eternally. Christians, who have been spiritually enlivened during their life on this earth, will go on living in fellowship with God in the “eternal life” (John 10:28; 17:3; 1 John 5:20). Only those who are not enlivened spiritually by God’s Spirit will experience the ultimate “second death” (Rev 20:14; 21:8), being eternally separated from God (2 Thess 1:9).

Why Does a Person Die?

What is the cause of death? That is, why do human beings die? The first mention of death in the Bible is in Genesis 2:17 which states, “from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.” In the day the first humans ate of that tree they immediately died in a spiritual sense and entered into a condition in which physical death was inevitable. This word clearly establishes human sin and disobedience to God as the reason for death. Death was God’s judgment upon humans as a result of their fall into sin (Gen 3:19). This is confirmed by numerous verses throughout the Bible. Romans 5:12 associates this penalty for initial sin with all humans by stating that “sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned” and Romans 6:23 further makes this clear in declaring that “the wages of sin is death.”

Throughout the history of the Church, there has been a great deal of debate as to whether humans would have died if they had not sinned, or to put it in different terms, whether humans were created as mortal or immortal beings. My feeling is that God intended for humans to be immortal; he created us with the potential to live forever.

But before this potential for immortality could be realized and become an established reality, the first humans disobeyed God and thus brought death upon themselves (and upon the ensuing human race). By not eating the Tree of Life, but instead disobeying God and eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, humankind inadvertently chose to die. Adam’s choice was either the Tree of Knowledge (resulting in death) or the Tree of Life (resulting in eternal life); the Bible doesn’t leave room for the option of not choosing one of these. Humankind had to choose one tree at the exclusion of the other. This is made clear by the fact that after humans ate of the Tree of Knowledge God put humans out of the garden of Eden so that they might not “reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” (Gen 3:22-23).

Thus, spiritual and physical death spread to all because the first humans sinned. Since humans chose death, then death reigns and was passed to all; if they would have chosen the Tree of Life, then they would have lived forever, spiritually and physically. So, although sin caused death, it is a moot point to ask if humans would not have died if they had not sinned; the Bible does not address what humankind would have been like if they had eaten from neither Tree. The Bible implies that they would have died (Genesis 2:17); the only way to live forever and thus not die was to eat of the Tree of Life. The fact that God chose to make humans out of the dust of the earth (Gen 2:7) points to the fact that this body is ‘earthly’ (1 Cor 15:47; 2 Cor 5:1) and thus was not meant to be eternal in that original created state. The well-respected theologian Millard Erickson says in this regard: “Since physical death is a result of sin, it seems probable that the humans were created with the possibility of living forever. They were not inherently immortal, however; that is, they would not by virtue of their nature have lived on forever. Rather, if they had not sinned, they could have partaken of the tree of life and thus have received everlasting life. They were mortal in the sense of being able to die; and when they sinned, that potential or possibility became a reality.”

The Final and Intermediate States When a person dies physically, it does not mean permanent and ultimate extinction for them. Rather than extinction, death is a transfer from one state of being to another (Heb 9:27). Every human being will one day be resurrected from the

dead and will be judged according to their deeds and their relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Jesus says in John 5:28-29, “the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and will come out—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” Every person will come to life at the resurrection and will either be assigned to “be with the Lord forever” (1 Thess 4:17) or to be eternally “separated from the presence of the Lord” (2 Thess 1:9), based on whether a person has a righteous standing with God and is spiritually alive or not. This can be considered their final state of being, where they will spend eternity. Each person’s condition will be established at the end of the world when God “will judge the world in righteousness through” Jesus Christ (Acts 17:31) and “will repay according to each one’s deeds” (Rom 2:6). (Cf. Matt 25:31; Rev 20:11).

But before the time of the resurrection of all people, when humans will be judged and their eternal state will be determined, they exist in a state of being that is often referred to as the ‘intermediate state’. It is hard to say exactly what their state of being will be like during this time. The Bible says very little about this intermediate state and leaves many questions unanswered; what it does say is overshadowed by the topic of human beings’ final state of existence. Theologian Anthony Hoekema rightly says that the New Testament tells us “nothing more than a whisper” about the intermediate state. I tend to agree with Thomas Oden when he writes, “The study of the future remains, according to God’s wisdom, a matter of the meekness of faith, not the pretense of elaborate knowledge.” Even the beloved Apostle John said that “what we will be has not yet been revealed” (1 John 3:2).

However, there are some indications regarding this intermediate state that are worth mentioning. There are strong suggestions that humans are not annihilated at death, but continue to exist either in a pleasant place, referred to as Paradise, or in an unpleasant place, referred to as Hades. These places seem to be different from what has traditionally been understood as Heaven and Hell.

Hades is a realm of the dead, used as a place of torment for unrighteous people before the general resurrection of all people. Second Peter 2:9 says that “the Lord knows how to... keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment.” This indicates that, even before the final judgment of all people, there

awaits an unpleasant place for ungodly people. This place is clearly referred to in Revelation 20:13 which says, “Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and all were judged according to what they had done.” After this final judgment at the end of time, then the unrighteous people, along with death and Hades themselves, “were thrown into the lake of fire” (verse 14). Thus Hades and the ‘lake of fire’ are distinguished as two separate places. Hades is further described as a place of torment by Jesus in the parable of Luke 16 (vv. 19-31). Verse 31 makes it clear that the setting of this parable is before the final resurrection of the dead.

This parable contrasts Hades with a pleasant place referred to here as “Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:22, NASB), which is described as a place of comfort (v. 25). This seems to be the same place that Jesus refers to when he tells the thief being crucified next to him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43).

The Christian’s Attitude Toward Death

For a person with no hope and expectation of spending eternity with the loving Creator of the universe, death is something that is to be feared. Not only is there the end of life, but there is also the fear of not knowing what really lies ahead. But we as Christians believe that just as Christ was raised from the dead, so also will we be raised. This enables us to be free from inner turmoil and the bondage caused by “the fear of death” (Heb 2:14-15). Nor do we need to be distressed or grieve over our beloved fellow Christians who have died because we have the hope that one-day we will be resurrected and reunited with them, forever in the Lord’s presence (1 Thess 4:13-17). Not only do we as Christians have no fear of death, but we also should properly have an expectation of being reunited with the Lord and with all the Christians of past centuries (Heb 12:23; Rev 7:9). We also have the anticipation that we will be rewarded with a “crown of righteousness” (2 Tim 2:8). This thought and expectation was so much in the mind of the Apostle Paul that he actually felt it was “far better” to “depart and be with Christ” (Phil 1:23). Living this life is surely a time to experience and know Christ, but dying will be a “gain” in that we will in some way be with Christ in a more real and lasting way (Phil 1:21, 23). Surely Anthony Hoekema has well said, “Death for the Christian is not an end, but a glorious new beginning.”

Chapter 3

Particular Judgment

The Catholic doctrine of the particular judgment is this: that *immediately after death the eternal destiny of each separated soul is decided by the just judgment of God*. Although there has been no formal definition on this point, the dogma is clearly implied in the Union Decree of Eugene IV (1439), which declares that souls leaving their bodies in a state of grace, but in need of purification are cleansed in Purgatory, where as souls that are perfectly pure are at once admitted to the beatific vision of the God head (*ipsum Deum unum et trinum*) and those who depart in actual mortal sin, or merely with original sin, are at once consigned to eternal punishment, the quality of which corresponds to their sin (*paenis tamen disparibus*). The doctrine is also in the profession of faith of Michael Palaeologus in 1274, in the Bull "Benedictus Deus" of Benedict XII, in 1336, and in the professions of faith of Gregory XIII and Benedict XIV.

Biblical Basis of Particular Judgment

Ecclesiastes 11:9; 12:1 sq.; and Hebrews 9:27, are sometimes quoted in proof of the particular judgment, but though these passages speak of a judgment after death, neither the context nor the force of the words prove that the sacred writer had in mind a judgment distinct from that at the end of the world. The Scriptural arguments in defence of the particular judgment must be indirect. There is no text of which we can certainly say that it expressly affirms this dogma but there are several which teach an immediate retribution after death and thereby clearly imply a particular judgment. Christ represents Lazarus and Dives as receiving their respective rewards immediately after death. They have always been regarded as types of the just man and the sinner. To the penitent thief it was promised that his soul instantly on leaving the body would be in the state of the blessed: "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). St. Paul (2 Corinthians 5) longs to be absent from the body that he may be present to the Lord, evidently understanding death to be the entrance into his reward (cf. Philemon 1:21 sq.). Ecclesiasticus 11:28-29 speaks of a retribution at the hour of death, but it may refer to a temporal punishment, such as sudden death in the midst of prosperity, the evil remembrance that survives the wicked or the misfortunes of their children. However, the other texts that have been quoted are sufficient to establish the strict conformity of the doctrine with Scripture teaching. (Cf. Acts 1:25; Apocalypse 20:4-6, 12-14).

Patristic Testimony

St. Augustine witnesses clearly and emphatically to this faith of the early Church. Writing to the presbyter Peter, he criticizes the works of Vincentius Victor on the soul, pointing out that they contain nothing except what is vain or erroneous or mere commonplace, familiar to all Catholics. As an instance of the last, he cites Victor's interpretation of the parable of Lazarus and Dives. He writes: For with respect to that which he (Victor) most correctly and very soundly holds, namely, that souls are judged when they depart from the body, before they come to that judgment which must be passed on them when reunited to the body and are tormented or glorified in that same flesh which they here inhabited - was that a matter of which you (Peter) were unaware? Who is so obstinate against the Gospel as not to perceive those things in the parable of that poor man carried after death to Abraham's bosom and of the rich man whose torments are set before us? (De anima et ejus origine, 11, n.8.).

In the sermons of the Fathers occur graphic descriptions of the particular judgment (cf. S. Ephraem, "Sermo de secundo Adventu"; "Sermo in eos qui in Christo obdormiunt").

Heresies

Lactantius is one of the few Catholic writers who disputed this doctrine (*Divine Institutes* VII:21). Among heretics the particular judgment was denied by Tatian and Vigilantius. The Hypnopsychites and the Thnetopsychites believed that at death the soul passed away, according to the former into a state of unconsciousness, according to the latter into temporary destruction. They believed that souls would arise at the resurrection of the body for judgment. This theory of "soul slumber" was defended by the Nestorians and Copts, and later by the Anabaptists, Socinians, and Arminians. Calvin (*Inst.* III, 25) holds that the final destiny is not decided till the last day.

Prompt Fulfillment of Sentence

The prompt fulfilment of the sentence is part of the dogma of particular judgment, but until the question was settled by the decision of Benedict XII, in 1332, there was much uncertainty regarding the fate of the departed in the period between death and the general resurrection. There was never any doubt that the penalty of loss (*poena damni*), the temporal or eternal forfeiture of the joys of Heaven, began from the moment of death. Likewise it was admitted from the earliest times that the punishment following death included other sufferings (*poena sensus*) than the penalty of loss (Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 5). But whether the torment of fire was to be included among these sufferings, or whether it began only after the final judgment, was a question that gave rise to many divergent opinions. It was a common belief among the early Fathers that the devils will not suffer from the flames of hell until the end of the world. Regarding the reprobate souls there was a similar belief. Some of the Fathers contended that these souls do not suffer the torment of fire until reunited with their bodies in the resurrection, while others hesitated (cf. Tert., "De Test. an.", iv). Many, on the contrary, clearly taught that the punishment of hell fire followed speedily upon the particular judgment (Hilary, In Ps. cxxxviii, 22). This is evident from the words of Gregory the Great: "just as happiness rejoices the elect, so it must be believed that from the day of their death fire burns the reprobate" (*Dial.*, IV, 28). Early Christian writers also refer to a purgatorial fire in which souls not perfectly just are purified after death.

Some of the early Fathers, misled by Millenarian errors, believed that the essential beatitude of Heaven is not enjoyed until the end of time. They supposed that during the interval between death and the resurrection the souls of the just dwell happily in a delightful abode, awaiting their final glorification. This was apparently the opinion of Sts. Justin and Irene's, Tertullian, St. Clement of Alexandria, and St. Ambrose. According to others, only the martyrs and some other classes of saints are admitted at once to the supreme joys of heaven. It cannot, however, be inferred from these passages that all of the Fathers quoted believed that the vision of God is in most cases delayed till the day of judgment. Many of them in other parts of their works profess the doctrine either expressly or by implication through the acknowledgment of other dogmas in which it is contained, for instance, in that of the descent of Christ into Limbo, an article of the Creed which loses all significance unless it be admitted that the saints of the Old Testament were thereby liberated from this temporal penalty of loss and admitted to the vision of God. As to the passages which state that the supreme happiness of Heaven is not enjoyed till after the resurrection, they refer in many instances to an increase in the accidental joy of the blessed through the union of the soul with its glorified body, and do not signify that the essential happiness of heaven is not enjoyed till then. Notwithstanding the aberrations of some writers and the hesitation of others, the belief that since the death of Christ souls which are free from sin enter at once into the vision of God was always firmly held by the great body of Christians (cf. St. Cyprian, *De exhort. mart.*). As the earliest Acts of the Martyrs and Liturgies attest, the martyrs were persuaded of the prompt reward of their devotion. This belief is also evidenced by the ancient practice of honoring and invoking the saints, even those who were not martyrs. But the opposite error found adherents from time to time, and in the Middle Ages was warmly defended. The Second Council of Lyons (1274) declared that souls free from sin are at once received into heaven (*mox in caelum recipi*), but did not decide in what their state of beatitude consisted. A number of theologians maintained the opinion that until the resurrection the just do not enjoy the intuitive or facial vision of God, but are under the protection and consolation of the Humanity of Jesus Christ. Pope John XXII (1316-1334) at Avignon, as a private theologian, seems to have supported this view, but that he gave it any official sanction is a fable invented by the Fallibility. His successor, Benedict XII, ended the controversy by the Bull "Benedictus Deus".

Circumstances of Particular Judgment According to Theologians

Theologians suppose that the particular judgment will be instantaneous, that in the moment of death the separated soul is internally illuminated as to its own guilt or innocence and of its own initiation takes its course either to hell, or to purgatory, or to heaven (Summa Theologica, Supplement 69:2, 88:2). In confirmation of this opinion the text of St. Paul is cited: “Who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them, and their thoughts between themselves accusing, or also defending one another, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ (Romans 2:15-16). The “Book of Judgment”, in which all the deeds of men are written (Apocalypse 20:12), and the appearance of angels and demons to bear witness before the judgment seat are regarded as allegorical descriptions (St. Augustine, *City of God* XX.14). The common opinion is that the particular judgment will occur at the place of death (Suarez in III, Q, lix. a. 6, disp. 52).

Particular Judgment in Brief

The judgment which will be passed on each one of us immediately after death is called the particular judgment. The existence of the particular judgment can be deduced from the parable of Dives and Lazarus; a soul is shown rewarded immediately after death.

1. As soon as each soul leaves the body at death it undergoes the Particular judgment, at which its eternal destiny is decided. “We must all be manifested at the judgment seat of Christ.” “It is appointed unto men to die once, but after this comes the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). “Every one of us will render an account for himself to God” (Rom. 14:12).

Let us remember that even while the relatives gather around the bed of the departed one, even while his body is still warm, the particular judgment is gone through and finished; the judgment is passed, and the soul gone to his reward or punishment. If we remember this, we shall be more fervent in praying for the dead, in helping others die a happy death, so that without fear they may meet God at the judgment.

2. Jesus Christ is the *Judge* at the Particular Judgment. Before Him each soul must stand. The soul will stand in the awesome presence of God the Son, to *give an account* of its whole life: of every thought, word, act, and omission.

“Neither does the Father Judge any man, but all judgment he has given to the Son” (John 5:22).

3. A man’s whole life will be spread before him like a great picture. He will remember everything, although he might have forgotten much at the moment of death. How he will wish then that he had done only good! We are not to suppose that the soul will go to heaven before Christ to be judged. God enlightens each soul in such a manner that it fully knows Christ has passed a true judgment on it. “Of every idle word men speak, they shall give account on the day of judgment” (Matt. 12:36). The judgment will embrace even the good which has been neglected: a strict account will have to be rendered of the use we made of the talents and graces given to us. Even good actions badly performed will come under scrutiny, careless communions, hasty confessions, etc. Only then shall we know the exactness with which God sees and measures every act, word, and even intention in our deepest thought.
4. The good and the evil that the soul has done will be weighed in the balance of God’s justice. Then the sentence will be passed by Jesus Christ alone, without the intervention of witnesses. This sentence is final and will never be reversed. The soul will learn the sentence, the reasons for it, and its absolute justice. “But of every one to whom much has been given, much will be required; and of him to whom they have entrusted much, they will demand the more” (Luke 12:48).

The Rewards or Punishments after the Particular Judgment

The rewards or punishments appointed for men after the particular judgment are heaven, purgatory, or hell. “With what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you” (Matt. 7:2). As we have loved God and our fellow-men during life, so we shall be given the proper reward or punishment.

1. He who dies in his *baptismal innocence* or after having fully satisfied for all the sins he committed, will be sent at once to *heaven*. The just will enter into everlasting life (Matt. 25:46). Only those souls enter heaven who are free from all sin, and from the penalty due to sins which have been forgiven. Nothing defiled can enter heaven (Apoc. 21:27).
2. He who dies in the state of grace, but is in venial sin, or has not fully atoned for the temporal punishment due his forgiven sins, will be sent for a time to *purgatory*.

Eschatology

The souls in purgatory are saints, because they are sure of going to heaven. In purgatory they cannot commit any more sin, not even the slightest. They only long for God.

3. He, who dies in *mortal sin*, even if only with one single mortal sin, will be sent at once to *hell*. For the hope of the wicked is as dust, which is blown away with the wind, and as a thin froth which is dispersed by the storm: and a smoke that is scattered abroad by the wind: and as the remembrance of a guest of one day that passed by” (Wis. 5:15). By mortal sin a man cuts himself off from God. It is really *he himself that sends himself to hell*. God’s desire would be to see all His creatures with Him in heaven.

How should we prepare for the Judgment?

We should prepare for the judgment by being most careful to lead a good life and die a happy death.

1. We should do *all the good* we can, so that God may forgive the evil we may do. We should not only obey carefully all the Commandments out God and the Church, but do good works in prayer and alms-deeds, practicing charity for the love of God. How can we be careless about a matter of such importance, when we are absolutely certain of being judged by God! “For what shall I do, when God shall rise to judge?” (Job 31:14).
2. We should do voluntary works of penance, for love of God; in expiation of any sins we may have the misfortune to commit.

The “Imitation of Christ” says on this topic: “In all things look to the end, and how thou wilt stand before the strict Judge, from Whom there is nothing hid; Who takes no bribes, and receives no excuses, but will judge that which is just... Be, therefore, now solicitous for thy sins, that in the Day of Judgment thou may be in security with the blessed.. Then shall the poor and humble have great confidence and the proud fear on every side. Then it will appear that he was wise in this world, who for Christ’s sake learned to be a fool and despised... Then shall the flesh that was afflicted exult more than if it had always fared in delights... Then a pure and good conscience shall bring more joy than learned philosophy. Then shall the contempt of riches far outweigh all treasures of the children of earth... Learn to suffer now in little things that thou may be delivered from more grievous sufferings... All is vanity except to love and serve God alone” (*Bk. I, chap. 24*).

Chapter 4

General Judgment

We are mindful and profess in our Creed that Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead. The Second Vatican Council’s “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church” states, “Already the final age of the world is with us and the renewal of the world is irrevocably under way; it is even now anticipated in a certain real way, for the Church on earth is endowed already with a sanctity that is real though imperfect” (No. 48). To try to grasp the when, what and how of this Second Coming and last judgment, we really need to glean the various passages in Sacred Scripture to see how our Church has interpreted them. They are united in one drama.

The Second Coming of the Lord and the Last Judgment

Our Lord in the Gospel spoke of His second coming. He indicated that various signs would mark the event. Mankind would suffer from famine, pestilence and natural disasters. False prophets who claim to be the Messiah will deceive and mislead people. Nations will

wage war against each other. The Church will endure persecution. Worse yet, the faith of many will grow cold and they will abandon the faith, even betraying and hating one another. (Confer Mt. 24:4-14; Lk 17:22-37) St. Paul describes a “mass apostasy” before the Second Coming, which will be led by the “son of perdition,” the “Man of Lawlessness,” the “adversary who exalts himself above every so-called god proposed for worship.” This “lawless one” is part of the work of Satan, and with power, signs, wonders and seductions will bring to ruin those who have turned from the truth. However, “the Lord Jesus will destroy him with the breath of His mouth and annihilate him by manifesting His own presence.” (Cf. 2 Thes 2:3-12) The Catechism affirms, “God’s triumph over the revolt of evil will take the form of the last judgment after the final cosmic upheaval of this passing world” (No. 667). Our Lord will come suddenly. “The Son of Man in His day will be like the lightening that flashes from one end of the sky to the other” (Lk 17:24). St. Peter predicts, “The day of the Lord will come like a thief and on that day the heavens will vanish with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire and the earth and all its deeds will be made manifest” (2 Pt 3:10).

Death will be no more. The dead shall rise and those souls who have died will be united again to their bodies. All will have a glorious, transformed, spiritualized body as St. Paul said, “He will give a new form to this lowly body of ours and remake it according to the pattern of His glorified body...” (Phil 3:21).

At this time, the final or general judgment will occur. Jesus said, “Those who have done right shall rise to life; the evildoers shall rise to be damned” (Jn 5:29). Our Lord described this judgment as follows: “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, escorted by all the angels of heaven, He will sit upon His royal throne and all the nations will be assembled before Him. Then He will separate them into two groups, as a shepherd separated sheep from goats” (Mt 25:31-32).

Here each person will have to account for his conduct and the deepest secrets of his soul will come to light. How well each person has responded to the prompting of God’s grace will be made clear. Our attitude and actions toward our neighbor will reflect how well we have loved our Lord. “As often as you did it for one of My least brothers, you did it for Me” (Mt 25:41).

Our Lord will judge us accordingly. For those who have died and already have faced the particular judgment, their judgment will stand. Those living at the time of the Second Coming will receive judgment. Those who have rejected the Lord in this life, who have sinned mortally, who have no remorse for sin and do not seek forgiveness, will have condemned themselves to hell for all eternity. “By rejecting grace in this life, one already judges oneself, receives according to one’s works and can even condemn oneself for all eternity by rejecting the Spirit of love (Catechism, No. 678). The souls of the righteous will enter heavenly glory and enjoy the beatific vision and those who need purification will undergo it.

We do not know when the Second Coming will occur. Jesus said, “As to the exact day or hour, no one knows it, neither the angels in heaven nor even the Son, but only the Father. Be constantly on the watch! Stay awake! You do not know when the appointed time will come” (Mk 13:32-33).

Existence of the General Judgment

Few truths are more often or more clearly proclaimed in Scripture than that of the general judgment. To it the prophets of the Old Testament refer when they speak of the “Day of the Lord” (Joel 3:4; Ezekiel 13:5; Isaiah 2:12), in which the nations will be summoned to judgment. In the New Testament the second Parusia, or coming of Christ as Judge of the world, is an oft-repeated doctrine. The Savior Himself not only foretells the event but graphically portrays its circumstances (Matthew 24:27 sqq.; 25:31 sqq.). The Apostles give a most prominent place to this doctrine in their preaching (Acts 10:42; 17:31) and writings (Romans 2:5-16; 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:5; James 5:7). Besides the name Parusia (*parousia*), or Advent (1 Corinthians 15:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:19), the Second Coming is also called Epiphany, *epiphaneia*, or Appearance (2 Thessalonians 2:8; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1; Titus 2:13), and Apocalypse (*apokalypsis*), or Revelation (2 Thessalonians 2:7; 1 Peter 4:13). The time of the Second Coming is spoken of as “that Day” (2 Timothy 4:8), “the day of the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 5:2), “the day of Christ” (Philippians 1:6 and 2:16), “the day of the Son of Man” (Luke 17:30), “the last day” (John 6:39-40).

The belief in the general judgment has prevailed at all times and in all places within the Church. It is contained as an article of faith in all the ancient creeds: “He ascended into heaven. From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead” (Apostles’ Creed). He shall come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead” (Nicene Creed). “From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead, at whose coming all men must rise with their bodies and are to render an account of their deeds” (Athanasius). Relying on the authority of Papias, several Fathers of the first four centuries advanced the theory of a thousand years’ terrestrial reign of Christ with the saints to precede the end of the World). Though this idea is interwoven with the eschatological teachings of those writers, it in no way detracted from their belief in a universal world-judgment. Patristic testimony to this dogma is clear and unanimous.

The Roman Catechism thus explains why, besides the particular judgment of each individual, a general one should also be passed on the assembled world: “The first reason is founded on the circumstances that most augment the rewards or aggravate the punishments of the dead. Those who depart this life sometimes leave behind them children who imitate the conduct of their parents, descendants, followers; and others who adhere to and advocate the example, the language, the conduct of those on whom they depend, and whose example they follow; and as the good or bad influence or example, affecting as it does the conduct of many, is to terminate only with this world; justice demands that, in order to form a proper estimate of the good or bad actions of all, a general judgment should take place... Finally, it was important to prove, that in prosperity and adversity, which are sometimes the promiscuous lot of the good and of the bad, everything is ordered by an all-wise, all-just, and all-ruling Providence: it was therefore necessary not only that rewards and punishments should await us in the next life but that they should be awarded by a public and general judgment.”

Signs that are to precede the General Judgment

The Scriptures mention certain events which are to take place before the final judgment. These predictions were not intended to serve as indications of the exact time of the judgment, for that day and hour are known only to the Father, and will come when least expected. They were meant to foreshadow the last judgment and to

keep the end of the world present to the minds of Christians, without, however, exciting useless curiosity and vain fears. Theologians usually enumerate the following nine events as signs of the last judgment:

General preaching of the Christian religion: Concerning this sign the Savior says: “And this gospel of the kingdom, shall be preached in the whole world, for a testimony to all nations, and then shall the consummation come” (Matthew 24:14). This sign was understood by Chrysostom and Theophilus as referring to the destruction of Jerusalem, but, according to the majority of interpreters, Christ is here speaking of the end of the world.

Conversion of the Jews: According to the interpretation of the Fathers, the conversion of the Jews towards the end of the world is foretold by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans (11:25-26): “For I would not have you ignorant, brethren, of this mystery,... that blindness in part has happened in Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles should come in. And so all Israel should be saved as it is written: *There shall come out of Sion, he that shall deliver, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob*”.

Return of Enoch and Elijah: The belief that these two men, who have never tasted death, are reserved for the last times to be precursors of the Second Advent was practically unanimous among the Fathers, which belief they base on several texts of Scripture. (Concerning Elijah see Malachi 4:5-6; Sirach 48:10; Matthew 17:11; concerning Enoch see Sirach 44:16).

A great apostasy: As to this event St. Paul admonishes the Thessalonians (2 Thessalonians 2:3) that they must not be terrified, as if the day of the Lord were at hand, for there must first come a revolt (*he apostasia*). The Fathers and interpreters understand by this revolt a great reduction in the number of the faithful through the abandonment of the Christian religion by many nations. Some commentators cite as confirmatory of this belief the words of Christ: “But yet the Son, when he cometh, shall he find, think you, faith on earth?” (Luke 18:8).

The reign of Antichrist: In the passage above mentioned (2 Thessalonians 2:3 sqq.) St. Paul indicates as another sign of the day of the Lord, the revelation of the man of sin, the son of perdition. “The man of sin” here described is generally identified with the Antichrist, who, says St. John (1 John 2:18), is to come in the last

days. Although much obscurity and difference of opinion prevails on this subject, it is generally admitted from the foregoing and other texts that before the Second Coming there will arise a powerful adversary of Christ, who will seduce the nations by his wonders, and persecute the Church.

Extraordinary perturbations of nature: The Scriptures clearly indicate that the judgment will be preceded by unwonted and terrifying disturbances of the physical universe (Matthew 24:29; Luke 21:25-26). The wars, pestilences, famines, and earthquakes foretold in Matthew are also understood by some writers as among the calamities of the last times.

The universal conflagration: In the Apostolic writings we are told that the end of the world will be brought about through a general conflagration, which, however, will not annihilate the present creation, but will change its form and appearance (2 Peter 3:10-13; cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:2; Apocalypse 3:3, and 16:15). Natural science shows the possibility of such a catastrophe being produced in the ordinary course of events, but theologians generally tend to believe that its origin will be entirely miraculous.

The Trumpet of Resurrection: Several texts in the New Testament make mention of a voice or trumpet which will awaken the dead to resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:15; John 5:28). According to St. Thomas (Supplement 86:2) there is reference in these passages either to the voice or to the apparition of Christ, which will cause the resurrection of the dead.

“The sign of the Son of Man appearing in the heavens”: In Matthew 24:30, this is indicated as the sign immediately preceding the appearance of Christ to judge the world. By this sign the Fathers of the Church generally understand the appearance in the sky of the Cross on which the Savior died or else of a wonderful cross of light.

Circumstances Accompanying the General Judgment

Time: As was stated above, the signs that are to precede the judgment give no accurate indication of the time when it will occur (Mark 13:32). When the Disciples asked the Savior: “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” He answered: “It is not for you to know the times or moments, which the Father hath put in his own power” (Acts 1:6-7). The uncertainty of the day

of judgment is continually urged by Christ and the Apostles as an incentive to vigilance. The day of the Lord will come “as a thief” (Matthew 24:42-43), like lightning suddenly appearing (Matthew 24:27), like a snare (Luke 21:34), as the Deluge (Matthew 24:37).

Place of the judgment: All the texts in which mention is made of the Parusia, or Second Coming, seem to imply clearly enough that the general judgment will take place on the earth. Some commentators infer from 1 Thessalonians 4:16, that the judgment will be held in the air, the newly risen being carried into the clouds to meet Christ; according to others the prophecy of Joel (3:1 sq.) places the last judgment in the Valley of Josaphat.

The coming of the Judge: That this judgment is ascribed to Christ, not only as God, but also as Man, is expressly declared in Scripture; for although the power of judging is common to all the Persons of the Trinity, yet it is specially attributed to the Son, because to Him also in a special manner is ascribed wisdom. But that as Man He will judge the world is confirmed by Christ Himself (John 5:26-27). At the Second Coming Christ will appear in the heavens, seated on a cloud and surrounded by the angelic hosts (Matthew 16:27; 24:30; 25:31). The angels will minister to the Judge by bringing all before Him (Matthew 24:31). The elect will aid Christ in a judicial capacity (1 Corinthians 6:2). The lives of the just will in themselves be a condemnation of the wicked (Matthew 21:41), whose punishment they will publicly approve. But the Apostles will be judges of the world in a sense yet more exact, for the promise that they shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28) seems to imply a real participation in judicial authority. According to a very probable opinion, this prerogative is extended to all who have faithfully fulfilled the counsels of the Gospel (Matthew 19:27-28). Nothing certain is known as to the manner in which this delegated authority will be exercised. St. Thomas conjectures that the greater saints will make known the sentence of Christ to others (Supplement 88:2).

Those to be judged: All men, both good and bad, according to the Athanasius Creed, will appear in the judgment to give an account of their deeds. As to children that have personally done neither good nor evil, the baptized must be distinguished from the unbaptized. The former appear in the judgment, not to be judged, but only to hold

the glory of Christ (Supplement 80:5), while the latter, ranked with the wicked, although not judged, will be enabled to realize the justice of their eternal loss (Suarez). The angels and the demons will not be judged directly, since their eternal destiny has already been fixed; yet, because they have exercised a certain influence over the fortunes of men, the sentence pronounced on the latter will have a corresponding effect on them also (Supplement 89:8).

Object of the judgment: The judgment will embrace all works, good or bad, forgiven as well as unforgiving sins, every idle word (Matthew 12:36), every secret thought (1 Corinthians 4:5). With the exception of Peter Lombard, theologians teach that even the secret sins of the just will be made manifest, in order that judgment may be made complete and that the justice and mercy of God may be glorified. This will not pain or embarrass the saints, but add to their glory, just as the repentance of St. Peter and St. Mary Magdalen is to these saints a source of joy and honor.

Form of the judgment: The procedure of the judgment is described in Matthew 25:31-46, and in the Apocalypse 20:12. Commentators see in those passages allegorical descriptions intended to convey in a vivid manner the fact that in the last judgment the conduct and deserts of each individual will be made plain not only to his own conscience but to the knowledge of the assembled world. It is probable that no words will be spoken in the judgment, but that in one instant, through a Divine illumination, each creature will thoroughly understand his own moral condition and that of every fellow creature (Romans 2:15). Many believe, however, that the words of the sentence: "Come, ye blessed", etc. and "Depart from me", etc. will be really addressed by Christ to the multitude of the saved and the lost.

Results of the General Judgment

With the fulfillment of the sentence pronounced in the last judgment the relations and the dealings of the Creator with the creature find their culmination, are explained and justified. The Divine purpose being accomplished, the human will, as a consequence, attain its final destiny. The reign of Christ over mankind will be the sequel of the General Judgment.

Resurrection of Bodies

Resurrection is the rising again from the dead, the resumption of life. The Fourth Lateran Council teaches that all men whether elect or reprobate, "will rise again with their own bodies which they now bear about with them"(cap."Fir miter"). In the language of the creeds and professions of faith this return to life is called resurrection of the body (*resurrectio carnis, resurrectio mortuorum, anastasis ton nekron*) for a double reason: first, since the soul cannot die, it cannot be said to return to life; second the heretical contention of Hymeneus and Philitus that the Scriptures denote by resurrection not the return to life of the body, but the rising of the soul from the death of sin to the life of grace, must be excluded. (We shall treat of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ in a separate article; here, we treat only of the General Resurrection of the Body.)

"No doctrine of the Christian Faith", says St. Augustine, "is so vehemently and so obstinately opposed as the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh" (In Ps.

lxxxviii, sermo ii, n. 5). This opposition had begun long before the days of St. Augustine: “And certain philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics”, the inspired writer tells us (Acts 17:18, 32), “disputed with him [Paul]... and when they had heard of the resurrection of the dead, some indeed mocked, but others said: We will hear thee again concerning this matter.” Among the opponents of the Resurrection we naturally find first those who denied the immortality of the soul; secondly, all those who, like Plato, regarded the body as the prison of the soul and death as an escape from the bondage of matter; thirdly the sects of the Gnostics and Manicheans who looked upon all matter as evil; fourthly, the followers of these latter sects the Priscillianists, the Cathari, and the Albigenses; fifthly, the Rationalists, Materialists, and Pantheists of later times. Against all these we shall first establish the dogma of the resurrection, and secondly consider the characteristics of the risen body.

Dogma of the Resurrection

The creeds and professions of faith and councilor definitions do not leave it doubtful that the resurrection of the body is a dogma or an article of faith. We may appeal, for instance, to the Apostles’ Creed, the so called Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, the Creed of the Eleventh Council of Toledo, the Creed of Leo IX, subscribed by Bishop Peter and still in use at the consecration of bishops the profession of faith subscribed by Michael Palaeologus in the Second Council of Lyons, the Creed of Pius IV, and the Decree of the Fourth Lateran Council (c. “Firmiter”) against the Albigenses. This article of faith is based on the belief of the Old Testament, on the teaching of the New Testament, and on Christian tradition.

Old Testament

The words of Martha and the history of the Machabees show the Jewish belief towards the end of the Jewish economy. “I know”, says Martha, “that He shall rise again, in the resurrection at the last day” (John 11:24). And the third of the Machabee martyrs put forth his tongue and stretched out his hands, saying: “These I have from heaven, but for the laws of God I now despise them: because I hope to receive them again from him” (2 Maccabees 7:11; cf. 9:14). The Book of Daniel (12:2; cf. 12) inculcates the same belief: “Many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake: some unto

life everlasting, and others unto reproach, to see it always.” The word *many* must be understood in the light of its meaning in other passages, e.g. Isaiah 53:11-12; Matthew 26:28; Romans 5:18-19. Though Ezechiel’s vision of the resurrection of the dry bones refers directly to the restoration of Israel, such a figure would be hardly Israel, such a figure would be hardly intelligible except by readers familiar with the belief in a literal resurrection (Ezekiel 37). The Prophet Isaias foretells that the Lord of hosts “shall cast down death headlong forever” (25:8), and a little later he adds: “Thy dead men shall live, my slain shall rise again... the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall cover her slain no more” (26:19-21). Finally, Job, bereft of all human comfort and reduced to the greatest desolation, is strengthened by the thought of the resurrection of his body: “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see God. Whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another; this hope is laid up in my bosom” (Job 19:25-27). The literal translation of the Hebrew text differs somewhat from the foregoing quotation, but the hope of resurrection remains.

New Testament

The resurrection of the dead was expressly taught by Christ (John 5:28-29; 6:39-40; 11:25; Luke 14:14) and defended against the unbelief of the Sadducees, whom He charged with ignorance of the power of God and of the Scriptures (Matthew 22:29; Luke 20:37). St. Paul places the general resurrection on the same level of certainty with that of Christ’s Resurrection: “If Christ be preached, that he rose again from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen again. And if Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain” (1 Corinthians 15:12 sqq.). The Apostle preached the resurrection of the dead as one of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, at Athens, for instance (Acts 17:18, 31, 32), at Jerusalem (xxiii, 6), before Felix (xxiv, 15), before Agrippa (xxvi, 8). He insists on the same doctrine in his Epistles (Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:12 sqq.; 2 Corinthians 4:14; 5:1 sqq.; Philippians 3:21; 1 Thessalonians 4:12-16; 2 Timothy 2:11; Hebrews 6:2), and in this he agrees with the Apocalypse (xx, 12 sqq.).

Tradition

It is not surprising that the Tradition of the early Church agrees with the clear teaching of both the Old and New Testaments. We have already referred to a number of creeds and professions of faith which may be considered as part of the Church's official expression of her faith. Here we have only to point out a number of patristic passages, in which the Fathers teach the doctrine of the general resurrection in more or less explicit terms. St. Clement of Rome, I Corinthians 25; St. Justin Martyr, "De resurrect.", vii sqq.; Idem, *Dialogue with Trypho* 80; Athenagoras, "De recur. carn.", iii; Tatian, "Adv. Graec.", vi; St. Irenæus, "Contra haer.", I, x; V, vi, 2; Tertullian, "Contra Marcion.", V, ix; Idem, "De praescript.", xiii; Idem, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* I.12, 15, 63; Minucius Felix, "Octav.", xxxiv; Origen, tom. XVII, in Matt., xxix; Idem, *De Principiis* Preface, no. 5; Idem, "In Lev.", v, 10; Hippolytus, "Adv. Graec." in P.G., X, 799; St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* XVIII.15; St. Ephraem, "De resurrect. mort."; St. Basil, "Ep. cclxxi", 3; St. Epiphanius, "In ancor.", lxxxiii sq., xcix; St. Ambrose, "De excessu frat. sui Satyri", II, lxvii, cii; Idem, "In Ps. cxviii", serm. x, n. 18; Ps. Ambr., "De Trinit.", xxiii, in P.L. XVII, 534; St. Jerome, "Ep. ad Paul" in LIII, 8; Rufinus, "In symbol.", xlv sq.; St. Chrysostom (Ps. Chrysostom), "Fragm. in libr. Job" in P.G., LXIV, 619; St. Peter Chrysologus, serm. 103, 118; "Apost. Constit.", VII, xli; St. Augustine "Enchirid.", 84; Idem, *City of God* XX.20; Theodoret, "De provident.", or. ix; *Church History* I.3.

The general resurrection can hardly be proved from reason, though we may show its congruity.

- ◆ As the soul has a natural propensity to the body, its perpetual separation from the body would seem unnatural.
- ◆ As the body is the partner of the soul's crimes, and the companion of her virtues, the justice of God seems to demand that the body be the sharer in the soul's punishment and reward.
- ◆ As the soul separated from the body is naturally imperfect, the consummation of its happiness, replete with every good, seems to demand the resurrection of the body.

The first of these reasons appears to be urged by Christ Himself in Matthew 22:23; the second reminds one of the words of St. Paul, 1

Corinthians 15:19, and 2 Thessalonians 1:4. Besides urging the foregoing arguments, the Fathers appeal also to certain analogies found in revelation and in nature itself, e.g. Jonas in the whale's belly, the three children in the fiery furnace, Daniel in the lions' den, the carrying away of Henoch and Elias, the raising of the dead, the blossoming of Aaron's rod, the preservation of the garments of the Israelites in the desert, the grain of seed dying and springing up again, the egg, the season of the year, the succession of day and night. Many pictures of early Christian art express these analogies. But in spite of the foregoing congruities, theologians more generally incline to the opinion that in the state of pure nature there would have been no resurrection of the body.

Characteristics of the Risen Body

All shall rise from the dead in their own, in their entire, and in immortal bodies; but the good shall rise to the resurrection of life, the wicked to the resurrection of Judgment. It would destroy the very idea of resurrection, if the dead were to rise in bodies not their own. Again, the resurrection, like the creation, is to be numbered amongst the principal works of God; hence, as at the creation all things are perfect from the hand of God, so at the resurrection all things must be perfectly restored by the same omnipotent hand. But there is a difference between the earthly and the risen body; for the risen bodies of both saints and sinners shall be invested with immortality. This admirable restoration of nature is the result of the glorious triumph of Christ over death as described in several texts of Sacred Scripture: Isaiah 25:8; Osee, xiii, 14; 1 Corinthians 15:26; Apocalypse 2:4. But while the just shall enjoy an endless felicity in the entirety of their restored members, the wicked "shall seek death, and shall not find it, shall desire to die, and death shall fly from them" (Revelation 9:6).

These three characteristics, identity, entirety, and immortality, will be common to the risen bodies of the just and the wicked. But the bodies of the saints shall be distinguished by four transcendent endowments, often called qualities.

- ◆ The first is "impassibility", which shall place them beyond the reach of pain and inconvenience. "It is sown", says the Apostle, "in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption" (1 Corinthians 15:42).

The Schoolmen call this quality impassibility, not incorruption, so as to mark it as a peculiarity of the glorified body; the bodies of the damned will be incorruptible indeed, but not impassible; they shall be subject to heat and cold, and all manner of pain.

- ◆ The next quality is “brightness”, or “glory”, by which the bodies of the saints shall shine like the sun. “It is sown in dishonor,” says the Apostle, “it shall rise in glory” (1 Corinthians 15:43; cf. Matthew 13:43; 17:2; Philippians 3:21). All the bodies of the saints shall be equally impassible, but they shall be endowed with different degrees of glory. According to St. Paul: “One is the glory of the sun, another the glory of the moon, another the glory of the stars. For star different from star in glory” (1 Corinthians 15:41-42).
- ◆ The third quality is that of “agility”, by which the body shall be freed from its slowness of motion, and endowed with the capability of moving with the utmost facility and quickness wherever the soul pleases. The Apostle says: “It is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power” (1 Corinthians 15:43).
- ◆ The fourth quality is “subtlety”, by which the body becomes subject to the absolute dominion of the soul. This is inferred from the words of the Apostle: “It is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:44). The body participates in the soul’s more perfect and spiritual life to such an extent that it becomes itself like a spirit. We see this quality exemplified in the fact that Christ passed through material objects.

Importance of the Resurrection of the Body

Death - The Sleep of the Body

No Biblical description of death is so comforting and consoling to the believer as that which is revealed in the familiar word sleep. It is a word that applies to the body only and never to the soul. Our Lord said to His disciples: “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said His disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death” (John 11:11-13). Of the martyrdom and death of Stephen, we read: “He fell asleep” (Acts 7:60). When the Apostle Paul was yet alive, he said that of the five hundred brethren who had seen Christ alive after His Resurrection, “some are fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:6). His comforting message to the believers at Thessalonica was, “I would

not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep” (1 Thessalonians 4:13). The Apostle Peter, speaking of Old Testament saints, said: “The fathers fell asleep” (2 Peter 3:4).

The Old Testament saints were comforted by this same truth. More than forty times in the Old Testament it is said of a man who died that he “slept with his fathers.” “And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers” (Deuteronomy 31:16; 2 Samuel 7:12). Job said: “Now shall I sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be” (Job 7:21). In these verses we have a transcendently sublime description of death which assures the believer that it is but “the transient slumber of the body, to be followed by the glorious awakening at the sound of the last trumpet.”

Death-Temporary Separation of the Spiritual from the Physical

This temporary suspension of the activities of the body does not mean that the spirit of man is asleep. The body is but the tabernacle or dwelling place of the spirit part of man. Upon the death of the body, the spirit of a believer takes departure, closing the senses of the body until the day of its resurrection. Immediately upon the death of our bodies, we leave the flesh, “to depart, and to be with Christ” (Philippians 1:23), “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:23).

Here is a simple illustration. Recently I noticed that a butcher shop in our town was no longer open for business. One day while driving past the building I saw a sign in the window which read: “Closed For Alterations.” The owner had suspended his business relations with the public long enough to renovate the store. After about two months the store was reopened with many changes. This is a picture of the death of the believer. He moves out of the body until it has been repaired and renovated, when, at the resurrection, the inward man shall move into his renewed body.

Raised to be Like Jesus

Death is not to be feared by the Christian. We shall live in a literal body just as real as the one we have now, for, says Paul: “We look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body...” (Philippians 3:20, 21). The coming of our Lord in the air to take us to Heaven will

necessitate a change in this purchased body of corruption. The body is as much the Lord's purchased possession as is the soul. It is dear to Him. "The body is... for the Lord; and the Lord for the body" (1 Corinthians 6:13). The goal of the Gospel is to bring eternal life and immortality to all who will believe. Since the body of the saints will be "fashioned like unto His glorious body," we may well wonder what our bodies will be like at the resurrection. John says: "We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). When our Lord ascended into Heaven, He was thirty-three years of age, a young man in the strength and glory of His youth. Senility had not overtaken our Lord when He died upon the Cross for our sins. In David's Psalm of the exalted Christ in the glory, we read: "Thou hast the dew of Thy youth" (Psalm 110:3). O wondrous thought! We shall be clothed upon with perennial youth. We shall be like Him, fashioned like unto His glorious body.

Christ shall "change our vile body" (Philippians 3:21) we read. The word "change" means to transfigure. It has been suggested that we have here the thought of metamorphosis which is a remarkable change in the form and structure of a living body. When our Lord took Peter, James, and John up into the Holy Mountain, we read that "He was transfigured before them" (Matthew 17:2). Christ appeared during that brief period of time in His glorified body. He was transfigured (or metamorphosed) before them. It was a body like His post-resurrection body when He appeared to His disciples behind shut doors (John 20:19). The change of the believer at the resurrection has to do with his body, wherein resides the sin principle, for even the Christian must admit, "I know that in me (that is in my flesh) there dwelled no good thing" (Romans 7:18). The word "change" could not refer to the spiritual part of man, for, as Kenneth Wuest says: "The word 'change' is the translation of a Greek word which speaks of an expression which is assumed from the outside, which act brings about a change of outward expression."

Biologically speaking, the change of a caterpillar into a butterfly is spoken of as a "metamorphosis." The ugly, repulsive caterpillar is confined to a tomb which it spins for itself. While in the cocoon there is an apparently dead and formless substance. But after the warm sun of spring has beaten its golden rays upon that cocoon, there comes forth a beautiful butterfly. Though the butterfly is different in

appearance from the caterpillar, we recognize the beautiful winged insect as being the same as the caterpillar. It is the same living creature, yet different. So also is the resurrection of the body. Now we have a vile body (or a body of humiliation). The Apostle James calls it a "low" body, "because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away" (James 1:10). The body of Adam, in its original state, was provided with a covering of glory, but when sin entered the covering of glory was replaced with a covering of humiliation. In our present bodies of humiliation we are unfit for the glories of Heaven and God's presence, but hopefully we look for our Lord's return when He shall fashion our bodies of humiliation like unto His own body of glory. It will be the same body in that it will be recognizable, but wonderfully changed.

Answering the Skeptic

Some unbelieving skeptics have proposed the argument that it will be impossible for the same body to be raised since the bodies of those who have been dead for hundreds of years have become decomposed into integrant parts; that is, reduced to powder. They add that those elements which composed one body may have become a part of other bodies. For example, a dead body deteriorates. Over the grave of that body a tree may grow, having fed its roots on the elements of the dead body. If the fruit of that tree is eaten by other men, the elements of the decomposed and deteriorated body in the grave become a part of other men's bodies. They conclude that it is an impossibility to raise the same body atom for atom.

God anticipated this problem. We read: "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" (1 Corinthians 15:35) To answer this, the Apostle, by the Holy Spirit, uses the illustration of a farmer sowing grain. When a farmer drops a kernel of grain into the ground, he knows that when the seed dies or seemingly rots away, that does not mean the end of his efforts. He knows that one seed will come forth into a fuller life, producing a stalk with several ears bearing many hundreds of kernels like the one he planted. The actual seed that was planted he does not see. Yet there is absolute identity. It is the same with the resurrection of our bodies. "That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die; And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain. But God

giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body” (1 Corinthians 15:36-38).

It will not be necessary for God to use every part of this body when he raises it from the grave. Such a thought is not taught in Scripture. In fact, it is scientifically true that the component parts of our bodies undergo periodical changes. We are told that through the change of elements, we receive new bodies every seven years. We may not be conscious of the change. Nevertheless we have not the same body today that we had seven years ago. There is an identity that we maintain all our lifetime, and yet there is not one cell in our bodies that was there seven years ago. In the resurrection the bodies of the saints will bear their individual identities. Dr. Wilbur M. Smith has said: “The fact that after death our physical substance disintegrates and scatters creates no difficulties for God, so that He could not bring those bodies back gloriously transformed.” By the new birth we are born again into the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom that can never break down or disintegrate. Because sin can never enter, there is no danger of corruptibility. The resurrection will be the occasion when our bodies become incorruptible and will inherit the Kingdom of God.

From Corruption to Incorruption - From Mortality to Immortality

It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption (1 Corinthians 15:42). For this corruptible must put on incorruption (1 Corinthians 15:53). Death is written on the face of all that is alive. The moment we begin to live we commence to die. The report of the birth of a new baby guarantees the digging of a new grave. The preacher of wisdom wrote: “The strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened... man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets... Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:3, 5, 7). This is a picture of the body of corruption. Its destiny is death, decay, and dissolution. But if we are to have bodies in Heaven, we must have bodies that are free from corruption. This is exactly the kind of body that Christ will give us when He comes. It was buried in corruption, but it will be raised in incorruption. We have some idea of an incorruptible body in the scene on the Mount of Transfiguration. Moses and Elijah both appeared with Christ. Moses had died fifteen hundred years before. Yet he was there recognizable in a glorious

body. Elijah had been caught up to Heaven without dying about nine hundred years before, and he too was there in a glorified body. Our resurrection will clothe us with bodies where disease and sickness will never enter. No pain, no weakness, no fever will touch our resurrection bodies. “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

From Dishonor to Glory

It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory (1 Corinthians 15:43). The body that is put in the grave is sown in dishonor. The average Christian sadly neglects his body, failing to realize that it is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Proper care of the body is far more the exception than it is the rule. The bodies of some Christians have been broken and diseased by sin before the persons ever came to knowledge of truth. The drinking of intoxicating liquors, the use of tobacco, and other sins of the body have brought to the body dishonor. Some do not get enough rest, while others injure the body through laziness and inactivity. Some persons overeat regularly while others mistreat the body by not eating the right kind of food. It is the opinion of the writer that the majority of people are guilty of not giving the body its required care. It is sown in dishonor. But our resurrection bodies will be raised in glory. We shall be like Jesus, in the brightness of His glory. O glorious hope!

From Weakness to Power

It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power (1 Corinthians 15:43). It is believed that the Apostle Paul was frail in body, afflicted with “a thorn in the flesh.” Weak bodies have their limitations, and many of us can testify as to how the work of the Lord often is hampered by bodily limitations. The tasks we seek to perform become wearisome by reason of the infirmities of the flesh. But in Heaven we shall know nothing of physical weakness. The limitations of earth are not known in Heaven. What a glorious change that will be! Raised in power! Here on earth we find that the spirit sometimes is willing, but the flesh is weak. Some of God’s choice saints cannot as much as attend a church service because of bodily affliction, but in Heaven all will have strong bodies. The new body will be a habitation from God, incorruptible, immortal, and powerful.

From the Natural to the Spiritual

It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:44). It must be clearly understood that the phrase “a spiritual body” does not so much as infer that the resurrection body will be a body without substance. The word “natural” is from a word used by the Greeks when they spoke of the soul of man. We pointed out earlier in this volume how that man was made of three component parts: body, soul, and spirit. In the physical he possesses world-consciousness through his five senses. With his soul, which is the seat of his emotions, he possesses self-consciousness, thereby having knowledge that he is a personality. By his spirit, he is enabled to know God and to worship and serve Him after his human spirit has been quickened by the Holy Spirit. Our bodies while on earth are natural or soulish bodies and are engaged chiefly with the activities and the environment of earth. By nature it becomes easily adjusted to work and play. The spiritual life is not absent altogether from man, but it occupies a small part of his time and energy as compared with his soul life.

When the resurrection body is called “a spiritual body,” it is not meant that it will be composed of intangible substance. Robert S. Candlish has said: “The words natural and spiritual, as applied to the body, have respect not so much to the nature of the substance of which the body is composed, as to the uses or purposes which it is intended to serve.” On earth we are occupied to a greater degree with the natural body, while in Heaven in our resurrection bodies we will be occupied with all that pertains to God and godliness. The spiritual life of man will prevail.

We might say that the body has two masters, a natural and a spiritual. Paul said: “When I would do good, evil is present with me” (Romans 7:21). The Apostle was truly God’s child by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, but the natural man was still very much alive and warring against the spiritual. And each of us knows too well what a barrier the natural man is! We are hindered by the attitude of the natural toward the spiritual. But in Heaven we shall be clothed with a resurrection body where the higher principles in man will predominate and the full tide of spiritual life will be in control.

In Heaven all will be incorrupt, immortal, glorious, powerful, and spiritual. Before the throne of God we will serve Him eternally in His temple. O glorious hope! O resurrection day!

Chapter 6

When Does the World End?

The term “end times” applies both to the era of Christ’s first coming (Heb 1:2, 1 Cor 10:11, Heb 9:26) and to the events immediately before his return and the end of the ages (Mt 24:13, 2 Tim 2:1, 2 Peter 3:3). The definitive Catholic teaching on the end times is contained in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* under the discussion of the article of the Creed, “From thence He will come again to judge the living and the dead.” [CCC 668-682] As the Creed infallibly teaches, the Second Coming is associated with the end of the world and the Last Judgment. Therefore, it is not associated with any earlier time—such as to establish a “Millennium.” The Catholic Church specifically condemns “millenarianism,” according to which Jesus will establish a throne in this world and reign here for a thousand years [CCC 676]. She teaches instead that Jesus already reigns in eternity (1 Cor. 15:24-27, Rev. 4 & 5) and that in this world His reign, established as a seed, is found already in the Church [CCC 668-669]. This is the 1000 years, which is the Hebrew way of indicating an indefinite

long time - in this case, the time between the first and second comings, the era of the Church, in other words the last days in the broadest sense. The Book of Revelation situates this era between the persecutions of the Roman antichrists of the first century and the final unleashing of evil at the end. Naturally, non-Catholics cannot accept that the Catholic Church represents Christ in this world, so they are forced to look for a personal earthly reign somewhere out in the future. The notion that Jesus will come, reign, and then depart, so that the devil can trick the world again, is incompatible with the incomprehensible dignity of the Lord and His love for His people. Jesus' Coming will be definitive, triumphant and ever-lasting, not temporal and limited. As for the Rapture, the meaning of 1 Thes 4:15-17 is that at the return of Christ (v.15) and the General Resurrection of the Dead (v.16), those who survive the persecution of the Antichrist will have no advantage in being resurrected over those who died before His Coming [CCC 1001]. All will go to meet Him and be with Him forever (v.17; cf. Rev 20:17-21:27). The Catechism provides us with a general order of events at the End [CCC 673-677]. Chronologically they are, 1. the full number of the Gentiles come into the Church the "full inclusion of the Jews in the Messiah's salvation, in the wake of the full number of the Gentiles" (#2 will follow quickly on, in the wake of, #1) a final trial of the Church "in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth." The supreme deception is that of the Antichrist. Christ's victory over this final unleashing of evil through a cosmic upheaval of this passing world and the Last Judgment. As Cardinal Ratzinger recently pointed out (in the context of the message of Fatima), we are not at the end of the world. In fact, the Second Coming (understood as the physical return of Christ) cannot occur until the full number of the Gentiles are converted, followed by "all Israel." Approved Catholic mystics (Venerable, Blessed and Saints, approved apparitions) throw considerable light on this order, by prophesying a minor apostasy and tribulation toward the end of the world, after which will occur the reunion of Christians. Only later will the entire world fall away from Christ (the great apostasy) and the personal Antichrist arise and the Tribulation of the End occur. Although this is not Catholic doctrine, arising as it does from private revelation, it conforms to what is occurring in our time, especially in light of Our Lady of Fatima's promise of an "Era of Peace." This "Triumph of the Immaculate Heart" (other saints have spoken of a social reign of Jesus Christ

when Jesus will reign in the hearts of men) would seem to occur prior to the rise of the Antichrist. The optimism of the Pope for the "New Evangelization" and a "Civilization of Love" in the Third Millennium of Christianity fits here, as well. This would place us, therefore, in the period just before the events spoken of in the *Catechism*, that is, on the verge of the evangelization of the entire world. Other interpretations are possible, but none seem to fit the facts as well, especially when approved mystics are studied, instead of merely alleged ones.

Is Anti-Christ Near?

Uprising after uprising in the Middle East; sexual and intellectual scandal in the Church; earthquakes in Chile and Haiti; tsunamis in Indonesia and Japan; and financial collapse in almost every market: given the startling increase in the frequency of global crises - political, religious, financial, natural - one is tempted to begin looking for Antichrist and despair for the future. The pervading anxiety and fear is exacerbated by non-Catholic proliferation of end times fiction and even some Catholics who erroneously promote the imminent arrival of the Antichrist and the Second Coming. This idea has distinct emotional appeal in our troubled times, since one way or another, it would all end soon, and possibly without our having to "do" anything.

Although the prospect relieves us of our sense of personal responsibility to become or remain involved in an immoral world which despises a Christian moral message, according to the historic Tradition of the Church and the direction of her leadership, it would be a tragic error for several reasons.

No Human Person Can be the Antichrist

First, the Antichrist is not here, or even just around the corner. Jesus told the disciples how they might positively identify the imminent arrival of Antichrist and the events surrounding the end times. The Church Fathers, as the most immediate successors of the original apostles, sorted out much of the eschatological uncertainty from what had been handed down to them both orally and in writing from the apostles, and left extensive writings on the subject.

We know to watch for particular signs, and although conditions have been chaotic enough in other eras in history that our ancestors also speculated they might be near the end of the world, at no time have all the signs outlined in Scripture and the Tradition of the Church yet been present.

Those signs were given in order to combat then-current teachings of the imminent end of the world, and/or, the opposite view that God had completely abandoned creation to destruction. Yet to happen are: the sweeping conversion to Christ, a world-wide religious apostasy, signs in the heavens, the arrival of Enoch and Elijah (Rom. 11; 2 Thess. 2; Rev. 8-12).

The Third Millennium

Second, our last two Holy Fathers have strategically and deliberately prepared the Church for the “New Evangelization” of the third millennium, pastorally, liturgically, and theologically. Would they do this if the end of the world were imminent?

Is not Pope Benedict XVI a brilliantly distinguished academic and theologian, conversant with both public and private prophecy? Was he not hand-picked by our beloved John Paul II and the College of Cardinals for his orthodoxy and holiness? Is he not also intimately familiar with the writings of the Fathers and approved private revelations (Our Lady of Fatima, for example) that help “flesh out” the eschatological skeleton given to us in the Deposit of Faith?

He and our faithful Bishops know that Scripture, Tradition, and approved private revelation agree: we are not experiencing the time of Antichrist, or even his imminent arrival.

Chastisement in Love

What we do seem to be experiencing, in my opinion, is a minor chastisement that may precede the major chastisement of Antichrist. Between the two chastisements is a prophesied age of great peace. We will suffer the sweeping consequences of decades of unprecedented flagrant sin against God and Church, humanity itself, and the earth.

We are told it will become so desperate that people will believe it is the end of the world. It is not. It is mercy from God upon our faithless, corrupt age, and nowhere near what the world will experience during Antichrist. Chastisement proceeds from a loving Heavenly Father attempting to draw men to Himself in repentance. We must repent! and repentance begins in the house of God (1 Pet. 4:17). We are told we can avoid the chastisement, even as it has already begun, through repentance.

A Great Hope

We can avert it for ourselves and our children! “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Ch 7:14). Our Lady of Fatima begs us to pray, pray earnestly for sinners (ourselves!) and sacrifice for the salvation of souls.

We can repent in this way, and perhaps a period of unprecedented Catholic peace will reign over the whole earth, both in government and in the Church, in what may seem like a renaissance of the Holy Roman Empire.

Or we can continue our current trajectory and experience the dramatic frequency and worsening of the crises: multiple simultaneous civil and national wars in Europe, the radical rise and spread of militant fundamentalism, great famines and disease plagues due to war and other sin and near-complete financial collapse, widespread death and destruction, several days of total darkness, sacks of Catholic churches and the murder of a pope - at which time there will arise a Great King, Great Pope and a great Church Council that will usher in the age of civil and sacred peace under the protection and direction of God.

All this precedes the major chastisement and Antichrist.

There will not be a literal 1000 year reign of Christ with His Saints on the earth. This is called millennialism, and it is a heresy condemned by the Church on the basis that it denies the Second Coming as the end of the ages and awaits another period of definitive salvation after that.

There will not be a “Rapture” in which the church is assumed *en masse* into heaven to escape chastisement. This teaching denies that the Church must follow Jesus in taking up her cross and being crucified with Christ, in order to also be resurrected.

While “no man knows the day or hour,” Jesus left us some certain knowledge of the future, both in the Deposit of Faith, and also through the spiritual charisma of prophecy offered for the edification of the Church through great numbers of Saints, Venerable, Popes, and Blessed. When such prophecies are duly investigated and approved by the Church they provide heroic hope for the people, and fulfill the

deep-seated, created physiological need in man to anticipate, work for, and hope in the future.

We must be prepared to offer “an explanation for the hope that is within us” when waves of people search for God in the chaos. We must be able to offer stability, sanity, hope, truth.

It is not the end. Be not afraid! Now is the time for the New Evangelization. We are invited to repent, pray, and work for the salvation of souls, help stave off the worst of the chastisement, and work to usher in the coming peace. Our Holy Father leads the way into the third millennium. Come Holy Spirit, come. Renew the face of the earth!

Are we living in the “last days”?

Are we, as many Christians believe living in the last days? In fact, the “last days” refers not only to the “end of time,” but to the last two thousand years. Scripture teaches that the Incarnation ushered in “the last days.” According to Hebrews 1:1-2, “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.”

At Pentecost, Peter preached that “the last days” had arrived, in fulfillment of the words of the prophet Joel: “For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall be in the last days,’ God says, that I will pour forth my spirit on all mankind...” (Acts 2:15-17; cf. Joel 2:28-32).

“The last days” or “the end times,” properly understood, refers to the time of the New Covenant, the gathering together of God’s people in the Church, which is “on earth, the seed and the beginning of the kingdom” (CCC 567, 669; Lumen Gentium). The Holy Spirit, the “soul of the Church,” has been and is being poured out, because of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ:

The Holy Spirit is at work with the Father and the Son from the beginning to the completion of the plan for our salvation. But in these “end times,” ushered in by the Son’s redeeming Incarnation, the Spirit is revealed and given, recognized and welcomed as a person. Now can this divine plan, accomplished in Christ, the firstborn and head of the new creation, be embodied in mankind by the outpouring of the

Spirit: as the Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting (CCC 686).

This understanding of the “last days” differs from that of those who believe in the Rapture. Catholics agree that there will definitely be an “end of time” and that history as we know it will one day be complete. But we also recognize that each of us will face the end of our time on earth, and that this should, in many ways, concern us more than the end of the world (see CCC 1007).

Church authority and Bible prophecy

How should we understand the Bible’s teaching on the “last days”? For Catholics, the Bible is truly the Word of God, and when the Word of God says that the Church is the Body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:22-33) and the “pillar and support of truth” (1 Timothy 3:15), it points to a key principle: the task of authentically interpreting Scripture belongs to the Church. And the Church has a certain structure, based on Christ’s own choosing of apostles and granting them authority: “For, of course, all that has been said about the manner of interpreting Scripture is ultimately subject to the judgment of the Church which exercises the divinely conferred commission and ministry of watching over and interpreting the Word of God (CCC 119).

This does not mean that the Catholic Church has definitively interpreted every single passage of Scripture or that individual Catholics cannot study Scripture for themselves. On the contrary, the Church has definitively interpreted less than a dozen passages, while encouraging Catholics to read the Bible in light of the “living Tradition of the whole Church” (CCC 113).

The issue of authority in interpreting Scripture is important because so much of what passes for “Biblical prophecy” today is really pseudo-Biblical guesswork, noteworthy for its use of sloppy methods, hazy conjecture, and overt sensationalism. Many “prophecy teachers,” especially in the last three decades, have taken passages of Scripture and applied them to current events and people with little or no regard for historical context or original meaning of the texts. This has resulted, for example, in the Antichrist being identified as the Pope, Hitler, Gorbachev, Ronald Reagan, Saddam Hussein, and other, lesser-known people.

The puzzling and sometimes shocking images of Revelation are interpreted in clever, bizarre, and often laughable ways. The mark of

the beast (Rev. 13:16-18) is seen in bar codes, credit cards, computer chips and laser beams. Most Catholics who encounter such misinterpretations usually scratch their heads and steer clear of the biblical books that deal with apocalyptic themes, Daniel and Revelation. They are content to let their non-Catholic friends battle over these confusing matters.

This is unfortunate for a couple of reasons. First, Catholics should study all of Scripture, including difficult books such as Daniel and Revelation, because God gave it to the Church for that purpose. Second, the Catholic Church offers two thousand years of reflection and study of Scripture, resulting in a rich, balanced, and nuanced understanding of the whole Bible. If the Catholic Church has the authority that Catholics believe she possesses, then they need to take seriously her understanding of Scripture. At the very least, doing so will help them avoid the serious misunderstandings of some other Christians and will equip Catholics to discuss these misunderstandings with them.

Defining Some Terms

The Left Behind books are based on a theological system known as dispensationalism. This term refers to the belief that God works in history through a series of different epochs, or dispensations. In each of these periods, God tests man in a certain way. Man fails the test, and then God judges man. On this view, man now lives during the “Church Age,” which is so full of apostasy and error that only a remnant of “true believers” remains.

According to dispensationalism, God is pursuing two purposes in history: one involving an earthly people (Israel) and the other, a heavenly people (the Church). Dispensationalists believe that when Jesus Christ came, He offered the earthly people, Israel, a physical, earthly kingdom, but that they rejected Him as their Messiah. Consequently, Jesus formed a heavenly people, the Church, who are not meant to reign here on earth, but will reign with Him in heaven.

However, God will still fulfill the many Old Testament promises to Israel, His earthly people, because, dispensationalists insist, those promises were unconditional. When Christ founded the Church, all of those promises were “put on hold” until the heavenly people were removed from the earth in the Rapture. Since Israel has now been re-established as a nation, most dispensationalists believe that the removal of the Church via the Rapture can occur at any moment.

The Rapture will be a secret “snatching up” of all true believers in Christ to heaven; it will be immediately followed according to most dispensationalists by seven years of Tribulation and the reign of the Antichrist. At the end of the Tribulation, Christ will come again to establish an earthly, thousand-year reign, based in Jerusalem, where a new temple (complete with animal sacrifices) will exist.

The dispensationalist view of the end times was developed in the 1830s by an ex-Anglican priest named John Nelson Darby, who condemned most of Christendom as apostate and worldly. Dispensationalism subsequently spread throughout the U.S., in the early 1900s, as a result of the popular Scofield Reference Bible, which incorporated dispensationalist ideas into its footnotes. In the 1970s, the doctrine was popularized through the best-selling books such as *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey.

Some Catholics might dismiss these unusual beliefs as unimportant. But that would be a mistake for a number of reasons. For one thing, despite waning popularity in scholarly theological circles, dispensationalism is still a widespread belief system among Fundamentalists and many Evangelicals, even many of those who are unfamiliar with the term.

Another reason is that the vast majority of dispensationalists are either actively opposed to, or are very suspicious of, the Catholic Church. Many of them believe the Catholic Church will play a central role in a coming one world apostate religion. In a sense, this shouldn't surprise anyone, since the core of dispensationalism is incompatible with Catholic doctrine, even though they are compatible on some secondary issues.

Moreover, many Catholics who leave the Church are drawn towards groups that teach dispensationalism in some form or another. The belief in the Rapture is often what attracts these straying Catholics.

Finally, through Fundamentalist and conservative Evangelical political activity, dispensationalist ideas and interests have had a significant influence on U.S. foreign policy towards Israel and the Middle East, and on how many of these Christians view the U.S. Many Fundamentalist and Evangelical Christians are staunch allies of Israel for theological, rather than political reasons.

Two People of God, or Just One?

Eschatology, the study of the last things, flows directly from ecclesiology, the doctrine of the Church. This explains some of the significant differences between what Catholics and many Fundamentalists believe about the end of time. While Tim Lahaye, Hal Lindsey, and other dispensationalists teach that God has two people, the Church and Israel, the Catholic Church asserts that God has always had only one people, or family, throughout history. According to Catechism, “This ‘family of God’ is gradually formed and takes shape during the stages of human history, in keeping with the Father’s plan. In fact, ‘already present in figure at the beginning of the world, this Church was prepared in marvelous fashion in the history of the people of Israel... Established in this last age of the world and made manifest in the outpouring of the Spirit, it will be brought to glorious completion at the end of time’” (CCC 759).

Therefore, the Catholic Church has always understood herself as being the New Israel (Gal. 6:16; Eph. 2:11-12) and the new People of God (1 Pet. 2:9-10), the recipients of the New Covenant given through Christ (Heb. 8:8-13). The Old Covenant was not rejected by Christ, but fulfilled and taken up into the New Covenant; it concluded with the New Covenant and is included in it. This difference between dispensationalism and Catholic doctrine is the basis for other disagreements, including those involving the Rapture and the nature of the millennium.

(Interestingly enough, even Luther and Calvin understood the Church to be the true heir of Israel. They also would have rejected dispensationalism, which only emerged as a method of biblical interpretation in the last two hundred years or so.)

Catholic doctrine also teaches that the Church is intimately related to the Kingdom of God. The Church is “ultimately one, holy, catholic, and apostolic in her deepest and ultimate identity, because it is in her that ‘the Kingdom of heaven,’ the ‘Reign of God,’ already exists and will be fulfilled at the end of time” (CCC 865). The Kingdom is not yet complete, but began with the Incarnation and will be fully realized at the end of time: “The kingdom of heaven was inaugurated on earth by Christ. ‘This kingdom shone out before men in the word, in the works and in the presence of Christ.’ The Church is the seed and beginning of this kingdom. Its keys are entrusted to Peter” (CCC 567). In its fullness, the Kingdom is not an earthly reign, but the final

triumph of Christ over the power of sin and Satan, culminating in an eternity spent in communion with the Triune God: “The kingdom has come in the person of Christ and grows mysteriously in the hearts of those incorporated into him, until its full eschatological manifestation” (CCC 865).

In contrast, dispensationalists believe that the Kingdom will be a thousand-year, earthly reign of Christ, known as the Millennium (from the Latin word for “thousand years”). Belief in a literal thousand-year earthly reign is called millenarianism or millennialism. It has been explicitly rejected by the Catholic Church. In 1944, the Holy Office warned against “... the system of mitigated Millenarianism, which teaches ... that Christ the Lord before the final judgment, whether or not preceded by the resurrection of the many just, will come visibly to rule over this world... The system of mitigated Millenarianism cannot be taught safely” (CCC 676).

It is true that some of the early Church Fathers before the fourth century believed in an earthly, millennial reign of Christ. This belief was largely formed in reaction to Gnostics, who taught that Christ and His Kingdom had nothing to do with the physical world since, the Gnostics claimed, it was inherently evil. However, St. Augustine, writing in the late 300s and early 400s, interpreted the reference to a “thousand years” in Revelation 20 as a metaphor for the age of the Church. This would become the accepted belief of the Church, going unchallenged for many centuries. Yet the Catholic Church has never made a formal statement about what the Millennium is, although Augustine’s view has usually been accepted by Catholic theologians.

In addition, none of the Church Fathers believed in a secret removal of true believers prior to the Tribulation. On the contrary, they taught that the Church would undergo a period of intense tribulation prior to the Second Coming. The idea of a “secret” Rapture, developed by John Nelson Darby in the 1830s, would have been both foreign and repulsive to the early Christians, as it was bothersome to many of Darby’s Protestant allies.

The rapture and the second coming

The Church tacitly rejects the “secret” Rapture based on her doctrine of the Church. It has always been Catholic teaching, of course, that Jesus Christ will physically and visibly return to earth. As we say in the Creed each week at Eucharistic Liturgy, “He will

come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end” (cf. CCC 681-682).

Yet from the Catholic perspective, the term rapture is problematic. On one hand, it can refer to being taken to be with Christ (1 Thess. 4:17; see CCC 1025). In fact, the term rapture comes from Jerome’s Latin translation of 1 Thes 4:17, meaning “to be caught up.” Catholics believe this will happen at the Second Coming, when our bodies are resurrected (see CCC 989-990).

On the other hand, the term “Rapture” is, in a sense, owned and copyrighted by dispensationalists. In popular discourse, it almost always refers to a secret snatching away of “true believers,” prior to the Tribulation, and distinct from the Second Coming. Since the term Rapture is rarely used in Catholic circles, it is easy to see how confusion among Catholics might arise. But in any case the Rapture, as dispensationalists use the term, is contrary to Catholic belief.

Israel, Tribulation, and Antichrist

Another issue is the fate of Israel. What will happen to Israel in the end? According to the Catechism, “The glorious Messiah’s coming is suspended at every moment of history until His recognition by ‘all Israel’, for ‘a hardening has come upon part of Israel’ in their ‘unbelief’ toward Jesus” (CCC 674). The Church, reflecting upon Romans 9-11, believes that Israel will somehow come to recognize Christ for who He is. Precisely how this will occur the Church has not said.

The Church also says relatively little about the time of trial or tribulation in the final days. The Church will go through the great trial, but we do not know how long it will last. The Catechism declares, “Before Christ’s Second Coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth will unveil the ‘mystery of iniquity’ in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth” (CCC 675; also see CCC 2642).

This time of trial will be at the start of the “last days” in the sense of the end of history: “According to the Lord, the present time is the time of the Spirit and of witness, but also a time still marked by ‘distress’ and the time of evil which does not spare the Church and ushers in the struggles of the last days. It is a time of waiting and watching” (CCC 672).

Along with this belief in a time of future testing and trial, the Church teaches that there have been many Antichrists, but there will also be the Antichrist who leads a worldwide system of anti-Christian belief: ... The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh... The Antichrist’s deception already begins to take shape in the world every time the claim is made to realize within history that messianic hope which can only be realized beyond history through the [end times] judgment... (CCC 675, 676)

This last sentence applies to any sort of utopian scheme that ignores man’s fallen nature, the reality of sin, and man’s need for salvation through Christ.

Interpreting the book of Revelation

Interpretations of the book of Revelation are, undoubtedly, among the most hotly debated aspects of the Bible. The Catholic Church has not officially interpreted the difficult passages in Revelation. But various Catholic scholars have commented on them, and have debated the various interpretations.

There are four main approaches to the book of Revelation: futurist, preterist, historicist and idealist. Futurists believe that most or all of the book of Revelation has yet to be fulfilled; preterists say that most or all of it was fulfilled in the first century; historicists claim that events described in Revelation have been transpiring for the last two thousand years; and idealists believe that the book of Revelation is allegorical and has little or nothing to do with historical events.

The Catholic Church allows a wide range of interpretive possibilities, including forms of futurism, preterism, historicism and idealism. For example, a Catholic may believe the book of Revelation describes the conflict of good and evil as experienced by individual Christians or the Church (idealism), and makes prophetic utterances about events still to occur (futurism), and also refers to events that have already occurred, either in the early Church or later Church history (preterism and historicism). Catholic flexibility here is based on the fact that Scripture, inspired by God, often has different, yet complementary, meanings.

From early times, the Church, following the examples of Christ and the Apostles (i.e., Lk 24:25-27; 1 Cor 10:1-4), understood Scripture to have different senses, a literal and a spiritual sense (CCC 115). As the Catechism explains, the spiritual sense is always rooted in the

Eschatology

literal sense: “The literal sense is the meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture and discovered by exegesis, following the rules of sound interpretation: ‘All other senses of Sacred Scripture are based on the literal’” (CCC 116).

A common misconception is that Catholics interpret Scripture especially the book of Revelation “symbolically,” while Evangelicals interpret it “literally.” This has often been used to explain why the Catholic Church rejects an earthly, thousand-year reign of Christ. Yet few “literalists” bother to interpret literally other images in Revelation, such as the Beast, the dragon, the locusts, and the four horsemen.

A Last Word on the Last Days

In conclusion, it can be seen that the Catholic Church says relatively little about future events leading up to Christ’s Second Coming. Many of her teachings are rejections (either implicit or explicit), not affirmations, of particular beliefs such as the dispensational dichotomy between the Church and Israel, the “secret” Rapture, and the earthly millennial kingdom. What she does teach is quite clear, as well as succinct: there will be a Second Coming, a time of trial which the Church must endure, an Antichrist, a conversion of Israel to Christ, a definitive judgment of all people, and the fulfillment of the Kingdom that has already begun in the Church. Within those parameters, Catholics may freely roam, search the Scriptures, and seek to better understand the Word of God.

Chapter 7

Purgatory

Purgatory (Lat., “purgare”, to make clean, to purify) in accordance with Catholic teaching is a place or condition of temporal punishment for those who, departing this life in God’s grace, are, not entirely free from venial faults, or have not fully paid the satisfaction due to their transgressions. The faith of the Church concerning purgatory is clearly expressed in the Decree of Union drawn up by the Council of Florence (Mansi, t. XXXI, col. 1031), and in the decree of the Council of Trent which (Sess. XXV) defined: “Whereas the Catholic Church, instructed by the Holy Ghost, has from the Sacred Scriptures and the ancient tradition of the Fathers taught in Councils and very recently in this Ecumenical synod (Sess. VI, cap. XXX; Sess. XXII cap.ii, iii) that there is a purgatory, and that the souls therein are helped by the suffrages of the faithful, but principally by the acceptable Sacrifice of the Altar; the Holy Synod enjoins on the Bishops that they diligently endeavor to have the sound doctrine of the Fathers in Councils regarding purgatory everywhere taught and preached, held and believed by the faithful” (Denzinger, “Enchiridion”,

983). Further than this the definitions of the Church do not go, but the tradition of the Fathers and the School men must be consulted to explain the teachings of the councils, and to make clear the belief and the practices of the faithful.

Catechism of the Catholic Church on Purgatory

On final purification and purgatory the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches as follows: All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.

The Church gives the name *Purgatory* to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned. The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent. The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire: As for certain lesser faults, we must believe that, before the Final Judgment, there is a purifying fire. He who is truth says that whoever utters blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will be pardoned neither in this age nor in the age to come. From this sentence we understand that certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come.

This teaching is also based on the practice of prayer for the dead, already mentioned in Sacred Scripture: "Therefore [Judas Maccabeus] made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin." From the beginning the Church has honored the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them, above all the Eucharistic sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God. The Church also commends almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance undertaken on behalf of the dead: Let us help and commemorate them. If Job's sons were purified by their father's sacrifice, why would we doubt that our offerings for the dead bring them some consolation? Let us not hesitate to help those who have died and to offer our prayers for them.

Ten truths about purgatory

Does purgatory still exist? Even though we don't hear about it as much as in earlier times, Catholics do believe in purgatory. It is a matter of faith, supported by the Bible and tradition, clarified at the Council of Florence in 1439 and the Council of Trent (1545-1563)

and explained in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Here is what we know about purgatory.

1. Purgatory exists: The Catechism of the Catholic Church states there are three states of the church, those who are living on earth, those who are in purgatory and those who are in heaven with God.
2. It is not a second chance: The soul is already saved. Purgatory is a place to pay off debts for sins that were forgiven but for which sufficient penance had not been done on earth.
3. It is not an actual place: Blessed John Paul II said in an Aug. 4, 1999 general audience that purgatory was a state of being: "The term does not indicate a place, but a condition of existence." Pope Benedict XVI said in a Jan. 12, 2011 general audience, "This is purgatory, an interior fire."
4. Purgatory is not punishment but God's mercy: "Few people can say they are prepared to stand before God," says Susan Tassone, author of "Prayers, Promises, and Devotions for the Holy Souls in Purgatory" (Our Sunday Visitor, 2012). "If we didn't have purgatory there would be very few people in heaven, because it would be heaven or hell. It is his mercy that allows us to prepare to be with him in heaven."
5. Our prayers for the souls in purgatory help them achieve heaven: "The doctrine of purgatory recalls how radically we take love of neighbor," says Sulpician Father Gladstone Stevens, vice rector and dean of men at St. Patrick's Seminary & University, Menlo Park. "The obligation to pray for each other does not cease when biological life ends. God wants us to always pray for each other, work for each other's redemption."
6. The souls in purgatory can intercede for those on earth but cannot pray for themselves: The Catechism of the Catholic Church (958) states: "... the church in its pilgrim members, from the very earliest days of the Christian religion, has honored with great respect the memory of the dead; ... Our prayer for them is capable not only of helping them, but also of making their intercession for us effective."
7. God does not send souls to purgatory - each soul sends itself to purgatory: Once a soul sees itself with the light of God, it realizes it cannot stay in his presence until all imperfections are wiped away. "The soul chooses," Tassone says.
8. There is no fire in purgatory: But each soul is aflame with the pain of being separated from God and with the desire to be purified so it

can be in the beatific vision. Each soul also feels joy knowing it will one day be with God, Father Stevens and Tassone say.

9. There is a special day and month to pray for the souls in purgatory: Nov. 2 or All Souls' Day is the day set aside and November is the month in the liturgical calendar to pray especially for all the souls who are in purgatory. Nov. 2 is called "The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed," but the church asks us to pray always for each other, including for the souls in purgatory.
10. Prayers for souls in purgatory always count: Pope Benedict says in his encyclical "Spe Salve" ("On Christian Hope"), regarding the souls of the dead, "... in the communion of souls simple terrestrial time is superseded. It is never too late to touch the heart of another, nor is it ever in vain."

Temporal punishment

That temporal punishment is due to sin, even after the sin itself has been pardoned by God, is clearly the teaching of Scripture. God indeed brought man out of his first disobedience and gave him power to govern all things (Wisdom 10:2), but still condemned him "to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow" until he returned unto dust. God forgave the incredulity of Moses and Aaron, but in punishment kept them from the "land of promise" (Numbers 20:12). The Lord took away the sin of David, but the life of the child was forfeited because David had made God's enemies blaspheme His Holy Name (2 Samuel 12:13-14). In the New Testament as well as in the Old, almsgiving and fasting, and in general penitential acts are the real fruits of repentance (Matthew 3:8; Luke 17:3; 3:3). The whole penitential system of the Church testifies that the voluntary assumption of penitential works has always been part of true repentance and the Council of Trent (Sess. XIV, can. xi) reminds the faithful that God does not always remit the whole punishment due to sin together with the guilt. God requires satisfaction, and will punish sin, and this doctrine involves as its necessary consequence a belief that the sinner failing to do penance in this life may be punished in another world, and so not be cast off eternally from God.

Venial sins

All sins are not equal before God, nor dare anyone assert that the daily faults of human frailty will be punished with the same severity that is meted out to serious violation of God's law. On the other hand whosoever comes into God's presence must be perfectly pure for in

the strictest sense His "eyes are too pure, to behold evil" (Habakkuk 1:13). For unrepeatable venial faults for the payment of temporal punishment due to sin at time of death, the Church has always taught the doctrine of purgatory.

So deep was this belief ingrained in our common humanity that it was accepted by the Jews, and in at least a shadowy way by the pagans, long before the coming of Christianity. ("Aeneid," VI, 735 sq.; Sophocles, "Antigone," 450 sq.).

Errors

Epiphanius (Haer., lxxv, P.G., XLII, col. 513) complains that Aërius (fourth century) taught that prayers for the dead were of no avail. In the Middle Ages, the doctrine of purgatory was rejected by the Albigenses, Waldenses, and Hussites. St. Bernard (Serm. lxxvi in Cantic., P.L. CLXXXIII, col. 1098) states that the so-called "Apostolici" denied purgatory and the utility of prayers for the departed. Much discussion has arisen over the position of the Greeks on the question of purgatory. It would seem that the great difference of opinion was not concerning the existence of purgatory but concerning the nature of purgatorial fire; still St. Thomas proves the existence of purgatory in his dissertation against the errors of the Greeks, and the Council of Florence also thought necessary to affirm the belief of the Church on the subject (Bellarmine, "De Purgatorio," lib. I, cap. i). The modern Orthodox Church denies purgatory, but is rather inconsistent in its way of putting forth its belief.

At the beginning of the Reformation there was some hesitation especially on Luther's part (Leipzig Disputation) as to whether the doctrine should be retained, but as the breach widened, the denial of purgatory by the Reformers became universal, and Calvin termed the Catholic position "exitiale commentum quod crucem Christi evacuat... quod fidem nostram labefacit et evertit" (Institutiones, lib. III, cap. v, 6). Modern Protestants, while they avoid the name *purgatory*, frequently teach the doctrine of "the middle state," and Martensen ("Christian Dogmatics," Edinburgh, 1890, p. 457) writes: "As no soul leaves this present existence in a fully complete and prepared state, we must suppose that there is an intermediate state, a realm of progressive development, in which souls are prepared for the final judgment" (Farrar, "Mercy and Judgment," London, 1881, cap. iii).

Proofs

The Catholic doctrine of purgatory supposes the fact that some die with smaller faults for which there was no true repentance, and also the fact that the temporal penalty due to sin is at times not wholly paid in this life. The proofs for the Catholic position, both in Scripture and in Tradition, are bound up also with the practice of praying for the dead. For why pray for the dead, if there be no belief in the power of prayer to afford solace to those who as yet are excluded from the sight of God? So true is this position that prayers for the dead and the existence of a place of purgation are mentioned in conjunction in the oldest passages of the Fathers, who allege reasons for succoring departed souls. Those who have opposed the doctrine of purgatory have confessed that prayers for the dead would be an unanswerable argument if the modern doctrine of a "particular judgment" had been received in the early ages. But one has only to read the testimonies hereinafter alleged to feel sure that the Fathers speak, in the same breath, of oblations for the dead and a place of purgation; and one has only to consult the evidence found in the catacombs to feel equally sure that the Christian faith there expressed embraced clearly a belief in judgment immediately after death. Wilpert ("Roma Sotteranea," I, 441) thus concludes chapter 21, "Che tale esaudimento", etc.: Intercession has been made for the soul of the dear one departed and God has heard the prayer, and the soul has passed into a place of light and refreshment." "Surely," Wilpert adds, "such intercession would have no place were there question not of the particular, but of the final judgment.

Some stress too has been laid upon the objection that the ancient Christians had no clear conception of purgatory, and that they thought that the souls departed remained in uncertainty of salvation to the last day; and consequently they prayed that those who had gone before might in the final judgment escape even the everlasting torments of hell. The earliest Christian traditions are clear as to the particular judgment, and clearer still concerning a sharp distinction between purgatory and hell. The passages alleged as referring to relief from hell cannot offset the evidence given below (Bella mine, "De Purgatorio," lib. II, cap. v). Concerning the famous case of Trajan, which vexed the Doctors of the Middle Ages, see Bellarmine, loc. cit., cap. VIII.

Old Testament

The tradition of the Jews is put forth with precision and clearness in 2 Maccabees. Judas, the commander of the forces of Israel, making a gathering... sent twelve thousand drachmas of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection (For if he had not hoped that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead). And because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness, had great grace laid up for them. It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins (2 Maccabees 12:43-46).

At the time of the Maccabees the leaders of the people of God had no hesitation in asserting the efficacy of prayers offered for the dead, in order that those who had departed this life might find pardon for their sins and the hope of eternal resurrection.

New Testament

There are several passages in the New Testament that point to a process of purification after death. Thus, Jesus Christ declares (Matthew 12:32): "And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come." According to St. Isidore of Seville (Deord. creatur., c. xiv, n. 6) these words prove that in the next life "some sins will be forgiven and purged away by a certain purifying fire." St. Augustine also argues "that some sinners are not forgiven either in this world or in the next would not be truly said unless there were other [sinners] who, though not forgiven in this world, are forgiven in the world to come" (*City of God* XXI.24). The same interpretation is given by Gregory the Great (Dial., IV, xxxix); St. Bede (commentary on this text); St. Bernard (Sermo lxvi in Cantic., n. 11) and other eminent theological writers.

A further argument is supplied by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15: "For other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid; which is Christ Jesus. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay stubble: Every man's work shall be manifest; for the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive

a reward. If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire."

While this passage presents considerable difficulty, it is regarded by many of the Fathers and theologians as evidence for the existence of an intermediate state in which the dross of lighter transgressions will be burnt away, and the soul thus purified will be saved. This, according to Bellarmine (*De Purg.*, I, 5), is the interpretation commonly given by the Fathers and theologians; and he cites to this effect:

- ◆ St. Ambrose (commentary on the text, and *Sermo xx* in *Ps. cxvii*),
- ◆ St. Jerome, (*Comm. in Amos*, c. iv),
- ◆ St. Augustine (*Enarration on Psalm 37*),
- ◆ St. Gregory (*Dial.*, IV, xxxix), and
- ◆ Origen (*Hom. vi* in *Exod.*).

See also St. Thomas, "Contra Gentes," IV, 91. For a discussion of the exegetical problem, see Atzberger, "Die christliche Eschatologie", p. 275.

Tradition

This doctrine that many who have died are still in a place of purification and that prayers avail to help the dead is part of the very earliest Christian tradition. Tertullian "De corona militis" mentions prayers for the dead as an Apostolic ordinance, and in "De Monogamia" (chapter 10) he advises a widow "to pray for the soul of her husband, begging repose for him and participation in the first resurrection"; he commands her also "to make oblations for him on the anniversary of his demise," and charges her with infidelity if she neglect to succor his soul. This settled custom of the Church is clear from St. Cyprian, who (*P.L.* IV, col. 399) forbade the customary prayers for one who had violated the ecclesiastical law. "Our predecessors prudently advised that no brother, departing this life, should nominate any churchman as his executor; and should he do it, that no oblation should be made for him, nor sacrifice offered for his repose." Long before Cyprian, Clement of Alexandria had puzzled over the question of the state or condition of the man who, reconciled to God on his death-bed, had no time for the fulfillment of penance due his transgression. His answer is: "the believer through discipline divests himself of his passions and passes to the mansion which is better than the former one, passes to the greatest torment, taking with him the characteristic of repentance for the faults he may have committed after baptism. He is tortured then still more, not yet attaining what he sees others have acquired. The greatest torments are assigned to the believer, for God's righteousness is good, and

His goodness righteous, and though these punishments cease in the course of the expiation and purification of each one, "yet" etc. (*P.G.* IX, col. 332).

In Origen the doctrine of purgatory is very clear. If a man departs this life with lighter faults, he is condemned to fire which burns away the lighter materials, and prepares the soul for the kingdom of God, where nothing defiled may enter. "For if on the foundation of Christ you have built not only gold and silver and precious stones (1 Corinthians 3); but also wood and hay and stubble, what do you expect when the soul shall be separated from the body? Would you enter into heaven with your wood and hay and stubble and thus defile the kingdom of God; or on account of these hindrances would you remain without and receive no reward for your gold and silver and precious stones? Neither is this just. It remains then that you be committed to the fire which will burn the light materials; for our God to those who can comprehend heavenly things is called a cleansing fire. But this fire consumes not the creature, but what the creature has himself built, wood and hay and stubble. It is manifest that the fire destroys the wood of our transgressions and then returns to us the reward of our great works." (*P.G.*, XIII, col. 445, 448).

The Apostolic practice of praying for the dead which passed into the liturgy of the Church, is as clear in the fourth century as it is in the twentieth. St. Cyril of Jerusalem (*Mystagogical Catechesis* V.9) describing the liturgy, writes: "Then we pray for the Holy Fathers and Bishops that are dead; and in short for all those who have departed this life in our communion; believing that the souls of those for whom prayers are offered receive very great relief, while this holy and tremendous victim lies upon the altar." St. Gregory of Nyssa (*P.G.*, XLVI, col. 524, 525) states that man's weaknesses are purged in this life by prayer and wisdom, or are expiated in the next by a cleansing fire. "When he has quitted his body and the difference between virtue and vice is known he cannot approach God till the purging fire shall have cleansed the stains with which his soul was infested. That same fire in others will cancel the corruption of matter, and the propensity to evil." About the same time the Apostolic Constitution gives us the formularies used in succoring the dead. "Let us pray for our brethren who sleep in Christ, that God who in his love for men has received the soul of the departed one, may forgive him every fault, and in mercy and clemency receive him into the bosom of Abraham, with those who in this life have pleased God" (*P.G.* I, col. 1144). Nor can we pass over the use of the diptychs where the names of the dead

were inscribed; and this remembrance by name in the Sacred Mysteries- (a practice that was from the Apostles) was considered by Chrysostom as the best way of relieving the dead (*Homily 41 on First Corinthians*, no. 8).

The teaching of the Fathers, and the formularies used in the Liturgy of the Church, found expression in the early Christian monuments, particularly those contained in the catacombs. On the tombs of the faithful were inscribed words of hope, words of petition for peace and for rest; and as the anniversaries came round the faithful gathered at the graves of the departed to make intercession for those who had gone before. At the bottom this is nothing else than the faith expressed by the Council of Trent (Sess. XXV, "De Purgatorio"), and to this faith the inscriptions in the catacombs are surely witnesses.

In the fourth century in the West, Ambrose insists in his commentary on St. Paul (1 Corinthians 3) on the existence of purgatory, and in his masterly funeral oration (*De obitu Theodosii*), thus prays for the soul of the departed: "Give, O Lord, rest to Thy servant Theodosius, that rest Thou hast prepared for Thy saints. ... I loved him, therefore will I follow him to the land of the living; I will not leave him till by my prayers and lamentations he shall be admitted unto the holy mount of the Lord, to which his deserts call him" (P.L., XVI, col. 1397). St. Augustine is clearer even than his master. He describes two conditions of men; "some there are who have departed this life, not so bad as to be deemed unworthy of mercy, nor so good as to be entitled to immediate happiness" etc., and in the resurrection he says there will be some who "have gone through these pains, to which the spirits of the dead are liable" (*City of God* XXI.24). Thus at the close of the fourth century:

- ◆ not only were prayers for the dead found in all the Liturgies, but the Fathers asserted that such practice was from the Apostles themselves;
- ◆ those who were helped by the prayers of the faithful and by the celebration of the Holy Mysteries were in a place of purgation;
- ◆ from which when purified they "were admitted unto the Holy Mount of the Lord".

So clear is this patristic Tradition that those who do not believe in purgatory have been unable to bring any serious difficulties from the writings of the Fathers. The passages cited to the contrary either do

not touch the question at all, or are so lacking in clearness that they cannot offset the perfectly open expression of the doctrines found in the very Fathers who are quoted as holding contrary opinions (Bellarmine "De Purg.", lib. I, cap. xiii).

Duration and nature

The very reasons assigned for the existence of purgatory make for its passing character. We pray, we offer sacrifice for souls therein detained that "God in mercy may forgive every fault and receive them into the bosom of Abraham" (*Apostolic Constitutions*); and Augustine (*City of God* XXI.13, 16) declares that the punishment of purgatory is temporary and will cease, at least with the Last Judgment. "But temporary punishments are suffered by some in this life only, by others after death, by others both now and then; but all of them before that last and strictest judgment."

Nature of punishment

It is clear from the Liturgies and the Fathers above cited that the souls for whose peace sacrifice was offered were shut out for the time being from the sight of God. They were "not so good as to be entitled to eternal happiness". Still, for them "death is the termination not of nature but of sin" (Ambrose, "De obitu Theodos."); and this inability to sin makes them secure of final happiness. This is the Catholic position proclaimed by Leo X in the Bull "Exurge Domine" which condemned the errors of Luther.

Are the souls detained in purgatory conscious that their happiness is but deferred for a time, or may they still be in doubt concerning their ultimate salvation? The ancient Liturgies and the inscriptions of the catacombs speak of a "sleep of peace", which would be impossible if there was any doubt of ultimate salvation. Some of the Doctors of the Middle Ages thought uncertainty of salvation one of the severe punishments of purgatory. (Bellarmine, "De Purgat." lib. II, cap. iv); but this opinion finds no general credit among the theologians of the medieval period, nor is it possible in the light of the belief in the particular judgment. St. Bonaventure gives as the reason for this elimination of fear and of uncertainty the intimate conviction that they can no longer sin (lib. IV, dist. xx, p.1, a.1 q. iv): "Est evacuatio timoris propter confirmationem liberi arbitrii, qua deinceps scit se peccare non posse" (Fear is cast out because of the strengthening of the will by which the soul knows it can no longer sin), and St. Thomas (dist. xxi, q. i, a.1) says: "nisi scirent se esse liberandas suffragia non peterent"

(unless they knew that they are to be delivered, they would not ask for prayers).

Merit

In the Bull “Exurge Domine” Leo X condemns the proposition (n. 38) “Nec probatum est ullis aut rationibus aut scripturis ipsas esse extra statum merendi aut augendae caritatis” (There is no proof from reason or Scripture that they [the souls in purgatory] cannot merit or increase in charity). For them “the night has come in which no man can labour”, and Christian tradition has always considered that only in this life can man work unto the profit of his own soul. The Doctors of the Middle Ages while agreeing that this life is the time for merit and increase of grace, still some with St. Thomas seemed to question whether or not there might be some non-essential reward which the souls in purgatory might merit (IV, dist. xxi, q. i, a. 3). Bellarmine believes that in this matter St. Thomas changed his opinion and refers to a statement of St. Thomas (“De Malo”, q. vii, a. 11). Whatever may be the mind of the Angelic Doctor, theologians agree that no merit is possible in purgatory, and if objection be urged that the souls there merit by their prayers, Bellarmine says that such prayers avail with God because of merit already acquired “Solum impetrant ex meritis praeteritis quomodo nunc sancti orando) pro nobis impetrant licet non merendo” (They avail only in virtue of past merits as those who are now saints intercede for us not by merit but by prayer). (loc. cit. II, cap. iii).

Purgatorial fire

At the Council of Florence, Bessarion argued against the existence of real purgatorial fire, and the Greeks were assured that the Roman Church had never issued any dogmatic decree on this subject. In the West the belief in the existence of real fire is common. Augustine (*Enarration on Psalm 37*, no. 3) speaks of the pain which purgatorial fire causes as more severe than anything a man can suffer in this life, “gravior erit ignis quam quicquid potest homo pati in hac vita” (P.L., col. 397). Gregory the Great speaks of those who after this life “will expiate their faults by purgatorial flames,” and he adds “that the pain be more intolerable than anyone can suffer in this life” (Ps. 3 poenit., n. 1). Following in the footsteps of Gregory, St. Thomas teaches (IV, dist. xxi, q. i, a. 1) that besides the separation of the soul from the sight of God, there is the other punishment from fire. “Una poena damni, in quantum scilicet retardantur a divina visione; alia sensus secundum

quod ab igne punientur”, and St. Bonaventure not only agrees with St. Thomas but adds (IV, dist. xx, p. 1, a. 1, q. ii) that this punishment by fire is more severe than any punishment which comes to men in this life; “Gravior est omni temporali poena. quam modo sustinet anima carni conjuncta”. How this fire affects the souls of the departed the Doctors do not know, and in such matters it is well to heed the warning of the Council of Trent when it commands the bishops “to exclude from their preaching difficult and subtle questions which tend not to edification”, and from the discussion of which there is no increase either in piety or devotion” (Sess. XXV, “De Purgatorio”).

Succouring the dead

Scripture and the Fathers command prayers and oblations for the departed, and the Council of Trent (Sess. XXV, “De Purgatorio”) in virtue of this tradition not only asserts the existence of purgatory, but adds “that the souls therein detained are aided by the suffrages of the faithful and principally by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar.” That those on earth are still in communion with the souls in purgatory is the earliest Christian teaching, and that the living aid the dead by their prayers and works of satisfaction is clear from the tradition above alleged. That the Holy Sacrifice was offered for the departed was received Catholic Tradition even in the days of Tertullian and Cyprian, and that the souls of the dead, were aided particularly “while the sacred victim lay upon the altar” is the expression of Cyril of Jerusalem quoted above. Augustine (Serm. clxii, n. 2) says that the “prayers and alms of the faithful, the Holy Sacrifice of the altar aid the faithful departed and move the Lord to deal with them in mercy and kindness, and,” he adds, “this is the practice of the universal Church handed down by the Fathers.” Whether our works of satisfaction performed on behalf of the dead avail purely out of God’s benevolence and mercy, or whether God obliges himself in justice to accept our vicarious atonement, is not a settled question. Francisco Suárez thinks that the acceptance is one of justice, and alleges the common practice of the Church which joins together the living and the dead without any discrimination (De poenit., disp. xlvi, 6, n. 4).

Indulgences

The Council of Trent (Sess. XXV) defined that indulgences are “most salutary for Christian people” and that their “use is to be retained in the Church”. It is the common teaching of Catholic theologians that

- ◆ indulgences may be applied to the souls detained in purgatory; and

- ◆ that indulgences are available for them “by way of suffrage” (*per modum suffragii*).

(1) Augustine (*City of God* XX.9) declares that the souls of the faithful departed are not separated from the Church, which is the kingdom of Christ, and for this reason the prayers and works of the living are helpful to the dead. “If therefore”, argues Bellarmine (*De indulgentiis*, xiv) “we can offer our prayers and our satisfactions in behalf of those detained in purgatory, because we are members of the great body of Christ, why may not the Vicar of Christ apply to the same souls the superabundant satisfaction of Christ and his saints-of which he is the dispenser?” This is the doctrine of St. Thomas (IV, Sent., dist. xlv, q. ii, a. 3, q. 2) who asserts that indulgences avail principally for the person who performs the work for which the indulgence is given, if they but secondarily may avail even for the dead, if the form in which the indulgence is granted be so worded as to be capable of such interpretation, and he adds “nor is there any reason why the Church may not dispose of its treasure of merits in favour of the dead, as it surely dispenses it in favour of the living”.

(2) St. Bonaventure (IV, Sent., dist. xx, p. 2, q. v) agrees with St. Thomas, but adds that such “relaxation cannot be after the manner of absolution as in the case of the living but only as suffrage (*Haec non tenet modum iudicii, sed potius suffragii*). This opinion of St. Bonaventure, that the Church through its Supreme Pastor does not absolve juridically the souls in purgatory from the punishment due their sins, is the teaching of the Doctors. They point out (Gratian, 24 q. ii, 2, can.1) that in case of those who have departed this life, judgment is reserved to God; they allege the authority of Gelasius (*Ep. ad Faustum*; *Ep. ad Episcopos Dardaniae*) in support of their contention (Gratian *ibid.*), and they also insist that the Roman Pontiffs, when they grant indulgences that are applicable to the dead, add the restriction “*per modum suffragii et deprecationis*”. This phrase is found in the Bull of Sixtus IV “*Romani Pontificis provida diligentia*”, 27 Nov. 1447.

The phrase “*per modum suffragii et deprecationis*” has been variously interpreted by theologians (Bellarmine, “*De indulgentiis*”, p.137). Bellarmine himself says: “The true opinion is that indulgences avail as suffrage, because they avail not after the fashion of a juridical absolution ‘*quia non prosunt per modum iudicis absolutionis*’.” But according to the same author the suffrages of the faithful avail at times “*per modum meriti congrui*” (by way of merit), at times “*per modum impetrationis*” (by way of supplication) at times “*per modum*

satisfactionis” (by way of satisfaction); but when there is question of applying an indulgence to one in purgatory it is only “*per modum suffragii satisfactorii*” and for this reason “the pope does not absolve the soul in purgatory from the punishment due his sin, but offers to God from the treasure of the Church whatever may be necessary for the cancelling of this punishment”.

If the question be further asked whether such satisfaction is accepted by God out of mercy and benevolence, or “*ex iustitia*”, theologians are not in accord - some holding one opinion, others the other. Bellarmine after canvassing both sides (pp. 137, 138) does not dare to set aside “either opinion, but is inclined to think that the former is more reasonable while he pronounces the latter in harmony with piety (“*admodum pia*”).

Condition

That an indulgence may avail for those in purgatory several conditions are required:

- ◆ The indulgence must be granted by the pope.
- ◆ There must be a sufficient reason for granting the indulgence, and this reason must be something pertaining to the glory of God and the utility of the Church, not merely the utility accruing to the souls in purgatory.
- ◆ The pious work enjoined must be as in the case of indulgences for the living.

If the state of grace be not among the required works, in all probability the person performing the work may gain the indulgence for the dead, even though he himself be not in friendship with God (Bellarmine, *loc. cit.*, p. 139). Francisco Suárez (*De Poenit.*, disp. Iiii, s. 4, n. 5 and 6) puts this categorically when he says: “*Status gratiae solum requiritur ad tollendum obicem indulgentiae*” (the state of grace is required only to remove some hindrance to the indulgence), and in the case of the holy souls there can be no hindrance. This teaching is bound up with the doctrine of the Communion of Saints, and the monuments of the catacombs represent the saints and martyrs as interceding with God for the dead. The prayers too of the early liturgies speak of Mary and of the saints interceding for those who have passed from this life. Augustine believes that burial in a basilica dedicated to a holy martyr is of value to the dead, for those who recall the memory of him who has suffered will recommend to the martyr’s prayers the soul of him who has departed this life (Bellarmine, *lib. II, xv*). In

the same place Bellarmine accuses Dominicus A Soto of rashness, because he denied this doctrine.

Invocation of souls

Do the souls in purgatory pray for us? May we call upon them in our needs? There is no decision of the Church on this subject, nor have the theologians pronounced with definiteness concerning the invocation of the souls in purgatory and their intercession for the living. In the ancient liturgies there are no prayers of the Church directed to those who are still in purgatory. On the tombs of the early Christians nothing is more common than a prayer or a supplication asking the departed to intercede with God for surviving friends, but these inscriptions seem always to suppose that the departed one is already with God. St. Thomas (II-II.83.11) denies that the souls in purgatory pray for the living, and states they are not in a position to pray for us, rather we must make intercession for them. Despite the authority of St. Thomas, many renowned theologians hold that the souls in purgatory really pray for us, and that we may invoke their aid. Bellarmine (*De Purgatorio*, lib. II, xv,) says the reason alleged by St. Thomas is not at all convincing, and holds that in virtue of their greater love of God and their union with Him their prayers may have great intercessory power, for they are really superior to us in love of God, and in intimacy of union with Him. Francisco Suárez (*De poenit.*, disp. xlvii, s. 2, n. 9) goes farther and asserts “that the souls in purgatory are holy, are dear to God, love us with a true love and are mindful of our wants; that they know in a general way our necessities and our dangers, and how great is our need of divine help and divine grace”.

When there is question of invoking the prayers of those in purgatory, Bellarmine (*loc. cit.*) says it is superfluous, ordinarily speaking, for they are ignorant of our circumstances and condition. This is at variance with the opinion of Francisco Suárez, who admits knowledge at least in a general way, also with the opinions of many modern theologians who point to the practice now common with almost all the faithful of addressing their prayers and petitions for help to those who are still in a place of purgation. Scavini (*Theol. Moral.*, XI, n. 174) sees no reason why the souls detained in purgatory may not pray for us, even as we pray for one another. He asserts that this practice has become common at Rome, and that it has the great name of St. Alphonsus in its favour. St. Alphonsus in his work the “Great Means of Salvation”, chap. I, III, 2, after quoting Sylvius, Gotti, Lessius, and Medina as favourable to his opinion, concludes: “so the souls in purgatory, being beloved

by God and confirmed in grace, have absolutely no impediment to prevent them from praying for us. Still the Church does not invoke them or implore their intercession, because ordinarily they have no cognizance of our prayers. But we may piously believe that God makes our prayers known to them”. He alleges also the authority of St. Catharine of Bologna who “whenever she desired any favour had recourse to the souls in purgatory, and was immediately heard”.

Utility of prayer for the departed

It is the traditional faith of Catholics that the souls in purgatory are not separated from the Church, and that the love which is the bond of union between the Church’s members should embrace those who have departed this life in God’s grace. Hence, since our prayers and our sacrifices can help those who are still waiting in purgatory, the saints have not hesitated to warn us that we have a real duty toward those who are still in purgatorial expiation. Holy Church through the Congregation of Indulgences, 18 December 1885, has bestowed a special blessing on the so-called “heroic act” in virtue of which “a member of the Church militant offers to God for the souls in purgatory all the satisfactory works which he will perform during his lifetime, and also all the suffrages which may accrue to him after his death” (*Heroic Act*, vol. VII, 292). The practice of devotion to the dead is also consoling to humanity and eminently worthy of a religion which seconds all the purest feelings of the human heart. “Sweet”, says Cardinal Wiseman (lecture XI), “is the consolation of the dying man, who, conscious of imperfection, believes that there are others to make intercession for him, when his own time for merit has expired; soothing to the afflicted survivors the thought that they possess powerful means of relieving their friend. In the first moments of grief, this sentiment will often overpower religious prejudice, cast down the unbeliever on his knees beside the remains of his friend and snatch from him an unconscious prayer for rest; it is an impulse of nature which for the moment, aided by the analogies of revealed truth, seizes at once upon this consoling belief. But it is only a flitting and melancholy light, while the Catholic feeling, cheering though with solemn dimness, resembles the unfailing lamp, which the piety of the ancients is said to have hung before the sepulchers of their dead.”

Chapter 8

Hell

The doctrine of hell is so frightening that numerous heretical sects end up denying the reality of an eternal hell. The Unitarian-Universalists, the Seventh-day Adventists, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Christadelphians, the Christian Scientists, the Religious Scientists, the New Agers, and the Mormons—all have rejected or modified the doctrine of hell so radically that it is no longer a serious threat. In recent decades, this decay has even invaded mainstream Evangelicalism, and a number of major Evangelical figures have advocated the view that there is no eternal hell—the wicked will simply be annihilated.

But the eternal nature of hell is stressed in the New Testament. For example, in Mark 9:47-48 Jesus warns us, "It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, where the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched." And in Revelation 14:11, we read: "And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."

Hell is not just a theoretical possibility. Jesus warns us that real people go there. He says, "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. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few" (Matt. 7:13-14). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: "The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. Immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, 'eternal fire.' The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs" (CCC 1035).

In his 1994 book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Pope John Paul II wrote that too often "preachers, catechists, teachers... no longer have the courage to preach the threat of hell" (p. 183). Concerning the reality of hell, the pope says, "In point of fact, the ancient councils rejected the theory... according to which the world would be regenerated after destruction, and every creature would be saved; a theory which abolished hell... The words of Christ are unequivocal. In Matthew's Gospel he speaks clearly of those who will go to eternal punishment (cf. Matt. 25:46). [But] who will these be? The Church has never made any pronouncement in this regard" (pp. 185-6).

Thus the issue that some will go to hell is decided, but the issue of who in particular will go to hell is undecided. The early Church Fathers were also absolutely firm on the reality of an eternal hell, as the following quotes show. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches on Hell as follows: We cannot be united with God unless we freely choose to love him. But we cannot love God if we sin gravely against him, against our neighbor or against ourselves: "He who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are his brethren. To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from him forever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called "hell."

Jesus often speaks of "Gehenna" of "the unquenchable fire" reserved for those who to the end of their lives refuse to believe and

be converted, where both soul and body can be lost. Jesus solemnly proclaims that he “will send his angels, and they will gather... all evil doers, and throw them into the furnace of fire,” and that he will pronounce the condemnation: “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire!”

The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. Immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, “eternal fire.” The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs.

The affirmations of Sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Church on the subject of hell are a call to the responsibility incumbent upon man to make use of his freedom in view of his eternal destiny. They are at the same time an urgent call to conversion: “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. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”

Since we know neither the day nor the hour, we should follow the advice of the Lord and watch constantly so that, when the single course of our earthly life is completed, we may merit to enter with him into the marriage feast and be numbered among the blessed, and not, like the wicked and slothful servants, be ordered to depart into the eternal fire, into the outer darkness where “men will weep and gnash their teeth.”

God predestines no one to go to hell; for this, a willful turning away from God (a mortal sin) is necessary, and persistence in it until the end. In the Eucharistic liturgy and in the daily prayers of her faithful, the Church implores the mercy of God, who does not want “any to perish, but all to come to repentance”:

Father, accept this offering
from your whole family.
Grant us your peace in this life,
save us from final damnation,
and count us among those you have chosen.

Name and place of hell

The term *hell* is cognate to “hole” (cavern) and “hollow”. It is a substantive formed from the Anglo-Saxon *helanor behelian*, “to

hide”. This verb has the same primitive as the Latin *occulere* and *celare* and the Greek *kalyptein*. Thus by derivation hell denotes a dark and hidden place. In ancient Norse mythology Hel is the ill-favoured goddess of the underworld. Only those who fall in battle can enter Valhalla; the rest go down to Hel in the underworld, not all, however, to the place of punishment of criminals.

Hell (*infernus*) in theological usage is a place of punishment after death. Theologians distinguish four meanings of the term *hell*:

- ◆ hell in the strict sense, or the place of punishment for the damned, be they demons or men;
- ◆ the limbo of infants (*limbus parvulorum*), where those who die in original sin alone, and without personal mortal sin, are confined and undergo some kind of punishment;
- ◆ the limbo of the Fathers (*limbus patrum*), in which the souls of the just who died before Christ awaited their admission to heaven; for in the meantime heaven was closed against them in punishment for the sin of Adam;
- ◆ purgatory, where the just, who die in venial sin or who still owe a debt of temporal punishment for sin, are cleansed by suffering before their admission to heaven.

The present article treats only of hell in the strict sense of the term.

The Latin *infernus* (*inferum, inferi*), the Greek *Hades*, and the Hebrew *sheol* correspond to the word *hell*. *Infernus* is derived from the root *in*; hence it designates hell as a place within and below the earth. *Haidēs*, formed from the root *fid*, to see, and *a* privative, denotes an invisible, hidden, and dark place; thus it is similar to the term *hell*. The derivation of *sheol* is doubtful. It is generally supposed to come from the Hebrew root meaning, “to be sunk in, to be hollow”; accordingly it denotes a cave or a place under the earth. In the Old Testament (Septuagint *hades*; Vulgate *infernus*) *sheol* is used quite in general to designate the kingdom of the dead, of the good (Genesis 37:35) as well as of the bad (Numbers 16:30); it means hell in the strict sense of the term, as well as the limbo of the Fathers. But, as the limbo of the Fathers ended at the time of Christ’s Ascension, *hades* (Vulgate *infernus*) in the New Testament always designates the hell of the damned. Since Christ’s Ascension the just no longer go down to the lower world, but they dwell in heaven (2 Corinthians 5:1). However, in the New Testament the term *Gehenna* is used more frequently in preference to *hades*, as a name for the place of punishment

of the damned. Gehenna is the Hebrew *gê-hinnom* (Nehemiah 11:30), or the longer form *gê-ben-hinnom* (Joshua 15:8), and *gê-benê-hinnom* (2 Kings 23:10) “valley of the sons of Hinnom”. Hinnom seems to be the name of a person not otherwise known. The Valley of Hinnom is south of Jerusalem and is now called Wadi er-rababi. It was notorious as the scene, in earlier days, of the horrible worship of Moloch. For this reason it was defiled by Josias (2 Kings 23:10), cursed by Jeremias (Jeremiah 7:31-33), and held in abomination by the Jews, who, accordingly, used the name of this valley to designate the abode of the damned (Targ. Jon., Gen., iii, 24; Henoch, c. xxvi). And Christ adopted this usage of the term. Besides Hades and Gehenna, we find in the New Testament many other names for the abode of the damned. It is called “lower hell” (Vulgate *tartarus*) (2 Peter 2:4), “abyss” (Luke 8:31 and elsewhere), “place of torments” (Luke 16:28), “pool of fire” (Revelation 19:20 and elsewhere), “furnace of fire” (Matthew 13:42, 50), “unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:12, and elsewhere), “everlasting fire” (Matthew 18:8; 25:41; Jude 7), “exterior darkness” (Matthew 7:12; 22:13; 25:30), “mist” or “storm of darkness” (2 Peter 2:17; Jude 13). The state of the damned is called “destruction” (*apoleia*, Philippians 3:19 and elsewhere), “perdition” (*olethros*, 1 Timothy 6:9), “eternal destruction” (*olethros aionios*, 2 Thessalonians 1:9), “corruption” (*phthora*, Galatians 6:8), “death” (Romans 6:21), “second death” (Revelation 2:11 and elsewhere).

Where is hell? Some were of opinion that hell is everywhere, that the damned are at liberty to roam about in the entire universe, but that they carry their punishment with them. The adherents of this doctrine were called Ubiquists, or Ubiquitarians; among them were, e.g., Johann Brenz, a Swabian, a Protestant theologian of the sixteenth century. However, that opinion is universally and deservedly rejected; for it is more in keeping with their state of punishment that the damned be limited in their movements and confined to a definite place. Moreover, if hell is a real fire, it cannot be everywhere, especially after the consummation of the world, when heaven and earth shall have been made anew. As to its locality all kinds of conjectures have been made; it has been suggested that hell is situated on some far island of the sea, or at the two poles of the earth; Swinden, an Englishman of the eighteenth century, fancied it was in the sun; some assigned it to the moon, others to Mars; others placed it beyond the confines of the universe [Wiest, “Instit. theol.”, VI (1789), 869]. The Bible seems to indicate that hell is within the earth, for it describes hell as an abyss to which the wicked descend. We even read of the

earth opening and of the wicked sinking down into hell (Numbers 16:31 sqq.; Psalm 54:16; Isaiah 5:14; Ezekiel 26:20; Philippians 2:10, etc.). Is this merely a metaphor to illustrate the state of separation from God? Although God is omnipresent, He is said to dwell in heaven, because the light and grandeur of the stars and the firmament are the brightest manifestations of His infinite splendor. But the damned are utterly estranged from God; hence their abode is said to be as remote as possible from his dwelling, far from heaven above and its light, and consequently hidden away in the dark abysses of the earth. However, no cogent reason has been advanced for accepting a metaphorical interpretation in preference to the most natural meaning of the words of Scripture. Hence theologians generally accept the opinion that hell is really within the earth. The Church has decided nothing on this subject; hence we may say hell is a definite place; but where it is, we do not know. St. Chrysostom reminds us: “We must not ask where hell is, but how we are to escape it” (In Rom., hom. xxxi, n. 5, in P.G., LX, 674). St. Augustine says: “It is my opinion that the nature of hell-fire and the location of hell are known to no man unless the Holy Ghost made it known to him by a special revelation”, (*City of God* XX.16). Elsewhere he expresses the opinion that hell is under the earth (Retract., II, xxiv, n. 2 in P.L., XXXII, 640). St. Gregory the Great wrote: “I do not dare to decide this question. Some thought hell is somewhere on earth; others believe it is under the earth” (Dial., IV, xlii, in P.L., LXXVII, 400; cf. Patuzzi, “De sede inferni”, 1763; Gretser, “De subterraneis animarum receptaculis”, 1595).

Existence of hell

There is a hell, i.e. all those who die in personal mortal sin, as enemies of God, and unworthy of eternal life, will be severely punished by God after death. On the nature of mortal sin, see sin; on the immediate beginning of punishment after death. As to the fate of those who die free from personal mortal sin, but in original sin.

The existence of hell is, of course, denied by all those who deny the existence of God or the immortality of the soul. Thus among the Jew the Sadducees, among the Gnostics, the Seleucians, and in our own time Materialists, Pantheists, etc., deny the existence of hell. But apart from these, if we abstract from the eternity of the pains of hell, the doctrine has never met any opposition worthy of mention.

The existence of hell is proved first of all from the Bible. Wherever Christ and the Apostles speak of hell they presuppose the knowledge of its existence (Matthew 5:29; 8:12; 10:28; 13:42;

25:41, 46; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; Revelation 21:8, etc.). A very complete development of the Scriptural argument, especially in regard to the Old Testament, may be found in Atzberger's "Die christliche Eschatologie in den Stadien ihrer Offenbarung im Alten und Neuen Testament", Freiburg, 1890. Also the Fathers, from the very earliest times, are unanimous in teaching that the wicked will be punished after death. And in proof of their doctrine they appeal both to Scripture and to reason (cf. Ignatius, "Ad Eph.", v, 16; "Martyrium s. Polycarpi", ii, n, 3; xi, n.2; Justin, "Apol.", II, n. 8 in P.G., VI, 458; Athenagoras, "De resurr. mort.", c. xix, in P.G., VI, 1011; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V. 27.2; Tertullian, "Adv. Marc.", I, c. xxvi, in P.L., IV, 277). For citations from this patristic teaching see Atzberger, "Gesh. der christl. Eschatologie innerhalb der vor-nicanischen Zeit" (Freiburg, 1896); Petavius, "De Angelis", III, iv sqq.

The Church professes her faith in the Athanasian Creed: "They that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire" (Denzinger, "Enchiridion", 10th ed., 1908, n.40). The Church has repeatedly defined this truth, e.g. in the profession of faith made in the Second Council of Lyons (Denz., n. 464) and in the Decree of Union in the Council of Florence (Denz., N. 693): "the souls of those who depart in mortal sin, or only in original sin, go down immediately into hell, to be visited, however, with unequal punishments" (*poenis disparibus*).

If we abstract from the eternity of its punishment, the existence of hell can be demonstrated even by the light of mere reason. In His sanctity and justice as well as in His wisdom, God must avenge the violation of the moral order in such wise as to preserve, at least in general, some proportion between the gravity of sin and the severity of punishment. But it is evident from experience that God does not always do this on earth; therefore He will inflict punishment after death. Moreover, if all men were fully convinced that the sinner need fear no kind of punishment after death, moral and social order would be seriously menaced. This, however, Divine wisdom cannot permit. Again, if there were no retribution beyond that which takes place before our eyes here on earth, we should have to consider God extremely indifferent to good and evil, and we could in no way account for His justice and holiness. Nor can it be said: the wicked will be punished, but not by any positive infliction: for either death will be the end of their existence, or, forfeiting the rich reward of the good, they will enjoy some lesser degree of happiness. These are arbitrary and vain subterfuges, unsupported by any sound reason; positive punishment is the natural recompense

of evil. Besides, due proportion between demerit and punishment would be rendered impossible by an indiscriminate annihilation of all the wicked. And finally, if men knew that their sins would not be followed by sufferings, the mere threat of annihilation at the moment of death, and still less the prospect of a somewhat lower degree of beatitude, would not suffice to deter them from sin.

Furthermore, reason easily understands that in the next life the just will be made happy as a reward of their virtue. But the punishment of evil is the natural counterpart of the reward of virtue. Hence, there will also be punishment for sin in the next life. Accordingly, we find among all nations the belief that evil-doers will be punished after death. This universal conviction of mankind is an additional proof for the existence of hell. For it is impossible that, in regard to the fundamental questions of their being and their destiny, all men should fall into the same error; else the power of human reason would be essentially deficient, and the order of this world would be unduly wrapt in mystery; this however, is repugnant both to nature and to the wisdom of the Creator. On the belief of all nations in the existence of hell cf. Lüken, "Die Traditionen des Menschengeschlechts" (2nd ed., Münster, 1869); Knabenbauer, "Das Zeugnis des Menschengeschlechts für die Unsterblichkeit der Seele" (1878). The few men who, despite the morally universal conviction of the human race, deny the existence of hell, are mostly atheists and Epicureans. But if the view of such men in the fundamental question of our being could be the true one, apostasy would be the way to light, truth, and wisdom.

Eternity of hell

Many admit the existence of hell, but deny the eternity of its punishment. Condition lists hold only a hypothetical immortality of the soul, and assert that after undergoing a certain amount of punishment, the souls of the wicked will be annihilated. Among the Gnostics the Valentinians held this doctrine, and later on also Arnobius, the Socinians, many Protestants both in the past and in our own times, especially of late (Edw. White, "Life in Christ", New York, 1877). The Universalists teach that in the end all the damned, at least all human souls, will attain beatitude (*apokatastasis ton panton, restitutio omnium*, according to Origen). This was a tenet of the Origenists and the Misericordes of whom St. Augustine speaks (*City of God* XXI.18). There were individual adherents of this opinion in every century, e.g. Scotus Eriugena; in particular, many rationalistic Protestants of the last centuries defended this belief, e.g. in England,

Farrar, "Eternal Hope" (five sermons preached in Westminster Abbey, London and New York, 1878). Among Catholics, Hirscher and Schell have recently expressed the opinion that those who do not die in the state of grace can still be converted after death if they are not too wicked and impenitent.

The Holy Bible is quite explicit in teaching the eternity of the pains of hell. The torments of the damned shall last forever and ever (Revelation 14:11; 19:3; 20:10). They are everlasting just as are the joys of heaven (Matthew 25:46). Of Judas Christ says: "it was better for him, if that man had not been born" (Matthew 26:24). But this would not have been true if Judas was ever to be released from hell and admitted to eternal happiness. Again, God says of the damned: "Their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched" (Isaiah 66:24; Mark 9:43, 45, 47). The fire of hell is repeatedly called eternal and unquenchable. The wrath of God abideth on the damned (John 3:36); they are vessels of Divine wrath (Romans 9:22); they shall not possess the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:10; Galatians 5:21), etc. The objections adduced from Scripture against this doctrine are so meaningless that they are not worth while discussing in detail. The teaching of the fathers is not less clear and decisive (cf. Patavius, "De Angelis", III, viii). We merely call to mind the testimony of the martyrs who often declared that they were glad to suffer pain of brief duration in order to escape eternal torments; e.g. "Martyrium Polycarpi", c. ii (cf. Atzberger, "Geschichte", II, 612 sqq.). It is true that Origen fell into error on this point; but precisely for this error he was condemned by the Church (Canones adv. Origenem ex Justiniani libro adv. Origen., can. ix; Hardouin, III, 279 E; Denz., n. 211). In vain attempts were made to undermine the authority of these canons (cf. Dickamp, "Die origenistischen Streitigkeiten", Münster, 1899, 137). Besides even in Origen we find the orthodox teaching on the eternity of the pains of hell; for in his words the faithful Christian was again and again victorious over the doubting philosopher. Gregory of Nyssa seems to have favoured the errors of Origen; many, however, believe that his statements can be shown to be in harmony with Catholic doctrine. But the suspicions that have been cast on some passages of Gregory of Nazianzus and Jerome are decidedly without justification (cf. Pesch, "Theologische Zeitfragen", 2nd series, 190 sqq.). The Church professes her faith in the eternity of the pains of hell in clear terms in the Athanasian Creed (Denz., nn. 40), in authentic doctrinal decisions (Denz., nn. 211, 410, 429, 807, 835, 915), and in countless passages of her liturgy; she never prays for the damned. Hence, beyond the possibility of doubt,

the Church expressly teaches the eternity of the pains of hell as a truth of faith which no one can deny or call in question without manifest heresy.

But what is the attitude of mere reason towards this doctrine? Just as God must appoint some fixed term for the time of trial, after which the just will enter into the secure possession of a happiness that can never again be lost in all eternity, so it is likewise appropriate that after the expiration of that term the wicked will be cut off from all hope of conversion and happiness. For the malice of men cannot compel God to prolong the appointed time of probation and to grant them again and again, without end, the power of deciding their lot for eternity. Any obligation to act in this manner would be unworthy of God, because it would make Him dependent on the caprice of human malice, would rob His threats in great part of their efficacy, and would offer the amplest scope and the strongest incentive to human presumption. God has actually appointed the end of this present life, or the moment of death, as the term of man's probation. For in that moment there takes place in our life an essential and momentous change; from the state of union with the body the soul passes into a life apart. No other sharply defined instant of our life is of like importance. Hence we must conclude that death is the end of our probation; for it is meet that our trial should terminate at a moment of our existence so prominent and significant as to be easily perceived by every man. Accordingly, it is the belief of all people that eternal retribution is dealt out immediately after death. This conviction of mankind is an additional proof of our thesis.

Finally, the preservation of moral and social order would not be sufficiently provided for, if men knew that the time of trial were to be continued after death.

Many believe that reason cannot give any conclusive proof for the eternity of the pains of hell, but that it can merely show that this doctrine does not involve any contradiction. Since the Church has made no decision on this point, each one is entirely free to embrace this opinion. As is apparent, the author of this article does not hold it. We admit that God might have extended the time of trial beyond death; however, had He done so, He would have permitted man to know about it, and would have made corresponding provision for the maintenance of moral order in this life. We may further admit that it is not intrinsically impossible for God to annihilate the sinner after some definite amount of punishment; but this would be less in

conformity with the nature of man's immortal soul; and, secondly, we know of no fact that might give us any right to suppose God will act in such a manner.

The objection is made that there is no proportion between the brief moment of sin and an eternal punishment. But why not? We certainly admit a proportion between a momentary good deed and its eternal reward, not, it is true, a proportion of duration, but a proportion between the law and its appropriate sanction. Again, sin is an offence against the infinite authority of God, and the sinner is in some way aware of this, though but imperfectly. Accordingly there is in sin an approximation to infinite malice which deserves an eternal punishment. Finally, it must be remembered that, although the act of sinning is brief, the guilt of sin remains forever; for in the next life the sinner never turns away from his sin by a sincere conversion. It is further objected that the sole object of punishment must be to reform the evil-doer. This is not true. Besides punishments inflicted for correction, there are also punishments for the satisfaction of justice. But justice demands that whoever departs from the right way in his search for happiness shall not find his happiness, but lose it. The eternity of the pains of hell responds to this demand for justice. And, besides, the fear of hell does really deter many from sin; and thus, in as far as it is threatened by God, eternal punishment also serves for the reform of morals. But if God threatens man with the pains of hell, He must also carry out His threat if man does not heed it by avoiding sin.

For solving other objections it should be noted:

- ◆ God is not only infinitely good, He is infinitely wise, just, and holy.
- ◆ No one is cast into hell unless he has fully and entirely deserved it.
- ◆ The sinner perseveres forever in his evil disposition.
- ◆ We must not consider the eternal punishment of hell as a series of separate of distinct terms of punishment, as if God were forever again and again pronouncing a new sentence and inflicting new penalties, and as if He could never satisfy His desire of vengeance. Hell is, especially in the eyes of God, one and indivisible in its entirety; it is but one sentence and one penalty. We may represent to ourselves a punishment of indescribable intensity as in a certain sense the equivalent of an eternal punishment; this may help us to see better how God permits the sinner to fall into hell - how a man who sets at naught all Divine warnings, who fails to profit by all the patient forbearance God has shown him, and who in wanton

disobedience is absolutely bent on rushing into eternal punishment, can be finally permitted by God's just indignation to fall into hell.

In itself, it is no rejection of Catholic dogma to suppose that God might at times, by way of exception, liberate a soul from hell. Thus some argued from a false interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19 sq., that Christ freed several damned souls on the occasion of His descent into hell. Others were misled by untrustworthy stories into the belief that the prayers of Gregory the Great rescued the Emperor Trajan from hell. But now theologians are unanimous in teaching that such exceptions never take place and never have taken place, a teaching which should be accepted. If this be true, how can the Church pray in the Offertory of the Mass for the dead: "Libera animas omnium fidelium defunctorum de poenis inferni et de profundo lacu" etc.? Many think the Church uses these words to designate purgatory. They can be explained more readily, however, if we take into consideration the peculiar spirit of the Church's liturgy; sometimes she refers her prayers not to the time at which they are said, but to the time for which they are said. Thus the offertory in question is referred to the moment when the soul is about to leave the body, although it is actually said some time after that moment; and as if he were actually at the death-beds of the faithful, the priest implores God to preserve their souls from hell. But whichever explanation be preferred, this much remains certain, that in saying that offertory the Church intends to implore only those graces which the soul is still capable of receiving, namely, the grace of a happy death or the release from purgatory.

Impenitence of the damned

The damned are confirmed in evil; every act of their will is evil and inspired by hatred of God. This is the common teaching of theology; St. Thomas sets it forth in many passages. Nevertheless, some have held the opinion that, although the damned cannot perform any supernatural action, they are still able to perform, now and then, some naturally good deed; thus far the Church has not condemned this opinion. The author of this article maintains that the common teaching is the true one; for in hell the separation from the sanctifying power of Divine love is complete. Many assert that this inability to do good works is physical, and assign the withholding of all grace as its proximate cause; in doing so, they take the term grace in its widest meaning, i.e. every Divine co-operation both in natural and in supernatural good actions. The damned, then, can never choose between acting out of love of God and virtue, and acting out of hatred of God. Hatred is the only motive

in their power; and they have no other choice than that of showing their hatred of God by one evil action in preference to another. The last and the real cause of their impenitence is the state of sin which they freely chose as their portion on earth and in which they passed, unconverted, into the next life and into that state of permanence (*status termini*) by nature due to rational creatures, and to an unchangeable attitude of mind. Quite in consonance with their final state, God grants them only such cooperation as corresponds to the attitude which they freely chose as their own in this life. Hence the damned can but hate God and work evil, whilst the just in heaven or in purgatory, being inspired solely by love of God, can but do good. Therefore, too, the works of the reprobate, in as far as they are inspired by hatred of God, are not formal, but only material sins, because they are performed without the liberty requisite for moral imputability. Formal sin the reprobate commits then only, when, from among several actions in his power, he deliberately chooses that which contains the greater malice. By such formal sins the damned do not incur any essential increase of punishment, because in that final state the very possibility and Divine permission of sin are in themselves a punishment; and, moreover, a sanction of the moral law would be quite meaningless.

From what has been said it follows that the hatred which the lost soul bears to God is voluntary in its cause only; and the cause is the deliberate sin which it committed on earth and by which it merited reprobation. It is also obvious that God is not responsible for the reprobate's material sins of hate, because by granting His co-operation in their sinful acts as well as by refusing them every incitement to good, He acts quite in accordance with the nature of their state. Therefore their sins are no more imputable to God than are the blasphemies of a man in the state of total intoxication, although they are not uttered without Divine assistance. The reprobate carries in himself the primary cause of impenitence; it is the guilt of sin which he committed on earth and with which he passed into eternity. The proximate cause of impenitence in hell is God's refusal of every grace and every impulse for good. It would not be intrinsically impossible for God to move the damned to repentance; yet such a course would be out of keeping with the state of final reprobation. The opinion that the Divine refusal of all grace and of every incitement to good is the proximate cause of impenitence, is upheld by many theologians, and in particular by Molina. Francisco Suárez considers it probable. Scotus and Vasquez hold similar views. Even the Fathers and St. Thomas may be understood in this sense. Thus St. Thomas teaches (*De verit.*, Q. xxiv, a. 10) that the chief cause

of impenitence is Divine justice which refuses the damned every grace. Nevertheless many theologians, e.g. Francisco Suárez, defend the opinion that the damned are only morally incapable of good; they have the physical power, but the difficulties in their way are so great that they can never be surmounted. The damned can never divert their attention from their frightful torments, and at the same time they know that all hope is lost to them. Hence despair and hatred of God, their just Judge, is almost inevitable, and even the slightest good impulse becomes morally impossible. The Church has not decided this question. The present author prefers Molina's opinion.

But if the damned are impenitent, how can Scripture (*Wisdom 5*) say they repent of their sin? They deplore with the utmost intensity the punishment, but not the malice of sin; to this they cling more tenaciously than ever. Had they an opportunity, they would commit the sin again, not indeed for the sake of its gratification, which they found illusive, but out of sheer hatred of God. They are ashamed of their folly which led them to seek happiness in sin, but not of the malice of sin itself (*St. Thomas, Theol. comp.*, c. cxxv).

Poenā damni

The *poena damni*, or pain of loss, consists in the loss of the beatific vision and in so complete a separation of all the powers of the soul from God that it cannot find in Him even the least peace and rest. It is accompanied by the loss of all supernatural gifts, e.g. the loss of faith. The characters impressed by the sacraments alone remain to the greater confusion of the bearer. The pain of loss is not the mere absence of superior bliss, but it is also a most intense positive pain. The utter void of the soul made for the enjoyment of infinite truth and infinite goodness causes the reprobate immeasurable anguish. Their consciousness that God, on Whom they entirely depend, is their enemy forever is overwhelming. Their consciousness of having by their own deliberate folly forfeited the highest blessings for transitory and delusive pleasures humiliates and depresses them beyond measure. The desire for happiness inherent in their very nature, wholly unsatisfied and no longer able to find any compensation for the loss of God in delusive pleasure, renders them utterly miserable. Moreover, they are well aware that God is infinitely happy, and hence their hatred and their impotent desire to injure Him fills them with extreme bitterness. And the same is true with regard to their hatred of all the friends of God who enjoy the bliss of heaven. The pain of loss is the very core of eternal punishment. If the damned beheld God face to face, hell itself, not with

standing its fire, would be a kind of heaven. Had they but some union with God even if not precisely the union of the beatific vision, hell would no longer be hell, but a kind of purgatory. And yet the pain of loss is but the natural consequence of that aversion from God which lies in the nature of every mortal sin.

Poena sensus

The *poena sensus*, or pain of sense, consists in the torment of fire so frequently mentioned in the Holy Bible. According to the greater number of theologians the term *fire* denotes a material fire, and so a real fire. We hold to this teaching as absolutely true and correct. However, we must not forget two things: from Catharinus (d. 1553) to our times there have never been wanting theologians who interpret the Scriptural term fire metaphorically, as denoting an incorporeal fire; and secondly, thus far the Church has not censured their opinion. Some few of the Fathers also thought of a metaphorical explanation. Nevertheless, Scripture and tradition speak again and again of the fire of hell, and there is no sufficient reason for taking the term as a mere metaphor. It is urged: How can a material fire torment demons, or human souls before the resurrection of the body? But, if our soul is so joined to the body as to be keenly sensitive to the pain of fire, why should the omnipotent God be unable to bind even pure spirits to some material substance in such a manner that they suffer a torment more or less similar to the pain of fire which the soul can feel on earth? The reply indicates, as far as possible, how we may form an idea of the pain of fire which the demons suffer. Theologians have elaborated various theories on this subject, which, however, we do not wish to detail here (cf. the very minute study by Franz Schmid, “*Quaestiones selectae ex theol. dogm.*”, Paderborn, 1891, q. iii; also Guthberlet, “*Die poena sensus*” in “*Katholik*”, II, 1901, 305 sqq., 385 sqq.).

It is quite superfluous to add that the nature of hell-fire is different from that of our ordinary fire; for instance, it continues to burn without the need of a continually renewed supply of fuel. How are we to form a conception of that fire in detail remains quite undetermined; we merely know that it is corporeal. The demons suffer the torment of fire, even when, by Divine permission, they leave the confines of hell and roam about on earth. In what manner this happens is uncertain. We may assume that they remain fettered inseparably to a portion of that fire.

The pain of sense is the natural consequence of that inordinate turning to creatures which is involved in every mortal sin. It is meet

that whoever seeks forbidden pleasure should find pain in return. (Cf. Heuse, “*Das Feuer der Hölle*” in “*Catholic*”, II, 1878, 225 sqq., 337 sqq., 486 sqq., 581 sqq.; “*Etudes religieuses*”, L, 1890, II, 309, report of an answer of the Poenitentaria, 30 April, 1890; Knabenbauer, “*In Matth.*, xxv, 41”.)

Accidental pains of the damned

According to theologians the pain of loss and the pain of sense constitute the very essence of hell, the former being by far the most dreadful part of eternal punishment. But the damned also suffer various “accidental” punishments.

- ◆ Just as the blessed in heaven are free from all pain, so, on the other hand, the damned never experience even the least real pleasure. In hell separation from the blissful influence of Divine love has reached its consummation.
- ◆ The reprobate must live in the midst of the damned; and their outbursts of hatred or of reproach as they gloat over his sufferings, and their hideous presence, are an ever fresh source of torment.
- ◆ The reunion of soul and body after the Resurrection will be a special punishment for the reprobate, although there will be no essential change in the pain of sense which they are already suffering.

As to the punishments visited upon the damned for their venial sins, cf. Francisco Suárez, “*De peccatis*”, disp. vii, s. 4.

Characteristics of the pains of hell

(1) The pains of hell differ in degree according to demerit. This holds true not only of the pain of sense, but also of the pain of loss. A more intense hatred of God, a more vivid consciousness of utter abandonment by Divinegoodness, a more restless craving to satisfy the natural desire for beatitude with things external to God, a more acute sense of shame and confusion at the folly of having sought happiness in earthly enjoyment - all this implies as its correlation a more complete and more painful separation from God.

(2) The pains of hell are essentially immutable; there are no temporary intermissions or passing alleviations. A few Fathers and theologians, in particular the poet Prudentius, expressed the opinion that on stated days God grants the damned a certain respite, and that besides this the prayers of the faithful obtain for them other occasional intervals of rest. The Church has never condemned this opinion in

Eschatology

express terms. But now theologians are justly unanimous in rejecting it. St. Thomas condemns it severely (In IV Sent., dist. xlv, Q. xxix, cl. 1). [Cf. Merkle, "Die Sabbatruhe in der Hölle" in "Römische Quartalschrift" (1895), 489 sqq.; see also Prudentius.]

However, accidental changes in the pains of hell are not excluded. Thus it may be that the reprobate is sometimes more and sometimes less tormented by his surroundings. Especially after the last judgment there will be an accidental increase in punishment; for then the demons will never again be permitted to leave the confines of hell, but will be finally imprisoned for all eternity; and the reprobate souls of men will be tormented by union with their hideous bodies.

(3) Hell is a state of the greatest and most complete misfortune, as is evident from all that has been said. The damned have no joy whatever, and it were better for them if they had not been born (Matthew 26:24). Not long ago Mivart (The Nineteenth Century, Dec., 1892, Febr. and Apr., 1893) advocated the opinion that the pains of the damned would decrease with time and that in the end their lot would not be so extremely sad; that they would finally reach a certain kind of happiness and would prefer existence to annihilation; and although they would still continue to suffer a punishment symbolically described as a fire by the Bible, yet they would hate God no longer, and the most unfortunate among them be happier than many a pauper in this life. It is quite obvious that all this is opposed to Scripture and the teaching of the Church. The articles cited were condemned by the Congregation of the Index and the Holy Office on 14 and 19 July, 1893 (cf. "Civiltà Cattolica", I, 1893, 672).

Chapter 9

Heaven

Heaven (Anglo-Saxon *heofon*, O.S. *hevan* and *himil*, originally *himin*) corresponds to the Gothic *himin-s*. Both *heaven* and *himil* are formed from *himin* by a regular change of consonants: *heaven*, by changing *m* before *n* into *v*; and *himil*, by changing *n* of the unaccented ending into *l*. Some derive *heaven* from the root *ham*, "to cover" (cf. the Gothic *ham-ôn* and the German *Hem-d*). According to this derivation heaven would be conceived as the roof of the world. Others trace a connection between *himin* (heaven) and *home*; according to this view, which seems to be the more probable, heaven would be the abode of the Godhead. The Latin *coelum* (*koilon*, a vault) is derived by many from the root of *celare* "to cover, to conceal" (*coelum*, "ceiling" "roof of the world"). Others, however think it is connected with the Germanic *himin*. The Greek *ouranos* is probably derived from the root *var*, which also connotes the idea of covering. The Hebrew name for heaven is thought to be derived from a word meaning "on high"; accordingly, heaven would designate the upper region of the world.

Bible on Heaven

In the Holy Bible the term *heaven* denotes, in the first place, the blue firmament, or the region of the clouds that pass along the sky. Genesis 1:20, speaks of the birds "under the firmament of heaven". In other passages it denotes the region of the stars that shine in the sky. Furthermore heaven is spoken of as the dwelling of God; for, although God is omnipresent, He manifests Himself in a special manner in the light and grandeur of the firmament. Heaven also is the abode of the angels; for they are constantly with God and see His face. With God in heaven are likewise the souls of the just (2 Corinthians 5:1; Matthew 5:3, 12). In Ephesians 4:8 sq., we are told that Christ conducted to heaven the patriarchs who had been in limbo (*limbus patrum*). Thus the term *heaven* has come to designate both the happiness and the abode of just in the next life. The present article treats as heaven in this sense only.

In Holy Scripture it is called:

- ◆ the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3),
- ◆ the kingdom of God (Mark 9:46),
- ◆ the kingdom of the Father (Matthew 13:43),
- ◆ the kingdom of Christ (Luke 22:30),
- ◆ the house of the Father (John 14:2),
- ◆ city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12),
- ◆ the holy place (Hebrews 9:12; D.V. *holies*),
- ◆ paradise (2 Corinthians 12:4),
- ◆ life (Matthew 7:14),
- ◆ life everlasting (Matthew 19:16),
- ◆ the joy of the Lord (Matthew 25:21),
- ◆ crown of life (James 1:12),
- ◆ crown of justice (2 Timothy 4:8),
- ◆ crown of glory (1 Peter 5:4),
- ◆ incorruptible crown (1 Corinthians 9:25),
- ◆ great reward (Matthew 5:12),
- ◆ inheritance of Christ (Ephesians 1:18),
- ◆ eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:15).

The location of Heaven

Where is heaven, the dwelling of God and the blessed? Some are of opinion that heaven is everywhere, as God is everywhere. According to this view the blessed can move about freely in every part of the universe, and still remain with God and see everywhere. Everywhere, too, they remain with Christ (in His sacred Humanity)

and with the saints and the angels. For, according to the advocates of this opinion, the spatial distances of this world must no longer impede the mutual intercourse of blessed.

In general, however, theologians deem more appropriate that there should be a special and glorious abode, in which the blessed have their peculiar home and where they usually abide, even though they be free to go about in this world. For the surroundings in the midst of which the blessed have their dwelling must be in accordance with their happy state; and the internal union of charity which joins them in affection must find its outward expression in community of habitation. At the end of the world, the earth together with the celestial bodies will be gloriously transformed into a part of the dwelling-place of the blessed (Revelation 21). Hence there seems to be no sufficient reason for attributing a metaphorical sense to those numerous utterances of the Bible which suggest a definite dwelling-place of the blessed. Theologians, therefore, generally hold that the heaven of the blessed is a special place with definite limits. Naturally, this place is held to exist, not within the earth, but, in accordance with the expressions of Scripture, without and beyond its limits. All further details regarding its locality are quite uncertain. The Church has decided nothing on this subject.

Existence of heaven

There is a heaven, i.e., God will bestow happiness and the richest gifts on all those who depart this life free from original sin and personal mortal sin, and who are, consequently, in the state of justice and friendship with God. Concerning the purification of those just souls who depart in venial sin or who are still subject to temporal punishment for sin. On the lot of those who die free from personal sin, but infected with original sin. On the immediate beginning of eternal happiness after death, or eventually, after the passage through purgatory. The existence of heaven is, of course, denied by atheists, materialists, and pantheists of all centuries as well as by those rationalists who teach that the soul perishes with the body - in short, by all who deny the existence of God or the immortality of the soul. But, for the rest, if we abstract from the specific quality and the supernatural character of heaven, the doctrine has never met with any opposition worthy of note. Even mere reason can prove the existence of heaven or of the happy state of the just in the next life.

We shall give a brief outline of the principal arguments. From these we shall, at the same time, see that the bliss of heaven is eternal and

consists primarily in the possession of God, and that heaven presupposes a condition of perfect happiness, in which every wish of the heart finds adequate satisfaction.

- ◆ God made all things for His objective honour and glory. Every creature was to manifest His Divine perfections by becoming a likeness of God, each according to its capacity. But man is capable of becoming in the greatest and most perfect manner a likeness of God, when he knows and loves His infinite perfections with a knowledge and love analogous to God's own love and knowledge. Therefore man is created to know God and to love Him. Moreover, this knowledge and love is to be eternal; for such is man's capability and his calling, because his soul is immortal. Lastly, to know God and to love Him is the noblest occupation of the human mind, and consequently also its supreme happiness. Therefore man is created for eternal happiness; and he will infallibly attain it hereafter, unless, by sin, he renders himself unworthy of so high a destiny.
- ◆ God made all things for His formal glory, which consists in the knowledge and love shown Him by rational creatures. Irrational creatures cannot give formal glory to God directly, but they should assist rational creatures in doing so. This they can do by manifesting God's perfections and by rendering other services; whilst rational creatures should, by their own personal knowledge and love of God, refer and direct all creatures to Him as their last end. Therefore every intelligent creature in general, and man in particular, is destined to know and love God for ever, though he may forfeit eternal happiness by sin.
- ◆ God, in his infinite justice and holiness, must give virtue its due reward. But, as experience teaches, the virtuous do not obtain a sufficient reward here; hence they will be recompensed hereafter, and the reward must be everlasting, since the soul is immortal. Nor can it be supposed that the soul in the next life must merit her continuance in happiness by a continued series of combats; for this would be repugnant to all the tendencies and desires of human nature.
- ◆ God, in His wisdom, must set on the moral law a sanction, sufficiently appropriate and efficacious. But, unless each man is rewarded according to the measure of his good works, such a sanction could not be said to exist. Mere infliction of punishment for sin would be insufficient. In any case, reward for good deeds is the best means of inspiring zeal for virtue. Nature itself teaches us to reward virtue in others whenever we can, and to hope for a reward of our own

good actions from the Supreme Ruler of the universe. That reward, not being given here, will be given hereafter.

- ◆ God has implanted in the heart of man a love of virtue and a love of happiness; consequently, God, because of His wisdom, must by rewarding virtue establish perfect harmony between these two tendencies. But such a harmony is not established in this life; therefore it will be brought about in the next.
- ◆ Every man has an innate desire for perfect beatitude. Experience proves this. The sight of the imperfect goods of earth naturally leads us to form the conception of a happiness so perfect as to satisfy all the desires of our heart. But we cannot conceive such a state without desiring it. Therefore we are destined for a happiness that is perfect and, for that very reason, eternal; and it will be ours, unless we forfeit it by sin. A natural tendency without an object is incompatible both with nature and with the Creator's goodness. The arguments thus far advanced prove the existence of heaven as a state of perfect happiness.
- ◆ We are born for higher things, for the possession of God. This earth can satisfy no man, least of all the wise. "Vanity of vanities", says the Scripture (Ecclesiastes 1:1); and St. Augustine exclaimed: "Thou hast made us for Thyself (O God) and our heart is troubled till it rests in Thee."
- ◆ We are created for wisdom, for a possession of truth perfect in its kind. Our mental faculties and the aspirations of our nature give proof of this. But the scanty knowledge, that we can acquire on earth stands in no proportion to the capabilities of our soul. We shall possess truth in higher perfection hereafter.
- ◆ God made us for holiness, for a complete and final triumph over passion and for the perfect and secure possession of virtue. Our natural aptitudes and desires bear witness to this. But this happy goal is not reached on earth, but in the next life.
- ◆ We are created for love and friendship, for indissoluble union with our friends. At the grave of those we love our heart longs for a future reunion. This cry of nature is no delusion. A joyful and everlasting reunion awaits the just man beyond the grave.
- ◆ It is the conviction of all peoples that there is a heaven in which the just will rejoice in the next life. But, in the fundamental questions of our being and our destiny, a conviction, so unanimous and universal, cannot be erroneous. Otherwise this world and the order of this world would remain an utter enigma to intelligent creatures, who

ought to know at least the necessary means for reaching their appointed end.

- ◆ Very few deny the existence of heaven; and these few are practically all atheists and epicureans. But surely it cannot be that all the rest have erred, and an isolated class of men such as these are not the true guides in the most fundamental questions of our being. For apostasy from God and His law cannot be the key to wisdom.

Revelation also proclaims the existence of heaven. This we have already seen in the preceding section from the many names by which the Bible designates heaven; and from the texts of Scripture, still to be quoted on the nature and peculiar conditions of heaven.

Supernatural character of heaven and the beatific vision

(1) In heaven the just will see God by direct intuition, clearly and distinctly. Here on earth we have no immediate perception of God; we see Him but indirectly in the mirror of creation. We get our first and direct knowledge from creatures, and then, by reasoning from these, we ascend to a knowledge of God according to the imperfect likeness which creatures bear to their Creator. But in doing so we proceed to a large extent by way of negation, i.e., by removing from the Divine Being the imperfections proper to creatures. In heaven, however, no creature will stand between God and the soul. He himself will be the immediate object of its vision. Scripture and theology tell us that the blessed see God face to face. And because this vision is immediate and direct, it is also exceedingly clear and distinct. Ontologists assert that we perceive God directly in this life, though our knowledge of Him is vague and obscure; but a vision of the Divine Essence, immediate yet vague and obscure, implies a contradiction. The blessed see God, not merely according to the measure of His likeness imperfectly reflected in creation, but they see Him as He is, after the manner of His own Being. That the blessed see God is a dogma of faith, expressly defined by Benedict XII (1336): We define that the souls of all the saints in heaven have seen and do see the Divine Essence by direct intuition and face to face [*visione intuitivâ et etiam faciali*], in such wise that nothing created intervenes as an object of vision, but the Divine Essence presents itself to their immediate gaze, unveiled, clearly and openly; moreover, that in this vision they enjoy the Divine Essence, and that, in virtue of this vision and this enjoyment, they are truly blessed and possess eternal life and eternal rest” (Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, ed. 10, n. 530-old edition, n. 456; cf. nn. 693, 1084, 1458 old, nn. 588, 868).

The Scriptural argument is based especially on 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 (cf. Matthew 18:10; 1 John 3:2; 2 Corinthians 5:6-8, etc.). The argument from tradition is carried out in detail by Petavius (“*De theol. dogm.*”, I, i, VII, c. 7). Several Fathers, who seemingly contradict this doctrine, in reality maintain it; they merely teach that the bodily eye cannot see God, or that the blessed do not fully comprehend God, or that the soul cannot see God with its natural powers in this life (cf. Francisco Suárez, “*De Deo*”, I, II, c. 7, n. 17).

(2) It is of faith that the beatific vision is supernatural, that it transcends the powers and claims of created nature, of angels as well as of men. The opposite doctrine of the Beghards and Beguines was condemned (1311) by the Council of Vienne (Denz., n. 475-old, n. 403), and likewise a similar error of Baius by Pius V (Denz., n. 1003-old, n. 883). The Vatican Council expressly declared that man has been elevated by God to a supernatural end (Denz., n. 1786-old, n. 1635; cf. nn. 1808, 1671-old, nn. 1655, 1527). In this connection we must also mention the condemnation of the Ontologists, and in particular of Rosmini, who held that an immediate but indeterminate perception of God is essential to the human intellect and the beginning of all human knowledge (Denz., nn. 1659, 1927-old, nn. 1516, 1772).

That the vision of God is supernatural can also be shown from the supernatural character of sanctifying grace (Denz., n. 1021-old, n. 901); for, if the preparation for that vision is supernatural. Even unaided reason recognizes that the immediate vision of God, even if it be at all possible, can never be natural for a creature. For it is manifest that every created mind first perceives its own self and creatures similar to itself by which it is surrounded, and from these it rises to a knowledge of God as the source of their being and their last end. Hence its natural knowledge of God is necessarily mediate and analogous; since it forms its ideas and judgments about God after the imperfect likeness which its own self and its surroundings bear to Him. Such is the only means nature offers for acquiring a knowledge of God, and more than this is not due to any created intellect; consequently, the second and essentially higher way of seeing God by intuitive vision can but be a gratuitous gift of Divine goodness.

These considerations prove, not merely that the immediate vision of God exceeds the natural claims of all creatures in actual existence; but they also prove against Ripalda, Becaenus, and others (Recently also Morlias), that God cannot create any spirit which would, by virtue of its nature, be entitled to the intuitive vision of the Divine Essence.

Therefore, as theologians express it, no created substance is of its nature supernatural; however, the Church has given no decision on this matter. Cf. Palmieri, “De Deo creante et elevante” (Rome, 1878), thes. 39; Morlais, “Le Surnaturel absolu”, in “Revue du Clergé Français”, XXXI (1902), 464 sqq., and, for the opposite view, Bellamy, “La question du Surnaturel absolu”, *ibid.*, XXXV (1903), 419 sqq. St. Thomas seems to teach (I.12.1) that man has a natural desire for the beatific vision. Elsewhere, however, he frequently insists on the supernatural character of that vision (e.g. III.9.2 ad 3um). Hence in the former place he obviously supposes that man knows from revelation both the possibility of the beatific vision and his destiny to enjoy it. On this supposition it is indeed quite natural for man to have so strong a desire for that vision, that any inferior kind of beatitude can no longer duly satisfy him.

(3) To enable it to see God, the intellect of the blessed is supernaturally perfected by the light of glory (*lumen gloriae*). This was defined by the Council of Vienne in 1311 (Denz., n. 475; old, n. 403); and it is also evident from the supernatural character of the beatific vision. For the beatific vision transcends the natural powers of the intellect; therefore, to see God the intellect stands in need of some supernatural strength, not merely transient, but permanent as the vision itself. This permanent invigoration is called the “light of glory”, because it enables the souls in glory to see God with their intellect, just as material light enables our bodily eyes to see corporeal objects.

On the nature of the light of glory the Church has decided nothing. Theologians have elaborated various theories about it, which, however, need not be examined in detail. According to the view commonly and perhaps most reasonably held, the light of glory is a quality Divinely infused into the soul and similar to sanctifying grace, the virtue of faith, and the other supernatural virtues in the souls of the just (cf. Franzelin, “De Deo uno”, 3rd ed., Rome, 1883, thes. 16). It is controverted among theologians whether or not a mental image, be it a *species expressa* or a *species impressa*, is required for the beatific vision. But by many this is regarded as largely a controversy about the appropriateness of the term, rather than about the matter itself. The more common and probably more correct view denies the presence of any image in the strict sense of the word, because no created image can represent God as He is (cf. Mazzella, “De Deo creante”, 3rd ed., Rome, 1892, disp. IV, a. 7, sec. 1). The beatific vision is obviously a created act inherent in the soul, and not, as a few of the older theologians thought, the uncreated act of God’s own intellect communicated to the soul. For, “as seeing and knowing are immanent vital actions,

the soul can see or know God by its own activity only, and not through any activity exerted by some other intellect. Cf. Gutherlet, “Das lumen gloriae” in “Pastor bonus”, XIV (1901), 297 sqq.

(4) Theologians distinguish the primary and the secondary object of the beatific vision. The primary object is God Himself as He is. The blessed see the Divine Essence by direct intuition, and, because of the absolute simplicity of God, they necessarily see all His perfections and all the persons of the Trinity. Moreover, since they see that God can create countless imitations of His Essence, the entire domain of possible creatures lies open to their view, though indeterminately and in general. For the actual decrees of God are not necessarily an object of that vision, except in as far as God pleases to manifest them. Therefore finite things are not necessarily seen by the blessed, even if they are an actual object of God’s will. Still less are they a necessary object of vision as long as they are mere possible objects of the Divine will. Consequently the blessed have a distinct knowledge of individual possible things only in so far as God wishes to grant this knowledge. Thus, if God so willed, a blessed soul might see the Divine Essence without seeing in it the possibility of any individual creature in particular. But in fact, there is always connected with the beatific vision a knowledge of various things external to God, of the possible as well as of the actual. All these things, taken collectively, constitute the secondary object of the beatific vision.

The blessed soul sees these secondary objects in God either directly (*formaliter*), or in as far as God is their cause (*causaliter*). It sees in God directly whatever the beatific vision discloses to its immediate gaze without the aid of any created mental image (*species impressa*). In God, as in their cause, the soul sees all those things which it perceives with the aid of a created mental image, a mode of perception granted by God as a natural complement of the beatific vision. The number of objects seen directly in God cannot be increased unless the beatific vision itself be intensified; but the number of things seen in God as their cause may be greater or smaller, or it may vary without any corresponding change in the vision itself.

The secondary object of the beatific vision comprises everything the blessed may have a reasonable interest in knowing. It includes, in the first place, all the mysteries which the soul believed while on earth. Moreover, the blessed see each other and rejoice in the company of those whom death separated from them. The veneration paid them on earth and the prayers addressed to them are also known to the

blessed. All that we have said on the secondary object of the beatific vision is the common and reliable teaching of theologians. In recent times (Holy Office, 14 Dec., 1887) Rosmini was condemned because he taught that the blessed do not see God Himself, but only His relations to creatures (Denz., 1928-1930 - old, 1773-75). In the earlier ages we find Gregory the Great ("Moral.", l. XVIII, c. liv, n. 90, in P.L., LXXVI, XCIII) combating the error of a few who maintained that the blessed do not see God, but only a brilliant light streaming forth from Him. Also in the Middle Ages there are traces of this error (cf. Franzelin, "De Deo uno", 2nd ed., thes. 15, p. 192).

(5) Although the blessed see God, they do not comprehend Him, because God is absolutely incomprehensible to every created intellect, and He cannot grant to any creature the power of comprehending Him as He comprehends Himself. Francisco Suárez rightly calls this a revealed truth ("De Deo", l. II, c. v, n. 6); for the Fourth Council of the Lateran and the Vatican Council enumerated incomprehensibility among the absolute attributes of God (Denz., nn. 428, 1782 - old nn. 355, 1631). The Fathers defend this truth against Eunomius, an Arian, who asserted that we comprehend God fully even in this life. The blessed comprehend God neither intensively nor extensively - not intensively, because their vision has not that infinite clearness with which God is knowable and with which He knows Himself, nor extensively, because their vision does not actually and clearly extend to everything that God sees in His Essence. For they cannot by a single act of their intellect represent every possible creature individually, clearly, and distinctly, as God does; such an act would be infinite, and an infinite act is incompatible with the nature of a created and finite intellect. The blessed see the Godhead in its entirety, but only with a limited clearness of vision (*Deum totum sed non totaliter*). They see the Godhead in its entirety, because they see all the perfections of God and all the Persons of the Trinity; and yet their vision is limited, because it has neither the infinite clearness that corresponds to the Divine perfections, nor does it extend to everything that actually is, or may still become, an object of God's free decrees. Hence it follows that one blessed soul may see God more perfectly than another, and that the beatific vision admits of various degrees.

(6) The beatific vision is a mystery. Of course reason cannot prove the impossibility of such a vision. For why should God, in His omnipotence, be unable to draw so near and adapt Himself so fully to our intellect, that the soul may, as it were, directly feel Him and lay

hold of Him and look on Him and become entirely immersed in Him? On the other hand, we cannot prove absolutely that this is possible; for the beatific vision lies beyond the natural destiny of our intellect, and it is so extraordinary a mode of perception that we cannot clearly understand either the fact or the manner of its possibility.

(7) From what has been thus far said it is clear that there is a two fold beatitude: the natural and the supernatural. As we have seen, man is by nature entitled to beatitude, provided he does not forfeit it by his own fault. We have also seen that beatitude is eternal and that it consists in the possession of God, for creatures cannot truly satisfy man. Again, as we have shown, the soul is to possess God by knowledge and love. But the knowledge to which man is entitled by nature is not an immediate vision, but an analogous perception of God in the mirror of creation, still a very perfect knowledge which really satisfies the heart. Hence the beatitude to which alone we have a natural claim consists in that perfect analogous knowledge and in the love corresponding to that knowledge. This natural beatitude is the lowest kind of felicity which God, in His goodness and wisdom, can grant to sinless man. But, instead of an analogous knowledge of His Essence He may grant to the blessed a direct intuition which includes all the excellence of natural beatitude and surpasses it beyond measure. It is this higher kind of beatitude that it has pleased God to grant us. And by granting it He not merely satisfies our natural desire for happiness but He satisfies it in superabundance.

Eternity of heaven and impeccability of the blessed

It is a dogma of faith that the happiness of the blessed is everlasting. This truth is clearly contained in the Holy Bible (see Section I); it is daily professed by the Church in the Apostles' Creed (*credo... vitam aeternam*), and it has been repeatedly defined by the Church, especially by Benedict XII (cf. Section III). Even reason, as we have seen, can demonstrate it. And surely, if the blessed knew that their happiness was ever to come to an end, this knowledge alone would prevent their happiness from being perfect.

In this matter Origen fell into error; for in several passages of his works he seems to incline to the opinion that rational creatures never reach a permanent final state (*status termini*), but that they remain forever capable of falling away from God and losing their beatitude and of always returning to Him again.

The blessed are confirmed in good; they can no longer commit even the slightest venial sin; every wish of their heart is inspired by the purest love of God. That is, beyond doubt, Catholic doctrine. Moreover this impossibility of sinning is physical. The blessed have no longer the power of choosing to do evil actions; they cannot but love God; they are merely free to show that love by one good action in preference to another. But whilst the impeccability of the blessed appears to be unanimously held by theologians, there is a diversity of opinion as to its cause. According to some, its proximate cause consists in this that God absolutely withholds from the blessed His co-operation to any sinful consent. The beatific vision does not, they argue, of its very nature exclude indirectly and absolutely; because God may still displease the blessed soul in various ways, e.g., by refusing a higher degree to beatitude, or by letting persons whom that soul loves die in sin and sentencing them to eternal torment. Moreover, when great sufferings and arduous duties accompany the beatific vision, as was the case in the human nature of Christ on earth, then at least the possibility of sin is not directly and absolutely excluded.

The ultimate cause of impeccability is the freedom from sin or the state of grace in which at his death man passes into the final state (*status termini*), i.e. into a state of unchangeable attitude of mind and will. For it is quite in consonance with the nature of that state that God should offer only such co-operation as corresponds to the mental attitude man chose for himself on earth. For this reason also the souls in purgatory, although they do not see God, are still utterly incapable of sin. The beatific vision itself may be called a remote cause of impeccability; for by granting so wondrous a token of His love, God may be said to undertake the obligation of guarding from all sin those whom He so highly favours, whether by refusing all co-operation to evil acts or in some other manner. Besides, even if the clear vision of God, most worthy of their love, does not render the blessed physically unable, it certainly renders them less liable, to sin.

Impeccability, as explained by the representatives of this opinion, is not, properly speaking, extrinsic, as is often wrongly asserted; but it is rather intrinsic, because it is strictly due to the final state of blessedness and especially to the beatific vision. This is substantially the opinion of the Scotists, likewise of many others, especially in recent times. Nevertheless the Thomists, and with them the greater number of theologians, maintain that the beatific vision of its very nature directly excludes the possibility of sin. For no creature can have a clear intuitive

view of the Supreme Good without being by that very fact alone irresistibly drawn to love it efficaciously and to fulfil for its sake even the most arduous duties without the least repugnance. The Church has left this matter undecided. The present writer rather inclines to the opinion of the Scotists because of its bearing on the question of the liberty of Christ.

Essential beatitude

We distinguish objective and subjective beatitude. Objective beatitude is that good, the possession of which makes us happy; subjective beatitude is the possession of that good. The essence of objective beatitude, or the essential object of beatitude is God alone. For the possession of God assures us also the possession of every other good we may desire; moreover, everything else is so immeasurably inferior to God that its possession can only be looked upon as something accidental to beatitude. Finally, that all else is of minor importance for beatitude is evident from the fact that nothing save God alone is capable of satisfying man. Accordingly the essence of subjective beatitude is the possession of God, and it consists in the acts of vision, love, and joy. The blessed love God with a twofold love; with the love of complacency, by which they love God for His own sake, and secondly with the love less properly so called, by which they love Him as the source of their happiness (*amor concupiscentiae*). In consonance with this twofold love the blessed have a twofold joy; firstly, the joy of love in the strict sense of the word, by which they rejoice over the infinite beatitude which they see in God Himself, precisely because it is the happiness of God whom they love, and secondly, the joy springing from love in a wider sense, by which they rejoice in God because He is the source of their own supreme happiness. These five acts constitute the essence of (subjective) beatitude, or in more precise terms, its physical essence. In this theologians agree.

Here theologians go a step farther and inquire whether among those five acts of the blessed there is one act, or a combination of several acts, which constitutes the essence of beatitude in a stricter sense, i.e. its metaphysical essence in contradistinction to its physical essence. In general their answer is affirmative; but in assigning the metaphysical essence their opinions diverge. The present writer prefers the opinion of St. Thomas, who holds that the metaphysical essence consists in the vision alone. For, as we have just seen, the acts of love and joy are merely a kind of secondary attributes of the vision; and this remains true, whether love and joy result directly from the vision, as the Thomists

hold, or whether the beatific vision by its very nature calls for confirmation in love and God's efficacious protection against sin.

Accidental beatitude

Besides the essential object of beatitude the souls in heaven enjoy many blessings accidental to beatitude. We shall mention only a few:

- ◆ In heaven there is not the least pain or sadness; for every aspiration of nature must be finally realized. The will of the blessed is in perfect harmony with the Divine will; they feel displeasure at the sins of men, but without experiencing any real pain.
- ◆ They delight greatly in the company of Christ, the angels, and the saints, and in the reunion with so many who were dear to them on earth.
- ◆ After the resurrection the union of the soul with the glorified body will be a special source of joy for the blessed.
- ◆ They derive great pleasure from the contemplation of all those things, both created and possible, which, as we have shown, they see in God, at least indirectly as in the cause. And, in particular, after the last judgment the new heaven and the new earth will afford them manifold enjoyment.
- ◆ The blessed rejoice over sanctifying grace and the supernatural virtues that adorn their soul; and any sacramental character they may have also adds to their bliss.
- ◆ Very special joys are granted to the martyrs, doctors, and virgins, a special proof of victories won in time of trial (Revelation 7:11 sq.; Daniel 12:3; Revelation 14:3 sq.). Hence theologians speak of three particular crowns, aureolas, or glorioles, by which these three classes of blessed souls are accidentally honoured beyond the rest. *Aureola* is a diminutive of *aurea*, i.e. *aurea corona* (golden crown). (Cf. St. Thomas, Supp:96.)

Since eternal happiness is metaphorically called a marriage of the soul with Christ, theologians also speak of the bridal endowments of the blessed. They distinguish seven of these gifts, four of which belong to the glorified body - light, impassibility, agility, subtilty and three to the soul - vision, possession, enjoyment (*visio, comprehensio, fruitio*). Yet in the explanation given by the theologians of the three gifts of the soul we find but little conformity. We may identify the gift of vision with the habit of the light of glory, the gift of possession with the habit of that love in a wider sense which has found in God the fulfilment of its desires, and the gift of enjoyment we may identify with

the habit of love properly so called (*halitus caritatis*) which rejoices to be with God; in this view these three infused habits would be considered simply as ornaments to beautify the soul. (Cf. St. Thomas, Supp:95)

Attributes of beatitude

There are various degrees of beatitude in heaven corresponding to the various degrees of merit. This is a dogma of faith, defined by the Council of Florence (Denz., n. 693- old, n. 588). The Bible teaches this truth in very many passages (e.g., wherever it speaks of eternal happiness as a reward), and the Fathers defend it against the heretical attacks of Jovinian. It is true that, according to Matthew 20:1-16, each labourer receives a penny; but by this comparison Christ merely teaches that, although the Gospel was preached to the Jews first, yet in the Kingdom of Heaven there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile, and that no one will receive a greater reward merely because of being a son of Judah. The various degrees of beatitude are not limited to the accidental blessings, but they are found first and foremost in the beatific vision itself. For, as we have already pointed out, the vision, too, admits of degrees. These essential degrees of beatitude are, as Francisco Suárez rightly observes ("De beat.", d. xi, s. 3, n. 5), that threefold fruit Christ distinguishes when He says that the word of God bears fruit in some thirty, in some sixty, in some a hundredfold (Matthew 13:23). And it is by a mere accommodation of the text that St. Thomas (Supp:96, aa. 2 sqq.) and other theologians apply this text to the different degrees in the accidental beatitude merited by married persons, widows, and virgins.

The happiness of heaven is essentially unchangeable; still it admits of some accidental changes. Thus we may suppose that the blessed experience special joy when they receive greater veneration from men on earth. In particular, a certain growth in knowledge by experience is not excluded; for instance, as time goes on, new free actions of men may become known to the blessed, or personal observation and experience may throw a new light on things already known. And after the last judgment accidental beatitude will receive some increase from the union of soul and body, and from the sight of the new heaven and the earth.

Is heaven a place or only a state of mind?

Your distress shows the difficulty of expressing transcendent concepts in mere words. The truth is, we don't know exactly what heaven is like-even if we did, we could not reduce it to language, which

Eschatology

is a human device incapable of containing God. Your group leader's statement that heaven is "in our minds" is misleading, however. Heaven *is* within us, in the sense that each Christian is a temple of the indwelling Trinity. But it is no more accurate to say that heaven is *only* within us than it is to say that, by virtue of our receiving the sacraments, Jesus exists *only* within us. God and heaven live within us-but they also have an objective life beyond us as well.

God, in a sense, *is* heaven. In 1 Maccabees 3:18, for example, the author uses "Heaven" as a name for God (to avoid using the name it was forbidden to pronounce). Heaven exists wherever God is. Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 4:17), meaning that, since God took on flesh, heaven itself is here, among us. After death, our experience of heaven will be to enter fully into the intimate love of the Holy Trinity, to our everlasting and perfect joy. To the extent that we participate in that love while on earth, we begin to share the joy of heaven now. Catherine of Siena said, "All the way to heaven is heaven."

You are right that the Bible refers to "heavenly places." We must keep in mind that time and space are finite concepts; God is not bound by them, nor could God live in one physical place, as we think of it, because the physical universe is his creation and cannot contain him. Heaven is a *place*, but not a particular *space*. We must understand the symbolic language of the Bible and the saints as an attempt to communicate the ineffable. We do not understand literally terms such as seeing God "face to face." We rejoice in their *meaning*: that we will be *with* God, intimate with him, unhindered by our mortal limitations.

As the *Catechism* says (section 1024), "This perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity-this communion of life and love with the Trinity, with the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the blessed-is called 'heaven.' Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness." We leave up to God "where" and "how" he fulfills his promise.

Chapter 10

Fourteen Questions About Heaven

Of course not. Why would someone think that? There are two reasons, and the first one is simply a confusion between Heaven and divinity. We will remain human in Heaven, therefore finite, therefore our knowledge will remain finite. True, we will share in divine life, but this is just a share. In fact, we share in divine life now, if we are reborn in Christ; our souls nurture a fetal Christ. But I have not observed that fact generating omniscience in myself or any other.

1. Will we know everything in heaven?

When you come to think of it, knowing everything would be more like Hell than Heaven for us. For one thing, we need progress and hope: we need to look forward to knowing something new tomorrow. Mystery is our mind's food. If we truly said, "I have seen everything", we would conclude, as did the author of Ecclesiastes, "all is vanity". For another thing, the more knowledge, the more responsibility. Only omnipotence can bear the burden of omniscience; only God's shoulders

are strong enough to carry the burden of infinite knowledge without losing the joy.

The second reason we may think our heavenly knowledge is infinite is the theory that on earth we have already an access, a potency, for all knowledge; that the brain is a “reducing valve”, not a generator. Perhaps the Fall lowered the curtain between us and all truth, which we now see “through a glass, darkly”; and in Heaven the curtain will rise again. Thus, the knowledge we now have is both a memory and a prophecy of Paradise.

But even if this theory is true it does not entail our omniscience. Even if there is no curtain in Heaven, even if our consciousness there dashes against no wall or limit, still we remain like the tiny figures in a Chinese landscape: small subjects in an enormously larger objective world. Even if we then escape from the tiny hut in which we are now imprisoned and through whose smudged windows or chinks in whose walls we now must look even if we wander freely in the country of light we are in the light, not the light in us. Our first and last wisdom in Heaven is Socratic, just as it is on earth: to know how little we know. If there is no end of the need for humility in the moral order (the saint is the one humble enough not to think he is a saint), the same is true of the intellectual order (the wise man is the one humble enough to know he has no wisdom). It all depends on the standard of judgment: by earthly standards most of us are moderately saintly and moderately wise; by Heavenly standards all of us, even in Heaven, are children. And by the standard of the infinite, inexhaustible perfection of God, we remain children forever. Happy children, fulfilled children, but children.

Perhaps this will be one of the supreme tests: would we choose the childlikeness of Heaven or the promise of “maturity”, of “humanity come of age” in Hell? Will we suffer gladly the blow and shock to our pride that is Heaven’s gift of eternal childhood (thus eternal hope and progress) or will we insist on the “successes” of “self-actualization” that Heaven denies us and Hell offers us? If the latter, we will find despair instead of hope, ennui instead of creative work, and the emptying out of all our joy. Jesus’ teaching, “Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven”, is not something to be outgrown. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, when asked which are the four most important virtues, replied, “Humility, humility, humility, and humility.” It is only the foolish egotist who thinks that our smallness

relative to the infinite riches of objective reality is a problem to be overcome.

2. Will we all be equal in heaven?

By God’s grace, no! How awful that would be almost as awful as knowing everything. Having no heroes, being unable to look up to anyone, would be Hell, not Heaven.

We modern egalitarians are tempted to the primal sin of pride in the opposite way from the ancients. The old, aristocratic form of pride was the desire to be better than others. The new, democratic form is the desire not to have anyone better than yourself. It is just as spiritually deadly and does not even carry with it the false pleasure of gloating superiority. Flat, boring, repetitive sameness is simply not the structure of reality in a theistic universe, either on earth or in Heaven. However, in Heaven, as on earth, each of us will be or do something no one else will be or do as well. No one will be superfluous.

If He had no use for all these differences, I do not see why He should have created more souls than one... Your soul has a curious shape because it is a hollow made to fit a particular swelling in the infinite contours of the divine substance, or a key to unlock one of the doors in the house with many mansions... each of the redeemed shall forever know and praise some one aspect of the divine beauty better than any other creature can.

God’s justice is not ours. It surprises ours in a double way. On the one hand, the one-hour workers receive the same pay as the all-day workers, in Christ’s parable. “He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent empty away.” “Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low.” But on the other hand, to him who already has, more will be given, and “from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away”. Human justice is outraged by both halves of Christ’s paradoxical justice.

Justice does not mean equality. In a poem, in the universe, in mathematics, in architecture everywhere there is natural justice, justice means inequality, yin and yang, male and female, higher and lower, East and West, light and darkness, land and water. No flat, dull repetition but uniqueness. In human relationships too, justice does not mean equality, but treating equals equally and unequals unequally. Is

it just to treat a pig like a man? If so, it is also just to treat a man like a pig. One of the astonishing blind spots of modernity is its unquestioning fixation on equality.

Of course there are degrees of perfection in Heaven; it is quite the divine style. There are degrees of perfection in everything God created (though not in everything we create). Equality is a man-made legal fiction designed as a wall of defense against tyranny, a medicine against a disease.

3. Do the blessed in heaven see us now?

The living often say they feel the dead present and watching them. Is this illusion or fact?

It is fact. The Bible says we are surrounded by “a great cloud of witnesses”. The context is speaking of the dead. They are alive. For God is “not God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him”.

Reason confirms revelation here. Does their love for us cease? Does it not rather increase in purity and power? And do not their vision and understanding also increase?

“The Communion of Saints” means not only (1) love and understanding among the blessed in Heaven and (2) love and understanding among the redeemed on earth but also (3) love and understanding between those two groups, the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant, temporarily separated by death.

What difference does this make? Well, what difference does it make to you if you believe you are being watched by a thousand living human eyes? Multiply this consequence by millions and by the increase in love and understanding in Heaven. Throw in literally innumerable angels, all of them sharing mightily in God’s love and knowledge. Then you have the difference it makes: the exponent of infinity.

The link connecting the Church Militant with the Church Triumphant, the link connecting Heaven and earth, is the incarnate Christ. We participate in what Christ does, and Christ links Heaven and earth. He is still on earth as well as in Heaven (1) by His Spirit and (2) in His Mystical Body, the Church, His people. Christianity does not worship an absent Christ. And just as He can be on earth even when He has gone to Heaven, so can we in Him. The cells in

the one Body are all living cells, but only a very few of them are living on earth.

4. Do ghosts come from heaven?

First of all, Scripture strictly forbids us to call them up as Saul called up the ghost of the prophet Samuel by means of the Witch of Endor’s necromancy. Because of this deed, he lost his kingdom and perhaps his soul.

The reason for the stricture is probably protection against the danger of deception by evil spirits. We are out of our depth, our knowledge, and our control once we open the doors to the supernatural. The only openings that are safe for us are the ones God has approved: revelation, prayer, His own miracles, sacraments, and primarily Christ Himself. He has made a straight and safe road for us from earth to Heaven, through the dark woods of the innumerable, unknowable, and unpredictable spiritual forces that are to us as fire to an infant or a juggernaut to an ant. The danger is not physical but spiritual, and spiritual danger always centers on deception. The Devil is “a liar and the father of lies”. He disguises himself “as an angel of light”.

Nevertheless, without our action or invitation, the dead often do appear to the living. There is enormous evidence of “ghosts” in all cultures. What are we to make of them? Surely we should not classify the appearances of the wives of C. S. Lewis and Sheldon Vanauken, just to take two Christian examples, as demonic?

We can distinguish three kinds of ghosts, I believe. First, the most familiar kind: the sad ones, the wispy ones. They seem to be working out some unfinished earthly business, or suffering some purgatorial purification until released from their earthly, business. These ghosts would seem to be the ones who just barely made it to Purgatory, who feel little or no joy yet and who need to learn many painful lessons about their past lives on earth.

Second, there are malicious and deceptive spirits and since they are deceptive, they hardly ever appear malicious. These are probably the ones who respond to conjuring at séances. They probably come from Hell. Even the chance of that happening should be sufficient to terrify away all temptation to necromancy.

Third, there are the bright, happy spirits of dead friends and family, especially spouses, who appear unbidden, at God’s will, not ours,

with messages of hope and love. They seem to come from Heaven. Unlike the purgatorial ghosts who come back primarily for their own sakes, these bright spirits come back for the sake of us the living, to tell us all is well. They are aped by evil spirits who say the same, who speak “peace, peace, when there is no peace.” But deception works only one way: the fake can deceive by appearing genuine, but the genuine never deceives by appearing fake. Heavenly spirits always convince us that they are genuinely good. Even the bright spirits appear ghostlike to us because a ghost of any type is one whose substance does not belong in or come from this world. In Heaven these spirits are not ghosts but real, solid, and substantial because they are at home there. “One can’t be a ghost in one’s own country.”

That there are all three kinds of ghosts is enormously likely. Even taking into account our penchant to deceive and to be deceived, our credulity and our fakery, there remain so many trustworthy accounts of all three types of ghosts trustworthy by every ordinary empirical and psychological standard that only a dogmatic a priori prejudice against them could prevent us from believing they exist. As Chesterton says, “We believe an old apple-woman when she says she ate an apple; but when she says she saw a ghost we say, ‘But she’s only an old apple-woman.’” A most undemocratic and unscientific prejudice.

5. Will we have emotions in heaven?

Emotions move us; we do not move them. They are a form of passivity. We will be far more active in Heaven than we ever were before, since our spirits (which are activity) will rule rather than being ruled by our bodies (which are passivity). Nevertheless, we will have bodies, therefore passivity, therefore emotions, though they will not be at the un free whim of heredity, environment, animal instinct, propaganda, others’ demands, and the many other forces that presently condition us.

Even when our spirits are perfectly free, they can feel. Even now, it is the spirit that feels, not just the body. It is a prejudice imported from Greek philosophy, not a notion found in Scripture, that feelings should be dominated by rational thought. The center of the self which the Greeks located in reason, Scripture locates in the “heart”, that which loves. This center is no more a feeling than it is thinking; it is the pre functional root of both, or it is a deeper feeling and a deeper thinking: the heart has its reasons which the reason does not know.”

But since our thinking and our feeling are equal functions of the heart, we will retain our feeling in Heaven just as we will retain our thinking. All our humanity is perfected, not diminished, in Heaven.

6. Will we feel sorrow in heaven for those in hell?

We seem to face a dilemma here. On the one hand, Scripture assures us that “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

On the other hand, the blessed dead seem sometimes to manifest sorrow, like Mary at LaSalette, weeping for the sins of the world. And C. S. Lewis says, “as there may be pleasures in Hell (God shield us from them), there may be something not all unlike pains in Heaven (God grant us soon to taste them).” What could this mean?

Might it be that the sorrow appears only during our first, purgatorial stage? At this point the pains of separation may affect not only the earthly bereaved lover but also the heavenly beloved. As Lewis says, “I can’t help suspecting the dead also feel the pains of separation (and this may be one of their purgatorial sufferings).” But this would not explain the tears of Mary, who is certainly beyond Purgatory.

Might it be that the sorrow is only an appearance, like angels’ bodies, put on for our sake? But the purpose of appearance should be to teach, not to deceive, if the appearance comes from Heaven.

To solve this problem let us look at the greatest suffering, that which is made possible by love. The more you love, the more you can suffer. That fact creates the following problem: Does God the Father suffer? The affirmative answer to that question has been declared a heresy (Patripassianism); yet how can God love us, and remain aloof and invulnerable? As Kierkegaard says, the unhappiness that comes from the inability of lovers to understand each other is infinitely more profound than that [unhappiness] of which men commonly speak, since it strikes at the very heart of love... This infinitely deeper grief is essentially the prerogative of the superior... in reality, it belongs to God alone... Men sometimes think that this might be a matter of indifference to God, since he does not stand in need of the learner [us]. But in this we forget or rather, alas! we prove how far we are from understanding him; we forget that God loves the learner.

The dilemma, then, is this: If God cannot suffer, how can He really love us? But if He can suffer, how is He God? To answer this question would also be to answer the question of whether and how we can suffer in Heaven, for Heavenly children resemble their Heavenly Father.

The answer requires us to distinguish between two ingredients of earthly love and caring, an active and a passive ingredient, that are together in fact but distinguishable in thought. Say a parent loves a child who has done something harmful to himself. The parent's love speaks two words to the child. The first word, the word of active caring for the other, says, "How could you do this to yourself?" The second word, the word of passivity and vulnerability, says, "How could you do this to me?" God loves us with the first love only, and the blessed in Heaven will love as God loves. We cannot blackmail God. We cannot make Him wring His hands by holding our breath until we turn blue in the face. He truly loves and cares, yet He is invulnerable not by being aloof but by being supremely active, not passive.

Perhaps the ultimate fact of all, the nature of God, the inner life of the Trinity as a system of self-dying, self-giving. Perhaps this is the deepest reason of all for pain on earth, and the solution to the "problem of evil": Why does a good and loving God allow so much earthly suffering? To train us for Heaven's joyful suffering and to enact, to incarnate, to manifest the ultimate law of reality on our human level: the law of death and life, blessed self-death (no longer blessed for fallen creatures) leading to eternal life. "All pains and pleasures we have known on earth are early initiations in the movements of that dance." This is the supreme joy in all existence, the joy of God's inner life of self-giving, the secret forever incomprehensible to the rebel, angelic or human, who says "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven."

7. Will we be free to sin in heaven?

Here is another dilemma. If we answer no, we seem to lack something: free will. If we answer yes, we lack something else: moral perfection. The Heavenly question thus lands us squarely into an earthly and present issue concerning the nature of freedom and of morality and may help us to puncture one of modernity's most pervasive and destructive illusions: the association of freedom with rebellion and of obedience with unfreedom.

Suppose we change the question so as to avoid the ambiguity of the word freedom. Are we able to sin in Heaven? If not, it seems we are programmed and determined rather than free. If so, if temptation is possible in Heaven, Heavenly security against sin is gone. One of the best things to look forward to at death, say the saints, is that "he who has died is freed from sin." If there is even a possibility of sin in Heaven, that possibility may be actualized, for if the actualization of a possibility is impossible, then it is not a possibility but an impossibility.

How can we preserve both free will and sinlessness in Heaven? Once again, God is our model and solution: we solve this pseudoproblem in the same way God does. He is both free and sinless. How? Let us judge our freedom by His, rather than vice versa.

What do we mean by "freedom"? Sometimes (1) political freedom, freedom from tyranny, oppression, or the denial of our rights; sometimes (2) physical power, ability to act, freedom from hindrance; and sometimes (3) spiritual power to choose ("free will"). Of course we will have all three in Heaven, but why won't we be able to sin, since we will have free will?

Because we will also have a fourth freedom, the most important one of all: freedom from sin, from what makes us not ourselves. We will be free to be the true selves God designed us to be, free to be determined by God. This determination does not remove our freedom but is our freedom, for even now freedom is not simply indeterminism; it is freedom to be determined by final causes (purposes) rather than efficient causes (things and events that already exist and act upon us). Our free will means that our present is determined by our future rather than by our past. Final causes are at present only mental pictures and desires. To say we are determined by final causes means that we, like God, create by knowing; that as creative artists our knowledge antecedes and determines the truth of its object, the work of art, rather than conforming to its object, as scientific and empirical knowledge does. But we are objects to God (though subjects to the world); we too, therefore, are true only when we conform to God's knowledge of us, God's artistic plan for our identity. Since our highest freedom means freedom to be ourselves, we are most free when we are most obedient to God's will, which expresses His idea of us. Thus freedom and obedience coincide. To obey God is to be free in the most radical sense: free to be me, free from inauthenticity, free from false being, free from the alien within, not just free from the alien without, the oppressor.

This explains a paradox frequently met in earthly experience: that at the moment of freest choice it feels most like destiny, and at the moment of most destined choice it feels freest. Caesar's crossing the Rubicon, choosing someone to marry, a conversion decision - these all feel both more free and more destined than ordinary choices. C. S. Lewis' explanation of this principle is that it is all of us that chooses; nothing is left over. Therefore there is nothing in us that opposes the choice; it is certain; it is wholly determined. But it is also wholly free because it is wholly self-determined. The whole self chooses, the divided will is healed.

The answer to our question, then, is that "freedom to sin" is a self-contradictory concept. Sin is inauthenticity and freedom is authenticity; sin is our false self and freedom is our true self Sin is part of Hell and freedom is part of Heaven. The question cannot be resolved, only dissolved, because it confuses Hell with Heaven.

8. *What will we possess in heaven?*

Nothing and everything. Saint Francis of Assisi and others devoted to poverty understand this paradox. Saint Paul speaks of "having nothing, and yet possessing all things" because possessed by God: "all [things] are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

Heaven is pure communism. There is no private property in Heaven. (Earthly communism, even when not atheistic, is another "too-soon" mistake of Utopianism.) "In Heaven there is no ownership. If any there took upon him to call anything his own, he would straightway be thrust out into hell and become an evil spirit." For the ultimate possession is the self, and if even that is given away, nothing else can be held (because there is no holder); and that is given away: The golden apple of selfhood, thrown among the false gods, became an apple of discord because they scrambled for it. They did not know the first rule of the holy game, which is that every player must by all means touch the ball and then immediately pass it on. To be found with it in your hands is a fault; to cling to it, death. But when it flies to and fro among the players too swift for eye to follow, and the great master Himself leads the revelry, giving Himself eternally to His creatures in the generation, and back to Himself in the sacrifice, of the Word, then indeed the eternal dance "makes heaven drowsy with the harmony."

As Mac Donald says, "the heart cannot hoard", only the hand. As Marcel says, the true self cannot possess or have anything because I do not have my own body as my body has things: I am my body.

No one can possess goodness, truth, beauty, love, life, light, God. But Heaven is these things. Therefore no one can possess Heaven. Whenever, even now, we think of truth or goodness as something we have we become self-righteous, narrow, and defensive. To have truth is to be dogmatic; to have goodness is to be proud; to have beauty is to be vain; to have joy is to be miserable with fear of losing it. God, I AM, pure subject, is the only Haver. He cannot be had, nor can His attributes or His Kingdom of Heaven.

Thus, we must learn detachment to enter Heaven. Willy-nilly, death detaches us from everything, even ourselves. We must learn to "die before you die. There is no chance after." Learning detachment from the world, which can be possessed, is our training for learning detachment from the desire to possess Heaven, which cannot be possessed. Asked whether he thought he would possess any of his beloved library books in Heaven, C. S. Lewis replied, "Only those I gave away on earth."

9. *Will we wear clothes in heaven?*

Those who claim to have caught glimpses of Heaven report a strange and surprising answer to this question; and the fact that so many have said the same surprising thing without previous acquaintance with each other lends weight to the testimony. They say that it is hard to classify the blessed as either clothed or naked. If clothed, it is as if the clothing were a part of the body, an organic growth, rather than an accidental, foreign covering: it reveals rather than conceals, and it is natural and necessary rather than artificial and accidental. If naked, it is shameless and not arousing erotic desires. It is not the result of "naking", the process of taking off the clothes that in our present state are natural, thus attaining a state of nudity that is (in our present state) unnatural. (Nudist camps are not "natural").

The principle behind the naturalness of Heavenly clothing is the overcoming of the distinction between appearance and reality. In Heaven, light reigns; we know and are known. On earth, shadows reign, reality hides behind appearances as a mercy to fallen and weakened eyes. We need the double-lensed sunglasses of reason

and faith to know truth now; in Heaven we shall see the truth naked and direct. When reality appears and no longer hides, so will we.

The clothing of Heaven is described in Scripture as “white garments.” White is the color of light. Light reveals. On earth, clothes partly conceal and partly reveal, just as language does. In Heaven all is revealed. “Nothing is hid that shall not be made manifest.”

Here, truth is *aletheia*, overcoming of *Lethe*: forgetfulness, appearance, concealment. So clothing hides the body, and the truth about the body is reached by unveiling, making. In Heaven, the truth will be in the appearances (fully revealed, fully apparent), so the truth of the resurrection body will be revealed in its clothes. As the Son perfectly expresses the Father, clothes will express the body.

Our heavenly clothes may express our earthly story and success. Socrates will have his philosopher’s robe. Heroes will wear the clothes associated with their heroism. Jesus will wear His crown of thorns. Each thorn will be a diamond.

10. Are there animals in heaven?

The simplest answer is: Why not? How irrational is the prejudice that would allow plants (green fields and flowers) but not animals into Heaven! Much more reasonable is C.S. Lewis’ speculation that we will be “between the angels who are our elder brothers and the beasts who are our jesters, servants, and playfellows.” Scripture seems to confirm this: “thy judgments are like the great deep; man and beast thou savest, O Lord.” Animals belong in the “new earth, as much as trees.

C. S. Lewis supposes that animals are saved “in” their masters, as part of their extended family. Only tamed animals would be saved in this way. It would seem more likely that wild animals are in Heaven too, since wildness, otherness, not-mine-ness, is a proper pleasure for us. The very fact that the seagull takes no notice of me when it utters its remote, lonely call is part of its glory.

Would the same animals be in Heaven as on earth? “Is my dead cat in Heaven?” Again, why not? God can raise up the very grass; why not cats? Though the blessed have better things to do than play with pets, the better does not exclude the lesser. We were meant from the beginning to have stewardship over the animals; we have not fulfilled that divine plan yet on earth; therefore it seems likely that

the right relationship with animals will be part of Heaven: proper “petship”. And what better place to begin than with already petted pets?

11. Is there music in heaven?

First of all, the Bible says so.

Secondly, great earthly music is particularly Heavenly, a sign or pointer beyond itself to Heaven. What was dimly suggested in all earthly music that moved us so much that the ancients necessarily ascribed it not to men but to gods goddesses, the nine Muses is precisely Heavenly music. That is why we were moved here; it reminded us of There, which is our home.

Third, it may well be in music that the world was created, and that music is the original language. Spoken poetry is to music what prose is to poetry. Poetry is not ornamented prose, and music is not accompanied poetry. Prose is ossified poetry, and poetry is half of music. It is not that music is in Heaven; Heaven is in music. Heaven is “the region where there is only life, and therefore all that is not music is silence.” Heaven is both silent, like the contemplative mystic, and full of sound, like a dance or a symphony.

12. How big is heaven?

The very nature of space, and therefore of size, changes in Heaven. Meaning determines size, rather than size, meaning.

The New Jerusalem’s measures are symbolic, not physical.

Heaven is big enough so that billions of races of billions of saved people are never crowded, yet small enough so that no one gets lost or feels lonely. And we can travel anywhere in Heaven simply by will.

13. Is heaven serious or funny?

The very distinction is too funny to take seriously. The distinction between humor and seriousness is strictly earthly. Here on earth, much humor is “comic relief “ from the grim business of “real” life. But in Heaven, humor is high seriousness. It is the inner secret of God and the blessed.

Even on earth, saints play with their lives in the most outrageous way. Saint Thomas More ended his life with a bad joke, telling the

axman “please do not chop my beard in two; it has not committed treason.” Jesus has the most perfect sense of humor of all. We do not often see it, because we think of humor as jokes. But the most perfect humor is in the very situation itself, especially irony, the contrast between appearance and reality. “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her” is irony. It could be more clumsily and directly rendered, “You judgmental fools are worse than that adulteress - taking out splinters with logs in your eyes.” There is great irony in the Sermon on the Mount: “Consider the lilies of the field... they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” In other words, “You’re sillier than the lilies. Who do you think you are anyway? God? He’ll take as good care of you as the lilies, won’t he?” There is irony in “You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me.” That is, “You’re trying to read the sign as if it pointed to itself” It is the same irony as Pilate’s “What is truth?” as Truth stands in front of him. Finally, there is Jesus’ ironic remark to Nicodemus, who cannot understand being “born again” and asks whether he must return to his mother’s womb: “Are you a teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand this?” You experts know everything except what it’s all about.

Jesus is our best indicator of Heaven, and if there is humor in Jesus, there is humor in Heaven. Jesus is the manifestation of the Father, and if there is humor in the personality of the Son, there is humor in the personality of the Father. For some reason, people think of the Persons of the Trinity as lacking personality, as nebbishes. In fact, the three fullest personalities in all reality are the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. They are characters! They designed ostriches, for goodness’ sake (literally). And supreme joke us.

Many of the resuscitated perceive and share Heavenly humor, even God’s laughter at repented and forgiven sins. We can laugh only when we are free, detached. The saint can laugh at life in his martyrdom, and once freed from sin (but not till then) we can laugh even at sin in Heaven. Detachment is necessary for humor. And in Heaven there is perfect detachment, even from self (ek-stasis, “standing-outside-oneself”) Therefore in Heaven there is perfect humor.

The saint and the clown share the secret of levity, the union between the two meanings of “light”: truth (opposite of falsehood and darkness) and levity (opposite of gravity and heaviness). Saints levitate! Body follows spirit.

But Heavenly humor is not the opposite of seriousness, only of joyless seriousness. Saints, mystics, and the resuscitated take life more seriously than others do. Everything gains an infinite importance, an “eternal weight of glory.” Joy is a serious matter too good to be wasted on jokes. The saint does not usually tell jokes, because he does not need to, to relieve the joylessness, to relieve sadness, to distract from the heavy, practical world. “Joy is the serious business of Heaven.”

14. Why won't we be bored in heaven?

Because we are with God, and God is infinite. We never come to the end of exploring Him. He is new every day. Because we are with God, and God is eternal. Time does not pass (a condition for boredom); it just is. All time is present in eternity, as all the events of the plot are present in an author’s mind. There is no waiting. Because we are with God, and God is love. Even on earth, the only people who are never bored are lovers.

PETER KREEFT

Chapter 11

Omega Point Theory of Chardin

The concept of the Omega Point in science and religion discussions was introduced by Jesuit paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955) as a reference to Christ as the final goal of the evolutionary process. The Omega Point Theory, inspired by the language of Teilhard, is quite distinct from Teilhard's original idea. This theory was put forward by physicist and mathematician Frank Tipler in a series of articles in the late 1980s and popularized in his 1994 book *The Physics of Immortality*. Tipler theorizes that all matter will converge to an infinite all-knowing point at the end of a closed universe and that this point to which the universe is moving is the Omega Point. This Omega Point is the “god” that necessarily exists but is not the personal God of traditional theism.

1. Teilhard's Gnosis: Cosmogenesis

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was a Jesuit priest-theologian and a distinguished geologist-paleontologist, who was born in France in 1881 and died in New York City in 1955. Following teaching posts in Paris and Cairo,

he was assigned to China for many years. In China, Teilhard became imbued with a vision of working to build the future.

By the future he meant more than the building up of the physical world; he envisaged the irreversible ascent, through man's collective efforts materially and mentally, to reach what he called the Omega Point. For Teilhard the Omega was the cosmic apex, the Christ who was the Spirit of the Earth. He began writing out his ideas. Teilhard the scientist began to view the cosmos as a holistic entity in process. The foundation of his ideas is scientific, based on the principles of geological and biological evolution. Teilhard the theologian intermixed these evolutionary cosmic concepts with Christian creedal theology. Because of these innovative efforts he was considered subversive and so he was silenced by the Vatican throughout much of his adult life. His works, written over a period from 1924 to 1955, were only published after his death.

This essay will deal mainly only with those aspects of Teilhard's cosmogenesis theory that are based on the rationale of geological and biological evolution. Although the essay will certainly consider Teilhard's cosmological and ontological ideas, it will not address his religious creedal theories.

The main thrust of Teilhard's gnosis was a foundational understanding of the Universe, which was expressed in his theory of Cosmogenesis. According to Teilhard, the universe is no longer to be considered a static order, but rather a universe in process. And it is a continuing, upslope trajectory of evolution that Teilhard declares a cosmogenesis. The process of Teilhard's holistic cosmos is broken into the following categories: the Without and Within of things; the evolution of matter, life, consciousness; and the Omega Point.

The world without consists of inorganic and organic matter. Looking at elemental matter, Teilhard notes that the characteristic of minerals have “chosen a road which closed them prematurely in upon themselves.” He calls this condensed matter. Eventually, in order to develop, molecules of an innate structure have in some way to get out of themselves.

They do. Teilhard observes that atoms aggregate, in geometrical patterns, into simple groups, then into “complex groupings. This is crystallization. During this crystallizing state of elemental matter, Teilhard observes that energy was constantly being released. The earth's energy became capable of building up “carbonates, hydrates, and nitrates.”

This led to polymerization, in which molecular particles “group themselves and exchange position,” thus developing into “larger and more complex” organic compounds.

Teilhard considers the earth’s early inorganic and organic developments to be “two inseparable facets of one and the same telluric operation.” Teilhard’s refrain to this is boggling: “In the world, nothing could ever burst forth as final across the different thresholds successively traversed by evolution which has not already existed in an obscure and primordial way.” Teilhard believes that there is a Within in the heart of things!

Teilhard specifically stresses that the Within is used to “denote the psychic fact of that portion of the stuff of the cosmos enclosed from the beginning of time within the narrow scope of the early earth.” The exterior world is lined with an interior one! He links this Within with enfoldment. He notes that the very individualization of the earth suggests that a “certain mass of elementary consciousness was originally imprisoned in the matter of the earth.” Teilhard is alluding to a kind of embedded cosmic intelligence or encoded information.

Moving from inanimate matter, the next step in Teilhard’s cosmic process is the outburst of life. The cell is the “natural granule of life.” The cell merges “qualitatively and quantitatively” into a multitude of living and even more complex individualized and personalized forms. In the cell, Teilhard believes that “we have...the stuff of the universe reappearing once again with all its characteristics...only this time it has reached a higher rung of complexity,” and thus has advanced “still further in interiority, i.e. in consciousness.” Teilhard labels this vast network of living creatures the biosphere.

This biosphere, this advancing network of life, has thus far resulted in the culminating development of man. With the advent of man, Teilhard believes that cosmic evolution has finally become conscious of itself...at least on this planet, which is woven into the cosmic whole. Teilhard opines that the destiny of man is to culminate into a consciousness of the species.

This consciousness of mankind will ultimately become the “thinking layer of the earth,” which Teilhard calls the noosphere.

Cosmic evolution will not cease with the noosphere. Teilhard does not consider the human species to be the epitome of the universe; rather, he believes that Nature provides us with yet another evolutionary

opening...that of a “super-soul above our souls.” The whole “gigantic psycho-biological operation” of cosmic evolution points toward a “mega-synthesis” of all the thinking elements of the earth forcing an entree into the realm of the super-human.

Teilhard refers to the super-human as the Omega Point. It is, for him, the apex of cosmic evolution. Teilhard, scientifically speaking, can only imagine what the reality of Omega might be like...a pure conscious energy. Teilhard proclaims this cosmic energy almost in the mode of poetry. “In the discovery of the sidereal world, so vast that it seems to do away with all proportion between our own being and the dimensions of the cosmos around us, only one reality seems to survive and be capable of succeeding and spanning the infinitesimal and the immense: energy... that floating, universal entity from which all emerges and into which all falls back as into an ocean; energy...the new spirit; energy...the new god.”

Now I would like to move more deeply into Teilhard’s model of the cosmic process. The structural outline of this model is as follows: the Ground of All Existence; Matter; Consciousness; and the Cosmic Apex.

The Ground of All Existence: The stuff of the universe, according to Teilhard, necessarily has a “double aspect to its structure.” By this, he means that in every region of time and space, the stuff of the universe has an inner aspect of itself: “co-extensive with their Without, there is a Within to things.”

At the very depths of the ground of all existence, Teilhard believes that there exists a special energy. For Teilhard, “somehow or other, there must be a single energy operating in the world” that holds everything together.

Teilhard talks of an interdependent energy between the Within and the Without; he believes that this energy is “psychic” in nature, but that it is divided into two distinct components: a tangential energy and a radial energy. Teilhard believes that tangential energy “links an element with all others of the same order.” Radial energy draws an element towards “ever greater complexity and centricity,” which for Teilhard means spiritual perfection.

This psychic, radial energy follows what Teilhard coins the Cosmic Law of Complexity-Consciousness. Teilhard explains it thus: “if the universe, regarded sidereally, is in process of spatial expansion (from the infinitesimal to the immense), in the same way and still more clearly

it presents itself to us, physico-chemically, as in process of organic involution upon itself (from the extremely simple to the extremely complex)...and, moreover, this particular involution of complexity is experimentally bound up with a correlative increase in interiorization, that is to say in the psyche or consciousness.”

Matter-Inanimate and Animate: Teilhard considers that matter has three faces: plurality, unity, energy. Our sensory experience, as it pursues the depths, the minuteness of matter, breaks down into an abstraction. The world becomes blurred in its plurality. And yet, says Teilhard, the more we artificially (through instruments) observe matter, the more “insistently it proclaims its fundamental unity.” The realm of the atom is co-extensive with that of every other atom. There is a “collective unity” bonded by energy. Each element of the cosmos is positively woven from all the others. There is no dichotomy in this universe.

Teilhard states that “Everything, in some extremely attenuated extension of itself, has existed from the very first.” Teilhard uses a marvelous term to explain this: cosmic embryogenesis. This cosmic embryo implies development. Though referring to the earth, Teilhard could be commenting on cosmogenesis. The “earth...is passing through a consecutive series of moving equilibria; and...in all probability it is tending towards some final state. It has a birth, a development, and presumably a death ahead.”

The ascent of life is an exciting expression of this cosmogenesis. Coming from the point of view of biology, Teilhard declares that “there is an ascent of life that is invincible.” There is movement within life at all levels; and Teilhard detects certain characteristic attitudes in this movement. They are profusion, indifference, and ingenuity.

Life is a milieu of unlimited multiplication. Accepting the concepts of Darwinian evolution, still prevalent in his day, Teilhard admits that “milliards of germs and millions of adults jostling, shoving and devouring one another fight for elbow room and for the best and largest living space.” And the individual unit of life seems to count for little in the process at this state. Admitting that there appears to be a lot of ferocity and waste, Teilhard submits that underlying all this is a certain efficiency in the struggle for life. “By reckless self-reproduction life takes its precautions against mishap. It increases its chances of survival and at the same time multiplies its chances of progress.” Teilhard believes that groping...or grasping...is directed change.

There is an ingenuity in all this groping Teilhard declares. Pervading life tries out all the paths, it mutates, and eventually it accumulates in “stable and coherent aggregates.” This is reflective of cleverness. Not only does life “invent” itself, but it has to “design” itself. Life also ramifies, expanding into natural hierarchical units. Even early on there is the intimation of information, of intelligence in the process of cosmogenesis.

This wonderful groping, grasping movement, at least on this planet, has led to the globalization of life, a “living substance spread over the earth.” For Teilhard, this stage of the cosmic process has culminated into the “unity of the biosphere that lies beyond the plurality and essential rivalry of individual beings.”

What lies ahead? For Teilhard it is the development of consciousness.

Consciousness: Teilhard stresses a sense of building-up, of an accumulation of a cosmic reflective nature. He puts it thus: “Under the free and ingenious effort of successful intelligences, something...irreversibly accumulates...and is transmitted, at least collectively by means of education, down the course of ages.”

On earth, the human person, individually, and mankind collectively represent cosmic consciousness at its present stage of development. Teilhard declares “man as a definite turning point, an upgrading of the cosmic process towards consciousness. But he does not consider man separate from Nature. “Man emerged from a general groping of the world. He was born a direct lineal descendent from a total effort of life, so that the species has an axial value and a pre-eminent dignity.”

Teilhard believes that man may be pivotal in this cosmogenic outreach towards greater consciousness. Humankind collectively, says Teilhard, is in a “state of continuous additive growth, in numbers and inter-connections.” It is becoming more “tightly concentrated upon itself.”

Teilhard calls for a push toward a new dimension of cosmic reality. He calls for the human collectivity to erect a “sphere of mutually reinforced consciousness, the seat, support and instrument of supervision and super-ideas.” Mankind has to build the noosphere!

Optimistic, Teilhard believes that the human collectivity has already made some progress towards achieving the construction of the noosphere. Teilhard puts it thus: “In every past generation true seekers, those by vocation or profession, are to be found, but in the past they were no more than a handful of individuals, generally isolated, and of a

type that was virtually abnormal. But today...in fields embracing every aspect of physical matter, life and thought, the research workers are to be numbered in the hundreds of thousands, and they no longer work in isolation but in teams endowed with penetrative powers. Research...is in process of becoming a major, indeed the principal, function of humanity.” Teilhard definitely believes that humanity is “cerebrating” itself, and slowly but surely building the noosphere, which for him is a “stupendous thinking machine.”

If a successful noogenesis comes to fullness, it will move and have its being within that greater dimension of reality: the Cosmic Apex.

The Cosmic Apex: Teilhard has a repository of labels for this greater dimension of reality: super-soul, the hyper-personal, the Evolutionary All, and the Omega Point.

Teilhard expresses himself poetically about the cosmic apex: “Omega, He towards whom all converges, is concurrently He from whom all radiates. Impossible to place him as a focus at the summit of the universe, without at the same time diffusing his presence in the intimate heart of the smallest movement of evolution.” Teilhard believes that this most mysterious of the cosmic energies is the “attraction which is exercised upon each conscious element by the center of the universe.” This is indeed the attraction “In Whom all things hold together.”

What or Who is this Cosmic Center, this Universal Attractor? Teilhard’s feeling is that at the “head of Cosmogogenesis there stands a Pole, not simply of attraction but of consolidation.” It is an “inclusive Center in which everything is gathered together...with the power to grow greater, without distortion or loss of continuity.”

For Teilhard, the Cosmic Apex is Holy Intelligence!

Cosmic Characteristics: There are certain characteristics that can be discerned from Teilhard’s cosmic model. They are Order, Intelligence, Personalization, Creativity, and a sense of Holiness.

Teilhard considers that order underlies the form and movement of the cosmic process. He believes that a special cosmic energy holds the All together, and that this cosmic energy follows a cosmic law. Teilhard calls this universal law the Cosmic Law of Complexity-Consciousness. Teilhard’s law, incorporated within his perceptions of geological and biological evolution, encompasses an organic cosmic evolution (and involution) which is proportionately correlative with an increase in consciousness (interiority).

Now there is something that drives the cosmic process. Teilhard calls it an Intelligence. He considers cosmic intelligence to be that “growth of powers of foresight and invention, prompting and guiding a planned rebound of evolution.” Intelligence, for Teilhard, is free and ingenious, it is something that is transmitted and accumulated. Teilhard believes that the level of conscious intelligence is steadily rising...particularly by means of the human brain. Teilhard declares that this is a universe that is acquiring a personality!

Inferring that there is a fundamental cosmic intelligence, Teilhard puts it thus: “From the moment when Evolution (the evolving cosmos) begins to think itself it can no longer live with or further itself except by knowing itself to be irreversible...an irreversible rise towards the personal.”

Teilhard demonstrates through the collective transformations of the evolving cosmos that progress towards individualization has taken place. “The more highly each phylum became charged with psychism, the more it tended to granulate. The animal grew in value in relation to the species. Finally at the level of man the phenomenon gathers new power and takes definite shape. With the human person, endowed by personalization...the cell has become someone.”

Evolution, however, is an ascent towards higher and higher complexity and consciousness. Teilhard believes that there is more...that there is more beyond man. Teilhard claims there is a kind of resonance, a resonance to the All. He claims that there seems to be an “expectation and awareness of a Great Presence. Like the genetic coding of the plant, animal, or human, it is as if there is coded into the cosmos the intuited promise of its ultimate form, it’s Ahead, it’s Personhood.

Theoretically, for Teilhard, there is a Knower...a cosmic Knower, a cosmic Person, a cosmic Player felt to be one with all that is known. This cosmic Knower is pure energy. It is Intelligence. It is Conscious. It is a Person. This Knower, according to Teilhard, is also creative!

About this creative Cosmic Knower, Teilhard talks in terms of “creative transformation.” He does not believe that creation was a “periodic intrusion of the First Cause,” rather “it is an act co-extensive with the whole duration of the universe.” Referring to the Cosmic Knower as “God” in the following statement, Teilhard continues. “God has been creating ever since the beginning of time, and seen from within, his creation (even his initial creation) takes the form of a

transformation. Participated being is not introduced in batches which are differentiated later as a result of a non-creative modification: God is continually breathing new being into us.”

There is little doubt that Teilhard considers this pure energy, this active Intelligence, this Cosmic Knower, which is the Cosmic Apex, as Holy. It is also an Ahead!

Teilhard’s cosmic paradigm shows a steady process which points in the direction of the Ahead. As Teilhard said, “the universe is no longer an Order but a Process. The Cosmos has become a Cosmogensis.” For Teilhard the long dreamed-of-higher life, that which has been considered as holy, had hitherto been sought Above now directs itself toward the Ahead.

Teilhard’s cosmic model also suggests that the Ahead has existed since the foundation of the cosmos. The Ahead is present in the cyclical process of the universe. The Ahead is pure, active intelligence from which all that is manifest in the cosmos comes. The Ahead acts upon universal matter, both animate and inanimate. It acts through a kind of “spirit,” an inwardness in consciousness. It enfolds information into the many explicate levels of consciousness, into all of life. The Ahead is both the Ground of All Existence and the beckoning Cosmic Apex. The Ahead is both Alpha and Omega simultaneously.

Now Humanity is a pilgrim in this cosmic process. What are the implications for humanity in Teilhard’s cosmic vision?

Implications: An aspect of the cosmic entity, humanity walks down the evolutionary path, grasping and growing, making mistakes but yet achieving mastery. Humanity is body and mind, manifest and unmanifest. Humanity is not whole, but knows that it can be Whole. Humanity is a great mystery. In humanity’s immediate world there is evil and evolution. There is ignorance along with consciousness and creativity. And war and destruction accompany the construction of civilization. Keeping these paradoxes in mind, how can the acceptance of Teilhard’s cosmic vision modify humanity’s circumstances and mindset?

Teilhard addresses the place and part of evil in the cosmic process. To begin, Teilhard describes what he considers to be the different categories of evil: The Evil of Disorder and Failure is engendered by a cosmic process that is groping, taking chances, and making choices. The Evil of Decomposition, which is sickness and corruption, results from some “unhappy chance,” and death, which exists because of the

“indispensable condition of the replacement of one individual by another along a phyletic stem.” The Evil of Solitude and Anxiety is basically the great anxiety of a “consciousness waking up to reflection.” And the Evil of Growth is that which is symbolically suffered in the “pangs of childbirth.”

Teilhard especially considers that the deeply engrained notion of original sin “translates, personifies...the perennial and universal law of imperfection which operates in mankind in virtue of its being in the process of becoming.” Salvation beckons for Teilhard, precisely because evil (disorder) is perceived to be caused, because the creature... along with the cosmos...is in process. He believes that once this perception is fully understood, than we will be able to comprehend the other side of this evil. Teilhard notes that “Evil, in all its forms...injustice, inequality, suffering, death...ceases theoretically to be outrageous from the moment when Evolution becoming a Genesis... displays itself as the...price of an immense triumph.” Then life on this planet will no longer seem a “meaningless prison,” but rather the “matrix in which our unity is being forged.”

For Teilhard, the tragic, real evil in this life occurs when humanity fails to acquire a sense of the true value of the universe. Teilhard portends that for the “man who sees nothing at the end of the world, nothing higher than himself, (than) daily life can only be filled with pettiness and boredom.”

The way beyond the ignorance, for Teilhard, is basically an individuation process. Teilhard opines that the human ego must make the pilgrimage into Self. He says it thus: “my ego must subsist through abandoning itself or the gift will fade away.” The gift is the Self. It is the “very center of our consciousness...that is the essence which Omega, if it is to be truly Omega, must reclaim.” Teilhard is not asking the human ego to self-destruct; rather, by climbing to a higher level of consciousness the ego becomes greater. The more the ego is connected with a sense of cosmic insight, the more it finds its true Self...and via the Self the more connected humanity becomes with the Cosmic Mind.

To be fully ourselves, according to Teilhard, we must head in the direction of “convergence with all the rest...towards the other.” He puts it grandly: “The peak of ourselves, the acme of our originality, is not our individuality but our person; and according to the evolutionary structure of the world, we can only find our person by uniting together. There is no mind without synthesis.”

The danger, or the evil, is not so much the ego as it is egocentrism! Teilhard denotes that egocentrism (or egoism) confuses “individuality with personality.” Becoming separate, the ego “individualizes itself.” It is a fatal move, it is regressive. It seeks “to drag the world backwards towards plurality and into matter.”

For Teilhard, the point of the individuation process, or being open to universal insight, is to further the evolution of cosmic (and human) consciousness and creativity.

Teilhard believes that there is an enfolded creative Intelligence within the depths of the cosmos...and that every aspect of human experience can be affected by this creative Intelligence, mainly via a “breakthrough” experience.

For Teilhard this special breakthrough creativity is an “act co-extensive with the whole duration of the universe.” This creativity takes the form of a transformation. Teilhard calls it a “creative transformation” that brings real emancipation. “It puts an end to the paradox and the stumbling-block of matter.” For Teilhard this transformation, this “growth of powers of foresight and invention,” can prompt and guide the evolutionary process.

This special creativity is also part and parcel of Teilhard’s vision of the noosphere. Now rather than again looking once again at Teilhard’s vision from the perspective of the cosmic process, it may be more fruitful to examine the noosphere from the angle of how humanity directly contributes to and benefits from its development.

According to Teilhard, what is really going on in the buildin îthe noosphere is the “super organization of matter itself,” and this is done via human collectivisation...collective cooperation! Using Teilhardian language: the “process cannot achieve stability until, over the entire globe, the human quantum has not merely closed the circle upon itself... but has become organically totalized.” Only through collectivization (collective cooperation) can humanity achieve this total, planetary development of the noosphere. It cannot be built by people who think only of themselves; yet every person “on earth shares, in (hirsself), in the universal heightening of consciousness.”

The resurrection of the Body

For Teilhard, faith in *Christ* is the conviction that the cosmic process is tending to a final state in which all persons are saved. Salvation is

the recovery and perfection of what is most personal in every human (PHEN: 260-64; FUT: 175).

Teilhard often writes about this salvation in psychological terms (e.g., in terms of consciousness). But he also talks in biological terms about the passage through the critical point (FUT: 51).

He writes: “Is the Kingdom of *God* a big family? Yes, in a sense it is. But in another sense it is a prodigious biological operation - that of the Redeeming Incarnation” (PHEN: 293)

On this view, there is no reason to oppose the psychological to the biological.

Human cognition is a biological computation running in every cell in the body at the molecular level.

The psychology of an individual human body is recovered and perfected when the biological program that was running on that body is recovered and perfected. The recovery and perfection of an individual body-program is the resurrection of the body. The resurrection of the body is obviously not the revival of a corpse. It is the translation of the body-program into a new medium.

The resurrection of the body has long been associated with the disembodiment and re-embodiment of the soul. A long tradition identifies the soul with the form of the body (see Aristotle, *De Anima*, 412a5-412b21; Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part 1, Q 78-84).

We may follow this tradition: the form of the body is the form of the biological computation running in every cell in that body at the molecular level. The soul may be identified with the body-program, as several important Christian thinkers have done (Hick, 1976: ch. 15; Reichenbach, 1978; Polkinghorne, 1985: 180-81; Mackay, 1997).

Barrow and Tipler explicitly identify the soul with the body-program: an intelligent being - or more generally, any living creature - is fundamentally a type of computer... the really important part of a computer is not the particular hardware, but the program; we may even say that a human being is a program designed to run on particular hardware called a human body, coding its data in very special types of data storage devices called DNA molecules and nerve cells.

The essence of a human being is not the body but the program which controls the body... defining the soul to be a type of program

has much in common with Aristotle and Aquinas' definition of the soul as "the form of activity of the body".

A living human being is a representation of a definite program rather than the program itself. In principle, the program corresponding to a human being could be stored in many different forms. (Barrow and Tipler, 1986: 659)

For Barrow and Tipler (and especially for Tipler), a particular human individual is resurrected when its body-program begins to run on the material super-computer formed during the *Big Crunch*.

Tipler refers to an exact simulation as an emulation.

He says: "the physical mechanism of individual resurrection is the emulation of each and every long-dead person - and their worlds - in the computers of the far future"

Of course, our emulations in the computers of the far future need not suffer and die as we do on Earth. They can be improved. They can live indefinitely. Their lives can be guided into super-human forms and then into forms of ever higher complexity. They can become infinitely complex (Barrow and Tipler, 1986: 659-61).

Since the end of the universe in a *Big Crunch* does not seem likely, however, the *Barrow-Tipler theory* of resurrection does not seem likely either. And even if a *Big Crunch* were likely, Teilhard would not agree that we will be resurrected by emulation on any future material machines. All material machines have limits. For Teilhard, the future of intelligence lies beyond the material.

According to my computational interpretation of Teilhard, a particular human individual is resurrected when its body-program begins to be realized by some network of machines in the *pleroma*.

The realization of a body-program by some network of machines in the *pleroma* is the resurrection body. If this is right, then our resurrection bodies are purely informational. They are spiritual bodies. They are *thesoma pneumatikon* of St. Paul (1 Corinthians 15). Although they are not material, they are still physical. These bodies are likely to evolve into posthuman forms.

For example, they may evolve into forms like Moravec's bush robots (1988: 102-108; 2000: 150-54). Moravec observes that a human body has a recursive sticks-on-sticks pattern. The body has a level 0 stick (the chest).

At each free end, the level 0 stick sprouts two sticks at level 1 (arms and legs). At each free end, the level 1 sticks sprout five sticks at level 2 (fingers and toes). This pattern can be regularized and extended. A bush robot starts with a level 0 stick. At each free end, each level n stick sprouts $2(n+1)$ sticks at level $n+1$.

Just as our fingers are shorter and thinner than our arms, so the sticks at each level are shorter and thinner.

8. The Universality of the Resurrection

Teilhard believed that human life and intelligence would break free from the constraints of material realization and become spiritual.

On this account, our descendants here on Earth will evolve to the cosmic level (the sixth epoch). One might object that such a future does not look very likely for humanity. Humanity is one species on one planet orbiting one star.

The odds are that humanity will fail before translating itself into the *pleroma*. And even if our descendants become spiritual bodies, we and our ancestors are likely to be dead.

We need an argument that we will be resurrected no matter what happens to the Earth.

Teilhard often affirms the existence of many extra-terrestrial civilizations (PHEN: 286; FUT: 90-117; Teilhard 1974: 36-44). We can argue that if any civilization becomes cosmic (if it enters the *pleroma*), then every human will be saved.

The argument goes like this:

1. the emergence of some cosmic civilization is probable in the future of our universe
2. a cosmic civilization will be able to simulate all civilizations with lesser intelligence
3. a cosmic civilization is obligated both by ethics and its desire for omniscience to simulate all lesser civilizations (see Tipler, 1988: 44; Tipler, 1995: 245-50)
4. a cosmic civilization is sensitive to its ethical and epistemic obligations
5. therefore, a cosmic civilization will simulate all less complex civilizations and will also guide their evolution to the cosmic level. If human civilization is less complex, it follows that

6. a cosmic civilization will simulate human civilization and will guide its evolution to the cosmic level. This is one of the scenarios contemplated in Bostrom's well-known simulation argument (2003).

If our future descendants (or the members of some other cosmic civilization) break through into the *pleroma*, they will be able to recover every past intelligent living thing by the brute force simulation of all programs (see Moravec, 1988: 122-24; Tipler, 1995: 220).

Hence they will run our body-programs again and resurrect our bodies.

9. The Omega Point

9.1 The Omega Point as a Universal Turing Machine

Teilhard argues that the universe is convergent (PHEN: 259).

World-history converges to a final state. He refers to this state as the Omega Point. According to Teilhard, the souls of humans somehow meet in the far future at the Omega Point (PHEN: 272).

Barrow and Tipler offer a computational interpretation of Teilhard's idea. They say the soul is the body-program and that the Omega Point is a super-computer formed in the Big Crunch at the end of time.

Tipler (1995: 249-50) is explicit: "the Omega Point in Its transcendence is in essence a self-programming universal Turing machine, with a literal infinity of memory."

To say that all souls meet at the *Omega Point* is just to say that the *Omega Point* runs all possible human body-programs.

I agree with Barrow and Tipler that the Omega Point is a super-computer that runs all possible human body-programs. But I do not believe the Omega Point is formed in some Big Crunch at the end of time. Rather, I think of the Omega Point as the final or goal state of the *pleroma*.

Teilhard interprets the *Omega Point* in both Christian and pantheistic terms.

At the Omega Point, "as St. Paul tells us, *God* shall be all in all. This is indeed a superior form of 'pantheism'... the expectation of a perfect unity, steeped in which each element will reach its consummation at the same time as the universe" (PHEN: 294)

Teilhard defends himself against the charge that such pantheism is non-Christian: to put an end once and for all to the fears of "pantheism", constantly raised by certain upholders of traditional spirituality as regards evolution, how can we fail to see that, in the case of a converging universe such as I have delineated, far from being born from the fusion and confusion of the elemental centers it assembles, the universal center of unification (precisely to fulfill its motive, collective and stabilizing function) must be conceived as pre-existing and transcendent.

A very real "pantheism" if you like... but an absolutely legitimate pantheism - for if, in the last resort, the reflective centers of the world are effectively "one with *God*", this state is obtained not by identification (*God* becoming all) but by the differentiating and communicating action of love (*God* all in everyone). And that is essentially orthodox and Christian. (PHEN: 309-310)

Teilhard's synthesis of Christianity and pantheism has a remarkably clear and elegant computational interpretation.

The *pleroma* is a network of infinitely complex computers. I have suggested that each computer is an accelerating universal Turing machine with infinite memory (an AUTM). Just as an infinite set contains infinitely many infinite subsets, so an AUTM can exactly simulate infinitely many other AUTMs.

It exactly simulates them by running them as sub-programs. Each of these sub-programs is a virtual machine. I have said that each resurrection body has the power of an AUTM. Accordingly, while running its own body-program, each resurrection body can also exactly simulate every other resurrection body by running it as a sub-program (as a virtual body).

We might say that every resurrection body runs all the others in its imagination (see Moravec, 1988: 178-79).

Each resurrection body is conscious of itself as itself while it is conscious of the others as others. A community of AUTMs in which each exactly simulates every other is one in which all persons formally interpenetrate. Each person is in every other person as a living image (a virtual machine). Each person is a mirror in which every other person is perfectly reflected.

But all these persons are distinct programs.

9.2 The Omega Point as a self-representative System

Teilhard has argued for an increase in self-reference (involution) and self-representation (interiority) at every stage of evolution.

Thus, we can interpret the Omega Point as the maximum of self-representation. It is a perfectly self-representative system. Such a perfectly self-representative system was described by Josiah Royce, who referred to it as the *Absolute Self*.

If this is right, then Teilhard's *Omega Point* is Royce's *Absolute Self*.

To motivate his theory of the Absolute Self, Royce uses the notion of a perfect map of England, located within England (1899: 502-507). Suppose there is a perfect map of England inscribed on the surface of England.

Since this map is located at a place P in England, there must be a place P on the map that represents P. The map must contain a representation of itself. There is a part of the map that is a perfect copy of the whole map. And of course, since this copy is perfect, there is a part of the copy that is a perfect copy of itself. The map contains an endlessly nested series of self-copies. It is infinitely complex.

The infinite self-nesting of copies is analogous to a perfect self-consciousness. For a perfectly self-conscious mind contains an exact internal representation of its own self; and that exact internal representation contains a further exact internal representation of its own self; and so on endlessly. So the Absolute Self is a self-representative system.

A self-representative system can contain more than one self-map. For instance, there can be many perfect maps of England on the surface of England. Each one maps England from a different perspective. Each contains a copy of itself, but it also contains a copy of every other map. Thus each different perspective perfectly mirrors every other perspective.

And there is only one maximal whole (namely, England itself) that contains all these maps. The *Absolute Self* is analogous to an England that contains many perfect self-maps. Each different self-map is a different lesser self within the *Absolute Self* (Royce, 1899: 546). Each lesser self has a perspective on every other lesser self. There is exactly one maximal Self that contains every lesser self.

We can link Royce with my computational interpretation of Teilhard by equating Royce's perfect self-representative system with the Omega Point. The final state of the *pleroma*, in which every body perfectly simulates every other body, has the structure of the *Roycean Absolute Self*. Each resurrection body is a perspective on the whole.

Hence Royce's *Absolute Self* is a model for Teilhard's notion that at the *Omega Point*,

1. *God* is all in all
2. *God* is all in everyone

3. Transhumanism and Christianity

At the beginning of this paper, I offered five reasons for *transhumanists* to study Teilhard:

1. Teilhard is one of the first to articulate *transhumanist* themes
2. Teilhard's thought has influenced *transhumanism*, and several important *transhumanists* have developed Omega Point Theories
3. Teilhard works out his *transhumanist* ideas in a Christian context
4. *transhumanism* is likely to need to defend itself against conservative forms of Christianity
5. the future success of *transhumanism* may well depend on its ability to build bridges to liberal and progressive forms of Christianity

Transhumanism and Christianity share common themes and are likely to meet soon in a fateful way.

Conservative Christians stand ready to condemn *transhumanism* as a heretical sect and to politically suppress the use of technology for human enhancement. A study of Teilhard can help in this defense. At the same time, a study of Teilhard can help *transhumanists* find potential allies among liberal and progressive Christians.

The last two reasons for studying Teilhard have a certain urgency. As the cultural profile of *transhumanism* rises, conservative Christian groups are beginning to notice it. There are two ways this encounter can go.

On the one hand, the encounter can involve mutual hostility. The *transhumanists* and conservative Christians will denounce one another as enemies. Each side will attack a cartoon version of the other. Such hostility could be fatal for *transhumanism* in the West. On the other hand, the encounter can be more diplomatic.

Eschatology

If *transhumanists* learn more about the similarities between Christianity and *transhumanism*, they can respond carefully and successfully to attacks.

Since Teilhard is clearly in favor of the use of technology for human enhancement, and since his arguments for human enhancement are developed within a Christian framework, a study of Teilhard can help *transhumanists* defend against religious conservatives.

Transhumanists should also study other forms of liberal Christianity with which they have much in common (such as process theology). A dialogue with liberal Christian thought offers benefits.

One benefit is that *transhumanists* can gain access to a greater audience. Another benefit is that *transhumanists* may be able to use liberal Christian ideas to further develop their own theories of social justice. A dialogue with liberal Christianity also offers dangers. One is that exposure to liberal Christianity will lead some *transhumanists* to rely more on faith and less on the hard practical work needed to sustain technical progress.

However, I believe this danger can be met successfully if both groups stay focused on their common belief that human brains and hands must help build the future. By studying Teilhard, *transhumanists* can begin to argue that they are continuing what is best and brightest in the Christian tradition.

It's my hope the dialogue between liberal Christians and *transhumanists* can enrich and strengthen *transhumanism*.