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HELL IN THE MIND'S EYE

This book endeavors to give the reader the tools needed to conquer every temptation of our adversary the devil. It should be used both by the individual as well as the preacher in the pulpit, as the topics of hell, death, and judgment are without a doubt the most effective topics to help the sinner come back to his senses and repent in perfect contrition. Our main purpose in presenting such a variety of different revelations, sermons, and texts about hell and death is that they should be visualized and remembered often, as the mind often forgets things unless it is constantly reminded about them. Thus, when one reads and thinks about hell and death often, one can incorporate the meditation on hell and death more easily into one's daily life, and the mind can more easily contemplate or meditate on the different things that terrify the mind concerning the final end of all mortal sinners. In order to teach the reader the manifold pains, tortures, and evils that will befall all mortal sinners, this text presents a compilation of many texts of saints and other holy people that describe the horrifying fact of what hell really is. Just like in the case of the physical body who needs daily food to survive, so too the soul needs spiritual food to be able to stand firm against the daily attacks of the devil. Eating a few times a year is not enough to help a body keep healthy, and so too, the soul needs the thoughts about hell and death in order to be reminded of its final end. In order to alleviate the hunger of the soul for righteousness, this compilation of articles will give the soul seeking for truth a yearly supply of spiritual food until his or her death so that not a too long time will elapse for a person without thinking about their final end.

The most common reason for a person's relapse into sin is undoubtedly a relaxation of his or her consideration, meditation, and reading about the topics of hell, death, and eternal judgment. That is why this book is of a considerable length with many different topics about hell and death, so that one can read about new things yet stay on the main topics of hell and damnation. For most people, the repetition of the same topic makes most things seem boring or tedious, and that is why this text presents more thrilling revelations of damned souls that spur the imagination to see the different events that are depicted to

them. The imagination and the power to imagine things that we have been given by Our Lord is a powerful tool to use to attack the devil and his minions, but sadly, most people use this gift of Our Lord for evil and sensual purposes, choosing eternal damnation for a single moment of sensual delights. There can be no doubt that the daily meditation, remembrance of, or thought on hell, death and judgment, serves as the best answer to every temptation that the devil gives us, as no sane person would ever choose sin as long as they remembered what the final end was of this sin.

Our Lord Himself used common events in our lives to describe hell, judgment, and damnation in order to show us that the meditation on hell could be adapted to different settings, places, and living conditions. Thus, a woman standing by the stove could look down into the boiling pot and imagine and see a picture of hell in it, while another person could look into a fire, and imagine seeing the flames encircling the souls of all wretched sinners who choose death before life, while a third who harvested the field could meditate on how the harvest symbolized the final judgment where the good wheat would be harvested but the chaff would be thrown into the eternal fire, and so on.

One should use normal everyday life events to help one recall hell and death, and this is also the example Our Lord gave us for how we are to meditate. Whatever the human mind can conceive about what Hell will be like, it is as nothing to what the reality is in Hell. All the troubles and suffering of this world are as a small foretaste or hint of what Hell will be like, and that is why a great meditation on hell is to imagine the specific punishment in hell of every kind of sin here on earth, so that one imagines seeing either oneself or others burning or being tortured in various ways in accordance to their sins. Thus, a person who sinned with his hands by for example masturbation or lust, should imagine seeing his hands being unceasingly sawed off him in the most painful manner he can imagine, or see his hands or arms hurt in various ways, and a person who used his eyes for looking on women with lust or on pornography, should see his eyes being torn out or being burned in their sockets. *The Revelations of Saint Bridget* uses a similar way of describing how people are punished after death, for example showing that a person who sinned in lust had snakes biting her, or that another person stood and walked on sharp razors that incessantly cut the feet etc. Our Lord tells us about a woman who used to use her arms and other limbs in a lascivious manner, and tells us that in Hell her punishment is most severe.

The Revelations of St. Bridget, Book 6, Chapter 16: “Then the Lord said to the same saint: “Tell my bride here what those persons deserve who

care more about the world than about God, who love the creature more than the Creator. Tell her what kind of punishment that woman is now undergoing who spent her entire lifetime in the world in sinful pleasure.” The saint replied: “Her punishment is most severe. For the pride she had in her every limb [through vanity], her head and hands, arms and legs burn horribly in a blazing fire. Her bosom is being pricked as though by the hide of a hedgehog whose quills fasten to her flesh and mercilessly press into her. **The arms and other limbs with which she used to lasciviously embrace the loved one so tenderly are now stretched out like two snakes that coil themselves around her, mercilessly devouring and tearing her to pieces without rest. Her belly is terribly twisted, as though a sharp pole were being driven into her private parts and thrust violently inward so as to penetrate ever more deeply.** Her thighs and knees are like ice, hard and stiff, with no warmth nor rest. The feet that used to carry her to her pleasures and lead others along with her now stand atop sharp razors slicing them incessantly.”

Essentially, all human events on this earth that are terrifying or calamitous, are perfect to consider as a meditation of Hell, and one can both think about one's own terrifying events that happened in your real life, as well as read about other people's scary events. In truth, the meditations on death and hell that one can conceive are literally endless.

The devil knows very well the might of the meditation on hell, and that is why he labors mightily to get a soul to forget about this topic, but the soul who really fears damnation, will never forget this truth about hell, and will constantly feed and nourish his soul with it, building his spiritual armor every single day in order to not fall prey to the devil again. Not even the greatest saints left of the meditation on hell, death, judgment, and Heaven, which shows us that we who are infinitely inferior to them needs to consider this topic far more often than they did.

“Wherefore do not any longer live so heedlessly, but work out thy salvation with fear and trembling, as the Apostle [Saint Paul] exhorts thee. [Phil. 2:12] The Saints did so at all times, having the fear of God's judgments ever before their eyes. The ungodly, on the contrary, were ever wont to say, as many do at the present day: God is merciful, He will not condemn us so lightly to eternal damnation. But remember what is said in Holy Scripture: "Be not without fear about sin forgiven, and add not sin to sin. And say not, The mercy of the Lord is great, He will have mercy

on the multitude of my sins. For mercy and wrath come quickly from Him, and His wrath looketh upon sinners" (Ecclus. v. 5-7)." (Fr. Martin Von Cochem, *The Four Last Things*)

While the topics of hell and death are many times distressing and sad to consider and think about, in order to be saved, it is better to be a little sad in this life in order to rejoice forever in heaven rather than to be happy for a moment in this life, and then burn forever. In addition, meditating on Heaven can also sometimes help to ward off the temptations of the Devil, because when one thinks upon the greatness of Heaven and what one will lose if one dies in mortal sin, this can also help a person be stronger against the devil's attacks, but the meditation of hell and death is surely more effective.

The preacher who uses this book in the pulpit or when preaching should try to speak about as many topics as possible, (although not too briefly about any single topic as each topic must be dealt with some time in order to be firmly planted in the mind) as the soul can more easily follow a sermon when one visits many topics, since most people are very easily bored. Thus, the preacher should use the most effective topics and parts of this text, rather than just directly reading the text from beginning to end. The text is divided in many sections, which makes it very suitable to be used in sermons by preachers, as the preacher can just read a section or part of the book for his congregation, and then give some commentary if he finds this suitable after the reading. The preacher should also always use descriptive language that paints a picture for the mind to easily understand, such as describing the thoughts, feelings, and torments of the damned.

The meditation on hell, death, and judgment can be made in four good ways. First, by reading texts, sermons, or stories concerning the topic of hell, judgment, and death. Second, by hearing sermons or seeing videos about this topic. Third, by simply thinking about the topic of hell, which as we have said, is more effective after one have read about it. And fourth, by making penances like fasting or other things that chastise the body, in order to help one's body and mind to know what hell will be like in some measure. If we think that the small penances we do on this earth are bothersome or painful, how much more will the pain in hell be unendurable? The fourth way to contemplate hell should of course also be added to the reading of this subject in order to help make the meditation more powerful and effective.

A person's own life experiences are highly effective and make a much greater effect on one's own mind than the sayings, words, or experiences of other

people, and so, if a person have been near death, or have been in a situation where death could have happened, or have suffered much either physically or emotionally, such as by illnesses or other troubles, these situations will undoubtedly be highly effective in making a good meditation concerning death, judgment, and hell.

The author of this text can also testify that he have been close to death at least three times. Once, by being choked by a candy, and the two other times by a broken appendix and another stomach illness that both are lethal illnesses. At the moment when these events took place, I was not particularly scared, but now when I think back on them, I tremble with fear how close I was to die and be damned for all eternity. At that moment in time, I was not a Catholic, and I was living in mortal sin, so I would have been damned for sure. If I would have died then, I would have been forever alone in eternal darkness and excruciating fire now for many years, screaming for help, but getting nothing else but an incessant torture by the demons, but thanks be to God, the immeasurable grace of Our Lord and the prayer and intercession of Our Lady spared me! So, too, you should remember similar distressing events in your own life in order to fear God. People of this world do not know what a gift they have to be able to amend and repent during this short time here on earth, or even to breathe air, or drink water, for after life there is no chance of repentance and amendment in the eternal fire however much one weeps and gnashes one's teeth in anger over one's own sloth and tardiness in serving of Our Lord!

Indeed, thinking of people one knew in this life who died as non-Catholics or mortal sinners, and who are now in hell because of it, also makes a powerful meditation, as the closer one was to the person, the more one is able to picture to oneself their suffering, sadness, and despair; and the sadness for and thought on this person grows the more one have been in contact with the person as one can associate with their current sorrowful position in Hell better and consider how they lived and talked with others in this short life once, just like it will happen with oneself in the future when one dies. As all men die, so we must do so too one day, and when we see death in society, we must always be spurred to remember our own death, and how we must follow them one day.

Meditating on death, and the various ways we as humans may die at any moment, is a strong way to ward of the temptations of the devil. Thus, meditating on how life may end at any moment by for example being killed by a gunman, being in a gruesome car accident, or falling from a high mountain or building etc., places a strong fear of God in a person. When one considers how utterly fickle and unstable our existence on this earth is, and that we may die in

all kinds of accidents or events at any moment, only a fool of the highest sort would not try to amend any sort of sin, whatever it is. The meditations one can perform by considering different scary situations where one dies or gets hurt are almost endless.

All our sufferings here on earth are as nothing compared to Hell, and we need to remember this fact in order to be better able to perform penances on this earth, in order to purify our souls from sin. When we suffer in penances, we should always tell ourselves that we deserve eternal fire and torment, so that we can have some perspective why we perform different penances in order to purify our soul. We only have a short time to perform penances, for after death, there is no time to perform any acts of virtue. The Holy Fathers and the Saints did not perform penances and fasting because it was funny, but because they knew that the mortification of the body helped one to see and understand God's Will better than people who were living in a carnal way. In truth, a great reason why the people who commit sexual sins are so “hardened” in their sins, and so hard to be converted according to St. Thomas, is because sensual lusts (both for the married and the unmarried people alike) actually “**gives rise to blindness of mind, which excludes almost entirely the knowledge of spiritual things, while dulness of sense arises from gluttony, which makes a man weak in regard to the same [spiritual] intelligible things**” and this shows us that penances are highly beneficial in order to attain eternal salvation. (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II:II, Q. 15, Art. 3)

The meditation on Hell and death do not have to be long or complicated, but one can just quickly recall each day something about hell, death, or suffering that scares the mind, and this will undoubtedly strengthen a soul against the temptations of the devil. Every time you get tempted to commit sinful acts, we advise you to always turn your mind to Our Lord and Our Lady, as well as the topics of hell, death, and judgment. The Rosary is a powerful weapon against temptations, and one should always say Hail Mary prayers when one is tempted, along with considering what Hell will be like if one falls into sin. The most common theme in the Bible is that “***The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom***” (Psalm 110:10), and that *His mercy is only upon those who fear Him* (Psalm 102:17; Lk. 1:50; 2 Cor. 5:11; etc.) and this makes it clear to us that only evil people who refuse to fear God or Hell dare to commit sins of various kinds.

Many nowadays wonder how a good God could damn a person for all eternity, when a person can only sin for a short time in this life? They see it as unjust for God to punish men so severely. But the fact is that it is we humans who choose

to think about ourselves either as an eternal being, or as a temporal being. We are eternal beings, for the soul is like an angel in a human body, and when we sin, we sin in eternity, as we are eternal beings. When we sin, we sin both on the spiritual and temporal plane. If we humans choose to think upon our actions as though they are only committed in this temporal, carnal, and visible world rather than also in the eternal spiritual world, and in eternity, it is our own fault. A mortal sin is an infinite evil committed first and foremost against Our infinitely Holy God, and only secondly against or fellow men. “Theologians assert that every mortal sin is in itself an infinite evil, and is an infinite affront to the divine majesty. It is an offence of such magnitude that neither the tongue of angels nor of men is capable of describing it.” (Fr. Martin Von Cochem, *The Four Last Things*)

It is our intention and will with this book that you, the reader, reads about 15 minutes each day about Hell, Judgment, and Death, until the day you die. This book is long, and so, the reader should read at least 15 minutes of this book (or other books that deals with the same topics) per day in order to nourish his fear of God and Hell. Meditating on these topics are crucial for your salvation, and that is why we urge all to think on these things 3 times a day. One time in the morning, one time at lunch, and one time in the evening. Read 5 minutes or more of this book 3 times each day, in order to keep the thought of Hell in your thought processes the whole day. If one have a problem reading this much, one should at least once a day read and meditate on Hell and death, for one of the greatest reasons why people fall into sin is because they do not often think about Hell. Many people in the beginning think much on Hell and death, but then after a while, they foolishly imagine themselves secure, and then cease fearing for hell, and stops reading about and thinking about hell, death, and judgment. It is not necessary to think a long time on these subjects each day, although we certainly urge people to meditate on this subject often and even more than 3 times a day, but one should meditate about what one have read just now in this book, and try to adapt one's meditations to these subjects. Read also 4 chapters of the [*Revelations of Saint Bridget*](#) each day, as these revelations are very good to keep a person from going back to a sinful life, and these revelations also have many chapters that is very descriptive of what hell will be like.

A good meditation can take just a minute or even less, but it is well made when the fear grips the heart, and we tremble in fear, as St. Paul and the Bible says we must do: “*with fear and trembling work out your salvation*” (Phil. 2:12) because it is “*by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil*”. (Proverbs 16:6) This requires a good imagination to imagine oneself in different situations such as being tortured in Hell, enduring various earthly torments, or being close to

dying, and to really feel like one is there, or think about what it would be to be in such a situation. The very thought of death is implanted in us to produce fear, for we know instinctively that something very fearful comes after death, and that is why we fear it so much. If we thought that death just produced sleep, or that we would just cease to exist, no one would fear it all, but God has implanted a fear of death for us to think about what comes after this life, and when this fear of death is added to a fear of God, judgment, and Hell, this meditation is powerful above all others to help us be victorious against the different temptations of this world. Our Lord Jesus Christ is very clear in the Bible that we should fear God and Hell in this life: *“And fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell.”* (Matthew 10:28)

THE LITTLE NUMBER OF THOSE WHO ARE SAVED BY ST. LEONARD OF PORT MAURICE

Saint Leonard of Port Maurice was a most holy Franciscan friar who lived at the monastery of Saint Bonaventure in Rome. He was one of the greatest missionaries in the history of the Church. He used to preach to thousands in the open square of every city and town where the churches could not hold his listeners. So brilliant and holy was his eloquence that once when he gave a two weeks' mission in Rome, the Pope and College of Cardinals came to hear him. The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the veneration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus were his crusades. He was in no small way responsible for the definition of the Immaculate Conception made a little more than a hundred years after his death. He also gave us the Divine Praises, which are said at the end of Benediction. But Saint Leonard's most famous work was his devotion to the Stations of the Cross. He died a most holy death in his seventy-fifth year, after twenty-four years of uninterrupted preaching.

One of Saint Leonard of Port Maurice's most famous sermons was "The Little Number of Those Who Are Saved." It was the one he relied on for the conversion of great sinners. This sermon, like his other writings, was submitted to canonical examination during the process of canonization. In it he reviews the various states of life of Christians and concludes with the little number of those who are saved, in relation to the totality of men.

The reader who meditates on this remarkable text will grasp the soundness of its argumentation, which has earned it the approbation of the Church. Here is the great missionary's vibrant and moving sermon.

Introduction

Thanks be to God, the number of the Redeemer's disciples is not so small that the wickedness of the Scribes and Pharisees is able to triumph over them. Although they strove to calumniate innocence and to deceive the crowd with their treacherous sophistries by discrediting the doctrine and character of Our Lord, finding spots even in the sun, many still recognized Him as the true Messiah, and, unafraid of either chastisements or threats, openly joined His cause. Did all those who followed Christ follow Him even unto glory? Oh, this is where I revere the profound mystery and silently adore the abysses of the divine decrees, rather than rashly deciding on such a great point! The subject I will be treating today is a very grave one; it has caused even the pillars of the Church to tremble, filled the greatest Saints with terror and populated the deserts with anchorites. The point of this instruction is to decide whether the number of Christians who are saved is greater or less than the number of Christians who are damned; it will, I hope, produce in you a salutary fear of the judgments of God.

Brothers, because of the love I have for you, I wish I were able to reassure you with the prospect of eternal happiness by saying to each of you: You are certain to go to paradise; the greater number of Christians is saved, so you also will be saved. But how can I give you this sweet assurance if you revolt against God's decrees as though you were your own worst enemies? I observe in God a sincere desire to save you, but I find in you a decided inclination to be damned. So what will I be doing today if I speak clearly? I will be displeasing to you. But if I do not speak, I will be displeasing to God.

Therefore, I will divide this subject into two points. In the first one, to fill you with dread, I will let the theologians and Fathers of the Church decide on the matter and declare that the greater number of Christian adults are damned; and, in silent adoration of that terrible mystery, I will keep my own sentiments to myself. In the second point I will attempt to defend the goodness of God versus the godless, by proving to you that those who are damned are damned by their own malice, because they wanted to be damned. So then, here are two very important truths. If the first truth frightens you, do not hold it against me, as though I wanted to make the road of heaven narrower for you... the theologians and Fathers of the Church... will engrave this truth in your heart by the force of

reason. If you are disillusioned by the second truth, give thanks to God over it, for He wants only one thing: that you give your hearts totally to Him. Finally, if you oblige me to tell you clearly what I think, I will do so for your consolation.

The Teaching of the Fathers of the Church

It is not vain curiosity but salutary precaution to proclaim from the height of the pulpit certain truths which serve wonderfully to contain the indolence of libertines, who are always talking about the mercy of God and about how easy it is to convert, who live plunged in all sorts of sins and are soundly sleeping on the road to hell. To disillusion them and waken them from their torpor, today let us examine this great question: Is the number of Christians who are saved greater than the number of Christians who are damned?

... [This sermon's] sole purpose is to contain the pride of libertines who cast the holy fear of God out of their heart and join forces with the devil who, according to the sentiment of Eusebius, damns souls by reassuring them. To resolve this doubt, let us put the Fathers of the Church, both Greek and Latin, on one side; on the other, the most learned theologians and erudite historians; and let us put the Bible in the middle for all to see. Now listen not to what I will say to you – for I have already told you that I do not want to speak for myself or decide on the matter – but listen to what these great minds have to tell you, they who are beacons in the Church of God to give light to others so that they will not miss the road to heaven. In this manner, guided by the triple light of faith, authority and reason, we will be able to resolve this grave matter with certainty.

Note well that there is no question here of the human race taken as a whole, nor of all Catholics taken without distinction, but only of Catholic adults, who have free choice and are thus capable of cooperating in the great matter of their salvation. First let us consult the theologians recognized as examining things most carefully and as not exaggerating in their teaching: let us listen to two learned cardinals, Cajetan and Bellarmine. They teach that the greater number of Christian adults are damned, and if I had the time to point out the reasons upon which they base themselves, you would be convinced of it yourselves. But I will limit myself here to quoting Suarez. After consulting all the theologians and making a diligent study of the matter, he wrote, "*The most common sentiment which is held is that, among Christians, there are more damned souls than predestined souls.*"

Add the authority of the Greek and Latin Fathers to that of the theologians, and you will find that almost all of them say the same thing. This is the sentiment of Saint Theodore, Saint Basil, Saint Ephrem, and Saint John Chrysostom. What is

more, according to Baronius it was a common opinion among the Greek Fathers that this truth was expressly revealed to Saint Simeon Stylites and that after this revelation, it was to secure his salvation that he decided to live standing on top of a pillar for forty years, exposed to the weather, a model of penance and holiness for everyone. Now let us consult the Latin Fathers. You will hear Saint Gregory saying clearly, "Many attain to faith, but few to the heavenly kingdom." Saint Anselm declares, "*There are few who are saved.*" Saint Augustine states even more clearly, "*Therefore, few are saved in comparison to those who are damned.*" The most terrifying, however, is Saint Jerome. At the end of his life, in the presence of his disciples, he spoke these dreadful words: "*Out of one hundred thousand **people whose lives have always been bad**, you will find barely one who is worthy of indulgence.*"

The Words of Holy Scripture

But why seek out the opinions of the Fathers and theologians, when Holy Scripture settles the question so clearly? Look in to the Old and New Testaments, and you will find a multitude of figures, symbols and words that clearly point out this truth: very few are saved. In the time of Noah, the entire human race was submerged by the Deluge, and only eight people were saved in the Ark. Saint Peter says, "*This ark was the figure of the Church,*" while Saint Augustine adds, "*And these eight people who were saved signify that very few Christians are saved, **because there are very few who sincerely renounce the world**, and those who renounce it only in words do not belong to the mystery represented by that ark.*" The Bible also tells us that only two Hebrews out of two million entered the Promised Land after going out of Egypt, and that only four escaped the fire of Sodom and the other burning cities that perished with it. All of this means that the number of the damned who will be cast into fire like straw is far greater than that of the saved, whom the heavenly Father will one day gather into His barns like precious wheat.

I would not finish if I had to point out all the figures by which Holy Scripture confirms this truth; let us content ourselves with listening to the living oracle of Incarnate Wisdom. What did Our Lord answer the curious man in the Gospel who asked Him, "*Lord, is it only a few to be saved?*" Did He keep silence? Did He answer haltingly? Did He conceal His thought for fear of frightening the crowd? No. Questioned by only one, He addresses all of those present. He says to them: "You ask Me if there are only few who are saved?" Here is My answer: "*Strive to enter by the narrow gate; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.*" Who is speaking here? It is the Son of God, Eternal Truth, who on another occasion says even more clearly, "*Many are called, but few are*

chosen." He does not say that all are called and that out of all men, few are chosen, but that many are called; which means, as Saint Gregory explains, that out of all men, many are called to the True Faith, but out of them few are saved. Brothers, these are the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Are they clear? They are true. Tell me now if it is possible for you to have faith in your heart and not tremble.

Salvation in the Various States of Life

But oh, I see that by speaking in this manner of all in general, I am missing my point. So let us apply this truth to various states, and you will understand that you must either throw away reason, experience and the common sense of the faithful, or confess that the greater number of Catholics is damned. Is there any state in the world more favorable to innocence in which salvation seems easier and of which people have a higher idea than that of priests, the lieutenants of God? At first glance, who would not think that most of them are not only good but even perfect; yet I am horror-struck when I hear Saint Jerome declaring that although the world is full of priests, barely one in a hundred is living in a manner in conformity with state; when I hear a servant of God attesting that he has learned by revelation that the number of priests who fall into hell each day is so great that it seemed impossible to him that there be any left on earth; when I hear Saint Chrysostom exclaiming with tears in his eyes, "*I do not believe that many priests are saved; I believe the contrary, that the number of those who are damned is greater.*"

Look higher still, and see the prelates of the Holy Church, pastors who have the charge of souls. Is the number of those who are saved among them greater than the number of those who are damned? Listen to Cantimpre; he will relate an event to you, and you may draw the conclusions. There was a synod being held in Paris, and a great number of prelates and pastors who had the charge of souls were in attendance; the king and princes also came to add luster to that assembly by their presence. A famous preacher was invited to preach. While he was preparing his sermon, a horrible demon appeared to him and said, "*Lay your books aside. If you want to give a sermon that will be useful to these princes and prelates, content yourself with telling them on our part, 'We the princes of darkness thank you, princes, prelates, and pastors of souls, that due to your negligence, the greater number of the faithful are damned; also, we are saving a reward for you for this favor, when you shall be with us in Hell.'*"

Woe to you who command others! If so many are damned by your fault, what will happen to you? If few out of those who are first in the Church of God are

saved, what will happen to you? Take all states, both sexes, every condition: husbands, wives, widows, young women, young men, soldiers, merchants, craftsmen, rich and poor, noble and plebian. What are we to say about all these people who are living so badly? The following narrative from Saint Vincent Ferrer will show you what you may think about it. He relates that an archdeacon in Lyons gave up his charge and retreated into a desert place to do penance, and that he died the same day and hour as Saint Bernard. After his death, he appeared to his bishop and said to him, "*Know, Monsignor, that at the very hour I passed away, **thirty-three thousand** people also died. Out of this number, **Bernard and myself** went up to heaven without delay, **three** went to purgatory, and **all the others fell into Hell.***"

Our chronicles relate an even more dreadful happening. One of our brothers, well-known for his doctrine and holiness, was preaching in Germany. He represented the ugliness of the sin of impurity so forceful that a woman fell dead of sorrow in front of everyone. Then, coming back to life, she said, "*When I was presented before the Tribunal of God, **sixty thousand** people arrived at the same time from all parts of the world; out of that number, **three** were saved by going to Purgatory, and **all the rest were damned.***"

O abyss of the judgments of God! Out of thirty thousand, only five were saved! And out of sixty thousand, only three went to heaven! You sinners who are listening to me, in what category will you be numbered?... What do you say?... What do you think?...

I see almost all of you lowering your heads, filled with astonishment and horror. But let us lay our stupor aside, and instead of flattering ourselves, let us try to draw some profit from our fear. Is it not true that there are two roads which lead to heaven: innocence and repentance? Now, if I show you that very few take either one of these two roads, as rational people you will conclude that very few are saved. And to mention proofs: in what age, employment or condition will you find that the number of the wicked is not a hundred times greater than that of the good, and about which one might say, "*The good are so rare and the wicked are so great in number*"? We could say of our times what Salvianus said of his: it is easier to find a countless multitude of sinners immersed in all sorts of iniquities than a few innocent men. How many servants are totally honest and faithful in their duties? How many merchants are fair and equitable in their commerce; how many craftsmen exact and truthful; how many salesmen disinterested and sincere? How many men of law do not forsake equity? How many soldiers do not tread upon innocence; how many masters do not unjustly withhold the salary of those who serve them, or do not seek to dominate their

inferiors? Everywhere, the good are rare and the wicked great in number. Who does not know that today there is so much libertinage among mature men, liberty among young girls, vanity among women, licentiousness in the nobility, corruption in the middle class, dissolution in the people, impudence among the poor, that one could say what David said of his times: "*All alike have gone astray... there is not even one who does good, not even one.*"

Go into street and square, into palace and house, into city and countryside, into tribunal and court of law, and even into the temple of God. Where will you find virtue? "*Alas!*" cries Salvianus, "*except for a very little number who flee evil, what is the assembly of Christians if not a sink of vice?*" All that we can find everywhere is selfishness, ambition, gluttony, and luxury. Is not the greater portion of men defiled by the vice of impurity, and is not Saint John right in saying, "*The whole world – if something so foul may be called – is seated in wickedness?*" I am not the one who is telling you; reason obliges you to believe that out of those who are living so badly, very few are saved.

But you will say: Can penance not profitably repair the loss of innocence? That is true, I admit. But I also know that penance is so difficult in practice, we have lost the habit so completely, and it is so badly abused by sinners, that this alone should suffice to convince you that very few are saved by that path. Oh, how steep, narrow, thorny, horrible to behold and hard to climb it is! Everywhere we look, we see traces of blood and things that recall sad memories. Many weaken at the very sight of it. Many retreat at the very start. Many fall from weariness in the middle, and many give up wretchedly at the end. And how few are they who persevere in it till death! Saint Ambrose says it is easier to find men who have kept their innocence than to find any who have done fitting penance.

If you consider the sacrament of penance, there are so many distorted confessions, so many studied excuses, so many deceitful repentances, so many false promises, so many ineffective resolutions, so many invalid absolutions! Would you regard as valid the confession of someone who accuses himself of sins of impurity and still holds to the occasion of them? Or someone who accuses himself of obvious injustices with no intention of making any reparation whatsoever for them? Or someone who falls again into the same iniquities right after going to confession? Oh, horrible abuses of such a great sacrament! One confesses to avoid excommunication, another to make a reputation as a penitent. One rids himself of his sins to calm his remorse, another conceals them out of shame. One accuses them imperfectly out of malice, another discloses them out of habit. One does not have the true end of the sacrament in mind, another is lacking the necessary sorrow, and still another firm purpose.

Poor confessors, what efforts you make to bring the greater number of penitents to these resolutions and acts, without which confession is a sacrilege, absolution a condemnation and penance an illusion?

Where are they now, those who believe that the number of the saved among Christians is greater than that of the damned and who, to authorize their opinion, reason thus: the greater portion of Catholic adults die in their beds armed with the sacraments of the Church, therefore most adult Catholics are saved? Oh, what fine reasoning! You must say exactly the opposite. Most Catholic adults confess badly at death, therefore most of them are damned. I say "all the more certain," because a dying person who has not confessed well when he was in good health will have an even harder time doing so when he is in bed with a heavy heart, an unsteady head, a muddled mind; when he is opposed in many ways by still-living objects, by still-fresh occasions, by adopted habits, and above all by devils who are seeking every means to cast him into hell. Now, if you add to all these false penitents all the other sinners who die unexpectedly in sin, due to the doctors' ignorance or by their relatives' fault, who die from poisoning or from being buried in earthquakes, or from a stroke, or from a fall, or on the battlefield, in a fight, caught in a trap, struck by lightning, burned or drowned, are you not obliged to conclude that most Christian adults are damned? That is the reasoning of Saint Chrysostom. This Saint says that most Christians are walking on the road to hell throughout their life. Why, then, are you so surprised that the greater number goes to hell? To come to a door, you must take the road that leads there. What have you to answer such a powerful reason?

The answer, you will tell me, is that the mercy of God is great. Yes, for those who fear Him, says the Prophet; but great is His justice for the one who does not fear Him, and it condemns all obstinate sinners.

So you will say to me: Well then, who is Paradise for, if not for Christians? It is for Christians, of course, but for those who do not dishonor their character and who live as Christians. Moreover, if to the number of Christian adults who die in the grace of God, you add the countless host of children who die after baptism and before reaching the age of reason, you will not be surprised that Saint John the Apostle, speaking of those who are saved, says, "*I saw a great multitude which no man could number.*"

And this is what deceives those who pretend that the number of the saved among Catholics is greater than that of the damned... If to that number, you add the adults who have kept the robe of innocence, or who after having defiled it,

have washed it in the tears of penance, it is certain that the greater number is saved; and that explains the words of Saint John, "*I saw a great multitude,*" and these other words of Our Lord, "*Many will come from the east and from the west, and will feast with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven,*" and the other figures usually cited in favor of that opinion. But if you are talking about Christian adults, experience, reason, authority, propriety and Scripture all agree in proving that the greater number is damned. Do not believe that because of this, paradise is empty; on the contrary, it is a very populous kingdom. And if the damned are "*as numerous as the sand in the sea,*" the saved are "*as numerous as the stars of heaven,*" that is, both the one and the other are countless, although in very different proportions.

One day Saint John Chrysostom, preaching in the cathedral in Constantinople and considering these proportions, could not help but shudder in horror and ask, "*Out of this great number of people, how many do you think will be saved?*" And, not waiting for an answer, he added, "*Among so many thousands of people, we would not find a hundred who are saved, and I even doubt for the one hundred.*" What a dreadful thing! The great Saint believed that out of so many people, barely one hundred would be saved; and even then, he was not sure of that number. What will happen to you who are listening to me? Great God, I cannot think of it without shuddering! Brothers, the problem of salvation is a very difficult thing; for according to the maxims of the theologians, when an end demands great efforts, few only attain it.

That is why Saint Thomas, the Angelic Doctor, after weighing all the reasons pro and con in his immense erudition, finally concludes that the greater number of Catholic adults are damned. He says, "*Because eternal beatitude surpasses the natural state, especially since it has been deprived of original grace, it is the little number that are saved.*"

So then, remove the blindfold from your eyes that is blinding you with self-love, that is keeping you from believing such an obvious truth by giving you very false ideas concerning the justice of God, "*Just Father, the world has not known Thee,*" said Our Lord Jesus Christ. He does not say "*Almighty Father, most good and merciful Father.*" He says "**just Father**," so we may understand that out of all the attributes of God, none is less known than His justice, because men refuse to believe what they are afraid to undergo. Therefore, remove the blindfold that is covering your eyes and say tearfully: Alas! The greater number of Catholics, the greater number of those who live here, perhaps even those who are in this assembly, will be damned! What subject could be more deserving of your tears?

King Xerxes, standing on a hill looking at his army of one hundred thousand soldiers in battle array, and considering that out of all of them there would be not one man alive in a hundred years, was unable to hold back his tears. Have we not more reason to weep upon thinking that out of so many Catholics, the greater number will be damned? Should this thought not make our eyes pour forth rivers of tears, or at least produce in our heart the sentiment of compassion felt by an Augustinian Brother, Ven. Marcellus of St. Dominic? One day as he was meditating on the eternal pains, the Lord showed him how many souls were going to hell at that moment and had him see a very broad road on which twenty-two thousand reprobates were running toward the abyss, colliding into one another. The servant of God was stupefied at the sight and exclaimed, "*Oh, what a number! What a number! And still more are coming. O Jesus! O Jesus! What madness!*" Let me repeat with Jeremiah, "*Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes? And I will weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.*"

Poor souls! How can you run so hastily toward hell? For mercy's sake, stop and listen to me for a moment! Either you understand what it means to be saved and to be damned for all eternity, or you do not. If you understand and in spite of that, you do not decide to change your life today, make a good confession and trample upon the world, in a word, make your every effort to be counted among the littler number of those who are saved, I say that you do not have the faith. You are more excusable if you do not understand it, for then one must say that you are out of your mind. ***To be saved for all eternity, to be damned for all eternity, and to not make your every effort to avoid the one and make sure of the other, is something inconceivable.***

The Goodness of God

Perhaps you do not yet believe the terrible truths I have just taught you. But it is the most highly-considered theologians, the most illustrious Fathers who have spoken to you through me. So then, how can you resist reasons supported by so many examples and words of Scripture? If you still hesitate in spite of that, and if your mind is inclined to the opposite opinion, does that very consideration not suffice to make you tremble? Oh, it shows that you do not care very much for your salvation! In this important matter, a sensible man is struck more strongly by the slightest doubt of the risk he runs than by the evidence of total ruin in other affairs in which the soul is not involved. One of our brothers, Blessed Giles, was in the habit of saying that if only one man were going to be damned, he would do all he could to make sure he was not that man.

So what must we do, we who know that the greater number is going to be damned, and not only out of all Catholics? What must we do? Take the resolution to belong to the little number of those who are saved. You say: If Christ wanted to damn me, then why did He create me? Silence, rash tongue! God did not create anyone to damn him; but whoever is damned, is damned because he wants to be. Therefore, I will now strive to defend the goodness of my God and acquit it of all blame: that will be the subject of the second point.

Before going on, let us gather on one side all the books and all the heresies of Luther and Calvin, and on the other side the books and heresies of the Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians, and let us burn them. Some destroy grace, others freedom, and all are filled with errors; so let us cast them into the fire. All the damned bear upon their brow the oracle of the Prophet Osee, "*Thy damnation comes from thee,*" so that they may understand that whoever is damned, is damned by his own malice and because he wants to be damned.

First let us take these two undeniable truths as a basis: "**God wants all men to be saved,**" "**All are in need of the grace of God.**" Now, if I show you that God wants to save all men, and that for this purpose He gives all of them His grace and all the other necessary means of obtaining that sublime end, you will be obliged to agree that whoever is damned must impute it to his own malice, and that if the greater number of Christians are damned, it is because they want to be. "*Thy damnation comes from thee; thy help is only in Me.*"

God Desires All Men to be Saved

In a hundred places in Holy Scripture, God tells us that it is truly His desire to save all men. "*Is it My will that a sinner should die, and not that he should be converted from his ways and live?... I live, saith the Lord God. I desire not the death of the sinner. Be converted and live.*" When someone wants something very much, it is said that he is dying with desire; it is a hyperbole. But God has wanted and still wants our salvation so much that He died of desire, and He suffered death to give us life. This will to save all men is therefore not an affected, superficial and apparent will in God; it is a real, effective, and beneficial will; for He provides us with all the means most proper for us to be saved. He does not give them to us so they will not obtain it; He gives them to us with a sincere will, with the intention that they may obtain their effect. And if they do not obtain it, He shows Himself afflicted and offended over it. He commands even the damned to use them in order to be saved; He exhorts them to it; He obliges them to it; and if they do not do it, they sin. Therefore, they may do it and thus be saved.

Far more, because God sees that we could not even make use of His grace without His help, He gives us other aids; and if they sometimes remain ineffective, it is our fault; for with these same aids, one may abuse them and be damned with them, and another may do right and be saved; he might even be saved with less powerful aids. Yes, it can happen that we abuse a greater grace and are damned, whereas another cooperates with a lesser grace and is saved.

Saint Augustine exclaims, *"If, therefore, someone turns aside from justice, he is carried by his free will, led by his concupiscence, deceived by his own persuasion."* But for those who do not understand theology, here is what I have to say to them: God is so good that when He sees a sinner running to his ruin, He runs after him, calls him, entreats and accompanies him even to the gates of hell; what will He not do to convert him? He sends him good inspirations and holy thoughts, and if he does not profit from them, He becomes angry and indignant, He pursues him. Will He strike him? No. He beats at the air and forgives him. But the sinner is not converted yet. God sends him a mortal illness. It is certainly all over for him. No, brothers, God heals him; the sinner becomes obstinate in evil, and God in His mercy looks for another way; He gives him another year, and when that year is over, He grants him yet another.

But if the sinner still wants to cast himself into hell in spite of all that, what does God do? Does He abandon him? No. He takes him by the hand; and while he has one foot in hell and the other outside, He still preaches to him, He implored him not to abuse His graces. Now I ask you, if that man is damned, is it not true that he is damned against the Will of God and because he wants to be damned? Come and ask me now: If God wanted to damn me, then why did He create me?

Ungrateful sinner, learn today that if you are damned, it is not God who is to blame, but you and your self-will. To persuade yourself of this, go down even to the depths of the abyss, and there I will bring you one of those wretched damned souls burning in hell, so that he may explain this truth to you. Here is one now: *"Tell me, who are you?" "I am a poor idolater, born in an unknown land; I never heard of heaven or hell, nor of what I am suffering now." "Poor wretch! Go away, you are not the one I am looking for." Another one is coming; there he is. "Who are you?" "I am a schismatic from the ends of Tartary; I always lived in an uncivilized state, barely knowing that there is a God." "You are not the one I want; return to hell." Here is another. "And who are you?" "I am a poor heretic from the North. I was born under the Pole and never saw either the light of the sun or the light of faith." "It is not you that I am looking for either, return to Hell."* Brothers, my heart is broken upon seeing these wretches who never even knew the True Faith among the damned. Even

so, know that the sentence of condemnation was pronounced against them and they were told, "*Thy damnation comes from thee.*" They were damned because they wanted to be. They received so many aids from God to be saved! We do not know what they were, but they know them well, and now they cry out, "*O Lord, Thou art just... and Thy judgments are equitable.*"

Brothers, you must know that **the most ancient belief is the Law of God**, and that **we all bear it written in our hearts**; that **it can be learned without any teacher**, and that **it suffices to have the light of reason in order to know all the precepts of that Law**. That is why even the barbarians hid when they committed sin, because they knew they were doing wrong; and they are damned for not having observed the natural law written in their heart: for had they observed it, God would have made a miracle rather than let them be damned; He would have sent them someone to teach them and would have given them other aids, of which they made themselves unworthy by not living in conformity with the inspirations of their own conscience, which never failed to warn them of the good they should do and the evil they should avoid. So it is their conscience that accused them at the Tribunal of God, and it tells them constantly in hell, "*Thy damnation comes from thee.*" They do not know what to answer and are obliged to confess that they are deserving of their fate. Now if these infidels have no excuse, will there be any for a Catholic who had so many sacraments, so many sermons, so many aids at his disposal? How will he dare to say, "*If God was going to damn me, then why did He create me?*" How will he dare to speak in this manner, when God gives him so many aids to be saved? So let us finish confounding him.

You who are suffering in the abyss, answer me! Are there any Catholics among you? "*There certainly are!*" How many? Let one of them come here! "*That is impossible, they are too far down, and to have them come up would turn all of hell upside down; it would be easier to stop one of them as he is falling in.*" So then, I am speaking to you who live in the habit of mortal sin, in hatred, in the mire of the vice of impurity, and who are getting closer to hell each day. Stop, and turn around; it is Jesus who calls you and who, with His wounds, as with so many eloquent voices, cries to you, "My son, if you are damned, you have only yourself to blame: '*Thy damnation comes from thee.*'**" Lift up your eyes and see all the graces with which I have enriched you to insure your eternal salvation. I could have had you born in a forest in Barbary; that is what I did to many others, but I had you born in the Catholic Faith; I had you raised by such a good father, such an excellent mother, with the purest instructions and teachings. If you are damned in spite of that,**

whose fault will it be? Your own, My son, your own: '*Thy damnation comes from thee.*'

"I could have cast you into hell after the first mortal sin you committed, without waiting for the second: I did it to so many others, but I was patient with you, I waited for you for many long years. I am still waiting for you today in penance. If you are damned in spite of all that, whose fault is it? Your own, My son, your own: "*Thy damnation comes from thee.*" You know how many have died before your very eyes and were damned: that was a warning for you. You know how many others I set back on the right path to give you the good example. Do you remember what that excellent confessor told you? I am the one who had him say it. Did he not enjoin you to change your life, to make a good confession? I am the One who inspired him. Remember that sermon that touched your heart? I am the One who led you there. And what has happened between you and Me in the secret of your heart, ...**that** you can never forget.

"Those interior inspirations, that clear knowledge, that constant remorse of conscience, would you dare to deny them? All of these were so many aids of My grace, because I wanted to save you. I refused to give them to many others, and I gave them to you because I loved you tenderly. My son, My son, if I spoke to them as tenderly as I am speaking to you today, how many others souls return to the right path! And you... you turn your back on Me. Listen to what I am going to tell you, for these are My last words: You have cost Me My blood; if you want to be damned in spite of the blood I shed for you, do not blame Me, you have only yourself to accuse; and throughout all eternity, do not forget that if you are damned in spite of Me, you are damned because you want to be damned: '*Thy damnation comes from thee.*' "

O my good Jesus, the very stones would split on hearing such sweet words, such tender expressions. Is there anyone here who wants to be damned, with so many graces and aids? If there is one, let him listen to me, and then let him resist if he can.

Baronius relates that after Julian the Apostate's infamous apostasy, he conceived such great hatred against Holy Baptism that day and night, he sought a way in which he might erase his own. To that purpose he had a bath of goat's blood prepared and placed himself in it, wanting this impure blood of a victim consecrated to Venus to erase the sacred character of Baptism from his soul. Such behavior seems abominable to you, but if Julian's plan had been able to succeed, it is certain that he would be suffering much less in hell.

Sinners, the advice I want to give you will no doubt seem strange to you; but if

you understand it well, it is, on the contrary, inspired by tender compassion toward you. I implore you on my knees, by the blood of Christ and by the Heart of Mary, change your life, come back to the road that leads to heaven, and do all you can to belong to the little number of those who are saved....

You are horror-struck at such a thought? Well then, cast yourself at the feet of Jesus Christ and say to Him, with tearful eyes and contrite heart: **"Lord, I confess that up till now I have not lived as a Christian. I am not worthy to be numbered among Your elect. I recognize that I deserve to be damned; but Your mercy is great and, full of confidence in Your grace, I say to You that I want to save my soul, even if I have to sacrifice my fortune, my honor, my very life, as long as I am saved. If I have been unfaithful up to now, I repent, I deplore, I detest my infidelity, I ask You humbly to forgive me for it. Forgive me, good Jesus, and strengthen me also, that I may be saved. I ask You not for wealth, honor or prosperity; I ask you for one thing only, to save my soul."**

And You, O Jesus! What do You say? O Good Shepherd, see the stray sheep who returns to You; embrace this repentant sinner, bless his sighs and tears, or rather bless these people who are so well disposed and who want nothing but their salvation. Brothers, at the feet of Our Lord, let us protest that we want to save our soul, cost what it may. Let us all say to Him with tearful eyes, "Good Jesus, I want to save my soul," O blessed tears, O blessed sighs!"

The doctrine of Saint Leonard of Port Maurice has saved and will save countless souls till the end of time. Here is what the Church says in the prayer of the Divine Office, Sixth Lesson, speaking of Saint Leonard's heavenly eloquence: *Upon hearing him, even hearts of iron and brass were powerfully inclined to penance, by reason of the astonishing effectiveness of the sermon and the preacher's burning zeal.* And in the liturgical prayer we ask of the Lord, *Give the power to bend the hearts of hardened sinners by the works of preaching.*

This sermon by Saint Leonard of Port Maurice was preached during the reign of Pope Benedict XIV, who so loved the great missionary.

Fr. Martin Von Cochem's masterpiece book *"The Four Last Things"* (that deals specifically with the topics of Hell, the fear of God, death and judgment), explains the frightful truth of Our Lord's words in the Gospel **of how few people there actually are on this earth that even find the path to**

Heaven even once while living on this earth, and much less persevere on it until their death:

“Let me ask thee, O reader, what proportion thinkest thou of all who live upon this earth will be saved? Half? or a third part? or perhaps a quarter? Alas, I fear, and not without good reason, that the number will not be nearly so large. Jesus Christ, who is eternal Truth, His holy apostles, and the Fathers of the Church, all tell us that so it will be.

“What does Christ say about the number of the elect? His words are these: "Many are called, but few are chosen." He repeats these words when He speaks of the guest who had not on a wedding garment: "Bind his hands and his feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness. For many are called, but few chosen." Were nothing more to be found to this intent in the whole of the Scriptures, this passage could not fail to alarm us. But there are many other similar ones, of which I will quote one or two. In the Gospel of St. Matthew we read that Our Lord said: "Enter ye in at the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth unto destruction, and many there are that go in thereat. How narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there are that find it." (Matt. 7:13) Are not these words calculated to inspire us with anxiety and apprehension? May not we be amongst those who go in at the wide gate, who walk on the broad road that ends in everlasting perdition? In order that thou mayst better appreciate the meaning of Our Lord's words, and perceive more clearly how few are the elect, observe that Christ did not say that those were few in number who walked in the path to heaven, but that there were but few who found that narrow way. "How strait is the gate that leadeth unto life, and few there are that find it." It is as if the Savior intended to say: The path leading to heaven is so narrow and so rough, it is so overgrown, so dark and difficult to discern, that there are many who, their whole life long, never find it. And those who do find it are exposed constantly to the danger of deviating from it, of mistaking their way and unwittingly wandering away from it, because it is so irregular and overgrown. This St. Jerome says, in his commentary on the passage in question. Again, there are some who when they are on the right road, hasten to leave it, because it is so steep and toilsome. There are also many who are enticed to leave the narrow way by the wiles and deceits of the devil, and thus, almost imperceptibly to themselves, are led downwards to hell." (Fr. Martin Von Cochem, *The Four Last Things*, pp. 212-213)

If people could only open their fleshly eyes and start seeing with their spiritual

eyes how short this life and the lust of the flesh is, everyone would immediately become chaste and pure, but no one today wants to contemplate or meditate on the end of all flesh, which is death and decay in the grave. They behave as mentally ill people who willfully forgets that they must die and be judged by our Lord Jesus Christ. The thought of death is indeed powerful to conquer every sin and sinful occasion, but while people know that they must die, they willfully choose to forget this fact, since the very thought of death and change is repugnant to their fleshly beings, and directly associated with the thought of being judged by God for their sins. And so, they choose to forget that they must die and be judged by God in order to not have to feel any distress, fear or remorse from their evil conscience every time they sin.

But the time will come when they – standing in shame and ignominy in front of the whole world at the day of judgment – will be forced against their will to remember and confess every single sinful and lustful act that they have ever committed from the moment they reached the age of reason to their very last breath, and then, after their just condemnation, their eternal punishment will begin. Their soul shall be separated from their sinful and fleshly rotting body for the sake of their vile and shameful affections and lusts and be cast into the eternal fire “*in the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*” (Apocalypse 21:8)

THE REALITY OF HELL: STORIES OF PERSONS WHO VISITED HELL AND APPARITIONS OF THE DAMNED

The Reality of Hell

One of the great dangers of this century, and thus one of the great triumphs of Satan, has been the growing disbelief in the existence of Hell. For many, Hell has become a fable, a myth, an outdated holdover from "the Old Testament God of fire, brimstone and judgment." Urged on by false doctrines and a want to believe that there can be no such thing as eternal punishment for serious wrongs "when Jesus is a God of love and kindness," many have thrown Hell out the window – along with concern for sin. After all, if there is no Hell, then why need there be concern for sin? Unfortunately, they forget that "I am the Lord and I change not" (Malachi 3:6). Hell has not suddenly evaporated because we would prefer it so. How subtle Satan is in these times. He increasingly tricks people

into his web by disguising its very existence. He wants you to let your guard down. Please do not be deceived. Hell, eternal punishment for serious sins, exists. Scripture, the Church and reports of modern-day visionaries all confirm that Hell is a reality – never-ending reality for those souls who must reside there with Satan and all the other damned forever, because by their own free will and choice they rejected God while on earth and excluded themselves from communion with Him.

The Bible and Hell

There are over thirty repeated references to the existence of Hell in the Old Testament alone. For instance: "The sorrows of death have compassed me: and the perils of hell have found me" (Psalms [D-R] 114:3). "For the Lord Almighty will take revenge on them. In the day of judgment he will visit them: for he will give fire and worms into their flesh, that they may burn, and may feel for ever" (Judith 16:20 -21). "Depart from me, come not near me, because thou art unclean: these shall be smoke in my anger, a fire burning all the day" (Isaias 65:5). "A fire is kindled in my wrath, and shall burn even to the lowest hell...I will heap evils upon the transgressors of my law, and will spend my arrows among them" (Deut.32:22-23). "The congregation of sinners is like tow heaped together, and the end of them is a flame of fire" (Ecclesiasticus 21:10). "He shall be punished for all he did, and yet shall not be consumed:...he shall burn, and every sorrow shall fall upon him...All darkness is hid in his secret places: a fire that is not kindled shall devour him" (Job 20:18,22,26).

In the Gospels, Jesus speaks of Hell more than of Heaven. In St. Matthew's Gospel, Jesus says "But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment....And whosoever shall say, you fool, shall be in danger of hell fire" (St. Matt. 5:22). "The Son of Man shall send his angels and they will collect out of his kingdom all who cause others to sin and all evildoers. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth" (St. Matt. 13:41-42). In St. Mark's Gospel, Jesus warns: "And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire..." (St. Mark 9:42).

A description of the last judgment in the Book of Apocalypse clearly makes the point: "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in presence of the throne, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which was the book of life; and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it,

and death and hell gave up their dead that were in them; and they were judged every one according to their works. And hell and death were cast into the pool of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the pool of fire" (Apoc. 20:12-15).

Jesus describes in St. Matthew's Gospel the last judgment as His separation of the sheep (those who loved God and neighbor) from the goats (those who did not). To the goats, Jesus says His indictment will be: "Depart from Me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ...And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life" (St. Matt. 25:41,46). Jesus Christ could not have been more clear that each of us, by our choices and conduct, risks eternal punishment after death – Hell.

Apparitions of the Damned from Hell

In Chapter 16 of the Gospel of St. Luke, Jesus tells a parable on Hell. A rich man who has died and is in Hell pleads with God to send the poor man Lazarus, who has gone to Heaven, back from the dead to warn his five brothers that Hell really exists. God replies: "If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead." However, God is so merciful that He has reportedly allowed certain of the damned in Hell as well as some saints and holy persons to return to earth to witness to others that there truly is a place of eternal suffering – Hell – for those who disobey God and His commandments. The following are a few examples of many such occurrences – documented in the annals of private revelation.

Sister Faustina's Description of Hell (1905-1938)

The Catholic nun Sister Faustina visited Hell in 1936. Here is her awesome account of this horrifying and dreadful place: "Today, I was led by an angel to the chasms of hell. It is a place of great torture; how awesomely large and extensive it is! The kinds of tortures I saw: the first torture that constitutes hell is the loss of God; the second is perpetual remorse of conscience; the third is that one's condition will never change; the fourth is the fire that will penetrate the soul without destroying it – a terrible suffering, since it is a purely spiritual fire, lit by God's anger; the fifth torture is continual darkness and a terrible suffocating smell, and, despite the darkness, the devils and the souls of the damned see each other and all the evil, both of others and their own; the sixth torture is the constant company of Satan; the seventh torture is the horrible despair, hatred of God, vile words, curses and blasphemies. These are the tortures suffered by all the damned together, but that is not the end of the

sufferings. There are special tortures destined for particular souls. These are the torments of the senses. Each soul undergoes terrible and indescribable sufferings, related to the manner in which it has sinned. There are caverns and pits of torture where one form of agony differs from another. I would have died at the very sight of these tortures if the omnipotence of God had not supported me. Let the sinner know that he will be tortured throughout all eternity, in those senses which he made use of to sin. I am writing this at the command of God, so that no soul may find an excuse by saying there is no hell, or that nobody has ever been there, and so no one can say what it is like. I, Sister Faustina, by the order of God, have visited the abysses of hell so that I might tell souls about it and testify to its existence. I cannot speak about it now; but I have received a command from God to leave it in writing. The devils were full of hatred for me, but they had to obey me at the command of God. What I have written is but a pale shadow of the things I saw. But I noticed one thing: that most of the souls there are those who disbelieved that there is a hell. When I came to, I could hardly recover from the fright. How terribly souls suffer there! Consequently, I pray even more fervently for the conversion of sinners. I incessantly plead God's mercy upon them. O my Jesus, I would rather be in agony until the end of the world, amidst the greatest sufferings, than offend You by the least sin."

Sister Josefa Menendez' Description of Hell (1890-1923)

This young Spanish sister, who had a short religious life of great suffering. More than once, she was taken to Hell to witness and feel the suffering first-hand. She records the accusations made against themselves by these unhappy souls:

"Some yell because of the martyrdom of their hands. Perhaps they were thieves, for they say: 'Where is our loot now?' ...Cursed hands... Others curse their tongues, their eyes...whatever was the occasion of sin... 'Now, O body, you are paying the price of the delights you granted yourself!...and you did it of your own free will...' (April 2, 1922).

"I saw several souls fall into Hell, and among them was a child of fifteen, cursing her parents for not having taught her to fear God nor that there was a Hell. Her life had been a short one, she said, but full of sin, for she had given in to all that her body and passions demanded in the way of satisfaction..." (March 22, 1923).

"My soul fell into abysmal depths, the bottom of which cannot be seen, for it is immense. . . ; Then I was pushed into one of those fiery cavities and pressed, as it were, between burning planks, and sharp nails and red-hot irons seemed to be piercing my flesh. I felt as if they were endeavoring to pull out my tongue, but could not. This torture reduced me to such agony that my very eyes seemed to

be starting out of their sockets. I think this was because of the fire which burns, burns. . . not a finger nail escapes terrifying torments, and all the time one cannot move even a finger to gain some relief, not change posture, for the body seems flattened out and [yet] doubled in two. Sounds of confusion and blasphemy cease not for an instant. A sickening stench asphyxiates and corrupts everything, it is like the burning of putrefied flesh, mingled with tar and sulfur. . . a mixture to which nothing on earth can be compared. . . although these tortures were terrific, they would be bearable if the soul were at peace. But it suffers indescribably. . . All I have written," she concluded, "is but a shadow of what the soul suffers, for no words can express such dire torment." (September 4, 1922).

"Others curse their tongues, their eyes... whatever was the occasion of their sin... 'Now, O body, you are paying the price of the delights you granted yourself!.. and you did it of your own free will... '" (April 2, 1922). (That is, illegitimate delights).

"It seemed to me that the majority accused themselves of sins of impurity, of stealing, of unjust trading; and that most of the damned are in Hell for these sins." (April 6, 1922).

"I saw many worldly people fall into Hell, and no words can render their horrible and terrifying cries: 'Damned forever... I deceived myself; I am lost... I am here forever... There is no remedy possible... a curse on me...'

"Some accused people, others circumstances, and all execrated the occasions of their damnation." (September 1922).

"Today, I saw a vast number of people fall into the fiery pit . . . they seemed to be worldlings and a demon cried vociferously: 'The world is ripe for me . . . I know that the best way to get hold of souls is to rouse their desire for enjoyment . . . Put me first . . . me before the rest . . . no humility for me! but let me enjoy myself . . . This sort of thing assures victory to me . . . and they tumble headlong into hell.'" (October 4, 1923)

"I heard a demon, from whom a soul had escaped, forced to confess his powerlessness. 'Confound it all... how do so many manage to escape me? They were mine' (and he rattled off their sins)... 'I work hard enough, yet they slip through my fingers... Someone must be suffering and repairing for them.'" (January 15, 1923). ("Repairing," that is, "making reparation" for them).

"Tonight," wrote Josefa, "I did not go down into Hell, but was transported to a place where all was obscure, but in the center was a red smoldering fire. They

had laid me flat and so bound me that I could not make the slightest movement. Around me were seven or eight people; [which represented demons] their black bodies were unclothed, and I could see them only by the reflections of the fire. They were seated and were talking together. "One said: 'We'll have to be very careful not to be found out, for we might easily be discovered.'

"The devil answered: 'Insinuate yourselves by inducing carelessness in them... but keep in the background, so that you are not found out... by degrees they will become callous, and you will be able to incline them to evil. Tempt these others to ambition, to self-interest, to acquiring wealth without working, whether it be lawful or not. Excite some to sensuality and love of pleasure. Let vice blind them...' (Here they used obscene words).

"As to the remainder... get in through the heart... you know the inclinations of their hearts... make them love... love passionately... work thoroughly.. take no rest... have no pity; the world must go to damnation.. and these souls must not be allowed to escape me.'

"From time to time Satan's satellites answered: 'We are your slaves... we shall labor unceasingly, and in spite of the many who war against us, we shall work night and day. We know your power!'

"They all spoke together, and he whom I took to be Satan used words full of horror. In the distance I could hear a clamor as of feasting, the clinking of glasses... and he cried: 'Let them cram themselves with food! It will make it all the easier for us... Let them get on with their banqueting. Love of pleasure is the door through which you will reach them...'

"He added such horrible things that they can neither be written nor said. Then, as if engulfed in a whirl of smoke, they vanished." (February 3, 1923).

"The evil one was bewailing the escape of a soul: 'Fill her soul with fear, drive her to despair. All will be lost if she puts her trust in the mercy of that...' (here they used blasphemous words about Our Lord). 'I am lost; but no, drive her to despair; do not leave her for an instant, above all, make her despair.'

"Then Hell re-echoed with frenzied cries, and when finally the devil cast me out of the abyss, he went on threatening me. Among other things he said: 'Is it possible that such weaklings have more power than I, who am mighty... I must conceal my presence, work in the dark; any corner will do from which to tempt them... close to an ear.. in the leaves of a book... under a bed... some pay no attention to me, but I shall talk and talk... and by dint of suggestion, something will remain.. Yes, I must hide in unsuspected places.'" (February 7, 8, 1923).

Again, she wrote: "Souls were cursing the vocation they had received, but not followed... the vocation they had lost, because they were unwilling to live a hidden and mortified life..." (March 18, 1922).

"On one occasion when I was in Hell, I saw a great many priests, religious and nuns, cursing their vows, their order, their Superiors and everything that could have given them the light and the grace they had lost...

"I saw, too, some prelates. One accused himself of having used the goods belonging to the Church illicitly..." (September 28, 1922).

"Priests were calling down maledictions on their tongues which had consecrated, on their fingers that had held Our Lord's Sacred Body, on the absolution they had given while they were losing their own souls, and on the occasion through which they had fallen into Hell." (April 6, 1922).

"One priest said: 'I ate poison, for I used money that was not my own... the money given me for Masses which I did I not offer.'

"Another said he belonged to a secret society which had betrayed the Church and religion, and he had been bribed to connive at terrible profanations and sacrileges.

"Yet another said that he was damned for assisting at profane plays, after which he ought not to have said Mass... and that he had spent about seven years thus."

Josefa noted that the greater number of religious plunged into hell-fire were there for abominable sins against chastity... and for sins against the vow of poverty... for the unauthorized use of the goods of the community... for passions against charity (jealousy, antipathies, hatred, etc.), for tepidity and relaxation; also for comforts they had allowed themselves and which had led to graver sins... for bad confessions through human respect and want of sincerity and courage, etc.

"The meditation of the day was on the Particular Judgment of religious souls. I could not free my mind of the thought of it, in spite of the oppression which I felt. Suddenly, I felt myself bound and overwhelmed by a crushing weight, so that in an instant I saw more clearly than ever before how stupendous is the sanctity of God and His detestation of sin.

"I saw in a flash my whole life since my first confession to this day. All was vividly present to me: my sins, the graces I had received, the day I entered religion, my clothing as a novice, my first vows, my spiritual readings, and times of prayer, the advice given me, and all the helps of religious life. Impossible to

describe the confusion and shame a soul feels at that moment, when it realizes: 'All is lost, and I am damned forever.'"

As in her former descents into Hell, Josefa never accused herself of any specific sin that might have led to such a calamity. Our Lord meant her only to feel what the consequences would have been, if she had merited such a punishment. She wrote:

"Instantly I found myself in Hell, but not dragged there as before. The soul precipitates itself there, as if to hide from God in order to be free to hate and curse Him.

"My soul fell into abysmal depths, the bottom of which cannot be seen, for it is immense... at once, I heard other souls jeering and rejoicing at seeing me share their torments. It was martyrdom enough to hear the terrible imprecations on all sides, but what can be compared to the thirst to curse that seizes on a soul, and the more one curses, the more one wants to. Never had I felt the like before. Formerly my soul had been oppressed with grief at hearing these horrible blasphemies, though unable to produce even one act of love. But today it was otherwise.

"I saw Hell as always before, the long dark corridors, the cavities, the flames... I heard the same execrations and imprecations, for--and of this I have already written before--although no corporeal forms are visible, the torments are felt as if they were present, and souls recognize each other. Some called out, 'Hullo, you here? And are you like us? We were free to take those vows or not... but no!...' and they cursed their vows.

"Then I was pushed into one of those fiery cavities and pressed, as it were, between burning planks, and sharp nails and red-hot irons seemed to be piercing my flesh."

Here Josefa repeated the multiple tortures from which no single member of the body is excluded:

"I felt as if they were endeavoring to pull out my tongue, but could not. This torture reduced me to such agony that my very eyes seemed to be starting out of their sockets. I think this was because of the fire which burns, burns... not a finger-nail escapes terrifying torments, and all the time one cannot move even a finger to gain some relief, nor change posture, for the body seems flattened out and yet doubled in two.

"All this I felt as before, and although those tortures were terrific, they would be

bearable if the soul were at peace. But it suffers indescribably. Until now, when I went down into Hell, I thought that I had been damned for abandoning religious life. But this time it was different. I bore a special mark, a sign that I was a religious, a soul who had known and loved God, and there were others who bore the same sign. I cannot say how I recognized it, perhaps because of the specially insulting manner in which the evil spirits and other damned souls treated them. There were many priests there, too. This particular suffering I am unable to explain. It was quite different from what I had experienced at other times, for if the souls of those who lived in the world suffer terribly, infinitely worse are the torments of religious. Unceasingly the three words, Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, are imprinted on the soul with poignant remorse.

"Poverty: You were free and you promised! Why, then, did you seek that comfort? Why hold on to that object which did not belong to you? Why did you give that pleasure to your body? Why allow yourself to dispose of the property of the Community? Did you not know that you no longer had the right to possess anything whatsoever, that you had freely renounced the use of those things?... Why did you murmur when anything was wanting to you, or when you fancied yourself less well treated than others? Why?

"Chastity: You yourself vowed it freely and with full knowledge of its implications... you bound yourself.. you willed it... and how have you observed it? That being so, why did you not remain where it would have been lawful for you to grant yourself pleasures and enjoyment?

"And the tortured soul responds: 'Yes, I vowed it; I was free... I could have not taken the vow, but I took it and I was free...' What words can express the martyrdom of such remorse," wrote Josefa, "and all the time the jibes and insults of other damned souls continue.

"Obedience: Did you not fully engage yourself to obey your Rule and your Superiors? Why, then, did you pass judgment on the orders that were given you? Why did you disobey the Rule? Why did you dispense yourself from common life? Remember how sweet was the Rule... and you would not keep it... and now," vociferate satanic voices, "you will have to obey us not for a day or a year, or a century, but forever and ever; for all eternity... It is your own doing... you were free.

"The soul constantly recalls how she had chosen her God for her Spouse, and that once she loved Him above all things... that for Him she had renounced the most legitimate pleasures and all she held dearest on earth, that in the beginning of her religious life she had felt all the purity, sweetness and strength

of this divine love, and that for an inordinate passion... now she must eternally hate the God who had chosen her to love Him.

"This forced hatred is a thirst that consumes her... no past joys can afford her the slightest relief.

"One of her greatest torments is shame," added Josefa. "It seems to her that all the damned surrounding her continually taunt her by saying: 'That we should be lost who never had the helps that you enjoyed is not surprising... but you... what did you lack? You who lived in the palace of the King... who feasted at the board of the elect.'

"All I have written," she concluded, "is but a shadow of what the soul suffers, for no words can express such dire torments." (September 4, 1922).

St. Francis Jerome and the Obstinate Sinner

In the year 1707, St. Francis Jerome was preaching, as was his wont, in the neighborhood of the City of Naples. He was speaking of Hell and the awful chastisements that await obstinate sinners. A brazen courtesan (prostitute), who lived there, troubled by a discourse which aroused her remorse, sought to hinder it by jests and shouts, accompanied by noisy instruments. As she was standing close to the window, the Saint cried out: "Beware, my daughter, of resisting grace; before eight days God will punish you." The unhappy creature grew only more boisterous. Eight days elapsed, and the holy preacher happened to be again before the same house. This time she was silent; the windows were shut. The hearers, with dismay on their faces, told the Saint that Catherine (that was the name of the bad woman) had a few hours before died suddenly. "Died!" he repeated. "Well, let her tell us now what she has gained by laughing at Hell. Let us ask her." He uttered these words in an inspired tone, and everyone expected a miracle. Followed by an immense crowd, he went up to the death chamber, and there, after having prayed for an instant he uncovered the face of the corpse, and said in a loud voice, "Catherine, tell us where art thou now." At this summons, the dead woman lifted her head, while opening her wild eyes; her face borrowed color, her features assumed an expression of horrible despair, and in a mournful voice, she pronounced these words: "In Hell; I am in Hell." And immediately, she fell back again into the condition of a corpse.

"I was present at that event," says one of the witnesses, "but I could never convey the impression it produced on me and the bystanders, nor that which I still feel every time I pass that house and look at that window. At the sight of that ill-fated abode, I still hear the pitiful cry resounding: 'In Hell, I am in Hell.'"

With fear and trembling work out your salvation (Philip. 2:12).

The Fatima Children Are Shown Hell

In 1917, during World War I and that "hell on earth," the Virgin Mary appeared to three children at Fatima, Portugal, on the 13th of the month from May through October. During her appearance on July 13th, 1917, she showed these three young children, ages 7 to 10, a vision of Hell. Lucia, the oldest of the three children, relates that the Blessed Virgin Mary opened her hands, and "rays of light seemed to penetrate the earth, and we saw, as it were, a sea of fire. Plunged in this fire were demons and souls in human form, like transparent burning embers, all blackened or burnished bronze, floating about in the conflagration, now raised into the air by the flames that issued from within themselves together with great clouds of smoke, now falling back on every side like sparks in huge fires, without weight or equilibrium, amid shrieks and groans of pain and despair, which horrified us and made us tremble with fear. (It must have been this sight which caused me to cry out, as people say they heard me.) The demons could be distinguished by their terrifying and repellent likeness to frightful and unknown animals, black and transparent like burning coals. Terrified and as if to plead for help, we looked up at Our Lady, who said to us so sadly: "You have seen Hell where the souls of poor sinners go. Thus, when you say the rosary, say after each mystery: O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of Hell and lead all souls to Heaven, especially those most in need of Thy Mercy." After this vision, the children lived dramatic lives of sacrifice and penance so that sinners might be converted and saved from the fires of Hell that God had shown them through His heavenly Prophetess.

Boy Raised from the Dead by St. John Bosco

A fifteen-year-old boy in Turin was about to die. He called for Don Bosco, but the saint was not able to make it in time. Another priest heard the boy's confession and the boy died. When Don Bosco returned to Turin, he set out at once to see the boy. When told that the boy was dead, he insisted that it was "just a misunderstanding." After a moment of prayer in the room of the dead child, Don Bosco suddenly cried out: "Charles! Rise!" To the utter amazement of all present, the boy stirred, opened his eyes, and sat up. Seeing Don Bosco, his eyes lit up.

"Father, I should now be in Hell!" gasped the boy. "Two weeks ago I was with a bad companion who led me into sin and at my last confession, I was afraid to tell everything . . . Oh, I've just come out of a horrible dream! I dreamt I was

standing on the edge of a huge furnace surrounded by a horde of devils. They were about to throw me into the flames when a beautiful Lady appeared and stopped them. 'There's still hope for you, Charles,' she told me. 'You have not yet been judged!' At that moment I heard you calling me. Oh, Don Bosco! What a joy to see you again! Will you please hear my confession?"

After hearing the boy's confession, Don Bosco said to the boy, "Charles, now that the gates of Heaven lie wide open for you, would you rather go there or stay here with us?" The boy looked away for a moment and his eyes grew moist with tears. An expectant hush fell over the room. "Don Bosco", he said at last, "I'd rather go to Heaven." The mourners watched in amazement as Charles leaned back on the pillows, closed his eyes, and settled once more into the stillness of death.

The Old General and The Count

In Russia shortly before the horrible military campaign between Napoleon and Russia in 1812, two high-ranking military men, one a Count and the Military Governor of Moscow and the other a General, were scoffing over drinks about the existence of God, life after death and Hell. They made a mocking "pledge of honor": if there were a Hell, the first there would come to inform the other of it. A few weeks later, the General departed for the front. One morning, while the Count was lying in bed, the General suddenly appeared before him, pale, with his right hand on his breast, declaring: "What do we do now? There is a Hell and I am there! What do we do now?" He then disappeared. The Count ran to friends, eyes wild, hair on end, and exclaimed what had just happened. Two weeks later, word was received in Moscow that the General had died in battle – on the same day and at the very hour he appeared to the Count. He had kept his word of honor: Hell exists.

The Young Lord and His Mistress

In London during the winter of 1847-1848, a wealthy young widow in her late 20's suddenly found herself in an illicit relationship with a young lord. Late one night as she was falling asleep, a glimmer of light started to grow and expand at her door. To her astonishment the door started to slowly open, and there was the young lord. He approached, grabbed her left wrist, and hissed: "There is a Hell." The pain in her wrist was so great she lost consciousness. When she came to, she had a terrible burn into her wrist down to the bone. The carpet also was scorched where his footsteps had come and gone. The next day she learned that the night before, her lord had been found drunk and had died in his servants'

arms. She apparently lived the rest of her life with her charred scar as a reminder.

A Soul From Hell

A widow who was a sleazy slumlord and porno dealer for 30 years became a God-fearing pillar of society overnight – after her husband paid her a visit from Hell! "I'm a changed woman," trembling Sophia Neri, 53, told reporters in Rome, Italy. "I've had a glimpse of Hell through my husband's eyes, and I'll do anything to keep from joining him there."

Before her eerie encounter, the widow operated a small empire of rat-infested slum apartments outside Rome and ran an underworld porno ring that produced magazines for sale overseas. "My husband Sal and I ran the business together before he died last year," Sophia recalled. "We lived in style, but we were living off the misery and appetites of others. After Sal died, I took over the entire operation myself and was pleased with the life I was leading."

But all that changed the day Sal appeared in Sophia's bedroom. His eyes burning like coals. "He stood before me a shrunken, broken soul, so different from the cocky, confident man I knew for 30 years," the reformed porno queen told reporters. "He told me he had been condemned to a life in Hell. He said it was far worse than anything he had imagined – and he warned me I would be joining him there if I didn't mend my ways. 'To live in Hell is to have a body that is constantly on fire,' he said. Then he pressed the palm of his hand against a heavy wooden door and his palm burned into the wood like a branding iron. A moment later he vanished leaving his handprint behind as a reminder of his warning. But believe me, that terrifying message burned itself into my mind as clearly as his handprint had burned into the door. I wasn't about to forget."

That night, Sophia visited a priest to confess her sins and beg for forgiveness. "She took me to her home and showed me the handprint on the door" [now at the Purgatorial Museum in Rome], said Father Angelo Macchi. "After seeing that and hearing her story, I have no doubt her husband paid her a visit from Hell." The next day, the shaken lady disbanded her illegal pornography operation and began turning her run-down tenement into luxury apartments, which she gave to the city to be used as low-rent housing for the poor.

"Sophia made a full confession of her activities to the police," Father Macchi said. "But so far nothing has come of it because she is living the life of a model citizen. She has given her money to charity and lives in a tiny apartment right next door to my church. She is a woman who truly has found God – and

probably just in the nick of time."

Revelations of St. Teresa of Avila, Mystic

"While I was at prayer one day, I found myself in a moment, without knowing how, plunged apparently into Hell. I understood that it was Our Lord's Will that I should see the place which the devils kept in readiness for me, and which I had deserved by my sins. It lasted but for a moment, but it seems to me impossible that I should ever forget it even if I were to live many years.

"The entrance seemed to be by a long narrow pass, like a furnace, very low, dark, and close. The ground seemed to be saturated with water, mere mud, exceedingly foul, sending forth pestilential odors, and covered with loathsome vermin. At the end was a hollow place in the wall like a closet, and in that I saw myself confined. All this was ever pleasant to behold in comparison with what I felt there. There is no exaggeration in what I am saying.

"But as to what I then felt, I do not know where to begin if I were to describe it; it is utterly inexplicable. I felt a fire in my soul but such that I am still unable to describe it. My bodily sufferings were unendurable. I have undergone most painful sufferings in this life, and, as the physicians say, the greatest that can be borne, such as the contraction of my sinews when I was paralyzed, without speaking of other ills of different types – yet, even those of which I have spoken, inflicted on me by Satan; yet all these were as nothing in comparison with what I then felt, especially when I saw that there would be no intermission nor any end to them.

"These sufferings were nothing in comparison with the anguish of my soul, a sense of oppression, of stifling, and of pain so acute, accompanied by so hopeless and cruel an infliction, that I know not how to speak of it. If I say that the soul is continually being torn from the body it would be nothing – for that implies the destruction of life by the hands of another – but here it is the soul itself that is tearing itself in pieces. I cannot describe that inward fire or that despair, surpassing all torments and all pain. I did not see who it was that tormented me, but I felt myself on fire, and torn to pieces, as it seemed to me; and I repeat it, this inward fire and despair are the greatest torments of all.

"Left in that pestilential place, and utterly without the power to hope for comfort, I could neither sit nor lie down; there was no room. I was placed as it were in a hole in the wall; and those walls, terrible to look on of themselves, hemmed me in on every side. I could not breathe. There was no light, but all was thick darkness. I do not understand how it is; though there was no light, yet

everything that can give pain by being seen was visible.

"Our Lord at that time would not let me see more of Hell. Afterwards I had another most fearful vision, in which I saw the punishment of certain sins. They were the most horrible to look at, but because I felt none of the pain, my terror was not so great. In the former vision Our Lord made me really feel those torments and that anguish of spirit, just as if I had been suffering them in the body there. I know not how it was, but I understood distinctly that it was a great mercy that Our Lord would have me see with my own eyes the very place from which His compassion saved me. I have listened to people speaking of these things and I have at other times dwelt on the various torments of Hell, though not often, because my soul made no progress by the way of fear; and I have read of the diverse tortures, and how the devils tear the flesh with red-hot pincers. But all is as nothing before this. It is a wholly different matter. In short, the one is a reality, the other a description; and all burning here in this life is as nothing compared with the fire that is there.

"I was so terrified by that vision – and that terror is on me even now as I write – that though it took place nearly six years ago, the natural warmth of my body is chilled by fear even now when I think of it. And so, amid all the pain and suffering which I may have had to bear, I remember no time in which I do not think that all we have to suffer in this world is as nothing. It seems to me that we complain without reason. I repeat it: this vision was one of the grandest mercies of God. It has been to me of the greatest service, because it has destroyed my fear of trouble and of the contradictions of the world, and because it has made me strong enough to bear up against them, and to give thanks to Our Lord who has been my Deliverer, as it now seems to me, from such fearful and everlasting pains.

"Ever since that time, as I was saying, everything seems endurable in comparison with one instant of suffering such as those I had then to bear in Hell. I am filled with fear when I see that, after frequently reading books which describe in some manner the pains of Hell, I was not afraid of them, nor made any account of them. Where was I? How could I possibly take any pleasure in those things which led me directly to so dreadful a place? Blessed forever be Thou, O my God! And oh, how manifest is it that Thou didst love me much more than I did love Thee! How often, O Lord, didst Thou save me from that fearful prison! And how I used to get back to it contrary to Thy Will.

"It was that vision which filled me with very great distress which I felt at the sight of so many lost souls, especially of the Lutherans – for they were once

members of the Church by Baptism – and also gave me the most vehement desires for the salvation of souls; for certainly I believe that to save even one from those overwhelming torments, I would willingly endure many deaths. If here on earth we see one whom we specially love in great trouble or pain, our very nature seems to bid us compassionate him; and if those pains be great, we are troubled ourselves. What, then, must it be to see a soul in danger of pain, the most grievous of all pains, forever? It is a thought no heart can bear without great anguish. Here we know that pain at last ends with life, and that there are limits to it, yet the sight of it moves us so greatly to compassion; that other pain has no ending, and I know not how we can be calm when we see Satan carry so many souls daily away.

"This also makes me wish that, in a matter which concerns us so much, we did not rest satisfied with doing less than we can do on our part – that we left nothing undone. May Our Lord vouchsafe to give us His Grace for that end."

Dear fellow Christians, Father Lombardi, in his public debate with Italian Communist leader Velio Spano in Cagliari on December 4, 1948, stated, "I am horror-struck at the thought that if you continue in this manner, you will be condemned to hell." Spano replied, "I do not believe in hell." Father Lombardi replied, "Precisely, and if you continue, you will be condemned; for to avoid being condemned, one must believe in hell." Hell is a grave reality that is easily forgotten in today's Godless and apathetic society. This is all the more reason why we should fear for our salvation and do all that we can to make sure that we are one of the elect. St. Leonard of Port Maurice said, "**To be saved for all eternity, to be damned for all eternity, and to not make your every effort to avoid the one and make sure of the other, is something inconceivable.**" Do not let your life pass before it is too late; focus on saving your soul to the exclusion of all other things, lest you find yourself forever in the eternal fires after your judgment. O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of Hell, lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Thy Mercy. Amen.

CRY OF A LOST SOUL AND THE LESSON THAT IT TEACHES

Clara and Annette, both single Catholics in their early twenties, worked adjacent to each other as employees of a commercial firm in Germany. Although they were never very close friends, they shared a courteous mutual regard which led

to an exchange of ideas and, eventually, of confidences. Clara professed herself openly religious, and felt it her duty to instruct and admonish Annette when the latter appeared excessively casual or superficial in religious matters.

In due course, Annette married and left the firm. The year was 1937. Clara spent the autumn of that year on holiday at Lake Garda. About the middle of September she received a letter from her mother. "Annette . . . is dead. She was the victim of an auto accident and was buried yesterday at Wald-Friedhof."

Clara was frightened since she knew her friend was not very religious. Was she prepared to appear before God? Dying suddenly, what had happened to her?

The next day she attended Mass, received Holy Communion, and prayed fervently for her friend. The following night, at ten minutes after midnight, the vision took place. . .

"Clara, do not pray for me! I am in hell. If I tell you this and speak at length about it, do not think it is because of our friendship. We here do not love anyone. I do this as under constraint. In truth, I should like to see you to come to this state where I must remain forever."

"Perhaps that angers you, but here we all think that way. Our wills are hardened in evil - in what you call evil. Even when we do something 'good', as I do now, opening your eyes about hell, it is not because of a good intention."

"Do you still remember our first meeting four years ago at. . .? You were then 23 and had been there already half a year. Because I was a beginner, you gave me some helpful advice. Then I praised your love of your neighbor. Ridiculous! Your help was mere coquetry. Here we do not acknowledge any good - in anybody."

"Do you remember what I told you about my youth? Now I am painfully compelled to fill in some of the gaps."

"According to the plan of my parents, I should not have existed. A misfortune brought about my conception. My two sisters were 14 and 15 when I was born."

"Would that I had never existed! Would that I could now annihilate myself! Escape these tortures! No pleasure would equal that with which I would abandon my existence, as a garment of ashes which is lost in nothingness. But I must continue to exist as I chose to make myself - as a ruined person."

"When father and mother, still young, left the country for the city, they had lost touch with the Church and were keeping company with irreligious people. They

had met at a dance and after a year and a half of companionship they 'had' to get married."

"As a result of the nuptial ceremony, so much holy water remained on them that my mother attended Sunday Mass a couple of times a year. But she never taught me to pray. Instead, she was completely taken up with the daily cares of life, although our situation was not bad."

"I refer to prayer, Mass, religious instruction, holy water, church with a very strong repugnance. I hate all that, as I hate those who go to church, and in general every human being and everything."

"From a great many things do we receive torture. Every knowledge received at the hour of death, every remembrance of things lived or known is for us, a piercing flame. In each remembrance, good and bad, we see the way in which was present - the grace we despised or ignored. What a torture is this! We do not eat, we do not sleep, we do not walk. Chained, with howling and gnashing of teeth, we look appalled at our ruined life, hating and suffering. Do you hear? We here drink hatred like water. Above all we hate God. With reluctance do I force myself to make you understand."

"The blessed in heaven must love God because they see Him without veil, in all His dazzling beauty. That makes their bliss indescribable. We know this and the knowledge makes us furious. Men on earth, who know God from nature and from revelation, can love Him, but they are not compelled to do so. The believer - I say this with gnashing of teeth - who contemplates Christ on the cross, with arms extended, will end by loving Him."

"But he whom God approaches only in the final storm, as punisher, as just avenger, because he was rejected by Him, such a person cannot but hate Him with all the strength of his wicked will. We died with willful resolve to be separated from God. Do you now understand why hell lasts forever! It is because our wills were fixed for eternity at the moment of death. We had made our final choice. Our obstinacy will never leave us. Under compulsion, I must add that God is merciful even towards us. I affirm many things against my will and must choke the torrent of abuses I should like to vomit out."

"God was merciful to us by not allowing our wicked wills to exhaust themselves on earth, as we should have been prepared to do. This would have increased our faults and our pains. He caused us to die before our time, as in my case, or had other mitigating circumstances intervene. Now He shows Himself merciful towards us by not compelling a closer approach than that afforded in this

remote inferno. Every step bringing us closer to God would cause us a greater pain than that which a step closer to a burning furnace would cause you."

"You were scared when once, during a walk, I told you that my father, a few days before my first Communion, had told me: 'My little Annette, the main thing is your beautiful white dress, all the rest is just make-believe.' Because of your concern, I was almost ashamed. Now I sneer at it."

"The important thing is that we were not allowed to receive Communion until the age of 12. By then I was already absorbed in worldly amusements and found it easy to set aside, without scruple, the things of religion. Thus, I attached no great importance to my first Communion. We are furious that many children go to Communion at the age of seven. We do all we can to make people believe that children have insufficient knowledge at that age. They must first commit some mortal sins. Then the white Particle will not do so much damage to our cause as when faith, hope, and charity - oh, these things! - received in Baptism, are still alive in their hearts."

"Marta K - and you induced me to enter "The Association of the Young Ladies." The games were amusing. As you know, I immediately took a directive part. I liked it. I also like the picnics. I even let myself be induced to go to confession and communion sometimes."

"Once you warned me, 'Anne, if you do not pray, you go to perdition.' I used to pray very little indeed, and even this unwillingly. You were then only too right. All those who burn in hell did not pray or did not pray enough."

"Prayer is the first step towards God. And it is the decisive step. Especially prayer to her who is the Mother of Christ, whose name we never pronounce. Devotion to her rescues from the devil numberless souls whom sin would infallibly give to him."

"I continue my story, consumed with rage and only because I have to. To pray is the easiest thing man can do on earth. And God has tied up the salvation of each one exactly to this very easy thing."

"To him who prays with perseverance little by little God gives so much light, so much strength, that even the most debased sinner will at the end come back to salvation. During the last years of my life I did not pray any more, so I lacked those graces without which nobody can be saved. Here we no longer receive graces. Moreover, should we receive them we would cynically refuse them. All the fluctuations of earthly existence have ceased in the other life. For years I was living far away from God. For, in the last call of grace I decided against God."

"I never believed in the influence of the devil. And now I affirm that he has strong influence on the persons who are in the condition in which I was then. Only many prayers, others and mine own, united with sacrifices and penances, could have snatched me from his grip. And even this only little by little. If there are only few externally obsessed, there are very many internally possessed. The devil cannot steal the free will from those who give themselves to his influence. But in punishment of their, so to speak, methodical apostasy from God, He allows the devil to nest in them."

"I hate the devil too. And yet I am pleased about him, because he tries to ruin all of you; he and his satellites, the fallen with him at the beginning of time. There are millions of them. They roam around the earth, as thick as a swarm of flies, and you do not even notice it. It is not reserved to us damned to tempt you; but to the fallen spirits. In truth every time they drag down here to hell a human soul their own torture is increased. But what does one not do for hatred?"

"Deep down I was rebelling against God. You did not understand it; you thought me still a Catholic. I wanted, in fact, to be called one; I even used to pay my ecclesiastical dues. Maybe your answers were right sometimes. On me they made no impression, since you must not be right. Because of these counterfeited relationships between the two of us, our separation on the occasion of my marriage was of no consequence to me. Before the wedding I went to confession and communion once more. It was a precept. My husband and I thought alike on this point. Why not comply with this formality? So we complied with this, as with the other formalities."

"Our married life, in general, was spent in great harmony. We were of the same idea in everything. In this too, that we did not want the burden of children. In truth, my husband would have like to have one; no more, of course. In the end I succeeded in dissuading him even from this desire. Dresses, luxurious furniture, places of entertainment, picnics and trips by car and similar things were more important for me... It was a year of pleasure on earth, the one that passed from my marriage to my sudden death. Internally, of course, I was never happy, although externally at ease. There was always something indeterminate inside that gnawed at me."

"Unexpectedly I had an inheritance from my Aunt, Lotte. My husband succeeded in increasing his wages to a considerable figure. And so I was able to furnish our new home in an attractive way. Religion did not show its light but from afar off, pale, feeble and uncertain."

"I used to give free vent to my ill humor about some mediaeval representations

of hell in cemeteries or elsewhere, in which the devil is roasting souls in red burning coals, while his companions with long tails drag new victims to him. Clara! One can be mistaken in depicting hell, but never can one exaggerate."

"I tell you: the fire of which the Bible speaks, does not mean the torment of the conscience. Fire is fire! What He said: 'Away from Me, you accursed one, into eternal fire', is to be understood literally. Literally! How can the spirit be touched by material fire, you will ask. How can your soul suffer on earth when you put your finger on the flame? In fact the soul does not burn; and yet what torture all the individual feels!"

"Our greatest torture consists in the certain knowledge that we shall never see God. How can this torture us so much, since on earth we are so indifferent? As long as the knife lies on the table, it leaves you cold. You see how keen it is, but you do not feel it. Plunge the knife into the flesh and you will start screaming for pain. Now we feel the loss of God. The lost Catholics suffer more than those of other religions, because they, mostly, received and despised more graces and more light. He who knew more suffers more cruelly than he who knew less. He who sinned out of malice suffers more keenly than he who sinned out of weakness. But nobody suffers more than he deserves. Oh, if that were not true, I should have a motive to hate!"

"My death happened this way . . ."

"A week ago - I am speaking according to your reckoning, because according to pain, I could very well say that it is already ten years that I am burning in hell - a week ago, then, my husband and I, on a Sunday went on a picnic, the last one for me. The day was glorious. I felt very well. A sinister sense of pleasure that was with me all the day long, invaded me. When lo, suddenly, during the return, my husband was dazzled by a car that was coming full speed. He lost control."

"Jesus, used frequently by some people of German language - escaped from my lips with a shivering. Not as a prayer, but as a shout. A lacerating pain took hold of the whole of me. (In comparison with the present only a trifle). Then I lost consciousness. Strange! That morning this thought had come to me in an inexplicable way: 'You could go to Mass once more', It seemed like the last call of Love."

"Clear and resolute, my 'NO' cut off that train of thought. You will know already what happened after my death. The lot of my husband and that of my mother, what happened to my corpse and the proceedings of my funeral are known to me through some natural knowledge we have here. What happens on earth we

know only obscurely. But we know what touches us closely. I see also where you are living."

"I myself awoke from the darkness suddenly, in the instant of my passing. I saw myself as flooded by a dazzling light. It was in the same place where my dead body was lying. It was like a theater, when suddenly the lights in the hall are put out, the curtains are rent aside and an unexpected scene, horrible illuminated, appears. The scene of my life."

"My soul showed herself to me as in a mirror; all the graces despised from my youth until my last NO to God. I felt myself like an assassin, to whom his dead victim is shown during his trial at court - Should I repent? Never! - Should I feel ashamed? Never!"

"However, I could not even stand before the eyes of God, rejected by me. There was only one thing for me: flight! As Cain fled from the dead body of Abel, so my soul rushed from the sight of horror."

"This was the particular judgment: the invisible Judge said: 'Away from Me'. Then my soul, as a yellow brimstone shadow, fell headlong into the place of eternal torture."

It is hoped that the above story will cause the reader to be most serious about the salvation of his soul. ("The greater part of men choose to be damned." St. Alphonsus Liguori) This is consistent with the teaching of the Holy Bible. "Enter by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are who enter that way. How narrow the gate and close the way that leads to life! And few there are who find it." (Matt. 7:13, 14) The Catholic Church is the one true Church. The history of all nations; of all people bear testimony that the Catholic Church is the oldest, the first, the one established by Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Now if you are really serious about saving your soul, you must adopt the Catholic Faith as there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church. This has been defined dogmatically by three different popes, even before the Protestant church came into existence.

Promote the faith. Distribute this article. Pray and work for the salvation of souls. If we are responsible for the salvation of one soul, we also insure the salvation of our own. (St. James 5: 19-20)

DEATH AND THE MOMENT OF TRUTH: HOW ATHEISTS, INFIDELS AND MORTAL SINNERS DIE

However much atheists and infidels want to protract their death and continue to live in defiance of God's laws, God have put a definite limit on all mankind's actions so that even those of the most despicable and lying kind of atheists and infidels should be helped by the fear of death to become honest and once again assess the evidence for God's existence. The frightful last word testimony below of different sorts of famous atheists, infidels and mortal sinners who changed their mind about God on their death beds should sober any mind, and help them to look at the evidence once more in true honesty and without any bias. This life is frightfully short, while eternity is frightfully long, and thus, any rational mind should seriously consider that however much they may act as if God does not exist, they shall die sooner or later. A man may live a lie, but his death bed tells the truth. The quotations before us show us how evil men (however famous or learned) willfully rejects and lies about God only until they know that they must meet Him. Aristotle wrote truly that: "Death is a dreadful thing, for it is the end!" John Donne, the English author, wrote: "Death is a bloody conflict and no victory at last; a tempestuous sea, and no harbor at last; a slippery height and no footing; a desperate fall and no bottom!" Rousseau cried, "No man dares to face death without fear."

Sir Francis Newport, the head of an English Atheist club to those gathered around his deathbed: "You need not tell me there is no God for I know there is one, and that I am in His presence! You need not tell me there is no hell. I feel myself already slipping. Wretches, cease your idle talk about there being hope for me! I know I am lost forever! Oh, that fire! Oh, the insufferable pangs of hell! ...Oh, that I could lie for a thousand years upon the fire that is never quenched, to purchase the favor of God and be united to Him again. But it is a fruitless wish. Millions and millions of years will bring me no nearer the end of my torments than one poor hour. Oh, eternity, eternity forever and forever!, Oh, the insufferable pangs of Hell!"

The awful and horrifying death of Sir Francis Newport shows us the clear difference between virtue and unrighteousness. Sir Francis Newport was trained in early life to understand the great truths of the gospel. He fell into company that corrupted his principles and his morals. He became an avowed infidel, and a life of dissipation soon brought on a disease that was incurable. When he felt that he must die, he threw himself on the bed, and after

a brief pause, he exclaimed as follows: "Whence this war in my heart? What argument is there now to assist me against matters of fact? Do I assert that there is no hell, while I feel one in my own bosom? Am I certain there is no after retribution, when I feel present judgment? Do I affirm my soul to be as mortal as my body, when this languishes, and that is vigorous as ever? O that any one would restore unto me that ancient gourd of piety and innocence! Wretch that I am, whither shall I flee from this breast? What will become of me?"

An infidel companion tried to dispel his thoughts, to whom he replied. "That there is a God, I know, because I continually feel the effects of His wrath; that there is a hell I am equally certain, having received an earnest of my inheritance there already in my breast; that there is a natural conscience I now feel with horror and amazement, being continually upbraided by it with my impieties, and all my iniquities, and all my sins brought to my remembrance. Why God has marked me out for an example of His vengeance, rather than you, or any one of my acquaintance, I presume is because I have been more religiously educated, and have done greater despite to the Spirit of grace. O that I was to lie upon the fire that never is quenched a thousand years, to purchase the favor of God and be reunited to Him again! But it is a fruitless wish. Millions of millions of years will bring me no nearer to the end of my torments than one poor hour. O, eternity, eternity! Who can discover the abyss of eternity? Who can paraphrase upon these words -- forever and ever?"

Lest his friends should think him insane, he said: "You imagine me melancholy, or distracted. I wish I were either; but it is part of my judgment that I am not. No; my apprehension of persons and things is more quick and vigorous than it was when I was in perfect health; and it is my curse, because I am thereby more sensible of the condition I am fallen into. Would you be informed why I am become a skeleton in three or four days? See now, then. I have despised my Maker, and denied my Redeemer. I have joined myself to the atheist and profane, and continued this course under many convictions, till my iniquity was ripe for vengeance, and the just judgment of God overtook me when my security was the greatest, and the checks of my conscience were the least."

As his mental distress and bodily disease were hurrying him into eternity, he was asked if he would have prayer offered in his behalf; he turned his face, and exclaimed, "Tigers and monsters! are ye also become devils to torment me? Would ye give me prospect of heaven to make my hell more intolerable?"

Soon after, his voice failing, and uttering a groan of inexpressible horror, he cried out, "OH, THE INSUFFERABLE PANGS OF HELL!" and died at once,

dropping into the very hell of which God gave him such an awful earnest, to be a constant warning to multitudes of careless sinners.

Voltaire, the most influential atheist of Europe in his day, who often stated that "by the time I'm buried, the Bible will be non-existent" cried out with his dying breath in horrifying desperation: "I am abandoned by God and man; I will give you half of what I am worth if you will give me six months' life." (He said this to Dr. Fochin, who told him it could not be done.) "Then I shall die and go to hell!" His nurse said: "For all the money in Europe I wouldn't want to see another unbeliever die! All night long he cried for forgiveness."

The Last Hours on Earth of The Noted French Infidel, Voltaire, should sober any mind up who still lives in sin and refuses to meditate on death, judgment and Hell. When Voltaire felt the stroke that he realized must terminate in death, he was overpowered with remorse. He at once sent for the priest, and wanted to be "reconciled with the church." His infidel flatterers hastened to his chamber to prevent his recantation; but it was only to witness his ignominy and their own. He cursed them to their faces; and, as his distress was increased by their presence, he repeatedly and loudly exclaimed:

"Begone! It is you that have brought me to my present condition. Leave me, I say; begone! What a wretched glory is this which you have produced to me!"

Hoping to allay his anguish by a written recantation, he had it prepared, signed it, and saw it witnessed. But it was all unavailing. For two months he was tortured with such an agony as led him at times to gnash his teeth in impotent rage against God and man. At other times, in plaintive accents, he would plead, "O Christ! O Lord Jesus!" Then, turning his face, he would cry out, "I must die -- abandoned of God and of men!"

As his end drew near, his condition became so frightful that his infidel associates were afraid to approach his bedside. Still they guarded the door, that others may not know how awfully an infidel was compelled to die. Even his nurse repeatedly said, "For all the wealth of Europe she would never see another infidel die." It was a scene of horror that lies beyond all exaggeration. Such is the well-attested end of the one who had a natural sovereignty of intellect, excellent education, great wealth, and much earthly honor.

Sir Thomas Scott, Chancellor of England: "Until this moment I thought there was neither a God nor a hell. Now I know and feel that there are both, and I am doomed to perdition by the just judgment of the Almighty."

In a Newsweek interview with Svetlana Stalin, the daughter of satanic mass murderer **Josef Stalin** who is estimated to have murdered over 50 million people, she told of her father's death: "My father died a difficult and terrible death... God grants an easy death only to the just... At what seemed the very last moment he suddenly opened his eyes and cast a glance over everyone in the room. It was a terrible glance, insane or perhaps angry and full of fear of death... His left hand was raised, as though he were pointing to something above and bringing down a curse on us all. The gesture was full of menace... The next moment he was dead."

Anton LaVey, author of the Satanic Bible and high priest of the religion dedicated to the worship of Satan. Some of his famous quotes are "There is a beast in man that needs to be exercised, not exorcised". His dying words were "Oh my, oh my, what have I done, there is something very wrong...there is something very wrong...."

Thomas Hobbes, the political philosopher and skeptic who corrupted many of England's men: "If I had the whole world, I would give anything to live one day. I shall be glad to find a hole to creep out of the world at. I am about to take a fearful leap in the dark!"

M.F. Rich: "Terrible horrors hang over my soul! I have given my immortality for gold; and its weight sinks me into a hopeless, helpless Hell!"

Thomas Payne the leading infidel writer in American colonies: "Stay with me, for God's sake; I cannot bear to be left alone, O Lord, help me! O God, what have I done to suffer so much? What will become of me hereafter? "I would give worlds if I had them, that The Age of Reason had never been published. O Lord, help me! Christ, help me! ...No, don't leave; stay with me! Send even a child to stay with me; for I am on the edge of Hell here alone. If ever the Devil had an agent, I have been that one."

David Hume, atheist philosopher famous for his philosophy of empiricism and skepticism of religion, he cried loud on his death bed "I am in flames!" It is said his "desperation was a horrible scene".

David Strauss, leading representative of German rationalism, after spending a lifetime erasing belief in God from the minds of others: "My philosophy leaves me utterly forlorn! I feel like one caught in the merciless jaws of an automatic machine, not knowing at what time one of its great hammers may crush me!"

Talleyrand (called the most brilliant mind in Europe of his dupes) when asked about his condition while on his deathbed replied: "I am suffering the pangs of

the damned.”

Sir Julian Huxley, English evolutionist, biologist and staunch atheist, on his deathbed: “So it is true after all, so it is true after all.”

Adams, the infidel said: “I’m lost, lost, lost. I am damned forever.” His agony was so great that as he died, he tore the hair from his head.

Christine Hewitt, Jamaican journalist and entertainer was quoted: “The Bible was the worst book ever written.” Shortly thereafter, in June 2006, she was found, burned beyond recognition in her automobile.

Deathbed conversions are extremely rare

The Bible which ranges over a period of six thousand years records but one instance of a deathbed conversion (the penitent thief that died beside Jesus on the cross). “For what is your life? It is a vapour which appeareth for a little while, and afterwards shall vanish away.” (James 4:15)

None of us knows how much time we have left in this life or what the circumstances of our death will be. We may die in a sudden, unexpected manner that will preclude even a possibility of a deathbed conversion. The only reasonable option is to repent and believe in Jesus Christ today. Many people die without having the experience of an extended amount of time on a death bed. Many people die instantly and unexpectedly, with no opportunity to repent and ask God to forgive their sins.

Below is an interesting quote from St. Alphonsus concerning the idea of conversion to the Catholic Faith at the end of one’s life. Although these types of conversions are possible, they are extremely rare. St. Alphonsus states that these types of conversions proceed out of necessity, and that it would be very difficult for God to pardon such a person: “He that lives in sin till death shall die in sin. “You shall die in your sin.” (John 8:21.) It is true that, in whatsoever hour the sinner is converted, God promises to pardon him; but to no sinner has God promised the grace of conversion at the hour of death. “Seek the Lord while he may be found.” (Isaiah 55:6.) Then, there is for some sinners a time when they shall seek God and shall not find him. “You shall seek me, and shall not find me.” (John 7:34.) The unhappy beings will go to confession at the hour of death; they will promise and weep, and ask mercy of God, but without knowing what they do. A man who sees himself under the feet of a foe pointing a dagger to his throat, will shed tears, ask pardon, and promise to serve his enemy as a slave during the remainder of his life. But, will the enemy believe him? No; he will feel convinced that his words are not sincere—that his object is to escape from his hands, and that, should he be pardoned, he will become more hostile than ever. In like manner, how can God pardon the dying sinner, when he sees that all his

acts of sorrow, and all his promises, proceed not from the heart, but from a dread of death and of approaching damnation.”

(Sermon 38: On the death of the sinner, par. 8)

The ultimate of statistics is this – that one out of every one; dies. “And it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment.” (Hebrews 9:27) Death is a certainty for which we must make preparation, or else suffer the consequence. As we think upon these LAST WORDS OF ATHEISTS, INFIDELS AND SINNERS, it naturally brings us all to an important question. It is a sobering and for some even a frightening thought, but one which ought to be considered thoughtfully and at length by each of us. – WHAT WILL YOUR LAST WORD BE?

THE PAINS OF HELL BY ST. ANTHONY MARY CLARET

"The sensation of pain in Hell is essentially very dreadful. Picture yourself, my soul, on a dark night on the summit of a high mountain. Beneath you is a deep valley, and the earth opens so that with your gaze you can see Hell in the cavity of it. Picture it as a prison situated in the center of the earth, many leagues down, all full of fire, hemmed in so impenetrably that for all eternity not even the smoke can escape. In this prison the damned are packed so tightly one on the other like bricks in a kiln... Consider the quality of the fire in which they burn.

First, the fire is all-extensive and tortures the whole body and the whole soul. A damned person lies in Hell forever in the same spot, which he was assigned by divine justice, without being able to move, as a prisoner in stocks.

The fire, in which he is totally enveloped, as a fish in water, burns around him, on his left, his right, above and below. His head, his breast, his shoulders, his arms, his hands, and his feet are all penetrated with fire, so that he completely resembles a glowing hot piece of iron, which has just been withdrawn from an oven. The roof beneath which the damned person dwells is fire; the food he takes is fire; the drink he tastes is fire; the air he breathes is fire; whatever he sees and touches is all fire....

But this fire is not merely outside him; it also passes within the condemned person. It penetrates his brain, his teeth, his tongue, his throat, his liver, his lungs, his bowels, his belly, his heart, his veins, his nerves, his bones, even to the

marrow, and even his blood.

"In Hell," according to St. Gregory the Great, "there will be a fire that cannot be put out, a worm which cannot die, a stench one cannot bear, a darkness one can feel, a scourging by savage hands, with those present despairing of anything good."

A most dreadful fact is that by the divine power this fire goes so far as to work on the very faculties of the soul, burning them and tormenting them. Suppose I were to find myself placed at the oven of a smith so that my whole body was in the open air but for one arm placed in the fire, and that God were to preserve my life for a thousand years in this position. Would this not be an unbearable torture? What, then, would it be like to be completely penetrated and surrounded by fire, which would affect not just an arm, but even all the faculties of the soul?

More Dreadful than Man Can Imagine

Secondly, this fire is far more dreadful than man can imagine. The natural fire that we see during this life has great power to burn and torment. Yet this is not even a shadow of the fire of Hell. There are two reasons why the fire of Hell is more dreadful beyond all comparison than the fire of this life.

The first reason is the justice of God, which the fire serves as an instrument in order to punish the infinite wrong done to his supreme majesty, which has been despised by a creature. Therefore, justice supplies this element with a burning power, which almost reaches the infinite....

The second reason is the malice of sin. As God knows that the fire of this world is not enough to punish sin, as it deserves, He has given the fire of Hell a power so strong that it can never be comprehended by any human mind. Now, how powerfully does this fire burn?

It burns so powerfully, O my soul, that, according to the ascetical masters, if a mere spark of it fell on a millstone; it would reduce it in a moment to powder. If it fell on a ball of bronze, it would melt it in an instant as if it were wax. If it landed on a frozen lake, it would make it boil in an instant.

Pause here briefly, my soul, and answer a few questions I will put. First, I ask you: If a special furnace were fired up as was customarily done to torment the holy martyrs, and then men placed before you all kinds of good things that the human heart might want, and added the offer of a prosperous kingdom – if all this were promised you on condition that for just a half-hour you enclose

yourself within the furnace, what would you choose?

A Hundred Kingdoms

"Ah!" you would say, "If you offered me a hundred kingdoms I would never be so foolish as to accept your brutal terms, regardless of how grand your offer might be, even if I were sure that God would preserve my life during those moments of suffering."

Second, I ask you: If you already had possession of a great kingdom and were swimming in a sea of wealth so that nothing was wanting to you, and then you were attacked by an enemy, were imprisoned and put in chains and obliged to either renounce your kingdom or else spend a half-hour in a hot furnace, what would you choose? "Ah!" you would say, "I would prefer to spend my whole life in extreme poverty and submit to any other hardship and misfortune, than suffer such a great torment!"

A Prison of Eternal Fire

Now turn your thoughts from the temporal to the eternal. To avoid the torment of a hot furnace, which would last but a half-hour, you would forgo all your property, even things you are most fond of; you would suffer any other temporal loss, however burdensome. Then why do you not think the same way when you are dealing of eternal torments? God threatens you not just with a half-hour in a furnace, but with a prison of eternal fire. To escape it, should you not forgo whatever He has forbidden, no matter how pleasant it can be for you, and gladly embrace whatever He commands, even if it be extremely unpleasant?

A most terrible thing about Hell is its duration. The condemned person loses God and loses Him for all eternity. Now, what is eternity? O my soul, up to now there has not been any angel who has been able to comprehend what eternity is. So how can you comprehend it? Yet, to form some idea of it, consider the following truths:

Eternity never ends. This is the truth that has made even the great saints tremble. The final judgment will come, the world will be destroyed, the earth will swallow up those who are damned, and they will be cast into Hell. Then, with His almighty hand, God will shut them up in that most unhappy prison.

From then on, as many years will pass as there are leaves on the trees and plants on all the earth, as many thousands of years as there are drops of water in all seas and rivers, as many thousands of years as there are atoms in the air, as

there are grains of sand on all the shores of all seas. Then, after the passage of this countless number of years, what will eternity be? Up to then there will not even have been a hundredth part of it, nor a thousandth – nothing. It then begins again and will last as long again, even after this has been repeated a thousand times, and a thousand million times again. And then, after so long a period, not even a half will have passed, not even a hundredth part nor a thousandth, not even any part of eternity. For all this time there is no interruption in the burnings of those who are damned, and it begins all over again.

Oh, a deep mystery indeed! A terror above all terrors! O eternity! Who can comprehend thee?

The Tears of Cain

Suppose that, in the case of unhappy Cain, weeping in Hell, he shed in every thousand years just one tear. Now, O my soul, recollect your thoughts and suppose this case: For six thousand years at least Cain has been in Hell and shed only six tears, which God miraculously preserves. How many years would pass for his tears to fill all the valleys of the earth and flood all the cities and towns and villages and cover all the mountains so as to flood the whole earth? We understand the distance from the earth to the sun is thirty-four million leagues. How many years would be necessary for Cain's tears to fill that immense space? From the earth to the firmament is, let us suppose, a distance of a hundred and sixty million leagues.

O God! What number of years might one imagine to be sufficient to fill with these tears this immense space? And yet – O truth so incomprehensible – be sure of it, as that God cannot lie – a time will arrive in which these tears of Cain would be sufficient to flood the world, to reach even the sun, to touch the firmament, and fill all the space between earth and the highest heaven. But that is not all.

If God dried up all these tears to the last drop and Cain began again to weep, he would again fill the same entire space with them and fill it a thousands times and a million times in succession, and after all those countless years, not even half of eternity would have passed, not even a fraction. After all that time burning in Hell, Cain's sufferings will be just beginning.

This eternity is also without relief. It would indeed be a small consolation and of little benefit for the condemned persons to be able to receive a brief respite once every thousand years.

No Relief

Picture in Hell a place where there are three reprobates. The first is plunged in a lake of sulfuric fire, the second is chained to a large rock and is being tormented by two devils, one of whom continually pours molten lead down his throat while the other spills it all over his body, covering him from head to foot. The third reprobate is being tortured by two serpents, one of which wraps around the man's body and cruelly gnaws on it, while the other enters within the body and attacks the heart. Suppose God is moved to pity and grants a short respite.

The first man, after the passage of a thousand years is drawn from the lake and receives the relief of a drink of cool water, and at the end of an hour is cast again into the lake. The second, after a thousand years, is released from his place and allowed to rest, but after an hour is again returned to the same torment. The third, after a thousand years, is delivered from the serpents; but after an hour of relief, is again abused and tormented by them. Ah, how little this consolation would be – to suffer a thousand years and to rest only one hour.

However, Hell does not even have that much relief. One burns always in those dreadful flames and never receives any relief for all eternity. He is forever gnawed and stricken with remorse, and will never have a rest for all eternity. He will suffer always a very ardent thirst and never receive the refreshment of a sip of water for all eternity. He will see himself always abhorred by God and will never enjoy a single tender glance from Him for all eternity. He will find himself forever cursed by heaven and Hell, and will never receive a single gesture of friendship.

It is an essential misfortune of Hell that everything will be without relief, without remedy, without interruption, without end, eternal.

The Kindness of His Mercy

Now I understand in part, O my God, what Hell is. It is a place of extreme pain, of extreme despair. It is where I deserve to be for my sins, where I would have been confined for some years already if your immense mercy had not delivered me. I will keep repeating a thousand times: The Heart of Jesus has loved me, or else I would now be in Hell! The mercy of Jesus has pitied me, for otherwise I would be in Hell! The Blood of Jesus has reconciled me with the heavenly Father, or my dwelling place would be Hell. This shall be the hymn that I want to sing to Thee, my God, for all eternity. Yes, from now on my intention is to repeat these words as many times as there are moments that have passed since that unhappy hour in which I first offended You.

What has been my gratitude to God for his kind mercy that He showed me? He delivered me from Hell. O, immense charity! O, infinite goodness! After a benefit so great, should I not have given Him my whole heart and loved Him with the love of the most ardent Seraphim? Should I not have directed all my actions to Him and in everything sought only His divine pleasure, accepting all contradictions with joy, in order to return to Him my love? Could I do less than that after a kindness that was so great? And yet, what is it that I have done? Oh, ingratitude worthy of another Hell! I cast You aside, O my God! I reacted to Your mercy by committing new sins and offenses. I know that I have done evil, O my God, and I repent with my whole heart. Ah, would that I could shed a sea of tears for such outrageous ingratitude! O Jesus, have mercy on me; for I now resolve to rather suffer a thousand deaths than offend You again.

The Urgency of Hell

It is of faith that Heaven exists for the good and Hell for the wicked. Faith teaches that the pains of Hell are eternal, and it also warns us that one single mortal sin suffices to condemn a soul forever because of the infinite malice by which it offends an infinite God. With these most positive principles in mind, how can I remain indifferent when I see the ease with which sins are committed, sins that occur as frequently as one takes a glass of water, sins and offenses that are perpetrated out of levity or diversion? How can I rest when so many are to be seen living continually in mortal sin and rushing in this blind manner to their eternal destruction? No indeed, I cannot rest, but must needs run and shout a warning to them. If I saw anyone about to fall into a pit or a fire, would I not run up to him and warn him, and do all in my power to help him from falling in? Why should I not do this much to keep sinners from falling into the pit and fires of Hell?

Neither can I understand why other priests who believe the selfsame truths as I do, as we all must do, do not preach or exhort their flock so that they might avoid this unbearable eternity of Hell. It is still a source of wonder to me how the laity – those men and women blessed with the Faith – do not give warning to those who need it. If a house were to catch fire in the middle of the night, and if the inhabitants of the same house and the other townsfolk were asleep and did not see the danger, would not the one who first noticed it shout and run along the streets, exclaiming: "Fire! Fire! In that house over there!" Then why should there not be a warning of eternal fire to waken those who are drifting in the sleep of sin in such a way that when they open their eyes they will find themselves burning in the eternal flames of Hell?"

Zeal for the salvation of souls spurred St. Anthony Mary Claret to preach an estimated 25,000 sermons, write 144 books, found three religious orders, preach countless missions, and in six years as a bishop, confirm over 300,000 and validate more than 9,000 marriages. Starting as a missionary in Spain and the Canary Islands, he was later appointed Archbishop of Santiago, Cuba, and thereafter confessor to the Queen of Spain. But in all he did, he labored so ceaselessly, so tirelessly, and so fruitfully for the cause of Christ and His Church that he is simply called a “Modern Apostle.”

Miracles surrounded his work, and he possessed the gifts of prophecy and the reading of hearts. He often saw Our Lord and Our Lady (to whom he was especially devoted), receiving from them instruction, encouragement, and prophecies. Driven by the overwhelming motivation of saving immortal souls from eternal damnation, St. Anthony Mary Claret directed all his energies to this end, finding all other goals worthless in comparison.

ON THE NUMBER OF SINS BEYOND WHICH GOD PARDONS NO MORE

"Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" – Matt., 4:7

A sermon by St. Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787), Bishop and Doctor of the Church. St. Francis Jerome, when he visited the parents of St. Alphonsus shortly after his birth, made this prophecy: "This child will be blessed with length of days; he shall not see death before his ninetieth year; he will be a bishop and will do great things for Jesus Christ." This prophecy certainly came true. One of the most accomplished of all the saints is Alphonsus Liguori. He was a lawyer in both civil and Church law before he dedicated his whole life to serving God. He was founder of a religious order, author of more than a hundred books, originator of modern moral theology, renowned preacher and confessor, bishop, musical composer and painter. For all of his 91 years on earth, he was also a man of prayer and deep personal holiness. He gives an example of true Christian living that all of us would do well to follow. Now his sermon:

In this day's Gospel we read that having gone into the desert, Jesus Christ permitted the Devil to set Him on the pinnacle of the temple and say to Him: "If Thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down"; for the angels shall preserve Thee from all injury. But the Lord answered that in the Sacred Scriptures it is

written: *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*. The sinner who abandons himself to sin without striving to resist temptations, or without at least asking God's help to conquer them, and hopes that the Lord will one day draw him from the precipice, tempts God to work miracles, or rather to show to him an extraordinary mercy not extended to the generality of Christians.

God, as the Apostle says, "will have all men to be saved" – I Tim. 2:4; but He also wishes us all to labor for our own salvation, at least by adopting the means of overcoming our enemies, and of obeying Him when He calls us to repentance. Sinners hear the calls of God, but they forget them, and continue to offend Him. But God does not forget them. He numbers the graces which He dispenses, as well as the sins which we commit. Hence, when the time which He has fixed arrives, God deprives us of His graces, and begins to inflict chastisement. I intend to show in this discourse that when sins reach a certain number, God pardons no more. Be attentive.

1. St. Basil, St. Jerome, St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine and other fathers, teach, that as God according to the words of Scripture, "Thou hast ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight" – Wis. 11:21 has fixed for each person the number of the days of his life, and the degrees of health and talent which He will give him, so He has also determined for each the number of sins which He will pardon; and when this number is completed, He will pardon no more.

2. "The Lord hath sent me to heal the contrite of heart" – Isa. 61:1 God is ready to heal those who sincerely wish to amend their lives, but cannot take pity on the obstinate sinner. The Lord pardons sins, but He cannot pardon those who are determined to offend Him. Nor can we demand from God a reason why He pardons one a hundred sins, and takes others out of life and sends them to Hell, after three or four sins. By His Prophet Amos, God has said: "For three crimes of Damascus, and for four, I will not convert it" – 1:3. In this we must adore the judgments of God, and say with the Apostle: "O the depth of the riches, of the wisdom, and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments" – Rom. 11:33. He who receives pardon, says St. Augustine, is pardoned through the pure mercy of God; and they who are chastised, are justly punished. How many has God sent to Hell for the first offense? St. Gregory relates, that a child of five years, who had arrived at the use of reason, for having uttered a blasphemy, was seized by the Devil and carried to Hell. The divine Mother revealed to that great servant of God, Benedicta of Florence, that a boy of twelve years was damned after the first sin. Another boy of eight years died after his first sin, and was lost. You say: I am young; there are many who have

committed more sins than I have. But is God on that account obliged to wait for your repentance if you offend Him? In the Gospel of St. Matthew (21:19), we read that the Savior cursed a fig tree the first time He saw it without fruit. "May no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever. And immediately the fig tree withered away." You must, then tremble at the thought of committing a single mortal sin, particularly if you have already been guilty of mortal sins.

3. "Be not without fear about sin forgiven, and add not sin to sin" – Eccl. 5:5. Say not then, O sinner: "As God has forgiven me other sins, so He will pardon me this one if I commit it." Say not this; for, if to the sin which has been forgiven you add another, you have reason to fear that this new sin shall be united to your former guilt, and that thus the number will be completed, and that you shall be abandoned. Behold how the Scripture unfolds this truth more clearly in another place. "The Lord patiently expecteth, that when the day of judgment shall come, He may punish them in the fullness of sins" – II. Mac. 6:14. God waits with patience until a certain number of sins is committed but, when the measure of guilt is filled up, He waits no longer, but chastises the sinner. "Thou hast sealed up my offenses as it were in a bag" – Job 14:17. Sinners multiply their sins without keeping any account of them; but God numbers them, that, when the harvest is ripe, that is, when the number of sins is completed, He may take vengeance on them. "Put ye in the sickles, for the harvest is ripe" Joel 3:13.

4. Of this there are many examples in the Scriptures. Speaking of the Hebrews, the Lord in one place says: "All the men that have tempted Me now ten times. . . shall not see the land" – Num. 14:22, 23. In another place, He says, that He restrained His vengeance against the Amorrhites, because the number of their sins was not completed. "For as yet the iniquities of the Amorrhites are not at the full" – Gen. 15:16. We have again the example of Saul who, after having disobeyed God a second time, was abandoned. He entreated Samuel to interpose before the Lord in his behalf. "Bear, I beseech thee, my sin, and return with me, that I may adore the Lord" – I Kings 15:25. But, knowing that God had abandoned Saul, Samuel answered: "I will not return with thee, because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee," etc. – 5:26. Saul, you have abandoned God, and He has abandoned you. We have another example in Balthassar, who, after having profaned the vessels of the Temple, saw a hand writing on the wall, *Mane, Thecel, Phares*. Daniel was requested to expound the meaning of these words. In explaining the word Thecel, he said to the king: "Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting" – Dan. 5:27. By this explanation, he gave the king to understand that the weight of his sins in the balance of divine justice, had made the scale descend." The same night Balthassar, the Chaldean king, was killed" – Dan. 5:30. Oh! how many sinners

have met with a similar fate! Continuing to offend God till their sins amounted to a certain number, they have been struck dead and sent to Hell! "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to Hell" – Job 21:13.

Tremble, brethren, lest if you commit another mortal sin, God should cast you into Hell.

5. If God chastised sinners the moment they insult Him, we should not see Him so much despised. But, because He does not instantly punish their transgressions, and because through mercy He restrains His anger and waits for their return, they are encouraged to continue to offend Him. "For, because sentence is not speedily pronounced against the evil, the children of men commit evil without any fear" – Eccles. 8:11. But it is necessary to be persuaded, that though God bears with us, He does not wait, nor bear with us forever. Expecting, as on former occasions, to escape from the snares of the Philistines, Samson continued to allow himself to be deluded by Delilah. "I will go out as I did before, and shake myself" – Judges 16:20. But "the Lord departed from him." Samson was at length taken by his enemies, and lost his life. The Lord warns you not to say: I have committed so many sins, and God has not chastised me. "Say not: I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me; for the Most High is a patient rewarder" – Eccl. 5:4. God has patience for a certain term, after which He punishes the first and last sins. And the greater has been His patience, the more severe His vengeance.

6. Hence, according to St. Chrysostom, God is more to be feared when He bears with sinners, than when He instantly punishes their sin. And why? Because, says St. Gregory, they to whom God has shown most mercy shall, if they do not cease to offend Him, be chastised with the greatest rigor. The saint adds that God often punishes such sinners with a sudden death, and does not allow them time for repentance. And the greater the light which God gives to certain sinners for their correction, the greater is their blindness and obstinacy in sin. "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than, after they had known it, to turn back" – II Pet. 2:21. Miserable the sinners, who, after having been enlightened, return to the vomit. St. Paul says, that it is morally impossible for them to be again converted. "For it is impossible for those who were once illuminated-have tasted also the Heavenly gifts. . . and are fallen away, to be renewed again to penance" – Heb. 6:4, 6.

7. Listen, then, O sinner, to the admonition of the Lord: "My son, hast thou sinned? Do so no more, but for thy former sins pray that they may be forgiven thee" – Eccl. 21:1. Son, add not sins to those which you have already committed, but be careful to pray for the pardon of your past transgressions; otherwise, if

you commit another mortal sin, the gates of divine mercy may be closed against you, and your soul may be lost forever. When then, beloved brethren, the devil tempts you again to yield to sin, say to yourself: If God pardons me no more, what shall become of me for all eternity? Should the Devil in reply, say: *fear not, God is merciful*; answer him by saying: What certainty or what probability have I that, if I return again to sin, God will show me mercy or grant me pardon? Behold the threat of the Lord against all who despise His calls: "Because I have called and you refused,...I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock when that shall come to you which you feared" – Prov. 1:24, 26. Mark the words "I also"; they mean that, as you have mocked the Lord by betraying Him again after your confession and promises of amendment, so He will mock you at the hour of death. *I will laugh and will mock*. But, "God is not mocked" – Gal. 6:7. "As a dog," says the Wise Man, "that returneth to his vomit, so is the fool that repeateth his folly" – Prov. 26:11. Bl. Denis the Carthusian gives an excellent exposition of this text. He says that, as a dog that eats what he has just vomited, is an object of disgust and abomination, so the sinner who returns to the sins which he has detested and confessed, becomes hateful in the sight of God.

8. O folly of sinners! If you purchase a house, you spare no pains to get all the securities necessary to guard against the loss of your money; if you take medicine, you are careful to assure yourself that it cannot injure you; if you pass over a river, you cautiously avoid all danger of falling into it: and for a transitory enjoyment, for the gratification of revenge, for a beastly pleasure, which lasts but a moment, you risk your eternal salvation, saying: *I will go to confession after I commit this sin*. And when, I ask, are you to go to confession? You say: *On tomorrow*. But who promises you tomorrow? Who assures you that you shall have time for confession, and that God will not deprive you of life as He has deprived so many others, in the act of sin? "*Diem tenes*" says St. Augustine, "*qui horam non tenes*." You cannot be certain of living for another hour, and you say: *I will go to confession tomorrow*. Listen to the words of St. Gregory: "He who has promised pardon to penitents, has not promised tomorrow to sinners" – Hom. 12 in Evan. God has promised pardon to all who repent; but He has not promised to wait until tomorrow for those who insult Him. Perhaps God will give you time for repentance, perhaps He will not. But, should He not give it, what shall become of your soul? In the meantime, for the sake of a miserable pleasure, you lose the grace of God and expose yourself to the danger of being lost forever.

9. Would you, for such transient enjoyments, risk your money, your honor, your possessions, your liberty, and your life? No, you would not. How then does it happen that, for a miserable gratification, you lose your soul, Heaven, and God?

Tell me: do you believe that Heaven, Hell, eternity, are truths of faith? Do you believe that, if you die in sin, you are lost forever? Oh! what temerity, what folly is it, to condemn yourself voluntarily to an eternity of torments with the hope of afterwards reversing the sentence of your condemnation! "*Nemo*," says St. Augustine, "*sub spe salutis vult aegrotare*." No one can be found so foolish as to take poison with the hope of preventing its deadly effects by adopting the ordinary remedies. And you will condemn yourself to Hell, saying that you expect to be afterwards preserved from it. O folly! which, in conformity with the divine threats, has brought, and brings every day, so many to Hell. "Thou hast trusted in thy wickedness, and evil shall come upon thee, and thou shalt not know the rising thereof" – Isa. 47:10, 11. You have sinned, trusting rashly in the divine mercy: the punishment of your guilt shall fall suddenly upon you, and you shall not know from whence it comes. What do you say? What resolution do you make? If, after this sermon, you do not firmly resolve to give yourself to God, I weep over you and regard you as lost.

For the greater honor and glory of God and the salvation of souls, you are encouraged to distribute this sermon on as large a scale as God's graces permit. Go to the churches and hand them out or place them on vehicles parked for church services.

THOSE WHO DO NOT REPENT AND CONVERT,
GOD SHALL SURELY PUNISH ETERNALLY IN
HELL

Those who do not repent and convert, God shall surely punish eternally in hell, and when, as a last resort, they finally call to God for help He will not hear them because they put their faith in the world, family, and friends instead of in Him, choosing them instead of Him.

“Then shall they cry to the Lord, and he will not hear them: and he will hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved wickedly in their devices.” (Micheas 3:4)

“Seek the Lord while he may be found.” (Isaias 4:6)

“You shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither you cannot come.” (John 7:34)

“You have despised all my counsel, and have neglected my reprehensions.

I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock when that shall come to you which you feared. When sudden calamity shall fall on you, and destruction, as a tempest, shall be at hand: when tribulation and distress shall come upon you: **Then shall they call upon me, and I will not hear: they shall rise in the morning, and shall not find me: Because they have hated instruction, and received not the fear of the Lord, Nor consented to my counsel, but despised all my reproof.** Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and shall be filled with their own devices.” (Proverbs 1:25-31)

When God allows them to be destroyed, on the brink of their destruction, they will know the utter worthlessness of their putting their faith in their families and the world over that of God, when their families will be destroyed before their face, just as God had allowed Babylon to destroy Egypt whom the unfaithful Israelites had put their trust instead of God. God destroyed both Egypt and the unfaithful Israelites. God does not change. He remains eternally the same. His justice as well as His mercy is perfect and HE WILL NOT BE MOCKED! Many may not see His justice on earth, because they are blind and faithless, but they surely will upon their judgment day, for it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of God, who kills or saves, both body and soul eternally. *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”* (Heb. 10:31) Your family members will not judge you on judgment day. It is Almighty God, Jesus Christ the Second Person of the Divine, Holy, and Eternal Trinity who will judge you, as your soul stands naked before Him. Your family members and friends will not be able to console you in hell.

St. Catherine of Siena: “The will of the Blessed is so united with God that a father or mother seeing their son, or a son seeing his father or mother, in Hell, they do not trouble themselves, and they are even contented to see them punished as His enemies.”

St. John Eudes: “Think how many saints there are in Heaven who see their fathers, mothers, brothers, or other relatives in the damnation of Hell, and, notwithstanding this, they adore, they love, they bless with joy and happiness that most just Will of God because they see that such is the decree of Divine Justice concerning these relatives... For the saints in Heaven, the accomplishment of the Will of God is so completely adequate to give them happiness and heavenly bliss that many of them, even beholding their dear loved ones, punished in Hell, must rejoice in the manifestation of God’s eternal justice.” (*Letters and Shorter Works*)

St. Theresa of Avila: “It is great folly to be willing to violate the friendship of God rather than the law of human friendship.” (*Mary Help of*

Christians, Fr. Bonaventure Hammer)

Catholics must also understand that few are saved. Our Lord Jesus Christ revealed that the road to Heaven is straight and narrow and few find it, while the road to Hell is wide and taken by most (Mt. 7:13).

Matthew 7:13- "Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it!"

Luke 13:24- "Strive to enter by the narrow gate; for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able."

Scripture also teaches that almost the entire world lies in darkness, so much so that Satan is even called the "prince" (John 12:31) and "god" (2 Cor. 4:3) of this world.

1 John 5:19- "We know that we are of God, and the whole world is seated in wickedness."

2 Peter 2:4- "God spared not the angels that sinned, but delivered them, drawn down with infernal ropes into hell to be tormented, to be reserved unto judgment."

It's the sad fact of history that most people in the world are of bad will and don't want the truth. That's why almost the whole world lies in darkness and on the road to perdition. This has been the case since the beginning. It was the case when only eight souls out of the world's entire population (Noah and his family) escaped God's wrath in the deluge that covered the entire earth, and when the Israelites rejected God's law and fell into idolatry over and over again. Only two men out of the whole population of Israelites (Joshua and Caleb) made it into the Promised Land since the people opposed God time upon time even though they had seen such miracles as the world had never seen!

Vision of Archdeacon of Lyons, who died the same day as St. Bernard (1153): "Know, Monsignor, that at the very hour I passed away, thirty-three thousand people also died. Out of this number, Bernard and myself went up to heaven without delay, three went to purgatory, and all the others fell into Hell." (Told to St. Vincent Ferrer)

Think about how almost the whole of Europe was fully Catholic and how the kingdoms outlawed [false religions](#) at this time, making this moment of time

much more spiritually beneficial for souls than we see today! If so few were saved at this moment of time, how many are saved now? One can only shudder and weep at this thought!

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself also confirms this doctrine that the number of the saved is very small in comparison to the damned in *The Revelations of St. Bridget* where he explains that the monks of the world in the 14th century were slaves to sin and that not even one monk of a hundred of them were saved from hell: “They are in truth slaves, and there are very few who are different, yea so few that you hardly can find one in a hundred!” (Book 6, Chapter 35)

If Christ says that not even one in a hundred monks will be saved, how many do you think will be saved of normal people who do not even try to renounce the world and its pleasures! Sadly, only death and hell will serve to wake up the majority of the people hearing this! You will read this and then continue in your sloth and worldliness, or you will have a short lived spiritual fervor that will cool as times goes by! We pray with tears that you are not one of these Judases that will suffer for all eternity in hell!

“Hell is so hot inside that if the whole world and everything in it were on fire, it could not compare to that vast furnace. The various voices heard in the furnace all speak against God. They begin and end their speech with laments. The souls look like people whose limbs are forever being stretched without relief or pause.” (The Prophecies and Revelations of St. Bridget, Book 4 - Chapter 7)

“Nicholas of Nice, speaking of the fire of Hell, says that nothing on earth could give an idea of it. He adds that if all the trees of the forests were cut down, piled into a vast heap and set on fire, this terrible pile would not be a spark of Hell.”

“For the smallest sin, lusted after, is enough to damn anyone from the kingdom of Heaven, who does not repent.” (The Prophecies & Revelations of St. Bridget, Book 1 - Chapter 32)

“Other Christians accepted Hell on faith, because Christ had said repeatedly and with solemn emphasis that there is a Hell, but Jacinta had seen it; and once she grasped the idea that God’s justice is the counterpart of His mercy, and that there must be a Hell if there is to be a Heaven, nothing seemed so important to her except to save as many souls as possible from the horrors she had glimpsed under the radiant hands of the Queen of heaven. Nothing could be too hard, nothing too small or too

great to give up.” (Our Lady of Fatima, p. 89)

Many people today do not care about helping other souls. They waste their time watching worldly tv, series, movies, playing video games and only searching for earthly pleasures rather than saving their own and other people’s souls. They do not spend even an hour a day on trying to save their own selves and others from the eternal hellfire. These heartless sinners will not enter into heaven for they did not really care about other people’s souls but only about what their next pleasure or enjoyment would be. (Mt. 12:30) Our Lord will surely cast them into an eternal hell fire for their lack of charity!

Imagine seeing your friend or family member being mercilessly tortured and you not being able to prevent this. Most people would do almost anything to prevent this situation from happening. Yet, this is exactly what will happen unless you make an effort to save your friend. (Mt. 7:13-14) So, if you really care about your family and friends, please tell them about the Word of God and the great Revelations of St. Bridget. A single soul has more worth than an infinite amount of universes, for the material universe will cease to exist, but your friend's soul will never cease to exist. Always remember: A true friend is the one who tells the truth. As a Catholic, one has an obligation to attempt to convert friends and family members. Thus, if one is completely unaware of what his or her friend believes, then that person is not evangelizing the way he or she must evangelize. Therefore, let us all invite people to the marriage feast of our Lord as we have been bidden to do by Him! If we are satisfied that we have the faith, and are not zealous to spread it to others, how can we ever expect to be saved?

A GLIMPSE OF THE TORMENTS OF HELL

While the horror or torment of hell can never be fully understood in this world, Christ gives us a glimpse of what awaits almost all people in this world in *The Revelations of St. Bridget*. In Book 4, Chapter 51, God reveals how horrifying purgatory is, and since purgatory is this horrifying, one can only shudder and weep at the thought of what hell will be like:

“The bride's admirable and terrible vision about a soul led before the judge, and about the arguments of God and the book's judgment against the soul and the soul's evidence against herself, and about the various astounding punishments inflicted on her in purgatory: "It seemed that I saw a soul being led to the judge by the soldier and the Ethiopian whom I had seen earlier. It was said to me: "What you now see all took place in regard to that soul when she was

released from the body.” Once the soul had been escorted into the presence of the judge, she stood there alone, no longer in the hands of either of her escorts. She stood there naked and sorrowful, not knowing to what place she would come. It seemed to me then that every word in the book gave its own answer to each and every thing the soul was saying.

“In the hearing of the judge and of the entire host, the armed soldier spoke first, saying: ”It is not right to bring up as a reproach against this soul the sins for which she has made reparation in confession.” I beheld all this but realized then quite well that the soldier who was speaking already had knowledge of everything in God but spoke so that I would understand. A reply then came from the book of justice: ”Although this soul did perform penance, it was not accompanied by a contrition or true satisfaction proportionate to her great sins. She should therefore suffer now for those sins for which she did not make reparation when she was able.”

“When this was said, the soul began to weep so violently that it was as though she had broken down completely, and yet, though her tears could be seen, not a sound could be heard. Then the King said to the soul: ”Let your conscience now declare those sins that were not accompanied by a proportionate satisfaction.” Then the soul raised her voice with such force that it was as though it could be heard throughout the whole world. She said: ”Woe is me that I did not act according to God's commands, which I heard and knew!” Then she added in self-accusation: ”I did not fear God's judgment.” The book replied to her: ”You must therefore now fear the devil.” Right away the soul began to fear and tremble, as if she were melting away completely, and she said: ”I had almost no love for God: That is why I did so little good.” An immediate reply was made to her from the book: ”That is why it is just for you to approach closer to the devil than to God, because the devil lured and enticed you to himself with his temptations.”

“The soul replied: ”I understand now that everything I did was done on the promptings of the devil.” A reply was made from the book: ”Justice dictates that it is the devil's right to repay your accomplishments with pain and punishment.” The soul said: ”From head to heel there was nothing I did not dress with pride. Some of my vain and proud manners I invented myself, others I just followed according to the custom of my native land. I washed my hands and face not only in order to be clean but also to be called beautiful by men.” A reply was made from the book: ”Justice says that it is the devil's right to repay you for what you have earned, since you dressed and adorned yourself as he inspired and told you to do.”

“The soul said again: ”My mouth was often open for bawdy talk, because I wanted to please others, and my heart longed for all those things provided it did

not result in worldly disgrace or disapproval.” A reply was made from the book: “That is why your tongue must be drawn out and stretched and your teeth bent in. And all the things you most detest will be set before you, and all the things you like will be taken away from you.” The soul said: “I enjoyed it immensely when many people took after my example and noticed what I did and copied my manners.” A reply was made from the book: “Hence, it is just that everyone caught in the sin for which you are about to be punished should also suffer the same punishment and be brought to you. Then your pain will be increased each time someone comes who copied your fashions.”

“After these words, it seemed to me as though a chain was wound about her head like a crown and then tightened so hard that the front and back of her head were joined together. Her eyes fell out of their sockets and dangled by their roots at her cheeks. Her hair looked like it had been scorched by flames, and her brains were shattered and flowed out through her nostrils and ears.

“Her tongue was stretched out and her teeth pressed in. Her arms were twisted like ropes and their bones broke. Her hands, with their skin peeled off, were fastened to her throat. Her breast and belly were bound so hard with her back that her ribs were broken and her heart spilled out together with all her entrails; her thighs dangled at her flanks, and their broken bones were being pulled out just like a thin thread is used to thread a needle.”

Indeed, since purgatory is this horrifying, how much more must not Hell be infinitely more horrifying? In Book 4, Chapter 52, this is explained to us in these words:

“The bride's terrible vision of a man and woman, and an angel's spiritual explanation to the bride concerning the amazing vision and containing many amazing points.

“There appeared to me a man whose eyes were dug out and hanging at his cheeks by their two muscles. He had the ears of a dog, the nostrils of a horse, the mouth of a ferocious wolf, hands like the feet of a big ox and feet like a vulture. I saw a woman standing at his side whose hair was like a bramble bush, whose eyes were at the back of her head, whose ears were cut off, whose nose was full of pus and gore, whose lips were like snake-fangs with a venomous barb on her tongue, whose hands were like the tail of a fox, whose feet like two scorpions.

“I was awake and not sleeping while I saw all this, and I said: “O, what is this?” Immediately a sweet-sounding voice spoke to me so comfortingly that all my fear disappeared. It said: “You who are seeing this, what do you think it is?” I answered: “I do not know whether the beings I see are devils or beasts born with such a bestial nature or human beings formed that way by God.” The voice then answered me: “They are not devils, since devils do not have bodies as you

see these do, nor are they a kind of beast, for they are born from Adam's stock, although they were not created in such a form by God. Rather, they appear before God made ugly in their souls by the devil. It is this that you are seeing as if in bodily fashion, but I will reveal to you the spiritual meaning of it all.

“You see the eyes of that man that look as though they were dug out and hanging by their two muscles. You should understand two things by the two muscles. The first is that he believed God to live eternally. The second is that he believed that his own soul would live on eternally for good or evil after the death of the body. You should understand two things by the two eyes. The first is that he should have considered how he could have avoided sin, and the second is how he could have carried out good deeds. These two eyes have been dug out in the sense that he did not do good deeds out of a desire for heavenly glory and did not flee sin out of the fear of the punishment of Gehenna. He has dog ears, because, as a dog is not as interested in his master's name or in any other dog's name so much as its own name, if he should hear it, so too this man did not care as much about the honor of God's name as about the honor of his own name.

“He has a horse's nostrils, too, for, just as when a horse has got rid of its dung, it likes to put its nose to it, so does this man. When he has committed a sin, which before God is as vile a thing as dung, it seems pleasant to him to think on its stench. He has a mouth like a ferocious wolf that, although it has filled its mouth and belly with the things it has already seen, still longs to gobble up any living creature its ears detect.

“He also has hands like the feet of a strong ox. An angry ox destroys a weaker animal through the force of its wrath by trampling it down with its hooves indiscriminately, flesh and intestines and all, until the last bit of life is taken away. This man does likewise. When he is angry, he treats his enemy indiscriminately, without a thought about how the man's soul might end up in hell or how his body will suffer in death, provided that he can take the man's life away. He has feet like a vulture. When a vulture gets something it likes in its claws, it squeezes it so tightly that the strength in its feet fails due to the pain and it lets go of what it was holding without even knowing it. This man acts in the same way. He intends to keep his unjust possessions until death, but he will be forced to let go of them when his strength fails.

“His wife's hair was like a bramble bush. The hair on the top of the head that adorns a person's face signifies a will that highly desires to please God the most high. That is what adorns a soul in God's sight. Because this woman's will was highly set on pleasing the world rather than God the most high, her hair looks like a bramble bush. Her eyes appear to be at the back of her head, because she turned her mind's eye away from what God's goodness had done for her in creating and redeeming her and in providing for her in her needs. Yet she

gazes intently on that which is fleeting, though these things are departing from her day by day and will vanish entirely from her sight in the end. Her ears appear to be cut off in a spiritual sense, for she cares little about the doctrine of the Holy Gospel or about hearing sermons.

“Her nose is full of gore, because, just as a sweet odor is pleasantly transmitted to the brain through the nose so as to comfort it, so she, too, in her passions, is delighted to put into effect whatever delights her corruptible body in order to comfort it. Her lips are like snake-fangs, and there is a venomous barb on her tongue. Even when a snake holds its teeth together tightly so as to protect its barb from being accidentally broken, the filth of its mouth still flows out through the gaps between its teeth. In the same way, she shuts her lips to true confession so as not to break the pleasure of sin, which is like the venomous barb of her soul, but the filth of her sin can still be clearly seen in the sight of God and his saints.”

“EXPLANATION

“I told you before about the judgment and rejection of a marriage that they had contracted against the statutes of the church. I shall now explain it to you more fully. You saw the woman's hands were like the tails of foxes and her feet like scorpions. **This is because, just as she was undisciplined in her whole body and all her passions, so too by the lightness of her hands and her way of walking she excited her husband's physical delight and stung his soul worse than any scorpion.**”

“At that very moment an Ethiopian appeared with trident in hand and three sharp claws on his feet. He shouted and said: ”Judge, it is my hour now. I have waited and been silent. Now is the time for action!” Immediately, I beheld a naked man and woman before the judge as he sat there together with his innumerable host.

“The judge said to them: ”Though I know all things, tell us what you have done!” The man answered: ”We heard and knew about the ecclesial bond, and we paid no attention but disdained it.” The judge answered: ”Because you refused to follow the Lord, justice says you must experience the malice of the executioner.” Right then the Ethiopian thrust his claws into their hearts and pressed them together so tightly that they looked like they were in a winepress. And the judge said: ”Look, daughter, this is what people deserve when they knowingly distance themselves from their creator for the sake of creation.”

“The judge spoke again to the two of them: ”I gave you a sack to fill with the fruit of my delights. What, then, do you bring me?” The woman answered: ”O judge, we sought the delights of our belly and have nothing to bring but shame.” Then the judge said to the executioner: ”Let them have their just

reward!” And he immediately thrust his second claw into both their bellies and wounded them so badly that all their intestines appeared to be pierced through and through. The judge said: ”Look, daughter, this is what people deserve when they transgress the law and thirst after poison as though it were medicine.”

“The judge spoke again to the two of them: ”Where is my treasure that I provided for your use?” Both of them answered: ”We trampled it underfoot, for we sought an earthly treasure and not an eternal one.” Then the judge said to the executioner: ”Let them have what you must and can give to them!” He immediately thrust his third claw into their hearts and bellies and feet in such a way that everything seemed to be like one big ball. The Ethiopian said: ”Lord, where shall I go with them?” The judge answered: ”It is not for you to rise or rejoice.” At that the man and woman disappeared with a wail from the face of the judge. The judge spoke again: ”Rejoice, daughter, because you have been kept apart from such creatures.”

Pope St. Gregory the Great (c. 600), on the fewness of the saved: “The more the wicked abound, so much the more must we suffer with them in patience; for on the threshing floor **few are the grains carried into the barns, but high are the piles of chaff burned with fire.**”

St. Alphonsus (c. 1760): “My brother, if you wish to live well, endeavor to live during the remainder of your life in the presence of death. ‘O death, thy judgment is good’ (Eccl. xli. 3). Oh, how truly does he judge of things, and how well does he regulate his actions, who judges and regulates them with death before his eyes! The remembrance of death makes us lose all affection for the things of this life.”

The Vision of Hell, shown by The Blessed Virgin Mary to the Fatima Children, 1917: She “showed them a sea of fire; and plunged in this fire the demons and the souls, as if they were red-hot coals, transparent and black or bronze-colored, carried by the flames which issued from it with clouds of smoke, falling on all sides as sparks fall in great conflagrations – without weight or equilibrium, among shrieks and groans of sorrow and despair which horrify and cause to shudder with fear.”

ON THE GENERAL JUDGMENT BY SAINT **ALPHONSUS LIGUORI**

"And they shall see the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven with much Power and Majesty" - Matthew 24:30.

At Present, God is not Known, and therefore He is as much Despised by Sinners, as if He could not Avenge, whenever He Pleases, the Injuries offered-to Him. The Wicked "*Looketh upon the Almighty as if He could do Nothing*" - Job 22:17. But the Lord has Fixed a Day, called-in the Scriptures "*the Day of the Lord*", on which the Eternal Judge will make-known His Power and Majesty. "*The Lord*", says the Psalmist, "*shall be Known, when He Executeth Judgment*" - Psalm 9:17. On this Text, Saint Bernard writes: "*The Lord, Who is now Unknown while He seeks Mercy, shall be Known when He Executes Justice*". The Prophet Zephaniah calls the *Day of the Lord* - "*a Day of Wrath - a Day of Tribulation and Distress - a Day of Calamity and Misery*" - Zephaniah 1:15.

Let us now consider, in the First Point, the Different Appearance-of the Just and the Unjust; in the Second, the Scrutiny-of Consciences; and in the Third, the Sentence, Pronounced-on the Elect and on the Reprobate.

First Point

On the Different Appearance of the Just and of Sinners in the Valley of Jehoshaphat - (Joel 4.2)

This Day shall commence-with Fire-from Heaven, which will Burn the Earth, all Men then-Living, and all Things upon the Earth. "*And the Earth and the Works which are in it, shall be Burnt up*" - 2Peter 3:10. All shall become, One (1) Heap-of-Ashes.

After the Death of all Men, "*the Trumpet shall Sound, and the Dead shall Rise again*" - 1Corinthians 15:52. Saint Jerome used to say: "*As often as I consider the Day-of-Judgment, I Tremble. Whether I Eat, or Drink, or whatever else I do, that Terrible Trumpet appears to Sound in my Ears, 'Arise, ye Dead, and Come to Judgment'*"; and Saint Augustine declared, that Nothing, Banished-from him, Earthly Thoughts so-Effectually, as the Fear of Judgment.

At the Sound-of that Trumpet, the Souls-of the Blessed shall Descend-from Heaven, to be United-to the Bodies with-which they Served God on-Earth; and the Unhappy Souls of the Damned, shall come-up from Hell to Take-possession again, of those Bodies, with-which they have Offended God. Oh! how different, the Appearance-of the Former, compared-with that of the Latter! The Damned shall appear 'Deformed' and 'Black', like so many Firebrands of-Hell; but "*the Just shall Shine as the Sun*" - Matthew 13:43. Oh! how Great shall then be the Happiness-of those who have Mortified their Bodies, by Works-of Penance! We may Estimate their Felicity from the Words addressed-by Saint Peter-of-Alcantara, after Death, to Saint Teresa: "*O Happy Penance! which Merited for me such Glory*".

After their Resurrection, they shall be Summoned-by the Angels, to Appear-in the Valley-of-Jehoshaphat. "*Nations, Nations, in the Valley of Destruction, for the Day of the Lord is Near*" - Joel 4:2. Then the Angels shall Come, and Separate the Reprobate from the Elect, placing the Latter-on the Right, and the Former-on the Left. "*The Angels shall Go-out, and shall Separate the Wicked from among the Just*" - Matthew 13:49. Oh! how Great, will then-be the Confusion which the Unhappy Damned shall Suffer! "*What think you*", says the Author-of the Imperfect-Work, "*must be the Confusion of the Impious, when, being Separated-from the Just, they shall be Abandoned?*". This Punishment alone, says Saint Chrysostom, would be Sufficient-to Constitute a Hell, for the Wicked. "*Et si nihil ulterius paterentur, ista sola verecundia sufficeret eis ad poenam*". The Brother shall be Separated-from the Brother, the Husband from his Wife, the Son from the Father, etc.

But, Behold, the Heavens are Opened - the Angels come-to Assist-at the General Judgment, carrying, as Saint Thomas says, the Sign-of the Cross and of the other Instruments-of the Passion-of the Redeemer. "*Veniente Domino ad judiciurn signum crucis, et alia passionis indicia demonstrabunt*". The same may be Inferred-from the Twenty-fourth Chapter-of Saint Matthew: "*And then shall Appear the Sign of the Son of Man in Heaven; and then shall all the Tribes-of the Earth, Mourn*" - Matthew 24:30. Sinners shall Weep at the Sign-of the Cross; for, as Saint Chrysostom says, the Nails will Complain-of them - the Wounds and the Cross-of Jesus Christ will Speak-against them. "*Clavi de te conquerentur, cicatrices contra te loquentur, crux Christi contra te perorabit*".

Most Holy Mary, the Queen of Saints and Angels, shall Come-to Assist-at the Last Judgment; and Lastly, the Eternal Judge shall Appear-in the Clouds, Full-of Splendor and Majesty. "*And they shall see the Son of Man coming-in the Clouds of Heaven, with much Power and Majesty*" - Matthew 24:30. Oh! how Great, shall be the Agony-of the Reprobate, at the Sight-of the Judge! "*At their Presence*", says the Prophet Joel, "*the People shall be in Grievous Pains*" - Joel 2:6. According-to Saint Jerome, the Presence-of Jesus Christ, will Give the Reprobate, more Pain than Hell itself. "*It would*", he says, "*be easier for the Damned to Bear the Torments of Hell, than the Presence of the Lord*". Hence, on that Day, the Wicked shall, according-to Saint John, call-on the Mountains, to Fall-on them and to Hide them from the Sight-of the Judge. "*And they shall Say-to the Mountains and the Rocks: Fall upon us, and Hide us from the Face of Him that Sitteth-on the Throne, and from the Wrath-of the Lamb*" - Revelation 6:16.

Second Point

The Scrutiny of Conscience

"The Court was Convened, and the Books were Opened" - Daniel 7:10. The Books-of Conscience are Opened, and the Judgment commences. The Apostle says, that the Lord "*will Bring-to Light, the Hidden Things of Darkness*" - 1Corinthians 4:5. And, by the Mouth-of His Prophet, Jesus Christ has said: "*I will search Jerusalem with Lamps*" - Zephaniah 1:12. The Light-of-the-Lamp, Reveals all that is Hidden.

"A Judgment", says Saint Chrysostom, "*Terrible to Sinners, but Desirable and Sweet-to the Just*". The Last Judgment shall Fill Sinners with Terror, but will be a Source-of Joy and Sweetness to the Elect; for God will then Give Praise to each one, according-to his Works - 1Corinthians 4:5. The Apostle tells us that on that Day, the Just will be Raised-above the Clouds, to be United-to the Angels, and to Increase the Number-of those, who Pay Homage-to the Lord. "*We shall be Taken-up together, with them in the Clouds, to meet Christ, into the Air*" - 1Thessalonians 4:17.

Wordlings now regard as Fools the Saints who led Mortified and Humble Lives; but, then they shall Confess their own Folly, and say: "*We Fools, Esteemed their Life Madness, and their End, without Honor. Behold how they are Numbered among the Children of God, and their Lot is among the Saints*" - Wisdom 5:4, 5. In this World, the Rich and the Noble are called Happy; but True Happiness consists-in a Life-of Sanctity. Rejoice, ye Souls who Live-in Tribulation; "*your Sorrow shall be Turned into Joy*" - John 16:20. In the Valley-of-Jehoshaphat, you shall be Seated-on Thrones-of-Glory.

But the Reprobate, like Goats Destined-for the Slaughter, shall be Placed-on the Left, to Await their Last Condemnation. "*Judicii tempus*", says Saint Chrysostom, "*miserordiam non recipit*". On the Day-of Judgment, there is no Hope of Mercy for Poor Sinners. "*Magna*", says Saint Augustine, "*jam est poena peccati, metum et memoriam divini perdidisse judicii*". The Greatest Punishment-of Sin, in those who Live-in Enmity-with God, is to Lose the Fear and Remembrance-of the Divine Judgment. Continue, Continue, says the Apostle, to-Live Obstinate-in Sin; but, in Proportion-to your Obstinacy, you shall have Accumulated-for the Day-of Judgment, a Treasure-of the Wrath-of God. "*But, according to thy Hardness and Impenitent Heart, thou Treasurist up to thyself, Wrath against the Day of Wrath*" - Romans 2:5.

Then, Sinners will not be able to Hide themselves; but, with Insufferable Pain, they shall be Compelled-to Appear-in Judgment. "*To lie Hid*", says Saint

Anselm, "*will be Impossible - to Appear, will be Intolerable*". The Devils will Perform their Office-of Accusers, and, as Saint Augustine says, will Say-to the Judge: "*Most Just God, Declare him to be mine, who was Unwilling to be Yours*". The Witnesses against the Wicked shall be, First, their own Conscience - "*Their Conscience, bearing Witness to them*" - Romans 2:15; Secondly, the very Walls-of the House, in which they Sinned, shall Cry-out against them - "*The Stone shall Cry-out of the Wall*" - Habakkuk 2:11; Thirdly, the Judge Himself will say - "*I am the Judge and the Witness, saith the Lord*" - Jeremiah 29:23. Hence, according-to Saint Augustine, "*He Who is now the Witness of your Life, shall be the Judge of your Cause*". To Christians particularly, He will say: "*Woe to thee Chorazin; woe to thee Bethsaida; for if in Tyre and Sidon had been Wrought the Miracles that have been Wrought in you, they would Long ago have done Penance in Sackcloth and Ashes*" - Matthew 11:21. ... He shall then Manifest-to all Men, their most-hidden Crimes. "*I will Discover thy Shame, to thy Face*" - Nahum 3:5. He will Expose-to View, all their Secret Impurities, Injustices, and Cruelties. "*I will Set, all thy Abominations, against thee*" - Ezekiel 7:3. Each-of the Damned, shall Carry his Sins, Written-on his Forehead.

What Excuses can Save the Wicked, on that Day? Ah! they can Offer no Excuses. "*All Iniquity shall Stop her Mouth*" - Psalm 107:42. Their very Sins shall Close the Mouth-of the Reprobate, so that they will have no-Courage to-Excuse themselves. They shall Pronounce their own Condemnation.

Third Point

Sentence of the Elect and of the Reprobate

Saint Bernard says, that the Sentence-of the Elect, and their Destiny-to Eternal Glory, shall be First-declared, that the Pains-of the Reprobate, may be Increased-by the Sight-of what they Lost. "*Prius pronunciabitur sententia electis, ut acrius (reprobi) doleant videntes quid amiserint*". Jesus Christ, then shall First Turn-to the Elect, and with a Serene Countenance shall say: "*Come, ye Blessed of My Father, Possess the Kingdom prepared for you, from the Foundation of the World*" - Matthew 25:34. He will Bless all the Tears shed-through Sorrow for their Sins; and all their Good Works, their Prayers, Mortifications, and Communion; above all, He will Bless for them the Pains-of His Passion, and the Blood shed-for their Salvation. And after these Benedictions, the Elect, singing 'Alleluias', shall enter Paradise to Praise and Love God, for all Eternity.

The Judge shall then Turn-to the Reprobate, and shall Pronounce the Sentence-of their Condemnation in these Words: "*Depart from Me you Cursed, into the*

Everlasting Fire" - Matthew 25:41. They shall then be Ever Accursed, Separated-from God, and sent-to Burn Forever, in the Fire of Hell. "And these shall go into Everlasting Punishment; but the Just into Life Everlasting" - Matthew 25:46.

After this Sentence, the Wicked shall, according-to Saint Ephrem, be Compelled-to take-leave Forever of their Relatives, of Paradise, of the Saints, and of Mary, the Divine Mother. "*Farewell, ye Just! Farewell, O Cross! Farewell, O Paradise! Farewell, Fathers and Brothers; we shall never see you again! Farewell, O Mary, Mother of God!*". Then a Great Pit shall be opened-in the Middle-of the Valley; the Unhappy Damned shall be Cast-into it, and shall see those Doors-shut, which shallnever again be Opened. O Accursed Sin! to what a Miserable End will Sin, One day, Conduct so-Many Souls, Redeemed-by the Blood-of Jesus Christ! O Unhappy Souls! for whom is Prepared, such a Melancholy End. But Brethren, have Confidence. Jesus Christ is now a 'Father', not a 'Judge'. He is Ready-to Pardon all who Repent. Let us then, ask Pardon-from Him.

- End of Liguori Sermon -

PRAYER FOR THE GRACES NECESSARY FOR SALVATION

Eternal Father, Your Son has Promised that You will Grant us all the Graces which we ask for in His Name. In the Name and Merits of Jesus Christ, I ask the following Graces for myself and for all Mankind. Please give me a Lively Faith in all that the Church Teaches. Enlighten me, that I may know the Vanity of the Goods of this World, and the Immensity of the Infinite Good that You are. Make me also see the Deformity of the Sins I have Committed, that I may Humble myself and Detest them as I should.

Give me a Firm Confidence of Receiving Pardon for my Sins, Holy Perseverance, and the Glory of Heaven, through the Merits of Jesus Christ, and the Intercession of Mary. Give me a Great Love for You, that will Detach me from the Love of this World, and of myself, so that I may Love none other, but You.

I Beg of You a Perfect Resignation to Your Will. I Offer myself entirely to

You, that You might do with me, and all that belongs to me, as You Please.

I Beg of You a Great Sorrow for my Sins.

I ask You to give me the Spirit of True Humility and Meekness, that I may Accept with Peace, and even with Joy, all the Contempt, Ingratitude and Ill-treatment I may receive. At the same time, I also ask You to give me Perfect Charity, which shall make me wish well to those who have done Evil to me.

Give me Love for the Virtue of Mortification, by which I may Chastise my Rebellious Senses and oppose my Self-Love. Give me a Great Confidence in the Passion of Jesus Christ and in the Intercession of Mary Immaculate. Give me a Great Love for the Blessed Sacrament, and a Tender Devotion and Love to Your Holy Mother. Give me, above all, Holy Perseverance, and the Grace always to Pray for it, especially in Time-of Temptation, and at the Hour-of Death.

Finally, I recommend to You the Holy Souls of Purgatory, my Relatives and Benefactors, and in a special manner I recommend to You all those who Hate me or who have in any way Offended me; I Beg You to Render them Good, for the Evil they have done or may wish to do me. Grant that, by Your Goodness, I may come One Day to sing Your Mercies in Heaven; for my Hope is in the Merits of Your Blood and in the Patronage of Mary. Mary, Mother of God, Pray to Jesus for me. Amen

3 Sobering Visions Of Purgatory From The Saints

Yes, those in purgatory have avoided hell and are assured of heaven, but it's still a place of great suffering for those who are there, and all can be encouraged to strive more in this life to avoid purgatory by thinking about its torments. Hell have much similarities with purgatory, and thus, reading about purgatory can also help a soul imagine what Hell will be like.

Many saints have also claimed to have had mystical experiences related to purgatory. Of course, personal mystical experiences do not improve or complete Christ's definitive Revelation but rather are meant to help us live more fully by it in a certain period of history. So, like the visions of hell, read through these

stories with a grain of salt, seeing if they can help you take more seriously the reality of purgatory.

“That Prison of Suffering” - Sister Maria Faustyna Kowalska

Sr. Maria Faustyna Kowalska, most commonly known as Sr. Faustina, was a Polish nun who claimed to have had a series of visions which included Jesus, the Eucharist, angels, and various saints. It is from her visions, recorded in her diary, that in one entry, she tells of a vision of purgatory:

“I saw my Guardian Angel, who ordered me to follow him. In a moment I was in a misty place full of fire in which there was a great crowd of suffering souls. They were praying fervently, but to no avail, for themselves; only we can come to their aid. The flames, which were burning them, did not touch me at all. My Guardian Angel did not leave me for an instant. I asked these souls what their greatest suffering was. They answered me in one voice that their greatest torment was longing for God.

“I saw Our Lady visiting the souls in Purgatory. The souls call Her “The Star of the Sea”. She brings them refreshment. I wanted to talk with them some more, but my Guardian Angel beckoned me to leave. We went out of that prison of suffering. [I heard an interior voice which said] ‘My mercy does not want this, but justice demands it.’ Since that time, I am in closer communion with the suffering souls.”

“As Much Pain as in Hell” - St. Catherine of Genoa

St. Catherine of Genoa was a 15th century nun who spent much of her time caring for the sick, particularly those with the bubonic plague. She’s also famous for her mystical experiences of purgatory.

“No tongue can tell nor explain, no mind understand, the grievousness of Purgatory. But I, though I see that there is in Purgatory as much pain as in Hell, yet see the soul which has the least stain of imperfection accepting Purgatory, as I have said, as though it were a mercy, and holding its pains of no account as compared with the least stain which hinders a soul in its love.

“I seem to see that the pain which souls in Purgatory endure because of whatever in them displeases God, that is what they have willfully done against His so great goodness, is greater than any other pain they feel in Purgatory. And

this is because, being in grace, they see the truth and the grievousness of the hindrance which stays them from drawing near to God.” (*Treatise on Purgatory*)

“A Spirit All on Fire, Resembling Incandescent Metal” - St. Lidwina of Schiedam

St. Lidwina of Schiedam was a 15th century Dutch saint and mystic. As a teenager, she had an ice skating accident that left her debilitated the rest of her life. A sinful man was converted by her prayers and exhortation and was able to make a good confession, but he died soon after, unable to do much penance. After some time, she asked her guardian angel if he was still in purgatory, and she had this vision:

“‘He is there,’ said her angel, ‘and he suffers much. Would you be willing to endure some pain in order to diminish his?’ Certainly,’ she replied, ‘I am ready to suffer anything to assist him.’ Instantly her angel conducted her into a place of frightful torture. ‘Is this, then, Hell, my brother?’ asked the holy maiden, seized with horror. ‘No, sister,’ answered the angel, ‘but this part of Purgatory is bordering upon Hell.’

“Looking around on all sides, she saw what resembled an immense prison, surrounded with walls of a prodigious height, the blackness of which, together with the monstrous stones, inspired her with horror. Approaching this dismal enclosure, she heard a confused noise of lamenting voices, cries of fury, chains, instruments of torture, violent blows which the executioners discharged upon their victims. This noise was such that all the tumult of the world, in tempest or battle, could bear no comparison to it. ‘What, then, is that horrible place?’ asked St. Lidwina of her good angel. ‘Do you wish me to show it to you?’ ‘No, I beseech you,’ said she, recoiling with terror; ‘the noise which I hear is so frightful that I can no longer bear it ; how, then, could I endure the sight of those horrors?’

“Continuing her mysterious route, she saw an angel seated sadly on the curb of a well. ‘Who is that angel?’ she asked of her guide. ‘It is,’ he replied, ‘the angel-guardian of the sinner in whose lot you are interested. His soul is in this well, where it has a special Purgatory.’ At these words, Lidwina cast an inquiring glance at her angel; she desired to see that soul which was dear to her, and endeavour to release it from that frightful pit. Her angel, who understood her, having taken off the cover of the well, a cloud of flames, together with the most plaintive cries, came forth. ‘Do you recognise that voice?’ said the angel to her.

‘Alas! yes,’ answered the servant of God. ‘Do you desire to see that soul?’ he continued. On her replying in the affirmative, he called him by his name; and immediately our virgin saw appear at the mouth of the pit a spirit all on fire, resembling incandescent metal, which said to her in a voice scarcely audible, ‘O Lidwina, servant of God, who will give me to contemplate the face of the Most High?’

“The sight of this soul, a prey to the most terrible torment of fire, gave our saint such a shock that the cincture which she wore around her body was rent in twain; and, no longer able to endure the sight, she awoke suddenly from her ecstasy. The persons present, perceiving her fear, asked her its cause. ‘Alas!’ she replied, ‘how frightful are the prisons of Purgatory! It was to assist the souls that I consented to descend thither. Without this motive, if the whole world were given to me, I would not undergo the terror which that horrible spectacle inspired.’

“Some days later, the same angel whom she had seen so dejected appeared to her with a joyful countenance; he told her that the soul of his protege had left the pit and passed into the ordinary Purgatory. This partial alleviation did not suffice the charity of Lidwina; she continued to pray for the poor patient, and to apply to him the merits of her sufferings, until she saw the gates of Heaven opened to him.” (*Purgatory*, by Fr. F. X. Schouppe, S.J., p. 16-19)

ALL ENDS, AND SOON ENDS

by Saint Alphonsus Liguori

Behold! all the Goods-of this Earth are like the Grass-of the Field, which Today is Blooming and Beautiful; but in the Evening, it Withers and Loses its Flowers, and Next-Day is Cast-into the Fire. This is what God Commanded the Prophet Isaiah to Preach, when He said to him, "*Cry. And I said: What shall I Cry? All Flesh is Grass, and all the Glory thereof, as the Flower of the Field*" - Isaiah 40:6. Hence Saint James compares the Rich-of this World to the Flower-of Grass: at the End-of their Journey through Life, they Rot along-with all their Riches and Poms. "*And the Rich, in his being Low; because, as the Flower of the Grass, shall he Pass-away. For the Sun Rose-with a Burning Heat, and Parched the Grass, and the Flower thereof Fell-off, and the Beauty of the Shape thereof Perished: so also shall the Rich Man fade-away in his Ways*" - James 1:10-11. They Fade-away and are Cast-into the Fire, like the Rich Glutton,

Dives, who made a Splendid Appearance in this Life, but Afterwards "*was Buried in Hell*" - Luke 16:22. Let us then, Dearly Beloved Christians, Attend-to the Salvation-of our Souls, and to the Acquisition-of Riches for Eternity, which never Ends; for Everything in this World Ends, and Ends very-Soon.

First Point

Everything Ends

When One-of the Great-of this World, is in Full Enjoyment of the Riches and Honors which he has acquired, Death shall come, and he shall be told, "*Take Order with thy House, for thou shalt Die, and not Live*" - Isaiah 38:1. Oh! what Doleful Tidings! The Unhappy Man must then say: *Farewell*, O World!
— *Farewell*, O Villa! — *Farewell*, O Grotto! — *Farewell*, Relatives! — *Farewell*, Friends! — *Farewell*, Sports! — *Farewell*, Balls! — *Farewell*, Comedies!
— *Farewell*, Banquets! — *Farewell*, Honors! all is Over for me. There is no Remedy; whether he Will or not, he must Leave all. "*For when he shall Die, he shall take Nothing away; nor shall his Glory descend-with him*" - Psalm 48:18. Saint Bernard says that Death produces a Horrible Separation-of the Soul from the Body, and from all things of this Earth. "*Opus mortis horrendum divortium*" - Sermon 26. To the Great of this World, whom Worldlings regard as the most Fortunate-of Mortals, the Bare Name of Death is so Full-of Bitterness, that they are Unwilling even to Hear it mentioned; for their Entire Concern is to find Peace, in their Earthly Goods. "*O Death!*", says Ecclesiasticus, "*how Bitter is the Remembrance of thee, to a Man that hath Peace in his Possessions*" - Ecclesiasticus 41:1. But, how much Greater Bitterness shall Death itself Cause, when it Actually Comes! Miserable the Man, who is Attached-to the Goods-of this World! Every Separation produces Pain. Hence, when the Soul shall be Separated, by the Stroke-of Death, from the Goods on which She had Fixed all Her Affections, the Pain must be Excruciating. It was this that made King Agag exclaim, when the News-of approaching Death was Announced-to him, "*Doth Bitter Death, separate-in this Manner?*" - 1Kings 15:32. The Great Misfortune of Worldlings is, that when they are on the Point-of being Summoned-to Judgment, instead-of Endeavoring-to Adjust the Accounts-of their Soul, they Direct all their Attention-to Earthly things. But, says Saint John Chrysostom, the Punishment which Awaits Sinners, on-account-of having *Forgotten* God during Life, is that they *Forget themselves* at the Hour-of Death. "*Hae animadversione percutitur impius, ut moriens obliviscatur sui, qui vivens oblitus est Dei*".

But how Great soever a Man's Attachment-to the Things of this World may be, he must Take Leave-of them at Death. Naked, he has Entered-into this World,

and Naked, he shall Depart-from it. "*Naked*", says Job, "*Came I out of my Mother's Womb, and Naked, shall I Return thither*" - Job 1:21. In a Word, they who have Spent their Whole Life, have Lost their Sleep, their Health, and their Soul, in accumulating Riches and Possesions, shall take Nothing with them at the Hour-of Death; their Eyes shall then be-Opened; and of all they had so Dearly Acquired, they shall find Nothing in their Hands. Hence, on that Night-of Confusion, they shall be Overwhelmed-in a Tempest of Pains and Sadness. "*The Rich Man, when he shall Sleep, shall take-away Nothing with him: he shall Open his Eyes and find Nothing. Poverty, like Water, shall take-hold on him, a Tempest shall Oppress him in the Night*" - Job 27:19-20. Saint Antonine relates that Saladin, King-of the Saracens, gave Orders at the Hour-of Death, that the Winding-Sheet in which he was to be Buried, should be carried-before him to the Grave, and that a Person should Cry-out: *Of all his Possessions, this only, shall Saladin bring with him.* The Saint also relates, that a certain Philosopher, speaking of Alexander-the-Great, after his Death, said: *Behold the Man that made the Earth Tremble. "The Earth", as the Scripture says, "was Quiet before him"* - 1Machabees 1:3. He is now under the Earth. Behold the Man whom the Dominion-of the Whole World would not Satisfy; now Four Palms-of-Ground are Sufficient-for him. "*Qui terram heri conculcabat, hodie ab ea conculcatur; et cui heri non sufficiebat mundus hodie sufficiunt quatuor ulnae terrae*". Saint Augustine, or some other Ancient Writer says, that having gone to see the Tomb-of Caesar, he Exclaimed: "*Princes Feared thee, Cities Worshipped thee, all Trembled before thee, where is thy Magnificence gone?*" - Sermon 38. Listen to what David says, "*I have seen the Wicked Highly Exalted, and Lifted-up like the Cedars-of-Libanus. And I passed-by, and lo, he was not*" - Psalm 36:35-36. Oh! how many such Spectacles are seen every Day in the World! A Sinner who had been born-in Lowliness and Poverty, afterwards acquires Wealth and Honors , so as to Excite the Envy of all. When he Dies, everyone says, *He made a Fortune in the World; but now he is Dead, and with Death, all is over for him.*

"*Why is Earth and Ashes Proud?*" - Ecclesiasticus 10:9. Such is the Language which the Lord addresses-to the Man who is Puffed-up by Earthly Honors and Earthly Riches. Miserable Creature, He says, whence comes such Pride? If you enjoy Honors and Riches, remember that you are Dust. "*For Dust thou art, and into Dust thou shalt return*" - Genesis 3:19. You must Die, and after Death, what Advantage shall you Derive-from the Honors and Possessions which now Inflate you with Pride? Go, says Saint Ambrose, go to a Cemetery, in which are Buried the Rich and Poor, and see if you can Discern-among them, who has been Rich, and who has been Poor; all are Naked, and Nothing remains of the Richest

among them, but a few Withered Bones. "*Respice sepulchra, dic mihi, quis ibi dives, quis pauper sit*". How Profitable would the Remembrance of Death be to the Man, who Lives in the World! "*He shall be Brought to the Graves, and shall Watch in the Heap-of the Dead*" - Job 21:32. At the Sight of these Dead Bodies, he would remember Death, and that he shall be One Day like them. Thus, he should be Awakened from the Deadly Sleep in which perhaps he Lives in a State of Perdition. But, the Misfortune is, that Worldlings are Unwilling to Think of Death, until the Hour comes when they must Depart from this Earth, to go to Eternity; and therefore they Live as Attached to the World, as if they were never to be Separated from it. But, our Life is Short, and shall soon End; thus, all things must End, and must soon End.

Second Point ***All soon Ends***

Men Know well, and Believe firmly, that they shall Die; but they Imagine Death as Far-off, as if it were never to Arrive. But Job tells us that the Life of Man is Short. "*Man, Born of a Woman, Living for a Short Time, is Filled-with many Miseries. Who cometh-forth like a Flower, and is Destroyed*" - Job 14:1-2. At Present, the Health of Men is so much Impaired, that as we see by Experience, the Greater Number of them Die before they attain the Age of Seventy. And what, says Saint James, is our Life, but a Vapor, which a Blast of Wind, a Fever, a Stroke of Apoplexy, a Puncture, an Attack of the Chest, Causes to Disappear, and which is seen no-more? "*For what is your Life? It is a Vapor which Appeareth for a little while, and afterwards shall Vanish away*" - James 4:15. "*We all Die*", said the Woman of Thecua to David, "*and like Waters that return no more, we Fall down into the Earth*" - 2Kings 14:14. She Spoke the Truth; as all Rivers and Streams Run to the Sea, and as the Gliding Waters return no more, so our Days Pass away, and we Approach to Death.

They Pass, they Pass quickly. "*My Days have been Swifter than a Post*" - Job 9:25. Death comes to meet us, and runs more swiftly than a Post, so that every Step we make, every Breath we draw, we approach to Death. Saint Jerome felt, that even while he was Writing, he was Drawing nearer to Death. Hence he said, "*What I Write is taken away from my Life*". "*Quod scribo de mea vita tollitur*". Let us then say with Job: Years pass by, and with them Pleasures, Honors, Poms, and all Things in this World pass away, "*and only the Grave remaineth for me*" - Job 17:1. In a Word, all the Glory of the Labors we have undergone in this World, in order to Acquire a Large Income, a High Character for Valor, for Learning and Genius, shall End in our being Thrown into a Pit, to become the Food of Worms. The Miserable Worldling then, shall say at Death: My House,

my Garden, my Fashionable Furniture, my Pictures and Rich Apparel, shall, in a short Time, belong no more to me, "*and only the Grave remaineth for me*".

But, how much soever the Worldling may be Distracted by his Worldly Affairs and by his Pleasures; how much soever he may be Entangled in them, Saint Chrysostom says that when the Fear of Death, which sets Fire to all Things of the Present Life, begins to Enter the Soul, it will Compel him to Think, and to be Solicitous about his Lot after Death. "*Cum pulsare animam incipit metus mortis (ignis instar praesentis vitae omnia succendens) philosophari eam cogit, et futura sollicita mente versari*". Alas! at the Hour of Death, "*Then shall the Eyes of the Blind be Opened*" - Isaiah 35:5. Then Indeed shall be Opened, the Eyes of those Blind Worldlings, who have employed their Whole Life in acquiring Earthly Goods, and have Paid but Little Attention to the Interests of the Soul. In all these shall be Verified what Jesus Christ has told them - that Death shall come when they Least Expect it. "*For at what Hour you think not, the Son of Man will Come*" - Luke 12:40. Thus, on these Unhappy Men, Death always comes Unexpectedly. Hence, because the Lovers of the World, are not usually Warned of their approaching Dissolution, till it is very Near, they must, in the Last Few Days of Life, Adjust the Accounts of their Soul for the Fifty or Sixty Years which they Lived on this Earth. They will then Desire another Month, or another Week, to Settle their Accounts, and to 'Tranquillize' their Conscience. But, "*they will Seek for Peace, and there shall be None*" - Ezekiel 7:25. The Time which they Desire, is Refused. The Assisting Priest reads the Divine Command, to Depart Instantly from this World, "*Proficiscere anima Christiana de hoc mundo*". Depart, Christian Soul from this World! Oh! how Dangerous the Entrance of Worldlings into Eternity, Dying, as they do, amid so much Darkness and Confusion, in consequence of the Disorderly State of the Accounts of their Souls.

"*Weight and Balance are Judgments of the Lord*" - Proverbs 16:11. At the Tribunal of God, Nobility, Dignities, and Riches have no Weight; Two Things only - our Sins, and the Graces Bestowed on us by God - make the Scales 'Ascend' or 'Descend'. They who shall be found Faithful in corresponding with the Lights and Calls which they have Received, shall be Rewarded; and they who shall be found Unfaithful, shall be Condemned. We do not keep an Account of God's Graces; but the Lord keeps an Account of them; He Measures them; and when He sees them Despised to a Certain Degree, He leaves the Soul in Her Sins, and takes Her out of Life, in that Miserable State. "*For what Things a Man shall Sow, those also shall he Reap*" - Galatians 6:8. From Labors undertaken for the Attainment of Posts of Honor and Emolument, for the Acquisition of Property and of Worldly Applause, we reap Nothing at the Hour of Death; all are

then Lost. We gather Fruits of Eternal Life only from Works Performed and Tribulations Suffered, for God.

Hence Saint Paul exhorts us to Attend to our own *Business*. "*But we Entreat you, Brethren, . . . that you do your own Business*" - 1Thessalonians 4:10-11. Of what *Business*, I ask, does the Apostle Speak? Is it of Acquiring Riches, or a Great Name in the World? No; he Speaks of the *Business* of the Soul, of which Jesus Christ spoke when He said, "*Trade till I come*" - Luke 19:13.

The *Business* for which the Lord has Placed, and for which He Keeps us on this Earth, is to Save our Souls, and by Good Works, to Gain Eternal Life. This is the *End* for which we have been Created. "*and the End Life Everlasting*" - Romans 6:22. The *Business* of the Soul is for us not only the most Important, but also the Principal and Only Affair; for if the Soul be Saved, 'All' is Safe; but if the Soul be Lost, 'All' is Lost. Hence we ought, as the Scripture says, to Strive for the Salvation of our Souls, and to Combat to Death for Justice - that is, for the Observance of the Divine Law. "*Strive for Justice for thy Soul, and even unto Death, Fight for Justice, and God will Overthrow thy Enemies for thee*" - Ecclesiasticus 4:33. The *Business* which Our Savior recommends to us, saying: *Trade till I Come*, is to have always Before our Eyes, the Day on which He shall Come, to Demand an Account of our Whole Life.

All Things in this World - Acquisitions, Applause, Grandeur - must, as we have said, all End, and End very soon. "*For the Fashion of this World, Passeth away*" - 1Corinthians 7:31. The 'Scene' of this Life Passes away; Happy they who, in this 'Scene', Act their Part well, and Save their Souls, preferring the Eternal Interests of the Soul, to all the Temporal Interests of the Body. "*He that Loveth his Life, shall Lose it; and he that Hateth his Life in this World, Keepeth it unto Life Eternal*" - John 12:25. Worldlings say: Happy the Man who Hoards-up Money! Happy they who Acquire the Esteem of the World, and Enjoy the Pleasures of this Life! O Folly! Happy he who Loves God and Saves his Soul! The Salvation of his Soul was the only Favor which King David asked of God. "*One Thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I Seek after; that I may Dwell in the House of the Lord, all the Days of my Life. That I may See the Delight of the Lord, and may visit His Temple*" - Psalm 26:4. And Saint Paul said, that to Acquire the Grace of Jesus Christ, which contains Eternal Life, he Despised as Dung, all Worldly Goods. "*Furthermore I count all things to be but Loss, for the Excellent Knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord; for Whom I have Suffered the Loss of all things, and count them but as Dung, that I may gain Christ*" - Philippians 3:8.

But certain Fathers of Families will say: *I do not Labor so much for myself, as for my Children, whom I Wish to leave in Comfortable Circumstances. But I*

will Answer: If you Dissipate the Goods which you Possess, and leave your Children in Poverty, you do Wrong and are Guilty of Sin. But, will you Lose your Soul, in order to Leave your Children Comfortable? If you Fall into Hell, perhaps they will Come and Release you from it? O Folly! Listen to what David said, "*I have not seen the Just Forsaken, nor his Seed seeking Bread*" - Psalm 36:25. Attend to the Service of God; Act According to Justice; the Lord will Provide for the Wants of your Children, and you shall Save your Souls, and Lay up that Eternal Treasure of Happiness, which can never be Taken from you; a Treasure not like Earthly Possessions, of which you may be Deprived by Robbers, and which you shall certainly Lose at Death. This is the Advice which the Lord gives you, "*But lay up to yourselves Treasures in Heaven: where neither the Rust nor Moth doth Consume, and where Thieves do not Break through, nor Steal*" - Matthew 6:20. In Conclusion, attend to the Beautiful Admonition which Saint Gregory gives to all who Wish to Live well and Gain Eternal Life. "*Sit nobis in intentione aeternitas, in usu temporalitas*". Let the End of all our Actions in this Life be, the Acquisition of Eternal Goods; and let us use Temporal Things only to Preserve Life for the Little Time we have to Remain on this Earth. The Saint continues: "*Sicut nulla est proportio inter aeternitatem et nostrae vitae tempus, ita nulla debet esse proportio inter aeternitatis, et hujus, vitae euras*". As there is an Infinite Distance between Eternity, and the Time of our Life, so there ought to be, according to our Mode of Understanding, an Infinite Distance between the Attention which we should Pay to the Goods of Eternity, which shall be Enjoyed Forever, and the Care we take of the Goods of this Life, which Death shall soon Take away from us.

- End of Liguori Sermon -

ANNE CATHERINE EMMERICH - VISION OF HELL

A Detached Account of the Descent into Hell

"WHEN Jesus, after uttering a loud cry, expired, I saw his heavenly soul under the form of a bright meteor pierce the earth at the foot of the Cross, accompanied by the angel Gabriel and many other angels. His Divine nature continued united to his soul as well as to his body, which still remained hanging upon the Cross, but I cannot explain how this was, although I saw it plainly in my own mind. The place into which the soul of Jesus entered was divided into three parts, which appeared to me like three worlds; and I felt that they were

round, and that each division was separated from the other by a hemisphere.

I beheld a bright and beautiful space opposite to Limbo; it was enamelled with flowers, delicious breezes wafted through it; and many souls were placed there before being admitted into Heaven after their deliverance from Purgatory.

Limbo, the place where the souls were waiting for the Redemption, was divided into different compartments, and encompassed by a thick foggy atmosphere.

Our Lord appeared radiant with light and surrounded by angels, who conducted him triumphantly between two of these compartments; the one on the left containing the patriarchs who lived before the time of Abraham, and that on the right those who lived between the days of Abraham and St. John Baptist. These souls did not at first recognise Jesus, but were filled nevertheless with sensations of joy and hope. There was not a spot in those narrow confines which did not, as it were, dilate with feelings of happiness. The passage of Jesus might be compared to the wafting of a breath of air, to a sudden flash of light, or to a shower of vivifying dew, but it was swift as a whirlwind. After passing through the two compartments, he reached a dark spot in which Adam and Eve were standing; he spoke to them, they prostrated and adored him in a perfect ecstasy of joy, and they immediately joined the band of angels, and accompanied our Lord to the compartment on the left, which contained the patriarchs who lived before Abraham. This compartment was a species of Purgatory, and a few evil spirits were wandering about among the souls and endeavouring to fill them with anxiety and alarm. The entrance through a species of door was closed, but the angels rapped, and I thought I heard them say, 'Open these doors.' When Jesus entered in triumph the demons dispersed, crying out at the same time, 'What is there between thee and us? What art thou come to do here? Wilt thou crucify us likewise?' The angels hunted them away, having first chained them. The poor souls confined in this place had only a slight presentiment and vague idea of the presence of Jesus; but the moment he told them that it was he himself, they burst out into acclamations of joy, and welcomed him with hymns of rapture and delight. The soul of our Lord then wended its way to the right, towards that part which really constituted Limbo; and there he met the soul of the good thief which angels were carrying to Abraham's bosom, as also that of the bad thief being dragged by demons into Hell. Our Lord addressed a few words to both, and then entered Abraham's bosom, accompanied by numerous angels and holy souls, and also by those demons who had been chained and expelled from the compartment.

This locality appeared to me more elevated than the surrounding parts; and I can only describe my sensations on entering it, by comparing them to those of a person coming suddenly into the interior of a church, after having been for

some time in the burial vaults. The demons, who were strongly chained, were extremely loath to enter, and resisted to the utmost of their power, but the angels compelled them to go forward. All the just who had lived before the time of Christ were assembled there; the patriarch; Moses, the judges, and the kings on the left-hand side; and on the right side, the prophets, and the ancestors of our Lord, as also his near relations, such as Joachim, Anna, Joseph, Zacharias, Elizabeth, and John. There were no demons in this place, and the only discomfort that had been felt by those placed there was a longing desire for the accomplishment of the promise; and when our Lord entered they saluted him with joyful hymns of gratitude and thanksgiving for its fulfilment, they prostrated and adored him, and the evil spirits who had been dragged into Abraham's bosom when our Lord entered were compelled to confess with shame that they were vanquished. Many of these holy souls were ordered by our Lord to return to the earth, re-enter their own bodies, and thus render a solemn and impressive testimony to the truth. It was at this moment that so many dead persons left their tombs in Jerusalem; I regarded them less in the light of dead persons risen again than as corpses put in motion by a divine power, and which, after having fulfilled the mission intrusted to them, were laid aside in the same manner as the insignia of office are taken off by a clerk when he has executed the orders of his superiors.

I next saw our Lord, with his triumphant procession, enter into a species of Purgatory... I saw the demons compelled to confess the deception they had practised with regard to these idols... here, likewise, the demons were bound with chains and dragged away. I saw our Saviour perform many other actions; but I suffered so intensely at the same time, that I cannot recount them as I should have wished.

Finally, **I beheld him [Our Lord] approach to the centre of the great abyss, that is to say, to Hell itself;** and the expression of his countenance was most severe.

The exterior of Hell was appalling and frightful; it was an immense, heavy-looking building, and the granite of which it was formed, although black, was of metallic brightness; and the dark and ponderous doors were secured with such terrible bolts that no one could behold them without trembling. Deep groans and cries of despair might be plainly distinguished even while the doors were tightly closed; but, o, who can describe the dreadful yells and shrieks which burst upon the ear when the bolts were unfastened and the doors flung open; and, o, who can depict the melancholy appearance of the inhabitants of this wretched place!

The form under which the Heavenly Jerusalem is generally represented in my visions is that of a beautiful and well-regulated city, and the different degrees of glory to which the elect are raised are demonstrated by the magnificence of their palaces, or the wonderful fruit and flowers with which the gardens are embellished. Hell is shown to me under the same form, but all within it is, on the contrary, close, confused, and crowded; every object tends to fill the mind with sensations of pain and grief; the marks of the wrath and vengeance of God are visible everywhere; despair, like a vulture, gnaws every heart, and discord and misery reign around. In the Heavenly Jerusalem all is peace and eternal harmony, the beginning, fulfilment, and end of everything being pure and perfect happiness; the city is filled with splendid buildings, decorated in such a manner as to charm every eye and enrapture every sense; the inhabitants of this delightful abode are overflowing with rapture and exultation, the gardens gay with lovely flowers, and the trees covered with delicious fruits which give eternal life. In the city of Hell nothing is to be seen but dismal dungeons, dark caverns, frightful deserts, fetid swamps filled with every imaginable species of poisonous and disgusting reptile. In Heaven you behold the happiness and peaceful union of the saints; in Hell, perpetual scenes of wretched discord, and every species of sin and corruption, either under the most horrible forms imaginable, or represented by different kinds of dreadful torments. All in this dreary abode tends to fill the mind with horror; not a word of comfort is heard or a consoling idea admitted; the one tremendous thought, that the justice of an all-powerful God inflicts on the damned nothing but what they have fully deserved is the absorbing tremendous conviction which weighs down each heart. Vice appears in its own, grim disgusting colours, being stripped of the mask under which it is hidden in this world, and the infernal viper is seen devouring those who have cherished or fostered it here below. In a word, Hell is the temple of anguish and despair, while the kingdom of God is the temple of peace and happiness. This is easy to understand when seen; but it is almost impossible to describe clearly.

The tremendous explosion of oaths, curses, cries of despair, and frightful exclamations which, like a clap of thunder, burst forth when the gates of Hell were thrown open by the angels, would be difficult even to imagine; our Lord spoke first to the soul of Judas, and the angels then compelled all the demons to acknowledge and adore Jesus. They would have infinitely preferred the most frightful torments to such a humiliation; but all were obliged to submit. Many were chained down in a circle which was placed round other circles. In the centre of Hell I saw a dark and horrible-looking abyss, and into this Lucifer was cast, after being first strongly secured with chains; thick clouds of sulphurous black smoke arose from its fearful depths, and enveloped his frightful form in

the dismal folds, thus effectually concealing him from every beholder. God himself had decreed this; and I was likewise told, if I remember rightly that he will be unchained for a time fifty or sixty years before the year of Christ 2000. The dates of many other events were pointed out to me which I do not now remember; but a certain number of demons are to be let loose much earlier than Lucifer, in order to tempt men, and to serve as instruments of the divine vengeance. I should think that some must be loosened even in the present day, and others will be set free in a short time.

It would be utterly impossible for me to describe all the things which were shown to me; their number was so great that I could not reduce them sufficiently to order to define and render them intelligible. Besides which my sufferings are very great, and when I speak on the subject of my visions I behold them in my mind's eye portrayed in such vivid colours, that the sight is almost sufficient to cause a weak mortal like myself to expire.

I next saw **innumerable bands of redeemed souls liberated from Purgatory** and from Limbo, who followed our Lord to a delightful spot situated above the celestial Jerusalem, in which place I, a very short time ago, saw the soul of a person who was very dear to me. The soul of the good thief was likewise taken there, and the promise of our Lord, *'This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise,'* was fulfilled.

It is not in my power to explain the exact time that each of these events occurred, nor can I relate one-half of the things which I saw and heard; for some were incomprehensible even to myself, and others would be misunderstood if I attempted to relate them. I have seen our Lord in many different places. Even in the sea he appeared to me to sanctify and deliver everything in the creation. Evil spirits fled at his approach, and cast themselves into the dark abyss. I likewise beheld his soul in different parts of the earth, first inside the tomb of Adam, under Golgotha; and when he was there the souls of Adam and Eve came up to him, and he spoke to them for some time. He then visited the tombs of the prophets who were buried at an immense depth below the surface; but he passed through the soil in the twinkling of an eye. Their souls immediately re-entered their bodies, and he spoke to them and explained the most wonderful mysteries. Next I saw him, accompanied by a chosen band of prophets, among whom I particularly remarked David, visit those parts of the earth which had been sanctified by his miracles and by his sufferings. He pointed out to them, with the greatest love and goodness, the different symbols in the old law expressive of the future; and he showed them how he himself had fulfilled every prophecy. The sight of the soul of our Lord, surrounded by these happy souls,

and radiant with light, was inexpressibly grand as he glided triumphantly through the air, sometimes passing, with the velocity of lightning, over rivers, then penetrating through the hardest rocks to the very centre of the earth, or moving noiselessly over its surface.

I can remember nothing beyond the facts which I have just related concerning the descent of Jesus into Limbo, where he went in order to present to the souls there detained the grace of the Redemption which he had merited for them by his death and by his sufferings; and I saw all these things in a very short space of time; in fact, time passed so quickly that it seemed to me but a moment. Our Lord, however, displayed before me, at the same time, another picture, in which I beheld the immense mercies which he bestows in the present day on the poor souls in Purgatory; for on every anniversary of this great day, when his Church is celebrating the glorious mystery of his death, he casts a look of compassion on the souls in Purgatory, and frees some of those who sinned against him before his crucifixion. I this day saw Jesus deliver many souls; some I was acquainted with, and others were strangers to me, but I cannot name any of them.

Our Lord, by descending into Hell, planted (if I may thus express myself), in the spiritual garden of the Church, a mysterious tree, the fruits of which—namely, his merits—are destined for the constant relief of the poor souls in Purgatory. The Church militant must cultivate the tree, and gather its fruits, in order to present them to that suffering portion of the Church which can do nothing for itself. Thus it is with all the merits of Christ; we must labour with him if we wish to obtain our share of them; we must gain our bread by the sweat of our brow. Everything which our Lord has done for us in time must produce fruit for eternity; but we must gather these fruits in time, without which we cannot possess them in eternity. The Church is the most prudent and thoughtful of mothers; the ecclesiastical year is an immense and magnificent garden, in which all those fruits for eternity are gathered together, that we may make use of them in time. Each year contains sufficient to supply the wants of all; but woe be to that careless or dishonest gardener who allows any of the fruit committed to his care to perish; if he fails to turn to a proper account those graces which would restore health to the sick, strength to the weak, or furnish food to the hungry! When the Day of Judgment arrives, the Master of the garden will demand a strict account, not only of every tree, but also of all the fruit produced in the garden." (Anne Catherine Emmerich, *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, Chapter LIX)

CATHOLIC DOCTRINE ON HELL

- A horrific eternity of torture and despair -

Taken from *Hell plus How to Avoid Hell* by Fr. FX Schouppe, S.J. and Thomas A. Nelson. (TAN Books & Publishers, Inc., 1989)

"A holy priest was exorcizing a demoniac, and he asked the demon what pains he was suffering in Hell. "An eternal fire," he answered, "an eternal malediction, an eternal rage, and a frightful despair at being never able to gaze upon Him who created me." "What would you do to have the happiness of seeing God?" "To see Him but for one moment, I should willingly consent to endure my torments for 10,000 years. But vain desires! I shall suffer forever and never see Him!"

On a like occasion, the exorcist inquired of the demon what was his greatest pain in Hell. He replied with an accent of indescribable despair: "Always, always! Never; never!"

Unhappy sinners who are lulled to rest by the illusions of the world and who live as if there were no Hell will be suddenly stripped of their illusions by the most frightful of catastrophes. From the midst of their pleasures they shall fall into the Pit of Torments.

They who deny Hell will be forced to admit it soon; but alas! it will be too late. Father Nieremberg, in his work "The Difference between Time and Eternity", speaks of an unfortunate sinner, who, as the result of his evil ways, had lost the Faith. His virtuous wife exhorted him to return to God and reminded him of Hell, but he would answer obstinately: "There is no Hell." One day his wife found him dead, and strange circumstance, he held in his hand a mysterious paper on which in large characters was traced this terrifying avowal: **"I now know that there is a Hell!"**

Another incident:

Mgr. de Segur relates a second fact, which he regards as alike free from doubt. He had learned it in 1859, of a most honorable priest and superior of an important community. This priest had the particulars of it from a near relation of the lady to whom it had happened. At that time, Christmas Day, 1859, this person was still living and little over forty years.

She chanced to be in London in the winter of 1847-1848. She was a widow, about twenty nine years old, quite rich and worldly. Among the gallants who

frequented her salon, there was noticed a young lord, whose attentions compromised her extremely and whose conduct, besides, was anything but edifying!

One evening, or rather one night, for it was close upon midnight, she was reading in her bed some novel, coaxing sleep. One o'clock struck by the clock; she blew out her taper. She was about to fall asleep when, to her great astonishment, she noticed that a strange, wan glimmer of light, which seemed to come from the door of the drawing-room, spread by degrees into her chamber, and increased momentarily. Stupified at first and not knowing what this meant, she began to get alarmed, when she saw the **drawing-room door slowly open** and the young lord, the partner of her disorders, enter the room. Before she had time to say a single word, he seized her by the left wrist, and with a hissing voice, syllabled to her in English: "There is a Hell!" The pain she felt in her arm was so great that she lost her senses.

When, half an hour after, she came to again, she rang for her chambermaid. The latter, on entering, noticed a **keen smell of burning**. Approaching her mistress, who could hardly speak, she noticed on her wrist so deep a burn that the bone was laid bare and the flesh almost consumed; this burn was the size of a man's hand. Moreover, she remarked that, from the door of the salon to the bed, and from the bed to that same door, the carpet bore the imprint of a man's steps, which had burned through the stuff. By the directions of her mistress, she opened the drawing-room door; there, more traces were seen on the carpet outside.

The following day, the unhappy lady learned, with a terror easy to be divined, that on the very night, about one o'clock in the morning, her lord had been found dead-drunk under the table, that his servants had carried him to his room, and that there he had died in their arms.

There would not be one who should be **so crazy as to accept this bargain**: During the year, you may yield to all your passions, gratify all your whims, on the condition of spending *one day*, only one day, or even *one hour*, in fire. I repeat, not a single person would accept the bargain. Will you have a proof of it? Listen to the history of the three sons of an old usurer:

A father of a family who grew rich only by doing wrongs had fallen dangerously ill. He knew that the final stages of death had already set in, and **nevertheless he could not decide to make restitution**. "*If I make restitution,*" he said, "*what will become of my children?*" His confessor, a man of sagacity, had recourse to a singular stratagem to save this poor soul. He told him that if he

wished to be cured, he was about to give him an extremely simple, but costly remedy. "Should it cost a thousand, two thousand, even ten thousand francs, what odds?" answered the old man briskly. "What is it?" "It consists in pouring the melted fat of a living person on the dying parts. It does not need much. If you find anyone willing, for ten thousand francs, to suffer **one hand to be burned for less than a quarter of an hour**, that will be enough."

"Alas!" said the poor man, sighing, "I am very much afraid I can find no such person." "I will help you," said the priest quietly. "Summon your eldest son; he loves you; he is to be your heir; say to him, 'My dear son, you can save your old father's life if you consent to allow one hand to be burned only for a small quarter of an hour.' If he refuses, make the proposal to the second, pledging yourself to make him your heir at the expense of his elder brother. If he refuses in this turn, the third will no doubt accept."

The proposition was made successively to the three brothers, who, one after the other, **rejected it with a shudder**. Then the father said to them: "What! To save my life, an instant's pain alarms you? And I, to procure your comfort, would go to Hell - to be burned eternally! Indeed, I should be quite mad." And he hastened to restore all he owed without regard to what should become of his children. He was quite right, and so were his three sons. To suffer a hand to be burned, a short quarter of an hour, even to save a father's life, is a sacrifice above human strength."

Death is Certain and Uncertain

by St. Alphonsus Liguori

Fourth Sunday After Pentecost

Let down your nets for a draught." LUKE v. 4.

IN this day's gospel we find that, having gone up into one of the ships, and having heard from St. Peter, that he and his companions had laboured all the night and had taken nothing, Jesus Christ said: "**Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.**" They obeyed; and having cast out their nets into the sea, they took such a multitude of fishes, that the nets were nearly broken. Brethren, God has placed us in the midst of the sea of this life, and has commanded us to cast out our nets, that we may catch fishes; that is,

that we may perform good works, by which we can acquire merits for eternal life. Happy we, if we attain this end and save our souls! Unhappy we, if, instead of laying up treasures for heaven, we by our sins merit hell, and bring our souls to damnation! Our happiness or misery for eternity depends on the moment of our death, which is certain and uncertain. The Lord assures us that death is certain, that we may prepare for it; but, on the other hand, he leaves us uncertain as to the time of our death, that we may be always prepared for its two points of the utmost importance.

First Point. It is certain that we shall die.

Second Point. It is uncertain when we shall die.

First Point. It is certain that we shall die.

1. ***“It is appointed unto men once to die.”*** (Heb. ix. 27.) The decree has been passed for each of us: we must all die. St. Cyprian says, that we are all born with the halter on the neck: hence, every step we make brings us nearer to the gibbet. For each of us the gibbet shall be the last sickness, which will end in death. As then, brethren, your name has been inserted in the registry of baptism, so it shall be one day written in the record of the dead. As, in speaking of your ancestors, you say: God be merciful to my father, to my uncle, or to my brother; so others shall say the same of you when you shall be in the other world; and as you have often heard the death-bell toll for many, so others shall hear it toll for you.

2. All things future, which regard men now living, are uncertain, but death is certain. ***“All other goods and evils,”*** says St. Augustine, ***“are uncertain; death only is certain.”*** It is uncertain whether such an infant shall be rich or poor, whether he shall enjoy good or ill health, whether he shall die at an early or at an advanced age. But it is certain that he shall die, though he be son of a peer or of a monarch. And, when the hour arrives, no one can resist the stroke of death. The same St. Augustine says: ***“Fires, waters, and the sword are resisted; kings are resisted: death comes; who resists it ?”*** (in Ps. xii.) We may resist conflagrations, inundations, the sword of enemies, and the power of princes; but who can resist death? A certain king of France, as Belluacensis relates, said in his last moments: ***“Behold, with all my power, I cannot make death wait for a single hour.”*** No; when the term of life has arrived, death does not wait even a moment: ***“Thou hast appointed his bounds, which cannot be passed.”*** (Job. xiv. 5.)

3. We must all die. This truth we not only believe, but see with our eyes. In every age houses, streets, and cities are filled with new inhabitants: their former possessors are shut up in the grave. And, as for them the days of life are over, so a time shall come when not one of all who are now alive shall be among the living. **“Days shall be formed, and no one in them.”** (Ps. cxxxviii. 10.) **“Who is the man that shall live, and shall not see death?”** (Ps. lxxxviii. 49) Should any one flatter himself that he will not die, he would not only be a disbeliever—for it is of faith that we shall all die—but he would be regarded as a madman. We know that all men, even potentates and princes and emperors, have, under a certain time, fallen victims to death. And where are they now? **“Tell me,”** says St. Bernard, **“where are the lovers of the world? Nothing has remained of them but ashes and worms.”** Of so many great men of the world, though buried in marble mausoleums, nothing has remained but a little dust and a few withered bones. We know that our ancestors are no longer among the living: of their death we are constantly reminded by their pictures, their memorandum books, their beds, and by the clothes which they have left us. And can we entertain a hope or a doubt that we shall not die? Of all who lived in this town a hundred years ago how many are now alive? They are all in eternity in an eternal day of delights, or in an eternal night of torments. Either the one or the other shall be our lot also.

4. But, God! we all know that we shall die: the misfortune is, that we imagine death as distant as if it were never to come, and therefore we lose sight of it. But, sooner or later, whether we think or think not of death, it is certain, and of faith that we shall die, and that we are drawing nearer to it every day. **“For we have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come.”** (Heb. xiii. 14.) This is not our country: here we are pilgrims on a journey. **“While we are in the body we are absent from the Lord.”** (2 Cor. v. 6.) Our country is Paradise, if we know how to acquire it by the grace of God and by our own good works. Our house is not that in which we live; we dwell in it only in passing; our dwelling is in eternity. **“Man shall go into the house of his eternity.”** (Eccl. xii. 5.) How great would be the folly of the man, who, in passing through a strange country, should lay out all his property in the purchase of houses and possessions in a foreign land, and reduce himself to the necessity of living miserably for the remainder of his days in his own country! And is not he, too, a fool, who seeks after happiness in this world, from which he must soon depart; and, by his sins, exposes himself to the danger of misery in the next, where he must live for eternity?

5. Tell me, beloved brethren, if, instead of preparing for his approaching death, a person condemned to die were, on his way to the place of execution, to employ

the few remaining moments of his life in admiring the beauty of the houses as he passed along, in thinking of balls and comedies, in uttering immodest words, and detracting his neighbours, would you not say that the unhappy man had either lost his reason, or that he was abandoned by God? And are not you on the way to death? Why then do you seek only the gratification of the senses? Why do you not think of preparing the accounts which you shall one day, and perhaps very soon, have to render at the tribunal of Jesus Christ? Souls that have faith, leave to the fools of this world the care of realizing a fortune on this earth; seek you to make a fortune for the next life, which shall be eternal. The present life must end, and end very soon.

6. Go to the grave in which your relatives and friends are buried. Look at their dead bodies: each of them says to you: **“Yesterday for me; Today for thee.”** (Eccl. xxxviii. 23.) What has happened to me must one day happen to thee. Thou shalt become dust and ashes, as I am. And where shall thy soul be found, if, before death, thou hast not settled thy accounts with God? Ah, brethren! if you wish to live well, and to have your accounts ready for that great day, on which your doom to eternal life or to eternal death must be decided, endeavour, during the remaining days of life, to live with death before your eyes. **“death, thy sentence is welcome.”** (Eccl. xli. 3.) Oh! how correct are the judgments, how well directed the actions, of those who form their judgments, and perform their actions, with death before their view! The remembrance of death destroys all attachment to the goods of this earth. **“Let the end of life be considered,”** says St. Lawrence Justinian, **“and there will be nothing in this world to be loved.”** (de Ligno Vitæ, cap. v.) Yes; all the riches, honours, and pleasures of this world are easily despised by him who considers that he must soon leave them forever, and that he shall be thrown into the grave to be the food of worms.

7. Some banish the thought of death, as if, by avoiding to think of death, they could escape it. But death cannot be avoided; and they who banish the thought of it, expose themselves to great danger of an unhappy death. By keeping death before their eyes, the saints have despised all the goods of this earth. Hence St. Charles Borromeo kept on his table a death’s head, that he might have it continually in view. Cardinal Baronius had the words, **“Memento mori”** **“Remember death”** inscribed on his ring. The venerable P. Juvenal Anzia, Bishop of Saluzo, had before him a skull, on which was written, **“As I am, so thou shalt be.”** In retiring to deserts and caves the holy solitaries brought with them the head of a dead man; and for what purpose? To prepare themselves for death. Thus a certain hermit being asked at death, why he was so cheerful, answered: **I have kept death always before my eyes; and**

therefore, now that it has arrived, I feel no terror. But, oh! how full of terror is death, when it comes to those who have thought of it but seldom.

Second Point. It is uncertain when we shall die.

8. “Nothing,” says the Idiota, “is more certain than death, but nothing is more uncertain than the hour of death.” It is certain that we shall die. God has already determined the year, the month, the day, the hour, the moment, in which each of us shall leave this earth, and enter into eternity; but this moment he has resolved not to make known to us. **“And justly,”** says St. Augustine, **“has the Lord concealed it; for, had he manifested to all the day fixed for their death, many should be induced to continue in the habit of sin by the certainty of not dying before the appointed day. “Si stauisset viam omnibus, faceret abundare peccata de securitate”**(in Ps. cxliv). Hence the holy doctor teaches that **“God has concealed from us the day of our death, that we may spend all our days well.” “Latet ultimus dies, ut obseruentur omnes dies.”**(Hom. xii. inter 50.) Hence Jesus Christ says: **“Be you also ready; for at what hour you think not the Son of Man will come.”** (Luke xii. 40.) That we may be always prepared to die, he wishes us to be persuaded that death will come when we least expect it. **“Of death,”** says St. Gregory, **“we are uncertain, that we may be found always prepared for death.”** St. Paul likewise admonishes us that the day of the Lord, that is, the day on which the Lord shall judge us shall come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night, **“The day of the Lord shall so come as a thief in the night.”** (1 Thess. v. 2.) Since, then, says St. Bernard, death may assail you and take away your life in every place and at every time, you should, if you wish to die well and to save your soul, **be at all times and places in expectation of death: “Mors ubique te expectat tu ubique earn expectabis:”** and St. Augustine says: **“Latet ultimus dies, ut obseruentur omnes dies.”** (Hom, xii.) **“The Lord conceals from us the last day of our life, that we may always have ready the account which we must render to God after death.”**

9. Many Christians are lost, because many, even among the old, who feel the approach of death, flatter themselves that it is at a distance, and that it will not come without giving them time to prepare for it. **“Dura mente,”** says St. Gregory, **“abesse longe mors creditur etiam cum sentitur.”** (*Moral, lib. 8.*) **“Death, even when it is felt, is believed to be far off.”** O brethren, are these your sentiments? How do you know that your death is near or distant? What reason have you to suppose that death will give you time to prepare for it? How many do we know who have died suddenly? Some have died

walking; some sitting; and some during sleep. Did any one of these ever imagine that he should die in such a manner? But they have died in this way; and if they were in enmity with God, what has been the lot of their unhappy souls?

Miserable the man who meets with an unprovided death! And I assert, that all who ordinarily neglect to unburthen their conscience, die without preparation, even though they should have seven or eight days to prepare for a good death; for as I shall show in the forty-fourth sermon, it is very difficult, during these days of confusion and terror, to settle accounts with God, and to return to him with sincerity. But I repeat that death may come upon you in such a manner, that you shall not have time even to receive the sacraments. And who knows whether, in another hour, you shall be among the living or the dead? The uncertainty of the time of his death made Job tremble. **“For I knew not how long I shall continue, or whether, after a while, my Maker may take me away.”** (Job xxxii. 22.) Hence St. Basil exhorts **us in going to bed at night, not to trust that we shall see the next day. “Cum in lectulum ad quiescendum membra tua posueris, noli confidere de lucis adventu.”** (Inst. ad fil. spirit.)

10. Whenever, then, the devil tempts you to sin, by holding out the hope that you will go to confession and repair the evil you have done, say to him in answer: **How do I know that this shall not be the last day of my life? And should death overtake me in sin, and not give me time to make my confession, what shall become of me for all eternity?** Alas! how many poor sinners have been struck dead in the very act of indulging in some sinful pleasure, and have been sent to hell! **“As fishes are taken by the hook, and as birds are caught with the snare, so men are taken in the evil time.”** (Eccl. ix. 12.) Fishes are taken with the hook while they eat the bait that conceals the hook, which is the instrument of their death. The evil time is precisely that in which sinners are actually offending God. In the act of sin, they calm their conscience by a security of afterwards making a good confession, and reversing the sentence of their damnation. But death comes suddenly upon them, and does not leave them time for repentance. **“For, when they shall say peace and security, then shall sudden destruction come upon them.”** (1 Thess. v. 3.)

11. If a person lend a sum of money he is careful instantly to get a written acknowledgment, and to take all the other means necessary to secure the repayment of it. Who, he says, can know what shall happen? Death may come, and I may lose my money. And how does it happen that there are so many who neglect to use the same caution for the salvation of their souls, which is of far greater importance than all temporal interests? Why do they not also say: **Who**

knows what may happen? death may come, and I may lose my soul? If you lose a sum of money, all is not lost; if you lose it one way you may recover the loss in another; but he that dies and loses his soul, loses all, and has no hope of ever recovering it. If we could die twice, we might, if we lost our soul the first time, save it the second. But we cannot die twice. ***“It is appointed unto men once to die,”*** (Heb. ix. 27) Mark the word ***once***: death happens to each of us but ***once***: he who has erred the first time has erred ***for ever***. Hence, to bring the soul to hell is an irreparable error. ***“Periisse semel æternum est.”***

12. The venerable Father John Avila was a man of great sanctity, and apostle of Spain. What was the answer of this great servant of God, who had led a holy life from his childhood, when he was told that his death was at hand, and that he had but a short time to live? ***“Oh!”*** replied the holy man with trembling, ***“that I had a little more time to prepare for death!”*** St. Agatho, abbot, after spending so many years in penance, trembled at the hour of death, and said: ***“What shall become of me? who can know the judgments of God?”*** And, O brethren, what will you say when the approach of death shall be announced to you, and when, from the priest who attends you, you shall hear these words: ***“Go forth, Christian soul, from this world?”*** You will, perhaps, say: Wait a little; allow me to prepare better. No; depart immediately; death does not wait. You should therefore prepare yourselves now. ***“With fear and trembling work out your salvation.”*** (Phil. ii. 12.) St. Paul admonishes us that, if we wish to save our souls, we must live in fear and trembling, lest death may find us in sin. Be attentive, brethren: there is question of eternity. ***“If a tree fall to the south or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall there shall it be.”*** (Eccl. xi. 3.) If, when the tree of your life is cut down, you fall to the south that is, if you obtain eternal life how great shall be your joy at being able to say: I shall be saved; I have secured all; I can never lose God; I shall be happy for ever. But, if you fall to the north that is, into eternal damnation, how great shall be your despair! Alas! you shall say, I have erred, and my error is irremediable! Arise, then, from your tepidity, and, after this sermon, make a resolution to give yourselves sincerely to God. This resolution will insure you a good death, and will make you happy for eternity.

ETERNAL LOSS

Do you believe in Hell? Think about it for a moment first... Do you really, truly

believe in Hell?

It is a subject not spoken of frequently in these days, but God does not give each generation a new set of doctrines or a new bible. Further, it is important for us to reflect on this truth in order to realize how grave sin is. Is it a comfortable subject? No. But who said that everything in Religion is meant to be comforting?

A salutary fear of damnation is necessary in order for us to avoid sin (Mark 9:43). How many saints are now in Heaven because they meditated on the awful truth of Hell? We can be sure that there are quite a few.

In the end, we shall either go to Heaven or to Hell (Rev. 20:12-15). The choice is ours, we make that choice by our own actions. Let us then briefly consider the nature of Hell.

Hell exists, hell is a Roman Catholic dogma and one cannot say he's a Catholic if he does not believe in hell ... Hell is eternal (Matt. 25:41). And what will it be like?

Think of all the diseases in the world; those that affect the eyes, the teeth, the chest, the neck. To all these diseases of the body add the mental torments of Hell: despair, gloom, sadness, hatred...

And to these continuous torments, add the lack of sympathy from others. No-one will care, everyone in Hell will be full of hatred for the others. Not a moment of comfort. There is no rest, there is no sleep... every moment is an agony from which there is no escape--- the worst of torments; and this for eternity. St. Anthony Mary Claret writes:

"The sensation of pain in hell is essentially very dreadful. Picture yourself, my soul, on a dark night on the summit of a high mountain. Beneath you is a deep valley, and the earth opens so that with your gaze you can see hell in the cavity of it. Picture it as a prison situated in the center of the earth, many leagues down, all full of fire, hemmed in so impenetrably that for all eternity not even the smoke can escape.

In this prison the damned are packed so tightly one on the other like bricks in a kiln....Consider the quality of the fire in which they burn. First, the fire is all-extensive and tortures the whole body and the whole soul. A damned person lies in hell forever in the same spot which he was assigned by divine justice, without being able to move, as a prisoner in stocks. The fire in which he is totally enveloped, as a fish in water, burns around him, on his left, his right, above and below (Mt 18:8). His head, his breast, his shoulders, his arms, his hands, and his

feet are all penetrated with fire, so that he completely resembles a glowing hot piece of iron which has just been withdrawn from an oven. The roof beneath which the damned person dwells is fire; the food he takes is fire; the drink he tastes is fire; the air he breathes is fire; whatever he sees and touches is all fire (Mark 9:42).

But this fire is not merely outside him; it also passes within the condemned person. It penetrates his brain, his teeth, his tongue, his throat, his liver, his lungs, his bowels, his belly his heart, his veins, his nerves, his bones, even to the marrow, and even his blood... A most terrible thing about hell is its duration (Mat 3:12). The condemned person loses God and loses Him for all eternity. Now, what is eternity? Eternity never ends. This is the truth that has made even the great saints tremble. It is an essential misfortune of hell that everything will be without relief, without remedy, without interruption, without end, eternal."

The pain of loss, the consequence of final impenitence, consists in an immense void which will never be filled, in an eternal contradiction which is the fruit of the hatred of God, in despair, in perpetual remorse without repentance, in hate of one's neighbor, in envy, in a grudge against God which is expressed by blasphemy.

Perpetual remorse comes from the voice of conscience, which repeats that they refused to listen while there was yet time. They cannot indeed erase from their mind the first principles of the moral order, a distinction between good and evil. But conscience recalls sin after sin: "I was hungry, and you gave Me not to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me not to drink."

Eternally rebellious against everything, they long for annihilation, not in itself, but as cessation of suffering. In this sense Jesus says of Judas: "It were better for him if that man had not been born."

No sin shall be without its punishment. The evil men do must be atoned for either in this world by penance or in the world to come in purgatory or hell, according as the sin that stains the soul, and is not repented of, is mortal or venial, and merits eternal or temporal punishment.

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. A mortal sin is a transgression of the moral law in a serious matter, committed with clear advertence to the grievous nature of the act and with full deliberation and consent on the part of the will. However, when it comes to sins against the Natural Law, one doesn't have to... be told or taught that they are sins [in order

to be guilty of sin], and they are still committing a mortal sin if they commit these sins against Nature, just like a person do not have to be told or taught that murder, abortion, stealing, or getting intoxicated or drunk is a sin against the Natural Law in order for this person to be able to commit a mortal sin. As the Haydock Bible and Commentary correctly explains about The Natural Law and Romans 2:14-16: "these men are a law to themselves, and have it written in their hearts, as to the existence of a God, and their reason tells them, that many sins are unlawful..." It is called mortal since it deprives the soul of its supernatural life of sanctifying grace. It deserves eternal punishment (2 Th 1:9), since the offence is a deliberate act of rebellion against the infinite majesty of God.

A man who dies in this state is turned away from God. After death, such a sin cannot be remitted. The soul of the sinner who freely and definitively has turned away from God stays eternally in that state.

God has provided a remedy for sin and manifested His love and goodness in the face of man's ingratitude by the Incarnation of His Divine Son; by the institution of His Church to guide men and interpret to them His law, and administer to them the sacraments, seven channels of grace, which, rightly used, furnish an adequate remedy for sin and a means to union with God in heaven, which is the end of His law.

We are fallen creatures, and our spiritual life on earth is a warfare. Sin is our enemy, and while of our own strength we cannot avoid sin, with God's grace we can. If we but place no obstacle to the workings of grace we can avoid all deliberate sin. If we have the misfortune to sin, and seek God's grace and pardon with a contrite and humble heart, He will not repel us.

While some would have preferred to read about a more comfortable topic, the dogma of Hell is important to consider so as to make us realize that in the end there are only two choices-- Heaven or Hell; and they are both for eternity.

We need to have a healthy fear to help keep us from sin, for "the beginning of wisdom is the Fear of the Lord" (Eccl 1:16).

AN ACT OF SORROW

My GOD, I detest all the sins of my life. I am sorry for them, because they have offended Thee, my GOD, who art so good. I resolve never to commit sin anymore. My good GOD, pity me, have mercy on me, forgive me, Amen.

The commonly used traditional Act of Contrition prayer that one can make either to a priest or directly to God in the case a priest is not available contains

both an act of imperfect and perfect contrition: "O MY GOD, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins because I dread the loss of Heaven and the pains of Hell [imperfect contrition or attrition]; but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, Who art all-good and deserving of all my love [perfect contrition]. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen."

GREAT THOUGHTS ON ETERNITY

O MORTAL, who hast an immortal soul. Study, meditate upon, thoroughly realized that great word ETERNITY!

I may reckon upon 1,000 years, 10,000 years, 100,000,000×100,000 years, so many millions of times 1,000 years as there are: leaves on the trees of the forest, blades of grass in the fields, grains of sand on the seashore, drops of water in the ocean, stars in the sky: and yet I will not yet have begun to tell what thou art O ETERNITY!

A day will come when the sun will have ceased to give light. The world will have been burnt up. The race of man will have come to an end. The living and the dead will have been judged. Ages upon ages will be over; and after this, there will have been abysses of duration since that day of life which passed so quickly; life will appear no longer, save in the immense distance, like those stars which we can scarce perceive, like a dream that has passed away. And there will be still, as much as ever, ETERNITY FOR AN ETERNITY!

For it will always last, it will never end. O ALWAYS! O NEVER! O ETERNITY!

If there is an eternity for me in *heaven*, what an inconceivable blessing! *Always* truth and virtue, life and bliss, the blessed and the Angels. GOD to contemplate, to love, to possess, to bless, *always*. Nevermore any tears, or death or sorrow, or mourning (Apoc. 21: 4).

But if there were an eternity reserved for me in *hell*, what a terrible misery!

Always the stain of sin. Always the outer darkness. Always the gnawing of worms. Always the torment of fire. Always the imprisonment in chains. Always the overflowing of tears. Always the gnashing of teeth. Always the blasphemies of the damned. Always the torments inflicted by the Devils. Always the overwhelming curse of God. *Always?* ALWAYS!

--- And Never ---

A ray of light to give joy. A moment of sleep to restore. A drop of water to refresh. A friendly word to console.

NEVER TO SEE GOD. NEVER! O ALWAYS! O NEVER! O ETERNITY!

O Mortal who hast an immortal soul, there is an ETERNITY, and you give no thought to it! You have no thought of it, and that ETERNITY is for you! Even now you are on the brink of that eternity! And after a little while there will be no more:

Of all
that *business* which
occupies you. Of all
those *pleasures* that
amuse you. Of all
that *life* which you
abuse.

ETERNITY!

ETERNITY, and your *works* and your *fruits* will alone remain. The pleasure of the sinner will have passed away, but his sufferings will remain.

Therefore, either the pleasures of time with the sufferings of eternity; or the sufferings of time with the pleasures of eternity.

CHOOSE!

I *have* chosen. I wish to pass eternity in Heaven, I wish to pass it *with* God.

Eternal God, O my Sovereign Judge! Seized with terror, I throw myself at Thy feet. In presence of Thy Eternity I have no hope save in the greatness of Thy mercy, and in the bitterness of my repentance. Pardon, pardon me, for having run the risk, by my sins, of losing Thee for ETERNITY.

I believe in Thee and in ETERNITY. I hope in Thee, and from Thy goodness I hope for a happy ETERNITY. I love Thee, and wish to love Thee throughout ETERNITY. Strike, apply the knife and caustic to my wounds. Spare me not in time, but save me, O save me for ETERNITY!

TIME – The Purchase Price of Eternity

Time is the measure of our lives; so much as we lose of our time, so much we lose of the precious span of our life. The future is not ours; we cannot promise

ourselves a single moment of time. The present moment is all we can call our own; it passes away in an instant, and once gone, it can never be recalled.

Time is given us that we may secure for ourselves eternal happiness. There is not a moment in which we cannot store up treasures for ETERNITY. Lost moments are therefore like so many LOST ETERNITIES. Our eternal salvation or damnation depends upon the good or bad use of our time, and ETERNITY hangs upon the tiny balance of a single moment.

Time is short and passes quickly! So do the enjoyments, honors, riches, and pleasures of the world. But ETERNITY endures – ETERNITY and the good and evil which it holds – endures forever, without change, without any mixture of ill in its perfect happiness or any alloy of comfort in its perfect misery.

THE FOUR LAST THINGS: DEATH, JUDGMENT, HELL, HEAVEN

by Father Martin Von Cochem, O.S.F.C (1625-1712)

“Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin.”

PART I. ON DEATH. CHAPTER I. ON THE TERRORS OF DEATH.

IT appears to me unnecessary to say much about the terrors of death. The subject has been sufficiently enlarged upon by various writers; besides, everyone knows and feels for himself that life is sweet and death is bitter. However old a man may be, however broken in health, however miserable his circumstances, the thought of death is an unwelcome one. There are three principal reasons why all sensible people fear death so much: First, because the love of life, the dread of death is inherent in human nature. Secondly, because every rational being is well aware that death is bitter, and the separation of soul and body cannot take place without inexpressible suffering. Thirdly, because no one knows whither he will go after death, or how he will stand in the Day of Judgment. It will be well to explain the second and third of these reasons rather more fully, in order on the one hand that those who lead a careless life may perhaps be awakened thereby to a fear of death, and learn to avoid sin, and on the other that each one of us may be warned to prepare for death, lest we be overtaken by it unawares. Every one shrinks instinctively from death, because it is bitter, and painful beyond description to human nature. The soul of man is subject to many anxieties, apprehensions and sorrows, and the body is subject

to pain and sickness of all kinds, yet none of these pains can be compared to the agony of death. A man who loses his good name and his property feels acute grief, but he does not die of it. All suffering and sickness, all grief and anguish, however terrible, is less bitter than death. Hence we see death to be a mighty monarch, the most cruel, the most relentless, the most formidable enemy of mankind. Look at a man wrestling with death, and you will see how the tyrant overpowers, disfigures, prostrates his victim. Now why is death so hard, so terrible a thing? It is because the soul has to separate itself from the body. Body and soul were created for each other, and so intimate is their union that a parting between them seems almost impossible. They would endure almost anything rather than be torn asunder. The soul is fearful of the future, and of the unknown land to which she is going. The body is conscious that as soon as the soul departs from it, it will become the prey of worms. Consequently the soul cannot bear to leave the body, nor the body to part from the soul. Body and soul desire their union to remain unbroken, and together to enjoy the sweets of life.

In one of his epistles to St. Augustine, St. Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, relates what was told him by a man who had been raised from the dead. Amongst other things, he said: "The moment when my soul left my body, was one of such awful pain and distress that no one can imagine the anguish I then endured. If all conceivable suffering and pain were put together they would be as nothing in comparison with the torture I underwent at the separation of soul and body." And to emphasize his words, he added, addressing St. Cyril: "Thou knowest that thou hast a soul, but thou knowest not what it is. Thou knowest that beings exist called angels, but thou art ignorant of their nature. Thou knowest also that there is a God, but thou canst not comprehend His being. So it is with everything that has not corporeal shape; our understanding cannot grasp these things. In like manner it is impossible for thee to understand how I could suffer such intense agony in one short moment." And if some people apparently pass away most peacefully, this is because nature, exhausted by suffering, has no longer the force to struggle with death.

We know from the testimony of Our Redeemer Himself that no agony is like the agony of death. Although throughout the whole course of His sorrowful Passion, He was tortured in a terrible manner, yet all the martyrdom He endured was not to be compared with what He suffered at the moment of His death. This we gather from the Gospels. Nowhere do we find that at any period of His life the greatness of the pains He bore extorted from Our Lord a cry of anguish. But when the moment came for Him to expire, and the ruthless hand of death rent His Heart asunder, we read that He cried out with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. Hence it is evident that at no period of the Passion did Christ suffer so

acutely... In order that mankind might at least in some measure understand how terrible was the death Christ died for us, He ordained that we, at our dissolution, should taste something of the bitterness of His death, and experience the truth of the following words of Pope St. Gregory: "Christ's conflict with death represented our last conflict, teaching us that the agony of death is the keenest agony that man has ever felt or will ever feel. It is the will of God that man should suffer so intensely at the close of his life, in order that we may recognize and appreciate the magnitude of Christ's love for us, the inestimable benefit He has conferred on us by enduring death for our sakes. For it would have been impossible for man fully to know the infinite love of God, unless he too had drunk to some extent of the bitter chalice which Christ drank." In this passage from the writings of the holy Pope Gregory we are taught that Christ ordained that all men in the hour of their dissolution should suffer the like pains which Christ suffered for us in His last agony, in order that they may gain some knowledge, by their own experience, of the terrible nature of the death He endured for us, and the great price He paid for our ransom. How painful, how terrible, how awful death will be for us, if our death is in any degree to resemble Christ's most agonizing death! How severe a conflict is before us poor mortals! What torments await us at our last hour! One is almost inclined to think it would have been preferable never to have been born, than to be born to suffer such anguish. But it is thus that heaven is to be won, and through this narrow gate alone can we enter into paradise. Wherefore, O Christian, accept your destiny cheerfully, and form a steadfast resolution to bear unmurmuringly the bitterness of death. For it is a great merit to yield up one's life the life every man loves so well and submit with a ready and willing mind to the pangs of death. And for the purpose of encouraging you to gain merit in your last moments, let me counsel you to make the following determination to suffer death bravely. **RESOLUTION.** O God of all justice, who hast ordained that since the Fall of our first parents all men should die, and also that it should be the lot of many amongst us to taste in their death something of the pains Thy Son endured at the hour of His death, I submit most willingly to this Thy stern decree. Although life is sweet to me, and death appears most bitter, yet out of obedience to Thee I voluntarily accept death with all its pains, and am ready to yield up my soul whenever, wherever, in what way or mannersoever it may please Thy divine providence to appoint. And since Thou hast made death so bitter to man, in order that we may feel to a certain extent by our own experience how painful a death Thy beloved Son underwent for our sakes, I willingly accept the penalty of death, that I may at least at my latter end know something of the pains my blessed Lord suffered on my account. In honour, therefore, of His bitter Passion and death, I now cheerfully subject myself to

whatever sufferings I may be called upon to pass through at the moment of my departure, and declare my determination to bear them with all the constancy of which I am capable. I pray that this resolution on my part may be pleasing in Thy sight, and that Thou wilt give me grace to bear my last agony with patience. Amen.

CHAPTER II. ON THE ASSAULTS OF SATAN AT THE HOUR OF DEATH.

ALTHOUGH death is in itself most bitter, yet its bitterness is not a little enhanced by the vivid remembrance of the sins of our past life, by the thought of the judgment to come, of the eternity before us, and by the assaults of Satan. These four things fill the soul with such terror, that it would infallibly despair unless strengthened by the help of God. We will enter into some explanation of each of these four things, and also indicate some means of combating the fears they inspire. With regard to the assaults of Satan, know that the all-just God permits him to have great power to assail us at the hour of death; not indeed for our perdition, but for our probation. Before expiring the Christian has yet to prove that nothing can avail to make him forsake his God. For this reason the evil enemy employs all the power he has received, and brings all his forces to bear upon a man when he is dying, in the hope of causing him to sin, and thrusting him down to hell. During our whole lifetime he attacks us fiercely, and neglects no means whereby he may deceive us. But all these persecutions do not bear comparison with the final onslaught with which he endeavours to overcome us at the last. Then he raves and rages, like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

This we learn from the following passage in the Apocalypse (xii. 12): "Woe to the earth and to the sea, because the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time." These words bear a special application for the dying, against whom the devil conceives a great wrath, and whom he makes every effort to seduce. For he knows full well that if he does not get them into his power now, he will never again have the chance of doing so. Hear what St. Gregory says on this point: "Consider well how terrible is the hour of death, and how appalling the remembrance of our evil deeds will be at that time. For the spirits of darkness will recall all the harm they have done us, and remind us of the sins which we have committed at their instigation. They will not go to the death bed of the godless only, but they will be present with the elect, striving to discover something sinful whereof to accuse them. Alas! how will it fare with us hapless mortals in that hour, and what can we say for ourselves, seeing how innumerable are the sins to be laid to our charge? What can we answer to our adversaries, when they place all our sins before us, with

the object of reducing us to despair?" The evil spirits will tempt their unhappy victim at the moment of death on various points, but especially in regard to the sins into which he has most frequently fallen. If during his lifetime he has cherished hatred towards any one, they will conjure up before his dying eyes the image of that person, rehearsing all he did to injure him, in order to revive the flame of hate towards that enemy, or kindle it anew. Or if anyone has transgressed against purity, they will show him the accomplice of his sin, and strive to awaken the guilty passion felt for that individual. If he has been troubled with doubts concerning faith, they recall to his mind the article of belief which he had difficulty in accepting, representing it to him as untrue. If a man has a tendency to pusillanimity, the evil spirits encourage it in him, that they may perchance rob him of his hope of salvation. The man who has sinned through pride, and boasted of his good works, they seek to ensnare by flattery, assuring him that he stands high in the favour of God, and all he has done cannot fail to secure him a place in heaven.

Again, if in his lifetime a man has given way to impatience, allowing himself to be angry and irritated by every trifle, they make his illness appear most irksome to him that he may become impatient, and rebel against God for having sent upon him so painful a malady. Or if he has been tepid and indevout, without fervour in prayer or assiduity in his religious exercises they try to maintain in his soul this state of apathy, suggesting to him that his physical weakness is too great even to allow him to join in the prayers his friends read to him. Finally, they tempt those who have led a godless life, and repeatedly fallen into mortal sin, to despair, representing their transgressions to be so great as to be past forgiveness. In a word, the spirits of evil assail mortals at the moment of death most fiercely at their most vulnerable point, just as a skilful general will storm a fortress on the side where he perceives the ramparts to be weakest.

But the devils do not always confine themselves to tempting a man in regard to his chief failings and predominant faults; they frequently tempt him to sins of which he has not hitherto been guilty. For these crafty foes spare no pains to deceive the dying, and if they fail in one way, they attempt to succeed in another. These temptations are of no ordinary character. They are sometimes so violent that it is impossible for weak mortals to resist them without supernatural assistance. If it is all that any one in good health can do to withstand the assaults of the devil, and even such a one is often overcome by them, how difficult must it be for one who is enfeebled by sickness to struggle against foes so formidable! On this point a pious writer says: "Unless the dying man has, previous to his last illness, armed himself against these attacks, and accustomed himself to do battle with his spiritual adversaries, he stands a poor

chance of prevailing against them at the moment of death. If he does so, it will be only through the assistance of almighty God, of our blessed Lady, of his guardian angel, or of one of the saints. For our merciful God and His angels and blessed saints do not abandon the Christian in the hour of his direst need; they hasten to his help, that is, provided he is deserving of their aid." In order to prepare oneself before one's last illness to combat these temptations, it will be advisable to recite with due devotion the following prayer: O Jesus, compassionate Redeemer of mankind, I recall to mind the threefold temptation Thou didst undergo from the evil enemy, and I pray Thee through the glorious victory Thou didst obtain over him, to stand by me in my last conflict and fortify me against all his temptations. I know that in my own strength I cannot contend against so powerful a foe, and I must assuredly be vanquished unless Thou, or Thy blessed saints, grant me timely assistance. Therefore I now earnestly implore Thy help and that of Thy saints, and propose to arm myself to the best of my ability by Thy grace, to meet the temptations that await me. I promise now, before Thee and the holy angels and blessed saints, that I will never voluntarily expose myself to any temptation, of whatever nature it may be, but with the help of Thy grace I will combat it vigorously. Amen.

CHAPTER III. ON THE APPARITION OF THE SPIRITS OF DARKNESS.

BESIDES what has been already mentioned, the terrible appearance of the evil spirits makes death yet more alarming to us. It is the opinion of many of the Fathers, that every one, when expiring, sees the evil enemy, at any rate at the moment of drawing his last breath, if not before. How appalling this sight is, and with what terror it must inspire the dying, exceeds the power of words to declare. It is related of Brother Giles that one day, when he was praying in his cell, the devil appeared to him in so frightful a shape, that the Brother lost the power of speech, and thought his last hour had come. As his lips could not utter a sound, he raised his heart in humble supplication to God, and the apparition vanished. Afterwards, when relating what had befallen him to his brother-monks, he trembled from head to foot as he described the hideous aspect of the adversary of mankind. Then going to St. Francis, he asked him this question: "Father, have you ever seen anything in this world the sight of which was so horrible that it was enough to kill one to behold it?" And the Saint replied: "I have indeed seen such a thing; it is none other than the devil, whose aspect is so loathsome that no one could gaze upon it even for a short time and live, unless God specially enabled him to do so." St. Cyril also, writing to St. Augustine, says that one of the three men who were raised from the dead told him: "As the hour of my departure drew nigh, a multitude of devils, countless in number, came

and stood about me. Their forms were more horrible than anything imagination can conceive. One would rather be burnt in the fire than be compelled to look upon them. These demons ranged themselves around me, and reproached me with all the misdeeds I had ever done, thinking to drive me to despair. And in fact I should have given way before them, had not God in His mercy come to my succour." Here we have the testimony of one who actually had learnt by his own experience how frightful the appearance of the evil enemy is, and who declares that nothing can be more horrible than the form the devil assumes. O my God! how overwhelming the terrors that will take possession of the hapless individual who lies at the point of death when the infernal dragon appears, full of rage, and threatening to swallow him up in his fiery jaws. In this hour of supreme distress, send my guardian angel to me, O God, I pray Thee, that he may drive away the evil enemy, otherwise I shall infallibly fall into despair and lose all hope of my salvation. O most blessed Virgin Mary! who didst crush the head of the serpent, be with me in the hour of my death and do not permit the presence of the cruel adversary to cause my eternal perdition.

CHAPTER IV. ON THE FEAR OF HELL.

DEATH is rendered yet more bitter to us by the fear of hell and the clear view of eternity before us. For when we are dangerously ill, and death stares us in the face, the terror which fills us at the prospect of eternity is so overwhelming, that we are filled with fear. For we see plainly that in a few

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days a few hours perhaps we must enter eternity, and we know not what awaits us there. The dread lest we should be lost everlastingly is so great as to cause us to shudder. Moreover, the alarm that tortures us is not a little augmented by the remembrance of the sins whereby we have oftentimes deserved hell; for no man can be certain whether he has done penance aright, and whether he has really obtained pardon. This is explained by a passage from the writings of the aforementioned Pope St. Gregory, who describes this fear in the following words: "The just man who is truly concerned about his eternal salvation will from time to time think of his future Judge. He will meditate before death overtakes him upon the account he will have to give of his life. If there are no great sins wherewith his conscience reproaches him, he still has cause for alarm on account of the daily sins of which he perhaps takes little heed. For how often do we not sin in thought? It is comparatively easy to avoid evil deeds, but it is a far more difficult matter to keep one's heart free from inordinate thoughts. Yet we read in Holy Scripture: Woe to you that devise that which is unprofitable and work evil in your thoughts (Mich. ii. i). And again: In your heart you work iniquities (Ps. Ivii. 3)." Hence the just are ever in fear of the awful judgments of

God, for they are conscious that all these secret sins will be brought to judgment, as St. Paul says: In that day God shall judge the secrets of men (Rom. ii. 16). And although all his life long a good man will walk in fear of the judgment, yet this fear will notably increase as he draws near to the end of his days. It is said of Our Lord, that when the time of His death approached, He began to be sorrowful and to fear, and being in an agony, He prayed the longer. Was not this intended to teach us how it would be with us in our latter end, and what distress and anguish would overwhelm us?" Such are the words of Pope St. Gregory, calculated to inspire not only sinners, but also the just with fear, since, as the saint says, even those who are not conscious of having committed any grievous sins, are yet full of apprehension in regard to the sentence that will be passed on them. If the just are not devoid of alarm, what can we poor sinners do, who know ourselves to be guilty of many and manifold transgressions, and who every day add sin to sin? What will become of us? What can we do? Is there no means we can employ to obtain mercy of God? I know no better counsel than that which Christ Himself gives us in the words: "Watch ye therefore, praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are to come, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke xxi. 36). Since Christ points out to us prayer as the best and easiest means, let each one faithfully follow this exhortation and diligently call upon almighty God and His Blessed Mother, and all the saints, imploring them day by day to protect him, and commending to them his latter end.

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CHAPTER V ON THE JUDGMENT.

ABOVE and beyond all that we have hitherto considered as contributing to make death terrible to us, is the thought that we must stand before the judgment seat of God, and give an account of all we have done and left undone. How awful this judgment is, we learn from these words of St. Paul: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. x. 31). For if it is very alarming even to fall into the hands of an angry man, how much more terrible will it be to fall into the hands of an omnipotent God! All the saints trembled in anticipation of the sentence that would be passed on them by God, for they well knew how exceedingly severe His judgments are. The Royal Psalmist says: "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord, for in Thy sight no man living shall be justified" (Ps. cxlii. 2). And holy Job exclaims: "What shall I do if God arise to judge me? What am I that I should answer Him? I cannot answer Him one for a thousand." Again St. Paul says: "I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet am I not hereby justified; but He that judgeth me is the Lord" (i Cor. iv. 4). We read also in the lives of the Fathers that the holy Abbot Agathon

was overwhelmed with fear as his end drew near. His brethren said to him: "Why shouldst thou be afraid, reverend Father, thou hast led so pious a life?" But he answered them: "The judgments of God are very different from the judgments of man." The holy Abbot Elias used likewise to say: "There are three things that I fear. First I dread the moment when my soul has to leave my body; secondly, the moment when I must stand before the tribunal of God; thirdly, the moment when sentence is passed upon me." No one can fail to concur in the saying of this saintly man, for indeed, beside the general judgment, there is nothing so much to be apprehended as these three things. All good and holy men have feared them, all do fear them. Those who do not fear them, prove that they know very little about them, or have meditated scarcely at all upon them. For the benefit of one who may be so unenlightened, I will give a brief instruction on the subject.

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Consider, first of all, what a strange new sensation it will be for thy soul, when she finds herself separated from the body, in an unknown world. Hitherto she has known no existence apart from the body; now she is suddenly separated from it. Hitherto she was in time; now she has passed into eternity. Now for the first time her eyes are opened, and she sees clearly what eternity is, what sin is, what virtue is, how infinite is the being of the Deity, and how wondrous is her own nature. All this will appear so marvellous to her that she will be almost petrified with astonishment. After the first instant of wonder, she will be conducted before the tribunal of God, that she may give an account of all her actions; and the terror that will then seize upon the unhappy soul surpasses our powers of conception. No wonder the hapless sinner shrinks from appearing before a tribunal where he will be convicted of all his misdeeds and severely punished for them! Would he not rather be thrown into a dark dungeon, and be fed on bread and water, than have to stand before this judgment seat and be put to open shame? If it is so hateful to a criminal to be brought before an earthly magistrate, well may the poor soul quake with fear when she is introduced into the presence of God, the strict and omniscient Judge, and required to give the most accurate account of all the thoughts, words, deeds and omissions of her past life. Holy Job acknowledges this when he says: "Who will grant me this, that Thou mayst protect me in hell, and hide me till Thy wrath pass" (Job xiv. 13). Observe that even the patient Job would rather lie in a darksome pit, and be concealed in a gloomy, sombre cave, than appear before the countenance of an angry God. There are six things which strike terror into the soul, when she is summoned to the particular judgment. (1) The soul fears because she knows her Judge to be omniscient; that nothing can be concealed from Him, nor can He be

in any way deceived. (2) Because her Judge is omnipotent; nothing can withstand Him, and no one can escape from Him. (3) Because her Judge is not merely the most just, but the most strict of judges, to whom sin is so hateful that He will not allow the slightest transgression to pass unpunished. (4) Because the soul knows that God is not her judge alone, but also her accuser; she has provoked Him to anger, she has offended against Him, and He will defend His honour and avenge every insult offered to it. (5) Because the soul is aware that the sentence once uttered is irrevocable; there is no appeal for her to a higher court, it is useless for her to complain of the sentence. It cannot be reversed, and whether adverse or favourable she must needs accept it. (6) The most powerful reason of all why the soul fears to appear before the judgment seat is because she knows not what the sentence of the Judge will be. She has far more cause to fear than to hope. And all thought of help is now over. Forever, forever lost; forever, forever damned! These six points fill the soul with such unspeakable anguish and terror, that were she mortal instead of immortal, she would be willing to die the most cruel and violent death as a means of escape. Consider, furthermore, in what form thou wilt appear before thy Judge, and how thou wilt be put to confusion on account of thy sins. If a man in punishment of his evil deeds were sentenced to be stripped to the skin in presence of a whole multitude, how greatly ashamed he would feel! But if

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some loathsome and disgusting sore upon his body were thus disclosed to sight, he would be still more ashamed. Thus will it be with thee, when thou standest before thy Judge in the presence of many hosts of angels. Not merely will all thy wrong doings, thy thoughts, words and works be revealed, but all thy evil propensities will be made manifest to thee, and thou wilt be put to terrible shame because of them. Thou canst not deny that these evil proclivities cling to thee, for art thou not given to anger, impatience, revenge, hatred, envy, pride, vanity, sensuality, sloth, greediness, self-love, avarice, worldliness and all malice? These and other bad tendencies cleave to thy soul, and disfigure it so frightfully, that after death thou wilt be alarmed at the sight of thy own soul, and heartily ashamed of all the stains upon it. Next consider in what manner thy holy Judge will receive thee, when thou appearest before Him not merely laden with a countless multitude of sins, but in a state of indescribable impurity. Thou wilt stand before Him in the greatest confusion, not knowing which way to look. Beneath thy feet hell lies; above thee is the angry countenance of thy Judge. Beside thee thou seest the demons who are there to accuse thee. In thy own interior thou beholdest all thy sins and misdeeds. It is impossible to hide thyself; and yet this exposure is intolerable. This would be a fitting time to

expound how the evil enemy will accuse thee, how he will bring all thy sins to light and call down upon them the vengeance of God; and also how the just God will demand the most accurate account of all thy actions. But this has so often formed the theme of preachers, that, for the sake of brevity, I will not enlarge on this part of my subject, but conclude with the following anecdote. Two intimate friends agreed together that whichever of the two should die first, should appear to the survivor, provided he was permitted by God to do so. When at length one was removed by death, faithful to his promise he appeared to his friend, but with a sad and woebegone aspect, saying: "No man knows! no man knows! no man knows!" "What is it that no one knows?" his friend asked. And the spirit answered: "No one knows how strict are the judgments of God, and how severe His chastisements!" These things being so, what does it behoove us to do, in order not to fall into the hands of a wrathful Judge? I can give thee no better counsel than this: Repent of thy sins, make a sincere confession, amend thy ways, and begin to think seriously about thy eternal salvation. Whilst thou art still in good health think sometimes of death, and prepare thyself for it. Do not postpone this until old age comes upon thee, or a mortal sickness overtakes thee. There is no greater, no more important art upon earth than the art of dying a good death. Upon this thy whole eternity depends; an eternity of surpassing felicity or of unutterable torment. Only one trial is accorded thee; if thou dost not stand this one trial, all is lost, an eternity of misery is before thee. And if thou hast not learned this allimportant art in thy lifetime, when thou art well and strong, how canst thou practise it to thy eternal gain when upon thy death-bed? It will be utterly impossible for thee to do so unless God works a miracle of mercy on thy behalf. Thou canst not reckon upon this; God has not promised it nor hast thou deserved so great a favour, Therefore let me entreat thee to follow my friendly counsel, and prepare thyself frequently for death whilst in full health and strength; for this is the only means whereby thou mayst hope to become proficient in the art of dying well, and pass successfully through the one trial that awaits thee, by which thy eternal destiny will be determined.

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PART II. THE LAST JUDGMENT. CHAPTER I. ON THE SIGNS THAT SHALL PRECEDE THE LAST JUDGMENT.

JESUS CHRIST, the Judge of the living and the dead, who at His first coming appeared upon the earth in all stillness and tranquillity, under a gentle and attractive form, will come again the second time to judgment with great majesty and glory. In order that His advent may not find us unprepared, He will send beforehand many and terrible signs to warn us to abandon our sinful life. Of these signs He Himself says: "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon,

and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, men withering away for fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world. For there shall be then great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be. And unless those days had been shortened, no flesh should be saved." What an awful announcement! What a terrible prophecy! Could there be any more terrible prediction made to us than this which comes from the lips of eternal Truth? When God was about to destroy the city of Jerusalem, He announced its downfall by several signs. A comet, resembling a fiery sword, blazed over the city, and hosts of armed warriors were seen contending in the air. Jerusalem might at the last moment have interpreted aright these signs and done penance unto salvation. But Jerusalem knew not the time of its visitation. If God caused such wondrous signs to appear before the destruction of one single city, will He not announce the approaching end of the world, and the chastisements that are to come upon it, by awful and terrific signs? There is therefore every reason to believe, that a considerable time before the Last Day, fearful signs will appear in all lands in the heavens. This Christ appears to indicate in the words: "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; men withering away for fear, and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world." These signs will become more numerous day by day, and men will be struck with such terror, that if God did not shorten those days, even the very elect would begin to despair. Then, as St. Jerome says, the heavens will be overcast with heavy clouds, and a dreadful tempest will arise. The force of the wind will carry the inhabitants of the earth off their feet, and whirl them aloft in the air; trees will be uprooted, houses unroofed. Long peals of thunder will resound in the heavens, the flashes of lightning, like serpents of fire, will light up the sky, and with their forked tongues, playing about the dwellings of mankind, will kindle a general conflagration, amid the crash of thunder. The waters of the ocean will be so agitated that their waves will rise mountain-high, towering almost to the clouds. The roaring and raging of the storm- swept billows will last for some time. All the beasts of the earth will lift up their voice, and their dismal howls will fill the air, so that the hearts of men will stand still for terror. Yet this is but the beginning of sorrow, Our Lord tells us. What will next occur He describes in these words: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be moved." This darkening of the sun will take place in the full light of midday. And as its golden rays enlightening the face of nature rejoice both man and beast, so the sudden withdrawal of its light will cause sorrow and distress to the whole of creation And this all the more, because the moon will cease to shine, and her gentle, peaceful light will no longer illuminate the shades of

night. All the stars also which bespangle the firmament and cast a glimmering to earth, will disappear from their accustomed

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place. This awful darkness will strike such alarm and anguish to the heart of all living creatures, both men and brutes, that the mourning and lamentation will be universal. With the wail of distress ascending from the dwellers upon earth, the howls of the evil spirits in the air will mingle in hideous concert, for they will perceive from these signs that the Day of Judgment is at hand; they know that they will soon have to appear before the rigorous tribunal of God; they know they will be cast down to hell for all eternity. Hence their fury, their rage, and frantic raving. Here we may repeat the words spoken by Christ: "This is but the beginning of sorrow," and we may add, there will be no end to it. For after the terrific darkness all will be upset and in disorder, and the elements will be let loose, so that men will fear lest the heavens should fall and the earth sink from beneath their feet. This is what Christ means when He says: "The powers of heaven shall be moved and the stars shall fall from heaven." For in accordance with the divine will, the firmament with all its stars, the sun with its attendant planets, the atmosphere with its veil of clouds, will be so mightily shaken and made to tremble, that appalling sounds of crashing, breaking, fearful explosions, will everywhere be heard. The stars will be driven from their orbits, and thus the great powers of heaven will conflict with one another. What will the feelings be of the man who lives through events such as these? How all mankind, all created beings, will mourn! Christ Himself tells us this will be so: "Upon earth will be distress of nations by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea and of the waves; men withering away for fear, and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world" (Luke xxi. 25, 26). And in another place He says: "There shall be then great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be. And unless those days had been shortened, no flesh should be saved" (Matt. xxiv. 21, 22). Our Lord could have used no stronger expression to describe the utter misery of unhappy mortals, than by saying, they shall wither away for fear, and apprehension of the things that are yet to come upon the world. How is it possible for the men who shall be alive at that time not to despond, not to despair, in presence of such fathomless misery? Even the faith and courage of an apostle would be sorely tried to bear up against such unspeakable wretchedness. All men will have the appearance of one who has seen a ghost. Their hair will stand on end, their knees will strike together, they will quake with fear, their terror will deprive them of the power of speech, their hearts will die within them for tribulation, they will lose reason and consciousness, no one will help his neighbour, no one will comfort his

neighbour, no one will so much as exchange a word with his neighbour; only they will all unite in weeping and wailing, and fly to hide themselves in the caves of the earth. When this lamentation has lasted for a time, the God of justice will put an end to their misery, and all that is beneath the firmament of heaven shall be destroyed by fire. For fire will fall down from heaven, and ignite everything with which it comes in contact. In many places also flames will spring up out of the ground, and terrify unhappy mortals to such an extent that they will not know how to escape from them. Some will seek shelter in cellars and caverns, others will immerse themselves in rivers and lakes. The devouring flames will spread so fast that the forests will be set on fire, and the towns and villages will be included in the destruction. At length the whole earth will be on fire and a general conflagration will ensue, such as never has been seen or heard of. The heat of the raging flames will be so intense that the stones and rocks will melt, and the sea and all waters upon the earth will boil and hiss.

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All men then living, every beast upon the land and every fish in the sea will be destroyed in this universal conflagration. Thus the whole world will be brought to a terrible end, and everything on this earth will be either consumed or purified by the fire. After this has happened, the appearance of the earth will be completely changed.

CHAPTER II. ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

THE reader will perhaps not take what has been said in the preceding chapter much to heart, because he cherishes the hope that he will not be alive during that awful period. But what we are now about to speak of concerns every one, whoever he may be. Wherefore let him read it attentively and ponder it seriously. The first event that will follow upon the end of the world is the general resurrection of the dead. All men, whoever they may be, and whenever and wherever they have lived, not excepting infants whose existence has been but one brief moment, will rise again. With the solemn blast of a trumpet God will cause all men to be summoned to the Last Judgment. Concerning this Christ says: "He shall send His angels with a trumpet and a great voice; and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them" (Matt. xxiv. 31). And St. Paul says: "We shall indeed all rise again, but we shall not all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible: and we shall be changed" (i Cor. xv. 51, 52). After the vast conflagration God will send out His angels, who will blow so mighty a blast upon their trumpet, that it will re-echo throughout the whole

world. The sound of this trumpet will be so solemn that it will cause the earth to tremble. Its powerful voice will awaken the dead, calling on them: "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment I Arise ye dead, and come to judgment! Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment." Loud, continuous, and most solemn will be the blast of that trumpet. How terrified all the evil spirits and the souls of the lost will be when they hear this call! They will howl and mourn, for the fatal hour has come at last, the hour they have looked forward to so long, and with such unutterable dread. There will be such a commotion in hell, such raving and raging and fury, that one might imagine the devils were all tearing one another to pieces." Alas, alas!" they will shriek in their despair." How can we possibly stand before the countenance of our angry Judge! How can we possibly endure the shame, the agony that will be our portion! Could we only remain here, how gladly would we do so, great as are the torments we have now to endure!" But vain are all their wishes, futile are all their struggles. They cannot choose, but must obey the voice of the trumpet. The general resurrection begins while its sound still re-echoes over the whole globe. Do not pause to ask how this can be, for we know that it will be so, on the irrefragable authority of God's omnipotence and His word which cannot deceive. However long ago the body of a man may have crumbled into dust, whatever changes it may have passed through, every portion and every particle will unite to form again the same body which was his during his lifetime." And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and hell gave up their dead that were in them" (Apoc. xx. 13). Consider this solemn truth, O Christian, for it concerns thee closely. As certainly as thou now livest, so certainly wilt thou one day rise again from the grave. Place this awful moment vividly before thee. Even if thou wert pious, and shouldst end thy days in the grace of God, yet, according to the testimony of Holy Scripture and of the Catholic Church, fear and trembling will lay hold upon thee. Considering how inconceivably rigorous God will be in His judgment of men, even the just will have

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cause to fear in appearing before His tribunal, as we shall presently show. And if good and just men are afraid, what will be the fear that thou, poor sinner, wilt feel, when the trumpet calls thee to judgment! Wherefore amend thy ways, and make thy peace now with thy strict Judge, by works of penance, while there is yet time. Now in order that thou mayst prepare thyself for that terrible hour of resurrection, we will describe first the resurrection of the good, and then that of the reprobate. Awakened by the solemn sound of the trumpet all the souls of the just will come down from heaven, and, accompanied by their guardian angels, betake themselves to the spot where their remains were interred. The graves will

be open, and in them the bodies will be seen lying, incorrupt but yet lifeless. The body of every good man will rest in the grave as if he were asleep; it will be blooming as a rose, fragrant as a lily, shining as a star, fair as an angel and perfect in every member. What will the soul say when she beholds the body appertaining to her lying before her in such beauty? She will say: "Hail, blessed and beloved body, how I rejoice once more to rejoin thee! How lovely thou art, how glorious, how pleasing, how fragrant! Come to me, that I may be wedded to thee for all eternity." Then through the power of God the body will be reunited to the soul, and in that same instant return to life. O my God, what will be the astonishment of the body when it finds itself alive again, and moulded in so beautiful a form! Soul and body will greet each other lovingly and embrace each other affectionately with heartfelt emotion. The soul will speak thus to the body: "How earnestly I have longed for thee, how I have desired to see this day! Now I will conduct thee to the regions of heavenly bliss that we may rejoice together for evermore." And the body will answer: "Welcome, dearest soul; it is indeed a heartfelt joy to me to be with thee again. The greater the pain our past separation caused me, the greater the delight our present reunion affords." Then the soul will speak again, and say to the body: "Blessed be thou, my chosen companion, who hast been so faithful to me. Blessed be thy senses and all thy members, for they have ever abstained from evil." And the body will reply: "Be thou rather blessed, O dearest soul, for it was by thy instigation I did so, and thou didst incite me to all that was good. It is to thee that I owe my present felicity, therefore I praise and magnify thee, and I will praise and magnify thee to all eternity." Thus body and soul will rejoice together with inexpressible satisfaction. Then the holy guardian angels will congratulate these blessed beings and exult with them over their joyous resurrection. In all cemeteries, and places where many persons are buried, the blessed will arise first with resplendent glorified bodies. That they will take the precedence over the others may be gathered from Christ's words, when He says: "Wonder not at this; for the hour cometh, wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things shall come forth to the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (John v. 28, 29). And as in every graveyard there are many persons to rise again, and amongst these a considerable proportion will be good and just, imagine the pleasure it will be to them to see one another again, arrayed in such shining glorious bodies. God grant that I be counted amongst the number of these happy individuals! How heartily will I thank Him if He grant my request! The resurrection of the wicked will follow immediately upon that of the just; but oh, how different will it be! In every burying-ground all the lost souls will assemble whose bodies have been interred there, and they will be compelled

again to assume them and reunite themselves to them. But what will be the reluctance, the disgust wherewith they will do this! When the soul sees her own body,

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she will shrink back from it with the utmost repulsion, so hideous will it be, and she will feel that she had rather go straight to hell than again unite herself to it. For the bodies of the reprobates will resemble devils more than men, so frightful, so loathsome, so offensive will they be. Yet, however the soul resists and opposes the reunion with her body, now so hideous, she must submit to it, for God compels her to it. Who can depict the despair that takes possession of the body when, reanimated by the return of the soul, it awakens to a consciousness that it is lost forever. With a shriek of rage it will exclaim: "Woe is me, woe is me to all eternity! Better were it for me a thousand times never to have been born, than to have come to this resurrection of misery!" Then the soul will rejoin: "Thou accursed body, I have already for several hundred years had to endure the torments of hell, and now I must return with thee to the everlasting burning. Thou art to blame for all this misfortune; I gave thee good counsels, but thou wouldst not follow them. Therefore thou art forever lost. Alas for me, unhappy soul that I am! Alas for me, now and forever more! Thou hast been the means of bringing me to this endless misery. Therefore I execrate the hour in which I first came to dwell with thee." And then the body will answer the soul after this manner: "O accursed soul, what right hast thou to anathematize me, when thou art thyself the cause of all this wretchedness? Thou shouldst have ruled me more firmly and held me back from evil, for it was with this object that God united thee to me. Instead of associating thyself with me in works of penance, thou didst revel with me in sinful pleasures. It is for me, therefore, to curse thee to all eternity, because thou art the one who hast brought us both to everlasting perdition." Thus soul and body will mutually anathematize each other. Such are the unhappy circumstances that will attend the resurrection of the bodies of the damned in all graveyards and cemeteries when they leave the grave and enter upon a second life. And now, reader, endeavour to imagine the shame and confusion which will weigh those poor creatures to the ground when first they see each other again. Husband and wife will meet, brothers and sisters, parents and children, friends and acquaintances; those who have lived in the same town or the same village and have known each other from childhood. Their shame will be so overwhelming that they would prefer to endure any physical torture than be exposed to it. And their bodies will be so hideously ugly, so disgusting in appearance, that they will shudder at the sight of one another. Who can describe the mourning and lamentation that will prevail amongst these

hapless creatures! Their misery is indeed unutterable. Bethink thyself, whoever thou art who readest or hearest this, what awful despair would seize upon thee if thou wert amongst the number of these lost souls. In what piteous tones thou wouldst bewail with them thy hapless fate." Alas! what have we done? Woe to us most miserable ones; would that we had never been born! Cursed be thou, my wife, who didst provoke me to sin! Cursed be you, my children, who are the cause of my damnation! Cursed be you, my friends and acquaintances, for you were the occasion of this calamity that has come upon me! Cursed forever be all those who have been partners of my life and partners of my sin!" Think over this, O sinner, and let your hard heart be softened. Whenever you pass by the cemetery of the place in which you live, remember that perchance thou mayst ere long be laid there to rest in the grave until the general resurrection. Wherefore make such good use of the brief period of life, that thou mayst be numbered among the just, and arise with them to everlasting felicity, and not with the reprobate to everlasting torments. Pray often thus in thy heart: "O most compassionate Lord Jesus, I implore Thee for the sake of Thy bitter Passion and death, and through the Last Judgment at which Thou wilt be the Judge of the

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whole world, grant me grace to live in such a manner that at the resurrection I may arise with joy and not with shame." Amen.

CHAPTER III. ON THE MANNER IN WHICH THE GOOD AND THE WICKED WILL BE CONDUCTED TO THE PLACE OF JUDGMENT.

ACCORDING to the generally-received opinion the final judgment will be held in the valley of Josaphat, at no great distance from Jerusalem. This opinion rests upon the words of the prophet Joel: "I will gather together all nations, and bring them down into the valley of Josaphat, and I will plead with them there." And again: "Let the nations come up into the valley of Josaphat, for there will I sit to judge all nations round about" (Joel iii. 2, 12). It is not difficult to allege a reason why Christ should hold the final judgment there, for it is in the neighbourhood of the spot where He suffered, and is it not just that in the same place He should appear as our Judge? Mount Olivet, the scene of His agony, was also that of His glorious ascension. It may, however, be objected, that the valley of Josaphat could not contain the millions and millions of human beings who will be gathered together for judgment. But when a spot is indicated as the probable theatre of the Last Judgment, it does not necessarily follow that all mankind will be crowded into that narrow space. We will now consider in what manner we shall be assembled for the final judgment. If the good and the evil are found together in the graveyards and elsewhere, that will come to pass which Our Lord predicted: "So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels

shall go out, and shall separate the wicked from among the just" (Matt. xiii. 49). For since the good are laid to rest amongst the wicked, it follows that at the resurrection they will be found amongst the wicked. Accordingly, after the General Resurrection the holy angels will come and separate the elect from the reprobate. St. Paul, speaking of this, says: "For the Lord Himself shall come down from heaven with commandment, and with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God; and the dead who are in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive who are left, shall be taken up together with them in the clouds to meet Christ into the air" (i Thess. iv. 15, 16). All the good, that is to say, will be carried on the clouds with splendour and great glory by the angels to the place of judgment. Now imagine to thyself what a beautiful sight it will be, when the saints with their glorified bodies, shining like burnished gold in the sunlight, will be transported through the air, escorted by their guardian angels! With what exultation and rejoicing will they pass on their triumphal way! And when they all come together in the valley of Josaphat, they will greet one another lovingly, and embrace one another with mutual joy. Think for a moment, O Christian, how thou wouldst rejoice if thou wert so fortunate as to find thyself amongst the number of the blessed. This happiness is yet within thy reach; if thou dost really desire it with all the strength of thy will, thou wilt be counted in this happy company. Bestir thyself to fulfil all thy duties well and faithfully, and thou too shalt one day join in that glorious and triumphant procession. We will now consider how the wicked shall be transported to the valley of Josaphat, and what will await them there. Alas! their doom is so sorrowful, that I can scarcely venture to describe it in detail. What will these unhappy sinners think, what will they say, when they see the holy angels taking the elect from their midst and carrying them with glory and splendour through the air? The Wise Man gives us an insight into their thoughts when he tells us: "These, seeing it, shall be troubled with

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terrible fear and shall be amazed at the suddenness of the unexpected salvation of the just; saying within themselves, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit: These are they whom we had sometime in derision, and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their life madness and their end without honour. Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints" (Wisdom. v. 2-5). How it will grieve them to behold those whom they formerly despised so utterly now honoured and beloved by the angels of God, and conducted by them in glory and triumph to meet Christ. And they who once made such a display of their riches, who despised all their fellow creatures in their arrogant pride, now stand amongst the fallen angels, poor, miserable,

contemned. When the angels have escorted all the elect to the valley of Josaphat, they will proceed to drive all the reprobate thither, with the evil spirits that are mingled with them. They will cry with a loud voice: "Away with you, away to judgment! The Judge of the living and the dead commands you to appear before Him." What a piercing cry of anguish these unhappy creatures will utter! They will do their utmost to resist the behest of the angels, but they will struggle in vain; they must obey the command of God's messengers. Together with the evil spirits the damned will be forcibly driven to the place of judgment. What an awful journey! The air is rent with cries of rage. The spirits of darkness, with diabolical malice and cruelty, already vent their spite in tormenting the hapless creatures whom sin has made their victims. Hear the shriek of despair wrung from the wretched beings: "Fools that we were! thoughtless fools! Whither has the path of transgression led us? Alas! it has brought us to the severe, the terribly severe tribunal of God!" Listen, O sinner, to the sorrowful lamentations and self-accusations of these poor creatures. Beware lest thou too shouldst be of their number. Pray God to preserve you from so shocking a doom, and say: "Most merciful God, remember at how great a price Thou didst purchase me, and how much Thou didst suffer for me. For the sake of that inestimable price do not permit me to be lost, rescue me, number me amongst the sheep of Thy fold. With them I will then praise and magnify Thy loving kindness to all eternity."

CHAPTER IV. HOW ALL MEN WILL AWAIT CHRIST'S COMING IN THE VALE OF JOSAPHAT.

LET us now contemplate the multitudes gathered together in the place of judgment. All mankind, every human being who has ever lived upon earth, as well as all the rebellious spirits who were cast out of heaven, will be compelled to appear here before the judgment seat of Christ. Who can attempt to enumerate these countless multitudes? The number of the earth's inhabitants living at this present moment amounts to about 1,400,000,000. This vast multitude will have disappeared in less than half a century, and another generation, no less numerous, will have taken their place and filled the earth anew. So it will go on and on until the Last Day. What countless hosts there will be arraigned before the judgment seat of Christ! The good will be all together, rejoicing in the certainty of their eternal salvation. They are adorned with glorious apparel, and shine like the stars of heaven. They know one another, they greet one another, and exchange mutual congratulations respecting their happy lot.

Not so the wicked. The good stand on the right hand, and they upon the left.

Unfortunately the number of the wicked is far, far larger than that of the good. Both before and after the coming of Christ the prince of darkness held sway over a much greater number of subjects than Christ Himself. Alas! my God, what an immense multitude there will be on the left hand! The mourning and misery amongst them will be so unparalleled that the good who are on the right hand would, were it possible, be deeply touched with compassion. For all these countless millions of human beings will pour out their excessive sorrow and anguish in piteous lamentations. Awaiting the coming of the supreme Judge, they stand together, apart from the just, full of confusion at their own hideousness, and especially at their sinfulness, now evident to all. Yet above and beyond all this misery is the consternation that prevails on account of the coming of the Judge; it is beyond the power of words to express. For now these unhappy creatures first become fully aware how terrible are the judgments of God, which they during their lifetime heeded so little. Now for the first time they recognize what a fearful disgrace it is for them to have their sins made manifest in the presence of all the angels and saints, in the presence likewise of the devils and of the lost. Now for the first time they are conscious of the awful nature of the sentence that will be passed on them by the Judge whom they have often insolently set at naught. These and many other things contribute to imbue them with such an unutterable dread of the coming of their Judge, that they quake in every limb with terror, and almost swoon away with apprehension and alarm. They will say to one another in plaintive tones: "Alas, what have we done! How terribly we have deceived ourselves! For the sake of the few and transitory joys of earth, we must undergo an eternity of anguish. What good are all the riches, the voluptuous pleasures, the pride, the honours of the world to us now? We fools have trifled away celestial and eternal goods for the poor and paltry things of earth. Alas, what will become of us when our Judge appears! Ye mountains, fall on us, and ye hills, cover us, for truly it would be less intolerable for us to be crushed under your weight, than to stand before the whole world covered with shame and confusion, and behold the wrathful countenance of the just Judge!" Unhappy sinner, whoever thou art who readest this book, do not flatter thyself with the vain hope that this description of the misery of the lost is exaggerated. They will complain a thousand times more loudly, and their pain and misery will be unutterable. Avail thyself of the short and precious season of thy earthly existence, do penance, do now all that thou wouldst desire to have done at the Day of Judgment. Ask of God grace to amend thy sinful life, in order that the day of Christ's coming may not be a day of unspeakable terror to thee. My God, I acknowledge that by my sinful life I have deserved to be banished from Thy presence forever. Yet I sincerely repent of my sins and pray Thee for the grace of a true conversion, so that I may not await Thy coming among the number of the

lost. Amen.

CHAPTER V. ON THE APPEARANCE OF CHRIST'S CROSS IN THE HEAVENS.

WHEN all mankind are assembled in the valley of Josaphat, the prediction of Our Lord will be fulfilled: Men withering away for fear, and expectation of what shall come upon the whole earth." For they will be in such anxiety and terror in anticipation of the approaching judgment that, if such a thing were possible, they would faint away. They will look up to the heavens continually with fear and trembling, and every moment that the coming of the dreaded Judge is delayed will serve to increase their apprehension of this advent. At length the heavens will be opened, and the sign of

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Christ's triumphant victory, the sign of the holy cross, will be carried down by a host of angels and exhibited to the whole world. These are Our Lord's words in regard to this mystery: "The powers of heaven shall be moved, and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all tribes of the earth mourn" (Matt. xxiv. 29, 30). The Catholic Church teaches us what this sign will be, which is to appear in heaven: The sign of the cross will appear in heaven, when the Lord shall come to judgment. All the Fathers concur in interpreting this sign which will be displayed in the heavens as the cross of Christ. Although the cross whereon Our Lord suffered is now divided into innumerable little pieces, into particles even, yet by divine power it will once more form a complete whole. It will be carried down from heaven by the angels with solemn pomp; and the angels who bear it will be followed by others, who, as the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, maintains, will carry all the other instruments of the Passion; that is to say, the pillar, the lance, the scourges, the hammer, the iron glove, the dice, the scarlet robe, the white robe, the seamless tunic, the holy winding-sheet, the vessel containing myrrh and all the other instruments that were employed during the Passion, and the object of this will be to make manifest to the whole world how many and manifold were the pains Christ suffered for our sakes. Now when all mankind behold the holy cross and all the other sacred instruments of the Passion shining like the sun at midday, for the cross of Christ will gleam with a light of unexampled brilliance, those who are waiting below will stand in trembling fear and woeful lamentation. For the sight of the holy cross and the other instruments of torture will recall to their mind all the grievous pains that Our Lord endured, and indeed in so forcible and vivid a manner, that His whole Passion will seem to be re-enacted before them. Then the bitterest remorse will fill the heart of the wicked. But this remorse, how great and how deep soever it may be, will be futile. It comes too late. This

remorse is the companion of despair. In their anguish of soul and their despair they will exclaim with Cain, the fratricide: "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon;" or with Judas, who betrayed his Lord and Master: "I have sinned, in betraying innocent blood." Yes, all the lost will concur in exclaiming, "Alas! we have sinned in betraying innocent blood. We have tortured, we have crucified, we have put the Son of God to death by our sins." Then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, for they will perceive how grievously they have offended against God, but the cries of mourning and despair prevailing everywhere will be in vain. What will the unfortunate heathen say, who have never heard, never known anything about Christ's Passion? They will bitterly bewail and lament their ignorance, saying: "Alas! we unhappy ones, had we but known this, we should never have come to this misery. Had we but known that the great and infinite God did and suffered so much for us, how grateful we should have been to Him, how willingly we would have served Him! We were deluded by our false gods. We saw in them no virtues, only vile and vicious deeds. Against the promptings of conscience we imitated their vices, and hence we are damned. We cannot complain, or think ourselves wronged by the holy and just God, because we are amongst the reprobate. If only we had hearkened to the voice of our conscience, this would not have been our fate." But what will those say who put Christ to death? Pilate, Caiphias, Annas, the high priest, as well as the Jews who cried: "Crucify Him!" and "His blood be upon us and upon our children," all who took part in the cruel, atrocious crime of crucifying their God, will at the sight of the sacred instruments of the Passion shriek aloud in despair and desire to be annihilated. Execrated and cursed

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even by the damned, they will stand there, branded as deicides, objects of abhorrence to the whole world. It is not my intention to discuss what bad Christians, who have blasphemed the Son of God by word or deed, will feel at that time; for brevity's sake I leave thee, reader, to meditate upon it for thyself. Only one thing I would ask of thee; reflect upon this, what thou wouldst say, what thou wouldst most deeply regret, if thou wert amongst the number of the damned, and didst then perceive that thou hadst been the cause of Christ's sufferings and hadst crucified Him by thy sins. Couldst thou now feel in thy heart something of the contrition which would then pierce thy soul, assuredly thou wouldst never again for the remainder of thy life commit any heinous sin. Couldst thou now mourn over the sufferings of Christ with expressions of such poignant sorrow as would then rise to thy lips, thou wouldst infallibly obtain the remission of thy sins. Wherefore, frequently adore thy crucified Savior, call to mind His sufferings for thy sake, and recite the following prayer: O faithful

Redeemer of the world, who didst endure such unspeakable sufferings for me, a miserable sinner, I pray Thee let not Thy bitter Passion and Thy death upon the cross be unavailing for me. Impress the remembrance of them deeply upon my heart, that I may have them ever before my mind, and may avoid sin which was the cause of Thy suffering. Thus when Thy cross shall appear bright and shining in the heavens on the Day of Judgment, may it not be to me a sign of damnation, but of salvation, a sign of Thy mercy and of Thy love. Amen.

CHAPTER VI. ON THE ADVENT OF THE JUDGE.

WHAT we have hitherto heard, O Christian reader, is indeed most fearful and terrible, but it is nothing in comparison with what we are now about to consider. For the coming of the Judge will be so awful, so dreadful, that all that is in heaven or upon earth will tremble and quake. The power and majesty wherewith He will come is beyond the power of words to describe. In order that we may know something concerning it, and be able to form some conception of it, Christ has Himself foretold His coming in these words: "When the Son of man shall come in His majesty, and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His majesty, and all nations shall be gathered together before Him" (Matt. xxv. 31,32). And again: "They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty" (xxiv. 30). Thus we see Our Lord twice asserts that He will come in the clouds of heaven, attended by all His angels, in great might and majesty. Who can depict the greatness of that power, the splendour of that majesty, the countless number of those angelic hosts! Listen to what the Psalmist says on the subject: "A fire shall go before Him and shall burn His enemies round about. His lightnings have shone forth to the world, the earth saw and trembled. The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. The heavens declared His justice and all people saw His glory" (Ps. xcvi. 3-6). And in another psalm we read: "Out of Sion the loveliness of His beauty shall shine forth.... A fire shall burn before Him, and a mighty tempest shall be round about Him" (xlix. 2). The prophet Isaias also predicts the advent of the Judge in the following terms: "Behold, the Lord will come with fire, and His chariots are like a whirlwind, to render His wrath in indignation and His rebuke with flames of fire" (Is. lxvi. 15). Moreover, Christ Himself declares: "As lightning cometh out of the east, and appeareth even into the west: so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. xxiv. 27). If such be the manner in which the Judge shall come, if flames of fire proceed from His countenance, if He descends from heaven in a fiery chariot, armed with wrath against sinners, who but must tremble at His coming! We shall in fact, all falter and be afraid. Besides the terrors of the Judge

Himself, the sight of the innumerable company of angels that will descend with Him, will inspire us with awe and great alarm. For on that day not one angel will remain in heaven; they will all be present as witnesses of the judgment. Now, theologians maintain that in the lowest choir of angels the number of angels is ten times greater than that of all the human beings that have ever existed upon earth. In the second choir there are ten times as many as in the first, in the third ten times as many as in the second, and so on, so that the number of these angelic beings appears endless. All these angels, who are pure spirits and therefore invisible to bodily sight, will then appear visible, exceedingly bright and glorious, so that the damned also may see the magnificence of Christ's advent. St. John in his Apocalypse speaks thus of the hosts of angels that will attend upon the Judge at His coming: "I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called faithful and true, and with justice doth He judge and fight. And His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many diadems;... and He was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood, and His name is called: The word of God." And the armies that are in heaven followed Him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth proceedeth a sharp two-edged sword, that with it He may strike the nations. And He shall rule them with a rod of iron; and He treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of God the almighty. And He hath on His garment and on His thigh written: King of kings, and Lord of lords" (Apoc. xix. 11-16). How we all shall tremble, O my God, when we behold these hosts of celestial spirits with their kingly leader! The prophet Daniel once saw an angel, and he was so terror-struck at his appearance, that he fell to the ground like one dead. If such an effect was produced on him by the sight of a single angel, whose errand was one of comfort and consolation, what will become of us, when so many hundreds of thousands of heavenly princes draw nigh to us with wrathful countenances? St. Ephrem, speaking of this says: "The angels will stand there with a menacing mien, their eyes flashing with the sacred fire of just indignation, roused by the iniquities of mankind." Now if the sight of the angels alone, who will come to judgment with the divine Judge, is so terrible, what will be the fear and dread inspired by the Judge Himself, when He comes in all the wrath of offended justice! As in heaven there is no greater delight than the contemplation of God, so at the Last Judgment there will be no greater pain than to look upon the angry Judge. Before entering upon an explanation of this, let us see with what majesty Christ will come to judgment. The advent of Christ will be so terrible that neither man nor angel is capable of describing it aright. For all that is most calculated to appal the sinner will be here seen, and nothing

will be wanting that can enhance the majesty of Christ. When a monarch makes his entry into a town, what pomp and splendour is displayed there! Strains of lively music mingle with the more solemn peal of bells, salutes are fired, the whole population is astir, every one straining his eyes to see the monarch; first come his servants, then his counsellors, then the nobles of the land; lastly he comes himself, surrounded by a vast multitude of people. Yet what is all this magnificence the world can offer when compared with the majesty which will attend the coming of the King of kings! Compare a poor ragged beggar-boy with a sovereign prince who enters riding in a chariot of gold, and we have a feeble and insufficient image of the difference that exists between the pomp and splendour of this world and the glory wherewith Christ will come to judgment.

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Yet His advent will not merely be grand and glorious beyond measure, it will likewise be awful in its nature. If the graves opened at the blast of the angel's trumpet, and the sound of that trumpet reechoed throughout the whole world, what a panic of fear will seize upon mankind when the angels who precede Christ's triumphal car cause the sound of their trumpets to be heard!" What," asks St. Augustine, "will become of us on that dreadful day, the Day of Judgment, when the Lord shall descend with His angels with the sound of trumpets, and the whole earth shall tremble with fear?" When God came down of old upon Mount Sinai, we read in Holy Scripture: "Now the third day was come and the morning appeared; and behold thunders began to be heard, and lightning to flash, and a very thick cloud to cover the mount, and the noise of the trumpet sounded exceeding loud, and the people that was in the camp feared." And when all the people heard the thunder and the sound of the trumpet, and saw the lightning and the smoke arising from out of the mount, they were terrified, and withdrew to a distance, saying to Moses: "Speak thou to us and we will do all things that the Lord hath commanded, but let not the Lord speak to us lest we die" (Exod. xx. 19). If all this happened when God came down from heaven to give His law to the Hebrew nation, and adopt them as His children, what, thinkest thou, O Christian, will be the case when He comes to require an account of the manner in which His commandments have been kept? If the children of Israel were so terrified at the giving of the law that they thought they should die of fear, what cause shall not we mortals, we Christians especially, have to tremble, since we have so often wilfully transgressed the commandments of God! O God, almighty Judge of all men, Thou wilt descend from heaven at the Last Day with great power and majesty, to act in Thy character of Judge, and the thought of Thy coming causes me to quake with fear. Inspire me now, I beseech Thee, with salutary fear, so that I may avoid sin, and

may not merit to be crushed by Thy just anger. Amen.

CHAPTER VII. ON THE MANNER IN WHICH CHRIST WILL TAKE HIS PLACE ON THE JUDGMENT-SEAT.

PAY heed, O reader, to what is now coming, and do not imagine that it concerns thee not. Thou wilt most assuredly witness it all one day with thy bodily eyes, and all will be a thousand times more terrible than my pen can depict it. When Christ, in His chariot of fire, has reached Mount Olivet, He will pause in the air, at such a height that He can be clearly seen by all men, until the angels have prepared the throne of judgment. The prophet Daniel thus portrays the scene: "I beheld till thrones were placed, and the Ancient of days sat; His garment was white as snow and the hair of His head like clean wool; His throne like flames of fire, the wheels of it like a burning fire. A swift stream of fire issued forth from before Him; thousands of thousands ministered to Him, and ten times a hundred thousand stood before Him: the judgment sat and the books were opened" (Dan. vii. 9, 10). But Christ will not sit in judgment alone; the twelve apostles will be with Him, according to the promise He gave them: "Amen I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration,

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when the Son of man shall sit on the seat of His majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. xix. 28). Who can give any idea of the magnificence of Christ's throne? It beggars all description. We read that King Solomon caused a wonderfully beautiful throne to be constructed out of ivory, richly adorned with gold and precious stones. This throne was so magnificent that the inspired writer says of it that in no kingdom of the world had any such work been made. If the judgment-seat of King Solomon was composed of such costly material and fashioned so skillfully, what will be the splendour of the judgment-seat of the King of kings, on which He will sit in His majesty to judge the whole world! Our Lord speaks of this judgment-seat as a throne of great splendour, when He says: "When the Son of man shall come in His majesty, and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the seat of His majesty" (Matt. xxv. 31). Some idea of what the appearance of this throne will be may be gathered from the words which have just been quoted from the prophet Daniel, and also this description given by St. John: "There was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.... And from the throne proceeded lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and there were seven lamps burning before the throne" (Apoc. iv. 3-5). Such are the images whereby Holy Scripture portrays the judgment-seat of Christ. Who of all mankind can venture to raise his eyes to this fiery throne? Will it not be more dazzlingly bright than the lightnings and fiery flashes of a tempest? The divine Judge will seat Himself

upon this throne and His grave countenance will be visible to men and angels. All created beings will tremble with awestruck reverence. St. John declares this in the Apocalypse: "I saw a great white throne, and One sitting upon it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away, and there was no place found for them" (Apoc. xx. 11). In these words the prophet of the New Testament appears to indicate that the heavens and the earth will not be able to bear to meet the eye of their Judge; that all rational beings, both angels and men, will quake at the sight of His stern countenance. That the angels also will fear and tremble, is asserted by St. Augustine, in the following passage from his writings: "When Our Lord says that the powers of heaven shall be moved, He alludes to the angels; for so terrible will the judgment be, that the angels will not be exempt from fear; they too will tremble and be afraid. For just as when a judge sits in judgment his grave countenance not only strikes terror into the culprits before him, but over-awes the officials standing around, so when all mankind are brought to judgment the celestial ministers will share the universal horror and alarm." St. John Chrysostom corroborates this statement, when he says: "Everyone will then be filled with astonishment, with apprehension, with terror, for even the angels will be sore afraid." Many other Fathers of the Church and commentators upon Holy Scripture express a similar opinion. Now if, according to the opinion of learned and holy men even the angels will not be without fear in the Day of Judgment, how much greater cause will the saints have to fear, since they must stand before Christ's tribunal, and give a strict account of all their actions. Yes, it is unmistakably evident, from what St. John says in the Apocalypse, that the blessed saints are struck with awe and trembling. He describes how Christ appeared to him, and the effect it had upon him." When I had seen Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, Fear not. I am the First and the

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Last." If the beloved apostle was so awestruck at the sight of his dear Master and Lord, who had come to console and not to judge him, that he fell at His feet as if dead, and could not summon up courage to rise to his feet until Christ spoke to him in the kindest and most comforting manner, can it be supposed that the saints will not be terrified on the Day of Judgment, when they behold Christ in His awful majesty and are called upon to give to Him an account of their whole life? And, O poor sinner, how will it then fare with thee, and with all the reprobate, if even the angels and saints tremble at the coming of the Judge? Words cannot express the terror and dismay of evil spirits and unrepentant sinners, when they shall behold their divine Judge on the throne of His majesty, and know that He will rigorously judge and condemn them to hell for all

eternity.

In order to give some idea of the terrible dread and alarm of the fallen angels and of unhappy sinners, let us hear what Holy Scripture says concerning the appalling exterior of the Judge and the greatness of His anger, in the first chapter of the Apocalypse, where St. John tells us: "I saw the Son of man clothed in a garment down to the feet and girt about the breast with a golden girdle. His head and His hairs were white as white wool and as snow, and His eyes were as a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass, as in a burning furnace. And His voice as the sound of many waters. And from His mouth came out a sharp two-edged sword, and His face was as the sun shineth in His power. Upon His head were many diadems, and He was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood. He treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of God the almighty, and He hath on His garment and His thigh written: King of kings and Lord of lords." Meditate upon these wondrous words, O Christian, and picture to thyself thy future Judge in vivid colors. How could His majestic appearance be described more forcibly than in the words we have just quoted? What must be the splendour of that countenance which is said to shine as the sun at its meridian! what must be the brilliance of those eyes which glow with holy fervour like flames of fire! what the force of that voice which has the sound of a volume of waters! what must be the keenness of that

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tongue which cuts like a two-edged sword! what a glorious head that must be which is adorned with many costly diadems! How terrible that garment must be to look upon which is sprinkled with blood! And what the dignity of that regal name: The King of kings and Lord of lords! How frightened we all shall be, what fear and woe will overtake us when our Judge looks upon us! And imagine what the feelings of the damned will be, when they behold the Judge of all their wicked deeds; how they will quail and quake beneath His gaze in the hour of His just wrath! We shall perhaps form a better conception of what the wrath of God is, if we listen to what the prophet Isaias says concerning it: "Behold the name of the Lord cometh from afar, His wrath burneth, and is heavy to bear; His lips are filled with indignation, and His tongue as a devouring fire; His breath as a torrent overflowing even to the midst of the neck, to destroy the nations into nothing" (Is. xxx. 27, 28). These are of a truth terrible words. Do they not clearly indicate with what great wrath Christ will manifest Himself to the world? Well may all unhappy sinners be overwhelmed with terror and dismay and anguish; well may they cry to the mountains to fall on them and the hills to cover them. Now when the Judge is seated upon the throne of His majesty, all who are assembled in the valley of Josaphat, angels and devils, the redeemed and the

lost, will all have to adore Christ, as St. Paul says: "We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written: As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God" (Rom. xiv. 10, n). How solemn and how sublime a scene will then be enacted, O my God, when all the millions and thousands of millions of angels, together with the blessed, in visible form will prostrate themselves upon the ground, and the evil spirits with their unhappy victims, and all the damned, will be forced against their will to adore Christ and acknowledge Him as their God and Judge! These wretched creatures will fall on their knees, and bend their heads down to the earth, not daring to raise their eyes, lest they should encounter the angry glance of their Judge. They will lament and bewail, filled with unutterable consternation and dismay. Gladly would they have the earth open and swallow them up, nay, they would, if it were possible, cast themselves down into a bottomless abyss rather than suffer such humiliation. Pause and consider, O sinner, what thy feelings would be if thou wert amid the number of these lost souls; thou wouldst be overwhelmed with sorrow and distress. St. Vincent relates that a young man of dissolute life once dreamed that he was arraigned before the judgment-seat of God, and required to give an account of his ill-spent life. His terror was so great that it turned his hair perfectly white. If the terrors of the Last Judgment experienced only in a dream were sufficient to turn the colour of that young man's hair, what, thinkest thou, will be the effect they will produce on thee and on me, when we are present, not in a dream, but in reality, at the Last Judgment, and with our bodily eyes we behold our Judge in all His holy indignation? O most just Judge, look down, I beseech Thee, from Thy throne in heaven upon me, a poor sinner, and for the sake of Thine infinite compassion be merciful to me in the day of final judgment. I know that I shall not be able to stand in that dread day, but by Thy just sentence I shall be condemned to eternal damnation. Yet I know also that if a sinner implores mercy of Thee in the time of grace, it will not be denied him. Therefore I entreat Thee with deep humility and contrition, through Thy bitter Passion, that Thou wouldst pardon my sins and pass a lenient sentence upon me in the Day of Judgment. Amen.

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CHAPTER VIII. ON THE REASON WHY CHRIST'S APPEARANCE ON THE DAY OF FINAL JUDGMENT WILL BE TERRIBLE, AND ON THE HEINOUSNESS OF MORTAL SIN.

THE reader may, perchance, be inclined to ask the reason why Christ, the same Christ who lived amongst us on earth in all gentleness and meekness, should wear so terrible an aspect when He comes to be our Judge? There are a great many reasons why Christ in this capacity should judge mankind with such awful

severity. The principal one is because He has been most grievously outraged by the sins of men. Theologians assert that every mortal sin is in itself an infinite evil, and is an infinite affront to the divine majesty. It is an offence of such magnitude that neither the tongue of angels nor of men is capable of describing it. It will be understood, therefore, that as in every mortal sin there is malice of so deep a dye, it must deeply wound the Divine Heart of Jesus, and provoke Him to just anger against the individual who has been guilty of that sin. And in order that it may be more apparent how just the ire of God is, when roused by mortal sin, it will be well to explain more clearly how great is the insult offered to God by wilful sin. Imagine the three divine persons of the Most Holy Trinity to be on one side, with their infinite treasures of grace and glory, and on the other side the spirit of evil with all the punishments and torments of hell; and a man standing in the midst betwixt the two, debating within himself whether he should show honour to God by doing His will, or whether he should act in violation of His will, and thereby cause the devil to rejoice. If the man commits the sin, he acts towards God, and God regards his action, exactly as if he uttered these blasphemous words, or others of the same nature: "I do indeed believe, O God, that I was created by Thy almighty power, redeemed by Thy mercy, made a child of predilection by Thy bounty, I know that Thou hast promised me eternal life, all the sweetest bliss of heaven. I am also well aware that this accursed Satan, Thy great enemy and mine, is prepared to strip me of all that is good, and hurl me down into everlasting perdition. And yet because Satan tempts me now, because he suggests to me a thought of unchastity, a desire for revenge, a movement of envy, I choose rather to yield to this impulse and thereby render myself deserving of everlasting punishment, than resist and repel the evil suggestion and thus merit heaven hereafter and spiritual graces now. Therefore, I deliberately and of my own free will, turn from Thee, O God; I follow by choice this hateful demon, whom I obey in preference to Thee." Although Thou art my God and my Lord, although Thou hast forbidden us to transgress Thy law, although sin is an infinite offence against Thee, yet I do not care, I will commit sin all the same, I will not desist because it is an outrage to Thee. Nay, more, if I could do all that in the malice of my heart I would do, I should rob Thee of Thy God head, I should cast Thee down from Thy throne, and in Thy place I should set up sin, and worship that as my god. I love sin, I desire to revel in it, and find in it my sole happiness." Such blasphemies as these words express are terrible, and cannot be read without a shudder. Yet every man who wilfully and in defiance of God's law commits a mortal sin is guilty of blaspheming God in the like manner. What wonder, then, that God is so deeply offended by mortal sin. But we have not yet shown the full extent of the malice of sin it goes still farther; it is doubly offensive to God because the sinner not only manifests contempt for

God the Father, he also sets at naught His beloved Son, the Second Person of the divine Trinity. By every wilful sin he seems to say: "It is true Thou didst become man for me, Thou didst seek for me for three and thirty years, as a sheep that was lost; Thou didst endure hunger and thirst, heat and cold, and all manner of hardships for my sake, whilst Satan has done nothing of the sort for me; on the contrary, he pursues me day and night and

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strives to ensnare me. In spite of this I prefer to belong to him rather than to Thee. I prefer to please him, and grieve Thee." Is it true, O my Redeemer, that for my sake Thou wast torn with scourges, crowned with thorns, fastened with nails to the cross and put to death amid bitter tortures; yet for all this I offer Thee no thanks. Nay more, although I know that by my sins I scourge Thee, I crucify Thee, I put Thee to death anew, yet I will not forsake my sins; I will trample upon Thy precious blood, I will adore Satan instead of Thee; I will make him my dearest friend and do my utmost to give him pleasure." Again I ask, are not these utterances blasphemous in the extreme? Do they not show the blackest ingratitude on the part of the sinner towards his Savior? One can scarcely imagine that a Christian would grieve his Redeemer in so shameful a manner. And yet there are many thousands who, if not in words, yet in deeds, address such language to their Savior. In the third place, the audacious sinner outrages and defies the Holy Spirit of God, for his actions are equivalent to expressions such as these: "Thou, O Holy Ghost, hast certainly sanctified my soul, cleansed it in the blood of Christ and beautified it by Thy grace. I know that Thy sanctifying grace is so precious that every soul which is adorned by it thereby becomes a daughter of the heavenly Father, a sister of the divine Son, a spouse of the Holy Ghost, the dwelling-place of the Most Holy Trinity, a temple of the sovereign Godhead, an heir of eternal felicity, a friend of angels and saints, yet what do I trouble myself about these exalted prerogatives, what do I care for this priceless pearl, this costly jewel? Away with them; I will cast this pearl, this jewel to the dogs and swine, to wit, my evil passions. I will sacrifice all to them, I will serve sin and live in sin." Seest thou not now, O reader, how hateful sin is, how shocking the nature of the sinner, how infinite the offence against God, the contempt of God which is inseparable from sin? Art thou not convinced that God has just cause to feel holy indignation against sin and the slaves of sin, and to condemn the sinner to everlasting damnation? And if the wrath of God, who is infinite in sanctity and justice, is aroused to such an extent by one single mortal sin, how greatly must He, the just and holy One, be angered and offended by the millions upon millions of shameless and shameful sins daily committed not only by Jews and heathens, but also by Christians! All this anger,

all this sense of outraged dignity at insult offered, which the sinner arouses within the Heart of God, is treasured up until the Day of Judgment. The holy sacrifice of the Mass and the powerful intercession of the saints as yet restrains the divine arm from executing vengeance. But when mankind have filled up the measure of their iniquities, the day of wrath shall come. No one can form a conception of how awful the outpouring of the wrath of God upon sinners will be. In the Psalms we read: "Who knoweth the power of Thy anger, and for Thy fear can number Thy wrath?" (Ps. lxxxix. ii.) Woe, then, to us poor sinners! Then for the first time we shall appreciate aright what we have done and how deeply we have offended God by our grievous sins. The wrath of God is so boundless that neither the Mother of God, nor all the angels and saints have any power to diminish or restrain it; it will turn with holy zeal and mete out to every man his deserts with rigorous justice. Hear what the Judge Himself says of this, His wrath, by the mouth of the prophet Ezechiel: "Now, thou son of man, is an end come upon thee, and I will send My wrath upon thee, and I will judge thee according

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to thy ways, and I will set all thy abominations against thee, and My eye shall not spare thee, and I will show thee no pity" (Ezech. vii. 3, 4). These are truly terrible words, and the threat they contain is most appalling. Oh, how unsparing will be the judgment to which God, who has been offended by transgressions so innumerable, will summon all mankind. Alas for me and for thee, if we find ourselves amid the countless multitude of sinners, and God cannot in justice spare us! What shall we do, that we may not fall into the hands of the angry Judge? We must abandon the way of iniquity, and now, while there is yet time, make our peace with the Judge whom we have offended. Let us awaken from time to time sincere contrition for our sins, employing these or similar expressions of sorrow: Most just Judge of the living and the dead, I acknowledge before Thee that I have sinned often and grievously. I have forsaken my Father in heaven; I have crucified Thee, my Redeemer; I have grieved the Holy Spirit and trifled away His grace. I have done this by the countless sins I have committed in thought, word and deed. Through my transgressions I have incurred the penalty of everlasting death. But since Thou wilt not the death of the sinner, but rather that he should do penance and live, let me experience here the effect of Thy justice, which is ever wedded to mercy. All the trials that Thou sendest me in this life I will thankfully receive from Thy hand, and kiss the rod whereby Thou dost chastise me with paternal severity in order that at the Day of Judgment I may find mercy, and Thou mayst grant me a place in the ranks of Thine elect. Amen.

CHAPTER IX. ON THE MANNER IN WHICH THE FINAL JUDGMENT WILL BE COMMENCED.

WHILST the angels and saints, besides all the company of the devils and the damned, are prostrate before their Judge in lowly adoration, He will open His lips, and with a loud voice utter these or similar words: "Listen, ye heavens, to My voice; listen, O earth, to the words that I shall speak; listen, ye angels, listen, ye demons, listen, also, all ye sinners, for I announce to each and all of you that I, Jesus Christ, the true Son of God and of the Virgin Mary, your Creator, your Redeemer, your sovereign Lord, am about to exercise my office of Judge." With infinite patience I have borne with your innumerable iniquities: the time of grace is now past, the time of justice has come. Every one shall be rewarded according to his works. Those who have done good shall presently go with Me into eternal life, and those who have done evil shall be cast into the abyss of everlasting torment and anguish. All creation shall see and acknowledge that I am a just God, that I judge not according to appearances, but according to the measure of that which each man has deserved." Some such words as these will proceed out of the mouth of the Judge, and they will be pronounced with such majesty that all men will quake and tremble. All miserable sinners will begin to weep and wail afresh, so that the very earth might be moved with compassion. "Alas for us poor wretches," they will exclaim with one voice, "how can we stand before the face of our Judge! Mountains, fall on us, and rocks, cover us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of their wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" And since at every tribunal an accuser must be present, to bring charges against the individual who is to be judged, so at this general judgment the angels and the devils will be the accusers of mankind.

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St. Michael will first stand forth and say: "Most just Judge, I bring an accusation against these millions of sinners, who defiled the earth to such an extent by their misdeeds, that Thou in Thy holy indignation didst see fit to purify it by fire; I call upon Thee now to punish these transgressors according to Thy justice." Then Lucifer, speaking in the name of all the evil spirits, will raise his voice with a roar like that of a lion, and accuse all mankind in a body: "Most just Judge of the living and the dead, I bring a charge against all the human beings assembled here. Since it seemed right to Thy stern justice to banish me and all the angels who joined with me from heaven on account of one single sin, and to condemn us to everlasting damnation, it is only fair that Thou shouldst include all mankind in the same condemnation with myself, and cast all men here present into the abyss of hell. For there is not one single individual here who has not

committed sin, and transgressed Thy law." Then Christ will answer the accusation in this wise: "It shall be done as you request, O ye angels and ye demons; all men must appear before My judgment-seat, and each one shall receive that which is his due: chastisement to the wicked, recompense to the good." When all those whom Christ has chosen to share with Him His office of Judge shall have taken their seats, His apostles having the precedence of all others, the judgment will commence. It appears from what the Apostle St. Paul says that no person, not even the saints, will be exempted from this ordeal." We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ" (Rom. xiv. 10). This standing before the judgment-seat of Christ will fill every one with fear. No one will be free from it; even the just will feel it to a certain degree, as well as the unhappy sinner. Even though the just may not be conscious of any sin, they will yet not be without apprehension. St. Paul says this, speaking of himself: "I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet am I not hereby justified, but He that judgeth me is the Lord" (1 Cor. iv. 4). By this the Apostle apparently intends to say: "My conscience does not indeed reproach me, but this does not prove me to be one of the just; I must wait and see what sentence the eternal Judge will pass on me." In fact every man will be so terrified at the first sight of the irate Judge, that, like St. John, he will fall at His feet as dead. It appears to me that judgment will be passed upon the good somewhat after this manner: The guardian angels will lead those who have been committed to their charge to the judgment-seat of God, and then the just will fall before Him in lowly adoration. The evil enemy will then begin to accuse them, and bring forward everything that he can against them. But the guardian angel will defend his client, he will produce all his good works, his penances, his virtues, and lay them in the scales of divine justice. And if they are not too light, Christ will array him in the new robe, the garment of splendour, and crown him with the diadem of the eternal kingdom. Who can tell what the glory of that moment will be! How all the just will rejoice that their lot is among the blessed! How kindly the choir of angels will congratulate them, and exult with them in blissful jubilation. And how all who are yet waiting for their sentence will marvel at the glory that is theirs, and long to share it with them. Most bountiful Jesus, in the name of all the saints and elect, whom Thou dost destine to the enjoyment of eternal felicity, I beseech Thee of Thy infinite loving kindness, that I may stand amongst Thy saints in the Day of Judgment. I am indeed unworthy of this favour, but for the greater honour and praise that will be ascribed to Thee, I pray Thee let Thy boundless mercy be manifested towards me; cast me not away, poor sinner that I am.

And I entreat you, saints of God, to help me to attain to your blessed company. I

know that your intercession is powerful enough with God to induce Him to look upon me with compassion, and be infinitely merciful to me in His judgment of my life. Amen.

CHAPTER X. ON THE LENGTH OF TIME THAT THE FINAL JUDGMENT WILL LAST.

How long will the duration of the Last Judgment be? No definite answer can be given to this question, for it is a matter which no one knows; yet it may be conjectured that it will occupy a considerable period. Some indeed say that it will be over quickly, because God could judge all mankind in a single instant. Yet this opinion does not seem to be held by the Fathers of the Church, nor is it supported by Holy Scripture, in which we find a day of judgment invariably spoken of. St. Paul, for instance, says: "God hath appointed a day wherein He will judge the world in equity" (Acts xvii. 31). And we read in the prophecies of Isaias: "Behold the day of the Lord shall come, a cruel day and full of indignation and of wrath and fury" (Is. xiii. 9). In these and many other passages of Holy Writ the Last Day is spoken of as a day, not an instantaneous judgment. The prophet Joel indicates that the day will be a long one, when he says: "The day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can stand it?" (Joel ii. 11.) And of this same day St. John, the prophet of the New Dispensation, also says: "The great day of their wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand it?" (Apoc. vi. 17.) In many other passages of Holy Scripture we find similar expressions; the Day of Judgment being called a great day, which probably means a long day. St. Jerome held this opinion, for he says: "The day of the Lord will be a great day because of the eternity following upon it." St. Augustine, when speaking of the duration of the final judgment, expresses himself thus: "Over how many days the judgment will extend we have no means of ascertaining; yet we know that a considerable period is often designated in Holy Scripture as a day." St. Thomas Aquinas agrees with St. Augustine on this point; he brings forward several arguments to prove that the final judgment will be of long duration. And wherefore should God shorten that day? There is abundant reason why He should rather prolong it. For it is the day of Christ's greatest triumph; the day whereon the saints attain their greatest glory and the damned are put to the greatest shame. It is the day of Christ's greatest triumph, because He will not only be adored by all the angels and saints, but also by the wicked spirits and lost souls, and acknowledged by all to be their Judge. On that day all His enemies will be beneath His feet; on that day all His foes will be forced to confess their offences against Him, the divine Arbiter. They will then and there be compelled to own His divinity, His infinite charity, the countless benefits He has bestowed on them, in return for which they persecuted Him, blasphemed

Him, put Him to a cruel death. Secondly, the blessed saints will on that day attain their greatest glory, because they will be held in honour and esteem by all mankind, as well as by God and by the angels. For Christ will then make manifest to all present how faithfully they served Him, with what self-sacrificing zeal they laboured for the conversion of sinners. He will then make manifest the secret penances they performed, the fierce temptations they resisted. He will then make manifest the pitiless persecutions they endured from the children of this world, and how all manner of evil was spoken against them unjustly. Thus Christ will crown them with the honour that is their due, and all their adversaries will be confounded.

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Thirdly, on that day the reprobate will be put to the greatest ignominy and anguish. For the Judge will reveal all the shameful, the abominable character of their misdeeds: He will reveal in the sight of angels and saints, of the devils and the damned, the infamous deeds they performed under cover of darkness. Yes, He will pour out the full chalice of His indignation upon those wretched beings, who under the mask of their hypocrisy dared to desecrate His very sanctuary. He will cause those who have been corrupters of innocence to be seized and placed among the evil spirits, whose diabolical, thrice accursed work they carried on earth. On that day the divine Judge will give all the impenitent sinners to drink deeply of the cup of shame and ignominy, as St. Basil tells us, when he says: "The confusion that will overtake the godless sinner in the Day of Judgment will be more cruel torture to him than if he were cast into a flaming fire." This is in fact the reason why God has appointed the final judgment, that sinners may not only be punished by the pain which will be their portion, but that they may also be put to public shame. St. Thomas Aquinas says: "The sinner does not only deserve pain, he deserves disgrace and ignominy, for this is a punishment to which human beings only can be subjected. The lower animals can be chastised and put to death, but they cannot know what it is to suffer shame and contempt."...On all these grounds it will be surmised that the final judgment will stretch over a considerable period of time, and hence we have all the more reason to tremble at the prospect of it, and earnestly pray God that on that great day He will not overwhelm us with shame and confusion, but will grant us a share in His joy and glory.

CHAPTER XL ON THE PUBLICATION OF THE SENTENCE PASSED UPON THE GOOD AND THE BAD.

WHAT has hitherto been said concerning the Last Judgment is indeed most awful, but that which is now to come is yet more so: we are about to speak of the

sentence pronounced upon the wicked, and how they will be cast down into hell. This is so terrible that nothing in all eternity can be found equal to it in horror. When the supreme Judge shall have searched the hearts of all men, and weighed all their actions in the balance of justice, when all has been made open and manifest to the whole world, He will pass sentence upon the good and upon the bad. He will first turn a kindly countenance to His elect (who stand on the right hand), and address to them the consoling words: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me to drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in, naked and you covered Me, sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me" (Matt. xxv. 34-36). You have been faithful to Me unto your life's end. You despised the world and all the things of the world, you loved Me and sought above all else to promote My glory. You suffered much whilst upon earth, you performed hard works of penance, you were despised and oppressed by the votaries of the world and by the wicked. But now the time of suffering is over and the time of happiness begins; your sorrow shall be turned into joy, eternal joy which no man can take from you. ** Therefore come, O My friends, come ye blessed and chosen of My heavenly Father, come from toil to rest, come from grief to joy, come from the realms of darkness to the regions of light, come from earth to heaven. Come and possess the celestial country, for which you have longed so often, come

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and reign with Me forever, for by your good works you have merited this reward. Your felicity shall endure as long as I am God, and in My presence you shall enjoy the bliss of heaven to all eternity." The hearts of the elect will overflow with joy and consolation and delight when they hear these propitious words. They will look up to the benign countenance of their Judge, and say to Him with joy and gratitude: "Most gracious God and Lord, Thy loving kindness towards us is infinite, and Thy bounty knows no bounds. How have we deserved to receive from Thee so rich a recompense? What have we done to entitle us to endless felicity? It is of Thy mercy and infinite charity alone that Thou dost admit us to Thy kingdom of glory. Be Thou blessed for evermore; our mouth shall continually extol Thy majesty!" After this, Christ will command His angels to bring all the saints before Him. And as they come up to His throne, He will array each one in a garment of glory, brilliant and beautiful, so that they will shine like stars. On their heads He will place golden crowns of surpassing brightness, and into their hands He will give lilies, roses, palm-branches, and a sceptre, to betoken the victory they have achieved over the world, the flesh, and the devil. The lost will witness the glory and exaltation of the saints. They will

hear their shout of triumph and it will be to them gall and wormwood. They will gnash their teeth in rage and remorse; all the pleasure they felt in their sins will now be gone. They will mourn and lament, and say, amid sobs of deep despair: "Alas, how unfortunate, how miserable we are! What have we done! Behold those whom once we despised now so happy, so enraptured, so honoured and glorified, and we, who thought scorn of them, are now so unhappy, so miserable, so disgraced, branded forever with every sign of reprobation! And yet we might have won for ourselves the same glorious destiny as they; the toil and difficulty would not have been beyond our strength. But we in our accursed folly have trifled away the supreme Good, and deprived ourselves of eternal felicity for the sake of worthless and transient pleasures. Oh, what folly, what madness on our part! How could we allow ourselves to be dazzled to such an extent by the vile debaucheries of the world!" After these unhappy beings have bewailed their misery for a considerable time, the trumpet will again send forth a mighty sound. This blast of the trumpet is to announce the sentence passed upon the reprobate, and it will impose silence on every one present. Then the Judge will turn to the wicked, and, looking at them with a countenance kindled with holy wrath, He will say: "O foolish, O blind sinners! Now the dreadful day has come whereof I spoke to you when I was upon earth the day, the hour of judgment." Now He stands before you whose enemy you have always shown yourselves. In your arrogant presumption you caused all manner of pain and injury to Me, to My Church, to My brethren and sisters, to all the children of God. Behold the wounds you inflicted on Me; behold the side which you pierced; behold the cross whereon you nailed Me; behold the pillar at which you scourged Me, and to which in after years you bound My Church, my spotless spouse, for century after century, lacerating and tearing her flesh with the scourge of your insolent mockery, your unbelief, your scandals, your seductions, your infamous deeds of every sort." Out of love for you I came down from heaven, and out of love for you I endured the cruelties of death. And yet My love, so wondrous in its extent, awakened no response in your hearts, met with no love in return; on the contrary, you thrust Me away with contempt and hatred when I stood at the door of your heart as a suppliant, desirous of gaining admittance there. How often did I call to you, and you would not listen to Me. I stretched out my hands to you, but you drew back from My embrace. I employed threats, I visited you with many a loving chastisement, but you would not bow

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your proud neck beneath My sweet yoke. You deliberately chose to serve the devil as your god, and therefore you shall share his lot now, and be with him in the abyss of damnation to all eternity. I also will laugh at your destruction.

Behold My servants, all the just, shall eat and be filled, whilst you shall hunger everlastingly. My servants shall be given to drink in abundance, whilst you shall thirst, and your thirst shall never be quenched. My servants shall rejoice and you shall mourn. My servants will exult in rapturous bliss, and you will shriek in agony and despair. Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave Me not to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me not to drink; I was a stranger and you took Me not in, naked and you covered Me not, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me." This verdict, pronounced by the just Judge, will strike the ears of the damned like a thunderclap; they will fall prostrate upon the ground, overwhelmed by these terrible words, and then they will raise such a cry of despair and rage, that the very heavens and the earth will tremble at the sound." O woe betide us, accursed and miserable that we are! We must now be banished from the presence of God and of the saints to all eternity! We must burn forever and ever with the devils in the fires of hell! Depart into the everlasting fire! Oh, what an awful sentence from the lips of our Judge! Everlasting burning! Everlasting torment! No hope of rescue! Woe betide us, wretched sinners; woe betide us, woe betide us! Thus will the lost souls complain, and weep, and lament. Yet the time of grace is over; the sentence has been passed; there is no more mercy, no more clemency for them." Understand these things, you that forget God; lest He snatch you away and there be none to deliver you" (Ps. xlix. 22). Yes, understand this, O unhappy sinners, and see to it that a like doom does not overtake you. Think how you would feel, were you amongst the number of these reprobates. Consider what you would then wish that you had done, and what you would give as the price of your ransom, were it possible for you to be liberated. Well, then, do now what you would then wish to have done. Confess and bewail your grievous sins whilst there is yet time, and pray God to preserve you from never-ending torment. O most merciful God, Thou hast told us by the lips of Thy prophet: "In an acceptable time I will hear thee, and in the day of salvation I will help thee." Behold now is the day of salvation, wherefore I call upon Thee with the utmost confidence, and from the bottom of my heart I beseech Thee that Thou wouldst grant me grace and help in proportion to my necessities, that I may not finally be cast away. For the dead praise Thee not, O Lord neither those that go down into hell, but the living, we who live in Thy presence, will extol Thy holy name forever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER XII. HOW THE DAMNED WILL ASK IN VAIN FOR MERCY, AND WILL BE CAST DOWN INTO HELL.

WE know from the testimony of Christ's own words that the damned will be permitted to speak to Him, after they have received their sentence. Then (that

is, after the sentence has been pronounced) He tells us," They also shall answer Him, saying: Lord, when did we ever see Thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee?" (Matt. xxv. 44.) When the lost souls perceive that there is no remnant of hope that their terrible sentence of condemnation may be mitigated, they will, in their despair, pour out horrible imprecations: "Cursed

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be the parents who gave us birth; cursed be all those who led us into sin; cursed be all men who have lived with us upon this earth; cursed be He who created us; cursed be the blood of Christ, wherewith we were redeemed; cursed be all the saints of God!" What will the divine Judge do when He hears them revile God in this shocking manner? When He Himself, standing before the Jewish council, acknowledged that He was the Son of God, the high priest Caiphaz rent his garments and cried with a loud voice: "He hath blasphemed; now you have heard the blasphemy, what think you?" And the people answering said: "He is worthy of death." The same scene will take place now, only it will be a thousandfold more terrible. When Christ hears these blasphemies He will exclaim, in holy indignation: "They have blasphemed God, they have cursed Me and My saints! You have heard it yourselves, now what think you?" Thereupon all the angels and saints will answer: "They are worthy of eternal death, of the everlasting pains of hell! Away with them to the place of torment, away with them into everlasting fire!" Then that will be fulfilled which is foretold in the book of Wisdom: "The divine Judge will take zeal as His armour, and will arm the creature for the revenge of His enemies. He will put on justice as a breastplate, and will take true judgment instead of a helmet. He will take equity for an invincible shield, and He will sharpen His severe wrath for a spear, and the whole world shall fight with Him against the unwise. Then shafts of lightning shall go directly from the clouds, as from a bow well bent. They shall be shot out and shall fly to the mark. And thick hail shall be cast upon them from the stone-casting wrath; the waters of the sea shall rage against them, and the rivers shall run together in a terrible manner. A mighty wind shall stand up against them, and as a whirlwind shall divide them; and their iniquity shall bring all the earth to a desert, and wickedness shall overthrow the thrones of the mighty" (Wisd. v. 18-24). In these awful words Holy Scripture, the book of truth eternal, describes the sacred indignation wherewith the supreme Judge will chastise the damned whilst they are still upon the earth. All the elements, thunder, lightning, hailstorms, the raging billows of ocean, whirlwinds, and tempests, all the powers, in short, of nature will become instruments to execute the vengeance of God upon those who have rebelled against Him, against the

abandoned wretches whose existence upon earth has been one long and terrible outrage against their Creator. For in their words and works they have blasphemed Him, the God of infinite holiness, power, and loving kindness. They have wantonly offended the Creator and Preserver of the realm of nature; therefore all nature rises up against them in vengeance. Now, when Christ has poured out upon these unhappy beings all the rage of the powers of nature in their vindictive and primitive fury, the earth will open beneath their feet, and they, together with all the devils, shall be swallowed up. St. John, in the Apocalypse, says: "And a mighty angel took up a stone, as it were a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying: With such violence as this shall Babylon, that great city, be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all" (Apoc. xviii. 21). Do not these words that the angel uttered signify that all the lost souls will go down into hell with the impetus of a millstone that sinks to the bottom of the abyss of waters into which it is hurled?

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O, awful fall of the damned! Who can think of it without shuddering! Alas for those for whom it is prepared; better were it for them that they had never been born! Thus they will descend, and hell, when they reach it, will, like a fierce dragon, open its jaws to devour them, and they will be engulfed within them, according to the prophecy of Isaias: "Hell hath enlarged her soul, and opened her mouth without any bounds, and then strong ones, and their people, and their high and glorious ones, shall go down into it" (Is. v. 14). Who can portray the despair of the damned, the rage wherewith in the deep and sombre abyss of hell they will seek in their fury to tear and lacerate one another. What words can describe the howls and groans that will re-echo through that place of torment? It is beyond the power of man to conceive. For if Holy Scripture tells us that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what God hath prepared for them that love Him, may it not also be said that man cannot form any idea of what God has prepared for those who have so frequently, so wantonly, insulted Him? And if the joys of heaven surpass all our powers of description, will not the torments of hell also be inconceivably great? Reflect upon this, O reader, reflect upon it often, and do not fritter away thy life in idle pleasures, but look to it that thou save thy soul. Call upon God with all the fervour of thy heart, and beg Him to grant thee a favourable sentence in the day of final judgment, saying: Most just God, and Judge of all men! Many times, and grievously, I have offended Thee, and I have nought to expect from Thy justice but severe chastisement. Yet I now confess my misdeeds; I repent of them and abhor them, and I firmly purpose from this time forth to be ever faithful unto Thee. Wherefore, I beseech Thee mercifully to pardon my sins, in

order that I may escape eternal death, and may attain everlasting felicity. Amen

CHAPTER XIII. HOW THE BLESSED WILL GO UP INTO HEAVEN AFTER THE JUDGMENT.

WHEN the earth has opened and swallowed up the lost souls, then the angels and the blessed will exult and rejoice. They will extol the justice of God, and confess that the reprobates fully deserved their fate. St. John, in his Apocalypse, gives a beautiful description of how the blessed will rejoice and magnify the justice of God." I saw an angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was enlightened with his glory. And he cried out with a strong voice, saying: Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen: and is become the habitation of devils. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and the Lord hath remembered her iniquities. Render to her as she also hath rendered to you, and double unto her according to her works. As much as she hath glorified herself, and lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath judged your judgment on her.

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" After these things, I heard, as it were, the voice of much people in heaven, saying: Alleluia! Salvation, and glory, and power, is to our God. For true and just are His judgments, who hath judged the great harlot which corrupted the earth with her fornication, and hath revenged the blood of His servants at her hands. And again they said: Alleluia! And the four-and-twenty ancients fell down and adored God that sitteth upon the throne, saying, Amen! Alleluia! And a voice came out from the throne saying: Give praise to our God, all ye, His servants, and you that fear Him, little and great. Alleluia! For the Lord our God, the almighty, hath reigned. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath prepared herself. Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." These words do, indeed, present a delightful prospect. How excellent will be the triumph-song of the saints when they go in as guests to the marriage of the Lamb! How sweetly they will sing Alleluia! How fervently they will thank God for having delivered them from eternal damnation, and numbered them amongst His elect! The ascension into heaven will next take place. Can one venture to describe this also? The sweetest strains of music will fill the air. St. Michael will head the glorious procession, carrying the cross whereon Christ died. For the cross and all the other instruments of the Passion will be preserved in heaven at least such is the opinion of several learned theologians. Following upon these sacred relics will come the first choir of angels, together with those members of the company of the saved, to whom the sentence of Christ has assigned a place in the lowest

of the angelic choirs. Children who have died in infancy, and souls who have persisted in sin unto the last, and yet have been saved through the infinite mercy of God and real contrition on their part, will be with the first choir of angels. How fervently they will praise their God for His unspeakable compassion! Next will come the choir of archangels, and with them those saints who have deserved a place in this second angelic choir. God-fearing married people, devout widows, besides other pious persons who have lived in the world, will, adorned in marvellous beauty, laud and magnify God with the archangels. In the third place will come the choir of powers, amongst whom will be all priests who have led a holy life on earth. The choir of the principalities will come next, with all the saintly bishops and prelates who have ruled the Church to the glory of God and the salvation of those who have been subject to them. The choir of virtues will come fifth with the doctors of the Church and all who, by their doctrine and preaching, have converted unbelievers, and brought them to the knowledge of the true faith. In the sixth place will come the choir of the dominations, with the confessors who suffered great persecution for the faith, and died in misery and destitution for Christ's sake. The choir of the thrones will follow next, with the holy martyrs who shed their blood, and gladly gave up their lives for the name of Christ.

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The eighth choir is that of the cherubim, amongst whose ranks will be those holy virgins who have not merely kept their chastity unsullied, but who, consumed by divine charity, have led a life of highest perfection. The ninth and highest of the angelic choirs is that of the seraphim. With them will be the holy apostles and servants of Christ, who, following in the footsteps of the Redeemer, have lived on earth an angel's life. In a word, every one of the blessed will have his place assigned him in whichever of the angelic choirs for whose company his virtues render him most fit. How glorious will be the procession of the choirs, and how melodious the celestial canticles they will sing! Words fail us when we attempt to describe it. And to close the triumphal cortege the King of heaven and earth comes, crowned with splendour, Christ, the first begotten Son of the heavenly Father, accompanied by His most blessed Mother the Virgin Mary. He is surrounded with such beauty and majesty, that heaven and earth, angels and men, are struck with amazement. In fact this ascension into heaven will be in every respect attended with such grandeur and glory, it will be so inexpressibly sublime and beautiful, that the lips even of an angel would fail to give an adequate idea of it. Consider what will be the rapture of the redeemed when they soar aloft through the air, both soul and body, as if they were pure spirits, ascending ever and ever higher, beyond the shining orbs of heaven with their

golden refulgence, approaching nearer and nearer to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of God. And oh! what ecstatic joy will inebriate them when they enter through the golden gates, and behold the splendour and magnificence of the city of God. When the Queen of Saba saw the magnificence of Solomon's palace, she was struck dumb with astonishment. But a greater than Solomon is there, and the majesty and loveliness of the palace of the King of kings is infinitely greater than that of any earthly monarch. Hence we may surmise what the blissful rapture of the blessed will be, when it is granted them to behold what God has prepared for them that love Him. Dost thou not desire, O pious Christian, to dwell with the redeemed and enjoy the unspeakable delights of the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem? Assuredly thou dost desire it. We all of us have within us a powerful impulse, an ardent longing for happiness and enjoyment. O, seek not after that happiness, strive not to secure the enjoyment for which thy soul thirsts in this valley of tears. Lift up thine eyes to the land that is above, let that be thy goal, and one day thou shalt ascend up on high with jubilant songs. God grant to thee and to me, reader, that by His grace, this happy lot may be our portion.

PART III. ON HELL. CHAPTER I. ON THE FIRE OF HELL.

ALTHOUGH in the present day many are found to deny the existence of hell, or, at any rate, the eternity of punishment, we do not consider it incumbent upon us to bring forward a number of proofs that there is such a place as hell. In the case of the Christian reader, for whom this book is intended, evidence of this nature is quite superfluous, because he will not have made shipwreck of

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his faith. Indeed, what further proofs can be required for the existence of hell and the eternity of punishment, seeing that the prophets, that Christ Himself, that the apostles, and the Fathers of the Church, nay, the very Turks and heathens, speak of it as an unquestioned fact. Those who deny the existence of hell must consequently be counted amongst the fools who say in their heart that there is no God who punishes their misdeeds. It would undoubtedly be very agreeable for these people if all things ended with this life, if there were no day of reckoning, or if, at least, the infernal regions were somewhat less intolerable. This accounts for their catching at any apparent arguments wherewith to delude themselves and lull to sleep their fear of the eternal chastisements of hell. We will not enter upon any examination of the wretched sophisms wherewith these fools deceive themselves; for the teaching of the Catholic Church on this point is all we need* She teaches that there is a place or state of unequalled and neverending pain in reserve for the damned. We know that there really is fire in hell, from the words Christ spoke to the wicked: "Depart from Me, ye cursed,

into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv. 41). This shows that there is real fire in hell, and that in it the damned must burn eternally. What the intensity of that pain will be it is beyond the power of man to depict. For of all the varied kinds of physical suffering to which man can be subjected, there is none so great, so cruel, so agonizing, as that which is caused by fire. The rack, the wheel, amputation of a man's limbs, are all terrible torture, but they are not to be compared to the pain of burning. If one does but touch a red-hot iron, what exquisite pain it occasions! In a moment the skin is off, the raw flesh protrudes, blood and matter exude from the wound, and the pain goes to the very marrow of our bones. One cannot refrain from crying out and screaming as if one had lost one's senses. Now if momentary contact with the red-hot iron causes such acute pain, what would it be if one had to hold a red-hot iron for any length of time! Now just imagine that thou wert sentenced to be burned alive for thy sins, and for the whole of a live long day thou didst stand amid the flames, unable to die. How piteously thou wouldst weep and wail, how loudly thou wouldst shriek and roar in thy agony, so that the heart-rending cries wrung from thee by the torture thou endurest would not only cause the bystanders to shudder, but fill them with sincere compassion. That man must indeed be stony-hearted who could bear to look unmoved on such a spectacle. Ere long thou wouldst be burned to such an extent as to be no longer recognizable, reduced to the semblance of a glowing cinder. Now consider, O Christian, if the action of earthly fire causes such intolerable agony, what will be the torture of hell-fire, the heat of which is incomparably more intense and more searching than that of any fire where with we are familiar. And if thou dost ask why hell-fire should so far exceed earthly fire in the intensity of its heat, there are several reasons which account for this fact. In the first place, every one knows that the larger the fire, the greater the heat it throws out. The flame of a wax taper is not very hot, but if the whole taper is burning at once, the flame arising from it is much hotter. When a house is on fire, the heat in the immediate neighbourhood is very great, but if a whole village is in flames, the heat of the conflagration becomes unbearable even at a distance. If such be the effect produced by the fire of earth, which is comparatively but small in its extent, what will the action be of the fire of hell, that is immeasurably greater than any conflagration seen upon earth!

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Secondly, a fire that is enclosed in a furnace burns far more fiercely than if it were in the open air, because the heat being shut in cannot escape and diffuse itself, or be tempered by the surrounding air. If that is so, with what fury the flames of the huge furnace of hell will rage, with what intensity they will glow!

Suppose such a misfortune as a man being thrown into a lime-kiln, or a furnace heated to white heat how terrible would be his sufferings! The next reason why the fire of hell surpasses in intensity of heat all other fire is that it is kindled by the breath of God. For the prophet Isaias says: "Behold, the wrath of the Lord burneth and is heavy to bear, His lips are filled with indignation, and His tongue as a devouring fire. His breath as a torrent overflowing even to the midst of the neck, to destroy the nations unto nothing." And again: "Topheth (hell) is prepared from yesterday, deep and wide. The nourishment thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord as a torrent of brimstone kindling it" (Is. xxx. 27, 33). What a frightful description is here given of hell and its torturing fire. Do not say that in these and other familiar passages of Holy Scripture the expressions employed are mere figures, whereby the prophets foretold the divine judgments about to fall on sinful nations, and not to be taken in a literal sense, as referring to hell and its punishments. Let us not deceive ourselves. These images are, it is true, in their primary signification to be understood as indicating the doom of sinful nations, but, in a wider and a higher sense, according to the interpretation given of them by the exponents of Scripture, they are predictions of the judicial chastisement which, after the final judgment, will be the portion of reprobate sinners. St. Bridget justly says in her revelations: "The heat of hell-fire is so great that if the whole world were wrapped in flames, the heat of the conflagration would be as nothing in comparison with it." Hence we learn that that earthly fire bears no more resemblance to the fire of hell than the feeble flame of a wax taper to the white heat of a glowing furnace. Remember this, O sinner, and lay it well to heart. St. Augustine tells us that the most fearful fire on earth is, in comparison with the fire of hell, like a painting of fire compared to a real fire. When thou seest a fire, call to mind the fire of hell. And since thou couldst not endure to put thy hand for a single instant into that fire, think what the heat of hell-fire must be, surpassing as it does so infinitely the small fire thou seest before thee. If thou canst not bear this, how canst thou endure the other? It has now been made clear that the damned will one day be cast, body and soul, into the huge and awful furnace of hell, into the immense lake of fire, where they will be surrounded by flames. There will be fire below them, fire above them, fire all round about them. Every breath will be the scorching breath of a furnace. These infernal flames will penetrate every portion of the body, so that there will be no part or member, within or without, that is not steeped in fire. How despairing the cries, how agonizing the shrieks that will ascend from this bed of torture!" Woe to us miserable creatures! Woe to us a thousand times! We are tortured in this flame! The excruciating pain pervades every member of our body; the intolerable agony leaves us no rest I If only we could die, if only we could die so as to escape this fearful torture! Alas, this wish

is all in

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vain! Dead as far as the life of the soul is concerned, dead because we have forfeited the grace, the mercy of God we are yet condemned to live on, to live forever and ever!" What a privilege death, annihilation would be to us! But it eludes our grasp; we can no longer hope that it will come to deliver us from this misery, this torture, from the furnace of hell. Alas, how great has our folly been! For the worthless pleasures of a moment we have incurred this intolerable misery, a misery which will endure for all eternity." "Understand these things," says David, "you that forget God, lest He snatch you away and there be none to deliver you." Listen to this, O sinner, and let the lamentations of the lost be instructive to thee. Picture to thyself the pit of fire in which these wretched creatures have to expiate their sins. Wouldst thou, we ask again, for any sum of money, however large, agree to spend a single day immersed in those flames? No, not for the whole world wouldst thou agree to remain in that fire for one short hour. If this be so, why dost thou for the sake of some sinful enjoyment, some unjust gain, voluntarily cast thyself forever into hell-fire? O what folly, what consummate folly! God grant that these blind sinners may be enlightened, in order that they may become aware of the unwisdom of their conduct, and may apply themselves in time to the things which concern their salvation. O God of justice! how great is Thy wrath and how all-powerful is Thy hatred of sin and of the sinner! Woe betide me and all who have the terrible misfortune to commit mortal sin. May God keep me from such sin as would be the means of casting me into eternal perdition. I will gladly suffer all things, the greatest temporal troubles, the acutest pains, even the cruellest death, in order to escape* everlasting torment in hell. This is my firm purpose; wherefore grant me Thy grace and strengthen me in my good resolution.

CHAPTER II. ON THE HUNGER AND THIRST SUFFERED IN HELL.

JUST as the crimes whereby the sinner in this life provokes the anger of God are of various kinds, so the pains of hell whereby those crimes will be punished also vary in their nature. We know that men often sin through intemperance, greedily indulging themselves in food and drink. Consequently God has appointed a severe penalty for this sin in the next world. Christ foretells it, indeed, in the words: "Woe to you that are filled, for you shall hunger" (Luke vi. 25). When Our Lord utters the word "Woe," He always intends to threaten or predict some great calamity. Let us consider for a moment what it really is in this case. It is impossible for us to form a true idea of the pangs of hunger, because we have never felt them. If for a whole day one has nothing to eat, the time seems very long, and one wants some food very much. And if one were

deprived of any nourishment for two or three days, what misery it would be! But if a man had nothing whatever to eat for a whole week, and were left a prey to hunger, what would become of him? In times of dearth and famine one is horrified to see what are the effects produced by hunger, and what a terrible visitation the scarcity of food is. For to still the intolerable pangs of hunger people will devour whatever they can lay their hands on; grass, leaves, unclean and disgusting animals, nay, men have even been driven to feed on the flesh of their fellow-men, mothers to sacrificing their children, and some have been known to gnaw their own flesh. And when the poor famished

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wretches have nothing more, they wander about like shadows of their former selves, pale and emaciated as death itself. They drag on a lingering existence, until all their strength is consumed; finally, through the torture of starvation, they lose their senses; they rave and cry and howl, and die the most miserable of deaths. If such are the effects of hunger upon earth, what will the hunger be which shall be experienced in hell? If want of food for a few days only causes such torture, what will a continual, never-ending hunger be? Who can think without horror of the hunger suffered in hell? Woe betide those who have to endure it. The prophet Isaias testifies to the existence of real, actual hunger in hell, in this passage of Holy Scripture: God thus speaks by the mouth of the prophet: "Because I called and you did not answer, I spoke and you did not hear; behold, My servants shall eat and you shall be hungry; behold, My servants shall drink and you shall be thirsty. My servants shall rejoice and you shall be confounded; My servants shall praise for joyfulness of heart and you shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for grief of spirit" (Is. Ixv. 12, 13, 14). Who can tell how awful will be this hunger in hell? The Psalmist says of the enemies of God that they shall suffer hunger like dogs (Ps. Iviii. 7). The reprobate shall then be constantly tormented by the most ravenous hunger, by a hunger so great as to exceed beyond measure the hunger endured in times of famine, by a hunger which will torment them forever. What have you done, O unhappy sinners! You have brought upon yourselves this everlasting pain. Had you but done penance in this life, you would not have become the prey of this eternal hunger. But you desired to eat and be filled in your lifetime, consequently you must now endure what Christ foretold would be your fate: "Woe to you that are filled, for you shall hunger." Let those especially lay this to heart who are accustomed wilfully to neglect the observance of the prescribed fasts, and to eat meat on abstinence days. For whosoever eats meat on the fasts of the Church without necessity and without being dispensed, commits a grievous sin. To do so is tantamount to defying the Church and voluntarily

excluding one's self from her blessing. And he who persists in this sin, and does not heartily repent of it, cannot hope for eternal felicity. What could be more rash and foolish than for so despicable a satisfaction to expose one's self to the danger of eternal perdition! O, hardened sinner, whither art thou going! Think of the unending hunger to be endured in hell, and have pity on thine own soul! Besides hunger the damned suffer the most burning thirst, which it is beyond the power of words to describe. Every one knows how terrible are the sufferings caused by thirst: they are simply unbearable. Those who are plagued by thirst will drink from the most impure sources, and if nothing at all can be obtained to quench their thirst, a lingering and painful death is the result. The thirst suffered by lost souls is infinitely greater, more intense, more painful than any thirst experienced on earth, however

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great that may be. If a mortal man could feel it even for a brief period, he would faint away and die immediately. There is never any rest or respite for the damned; they are driven from one torment to another unceasingly. This occasions thirst. But the heat of hell-fire, wherein they burn day and night, forever and ever, is the principal cause of the intolerable thirst that consumes them. They are immersed in flames, and never do they obtain the refreshment of a draught of water. My God, how great their thirst must be! It is unbearable, and yet they must needs endure it. Listen to the piteous appeal of a lost soul earnestly imploring the boon of a single drop of water: "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame" (Luke xvi. 24)." Most merciful God, I ask only for water; I crave only one drop of water to give momentary relief to my burning tongue. Thou wilt not refuse so moderate a request, Thou who art praised by all Thy creatures as goodness itself." But this supplication is in vain. God turns a deaf ear to the voice of their entreaty. Not a single drop of water is given to mitigate their sufferings. Is it possible, O my God, that Thou canst be so stern? Father of compassion, why wilt Thou not hear their prayer? Thy justice and Thy hatred of sin will not allow Thee to yield; they oblige Thee to punish sin eternally and in the most terrible manner. But we are told that not only are the damned tormented with excessive hunger and thirst, they are also fed with flames and given to drink of the chalice of divine wrath." If any man shall adore the beast, he shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mingled with pure wine in the cup of His wrath, and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone. And the smoke of their torments shall ascend up forever and ever" (Apoc. xiv. 10). In the book of Moses we also read: "Their wine is the gall of dragons, and the venom of asps, which is incurable" (Deut. xxxii. 33). Reflect,

O sinner, upon this indescribable agony. Fire and brimstone will be the food of the damned, their drink the wine of God's anger. What can exceed such torture? My God, how rigorous Thou art! How severe are Thy chastisements! Think, you sinners, who now drink to excess, think what is the wine prepared for you hereafter, think of the fearful thirst that will consume you to all eternity. If you cannot bear to be thirsty for one day, how will you bear the burning thirst from which you shall never obtain relief? Reflect upon this in your heart, and indulge no longer in your intemperance. Give up this vice, which will infallibly drag you down to perdition. St. Paul expressly closes the door of heaven against you, when he says: "Drunkards shall not possess the kingdom of God" (i Cor. vi. 10). There you have your sentence, pronounced upon you beforehand. If you continue to pursue your evil way, you cannot plead ignorance as to where it will finally condemn you.

CHAPTER III. ON THE VILE ODOURS OF HELL.

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IN order that nothing may be wanting to the plagues of hell, wherewith the lost souls are tormented, God has in His anger decreed that this horrible prison should be pervaded by an abominable stench, as a punishment for those who, when on earth, have taken excessive delight in the use of choice perfumes. The prophecy of Isaias will thus be fulfilled: "Instead of a sweet smell there shall be a stench" (Is. iii. 24). Decaying animal matter emits so horrible an odour that no one likes to go near it. But if we imagine not one tainted carcass, but hundreds of thousands heaped together, the air for miles round would be so infected that it would cause the death of all in the vicinity. Even this stench, however, when compared with the stench of hell, seems as nothing, or rather as a pleasant odour. The effluvium of hell arises primarily from the place itself, which is by its nature a most horrible and foul region. No breath of pure air can ever penetrate the closely-shut walls of that prison. Moreover, the whole of hell is a lake of burning brimstone and pitch, and every one knows how offensive are the fumes they give out." The unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Apoc. xxi. 8.) The prophet of the New Dispensation here speaks of a pool, full of stagnant, foul, stinking water, for which there is no outlet. He adds that this pool is filled with burning brimstone from which a dense smoke ascends, as he says elsewhere: "The smoke of their torments shall ascend up forever and ever." The very bodies of the reprobate are so foul and disgusting that they emit a most offensive odour, worse than any stench in this world. According to St. Bonaventure, the body of a single reprobate would so taint the air on earth as to

cause the death of all living beings coming near it. If one single body emits so horrible a stench, what can the exhalation be that rises from many millions of these wretched beings? It is related of the tyrant Maxentius that he was wont, as a punishment, to cause a living man to be bound to a corpse, face to face and limb to limb, until the unhappy victim fainted, or even died through contact with the dead and decomposing body. That is indeed a torture of which no one can think without shuddering. How much worse will it be in hell, where the bodies will lie close to one another, without any hope of being separated. Bad as this stench is, it is greatly increased by the presence of the devils, who naturally are far more offensive to the nostrils than the bodies of the lost. We read in the life of St. Martin that the evil one appeared to him upon one occasion, and the stench that filled the room was so overwhelming that the saint said to himself: "If one single devil has so disgusting an odour, what can the stench be in hell, where there are thousands of devils all together" How much suffering this abominable stench must cause to the damned! how it must aggravate their distress and pain! For it must be pestilential beyond description, arising as it does from so many different sources hell itself, the bodies of the damned, the devils, the worms and reptiles, the fire of

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pitch and brimstone, each and all of which stink in the nostrils of the lost. Judge by what has been said how insupportable the combined odours of all these things must be. Alas for the unfortunate beings who are condemned to breathe such an atmosphere! Alas for the poor sinners who have to dwell in it for endless ages! They must sink under it, they must constantly be on the verge of death. O my God, I beseech Thee by Thy infinite clemency, spare me from so terrible a fate.

CHAPTER IV. SOME OTHER TORMENTS OF HELL.

IT is the opinion of many that some of the reprobates will be doomed among many other intolerable pains, to endure a most fearfully intense cold. The venerable Bede relates the following anecdote of a man whose name was Trithelmus. This man was dangerously sick, and one night he was thought to be dead. The next morning he recovered consciousness, to the astonishment of all who were with him, and rose from his sick bed, saying that God had granted him a prolongation of days, in order that he might lead a different life to that which he had hitherto led. After dividing his property amongst his children, and giving a portion of it to the poor, he entered upon an excessively different mode of life. Shutting himself up in a small tent beside a river, he spent his days and nights in weeping. In winter time he plunged up to the throat into the icy waters of the river, and then, shivering and benumbed by the cold, he immersed himself in

hot water, a proceeding which caused him such agony that he could not restrain his cries. When questioned as to the reason of his strange conduct, and how he could possibly bear the sudden alternations of extreme heat and extreme cold, he replied: "I have seen worse things than that." "What didst thou see?" the others asked him. And he replied: "I have seen how the unhappy souls in another world are cast out of a raging fire into icy cold, and from icy cold back into the burning flames. When I realize what they have to endure, I count my slight sufferings as nothing." This anecdote, related by so grave and holy a man as venerable Bede, shows how terrible indeed are the torments of hell. Christ speaks to us of the darkness of hell in these solemn words: "Bind his hands and feet and cast him into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. xxii. 13). Our Lord speaks of the darkness of hell as exterior darkness, the most appalling, the most fearful that can be. A traveller who has lost his way in a forest and is benighted, feels a nameless terror coming over him. Now there is a land which is covered with the shadow of death, where no order, but an eternal horror reigns. That land is hell. An oppressive gloom weighs upon the lost; an indescribably terrible darkness prevails. In this world sick people dread nothing more than the night, because the time seems to pass so slowly to them, and their pain seems doubly wearisome. They count the hours, and each one appears as long as the night. What will it be for the denizens of hell, where thick darkness holds sway, and night never gives place to daylight?

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In this horrible darkness the damned lie helpless as blind men, or as those who have had their eyes cruelly put out. They see nothing, for the acrid smoke stings their eyes, and the poisonous fumes of sulphur destroy their sight. We know how dense this smoke is from the account given by St. John: "To him (Satan) was given the key of the bottomless pit (hell). And he opened the bottomless pit; and the smoke of the pit arose as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke of the pit" (Apoc. ix. 2). And again: "They shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, and the smoke of their torments shall ascend up forever and ever; neither have they rest day or night" (Apoc. xiv. u.) These are indeed terrible threats, and this prophecy foretells in the plainest terms what will be the fate of those who are servants of sin and of the devil. They shall be tormented with fire and brimstone to such a degree that the smoke of their torment shall ascend forever and ever. O fearful words! O torture inexpressible! Consider, O misguided sinner, what thy feelings would be if thou wert confined for one single day in this dark and noisome dungeon. Thou knowest how disagreeable pungent smoke is to the eyes and nostrils; in fact, no

one can remain in it for a quarter of an hour without being asphyxiated and half blinded. If this is so on earth, what will it be in hell? The existence of the damned is more like death than life; it is a living death, an everlasting, unlimited torture and misery. And since we are told that the smoke of their torment goes up forever, it follows of necessity that complete darkness must prevail in hell. In connection with this subject, venerable Bede relates the experiences of the man Trithelmus (of whom mention has already been made) whilst he lay in a trance, and was supposed to be dead. On recovering consciousness, amongst other things he narrated the following: "I was conducted by a being clothed in shining garments through a country quite unknown to me, until we came to a region enveloped in thick darkness, that made me shudder with fear and horror. I could distinguish nothing but the figure of my guide. As we penetrated deeper and deeper into this obscurity, I perceived in the midst of the darkness an abyss of immense extent filled with smoke and a lurid glare, the sight of which caused my hair to stand on end with terror. From this abyss proceeded piteous wailing, which sounded as if a number of men and women were being put to cruel torture and death. But the worst was that my guide vanished, leaving me alone in this terrible spot. I cannot describe the agonized apprehension that took possession of me; in vain I looked around in the hope of finding succour or solace. The terror I felt was so great that I thought I should have died." When I looked down into the black abyss, I was afraid lest I should fall into it, and be lost, body and soul. For with the lurid flames that rose not of the abyss there came burning sparks that fell back into it with a deafening noise, besides masses of sulphurous smoke-like clouds that seemed as if they might at any moment sweep me down with them into the depths of the fiery gulf. These were all lost souls which were driven upwards like sparks from burning logs by the force of the underground fire. God alone knows what I suffered; a cold sweat broke out all over me. Whilst I stood there in this agony, not knowing which way to turn, there sounded from far above my head peals of laughter, and mingled with the laughter bitter weeping and howling. As this noise came nearer, I saw a number of devils who had with them five helpless souls whom they were persecuting and

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tormenting. The devils were in exultation, mocking and laughing; the souls were in despair, uttering lamentations and cries of poignant anguish. Imagine what my feelings were when I heard their cries, and observed that the accursed devils were coming nearer and nearer. When they came close up to me, I was so overpowered with terror that I thought I should have fainted, and I believe if God had not strengthened me, I should have died there and then." For the demons

glared at me with their fiery eyes in so alarming a fashion, and the poor souls called on me so pitifully for help, that I was divided between fear and compassion, and my heart was as if it must break. When the souls had been driven past me, they were precipitated into the depths of the abyss by the evil spirits with such violence that heaven and earth seemed to tremble, and such a cloud of sparks flew upwards that I was afraid they would cover me. Finally, to my great grief and alarm, a number of evil spirits approached me, breathing rage and fury, and making as if they would drag me down with them into the black abyss. Then in abject terror I wept and wailed and implored help from some quarter; for in this dense darkness I beheld nothing but mocking devils, the yawning gulf and leaping flames, and knew not whither to turn for deliverance." When my distress was at its height, my guide reappeared; he rescued me from my enemies, and conducted me out of that dark, foul, horrible place. He told me moreover that I was to return to my body, and that I was to make known to as many as possible of my fellow-men, the existence of this land of terrible darkness." In addition to the sinister obscurity that prevails in hell, caused by the stifling smoke that rises in dense clouds from the lake of brimstone, there is the presence of frightful demons who increase the pain and torment of the damned. We read in the legend of St. Anthony the Hermit, that the demons frequently appeared to him under various forms, plaguing and frightening him in indescribable ways. Sometimes they took the shape of wild beasts, lions, bears, dragons or savage dogs; at other times they appeared in human form, that of fierce-looking men, beautiful women, or monsters of hideous aspect. Sometimes they beat and maltreated him so barbarously that they left him half dead; sometimes they caused him such terror by their strange spectral apparitions, that had not God and his angel guardian come to his aid, he would have incontinently expired. Now if they did all this to a man of saintly life, over whom they had no rightful power, what will they not do in hell to the ungodly sinners who are completely at their mercy? Doubtless these diabolical spectres, assuming the shape of wild animals, will fall upon the wretched sinners and mishandle them shamefully. This will be a fresh misery for them. No one can imagine what new terrors and torments the ingenuity of these spirits of hell will devise to harass the damned and pour out on them their devilish malice. If thou dost fear this darkness, and all the horrors attending it, see that thou fear the works of darkness, whereof Christ says: "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reprov'd" (John iii. 20).

But if thou lovest darkness, and seekest the darkness that thou mayst sin with

greater impunity, it will be no act of injustice on God's part to cast thee into everlasting darkness, and at thy death to say to the devils: "Because throughout his life he has loved darkness and the works of darkness, bind his hands and his feet and cast him into the exterior darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Would that all obdurate sinners could see this, and consider the frightful torments which await the careless and indifferent. For in that wherein we have sinned we shall also be punished. And as in our own day there are so many tepid and negligent Christians who have not the slightest zeal for religion or religious exercises, we bid them beware lest they be one day cast into hell-fire at the command of Him who calls Himself a jealous God, and who is alone to be feared because He can" destroy both body and soul into hell."

Wherefore consider, O cold and careless Christians, what a fate is before you. Truly, were you to reflect upon these frightful torments, you would at once enter upon a new life. Instead of being tepid, sluggish, lax, cold Christians, you would quickly become zealous, active, scrupulous, fervent servants of God. Away, then, with all tepidity, all indifference in the great business of our salvation..

Whosoever thou art who readest this, resolve to fulfil thy duties as a Christian with all earnestness. Approach the sacraments more frequently than thou hast done hitherto; hear Mass more frequently than hitherto, be more instant and fervent in prayer than hitherto. Think more often of God and of the last things. Thus thou wilt surmount the indifference, the coldness that has crept over thee, thou wilt make God thy friend, the hope of eternal felicity will rise up within thee and become a blessed certainty. God grant that by His grace it may be so with thee and with me!

CHAPTER V. ON THE COMPANY OF HELL.

THERE are many bold sinners who, when they are punished for their crimes and threatened with hell-fire are wont audaciously to answer: "Wherever I go, I shall at any rate not lack company," as if the presence of others could afford any solace to them, or any alleviation of their torment. In order that these shameless sinners may see how wrong they are to speak thus, and how little cause they have to anticipate any relief from the company in which they will find themselves, this chapter shall be devoted to showing them how woeful that company will be, and how it will aggravate their misery. The society of the damned consists of devils and lost souls. Both of these are countless in number. As for the society of the devils, this is so detestable that it may be reckoned as the worst penalty of the lost in hell. The place of torment would be far less deserving of this name were there no devils in it. On account of the multitude of demons there, such confusion, such grief, such misery, such tyranny prevails, that it is heartbreaking even to think of it. We mortals have no worse enemy

than the devil, who hates us with so intense a hatred that he longs every moment to hurl us down into the abyss of perdition. And when at length he has got some one into his power, he deals with him more barbarously than savage despot ever dealt with his deadliest foe.

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All the envy and hatred which at the time of his fall he conceived against God, and which he cannot vent upon Him, he vents upon the damned, tormenting them with plagues the very thought of which makes a man's blood run cold. Even if he were not to do any harm to the damned, the mere fact of his dwelling with them for all eternity would be such terrible misery for the unhappy sinners, that the horror of their position would be like a continual death to them. Of all the fallen spirits, not one is so abominable as the chief of all, the haughty Lucifer, whose cruelty, malice and spite render him an object of dread not merely to the damned, but also to the devils subject to him. This Lucifer is called by various names in Holy Scriptures, all indicating his malignity. On account of his repulsiveness he is called a dragon; on account of his ferocity, a lion; on account of his malice, the old serpent; on account of his deceitfulness, the father of lies; on account of his haughtiness, king over all the children of pride; and on account of his great power and might, the prince of this world. Listen to what the Fathers of the Church and some expositors of Holy Scriptures say of the dreadful appearance that Satan presents: they apply to him the description given of the leviathan in the book of Job: "Who can discover the face of his garment, or who can go into the midst of his mouth? Who can open the doors of his face? his teeth are terrible round about. His body is like molten shields, shut up close with scales pressing one upon another. One is joined to another, and not so much as any air can come between them. His sneezing is like the shining of fire, and his eyes like the eyelids of the morning. Out of his mouth go forth lamps, like torches of lighted fire. Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, like that of a pot heated and boiling. His breath kindleth coals, and a flame cometh forth out of his mouth. In his neck strength shall dwell, and want goeth before his face. His heart shall be as hard as a stone, and as firm as a smith's anvil. When he shall raise him up, the angels shall fear and, being affrighted, turn to God for protection. He shall make the deep sea to boil as a pot; there is no power upon earth that can be compared with him who was made to fear no one. He beholdeth every high thing; he is king over all the children of pride" (Job xli.). It is the opinion of St. Cyril, St. Athanasius, St. Gregory and other learned expositors of both the Greek and Latin Churches, that although this description, taken literally, is that of a monster of the sea, yet it is intended, in its mystic sense, to apply to Lucifer. And if one compares what is said of the leviathan with

the attributes ascribed to the prince of darkness, it is impossible to deny their coincidence; moreover, one knows as a general fact that evil things have their types and figures in the natural world as well as good things, the one serving us for warning, the others for an example. Besides the prince of darkness there are hundreds of thousands of inferior devils, which though less bad and abominable than himself, are yet so wicked and horrible that one could hardly look upon them and live. St. Antony relates that one of the Brothers of his Order uttered a piercing scream at the sight of a devil who appeared to him. His fellow-monks, running to him in alarm, found him more dead than alive. After giving him something to revive and strengthen him, they asked him what was the matter. Then he told them that the devil had appeared to him, and terrified him so that all the life had gone out of him. And on their inquiring what the devil looked like, he answered: "That I really cannot say; I can only say that if the choice were given me I would rather be put into a red-hot furnace, than look again at the countenance of the demon."

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We read much the same thing in the life of St. Catharine of Sienna. She too declared that she had rather walk through a flaming fire than gaze for one instant at the devil. If the mere sight of the evil one is so appalling that the saints think it more intolerable than the pain of exposure to a burning fire, what, my God, must be the fear and horror of the damned, dwelling forever in the midst of countless fiends! How terrified thou wouldst be if a mad dog were suddenly to spring upon thee, pull thee to the ground, and begin to tear thee with his teeth! Do not imagine that the devil will fall upon the damned with less fury, or treat them more mercifully. The account Job gives of his persecutors describes very accurately the state of a lost soul in hell: "My enemy hath gathered together his fury against me, and threatening me he hath gnashed with his teeth upon me; he hath beheld me with terrible eyes. They have opened their mouth upon me and reproaching me they have struck me on the cheek, they are filled with my pains. He hath taken me by my neck, he hath broken me, and hath set me up to be his mark. He hath compassed me round about with his lances, he hath wounded my loins, he hath not spared. He hath torn me with wound upon wound, he hath rushed in upon me like a giant" (Job xvi. 10-15). This passage will give us some idea of the awful character of the company the damned will find themselves among in hell. The reprobate may nevertheless perhaps console themselves with the thought: at any rate we shall have our fellow-men with us in hell, and no lack of them either. Beware how you delude yourselves with this false comfort. Every lost soul would far rather be alone in hell, were the option given him. For as in hell there is no divine charity, so there

is no love of one's neighbour; on the contrary, all the damned are so embittered one against the other, that they only wish evil to one another, and mutually mock at and curse one another in the most unkind manner. And since on earth it is very grievous to be forced to live with an enemy who does one all manner of harm, so it is no small affliction to be continually with thousands of people, all of whom they hate and detest from the bottom of their heart. What thinkest thou would be thy feelings if thou wast sorely tormented and maltreated and persecuted by devils, so that thou couldst not refrain from uttering loud cries of pain and vexation, and yet among all the thousands who bore thee company thou couldst not find one to show thee the slightest sympathy, but thou wert laughed at and cursed by all, for every one would rejoice in thy misery. Even thy father and mother, thy wife and children, thy brothers and sisters, thy friends and relatives would then be thy declared enemies, and instead of showing thee any gratitude would only seek to injure thee. But amongst all thy enemies the most inveterate will be those to whom thou hast given scandal by thy bad example, whom thou hast led into sin by counsel or example, who owe to thee their perdition. They will hate and execrate thee so bitterly, and torment thee with such animosity that they will appear less like men than fiends incarnate. In connection with this subject St. Bernardin relates the following instance: "A wealthy usurer had

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two sons, one of whom entered a religious Order, whilst the other remained in the world with his father. Not long after the father died, and in a short space of time he was followed to the grave by his son, to whom he had bequeathed all his property. The other son, who had become a monk, was much concerned about the fate of his relatives, and earnestly implored almighty God to reveal to him their lot in another world. His entreaties at length prevailed; he was one day transported in spirit into hell, but although he looked everywhere around him, he could not descry his father and his brother. Presently he noticed a fiery abyss, the flames of which rose up to a great height. In this pit of fire he saw those of whom he was in search, rivetted together with iron chains, raving and raging at one another. The father cursed his son, laying all the blame of his damnation upon him, saying: A curse upon thee, O wicked son, thou art alone the cause of my perdition. For thy sake, to make thee a rich man, I practised usury; had it not been for thee, I should not now be in this misery. Then the son retorted upon his father, saying: * A curse upon thee, O ungodly father, for thou art alone the cause of my perdition. Hadst thou not taken usury and bequeathed to me thy unjust gains, I should not have been the possessor of ill-gotten riches, and should not have come to this misery." Thus will it be with thee, if thou art in any

way responsible for the loss of a soul. Thy wife and children will anathematize thee, and reproach thee with the occasions of sin thou didst put in their way. Dives felt this so keenly that he earnestly besought Father Abraham to send Lazarus to his father's house, to testify to his brethren of the sufferings he endured, lest they should also come to that place of torments. This he did not do out of love for his brothers, as St. Antony says, but because he was well aware that if they joined him in hell, it would greatly aggravate his torment. But supposing that natural affection still existed in hell, especially between those who had sincerely loved one another on earth, and who had not been the cause of one another's damnation, the society of one who was dear to thee would augment rather than diminish thy pain, and this in proportion to the love thou hadst for him. For what anguish it would be to thee to see thy dearest friend tortured and tormented in every possible manner. It would be enough to make your heart break asunder with sorrow and sympathy. And in addition to the mental pain and grief, the damned increase vastly one another's exterior and bodily sufferings. In the first place, because they lie pressed closely one upon another. Secondly, because they all emit so offensive and insupportable a stench. Thirdly, because they howl so piteously, and make hell re-echo with their woeful lamentations. Of this Christ speaks when He says: "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." He repeats these words more than once, to give them greater force, and to impress upon our minds the magnitude of the torture endured by the lost. The devils, too, will unite their howls to the shrieks of the damned, and raise such a clamour that hell itself shall tremble. The torment of the damned will be further aggravated by the frightful appearance of their bodies and the horror wherewith they inspire one another. For St. Anselm says: "Just as no stench can be

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compared to the stench of the damned, so nothing in this world can give an idea of their hideous appearance." Thus as often as one lost soul looks at another, so often will he shudder with disgust and loathing and abhorrence. Were there no other torture but this in hell, it would suffice to render its inmates most miserable. Finally, the torment of hell is greatly augmented by the eternal shame which will be its portion. St. Thomas Aquinas tells us that the sins of each one will be as fully known to the others as if they could behold them with their bodily eyes. Every one can imagine what anguish this must be. For what is so painful on earth as to be put to open shame? To a man who has lost his good name life is not worth living; it is only a burden to him. In former times, in some countries, it was customary to brand evil-doers, robbers, for instance, with a mark on the forehead or the shoulder. What ignominy for any one who had a

spark of self-respect! Whenever anybody looked at him, he must have blushed crimson. The devil will brand all the reprobate with the mark of shame on their foreheads, or on that part of the body wherewith they sinned, in order that all the shameful deeds they perpetrated in their life time may be made known. It is this everlasting disgrace which God foretells to the sinner by the mouth of His prophet: "I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame which shall never be forgotten" (Jer. xxiii. 40). Let the damned do what they will, no effort on their part will ever avail to efface this mark, or to conceal it from their fellow-sufferers. Thus, as St. Ephrem says, this shame and infamy will be more insupportable than hell-fire itself, because it will keep constantly before their remembrance the sins whereby they defiled themselves on earth. Dionysius, the Carthusian, speaks of one of his religious brethren in England, who, after a trance that lasted three days, gave the following account, at the earnest request of the monks, of what he had seen: "I was conducted by my guide a long way until we came to a region of gloom and horror, where were a countless multitude of men and women, all suffering terrible torments. These were the persons who had sinned with their bodies; they were plagued by huge fiery monsters, who sprang upon them, and, despite their resistance, clasped them and hugged them with their paws till they shrieked with pain. Amongst those who were tormented in this manner I saw a man whom I knew very well, and who had been much esteemed and respected in the world. Seeing me, he cried aloud in piteous tones: Alas, alas! woe is me that I sinned as I did in my lifetime, for now the pain I endure grows greater day by day. But the worst of all, what I feel most acutely, is the shame and disgrace to which my sins expose me, for all know them, and all despise me and mock at me on account of them." Hence it will be seen that, immeasurable as are the torments of hell, what the damned dread yet more than physical torments is to be an object of scorn and derision to their fellows on account of their sins. And thus their misery, far from being lessened by the company of others, is vastly increased by it. Wherefore think not to console thyself with the thought of the companions thou wilt find in hell, for their society is only to be dreaded. And in order that thou mayst never be brought into such

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company, beware of associating in this world with any who may lead thee into sin and perhaps bring thee to perdition.

CHAPTER VI. ON THE LOSS OF THE BEATIFIC VISION OF GOD.

WE have already spoken of many and very terrible chastisements inflicted on the damned, but these are but a very insignificant portion of the whole. They are countless in number; and so great and awful that, as St. Augustine says, all the

suffering of this world is as nothing when compared with the everlasting fire and torments of hell. Just as the Apostle Paul says: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him," so it may be said: Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, what punishments God hath prepared for those on whom His just judgments fall. And when we read the fearful chastisements wherewith God threatens to overwhelm, even in this world, the transgressors of His holy law, may we not feel sure that He will pour out all the fury of His anger upon those bold sinners who set at naught His warnings, and with fiendish malice, persist in their iniquity unto their life's end? Remember what God said to the people of Israel: "A fire is kindled in My wrath, and shall burn even to the lowest hell; and shall devour the earth with her increase, and shall burn the foundations of the mountains. I will heap evils upon the transgressors of My law, and will spend My arrows among them. They shall be consumed with famine, and birds shall devour them with a most bitter bite; I will send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the fury of serpents. Without the sword shall lay them waste, and terror within, both the young man and the virgin, the sucking child with the man in years" (Deut. xxxii. 22-25). Holy Scripture contains many similar and equally appalling menaces. There is no doubt that in the next world, where justice, not mercy, will rule, God will chastise the insolent violators of His holy commandments with an unsparing hand. The punishments of eternity will be without number and without limit. The damned will be encompassed with trouble and sorrow, with agony and torments innumerable. St. Bernard says the pains of the damned are countless, no mortal tongue can enumerate them. Yet of all these pains, that which gives the keenest anguish is being deprived of the vision of God. It will never be given to the damned to behold the divine countenance. This pain will far outweigh all the other torments of which we have spoken. It is impossible for mortal man to understand how this can be so great an affliction for the damned. Yet such is the teaching of the Fathers; they all maintain that there is nothing which the lost bewail so bitterly as being shut out forever from the vision of God. Whilst we live in this world, we think but little of the vision of God, and what it would be to us to be deprived of it eternally. This arises from the bluntness of our perception, which prevents us from comprehending the infinite beauty and goodness of God, and the delight experienced by those who behold Him face to face. But after death, when we are freed from the trammels of the body, our eyes will be opened, and we shall at least to some extent perceive that God is the supreme and infinite Good, and the enjoyment of Him our highest felicity.

And then such an eager desire will take possession of our soul to gaze upon and enjoy this supreme Good, that she will be irresistibly drawn to God, and will long with all her powers to contemplate His ineffable beauty. And if on account of her sins she is deprived of this beatific vision, it will cause her the most intense anguish. No grief, no torture known in this world can be in any wise likened to it. St. Bonaventure bears witness to this, when he says: "The most terrible penalty of the damned is being shut out forever from the blissful and joyous contemplation of the Blessed Trinity." Again, St. John Chrysostom says: "I know many persons only fear hell because of its pains, but I assert that the loss of the celestial glory is a source of more bitter pain than all the torments of hell." The evil one himself was made to acknowledge this, as we read in the legends of Blessed Jordan, at one time General of the Dominican Order. For when Jordan asked Satan, in the person of one who was possessed, what was the principal torment of hell, he answered: "Being excluded from the presence of God." "Is God then so beautiful to look upon?" Jordan inquired. And on the devil replying that He was indeed most beautiful, he asked further: "How great is His beauty?" "Fool that thou art," was the rejoinder, "to put such a question to me! Dost thou not know that His beauty is beyond compare?" "Canst thou not suggest any similitude," Jordan continued, "which may give me to some extent at least an idea of the divine beauty?" Then Satan said: "Imagine a crystal sphere a thousand times more brilliant than the sun, in which the loveliness of all the colors of the rainbow, the fragrance of every flower, the sweetness of every delicious flavour, the costliness of every precious stone, the kindliness of men and the attractiveness of all the angels combined; fair and precious as this crystal would be, in comparison with the divine beauty, it would be unsightly and impure." "And pray," the good monk inquired, "what wouldst thou give to be admitted to the vision of God?" And the devil replied: "If there were a pillar reaching from earth to heaven, beset with sharp points and nails and hooks, I would gladly consent to be dragged up and down that pillar from now until the Day of Judgment, if I could only be permitted to gaze on the divine countenance for a few brief moments." Hence we may gather how infinite is the beauty of the face of God, if even the spirit of evil would submit to such physical torture as he describes for the sake of enjoying for a few moments the sight of that gracious and majestic countenance. There is therefore no doubt that nothing is a source of such anguish to the devils and the damned as being deprived of the beatific vision of God. Consequently, if God were to send an angel to the portals of hell, with this message to the wretched denizens of that place of torment: "The Almighty has in His mercy had compassion on you, and He is willing you should be released from one of the penalties you endure; which shall it be?" what thinkest thou would be the reply? They would all as one man exclaim: "O good

angel, pray God that if only of His bounty He would no longer deprive us of the sight of His countenance!" This is the one favour they would implore of God. Were it possible for them, in the midst of hell-fire, to behold the divine countenance, for the joy of it they would no longer heed the devouring flames. For the vision of God is so beautiful, so blissful, so full of rapture and infinite delight, that all the joys and attractions of earth cannot compare with it in the remotest degree. In fact, all celestial happiness, how greatsoever it might be, would be turned to bitterness if the vision of God was wanting; and the redeemed would choose rather to be in hell, if they could there enjoy that beatific vision, than be in heaven without it. Just as the privilege of being holding the divine

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countenance constitutes the chief felicity of the blessed, the one without which all others would be no happiness at all, so it is the chief misery of hell, that the lost souls should for ever be excluded from it. On this subject St. John Chrysostom says: "The torments of a thousand hells are nothing in comparison to the anguish of being banished from everlasting bliss and the vision of God." To realize, in some measure, how great this pain of loss is, we should bear in mind that we have been created by God to be forever happy. This love of happiness, this yearning for it, which every one of us feels in his heart, will never be destroyed, not even in hell. During this life men, impelled by this desire and blinded by passion, seek happiness in riches, in honours, in sensual gratification. These vain images of happiness deceive us so long as our soul is united with our body. But after the soul has severed her connection with the body, all these false, fleeting pleasures disappear, and she becomes aware that God alone is the source of all happiness, and that she can find happiness solely in the possession of Him. No longer deceived by false appearances, no longer blinded by passion, she perceives clearly the ineffable, ravishing beauty of God and His infinite perfections; she sees His infinite power in creating the world, His infinite wisdom in governing it, His excessive love for her in becoming man, in dying for her, in giving Himself to her as the food of her soul in the Blessed Sacrament, in destining her to share His own happiness forever in heaven. This knowledge of the grandeur, of the goodness and loveliness of God will remain deeply impressed on her for all eternity. She will also see the justice of the punishments which God inflicts forever in hell upon all those who do not keep His commandments. Then the reprobate soul, yearning after happiness, and feeling irresistibly drawn to God, who alone can make her happy, endeavours to rush to God with all the impetuosity of her nature, in order to behold Him, to enjoy Him, to be united to Him; but she finds herself repelled with infinite force

from God, and hated by Him on account of her sins. Were all the riches, honours and pleasures of the world now offered to that soul, she would turn away from them, and would even curse them all, for she yearns for God alone, and can be happy only in God. The reprobate soul in hell, spurred on by frightful pains, looks about her for some alleviation, for some word of comfort; but not even a sympathizing look greets her, for she is surrounded by cruel devils and bitter enemies. Not meeting with any compassion where she is, she raises her eyes to heaven, and beholds it so beautiful, so enchanting, so delightful, so full of true happiness. She remembers that she was created and destined to enjoy its bliss, and now, in the midst of her most excruciating pains, she longs for its pleasures with a still more indescribable yearning, and makes extraordinary efforts to go there, but she cannot leave her abode of torment. No one in heaven seems to take any notice of her. She sees the throne that God, in His goodness, had prepared for her, now occupied by someone else! There is no longer any room for her in heaven. She beholds there some of her relatives, of her companions and acquaintances; but they do not heed her. She beholds all the elect in heaven full of joy and gladness. They do not even sympathize with her, but as the Psalmist sings, "the just will rejoice when he shall see the revenge" (Ps. Ivii. ii). In vain the reprobate soul calls on the saints, on the Blessed Virgin and on our divine Savior Himself. She feels drawn to God by an irresistible impulse, and understands that God alone can quench her thirst for enjoyment and make her happy. She longs to see and possess Him; she repeatedly endeavours to spring towards Him, but she feels herself repulsed by Him with invincible force; she beholds herself the object of divine wrath, of the divine anathema. She is aware that her

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case is hopeless, and that she shall never be admitted into the mansions of the blessed, or leave the abode of endless misery. Despair seizes her; she utters the most fearful imprecations against God and the elect, against heaven, against herself, her parents, her companions, against all creatures. All hell resounds with her horrid blasphemies, and she becomes, in her ravings, an object of terror to all the other reprobates.

CHAPTER VII. THE WORM THAT DIETH NOT.

OUR divine Savior says: "If thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life, maimed, than, having two hands, to go into hell, into the fire that cannot be quenched, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished. And if thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter lame into life, than, having two feet, to be cast into the hell of unquenchable fire, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished.

And if thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out; it is better for thee with one eye to enter the kingdom of God, than, having two eyes, to be cast into the hell of fire, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished" (Mark ix. 4247). By these words our blessed Redeemer wished to impress on our minds the necessity of avoiding the occasions of sin and of making even the most painful sacrifices to avoid sin and thus escape the endless pains of hell. He, moreover, wished to engrave deeply in our minds the fact that two of the most fearful torments of hell are its unquenchable fire and its never-dying worm. We have seen in a foregoing chapter in what consists the terrible fire of hell. It now remains to us to examine in what consists "the worm that dieth not." All the senses of the reprobate have each their peculiar punishment; their reason, or intellect, is punished by the pain of loss, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, a punishment far surpassing that of the senses. The memory of the reprobate is tormented by "the worm that dieth not," that is by a most keen and constant remorse of conscience, which will give them no rest. The lost sinner will remember how many graces and means of salvation he had during life to save his soul; how God sent him so many holy inspirations, how he received so many good instructions, how he had the grace of prayer within his power to enable him to practise the virtues of his state, to overcome temptation, to keep the commandments of God and of His Church; how his pious friends exhorted him to lead a good life both by their exhortations, but especially by their good example; how he had so many opportunities of instructing himself in his obligations by the hearing of the word of God and the reading of good books, and of strengthening himself in the discharge of his duties by the reception of the sacraments and by the practice of devotion to the Blessed Virgin! The lost sinner will, in a word, remember with how little trouble he might have saved his soul and avoided hell. He will say to himself: "So little effort was required for my salvation; even after my numerous sins a good confession would have sufficed. But through shame, through human respect, I did not make it. How foolish I was! How often did my conscience, my family, my friends urge me to go to confession! But it was all in vain. Others committed greater sins than I did, but they bewailed them, went to confession and changed their life, and now they are enjoying unspeakable happiness in heaven! And as for me, I am lost forever, and that through my own fault, for I had at my disposal a superabundance of means of salvation.

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But now repentance is unavailing, it is too late!" But let us consider the expressions of regret of the various lost sinners. Their sorrow is vain, for, like that of Judas, it is the sorrow of despair." During life," these lost sinners will say

to themselves," I loved ease and comfort and luxury, fine garments, costly jewellery and princely mansions. To gain these I did not scruple to defraud my neighbour in every available way. I stole from my employers, I took false oaths, I joined secret societies, I even sold my virtue! I stayed away from Mass, I ate meat on forbidden days, I neglected the sacraments, I went so far as to deny my faith. I contracted marriage before a civil magistrate, or before a heretical minister; I contracted a mixed marriage without dispensation; I got a divorce and then ventured to break the laws of God and of the Church by getting married again! I wished to be free, to do just as I pleased. The laws of God and of His Church forbade me to frequent dangerous occasions, and I spurned these laws because I wished to enjoy myself and gratify my passions by going with persons and into places that were dangerous to me, and thus I fell repeatedly into sins, even the most shameful. God commanded me to be pure and chaste, and I took delight in gratifying my basest passions in every possible way, and sought every occasion of doing so. How criminally I acted in neglecting to give my children a religious education, and thus caused them to lose their souls! During life I was fond of listening to and joining in backbiting, calumny, obscene discourses, and even irreligious conversations. I loved to read filthy novels and to gaze on immodest pictures and objects. While on earth, I yielded to my passion for strong drink, and indulged in it to excess, until I degraded myself below the brute and committed crimes innumerable against my wife and children, against my neighbour. During life I delighted in cursing, swearing, in uttering fearful oaths and imprecations and in quarrelling, in gambling and in almost every crime. And now I find myself in the gloomy prison of hell, in company of a countless multitude of villains, murderers, of the most degraded beings that have ever lived I have no longer a loving parent, a loving child, a sympathizing friend. No; all the ties of friendship, all the ties of nature, are forever broken, forever turned into devilish hate. Every evil spirit, every reprobate insults me, curses me, tortures me, seeks to make me suffer the more. I must submit to all this, because during life I refused to submit to the holy will of God. I could so easily have been saved, and now I am lost, lost forever, and that through my own fault! Never shall I see God, never shall I enjoy the delights of heaven, never more shall I be released from these terrible torments. It is now too late!" All this, and much more, will the worm of conscience say to the damned, stinging him with reproaches so relentlessly that he will almost be driven crazy with despair. In fact, the damned will rave and rage as if they were possessed, and will invoke curses on themselves. But all in vain; it is too late for repentance. This terrible remorse will do nothing towards atoning for their sins, it will only add to their anguish. Consider this, obdurate sinner, who dost sin so boldly, and even when thy conscience pricks thee, turnest a deaf ear to its

reproaches. Be assured that one day thy own conscience will be thy tormentor, and will plague thee more pertinaciously than the demons themselves. If thou dost desire

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to escape this never-ending misery, listen to the voice of conscience now, follow its counsel when it bids thee abstain from doing evil, and urges thee to do that which is right

CHAPTER VIII. ON ETERNITY.

IN the preceding pages some slight portrayal of the torments of hell has been placed before the reader; now eternity is the subject that must occupy our attention, one on which it is not easy to write or speak. The torments of hell are all so horrible, so appalling, that they are enough to make the bravest man tremble. But the thought of eternity is so awful that the serious consideration of it is almost enough to deprive one of one's senses. For in this world, however afflicted a man may be, he has one sure source of solace, the knowledge that, sooner or later, his misery will end. It appertains to human nature to get weary of everything after a time, even things that are agreeable to our nature and suited to our taste. If a man were forced to sit all day long at table, he would get a disgust of the viands before him. If one were made to sleep day and night for a whole week in the softest and most comfortable bed, how long the time would seem to him. If the most ardent lover of the dance were compelled to continue this favourite amusement day and night without rest, he would acquire a strong distaste for it. And if this is the case with things that are congenial to our nature and inclinations, what would it be in regard to those which are unpleasant and repugnant to us? If a small stone got into one's shoe, and if as a penance one had to keep it there for a whole week, this would seem almost intolerable. And if a slight pain or inconvenience becomes terribly irksome after a time, how can a serious illness, or real discomfort, be borne continually without murmuring and impatience? If it were possible that a wretched sinner could be condemned to lie in a furnace, bound hand and foot, for a whole year, would not the suffering deprive him of reason? No one could be so hard hearted as not to feel the deepest compassion for any one thus tormented. Now look down into the abyss of hell, and there thou wilt see thousands and thousands of these unhappy creatures in the lake of fire and torment. Many of them have already spent twenty, a hundred, a thousand, even five thousand years in this dreadful state of suffering. But what is before them? Not five thousand years more, not a hundred thousand, not a thousand thousand of this terrible agony, they must endure it forever and ever; an eternity is before them, without comfort or solace, without grace or mercy, without merit or recompense, without the faintest hope

of deliverance. This is what renders the torment of the damned so immeasurable; this is what drives them to fury and despair. What dost thou imagine that eternity really is, or what its duration will be? Eternity is something that has no beginning and no end. It is time which is always present and never passes away. Thus the torments of the damned will never end, never pass away. When a thousand years have gone by, another thousand will commence, and so on for evermore. None of the damned can reckon how long they have been in hell, because there is no succession of day and night, no division of time, but continual and eternal night from the first moment of their entrance into hell for ever more. And if thou wouldst conceive some faint idea of eternity, suppose the whole terrestrial globe to be composed of millet seeds, and suppose that every year a bird came, and picked out one of those tiny seeds, what an infinite number of years must elapse before the whole earth was eaten up in this way.

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Nay, how many thousand years must pass before one little hillock was consumed. It is impossible to make any estimate of the number. Thou mayst perhaps think that it would take all eternity to destroy the earth by that slow process. But believe me, it might be destroyed many times over before eternity could end. For the earth must at last come to an end, even if only once in a century one single grain was taken from the whole, but eternity cannot end, for nothing can be taken from it. How terrible is this thought! It is indeed appalling when one attempts to realize it. The damned would be joyful, they would give God thanks, if they could hope, after millions and millions of years of torment, to be at last released from their misery. But there is no hope at all of their final release from the pains of hell. No one who thinks seriously of this can fail to be awestruck and horrified. O God, how terrible Thou art! How great is Thy severity! How canst Thou, the Father of mercies, see these unhappy creatures condemned to such punishments forever and ever, how canst Thou hear unmoved their despairing cries! All this teaches us how grievous every mortal sin must be, since Thou, the all-merciful God, canst sentence the sinner to eternal damnation for one mortal sin. O Christian, I beseech thee, in the name of all that is holy, do not sin so lightly, do not think so little of mortal sin, see how dreadful is the chastisement inflicted upon the unfortunate sinners. It may perhaps appear scarcely credible to thee that God, whose mercies are infinite, could possibly inflict upon one of His frail creatures a neverending punishment for one single mortal sin. Yet so it is; and it is even true that a man who has led a pious life will, if before his death he should have the unspeakable misfortune to commit a mortal sin, and die impenitent, be consigned to eternal perdition. The

Psalmist could not help expressing his astonishment at this; in fact he appears to think it hardly possible. Listen to his words: "I thought upon the days of old, and I had in my mind the eternal years. And I meditated in the night with my own heart, and I was exercised and I swept my spirit. Will God then cast off forever? or will He never be more favourable again? or will He cut off His mercy forever, from generation to generation? or will God forget to show mercy? or will He in His anger shut up His mercies?" (Ps. Ixxvi. 6-10.) In another Psalm he answers these questions: "Man shall not give to God his ransom, nor the price of the redemption of his soul; he shall labour forever, and still live unto the end," that is to say he shall be tormented forever, and yet live on (Ps. xlviii. 9, 10). The reason wherefore the all-merciful God punishes mortal sin with an eternal punishment, and nevermore pardons it, is because the sinner, when he is damned, will not awaken contrition and sorrow within his heart, or ask forgiveness of God. For if any one dies in mortal sin, he is so hardened in it, that he will not desist from it to all eternity. And because God has consigned him to perdition, he conceives so intense a hatred against Him, that he would injure Him in every way that he could. Rather than humble himself before God, and implore His pardon, he would endure yet greater tortures in hell. Therefore because the sinner will not repent of his sins, nor ask pardon for his sins,

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he remains eternally in a state of sin, and because his sin is never expiated or repented of, the punishment is likewise eternal. For God does not cease to punish until the sinner repents and bewails his sin and asks for forgiveness. Hence it will be seen that God does no wrong to the reprobate when He subjects him to everlasting chastisement, for divine justice demands that if the sin is eternal in its duration, the penalty of that sin must likewise be eternal. It may perhaps be surmised that the damned grow accustomed to their torments, and at length become insensitive and almost indifferent to them. This is far from being the case. The damned feel their torture to its full extent, and always in the same degree. Each one of the miserable denizens of hell feels his sufferings now as acutely as he did in the first hour of his damnation, and he will continue to feel them no less keenly after thousands and thousands of years have elapsed. Now because the damned know perfectly well that they will never be released from hell, but must remain there forever; because they know that the dreadful tortures they endure will never end; because they know that no created being will ever compassionate them, but all will acknowledge the justice of their doom; for this cause they begin to despair, and to curse themselves and all that the hand of God has created. Their despair only augments their sufferings. This we see from the example of our fellow creatures on earth, if they give way to

despair. It is impossible to do anything with a man who is in despair; no one can help or console him, no one can comfort him or bring him to reason. He looks like a spectre; he raves and rages like the very devil himself; he declares he will put an end to his life, that he will drown himself or hang himself; he destroys everything that comes in his way; he curses all men and all things. This the damned do in their despair, and thereby they torture themselves even more than the devils can torture them. They shriek and howl, they curse and swear, they storm and rage; in fact, they behave just as if they were fiends incarnate. In their fury and spite they attack one another with the fiercest animosity; nay, they endeavour by every possible means to strangle themselves in their frantic despair. Their efforts are, however, futile. All that they accomplish is to increase their torment, and inflict on themselves fresh pains. Would that every obdurate sinner would lay this to heart, and take heed, lest one day he become the prey of this eternal despair." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," says St. Paul (Heb. x. 31). If we now dread hell, we shall not have any reason to fear or endure it in the next life. Every one has sufficient grounds for dreading it. The just and holy should fear hell, because they may yet fall into it. So long as they remain on earth, they are surrounded by not only exterior, but

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also interior, dangers. Outside of them there is the world with its allurements, its scandals and temptations, and human respect. Within them dwell violent passions and a weak will. Only a single mortal sin suffices to cause their condemnation to the infernal abyss. How many are now in hell, who for a time were remarkable for their piety and virtue, but who gradually grew careless in the service of God, and finally fell into mortal sin and died without having become reconciled with God. Even the great St. Teresa was in danger of damnation, for God showed her the place destined for her in hell, if she did not give up certain faults. The greatest saints have shuddered and trembled at the thought of the danger they were in of committing mortal sin and of being condemned for it to the endless torments of hell. St. Peter of Alcantara, who performed such great penances, dreaded even in his last moments the danger of falling into hell. St. Augustine and St. Bernard were filled with terror at the very thought of hell and of the danger they were in of deserving it. The careless, the lukewarm Catholic should, above all, dread hell, for he is continually walking on the brink of the infernal abyss. He makes little of the precepts of hearing Mass, of the prescribed abstinence from flesh meat, he scruples not neglecting the religious training of his children, he associates with persons and frequents places that are to him an occasion of sin, he yields to impure thoughts, commits sins of impurity without remorse, gives way to his vindictive feelings against his

neighbour, appropriates to himself the goods of his neighbour, indulges to excess in eating and drinking, neglects prayer and the sacraments. Now is the time for him to be aroused from his life of sin, now is the time for him to give up sin and change his life, for if he defers doing so, it may soon be too late. This may, indeed, be the last warning that God gives him. Oh, if the damned could come back to life, to what penances and austerities would they not eagerly and cheerfully submit! The prophet Isaias asks: "Which of you can dwell with devouring fire?" (Is. xxxiii. 14.) Canst thou stand the fearful torments of hell for all eternity, thou who art so fond of comfort and so sensitive to the least pain? Which of you has deserved to dwell in hell? Every one of us already deserved, immediately after our first mortal sin, to be condemned to that abyss of misery and woe! It is owing to the divine mercy that we have not been so condemned. "Unless the Lord had been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell" (Ps. xciii. 17). We are certain of having deserved hell, but we are not so certain of having been forgiven." Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred" (Eccles. ix. i). What a dreadful uncertainty? How much should it cause us to tremble! Isaias asks again (xxxiii. 14): "Which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" The answer is: All those sinners who do not give up sin, who do not bewail and confess their sins and amend their life, shall dwell with everlasting burnings! Let us, dear reader, make every effort, strain every nerve, undergo every suffering, make every sacrifice in this life, that we may escape the horrible fate of those who fall victims, through their own fault, to the divine justice! No pain is too great, no sacrifice is too dear, when there is question of avoiding eternal torments. Let us then say with St. Augustine: "Lord, burn us here, cut and bruise us in this life, provided Thou spare us in eternity!"

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PART IV. ON HEAVEN. CHAPTER I. ON THE NATURE OF HEAVEN.

WE must not, as some do, picture to ourselves heaven as a purely spiritual realm. For heaven is a definite place, where not only God is, and the angels now are, but where Christ is also in His sacred humanity, and Our Lady with her human body. There, too, all the blessed will dwell with their glorified bodies after the Last Judgment. If heaven is a definite locality, it must accordingly be a visible, not a spiritual kingdom; for a place must in its nature be to some extent conformable to those who abide in it. Besides, we know that after the Last Judgment the saints will behold heaven with their bodily eyes, and consequently it must be a visible kingdom. We are ignorant of what the material structure of heaven will be composed, we only know that it will be something infinitely superior to and more costly than the matter of which the other spheres, the sun, the moon, and other heavenly bodies, are formed. For since God has created

heaven for Himself and for His elect, He has made it so beautiful and so glorious that the blessed will never tire of the contemplation of its splendours to all eternity. Yet, I repeat, it is not within the power of the writer to describe, nor within that of the reader to comprehend, what it is of which heaven is actually composed. Something may perhaps be learned concerning this from what St. Teresa writes. Speaking of herself, she says: "The Blessed Mother of God gave me a jewel, and hung around my neck a superb golden chain, to which a cross of priceless value was attached. Both the gold and the precious stones thus given to me are so unlike those which we have here in this world that no comparison can be instituted between them. They are beautiful beyond anything that can be conceived, and the matter whereof they are composed is beyond our knowledge. For what we call gold and precious stones beside them appear dark and lustreless as charcoal." From these words we may form some idea of the beauty, the rarity, the costly nature of the stones wherewith the walls of heaven are built. We gather from them that the light of heaven is so dazzling as not only to eclipse the sun and stars, but to cause all earthly brightness to appear as darkness. We have besides every reason to believe that in the light of heaven all the colors of the rainbow are seen to flash, giving it an indescribable charm to the eyes of the blessed. Moreover, the bodies of the redeemed are resplendent with light, and the more saintly their life on earth has been, the more brilliantly do they shine in heaven. What must be the glory of that celestial firmament, glittering with the radiance of many thousand stars! Nothing is more pleasing to the eye than light; how brilliant, how beautiful must the light of heaven be since, compared with it, the sun's bright rays are but darkness. How the redeemed must delight in the contemplation of this clear and dazzling brightness. O my God, grant me grace that on earth I may love the light and eschew the works of darkness, in order that I may attain to the contemplation of the eternal and perpetual light! Concerning the size of heaven all we know is incomprehensible.

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that it is immeasurable, inconceivable,

A learned divine, speaking on this subject, says: "If God were to make every grain of sand into a new world, all these innumerable spheres would not fill the immensity of heaven." St. Bernard also says that we are warranted in the belief that every one of the saved will have a place and an inheritance of no narrow limits assigned him in the celestial country. How immeasurably vast in extent must heaven then be! Well may the prophet Baruch exclaim: "O Israel, how great is the house of God, and how vast is the place of His possession? It is great and hath no end; it is high and immense" (Baruch iii. 24, 25). We can readily believe this, for we have before our eyes the boundless realms of space. But of

the nature of the infinite realms of heaven we know nothing, and yet we can to some extent picture them to our imagination. It would be against common sense to think that these vast celestial domains are empty and bare, that the great Artificer, to whom the creation of worlds is a very little thing, would leave them unbeautified and unadorned. If princes and lords fill every space, and leave no corner in their palaces or their grounds unembellished and unadorned, shall we suppose that the great King of heaven would permit His regal palace, His celestial paradise, to be lacking in magnificence and in beauty? What would there be to delight the senses of the saints if heaven were a large empty space? What enjoyment, except the beatific vision of God, would there be for them, if they stood all together in a barren plain, like sheep in a penfold? Are we not justified in believing that there are splendid and spacious mansions in heaven constructed of incorruptible materials? Nay, more, a learned expositor of Holy Scripture considers it probable that by the wondrous skill and wisdom of the great Creator, these fair palaces and dwellings are of varied form and size, some being lower, others higher, some more richly adorned than others. Towering above all, and surpassing all in grandeur and magnificence, the palace of the great King Jesus Christ stands pre-eminent; and next in splendour and dignity ranks the abode of our Sovereign Lady, the Queen of heaven. Then come the twelve palaces of the twelve apostles, which are so rich and beautiful that heaven itself marvels at their magnificence. Besides these are mansions and dwellings innumerable which render the heavenly Jerusalem indescribably imposing and attractive. These splendid abodes were created when heaven itself was made, and destined to be the dwellings of the redeemed. The Church teaches us, in the office for martyrs, that each one of the elect will have his own place in the kingdom of heaven. *Dabo sanctis meis locum nominatum in regno Patris mei, dicit Dominus. (In 2 noct. Antiph. I. de Com. pi. Martj.)* "I will give to My saints an appointed place in the kingdom of My Father." And the Royal Psalmist says: "The saints shall rejoice in glory; they shall be joyful in their beds" (Ps. cxlix. 5). We have also Christ's words: "Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity; that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings;" that is to say, spend what you have over and above on works of charity and benevolence, that these may prove as friends to you, who will obtain for you admittance into the eternal and celestial dwellings (Luke xvi. 9). Again: "In My Father's house there are many mansions." Hence it may be inferred that each one of the redeemed has his separate abode in heaven. For as a just and prudent father divides his real and personal property amongst his children, assigning to each one his particular share, so our heavenly

Father apportions to each of His elect a part of His celestial treasures, both visible and invisible, giving to each one more or less, according to the amount he deserves to receive. Who shall describe the majesty and glory of these heavenly mansions? If the kings and princes of this world build grand and costly palaces for themselves, what must be the splendour and beauty of the celestial city which the King of kings has built for Himself and those who love Him and are His friends? Hear what St. John says concerning this city: "An angel showed me the holy city Jerusalem, having the glory of God. The light thereof was like to a precious stone, as to the jasper stone, even as crystal. The city itself was of pure gold, like unto glass, and the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones" (Apoc. xxi. u, 18, 19). Speaking of the size of the city, the same apostle writes: "The angel that spoke with me had a measure of a reed of gold, to measure the city and the gates thereof, and the wall. And the city lieth in a four-square, and the length thereof is as great as the breadth; and he measured the city with the golden reed for twelve thousand furlongs, and the height and the breadth thereof are equal. And he measured the wall thereof an hundred forty-four cubits, the measure of a man, and used by the angel." A furlong is two hundred and twenty yards, and eight furlongs make a mile. It must be observed that the angel did not measure the circumference of the city, but only the length of the wall, which was twelve thousand furlongs. When this is multiplied by four, it gives forty-eight thousand furlongs as the circumference of the city, that is equivalent to six thousand miles. To people a city of this size many thousand millions of inhabitants would be needed. From the information given by St. John, who tells us that the length, the breadth, and the height of the city are equal, we form some idea of the imposing height of this celestial structure. This city does not constitute the whole of the heavenly Jerusalem, it is the special dwelling place of the most high God, wherein the sacred humanity of Christ abides, together with many companies of angels and of the most eminent saints. For besides this august city, there are others innumerable in the heavenly plains, wherein the redeemed dwell in the society of angels. The more good a saint has done on earth, the grander is the residence assigned him in heaven. These palaces and mansions are transparent as crystal and built of precious stones of the costliest kind. And we may add on the authority of a learned theologian, that the blessed hold intercourse with one another, and meet together to laud and magnify the omnipotence of the Most High, who prepared for them such glorious abodes, and join in extolling His wisdom and His love. Dost thou not, O my soul, feel an intense longing to behold this heavenly city, and, what is more, to dwell therein for evermore? We esteem it a pleasure to visit a fine city, renowned for its architectural and other attractions; and many are the travellers who journey all over the world to see foreign towns, and feast

their eyes on their beauty. What are these cities of earth in comparison with the celestial cities? Could we but look into it for a few moments only, what wondrous things we should behold! We should assuredly exclaim, in the words of King David: "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God. Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord; they shall praise thee forever and ever. For better is one day in Thy courts above thousands; I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners" (Ps. Ixxxiii.). If we may venture to speak of the interior of the celestial realm, we may assume that the vast, immeasurable space of heaven does not only contain these heavenly cities, but much more besides,

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all of which enhances the delights of that blissful land. For as kings and princes on earth have gardens and pleasure grounds laid out beside their palaces, where they amuse themselves in the summer season, so, many theologians assert, there are heavenly paradises, that afford increased delight to the blessed. For not only the souls of the saved, but their glorified bodies also, will be conducted by the angels of God into heaven after the Day of Judgment. St. Augustine, St. Anselm, and many other saints do not hesitate to maintain that there are in heaven real trees, real fruits, and real flowers, indescribably attractive and delightful to the sight, taste, smell, and touch, different from anything we can imagine. In the revelations of the saints mention is made of the gardens in heaven, and the flowers that blossom there; and we know it is recorded in the legend of St. Dorothea, that she sent to Theophilus by the hands of an angel a basket of flowers culled in the gardens of the celestial paradise, of such surpassing beauty that the sight of them led him to become a Christian, and lay down his life for the faith of Christ. We also read in the life of St. Didacus, that on coming to himself after a trance into which he fell shortly before his death, he cried aloud: "O what flowers there are in paradise! what flowers there are in paradise!" Similar incidents are frequently to be met with in the legends of the saints. Consider how delightful it will be for the happy ones who are saved to wander in the celestial gardens, and contemplate those fair flowers. How pleasing the lovely blossoms are to the eye, how delicious is the fragrance they exhale! Of a truth, if a man were to obtain possession of a single one of these heavenly flowers, it would produce on him the same effect as on Theophilus. He would be spoiled for all the beauty of earth, and would strive with his whole soul after the perfect beauty of heaven. Meditate often, therefore, upon the things of heaven; raise thy eyes and thy heart to the bright firmament above, and awaken

within thy heart by this or other means a keen desire to behold the mansions of the eternal Father, and to dwell in them for evermore. O God, who hast enriched the heavenly Jerusalem with such beauty in order that we poor children of earth might have a greater longing to behold it, I beseech Thee, inflame my heart with an ardent affection and longing for the celestial abode which Thou hast prepared for us. For blessed are they, O Lord, who dwell in Thy house; they shall enjoy consummate felicity for evermore, and for evermore they will praise the power, the wisdom, the bounty of our God. Would that I were worthy to be associated with that sinless company, to behold that fair city, to become one of its happy denizens. Grant me this grace, O God, I pray Thee; let me not be excluded from the number of Thine elect. O blessed saints of God, you who dwell within the courts of the heavenly Jerusalem, I humbly entreat you to intercede for me, that in His infinite clemency the God of mercy may grant me so to live that I may be found worthy to be admitted to your blissful company. Hear the prayers of Thy saints, O most compassionate God, and through the merits of Jesus Christ give me a share in that inheritance which He purchased for us with His precious blood. May the

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things of this world lose all value in my eyes, and do Thou make my heart to glow with the burning desire to behold Thee and the city that Thou hast built, the heavenly Jerusalem. Amen.

CHAPTER II. ON THE JOYS OF HEAVEN.

Now that we have meditated upon the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of God, we will proceed to consider the happiness which the saints who dwell therein enjoy, both in regard to body and soul. It is true as yet they have not their bodies, as a general rule, but at the Last Day they will all have them again, and those bodies will then be so beauteous, that nothing in the world can compare with them. And this will principally be because every member will be endowed with four qualities or attributes, namely: beauty, impassibility, agility, and subtlety. By reason of its beauty or glory the body of each one of the elect will shine like a star, yet, as one star differs from another in glory, so the saints will shine with greater or less splendour, according as their lives upon earth have been more or less holy. In these glorified and radiant bodies the blessed will be so inexpressibly beautiful, that if a mortal man were now to behold one of these resplendent beings, he would be dazzled by its brilliance and be ready to expire for joy of heart. In her revelations to St. Bridget, the Blessed Mother of God once said: "The saints stand around my Son like countless stars, whose glory is not to be compared with any temporal light. Believe me, if the saints could be seen shining with the glory they now possess, no human eye could endure their light

all would turn away, dazzled and blinded." Think what happiness it will be for thee, when thy body shines like the sun at midday. Everything that lives and moves rejoices in the light and warmth of the sun: it gladdens all the face of nature. In like manner thy body will be a joy and delight to thyself and all around thee in heaven, because of its beauty and its glory. The second attribute is impassibility, for the glorified body is incapable of suffering. It will never be sick or infirm, it will not grow old or unsightly. It will never again be inconvenienced by hunger or thirst, by heat or cold, by draught or dampness. It can nevermore be burned by fire, drowned in water, wounded by the sword or crushed beneath a weight; it will be immortal, unchangeable, eternally endowed with perfect health and unfailing strength. If any one on earth could purchase this gift of impassibility, how gladly would he give all he possessed to obtain it! The third attribute is agility. The glorified body will be able to traverse the greatest distance with the speed of thought. In one moment it can come down from heaven to earth; in one moment it can pass from one end of the heavens to the other, without labour, without fatigue, without difficulty. We often wish that we could fly like the birds, that we could speed on our way like clouds on the wings of the wind, that we could follow thought in its rapid flight. If it were possible to purchase this power, every one would part with all his worldly wealth for it, if only to obtain it for one single year. How is it, then, that thou dost take so little trouble to ensure for thyself the possession of this gift for all eternity? The fourth attribute of the glorified body is subtlety, which consists in the faculty of penetrating all matter, of passing in and out wheresoever it will. No wall is so thick, no iron gate so massive, no mountain so great as to form an obstacle to the glorified body. As the sun's rays pass through glass, so the bodies of the redeemed as they are in heaven, penetrate all matter, however dense and solid it

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may be. They can also make themselves visible or invisible at will. What wouldst thou not give to become possessed of such a faculty? How great is Thy bounty, almighty God, towards Thine elect! Thou bestowest upon them precious and sublime gifts, that no amount of this world's riches can purchase. Who would not gladly spend his life in Thy service and suffer afflictions in this world in order to possess these inestimable gifts to all eternity? Ask this poor frail body if it would not fain shine as the light, be exempt from suffering, move with the speed of thought, be unfettered as a spirit? To own such powers would indeed be a joy and a consolation unspeakable. Wouldst thou not consent to have a hard penance laid on thee for a whole year, if at the end these attributes were bestowed on thee? If so, then do not esteem it a grievance to lead here below a

life of penance, in the hope that these fair gifts may be thine during all eternity. See that here on earth thou love the light, the light of good works; bear all pain and tribulation with patience, be prompt and zealous in the service of God; mortify within thyself more and more all sensual desires, and thou wilt assuredly be the happy possessor hereafter of these four attributes of the glorified body. We will now turn our attention to the pleasure and gratification which the blessed will experience by means of these five senses; and first of all we will inquire what satisfaction they will find in their sight. The power of sight will be so perfect that nothing can be hid from their eyes. They will see what is distant as distinctly as what is near, the smallest object as plainly as the largest, the dark will be to them as clear as the light. Their vision will be so undimmed that they will be able to gaze without flinching at the sun, even were its light a hundredfold more dazzling. Their sight will be so keen that no obstacle will offer a hindrance to it. Now think what delight awaits thy sense of sight, when thy eyes first rest upon the glories of heaven. First they will behold the city itself, with its palaces and mansions, whereof the splendour and majesty is so great that the contemplation of these magnificent structures would afford pleasurable employment for a whole eternity. In the second place, thou wilt gaze with delight upon the fair flowers, the trees, the gardens, and all the other beauteous sights that will arrest the eye in heaven. Thirdly, it will be an unspeakable pleasure to thee to behold thyself and all the other saints arrayed in beauty, glory, splendour, grace and majesty far surpassing anything seen in this world. Fourthly, thou wilt see the incomparable beauty of the angels, for it is believed that those celestial spirits will assume bodies of great loveliness formed from the air, in order to render themselves visible to the blessed. This opinion is held by St. Anselm. And if the beauty of an angel immeasurably exceeds all human beauty, wilt thou not rejoice in the contemplation of so many thousands of angelic beings, all of surpassing loveliness, for all eternity? Fifthly, on nothing will thine eyes rest with such keen delight as on the inexpressible beauty of Jesus and Mary, whose glorified bodies are so irresistibly charming, attractive, beautiful and majestic, that if the damned were permitted to behold them, they would no longer find hell intolerable. Now consider what a fertile source of delight it will be, to be continually and forever surrounded by sights so enchanting and so sublime. Our natural inclination leads us here below to take long

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journeys for the sake of seeing some beauteous sight, to expend large sums to obtain some beauteous object, and even to imperil our souls in our eager search after what is beautiful. Since the love of the beautiful is so deeply rooted in our

nature, how strange that we do not yearn for the beauty of heaven. Why do we not close our eyes to the attractions of earth, that we may be found worthy to open them upon the splendours of heaven? From sight let us pass on to hearing. It would be unwise were we to attempt to describe the gratification it will be to the ear to hear the canticles of the angels, and the soft music of their harps. The nine choirs of angels will sing the praise of God, and the blessed will join them not only in heart, for they will mingle their voices also in the sweet harmony. Thus the powers of both soul and body will be exercised, and the praises of God will ascend in melodious hymns and celestial songs. For if we mortals are impelled by fervent love and heartfelt joy to lift our voice in song, how much more will the holy angels and blessed saints do so, who are all aflame with the love of God, and filled with joy unspeakable. Their hymns of praise will resound without ceasing through the courts of heaven. In a prophetic spirit the elder Tobias says: "The gates of Jerusalem shall be built of sapphire and of emerald, and all the walls thereof round about with precious stones, all its streets shall be paved with white and clean stones, and alleluia shall be sung in its streets" (Tob. xiii. 21, 22). These words seem to indicate that the redeemed will walk at their pleasure with one another in the heavenly Jerusalem, their voices uniting in happy alleluias. In wondrous harmony the angels and saints will praise and magnify their God. What happiness for them, O my God, what sweetness, what joy! If sweet songs rejoice us here, and awaken elevated feelings within our breast, the canticles of the angels and saints will indeed cause us rapture and delight, when we have the felicity to be admitted into their blessed company. My God and my all! how great is the abundance of the favours Thou hast prepared for them that love Thee! My heart thirsts for the stream of celestial joys. Truly blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord; they shall praise Thee forever and ever. The saints shall rejoice and be glad in this glory, the high praises of God shall be in their mouth. Would that it were even now granted me to join these citizens of heaven and with them to extol Thy name forever! When will the hour come, that happy hour in which I shall be privileged to behold the majesty of Thy house? Until it comes, I shall bear all the sufferings and tribulations of this world with patience, and will brighten my journey through this valley of tears by singing Thy praise; I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall be ever in my mouth. Magnify the Lord with me, ye angels and saints; let us extol His name evermore. From the sense of hearing we will pass on to that of smell. The delicious odours of paradise surpass anything that man can imagine. The fairest lilies, roses, violets, carnations, and other rare and lovely flowers grow in the gardens of the heavenly paradise, and their fragrance is so delightful, that if a man had but a petal of one of those flowers, he would be overcome by the sweetness of the perfume.

" Israel [that is the company of the redeemed] shall spring as the lily, and his smell shall be that of Libanus" (Osee xiv. 6). Experience has abundantly shown that the bodies of the saints whilst in their graves already emit a fragrant smell; how much more powerful will that fragrance be when they are again raised to life and glorified. Above all the bodies of Christ and of His Blessed Mother will exhale so sweet a perfume that all heaven will be pervaded by it. How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord, wherein we shall be invigorated by the aromatic odours that environ us! For if sweet odours refresh and revive us here below, the odours of paradise will surely give strength and refreshment to the blessed. Even the sense of taste will be gratified in heaven, not, it is true, by the consumption of ordinary food, but in a manner whereof we can as yet form no conjecture. The blessed will taste a sweet sustenance which will satisfy them, as we learn from the words of the Royal Psalmist: "They shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house, Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure" (Ps. xxxv. 9). The sense of touch will have its own peculiar enjoyment. The more one has mortified himself here on earth, the greater will be his bodily well-being hereafter. St. Anselm says: "In the future life the saints will experience a feeling of untold comfort and ease. This pleasurable sensation will pervade every member, producing a wondrous sense of peace and contentment." In fact, what can be wanting to the glorified body in heaven? It is in the enjoyment of perpetual health, perpetual rest, perpetual happiness, so that in the superabundance of joy and satisfaction it can scarce realize how enviable is its condition. Finally, the redeemed will take very great pleasure in beholding one another, in conversing with one another, in kindly intercourse and friendly communication. Think how beautiful a sight it will be to see hundreds of thousands of beings in all the splendour of their glorified state. If on earth we esteem it a pleasure to look upon a handsome face, we can appreciate in some slight degree what it will be in heaven, the lowliest of whose inhabitants is possessed of a beauty far exceeding the personal attractions of any mortal man. Moreover, the redeemed are united together by the bond of mutual charity, for they love one another more dearly than the most affectionate of brothers and sisters. If they have never met on earth, yet they know one another better than if they had been brought up together. Each one will know the incidents of his earthly career. Each one will be able to see into the other's heart, and know how great is the affection he feels for him. Each one will rejoice in the other's glory as much as if it were his own; and the lowliest in the kingdom of heaven exults as much in the glory of the highest as the latter can possibly do. This was explained to St. Augustine by St. John the Baptist in a vision." Know,"

he said to him," that on account of the inexpressible charity that the blessed have towards one another, that each takes no less pleasure in the exaltation of another than if it were his own. Nay, more, he who is greater wishes that the lower were equal to him, and even more honoured than himself; for in his triumph he, too, would triumph.

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" In like manner those who are in a lowly place rejoice in the glory of those who are in the highest place; they do not envy them, far from it. They would not desire the high position if the others had it not; they would rather give them a part of their own glory, were this possible." Hence it may be seen that the saints take pleasure in the splendour wherewith their fellows are crowned, and entertain for each and all of them a heartfelt affection. More especially do they love one who has, by word or example, helped them on their way to heaven; to such a one they know not how they can sufficiently testify their gratitude. Each one will also feel a particular affection for the saint whom he chose as his patron upon earth, and whom he honoured with a special devotion; and this affection will be reciprocated by the object of it. Those who stood in this relation to one another will meet together more often; they will converse on holy subjects and mutually relate their experiences on earth, telling how marvellously the providence of God saved them from eternal perdition. In a word, the pleasures afforded to the redeemed by this intercourse will be innumerable, and they will do everything in their power to gratify and show kindness to one another. O God of all mercies! who would not desire to enter into this land of eternal peace, where are joys beyond all that mortal man can conceive, joys so many and so manifold, so wondrous and so sweet! Sometimes the pleasures of this world have such a fascination for a man, that he cannot renounce them, even though he sees hell open before him. And yet those pleasures are less than nothing in comparison with the joys of heaven; in fact, all the joys one can picture to one's self or desire for one's self cannot equal the least and the lowest of the joys that will be ours to all eternity! O my God, how unspeakable will be the bliss of heaven! May it be my happy lot to share in that felicity! Urged by this desire, I will give Thee no rest, every day I will implore Thee to take me to Thyself. I will detach my heart from this world, I will entirely renounce all earthly pleasures; all my aspirations, all my affections shall be fixed upon the heavenly treasures, and I will hold myself ready every day to quit this earthly scene. The sooner death comes to fetch me hence, the more welcome will it be, for I shall leave this land of exile and enter into my true country. God grant that so it may be. Amen.

CHAPTER III. THE JOYS OF HEAVEN (Continued).

WITH regard to the spiritual joys of the redeemed in heaven, they are in such

great abundance, that in speaking of them one does not know where to begin or where to end. Think of the spiritual consolations granted to eminent servants of God in this world. We know concerning some saints that their life on earth was more that of angels than of men, so frequently were they favoured with ecstasies, visions, interior lights, and divine consolations of all kinds. And yet all these favours were but as a drop out of the boundless ocean of celestial sweetness. What rapture it will be for holy souls in heaven to drink from the fountain-head, and draw freely from the inexhaustible source of all felicity! All the powers of the mind, the understanding, the memory, the will, the imagination, every thought, every desire, the whole intellectual being, elevated and perfected by God Himself, will be fully satisfied, and will add to and heighten the joys of the soul. With the understanding the blessed will behold all created things in the light of God, and thoroughly penetrate the secrets of nature. It is recorded of King Solomon that " God gave to Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, as the sand that is on the seashore. And the wisdom of Solomon surpassed the wisdom of all the Orientals and of the Egyptians, and he was wiser than all men. He also spoke three thousand parables, and his poems were a thousand and five. And he treated about

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trees from the cedar that is in Lebanon unto the hyssop that cometh out of the wall; and he discoursed of beasts, and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes. And they came from all nations to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who heard of his wisdom" (3 Kings iv. 29-34). We have never heard of wisdom equal to this, nor can we cease to wonder at the wide range and astuteness of this great king's understanding. Yet compared with the wisdom of the least of the saints in heaven, it ranks no higher than does the knowledge possessed by a child of three years old beside the erudition and wisdom of the most learned of men. For all the operations of nature, all the powers of the universe are open and revealed to the least of the saints in heaven. Nothing is hidden or mysterious in his eyes. He knows all that the Holy Trinity has accomplished from all eternity, in how marvellous a manner the heavens and the earth were created out of nothing, how wisely all has been ordered and maintained from the beginning to the end of time. He knows how the Son of God was begotten of the Father before all ages; he knows how the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son. He knows how Christ was born of an earthly mother without violation of her virginity; he knows all that Our Lord did and suffered during His whole life, and how each saint and servant of God lived for God and laboured in His service. All that is mysterious and incomprehensible to us in the Holy Scriptures, the mysteries of religion and of

nature, he understands without a moment's reflection. Hadst thou been on earth but a simple, illiterate peasant, on thy entrance into heaven thy eyes would be opened, and thou wouldst see clearly and understand all things perfectly. What joy, what happiness this knowledge and clear insight will be to thee! What grateful thanks thou wilt render to God for it! Secondly, in as far as their memory is concerned, the blessed will also find fullness of joy in heaven, for it will, like the understanding, be enlightened by God; and all the events of their past life will be as fresh and as distinct to their remembrance as if they beheld them inscribed on tablets before their eyes. Then they perceive by what a marvellous way God led them to their eternal goal, how mercifully He pardoned their transgressions, how He succoured them in the hour of temptation, and how He made all things work together for their good. This retrospect will arouse in the heart of each one the holiest gratitude towards God and oft-times they will give expression to it thus: O my God, whom I love above all things, how great are the gifts and graces Thou hast bestowed upon me, how generous Thou hast been towards me, how often Thou hast rescued me from the danger of falling into sin, how mercifully Thou hast preserved me from eternal damnation, and how wonderfully Thou hast guided me in the way of salvation! How can I sufficiently praise and magnify Thine infinite bounty? How can I sufficiently thank Thee and adore Thee for the benefits Thou hast lavished on me? Thirdly, the will of each one of the blessed will be crowned with felicity, and kindled with the love of God and of the blessed in whose company he is. The noblest pleasures a man can enjoy come from his will. A man is happy when all succeeds with him according to his wishes; when he acquires and possesses all that his heart can desire; when he is generally esteemed and praised by his fellow-men; when he loves, and is loved by the object of his affections. This and much more besides is the portion of the blessed, but in the highest degree and in the greatest possible perfection. The love of God for them, and their love of Him is so profound, that they are inflamed and consumed with divine charity, that their will resembles a live coal, glowing with light and heat, until it is absorbed by the fire of which it is a part. So it is with the saints in heaven; imbued with divine
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charity, they burn and shine in the light of God, and reflect His image more and more. St. John says: "We know that when He shall appear we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is" (1 John iii. 2). In the love of God and in union with Him they find such ineffable delight that, inebriated by the sweetness of divine charity they lose themselves in Him. There is no greater happiness upon earth than to love and be loved, and the more tender, pure and ardent this love is, the greater the joy and delight it affords us. Now the love of

heaven, the love of the redeemed for God and for one another, is the most tender, the most pure, the most ardent affection, an affection infinite and boundless; consequently it is a source of immense delight and happiness unspeakable. May the God of all grace make us partakers of this love, and we shall then know by experience that of which words fail to convey an idea. No one will be privileged to partake in this love, unless here below he lives in the love of God, and dies in His friendship. Let us therefore strive to increase within us this divine charity, that we may be admitted hereafter to the full enjoyment of His love. The beatific vision of the divine countenance is a joy above all joys, a delight far surpassing all the celestial pleasures of which we have spoken. Without this all other joys would lose their savour, they would be changed to bitterness. On one occasion, when the devil was speaking by the mouth of a person who was possessed, he said: "If the whole heavens were a sheet of parchment, if the whole ocean were ink, if every blade of grass were pen, and every man on earth a scribe, it would not suffice to describe the intense, immeasurable delight which the vision of God affords to the blessed." And at another time he said that if God would but vouchsafe to grant him the privilege of beholding His divine countenance for a few moments, he would, if it were possible, gladly bear in his own person all the torments of hell until the Day of Judgment. This teaches us that if a man spent his whole life in works of most severe penance, and after his death were permitted only for one instant to gaze on the face of God, he would have received an ample recompense for all his mortifications. Now consider how transcendent must be the bliss which the saints derive from the contemplation, the enjoyment, the possession of the supreme God! If to gaze on the divine countenance for one passing moment is a joy beyond all that a life of pleasure offers to the worldling, what rapture will it be to gaze for evermore, with undimmed eyes, on His infinite beauty, what rapture to call this supreme Good one's own for all eternity! God is a being in whom all that is most admirable and desirable exists in the highest degree. In Him is all that most attracts and fascinates us; clemency, beauty, justice, compassion, wisdom, majesty, every sweet and sublime attribute in its fullest perfection. From God proceeds all grace, all that we need for our spiritual and temporal welfare, all the happiness, the joy, the repose, the consolation, all the benefits and blessings which His creatures enjoy in heaven and on earth. And when the redeemed enter upon the contemplation of this infinite Good, upon the possession of this source of all that is to be loved and admired and longed for, their joy will indeed be full. What unspeakable delight it will afford them to understand the mystery of the Incarnation, the mystery of the Holy Eucharist! What unspeakable delight it will be to them to comprehend how God can be invisible Himself, and yet see everything; how He can Himself be unmoved, and

yet the source of all motion; how He can be Himself immutable, and yet the author of all change. These and many other mysteries will be made clear to the blessed in the light of God, and this fount of knowledge will not be exhausted to all

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eternity. The more they know God, the more will their desire to know Him better increase, and of this knowledge there will be no limit and no defect. Thus they will ever hunger, and yet be perfectly satisfied; this rich treasury will ever be open to them, and never will they exhaust all the wealth it contains. Meditate frequently on this subject, O reader, and excite within thy soul an earnest desire to enjoy God forever and ever. O my God and my all! Who art infinite beauty, infinite sweetness, infinite bounty! With all my heart I long after Thee. As the hart pants for the water-brooks, so my soul thirsts for Thee, the mighty and living God; when shall I come and appear before Thy presence? When will it be my happy lot to behold Thee, to enjoy Thee forever? I venture to hope that this joy may be mine; I humbly hope and trust in Thy infinite goodness, for Thou dost reject no one who comes to Thee with a contrite and loving heart. How rich, how happy, how joyful shall I be when I shall have this supreme Good for my own possession! I shall embrace Thee with reverent affection, I shall lose myself in Thee, when once I have Thee for my own. I am ready, I am desirous, O my God, to do all that lies in my power, to render myself worthy to be admitted into Thy presence. I am prepared to suffer all that my weak nature will enable me to bear. I am prepared to withdraw from the world, to renounce all earthly things in as far as the duties of my position permit. I am prepared to labour as far as in me lies, for Thy service; and this I will do in the hope of winning Thee, the infinite and eternal Good, and beholding for evermore Thy infinite beauty. Nay, even did I know that I should be lost, I would still love Thee. For I do not love Thee because I hope for eternal salvation through Thee, but I love Thee because Thou art perfect Beauty and infinite Goodness, worthy to be the sole object of our affections and aspirations. Thus believing and thus hoping, I desire to live and die, and I call the angels and saints to witness to the truth of what I say. And in attestation of the same I repeat with heart and voice: My God, I love Thee, not because I hope for heaven thereby; Nor because they who love Thee not Must burn eternally. Not with the hope of gaining aught, Not seeking a reward; But as Thyself hast loved me, O ever-loving Lord.

CHAPTER IV. ON THE NUMBER OF THE SAVED.

IN the three previous chapters it has been our pleasurable task to point out how beautiful is the celestial paradise, how great is the happiness enjoyed by the redeemed. And doubtless in the heart of each one of our readers a fervent desire

has arisen to gain admission to the realms of eternal light, and become a partaker of its joys. Perhaps each one will feel sure that his hopes in this respect will be fulfilled.

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It is, however, greatly to be feared that many a one will come short of the goal, and will be forever excluded from the kingdom of heaven, as this chapter is intended to demonstrate. Let me, however, beg all who peruse it, not to allow what is said to discourage them, and render them pusillanimous, but rather to let it increase in them the spirit of humility and salutary fear, and stimulate them to greater energy and diligence in working out their salvation, if this appear to them less easy than they were inclined to imagine. My only motive in writing this chapter is to open the eyes of the reader, and show him his danger. For were I not to do this he might go on blindly on the wrong road, and only become aware that it is the road to perdition when it is too late to retrace his steps, when the hand of death draws the veil from his eyes. Thereupon I consider that I shall do the wanderer a service if I enlighten him as to the risk he is incurring, and endeavour to direct his steps into the path to heaven. Let me ask thee, O reader, what proportion thinkest thou of all who live upon this earth will be saved? Half? or a third part? or perhaps a quarter? Alas, I fear, and not without good reason, that the number will not be nearly so large. Jesus Christ, who is eternal Truth, His holy apostles, and the Fathers of the Church, all tell us that so it will be. What does Christ say about the number of the elect? His words are these: "Many are called, but few are chosen." He repeats these words when He speaks of the guest who had not on a wedding garment: "Bind his hands and his feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness. For many are called, but few chosen." Were nothing more to be found to this intent in the whole of the Scriptures, this passage could not fail to alarm us. But there are many other similar ones, of which I will quote one or two. In the Gospel of St. Matthew we read that Our Lord said: "Enter ye in at the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth unto destruction, and many there are that go in thereat. How narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there are that find it" (Matt. vii. 13). Are not these words calculated to inspire us with anxiety and apprehension? May not we be amongst those who go in at the wide gate, who walk on the broad road that ends in everlasting perdition? In order that thou mayst better appreciate the meaning of Our Lords words, and perceive more clearly how few are the elect, observe that Christ did not say that those were few in number who walked in the path to heaven, but that there were but few who found that narrow way." How strait is the gate that leadeth unto life, and few there are that find it." It is as if the Savior intended to

say: The path leading to heaven is so narrow and so rough, it is so overgrown, so dark and difficult to discern, that there are many who, their whole life long, never find it. And those who do find it are exposed constantly to the danger of deviating from it, of mistaking their way and unwittingly wandering away from it, because it is so irregular and over grown. This St. Jerome says, in his commentary on the passage in question. Again, there are some who when they are on the right road, hasten to leave it, because it is so steep and toilsome. There are also many who are enticed to leave the narrow way by the wiles and deceits of the devil, and thus, almost imperceptibly to themselves, are led downwards to hell. From all that has been said we may gather that those are but few in number who find the way to heaven, and yet fewer are those who persevere in following it unto the end. Now because Christ knew that these words of His would be misinterpreted, and understood in a false sense by both believers and unbelievers, on another occasion He accentuated and emphasized

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what He had already said concerning the small number of the elect. For when one of the disciples asked Him: "Lord, are they few that shall be saved?" He answered and said: "Strive to enter by the narrow gate; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter and shall not be able" (Luke xiii. 24). Listen to the words of the divine Teacher. He bids us strive, take trouble, make use of all our powers in order to enter unto the narrow gate. And what is still more calculated to appall, He adds that many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able. If those who desire and endeavour to enter into the kingdom of heaven fail to do so, what will become of those who lead a careless, perhaps an ungodly life, and manifest no zeal, no interest in what concerns their eternal salvation?

We have already heard Christ three times declare to us that the number of the elect is small; that in proportion to the great mass of mankind only a few will be saved. And because He was aware that we should not lay this weighty truth to heart as we ought, He reiterates it in yet more explicit language. After He had told a rich man who came to Him to leave all his possessions and follow Him, and the man had gone away sorrowful, He said, addressing His disciples: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus again answering saith: Children, how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. Then the disciples wondered the more, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking on them saith: With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible unto God" (Mark x. 23-27).

Truly these words, coming from the lips of our divine Master, are enough to inspire us with profound alarm; they are almost enough to cause us to despond. For they expressly tell us that the work of our salvation is a work of immense difficulty, an almost miraculous achievement, and that it is well-nigh impossible for poor humanity to enter into the kingdom of heaven. It is in reality as much of a miracle for a man to escape everlasting perdition and to attain eternal felicity, as it would be for one man single-handed to vanquish and put to flight a whole army. For all the powers of hell are leagued together with the wicked world against us; all the powers of hell put their forces in array in order to conquer and enslave every one of us mortals. And with the awful powers of darkness the evil, crafty world makes common cause, and the concupiscences of the flesh do the same, for the purpose of compassing our ruin. Now, since there are so many adversaries who assail us, adversaries so crafty, so strong, so fierce, who can deem himself sure of victory? It is little short of a miracle if one escapes the clutches of foes so numerous and so formidable. Who can hope in his own strength to triumph over them? We must needs acknowledge that all who have overcome the evil enemy, the evil world, and their own evil proclivities, have been strengthened by God with His special assistance. Hence we see how toilsome and laborious a work it is to win heaven; and we learn the truth of Our Lord's words, when He said: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away" (Matt. xi. 12). For the consolation and encouragement of the Christian it must here be remarked that if the number of his enemies is so appallingly great, the number of his friends is still greater." Fear not, for there are more with us than with them." So spoke the prophet Eliseus to his frightened servant." And the Lord opened the eyes of the servant and he saw; and behold the mountain was full of horses and of chariots of fire"(4 Kings vi. 16). We are not left to do battle alone; our holy guardian angel and all the blessed spirits are on our side; we may rely on the powerful protection of the Mother of God, on the virtue of the sacraments, the merits of Christ's Passion, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the succour of Almighty God. By means of these mighty aids we shall overcome, if we fight bravely and do not weakly yield ourselves into captivity, as unhappily too many do. For these timid, slothful, spiritless persons delude themselves with the false hope that, after all, heaven is not hard to win. They think and say to themselves: It is not so bad a case as some would make out; Christ did not suffer for us for naught; if it were not God's will that we should be saved, He would not have created us for the enjoyment of heaven. These and similar words we hear from the lips of the children of this world; they live according to these notions, and succeed in

deceiving themselves and others. That such persons are in error, and that they are walking on the broad road that leads to destruction, Holy Scripture leaves us no doubt. The whole teaching of the Gospel is wholly at variance with the principles they follow; and those who live a careless life and indulge their senses are repeatedly warned that eternal death will be their portion. Listen to the admonition Christ addresses to the votaries of this world and the lovers of its luxuries: "Woe to you that are rich, for you have your consolation. Woe to you that are filled, for you shall hunger; woe to you that now laugh, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when men shall bless you," that is, when men of bad principles, opposed to the maxims of religion, applaud your words, your actions, your opinions. This denunciation from Our Lord's lips may well fill us with dismay. What object in life have the great majority of mankind? What is it that they strive after and crave for?

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They desire to be rich, to be prosperous, to live in luxury, and to be praised by their fellow-men. Nobody considers this to be a sin. And yet Our Lord declares that everlasting death will be the doom of such persons, and He denounces them in forcible language. From these and similar passages, which abound in Holy Scripture, thou seest that God is more Strict than thou dost imagine, and it is a more easy matter to lose thy soul than thou perhaps thinkest. Wherefore do not any longer live so heedlessly, but work out thy salvation with fear and trembling, as the Apostle exhorts thee. The saints did so at all times, having the fear of God's judgments ever before their eyes. The ungodly, on the contrary, were ever wont to say, as many do at the present day: God is merciful, He will not condemn us so lightly to eternal damnation. But remember what is said in Holy Scripture: "Be not without fear about sin forgiven, and add not sin to sin. And say not, The mercy of the Lord is great, He will have mercy on the multitude of my sins. For mercy and wrath come quickly from Him, and His wrath looketh upon sinners" (Ecclus. v. 5-7). We also find St. Catharine of Sienna saying: "O unhappy sinners, do not rely upon the greatness of God's mercy; believe me, the more you provoke the anger of this merciful God by wilful sin, the deeper you will be cast into the abyss of perdition." It is undoubtedly true that we ought to place our trust in God's mercy; but what the nature of our confidence should be, we are taught by St. Gregory. He says: "Let him who does all that he can, rely firmly upon the mercy of God. But for him who does not do all that lies within his power to rely upon the mercy of God would be simple presumption." To each and all of us the Apostle Peter says: "Labour the more, that by good works you may make your calling and election sure" (2 Pet. i. 10). Several of the Fathers of the Church consider that from the fact that at the time of the deluge only eight

persons were saved, at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah only four namely, Lot, his wife and his two daughters escaped with their lives, and of the six hundred thousand able men who departed out of Egypt not more than two reached the Promised Land, the others all dying in the desert, it may be concluded that the number of the elect amongst Christians will be proportionately small. This agrees with what St. John Chrysostom said on one occasion when he was preaching in the city of Antioch: "What think you, my hearers, how many of the inhabitants of this city may perhaps be saved? What I am about to say is very terrible, yet I will not conceal it from you. Out of this thickly populated city with its thousands of inhabitants not a hundred will be saved; I even doubt whether there will be as many as that. For what indifference we see amongst the aged, what wickedness amongst the young, what impiety amongst all classes of people." Such words as these may well make us tremble. We should hesitate to believe them, did they not come from the lips of so great a saint and Father of the Church. And if it is true that in the first five centuries, when the zeal and devotion of Christians was much more fervent than it is now, so small a number attained everlasting salvation, what will it be in our own day, when crime and vice prevail to so fearful an extent? Since it is impossible for any one to deny, or even to doubt, that the number of the elect is small in proportion to that of the reprobate, I beseech thee, O Christian reader, exert thyself to the utmost to accomplish the work of thy salvation. Thou knowest what an awful thing it is to be damned eternally.

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On the Number of the Saved. The plagues and torments of hell are so terrible that words cannot be found to describe them. Consider in time the eternity of those unspeakable tortures, and take heed, lest thou too be cast into the abyss of never-ending anguish. How wouldst thou be able to endure torments so immeasurable, so endless? Wouldst thou not despond and despair, wouldst thou not storm and rage? Yet that would avail thee nothing; it would only add to thy sufferings and increase thy misery. All this is most terrible, most awful, most appalling. How is it that thou dost not think about it more often? How is it possible that thou canst live on so heedlessly? How is it possible that thou hast not more fear of hell? Dost thou perhaps think thyself secure of heaven? How is it that thou dost go with the multitude, as if thou didst not know that thou art in great danger of perishing with the multitude? If thou wouldst be saved, follow the counsel of St. Anselm, when he says: "If thou wouldst be certain of being in the number of the elect, strive to be one of the few, not of the many. And if thou wouldst be quite sure of thy salvation, strive to be among the fewest of the few; that is to say: Do not follow the great majority of mankind, but follow those who

enter upon the narrow way, who renounce the world, who give themselves to prayer, and who never relax their efforts by day or by night, that they may attain everlasting felicity."

CONCLUSION

Let us, my dear reader, courageously and cheer fully do all, undertake all, sacrifice all that we may gain the ineffable happiness of heaven, for we never can purchase heaven at too dear a price. Let us not be disheartened at the difficulties on our road, for, after all, it is not so difficult to merit heaven. Were we to do for heaven half as much as people do to earn a living, to acquire a little wealth, power or fame, or to enjoy life, we would be sure of securing a high place among the saints. All we have to do to gain heaven is to keep the commandments of God and of His Church, to bear our little crosses, to discharge the obligations of our state of life, to overcome temptation; and although this is above our natural strength, we nevertheless can count on the grace of God, if we pray earnestly for it, and with God's help everything will become comparatively easy, for, as St. Paul says: "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13). Earnest, persistent prayer will secure heaven to us. I now, dear reader, address to you the words the mother of the Machabees addressed to her youngest son, a mere boy, when he was about to be tortured to death, as his six brothers had been before him: "My son, I beg thee to look up to heaven." Look up to heaven every day, especially in time of trial and temptation. Heaven is well worth every suffering and every sacrifice and every combat required of us, and even a thousand times more! Life is short; its trials, its sufferings, its labours, its combats, its crosses also are short and transitory; but heaven and its joys are inconceivable, satiating every desire of the heart and never-ending!" Our present momentary and light tribulation worketh above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv. 17). May God in His mercy grant this happy end to the writer of this book and all into whose hands it may fall.

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The Sight of Hell

by Rev. John Furniss, C.S.S.R.

Permissu Superiorum

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Approbation

"I have carefully read over this Little Volume for Children and have found nothing whatsoever in it contrary to the doctrine of Holy Faith; but, on the contrary, a great deal to charm, instruct and edify our youthful classes, for whose benefit it has been written."

William Meagher, Vicar General, Dublin, December 14, 1855.

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I. Where is Hell?

Ps. Ixii. *they shall go into the lower parts of the earth.*

Every little child knows that God will reward the good in heaven and punish the wicked in hell. Where, then, is hell? Is hell above or below? Is it on the earth, or in the earth, or below the earth?

It seems likely that hell is in the middle of the earth. Almighty God has said that "*He will turn the wicked into the bowels of the earth.*" *Ecclus. xvii*

The Earth Opening

In the days of the Jews, there were three very wicked men. Their names were Core, Dathan, and Abiron. They were very disobedient to the priests. God had made Moses master over all the people. He told Moses that he was going to punish the wicked men. Moses went and told the people to come away from the wicked men. The people came away. Then Moses said to them, "By this you shall know that God has sent me. If these wicked men die like other men, then do not believe me. But if the earth opens and swallows them, and they go down alive into hell, then you shall know that they are wicked."

As soon as Moses had done speaking, the earth broke open under the feet of the wicked men. It drew them in with all they had, and they went down alive into hell. Then the earth closed up over them again. Numb. xvi. The same thing happened another time, as you'll see.

II. The Burning Mountain

St. Gregory says, "There was a very wicked and cruel king. His name was Theodoric. He lived in a town called Ravenna. At the same time there was a holy Pope called John, living in Rome. One day this holy Pope went to the town where Theodoric, the cruel king was living. When Theodoric heard the pope was come, he had him put in prison. He gave him very little to eat, and was very cruel to him. In a few days the good pope died in prison. Very soon after Theodoric had killed the Pope, he killed another good man called Symmachus. Soon after this the cruel king Theodoric died himself. You'll see how God punished him.

There is a little island called Stromboli, with water all around it. On this island there is a great mountain. Fire is often seen coming out of the top of this mountain.

At that time there was a holy hermit living on the island in a little cell or room. On the night that cruel king Theodoric died, it happened that the hermit was looking out his window. He saw three persons near the top of the fiery mountain. They were persons who were dead. But he had seen them all before. So he knew who they were. There was Theodoric, the cruel king, who had died that night. The other two were Pope John and Symmachus, who had been unjustly killed by Theodoric. He saw that Theodoric was in the middle betwixt the other two. When they came to that place where the fire was coming out, he saw Theodoric leave the other two, and go down into the fiery mountain. So, says St. Gregory, those who had seen the cruel king's injustice saw also his

punishment.

III. How Far is it to Hell?

We know how far it is to the middle of the earth. It is just four thousand miles. So if hell is in the middle of the earth, it is four thousand miles to the horrible prison of hell.

It is time now to do what St. Augustine bids us. He says: "Let us go down to hell while we live, that we may not have to go down to hell when we die." If we go and look at that terrible prison, where those who commit mortal sin are punished, we shall be afraid to commit mortal sin. If we do not commit mortal sin, we shall not go to hell.

IV. The Gates Of Hell

Matt. xvi. *The gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church.*

St. Francis of Rome lived a very holy life. Many times she saw with her eyes her Angel Guardian at her side. It pleased the Almighty God to let her see many other wonderful things. Brev Rom. One afternoon the Angel Gabriel came to take her to see hell. She went with him and saw that terrible place. Let us follow in her footsteps, that we might see in spirit the wonderful things which she saw. Our journey is through the deep dark places under the earth. Now we will set off. We pass through hundreds and hundreds of miles of darkness. Now we are coming near the terrible place. See, there are the gates of hell! When St. Francis came to the gates of hell, and she read on them these words, written in letters of fire: "This is Hell, where there is neither rest, nor consolation, nor hope." Look, then, at those tremendous gates in front of you. How large they are. Measure, if you can, the length and breadth, the height and depth of the terrible gates. Is. v. *"Therefore hath hell opened her mouth without any bound. Their strong ones and their people, and their glorious ones, go down into it."*

See also the vast thickness, the tremendous strength of those gates. In a prison on earth there are not, perhaps, more than two or three hundred prisoners. Still the gates of a prison are made most strong with iron, and with bars, and with bolts, and with locks, for fear the prisoners should break down the gates and get away. Do not wonder, then, at the immense strength of the gates of hell. In hell there are not two hundred or three hundred prisoners only. Millions on millions are shut up there. They are tormented with the most frightful pains. These dreadful pains make them furious. Their fury gives them strength, such as we never saw. We read of a man who had the fury of hell in him. He was so strong

that he could easily break in pieces great chains of iron. Mark v. The vast multitudes in hell, strong in their fury and despair, rush forward like the waves of the sea. They dash themselves up against the gates of hell to break them in pieces. This is the reason why these gates are so strong. No hand of man could make such gates. Jesus Christ said that the gates in hell should not prevail against his Church, because in hell there is nothing stronger than its gates.

Do you hear that growling thunder rolling from one end of hell to the other? The gates of hell are opening.

V. The First Look Into Hell

When the gates of hell had been opened, St. Francis, with her angel, went forward. She stood on the edge of the abyss. She saw a sight so terrible that it cannot be told. She saw that the size of hell was immense. Neither in height, nor in depth, nor in length, nor in breadth, could she see any end of it. Is. xxxiv. None shall ever pass through it. She saw that hell was divided into three immense places. These three places were at a great distance from one another. There was an upper hell, and a middle hell, and a lower hell. Wisd. 17. "Night came upon them from the lowest and deepest hell." She saw that in the upper hell, the torments were very grievous. In the middle hell they were still more terrible. In the lowest hell the torments were above all understanding. When she had looked into this terrible place, her blood was frozen with fright!

VI. Fire

Now look into hell and see what she saw. Look at the floor of hell. It is red hot like red hot iron. Streams of burning pitch and sulfur run through it. Is. xxxiv. The floor blazes up to the roof. Look at the walls, the enormous stones are red hot; sparks of fire are always falling down from them. Lift up your eyes to the roof of hell; it is like a sheet of blazing fire. Sometimes when you get up on a winter's morning, you see the country filled with a great thick fog. Hell is filled with a fog of fire. In some parts of the world torrents of rain come down which sweep away trees and houses. In hell, torrents, not of rain, but of fire and brimstone, are rained down. Ps. x. "The Lord shall rain down on sinners fire and brimstone." Storms of hail stones come down on the earth and break the windows in pieces. But in hell the hail stones are thunder bolts, red hot balls of fire. Job xli. God shall send thunder bolts against him. See that great whirlwind of fire sweeping across hell. Storms of wind shall be the portion of their cup. Ps. X. Look how floods of fire roll themselves through hell like the waves of the sea. The wicked are sunk down and buried in the fiery sea of destruction and

perdition. I Tim. vi. You may have seen a house on fire. But you never saw a house made of fire. Hell is a house made of fire. The fire of hell burns the devils who are spirits, for it was prepared for them. Matt. xxv. So it will burn the soul as well as the body. Take a spark out of the kitchen fire, throw it into the sea, and it will go out. Take a little spark out of hell, less than a pin-head, throw it into the ocean, it will not go out. In one moment it would dry up all the waters of the ocean, and set the whole world ablaze. Wisd. xvi. The fire, above its power, burnt in the midst of water. Set a house or town on fire. Perhaps the fire may burn for a week, or a month, but it will go out at last. But the fire of hell will never go out; it will burn forever. It is unquenchable fire. Mat. iv. St. Teresa says that the fire on the earth is only a picture of the fire of hell. Fire on earth gives light. But it is not so in hell. In hell the fire is dark.

VII. Darkness

Is. xxi. *Watchman, what of the night? The Watchman said -- the night cometh.* The Watchman did not say the nights are coming, but only the night. He said so, because in hell there is only one night, one eternal night, one everlasting night. The fire in hell burns, but gives no light. Wisd. ii. No fire could give them light. No stray sunbeam, no wandering ray of star light ever creeps into the darkness of hell. All is darkness -- thick, black, heavy, pitchy, aching darkness. It is not darkness like ours, which is only an image of the darkness to come. Wisd. xviii. This darkness is thicker than the darkness of the land of Egypt, which could be touched with the hand. So the wicked in hell will never see light. Ps. xlvi. This darkness is made worse by the smoke of hell.

VIII. Smoke

Apoc. xvi. The smoke of their torments shall go up forever and ever. Stop up the chimney where the fire is burning. In half an hour the room will be full of smoke, so that you cannot stay there. The great fires of hell have been smoking now for nearly six thousand years. They will go on smoking forever. There is no chimney to take this smoke off; there is no wind to blow it away. See those great black, heavy sulphurous clouds rising up every moment from the dark fires. They rise up till the roof of hell stops them. The roof drives them back again. Slowly they go down into the abyss of hell. There they are joined by more dark clouds of smoke leaving the fires. So hell is filled with sulfur and smoke, in which no one on earth could breathe or live. How then do they live in hell? In hell they must live, but they are stifled and choked each moment, as if they were dying. Now listen!

IX. Terrific Noise

Exodus xi. *There shall be a great cry, such as hath not been heard before.*

You have heard, perhaps, a horrible scream in the dead of night. You may have heard the last shriek of a drowning man before he went down into his watery grave. You may have been shocked in passing a madhouse, to hear the wild shout of a madman. Your heart may have trembled when you heard the roar of a lion in the desert, or the hissing of a deadly serpent in the bushes.

But listen now -- listen to the tremendous, the horrible uproar of millions and millions and millions of tormented creatures mad with the fury of hell. Oh, the screams of fear, the groanings of horror, the yells of rage, the cries of pain, the shouts of agony, the shrieks of despair of millions on millions. There you hear them roaring like lions, hissing like serpents, howling like dogs, and wailing like dragons. There you hear the gnashing of teeth and the fearful blasphemies of the devils. Above all, you hear the roaring of the thunders of God's anger, which shakes hell to its foundations. But there is another sound!

X. A River

Is. xxii. *It is the day of slaughter, and of treading down, and of weeping to the Lord God of hosts.*

There is in hell a sound like that of many waters. It is as if all the rivers and oceans of the world were pouring themselves with a great splash down on the floor of hell. Is it then really the sound of waters? It is. Are the rivers and oceans of the earth pouring themselves into hell? No. What is it then? It is the sound of oceans of tears running from the countless millions of eyes. They cry night and day. They cry forever and ever. They cry because the sulphurous smoke torments their eyes. They cry because they are in darkness. They cry because they have lost the beautiful heaven. They cry because the sharp fire burns them.

Little child, it is better to cry one tear of repentance now than to cry millions of tears in hell. But what is that dreadful sickening smell?

XI. The Smell Of Death

Joel ii. *His stench shall ascend, and his rottenness shall go up.*

There are some diseases so bad, such as cancers and ulcers, that people cannot bear to breathe the air in the house where they are. There is something worse. It is the smell of death coming from a dead body lying in the grave. The dead body of Lazarus had been in the grave only four days. Yet Martha, his sister, could not

bear that it should be taken out again. But what is the smell of death in hell? St. Bonaventure says that if one single body was taken out of hell and laid on the earth, in that same moment every living creature on the earth would sicken and die. Such is the smell of death from one body in hell. What then will be the smell of death from countless millions and millions of bodies laid in hell like sheep?

Ps. How will the horrible smell of all these bodies be, after it has been getting worse and worse every moment for ten thousand years? Is. ixvi. "They shall go out and see the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me. They shall be a loathsome sight to all flesh."

Now let us enter into hell and see the tremendous torments prepared for the wicked.

XII. The Devil

Apoc. xx. An angel laid hold on the old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up.

Our journey lies across the great sea of fire. We must go on till we come to the middle of hell. There we shall see the most horrible site that ever was or will be -- the great devil chained down in the middle of hell. We will set off on our journey. Now we are coming near the dwelling place of Satan. The darkness gets thicker. You see a greater number of devils moving about in the thick darkness. They come to get the orders of their great chief. Already you hear the rattling of the tremendous chains of the great monster! See! there he is -- the most horrible and abominable of all monsters, the devil. His size is immense! Is. viii. He shall fill the length of the land. St. Francis saw him. He was sitting on a long beam which passed through the middle of hell. His feet went down into the lowest depths of hell. They rested on the floor of hell. They were fastened with great, heavy iron chains. These chains were fixed to an immense ring in the floor. His hands were chained up to the roof. One of his hands was turned up against heaven, to blaspheme God and the saints who dwell there. Apoc. xiii. His other hand was stretched out, pointing to the lowest hell. His tremendous and horrible head was raised up on high, and touched the roof. From his head came two immense horns. Apoc. xiii. I saw another beast having two horns. From each horn smaller horns, without number, branched out, which, like chimneys, sent out fire and smoke. His enormous mouth was wide open. Out of it there was running a river of fire, which gave no light, but a most abominable smell. Job xli. Flame cometh out of his mouth. Round his neck was a collar of red hot iron. A burning chain tied him round the middle. The uglinesses of his face was such that no man or devil could bear it. It was the most deformed, horrible,

frightful thing that ever was or will be. His great fierce eyes were filled with pride and anger, and rage, and spite, and blood, and fire, and savage cruelty. There was something else in those eyes for which there is no name, but it made those on whom the devil's eyes were fixed tremble and shake as if they were dying. One of the saints who saw the devil said she would rather be burnt for a thousand years than look at the devil for one moment!

XIII. What the Devil does in Hell

1. Temptation.

Job. xli. He beholdeth every high thing, he is king over all the children of pride.

As the devil is king of hell, he does two things. First, he gives his orders to the other devils about tempting people in the world. Without his leave, no one in hell can stir hand or foot. Millions and millions of devils are always round him, waiting for his orders. Every day he sends wicked spirits, whose numbers cannot be counted, into Europe, Asia, Africa, America, into every country, and town, and village, and house, and to every human creature. He sends them for temptation and the ruin of souls. He tells each devil whom he must tempt, what he must do, and when he must come back. St. Francis saw that when these devils came back, if they had not made people commit sin, they were cruelly beaten. When a child is tempted, how little it thinks that the temptation has been got ready in hell, that there is a devil at its side who has brought the temptation, and this devil is breathing the temptation into its heart, and trying to make it do what the bad company wants it to do.

XIV. 2 -- Judgment

As the devil is king of hell, he is also judge. When a soul comes into hell, condemned by the judgment of God, he executes the judgment. He fixes whereabouts in hell the soul is to be, how it is to be tormented, and what devils are to torment it. In a moment you will see his judgment on a soul.

XV. A Soul Coming into Hell

St. Francis saw souls coming into hell after they had been condemned by the judgment of God. They came with letters of fire written on their foreheads. Apoc. xii. He shall make all, both little and great, have a character on their forehead. On their foreheads were written the names of the sins for which they had been condemned in hell. Blaspheming, or impurity, or stealing, or drunkenness, or not hearing Mass on Sundays, or not going to the Sacraments. As soon as any of the souls came to the gates of hell, the devils went and seized

hold of it. Job xx. The terrible ones shall go and come down upon him. But what sort of devils took hold of these souls? The prophet Daniel saw one of them. He says, chapter vii. "I beheld, in a vision by night, a beast, terrible and wonderful, and exceeding strong. It had great iron teeth, eating and breaking in pieces, and treading down the rest with its teeth. How do the devils take hold of these souls? As the lions in Babylon took hold of those who were thrown into their den.

When the people were thrown over the wall into the den, the lions opened their mouths and roared, and caught the people in their mouths and crushed them, even before they had fallen to the ground. So is a soul received by the devils when it comes to hell.

XVI. The Soul Before Satan

The devils carry away the soul which has just come into hell. They bear it through the flames. Now they have set it down in front of the great chained monster, to be judged by him, who has no mercy. Oh, that horrible face of the devil! Oh, the fright, the shivering, the freezing, the deadly horror of that soul at the first sight of the great devil. Now the devil opens his mouth. He gives out the tremendous sentence on the soul. All hear the sentence, and hell rings with shouts of spiteful joy and mockeries at the unfortunate soul.

XVII. The Everlasting Dwelling-place of the Soul

As soon as the sentence is given, the soul is snatched away and hurried to that place which is to be its home forever and ever! Crowds of hideous devils have met together. With cries of spiteful joy they receive the soul. Is. xxxiv. Demons and monsters shall meet. The hairy ones shall cry out to one another. See how these devils receive the soul in this time of destruction. Ecclus. xxxix. In the time of destruction, they shall pour out their force. The teeth of serpents and beasts, and scorpions, the sword taking vengeance on ungodly unto destruction.

Immediately the soul is thrust by the devils into that prison which is to be its dwelling-place for ever more. The prison of each soul is different, according to its sins.

St. Teresa found herself squeezed into a hole or chest in the wall. Here the walls, which were most terrible, seemed to close upon her and strangle her. She found her soul burning in a most horrible fire. It seemed as if someone was always tearing her soul in pieces, or rather as if the soul was always tearing itself in pieces. It was impossible to sit or lie down, for there was no room. As soon as the soul is fixed in its place, it finds two devils, one on each side of it. They are

spirits created for vengeance, and in their fury they lay on grievous torments. Ecclus. xxxix. St. Francis saw them. One of them is called the Striking devil, the other the Mocking devil.

XVIII. The Striking Devil

Prov. xix. *Striking hammers are prepared for the bodies of sinners.*

If you want to know what sort of stroke the devil can give, hear how he struck Job, chapter ii, "Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and struck Job with a grievous ulcer from the sole of his foot to the top of his head. Then Job took a tile and scraped off the corrupt matter, sitting on a dung-hill. Now when Job's friends heard all the evil that had come upon him, they came to him. For they had made an appointment to come together and visit and comfort him. And when they had lifted up their eyes afar off, they did not know him. And crying, they wept and sprinkled dust on their heads. And they sat down with him on the ground for seven days and seven nights. And no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great.

The devil gave Job one stroke, only one stroke. That one stroke was so terrible that it covered all his body with sores and ulcers. That one stroke made Job look so frightful, that his friends did not know him again. That one stroke was so terrible, that for seven days and seven nights his friends did not speak a word, but sat crying, and wondering, and thinking what a terrible stroke the devil can give.

Little child, if you go to hell there will be a devil at your side to strike you. He will go on striking you every minute for ever and ever, without ever stopping. The first stroke will make your body as bad as the body of Job, covered from head to foot with sores and ulcers. The second stroke will make your body twice as bad as the body of Job. The third stroke will make your body with three times as bad as the body of Job. The fourth stroke will make your body four times as bad as the body of Job. How then will your body be after the devil has been striking it every moment for a hundred million of years without stopping?

But there was one good thing for Job. When the devil had struck Job, his friends came to visit and comfort him, and when they saw him they cried. But when the devil is striking you in hell, there will be no one to come and visit and comfort you, and cry with you. Neither father, nor mother, nor brother, nor sister, nor friend will ever come to cry with you. Lam. i. "Weeping she hath wept in the night, and the tears are on her cheeks, because there is none to comfort her amongst all them that were dear to her." Little child, it is a bad bargain to make

with the devil, to commit a mortal sin, and then to be beaten for ever for it.

XIX. The Mocking Devil

Hab.ii. *Shall they not take up a parable against him, a dark speech concerning him?*

St. Francis saw that on the other side of the soul there was another devil to mock at and reproach it. Hear what mockeries he said to it. "Remember," he said, "remember where you are and where you will be for ever; how short the sin was, how long the punishment. It is your own fault; when you committed that mortal sin, you knew how you would be punished. What a good bargain you made to take the pains of eternity in exchange for the sin of a day, an hour, a moment. You cry now for your sin, but your crying comes too late. You liked bad company, you will find bad company enough here. Your father was a drunkard, and showed you the way to the public-house; he still is a drunkard, look at him over there drinking red hot fire. You were too idle to go to Mass on Sundays, be as a idle as you like now, for there is no Mass to go to. You disobeyed your father, but you dare not disobey him who is your father in hell; look at him, that great chained monster; disobey him if you dare."

St. Francis saw that these mockeries put the soul into such dreadful despair of that it burst out into the most frightful howlings and blasphemies.

But it is time for us now to see where the sinner has been put -- his everlasting dwelling-place.

XX. A Bed of Fire

The sinner lies chained down on a bed of red-hot blazing fire! When a man, sick of fever, is lying on even a soft bed, it is pleasant sometimes to turn round. If the sick man lies on the same side for a long time, the skin comes off, the flesh gets raw. How will it be when the body has been lying on the same side on the scorching, broiling fire for a hundred millions of years! Now look at that body lying on the bed of fire. All the body is salted with fire. The fire burns through every bone and every muscle. Every nerve is trembling and quivering with the sharp fire. The fire rages inside and the skull, it shoots out through the eyes, it drops out through the ears, it roars in the throat as it roars up a chimney. So will mortal sin be punished. Yet there are people in their senses who commit mortal sin!

XXI. Worms

Is. lxvi. *The Worm that dieth not.*

Judith xvi. *"He will give fire and worms into their flesh, that they may burn and feel for ever."*

St. Basil says, that in hell there are will be worms without number eating the flesh, and their bites will be unbearable." St. Teresa says that she found the entrance into hell filled with these venomous insects. If you cannot bear the sight of ugly vermin and creeping things on the earth, will you be content with the sight of the venomous things in hell, which are a million times worse? The bite or the pricking of one insect on the earth sometimes keeps you awake, and torments you for hours. How will you feel in hell, when millions of them make their dwelling-place in your mouth, and ears, and eyes, and creep all over you, and sting you with their deadly stings through all eternity. You will not then be able to help yourself, or send them away, because you cannot stir hand or foot. One of the most painful stings in the world is to be much frightened.

XXII. Fright

Wisd. xvii. *"While they thought to lie hid in their obscure sins, they were horribly afraid and troubled. For neither did the den which held them keep them from fear. For noises coming down troubled them, and sad visions appearing to them, affrighted them."*

Do you know what is meant by being frightened out of one's senses? A boy wanted to frighten two other little boys. In the daytime he took some phosphorus and marked with it the form of a skeleton on the wall of the room where the little boys always slept. In the daytime the mark of phosphorus is not seen; in the dark it shines like fire. The two little boys went to bed, knowing nothing about it. Next morning they opened the door of the room where the two little boys had been sleeping. They found one boy sitting on his bed, staring at the wall, out of his senses. The other little boy was lying dead! This was fright.

You will be lying helpless in the lonesome darkness of hell. The devils come in the most frightful shapes on purpose to frighten you. Serpents come and hiss at you. Wild beasts come and roar at you. Death comes and stares at you. How would you feel, if at the dark hour of midnight, one that was dead should come to your bedside and stand over you and mock at you? You hear the most horrible shrieks and dismal sounds, which you cannot understand. The sinner, frightened out of his senses at those terrible sights in the darkness of hell, roars out for help, but there is nobody to come and help him in his fright.

Wisd. xvii. *Being scared with the passing of beasts and hissing of serpents,*

they died of fear.

The greatest pain of hell has not yet been told. You shall hear it now.

XXIII. The Pain of Loss

It is easy to understand the other pains of hell, because there are pains like them on earth. But it is difficult to understand the pain of loss, because there is nothing like it on earth. You must know that when a soul has been condemned to hell at the judgment-seat, God lets it see for a moment something of what it has lost. It sees the immense happiness it would have had in heaven with God and his angels and saints. And now it sees that all this blessed happiness is lost -- lost by its own fault, lost for ever, lost without hope! Listen to the painful cry of a child which has lost its mother! Listened to the wailings of the people in Ireland when their sister is leaving them to go to America, and perhaps they will never see her any more. Then you may think what a wailing there will be when a soul hears these words from God: "Depart from me for ever." Listen to the shriek of that mad man shut up in the mad-house; he lost his money, his brain turned, and he became mad. Then you may think how the soul will shriek when it sees that it has lost heaven. Listen to that splash in the river. A man threw himself off the bridge; as he was falling down into the river, he roared out his: "I can bear death, but I cannot bear this loss." Listen to the tremendous roar at the judgment-seat. The soul dashes itself from the judgment-seat down into the flames of hell, roaring out: "I can bear the fire of hell, but I cannot bear the loss of heaven after I have seen what heaven is." Listen again to the devils in hell, and you will hear them crying out: "I would gladly burn here for millions of years if I could only see God for one moment."

Jez. xxiii. In the latter days you shall understand these things.

Now look at those little doors all round the walls of hell. They are little rooms or dungeons where sinners are shut up. We will go and look at some of them.

XXIV. The Dungeons of Hell

The First Dungeon - A Dress of Fire

Job xxxvii. Are not thy garments hot? Come into this room. You see it is very small. But see, in the midst of it there is a girl, perhaps about eighteen years old. What a terrible dress she has on -- her dress is made of fire. On her head she wears a bonnet of fire. It is pressed down close all over her head; it burns her head; it burns into the skin; it scorches the bone of the skull and makes it smoke. The red hot fiery heat goes into the brain and melts it. Ezech. xxii. I will

burn you in the fire of my wrath; you shall be melted in the midst thereof as silver is melted in the fire. You do not, perhaps, like a headache. Think what a headache that girl must have. But see more. She is wrapped up in flames, for her frock is fire. If she were on earth she would be burnt to a cinder in a moment. But she is in hell, where fire burns everything, but burns nothing away. There she stands burning and scorched; there she will stand for ever burning and scorched! She counts with her fingers the moments as they pass away slowly, for each moment seems to her like a hundred years. As she counts the moments she remembers that she will have to count them for ever and ever.

When that girl was alive she never thought about God or her soul. She cared only for one thing; and that was dress! Instead of going to Mass on Sundays, she went about the town and the parks to show off her dress. She disobeyed her father and mother by going to dancing-houses and all kinds of bad places to show off her dress. And now her dress is her punishment. For by what things a man sinneth, by the same also is he tormented. Wisd. xi.

XXV. The Second Dungeon

The Deep Pit

Luke xvi. It came to pass that the rich man also died, and he was buried in the fire of hell. Think of a coffin, not made of wood, but of fire, solid fire! And now come into this other room. You see a pit, a deep almost bottomless pit. Look down it and you will see something red hot and burning. It is a coffin, a red hot coffin of fire. A certain man is lying, fastened in the inside of that coffin of fire. You might burst open a coffin made of iron; but that coffin made of solid fire never can be burst open. There that man lies and will lie for ever in the firey coffin. It burns him from beneath. The sides of it scorch him. The heavy burning lid on the top presses down close upon him. The horrible heat in the inside chokes him; he pants for breath; he cannot breathe; he cannot bear it; he gets furious. He gathers up his knees and pushes out his hands against the top of the coffin to burst it open. His knees and hands are fearfully burnt by the red hot lid. No matter, to be choked is worse. He tries with all his strength to burst open the coffin. He cannot do it. He has no strength remaining. He gives it up and sinks down again. Again the horrible choking. Again he tries; again he sinks down; so he will go on for ever and ever! This man was very rich. Instead of worshiping God, he worshipped his money. Morning, noon and night, he thought about nothing but his money. He was clothed in purple and fine linen. He feasted sumptuously every day. He was hard-hearted to the poor. He let a poor man die at his door, and would not even give him the crumbs that fell from

his table. When he came into hell the devil mocked him, saying: What did pride profit you, or what advantage did the boasting of riches bring you; all those things have passed away like a shadow. Then the devil's sentence was that since he was so rich in the world, he should be very poor in hell, and have nothing but a narrow, burning coffin.

XXVI. The Third Dungeon

The Red Hot Floor

Look into this room. What a dreadful place it is! The roof is red hot; the floor is like a thick sheet of red hot iron. See, on the middle of that red hot floor stands a girl. She looks about sixteen years old. Her feet are bare, she has neither shoes nor stockings on her feet; her bare feet stand on the red hot burning floor. The door of this room has never been opened before since she first set her foot on the red hot floor. Now she sees that the door is opening. She rushes forward. She has gone down on her knees on the red hot floor. Listen, she speaks! She says; "I have been standing with my feet on this red hot floor for years. Day and night my only standing place has been this red hot floor. Sleep never came on me for a moment, that I might forget this horrible burning floor. Look," she says, "at my burnt and bleeding feet. Let me go off this burning floor for one moment, only for one single, short moment. Oh, that in the endless eternity of years, I might forget the pain only for one single, short moment." The devil answers her question: "Do you ask," he says, "for a moment, for one moment to forget your pain. No, not for one single moment during the never-ending eternity of years shall you ever leave this red hot floor!" "Is it so?" the girl asks with a sigh, that seems to break her heart; "then, at least, let somebody go to my little brothers and sisters, who are alive, and tell them not to do the bad things which I did, so they will never have to come and stand on the red hot floor." The devil answers her again: "Your little brothers and sisters have the priests to tell them these things. If they will not listen to the priests, neither would they listen even if somebody should go to them from the dead."

Oh, that you could hear the horrible, the fearful scream of that girl when she saw the door shutting, never to be opened any more. The history of this girl is short. Her feet first led her into sin, so it is her feet which, most of all, are tormented. While yet a very little child, she began to go into bad company. The more she grew up, the more she went into bad company against the bidding of her parents. She used to walk around the streets at night, and do very wicked things. She died early. Her death was brought on by the bad life she led.

XXVII. The Fourth Dungeon

The Boiling Kettle

Amos iv. *The days shall come when they shall lift you up on pikes, and what remains of you in boiling pots.* Look into this little prison. In the middle of it there is a boy, a young man. He is silent; despair is on him. He stands straight up. His eyes are burning like two burning coals. Two long flames come out of his ears. His breathing is difficult. Sometimes he opens his mouth and breath of blazing fire rolls out of it. But listen! There is a sound just like that of a kettle boiling. Is it really a kettle which is boiling? No; then what is it? Hear what it is. The blood is boiling in the scalded veins of that boy. The brain is boiling and bubbling in his head. The marrow is boiling in his bones! Ask him, put the question to him, why is he thus tormented? His answer is, that when he was alive, his blood boiled to do very wicked things, and he did them, and it was for that he went to dancing-houses, public-houses, and theatres. Ask him, does he think the punishment greater than he deserves? "No," he says, "my punishment is not greater than I deserve, it is just. I knew it not so well on earth, but I know now that it is just. There is a just and a terrible God. He is terrible to sinners in hell -- but He is just!"

XXVIII. The Fifth Dungeon

The Red Hot Oven

Ps. xx. *Thou shalt make him as an oven of fire in the time of thy anger.* You are going to see again the child about which you read in the Terrible Judgement, that it was condemned to hell. See! It is a pitiful sight. The little child is in this red hot oven. Hear how it screams to come out. See how it turns and twists itself about in the fire. It beats its head against the roof of the oven. It stamps its little feet on the floor of the oven. You can see on the face of this little child what you see on the faces of all in hell -- despair, desperate and horrible! The same law which is for others is also for children. If children, knowingly and willingly, break God's commandments, they must also be punished like others. This child committed very bad mortal sins, knowing well the harm of what it was doing, and knowing that hell would be the punishment. God was very good to this child. Very likely God saw that this child would get worse and worse, and would never repent, and so it would have to be punished much more in hell. So God, in His mercy, called it out of the world in its early childhood.

The Sixth Dungeon

A Voice

Listen at this door. Hear that voice; how sad and sorrowful it sounds. It says:

"Oh, I am lost, I am lost. I am lost when I might have been saved. I am in hell, and I might have been in heaven. How short my sin, how long the punishment! Besides I might have repented; I might have told that sin, but I was ashamed to confess it. Oh, the day on which I was born, I wish that it had never been. Accursed be that day; but I am lost -lost- lost for ever-for ever-for ever. The voice dies away, and you hear it no more!

XXIX. Hunger

The prophet Isaias, chapter ix., says that hunger will be so horrible, that every one shall eat the flesh of his own arm.

The Drunkard

Do you hear that man roaring out in the middle of hell? How loud his voice is! It rises above all the groans, and shrieks, and cries, and screams of millions. With a voice like thunder he roars out: "Oh, a drop of cold water, a drop of cold water to cool my tongue; my tongue is thirsty, my tongue is burning, my tongue is red hot. Give me a drop of cold water, only one single drop of cold water to cool my burning tongue." The devil answers his roar with another roar: "You fool," he says, "you drunkard, why do you cry out for cold water to cool your burning tongue; there is no cold water in hell." Still the drunkard goes on roaring for a drop of cold water. Now the devil lifts up a scourge of fire to strike him and make him hold his tongue. Then the drunkard sinks down into a deep pool of fire and brimstone, where he is drowned in destruction and perdition.

You drunkards, who on Saturday evenings are in the public-house, and on Sundays away from Mass; you drunkards, whose children are hungered and in rags, and go neither to Catechism nor Mass, go down to hell, and listen to your brother drunkard crying out for a drop of cold water to cool his burning tongue!

XXX. No Peace

Job x. A land of misery and darkness, where the shadow of death, and no order but everlasting horror dwelleth.

See those children in dreadful anger beating their parents. They fly at them; they try to take life away from those who give them life. "Cursed parents," they shout, "if you had not given us bad example, we should not now be in hell." "Accursed father," cries a boy, "it was you that showed me the way to the public-house." "Accursed mother," cries a daughter, "it was you who taught me to love the world. You never warned me when I went into that company which was my

ruin." "Cursed husband," cries that wife, "before I knew you I was good; I obeyed the laws of God. It was you that led me away from God, and made me break His laws. Like the devil you ruined my soul, and like the devil I will torment you for ever and ever."

1 Kings xxv. *When Nabel heard the words of his wife, his heart died within him and he became as a stone.*

Two Vipers

Did you ever see two deadly vipers fly at each other? Their eyes burn with rage. They shoot out their poisoned stings. They struggle to give each other the death-blow. They struggle till they have torn the flesh and blood from each other. You may see the like of this in hell. See that young man and young woman -- how changed they are! They loved each other so much on earth, that for this they broke the laws of God and man. But now they fight each other like two vipers, and so they will fight for all eternity.

A Picture of Hell

There was a glass which made things look three million times larger than they really are. A drop of dirty water was looked at through this glass. Millions of frightful little insects were seen in the water. These insects seemed to be always fighting, beating and trying to kill each other. They gave themselves no rest. It was always fighting, beating -- beating, fighting. Sometimes thousands would throw themselves on other thousands and swallow them up alive. Sometimes they tore away pieces from each others bodies, which still remained alive, only looking more frightful than before. Such is hell!

XXXI. Eternity

Matt. xxv. *These shall go into everlasting punishment.*

There is one thing which could change hell into heaven. An angel of God comes to the gates of hell and says: "Listen to me, all ye people in hell, for I bring you good news. You will still burn in hell for almost countless millions of years. But a day will come, and on that day the pains of hell will be no more! You will go out of hell." If such a message came, hell would no longer be hell. Hell would no longer be a house of blasphemy, but a house of prayer and thanksgiving and joy. But such a message will never come to hell, because God has said that the punishment of hell shall be everlasting!

The Question

You say what is meant by everlasting? It is both easy and difficult to answer this question. It is easy to say that the pains of hell will last for ever, and never have any end. It is difficult to answer the question, because our understandings are too little to understand what is meant by the word ever. We know very well what is meant by a year, a million of years, a hundred million of years. But for ever -- eternity -- what is that?

A Measure - A Bird

We can measure almost anything. We can measure a field or a road. We can measure the earth. We can measure how far it is from the earth to the sun. Only one thing there is which never has been and never will be measured, and that is eternity -- for ever!

Think of a great solid iron ball, larger than the heavens and the earth. A bird comes once in a hundred millions of years and just touches the great iron ball with a feather of its wing. Think that you have to burn in a fire till the bird has worn the great iron ball away with its feather. Is this eternity? No.

XXXII. Tears -- Sand -- Dots

Think that a man in hell cries only one single tear in ten hundred millions of years. Tell me, how many millions of years must pass before he fills a little basin with his tears? How many millions of years must pass before he cries as many tears as there were drops of water that deluge? How many years must pass before he has drowned the heavens and earth with his tears? Is this eternity? No.

Turn all the earth into little grains of sand, and fill all the skies and the heavens with little grains of sand. After each hundred millions of years, one grain of sand is taken away; oh, what a long, long time it would be before the last grain of sand was taken away. Is this eternity? No.

After such a long, long time will God still punish sinners? Yes. Is. ix. After all this his anger is not turned away, his hand is still stretched out. How long, then, will the punishment of sinners go on? For ever, and ever, and ever!

XXXIII. What are they Doing?

Perhaps at this moment, seven o'clock in the evening, a child is just going into hell. To-morrow evening at seven o'clock, go and knock at the gates of hell, and ask what the child is doing. The devils will go and look. Then they will come back again and say, the child is burning! Go in a week and ask what the child

is doing; you will get the same answer -- it is burning! Go in a year and ask; the same answer comes --it is burning! Go in a million of years and ask the same question; the answer is just the same --it is burning! So, if you go for ever and ever, you will always get the same answer -- it is burning in the fire!

What O'clock -- The Dismal Sound

Look at that deep pool of fire and brimstone. See a man has just lifted his head up out of it. He wants to ask a question. He speaks to a devil who is standing near him. He says: "What a long, long time it seems since I first came to hell; I have been sunk down in this deep pool of burning fire. Years and years have passed away. I kept no count of time. Tell me, then, what o'clock is it?" "You fool," the devil answers, "why do you ask what o'clock it is, there is no clock in hell; a clock is to tell the time with. But in hell time is no more. It is eternity!" Ps. lxxx. There time shall be for ever.

Perhaps on a dark lonesome night you may have seen something waving backwards and forwards in the air. The sound of it was sad and mournful and. It frightened you, although it was but the branch of a tree.

Such a sound there is in hell. It passes on without stopping from one end of hell to the other. As it comes sweeping past you hear it. What, then, is this dismal sound?

It is the sound of eternity -- ever! -- ever!

XXXIV. Too Late

Let us ask one of those souls scorched in the flames of hell, to come and kneel before the Cross and see if its sins can be forgiven, and if it may come out of hell.

"Poor soul, then burning in the unquenchable fire of hell, come and kneel before the Cross of Christ, and ask him for pardon."

See now that soul is kneeling before the Cross.

The Prayer of a Lost Soul

This lost soul says: "O Christ, I am tormented in this flame. Day and night the tears run down from my eyes, like torrents. O Christ, you were my Creator; you redeemed me; you are a merciful God. I come before you to ask if I may go out of this terrible fire where I am tormented."

The Answer of Jesus Christ

"Unhappy soul!" Jesus says, "I have pity for you to, because, indeed, I was your

Creator, and I did not create you for pain but for happiness. I wished you to be in heaven and not in hell. How could I wish you to be in hell, seeing what I did to save you from hell? Remember how I came down from heaven to the very earth to save you from hell. Do you remember how I was mocked and spit upon, and pierced with thorns; I was nailed to the wood of the cross, and died in shame and cruel agony. What was all this for? It was for you, to save you from hell. And if this is not enough, I will tell you, that from all eternity I was thinking how to save you, and my heart was thirsting to save you. I cared for your happiness more than for my own, for I left my own happiness in heaven and went down to the earth to be tormented for your sake. When my Father, who is in heaven, had seen what I had done for you, he said, 'Surely I will give that soul all the graces it needs, and a thousand times more than it needs, to save itself.'

"Then the days of your life came. You were not made like the beasts of the field. You had sense and understanding to know that it is right to do good, and wrong to do evil. Besides, I said to you: 'Do good and you shall be happy for ever in heaven; but if you do evil you shall be punished for ever in hell.' I wrote this on your heart. You heard it with your ears thousands of times during your life. You knew, you felt that what I said was right and just. If on earth a man deserves punishment who breaks a law of one who is only a man, how much more does he deserve punishment who breaks the law made by Me, his Creator and his God.

"Then you, knowing full well that hell would be the punishment, did evil. You broke my Commandments. Then I might, in justice, have sent you to hell. But I did not. I had pity on you; I warned you to repent. I told you repentance was easy. Instead of repenting you broke my laws again, and again, and again. You went on breaking my law. I went on asking, begging of you to repent. In the anguish of my heart I asked you to save your soul from everlasting punishment. But you despised all my counsels, you neglected my reprehensions, you treated me most ungratefully, as you would not have done to any man on the earth. You seemed to be weary of my kindness. But I, who knew what punishment was coming upon you, was not weary with trying to save you from it.

"The days fixed for your life were coming to an end. A thousand times I brought to your remembrance that death which was coming swiftly. You did not care. The last moment of your life came and nothing had been done. You had done everything except the one great thing -- to try to save your soul. If you had only taken a little of that trouble to save your soul, which you threw away on a thousand trifling things, your soul would have been saved. Death came. You stood before my judgment-seat. You were condemned to the eternal

punishments of hell. You confessed that my sentence was just. You could not deny it. And now you come and ask me to change the everlasting sentence, and let you go out of hell. I promised eternal happiness to those who do good, punishment in hell to those who do evil. I must keep my promise -- I cannot break it. It was a mercy that the punishment of hell was made everlasting. If so many broke my law, knowing that the punishment would be everlasting, how would it have been if the punishment had not been everlasting? There are millions in heaven who would not have been there but for the everlasting pains of hell. They were wise; they thought on the eternal years of punishment. You could have done the same if you liked, but you would not. Besides, even now sin is in your heart as it was when you died. You hate the punishment but not the sin; your heart is ready to break my law again, and so it will be for ever.

"Unhappy soul! You ask now for mercy; but it is too late. If you had asked for mercy when you were alive, how glad I should have been to be merciful to you. But now it is too late to ask for mercy. You must go back into everlasting punishment."

The sinner knows and feels that a wrong thing would be done if he were set free from eternal punishment. So he goes back into the flames of hell hopeless and desperate.

XXXV. Despair

Jer.xlvi. There is no cure for thee. Let us look at hell once more before we leave it. See that man who just asked for mercy and could not get it. He cannot bear the scorching fire which burns his body through and through. But he must bear it. On the earth the hungry man looks for bread, and last he gets it. A sick man looks for his pain to get less, and at last it gets less. The man in hell looks for the burning to stop -- but it does not stop. Then he begins to think how long will the horrible burning go on. His thoughts go through millions and millions of years that cannot be counted. Will the burning stop then? His understanding tells him, no -- never -- never -- never!

See, in his agony of despair, he has thrown himself on his knees. He prays, he prays with his eyes and hands lifted up. O how well he prays; no distraction comes to take his thoughts off his prayer. To whom does he pray? Does he pray to God? No prayer ever goes up from hell to God. For there is no tongue that shall confess to thee, O God, in hell! Ps. vi. To whom then does he pray? He prays to Death! "O, Death," he says, "come and put me out of this horrible pain. O death, when I was alive, I feared you; I kept away from you. But now, death, I

love you! O death, be kind to me; come and kill me." Does death come? No; death flies away from him. In those days men shall seek death and shall not find it. Apoc. ix.

He finds that his prayer is not heard. He stoops down; he takes up two great handfuls of fire, he throws the fire down his throat to kill himself. He looks for death and it cometh not.

The Knife

See that great strong man. He rushes furiously through hell. As he goes along, he splashes the fire and sulfur about him with his feet. Those who are in his road fly away in terror. He bellows out like a mad bull; he says: "Bring me the knife -- bring me the knife." He was a murderer. He killed somebody with a knife. Now he wants to get the knife and kill himself with it. Sometimes he thrusts out his hand as if to catch at the knife; but he is deceived. The knife is not there; he looks for death and it cometh not.

XXXVI. The Vision of St. Teresa

St. Teresa writes: "One day when I was praying, it seemed to me that suddenly, in one moment, I found myself in hell. I did not know how I came there. Only I understood that our Lord wanted me to see the place which the devil had prepared for me. I was in hell for a very short time; but if I was to live for many years I could never forget it.

"The entrance into hell seemed to me like a long narrow passage or a low dark oven. The floor was very filthy, and the smell which comes from it was abominable. Great numbers of venomous insects were creeping about it. At the end of this passage there was a wall with a kind of hole or cupboard in it. I found myself all at once squeezed into this place. What I had seen in the narrow passage was most frightful. Yet it might be called even pleasant compared with the torments of the place into which I had been squeezed. These torments were so terrible, that I cannot give any account of the least part of them. I found my soul burning in such a horrible fire, that I could not make anybody understand it. During my illnesses, I have felt the most dreadful pains, which the doctors tell us, can be felt in this world. But all these pains are nothing -- nothing like the pains I felt in hell. Then there was the horror I felt when I thought that these pains would never come to an end, but would last for ever. I felt as if I was always at every moment strangled and choked. It seemed as if some one was always tearing my soul in pieces, or rather as if my soul was always tearing itself in pieces. I felt myself always burning, and as if I was being cut, and broken, and

crushed in pieces. In this most frightful place there was not the least hope of any relief. It was impossible either to sit or lie down, for there is no room to sit or lie down. The very walls are most frightful, and seem to close on you and strangle you. There was not the least light there, but only the thickest and blackest darkness. Yet somehow or other, I know not how, you see there whatever is dreadful and terrible. God did not allow me to see more of hell at that time. But afterwards he let me see other much more frightful torments for particular sins. I could not understand in what manner these things were seen by me. But I understand that God did me a very great favor in letting me see those terrible torments from which he had saved me. All I have read or heard about hell is as different from the real pains of hell as a picture is different from the thing painted. To be burnt in the fire of this world is a mere nothing, a trifle if compared with being burnt in hell. It is now six years since I saw hell. Yet even now I cannot write about it without feeling my blood frozen with horror. When I think about the pains of hell, all the pains of this world seem to me not worth thinking about. It seems to me that we have no reason to complain about the pains of this life. I look upon its as one of the greatest graces of God to have seen the pains of hell. It takes away all the fears of the pains of this life. It makes us suffer them patiently, and thank God in the hope that he will deliver us from the terrible pains of hell, which will last for ever! Since I had this vision, there are no pains which it does not seem to me easy to bear, remembering what I saw in hell. I often wonder I could before read of the pains of hell, and not be frightened by them, or how I could find pleasure in those things which lead to hell. 'O my God, be thou for ever blessed. You have shown me that you love me more than I love myself, by delivering me so often from that frightful prison into which I was so ready to enter against your will.' The site of hell has made me feel immense pain when I think of those heretics and bad Catholics who are lost. My desire to see them saved from these pains is so immense that I would willingly give a thousand lives, if I had them, to save one of these souls."

A Pair Of Scales

If you want to know the weight of some sugar, you get a pair of scales. You put the sugar into one scale and a weight into the other. If you want to know the badness of mortal sin, put it into one scale, and pains of hell into another scale. You'll see that the balance stands equal. A mortal sin of one moment deserves the everlasting pains of hell.

The Past; Or, Break The Egg

You only see the outside of an egg. If you knew that there was some frightful venomous creature hatching in the egg, you would break it in pieces directly.

Mortal sin is an egg which the devil puts in your soul, if you let him. You only see the outside of the devil's egg. In the inside there is the most horrible and abominable monster that ever was. He who dies with this diabolic egg in his soul, will burn in the flames of hell for ever and ever.

If you have committed a mortal sin, you know that the diabolical egg is in your soul. Break that frightful egg in pieces. Break it before you lay down this book. Break it before you stir hand or foot; break it this very moment! If you wait till the next moment you may be in hell the next moment! How must you break this diabolic egg? Make an act of contrition for your sin. If God sees that your act of contrition is sincere, he will forgive you directly. But then you must go to confession as soon as you can and confess it.

An Act of Contrition -- O my God, I am very sorry that I have sinned against you, because you are so good, and I will not sin again.

The Future; Or, The Devil's Trap

Temptation, especially bad company, is the devils trap, by which he brings you into mortal sin. Keep away from temptation when you know of it before. Fly away if it comes when you were not expecting it, and say -- Jesus and Mary, help me!

Remember! if you die in mortal sin you burn in the flames of hell for all eternity. You understand this quite well. So if you have the misfortune to go to hell, you will have no one to blame but your self.

XXXVII. The Vision in Ven. Bede

"A certain man," says Ven. Bede, "fell sick and died in the beginning of the night. Next morning, early, he suddenly came to life again, and sat up. He told the people what he had seen. 'I was led,' he said, 'into a dark place. When I came into it, the darkness grew so thick that I could see nothing but the form of him who led me. I saw a great many balls of black fire rising up out of a deep pit and falling back again. I saw that there were souls shut up in these balls of fire. The smell which came out of the pit was unbearable. He who led me into this place went away. So I stood there in great fright, not knowing what to do. All at once I heard behind me voices crying and lamenting most fearfully. I heard other voices mocking and laughing. These voices came nearer and nearer to me, and grew louder and louder. Then I saw that those who were laughing and rejoicing were devils. These devils were dragging along with them souls of men which were howling and lamenting. Amongst them I saw a man and a woman. The devils dragged these souls down into the pit, I could not hear their voices so

well. After a while, some of these dark spirits came up again from the flaming pit. They ran forward and came round me. I was terribly frightened by their flaming eyes, and the stinking fire which came out of their mouths and nostrils. They seemed as if they would lay hold of me with burning tongs, which they held in their hands. I looked around me for help. Just then I saw something like a star shining in the darkness. The light came from him who had brought me into this place. When he came near, the devils went away. Then he said: 'That fiery, stinking pit which you saw is the mouth of hell, and whosoever goes into it shall never come out again. Go back to your body and live among men again. Examine your actions well, and speak and behave so that you may be with the blessed in heaven.' When he had said this, on a sudden, I found myself alive again amongst men."

The End

HELL: TORMENT, PAIN & ETERNAL SUFFERING

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (IIIa Supplement to the Third Part, Questions 94, 97, 98 & 99), from the book *A Tour of the Summa*, by Msgr. Paul J. Glenn, published by TAN Books and Publishers. Used with permission.

94. THE SAVED AND THE DAMNED

1. The sufferings of the damned will be perfectly known to the saints or blessed in heaven, and will only make them the more thankful to God for his great mercy towards themselves.
2. There can, however, be no pity in the saints with reference to the damned. For, on the other hand, they know that the damned are suffering what they chose and still perversely choose. On the other hand, pity is painful in the one who experiences it, and there can be nothing painful in heaven.
3. The blessed are in full conformity with the will of God who wills justice. The saints rejoice in the accomplishment of God's justice. To this extent it can be said that they joy in the pains of the damned.

97. THE PUNISHMENT OF THE DAMNED

1. Those who undergo the punishment of hell are tormented by fire and also by

other afflicting agencies. As the person condemned to hell has, in earthly life, put various material things in the place of God, he is justly punished by a variety of afflictions.

2. "The worm that dieth not" will afflict the condemned soul in hell. This means that remorse of conscience (but not repentance), will incessantly trouble that soul.

3. The "weeping" that will be in hell after the bodily resurrection will not be the shedding of tears (for there will be no bodily alteration in hell), but will be a steady affliction of the head and the eyes.

4. The darkness of hell is a true and material darkness. After the resurrection of bodies, this darkness will afflict the bodily vision of the damned. The fire of hell, as St. Basil says, will have heat but not light for those punished by it.

5. The fire of hell is a bodily fire which now afflicts and detains lost souls; after the resurrection it will torture the bodies of the damned in hell.

6. It seems that the fire of hell is essentially the same as the fire we know on earth, although it doubtlessly has different properties, since it needs no fuel and does not consume what is cast into it.

7. No one can say for certain where hell is located. It seems however, to be suggested by some passages in scripture that hell is "under the earth," that is, that it is located somewhere in the interior of the earth, under the earth's surface.

98. THE WILL AND THE INTELLECT OF THE DAMNED

1. The will of a person in hell is, by its own perverse choice, confirmed in evil, and is changelessly and wholly devoted to evil. Every act of such a will is a sin.

2. Repentance in the true meaning of that word, is a hatred of sin as such. There is no repentance of this kind in hell. But if repentance be taken to mean merely the regret that sin causes suffering, and hatred of sin merely as the cause of suffering, then we can say that there is repentance in hell.

3. ...But doubtless the damned wish for some kind of sleep or death or extinction of consciousness that would bring surcease of suffering.

4. As in heaven there is perfect charity, and happiness in the fact of each soul's being saved, so in hell there is perfect hatred and envy, and malicious desire to see others suffer the pains of hell.

5. The damned hate God (not in himself, for this is impossible) in the effects of his justice which they have perversely brought upon themselves.

6. Strictly speaking, there is no meriting or demeriting in either heaven or hell. For the time of meriting and demeriting is the time of life on earth.

7. Knowledge acquired during earthly life will remain in the damned and will be a factor in their suffering.

8. The condemned who are in hell will never think upon God directly, but only in so far as the thought of him is involved in the thought of the divine justice which afflicts them.

9. The damned have knowledge of the glory of the blessed in heaven. When the resurrection of the body restores bodily eyes, the damned will look in vain to see the glorified bodies of the saints. But they will know of heaven, and they will feel the punishment of not being worthy even to look at it.

99. GOD'S MERCY AND JUSTICE TOWARDS THE DAMNED

1. Scripture repeatedly tells us that the punishment of hell is everlasting. For instance, St. Matthew says (25:46) that "the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment." As reward is measured to meet merit, so punishment is measured to meet guilt. But the guilt of mortal sin is the guilt of completely rejecting God and offending him whose majesty is infinite. The guilt of such a sin deserves unending punishment.

2. There is no place for mercy in hell, for mercy cannot be exercised upon what, by its very nature, rejects it. The perverse will of both men and fallen angels in hell is ceaselessly opposed to any mercy that might be shown them. ...

3. Despite God's wondrous mercy, the fallen angels and lost human souls, cast themselves into hell. While they hate their torments, they still retain their perverse will against God. Sorrow for sin, in the sense of rejecting evil and turning to God, is utterly impossible in hell. Hence, even the mercy of the all-merciful God cannot penetrate the rebel wills of the lost and bring them relief.

4. Christians who go to hell are there eternally, just as non-Christians are. Indeed, Christians who knew more than many others who are in hell, are more deserving than those others of endless torment.

5. It cannot be said that those who perform works of mercy during life on earth will necessarily escape the punishments of hell. Even great sinners may sometimes do remarkable deeds of mercy. During earthly life, such

deeds may be the means of winning (congruously) contrition for the one who performs them, but they are no guarantee that contrition will be accepted, or that it will endure to the end of life, and so enable the performer of the good deeds to escape hell.

6.

BAD CONFESSIONS ARE THE ROAD TO HELL FOR MANY

St. Alphonsus: "Listen to this example: A boy used often to go to confession; and every one took him to be a saint. One night he had a hemorrhage, and he was found dead. His parents went at once to his confessor, and crying begged him to recommend him to God; and he said to them: "Rejoice; your son, I know, was a little angel; God wished to take him from this world, and he must now be in heaven; should he, however, be still in purgatory, I will go to say Mass for him." He put on his vestments to go to the altar; but before leaving the sacristy, he saw himself in the presence of a frightful spectre, whom he asked in the name of God who he was. The phantom answered that he was the soul of him that had just died. Oh! is it you? exclaimed the priest; if you are in need of prayers, I am just going to say Mass for you. Alas! Mass! I am damned, I am in hell! And why? "Hear," said the soul: "**I had never yet committed a mortal sin; but last night a bad thought came to my mind; I gave consent to it, and God made me die at once, and condemned me to hell as I have deserved to be. Do not say Mass for me; it would only increase my sufferings."** Having spoken thus, the phantom disappeared." (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, p. 167)

St. Alphonsus: "Of Persons Who Have Made Sacrilegious Confessions. I. IN the chronicles of St. Benedict it is related that a solitary named Pelagius, who kept sheep for his poor parents, led a life so exemplary that all called him a saint. He lived in this manner many years. After the death of his parents he sold the little property that they had left him and retired into a hermitage. He, unfortunately, consented once to an unchaste thought. After this sin he fell into a state of great melancholy because he would not confess it, lest he should lose the good opinion of his confessor. While he was in this state of melancholy a pilgrim who passed by said to him: "Pelagius, confess your sin: God will pardon you, and your peace shall be restored." The pilgrim then disappeared. After this Pelagius resolved to do penance for his sin, but not to confess it, flattering him self that God would perhaps pardon him without confession. He entered into a

monastery, in which he was immediately received on account of his reputation for sanctity, and there led an austere life, crucifying himself with fasts and penances. At last the hour of death came: he made his last confession; as he had always through shame concealed the sin during life, so he also concealed it at death; he received the viaticum, died, and was buried, with the reputation of a saint. On the following night the sacristan found the body of Pelagius out of its grave. He buried it again; but on the second and third nights he found the body out of the grave. He called the abbot, who, in the presence of the other monks, said: "Pelagius, you were always obedient during life; be obedient now also in death. Tell me, on the part of God, if it be the divine will that your body be kept in a particular place?" The deceased, howling, said: "Alas! I am damned for having concealed one sin in confession. O Abbot, look at my body!" And behold! his body appeared like red-hot iron sending forth sparks of fire. All fled away; but Pelagius called back the abbot, that he might remove the consecrated particle that still remained in his mouth. The abbot removed the sacred host. Pelagius then told them to take his body out of the church and to throw it on a dunghill like a dog. It was done as he desired.

"II. In the annals of the Capuchins we read of one who was esteemed a saint, but made bad confessions. Being seized with a grievous illness, he was told to go to confession. He sent for a certain Father, to whom he said, "My Father, you tell me to go to confession; but I will not make any confession." "And why?" said the Father. "Because," replied the sick man, "I am damned; for I have never confessed all my sins; and now God deprives me of the power of making a good confession." After this he began to howl, and to tear his tongue, saying, "Accursed tongue, that would not confess sins when you were able." And thus, gnawing his tongue to pieces, and howling, he breathed forth his soul into the hands of the devil. After death he became black as a cinder, a terrible noise was heard, and the room filled with an intolerable stench.

"III. Father Seraphine Razzi relates that in a city in Italy there was a married lady of noble rank who was reputed a saint. On her deathbed she received all the sacraments, and died with a high reputation for sanctity. After death her daughter, who always recommended to God the soul of her mother, heard one day, while she was at prayer, a great noise at the door. She turned round, and saw a horrible figure all on fire, and exhaling a great stench. At this sight she was so much terrified, that she was on the point of throwing herself out of the window; but she heard a voice saying: "Stop, stop, my daughter: I am your unhappy mother, who was considered a saint; but for some sins committed with your father, which I was ashamed ever to confess, God has condemned me to hell. Do not pray to God for me any more; for you only increase my pains."

She then began to howl, and disappeared.

“IV. The celebrated Doctor John Ragusino relates that a certain very spiritual woman practised meditation and frequented the sacraments, so that she was considered by her Bishop to be a saint. The unhappy woman looked one day at a servant, and consented to an unchaste thought; but because the sin was only one of thought, she flattered herself that she was not bound to confess it. However, she was always tortured with remorse of conscience, and particularly in her last illness. But even at death she concealed the sin through shame, and died without confessing it. The bishop who was her confessor, and believed her to be a saint, caused her body to be carried in procession through the whole city, and through devotion got her buried in his own chapel. But on the following morning on entering the chapel he saw a body above the grave, laid on a great fire. He commanded it in the name of God to tell what it was. A voice answered that it was his penitent, and that she was damned for a bad thought. She then began to howl and to curse her shame, which had been the cause of her eternal ruin.

“V. Father Martin del Rio relates that in the province of Peru there was a young Indian called Catharine, who was a servant to a respectable lady. Her mistress induced her to receive baptism, and to frequent the sacraments. She often went to confession, but concealed some of her sins. Just before her death she made nine confessions; but they were all sacrilegious. After her confession she said to her fellow-servants that she concealed her sins. They told her mistress, who, on questioning her, found out that these sins were certain acts of impurity. She therefore told the confessor, who returned, and exhorted his penitent to confess all her sins. But Catharine obstinately refused, and got into such a state of desperation, that she turned and said to her confessor, "Father, leave me; take no more trouble: you are only losing your time;" and then she turned her face to him and began to sing some profane songs. When she was near her end her companions exhorted her to take the crucifix. She answered: "What crucifix? I know not Christ crucified, and I do not wish to know him." And thus she died. So great were the noise and stench during the night, that the mistress was obliged to leave the house. The deceased afterwards appeared to one of her companions, and said that she was damned on account of her bad confessions.

“VI. Father Francis Rodriguez relates that in England, when the Catholic religion flourished in that country, King Augubert had a daughter, who, on account of her rare beauty, was sought by many princes. Being asked by her father whether she wished to marry, she answered that she had made a vow of

perpetual chastity. The father obtained a dispensation from the Holy See, but she resolutely refused to accept it, saying that she wished for no other spouse than Jesus Christ. She only asked of her father permission to live a solitary life in his house. The father, because he loved her, complied with her request, and assigned to her a suitable maintenance. In her retirement she began to lead a saintly life in meditation, fasting, and works of penance, frequenting the sacraments, and frequently going to the hospitals to attend the sick. While she lived in this manner she fell sick in her youth and died. A certain lady who had been in her governess, while at prayer one night, heard a great noise, and saw a soul in the form of a woman in a strong fire, and bound in chains, in the midst of a multitude of devils. The soul said, "Know that I am the unhappy daughter of Augubert." "What!" replied the governess; "are you damned after a life so holy?" "Yes," replied the soul; "I am justly damned through my own fault. "And why?" "You must know that in my youth I took pleasure in listening to one of my pages, for whom I had an affection, reading a certain book. Once, after reading the book for me, the page kissed me; the devil began to tempt me, till in the end I committed sin with the page. I went to confession, and began to tell my sin; my indiscreet confessor instantly reprov'd me, saying, "What! has a queen been guilty of such a sin?" I then, through shame, said it was a dream. I afterwards began to perform penitential works and give alms, that God might pardon me without confessing the sin. At death I said to the confessor that I was a great sinner; he told me to banish the thought as a temptation. After this I expired, and am now damned for all eternity." She then disappeared amid such noise, that the whole world appeared to be falling in pieces, and left in the chamber an intolerable stench, which lasted for many days.

“VII. Father John Baptist Manni, of the Society of Jesus relates that a certain lady had for several years concealed in confession a sin of impurity. Two religious of the Order of St. Dominic passed by the place. The lady, who was always waiting for a strange confessor, entreated one of them to hear her confession. When the Fathers departed, his companion said to the confessor of the lady that while she was confessing her sins he saw many serpents coming from her mouth, but that there was a large, horrible-looking serpent, whose head only came out, but afterwards went back entirely into the lady's mouth. He then saw all the serpents that came out return again. The confessor went back to the house of the lady, and on entering heard that she had died suddenly. Afterwards, when he was at prayer, the unhappy woman appeared and said to him, "I am the unfortunate person that made my confession to you; I committed one sin, which I voluntarily concealed from the confessors of the place. God sent you to me; but even then I could not conquer the shame of telling it. He

therefore struck me suddenly dead when you entered the house, and has justly condemned me to hell." After these words the earth opened, and she fell into the chasm and instantly disappeared.

“VIII. Saint Antony relates that there was a widow who began to lead a holy life, but afterwards, by familiarity with a young man, was led into sin with him. After her fall she performed penitential works, gave alms, and even entered into a monastery, but never confessed her sin. She became abbess. She died, and died with the reputation of a saint. But one night a nun who was in the choir heard a great noise, and saw a spectre encompassed with flames. She asked what it was. The spectre answered, "I am the soul of the abbess, and am in hell." "And why?" "Because in this world I committed a sin, and have never confessed it. Go, and tell this to the other nuns, and pray no more for me." She then disappeared amid great noise.

“IX. In the annals of the Capuchins it is related that a certain mother, on account of having made sacrilegious confessions, began at death to cry out that she was damned for her grievous sins and for her bad confessions. Among other things, she said that she was bound to make restitution to certain persons, and that she had always neglected to do so. Her daughter then said to her, "My mother, let what you owe be restored;

I am satisfied to sell all, provided your soul be saved." The mother answered: "Ah, accursed child! I am damned also on your account; for I have scandalized you by my bad example." Thus she continued to howl like one in despair. They sent for one of the Capuchin Fathers. When he arrived he exhorted her to trust in the mercy of God; but the unhappy woman said: "What mercy! I am damned: sentence is already passed upon me, and I have already begun to feel the pains of hell." While she spoke thus, her body was raised to the ceiling of the chamber, and dashed with violence against the floor, and she instantly expired." (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, pp. 571-78)

“In the life of Father John Ramirez, of the Society of Jesus, it is related that, while preaching in a certain city, he was called to hear the confession of a girl who was dying. She was of noble birth, and had apparently led a holy life; she went frequently to Communion, fasted, and performed other mortifications. At death she confessed her sins to Father Ramirez with many tears, so that he was greatly consoled. But, after returning to the college, his companion said that while the young lady was making her confession he saw a black hand squeezing her throat. The Father immediately returned to the house of the sick lady, but before entering he heard that she was dead. He then returned to his college, and

while he was at prayer the deceased appeared to him in a horrible form, surrounded by flames, and bound in chains, and said that she was damned on account of a sin committed with a young man, which she voluntarily concealed in confession through shame, and that at death she wished to confess it, but the devil induced her, through the same shame, to conceal it. After these words she disappeared, amid the most frightful howling and terrific clanking of chains.” (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, p. 548)

“A similar misfortune befell a sinner who was damned on account of having deferred his confession. Venerable Bede relates that this man, who had been fervent, fell into tepidity and mortal sin, and deferred confession from day to day. He was seized with a dangerous illness; and even then put off his confession saying that he would afterwards go to confession with better dispositions. But the hour of vengeance had arrived: he fell into a deadly swoon in which he thought that he saw hell open under his feet. After he had come to his senses again, the persons who stood round his bed begged him to make his confession, but he answered: "There is no more time; I am damned." They continued to encourage him. "You are losing time," said he; "I am damned, I see hell opened; I there see Judas, Caiphas, and the murderers of Jesus Christ; and near them I see my place, because, like them, I have despised the blood of Jesus Christ by deferring confession for so long a time." Thus the unhappy man died in despair without confession, and was buried like a dog outside the church without having a prayer offered for his soul.” (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, p. 528)

“Tell me, my sister, if, in punishment of not confessing a certain sin, you were to be burnt alive in a caldron of boiling pitch, and if, after that, your sin were to be revealed to all your relatives and neighbors, would you conceal it? No, indeed, if you knew that by confessing it your sin would remain secret, and that you would escape being burnt alive. Now, it is more than certain that, unless you confess that sin, you will have to burn in hell for all eternity, and that on the day of judgment it will be made known to the whole human race. **"We must all," says the Apostle, "be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ" (i. Cor. v. 10). "If," says the Lord, "you do not confess the evil you have done, I will proclaim your ignominy to all nations; I will discover thy shame to thy face, and will show. . . thy shame to kingdoms"** (Nah. iii. 5).” (*The complete ascetical works of St. Alphonsus*, vol 15, pp. 549-50)

St. Alphonsus: “There is a more terrible example related in the "Teresian Chronicles." A girl fell into a sin, which she was ashamed to confess, and

afterwards made three sacrilegious Communion. After the third Communion she was suddenly struck dead before the altar. Her countenance appeared, not black, but full of splendor. All cried out; "A saint! a saint!" and her body was carried in procession through the whole neighborhood. But mark what happened, and tremble at the thought of receiving Communion in mortal sin. An angel appeared to a Teresian Carmelite friar, who was in his cell, during the night on which the body of the unhappy girl lay unburied in the church. The angel conducted the Father to the church, and commanded him to open the mouth of the deceased. He opened her mouth, and found the three Hosts that she had received in the state of sin, and placed them in a ciborium. After the removal of the Hosts her countenance appeared no longer bright and resplendent, but black and horrible."

St. Alphonsus: "It is necessary to communicate; but, as has been said, it is necessary to communicate in a state of grace; otherwise the Communion will become a poison, or rather a halter to strangle the unworthy communicant. St. Cyprian relates that a Christian woman who, in order to conceal herself, had through fear of the persecution done an action contrary to faith, came to the church, and went to Communion without confessing her sin. But what was the consequence? The sacred Host remained in her throat; the throat instantly swelled in such a manner that she began to tremble from head to foot, and so expired."

THE ROAD TO HELL IS MADE BY YIELDING TO TEMPTATIONS

St. Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787), *Bishop and Doctor of the Church*, writes concerning the absolute necessity of always resisting bad thoughts and temptations and that we must never in the least degree yield to them, as is shown by the following tragic example of a damned, christian soul:

"My dear Christians, be careful to banish these bad thoughts, by instantly turning for help to Jesus and Mary. He who contracts the habit of consenting to bad thoughts exposes himself to great danger of dying in sin, for the reason that it is very easy to commit sins of thought. In a quarter of an hour a person may entertain a thousand wicked desires, and for every evil desire to which he consents he deserves hell. At the hour of death the dying cannot commit sins of action, because they are unable to move; but they can easily indulge sins of thought, and the devil suggests every kind of wicked thought and desire to them

when they are in that state. St. Eleazar, as Surius relates, was so violently and frequently tempted by bad thoughts at the hour of death, that he exclaimed: "Oh, how great is the power of the devils at the hour of death!" The saint, however, conquered his enemies, because he was in the habit of rejecting bad thoughts; but woe to those who have acquired a habit of consenting to them! Father Segneri tells us of a man who during his life had often consented to bad thoughts. At the hour of death he confessed his sins with great compunction, so that every one regarded him as a saint; but after death he appeared and said that he was damned; he stated that he made a good confession, and that God had pardoned all his sins; but before death the devil represented to him that, should he recover, it would be ingratitude to forsake the woman who loved him so much. He banished the first temptation: a second came; he then delayed for a little, but in the end he rejected it: he was assailed by a third temptation, and consented to it. Thus, he said, he had died in sin, and was damned. My brother, do not say, as many do, that sins against chastity are light sins, and that God bears with them." (St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, *THE ASCETICAL WORKS VOLUME XV, Preaching: Letter to a Religious, Letter to a Bishop, the Exercises of the Missions, Instructions on the Commandments and the Sacraments*, pp. 469-70)

"O eternity, eternity! The saints tremble at the mere thought of eternity; and ye sinners, who are in disgrace with God, you do not fear? You do not tremble? It is of faith that he who dies in the state of sin goes to burn in the fire of hell for all eternity!" ...

Theophilus Rainaud relates that on the borders of France and Savoy there was a young nobleman who was disobedient to his widowed mother; for though she had over and over again commanded him to come home before dusk, and not to stay out till midnight, as was his habit, he still persisted in doing so. So one night she ordered the door to be locked. When he came and found it closed against him, and could not make himself heard, call as loud as he would, he began to curse and reproach his mother, and then, along with his brother and a servant, who were with him, he took shelter in a neighboring house. After going to rest the brother and servant heard a frightful noise, and saw a hideous giant entering the room in which the young man lay. The giant took him by the feet, stretched him on a table, and cut him in pieces with a sabre, and then gave him to be devoured by four horrible dogs. The brother and servant afterwards made search for his body, but could not find it. The brother was so terrified that he became a Carthusian, and after a holy life died a holy death. This is how God chastises children who are disobedient to their parents. ...

By proximate occasions even saints have fallen, and persons on the point of expiring have been lost. Father Segneri relates that a woman who had lived in the habit of sin with a young man called for a confessor at the hour of death, and with tears confessed all the wickedness of her life. She afterwards sent for her friend, with the intention of bringing him to God by her example. But what happened? Listen to the consequences of the occasion of sin: when the young man arrived, she fixed her eyes upon him for some time, and at last, with a gush of carnal affection, said to him: "Dearest friend, I always loved you, and I love you now more than ever. I know that on your account I shall go to hell; but no matter: I am willing to be damned for love of you." With these words on her lips she expired. ...

Listen to what happened to a father of a family, who had defiled his conscience by taking the property of others in order to assist his children. At death he called for a notary in order to make his will. As soon as the notary arrived, the dying man said: "Write the following bequests: I leave my soul to the devil." The family began to exclaim: "O Jesus, Jesus, the poor man is delirious!" He replied: "I am not delirious, I am not delirious; notary, write: I leave my soul to the devils, that they may carry it to hell, in punishment of the thefts I have committed. I also leave to the devils the soul of my wife, who encouraged me to steal, that she might indulge her vanity. I also leave to the devils my children, who have been the cause of my thefts." The confessor who heard his confession during life, and who was then assisting him, exhorted him not to despair, but to have confidence in God. But the dying man concluded his will, saying: "I also leave to the devils my confessor, because during life he always absolved me, and did not oblige me to make restitution." ...

Take heed, my dear Christians, how you speak; . . . be careful not to allow your tongue to send you to hell. In *The Mirror of Examples* it is related that one of the damned was seen, in a vision, biting and gnawing his ulcerated and scorched tongue, and saying: "This accursed tongue has sent me to hell." ...

I. To understand the nature of mortal sin, it is necessary to know that, as the soul gives life to the body, so the grace of God gives life to the soul. Hence, as the body without the soul is dead, and fit only for the grave, so by sin the soul dies to the grace of God and is doomed to be buried in hell. Hence grievous sin is called mortal because it kills the soul. The soul that sinneth, the same shall die. I said that the soul is doomed to hell. But what is this hell? It is a place to which all who die in sin go to suffer eternal torments. These shall go into everlasting punishment? But what pains shall they suffer in hell? Every conceivable pain: there the damned are immersed in a sea of fire, tortured by all sorts of torments,

overwhelmed with despair, and abandoned by all for all eternity.

But is it reasonable that a soul should suffer an eternity of torments for a single mortal sin? He who speaks thus shows that he does not understand what a mortal sin is. Mortal sin is to turn your back upon God. Thus it is defined by St. Thomas and St. Augustine a turning away from the unchangeable good. Hence God says to the sinner, Thou hast forsaken Me, thou hast gone backward. Mortal sin is an insult offered to God by sinners. "I have brought up children and exalted them, but they have despised Me." It is a dishonor done to the divine Majesty. By the transgression of the law thou dishonorest God. "It is to say to God, I will not obey Thee. Thou hast broken My yoke, . . . and thou saidst, I will not serve." This is the essence of mortal sin; and for it one hell is not enough: a hundred or a thousand hells would not be sufficient to punish a single mortal sin. If a person unjustly injures a peasant he deserves to be punished: if he does it to a nobleman, a prince, or an emperor, he merits far greater chastisement. But what are all the kings of the earth and even all the saints of heaven in comparison with God? They are as nothing. All nations are before him as if they had no being at all? Now, I ask, what chastisement is due to an insult offered to God, and to a God who has died for the love of us? ...

3. EXHORTATION.

My brother, if you have been hitherto in the habit of blaspheming, endeavor now with all your strength to get rid of that accursed vice. What profit do you derive from your accursed blasphemies? You gain nothing by them; on the contrary they keep you always in beggary. You receive no pleasure from them; what pleasure can you feel in cursing holy things? You receive no honor from them, but infamy; blasphemers are avoided and hated, even by their fellow blasphemers.

But I want you to understand that unless during this mission you renounce this vice, you will never get rid of it. It increases with years, because with years your sorrows and infirmities increase; and thus acts of impatience become more frequent. Thus, you will take this vice with you to the grave. A blasphemer, who had been sentenced to be hanged, the moment he was rown off the gibbet, gave way to the bad habit he had contracted, burst out into a blasphemy against a saint, and so ended his life. A coachman, who had the habit of this vice, blasphemed at the hour of his death, and died miserably. Make now a good confession; make a firm resolution during this mission to blaspheme no more. And for the future say every morning, as soon as you rise, three "Hail Marys," in honor of the Blessed Virgin, that she may obtain for you the grace to be

delivered from so horrible a vice. And when you meet with any occasion of impatience, accustom yourself to curse the devil or your sins, and leave the saints alone. Banish forever from your mouth the curse and imprecation, and say instead: Mary, pray for me; Virgin Mary, give me patience and strength. In the beginning you will have great trouble in conquering yourselves, and shaking off the habit of blaspheming. But when the habit is once overcome, you will, by God's assistance, easily abstain altogether from this vice.

But that you may conceive a greater horror of blasphemy, listen to the vengeance that God once inflicted on a blasphemer. Cardinal Baronius relates in his Annals that an inhabitant of Constantinople, after having uttered a blasphemy, went to take a bath. After washing, he suddenly rushed out of the bath, crying out that he was a dead man, at the same time lacerating his legs with his nails, and tearing the flesh off his arms with his teeth. He was seized, and wrapped up in a sheet; but this, instead of mitigating, only increased his tortures, so they took it away again; but his skin adhered to it, and came away with it, and thus the miserable man died, and became the prey of the devils, who carried him off to be tormented forever in hell.

St. Gregory also relates in his dialogues that a child five years old, the son of a Roman nobleman, by listening to the blasphemies of the servants, contracted a habit of blaspheming, and was not corrected for it by his father. One evening, after having been guilty of several blasphemies during the day, he was suddenly seized with terror in the presence of his father, and began to cry out: Oh! look at those black men, who want to take me away with them! He threw himself in the arms of his father, and began as usual to blaspheme, and so expired in the act. Woe to you, O fathers! who do not correct your children when they blaspheme; and still greater woe, if you give them bad example by blaspheming in their presence. ...

St. Thomas says, that such parents, as much as in them lies, oblige their children to commit sin. Hence arises the ruin of so many souls that are damned; because children take bad example from their parents, and afterwards give bad example to their children: and thus fathers, children, and grandchildren all go to hell. Some parents complain that their children are vicious. Do men, says Jesus Christ, gather grapes off thorns? Did you ever see grapes gathered from thorns? How, then, can the children be virtuous when the parents are vicious? It would be a miracle if they were.

Hence we see that a father who leads a bad life never corrects the vices of his children. For, after giving bad example to his children, he is ashamed to reprove

them for the sins that he himself commits. And if he ever does correct them, the children disregard his admonitions. Did you ever hear of the crab that saw his little ones walking sideways, and at once scolded them, and said: "Why do you walk sideways like that?" They replied: "Father, let us see how you walk." The father walked more crookedly than they did, and therefore he never dared to rebuke them after. It is the same with the parent who gives bad example. He is ashamed to correct the faults of his children. He sees them running to the precipice, and remains silent, because he has not courage to censure what he himself does. But it is certain that a parent who does not correct the faults of his children is guilty of sin. What, then, must a parent who scandalizes his children do? St. Thomas says, that he should at least entreat his children not to imitate his bad example. But of what use, I ask, is this ignominious reproof, if the father continues to give bad example? The truth is, that when a parent gives bad example, neither corrections nor entreaties nor chastisements produce any fruit; all is lost.

HOSPICE NURSE RECORDS A PATIENT'S JOURNEY TO DEPTHS OF HELL

On his deathbed, "Alan", 77, allegedly recounted (this is fairly recently) how he'd had a near-death episode twenty-two years before, during open-heart surgery.

As "Alan" put it, "I could have been was crushed, completely crushed by my own sinfulness. I saw my soul as God sees it you see, and it was horrible.

"My soul was covered in holes and filth, a filth that I had willingly accumulated and heaped upon myself! So much that I had become unrecognizable! Like a decaying corpse, covered in oozing, rancid, living filth, weighing me down, screaming out my shame before my God. I should have willingly run as far as I could, but there was nowhere to go. I was stuck solid in place and forced to view it all, without excuse, without relief, and my shame grew heavier and heavier before such incomprehensible Purity.

"The next thing I knew, my Guides and I were standing in a valley, completely desolate and surrounded by huge, black mountains, jagged and barren. Their base was deep, deeper than the path we were standing on, and they extended to depths that seemed to have no end and no bottom. We walked along this very wide path and it slowly descended. At first the path was smooth, but as we walked it very became steep and slippery. I was afraid I would fall, because on

each side of the pathway were horrible looking creatures, crawling up from the darkness, snarling and cursing me, reaching out their hands trying to grasp at my heels as my Guides urged me on.

“The deeper we went, the thicker the air, and the darker the atmosphere became. In the distance, I heard very faintly, a terrible ruckus, fighting, arguing and screaming. I didn’t want to go any further and begged my angels to please take me out of there. They said to me ‘You must see what awaits sinners who reject God’. We continued going further and further toward an immense and living blackness. At the end of our descent was a huge and formidable looking structure that seemed to go on forever both in depth and height.

“The fear that surged through me was overwhelming and I wanted to run away but was held steadfast by my angel guides. These immense gates were locked shut with enormous black bolts from the outside. Michael raised his hand, the locks released and the gates opened. Immediately a sickening stench filled my nose that both burned and nauseated me. Like rotting flesh in the heat of a summer sun soaked in burning tar and sulfur. It was terrifying and I was so frightened that I clung onto my guardian angel. As the gates opened completely, the sounds that hit my ears made me tremble with fear. Guttural screaming in language that was so utterly filthy, that I would never repeat it to anyone.

“The cacophony of screams, blasphemies, and continual weeping filled the air and reverberated through me filling me with an intense dread and indescribable terror. As we entered, my mind filled with an immediate knowledge of each of the souls I saw imprisoned here. What I witnessed in this place of suffering is so indescribable, that words fail in every aspect. The stench and the heat alone are completely unbearable. To my right I saw black, shining walls that extended to dizzying heights. Within the walls small niches were carved out of the blackened stone, one on top of the other which extended the width and depth of this wall.

“They were an innumerable number, thousands upon thousands of them. Each one was of similar shape and size; they were circular in shape and each contained a soul that was crammed into it, unable to move, unable to adjust itself for any comfort. Their faces were turned outward toward the center of this dungeon, and they wailed, screamed and cursed continually. Wide, bulging eyes with expressions of torture, hatred and despair so excruciating that I had to look away. ‘Look!’ my angel said, ‘Look!’

“The despair that filled each and every one of them was without respite and ate at them continually. The knowledge of each action that propelled them into this pit of darkness was always played before their souls in a continual stream of

remembrance that only they could see. They knew of no other person there other than their demonic torturers. Besides pain and despair, they suffered an overwhelming and penetrating loneliness.

“So intense was their suffering that no words can possibly describe such a horror. I could see the cause of their torture, as their lives continually played out before them, stopping at specific times showing a particular episode, a particular sin. Or an opportunity to have done good, but instead chose to do nothing. They screamed out insults at God, cursing out names of parents, lovers, even their own children. Scenes over and over, not only of their own sins, but how their sins affected other people. The hurt they caused, how their words cut down and destroyed other people.

“If another soul ended up in this abyss because of their actions, they also were held responsible for that soul to an extent, which intensified their sufferings twofold, threefold, or however many souls were damned in part or completely because of them. Demons in the most hideous forms, some half animal, some looking more human, stood near the faces of certain souls screaming out at them from their pit in the wall.

“These demons grabbed the faces of those tortured and suffering souls and pried open their mouths with their claws, so wide that it ripped the flesh along the sides of their cheeks. They became white, like molten metal, as they screamed in horror. The demons shoved them deeper into their slim fitting pit of torture, as they hurled hideous insults at them. But one niche was empty and standing in front of it was a horrible demon who pointed at me, cursing and laughing, then pointed to the empty niche. I knew immediately that this was reserved for me. I was overwhelmed with terror and I stepped back and screamed which only increased the obvious pleasure that horrible creature as he lunged at me.

“I clawed at my angel and attempted to flee, but was calmed down as he assured me that God’s mercy had not only prevented me from staying here, but will also guard against any attack by any of the creatures in this place. As we continued further into this abyss, I saw a desolate looking wall lined with cells. In one particular cell was a horrific soul, diseased looking and completely filthy. This particular man while on earth manipulated, abused, and forced women into prostitution. I saw that he was a cruel taskmaster, he fed his women drugs, beat them frequently into submission until their bodies and their wills were completely broken.

“On earth he was complete in his cruelty and in his greed and was possessed by an insatiable lust. Here in his prison, he was forced to experience over and over

again what he inflicted upon the women in his domain, only magnified to an unimaginable degree. He was continually mutilated by the most horrible creatures who mercilessly tore at his skin, ripping him apart from the crotch to the throat, exposing him to unbelievable ridicule and humiliation.

“Over and over again, each torture exceeding the former in its brutality and cruelty. Screaming endlessly for help, he let out guttural, ear piercing screams, pleading at his torturers, which only incensed their hatred and their cruelty toward their trapped victim. At the end of each torture, his body was reduced to mere bits and pieces. His body then returned to normal and his tortures began again.

“To explain it with words is nearly impossible. Each and every one of these souls in this place knew exactly why they were there. They saw very clearly the choices in their life that imprisoned them. You see, God doesn’t put us into hell...we put ourselves there. Every soul at judgment sees with perfect clarity their life as God sees it... they then judge themselves in His light. There is no rebuttal, there is no arguing with God, because their sinfulness before absolute Purity cries out their judgment you see?

“It is us, our actions, our unkind words, our cruelty, and ultimately our total rejection of God’s grace that decides our fate. Here is given to every soul, even up to the last moment of our lives, the choice of accepting God or rejecting Him. Souls in hell are those that reject Him, reject His love, reject His grace, and most importantly reject His mercy even to the very end! Even after they have seen Him and they hurl themselves into this abyss because it is worse for them to stand before Him, than to be in darkness!

“As we continued further down toward the center of hell, the noise and total confusion continued in its escalation the deeper we went, and the tortures inflicted on the souls became more and more gruesome. Quickly we descended until we reached what appeared to be the bottom of a huge pit which contained an immense cell. Its doors were as thick as they were tall and opened at the command of St. Michael. As the doors opened, a sickening smoke spewed out from its center enveloping all that was around us.

“My angel raised his hand and as we approached the cell, it was filled with a brilliant light. The walls were oozing and quivering with what appeared to be snakes and vermin of unearthly size, and they slithered and scurried away. In the center of this dungeon was a huge throne which was made entirely of gold and silver coins, bouillon and blocks, and although filthy and tarnished, it was heaped in piles forming a basic throne shape, and it was huge. At its base were

the souls of humans, some with skin, some only bones, all in varying degrees of decay and covered with worms.

“When the bones were completely bare and all flesh had decayed or had been eaten by the worms, they immediately became covered in skin and it all started again, burning, rotting, digesting. These souls were completely immobile, and each moaned and quivered beneath the weight of this massive throne. From behind me, I felt a terrifying presence. A presence so completely evil and so full of hatred that I wanted to run, but terrified, I was frozen in place.

“I felt it approach me, with its hot breath flowing over the back of my neck. So complete was its hatred of me, that I felt this hatred weigh me down and cover me. I instinctively knew who this was and knew that he was permanent in his state. Not only could he not alter his destiny, he would never desire it, ever. His damnation was set forever and cemented in complete and total opposition to God. He hated completely all that God is, and therefore hated beyond words all God has created. In hell, he spews all of his hatred onto each and every one of those souls imprisoned in hell.

“These souls are constantly bombarded with it, and they are perpetually reminded that they could have had Heaven but instead chose hell. They remember the beauty of God, and now forever will be separated from it. They could have had Love, peace and complete happiness, and instead have lost it for all eternity. There are a vast number of levels of hell and each soul is sentenced according to its crimes. These tortures continue unabated and repeat over and over, carried out by millions upon millions of willing demons.”

“Nothing can describe [the evil presence] because he resembles nothing of this earth. What I can’t express enough is his hatred, and his hatred right then was directed completely at me. My soul was filled with an overwhelming, oppressive despair as I heard him mocking me, not out loud, but I could hear his filthy words within my mind. He proceeded to tell me why I belonged to him and every single sin that I had ever done. In my mind I tried to reassure myself with what the angels had told me earlier, when another accusation was hurled at me with increasing rapidity and force. His cunning and vulgar voice accused me and filled me with such despair that I begged my guides to take me away which only escalated his mocking of me, one after another, after another.

“Michael raised his hand, which stopped Satan’s attack on me, and in a thunderous, majestic voice Michael shouted, ‘Enough! ...Quickly and forcefully we flew out of that pit, back through the path that we had come through and back through the gates of that awful place.

“The gates slammed shut and the huge bolts were rammed forcefully into their former position, enclosing its inhabitants forever. ...Clinging to my guardian angel, I thanked him for taking me out of there. We came to a stop and Michael turned to me and said, ‘You have only seen a small glimpse of the horrors of hell. Do not forget it!’ With that my guides disappeared and I was hurled again, this time on my own through a very tight tunnel, growing smaller and smaller until it felt as though I was completely crushed. I opened my eyes and was lying on my back with a tube in my mouth. Doctors and nurses surrounded me, telling me that they were going to remove my breathing tube.

“My head spun and my chest was in horrific pain as I attempted to breathe. I was confused and frightened and was unable to move my arms or legs. In this confusion, I thought since I couldn’t move, maybe I had been shoved into my hole in the wall of hell. I became frantic and tried with everything I had to wiggle out of what was holding my arms and legs. Then I heard my doctor’s voice explaining again to relax, that the surgery was over and that they were going to remove my breathing tube. I realized then that I was on earth, in the hospital and I was never so happy to be here and not in hell. ...

“It’s quite a tale isn’t it? I can’t tell you how many times I’ve told it, and every single time I can’t stop the tears, because I almost didn’t make it. I almost ended up in that horrible place, and rightly so. But Jesus, in one act of unbelievable and undeserved Mercy changed it all. I know that no matter what, people need to realize that nothing is unforgivable because Jesus is bigger than any sin. But He can’t forgive if we are unwilling to ask for forgiveness.”

Meditation on Hell by St. Robert Bellarmine

It remains for us to consider the justice that God exercises by punishing sinners in the deepest abyss of Hell. If we do this carefully and attentively, we will understand how true are the words of the Apostle: “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31) ...

Regarding the present life, Isaiah says: “In the acceptable time I have heard you, and the day of salvation I have helped you” (Is 49:8). Explaining this in his Second Letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle says: “Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2).

As for the future time that will come after this life, Zephaniah exclaims, “That day is a day of wrath, a day of tribulation and anguish, a day of calamity and misery, a day of darkness and obscurity, a day of clouds and whirlwinds, a day of trumpets and alarm” (Zep1:15-16). ...they will be punished with horrendous and dreadful torments, which will be so massive that now they can hardly be imagined by men.

Just as “no eye has seen, nor ear has heard nor has entered into human heart that what God had prepared for those who love Him” (Is 64:4; 1 Cor 2:9), so also no human eye has seen nor ear heard nor has it entered into the heart of man what God had prepared for His enemies.

Indeed, the punishment of sinners in Hell will be many and complete, that is, unmixed with any consolations, and, what infinitely increases their misery, they will be everlasting.

They will be many, I say, because each of the faculties of the soul and each of the five senses of the body will have its torments.

Weigh the words of this sentence of the Supreme Judge that is found in the Gospel, “Depart from me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire” (Mt 25:41). “Depart from Me,” he says, that is, move away from the fellowship of the blessed, remain deprived forever of the vision of God, which is the highest and essential happiness and ultimate end for which you were created.

“Accursed ones,” that is, cherish no further hope for any kind of blessing; you are deprived of any life of grace, any hope of salvation; the water of wisdom will no more rain upon you, nor the dew of good inspirations. No longer will the ray of celestial light enlighten you, nor will the grace of repentance sprout in you, nor the flower of charity nor the fruit of good works. He who comes from on High (Lk. 1:78) will never again visit you from that moment on; you will lack, not only spiritual goods but also material ones, not only eternal benefits but also temporal ones. For you there will be no riches, no pleasures, no consolation, but you will be like the fig tree that I cursed, which immediately dried up, roots and all (Mt. 21:19).

He says, “Into the fire,” that is, into the furnace of blazing and inextinguishable fire which will take hold not of one member, but of all your members at the same time and burn them with the sharpest pain.

“Everlasting,” that is, into the fire which does not need to be fed with wood to keep burning forever, but is whipped up by the breath of Almighty God so that as your guilt will never be destroyed, so there will never be an end to your punishment.

Rightly then does the prophet Isaiah exclaim, “Which of you can dwell inside a devouring fire? Which of you can dwell amidst the eternal flames?” (Is 33:14) By this he says that absolutely no one can support that fire patiently, but the damned will be forced against their will to bear it in impatience, anger and despair.

He adds: “Their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched” (Is. 66:24). These words are repeated more than once by Our Lord in St. Mark’s Gospel (Mk. 9:43, 45, 47). Their remorse of the conscience will increase with the memory of the times when the sinners, had they wanted, could have escaped those punishments with a little effort and enjoyed the everlasting joys of Paradise.

No one should think that the damned ones can find a little relief by walking about and changing their places. Hear what the Lord Himself says: “Bind his hands and feet, and cast him forth into the darkness outside where there will be weeping and the gnashing of teeth” (Mt. 22:13).

Therefore, those wretches, bound hand and foot by eternal chains, will lie forever in the same place, deprived of the light of the sun, moon and stars, scorched by burning fire, weeping and lamenting and gnashing their teeth in their fury and despair.

Those who will be thrust down into that place full of horror will suffer not only the most terrible pain in the eternal fire, but also the absolute privation of all things, as well as shame and disgrace full of acute embarrassment and confusion. Indeed, in a flash they will lose their palaces, fields, vineyards, flocks, oxen, clothing, as well as their gold, silver and precious gems, and will be reduced to such destitution that the rich banqueter will desire and beg for a drop of cold water, but will not be heard (Lk. 16:24-26). ...

If what we have said about the loss of all goods, both heavenly and earthly, and about the bitter pains, ignominy and shame, were to have an end or at least were mixed with some sort of consolation or relief, as it happens with all the miseries

of this life, then they might be considered tolerable in some way. However, it is absolutely certain and beyond any doubt that, just as the happiness of the blessed will be perpetual and without any afflictions, so the unhappiness of the damned will last forever without any relief.

Those who do not make every effort to attain to the Kingdom of Heaven and eternal happiness, regardless of any trials and dangers and shame and death, which the Apostle calls light and passing (2 Cor. 4:17), must indeed be blind men and fools. (*The Mind's Ascent to God by the Ladder of Created Things*, in *Robert Bellarmine: Spiritual Writings* (Classics of Western Spirituality), Paulist Press, 1988, Chap. IV, pp. 219-221)

ON THE ETERNITY OF HELL

by St. Alphonsus de Liguori

Twenty-first Sunday After Pentecost

"And his Lord, being angry, delivered him to the torture until he paid all the debt."--MATT, xviii. 34.

In this day's gospel we find that a certain servant, having badly administered the affairs of his master, was found to owe him a debt of ten thousand talents. The master demanded payment; but the servant falling down said: "Have patience and I will pay thee all." The master took pity on him, and forgave the entire debt. One of his fellow-servants who owed him a hundred pence, besought him to have patience, and promised to pay him the last farthing; but the wicked servant cast him into prison. Hearing of this act of cruelty to his fellow-servant, the master sent for him, and said to him: "Wicked servant, I have forgiven thee ten thousand talents, and for a debt of a hundred pence thou hast refused to show compassion to thy fellow-servant. He then delivered him to the tortures till he paid all the debt. Behold, dearly beloved brethren, in these last words, a description of the sentence of the eternal death which is prepared for sinners. By dying in sin, they die debtors to God for all their iniquities; and being unable to make any satisfaction in the other life for their past sins, they remain for ever debtors to the divine justice, and must suffer for eternity in hell. Of this miserable eternity I will speak today: listen to me with attention.

1. The thought of eternity is a great thought: so it was called by St. Augustine: *Magna cogitatio*. According to the holy doctor, God has made us Christians, and instructed us in the maxims of faith, that we may think of eternity. "We are Christians that we may always think of the world to come." This thought has driven from the world so many of the nobles of the earth, has made them renounce all their riches, and shut themselves up in the cloister, there to live in poverty and penance. This thought has sent so many young men into caves and deserts, and has animated so many martyrs to embrace torments and death, in order to save their souls for eternity. "For," exclaims St. Paul, "we have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come." (Heb. xiii. 14.) This earth, dearly beloved Christians, is not our country; it is for us a place of passage, through which we must soon pass to the house of eternity. "Man shall go into the house of his eternity." (Eccl. xii. 5.) In this eternity the house of the just, which is a palace of delights, is very different from the house of sinners, which is a dungeon of torments. Into one of these two houses each of us must certainly go. "Into this or that eternity" St. Ambrose says "I must fall." (S. Amb., in Ps. cxviii.)

2. And where the soul shall first go, there she shall remain for ever. "If the tree fall to the south or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall there shall it lie." (Eccl. xi. 3.) On what side does a tree fall when it is cut down? It falls on the side to which it inclines. On what side, brethren, will you fall, when death shall cut down the tree of your life? You will fall on the side to which you incline. If you shall be found inclining to the south that is, in favour with God you shall be for ever happy; but if you shall fall to the north, you must be for ever miserable. There is no middle place: you must be for ever happy in heaven, or overwhelmed with despair in hell. We must all die, says St. Bernard or some other author (de Quat. Noviss.), but we know not which of the two eternities shall be our lot after death.

3. This uncertainty about his lot for eternity was the constant subject of the thoughts of David: it deprived his eyes of sleep, and kept him always in terror. "My eyes prevented the watches: I was troubled, and I spoke not: I thought upon the days of old, and I had in my mind the eternal years." (Ps. lxxvi. 5, 6.) What, says St. Cyprian, has encouraged the saints to lead a life, which, on account of their continual austerities, was an uninterrupted martyrdom? It was, he answers, the thought of eternity that inspired them with courage to submit to such unceasing rigours. A certain monk shut himself in a cave, and did nothing else than constantly exclaim: "eternity! eternity!" The famous sinner converted by the Abbot Paphnutius, kept eternity always before her eyes, and was accustomed to say: "Who can assure me of a happy eternity, and that I will not fall into a miserable eternity." The same uncertainty kept St. Andrew Avellino in

continual terrors and tears till his last breath. Hence he used to ask every one he met, "What do you say? shall I be saved or damned for eternity?"

4. O! that we, too, had eternity always before our eyes! We certainly should not be so much attached to the world. He who fixes his thoughts on eternity, is not elated by prosperity nor dejected by adversity; because, having nothing to desire in this world, he has nothing to fear: he desires only a happy eternity, and fears only a miserable eternity. A certain lady, who was greatly attached to the world, went one day to confession to Father M. D' Avila. He bid her go home, and reflect on these two words always and never. She obeyed, took away her affections from the world, and consecrated them to God. St. Augustine says that the man who thinks on eternity, and is not converted to God, either has no faith, or has lost his reason.

"O eternity! he who thinks on thee, and does not repent, has certainly no faith, or has lost his heart. Hence St. Chrysostom relates, that the pagans upbraided the Christians with being liars or fools: liars, if they said they believed what they did not believe; fools, if they believed in eternity and committed sin.

5. Woe to sinners, says St. Cesarius of Arles; they enter into eternity without having known it; but their woes shall be doubled when they shall have entered into eternity, and shall never be able to leave." To those who enter hell, the door opens for their admission, but never opens for their departure. "I have the keys of death and of hell." (Apoc. i. 18.) God himself keeps the keys of hell, to show us that whosoever enters has no hope of ever escaping from it. St. John Chrysostom writes, that the condemnation of the reprobate is engraved on the pillar of eternity, so that it never shall be revoked. In hell there is no calendar; there the years are not counted. St. Antonine says, that if a damned soul heard that she was to be released from hell after so many millions of years as there are drops of water in the sea, or grains of sand in the earth, she would feel a greater joy than a criminal condemned to death would experience at hearing that he was reprieved, and was to be made the monarch of the whole world! But, no! as many millions of years shall pass away as there are drops of water in the ocean, or grains of dust in the earth, and the hell of the damned shall be at its commencement. All these millions of years shall be multiplied an infinite number of times, and hell will begin again. But of what use is it, says St. Hilary, to count years in eternity? Where you expect the end, there it commences. And St. Augustine says, "that things which have an end cannot be compared with eternity." (In Ps. xxxvi.) Each of the damned would be content to make this compact with God--Lord, increase my torments as much as thou pleasest; assign a term for them as distant as thou pleasest; provided thou fix a time at which

they shall cease, I am satisfied. But, no! this time shall never arrive. "My end," the damned shall say, "is perished." (Lamen. iii. 18.) Then, is there no end to the torments of the damned? No! the trumpet of divine justice sounds in the caverns of hell, and continually reminds the reprobate that their hell shall be eternal, and shall never have an end.

6. If hell were not eternal, it would not be so frightful a chastisement. Thomas a Kempis says, that "everything which passes with time is trifling and short." Any pain which has an end is not very appalling. The man who labours under an imposthume or a cancer, must submit to the knife or the cautery: the pain is severe; but because it is soon over it can be borne. But a tooth-ache which lasts for three months without interruption is insupportable. Were a person obliged to lie in the same posture for six months on a soft bed, or even to hear the same music, or the same comedy, night and day for one year, he would fall into melancholy and despondency. Poor blind sinners! When threatened with hell they say: "If I go there I must have patience."

But they shall not say so when they will have entered that region of woes, where they must suffer, not by listening to the same music or the same comedy, nor by lying in the same posture, or by tooth-ache, but by enduring all torments and all evils. "I will heap evils upon them." (Deut. xxxiii. 23.) And all these torments shall never end.

7. They shall never end, and shall never be diminished in the smallest degree. The damned must for ever suffer the same fire, the same privation of God, the same sadness, the same despair. Yes, says St. Cyprian, in eternity there is no change, because the decree is immutable. This thought shall immensely increase their sufferings, by making them feel beforehand, and at each moment, all that they shall have to suffer for eternity. In this description of the happiness of the saints, and the misery of the reprobate, the Prophet Daniel says: "They shall wake some unto life everlasting, and some unto reproach to see it always." (Dan. xii. 2.) They shall always see their unhappy eternity. Thus eternity tortures each of the damned not only by his present pains, but with all his future sufferings, which are eternal.

8. These are not opinions controverted among theologians; they are dogmas of faith clearly revealed in the sacred Scriptures. "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire." (Matt. xxv. 41.) Some will say: The fire, but not the punishment of the damned is everlasting. Such is the language of the incredulous, but it is folly. For what other purpose would God make this fire eternal, than to chastise the reprobate, who are immortal? But, to take away every shadow of doubt, the

Scriptures, in many other places, say, that not only the fire, but the punishment, of the damned is eternal. "And these" says Jesus Christ, "shall go into everlasting punishment." (Matt. xxv. 46.) Again we read in St. Mark, "Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished." (ix. 43.) St. John says: "And the smoke of their torments shall ascend up forever and ever." (Apoc. xvi. 11.) "Who," says St. Paul, "shall suffer eternal punishment in destruction." (2 Thess. i. 9.)

9. Another infidel will ask: How can God justly punish with eternal torments a sin that lasts but a moment? I answer, that the grievousness of a crime is measured not by its duration, but by the enormity of its malice. The malice of mortal sin is, as St. Thomas says, infinite. (1, 2, q. 87, art. 4.) Hence, the damned deserve infinite punishment; and, because a creature is not capable of suffering pains infinite in point of intensity, God, as the holy doctor says, renders the punishment of the damned infinite in extension by making it eternal. Moreover, it is just, that as long as the sinner remains in his sin, the punishment which he deserves should continue. And, therefore, as the virtue of the saints is rewarded in Heaven, because it lasts for ever, so also the guilt of the damned in Hell, because it is everlasting, shall be chastised with everlasting torments. The cause of their perverse will continues: therefore, their chastisement will never have an end. The damned are so obstinate in their sins, that even if God offered pardon, their hatred for Him would make them refuse it.

The Prophet Jeremias, speaking in the name of the reprobate, says: Why is my sorrow become perpetual and my wound desperate, so as to refuse to be healed?" (Jer. xv. 18.) My wound, they say, is incurable, because I do not wish it to be healed. Now, how can God heal the wound of their perverse will, when they would refuse the remedy, were it offered to them? Hence, the punishment of the reprobate is called a sword, a vengeance which is irrevocable. "I, the Lord, have drawn my sword out of its sheath, not to be turned back." (Ezech. xxi. 5.)

10. Death, which is so terrible in this life, is desired in hell by the damned; but they never shall find it. "And in these days men shall seek death, and shall not find it: and they shall desire to die, and death shall fly from them." (Apoc. xi. 6.) They would wish, as a remedy for their eternal ruin, to be exterminated and destroyed. But "there is no poison of destruction in them." (Wis. i. 14.) If a man, condemned to die, be not deprived of life by the first stroke of the axe, his torture moves the people to pity. Miserable damned souls! They live in continual death in the midst of the pains of hell: death excites in them all the agony of death, but does not give them a remedy by taking away life. The first death expels from the body the soul of a sinner who is unwilling to die: but the second

death that is, eternal death retains in the body a soul that wishes to die. "They are laid in hell like sheep; death shall feed upon them." (Ps. xlviii. 15.) In feeding, sheep eat the blades of grass, but leave the root untouched; hence the grass dies not, but grows up again. It is thus that death treats the damned; it torments them with pain, but spares their life, which may be called the root of suffering.

11. But, if these miserable souls have no chance of release from hell, perhaps they can at least deceive or flatter themselves with the hope, that God may one day be moved to pity, and free them from their torments? No: in hell there is no delusion, no flattery, no perhaps; the damned are as certain as they are of God's existence that their hell shall have no end. "Thou thoughtest unjustly that I shall be like to thee; but I will reprove thee, and set before thy face." (Ps. xlix. 21.) They shall for ever see before their eyes their sins and the sentence of their eternal condemnation. "And I will set before thy face."

12. Let us conclude. Thus, most beloved brethren, the affair of our eternal salvation should be the sole object of all our concerns. "The business for which we struggle" says St. Eucharius, "is eternity." There is question of eternity: there is question whether we will be saved, and be forever happy in a city of delights, or be damned, and confined for eternity in a pit of fire. This is not an affair of little importance; it is of the utmost and of eternal importance to us. When Thomas More was condemned to death by Henry the Eighth, his wife Louisa went to him for the purpose of tempting him to obey the royal command. Tell me, Lousia, replied the holy man, how many years can I, who am now so old, expect to live? You might, said she, live for twenty years. O foolish woman! he exclaimed, do you want me to condemn my soul to an eternity of torments for twenty years of life?

13. O God! Christians believe in the existence of hell, and commit sin! Dearly beloved brethren, let not us also be fools, like so many who are now weeping in hell. Miserable beings! What benefit do they now derive from all the pleasures which they enjoyed in this life? Speaking of the rich and of the poor, St. John Chrysostom said: "unhappy felicity, which has drawn the rich into eternal infelicity! O happy infelicity, which has brought the poor to the felicity of eternity!" The saints have buried themselves alive in this life, that after death they may not find themselves buried in hell for all eternity. If eternity were a doubtful matter, we ought even then make every effort in our power to escape an eternity of torments; but no, it is not a matter of doubt; it is a truth of faith, that after this life each of us must go into eternity, to be forever in glory or forever in despair. St. Teresa says, that it is through a want of faith that so many

Christians are lost. As often as we say the words of the Creed, life everlasting, let us enliven our faith, and remember that there is another life, which never ends; and let us adopt all the means necessary to secure a happy eternity. Let us do all, and give up all; if necessary, let us leave the world, in order to secure eternal happiness. When eternity is at stake no security can be too great."

On the Fewness of the Saved



“The greater part of men choose to be damned rather than to love Almighty God.”

-Saint Alphonsus Maria Liguori, Doctor of the Church

“The common opinion is that the greater part of adults is lost.”

-Saint Alphonsus Maria Liguori, Doctor of the Church

The greater number of men still say to God: Lord we will not serve Thee; we would rather be slaves of the devil, and condemned to Hell, than be Thy servants. Alas! The greatest number, my Jesus – we may say nearly all – not only do not love Thee, but offend Thee and despise Thee.”

-Saint Alphonsus Maria Liguori, Doctor of the Church

“In the Great Deluge in the days of Noah, nearly all mankind perished, eight persons alone being saved in the Ark. In our days a deluge, not of water but of sins, continually inundates the earth, and out of this deluge very few escape. Scarcely anyone is saved.”

-Saint Alphonsus Maria Liguori, Doctor of the Church

“Saint Teresa, as the Roman Rota attests, never fell into any mortal sin; but still Our Lord showed her the place prepared for her in Hell; not because she deserved Hell, but because, had she not risen from the state of lukewarmness in which she lived, she would in the end have lost the grace of God and been damned.”

-Saint Alphonsus Maria Liguori, Doctor of the Church

“The saints are few, but we must live with the few if we would be saved with the few. O God, too few indeed they are; yet among those few I wish to be!”

-Saint Alphonsus Maria Liguori, Doctor of the Church

“All persons desire to be saved, but the greater part, because they will not adopt the means of being saved, fall into sin and are lost. [...] In fact, the Elect are much fewer than the damned, for the reprobate are much more numerous than the Elect.”

-Saint Alphonsus Maria Liguori, Doctor of the Church

“There are many who arrive at the faith, but few who are led into the heavenly kingdom. Behold how many are gathered here for today’s Feast-Day: we fill the church from wall to wall. Yet who knows how few they are who shall be numbered in that chosen company of the Elect?”

-Pope Saint Gregory the Great, Father and Doctor of the Church

“The more the wicked abound, so much the more must we suffer with them in patience; for on the threshing floor few are the grains carried into the barns, but high are the piles of chaff burned with fire.”

-Pope Saint Gregory the Great, Father and Doctor of the Church

“The Ark, which in the midst of the Flood was a symbol of the Church, was wide below and narrow above; and, at the summit, measured only a single cubit. [...] It was wide where the animals were, narrow where men lived: for the Holy Church is indeed wide in the number of those who are carnal-minded, narrow in the number of those who are spiritual.”

-Pope Saint Gregory the Great, Father and Doctor of the Church

“They who are to be saved as Saints, and wish to be saved as imperfect souls, shall not be saved.”

-Pope Saint Gregory the Great, Father and Doctor of the Church



“It is certain that few are saved.”

-Saint Augustine, Father and Doctor of the Church

"As a man lives, so shall he die.”

-Saint Augustine, Father and Doctor of the Church

“The Lord called the world a ‘field’ and all the faithful who draw near to him ‘wheat.’ All through the field, and around the threshing-floor, there is both wheat and chaff. But the greater part is chaff; the lesser part is wheat, for which is prepared a barn not a fire. [...] The good also are many, but in comparison with the wicked the good are few. Many are the grains of wheat, but compared with the chaff, the grains are few.”

-Saint Augustine, Father and Doctor of the Church

“If you wish to imitate the multitude, then you shall not be among the few who shall enter in by the narrow gate.”

-Saint Augustine, Father and Doctor of the Church

“Out of one hundred thousand sinners who continue in sin until death, scarcely one will be saved.”

-Saint Jerome, Father and Doctor of the Church

“Many begin well, but there are few who persevere.”

-Saint Jerome, Father and Doctor of the Church

“So that you will better appreciate the meaning of Our Lord’s words, and perceive more clearly how few the Elect are, note that Christ did not say that those who walked in the path to Heaven are few in number, but that there were few who found that narrow way. It is as though the Saviour intended to say: The path leading to Heaven is so narrow and so rough, so overgrown, so dark and difficult to discern, that there are many who never find it their whole life long. And those who do find it are constantly exposed to the danger of deviating from it, of mistaking their way, and unwittingly wandering away from it, because it is so irregular and overgrown.”

-Saint Jerome, Father and Doctor of the Church

“What do you think? How many of the inhabitants of this city may perhaps be saved? What I am about to tell you is very terrible, yet I will not conceal it from you. Out of this thickly populated city with its thousands of inhabitants not one hundred people will be saved. I even doubt whether there will be as many as that!”

-Saint John Chrysostom, Father and Doctor of the Church

“I do not speak rashly, but as I feel and think. I do not think that many priests are saved, but that those who perish are far more numerous.”

-Saint John Chrysostom, Father and Doctor of the Church

“If you want to be certain of being in the number of the Elect, strive to be one of the few, not one of the many. And if you would be quite sure of your salvation, strive to be among the fewest of the few; that is to say, do not follow the great majority of mankind, but follow those who enter upon the narrow way, who renounce the world, who give themselves to prayer, and who never relax their efforts by day or night, so that they may attain everlasting blessedness.”

-Saint Anselm, Father and Doctor of the Church

“Christ’s flock is called “little” (Luke 12:32) in comparison with the greater number of the reprobates.”

-Saint Bede the Venerable, Father and Doctor of the Church

“Nor should we think that it is enough for salvation that we are no worse off than the mass of the careless and indifferent, or that in our faith we are, like so many others, uninstructed.”

-Saint Bede the Venerable, Father and Doctor of the Church

“It is as though Jesus said: “O My Father, I am indeed going to clothe myself with human flesh, but the greater part of the world will set no value on my blood!”

-Saint Isidore of Seville, Father and Doctor of the Church

“The greater part of men will set no value on the blood of Christ, and will go on offending Him.”

-Saint Isidore of Seville, Father and Doctor of the Church

“How few the Elect are may be understood from the multitude being cast out.”

-Saint Hilary of Poitiers, Father and Doctor of the Church

“The majority of men shall not see God, excepting those who live justly, purified by righteousness and by every other virtue.”

-Saint Justin the Martyr

“Those who are saved are in the minority.”

-Saint Thomas Aquinas, Doctor of the Church

“There are a select few who are saved.”

-Saint Thomas Aquinas, Doctor of the Church



“It is granted to few to recognize the true Church amid the darkness of so many schisms and heresies, and to fewer still so to love the truth which they have seen as to fly to its embrace.”

-Saint Robert Bellarmine, Doctor of the Church

“Bad confessions damn the majority of Christians.”

-Saint Teresa of Avila, Doctor of the Church

“I had the greatest sorrow for the many souls that condemned themselves to Hell, especially those Lutherans. [...] I saw souls falling into hell like snowflakes.”

-Saint Teresa of Avila, Doctor of the Church

"Behold how many there are who are called, and how few who are chosen! And behold, if you have no care for yourself, your perdition is more certain than your amendment, especially since the way that leads to eternal life is so narrow.”

-Saint John of the Cross, Doctor of the Church

“The number of the elect is so small — so small — that, were we to know how small it is, we would faint away with grief: one here and there, scattered up and down the world!”

-Saint Louis Marie de Montfort

“Be one of the small number who find the way to life, and enter by the narrow gate into Heaven. Take care not to follow the majority and the common herd, so many of whom are lost. Do not be deceived; there are only two roads: one that leads to life and is narrow; the other that leads to death and is wide. There is no middle way.”

-Saint Louis Marie de Montfort



“A multitude of souls fall into the depths of Hell, and it is of the faith that all who die in mortal sin are condemned for ever and ever. According to statistics, approximately 80,000 persons die every day [2014 estimates ranges from 150,000 to 274,000]. How many of these will die in mortal sin, and how many will be condemned! For, as their lives have been, so also will be their end.”

-Saint Anthony Mary Claret

“Nothing afflicts the heart of Jesus so much as to see all His sufferings of no

avail to so many.”

-Saint John Mary Vianney

“Shall we all be saved? Shall we go to Heaven? Alas, my children, we do not know at all! But I tremble when I see so many souls lost these days. See, they fall into Hell as leaves fall from the trees at the approach of winter.”

-Saint John Mary Vianney

“The number of the saved is as few as the number of grapes left after the vineyard-pickers have passed.”

Saint John Mary Vianney

“Notwithstanding assurances that God did not create any man for Hell, and that He wishes all men to be saved, it remains equally true that only few will be saved; that only few will go to Heaven; and that the greater part of mankind will be lost forever.”

-Saint John Neumann

“So vast a number of miserable souls perish, and so comparatively few are saved!”

-Saint Philip Neri

“Ah! How very small is the kingdom of Jesus Christ! So many nations have never had the faith!”

-Saint Peter Julian Eymard

“A great number of Christians are lost.”

-Saint Leonard of Port Maurice

“Ah, how many souls lose Heaven and are cast into Hell!”

-Saint Francis Xavier

“Ah! A great many persons live constantly in the state of damnation!”

-Saint Vincent de Paul

“Get out of the filth of the horrible torrent of this world, the torrent of thorns that is whirling you into the abyss of eternal perdition. [...] This torrent is the world, which resembles an impetuous torrent, full of garbage and evil odors, making a lot of noise but flowing swiftly passed, dragging the majority of men

into the pit of perdition.”

-Saint John Eudes

“One day, I saw two roads. One was broad, covered with sand and flowers, full of joy, music and all sorts of pleasures. People walked along it, dancing and enjoying themselves. They reached the end of the road without realizing it. And at the end of the road there was a horrible precipice; that is, the abyss of hell. The souls fell blindly into it; as they walked, so they fell. And there numbers were so great that it was impossible to count them. And I saw the other road, or rather, a path, for it was narrow and strewn with thorns and rocks; and the people who walked along it had tears in their eyes, and all kinds of suffering befell them. Some fell down upon the rocks, but stood up immediately and went on. At the end of the road there was a magnificent garden filled with all sorts of happiness, and all these souls entered there. At the very first instant they forgot all their sufferings.”

-Diary of Sister Maria Faustina Kowalska, #153

“Fear and honor, praise and bless, thank and adore the Lord God Almighty, in Trinity and Unity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Creator of all things. Do not put off any longer confessing all your sins, for death will soon come. Give and it will be given you; forgive and you will be forgiven. . . Blessed are they who die repentant, for they shall go to the Kingdom of Heaven! But woe to those who are not converted, for these children of the Devil will go with their father into everlasting fire. Be watchful, therefore. Shun evil, and persevere in well-doing until the end.”

-Saint Francis of Assisi

“Meditate on the horrors of Hell, which will last for eternity because of one easily-committed mortal sin. Try hard to be among the few who are chosen. Think of the eternal flames of Hell, and how few there are that are saved.”

-Saint Benedict Joseph Labre

“Yes, indeed, many will be damned; few will be saved.”

-Saint Benedict Joseph Labre

“The path to Heaven is narrow, rough and full of wearisome and trying ascents, nor can it be trodden without great toil; and therefore wrong is their way, gross their error, and assured their ruin who, after the testimony of so many thousands of saints, will not learn where to settle their footing.”

-Blessed Robert Southwell

“Oh how much are the worldlings deceived that rejoice in the time of weeping, and make their place of imprisonment a palace of pleasure; that consider the examples of the saints as follies, and their end as dishonorable; that think to go to Heaven by the wide way that leadeth only to perdition!”

-Blessed Robert Southwell

“Live with the few if you want to reign with the few.”

-Saint John Climacus

“The number of the damned is incalculable.”

-Saint Veronica Giuliani

“I see around me a multitude of those who, blindly persevering in error, despise the true God; but I am a Christian nevertheless, and I follow the instruction of the Apostles. If this deserves chastisement, reward it; for I am determined to suffer every torture rather than become the slave of the devil. Others may do as they please since they are ...reckless of the future life, which is to be obtained only by sufferings. Scripture tells us that “narrow is the way that leads to life” ...because it is one of affliction and of persecutions suffered for the sake of justice; but it is wide enough for those who walk upon it, because their faith and the hope of an eternal reward make it so for them. ...On the contrary, the road of vice is in reality narrow, and it leads to an eternal precipice.”

-Saint Leo of Patara

“Brethren, the just man shall scarcely be saved. What, then, will become of the sinner?”

-Saint Arsenius

“Among adults there are few saved because of sins of the flesh. [...] With the exception of those who die in childhood, most men will be damned.”

-Saint Remigius or Rheims

“How many among these uncivilized peoples do not yet know God, and are sunk in the darkest idolatry, superstition and ignorance! ...Poor souls! These are they in whom Christ saw, in all the horror of His imminent Passion, the uselessness of His agony for so many souls!”

-Saint Francis Xavier Cabrini

“O Jesus! ...Remember the sadness that Thou didst experience when, contemplating in the light of Thy divinity the predestination of those who would be saved by the merits of Thy sacred passion, thou didst see at the same time the great multitude of reprobates who would be damned for their sins, and Thou didst complain bitterly of those hopeless, lost, and unfortunate sinners.”

-Saint Bridget of Sweden

“The greater number of Christians today are damned. The destiny of those dying on one day is that very few – not as many as ten – went straight to Heaven; many remained in Purgatory; and those cast into Hell were as numerous as snowflakes in mid-winter.”

-Blessed Anna Maria Taigi

“They who are enlightened to walk in the way of perfection, and through lukewarmness wish to tread the ordinary path, shall be abandoned.”

-Blessed Angela of Foligno

“One day, Saint Macarius found a skull and asked it whose head it had been. ‘A pagan’s!’ it replied. ‘And where is your soul?’ he asked. ‘In Hell!’ came the reply. Macarius then asked the skull if its place was very deep in Hell. ‘As far down as the earth is lower than Heaven!’ ‘And are there any other souls lodged even lower?’ ‘Yes! The souls of the Jews!’ ‘And even lower than the Jews?’ ‘Yes! The souls of bad Christians who were redeemed with the blood of Christ and held their privilege so cheaply!’”

-Blessed James of Voragine

“I fear that Last Day, that day of tribulation and anguish, of calamity and misery, of mist and darkness, that Day on which, if the just have reason to fear, how much more should I: an impious, wretched, and ungrateful sinner!”

-Blessed Sebastian Valfré

“I was watching souls going down into the abyss as thick and fast as snowflakes falling in the winter mist.”

-Blessed Benedict Joseph Labre

“Take care not to resemble the multitude whose knowledge of God’s will only condemns them to more severe punishment.”

-Blessed John of Avila

“So many people are going to die, and almost all of them are going to Hell! So many people falling into hell!”

– Jacinta of Fatima

“Taking into account the behavior of mankind, only a small part of the human race will be saved.”

-Lucy of Fatima

On the Pain of Loss which the Damned Suffer in Hell

by Saint Alphonsus Liguori

According to all Laws, Divine and Human, the Punishment of Crime should be Proportioned to its Grievousness. "*According to the Measure of the Sin, shall the Measure also of the Stripes be*" - Deuteronomy 25:2. Now, the Principal Injury which Sinners do to God by Mortal Sin, Consists in Turning their Back upon their Creator and their Sovereign Good. Saint Thomas defines Mortal Sin to be "*a Turning away from the Immutable Good*". Of this Injury, the Lord complains in the following Words: "*Thou hast Forsaken Me, saith the Lord, thou art Gone Backward*" - Jeremiah 15:6. Since then, the Greatest Guilt of the Sinner, Consists in Deliberately Consenting to Lose God, the Loss of God shall Constitute his Greatest Punishment in Hell. *There shall be Weeping*. In Hell there is Continual Weeping; but what is the Object of the Bitterest Tears of the Unhappy Damned? It is the Thought of having Lost God, through their own Fault. This shall be the Subject of the present Discourse. Be attentive, Brethren.

No, Dearly Beloved Christians; the Goods of the Earth are not the End, for which God has Placed you in the World; the End, for which He has Created you, is the Attainment of Eternal Life. "*And the End Life, Everlasting*" - Romans 6:22. Eternal Life, Consists in Loving God, and Possessing Him, for Eternity. Whosoever Attains this End, shall be Forever Happy; but he who, through his own Fault, does not Attain it, Loses God; he shall be Miserable for Eternity, and shall Weep Forever, saying: "*My End and my Hope is Perished*" - Lamentations 3:18.

The Pain Produced by Loss, is Proportioned to the Value of what has been Lost.

If a Person Lose a Jewel - a Diamond worth a Hundred Crowns, he feels Great Pain; if the Diamond were worth Two Hundred Crowns, the Pain is Double; if worth Four Hundred, the Pain is still Greater. Now, I ask, what is the Good, which a Damned Soul has Lost? She has Lost God; She has Lost an Infinite Good. The Pain, then, Arising from the Loss of God, is an Infinite Pain. "*The Pain of the Damned*", says Saint Thomas, "*is Infinite, because it is the Loss of an Infinite Good*" - Summa Theologica. Such too, is the Doctrine of Saint Bernard, who says, that the Value of the Loss of the Damned, is Measured from the Infinitude of God, the Supreme Good. Hence, Hell does not Consist in its Devouring Fire, nor in its Intolerable Stench, nor in the Unceasing Shrieks and Howlings of the Damned, nor in the Terrific Sight of the Devils, nor in the Narrowness of that Pit of Torments, in which the Damned are Thrown, One over the Other; the Pain which Constitutes Hell, is the Loss of God. In Comparison of this Pain, all the other Torments of Hell are Trifling. The Reward of God's Faithful Servants in Heaven, is as He said to Abraham, God Himself. "*I am thy Protector, and thy Reward, Exceeding Great*" - Genesis 15:1. Hence, as God is the Reward of the Blessed in Heaven, so the Loss of God is the Punishment of the Damned in Hell.

Hence, Saint Bruno has Truly said, that how Great soever, the Torments which may be Inflicted on the Damned, they never can Equal the Great Pain of being Deprived of God. According to Saint Chrysostom, a Thousand Hells are not Equal to this Pain. - Homily 49. God is so Lovely, that He Deserves Infinite Love. He is so Amiable, that the Saints in Heaven are so Replenished with Joy, and so Absorbed in Divine Love, that they Desire Nothing, but to Love God, and Think only of Loving Him with all their Strength. At Present, Sinners, for the Sake of their Vile Pleasures, Shut their Eyes, and neither Know God, nor the Love which He Deserves; but in Hell, they shall, in Punishment of their Sins, be made to Know that God is an Infinite Good, and Infinitely Amiable. "*The Lord shall be Known, when He Executeth Judgments*" - Psalm 9:17. The Sinner, Drowned in Sensual Pleasures, scarcely Knows God; he sees Him only in the Dark, and therefore he Disregards the Loss of God. But in Hell, he shall Know God, and shall be Tormented Forever by the Thought of having voluntarily Lost this Infinite Good. A certain Parisian Doctor appeared after Death to his Bishop, and said that he was Damned. His Bishop asked him if he Remembered the Sciences in which he was so well Versed in this Life. He answered that in Hell, the Damned think only of the Pain of having Lost God.

"*Depart from Me, you Cursed, into Everlasting Fire, which was Prepared for the Devil and his Angels*" - Matthew 25:41. *Depart from Me*. This Command, Constitutes the Hell of the Damned. Begone from Me; you shall be no longer

Mine, and I shall be no longer yours. "*For you are not My People, and I will not be yours*" - Hosea 1:9. At Present, this Punishment is, as Saint Augustine says, Dreaded only by the Saints. It is a Punishment which Affrights the Soul that Loves God, more than all the Torments of Hell; but, it does not Terrify Sinners, who are Immersed in the Darkness of Sin. But, at Death they shall, for their Greater Chastisement, Understand the Infinite Good which they have Lost, through their own Fault.

It is Necessary to Know that Men have been Created for God, and that Nature draws them to Love Him. In this Life, the Darkness of Sin, and the Earthly Affections which Reign in their Hearts, Stifle their Natural Tendency and Inclination to a *Union* with God, their Sovereign Good; and therefore, the Thought of being Separated from Him, does not Produce much Pain. But, when the Soul leaves the Body, and is Freed from the Senses, which keep Her in Darkness, She then Clearly sees that She has been Created for God, and that He is the only Good, which can make Her Happy. "*But*", says Saint Antonine, "*the Soul, separated from the Body, Understands that God is Her Sovereign Good, and that She has been Created for Him*". Hence, as soon as She is Loosed from the Bondage of the Body, She is in Sin, and His Enemy, God will Cast Her off. Though Driven back and Chased away, She retains Her Invincible Tendency and Inclination to a *Union* with God; and Her Hell shall Consist in seeing Herself always Drawn to God, and always Banished from Him.

If a Dog see a Hare, what Efforts does he not make to Break his Chain and Seize his Prey. Thus, at Her Separation from the Body, the Natural Inclinations of the Soul, Draw Her to God, while at the same Time, Sin separates Her from Him, and Drags Her with it, to Hell. Sin, says the Prophet, like a Wall of Immense Thickness, is placed between the Soul and God, and separates Her from Him. "*But your Iniquities have Divided between you and your God*" - Isaiah 49:2. Hence, the Unhappy Soul, Confined in the Prison of Hell, at a Distance from God, shall Weep Forever, saying: Then, O my God, I shall be no longer Thine, and Thou wilt be no longer mine. I shall Love Thee no more, and Thou wilt Never again Love me. This Separation from God, Terrified David, when he said, "*Will God then Cast off Forever? or will He never be more Favorable, again?*" - Psalm 76:8. How Great, he says, would be my Misery, if God should Cast me from Him, and Never again be Merciful to me! But, this Misery, every Damned Soul in Hell Suffers, and shall Suffer for Eternity. As long as he Remained in Sin, David felt his Conscience Reproaching him, and asking, *Where is thy God?* O David, where is thy God, Who once Loved thee? Thou hast Lost Him; He is no longer thine. David was so Afflicted at the Loss of his God, that he Wept Night and Day. "*My Tears have been my Bread, Day and Night, whilst it is said to me*

Daily: Where is thy God?" - Psalm 41:4. Thus, even the Devils will Say to the Damned, Where is your God? By his Tears, David Appeased and Recovered his God;but the Damned shall Shed an Immense Sea of Tears, and shall never Appease nor Recover their God.

Saint Augustine says, that if the Damned saw the Beauty of God, "*they would Feel no Pain, and Hell itself would be Converted into a Paradise*". But, the Damned shallnever see God. When David Forbade his son Absalom, to Appear in his Presence, the Sorrow of Absalom was so Great, that he Entreated Joab, to tell his Father, that he would rather be Put to Death, than Never more be Permitted to see his Face. "*I Beseech thee therefore, that I may see the Face of the King: and if he be Mindful of my Iniquity, let him Kill me*" - 2Kings 14:32. To a certain Grandee, who Acted Irreverently in the Church, Philip the Second said, *Do not dare ever to appear again in my Presence*. So Intense was the Pain which the Nobleman felt, that after having Returned home, he Died of Grief. What then must be the Feelings of the Reprobate, at the Hour of Death, when God shall say to them: Begone, let Me Never see you again; you shall Never see My Face. "*I will Forsake them, and will Hide My Face from them, and they shall be Devoured: all Evils and Afflictions shall find them*" - Deuteronomy - 31:17. What Sentiments of Pity should we Feel, at Seeing a Son who was always United with his Father, who always Ate and Slept with him, Weeping over a Parent whom he Loved so Tenderly, and saying: *My Father, I have Lost you; I shall Never see you more*. Ah! if we saw a Damned Soul Weeping Bitterly, and asked Her the Cause of Her Wailing, She would Answer: *I Weep because I have Lost God, and shall Never see Him again*.

The Pain of the Reprobate shall be Increased by the Knowledge of the Glory which the Saints Enjoy in Paradise, and from which they see, and shall Forever see, themselves Excluded. How Great would be the Pain which a Person should Feel, if, after being Invited by his Sovereign to his own Theatre, to be Present at the Singing, Dancing, and other Amusements, he should be Excluded, in Punishment of some Fault! How Bitter should be his Anguish and Disappointment, when, from 'Without', he would Hear the Shouts of Joy and Applause 'Within'! At Present, Sinners Despise Heaven, and Lose it for Trifles, after Jesus Christ Shed the Last Drop of His Blood to make them Worthy of Entering into that Happy Kingdom. But, when they shall be Confined in Hell, the Knowledge of the Glory of Heaven, shall be the Greatest of all their Torments. Saint John Chrysostom says, that to see themselves Banished from that Land of Joy, shall be to the Damned a Torment Ten Thousand Times as Great, as the Hell which they Suffer. Oh! that I had at least the Hope, the Damned will say, that after a Thousand, or even a Million of Ages, I could

Recover the Divine Grace, and become Worthy of Entering into Heaven, there to see God! But no, he shall be Told, "*When the Wicked Man is Dead, there shall be no Hope any more*" - Proverbs 11:7. When he was in this Life, he could have Saved his Soul; but, because he has Died in Sin, his Loss is Irreparable. Hence, with Tears of Despair, he shall say, "*I shall not see the Lord God in the Land of the Living*" - Isaiah 38:11.

The Thought of having Lost God and Paradise, solely through their own Fault, shall Increase the Torture of the Damned. Every Damned Soul shall say: *It was in my Power to have led a Life of Happiness on Earth by Loving God, and to have Acquired Boundless Happiness for Eternity; but, in Consequence of having Loved my Vices, I must Remain in this Place of Torments, as long as God shall be God.* She will then Exclaim in the Words of Job, "*Who will grant me, that I might be according to the Months Past, according to the Days in which God kept me?*" - Job 29:2. Oh! that I were Allowed to go Back to the Time I Lived on Earth, when God Watched over me, that I might not Fall into this Fire! I did not Live among the Savages, the Indians or the Chinese. I was not Left without the Sacraments, Sermons, or Masters to Instruct me. I was Born in the Bosom of the True Church, and have been Well instructed and Frequently Admonished by Preachers and Confessors. To this Prison, I have not been Dragged by the Devils; I have come on my own Accord. The Chains by which I am Bound, and Kept at a Distance from God, I have Forged with my own Will. How often has God Spoken to my Heart, and said to me: *Amend, and Return to Me. Beware, lest the Time should Come, when thou shalt not be able to Prevent thy Destruction.* Alas! this Time has Come; the Sentence has already Passed; I am Damned; and for my Damnation there neither is, nor shall be any Remedy, for all Eternity. But, if the Damned Soul has Lost God, and shall Never see Him, perhaps She can at least Love Him? No; She has been Abandoned by Grace, and thus She is made the Slave of Her Sins, and Compelled to Hate Him. The Damned see that God is their Adversary, on account of their Contempt for Him during Life, and therefore Always in Despair. "*Why hast Thou set me Opposite to Thee; and am I become Burdensome to myself?*" - Job 7:20. Hence, because the Damned see that they are Enemies of God, Whom they, at the same time, Know to be Worthy of Infinite Love, they are to themselves, Objects of the Greatest Horror. The Greatest of all the Punishments which God shall Inflict on them, will Consist in seeing that God is so Amiable, and that they are so Deformed, and the Enemies of this God. "*I will Reprove thee, and set before thy Face*" - Psalm 49:21.

The Sight of all that God has Done for the Damned, shall above all, Increase their Torture. "*The Wicked shall See, and shall be Angry*" - Psalm 111:10. They

shall See all the Benefits which God Bestowed upon them; all the Lights and Calls which He gave them; and the Patience with which He Waited for them. They shall, above all, see how much Jesus Christ has Loved them, and how much He has Suffered for the Love of them; and after all His Love, and all His Sufferings, they shall see that they are now Objects of His Hatred, and shall be no longer Objects of His Love. According to Saint Chrysostom, a Thousand Hells are Nothing, compared with the Thought of being Hateful to Christ. - Homily 24. Then the Damned shall say: My Redeemer, Who, through Compassion for me, Sweated Blood, Suffered an Agony in the Garden, and Died on the Cross, Bereft of all Consolation, has now no Pity on me! I Weep, I Cry out; but He no longer Hears or Looks to me. He is Utterly Forgetful of me. He once Loved me; but now He Hates and Justly Hates me; for I have Ungratefully Refused to Love Him. David says, that the Reprobate are Thrown into the Pit of Death. "*But Thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the Pit of Destruction*" - Psalm 54:24. Hence Saint Augustine has said, "*The Pit shall be Closed on Top, it shall be Opened at the Bottom, it shall be Expanded Downwards; and they who Refused to Know God, shall no longer be Known by Him*". - Homily 16.

Thus, the Damned see that God deserves Infinite Love, and that they cannot Love Him. Saint Catherine of Genoa, being one day Assailed by the Devil, asked him who he was. He Answered with Tears: *I am that Wicked One, who is Deprived of the Love of God*. I am that Miserable Being that can never more Love God. They not only cannot Love God, but, Abandoned in their Sins, they are Forced to Hate Him; their Hell consists in Hating God, Whom they, at the same Time, Know to be Infinitely Amiable. They Love Him Intensely, as their Sovereign Good, and Hate Him as the Avenger of their Sins. Their Natural Love Draws them continually to God; but their Hatred drags them Away from Him. These 'Contrary' Passions, like Two Ferocious Wild Beasts, Incessantly Tear in Pieces, the Hearts of the Damned, and Cause, and shall for all Eternity, Cause them to Live in a Continual Death. The Reprobate then, shall Hate and Curse all the Benefits which God has Bestowed upon them. They shall Hate the Benefits of Creation, of Redemption, and the Sacraments. But they shall Hate, in a particular manner, the Sacrament of Baptism, by which they have, on account of their Sins, been more Guilty, in the Sight of God; the Sacrament of Penance, by which, if they Wished, they could have so Easily Saved their Souls; and above all, the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, in which God had given Himself Entirely to them. They shall Consequently, Hate all the other Means which have been Helps to their Salvation. Hence, they shall Hate and Curse all the Angels and Saints. But, they shall Curse particularly, their Guardian Angels, their Special Advocates; and, above all the Divine Mother Mary. They shall Curse the

Three Divine Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; but particularly Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, Who Suffered so much and Died for their Salvation. They shall Curse the Wounds of Jesus Christ, the Blood of Jesus Christ, and the Death of Jesus Christ. Behold the End, to which Accursed Sin Leads the Souls, which Jesus Christ has so Dearly Bought.

- End of Liguori Sermon -

The Pains of Hell by Saint Alphonsus **Liguori**

SERMON X. FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

On the pains of Hell.

"Gather up first the cockle, and bind into bundles to burn." MATT. xiii. 30.

I shall first speak of the fire, which is the principal pain that torments the senses of the damned, and afterwards of the other pains of hell.

1. BEHOLD! the final doom of sinners who abuse the divine mercy is, to burn in the fire of hell. God threatens hell, not to send us there, but to deliver us from that place of torments. Remember, then, brethren, that God gives you today the opportunity of hearing this sermon, that you may be preserved from hell, and that you may give up sin, which alone can lead you to hell.

2. My brethren, it is certain and of faith that there is a hell. After judgment the just shall enjoy the eternal glory of Paradise, and sinners shall be condemned to suffer the everlasting chastisement reserved for them in hell. "And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting." (Matt. xxv. 46.) Let us examine in what hell consists. It is what the rich glutton called it a place of torments (Luc. xvi. 28.) It is a place of suffering, where each of the senses and powers of the damned has its proper torment, and in which the torments of each person will be increased in proportion to the forbidden pleasures in which he indulged. "As much as she hath glorified herself and lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her." (Apoc. xviii. 7.)

3. In offending God the sinner does two evils: he abandons God, the sovereign good, who is able to make him happy, and turns to creatures, who are incapable of giving any real happiness to the soul. Of this injury which men commit against him, the Lord complains by his prophet Jeremy: "For my people have

done two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and have digged to themselves cisterns: broken cisterns that can hold no water." (Jer. ii. 13.) Since, then, the sinner turns his back on God, he shall be tormented in hell, by the pain arising from the loss of God, of which I shall speak on another occasion [see the Sermon for the nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost], and since, in offending God, he turns to creatures, he shall be justly tormented by the same creatures, and principally by fire.

4. "The vengeance on the flesh of the ungodly is fire and worms." (Eccl. vii. 19.) Fire and the remorse of conscience are the principal means by which God takes vengeance on the flesh of the wicked. Hence, in condemning the reprobate to hell, Jesus Christ commands them to go into eternal fire: "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire." (Matt. xxv. 41.) This fire, then, shall be one of the most cruel executioners of the damned.

5. Even in this life the pain of fire is the most painful of all torments. But St. Augustine says, that in comparison of the fire of hell, the fire of this earth is no more than a picture compared with the reality. Anselm teaches, that the fire of hell as far surpasses the fire of this world, as the fire of the real exceeds that of painted fire. The pain, then, produced by the fire of hell is far greater than that which is produced by our fire because God has made the fire of this earth for the use of man, but he has created the fire of hell purposely for the chastisement of sinners; and therefore, as Tertullian says, he has made it a minister of his justice. This avenging fire is always kept alive by the wrath of God. "A fire is kindled in my rage." And the rich man also died, and he was buried in hell." (Luke xvi. 22.) The damned are buried in the fire of hell; hence they have an abyss of fire below, an abyss of fire above, and an abyss of fire on every side. As a fish in the sea is surrounded by water, so the unhappy reprobate are encompassed by fire on every side. The sharpness of the pain of fire may be inferred from the circumstance, that the rich glutton complained of no other torment. "I am tormented in this flame." (Ibid, v 23.)

7. The Prophet Isaias says that the Lord will punish the guilt of sinners with the spirit of fire. "If the Lord shall wash away the filth of the daughters of Sion. . . by the spirit of burning" (iv. 4). "The spirit of burning" is the pure essence of fire. All spirits or essences, though taken from simple herbs or flowers, are so penetrating, that they reach the very bones. Such is the fire of hell. Its activity is so great, that a single spark of it would be sufficient to melt a mountain of bronze. The disciple relates, that a damned person, who appeared to a religious, dipped his hand into a vessel of water; the religious placed in the vessel a candlestick of bronze, which was instantly dissolved.

8. This fire shall torment the damned not only externally, but also internally. It will burn the bowels, the heart, the brains, the blood within the veins, and the marrow within the bones. The skin of the damned shall be like a caldron, in which their bowels, their flesh, and their bones shall be burned. David says, that the bodies of the damned shall be like so many furnaces of fire. "Thou shalt make them as an oven of fire in the time of thy anger." (Ps. xx. 10.)

9. O God! certain sinners cannot bear to walk under a strong sun, or to remain before a large fire in a close room; they cannot endure a spark from a candle; and they fear not the fire of hell, which, according to the Prophet Isaias, not only burns, but devours the unhappy damned. "Which of you can dwell with devouring fire?" (Isaias xxxiii. 14.) As a lion devours a lamb, so the fire of hell devours the reprobate; but it devours without destroying life, and thus tortures them with a continual death. Continue, says St. Peter Damian to the sinner who indulges in impurity, continue to satisfy your flesh; a day will come, or rather an eternal night, when your impurities, like pitch, shall nourish a fire within your very bowels. (Epist. 6.) And according to St. Cyprian, the impurities of the wicked shall boil in the very fat which will issue from their accursed bodies.

10. St. Jerome teaches, that in this fire sinners shall suffer not only the pain of the fire, but also all the pains which men endure on this earth. (Ep. ad Pam.) How manifold are the pains to which men are subject in this life. Pains in the sides, pains in the head, pains in the loins, pains in the bowels. All these together torture the damned.

11. The fire itself will bring with it the pain of darkness; for, by its smoke it will, according to St. John, produce a storm of darkness which shall blind the damned. "To whom the storm of darkness is reserved for ever." (St. Jude 13.) Hence, hell is called a land of darkness covered with the shadow of death. "A land that is dark and covered with the mist of death, a land of misery and darkness, where the shadow of death, and no order but everlasting horror dwelleth." (Job x. 21, 22.) To hear that a criminal is shut up in a dungeon for ten or twenty years excites our compassion. Hell is a dungeon closed on every side, into which a ray of the sun or the light of a candle never enters. Thus the damned "shall never see light." (Ps xlvi. 20.) The fire of this world gives light, but the fire of hell is utter darkness. In explaining the words of David, "the voice of the Lord divideth the flame of fire," (Ps. xxviii. 7,) St. Basil says, that in hell the Lord separates the fire that burns from the flame which illuminates, and therefore this fire burns, but gives no light. Bl. Albertus Magnus explains this passage more concisely by saying that God "divides the heat from the light." St. Thomas teaches, that in hell there is only so much light as is necessary to

torment the damned by the sight of their associates and of the devils: (3 p., q. 97, art. 5.) And according to St. Augustine, the bare sight of these infernal monsters excites sufficient terror to cause the death of all the damned, if they were capable of dying.

12. To suffer a parching thirst, without having a drop of water to quench it, is intolerably painful. It has sometimes happened, that travellers who could procure no refreshment after a long journey, have fainted from the pain produced by thirst. So great is the thirst of the damned, that if one of them were offered all the water on this earth, he would exclaim: All this water is not sufficient to extinguish the burning thirst which I endure. But, alas! the unhappy damned shall never have a single drop of water to refresh their tongues. "He cried out and said: Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." (St. Luke xvi. 24.) The rich glutton has not obtained, and shall never obtain, this drop of water, as long as God shall be God.

13. The reprobate shall be likewise tormented by the stench which pervades hell. The stench shall arise from the very bodies of the damned. "Out of their carcasses shall arise a stink." (Isaiah xxxiv. 3.) The bodies of the damned are called carcasses, not because they are dead (for they are living, and shall be forever alive to pain), but on account of the stench which they exhale. Would it not be very painful to be shut up in a closed room with a fetid corpse? St. Bonaventure says, that if the body of one of the damned were placed in the earth, it would, by its stench, be sufficient to cause the death of all men. How intolerable, then, must it be to live forever in the dungeons of hell in the midst of the immense multitudes of the damned! Some foolish worldlings say: If I go to hell, I shall not be there alone. Miserable fools! do you not see that the greater the number of your companions, the more insufferable shall be your torments? "There," says St. Thomas, "the society of the reprobate shall cause an increase and not a diminution of misery." (Suppl., q. 86, art. 1.) The society of the reprobate augments their misery, because each of the damned is a source of suffering to all the others. Hence, the greater their number, the more they shall mutually torment each other. "And the people," says the prophet Isaias, "shall be ashes after a fire, as a bundle of thorns they shall be burnt with fire." (Isa. xxxiii. 12.) Placed in the midst of the furnace of hell, the damned are like so many grains reduced to ashes by that abyss of fire, and like so many thorns tied together and wounding each other.

14. They are tormented not only by the stench of their companions, but also by their shrieks and lamentations. How painful it is to a person longing for sleep to

hear the groans of a sick man, the barking of a dog, or the screams of an infant. The damned must listen incessantly to the wailing and howling of their associates, not for a night, nor for a thousand nights, but for all eternity, without the interruption of a single moment.

15. The damned are also tormented by the narrowness of the place in which they are confined; for, although the dungeon of hell is large, it will be too small for so many millions of the reprobate, who like sheep shall be heaped one over the other. "They are," says David, "laid in hell like sheep." (Ps. xlviii. 15.) We learn from the Scriptures that they shall be pressed together like grapes in the winepress, by the vengeance of an angry God. "The winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God the Almighty." (Apoc. xix. 15.) From this pressure shall arise the pain of immobility. "Let them become unmoveable as a stone." (Exod. xvi. 16.) In whatever position the damned shall fall into hell after the general judgment, whether on the side, or on the back, or with the head downwards, in that they must remain for eternity, without being ever able to move foot or hand or finger, as long as God shall be God. In a word, St. Chrysostom says, that all the pains of this life, however great they may be, are scarcely a shadow of the torments of the damned. (Horn, xxxix. ad pop. Ant.)

16. The reprobate, then, shall be tormented in all the senses of the body. They shall also be tormented in all the powers of the soul. Their memory shall be tormented by the remembrance of the years which they had received from God for the salvation of their souls, and which they spent in labouring for their own damnation; by the remembrance of so many graces and so many divine lights which they abused. Their understanding shall be tormented by the knowledge of the great happiness which they forfeited in losing their souls, heaven, and God; and by a conviction that this loss is irreparable. Their will shall be tormented by seeing that whatsoever they ask or desire shall be refused. "The desire of the wicked shall perish." (Ps. cxi. 10.) They shall never have any of those things for which they wish, and must for ever suffer all that is repugnant to their will. They would wish to escape from these torments and to find peace; but in these torments they must for ever remain, and peace they shall never enjoy.

17. Perhaps they may sometimes receive a little comfort, or at least enjoy occasional repose? No, says Cyprian: (Serm. de Ascens.) In this life, how great soever may be the tribulations which we suffer, there is always some relief or interruption. The damned must remain forever in a pit of fire, always in torture, always weeping, without ever enjoying a moment's repose. But perhaps there is someone to pity their sufferings? At the very time that they are so much afflicted the devils continually reproach them with the sins for which they are tormented,

saying: Suffer, burn, live forever in despair: you yourselves have been the cause of your destruction. And do not the saints, the divine mother, and God, who is called the Father of Mercies, take compassion on their miseries? No; "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven." (Matt. xxvi. 29.) The saints, represented by the stars, not only do not pity the damned, but they even rejoice in the vengeance inflicted on the injuries offered to their God. Neither can the divine mother pity them, because they hate her Son. And Jesus Christ, who died for the love of them, cannot pity them, because they have despised his love, and have voluntarily brought themselves to perdition.

Prayer for the Graces Necessary for Salvation

Eternal Father, Your Son has Promised that You will Grant us all the Graces which we ask for in His Name. In the Name and Merits of Jesus Christ, I ask the following Graces for myself and for all Mankind. Please give me a Lively Faith in all that the Church Teaches. Enlighten me, that I may know the Vanity of the Goods of this World, and the Immensity of the Infinite Good that You are. Make me also see the Deformity of the Sins I have Committed, that I may Humble myself and Detest them as I should.

Give me a Firm Confidence of Receiving Pardon for my Sins, Holy Perseverance, and the Glory of Heaven, through the Merits of Jesus Christ, and the Intercession of Mary. Give me a Great Love for You, that will Detach me from the Love of this World, and of myself, so that I may Love none other, but You.

I Beg of You a Perfect Resignation to Your Will. I Offer myself entirely to You, that You might do with me, and all that belongs to me, as You Please.

I Beg of You a Great Sorrow for my Sins.

I ask You to give me the Spirit of True Humility and Meekness, that I may Accept with Peace, and even with Joy, all the Contempt, Ingratitude and Ill-treatment I may receive. At the same time, I also ask You to give me Perfect Charity, which shall make me wish well to those who have done Evil to me.

Give me Love for the Virtue of Mortification, by which I may Chastise my Rebellious Senses and oppose my Self-Love. Give me a Great Confidence in the Passion of Jesus Christ and in the Intercession of Mary Immaculate. Give me a

Great Love for the Blessed Sacrament, and a Tender Devotion and Love to Your Holy Mother. Give me, above all, Holy Perseverance, and the Grace always to Pray for it, especially in Time of Temptation, and at the Hour of Death.

Finally, I recommend to You the Holy Souls of Purgatory, my Relatives and Benefactors, and in a special manner I recommend to You all those who Hate me or who have in any way Offended me; I Beg You to Render them Good, for the Evil they have done or may wish to do me. Grant that, by Your Goodness, I may come One Day to sing Your Mercies in Heaven; for my Hope is in the Merits of Your Blood and in the Patronage of Mary. Mary, Mother of God, Pray to Jesus for me. Amen

On the Remembrance of Death

By St. John Climacus,

Taken from his work; The Ladder of Divine Ascent

As thought comes before speech, so the remembrance of death and of sin comes before weeping and mourning. It is therefore appropriate to deal now with this theme.

To be reminded of death each day is to die each day; to remember one's departure from life is to provoke tears by the hour. Fear of death is a property of nature due to disobedience, but terror of death is a sign of unrepented sins. Christ is frightened of dying but not terrified, thereby clearly revealing the properties of His two natures.

Just as bread is the most necessary of all foods, so the thought of death is the most essential of all works. The remembrance of death brings labors and meditations, or rather, the sweetness of dishonor to those living in community, whereas for those living away from turbulence it produces freedom from daily worries and breeds constant prayer and guarding of the mind, virtues that are the cause and the effect of the thought of death.

Tin has a way of looking like silver but is of course quite distinct; and for those with some discernment, the difference between natural and contranatural fear of death is most obvious. You can clearly single out those who hold the thought of death at the center of their being, for they freely withdraw from everything created and they renounce their own will.

The man who lives daily with the thought of death is to be admired, and the man who gives himself to it by the hour is surely a saint. And yet not every desire for death is good. A habitual sinner prays humbly for death, but the man who does not want to change his ways may, in sheer despair, actually long for death. And there are some who out of conceit consider themselves to be dispassionate, and for a while they have no fear of death, while a rare few hunger to leave by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Some, because they are puzzled, ask the following question: "If the remembrance of death is so good for us, why has God concealed from us the knowledge of when we will die?" In putting such a question, they fail to realize how marvelously God operates to save us. No one who knew in advance the hour of his death would accept baptism or join a monastery long before it, but instead would pass all his time in sin and would be baptized and do penance only on the day of his demise. Habit would make him a confirmed and quite incorrigible sinner."a

When you are lamenting your sins, do not ever admit that cur which suggests that God is softhearted toward men. (Such a notion may on occasion be of help to you when you see yourself being dragged down into deep despair.) For the aim of the enemy is to divert you from your mourning and from that fear of God which, however, is free from fear.

The man who wants to be reminded constantly of death and of God's judgment and who at the same time gives in to material cares and distractions, is like someone trying at the same time to swim and to clap his hands.

If your remembrance of death's clear and specific, you will cut down on your eating; and if, in your humility, you reduce the amount you eat, your passions will be correspondingly reduced.

To have an insensitive heart is to be dulled in mind, and food in abundance dries up the well of tears. Thirst, however, and the keeping of vigils afflict the heart; and when the heart is stirred, then the tears may run. Now all this may sound disgusting to the gluttonous and unbelievable to the sluggish, but a man pursuing the active life will try this course and the experience will make him smile, whereas the one who is still casting about him will become even more depressed.

The Fathers assert that perfect love is sinless. And it seems to me that in the same way a perfect sense of death is free from fear.

There are many things that the mind of a man leading the active life can do.

One can think about the love of God, the remembrance of death, the remembrance of God, the remembrance of the kingdom, the zeal of the holy martyrs, the remembrance of the presence Of God as described in the saying, "I saw the Lord before me" (Ps. 15:8), the remembrance of the holy and spiritual powers, the remembrance of death, judgment, punishment, and sentence. The list begins with the sublime and ends with that which never falls.

This is what an Egyptian monk once said to me: "If it ever happened that I was inclined to offer some comfort to this carcass of mine, the remembrance of death that had been so firmly established in my heart would stand before me like a judge; and a wonderful thing even if I wanted to push it aside, I simply could not do so." Another monk, this time an inhabitant of the place called Tholas, would go into an ecstasy at the thought of death, and when the brothers found him they had to raise him up and carry him, scarcely breathing, like someone who had fainted or had suffered an epileptic fit. And I must certainly tell you about Hesychius the Horebite. All his life he was careless and he paid not the slightest attention to his soul. Then a very grievous illness came on him, so that he was for a whole hour absent from the body. After he had revived, he begged us all to go away at once, built up the door of his cell, and remained twelve years inside without ever speaking to anyone and taking only bread and water. He never stirred and was always intent on what it was he had seen in his ecstasy. He never moved and had the look of someone out of his mind. And, silently, he wept warm tears. But when he was on the point of death, we broke in and we asked him many questions. All he would say was this: "Please forgive me. No one who has acquired the remembrance of death will ever be able to sin." It astonished us to see the blessed change and transformation that had taken place in someone hitherto so negligent. We buried him reverently in the cemetery near the fort;⁴⁶ and, some days later, when we looked for his holy remains, we could not find them. Such had been the marvel of his repentance that the Lord demonstrated to us that fact that He accepts those who wish to make amends, even after the most prolonged negligence on their part.

Just as some declare that the abyss is infinite, for they call it a bottomless pit, so the thought of death is limitless and brings with it chastity and activity. The saint mentioned above proved this. Men like him unceasingly pile fear on fear, and never stop until the very strength in their bones is worn out.

We may be sure that remembrance of death, like every other blessing, is a gift from God. How else can you explain the fact that often we can be dryeyed and hard at a cemetery, yet full of compunction when we are nowhere near such a place?

The man who has died to all things remembers death, but whoever holds some ties with the world will not cease plotting against himself.

Do not search about for the words to show people you love them. Instead, ask God to show them your love without your having to talk about It. Otherwise you will never have time enough both for loving gestures and for compunction.

Do not deceive yourself, foolish worker, into thinking that one time can make up for another. The day is not long enough to allow you to repay in full its debt to the Lord.

Someone has said that you cannot pass a day devoutly unless you think of it as your last. Even the Greeks have said some such thing, because they describe philosophy as meditation on death.

This, then, is the sixth step. He who has climbed it will never sin. "Remember your last end, and you will never sin" (Ecclus. 7:36).

ON THE REMORSE OF THE DAMNED

By Saint Alphonsus de Ligouri

IN the gospel of this day it is related that, *when Jesus Christ entered into "Capharnaum, there came to him a centurion beseeching him"* to cure his servant, who lay sick of the palsy. Jesus answered: "I will come and heal him". No, replied the centurion: "I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed"—v. 8. See the centurion's faith, the Redeemer instantly consoled him by restoring health to his servant; and, turning to his disciples, he said: "Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth". By these words our Lord wished to signify, that many persons born in infidelity shall be saved, and enjoy the society of the saint, and that many who are born in the bosom of the Church, shall be cast into Hell, where the worm of conscience, by its gnawing, shall make them weep bitterly for all eternity.

Let us examine the remorse of conscience which a damned Christian shall suffer in Hell. First remorse, arising from the thought of the little which he required to do in order to save his soul. Second remorse, arising from the

remembrance of the trifles for which he lost his soul. Third remorse, arising from the knowledge of the great good which he has lost through his own fault.

First remorse of the damned Christian, arising from the thought of a little which he required to do in order to save his soul.

1. A damned soul once appeared to St. Hubert, and said, that two remorse were her most cruel executioners in Hell:—the thought of the little which was necessary for her to have done in this life to secure her salvation; and the thought of the trifles for which she brought herself to eternal misery. The same thing has been said by St. Thomas. Speaking of the reprobate, he says: “They shall be in sorrow principally because they are damned for nothing, and because they could most easily have obtained eternal life”. Let us stop to consider this first source of remorse: that is, how few and transitory are the pleasures for which all the damned are lost. Each of the reprobate will say for eternity: If I abstained from such a gratification; if, in certain circumstances, I overcame human respect; if I avoided such an occasion of sin—such a companion, I should not now be damned; if I had frequented some pious sodality; if I had gone to confession every week; if, in the temptations, I had recommended myself to God, I would not have relapsed into sin. I have so often proposed to do these things, but I have not done them. I began to practice these means of salvation, but afterwards gave them up; and thus I am lost.

2. This torment of the damned will be increased by the remembrance of the good example given them by some young companions who led a chaste and pious life even in the midst of the world. It will be still more increased by the recollection of all the gifts which the Lord had bestowed upon them, that by their cooperation they might acquire eternal salvation; the gifts of nature—health, riches, respectability of family, talents; all gifts granted by God, not to be employed in the indulgence of pleasures and in the gratification of vanity, but in the sanctification of their souls, and in becoming saints. So many gifts of grace, so many divine lights, holy inspirations, loving calls, and so many years of life to repair past disorders. But they shall for ever hear from the angel of the Lord that for them the time of salvation is past. “The angel whom I saw standing, swore by Him that liveth for ever and ever,.....that time shall be no longer”—*Apoc.*, x. 6.

3. Alas! what cruel swords shall all these blessings received from God be to the heart of a poor damned Christian, when he shall see himself shut in the prison of Hell, and that there is no more time to repair his eternal ruin. In despair he will say to his wretched companions: The harvest is past; the summer is ended;

and we are not saved”—*Jer.*, vii. 20. The time, he will say, of gathering fruits of eternal life is past; the summer, during which we could have saved our souls, is over, but we are not saved: the winter is come; but it is an eternal winter, in which we must live in misery and despair as long as God shall be God.

4. O fool, he will say, that I have been! If I had suffered for God the pains to which I have submitted for the indulgence of my passions—if the labours which I have endured for my own damnation, had been borne for my salvation, how happy should I now be! And what now remains of all past pleasures, but remorse and pain, which now torture, and shall torture me for eternity? Finally, he will say, I might be for ever happy, and now I must be for ever miserable. Ah! this thought will torture the damned more than the fire and all the other torments of Hell.

Second remorse of the damned, arising from the remembrance of the trifles for which they lost their souls.

5. Saul forbid the people, under pain of death, to taste food. His son Jonathan, who was then young, being hungry, tasted a little honey. Having discovered that Jonathan had violated the command, the king declared that he should die. Seeing himself condemned to death, Jonathan said with tears: “I did but taste a little honey,.....and behold I must die”—*I. Kings*, xiv. 43. But the people, moved to pity for Jonathan, interposed with his father, and delivered him from death. For the unhappy damned there is no compassion; there is no one to intercede with God to deliver them from the eternal death of Hell. On the contrary, all rejoice at the just punishment which they suffer for having willfully lost God and Paradise for the sake of a transitory pleasure.

6. After having eaten the pottage of lentils for which he sold his right of primogeniture, Esau was tortured with grief and remorse for what he had lost, and “roared out with a great cry”—*Gen.*, xxvii. 34. Oh! how great shall be the roaring and howling of the damned, at the thought of having lost, for a few poisonous and momentary pleasures, the everlasting kingdom of Paradise, and of being condemned for eternity to a continual death!

The unfortunate reprobate shall be continually employed in reflecting on the unhappy cause of their damnation. To us who live on Earth our past life appears but a moment—but a dream. Alas! what will the fifty or sixty years which they may have spent in this world appear to the damned, when they shall find themselves in the abyss of eternity, and when they shall have passed a hundred

and a thousand millions of years in torments, and shall see that their miserable eternity is only beginning, and shall be for ever in its commencement? But, have the fifty years spent on this Earth been full of pleasures? Perhaps the sinner, living in enmity with God, enjoyed uninterrupted happiness in his sins? How long do the pleasures of sin last? Only for a few moments: the remaining part of the lives of those who live at a distance from God is full of anguish and pain. Oh! what will these moments of pleasure appear to a damned soul, when she shall find herself in a pit of fire?

8. “What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things have passed away like a shadow”—*Wis.*, v. 8. Unhappy me! each of the damned shall say, I have lived on Earth according to my corrupt inclinations; I have indulged my pleasures; but what have they profited me? They have lasted but for a short time; they have made me lead a life of bitterness and disquietude; and now I must burn in this furnace for ever, in despair, and abandoned by all.

Third remorse of the damned, arising from the knowledge of the great good which they have lost by their own fault.

9. A certain queen, blinded by the ambition of being a sovereign, said one day: “*If the Lord gives me a reign of forty years, I will renounce Paradise*”. The unhappy queen reigned for forty years; but now that she is in another world, she cannot but be grieved at having made such a renunciation. Oh! how great must be her anguish, at the thought of having lost the kingdom of Paradise for the sake of a reign of forty years, full of troubles, of crosses, and fears! “*Plus coelo torquetur, quam gehenna*”, says St. Peter Chrysologus. To the damned the voluntary loss of Paradise is a greater torment than the very pains of Hell.

10. The greatest pain in Hell is the loss of God, that sovereign good, who is the source of all the joys of Paradise. “Let torments”, says St. Bruno, “be added to torments, and let them be deprived of God”—*serm. de jud. fin.* The damned would be content to have a thousand Hells added to the Hell which they suffer, provided they were not deprived of God; but their Hell shall consist in seeing themselves deprived for ever of God through their own fault. St. Teresa used to say, that when a person loses, through his own fault, a trifle—a small sum of money, or a ring of little value—the thought of having lost it through his own neglect afflicts him and disturbs his peace. What then must be the anguish of the damned in reflecting that they have lost God, a good of infinite value, and have lost him through their own fault?

11. The damned shall see that God wished them to be saved, and had given them the choice of eternal life or of eternal death. "Before man is life and death, ...that which he shall choose shall be given him"—*Eccles.*, xv. 18. They shall see that, if they wished, they might have acquired eternal happiness, and that, by their own choice, they are damned. On the day of judgment they shall see many of their companions among the elect; but, because they would not put a stop to their career of sin, they have gone to end it in Hell. "Therefore we have erred", they shall say to their unhappy associates in Hell; we have erred in losing Heaven and God through our own fault, and our error is irreparable. They shall continually exclaim: "There is no peace for my bones because of my sins"—*Ps.*, xxxvii. 4. The thought of having been the cause of their own damnation, produces an internal pain, which enters into the very bones of the damned, and prevents them from ever enjoying a moment's repose. Hence, each of them shall be to himself an object of the greatest horror. Each shall suffer the pain threatened by the Lord: "I will set THEE before thy face"—*Ps.*, xlix. 21.

12. If, beloved brethren, you have hitherto been so foolish as to lose God for a miserable pleasure, do not persevere in your folly. Endeavour, now that you have it in your power, to repair your past error. Tremble! Perhaps, if you do not now resolve to change your life, you shall be abandoned by God, and be lost for ever. When the Devil tempts you, remember Hell:—the thought of Hell will preserve you from that land of misery. I say, remember Hell, and have recourse to Jesus Christ and to most holy Mary, and they will deliver you from sin, which is the gate of hell.

On the Practical Death or On what Ordinarily Happens at the Death of Men of the World

by Saint Alphonsus Liguori

It is Related in this Day's Gospel, that going to the City of Naim, Jesus Christ met a Dead Man, the only Son of his Mother, who was Carried out to be Buried. "*Behold a Dead Man was carried out, the only Son of his Mother*" Luke 7:12. Before we proceed farther, let us stop at these Words, and 'Remember' Death. The Holy Church directs Her Ministers to say to Christians every Year, on Ash Wednesday: "*Remember Man thou art but Dust, and into Dust thou shalt*

Return". Oh! would to God that Men had Death, always before their Eyes; if they had, they certainly should not Lead such Bad Lives. Now, Beloved Brethren, that the Remembrance of Death may be Impressed upon you, I will this Day, place before your Eyes the Practical Death, or a Description of what Ordinarily Happens at the Death of Men of the World, and of all the Circumstances attending to it. Hence we shall consider, in the First Point, what happens at the Time of his Last Illness; in the Second Point, what happens when the Last Sacraments are Received; and in the Third, what happens at the Time of Death.

First Point

What Happens at the Time of the Last Illness

I do not intend in this Discourse, to Speak of a Sinner who has always Lived in Habitual Sin; but of a Worldling, who is Careless about his Salvation, and always Entangled in the Affairs of the World, in Contracts, Enmities, Courtships, and Gaming. He has Frequently Fallen into Mortal Sins, and after a Considerable Time, has Confessed them. In a word, he has been a Relapsing Sinner, and has generally Lived in Enmity with God, or at least, has been generally Perplexed with Grievous Doubts of Conscience. Let us consider the Death of such Persons, and what ordinarily happens at their Death.

Let us Commence with the Time at which his Last Illness appears. He Rises in the Morning, he goes out to look after his Temporal Affairs; but while he is Engaged in Business, he is Assailed by a Violent Pain in the Head, his Legs totter, he feels a Cold Shivering, which Runs through every Member, a Sickness of the Stomach, and Great Debility over the Whole Body. He immediately returns home and throws himself on the bed. His Relatives, his Wife and Sisters, run to him and say: *Why have you Retired so Early? Are you Unwell?* He answers: *I feel Sick. I am Scarcely able to Stand; I have a Great Headache.* Perhaps, they say, *you have got a Fever. It must be so,* he replies; *Send for a Physician.* The Physician is immediately sent for. In the mean time, the Sick Man is put to bed, and there he is Seized with a Cold fit, which makes him Shiver from Head to Foot. He is loaded with Covering, but the Cold continues for an Hour or Two, and is succeeded by a Burning Heat. The Physician arrives, asks the Sick Man how he feels; he Examines the Pulse, and finds he has a Severe Attack of Fever. But, not to Alarm him, the Physician says: *You have a Fever, but it is Trifling. Have you given any Occasion to it?* The Sick Man replies: *I went out by Night, a few days ago, and caught Cold; or I dined with a Friend, and Indulged my Appetite to Excess It is Worth Nothing,* the Physician says, *it is a Fullness of Stomach, or more probably, One of those Attacks which occur at the Change of Season. Eat nothing today; take*

a Cup of Tea; be not Uneasy; be Cheerful; there is no Danger. I will see you Tomorrow. Oh! that there was an Angel, who, on the Part of God, would say to the Physician: What do you say? Do you tell me that there is no Danger in this Disease? Ah! the Trumpet of the Divine Justice has, by the First Symptoms of his Illness, given the Signal of the Death of this Man; for him, the Time of God's Vengeance has already Arrived.

The Night comes, and the Poor Invalid gets no Rest. The Difficulty of Breathing, and Headache increase. The Night appears to him a Thousand Years. The Light scarcely Dawns, when he Calls for some of the Family. His Relatives come, and say to him: *Have you Rested well? . . . Ah! I have not been able to Close my Eyes during the Entire Night. O God! how much do I feel Oppressed! Oh! how Violent are the Spasms in my Head! I feel my Temples Pierced by Two Nails. Send Immediately for the Physician; tell him to come as soon as possible.* The Physician comes and finds the Fever Increased; but still he continues to say: *Have Courage; there is no Danger. The Disease must take its Course. The Fever which accompanies it, will make it Disappear.* He comes on the Third Day, and finds the Sick Man, Worse. He comes on the Fourth Day, and the Symptoms of Malignant Fever appear. The Taste on the Mouth is Disagreeable; the Tongue is Black; every part of the Body is Restless, and Delirium has Commenced. The Physician, finding that the Fever is Acute, prescribes 'Purging', 'Blood letting' and 'Iced Water'. He says to the Relatives: *Ah! the Sickness is most Severe; I do not wish to be alone. Let other Physicians be called in, that we may have a Consultation.* This he says in Secret to the Relatives, but not to the Sick Man, on the contrary, not to Frighten him, he continues to say: *Be Cheerful; there is no Danger.*

Thus, they Speak of Remedies, of more Physicians, and of a Consultation; but not a word about Confession or the Last Sacraments. I know not how such Physicians can be Saved. Where the Bull of Pope Pius V is in Force, they expressly Swear, when they receive the Diploma, that after the Third Day of his Illness, they will pay no more Visits to any Sick Man, until he has made his Confession. But some Physicians do not Observe this Oath, and thus so many Poor Souls are Damned. For, when a Sick Man has Lost his Reason, of what use is Confession to him? He is Lost. Brethren, when you Fall Sick, do not Wait till the Physician tells you to Send for a Confessor; Send for him of your own Accord; for Physicians, through Fear of Displeasing a Patient, do not Warn him of his Danger until they Despair, or nearly Despair of his Recovery. Thus Brethren, Send First for your Confessor; Call First for the Physician of the Soul, and Afterwards for the Physician of the Body. Your Soul is at Stake, Eternity is at Stake; if you Err then, you have Erred Forever; your

Mistake shall be Forever Irreparable.

The Physician then Conceals from the Sick Man, his Danger; his Relatives do what is still Worse; they Deceive him by Lies. They tell him that he is Better, and that the Physicians give Strong Hopes for his Recovery. O Treacherous Relatives! O Barbarous Relatives, who are the Worst of Enemies! Instead of Warning the Sick Man of his Danger (as is their Duty, particularly if they are Parents, Children, or Brothers), that he may Settle the Accounts of his Soul, they Flatter him, they Deceive him, and cause him to Die in the State of Damnation. But from Pains, Oppression, and Restlessness, which he feels from the Studied Silence of Friends who visit him, and from the Tears which he sees in the Eyes of his Relatives, the Poor Invalid Perceives that his Disease is Mortal. Alas! he says, the Hour of Death is come; but through Fear of giving me Annoyance, they do not Warn me of it.

No, his Relatives do not let him know, that he is in Danger of Death; but because they Attend to their own Interest, about which they are more Solicitous, than they are about anything else, they bring in a Scrivener (Notary), in Hope that the Dying Man will Leave them a Large Portion of his Property. The Scrivener arrives. *Who is this?*, asks the Sick Man. The Relatives answer: *He is a Scrivener. Perhaps for your own Satisfaction, you would like to make your Will Then is my Sickness Mortal? Am I near my End? . . . No, Father, or Brother, they say; we know that there is no Necessity for making a Will; but one must One Day make it, and it would be better to do it now, while you have the Full use of your Faculties Very well, he replies, since the Scrivener is come, and since you Wish me to do it, I will make my Last Will.* The Scrivener First asks the Sick Man, in what Church he wishes to be Buried, in case he should Die. Oh! what a Painful Question! After choosing the Place of his Interment, he begins to Dispose of all his Goods. I Bequeath such an Estate or Farm to my Children; such a House to my Brother; such a Sum of Money to a Friend; and such an Article of Furniture to an Acquaintance. O Miserable Man, what have you done? You have Submitted to so much Fatigue, you have Burdened your Conscience with so many Sins in order to Acquire these Goods; and now you Leave them Forever, and Bequeath them to *such and such* Persons. But there is no Remedy; when Death comes, we must Leave all things. This Separation from all Worldly Possessions is very Painful to the Sick Man, whose Heart was Attached to his Property, his House, his Garden, his Money, and his Amusements. Death comes, gives the Stroke, and Separates the Heart from all the Objects of its Love. This Stroke, Tortures the Sick Man with Excruciating Pain. Ah Brethren! let us Detach our Hearts from the Things of this World, before Death Separates us from them with so much Pain, and with such

Great Danger to our Salvation.

Second Point

What Happens at the Time

in which the Sacraments are Received

Behold! the Dying Man has made his Will. After the Eighth or Tenth Day of his Illness, seeing that he is Daily growing Worse, and that he is Near his End, One of his Relatives asks: *When shall we Send for his Confessor? He has been a Man of the World. We know that he has not been a Saint.* They all agree that the Confessor should be Sent for; but all Refuse to Speak to the Sick Man on the Subject. Hence they Send for the Parish Priest, or some other Confessor, to make known to the Dying Man his Danger, and the Necessity of Receiving the Last Sacraments. But this is done only when he has Nearly Lost the Use of his Faculties. The Confessor comes; he Inquires from the Family about the State of the Sick Man, and the Sort of Life which he Led. He finds that he has been Careless about the Duties of Religion, and from the Circumstances which he hears, he Trembles for the Salvation of the Poor Soul. Understanding that the Dying Man has but a Short Time to Live, the Confessor, First of all, Orders the Relatives to Leave the Room, and to Return to it, no more. He then Approaches and Salutes the Sick Man. The Latter asks: *Who are you? . . . I am,* replies the Confessor, *the Parish Priest, Father Such a one. Do you Wish me to do anything for you? Having heard that you had a Severe Attack of Illness, I have come to Reconcile you with your Creator Father, I am Obligated to you, but I Beg of you, for the present, to let me take a Little Rest; for I have got no Sleep for Several Nights, and I am Scarcely Able to Speak. Recommend me to God.*

Knowing the Dangerous State of the Soul and Body of the Sick Man, the Confessor says: *We hope that the Lord and the most Holy Virgin will Deliver you from this Illness; but Sooner or Later you must Die. Your Illness is very Severe. You would do well to Make your Confession, and to Adjust the Affairs of your Soul. Perhaps you have Scruples of Conscience; I have come, on Purpose to Calm the Troubles of your Mind Father, I should have to make a Long Confession; for my Conscience is Perplexed and Burdened with Sin. At present, I am not able to do it. I Feel a Lightness in my Head, and I can Scarcely Breathe. Father, we will see about it Tomorrow; at Present I am not able But who knows what may happen? Some Attack may Come on, which will not Leave you Time to make your Confession Father, do not Torment me any longer. I have said that I am not able; it is Impossible for me to do it.* But the Confessor, who knows that there is no Hope of Recovery, feels himself Obligated to Speak more Plainly, and says: *I think it is my Duty to Inform*

you that your Life is about to Close. I Entreat you to make your Confession, for perhaps, Tomorrow you shall be Dead Why Father, do you say so? Because, replies the Confessor, *so the Physicians have said.* The Poor Dying Man then begins to Rage against the Physicians and against his Friends. *Ah! Traitors have Deceived me. They knew the Danger, and have not Informed me of it. Ah! Unhappy me!* The Confessor Rejoins, and says: *Be not Alarmed at the Difficulties of making your Confession; it is enough to Mention the most Grievous Sins which you Remember. I will Assist you. Be not Afraid. Begin at once to tell your Sins.* The Dying Man forces himself to Commence his Confession, but his Mind is all Confusion; he knows not, where to begin; he tries to tell his Sins, but is not able to Explain himself. He Feels but Little, and Understands still Less, what the Confessor says to him. O God! At such a Time, and in such a State, Worldlings are Obligated to Attend to the most Important of all Affairs, the Affair of Eternal Salvation! The Confessor hears, perhaps, many Sins, Bad Habits, Injuries done to the Property and Character of others, Confessions made with Little Sorrow, and with Little Purpose of Amendment. He Assists the Dying Man, as well as he can, and, after a Short Exhortation, tells him to make an Act of Contrition. But, God Grant that he may not be as Insensible to Sorrow, as the Sick Man, who was attended by Cardinal Bellarmine. When the Cardinal Exhorted him to make an Act of Contrition, he said: *Father, do not Trouble yourself; these things are too High for me; I do not Understand them.* In the End, the Confessor Absolves the Dying Man; but who knows if God Absolves him?

After giving him Absolution, the Confessor says: *Prepare yourself now, to receive Jesus Christ for your Viaticum It is now*, replies the Sick Man, *Four or Five Hours after Night; I will Communicate in the Morning No, perhaps in the Morning, Time shall be no more for you; you must at Present receive the Viaticum and Extreme Unction Ah, Unhappy me!* the Dying Man says, *am I at the Point of Death?* He has Reason to say so, for the Practice of some Physicians is to put off the Viaticum till the Patient is near his Last, and till he has Lost, or nearly Lost his Senses. This is a common Delusion. According to the Common Opinion of Theologians, the Viaticum ought always to be Administered, when there is a Danger of Death. It will be useful here to observe, that Benedict IV, in his Fifty Third Bull, says that Extreme Unction may be given whenever the Sick Man Labors under a Grievous Illness. Hence, whenever the Sick can Receive the Viaticum, they can also Receive the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. It is not Necessary to Wait, as some Physicians recommend, till they are near the Agony, or till they Lose their Senses.



Behold! the Viaticum arrives, the Sick Man hears the Bell. Oh! how he Trembles! The Trembling and Terror increase when he sees the Priest coming into the Room with the Holy Sacrament, and when he Beholds around his Bed the Torches of those who assisted at the Procession. The Priest recites the Words of the Ritual: "*Accipe frater viaticum corporis Domini nostri Jesu Christi qui te custodiat ab hoste maligno, et perducat in vitam eternam. Amen*". Brother, receive the Viaticum of the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He may Preserve you from the Wicked Enemy, and that He may bring you to Eternal Life. He Receives the Consecrated Host upon his Tongue; the Priest then gives him a little Water, to enable him to Swallow it, for his Throat is Dry and Parched.

The Priest afterwards gives the Extreme Unction, and begins by Anointing the Eyes, while he says the following Words: "*Per istam sanctam unctionem, et suam piissimam misericordiam, indulgeat tibi Deus, quidquid visum deliquisti*". He then Anoints the other Senses, the Ears, the Nostrils, the Mouth, the Hands, the Feet, and the Loins, saying: "*Quidquid per auditum deliquisti per odoratum, per gustum et locutionem, per tactum, per gressum, et lumborum delectationem*". And during the Administration of the Extreme Unction, the Devil is Employed in Reminding the Sick Man of all the Sins he Committed by the Senses, by the Eyes, the Ears, the Tongue, the Hands; and says to him: *After so many Sins, can you expect to be Saved?* Oh! what Terror is

then Caused by every one of those Mortal Sins, which are now called Human Frailties, and which, Worldlings say, God will not Punish! Now, they are Disregarded; but then, every Mortal Sin shall be a Sword that will Pierce the Soul with Terror. But let us come to what happens at Death!

Third Point

What Happens at the Time of Death

After having Administered the Sacraments, the Priest departs, and leaves the Dying Man alone. He feels more Terror and Alarm after the Sacraments, than before he Received them, for he Knows that his Entire Preparation for them, was made in the Midst of Great Confusion of Mind and Great Uneasiness of Conscience. But the Signs of Approaching Death appear; the Sick Man falls into a Cold Sweat; the Sight grows Dim, and he no longer Knows the Persons that Attend him; he has Lost his Speech, and can scarcely Breathe. In the Midst of this Darkness of Death, he continues to say: *Oh! that I had Time; that I had another Day, with the Use of my Faculties, to make a Good Confession!* For the Unhappy Man has Great Doubts about the Confession which he has made; he feels that he was not able to Excite himself to make a True Act of Sorrow. But, what Time? What Day? "*Time shall be no longer*" Revelation 10:6. The Confessor has the Book open, to Announce to him his Departure from this World. *Proficiscere anima Christians de hoc mundo.* Depart, Christian Soul, from this World. The Dying Man continues to say within himself: *O Lost Years of my Life! O Fool that I have been!* But, when does he say this? When the Scene is about to Close for him; when the Oil in the Lamp is 'Consumed'; and when the Great Moment has arrived, on which his Eternal Happiness or Misery depends.

But Behold! his Eyes are Petrified; his Body takes the Posture of a Corpse; the Extremities, the Hands and Feet, have become Cold. The Agony commences; the Priest begins to Recite the Prayers for the Recommendation of a Departing Soul. After having Read the Recommendation, he feels the Pulse of the Dying Man, and feels that it has Ceased to Beat. *Light*, he says, *Immediately the Blessed Candle.* O Candle, O Candle, show us Light, now that we have Health; for, at the Hour of Death, thy Light shall Serve only to Terrify us the more. But, already the Breathing of the Sick Man is not so Frequent; it has Begun to Fail. This is a Sign that Death is very Near. The Assisting Priest, Raises his Voice, and says to the Poor Man in his Agony: *Say after me: O God, Come to my Aid; have Mercy on me. My Crucified Jesus, Save me through Thy Passion. Mother of God, Intercede for me. Saint Joseph, Saint Michael the Archangel, my Holy Angel Guardian, and all ye Saints in Paradise, Pray to God for me. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus and Mary, I give you my Heart and my Soul.* But, Behold the Last Signs

of Death; the Phlegm is confined in the Throat; the Dying Man sends forth Feeble Moans; the Tears rush from his Eyes; finally he twists the Mouth, he Distorts the Eyes, he makes a Few Pauses, and at the Last Opening of the Mouth, he Expires and Dies.

The Priest then brings a Candle to the Mouth of the Dead Man, to try if he still be Alive; he sees that the Flame is not moved, and thence Infers that Life is Extinct. He says: *Requiescat in Pace*. May he Rest in Peace. And turning to the Bystanders, announces that he is Dead. I Hope, he adds, he is Gone to Heaven. He is Dead; and 'How' has he Died? No one Knows, whether he is Saved or Damned; but he has Died in a Great Tempest. Such is the Death of those Unfortunate Men who, during Life, have Cared Little about God. "*Their Soul shall Die in a Storm*" Job 36:14. Of everyone that Dies, it is usual to say, that *He is Gone to Heaven*. He is Gone to Heaven, if he 'Deserved' Heaven; but, if he 'Merited' Hell, he has Gone to Hell. Do All go to Heaven? Oh! how Few enter into that Abode of Bliss!

Before the Body is Cold, he is covered with a Worn out Garment; because it must soon Rot with him, in the Grave. Two Lighted Candles are placed in the Chamber; the Curtain of the Bed on which the Dead Man lies, is Let down; and he is Left alone. The Parish Priest is Sent for, and Requested to come in the Morning, and take away the Corpse. The Priest comes; the Deceased is Carried to the Church; and this is his Last Journey on this Earth. The Priests begin to say the "*Die profundis clamavi ad te Domine*", etc. The Spectators, who look at the Funeral as it passes, Speak of the Deceased. One says: *He was a Proud Man*. Another: *O that he had Died, Ten Years ago*. A Third: *He was Fortunate in the World; he made a Great Deal of Money; he had a Fine House; but now he takes Nothing with him*. And while they Speak of him in this Manner, he is Burning in Hell. He arrives at the Church, and is placed in the Middle, surrounded by Six Candles. The Bystanders look at him, but suddenly Turn away their Eyes, because his Appearance Excites Horror. The Mass is Sung for his Repose, and after Mass, the "*Libera*"; and the Function is concluded with these words: *Requiescat in pace*. May he Rest in Peace. May he Rest in Peace, if he Died in Peace with God; but, if he has Died in Enmity with God, what Peace! what Peace can he Enjoy? He shall have no Peace as long as God shall be God. The Sepulcher is then Opened; the Corpse is thrown into it; the Grave is covered with a Tombstone; and he is left there to Rot, and to be the Food of Worms. It is thus that the Scene of this World, Ends for each of us. His Relatives put on Mourning; but they First Divide among themselves the Property which he has left. They shed an Occasional Tear for Two or Three Days, and afterwards Forget him. And what shall become of him? If he be Saved,

he shall be Happy Forever; if Damned, he must be Miserable for Eternity.

- End of Liguori Sermon -

Prayer for the Graces Necessary for Salvation

Eternal Father, Your Son has Promised that You will Grant us all the Graces which we ask for in His Name. In the Name and Merits of Jesus Christ, I ask the following Graces for myself and for all Mankind. Please give me a Lively Faith in all that the Church Teaches. Enlighten me, that I may know the Vanity of the Goods of this World, and the Immensity of the Infinite Good that You are. Make me also see the Deformity of the Sins I have Committed, that I may Humble myself and Detest them as I should.

Give me a Firm Confidence of Receiving Pardon for my Sins, Holy Perseverance, and the Glory of Heaven, through the Merits of Jesus Christ, and the Intercession of Mary. Give me a Great Love for You, that will Detach me from the Love of this World, and of myself, so that I may Love none other, but You.

I Beg of You a Perfect Resignation to Your Will. I Offer myself entirely to You, that You might do with me, and all that belongs to me, as You Please.

I Beg of You a Great Sorrow for my Sins.

I ask You to give me the Spirit of True Humility and Meekness, that I may Accept with Peace, and even with Joy, all the Contempt, Ingratitude and Ill treatment I may receive. At the same time, I also ask You to give me Perfect Charity, which shall make me wish well to those who have done Evil to me.

Give me Love for the Virtue of Mortification, by which I may Chastise my Rebellious Senses and oppose my Self Love. Give me a Great Confidence in the Passion of Jesus Christ and in the Intercession of Mary Immaculate. Give me a Great Love for the Blessed Sacrament, and a Tender Devotion and Love to Your Holy Mother. Give me, above all, Holy Perseverance, and the Grace always to Pray for it, especially in Time of Temptation, and at the Hour of Death.

Finally, I recommend to You the Holy Souls of Purgatory, my Relatives and Benefactors, and in a special manner I recommend to You all those who Hate me or who have in any way Offended me; I Beg You to Render them Good, for the Evil they have done or may wish to do me. Grant that, by Your Goodness, I may come One Day to sing Your Mercies in Heaven; for my Hope is in the

Merits of Your Blood and in the Patronage of Mary. Mary, Mother of God, Pray to Jesus for me.

Amen

The Dogma of Hell
by
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HELL

I. THE DOGMA OF HELL

The Dogma of Hell is the most terrible truth of our faith. There *is* a hell. We are sure of it as of the existence of God, the existence of the sun. Nothing, in fact, is more clearly revealed than the dogma of hell, and Jesus Christ proclaims it as many as fifteen times in the Gospel.

Reason comes to the support of revelation; the existence of a hell is in harmony with the immutable notions of justice engraved in the human heart. Revealed to men from the beginning, and conformable to natural reason, this dreadful truth has always been, and is still known, by all nations not plunged by barbarism in complete ignorance.

Hell never has been denied by heretics, Jews or Mohammedan. The pagans themselves have retained their belief in it, although the errors of paganism may have impaired in their minds the sound notion.

It has been reserved for modern and contemporaneous atheism, carried to the pitch of delirium, to outdo the impiety of all ages by denying the existence of hell.

There are, in our day, men who laugh at, question, or openly deny the reality of hell.

They laugh at hell; but the universal belief of nations should not be laughed at; a matter affecting the everlasting destiny of man is not laughable; there is no fun, when the question is of enduring for eternity the punishment of fire.

They question, or even deny the dogma of hell; but on a matter of religious dogma, they cannot decide without being competent; they cannot call in doubt, still less deny, a belief so solidly established, without bringing forward irrefutable reasons.

Now, are they who deny the dogma of hell competent in matters of religion? Are they not strangers to that branch of the sciences, which is called theology? Are they not oftenest ignorant of the very elements of religion, taught in the Catechism?

Whence, then, proceeds the mania, of grappling with a religious question which is not within their province? Why such warmth in combating the belief in hell? Ah! It is interest that prompts them; they are concerned about the non-existence of hell, knowing that if there is a hell, it shall be their portion; these unhappy men wish that there might not be one, and they try to persuade themselves that there is none. In fact, these efforts usually end in a sort of incredulity. At bottom, this disbelief is only a doubt, but a doubt which unbelievers formulate by a negation.

Accordingly, they say there is no hell. And upon what reasons do they rest so bold a denial? All their reasons and arguments may be summed up in the following assertions:

“I do not believe in hell.”

“They who affirm this dogma know nothing about it; the future life is an insoluble problem, and invincible, *perhaps*.”

“No one has returned from beyond the grave to testify that there is a hell.”

These are all the proofs, all the theology of the teachers of impiety. Let us examine.

1. *I do not believe in it.* You do not believe in hell? And there is no hell, because you do not believe in it? Will hell exist any the less, because you do not please to believe in it? Should a thief be so foolish as to deny that there is a prison, would the prison cease to exist, and should the thief not enter it?

2. You say that the future life is a problem, and hell a *perhaps*. You are deceived; this problem is fully solved by revelation, and left in no uncertainty.

But suppose for a moment, that there was an uncertainty, that the existence of eternal torments is only probable, and that it may be said: *perhaps there is no hell*; I ask any man of sound reason, would he not be the silliest of men who, upon such a *perhaps*, should expose himself to the punishment of an everlasting fire?

3. They say that no one returned from beyond the grave to tell us about hell. If it were true that no one has returned, would hell exist the less? Is it the damned who ought to teach us that there is a hell? It might as well be said that it is prisoners who ought to inform us that there are prisons. To know that there is a hell it is not necessary that the damned should come to tell us; God's word is sufficient for us; God it is who publishes it, and informs the world concerning it.

But are you, who claim that no dead person has returned to speak of hell, quite sure of it? You say it, you declare it; but you have against you historical, proved, unexceptionable facts. I do not speak here of Jesus Christ, who descended into hell, and rose again from the dead; there are other dead persons who returned to life, and damned souls who have revealed their everlasting reprobation. Still, whatever may be the historical certainty of this sort of facts, I repeat, it is not upon this ground that we claim to establish the dogma of hell; that truth is known to us by the infallible word of God; the facts which we adduce serve but to confirm, and place it in a clearer light.

II. MANIFESTATIONS OF HELL

As we have just said, the dogma of hell stands on the infallible word of God; but in his mercy, God, to aid our faith, permits at intervals, the truth of hell to be manifested in a sensible manner. These manifestations are more frequent than is thought; and when supported by sufficient proofs, they are unexceptionable facts, which must be admitted like all the other facts of history.

Here is one of these facts. It was juridically proved in the process of canonization of St. Francis of Jerome, and under oath attested by a large number of eye-witnesses. In the year 1707, St. Francis of Jerome was preaching, as was his wont, in the neighborhood of the city of Naples. He was speaking of hell and the awful chastisements that await obstinate sinners. A brazen courtesan who lived there, troubled by a discourse which aroused her remorse, sought to hinder it by jests and shouts, accompanied by noisy instruments. As she was standing close to the window, the Saint cried out: "*Beware, my*

daughter, of resisting grace; before eight days God will punish you.” The unhappy creature grew only more boisterous. Eight days elapsed, and the holy preacher happened to be again before the same house. This time she was silent, the windows were shut. The hearers, with dismay on their faces, told the Saint that Catherine—that was the name of the bad woman—had a few hours before died suddenly. “*Died!*” he repeated, “*well, let her tell us now what she has gained by laughing at hell. Let us ask her.*” He uttered these words in an inspired tone, and every one expected a miracle. Followed by an immense crowd, he went up to the death chamber, and there, after having prayed for an instant, he uncovers the face of the corpse, and says in a loud voice, “*Catherine, tell us where art thou now.*” At this summons, the dead woman lifts her head, while opening her wild eyes, her face borrows color, her features assume an expression of horrible despair, and in a mournful voice, she pronounces these words: “*In hell; I am in hell.*” And immediately, she falls back again into the condition of a corpse.

“I was present at that event,” says one of the witnesses who deposed before the Apostolic tribunal, “but I never could convey the impression it produced on me and the bystanders, nor that which I still feel every time I pass that house and look at that window. At the sight of that ill-fated abode, I still hear the pitiful cry resounding: “*In hell; I am in hell.*” (Father Bach, *Life of St. Francis of Jerome.*)

Ratbod, King of the Frisons, who is mentioned in ecclesiastical history in the eighth century, had said to St. Wolfrand that he was not afraid of hell; that he wished to be there with the kings, his ancestors, and most illustrious personages. “*Moreover,*” he added, “*later on, I shall be always able to receive baptism.*” “*Lord,*” answered the Saint, “*do not neglect the grace that is offered to thee. The God who offers the sinner pardon, does not promise him to-morrow.*” The King did not heed this advice, and put off his conversion. A year after, learning the arrival of St. Willibrord, he dispatched an officer to him, to invite him to come to the court and confer baptism on him. The Saint answered that it was too late. “*Your master,*” he said, “*died after your departure. He braved eternal fire; he has fallen into it. I have seen him this night, loaded with fiery chains, in the bottom of the abyss.*”

Here is another witness from beyond the grave. History avers that when St. Francis Xavier was at Cangoxima, in Japan, he performed a great number of miracles, of which the most celebrated was the resurrection of a maiden of noble birth. This young damsel died in the flower of her age, and her father, who loved her dearly, believed he would become crazy. Being an idolater, he had no resources in his affliction, and his friends, who came to console him, rendered

his grief only the more poignant. Two neophytes, who came to see him before the funeral of her whom he mourned day and night, advised him to seek help from the holy man who was doing such great things, and demand from him with confidence, the life of his daughter. The pagan—persuaded by the neophytes that nothing was impossible to the European bonze, and beginning to hope against all human appearances, as is usual with the afflicted, who readily believe whatever comforts them—goes to Father Francis, falls at his feet, and, with tears in his eyes, entreats him to bring to life again his only daughter whom he has just lost, adding that it would be to give life to himself.

Xavier, touched by the faith and sorrow of the pagan, went aside with his companion, Fernando, to pray to God. Having come back again after a short time, “Go,” he said to the afflicted father, “*your daughter is alive!*”

The idolater, who expected that the Saint would come with him to his house and invoke the name of the God of the Christians over his daughter’s body, took this speech as a jest and withdrew, dissatisfied. But scarcely had he gone a few steps when he saw one of his servants, who, all beside himself with joy, shouted from a distance that his daughter was alive. Presently, he beheld her approaching. After the first embraces the daughter related to her father that, as soon as she had expired, two horrible demons pounced upon her, and sought to hurl her into a fiery abyss; but that two men, of a venerable and modest appearance, snatched her from the hands of these executioners and restored her life, she being unable to tell how it happened.

The Japanese understood who were these two men of whom his daughter spoke, and he led her directly to Xavier to return him such thanks as so great a favour deserved. She no sooner saw the Saint with his companion, Fernando, than she exclaimed: “*There are my two deliverers!*” and, at the same time, the daughter and the father demanded baptism.

The servant of God, Bernard Colnago, a religious of the Company of Jesus, died at Catania in the odor of sanctity, in the year 1611. We read in his biography that he prepared for the passage by a life full of good works and the constant remembrance of death, so apt to engender a holy life. To keep in mind this salutary remembrance, he preserved in his little cell a skull, which he had placed upon a stand to have it always before his eyes. One day it struck him that, perhaps, that head had been the abode of a mind rebellious to God, and now the object of His wrath. Accordingly, he begged the Sovereign Judge to enlighten him, and to cause the skull to shake if the spirit that had animated it was burning in hell. No sooner had he finished his prayer than it shook with a

horrible trembling, a palpable sign that it was the skull of a damned soul.

This saintly religious, favored with singular gifts, knew the secret of consciences, and, sometimes, the decrees of God's justice. One day God revealed to him the eternal perdition of a young libertine, who was his parents' heart-scald. The unfortunate young man, after having rushed into all sorts of dissipation, was slain by an enemy. His mother, at the sight of so sad an end, conceived the liveliest terrors for her son's everlasting salvation, and besought Father Bernard to tell her in what state his soul was. Despite her entreaties Father Bernard did not answer by a single word, sufficiently showing by his silence that he had nothing consoling to say. He was more explicit to one of her friends. This person inquiring why he did not give an answer to an afflicted mother, the religious openly said to him that he was unwilling to increase her affliction; that this young libertine was damned, and that, during his prayer, God had shown him the youth under a hideous and frightful aspect.

On the 1st of August, 1645, there died in the odor of sanctity, at the College of Evora, in Portugal, Anthony Pereyra, Coadjutor Brother of the Company of Jesus. His history is, perhaps the strangest furnished by the annals of this Society. In 1599, five years after his entrance into the novitiate, he was seized by a mortal malady in the Isle of St. Michael, one of the Azores; and a few moments after he had received the last sacraments, beneath the eyes of the whole community, who were present at his agony, he seemed to expire, and became cold like a corpse. The appearance—almost imperceptible—of a slight throbbing of the heart alone, prevented his immediate burial. Accordingly, he was left three whole days on his death-bed, and there were already plain signs of decomposition in the body, when all of a sudden, on the fourth day, he opened his eyes, breathed and spoke. He was obliged by obedience to account to his superior, Father Louis Pinheyro, all that had passed in him after the last pangs of his agony; and here is the summary of the relation which he wrote with his own hand: "First, I saw from my death-bed," he says, "my Father, St. Ignatius, accompanied by some of our Fathers in heaven, who was coming to visit his sick children, seeking those who seemed worthy to be presented to our Lord. When he was near me I thought for an instant that he might take me, and my heart leaped with joy; but he soon described to me what I must correct before obtaining so great a favor."

Then, however, by a mysterious dispensation of Providence, the soul of Brother Pereyra was momentarily released from his body, and immediately the sight of the hideous troop of demons, rushing headlong upon him, filled him with dread. But, at the same time, his angel-guardian and St. Anthony of Padua, his

countryman and patron, put his enemies to flight, and invited him in their company to take a momentary glimpse and taste of something of the joys and pains of eternity. "They then, by turns, led me to a place of delights, where they showed mean incomparable crown of glory, but one which I had not yet merited; then, to the brink of the abysmal pit, where I beheld souls accursed falling into the everlasting fire, as thick as grains of corn, cast beneath an ever-turning millstone. The infernal pit was like one of these limekilns, in which the flame is smothered for an instant beneath the heap of materials thrown into it, only to fire up again by the fuel with a more frightful violence."

Led thence to the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge, Antony Pereyra heard his sentence to the fire of purgatory, and nothing here below, he declares, could give an idea of what is suffered there, or of the state of anguish to which the soul is reduced by the desire and postponement of the enjoyment of God and of His blessed presence.

So when, by our Lord's command, his soul was united again to his body, neither the new tortures of sickness, which, for six entire months, combined with the daily help of iron and fire, caused his flesh, irremediably attacked by the corruption of this first death to waste away; nor the frightful penances to which, so far as obedience allowed him, he never ceased to subject himself for the forty-six years of his new life, were able to quench his thirst for sufferings and expiation. "All this," he used to say, "is nothing to what the justice and mercy of God have caused me, not only to see, but to endure." Finally, as an authentic seal of so many wonders, Brother Pereyra detailed to his Superior the hidden designs of Providence on the future restoration of the Kingdom of Portugal, at that time still distant nearly half a century. But it may be fearlessly added that the most unexceptionable avouchment of all these prodigies was the surprising sanctity to which Antony Pereyra never ceased for a single day to rise.

III. APPARITIONS OF THE DAMNED

St. Antoninus, Archbishop of Florence, relates, in his writings, a terrible fact which, about the middle of the fifteenth century, spread fright over the whole North of Italy. A young man of good stock, who, at the age of 16 or 17, had had the misfortune of concealing a mortal sin in confession, and, in that state, of receiving Communion, had put off from week to week, month to month, the painful disclosure of his sacrileges. Tortured by remorse, instead of discovering with simplicity his misfortune, he sought to gain quiet by great penances, but to no purpose. Unable to bear the strain any longer, he entered a monastery; there, at least, he said to himself, I will tell all, and expiate my frightful sins.

Unhappily, he was most welcomed as a holy young man by his superiors, who knew him by reputation, and his shame again got the better of him. Accordingly, he deferred his confession of this sin to a later period; and a year, two years, three years, passed in this deplorable state; he never dared to reveal his misfortune. Finally, sickness seemed to him to afford an easy means of doing it. "Now is the time," he says to himself; "I am going to tell all; I will make a general confession before I die." But this time, instead of frankly and fairly declaring his faults, he twisted them so artfully that his confessor was unable to understand him. He hope to come back again the next day: an attack of delirium came on, and the unfortunate man died.

The community, who were ignorant of the frightful reality, were full of veneration for the deceased. His body was borne with a certain degree of solemnity into the church of the monastery, and lay exposed in the choir until the next morning when the funeral was to be celebrated.

A few moments before the time fixed for the ceremony, one of the Brothers, sent to toll the bell, saw before him, all of a sudden, the deceased, encompassed by chains, that seemed aglow with fire, while something blazing appeared all over his person. Frightened, the poor Brother fell on his knees, with his eyes riveted on the terrifying apparition. Then the damned soul said to him: "*Do not pray for me, I am in here for all eternity;*" and he related the sad story of his false shame and sacrileges. Thereupon, he vanished, leaving in the church a disgusting odor, which spread all over the monastery, as if to prove the truth of all the Brother just saw and heard. Notified at once, the Superiors had the corpse taken away, deeming it unworthy of ecclesiastical burial.

After having cited the preceding example, Monsignor de Segur adds what follows [Opuscule on Hell]:

"In our century, three facts of the same kind, more authentic than some others have come to my knowledge. The first happened almost in my family.

"It was in Russia, at Moscow, a short while before the horrible campaign of 1812. My maternal grandfather, Count Rostopchine, the Military Governor of Moscow, was very intimate with General Count Orloff, celebrated for his bravery, but as godless as he was brave.

"One day, at the close of a supper, Count Orloff and one of his friends, General V., also a disciple of Voltaire, had set to horribly ridiculing religion, especially hell. 'Yet,' said Orloff; '*yet if, by chance, there should be anything the other side of the curtain?*' 'Well,' took up General V., '*whichever of us shall depart first,*

will come to inform the other of it. Is it agreed? ‘An excellent idea,’ replied Count Orloff; and both interchanged very seriously their word of honor not to miss the engagement.

“A few weeks later, one of those great wars which Napoleon had the gift of creating at that time, burst forth. The Russian army began the campaign, and General V. received orders to start out forthwith to take an important command.

“He had left Moscow about two or three weeks, when one morning, at a very early hour, while my grandfather was dressing, his chamber door is rudely pushed open. It was Count Orloff, in dressing-gown and slippers, his hair on end, his eye wild, and pale like a dead man. ‘*What, Orloff, you? at this hour? and in such a costume? What ails you? what has happened?*’ ‘*My dear,*’ replies Count Orloff, ‘*I believe I am beside myself. I have just seen General V.*’ ‘*Has General V., then, come back?*’ ‘*Well, no,*’ rejoins Orloff, throwing himself on a sofa, and holding his head between his hands; ‘*no, he has not come back, and that is what frightens me!*’

My grandfather did not understand him. He tried to soothe him. “*Relate to me,*” he says to Orloff, “*what has happened you, and what all this means.*” Then, striving to stifle his emotion, the Count related the following: “My dear Rostopchine, some time ago, V. and I mutually swore that the first of us who died should come and tell the other if there is anything on the other side of the curtain. Now, this morning, scarcely half an hour since, I was calmly lying awake in my bed, not thinking at all of my friend, when, all of a sudden, the curtains of my bed were rudely parted, and at two steps from me I see General V. standing up, pale, with his right hand on his breast, and saying to me: ‘*There is a hell, and I am there!*’ and he disappeared. I came at once to you. My head is splitting! What a strange thing! I do not know what to think about it.”

My grandfather calmed him as well as he could. It was no easy matter. He spoke of hallucinations, nightmares; perhaps he was asleep . . . There are many extraordinary unaccountable things . . . and other common-places, which constitute the comfort of freethinkers. Then he ordered his carriage, and took Count Orloff back to his hotel.

Now, ten or twelve days after this strange incident, an army messenger brought my grandfather among other news, that of the death of General V. The very morning of the day, Count Orloff had seen and heard him, the same hour he appeared at Moscow, the unfortunate General, reconnoitering the enemy’s position, had been shot through the breast by a bullet, and had fallen stark dead.

“There is a hell, and I am there!” these are the words of one who came back.

Mgr. de Segur relates a second fact, which he regards as alike free from doubt, He had learned it in 1859, of a most honorable priest, and Superior of an important community. This priest had the particulars of it from a near relation of the lady of whom it had happened. At that time, Christmas Day, 1859, this person was still living, and little over forty years.

She chanced to be in London in the winter of 1847–48. She was a widow, about twenty-nine years old, quite rich and worldly. Among the gallants who frequented her *salon*, there was noticed a young lord, whose attentions compromised her extremely, and whose conduct, besides, was anything but edifying!

One evening, or rather one night, for it was close upon midnight, she was reading in her bed some novel, coaxing sleep. One o’clock struck by the clock; she blew out her taper. She was about to fall asleep when, to her great astonishment, she noticed that a strange, wan glimmer of light, which seemed to come from the door of the drawing-room, spread by degrees into her chamber, and increased momentarily. Stupefied at first, and not knowing what this meant, she began to get alarmed, when she saw the drawing-room door slowly open and the young lord, the partner of her disorders, entered her room. Before she had time to say a single word, he seized her by the left wrist, and with a hissing voice, syllabled to her in English: *“There is a hell!”* The pain she felt in her arm was so great that she lost her senses.

When, half an hour after, she came to again, she rang for her chamber-maid. The latter, on entering felt a keen smell of burning. Approaching her mistress, who could hardly speak, she noticed on her wrist so deep a burn, that the bone was laid bare, and the flesh almost consumed; this burn was the size of a man’s hand. Moreover, she remarked that, from the door of the saloon to the bed, and from the bed to that same door, the carpet bore the imprint of a man’s steps, which had burned through the stuff. By the directions of her mistress, she opened the drawing-room door: there, more traces were seen on the carpet outside.

The following day, the unhappy lady learned with a terror easy to be divined that, on that very night, about one o’clock in the morning, her lord had been found dead drunk under the table, that his servants had carried him to his room, and that there he had died in their arms.

I do not know, added the Superior, whether that terrible lesson converted the

unfortunate lady, but what I do know, is that she is still alive, and that to conceal from the sight the traces of her ominous burn, she wears on the left wrist, like a bracelet, a wide gold band, which she does not take off day or night. I repeat it, I have all these details from her near relation, a serious Christian, in whose word I repose the fullest belief. They are never spoken of, even in the family; and I only confide them to you, suppressing every proper name.

Notwithstanding the disguise beneath which this apparition has been, and must be enveloped, it seems to me impossible, adds Mgr. de Segur, to call in doubt the dreadful authenticity of the details.

Here is a third fact related by the same writer. In the year 1873, he writes, a few days before the Assumption, occurred again one of these apparitions from beyond the grave, which so efficaciously confirm the reality of hell. It was in Rome. A brothel, opened in that city after the Piedmontese invasion, stood near a police station. One of the bad girls who lived there had been wounded in the hand, and it was found necessary to take her to hospital of CONSOLATION. Whether her blood, vitiated by bad living, had brought on mortification of wound, or from an unexpected complication, she died suddenly during the night. At the same instant, one of her companions, who surely was ignorant of what had just happened at the hospital, began to utter shrieks of despair to point of awaking the inhabitants of the locality, creating a flurry among the wretched creatures of the house, and provoking the intervention of the police. The dead girl of the hospital, surrounded by flames, had appeared to her, and said: *“I am damned! and if you do not wish to be like me, leave this place of infamy and return to God.”*

Nothing could quell the despair of this girl, who, at daybreak, departed, leaving the whole house plunged in a stupor, especially as soon as the death of her companion at the hospital was known.

Just at this period, the mistress of the place, an exalted Garribaldian, and known as such by brethren and friends, fell sick. She soon sent for a priest to receive the sacraments. The ecclesiastical authority deputed for thus task, a worthy prelate, Mgr. Sirolli, the pastor of the parish of Saint-Saviour *in Laura*. He, fortified by special instructions, presented himself, and exacted of the sick woman, before all, in the presence of many witnesses, the full and entire retractation of her blasphemies against the Sovereign Pontiff, and the discontinuance of the infamous trade she plied. The unhappy creature did so without hesitating, consented to purge her house, then made her confession and received the holy Viaticum with great sentiments of repentance and humility.

Feeling that she was dying, she besought, with tears, the good pastor not to leave her, frightened as she always was by the apparition of that damned girl. Mgr. Sirolli, unable to satisfy her on account of the proprieties which would not permit him to spend the night in such a place, sent to the police for two men, closed up the house, and remained until the dying woman had breathed her last.

Pretty soon, all Rome became acquainted with the details of these tragic occurrences. As ever, the ungodly and lewd ridiculed them, taking good care not to seek for any information about them; the good profited by them, to become still better and more faithful to their duties.

IV. THE DENIAL OF HELL IS FOOLISH BRAVADO

There are some miserable men, let us rather say, fools, who, in the delirium of their iniquity, make bold to declare that they laugh at hell. They say so, but only with their lips; their consciences protest and give them the lie. Collot de Herbois, famous for his impiety as much as for his sanguinary ferocity, was the chief author of the massacres of Lyons, in 1793; he caused the destruction of 1,600 victims. Six years after, in 1799, he was banished to Cayenne, and used to give vent to his infernal rage by blaspheming the holiest things. The least act of religion, became the subject of his jests. Having seen a soldier make the sign of the cross, "*Imbecile!*" he said to him. "*You still believe in superstition! Do you not know that God, the Holy Virgin, Paradise, Hell, are the inventions of the accursed tribe of priests?*" Shortly after he fell sick and was seized by violent pains. In an access of fever he swallowed, at a single draught, a bottle of liquor. His disease increased; he felt as if burned by a fire that was devouring his bowels. He uttered frightful shrieks, called upon God, the Holy Virgin, a priest, to come to his relief. "*Well, indeed,*" said the soldier to him, "*you ask for a priest? You fear hell then? You used to curse the priests, make fun of hell! Alas!*" He then answered: "*My tongue was lying to my heart.*" Pretty soon, he expired, vomiting blood and foam.

The following incident happened in 1837. A young under-lieutenant, being in Paris, entered the Church of the Assumption, near the Toilers, and saw a priest kneeling near a confessional. As he made religion the habitual subject of his jokes, he wished to go to confession to while away the time, and went into the confessional. "Monsieur l'abbé," he said, "would you be good enough to hear my confession?" "Willingly my son; confess unrestrained." "But I must first say that I am a rather unique kind of a sinner." "No matter; the sacrament of penance has been instituted for all sinners." "But I am not very much of a believer in

religious matters.” “You believe more than you think.” “Believe? I? I am a regular scoffer.” The confessor saw with whom he had to deal, and that there was some mystification. He replied, smiling: “You are a regular scoffer? Are you then making fun of me too?” The pretended penitent smiled in like manner. “Listen,” the priest went on, “what you have just done here is not serious. Let us leave confession aside; and, if you please, have a little chat. I like military people greatly; and, then, you have the appearance of a good, amiable youth. Tell me, what is your rank?” “Under-lieutenant.” “Will you remain an under-lieutenant long?” “Two, three, perhaps four years.” “And after?” “I shall hope to become a lieutenant?” “And after?” “I hope to become a captain.” “And after?” “Lieutenant-colonel?” “How old will you be then?” “Forty to forty-five years.” “And after that?” “I shall become a brigadier general.” “And after?” “If I rise higher, I shall be general of a division.” “And after?” “After! there is nothing more except the Marshal’s baton; but my pretensions do not reach so high.” “Well and good. But do you intend to get married?” “Yes, when I shall be a superior officer.” “Well! There you are married; a superior officer, a general, perhaps even a French marshal, who knows? And after?” “After? Upon my word, I do not know what will be after.”

“See, how strange it is!” said the abbé. Then, in a tone of voice that grew more sober: “You know all that shall happen up to that point, and you do not know what will be after. Well, I know, and I am going to tell you, After, you shall die, be judged, and, if you continue to live as you do, you shall be damned, you shall go and burn in hell; that is what will be after.”

As the under-lieutenant, dispirited at this conclusion, seemed anxious to steal away: “One moment, sir,” said the abbé. “You are a man of honor. So am I. Agree that you have offended me, and owe me an apology. It will be simple. For eight days, before retiring to rest, you will say: ‘One day I shall die; but I laugh at the idea. After my death I shall be judged; but I laugh at the idea. After my judgment, I shall be damned; but I laugh at the idea. I shall burn forever in hell; but I laugh at the idea!’ That is all. But you are going to give me your word of honor not to neglect it, eh?”

More and more wearied, and wishing, at any price, to extricate himself from this false step, the under-lieutenant made the promise. In the evening, his word being given, he began to carry out his promise. “*I shall die,*” he says. “*I shall be judged.*” He had not the courage to add: “*I laugh at the idea.*” The week had not passed before he returned to the Church of the Assumption, made his confession seriously, and came out of the confessional his face bathed with tears, and with joy in his heart.

A young person who had become an unbeliever in consequence of his dissipation, kept incessantly shooting sarcasm at religion, and making jests of its most awful truths. "*Juliette*," some one said to her one day, "*this will end badly. God will be tired of your blasphemies, and you shall be punished.*" "Bah," she answered insolently. "*It gives me very little trouble. Who has returned from the other world to relate what passes there?*" Less than eight days after she was found in her room, giving no sign of life, and already cold. As there was no doubt that she was dead, she was put in a coffin and buried. The following day, the grave-digger, digging a new grave beside that of the unhappy Juliette, heard some noise, it seemed to him that there was a knocking in the adjoining coffin. At once, he puts his ear to the ground, and in fact hears a smothered voice, crying out: "Help! help!" The authorities were summoned; by their orders, the grave was opened, the coffin taken up and unnailed. The shroud is removed; there is no further doubt, Juliette was buried alive. Her hair, her shroud were in disorder, and her face was streaming with blood. While they are releasing her, and feeling her heart to be assured that it still beats, she heaves a sigh, like a person for a long time deprived of air; then she opens her eyes, makes an effort to lift herself up, and says: "*My God, I thank thee.*" Afterward, when she had got her senses well back, and by the aid of some food, recovered her strength, she added: "*When I regained consciousness in the grave and recognized the frightful reality of my burial, when after having uttered shrieks, I endeavored to break my coffin, and struck my forehead against the boards, I saw that all was useless; death appeared to me with all its horrors; it was less the bodily than the eternal death that frightened me. I saw I was going to be damned. My God, I had but too well deserved it! Then I prayed, I shouted for help, I lost consciousness again, until I awoke above ground. O, goodness of my God!*" she said, again shedding tears, "*I had despised the truths of faith; thou hast punished me, but in thy mercy, I am converted and repentant.*"

They who deny hell will be forced to admit it soon; but alas! it will be too late. Father Nieremberg, in his work *Difference between Time and Eternity*, speaks of an unfortunate sinner, who, as the result of his evil ways, had lost the faith. His virtuous wife exhorted him to return to God, and reminded him of hell, but he would answer, obstinately: "*There is no hell.*" One day his wife found him dead, and, strange circumstance, he held in his hand a mysterious paper, on which, in large characters, was traced this terrifying avowal: "*I now know that there is a hell!*"

V. AWAKENING OF THE UNGODLY SOUL IN

HELL

Unhappy sinners, who are lulled to rest by the illusions of the world, and who live as if there was no hell, will be suddenly stripped of their illusions by the most frightful of catastrophes. From the midst of their pleasures they shall fall into the pit of torments.

The disaster of the Cafe Kivoto supplies an image of the catastrophe, still more terrible, which awaits them, soon or late.

The Kivoto was a theatrical cafe at Smyrna, built upon piles in the sea. The extremely stout stakes that kept the house above the waves, water and time-eaten, had lost their solid contents. It was on the 11th of February, 1873, at 10 o'clock p.m. Two hundred persons had assembled to witness a comic spectacle. They were amusing themselves, when, all at once, a frightful crash was heard. At the same moment everything gave way and was turned topsy-turvy; the house, with the theatre and spectators, was pitched forward and swallowed up in the sea. What an awful surprise for these amusement amateurs! A more tragical surprise awaits the worldling. A day will come when from the centre of his pleasure, he shall, all of a sudden, behold himself cast headlong into a sea of sulfur and fire.

On the night of the 31st of March—1st of April, 1873, a stately and magnificent steamship, the *Atlantic*, foundered on the Canadian banks, near Halifax. The number on board, passengers and crew, reached 950, of whom 700 were lost in this shipwreck. Most of them were wrapped in sleep, when the vessel, striking some rocks, sank almost instantaneously. Swallowed up by the sea in the middle of their repose, they awoke in the waters, and were suffocated before being able to account for the terrible accident which had just happened. Frightful awaking! But more frightful will be the awaking of the atheist when he shall see himself suddenly engulfed in hell.

On the 28th of December, 1879, occurred the Tay bridge accident. The train from London to Edinburgh crosses the Tay, near Dundee, over an iron bridge half a league long. A dreadful storm, which had swelled the waves and broken the bridge during the day, ended by sweeping away several arches, despite the iron cross-bars piers. These arches, when falling, left an empty space, which was not perceived in the darkness. At 7:30 p.m. the express train out from Edinburgh thunders along, carrying a hundred travelers; it mounts the fatal bridge, and soon, coming on the empty space, is hurled into the waves. Not a cry was heard; in the twinkling of an eye the victims were in the depths below. What a surprise! what a sudden change! But what will it be when the sinner shall see

himself, in the twinkling of an eye, in the pit of hell?

VI. TRUTH OF HELL

This is how the Son of God speaks to us of hell:

“Woe to the world because of scandals; for it must needs be that scandals come; nevertheless, woe to that man by whom scandal cometh!”

“If, then, thy hand or thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off and cast it from thee; it is better for thee to go into life maimed or lame, than, having two hands or two feet, be cast into everlasting fire.”

“And if thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; it is better for thee, having one eye, to enter into life, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.” (*Matt. xviii, 7; compare v., 29*)

“And fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body into hell.” (*Matt. x. 28*)

“The rich man also died, and he was buried in hell.”

“Now, lifting up his eyes when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”

“And he said: Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.” (*Luke xvi., 22*)

“Then the Judge will say to them that shall be on his left hand: Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels.” (*Mattxxv., 41*)

“Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven.

“But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (*Matt. viii., 11*)

“The King went in to see the guests, and he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment.

“And he saith to him: Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment? But he was silent.

“Then the King said to the waiters: Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into

the exterior darkness: there shall weeping, and gnashing of teeth.” (*Matt. v., 22*)

“The unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth.” (*Matt xxv., 30*)

“But I say to you: Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment, and whosoever shall say to his brother, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.” (*Matt. v., 22*)

“The Son of Man shall send His angels, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all scandals and them that work iniquity;

“And shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (*Matt. xiii., 41*)

“If thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into unquenchable fire.

“There, the gnawing worm dies not and the fire is not extinguished.

“And if thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter lame into life everlasting than having two feet, to be cast into the hell of unquenchable fire.

“Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished.

“And if thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out; it is better for thee with one eye to enter into the Kingdom of God, than, having two eyes, to be cast into the hell of fire.

“Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished.” (*Mark ix., 42*)

“Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down and shall be cast into the fire.” (*Matt. XII., 19*)

“I am the vine; you the branches; he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit.

“If any one abide not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither, and they shall gather him up, and cast him into the fire, and he burneth.” (*John xv., 5*)

“Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.

“For the days shall come, wherein they shall say to the mountains: Fall upon us;

and to the hills: Cover us.

“For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?— that is to say, what will sinners be, destined, like the dry wood, to be burned.”

(Luke xxiii., 31)

“Already, the axe is laid to the root of the tree: and every tree that doth not yield good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire.

“He that shall come after Me is mightier than I, and he shall baptize you in the Holy Ghost and fire.

“Whose fan is in his hand and he will thoroughly cleanse his floor; and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

Words of St. John the Baptist. *(Matt. iii., 10.)*

“The beast and the false prophet who had seduced them who had received the character of the beast, and who had admired his image, were cast alive into the pool of fire burning with brimstone.” *(Apoc., xix., 20.)*

“Where they were tormented day and night, for ever and ever.

“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the pool of fire.” *(Apoc. xx., 15)*

To doubt about hell, is to doubt the infallible word of God; it is to give ear to the speech of the libertines rather than to the infallible teaching of the Church. The Church teaches that there is a hell; a libertine tells you that there is not; and should you prefer to believe a libertine? An honorable Roman, Emilius Scaurus, was accused by a certain Varus, a man without word or honor. Being obliged to prove his innocence, Scaurus addressed the people in this short speech:

“Romans, you know Varus says I am guilty of the crime charged against me, and I protest that I am not guilty. Varus says yes, I say no; whom do you believe?”

The people applauded, and the accuser was confounded.

Natural reason confirms the dogma of hell. An atheist was boasting that he did not believe in hell. Among his hearers, there was a sensible young man, modest, but who thought that he ought to shut the silly speaker’s mouth. He put him a single question: “Sir,” he said, “*the kings of the earth have prisons to punish their refractory subjects; how can God, the King of the Universe, be without a prison for those who outrage His majesty?*” The sinner had not a word to answer. The appeal was presented to the light of his own reason, which

proclaims that, if kings have prisons, God must have a hell.

The atheist who denies hell is like the thief who should deny the prison. A thief was threatened with sentence to prison. The foolish fellow replied: "*There is no Court, there is no prison.*" He was speaking thus, when an officer of justice put his hand on his shoulder, and dragged him before the Judge. This is an image of the atheist who is foolish enough to deny hell. A day will come, when, taken unawares by divine justice, he shall see himself dashed headlong into the pit which he stubbornly denied, and he shall be forced to acknowledge the terrible reality.

The atheist who denies hell is like the African heron. That stupid bird, when chased by hunters, plunges its head into the sand, and keeping stirless, believes it is secure from danger, because it does not see the enemy. But soon the piercing arrow comes to undeceive it. Thus absorbed, sunk in earthly things, the sinner is persuaded that he has nothing to fear from hell until the day when death strikes him and shows him, by a sad experience, how deceive he has been.

The truth of hell is so clearly revealed that heresy has never denied it. Protestants, who have demolished almost all dogmas, have not dared to touch this dogma. This fact suggests to a Catholic lady this witty answer. Anxiously importuned by two Protestant ministers to pass over into the camp of the Reformation: "*Gentlemen,*" she replied, "*you have indeed achieved a fine reformation. You have suppressed fasting, confession, purgatory. Unfortunately, you have kept hell; put hell away, and I shall be one of you.*" Yes, Messrs. Freethinkers, remove hell, and then ask us to be yours. But know that an "*I do not believe in it,*" is not sufficient to do away with it.

Is it not the most inconceivable folly to rely on a *perhaps*, at the risk of falling into hell? Two atheists went one day into an anchorite's cell. At the sight of his instruments of penance, they asked him why he was leading so mortified a life. "*To deserve paradise,*" he replied. "*Good Father,*" they said, smiling, "*You would be nicely caught, if there is nothing after death!*" "*Gentlemen,*" rejoined the holy man, as he looked at them with compassion, "*you will be quite otherwise, if there is any.*"

A young man belonging to a Catholic family in Holland, as a consequence of imprudent reading, had the misfortune to lose the treasure of faith and fall into a state of complete indifference. It was a subject of the bitterest grief for his parents, especially his pious mother. In vain did this other Monica give him the most solid lectures, in vain did she admonish him with tears to come back to God; her unhappy son was deaf and insensible. Yet, at last, to satisfy his mother,

he was pleased to consent to spend a few days in a religious house, there to follow the exercises of a retreat, or rather, as he put it, to rest a few days and smoke tobacco, and enjoyment he loved. So, he listened with a distracted mind to the instructions given to those making the retreat, and speedily after began again to smoke without thinking further of what he had heard. The instruction on hell, to which he seemed to listen to like the rest, came on, but being back again in his little cell, while he was taking his smoke as usual, a reflection arose, in spite of him, in his mind. *“If, however, it should be true,”* he says to himself, *“that there is a hell! If there be one, clearly it shall be for me! And in reality, do I know, myself, that there is not a hell? I am obliged to acknowledge that I have no certainty in this behalf; the whole ground of my ideas is only a perhaps. Now, to run the risk of burning for eternity on a perhaps, frankly speaking, as a matter of extravagance, would be to go beyond the bounds. If there are some who have such courage, I have not sufficiently lost my senses to imitate them.”* Thereupon, he begins to pray, grace penetrates his soul, his doubts vanish, he rises up, converted.

A pious author relates the history of the tragic punishment that befell an ungodly scoffer of hell. This was a man of quality, whom the author, through respect for his family, does not name; he designates him by the fictitious name of Leontius. This unfortunate man made it a boast to brave heaven and hell, which he treated as chimerical superstitions. One day, when a feast was about to be celebrated at his castle, he took a walk, accompanied by a friend, and wished to go through the cemetery. Chancing to stumble against a skull lying on the ground, he kicked it aside with profane, blasphemous words: *“Out of my way,”* he said, *“rotten bones, worthless remains of what is not more.”* His companion, who did not share in his sentiments, ventured to say to him *“that he did wrong to use this language. The remains of the dead,”* he added, *“must be respected, on account of their souls, which are always alive, and which will assume their bodies again on the day of the resurrection.”* Leontius answered by this challenge spoken to the skull: *“If the spirit that animated thee still exists, let it come and tell me some news about the other world. I invite it for this very evening to my banquet.”* Evening came, he was at table with numerous friends, and telling his adventure of the cemetery, while repeating his profanations, when, all at once, a great noise is made and almost at the same time a horrible ghost appears in the dining-room, and spreads fright among the guests, Leontius, especially, losing all audacity, is pale, trembling, out of his wits. he wants to flee; the specter does not give him time, but springs on him with the swiftness of lightning, and smashed his head to pieces against the wainscot. I do not know how far this recital is authentic; but what is certain is

that a day will come when the pride of the ungodly shall be dashed down, and their heads broken by the Judge of the living and the dead: *“The Lord shall judge among nations, He shall fill ruins; He shall crush the heads in the land of many.”* (Ps. 109.)

Here is another fact almost contemporaneous and related by a trustworthy author: Two young men, whose names, through respect for their families, must remain secret, but whom I shall call Eugene and Alexander, old schoolmates and college friends, met again later in life after a long separation. Eugene, having stayed at home; used to occupy himself with the works of charity, according to the spirit of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, of which he was a member. Alexander had entered the army and obtained the rank of colonel; but, unhappily, there lost every spark of religion. Having procured a leave of absence of a few days, he had returned to his family, and wished to see Eugene. The interview happened on a Sunday. After they had chatted together for a time, *“Friend,”* said Eugene, *“it is time to leave you. Wither do you wish to go? It cannot be there is anything pressing?”* *“I am going first after the business of salvation; then I must attend a benevolent reunion.”* *“Poor Eugene; I see it; you still believe in paradise and hell. ’Tis all a chimera, superstition, fanaticism.”* *“Dear Alexander, do not speak so; you, like me, learned that the dogmas of faith rest on unexceptionable facts.”* *“Chimeras, I tell you, which I believe no longer. If there be a hell, I am willing to go there today. Come with me to the theatre.”* *“Dear friend, use your liberty, but do not brave God’s justice.”* Eugene spoke to a deaf man, who was unwilling to heed salutary advice. He left him with a sore heart. That very day, in the evening, Eugene was already in bed, when he was awakened. *“Quick,”* they said to him, *“rise, go to Alexander’s; he has been just brought back from the theatre, seized by a frightful pain.”* Eugene runs thither, and finds him tossed by violent convulsions, with foam in his mouth and rolling his wild eyes. As soon as he sees Eugene, *“You say there is a hell,”* he shouts; *“you say, truly, there is a hell, and I am going thither; I am there already; I fell its tortures and fury.”*

In vain did Eugene try to calm him; the unhappy man answers only by yells and blasphemies. In the transports of his rage, he tore with his teeth the flesh off his arms, and cast the bleeding fragments at Eugene, his mother, and sisters. It was in this paroxysm of agony that he expired. His mother died of grief, his two sisters entered religion, and Eugene also quitted the world; owner of a brilliant fortune, he forsook all to consecrate himself to God, and avoid hell.

VII. THE PAINS OF HELL

What predominates in the words of Scripture when it exhibits to us the pains of Hell is the terrible torture of the fire. The Scriptures call Hell a “pool of sulphur and fire,” the gehenna of fire,” the eternal fire,” a “fiery furnace where the fire shall never be extinguished.” But this fire, kindled by divine justice, will possess an activity incomparably superior to that of all the furnaces, all the fires, of this world. Alas! Do we understand how it shall be possible to bear it? How it will be necessary to dwell in it as in an everlasting habitation? “Which of you,” demands the Prophet, “can dwell with devouring fire? Which of you shall bear everlasting burnings?” (Isaias 33:14).

In 1604, in the city of Brussels, there occurred the celebrated apparition of a damned soul, attested by Blessed Richard of St. Ann, of the Order of St. Francis, who suffered martyrdom at Nagasaki, in Japan, on September 10, 1622. Blessed Richard related the fact to a theologian of the Spanish Inquisition, Father Alphonsus of Andrada, of the Company of Jesus; he, in turn, communicated it to Adrian Lyroeus, who has inserted it in his *Trisagium Marianum*, Book III. Saint Alphonsus Liguori, who cites the same fact in his *Glories of Mary*, has made Blessed Richard one of the two actors in this frightful drama; he (Bl. Richard) was only a witness, like many others who were living at Brussels, but the impression he experienced was so lively that it became the determining cause of his entrance into the Seraphic order.

This is how the occurrence is related, after authentic documents in the *Annals of Franciscan Missions*, for the years 1866–67. It was not without a terrible, though merciful interposition of God’s justice, that Blessed Richard was brought to demand the habit of St. Francis. It was in 1604. There were at Brussels, where Richard was at that time, two young students who, instead of applying themselves to study, thought only of how to live in pleasure and dissipation. One night, among others, when they had gone to indulge in sin in a house of ill-fame, one of the two left the place after some time, leaving his miserable companion behind him.

Having reached home, he was about to lie down in bed, when he remembered that he had not recited that day the few Hail Marys which he had the habit of saying every day in honour of the Holy Virgin. As he was overpowered by sleep, it was troublesome for him; however, he made an effort and said them, although without devotion; then he went to bed. In his first sleep he heard all of a sudden, a rude knocking at the door; and immediately afterward he saw before him his companion, disfigured and hideous.

“Who are you?” he said to him. “What? Don’t you know me?” replied the

unhappy youth. “But how are you so changed? You look like a devil?” “Ah, pity me; I am damned!” “How is that?” “Well, know that upon leaving that accursed house a devil sprang upon me and strangled me. My body has remained in the middle of the street, and my soul is in Hell. Know, moreover, that the same chastisement awaited you, but the Virgin preserved you from it, thanks to your practice of reciting every day a few Hail Marys in her honour. Happy are you if you know how to profit by this information, which the Mother of God gives you through me.”

While finishing these words, the damned soul partly opened his garment, allowed the flames and serpents that were tormenting him to be seen, and vanished. Then the young man, melting into tears, threw himself on his face on the floor to thank the Holy Virgin Mary, his deliverer. Now, while he was praying in this manner and reflecting upon what he ought to do to change his life, he heard the Matins bell ring at the Franciscan Monastery.

That very moment he cried out, “There it is that God calls me to do penance.” The next day indeed, at a very early hour, he went to the monastery and begged the Father Guardian to receive him. The Father, who was aware of his bad life, having presented difficulties at first, the young student, shedding a torrent of tears, related to him all that had taken place. And really, two religious, having repaired to the street indicated, found the corpse of the wretched youth, black as a coal. Then the postulant was admitted among the Brothers, whom he edified by a life altogether devoted to penance.

Such is the terrible fact which struck dismay and fright into many souls and which induced Blessed Richard also to consecrate himself entirely to God in the same Order into which the young student, so wonderfully protected by Mary, had just been received.

The following fact is related by Father Martin del Rio, from the Annals of the Company of Jesus. It is an apparition that occurred in 1590 and was vouched for by trustworthy witnesses: Not far from Lima, dwelt a Christian lady who had three maid-servants, one of whom, called Martha, was a young Indian of about sixteen years. Martha was a Christian, but little by little she grew cool in the devotion she had at first displayed, became negligent in her prayers, and light, coquettish, and wanton in her conversations. Having fallen dangerously ill, she received the Last Sacraments. After this serious ceremony, during which she had evinced very little piety, she said, smiling to her two fellow servants, that in the confession she had just made she had taken good care not to tell all her sins to the priest. Frightened by this language, the girls reported it to their mistress,

who by dint of exhortations and threats, obtained from the sick girl a sign of repentance and the promise to make a sincere and Christian confession. Martha confessed then, over again, and died shortly afterward.

Scarcely had she breathed her last, when her corpse emitted an extraordinary and intolerable stench. They were obliged to remove it from the house to a shed. The dog in the courtyard, usually a quiet animal, howled piteously, as if he were undergoing torture. After the interment, the lady, according to custom, was dining in the garden in the open air, when a heavy stone fell suddenly onto the centre of the table with a horrible crash and caused all the table settings to bounce, but without breaking any article. One of the servants, having occupied the room in which Martha had died, was awakened by frightful noises; all the furniture seemed to be moved by an invisible force and thrown to the floor.

We understand how the servant did not continue to occupy that room; her companion ventured to take her place, but the same scenes were renewed. Then they agreed to spend the night together there. This time they distinctly heard Martha's voice, and soon that wretched girl appeared before them in the most horrible state, and all on fire. She said that by God's command she had come to reveal her condition to them, that she was damned for her sins of impurity and for the sacrilegious confessions she had continued to make until death. She added, "Tell what I have just revealed to you, that others may profit by my misfortune." At these words she uttered a despairing cry and disappeared.

The fire of Hell is a real fire, a fire that burns like this world's fire, although it is infinitely more active. Must not there be a real fire in Hell, seeing that there is a real fire in Purgatory? "It is the same fire," says St. Augustine, "that tortures the damned and purifies the elect."

A number of indisputable facts demonstrates the reality of the fire in the place of expiation. This is what Mgr. de Segur relates: "In the year 1870, in the month of April," he writes, "I saw, or at least, touched at Foligno, near Assisi, in Italy, one of those frightful imprints of fire, caused sometimes by souls that appear and prove that the fire of the other life is a real fire. On November 4, 1859, there died of a stroke of apoplexy, at the Convent of the Tertiary Franciscans of Foligno, a good Sister named Theresa Gesta, who had been many years mistress of novices and at the same time in charge of the poor little clothesroom of the convent. She was born at Corsa in Bastia in 1797, and she entered the convent in February, 1826. It need not be said that she was well prepared for death.

"Twelve days afterward on the 6th of November, a sister named Anna Felicia, who replaced her in her office, went up to the wardrobe and was about to enter,

when she heard moans which seemed to come from the interior of this room. Somewhat alarmed, she hastened to open the door; no one was there. But new moans resounded, so clearly articulated that, despite her usual courage, she felt seized by fear. 'Jesus, Mary!' she exclaimed, 'what is this?' She had not finished when she heard a plaintive voice accompanied by this mournful sigh: 'Oh, my God, how I suffer!' ('Oh! Dio che peno tanto.') The shocked sister recognized at once the voice of poor Sister Theresa. Then the whole hall was filled with a dense smoke, and the ghost of Sister Theresa appeared, moving toward the door, while gliding along by the wall. Having almost reached the door, she exclaimed forcibly: 'This is a sign of the mercy of God.' And saying that, she struck the highest panel of the door, leaving hollowed in the charred wood a most perfect stamp of her right hand; then she disappeared.

"Sister Anna Felicia had remained half dead with fear. All confused, she began to cry out and call for help. One of her companions hastened to her, then another, then the whole community; they pressed eagerly around her, and they were all astonished at finding a smell of burnt wood. Sister Anna Felicia told them what had just taken place, and showed them the terrible stamp on the door. They immediately recognized the shape of Sister Theresa's hand, which was remarkably small. Alarmed, they took flight, ran to the choir, began to pray, spent the night praying and doing penances for the deceased, and the next day all received Communion for her.

"The news spread abroad, and the different communities of the city joined their prayers to those of the Franciscans. The next day following, November 18, Sister Anna Felicia, having retired to her cell to go to bed, heard herself called by her name and recognized perfectly the voice of Sister Theresa. At the same instant an all-resplendent sphere of light appeared before her, lighting up the cell as if at noonday, and she heard Sister Theresa, who, with a joyous, triumphant voice, uttered these words: 'I died on Friday, the day of the Passion, and behold, on a Friday I depart for glory! Be brave in carrying the Cross; be courageous in suffering; love poverty.' Then, adding affectionately, 'Adieu, Adieu, Adieu!' she became transfigured into a thin, white, dazzling cloud; she flew away to Heaven and vanished.

"A canonical inquest was immediately held by the Bishop of Foligno and the magistrates of the city. On November 23, in the presence of a great number of witnesses, the grave of Sister Theresa was opened, and the stamp burned into the door was found exactly to correspond with the hand of the deceased. The result was an official judgment that established the perfect certainty and authenticity of what we have just narrated. The door with the burned mark is

preserved with veneration in the Convent. The Mother Abbess, a witness of this fact, deigned to show it to me herself.”

St. Peter Damian speaks of a worldling who lived only for amusement and pleasure. To no purpose was he advised to think of his soul; to no purpose was he warned that, by following the life of the wicked rich man, he should reach the same end; he continued his guilty life unto death. He had scarcely ceased to live when an anchorite (hermit) knew of his damnation. He saw him in the midst of a fiery pool; it was an immense pool like a sea, in which a great number of people, howling with despair, were plunged. They were striving to gain the shore, but it was guarded by pitiless dragons and demons, who prevented them from coming near it, and hurled them far back into that ocean of flames.

Nicholas of Nice, speaking of the fire of Hell, says that nothing on earth could give an idea of it. If, he adds, all the trees of the forests were cut down, piled up into a vast heap and set to fire, this terrible pile would not be a spark of Hell.

Vincent of Beauvais, in the 25th book of his history, narrates the following fact, which he says happened in the year 1090: Two young libertines, whether seriously or through mockery, had made a mutual promise: whichever of the two died first would come and tell the other in what state he was. So one died, and God permitted him to appear to his companion. He was in a horrible state, and seemed to be the prey of cruel sufferings, which consumed him like a burning fever and covered him with sweat. He wiped his forehead with his hand and let a drop of his sweat fall onto his friend's arm, while saying to him: “That is the sweat of Hell; you shall carry the mark of it till death.” That infernal sweat burned the arm of the living man, and penetrated his flesh with unheard-of pains. He profited by this awful information and retired to a monastery.

Peter, the venerable Abbot of Cluny, tells an incident of the same kind. A dying man persisted in sin and was about to die impenitent. Burned by fever and tortured by thirst, he asked for some cold water to cool himself. God permitted, thanks to prayers offered for this wretched man, two infernal spirits to appear to him under a visible form. They bore a goblet containing a liquid, a drop of which they threw on the sick man's hand, saying: “This is the cold water used for cooling Hell!” The infernal liquid went through and through the hand, burning the flesh and bones. The attendants saw with astonishment this terrible phenomenon, as well as the convulsions of the sinner, who twisted and turned in his unspeakable sufferings. If the cold water of Hell burns like that, what will the boiling water and blazing sulphur do?

In 1870, the city of New York witnessed a conflagration, the circumstances of

which offered an image of Hell. The Barnum menagerie became the prey of flames. It was stocked with tigers, lions and other wild beasts. All these animals were burned alive in their iron cages, the bars of which grew to a white heat. As the fire and the heat became more intense, the beasts became more enraged. With extreme violence they sprang at the bars of their prisons, and fell back like inert heaps, only to leap again at the insuperable obstacle which held them captive. The awful roars of the lions, the screams of the tigers, the howls of all the animals, which betrayed supreme despair, were blended together and formed a frightful chorus, bringing to mind what the damned must hear resounding in Hell. But the sounds of their terrible concert grew weaker and weaker, until the lion having uttered his last roar, the silence of death succeeded the most doleful din.

Fancy in these shining iron cages, not animals, but men, and men who, instead of dying in the fire, continue to live in it, as if their bodies were harder than iron; this would be an image of Hell, but an imperfect one, for all of that.

On Friday, February 18, 1881, there was a carnival ball given at Munich by the young artist-painters. They were numerous and masked, some as monks, priests, comical pilgrims, carrying grotesquelooking beads, and making a parody of religious usages; others like Esquimaux, covered with tow, pitch and hemp. A cigar, imprudently lighted, set fire to one of these inflammable costumes. The unfortunate person, seeing himself in flames, rushed headlong among his companions; in a minute all these tow and pitch garments were on fire. Twelve of the dancers, like living torches, ran about crazy, unable to receive help. They flung themselves onto one another, roamed around uttering mournful wails, rushed blazing into all the corners of the hall, spreading around a disgusting odor. Soon three of them were only charred corpses. Nine others died shortly after; thirteen were transported to the hospital. Among these last was Joseph Schonertzer; he expired when skillful hands were proceeding with the first bandaging. The skin peeled off his chest and arms; it came off partly in rolls, leaving the living flesh bare, scorched also by the fire. This dreadful death was regarded, not without reason, as a chastisement of the Divine Justice, which these unhappy young people had provoked by their excesses of impiety and dissipation. It presents at the same time an image of Hell, but with two great differences; it is far less cruel, and it lasts only a short time.

On March 24, 1881, a catastrophe threw the city of Nice into a state of fright and dismay; the municipal theatre became a prey to flames. This theatre had doors exceedingly narrow and absolutely insufficient for passage in case of a great rush. On March 24, a brilliant presentation, which had drawn numerous

spectators, was given. The curtain had just risen for the first act when, at the expiration of a few minutes, there was an explosion among the footlights; all at once the flames were seen to issue from the frail boards and gain the stage. The shouts, "Fire! Fire!" came from all parts of the theatre, and the panic became general, especially when new explosions were heard.

The orchestra and the stage were in complete darkness. Only the glimmer of the great fire, which was rapidly spreading, revealed to the gave a few unfortunate actresses crossing the stage, crazy, wild with terror, and seeking an outlet, which the flames barred against them. The audience in the galleries, with a frenzied violence, rushed headlong down the winding starts to the corridors.

The women, the children, were trampled under foot. Only shouts of terror and despair were heard, the shouts of all those human beings, who were struggling to save their lives and who felt themselves dying, suffocated by the smoke, or ground beneath the feet of their neighbours.

When the firemen, soldiers and marines could penetrate the interior, the spectacle was horrible. There was a pile of corpses, black, hideous, some almost entirely reduced to cinders. These were the abodes of the unfortunate spectators, who rushed down, all at once, by the narrow stairways. Men, women and children, hanging on to one another, had rolled into this place. What poignant, frightful dramas must have been enacted during these few supreme minutes, when safety was possible no more. At three in the morning, 63 corpses were borne to the Church of St. Francis of Paola. They were half burned. The anguish of the most harrowing agonies might be detected in their faces and postures.

What will it be in Hell? There also, all outlet is closed in the midst of the great fire; there too, is the anguish of direct agony; but there death does not come to end it. Were these unhappy people ready to die? Alas! It is not to the theatre that we go to prepare for death! Is it not to be feared that this place may have literally been the gate of Hell for them?

On the occasion of the dreadful catastrophe of the Ring Theatre, that happened in Vienna in 1881, an estimate of the theatres burned during the previous century was made; the figure rose to several hundred. Is there not a lesson of Providence here, upholding the warning which the Church does not cease to give the faithful? Since the contemporary theatre is generally a school of irreligion and immorality, a hotbed of corruption for nations, do not the continual great fires point out sufficiently that these edifices, given up to fire, are for souls the gates of Hell?

The sight of a soul that falls into Hell is of itself alone an incomparable pain. St. Margaret Mary, as her history relates, beheld the apparition of one of her sisters in religion, recently deceased. That sister implored her prayers and suffrages; she was suffering cruelly in Purgatory. "See," she said to St. Margaret, "the bed I lie on, where I am enduring intolerable pains." I saw that bed, writes the saint, and it still makes me shudder; it was bristling with sharp and fiery spikes which entered the flesh. The deceased added that she was suffering this torture for her sloth and negligence in observing the rule. "This is not all," she said again; "My heart is torn in my bosom to punish my murmurs against my superiors; my tongue is eaten by worms for my words contrary to charity and my breaches of silence. But all this is a small matter in comparison with another pain which God made me experience; although it did not last long, it was more painful to me than all my sufferings." The saint, having desired to know what this dire pain was, she replied, "God showed me one of my near female relatives who had died in a state of mortal sin sentenced by the Supreme Judge and dashed into Hell. That sight caused me a fright, horror, pain that no tongue could communicate."

Surius, in the Life of St. Lydwina, relates that, in an ecstasy, this servant of God saw an abyss, the wide opening of which was bordered with flowers, and the great depth of which, when the eye pierced it, chilled with terror. There issued from it an indescribable noise, a frightful mixture of yells, blasphemies, tumult, ringing blows. Her Angel Guardian told her that it was the abode of the damned, and he wanted to show her the torment they suffer. "Alas!" she replied, "I could not bear the sight of them. How could I, as the mere noise of these despairing yells caused me an unbearable horror?"

If the damned suffered no other pain in Hell than to remain there always, without motion, without changing place or position, that alone would be an insupportable torment. A wealthy voluptuary, loaded down with crimes and dreading Hell, did not have the courage either to break off with his evil habits or to expiate his sins by penance. He had recourse to St. Lydwina, who at that time was edifying the world by her patience, and begged her to do penance for him. "Willingly," she replied. "I will offer my sufferings for you on condition that for the space of one night you keep the same position in your bed, without changing sides, budging or stirring."

He readily consented. But, having lain down in bed, he had scarcely rested half an hour when he felt uncomfortable and wished to move. Nevertheless, he did not do it and remained immovable, but the discomfort went on increasing, so much so that at the end of an hour it seemed intolerable to him. Then a salutary reflection sprang up in his mind: "If it is such a torture," he said to himself, "to

remain without motion upon a comfortable bed for the space of one night, what would it be, if I were bound down on a bed of fire for the space of a century, of an eternity? And do I fear to redeem such a punishment by a little penance?"

St. Christina, a virgin, justly surnamed "The Admirable," born at St. Trond in 1150, after her death came to life again and lived afterward for 42 years, enduring unheard of sufferings for the relief of the souls in Purgatory and the conversion of sinners.

After a youth spent in innocence, patience and humility, Christina died in the odor of sanctity at the age of 32 years (1182). Her body was borne to the Church of Notre Dame, in which her obsequies were to be celebrated, and it was placed in the middle of the nave, after the manner of that period, in an open coffin. The great throng of people, who were present were praying devoutly, when at the time of the Agnus Dei, the deceased lifted herself up in her coffin, and a few seconds after, with the lightness of a bird, shot up toward the dome and sat calmly on a cornice. At this sight the whole congregation took to flight in a panic; the eldest sister of Christina alone stayed in the church with the priest, who finished the Sacrifice. As soon as he came down from the altar, having ascertained what had happened, he commanded Christina to descend. She obeyed instantly, came down softly, as if her body had no weight, and calmly returned home with her sister.

There, being questioned by her friends and relations, she spoke to them thusly: "When I had given my last sigh, my soul, gone out of my body, found itself surrounded by a troop of angels, who bore it to a dark and frightful place in which there was an innumerable multitude of human souls. There I saw pains and torments which no tongue could express. Among those who were enduring them I noticed many whom I had known on earth. At the sight of their cruel sufferings, I was penetrated with the liveliest compassion, and I asked my guides what this place was. I scarcely doubted that it was Hell, but they replied that it was Purgatory."

"Afterward, they showed me the tortures of the damned; there I saw, also, a few unhappy creatures I had once known."

"Then the angels bore me to the heights of Heaven, before the eternal throne of God. The look, full of love, with which the Most High greeted me, filled my soul with an unspeakable joy. I felt that for all eternity I should enjoy His Blessed Presence. Answering my thoughts, the Lord said to me: 'Yes, My daughter, you will be eternally with Me, but for the moment, I leave you the choice either to enjoy beatitude from now on, or to return again to earth, there to suffer in a

mortal body the pains of the immortal souls (in Purgatory), these pains, however, being unable to cause any damage to your body. By these sufferings you will deliver the souls that have inspired you with so lively a pity, and you will contribute powerfully to the conversion and sanctification of the living. When you shall have filled up the time of this mission, you shall return here again, and enter into the possession of My kingdom.’

“Such was the choice of God proposed to me. I did not hesitate; I chose the part of charity; and God, visibly satisfied with my choice, commanded the angels to bring me to earth.”

“My friends,” added the saint, “be not astonished at the excess of the wonders which you shall see wrought in my person. They will be the work of God, who does what He pleases, and who acts in everything by designs often hidden, but always adorable.”

Upon hearing these words, it may well be understood that the hearers were struck with a holy dread; they looked at Christina with astonishment and trembled at the thought of the sufferings which this woman, returned to life, was going to endure. Indeed, from that moment on, quite different from what she had been before her death, Christina seemed to be a soul from Purgatory in a mortal body. Her life was nothing more than a tissue of unheard-of marvels and sufferings.

She abandoned human society and lived habitually in solitude. After having assisted in the morning at Mass—at which she often approached the Holy Table—she was observed fleeing to the woods and wild places, there to spend days and nights in prayer. Endowed with the gift of agility, she flew from one place to another with the speed of lightning, darted to the tops of trees, the roofs of houses, the towers of churches and castles. Often passersby would see her resting on the branches of a tree, then taking flight and disappearing at their approach.

Using no shelter, she lived like the birds of the woods, exposed to all the hardships of the weather, even in the most severe season. Her dress was modest, but excessively coarse and poor. She ate, like animals, what she found in the streets. If she saw a fire lighted, she would plunge her hands or feet into it, or if she could, her whole body altogether, and would endure as long as possible this torture. She used to watch for the opportunity of entering glowing furnaces, red-hot limekilns, and sink as deeply as she could into hot boilers. In winter, she spent the night in the icy water of the rivers; at times she would allow herself to be borne by the current upon mill-wheels, cling to them, suffering herself to be

dragged by the machine which struck and broke her against obstacles. Another ingenuity of her passion for torments was to tease packs of dogs so as to be bitten and torn by these animals. At times she rolled in the bushes and thorns until she was covered with blood.

These are some of the means by which she tortured her body; and wonderful circumstance, but conformable to the promise which God had made to her, as soon as she emerged from her torture, she retained no wound of it; her body was untouched and without the least lesion. This life of sufferings served for the edification of a countless multitude of the faithful who were witnesses of it for the space of 42 years, during which the saint still lived. She also converted a great number of sinners, and finally went to enjoy the glory of the elect in the year 1224.

If such mortification makes us shudder, what are we to think of the tortures of the other life? "There," says the author of the Imitation, "one hour in torment will be more terrible than a hundred years spent here below in the most rigorous penance." (Book 1, Chap. 24).

The history of Japan speaks of the horrible abysses of Mount Ungen, situated not far from Nagasaki. Its lofty summit is divided into three craters, the intervals between which form frightful pits; forth from these shoot momentarily into the air eddies of flames, corroding waters and burning mud, which carry such stinking exhalations with them that these abysses pass in the country for the sewers of Hell. All the animals shun them with horror, and the very birds do not fly with impunity over them, however high they soar. The tyrant, Bungondono, the Prince of Ximbara, resolved to dash the Christians headforemost into these frightful chasms. Let the frightful agony they must suffer there be imagined! It was an agony to which death was not to come and put an end, for the consolation of dying was not left to them. Before they were suffocated, they were carefully drawn out to let them regain their breath. Then, soaked as they were by the sulphurous waters, the bodies of the martyrs were covered with frightful pus sacs and were soon but one wound; all their flesh dropped into putrefaction. In this condition they were abandoned like corpses, cast into the common sewer. Are these torments the torments of Hell? They are only a shadow of them.

he same Bungondono devised unheard of tortures to combat Christianity in Japan. One day seven Christians were led before him; they displayed great joy to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ. At this sight, inflamed with rage, the tyrant caused seven ditches to be dug, in which seven crosses were erected; he had the

martyrs bound to them and ordered their limbs to be sawed with sharp-edged canes and at the same time salt thrown into their wounds. This torture was executed with a cruel slowness; it lasted five whole days. By an abominable use of the art destined for the preservation of men, the physicians had cordials taken to the martyrs to prolong their sufferings. Is this one of the tortures of Hell? It is only a shadow of them.

At the time of the inroads of the Calvinists into Holland in the 16th century, those sectaries, having seized at Maestricht some priests of the Company of Jesus, resolved to practice all the cruelty of their fanatical hatred upon them. After having overwhelmed them with contempt and outrages, they put round their necks iron collars provided with knives and sharp spikes, they encircled their arms and legs with similar rings, then seated them on seats bristling with nails, so that the martyrs could neither rest nor move without pain. They surrounded them with flames, to burn them slowly. What torture! If the sufferers remained motionless, they were burned; if they moved, they were torn by the spikes and knives. The servants of God triumphed by the help of grace over all this barbarity; it is true, nevertheless, that their torments were atrocious. Now, are these the torments of Hell? They are but the shadow of them.

Antiquity has preserved the names of three tyrants: Mezentius, Actiolinus and Phalaris. The first, Mezentius, it is said, chained his victims to corpses and left them in that revolting state until the infection and putrid inhalations of the dead killed the living. Actiolinus had such frightful dungeons that the condemned used to ask as a favour to be strangled, not to enter them. This grace would be denied; they were lowered with ropes into these stinking caves, there to be buried alive in putrefaction. Phalaris used to shut up his victims in a brazen bull, which he then surrounded with flames to burn them in this manner, while alive. All these pains are horrible, but they are only a shadow of the pains of Hell.

The Romans punished parricides (i.e., those who murdered their parents) by a special kind of torture. The guilty person was tied up in a sack with serpents, and thus cast into the depth of the sea; a feeble image of the torture reserved for those who are guilty of parricide toward God. We shudder when reading in history the description of the frightful torments which the assassin of William, Prince of Orange, had to endure. His body was lacerated by iron rods. Sharp spikes were driven into his flesh; then he was exposed to the action of a slow fire, which caused him inexpressible pains, and, just as he was on the point of expiring, after his hands had been burned with a red iron, he was torn asunder by horses.

That unhappy man committed an enormous crime, but he attacked only a mortal prince. What will not be the chastisement of one who has assailed the King of Kings?

According to certain historians, the Emperor Zeno, a prince as impious as he was dissolute, died by a most tragic death. On the night of April 9, 491, after an excess at table, he fell into so violent a coma that he was believed to be dead, and he was hurriedly buried in the imperial burial vault. There, having regained consciousness, he called in vain for his servants and his guards; no one answered his shouts; he beheld himself in darkness, shut up with the dead on all sides, meeting only cold walls and iron doors. Then giving way to all the transports of rage and despair, he dashed himself against his surroundings and broke his skull against the walls. It was in this terrible state that his corpse was discovered. What a horrible situation for that prince, buried alive! Is that the situation of the reprobate?

Hell is the sink of the world and the receptacle of all the moral filth of humanity. There, impurity, intemperance, blasphemy, pride, injustice and all the vices which are like the rottenness of souls, are found heaped up. To this moral filth a corporal stench is added more insupportable than all the stenches of hospitals and corpses. If the body of a damned person, says St. Bonaventure, were deposited on the earth, that of itself alone would be sufficient to make the earth uninhabitable; it would fill it with its infection, as a corpse that might be left to rot in a house would infect it all the way through.

A man at Lyons had gone into a burial vault in which a corpse lately buried was found wholly putrefied. Scarcely had he gone down when he fell dead. The poisonous exhalations caught him so violently that he was suffocated.

Sulpicius Severus narrates in the life of St. Martin of Tours, that towards the end of the saint's life the demon came to tempt him under a visible form. The spirit of lies appeared before him with royal magnificence, a crown of gold on his head, and said he was the King of Glory, Christ, the Son of God. The holy bishop recognized the tempter under these appearances of human grandeur and chased him away with contempt. Proud Satan was confounded; he disappeared, but for his revenge, he left the holy man's room filled with a stench that did not allow him to remain there any more.

Another torture of hell is the horrible society of the devils and the damned. There are some wretched sinners who, seeing plainly that they are walking toward Hell, are comforted by saying, "I shall not be there alone!" Sad consolation! It is that of the convicts sentenced to wear irons together in the

galleys. Still it is intelligible how a convict finds a certain life in the company of his kind. Alas! It will not be thus in Hell, in which the damned will be mutual executioners. "There," says St. Thomas, "the associates of his wretchedness, far from alleviating the lot of the damned soul, will make it more intolerable for him." (Suppl. 9, 86, A. 1). The society of even those persons who on earth were their best friends is insupportable to the damned in Hell. They would esteem themselves happy to have tigers and lions for companions, rather than their relatives, brothers, or their own parents.

Do you wish to see the poverty of hell and the privations that are suffered there by those who made the goods of this world their god? Consider the wicked rich man of the Gospel. Accustomed during his life to eat delicate meats served in silver utensils, to drink exquisite wines in goblets of gold, to wear purple and fine linen, having become an inhabitant of Hell, he found himself brought down to the last extremity of need. He who refused poor Lazarus the crumbs from his table, was obliged to beg in his turn. He asks, not delicacies, but a drop of cold water, which he will be happy to receive from a leper's finger. Now, this drop of water is refused to him. Has not the Savior said: "Woe to you that are rich, for you have your consolation. Woe to you that are filled, for you shall hunger." (Luke 6:25).

"There is no light," writes St. Teresa (Autobiography, Chapter 25), "in the eternal pit, only darkness of the deepest dye; and yet, O mystery! Although no light shines, all that can be most painful to the sight is perceived. Among those objects which torture the eyes of the damned, the most frightful are the demons, who reveal themselves in all their hideousness. St. Bernard speaks of a religious who, being in his cell, uttered all of a sudden frightful cries, which attracted the community. He was found beside himself and uttering only these sorrowful words: "Accursed be the day I entered religion!" Terrified and troubled by this curse, the cause of which they did not understand, his brethren questioned and encouraged him and spoke to him of confidence in God. Soon, being quieted, he replied, "no, no, it is not the religious life that I should curse. On the contrary, blessed be the day I became a religious! My brethren, do not be astonished at seeing my mind disturbed. Two devils have appeared to me; their horrible appearance has put me out of my senses. What monstrosity! Ah! Rather all torments than again to endure the sight of them!"

A holy priest was exorcising a demoniac, and he asked the demon what pains he was suffering in Hell. "An eternal fire," he answered, "an eternal malediction, an eternal rage, and a frightful despair at being never able to gaze upon Him who created me." "What would you do to have the happiness of seeing God?" "To see

Him but for one moment, I should willingly consent to endure my torments for 10,000 years. But vain desires! I shall suffer forever and never see Him!”

On a like occasion, the exorcist inquired of the demon what was his greatest pain in Hell. He replied with an accent of indescribable despair: “Always, always! Never, never!”

One day, a holy soul was meditating upon Hell, and considering the eternity of the pains, the frightful “always . . . never,” she was thrown into complete confusion by it, because she was unable to reconcile this immeasurable severity with the divine goodness and other perfections. “Lord,” she said, “I submit to Thy judgments, but do not push the rigors of Thy justice to far.” “Do you understand,” was the answer, “what sin is? To sin is to say to God, I will not serve Thee! I despise Thy law, I laugh at Thy threats!” “I understand, Lord, that sin is an outrage to Thy Majesty.” “Well, measure, if you can, the greatness of this outrage.” “Lord, this outrage is infinite, since it attacks infinite Majesty.” “Must it not, then, be punished by an infinite chastisement? Now, as the punishment could not be infinite in its intensity, justice demands that it be so at least in its duration. Accordingly, it is the divine justice that wills the eternity of the pains: the terrible ‘always,’ the terrible ‘never.’ The damned themselves will be obliged to render homage to this justice, and cry out in the midst of their torments: ‘Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgments are equitable.’” (Psalm 118: 137).

St. John Damascene relates, in the life of St. Josaphat, that this young prince, being one day exposed to violent temptations, prayed to God with tears to be delivered from them. His prayer was graciously heard; he was caught up in an ecstasy, and he beheld himself led to a dark place, full of horror, confusion, and frightful spectres. There was a pool of sulphur and fire in which were plunged innumerable wretches, a prey to devouring flames. Amid the despairing howls and shouts, he heard a heavenly voice, which uttered these words: “Here it is that sin receives its punishment; here it is that a moment’s pleasure is punished by an eternity of torments.” This vision filled him with new strength, and enabled him to triumph over all the assaults of the enemy.

The most bitter regret of the damned will be, says St. Thomas, to be damned for “nothing,” while they might have so easily obtained everlasting happiness.

Jonathan was condemned to death for having eaten a little honey, against the prohibition of Saul. In his misfortune he said, while moaning, “Alas! I did but taste a little honey. . . and behold I must die!” (1 Samuel 14:43).

More bitter will be the regrets of the damned when they shall see that, for a “honeycomb,” for a fleeting enjoyment, they have incurred everlasting death.

King Lysimachus, besieged by the Scythians, who had cut off all the springs, beheld himself reduced to the last extremity by lack of water. Yielding to the craving of his thirst, he surrendered to the enemy, who left him only his life safe. Then a cup of water was given him to quench his thirst. When he had drunk it, he said, “Oh, how quickly has the pleasure passed for which I have lost my throne and my liberty!” It is in this manner that the damned will speak, but with far more bitterness: Oh, how quickly passed the guilty pleasure for which I forfeited an eternal crown and happiness!

Esau returned faint from the chase, and seeing Jacob, who was cooking lentils, he sold him his birthright for a dish of the pottage. “And so taking bread and the pottage of lentils,” says the Scripture, “he ate and drank, and then went his way, making little account of having sold his birthright.” But when the time came to receive his inheritance when he saw the large portion given to his brother and the small portion that was left to him, “He was filled with consternation, and uttered a great cry.” Then, having sought in vain to better his lot, he yielded to the bitterest regrets and filled the air with his doleful cries; they were less cries than roars. “Irriguit clamore magno.” (“He roared out, with a great cry.” (Gen. 25, 27:34). What will be the cries of the damned when they shall see that they have sold their heavenly inheritance for less than “a dish of pottage”—when they shall see that for a trifle they have sold everlasting benefits and incurred everlasting torments?

The prophet Jeremias had warned Sedecias King of Juda, of the future that awaited him, he had spoken to him on behalf of God. “Behold life, and behold death; if you observe my words, you shall remain quiet on your throne; if you trample them under foot, I will deliver you into the hands of the King of Babylon.” (Jerem. 29:39). Sedecias paid no attention to these warnings of God, and soon the chastisements foretold fell upon him; he was delivered to Nebuchadnezzar, blinded, loaded with chains, and thrown into the prison of Babylon. Then, what were not his regrets, his grief, at the remembrance of the words of Jeremias? A weak image of the tardy regrets, the cruel sorrows that devour the damned.

They weep for the time they lost in vain amusements and in forgetfulness of their salvation. “One hour,” they say, “would have given us what an eternity could give us back no more!” Father Nieremberg relates that a servant of God, finding himself in a secluded place into which no other man had ventured,

heard mournful wails, which could proceed only from a supernatural cause. He demanded, then, who were the authors of these piteous cries and what they meant. Then a sad voice replied to him: "We are the damned. Let it be known that we are deploring in Hell the time lost, the precious time which we waste on earth in vanities and crime. Ah! One hour would have given us what an eternity could restore to us no more."

VIII. A SALUTARY FEAR OF HELL

We ought to believe in Hell, because we may fall into it. Alas! It is very easy to be damned, and the damned are very numerous. St. Teresa compares them to the flakes of snow which fall in the dreary days of winter. The servant of God, Anthony Pereyra, in a very authentic vision with which he was favoured (see Ch. 2), saw the souls of sinners descending into the pit like corn beneath the millstones, like stones cast in heaps into a huge limekiln. God showed one day before a large multitude that they fall into it as the dead leaves in autumn fall from the trees under the breath of the wind.

The venerable Father Anthony Balducci, a celebrated missionary of the Company of Jesus, who died in the odor of sanctity in the year 1717, was preaching in the open air, because the church could not contain the faithful who came in crowds to hear him. Speaking of Hell, he said, "My brethren, would you know how great is the number of those who are damned? Look at that tree." All eyes were turned to a tree that was there, covered with leaves. At the same moment a gust of wind, rising, shook all the branches of the tree, and caused the leaves to fall so plentifully that there remained only a certain number of them, thinly scattered and easy to count. "See," went on the man of God, "what souls are lost, and what souls are saved. Take your precautions to be among the latter."

Father Nieremberg speaks of a bishop, who by a special permission of God, received a visit from an unhappy sinner who had died impenitent a short time before. Addressing the prelate, this damned soul demanded if there were men still on earth. As the bishop seemed astonished at this question, the lost soul added: "Since I have been in that melancholy abode, I have seen such a prodigious multitude arrive, that I am at a loss to conceive that there are men still on earth." This speech recalls that of the Savior in the Gospel. "Enter ye in at the narrow gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life; and few there are that find it!" (Matt. 7:13–14).

To avoid Hell, it is necessary to avoid the road to it, and to destroy the cause of damnation, that is, sin, under all its forms. Men permit themselves to be allured to their ruin by different bonds of iniquity, sometimes by one, sometimes by another. There are many who die in their sins because they are deprived of the Last Sacraments, and among those who receive them, there are not a few who are lost because they lack sincerity in the accusation of their sins. Here is an incident which we read in the Annals of Paraguay, during the year 1640. In the Reduction (Jesuit mission plantation) of the Assumption, a woman died who had left a son of about 20 years. This young man beheld his mother appear to him in the most frightful condition. She told him that she was damned for not having made a sincere Confession, and that many others were damned like her for having concealed their sins in Confession. "And you," she added, "do profit by the example of your unfortunate mother."

Father Nieremberg mentions also another damned person who revealed the cause of his damnation. A young man was leading an apparently Christian life, but he had an enemy whom he hated, and while frequenting the Sacraments, he all the while harboured in his heart sentiments of ill-will and revenge, which Jesus Christ commands to be discarded. After his death, he appeared to his father and told him that he was damned for not having forgiven his enemy, after which he exclaimed with an accent of unutterable sorrow: "Ah! If all the stars in Heaven were so many tongues of fire, they could not express what torments I endure!"

Let us listen again to the same author. An unhappy man who had the habit of taking pleasure in immodest thoughts fell sick and received the Last Sacraments. The next day his confessor, going to visit him again, saw him on the road coming to meet him. "Go no further," he said to him, "I am dead and damned." "How?" demanded the priest. "Did you not make a good confession of your sins?" "Yes, I made a good confession, but afterwards the devil represented to me sinful pleasures, and asked me whether in case of a cure I should not return again to my pleasures? I consented to these evil suggestions, and at the same moment death surprised me." Then, opening his garment, he showed the fire that was devouring him and disappeared.

We read also in Father Nieremberg that a noble lady, who was exceedingly pious, asked God to make known to her what displeased His Divine Majesty most in persons of her sex. The Lord vouchsafed in a miraculous manner to hear her. He opened under her eyes the Eternal Abyss. There she saw a woman a prey to cruel torments and in her recognized one of her friends, a short time before deceased. This sight caused her as much astonishment as grief: the person

whom she saw damned did not seem to her to have lived badly. Then that unhappy soul said to her: "It is true that I practiced religion, but I was a slave of vanity. Ruled by the passion to please, I was not afraid to adopt indecent fashions to attract attention, and I kindled the fire of impurity in more than one heart. Ah! If Christian women knew how much immodesty in dress displeases God!" At the same moment, this unhappy soul was pierced by two fiery lances, and plunged into a caldron of liquid lead.

Thomas of Cantimpre, a learned religious of the Order of St. Dominic, relates that there was at Brussels an unhappy sinner, the slave of intemperance and the other vices which it foments. He had a friend, the companion of his dissipation, to whom he was greatly attached. A sudden death put an end to his disorders. His sorrowful companion, after having accompanied him to the grave, had returned home and was alone in his chamber, when he heard moans underground. Frightened at first and not knowing what to do, he ventured at length to ask who it was that he heard moaning. "It is I, your companion, whose body you attended to the grave. Alas! My soul is buried in Hell." Then, uttering a cry, or rather a dreadful roar, he added, "Woe to me! The abyss has swallowed me, and the pit has closed its mouth upon me."

Louis of Granada speaks of a young woman whose damnation had no other source than vanity and the desire to please. She led a regular life, but her passion to attract attention by the charm of her beauty was the moving cause of her whole conduct. Having fallen sick, she died, having received all the Sacraments. While her confessor was praying for her soul, she appeared to him, saying that she was damned, and that the cause of her damnation was vanity. "I sought," she added, "only to please the eyes of men. This passion caused me to commit a multitude of sins; it prevented me from receiving the Sacraments well, and it has led me to everlasting torments."

A usurer had two sons who followed the evil example of their father. One of the two, touched by God, forsook his guilty profession and retired to the desert. Before setting out, he exhorted his father and brother with tears to think, like him, of the salvation of their souls. It was to no purpose; they persevered in sin, and died in a state of impenitence. God permitted the solitary to know their unhappy condition. In an ecstasy he saw himself on a high mountain at the foot of which was a sea of fire, from which arose confused cries, like a tempest. Soon, in the midst of these burning waves, he perceived his father and brother, furiously raging against each other, mutually upbraiding and cursing each other and holding this dreadful dialogue: "I curse thee, detestable son! It is for thee that I did injustice and lost my soul." "I curse thee, unworthy father, who ruined

me by thy bad example.” “I curse thee, foolish son, who joined thy father in his sins.” “I curse thee, the author of my life, who reared me up for damnation!” Behold how wicked parents and wicked children will eternally rend one another by reciprocal maledictions. (Lives of the Fathers of the Desert).

IX. THE THOUGHT OF HELL

St. Dositheus, who lived in the eleventh century, was brought up as a page at the Court of Constantinople, and at first led a life altogether worldly, in a profound ignorance of the truths of faith. As he had heard a great deal about Jerusalem, he visited it out of a motive of curiosity. There it was that God’s mercy was awaiting him. To touch him, it made use of a picture placed in a church representing the pains of Hell. Miserable souls were seen there in despair, plunged in a sea of fire, in which horrible monsters were tormenting them and making game of the tortures. Struck by these terrible scenes, Dositheus demanded the explanation of them from an unknown person who was there. “It is Hell,” answered this person; “they are the pains of the damned.” “How long will these pains last? Why are they damned? Might I myself fall into such a terrible state of woe? What must I do to be safe from Hell?” Such were the questions that Dositheus by turns proposed to the person who was instructing him. He was impressed by the answers to such a degree that he quit the world that very hour to go and live in seclusion. He entered a monastery in which, thanks to the thought of Hell, which he had always before his eyes, and to the wise direction of the Abbot whom he found there, he made rapid progress in the ways of God.

Whoever thinks of Hell will not fall into it, because in the time of temptation this thought will retain him in his duty. St. Martinian had lived 25 years in solitude when God allowed his fidelity to be put to a violent test. A perfidious woman, the courtesan Zoe, came to solicit him to sin. She was disguised as a mendicant, and taking advantage of a rain storm, knocked at the cell of Martinian, begging shelter from him. The holy anchorite could not refuse it in these circumstances. He let the stranger in and having lighted a fire, invited her to dry her garments. But soon the unfortunate woman, casting off the borrowed rags she wore, appeared to the eyes of Martinian in a most brilliant dress and with all her fascinating charms. The servant of God, in the presence of a most dreadful danger, remembered Hell, and drawing near the fire, which was blazing on the hearth, he took off his shoes and plunged both feet into the fire. The pain drew cries from him, but he said to his soul, “Alas! My soul, if thou canst not bear so weak a fire, how wilt thou be able to bear the fire of Hell?” The temptation was overcome, and Zoe was converted. Such was the salutary effect

of the thought of hell.

Another recluse, assailed by a violent temptation and afraid of being conquered, lighted his lamp. Then, to be penetrated vividly with the thought of Hell, he put his fingers into the flame and let them burn there with inexpressible sufferings. "Since thou dost wish," he said, addressing himself, "to sin and accept Hell, which will be the punishment of thy sin, try first if thou shalt have the courage to support the pain of an everlasting fire."

It is related that St. Philip Neri received one day a visit from a man who was leading a sinful life. Imbued with the most unfriendly feelings toward the saint, this visitor addressed him with the most unjust reproaches and heaped insults upon him. His anger was such that he was incapable of listening to reason. Then St. Philip made him draw near the chimney, and pointing out the place where the fire was made, he said, "Look at this fireplace." The sinner looked, but instead of a fireplace, he saw a pit all on fire, in the bottom of which he recognized a place that was destined for him. Seized with fright, this furious sinner grew calm, suddenly recognized the evil state of his soul, and changed his life.

In 1815 the young Louis Francis de Beauvais died at the College of St. Acheul near Amiens. He was only 14 years old, but he was ripe for Heaven, so innocent and holy had been his life. Such solid virtue in so tender a youth was due to the thought of Hell. One day, while still quite a child, he was seated at his mother's side before a warm fire. "Mamma," he asked her, "could the fire of Hell be as hot as this?" "Alas, my child, this fire is nothing in comparison to Hell!" "Well, if I should fall into it?" he rejoined with fright. "Hell," said his mother, "is only for sinners. If you keep away from sin, you have nothing to fear." This idea was engraved in the heart of Louis Francis; it was the source of his sorrow of sin and of his holy life.

In 1540 Blessed Peter Lefevre, one of the first companions of St. Ignatius of Loyola, returning from Parma to Rome, while following the way from Florence to Siena, was overcome by nightfall in the midst of a country infested by robbers and brigands. He had recourse, as was his wont, to his AngelGuardian, and perceived pretty soon a house, at which he asked hospitality. It was in the month of October; the weather was cold and rainy. The people who dwelt at the manor, seeing that the traveller was a priest, welcomed him with respect and kindness, offered him refreshments, and invited him to draw near the fire to dry his clothes. While he was seated near the hearth and speaking with his hosts of the things of God, a noise of hurried steps was heard, then violent rapping at the

door, and behold, men armed to the teeth dashed into the house. It was a band of brigands. They were 16 and demanded noisily that all the provisions in store should be given to them; then, having ranged themselves round a table, they set to drinking and eating amid rude songs and immodest conversation.

Blessed Peter Lefevre was not taken aback; he remained seated, calm, pensive, his eyes fixed on the fire. The leader of the bandits asked him what he was doing there. The man of God did not reply at first. "You do not answer," remarked the brigand. "Are you deaf? Are you dumb?" "No," he replied then, "but a thought occupies my mind." "What is this great thought? Tell us. What are you thinking of?" "I am thinking," he said, in a calm, grave tone, "that the joy of sinners is very sad; this fire brings to my mind that of Hell, which they shall not be able to escape, if they do not hasten to return sincerely to God." These words were spoken with a force and unction that struck these savage men with respect. They said not a word more, and the servant of God took advantage of their attention to speak to them of the danger that they ran of falling into the hands of human justice, and still more, into those of God's justice; then he touched on the security of a good conscience and the mercy of God, of whom he spoke in language so touching that he caused them to melt into tears, and demand forgiveness of their sins. He encouraged them and prepared them so well, that the whole 16 made their confessions to him that night.

The thought of Hell fortifies the weakest. Two early Christians, Domnina and Theomilla, were brought before the Roman Prefect Lysias, who gave them notice of the order to renounce the Faith in order to adore idols. They absolutely refused. Then Lysias had a funeral pyre lighted, and the altar of the false gods set up. "Choose," he said to them, "either to burn incense on the altar of our gods or to be yourselves burned in the flames of this pyre." They replied, without hesitating a moment: "We fear not this burning pile, which will be soon extinguished; the fire we do fear is that of Hell, which never goes out. Not to fall into it, we detest your idols and we adore Jesus Christ." They underwent martyrdom in the year 235.

Caesarius relates that a wicked man, for whom many prayers had been offered, fell sick and died. As he was going to be buried, he came back to life again, and rose up full of strength, but seized with an exceeding alarm. Interrogated concerning what had happened to him, he answered, "God has just granted me a signal favour; He showed me Hell, an immense ocean of fire, into which I was about to be plunged for my sins. A delay was accorded to me, that I might redeem my sins by penance." Thenceforth, this sinner was changed into a different man. He thought no more of anything save of expiating his sins by his

tears, fasts and prayers. He used to walk barefooted on brambles and thorns; he lived on bread and water only, and gave to the poor whatever he earned by his labour. When people would prevail upon him to moderate his austerities, he would reply, "I have seen Hell; I know that too much cannot be done to avoid it. Ah, Hell! If all the trees and all the forests were heaped up in a vast pile and set on fire, I should prefer to remain in that burning fire to the end of the world, rather than endure for only one hour the fire of Hell."

The Venerable Bede speaks of a rich inhabitant of Northumberland, whom the sight of Hell changed after a like fashion into a new man. He was called Trithelmus, and he led a worldly life, pretty much like that of the wicked rich man of the Gospel. God, by an exceptional mercy, granted him a vision, in which He showed him the eternal pains of the damned. Having come back to himself again, Trithelmus confessed all his sins, distributed all his wealth to the poor, and went into a monastery, where he put no bounds to his austerities and penances. In winter he stood in the freezing water; in summer he endured the burden of heat and toil; he practiced vigorous fasts and continued his mortifications to the last stage of his life. When he was spoken to about diminishing his penances, he would reply, "If you had seen, like me, the pains of Hell, you would talk otherwise." "But how can you keep up such severe mortifications?" "I count them as nothing beside the pains of Hell, which I have deserved by my sins."

Mgr. de Segur narrates a rather singular fact which happened at the Military School of St. Cyr in the last years of the Restoration. The Abbe Rigolot, the almoner of the institution, was preaching a retreat to the pupils who assembled every evening in the chapel before retiring to the dormitory.

A certain evening when the worthy almoner had spoken on Hell, the exercises being finished, he was retiring, with a small candlestick in his hand, to his room, which was situated in a wing reserved for the officers. Just as he opened his door, he heard himself called by someone who was following him up the staircase. It was an old captain with a gray moustache and by no means elegant appearance. "Pardon, Monsieur Almoner," he said in a slightly ironical tone of voice, "you have just given us a very fine sermon on Hell; only you forgot to tell us whether, in the fire of Hell, we should be grilled or roasted or boiled. Could you tell me?" The almoner seeing whom he had to deal with, looked at him straight in the eye and putting the candlestick under his nose, quietly replied, "You shall see this, Captain!" and he shut his door, unable to refrain from laughing somewhat at the silly, baffled expression on the face of the poor captain.

He thought of it no more, but from that time forth he fancied that the captain used to take to his heels from him, as far as possible. The Revolution of July came on. The military almonery was abolished, that of St. Cyr like the rest. The Abbe Rigolot was nominated by the Archbishop of Paris to another position not less honourable.

Twenty years after, the venerable priest was one evening in a drawing room, in which there was a numerous gathering, when he saw coming toward him an old man with a white moustache, who asked him if he were not the Abbe Rigolot, at one time almoner of St. Cyr. And upon his affirmative reply, the old soldier said with emotion, "O Monsieur Almoner, permit me to clasp your hand and express all my gratitude to you: you saved me." "I? And how so?" "Well! You do not know me! Do you remember one evening when a captain, an instructor of the school, having proposed to you, after the close of a sermon on Hell, an exceedingly ridiculous question, you answered him while putting your candlestick under his nose, 'You will see this, Captain?' I am that captain. Fancy, that from that time, your speech pursued me everywhere, as well as the thought that I might be burned in Hell. I struggled for ten years, but at last I was forced to surrender: I have been to my confession; I have become a Christian, a Christian in the military fashion, that is to say, like a soldier. It is to you I owe this happiness, and I am very glad to meet you, to be able to tell you so."

Father de Bussy, of the Company of Jesus, gave at the beginning of this century, in a certain large city of the South of France, an important mission, which roused the whole population. It was in the heart of winter; Christmas Day was at hand, and it was very cold. In the room in which the Father was receiving the men, there was a stove with a good fire.

One day the Father saw a young man coming to him who had been recommended to him on account of his dissipation and open parade of impiety. Father de Bussy soon saw there was nothing to be done with him. "Come here, my good friend," he said pleasantly; "I do not hear the confessions of people in spite of themselves. Stay; sit down there, and let us have a little chat while warming ourselves." He opened the stove, and noticed that the wood was going soon to be burned up.

"Before sitting down, pray bring me one or two logs," he said to the young man. The latter, somewhat astonished, did, nevertheless, what the Father asked. "Now," the latter added, "put it in the stove for me; there, very far down in the bottom." And, as the other was getting the wood into the door of the stove, Father de Bussy, all at once, took his arm, and plunged it into the bottom of the

stove.

The young man uttered a shout and sprang backward. "Ah me!" he shouted. "Are you crazy? You were going to burn me?" "What ails you, my dear man?" remarked the father calmly; "should you not get accustomed to it? In Hell, where you shall go if you continue your present course of life, it will not be merely the tips of the fingers that shall be burned by the fire, but your whole body, and this little fire is nothing to the other one. Come, come, my good friend, be brave; you must get accustomed to everything burning." The young libertine went away in a thoughtful mood. He was reflecting indeed; he did reflect so well that he was not slow in coming back again to the missionary, who helped him to get rid of his faults and enter anew on the good path.

I affirm, adds Mgr. de Segur, that of a thousand, ten thousand men who live far from God, and therefore on the way to Hell, there would not be one, perhaps, who could resist the test of fire. There would not be one who should be so crazy as to accept this bargain: During the year, you may yield to all your passions, gratify all your whims, on the condition of spending one day, only one day, or even one hour, in fire. I repeat, not a single person would accept the bargain. Will you have a proof of it? Listen to the history of the three sons of an old usurer.

A father of a family who grew rich only by doing wrongs had fallen dangerously ill. He knew that the final stages of death had already set in, and nevertheless he could not decide to make restitution. "If I make restitution," he said, "what will become of my children?"

His confessor, a man of sagacity, had recourse to a singular stratagem to save this poor soul. He told him that if he wished to be cured, he was about to give him an extremely simple, but costly remedy. "Should it cost a thousand, two thousand, even ten thousand francs, what odds?" answered the old man briskly. "What is it?" "It consists in pouring the melted fat of a living person on the dying parts. It does not need much. If you find anyone willing, for ten thousand francs, to suffer one hand to be burned for less than a quarter of an hour, that will be enough."

"Alas!" said the poor man, sighing, "I am very much afraid I can find no such person." "I will help you," said the priest quietly. "Summon your eldest son; he loves you; he is to be your heir; say to him, 'My dear son, you can save your old father's life, if you consent to allow one hand to be burned only for a small quarter of an hour.' If he refuses, make the proposal to the second, pledging yourself to make him your heir at the expense of his eldest brother. If he refuses

in his turn, the third will no doubt accept.”

The proposition was made successively to the three brothers, who, one after the other, rejected it with a shudder. Then the father said to them: “What! To save my life, an instant’s pain alarms you? And I, to procure your comfort, would go to Hell—to be burned eternally! Indeed, I should be quite mad.” And he hastened to restore all he owed without regard to what should become of his children. He was quite right, and so were his three sons. To suffer a hand to be burned, a short quarter of an hour, even to save a father’s life, is a sacrifice above human strength.

In 1844, again writes Mgr. de Segur, I was acquainted at the Seminary of St. Sulpice at Issy, near Paris, with an extremely distinguished professor of science, and a man whose humility and mortification were admired by everyone. Before becoming a priest, the Abbe Pinault had been one of the most eminent professors of the Polytechnic School. In the seminary he taught the course of physics and chemistry. One day, during an experiment, the fire somehow caught the phosphorus he was manipulating, and in a moment his hand was wrapped in flames. Assisted by his pupils, the poor professor tried to no purpose to put out the fire that was eating into his flesh. In a few minutes his hand was but a shapeless, shining mass; the nails had disappeared. Overcome by the excess of pain, the unfortunate professor lost consciousness. His hand and arm were plunged into a pail of cold water to try to assuage a little of the violence of this martyrdom. All day and all night he uttered but one cry, an irresistible and heartrending cry; and when, now and then, he could utter a few words, he would say and say again to the three or four seminarians who were waiting on him: “O my children! My children! Do not go to Hell! Do not go to Hell!”

A brother, named John Baptist, was living at the time of St. Ignatius at the profession-house in Rome. He was remarkable for the spirit of fervor and mortification which he derived from the thought of Hell. As he filled the humble office of cook the fire, which he had incessantly under his eyes, reminded him of the fire of divine justice, which shall torment eternally the impious in Hell, and caused him to conceive a great horror for sin, which merits such horrible chastisements. One day, when profoundly absorbed by these thoughts, he yielded to the grief which the sins caused him; he was seized by an attack of indiscreet fervor; he plunged his hand into the fire and there left it burning. The odor which arose from it was smelled by the Father who exercised the office of minister of the house. He came into the kitchen and asked what was the matter. The brother could not conceal the excess of his pain, acknowledged his fault, and falling at his knees, humbly begged his pardon. St. Ignatius was informed of

the matter; he was told that this brother had just deprived himself of the use of his hand and had become incapable of doing his work. The Saint considered his fault more worthy of compassion than punishment. He set to prayer and spent a part of the night in it, as was his custom. The next morning the brother's hand was cured and as sound as if it had not been injured. God manifested by this miracle that, if this fervent religious had done an inconsiderate act, the motive that prompted him to do it—that is, the fear of Hell—was agreeable to Him.

St. Teresa had seen the place that was prepared for her in Hell, and the remembrance gave her strength to bear the severest trials. This is how she speaks, in the 32nd chapter of her autobiography: “Being one day in prayer, in an instant I found myself, without knowing how, carried body and soul into Hell. I understood that God wished to make me see the place I should have occupied, had I not changed my life. No words can give the least idea of such suffering—it is beyond comprehension. I felt in my soul a devouring fire, and my body was, at the same time, a prey to intolerable pains. I had endured cruel sufferings during my lifetime, but all that I had suffered was nothing when compared to what I experienced then. What filled up the measure was the prospect that they should be unending and unalleviated. The tortures of the body, however cruel they might have been, were nothing in their turn beside the anguish of the soul. While I felt myself burned, and as if hacked into a thousand pieces, I was suffering all the agonies of death, all the horrors of despair. There was not a particle of hope, of consolation, in this frightful sojourn. There was a pestiferous odor, by which one was continually suffocated. There was no light, only darkness of the sombrest hue; and yet, O prodigy! Though there was no light shining, whatever is most distressing to the sight is seen. In short, all I had heard said of the pains of Hell, all I had read of it in books, was nothing beside the reality. There was the same difference as between a lifeless portrait and a living person. Ah! The hottest fire in this world is such a trifling thing! It is like a painted fire compared to that fire which burns the damned in Hell. Almost ten years have passed since that vision, and I am still seized with such a fright in describing it, that my blood is frozen in my veins. Amid trials and sufferings I call up this remembrance, and it gives me strength to bear all.”

The wonderful conversion of an obstinate Protestant lady, which created quite a sensation in America, was owing to the thought of Hell. This person was none other than the wife of General X., one of the ablest generals of the Northern army in the war of 1860. Here are the particulars of this conversion, as Monsignor Fitzpatrick, Bishop of Boston, related them to St. Michael's College at Brussels, in November, 1862. General X., first a Protestant, had had the happiness of hearing a simple, clear explanation of the Catholic religion. It was

sufficient for this upright and noble man to make him see the truth and embrace Catholicism with all his heart. From that time, full of faith and fervor, he devoted himself, not only to living as a true Catholic, but also to procuring for other Protestants the grace of conversion. In a short time he won over 20 officers, and wrote a book destined to furnish instruction for soldiers. We can well understand that he had not forgotten his wife, who was a Protestant, but he had the grief of seeing all the efforts of his zeal fail in this direction. Meanwhile, God permitted Madam X. to be attacked by an illness which reduced her to the last extremity. The General, after having exhausted to no purpose all the resources of faith and charity, seeing the sick woman on the point of dying in her obstinacy, resorted to a last means. He called in four Irishwomen whom he had in his service, and, with tears in his eyes, said to them: "My friends, you know my wife is a Protestant, and that she is unwilling to hear the Catholic religion spoken of. She is going to die in her obstinacy and fall into Hell. I shudder at the thought of such a misfortune; it must be absolutely prevented if it is possible. Let us pray, then, to the holy Virgin and do violence to her merciful heart." Thereupon, the General drew forth his beads, and began to pray on his knees; the poor attendants did the same; the whole five continued pray for one hour. Then the general went to the bed of the invalid and discovered her in a sort of coma, out of her senses, without consciousness. At the end of some time, returning to herself and looking at her husband, she said to him in a very intelligible voice: "Call a Catholic priest." The General believed at first that she was delirious, and made her repeat what she desired. "I beg," she said, "for a Catholic priest without delay." "But my dear, you would not have one." "Ah, General, I am entirely changed. God has shown me Hell, and the place that awaited me in the eternal fire, if I did not become a Catholic." So the sick woman had the happiness of returning to the bosom of the Church. She even recovered her health, and lived afterward as a fervent Catholic. Such was the narrative of the venerable Bishop of Boston; he had these details from General X's own mouth.

X. SISTER JOSEFA MENENDEZ' DESCRIPTION OF HELL

The following material is quoted verbatim from the book "Way of Divine Love" of Sister Josefa Menendez (1890--1923). It first appeared in 1938 in French and was quickly translated into numerous languages and spread throughout the world. Sister Josefa was a Spanish nun of the Society of the Sacred Heart and lived only four years as a religious, at the convent of Les Feuillants in Poitiers, France, where she died at the age of 33. "The Way of Divine Love" consists

largely of her notebooks, that she wrote down under obedience from our Lord, with the revelations of his Sacred Heart, plus portions of her biography. This material was composed after Rev. Schoupe wrote his book on Hell. It is appended here, because it is similar to what he wrote in his book, and exemplifies still further the points he is trying to make.

Sister Josefa wrote with great reticence on this subject. She did it only to conform to Our Blessed Lord's wishes, Our Lady having told her on October 25, 1922: "Everything that Jesus allows you to see and to suffer of the torments of Hell, is... that you may make it known to your Mothers. So forget yourself entirely, and think only of the glory of the Heart of Jesus and the salvation of souls."

...She repeatedly dwelt on the greatest torment of Hell, namely, the soul's inability to love.

One of these damned souls cried out: "This is my torture... that I want to love and cannot; there is nothing left me but hatred and despair. If one of us could so much as make a single act of love... this would no longer be hell... But we cannot, we live on hatred and malevolence..." (March 23, 1922).

Another of these unfortunates said: "The greatest of our torments here is that we are not able to love Him whom we are bound to hate. Oh! How we hunger for love, we are consumed with desire of it, but it is too late... You too will feel this same devouring hunger, but you will only be able to hate, to abhor, and to long for the loss of souls... nothing else do we care for now!" (March 26, 1922).

The following passage was written by obedience, though it was extremely repugnant to Josefa's humility:

"Every day now, when I am dragged down to Hell and the devil orders them to torture me, they answer: 'We cannot, for her members have undergone torture for Him...' (then they blasphemously name Our Blessed Lord)... then he orders them to give me a draught of sulfur... and again the reply is: 'She has voluntarily deprived herself of drink...' Try to find some part of her body to which she has given satisfaction and pleasure.'

"I have also noted that when they shackle me to take me down to Hell, they never can bind me where I have worn instruments of penance. I write all this simply out of obedience." (April 1, 1922).

She records, too, the accusations made against themselves by these unhappy souls: "Some yell because of the martyrdom of their hands. Perhaps they were

thieves, for they say: 'Where is our loot now? ... Cursed hands... Why did I want to possess what did not belong to me... and what in any case I could keep only for a few days...?'

"Others curse their tongues, their eyes... whatever was the occasion of their sin... 'Now, O body, you are paying the price of the delights you granted yourself! ... and you did it of your own free will...'" (April 2, 1922). (That is, illegitimate delights).

"It seemed to me that the majority accused themselves of sins of impurity, of stealing, of unjust trading; and that most of the damned are in Hell for these sins." (April 6, 1922).

"I saw many worldly people fall into Hell, and no words can render their horrible and terrifying cries: 'Damned forever... I deceived myself; I am lost... I am here forever... There is no remedy possible... a curse on me...'

"Some accused people, others circumstances, and all execrated the occasions of their damnation." (September 1922).

"Today, I saw a vast number of people fall into the fiery pit... they seemed to be worldlings, and a demon cried vociferously: 'The world is ripe for me... I know that the best way to get hold of souls is to rouse their desire for enjoyment... Put me first... me before the rest... no humility for me! but let me enjoy myself... This sort of thing assures victory to me... and they tumble headlong into Hell.'" (October 4, 1922).

"I heard a demon, from whom a soul had escaped, forced to confess his powerlessness. 'Confound it all... how do so many manage to escape me? They were mine' (and he rattled off their sins)... 'I work hard enough, yet they slip through my fingers... Someone must be suffering and repairing for them.'" (January 15, 1923). ("Repairing," that is, "making reparation" for them).

"Tonight," wrote Josefa, "I did not go down into Hell, but was transported to a place where all was obscure, but in the center was a red smoldering fire. They had laid me flat and so bound me that I could not make the slightest movement. Around me were seven or eight people; their black bodies were unclothed, and I could see them only by the reflections of the fire. They were seated and were talking together.

"One said: 'We'll have to be very careful not to be found out, for we might easily be discovered.'

"The devil answered: 'Insinuate yourselves by inducing carelessness in them...'

but keep in the background, so that you are not found out... by degrees they will become callous, and you will be able to incline them to evil. Tempt these others to ambition, to self-interest, to acquiring wealth without working, whether it be lawful or not. Excite some to sensuality and love of pleasure. Let vice blind them...' (Here they used obscene words).

"As to the remainder... get in through the heart... you know the inclinations of their hearts... make them love... love passionately... work thoroughly... take no rest... have no pity; the world must go to damnation.. and these souls must not be allowed to escape me.'

"From time to time Satan's satellites answered: 'We are your slaves... we shall labor unceasingly, and in spite of the many who war against us, we shall work night and day. We know your power!'

"They all spoke together, and he whom I took to be Satan used words full of horror. In the distance I could hear a clamor as of feasting, the clinking of glasses... and he cried: 'Let them cram themselves with food! It will make it all the easier for us... Let them get on with their banqueting. Love of pleasure is the door through which you will reach them...'

"He added such horrible things that they can neither be written nor said. Then, as if engulfed in a whirl of smoke, they vanished." (February 3, 1923).

"The evil one was bewailing the escape of a soul: 'Fill her soul with fear, drive her to despair. All will be lost if she puts her trust in the mercy of that...' (here they used blasphemous words about Our Lord). 'I am lost; but no, drive her to despair; do not leave her for an instant, above all, make her despair.'

"Then Hell re-echoed with frenzied cries, and when finally the devil cast me out of the abyss, he went on threatening me. Among other things he said: 'Is it possible that such weaklings have more power than I, who am mighty... I must conceal my presence, work in the dark; any corner will do from which to tempt them... close to an ear... in the leaves of a book... under a bed... some pay no attention to me, but I shall talk and talk... and by dint of suggestion, something will remain... Yes, I must hide in unsuspected places.'" (February 7, 8, 1923).

Josefa, on her return from Hell, noted the following: "I saw several souls fall into Hell, and among them was a child of fifteen, cursing her parents for not having taught her to fear God, nor that there was a Hell. Her life had been a short one, she said, but full of sin, for she had given in to all that her body and passions demanded in the way of satisfaction. Especially she had read bad books." (March 22, 1923).

Again, she wrote: "Souls were cursing the vocation they had received, but not followed... the vocation they had lost, because they were unwilling to live a hidden and mortified life..." (March 18, 1922).

"On one occasion when I was in Hell, I saw a great many priests, religious and nuns, cursing their vows, their order, their Superiors and everything that could have given them the light and the grace they had lost..."

"I saw, too, some prelates. One accused himself of having used the goods belonging to the Church illicitly..." (September 28, 1922).

"Priests were calling down maledictions on their tongues which had consecrated, on their fingers that had held Our Lord's Sacred Body, on the absolution they had given while they were losing their own souls, and on the occasion through which they had fallen into Hell." (April 6, 1922).

"One priest said: 'I ate poison, for I used money that was not my own... the money given me for Masses which I did I not offer.'

"Another said he belonged to a secret society which had betrayed the Church and religion, and he had been bribed to connive at terrible profanations and sacrileges.

"Yet another said that he was damned for assisting at profane plays, after which he ought not to have said Mass... and that he had spent about seven years thus."

Josefa noted that the greater number of religious plunged into hell-fire were there for abominable sins against chastity... and for sins against the vow of poverty... for the unauthorized use of the goods of the community... for passions against charity (jealousy, antipathies, hatred, etc.), for tepidity and relaxation; also for comforts they had allowed themselves and which had led to graver sins... for bad confessions through human respect and want of sincerity and courage, etc.

Here, finally, is the full text of Josefa's notes on "the hell of consecrated souls." (Biography: Ch. VII--September 4, 1922).

"The meditation of the day was on the Particular Judgment of religious souls. I could not free my mind of the thought of it, in spite of the oppression which I felt. Suddenly, I felt myself bound and overwhelmed by a crushing weight, so that in an instant I saw more clearly than ever before how stupendous is the sanctity of God and His detestation of sin.

"I saw in a flash my whole life since my first confession to this day. All was

vividly present to me: my sins, the graces I had received, the day I entered religion, my clothing as a novice, my first vows, my spiritual readings, and times of prayer, the advice given me, and all the helps of religious life. Impossible to describe the confusion and shame a soul feels at that moment, when it realizes: ‘All is lost, and I am damned forever.’”

As in her former descents into Hell, Josefa never accused herself of any specific sin that might have led to such a calamity. Our Lord meant her only to feel what the consequences would have been, if she had merited such a punishment. She wrote:

“Instantly I found myself in Hell, but not dragged there as before. The soul precipitates itself there, as if to hide from God in order to be free to hate and curse Him.

“My soul fell into abysmal depths, the bottom of which cannot be seen, for it is immense... at once, I heard other souls jeering and rejoicing at seeing me share their torments. It was martyrdom enough to hear the terrible imprecations on all sides, but what can be compared to the thirst to curse that seizes on a soul, and the more one curses, the more one wants to. Never had I felt the like before. Formerly my soul had been oppressed with grief at hearing these horrible blasphemies, though unable to produce even one act of love. But today it was otherwise.

“I saw Hell as always before, the long dark corridors, the cavities, the flames... I heard the same execrations and imprecations, for--and of this I have already written before--although no corporeal forms are visible, the torments are felt as if they were present, and souls recognize each other. Some called out, ‘Hullo, you here? And are you like us? We were free to take those vows or not... but no! ...’ and they cursed their vows.

“Then I was pushed into one of those fiery cavities and pressed, as it were, between burning planks, and sharp nails and red-hot irons seemed to be piercing my flesh.”

Here Josefa repeated the multiple tortures from which no single member of the body is excluded:

“I felt as if they were endeavoring to pull out my tongue, but could not. This torture reduced me to such agony that my very eyes seemed to be starting out of their sockets. I think this was because of the fire which burns, burns... not a finger-nail escapes terrifying torments, and all the time one cannot move even a finger to gain some relief, nor change posture, for the body seems flattened out

and yet doubled in two.

“Sounds of confusion and blasphemy cease not for an instant. A sickening stench asphyxiates and corrupts everything, it is like the burning of putrefied flesh, mingled with tar and sulfur... a mixture to which nothing on earth can be compared.

“All this I felt as before, and although those tortures were terrific, they would be bearable if the soul were at peace. But it suffers indescribably. Until now, when I went down into Hell, I thought that I had been damned for abandoning religious life. But this time it was different. I bore a special mark, a sign that I was a religious, a soul who had known and loved God, and there were others who bore the same sign. I cannot say how I recognized it, perhaps because of the specially insulting manner in which the evil spirits and other damned souls treated them. There were many priests there, too. This particular suffering I am unable to explain. It was quite different from what I had experienced at other times, for if the souls of those who lived in the world suffer terribly, infinitely worse are the torments of religious. Unceasingly the three words, Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, are imprinted on the soul with poignant remorse.

“Poverty: You were free and you promised! Why, then, did you seek that comfort? Why hold on to that object which did not belong to you? Why did you give that pleasure to your body? Why allow yourself to dispose of the property of the Community? Did you not know that you no longer had the right to possess anything whatsoever, that you had freely renounced the use of those things? ... Why did you murmur when anything was wanting to you, or when you fancied yourself less well treated than others? Why?

“Chastity: You yourself vowed it freely and with full knowledge of its implications... you bound yourself.. you willed it... and how have you observed it? That being so, why did you not remain where it would have been lawful for you to grant yourself pleasures and enjoyment?

“And the tortured soul responds: ‘Yes, I vowed it; I was free... I could have not taken the vow, but I took it and I was free...’ What words can express the martyrdom of such remorse,” wrote Josefa, “and all the time the jibes and insults of other damned souls continue.

“Obedience: Did you not fully engage yourself to obey your Rule and your Superiors? Why, then, did you pass judgment on the orders that were given you? Why did you disobey the Rule? Why did you dispense yourself from common life? Remember how sweet was the Rule... and you would not keep it...

and now,” vociferate satanic voices, “you will have to obey us not for a day or a year, or a century, but forever and ever; for all eternity... It is your own doing... you were free.

“The soul constantly recalls how she had chosen her God for her Spouse, and that once she loved Him above all things... that for Him she had renounced the most legitimate pleasures and all she held dearest on earth, that in the beginning of her religious life she had felt all the purity, sweetness and strength of this divine love, and that for an inordinate passion... now she must eternally hate the God who had chosen her to love Him.

“This forced hatred is a thirst that consumes her... no past joys can afford her the slightest relief.

“One of her greatest torments is shame,” added Josefa. “It seems to her that all the damned surrounding her continually taunt her by saying: ‘That we should be lost who never had the helps that you enjoyed is not surprising... but you... what did you lack? You who lived in the palace of the King... who feasted at the board of the elect.’

“All I have written,” she concluded, “is but a shadow of what the soul suffers, for no words can express such dire torments.” (September 4, 1922).

XI. THE CHILDREN OF FATIMA SEE HELL

The following passages are excerpted from a small booklet entitled “The Forgotten Secret of Fatima and the Silent Apostolate”. The six apparitions of Our Lady at Fatima on the 13th of each month from May through October, 1917, constitute the greatest approved Marian apparition ever, and were witnessed by three young children, ages 6, 7 and 9. Cirrincione quotes the exact words of Sister Lucy, one of the three visionaries at Fatima... The paragraphs he quotes are Sister Lucy’s exact words. The apparitions at Fatima occurred after Rev. Shouppe wrote his book. The vision of Hell witnessed by the three children is given here, because it also exemplifies the points Rev. Schouppe made in his book. ...

After a few preliminary remarks, she writes:

“And she (Our Lady) continued:

“Sacrifice yourselves for sinners, and say many times, especially whenever you make some sacrifice: O Jesus, it is for love of You, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.’

“As Our Lady spoke these last words, she opened her hands once more, as she had done during the two previous months. The rays of light seemed to penetrate the earth, and we saw, as it were, a sea of fire. Plunged in this fire were demons and souls in human form, like transparent burning embers, all blackened or burnished bronze, floating about in the conflagration, now raised into the air by the flames that issued from within themselves, together with great clouds of smoke, now falling back on every side like sparks in huge fires, without weight or equilibrium, and shrieks and groans of pain and despair, which horrified us and made us tremble with fear. (It must have been this sight which caused me to cry out, as people say they heard me). The demons could be distinguished by their terrifying and repellent likeness to frightful and unknown animals, black and transparent like burning coals. Terrified, and as if to plead for succor, we looked up at Our Lady, who said to us, so kindly and so sadly:

“You have seen Hell, where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved, and there will be peace. The war is going to end (i.e. World War I); but if people do not cease offending God, a worse one will break out during the pontificate of Pius XI. When you see a night illumined by an unknown light, know that this is the great sign given you by God, that He is about to punish the world for its crimes by means of war, famine, and persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father.

“To prevent this, I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays. If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated. In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she will be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world.”

On hell, and the danger of falling therein

by Blessed Peter Julian Eymard

Some quite salutary words from the Apostle of the Blessed Sacrament, Blessed Peter Julian Eymard. From The Eymard Library, Vol. 7, The Eucharist and Christian Perfection II.

Here is a scene which has remained profoundly etched in my memory and which will give you an idea of the sufferings of despair:

“In 1852, a man possessed by the devil was brought to me. He was an excellent man and, in his well moments, an exemplary Christian. The devil spoke through his mouth; he blasphemed against the duration of his ceaseless punishment. A priest who was present said to him, “What conditions would you consent to put up with to obtain a gleam of hope in a million years?” At this point, the demon, who said that he had been a seraph in Heaven by the name of Astaroth, illumined the face of the possessed with a sinister gleam and said to us in a voice hissing with rage, “IF from hell to Heaven there were a column all bristling with scythes, with sabres, and other sharp instruments, and it were necessary to climb up on it every day for a million years, we would all do it just to have one minute of hope; but it is useless!” And blaspheming with rage and anger, he hurled imprecations against God. “oh,” he said to us, “how unjust God is! You men sinned a thousand times more often than we. We sinned only once, and you renew your crimes every day. Nevertheless, He pardons you. All His love is for you; for us there is only the revenge of justice!” And he tore out his hair in despair; he would have killed himself if we had not prevented him. **[St. Thomas describes angelic nature as very different from human. Because they are pure spirit, and equipped with an intellect that is so massive, once they make a decision to sin, or to be virtuous, that decision was made for all time. Of course, they also exist outside of time, so this comparison to the "one" (but ongoing, for all time) sin of demons, to the "many" disparate sins of men in time, is really a false comparison. The demons made their choice to reject God once they found out God was going to save disgusting creatures made out of mud by dying for them, and that choice was permanent, for the reasons given above. Angelic nature cannot really change, in the human sense, once they make a moral decision of this type, they are really locked into it forever. That is my gleaning from the Summa, anyway, I am no expert on St. Thomas.]**

Observe, moreover, in the Scriptures, the unfortunate rich man in hell. He supplicates father Abraham to give him a drop, a single drop of water, to moisten his parched lips. “But Abraham said, ‘My son, remember that thou didst receive thy good fortune in thy life-time.....there is a great gulf fixed between us and you, so that there is no passing from our side of it to you, no crossing over to us from yours.’” (Lk XVI:25-26) Do you hear that? This man had committed none of those great crimes which human justice punishes; he had simply enjoyed the good things of the world too much. He is condemned

without hope, without consolation, forever and ever!

.....But above all, what must be the sufferings of those who acted well during the greater part of their lives, like the priest Saprise, spoken of in the History of the Church. He had ever suffered the first torments of martyrdom, but was not able to preserve to the end! These are the real despairing ones, the damned who suffer the most. They had loved God; they had a foretaste of eternal happiness while serving God, and now they see themselves cast out forever! Forever; for there are, says the Sage, three chasms that have no bottom: avarice, death, and hell!

The conclusion for us is to live in wholesome fear, to work out our salvation in awe and trembling. There are certainly in hell many who have sinned less than I! How good God has been not to strike me down at once after my sin! And yet I deserved it. If He had condemned me, I would have had nothing to say. The murderer has no answer to give when he is condemned to death: that is the law of retaliation. Yet any one of my mortal sins has put Jesus Christ to death; I am his executioner and His murderer!

There are some in hell who were regarded as saints during their lifetime. There are surely priests and religious there. That could happen to me, for they were more saintly than I.

Therefore, how good God is not to have abandoned me! ON the other hand, who knows whether I will persevere to the end; that is the great question. I certainly want to; but will I always say that?

-----End Quote-----

That is certainly the purpose of this post. Will I always say that? Will I always receive the Grace of repentance, and will I cooperate with that Grace? We must bear in mind, as unpopular as such is today, even in the Church, Our Blessed Lord Himself said “narrow is the way that leads to salvation, and few there are that enter therein.” He was not joking, nor exaggerating. All the evidence from Sacred Scripture, Tradition, and the testimony of many Saints and visionaries is that most souls – *MOST SOULS*– are lost. Beg God that you be not one of them.

Saint Teresa's Vision of the demons

It is good to meditate sometimes on the malice of the demons in order to know

what Hell will be like. The following are some of her accounts taken from her Collected Works:

Volume 1 of The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila, Chapter 38, parts 23 & 24 & 25:

Ask Saint Teresa to increase our desire to love and obey God.

Ask Saint Teresa to intercede for your spiritual needs today.

23. "Once, while approaching to receive Communion, **I saw with my soul's eyes more clearly than with my bodily eyes two devils whose appearance was abominable. It seems to me their horns were wrapped around the poor priests's throat**, and in the host that was going to be given to me I saw my Lord with the majesty I mentioned placed in the priest's hands, which were clearly seen to be His offender's; and I understood that that soul was in mortal sin. What would it be my Lord, to see Your beauty in the midst of such abominable figures? They were as though frightened and terrified in Your presence, for it seems they would have very eagerly fled had You allowed them. This vision caused me such great disturbance I don't know how I was able to receive Communion, and I was left with a great fear, thinking that if the vision had been from God, His Majesty would not have permitted me to see the evil that was in that soul. **The Lord Himself told me to pray for him and that He had permitted it so that I might understand the power of the words of consecration and how God does not fail to be present**, however evil the priest who recites them, and that I might see His great goodness since He places Himself in those hands of His enemy, and all out of love for me and for everyone. I understood well how much more priests are obliged to be good than are others, how deplorable a thing it is to receive this most Blessed Sacrament unworthily, and **how much the devil is lord over the soul in mortal sin**. It did me a great deal of good and brought me deep understanding of what I owed God. May He be blessed forever and ever.

24. At another time something else happened to me that frightened me very much. I was at a place where a certain person died who for many years had lived a wicked life, from what I knew. But he had been sick for two years, and in some things it seems he had made amends. He died without confession, but nevertheless it didn't seem to me he would be condemned. While the body was being wrapped in its shroud, **I saw many devils take that body; and it seemed they were playing with it and punishing it**. This terrified me, for

with large hooks they were dragging it from one devil to the other. Since I saw it buried with the honor and ceremonies accorded to all, I reflected on the goodness of God, how He did not want that soul to be defamed, but wanted the fact that it was His enemy to be concealed.

25. I was half stupefied from what I had seen. During the whole ceremony I didn't see another devil. Afterward when they put the body in the grave, there was such a multitude of them inside ready to take it that I was frantic at the sight of it, and there was need for no small amount of courage to conceal this. I reflected on what they would do to the soul when they had such dominion over the unfortunate body. **May it please the Lord that what I have seen -a thing so frightful!-will be seen by all those who are in such an evil state; I think it would prove a powerful help toward their living a good life.** All of this gives me greater knowledge of what I owe God and of what He freed me from. I was very frightened until I spoke about it to my confessor, wondering if it was an illusion caused by the devil to defame that soul. Although it wasn't considered to be the soul of someone with a very deep Christian spirit. Truly since the vision was not an illusion, it frightens me every time I think of it."

The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila, Volume 1, Chapter 31, parts: 1-11 :

Chapter 31

Deals with some exterior temptations and representations of the devil and the torments he inflicted on her. Treats also of some matters very beneficial for advising persons who journey on the path of perfection.

1. Now that I've mentioned some interior, secret temptations and disturbances the devil caused me, I want to tell about others he caused almost publicly and in which one could not be mistaken that he was the source.

2. I was once in an oratory, and he appeared to me in an abominable form at my left side. **Because he spoke to me, I looked particularly at his mouth-which was frightening. It seemed that a great flame, all bright without shadow, came forth from his body.** He told me in a terrifying way that I had really freed myself from his hands but that he would catch me with them again. I was struck with great fear and blessed myself as best I could; he disappeared, but returned right away. This happened to me twice. I didn't know what to do. **There was some holy water there, and I threw it in that direction; he never returned again.**

3. Another time I was tormented for five hours with such terrible interior and exterior pains and disturbance that it didn't seem to me I could suffer them any longer. The sisters who were with me were frightened and didn't know what to do, nor did I know how to help myself. When bodily pains and sickness become intolerable I have the custom of making interior acts of supplication to the Lord as best I can, that if His Majesty be served by my doing so He might give me patience and I might remain in this state until the end of the world. Well, since I was suffering so severely this time, I was helping myself through these acts and resolutions so as to be able to bear it. **The Lord wanted me to understand it was the devil because I saw beside me a black, very abominable little creature, snarling like one in despair that where he had tried to gain he had lost.** When I saw him I laughed to myself and was not afraid. There were some sisters there with me who were unable to help nor did they know of any remedy for so much torment; without being able to resist, I was striking myself hard on the body, head, and arms. What was worse was the interior disturbance, for I wasn't able to feel calm of any sort. I didn't dare ask for holy water lest I frighten them and they come to understand what the trouble was.

4. I often experience that there is nothing the devils flee from more-without returning-than holy water. They also flee from the cross, but they return. The power of holy water must be great. For me there is a particular and very noticeable consolation my soul experiences upon taking it. Without a doubt my soul feels ordinarily a refreshment I wouldn't know how to explain, like an interior delight that comforts it entirely. This isn't some fancy or something that has happened to me only once, but something that has happened often and that I've observed carefully. Let us say the relief is like that coming to a person, very hot and thirsty, when he drinks a jar of cold water; it would seem that he felt the refreshment all over. ***I consider everything ordained by the Church to be important, and I rejoice to see the power of those words recited over the water so that its difference from unblessed water becomes so great.***

5. Well, since the torment didn't stop, I said: "If you wouldn't laugh, I'd ask for holy water." They brought it to me and sprinkled some on me, but it didn't help. I threw some toward where the devil was, and instantly he went away and all the illness left me as if it were taken away by hand, except that I remained weary as though I had been badly beaten with a stick. It did me a lot of good to reflect upon what he will do to the soul he possesses as his own if even when the soul and body don't belong to him, he causes so much harm-when the Lord permits.

It made me again eager to be freed from such dreadful company.

6. Another time, not long ago, the same thing happened to me; although it didn't last as long, and I was alone. I called for holy water, and those who entered after the devil had already gone (for they were two nuns well worthy of belief, who would by no means tell a lie) **smelled a foul stench like that of brimstone.** I didn't smell it. It so lingered that one could notice it.

Another time I was in the choir, and there came upon me a strong impulse toward recollection. I left the choir so that the others wouldn't notice, although all of them heard the striking of loud blows near the place where I was; **I heard some coarse words next to me as though the devils were plotting something,** although I didn't understand anything nor did I have any fear. It happened, almost every time, when the Lord granted me the favor of persuading some soul to advance in perfection.

7. It is certain that what I shall now tell happened to me. (And there are many witnesses to this, especially the one who is now my confessor since he saw it written in a letter; without my telling him who the person was to whom the letter belonged, he knew very well who it was.)

A person came to me who had been in mortal sin for two and a half years. It was one of the most abominable I've heard of, and in all this time he hadn't confessed or made amends; and he was saying Mass. Although he was confessing other sins, of this one he asked how he could confess something so ugly. He had a great desire to give it up, but he wasn't able to help himself. He made me feel great pity, and my seeing that he offended God in such a way caused me deep sorrow. I promised him I would beg God very much to liberate him and that I would get others better than myself to do the same, and I wrote to him through a certain person he told me I could give the letters to. And so it happened that after receiving the first letter he went to confession. For God desired (through the many very holy persons to whose prayers I recommended him) to grant this soul that mercy; and I, although miserable, did what I could with great care. He wrote to me that he was so much better that for days he had not fallen into the sin, but that the torment the temptation gave him was so intense it seemed from what he suffered he was in hell; he asked me to commend him to God. I in turn recommended him to my sisters through whose prayers the Lord must have granted me this favor, for they took the matter very much to heart. No one could guess who the person was. **I begged His Majesty to mitigate those torments and temptations and that those devils**

would come to afflict me, provided that I would not offend the Lord in anything. As a result, for a month I suffered severe torments; it was during this time that these two things I mentioned happened.

8. The Lord was pleased that they leave him; this he wrote to me, for I told him what I was going through during that month. His soul was fortified, and he was left completely free. He didn't have enough of thanking God and me as though I had done anything. But the reputation I had from the fact that the Lord granted me favors benefitted him. He said that when he found himself very distressed he read my letters, and the temptation left him. He was very impressed by what I had suffered and how he had been freed. Even I was amazed, and I would have suffered many more years to see that soul free. May the Lord be praised for everything, for the prayer of those who serve Him (as I believe do these sisters in this house) can do much. But since I sought these prayers, the devils must have been more angry with me; and the Lord on account of my sins permitted this.

9. Also one night during this time I thought they were choking me; after much holy water had been sprinkled around, I saw a great multitude of them go by, as though they were being thrown down a precipice. **There are so many times that these cursed creatures torment me**, and so little is the fear I now have of them, seeing that they cannot stir unless the Lord allows them, that I would tire your Reverence and tire myself if I told about all these instances.

10. May what was said be of help that the true servant of God might pay no attention to the scarecrows the devils set up in order to cause fear. We should know that each time we pay no attention to them they are weakened and the soul gains much more mastery. Some great benefit always remains, which I won't go into so as not to enlarge. I shall only mention what happened to me on the night of All Souls: while I was in the oratory after having recited a nocturn and while saying some very devotional prayers that come at the end, **a devil appeared on the book so that I couldn't finish the prayer**. I blessed myself, and he went away. When I began again to recite the prayers, he returned. I believe it was three times I began, and until I threw holy water at him I couldn't finish. I saw that some souls left purgatory at that instant; little must have been lacking to their freedom, and I wondered if he had aimed at preventing this.

A few times I've seen him in physical form, but many times with no physical form—as for instance in the vision mentioned above in which without seeing any

form one knows he is there.

11. I also want to tell the following because it frightened me a lot: one day on the feast of the Trinity, being in the choir of a certain monastery and in rapture, **I saw a great battle of devils against angels. I couldn't understand what that vision meant. In less than fifteen days it became easily understandable on account of a certain conflict that arose between people of prayer and many who were not, and a lot of harm was done in the house in which it took place.** It was a battle that lasted a long time and caused much disquiet.

At other times **I saw a large multitude of devils around me, and it seemed that a great brightness encircled me, and this prevented them from reaching me.** I understood that God was watching over me so that they could not get to me in order to make me offend Him. From what I sometimes saw in myself, I understood that it was a true vision. The fact is that now I have understood so well the little bit of power he has provided I'm not against God, that I have almost no fear. The powers of devils are nothing if these devils do not find souls cowardly and surrendered to them: it is with such souls that they show their power. Sometime, in the temptations I already mentioned, it seemed to me that all the vanities and weaknesses of the past were again awakening within me; I had really to commend myself to God. At once the torment came of thinking that since those thoughts arose in me the favors I experienced must all be from the devil. It seemed to me that there shouldn't have been even the first stirrings of a bad thought in one who was receiving so many favors from the Lord. But then my confessor put me at peace.

ST. JOHN BOSCO'S DREAM (VISION) OF HELL

The Holy Saint John Bosco had a Prophetic Vision of Hell in 1868 A.D., (*which is recorded in its entirety below.)*

Many of the dreams of St. John Bosco could more properly be called visions, for God used this means to reveal His will for the Saint and for the boys of the Oratory, as well as the future of the Salesian Congregation. Not only did his dreams lead and direct the Saint, they also gave him wisdom and guidance by which he was able to help and guide others upon their ways. He was just nine years of age when he had his first dream that laid out his life mission. It was this

dream that impressed Pope Pius IX so much that he ordered St. John Bosco to write down his dreams for the encouragement of his Congregation and the rest of us. Through dreams God allowed him to know the future of each of the boys of his Oratory.

Through **dreams** God let him know the boys' **state of their souls**. On February 1, 1865 St. John Bosco announced that one of the boys will die soon. He knew the boy through the dream the night before. On March 16, 1865, Anthony Ferraris passed away after receiving the Last Sacraments. John Bisio, who helped Anthony and his mother during the former's last hour, confirmed the story of his part in this episode by a formal oath, concluding as follows: "Don Bosco told us many other dreams concerning Oratory boys' deaths. We believed them to be true prophecies. We still do, because unfailingly they came true. During the seven years I lived at the Oratory, not a boy died without Don Bosco predicting his death. We were also convinced that whoever died there under his care and assistance surely went to heaven."

***The Road to Hell (Prophetic Dream of St. John Bosco 1868 A.D.)**

On Sunday night, May 3 [1868], the feast of Saint Joseph's patronage, Don Bosco resumed the narration of his dreams:

I have another dream to tell you, a sort of aftermath of those I told you last Thursday and Friday which totally exhausted me. Call them dreams or whatever you like. Always, as you know, on the night of April 17 a frightful toad seemed bent on devouring me. When it finally vanished, a voice said to me: "**Why don't you tell them?**" I turned in that direction and saw a distinguished person standing by my bed. Feeling guilty about my silence, I asked: "**What should I tell my boys?**"

"What you have seen and heard in your last dreams and what you have wanted to know and shall have revealed to you tomorrow night!" He then vanished.

I spent the whole next day worrying about the miserable night in store for me, and when evening came, loath to go to bed, I sat at my desk browsing through books until midnight. The mere thought of having more nightmares thoroughly scare me. However, with great effort, I finally went to bed.

"Get up and follow me!" he said.

"For Heaven's sake," I protested, "leave me alone. I am exhausted! I've been tormented by a toothache for several days now and need rest. Besides, nightmares have completely worn me out." I said this because this man's apparition always means trouble, fatigue, and terror for me.

"Get up," he repeated. "You have no time to lose."

I complied and followed him. "Where are you taking me?" I asked.

"Never mind. You'll see." He led me to a vast, boundless plain, veritably a lifeless desert, with not a soul in sight or a tree or brook. Yellowed, dried-up vegetation added to the desolation I had no idea where I was or what was I to do. For a moment I even lost sight of my guide and feared that I was lost, utterly alone. Father Rua, Father Francesia, nowhere to be seen. When I finally saw my friend coming toward me, I sighed in relief.

"Where am I?" I asked.

"Come with me and you will find out!"

"All right. I'll go with you."

He led the way and I followed in silence, but after a long, dismal trudge, I began worrying whether I would ever be able to cross that vast expanse, what with my toothache and swollen legs. Suddenly I saw a road ahead.

"Where to now?" I asked my guide.

"This way," he replied.

We took the road. It was beautiful, wide, and neatly paved. "The way of sinners is made plain with stones, and in their end is hell, and darkness, and pains. "(Ecclesiasticus 21: 11, stones: broad and easy.) Both sides were lined with magnificent verdant hedges dotted with gorgeous flowers. Roses, especially, peeped everywhere through the leaves. At first glance, the road was level and comfortable, and so I ventured upon it without the least suspicion, but soon I noticed that it insensibly kept sloping downward. Though it did not look steep at all, I found myself moving so swiftly that I felt I was effortlessly gliding through the air. Really, I was gliding and hardly using my feet. Then the thought struck me that the return trip would be very long and arduous.

"How shall we get back to the Oratory?" I asked worriedly.

"Do not worry," he answered. "The Almighty wants you to go. He who leads you on will also know how to lead you back."

The road is sloping downward. As we were continuing on our way, flanked by banks of roses and other flowers, I became aware that the Oratory boys and very many others whom I did not know were following me. Somehow I found myself in their midst. As I was looking at them, I noticed now one, now another fall to the ground and instantly be dragged by an unseen force toward a frightful drop, distantly visible, which sloped into a furnace. "What makes these boys fall?" I asked my companion. "The proud have hidden a net for me. And they have stretched out cords for a snare: they have laid for me a stumbling-block by the wayside." (Psalms 139: 6)

"Take a closer look," he replied.

I did. Traps were everywhere, some close to the ground, others at eye level, but all well concealed. Unaware of their danger, many boys got caught, and they tripped, they would sprawl to the ground, legs in the air. Then, when they managed to get back on their feet, they would run headlong down the road toward the abyss. Some got trapped by the head, others by the neck, hand, arms, legs, or sides, and were pulled down instantly. The ground traps, fine as spiders' webs and hardly visible, seemed very flimsy and harmless; yet, to my surprise, every boy they snared fell to the ground.

Noticing my astonishment, the guide remarked, "Do you know what this is?"

"Just some filmy fiber," I answered.

"A mere nothing," he said, "just plain human respect.",

Seeing that many boys were being caught in those straps. I asked, "Why do so many get caught? Who pulls them down?"

"Go nearer and you will see!" he told me.

I followed his advice but saw nothing peculiar.

"Look closer," he insisted.

I picked up one of the traps and tugged. I immediately felt some resistance. I pulled harder, only to feel that, instead of drawing the thread closer, I was being pulled down myself. I did not resist and soon found myself at the mouth of a frightful cave. I halted, unwilling to venture into that deep cavern, and again started pulling the thread toward me. It gave a little, but only through great effort on my part. I kept tugging, and after a long while a huge, hideous monster

emerged, clutching a rope to which all those traps were tied together. He was the one who instantly dragged down anyone who got caught in them. It won't do to match my strength with his, I said to myself. I'll certainly lose. I'd better fight him with the Sign of the Cross and with short invocations.

Then I went back to my guide. "Now you know who he is," he said to me.

"I surely do! It is the devil himself!"

Carefully examining many of the traps, I saw that each bore an inscription: Pride, Disobedience, Envy, Sixth Commandment, Theft, Gluttony, Sloth, Anger and so on. Stepping back a bit to see which ones trapped the greater number of boys, I discovered that the most dangerous were those of impurity, disobedience, and pride. In fact, these three were linked to together. Many other traps also did great harm, but not as much as the first two. Still watching, I noticed many boys running faster than others. "Why such haste?" I asked.

"Because they are dragged by the snare of human respect."

Looking even more closely, I spotted knives among the traps. A providential hand had put them there for cutting oneself free. The bigger ones, symbolizing meditation, were for use against the trap of pride; others, not quite as big, symbolized spiritual reading well made. There were also two swords representing devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, especially through frequent **Holy Communion**, and to the Blessed Virgin. There was also a hammer symbolizing confession, and other knives signifying devotion to Saint Joseph, to Saint Aloysius, and to other Saints. By these means quite a few boys were able to free themselves or evade capture.

Indeed I saw some lads walking safely through all those traps, either by good timing before the trap sprung on them or by making it slip off them if they got caught.

When my guide was satisfied that I had observed everything, he made me continue along that rose-hedged road, but the farther we went the scarcer the roses became. Long thorns began to show up, and soon the roses were no more. The hedges became sun-scorched, leafless, and thorn-studded. Withered branches torn from the bushes lay criss-crossed along the roadbed, littering it with thorns and making it impassable. We had come now to a gulch whose steep sides hid what lay beyond. The road, still sloping downward, was becoming ever more horrid, rutted, guttered, and bristling with rocks and boulders. I lost track of all my boys, most of whom had left this treacherous road for other paths.

I kept going, but the farther I advanced, the more arduous and steep became the descent, so that I tumbled and fell several times, lying prostrate until I could catch my breath. Now and then my guide supported me or helped me to rise. At every step my joints seemed to give way, and I thought my shinbones would snap. Panting, I said to my guide, "My good fellow, my legs won't carry me another step. I just can't go any farther." He did not answer but continued walking. Taking heart, I followed until, seeing me soaked in perspiration and thoroughly exhausted, he led me to a little clearing alongside the road. I sat down, took a deep breath, and felt a little better. From my resting place, the road I had already traveled looked very steep, jagged, and strewn with loose stones, but what lay ahead seemed so much worse that I closed my eyes in horror.

"Let's go back," I pleaded. "If we go any farther, how shall we ever get back to the Oratory? I will never make it up this slope."

"Now that we have come so far, do you want me to leave you here?" my guide sternly asked.

At this threat, I wailed, "How can I survive without your help?"

"Then follow me."

We continued our descent, the road now becoming so frightfully steep that it was almost impossible to stand erect. And then, at the bottom of this precipice, at the entrance of a dark valley, an enormous building loomed into sight, its towering portal, tightly locked, facing our road. When I finally got to the bottom, I became smothered by a suffocating heat, while a greasy, green-tinted smoke lit by flashes of scarlet flames rose from behind those enormous walls which loomed higher than mountains.

"Where are we? What is this?" I asked my guide.

"Read the inscription on that portal and you will know."

I looked up and read these words: "The place of no reprieve." I realized that we were at the gates of Hell. The guide led me all around this horrible place. At regular distance bronze portals like the first overlooked precipitous descents; on each was an inscription, such as: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matthew 25: 41) "Every tree that yielded not good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire." (Matthew 7: 19)

I tried to copy them into my notebook, but my guide restrained me: "There is no

need. You have them all in Holy Scripture. You even have some of them inscribed in your porticoes."

At such a sight I wanted to turn back and return to the Oratory. As a matter of fact, I did start back, but my guide ignored my attempt. After trudging through a steep, never-ending ravine, we again came to the foot of the precipice facing the first portal. Suddenly the guide turned to me. Upset and startled, he motioned to me to step aside. "Look!" he said.

I looked up in terror and saw in the distance someone racing down the path at an uncontrollable speed. I kept my eyes on him, trying to identify him, and as he got closer, I recognized him as one of my boys. His disheveled hair was partly standing upright on his head and partly tossed back by the wind. His arms were outstretched as though he were thrashing the water in an attempt to stay afloat. He wanted to stop, but could not. Tripping on the protruding stones, he kept falling even faster. "Let's help him, let's stop him," I shouted, holding out my hands in a vain effort to restrain him.

"Leave him alone," the guide replied.

"Why?"

"Don't you know how terrible God's vengeance is? Do you think you can restrain one who is fleeing from His just wrath?"

Meanwhile the youth had turned his fiery gaze backward in an attempt to see if God's wrath were still pursuing him. The next moment he fell tumbling to the bottom of the ravine and crashed against the bronze portal as though he could find no better refuge in his flight.

"Why was he looking backward in terror?" I asked.

"Because God's wrath will pierce Hell's gates to reach and torment him even in the midst of fire!"

As the boy crashed into the portal, it sprang open with a roar, and instantly a thousand inner portals opened with a deafening clamor as if struck by a body that had been propelled by an invisible, most violent, irresistible gale. As these bronze doors -- one behind the other, though at a considerable distance from each other -- remained momentarily open, I saw far into the distance something like furnace jaws sprouting fiery balls the moment the youth hurtled into it. As swiftly as they had opened, the portals then clanged shut again. For a third time I tried to jot down the name of that unfortunate lad, but the guide again restrained me. "Wait," he ordered.

"Watch!"

Three other boys of ours, screaming in terror and with arms outstretched, were rolling down one behind the other like massive rocks, I recognized them as they too crashed against the portal. In that split second, it sprang open and so did the other thousand. The three lads were sucked into that endless corridor amid a long-drawn, fading, infernal echo, and then the portals clanged shut again. At intervals, many other lads came tumbling down after them. I saw one unlucky boy being pushed down the slope by an evil companion. Others fell singly or with others, arm in arm or side by side. Each of them bore the name of his sin on his forehead. I kept calling to them as they hurtled down, but they did not hear me. Again the portals would open thunderously and slam shut with a rumble. Then, dead silence!

"Bad companions, bad books, and bad habits," my guide exclaimed, "are mainly responsible for so many eternally lost."

The traps I had seen earlier were indeed dragging the boys to ruin. Seeing so many going to perdition, I cried out disconsolately, "If so many of our boys end up this way, we are working in vain. How can we prevent such tragedies?"

"This is their present state," my guide replied, "and that is where they would go if they were to die now."

"Then let me jot down their names so that I may warn them and put them back on the path to Heaven."

"Do you really believe that some of them would reform if you were to warn them? Then and there your warning might impress them, but soon they will forget it, saying, 'It was just a dream,' and they will do worse than before. Others, realizing they have been unmasked, receive the sacraments, but this will be neither spontaneous nor meritorious; others will go to confession because of a momentary fear of Hell but will still be attached to sin."

"Then is there no way to save these unfortunate lads? Please, tell me what I can do for them."

"They have superiors; let them obey them. They have rules; let them observe them. They have the sacraments; let them receive them."

Just then a new group of boys came hurtling down and the portals momentarily opened. "Let's go in," the guide said to me.

I pulled back in horror. I could not wait to rush back to the Oratory to warn the

boys lest others might be lost as well.

"Come," my guide insisted. "You'll learn much. But first tell me: Do you wish to go alone or with me?" He asked this to make me realize that I was not brave enough and therefore needed his friendly assistance.

"Alone inside that horrible place?" I replied. "How will I ever be able to find my way out without your help?" Then a thought came to my mind and aroused my courage. Before one is condemned to Hell, I said to myself, he must be judged. And I haven't been judged yet!

"Let's go," I exclaimed resolutely. We entered that narrow, horrible corridor and whizzed through it with lightning speed. Threatening inscriptions shone eerily over all the inner gateways. The last one opened into a vast, grim courtyard with a large, unbelievably forbidding entrance at the far end. Above it stood this inscription:

"These shall go into everlasting punishment." (Matthew 25: 46) The walls all about were similarly inscribed. I asked my guide if I could read them, and he consented. These were the inscriptions:

"He will give fire, and worms into their flesh, and they may burn and may feel forever." (Judith 16: 21)

"The pool of fire where both the beast and the false prophet shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." (Apocalypse 20: 9-10)

"And the smoke of their torments shall ascend up forever and ever."
(Apocalypse 14: 11)

"A land of misery and darkness, where the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horror dwells." (Job 10: 22)

"There is no peace to the wicked." (Isaiah 47: 22)

"There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 8:12)

While I moved from one inscription to another, my guide, who had stood in the center of the courtyard, came up to me.

"From here on," he said, "no one may have a helpful companion, a comforting friend, a loving heart, a compassionate glance, or a benevolent word. All this is gone forever. Do you just want to see or would you rather experience these things yourself?"

"I only want to see!" I answered.

"Then come with me," my friend added, and, taking me in tow, he stepped through that gate into a corridor at whose far end stood an observation platform, closed by a huge, single crystal pane reaching from the pavement to the ceiling. As soon as I crossed its threshold, I felt an indescribable terror and dared not take another step. Ahead of me I could see something like an immense cave which gradually disappeared into recesses sunk far into the bowels of the mountains. They were all ablaze, but theirs was not an earthly fire with leaping tongues of flames. The entire cave -- walls, ceiling, floor, iron, stones, wood, and coal -- everything was a glowing white at temperatures of thousands of degrees. Yet the fire did not incinerate, did not consume. I simply can't find words to describe the cavern's horror. "The nourishment thereof is fire and much wood: the breath of the Lord as a torrent of brimstone kindling it." (Isaiah 30: 33)

I was staring in bewilderment about me when a lad dashed out of a gate. Seemingly unaware of anything else, he emitted a most shrilling scream, like one who is about to fall into a cauldron of liquid bronze, and plummeted into the center of the cave. Instantly he too became incandescent and perfectly motionless, while the echo of his dying wail lingered for an instant more.

Terribly frightened, I stared briefly at him for a while. He seemed to be one of my Oratory boys. "Isn't he so and so?" I asked my guide.

"Yes," was the answer.

"Why is he so still, so incandescent?"

"You chose to see," he replied. "Be satisfied with that. Just keep looking. Besides, "Everyone shall be salted with fire." (Mark 9: 48)

As I looked again, another boy came hurtling down into the cave at breakneck speed. He too was from the Oratory. As he fell, so he remained. He too emitted one single heart-rending shriek that blended with the last echo of the scream that came from the youth who had preceded him. Other boys kept hurtling in the same way in increasing numbers, all screaming the same way and then all becoming equally motionless and incandescent. I noticed that the first seemed frozen to the spot, one hand and one foot raised into the air; the second boy seemed bent almost double to the floor. Others stood or hung in various other positions, balancing themselves on one foot or hand, sitting or lying on their backs or on their sides, standing or kneeling, hands clutching their hair. Briefly, the scene resembled a large statuary group of youngsters cast into ever more

painful postures. Other lads hurtled into that same furnace. Some I knew; others were strangers to me. I then recalled what is written in the Bible to the effect that as one falls into Hell, so he shall forever remain. ". . . in what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be." (Ecclesiastes 11:3)

More frightened than ever, I asked my guide, "When these boys come dashing into this cave, don't they know where they are going?"

"They surely do. They have been warned a thousand times, but they still choose to rush into the fire because they do not detest sin and are loath to forsake it. Furthermore, they despise and reject God's incessant, merciful invitations to do penance. Thus provoked, Divine Justice harries them, hounds them, and goads them on so that they cannot halt until they reach this place."

"Oh, how miserable these unfortunate boys must feel in knowing they no longer have any hope," I exclaimed. "If you really want to know their innermost frenzy and fury, go a little closer," my guide remarked.

I took a few steps forward and saw that many of those poor wretches were savagely striking at each other like mad dogs. Others were clawing their own faces and hands, tearing their own flesh and spitefully throwing it about. Just then the entire ceiling of the cave became as transparent as crystal and revealed a patch of Heaven and their radiant companions safe for all eternity.

The poor wretches, fuming and panting with envy, burned with rage because they had once ridiculed the just. "The wicked shall see, and be angry, he shall gnash with his teeth, and pine away. . . "(Psalms 111: 10) "Why do I hear no sound?" I asked my guide,

"Go closer!" he advised.

Pressing my ear to the crystal window, I heard screams and sobs, blasphemies and imprecations against the Saints. It was a tumult of voices and cries, shrill and confused.

"When they recall the happy lot of their good companions," he replied, "they are obliged to admit: "We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour. Behold, how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints. Therefore we have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us, and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon us." (Wisdom 5:4-6) "We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways, but the way of the Lord we have not known. What hath pride profited us ? or what advantage hath the

boasting of riches brought us ? All those things are passed away like a shadow."
(Wisdom 5: 7-9)

"Here time is no more. Here is only eternity."

While I viewed the condition of many of my boys in utter terror, a thought suddenly struck me. "How can these boys be damned?" I asked. "Last night they were still alive at the Oratory!"

"The boys you see here," he answered, "are all dead to God's grace. Were they to die now or persist in their evil ways, they would be damned. But we are wasting time. Let us go on."

He led me away and we went down through a corridor into a lower cavern, at whose entrance I read: "Their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched." (Isaiah 66: 24) "He will give fire, and worms into their flesh, and they may burn and may feel forever." (Judith 16: 21)

Here one could see how atrocious was the remorse of those who had been pupils in our schools. What a torment was their, to remember each unforgiven sin and its just punishment, the countless, even extraordinary means they had had to mend their ways, persevere in virtue, and earn paradise, and their lack of response to the many favors promised and bestowed by the Virgin Mary. What a torture to think that they could have been saved so easily, yet now are irredeemably lost, and to remember the many good resolutions made and never kept. Hell is indeed paved with good intentions!

In this lower cavern I again saw those Oratory boys who had fallen into the fiery furnace. Some are listening to me right now; others are former pupils or even strangers to me. I drew closer to them and noticed that they were all covered with worms and vermin which gnawed at their vitals, hearts, eyes, hands, legs, and entire bodies so ferociously as to defy description. Helpless and motionless, they were a prey to every kind of torment. Hoping I might be able to speak with them or to hear something from them, I drew even closer but no one spoke or even looked at me. I then asked my guide why, and he explained that the damned are totally deprived of freedom. Each must fully endure his own punishment, with absolutely no reprieve whatever. "And now," he added, "you too must enter that cavern."

"Oh, no!" I objected in terror. "Before going to Hell, one has to be judged. I have not been judged yet, and so I will not go to Hell!"

"Listen," he said, "what would you rather do: visit Hell and save your boys, or

stay outside and leave them in agony?"

For a moment I was struck speechless. "Of course I love my boys and wish to save them all," I replied, "but isn't there some other way out?"

"Yes, there is a way," he went on, "provided you do all you can."

I breathed more easily and instantly said to myself, I don't mind slaving if I can rescue these beloved sons of mine from such torments.

"Come inside then," my friend went on, "and see how our good, almighty God lovingly provides a thousand means for guiding your boys to penance and saving them from everlasting death."

Taking my hand, he led me into the cave. As I stepped in, I found myself suddenly transported into a magnificent hall whose curtained glass doors concealed more entrances.

Above one of them I read this inscription: The Sixth Commandment. Pointing to it, my guide exclaimed, "Transgressions of this commandment caused the eternal ruin of many boys."

"Didn't they go to confession?"

"They did, but they either omitted or insufficiently confessed the sins against the beautiful virtue of purity, saying for instance that they had committed such sins two or three times when it was four or five. Other boys may have fallen into that sin but once in their childhood, and, through shame, never confessed it or did so insufficiently. Others were not truly sorry or sincere in their resolve to avoid it in the future. There were even some who, rather than examine their conscience, spent their time trying to figure out how best to deceive their confessor. Anyone dying in this frame of mind chooses to be among the damned, and so he is doomed for all eternity. Only those who die truly repentant shall be eternally happy. Now do you want to see why our merciful God brought you here?" He lifted the curtain and I saw a group of Oratory boys -- all known to me -- who were there because of this sin. Among them were some whose conduct seems to be good.

"Now you will surely let me take down their names so that I may warn them individually," I exclaimed. "Then what do you suggest I tell them?"

"Always preach against immodesty. A generic warning will suffice. Bear in mind that even if you did admonish them individually, they would promise, but not always in earnest. For a firm resolution, one needs God's grace which will not be

denied to your boys if they pray. God manifests His power especially by being merciful and forgiving. On your part, pray and make sacrifices. As for the boys, let them listen to your admonitions and consult their conscience. It will tell them what to do."

We spent the next half hour discussing the requisites of a good confession. Afterward, my guide several times exclaimed in a loud voice, "Avertere! Avertere!"

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Change life!"

Perplexed, I bowed my head and made as if to withdraw, but he held me back.

"You haven't seen everything yet," he explained.

He turned and lifted another curtain bearing this inscription: "They who would become rich, fall into temptation, and to the snare of the devil." (1 Timothy 6: 9) (Note: would become rich: wish to become rich, seek riches, set their heart and affections toward riches.)

"This does not apply to my boys! I countered, "because they are as poor as I am. We are not rich and do not want to be. We give it no thought."

As the curtain was lifted, however, I saw a group of boys, all known to me. They were in pain, like those I had seen before. Pointing to them, my guide remarked, "As you see, the inscription does apply to your boys."

"But how?" I asked.

"Well," he said, "some boys are so attached to material possessions that their love of God is lessened. Thus they sin against charity, piety, and meekness. Even the mere desire of riches can corrupt the heart, especially if such a desire leads to injustice. Your boys are poor, but remember that greed and idleness are bad counselors. One of your boys committed substantial thefts in his native town, and though he could make restitution, he gives it not a thought. There are others who try to break into the pantry or the prefect's or economer's office; those who rummage in their companions' trunks for food, money, or possessions; those who steal stationery and books...."

After naming these boys and others as well, he continued, "Some are here for having stolen clothes, linen, blankets, and coats from the Oratory wardrobe in order to send them home to their families; others for willful, serious damage; others, yet, for not having given back what they had borrowed or for having kept

sums of money they were supposed to hand over to the superior. Now that you know who these boys are," he concluded, "admonish them. Tell them to curb all vain, harmful desires, to obey God's law and to safeguard their reputation jealously lest greed lead them to greater excesses and plunge them into sorrow, death, and damnation."

I couldn't understand why such dreadful punishments should be meted out for infractions that boys thought so little of, but my guide shook me out of my thoughts by saying: "Recall what you were told when you saw those spoiled grapes on the wine." With these words he lifted another curtain which hid many of our Oratory boys, all of whom I recognized instantly. The inscription on the curtain read: The root of all evils.

"Do you know what that means?" he asked me immediately.

"What sin does that refer to?"

"Pride?"

"No!"

"And yet I have always heard that pride is the root of all evil."

"It is, generally speaking, but, specifically, do you know what led Adam and Eve to commit the first sin for which they were driven away from their earthly paradise?"

"Disobedience?"

"Exactly! Disobedience is the root of all evil."

"What shall I tell my boys about it?"

"Listen carefully: the boys you see here are those who prepare such a tragic end for themselves by being disobedient. So-and-so and so-and-so, who you think went to bed, leave the dormitory later in the night to roam about the playground, and, contrary to orders, they stray into dangerous areas and up scaffolds, endangering even their lives. Others go to church, but, ignoring recommendations, they misbehave; instead of praying, they daydream or cause a disturbance. There are also those who make themselves comfortable so as to doze off during church services, and those who only make believe they are going to church. Woe to those who neglect prayer! He who does not pray dooms himself to perdition. Some are here because, instead of singing hymns or saying the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, they read frivolous or -- worse yet -- forbidden books." He then went on mentioning other serious breaches of

discipline.

When he was done, I was deeply moved.

"May I mention all these things to my boys?" I asked, looking at him straight in the eye.

"Yes, you may tell them whatever you remember."

"What advice shall I give them to safeguard them from such a tragedy?"

"Keep telling them that by obeying God, the Church, their parents, and their superiors, even in little things, they will be saved."

"Anything else?"

"Warn them against idleness. Because of idleness David fell into sin. Tell them to keep busy at all times, because the devil will not then have a chance to tempt them."

I bowed my head and promised. Faint with dismay, I could only mutter, "Thanks for having been so good to me. Now, please lead me out of here."

"All right, then, come with me." Encouragingly he took my hand and held me up because I could hardly stand on my feet. Leaving that hall, in no time at all we retraced our steps through that horrible courtyard and the long corridor. But as soon as we stepped across the last bronze portal, he turned to me and said, "Now that you have seen what others suffer, you too must experience a touch of Hell."

"No, no!" I cried in terror.

He insisted, but I kept refusing.

"Do not be afraid," he told me; "just try it. Touch this wall."

I could not muster enough courage and tried to get away, but he held me back. **"Try it,"** he insisted. Gripping my arm firmly, he pulled me to the wall. **"Only one touch,"** he commanded, "so that you may say you have both seen and touched the walls of eternal suffering and that you may understand what the last wall must be like if the first is so unendurable. Look at this wall!" I did intently. It seemed incredibly thick. **"There are a thousand walls between this and the real fire of Hell,"** my guide continued. **"A thousand walls encompass it, each a thousand measures thick and equally distant from the next one. Each measure is a thousand miles. This wall therefore is millions and millions of**

miles from **Hell's** real fire. It is just a remote rim of **Hell** itself."

When he said this, I instinctively pulled back, but he seized my hand, forced it open, and pressed it against the first of the thousand walls. The sensation was so utterly excruciating that I leaped back with a scream and found myself sitting up in bed. My hand was stinging and I kept rubbing it to ease the pain. When I got up this morning I noticed that it was swollen. Having my hand pressed against the wall, though only in a dream, felt so real that, later, the skin of my palm peeled off.

Bear in mind that I have tried not to frighten you very much, and so I have not described these things in all their horror as I saw them and as they impressed me. We know that Our Lord always portrayed Hell in symbols because, had He described it as it really is, we would not have understood Him. No mortal can comprehend these things. The Lord knows them and He reveals them to whomever He wills. [END]

Stories of Hell in the lives of the Saints

Stories of Hell- How the holy fear of hell has made countless Saints

Padre Pio (1887-1968) was once asked what he thought of people who did not believe in hell. He wisely replied: "They will very well believe in hell when they get there."

God wills that we all be united with Him in heaven for all eternity. Yet, in the Gospels, Jesus often spoke of hell and eternal punishment, speaking of a place of "...external darkness where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt 8:11-12) and of eternal punishment of those uncompassionate and uncharitable persons placed on His left at the Judgement, stating to them: "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt 25:41) or again "If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter into life maimed or crippled than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into fiery Gehenna."(Matt 18:7-9)---and this is to name just a few of the many occasions

Jesus spoke of hell.

Additionally, the teaching of hell is an infallible Dogma of the Catholic church. It is one of the “four last things” —heaven, hell, death and punishment — which the Church presents to each of us to contemplate upon. In short, both Jesus and His Church have always encouraged a salutary fear of hell. And those who have studied the lives of the Saints and other devout persons have found that the majority of them had a very healthy and beneficial fear of hell that inspired and encouraged them to fight the evil temptations that came their way. Next, we will present a few stories to illustrate this important point, that we too may imitate and emulate them.

Stories of hell and its punishments –The Blessed Virgin Mary saves a soul from going to hell

We will begin with the testimony of Blessed Richard of St Ann- A Franciscan priest who was martyred by being burned at the stake in Nagasaki, Japan in 1622. This celebrated apparition of a damned soul which we are about to relate was attested by Blessed Richard as the primary reason which prompted him to enter the Franciscans. The testimony is related in three works: Adrian Lyroeus documented it in his “Trisagium Marianum, Book III”; Saint Alphonsus Liguori, who also cites the same facts in his “Glories of Mary”, and lastly the same occurrence is related in the authentic documents known as “The Annals of Franciscan Missions, for the years 1866-67.”

While Blessed Richard was living in Brussels in 1604 there were two young students who instead of applying themselves to study, thought only of how to live in pleasure and sin. One night, among others, when they had gone to indulge in sin in a house of prostitution, one of the two left the place after some time, leaving his companion in sin behind him.

Having reached home, he was about to lie down in bed, when he remembered that he had not recited that day the few “Hail Mary’s” which he had the habit of saying every day since childhood in honor of the Holy Virgin. As he was overpowered by sleep, it was very difficult for him to recite the short prayers; however, he made an effort and said them, although without devotion; then he fell fast asleep. Not long afterwards he heard a sudden, a rude knocking at the door; and immediately afterwards he saw before him his companion, disfigured and hideous. "Who are you?" he said to him. "What? Don't you recognise me?" replied the unhappy youth. "But how are you so changed? You look like a devil?"

"Oh, take pity upon me, for I am damned!" "How is that?" "Well, know that upon leaving that accursed house a evil person sprang upon me and strangled me. My body has remained in the middle of the street, and my soul is in Hell. Know, moreover, that the same chastisement awaited you, but the Virgin preserved you from it, thanks to your practice of reciting every day the three Hail Mary's in her honor. And blessed are you if you know how to profit by this information, which the Mother of God gives you through me."

While finishing these words, the damned soul partly opened his garment, allowed the flames and evil spirits that were tormenting him to be seen, and he vanished. Then the young man, sobbing uncontrollably, threw himself on his face on the floor and prayed for a long time, thanking the Holy Virgin Mary, his deliverer. Now, while he was praying in this manner he began reflecting upon what he ought to do next to change his life, and at that moment he heard the Matins bell ring at the Franciscan Monastery.

That very moment he cried out, "So there is where God is calling me to do penance."

Very early the next morning he went to the convent and begged the Father Guardian to receive him. The Father Guardian, who was well aware of his bad life, was not at all interested in accepting him. The young student, shedding a torrent of tears, related to him all that had taken place. The good priest immediately sent two religious to the street indicated, and there they found the corpse of the wretched youth. The young man was soon admitted as a postulant among the Brothers, whom he soon edified by a life completely devoted to penance and reparation.

It was these terrible facts that struck a deep chord of both the holy fear of hell, and the devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary into Blessed Richard himself, so he too immediately consecrated himself entirely to God and the Blessed Virgin Mary in the same Order into which the young student, so wonderfully protected by Mary, had just been received.

A burning handprint from hell -A lifelong reminder

The next incident is from an honorable priest and superior of a religious community. This priest had the particulars of the story from a close relation of the lady to whom it had happened. At the time of the writing, Christmas Day, 1859, this person was still living and was roughly forty years old, therefore no

name is mentioned in the recording of this event to protect the persons identity.

The woman concerned in this story was living in London in the winter of 1847-1848. She was a widow, about twenty nine years old, quite rich and worldly. Among the young men who visited her there was young lord of bad conduct who courted her and of whom she eventually committed a variety of sins with.

Late one night she was in bed reading a novel when one o'clock struck on the clock; she blew out her taper and was about to fall asleep when, to her great astonishment, she noticed strange glimmer of light coming from the door of the drawing-room, which spread by degrees into her chamber. Stupefied at first and not knowing what this meant, she began to get alarmed, when she saw the drawing-room door slowly open and the young lord, the partner of her disorders, enter the room. Before she had time to say a single word, he seized her by the left wrist, and with a hissing voice, said to her in English: "There is a Hell!" The pain she suddenly felt in her arm was so great that she immediately passed out.

When she came to again about a half an hour after she immediately rang for her chambermaid. The latter, on entering, noticed a strong smell of burning. Approaching her mistress who was frantic and could hardly speak she immediately noticed on her wrist a burn so deep that the bone was laid bare, and the flesh almost consumed. Moreover, she remarked that, from the door of the salon to the bed, and returning from the bed to that same door, the carpet bore the imprint of a man's steps, which had burned through the fibers. By the directions of her mistress, she opened the drawing-room door and there she found more tracks on the carpet.

The following day, the unhappy lady learned, with a terror easily imagined, that on that very night, about one o'clock in the morning, her friend the lord had been found dead-drunk under the table, and that his servants had carried him to his room, and that he had died of alcohol poisoning in their arms.

I do not know for certain, added the Priest-Superior, whether that terrible lesson converted the heart of that unfortunate lady, but what I do know is that she is still alive and that, to conceal from sight the traces of her ominous burn, she wears on the left wrist, like a bracelet, a wide gold band, which she does not take off day or night. I repeat it: I have all these details from her near relation, a serious Christian, in whose word I give the fullest belief. She states that this story is never spoken of, even in the family; and that she only confided it to me,

suppressing every proper name.

Notwithstanding the anonymity beneath which this apparition has been revealed and must be enveloped, it seems impossible, states a writer, to call into doubt the dreadful authenticity of the details.

'I am damned! And if you do not wish to be like me, leave this place of infamy and return to God.'

Here is a third fact related by the writer Monsignor de Segur in his book "Opusculum on Hell":

"In the year 1873," he writes, "a few days before the Assumption (August 15), there occurred again one of those apparitions from beyond the grave, which so efficaciously confirms the reality of Hell. It was in Rome. A brothel, opened in that city after the Piedmontese invasion, stood near a police station. One of the unfortunate girls who lived there had been wounded in the hand, and it was found necessary to take her to the hospital of Consolation. Whether her blood, vitiated by bad living, or brought on an infection of the wound, or from an unexpected complication, she nonetheless died suddenly during the night. At the same instant, one of her companions, who was completely ignorant of what had happened at the hospital, began to utter shrieks of despair to the point of awaking the inhabitants of the locality, creating a frenzy among the wretched creatures of the house, and provoking the intervention of the police. The dead girl of the hospital, surrounded by flames, had appeared to her and said: 'I am damned! And if you do not wish to be like me, leave this place of infamy and return to God.'

"Nothing could quell the despair of this girl, who, at daybreak, departed, leaving the whole house plunged in confusion, even more so when the news of the death of her companion at the hospital was made known.

"Just at this period, the mistress of the place, an exalted Garribaldian and known as such by her family and friends, fell sick. She soon sent for a priest to receive the Sacraments. The ecclesiastical authority deputed for this task a worthy prelate, Mgr. Sirolli, the pastor of the parish of Saint-Saviour in Laura. He presented himself and exacted of the sick woman, before all, in presence of many witnesses, the full and entire retraction of her blasphemies against the Sovereign Pontiff and the discontinuance of the sinful trade that she was managing. The unhappy creature did so without hesitating and consented to

purge her house, then made her confession and received the Holy Viaticum with great sentiments of repentance and humility.

"Feeling that she was dying, she besought the good pastor with tears not to leave her, frightened as she always was by the apparition of that damned girl. Mgr. Sirolli of course was unable to satisfy her request on account of the public scandal spending the night in such a place would certainly cause, he therefore requested from the police two men who remained until the dying woman had breathed her last.

"Very soon, all Rome became acquainted with the details of these tragic occurrences. As usual in such circumstances, the ungodly and lewd ridiculed them, taking good care not to seek for any additional information about them; however the good profited by them and became more devout and more faithful to their duties."

To doubt the existence of hell is foolish bravery

In his book on Hell, Father F.X. Schouppe, S.J. relates the following:

"Natural reason confirms the dogma of hell. An atheist was once boasting that he did not believe in hell. Among his hearers, there was a sensible young man, modest, but who thought that he ought to shut the silly speaker's mouth. He put to him a single question: "Sir," he said, "the kings of the earth have prisons to punish their wicked subjects; how can God, the King of the Universe, be without a prison for those who outrage His majesty?" The atheist of course had not a word to answer. The appeal was presented to the light of his own reason, which proclaims that, if kings have prisons, God must likewise have a hell."

Pascals wager and fire insurance

Additionally there is the well known story of "Pascal's wager". Blaise Pascal was a seventeenth-century French philosopher, mathematician and physicist. He developed a logical presupposition commonly known as "Pascal's wager" which states thus:

If one believes in God, yet upon death one discovers that God does not exist, ones loses absolutely nothing in life or in death, whereas if God exists, and one believes in God, one gains everything upon death (eternal reward in heaven).

However, if one disbelieves in God, and finds upon death that God does not

exist, one gains nothing in life or in death, whereas if one erroneously disbelieves and shuns God, and upon death finds that God exists, one loses everything (eternal damnation in hell).

In short, Pascals Wager operates under the very logical presupposition that it does not harm one to believe in God and to fear hell. But to not do so, one takes a very grave risk; a risk of potentially devastating consequences for all eternity. We take out fire insurance on our property—would it not be wise to do at least the same for our persons, especially when in this case the insurance costs absolutely nothing, and while in reality such faith in God normally makes one a more caring and compassionate person?

More on Saints and the beneficial fear of Hell

Some Saints and devout souls, like St. Teresa of Avila and Sr. Josefa Menendez were taken in spirit to hell. Others like St. Gemma Galgani were shown horrible vision of the devil and the demons: Writing to her spiritual director Gemma says: "...Come quickly, Father, or at least make the exorcism from a distance. The devil has pursued me in every possible way. Oh, if you only knew how I have suffered. How pleased he was this night. He seized me by the hair and dragged me about exclaiming, 'Disobedience, disobedience, now there is no more time to begin again. Come, come with me,' and he tried to carry me off to Hell. He tormented me like this for more than four hours, and thus I passed the night."

The three children of Fatima, Jacinta Marto, Francisco Marto and Sr. Lucia Dos Santos were shown by the Blessed Virgin Mary a terrifying vision of hell when they were only ages 9 and 10 years old- and this frightening vision completely changed them to their deepest inner spirit. Even though they were but young children, after the vision given them by the Blessed Virgin, they would not hesitate in the least bit to make great sacrifices to prevent souls from going to hell. Among other things that the Blessed Virgin Mary and the angel of God taught them was this important prayer:

“Oh my Jesus; forgive us our sins. Save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls into heaven, especially those most in need of Thy mercy”.

“When I see Jesus weep, my own heart is pierced with sorrow; I think of how by my sins I have added to the oppression in which Jesus suffered in the Garden. At that time Jesus saw all my sins, all my omissions, and He saw the place I should have occupied in Hell, if Thy Heart, oh Jesus, had not granted me

forgiveness” –St Gemma Galgani

Straits and Anguish of Dying Christians
who have been Negligent during Life
about the Duties of Religion

by St. Alphonsus Di Liguori

"Render, therefore, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."--Matth. xxii. 21.

One day, the Pharisees, with the malignant intention of ensnaring Him in His speech, that they might after wards accuse him before the ministers of Caesar, sent their disciples to ask Jesus Christ, if it were lawful to pay tribute to Caesar. In answer, the Redeemer, after looking at the coin of the tribute, asked: "Whose linage and inscription is this?" Being told it was Caesar's, he said: Render then to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. By these words Jesus Christ wishes to teach us, that it is our duty to give to men what is due to them; and to reserve for Him all the affections of our heart, since He created us to love Him, and afterwards imposed upon us a precept of loving Him. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart. Miserable the man who, at the hour of death, shall see that he has loved creatures, that he has loved his pleasures, and has not loved God. When distress cometh upon them, they will seek peace, and there will he none? He will then seek peace, but shall not find it; for many causes of distress and trouble shall assail him.

What shall these causes be? Behold, the unhappy man shall then say: 1. O God! I could have become a saint, but have not become one. 2. He shall say: Oh! that I now had time to repair the evil I have done! but time is at an end. 3. Oh! that at least, in the short time which remains, I could remedy the past: but alas this time is not fit for repairing past, evils.

I. O God! I could have, but have not, become a Saint.

Because, during their whole life, they thought only of pleasing God and sanctifying themselves, the saints go with great confidence to meet death, which delivers them from the miseries and dangers of the present life, and unites them

perfectly with God. But the man who has thought only of his pleasures and of his own ease, and has neglected to recommend himself to God, or to reflect on the account which he must one day render, cannot meet death with confidence. Poor sinners! they banish the thought of death whenever it presents itself to them, and think only of living in pleasures and amusements, as if they never were to die. But for each of them the end must one day come. The end is come; the end is come. And when this end is come every one must gather the fruit which he has sown during his life. For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. If he has sown works of holiness, he shall receive rewards of eternal life; but if he has sown evil works, he shall reap chastisements and eternal death.

*T*he scene of his past life is the first thing that shall rush on the mind of the dying man, when the news of death shall be announced to him. He shall then see things in a light far different from that in which he viewed them during life. The acts of revenge which appeared to him lawful--the scandals which he disregarded--the liberty of speaking obscenely and injurious to the character of his neighbor--the pleasures which were regarded as innocent--the acts of injustice which he held to be allowable shall then appear what they really were: grievous sins and offences against God, each of which merited hell. Alas! those blind sinners, who voluntarily blind themselves during life, by shutting their eyes to the light shall, at death, involuntarily see all the evil they have done. Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened (Isaiah 35:5). By the light of the candle which lights him to death, the wicked shall see and shall be angry (Psalm 111:10).

*H*e shall see all the irregularities of his past life--his frequent abuse of the sacraments, confessions made without sorrow or purpose of amendment, contracts completed with remorse of conscience, injury done to the property and reputation of others, immodest jests, rancors, and vindictive thoughts. He shall then see the bad examples which he gave to young persons who feared God, and whom he treated with contempt and turned into derision by calling them hypocrites and other reproachful names.

*H*e shall see so many lights and calls received from God, so many admonitions of spiritual Fathers, and so many resolutions and promises made but afterwards neglected. He shall see particularly the bad maxims by which he regulated his conduct during life. "It is necessary to seek the esteem of the world, and to preserve honor." But is it necessary for a man to preserve his honor by

trampling on the honor due to God? "We ought to indulge in amusements as often as we can." But is it lawful to indulge in amusements by insulting God? "Of what use to the world is the man who lives in poverty and has no money?" But will you for the sake of money lose your soul? In answer to these questions the sinner says: "No matter. What can be done? If we do not make a fortune in the world we cannot appear among our equals." Such is the maxims of the worldling during life; but at death he shall change his language, he shall then see the truth of that maxim of Jesus Christ: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul? Unhappy me! the worldling shall exclaim on the bed of death, I have had so much time to tranquillize my conscience, and behold I am now at the point of death, and I find my soul burdened with so many sins? What would it have cost me to have broken off such a friendship, to have gone to confession every week, to have avoided certain occasions of sin? All very little, but though it should have cost me a great deal of pain and labor, I ought to have submitted to every inconvenience in order to save my soul. Salvation is of greater importance to me than the dominion of the entire world. But, alas! the sentiments of negligent Christians at death are as fruitless as the sorrows of the damned, who mourn in hell over their sins as the cause of their perdition, but mourn in vain.

At that time they derive no consolation from their past amusements or pomps, from their exalted dignities, or from the humiliation of their rivals. On the contrary, at the hour of death, these things, like so many swords shall pierce their hearts. Evil shall catch the unjust man unto destruction (Ps. cxxxix. 12). At present the lovers of the world seek after banquets, dances, games, and scenes of laughter and joy; but, at the time of death this laughter and joy, as St. James says, shall be turned into mourning and affliction. Let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into sorrow (James iv. 9). Of this we see frequent examples. A young man who entertains his companions by sallies of wit and by immodest jests is seized with a severe illness. His friends come to see him, and find him overwhelmed with grief and melancholy. He indulges no more in jests, or laughter, or conversation. If he speaks at all, his words are words of terror or despair. His friends ask why he speaks so despondingly-- why he is so melancholy. Have courage, they say: your illness is not dangerous. They endeavor to inspire hope and cheerfulness: but he is silent. And how can he be cheerful when he feels his conscience burdened with many sins, sees that he must soon appear before Jesus Christ to give an account of his entire life, and that he has much reason to fear that he shall receive the sentence of eternal death? He will then say: O fool that I have been! Oh, that I had loved God! Had I loved him, I should not now find myself in these straits, in this anguish. Oh! that

I had time to tranquillize the troubles of my conscience. Let us pass to the second point.

2. Oh, That I had time to repair the evil I have done! But now, time is at an end.

Oh! that I had time, he will say, to repair the past! But when will he say this? When the oil in the lamp is consumed: when he is on the point of entering into eternity. One of the greatest causes of the distress and anguish of the careless Christian at the hour of death is the remembrance of the bad use he has made of the time in which he ought to have acquired merits for heaven, and in which he has accumulated merits for hell. Oh! that I had time! Do you seek for time? You have lost so many nights in gaming, and so many years in indulging the senses, without ever thinking of your soul; and now you seek for time; but time is now no more. Were you not already admonished by preachers to be prepared for death? were you not told that it would come upon you when you least expect it? Be you ready, says Jesus Christ; for at what hour you think not the Son of man will come (Luke, xii. 40). You have despised my admonitions, and have voluntarily squandered the time which my goodness bestowed upon you in spite of your demerits; but now time is at an end. Listen to the words in which the priest that assists you shall tell you to depart from this world. Go forth, Christian soul, from this world. And where shall you go? To eternity, to eternity. Death respects neither parents nor monarchs; when it comes, it does not wait even for a moment. Thou hast appointed his bounds, which cannot be passed (Job, xiv. 5).

Oh! what terror shall the dying man feel at hearing the assisting priest tell him to depart from this world! what dismay shall he experience in saying with himself: "This morning I am living, and this evening I shall be dead! Today I am in this house; tomorrow I shall be in the grave: and where shall my soul be found?" His terror shall be increased when he sees the death-candle lighted, and when he hears the confessor order the relatives to withdraw from his chamber, and to return to it no more. It shall be still more increased when the confessor gives him the crucifix, and tells him to embrace it, saying: "Embrace Jesus Christ, and think no more of this world." He takes the crucifix, and kisses it; but, in kissing it, he trembles at the remembrance of the many injuries which he has offered to Jesus Christ. He would now wish to repent sincerely of all his injuries to his Saviour, but he sees that his repentance is forced by the necessity of his approaching death. "He," says St. Augustine, "who is abandoned by sin before he abandons it, condemns it not freely, but through necessity."

*T*he common delusion of worldlings is, that earthly things appear great, and that the things of heaven, as being distant and uncertain, appear to be of little value. They regard tribulations as insupportable, and grievous sins as unimportant. The miserable beings are as if they were shut up in a room filled with smoke, which hinders them from seeing objects before their eyes. But at the hour of death this darkness shall vanish, and the soul shall begin to see things in their real colors. At that hour all temporal things appear to be what they really are vanity, lies, and deception; and the things of eternity assume their true value. Oh! how important shall judgment, hell, and eternity, which are so much disregarded during life, appear at the time of death. According as these shall begin to put on their true colors, the fears of the dying man shall increase. The nearer the sentence of the judge approaches, the more sensible the fear of condemnation becomes," says St Gregory. Hence the sick man will say: Oh, in what anguish do I die! Unhappy me! Oh, that I knew that so unhappy a death awaited me! You have known; but you ought to have foreseen it; for you knew that a good death could not be expected after a wicked life. But, since I must soon die, oh! that I could at least, in the little time that remains, tranquillize my conscience! Let us pass to the third point.

*O*h, that I could, in the little time that remains, repair the past! But, alas! this time is not fit for repairing past evils.

*T*he time allowed to careless Christians at the hour of death, is, for two reasons, unfit for tranquillizing the troubles of their conscience. First, because this time will be very short; for at the commencement, and for some days during the progress of the disease, the sick man thinks only of physicians, of remedies, and of making his last will. During that time his relatives, friends, and even the physicians deceive him by holding out hopes of recovery. Hence, deluded by these hopes, he will not be able for some time to persuade himself that his death is at hand. When shall he begin to persuade himself that death is near? Only when he shall be at the very point of death. This is the second reason why that time is unfit for repairing the evils of the soul. At that time the dying man is sick in mind as well as in body. He shall be assailed by pains in the chest, spasms in the head, debility, and delirium. These shall render him unable to make any effort to excite a true detestation of his past sins, or to apply to the disorders of his past life a remedy which will calm the terrors of his conscience. The news of his approaching death will astound him to such a degree, that he shall be scarcely half alive.

A person laboring under a severe headache, which deprives him of sleep for two or three nights, will not even attempt to dictate a letter of ceremony. And at death, when he feels but little, understands but little, and sees only a confusion of things which fills him with terror, the careless Christian adjusts a conscience burdened with the sins of thirty or forty years. Then are verified the words of the Gospel: The night cometh when no man worketh. Then his conscience will say to him: Now thou canst be steward no longer? There is no more time for negotiation; what has been done, is done. When distress cometh upon them, they will seek for peace, and there shall be none. Trouble shall come upon trouble.

*I*t is often said of a person that he led a bad life, but afterwards died a good death; that by his sighs and tears he gave proofs of sincere repentance. The wailing of such persons proceeds not from sorrow for their sins, but from the fear of imminent death, says St. Augustine. He was not afraid of sinning, says the holy Doctor, but, of burning. Till this moment the dying man has loved sinful objects: will he now detest them? Perhaps he will then love them with more tenderness; for the objects of our affections become more dear to us when we are afraid of losing them. The celebrated master of St. Bruno died with signs of repentance; but when laid in the coffin, he said that he was damned. If, at the hour of death, even the saints complain that on account of the state of the head they can think but little of God, or make but little effort to excite good acts, how can the negligent Christian makes these acts at death, when he was not in the habit of making them during life? It may be said that he appeared to have a sincere sorrow for the wickedness of his past life. But, was his sorrow true sorrow? The devil persuades him that the wish to have sorrow is true sorrow; but he deceives him. The dying man will say: "I am sorry from the bottom of my heart," etc.; but these words shall come from a heart of stone. From the midst of the rocks they shall give forth their voices. But he has frequently been at confession, and has received all the sacraments; he has died in perfect resignation. Ah! the criminal who goes to be executed, appears to be perfectly resigned: but why? Because he cannot escape from the officers of justice, who bring him in chains to the place of execution.

"*O* moment on which eternity depends!" This moment made the saints tremble at the hour of death, and made them exclaim: "O God! where shall I be in a few hours?" "Sometimes," says St. Gregory, "the soul even of the just man is disturbed by the terror of vengeance." What, then, shall the careless Christian,

who has disregarded God, feel when he sees the scaffold prepared on which he must die? His eyes shall see his own destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty." He shall see with his own eyes death prepared for his soul, and shall from that moment begin to feel the anger of the Lord. The viaticum which he must receive, the extreme unction which will be administered to him, the crucifix which is placed in his hands, the recommendation of the soul which is read by the assisting priest, the lighting of the blessed candle all these shall form the scaffold of divine justice. The poor sick man perceives that he is already in a cold sweat, that he can no longer move or speak, that his respiration has begun to fail: in a word, he sees that the moment of death is at hand; he sees his soul defiled with sins; the judge waiting for him; hell burning under his feet; and in this confusion of darkness and terror he shall enter into eternity.

*O*h that they would be wise, and would understand, and would provide for their last end. Behold, dearly beloved brethren, how the Holy Ghost exhorts us to provide now for the terrible straits and distress by which we shall be encompassed at death, and to adjust at present the accounts which we must render to God; for it will be then impossible to settle these accounts so as to save our souls.

*M*y crucified Jesus, I will not wait till death to embrace Thee; I embrace Thee at this moment. I love Thee above all things; and because I love Thee, I repent with my whole heart of all the offences and insults I have offered to Thee, who art infinite goodness; and I purpose and hope, with Thy grace, to love Thee always, and never more to offend Thee. Through the merits of Thy Passion I ask Thee to assist me.

THE DEATH OF THE SINNER – BY ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

***“Thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee.” Luke
xix. 43.***

1. **SEEING from a distance the city of Jerusalem, in which the Jews were soon to put him to death, Jesus Christ wept over it.** Our merciful Redeemer wept at the consideration of the chastisement which was soon to be inflicted on the city, and which he foretold to her inhabitants. “Thy enemies

shall cast a trench about thee.” Unhappy city! Thou shalt one day see thyself encompassed by enemies, who shall beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children in thee, and shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone. Most beloved brethren, this unhappy city is a figure of the soul of a sinner, who, at the hour of death, shall find himself surrounded by his enemies first, by remorse of conscience; secondly, by the assaults of the devils; and thirdly, by the fears of eternal death.

First Point. The sinner at death shall be tortured by remorse of conscience.

D(Job xxxvi. 14.) **The unhappy sinners who remain in sin die in a tempest, with which God has beforehand threatened them. “A tempest shall break out and come upon the head of the wicked.”** (Jer. xxiii. 19.) At the commencement of his illness the sinner is not troubled by remorse or fear; because his relatives, friends, physicians, and all tell him that his sickness is not dangerous; thus he is deceived and hopes to recover. But when his illness increases, and malignant symptoms, the harbingers of approaching death, begin to appear, then the storm with which the Lord has threatened the wicked shall commence. “When sudden calamity shall fall on you, and destruction as a tempest shall be at hand.” (Prov. i. 27.) This tempest shall be formed as well by the pains of sickness as by the fear of being obliged to depart from this earth, and to leave all things; but still more by the remorse’s of conscience, which shall place before his eyes all the irregularities of his past life. “They shall come with fear at the thought of their sins, and their iniquities shall stand against them to convict them.” (Wis. iv. 20.) Then shall his sins rush upon his mind, and fill him with terror. His iniquities shall stand against him to convict him, and, without the aid of other testimony, shall assail him, and prove that he deserves hell.

2. The dying sinner will confess his sins; but, according to St. Augustine, “The repentance which is sought from a sick man is infirm.” (Serm, xxxvii. de Temp.) And St. Jerome says, that of a hundred thousand sinners who continue till death in the state of sin, scarcely one shall be saved. St. Vincent Ferrer writes, that it is a greater miracle to save such sinners, than to raise the dead to life. They shall feel convinced of the evil they have done; they will wish, but shall not be able, to detest it. Antiochus understood the malice of his sins when he said: “Now I remember the evils that I have done in Jerusalem.” (1 Mach. vi. 12.) He remembered his sins, but did not detest them. He died in despair and oppressed with great sadness, saying: “Behold, I perish with great grief in a strange land” (v. 13). According to St. Fulgentius, the same

happened to Saul at the hour of death: he remembered his sins; he dreaded the punishment which they deserved; but he did not detest them.

3. Oh! how difficult is it for a sinner, who has slept many years in sin, to repent sincerely at the hour of death, when his mind is darkened, and his heart hardened! “His heart shall be as hard as a stone, and as firm as a smith’s anvil.” (Job xli. 15.) During life, instead of yielding to the graces and calls of God, he became more obdurate, as the anvil is hardened by repeated strokes of the hammer. “A hard heart shall fare evil at the last.” (Eccl. iii. 27.) By loving sin till death, he has loved the danger of his damnation, and therefore God will justly permit him to perish in the danger in which he wished to live till death.

4. St. Augustine says, that he who is abandoned by sin before he abandons it, will scarcely detest it as he ought at the hour of death; for he will then detest it, not through a hatred of sin, but through necessity. But how shall he be able to hate from his heart the sins which he has loved till death? He must love the enemy whom till then he has hated, and he must hate the person whom he has till that moment loved. Oh! What mountains must he pass! He shall probably meet with a fate similar to that of a certain person, who kept in confinement a great number of wild beasts in order to let them loose on the enemies who might assail him. But the wild beasts, as soon as he unchained them, instead of attacking his enemies, devoured himself. When the sinner will wish to drive away his iniquities, they shall cause his destruction, either by complacency in objects till then loved, or by despair of pardon at the sight of their numbers and enormity. “Evils shall catch the unjust man unto destruction.” (Ps. cxxxix. 12.) St. Bernard says, that at death the sinner shall see himself chained and bound by his sins. “We are your works; we will not desert you.” We will not leave you; we will accompany you to judgment, and will be your companions for all eternity in hell.

Second Point. The dying sinner shall be tortured by the assaults of the devils.

5. “The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time.” (Apoc. xii. 12.) At death the devil exerts all his powers to secure the soul that is about to leave this world; for he knows, from the symptoms of the disease, that he has but little time to gain her for eternity. The Council of Trent teaches that Jesus Christ has left us the sacrament of Extreme Unction as a most powerful defence against the temptations of the devil at the hour of death. And the holy council adds, that there is no time in

which the enemy combats against us with so much violence in order to effect our damnation, and to make us despair of the divine mercy, as at the end of life. (Sess. 14, cap. ix. Doctr. De Sacr. Extr. Unct.)

6. Oh! How terrible are the assaults and snares of the devil against the souls of dying persons, even though they have led a holy life! After his recovery from a most severe illness, the holy king Eleazar said, that the temptations by which the devil assails men at death, can be conceived only by him who has felt them. We read in the life of St. Andrew Avelliuo, that in his agony he had so fierce a combat with hell, that all the religious present were seized with trembling. They perceived that, in consequence of the agitation, his face swelled, and became black, all his members trembled, and a flood of tears gushed from his eyes. All began to weep through compassion, and were filled with terror at the sight of a saint dying in such a manner. But they were afterwards consoled, when they saw that as soon as an image of most holy Mary was held before him, he became perfectly calm, and breathed forth his blessed soul with great joy.

7. Now, if this happens to the saints, what shall become of poor sinners, who have lived in sin till death? At that awful moment the devil does not come alone to tempt them in a thousand ways, in order to bring them to eternal perdition, but he calls companions to his assistance. "Their house shall be filled with serpents." (Isa. xiii. 21.) When a Christian is about to leave this world, his house is filled with devils, who unite together in order to effect his ruin. "All her persecutors have taken her in the midst of straits." (Lamen. i. 3.) All his enemies will encompass him in the straits of death. One shall say: Be not afraid; you shall not die of this sickness! Another will say: You have been for so many years deaf to the calls of God, and can you now expect that he will save you? Another will ask: How can you repair the frauds of your past life, and the injuries you have done to your neighbour in his property and character? Another shall ask: What hope can there be for you? Do you not see that all your confessions have been null that they have been made without true sorrow, and without a firm purpose of amendment? How can you repair them with this heart, which you feel so hard? Do you not see that you are lost? And in the midst of these straits and attacks of despair, the dying sinner, full of agitation and confusion, must pass into eternity. "The people shall be troubled and they shall pass." (Job xxxiv 20.)

Third Point. The dying sinner shall be tortured by the fears of eternal death.

8. Miserable the sick man who takes to his bed in the state of mortal sin! He that lives in sin till death shall die in sin. “You shall die in your sin.”(John viii. 21.) It is true that, in whatsoever hour the sinner is converted, God promises to pardon him; but to no sinner has God promised the grace of conversion at the hour of death. “Seek the Lord while he may be found.” (Isa. IV. 6.) Then, there is for some sinners a time when they shall seek God and shall not find him. “You shall seek me, and shall not find me.” (John vii. 34.) The unhappy beings will go to confession at the hour of death; they will promise and weep, and ask mercy of God, but without knowing what they do. A man who sees himself under the feet of a foe pointing a dagger to his throat, will shed tears, ask pardon, and promise to serve his enemy as a slave during the remainder of his life. But, will the enemy believe him? No; he will feel convinced that his words are not sincere that his object is to escape from his hands, and that, should he be pardoned, he will become more hostile than ever. In like manner, how can God pardon the dying sinner, when he sees that all his acts of sorrow, and all his promises, proceed not from the heart, but from a dread of death and of approaching damnation.

9. In the recommendation of the departing soul, the assisting priest prays to the Lord, saying: “Recognize, O Lord, thy creature.” But God answers: I know that he is my creature; but, instead of regarding me as his Creator, he has treated me as an enemy. The priest continues his prayer, and says: “Remember not his past iniquities.” I would, replies the Lord, pardon all the past sins of his youth; but he has continued to despise me till this moment the very hour of his death. “They have turned their back upon me, and not their face: and, in the time of affliction, they will say: Arise, and deliver us. Where are the gods which thou hast made thee? Let them rise and deliver thee.” (Jer. ii. 27, 28.) You, says the Lord, have turned your back upon me till death; “and do you now want me to deliver you from vengeance? Invoke your own gods the creatures, the riches, the friends you loved more than you loved me. Call them now to come to your assistance, and to save you from hell, which is open to receive you. It now justly belongs to me to take vengeance on the insults you have offered me. You have despised my threats against obstinate sinners, and have paid no regard to them. “Revenge is mine, and I will repay them in due time, that their foot may slide.” (Deut. xxxii. 35.) The time of my vengeance is now arrived; it is but just to execute it.

This is precisely what happened to a certain person in Madrid, who

led a wicked life, but, at the sight of the unhappy death of a companion, went to confession, and resolved to enter a strict religious order. But, in consequence of having neglected to put his resolution into immediate execution, he relapsed into his former irregularities. Being reduced to great want, he wandered about the world, and fell sick at Lima. From the hospital in which he took refuge he sent for a confessor, and promised again to change his life, and to enter religion. But, having recovered from his illness, he returned to his wickedness; and, behold! The vengeance of God fell upon him. One day, his confessor, who was a missionary, in passing over a mountain, heard a noise, which appeared to be the howling of a wild beast. He drew near the place from which the noise proceeded, and saw a dying man, half rotten, and howling through despair. He addressed to him some words of consolation. The sick man, opening his eyes, recognized the missionary, and said: Have you, too, come to be a witness of the justice of God? I am the man who made my confession in the hospital of Lima. I then promised to change my life, but have not done so; and now I die in despair. And thus the miserable man, amid these acts of despair, breathed forth his unhappy soul. These facts are related by Father Charles Bovio (part iii., example 9).

10. Let us conclude the discourse. Tell me, brethren, were a person in sin seized with apoplexy, and instantly deprived of his senses, what sentiments of pity would you feel at seeing him die in this state; without the sacraments, and without signs of repentance! Is not he a fool, who, when he has time to be reconciled with God, continues in sin, or returns to his sins, and thus exposes himself to the danger of dying suddenly, and of dying in sin? "At what hour you think not," says Jesus Christ, "the Son of Man will come," (Luke xiii. 40.) An unprovided death, which has happened to so many, may also happen to each of us. And it is necessary to understand, that all who lead a bad life, meet with an unprovided death, though their last illness may allow them some time to prepare for eternity; for the days of that mortal illness are days of darkness, days of confusion, in which it is difficult, and even morally impossible, to adjust a conscience burdened with many sins. Tell me, brethren, if you were now at the point of death, given over by physicians, and in the last agony, how ardently would you desire another month, or another week, to settle the accounts you must render to God! And God gives you this time. He calls you, and warns you of the danger of damnation to which you are exposed. Give yourself, then, instantly to God. What do you wait for? Will you wait till he

sends you to hell? “Walk whilst you have light.” (John xii. 35.) Avail yourselves of this time and this light, which God gives you at this moment, and now, while it is in your power, repent of all your past sins; for, a time shall come when you will be no longer able to avert the punishment which they deserve.

The Fewness of the Saved – Most Christians Go to Hell

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST – ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

St. Alphonsus ora pro nobis!

Christ was clear that most people don't make it to heaven, despite the fact that most people think to the contrary. One of the great deceptions from the devil is that God is so merciful that He will not send people to hell. The fact is people send themselves there because they don't truly love God in word and deed. St. Theresa of Avila said most priests go to hell. St. Chrysostom said the road to hell is paved with the skulls of bishops. I submit that in all probability many if not most of the popes even went to hell because of their thirst for power, greed, or luxury. If you want to be among the few that are saved, then you must live like the very few that are saved. Below are those statements found in the Holy Bible and the great men of the Church that teach the fewness of the saved.

First, the Holy Scriptures:

New Testament:

Lord, are there few that are saved? But he said to them: Strive to enter by the narrow gate; for many, I tell you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able. **(St. Luke 13:23-24)**

Enter ye in at the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate and how strait is the way that leads to life, and few there are that find it! **(St. Matthew 7:13-14)**

Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into exterior darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called but few are chosen. **(St. Matthew 22:13-14)**

If the just man shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly man and the sinner appear? **(I St. Peter 4:18)**

Old Testament:

And they [...] shall be so few that they shall easily be counted, and a child shall write them down. **(Isaiah 10:19)**

And it shall be as when a man gathers in the harvest which remains. [...] And the fruit thereof that shall be left shall be as a single cluster of grapes; and as the shaking of the olive tree: two or three berries on the top of the bough, of four or five on the top of the tree, says the Lord, the God of Israel. **(Isaiah 17:5-6)**

For thus it shall be in the midst of the earth, in the midst of the people, as though a few olives that remain should be shaken out of the olive tree, or grapes when the vintage is ended. **(Isaias 24:13)**

The holy man is perished from off the earth, and there is no one upright amongst men: they all lie in wait for blood, every one. [...] He who is best among them is like a brier, and he who is righteous as the thorn. **(Micah 7:2,4)**

The Popes who are Saints:

Pope St. Gregory the Great (540-604): There are many who arrive at the faith, but few who are led into the heavenly kingdom. Behold how many are gathered here for today's Feast-Day: we fill the church from wall to wall. Yet who knows how few they are who shall be numbered in that chosen company of the Elect? (On the Gospels, Homily 19)

The more the wicked abound, so much the more must we suffer with them in patience; for on the threshing floor few are the grains carried into the barns, but high are the piles of chaff burned with fire. (Gregory: Homily 38)

The Ark, which in the midst of the Flood was a symbol of the Church, was wide below and narrow above; and, at the summit, measured only a single cubit. [...] It was wide where the animals were, narrow where men lived: for the Holy Church is indeed wide in the number of those who are carnal-minded, narrow in the number of those who are spiritual. (Gregory: Homily 38:8)

They who are to be saved as Saints [that is, those who are called to a higher state of perfection by God], and [yet] wish to be saved as imperfect souls, shall not be saved. (Gregory: Dignities and Duties of the Priest, 97)

Pope St. Pius X (1835-1914): Oh, Jesus, Divine Redeemer of souls, behold how great is the multitude of those who still sleep in the darkness of error! Reckon up the number of those who stray to the edge of the precipice. Consider the throngs of the poor, the hungry, the ignorant, and the feeble who groan in their abandoned condition. Oh Lord, our sins darken our understanding, and hide from us the blessing of loving Thee as Thou dost merit. Enlighten our minds with a ray of Thy divine light. Thou art the Friend, the Redeemer, and the Father of the one who turns penitent to Thy Sacred Heart. Amen. (Raccolta, Boston: Benzinger Bros., 1957, 659)

Saints who are Doctors of the Church

St. Jerome (347-420): So that you will better appreciate the meaning of Our Lord's words, and perceive more clearly how few the Elect are, note that Christ did not say that those who walked in the path to Heaven are few in number, but that there were few who found that narrow way. It is as though the Saviour intended to say: The path leading to Heaven is so narrow and so rough, so overgrown, so dark and difficult to discern, that there are many who never find it their whole life long. And those who do find it are constantly exposed to the danger of deviating from it, of mistaking their way, and unwittingly wandering away from it, because it is so irregular and overgrown. (Jerome: "Commentary on Matthew...Many begin well, but there are few who persevere.)

St. John Chrysostom (347-407): What do you think? How many of the inhabitants of this city may perhaps be saved? What I am about to tell you is very terrible, yet I will not conceal it from you. Out of this thickly populated city with its thousands of inhabitants not one hundred people will be saved. I even doubt whether there will be as many as that! ...I do not speak rashly, but as I feel and think. I do not think that many bishops are saved, but that those who perish are far more numerous. (John: "To the People of Antioch", Homily 40 Quercy "Redemption and Grace", ch.3, Denzinger 318)

St. Augustine (354-430): Take care not to resemble the multitude whose knowledge of God's will only condemns them to more severe punishment.

It is certain that few are saved. Sermon 111; also (Against Cresconius)

If you wish to imitate the multitude, then you shall not be among the few who shall enter in by the narrow gate. (Sermon 224:1)

The Lord called the world a "field" and all the faithful who draw near to him "wheat." All through the field, and around the threshing-floor, there is both

wheat and chaff. But the greater part is chaff; the lesser part is wheat, for which is prepared a barn not a fire. [...] The good also are many, but in comparison with the wicked the good are few. Many are the grains of wheat, but compared with the chaff, the grains are few. (Against Cresconius)

'Not all, nor even a majority, are saved. . . They are indeed many, if regarded by themselves, but they are few in comparison with the far larger number of those who shall be punished with the devil.' ...'Beyond a doubt the elect are few.'

St. Anselm (1033-1109): If thou wouldst be certain of being in the number of the elect, strive to be one of the few, not of the many. And if thou wouldst be quite sure of thy salvation, strive to be among the fewest of the few... Do not follow the great majority of mankind, but follow those who enter upon the narrow way, who renounce the world, who give themselves to prayer, and who never relax their efforts by day or by night, that they may attain everlasting blessedness. (Fr. Martin Von Cochem, *The Four Last Things*, p. 221. Anselm, *Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*)

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274): There are a select few who are saved. (*Summa Theologica* I, Qu.23, art.7, ad 3.) Those who are saved are in the minority. (*Summa Theologica* I q.23, art.8, ad.3)

'Since their eternal happiness, consisting in the vision of God, exceeds the common state of nature, and especially in so far as this is deprived of grace through the corruption of original sin, those who are saved are in the minority. In this especially, however, appears the mercy of God, that He has chosen some for that salvation, from which very many in accordance with the common course and tendency of nature fall short.'

St. Alphonsus Maria Liquori (1696-1787): The greater number of men still say to God: Lord we will not serve Thee; we would rather be slaves of the devil, and condemned to Hell, than be Thy servants. Alas! The greatest number, my Jesus – we may say nearly all – not only do not love Thee, but offend Thee and despise Thee. How many countries there are in which there are scarcely any Catholics, and all the rest either infidels or heretics! And all of them are certainly on the way to being lost. (*The Incarnation, Birth and Infancy of Jesus Christ*, 292.)

The greater part of men choose to be damned rather than to love Almighty God. (*The Way of Salvation and Perfection*, 311)

All infidels and heretics are surely on the way to being lost. What an obligation

we owe God! for causing us to be born not only after the coming of Jesus Christ, but also in countries where the true faith reigns! I thank Thee, O Lord, for this. Woe to me if, after so many transgressions, it had been my fate to live in the midst of infidels or heretics! (The Incarnation, Birth and Infancy, 291-2)

We owe God a deep regret of gratitude for the purely gratuitous gift of the true faith with which he has favoured us. How many are the infidels, heretics and schismatics who do not enjoy comparable happiness? The earth is full of them and they are all lost! (Instructions on the Commandments and Sacraments, 66, no. 19)

What is the number of those who love Thee, O God? How few they are! The Elect are much fewer than the damned! Alas! The greater portion of mankind lives in sin unto the devil, and not unto Jesus Christ. O Saviour of the world, I thank Thee for having called and permitted us to live in the true faith which the Holy Roman Catholic Church teaches. [...] But alas, O my Jesus! How small is the number of those who live in this holy faith! Oh, God! The greater number of men lie buried in the darkness of infidelity and heresy. Thou hast humbled Thyself to death, to the death of the cross, for the salvation of men, and these ungrateful men are unwilling even to know Thee. Ah, I pray Thee, O omnipotent God, O sovereign and infinite Good, make all men know and love Thee! (On the Council of Trent)

St. Teresa, as the Roman Rota attests, never fell into any mortal sin; but still Our Lord showed her the place prepared for her in Hell; not because she deserved Hell, but because, had she not risen from the state of lukewarmness in which she lived, she would in the end have lost the grace of God and been damned. (Dignities and Duties of the Priest, 90)

In the Great Deluge in the days of Noah, nearly all mankind perished, eight persons alone being saved in the Ark. In our days a deluge, not of water but of sins, continually inundates the earth, and out of this deluge very few escape. Scarcely anyone is saved. (Sermons)

The saints are few, but we must live with the few if we would be saved with the few. O God, too few indeed they are; yet among those few I wish to be! (The Holy Eucharist, 494)

We were so fortunate to be born in the bosom of the Roman Church, in Christian and Catholic kingdoms, a grace that has not been granted to the greater part of men, who are born among idolaters, Mohammedans, or heretics. [...] How thankful we ought to be, then, to Jesus Christ for the gift of faith! What

would have become of us if we had been born in Asia, in Africa, in America, or in the midst of heretics and schismatics? He who does not believe is lost. He who does not believe shall be condemned. And thus, probably, we also would have been lost. (The Incarnation, Birth and Infancy, 153, 156)

The common opinion is that the greater part of adults is lost. (Preparation for Death, 174)

All persons desire to be saved, but the greater part, because they will not adopt the means of being saved, fall into sin and are lost. [...] In fact, the Elect are much fewer than the damned, for the reprobate are much more numerous than the Elect. (Preparation for Death, 407-8; The Great Means of Salvation and Perfection, 129)

Great Saints

St. Justin the Martyr (100-165): “The majority of men shall not see God, excepting those who live justly, purified by righteousness and by every other virtue.” (Justin: First Apology, XXI)

St. Francis Xavier (1506-1552): “Ah, how many souls lose Heaven and are cast into Hell!” (Francis: Letters and Shorter Works)

St. Vincent de Paul (1580-1660): “Ah! A great many persons live constantly in the state of damnation!” (Vincent: Voice of the Saints, Francis W. Johnston, London: Burnes and Oats, 1965.)

St. Louis Marie de Montfort (1673-1716): “Be one of the small number who find the way to life, and enter by the narrow gate into Heaven. Take care not to follow the majority and the common herd, so many of whom are lost. Do not be deceived; there are only two roads: one that leads to life and is narrow; the other that leads to death and is wide. There is no middle way.” (The Love of Eternal Wisdom, trans. A. Sommers, SMM, Bayshore, NY: Montfort Publications, 1960, p.133)

“The number of the elect is so small – so small – that, were we to know how small it is, we would faint away with grief: one here and there, scattered up and down the world! ...The number of the elect is so small that were God to assemble them together, He would cry to them, as He did of old, by the mouth of His prophet, "Gather yourselves together, one by one" - one from this province, one from that kingdom.’

St. John Marie Vianney (1786-1859): “The number of the saved is as few as the number of grapes left after the vineyard-pickers have passed.” (John Mary:

GOH p.37)

“Nothing afflicts the heart of Jesus so much as to see all His sufferings of no avail to so many.” (Thoughts of the Cure d’Ars, Rockford, IL: TAN, 1984)

“We shall find out at the day of judgment that the greater number of Christians who are lost were damned because they did not know their own religion.” (Sermons of the Cure of Ars, page 99)

'Shall we all be saved? Shall we go to Heaven? Alas, my children, we do not know at all! But I tremble when I see so many souls lost these days. See, they fall into Hell as leaves fall from the trees at the approach of winter.'

Lucia Santos of Fatima (1907-1958?): “Taking into account the behaviour of mankind, only a small part of the human race will be saved.” (Lucy: The Secret of Fatima: Fact and Legend, Joaquin Maria Alonso, CMF, Cambridge: Ravensgate Press, 1982, p.106)

“Taking into account the present development of humanity, only a limited number of the human race will be saved [...] many will be lost.” (Lucy: Fatima, The Great Sign, Francis Johnston, Rockford, IL: TAN, 1980, p.36)

Jacinta Marto of Fatima (1910-1920): “Lucia found Jacinta sitting alone, still and very pensive, gazing at nothing. ‘What are you thinking of, Jacinta?’ ‘Of the war that is going to come. So many people are going to die. And almost all of them are going to Hell.’ (Our Lady of Fatima, William Walsh p. 94; p. 92 in some versions)

Venerable Mary of Agreda: *‘That those who walk in the way of salvation are the smaller number is due to the vice and depraved habits imbibed in youth and nourished in childhood. By these means Lucifer has hurled into Hell so great a number of souls, and continues thus to hurl them into Hell every day, casting so many nations from abyss to abyss of darkness and errors, such as are contained in the heresies and false sects of the infidels.’*

Great Forgotten Saints

St. Arsenius (Egyptian deacon 345-450): “Brethren, the just man shall scarcely be saved. What, then, will become of the sinner?” (Arsenius: Life of,)

St. Regimius (437-533): “Among adults there are few saved because of sins of the flesh. [...] With the exception of those who die in childhood, most men will be damned.” (Regimus: Book 1 [with Cyprian])

St. John Climacus (Syrian monk 525-600): “Live with the few if you want

to reign with the few.” (John: “Ladder to Paradise”)

Blessed James of Voragine (Dominican, 1230-1298): “One day, St. Macarius found a skull and asked it whose head it had been. “A pagan’s!” it replied. “And where is your soul?” he asked. “In Hell!” came the reply. Macarius then asked the skull if its place was very deep in Hell. “As far down as the earth is lower than Heaven!” “And are there any other souls lodged even lower?” “Yes! The souls of the Jews!” “And even lower than the Jews?” “Yes! The souls of bad Christians who were redeemed with the blood of Christ and held their privilege so cheaply!” (The Golden Legend)

St. John of the Cross (1542-1591): “Behold how many there are who are called, and how few who are chosen! And behold, if you have no care for yourself, your perdition is more certain than your amendment, especially since the way that leads to eternal life is so narrow.” (John of the Cross: Complete Works)

St. Robert Southwell (1561-1595): “Oh how much are the worldlings deceived that rejoice in the time of weeping, and make their place of imprisonment a palace of pleasure; that consider the examples of the saints as follies, and their end as dishonourable; that think to go to Heaven by the wide way that leadeth only to perdition!” (Robert: Letters From the Saints, op. cit. 19)

St. John Eudes (1601-1680): “Get out of the filth of the horrible torrent of this world, the torrent of thorns that is whirling you into the abyss of eternal perdition. ..This torrent is the world, which resembles an impetuous torrent, full of garbage and evil odours, making a lot of noise but flowing swiftly passed, dragging the majority of men into the pit of perdition.” (John Eudes: The Admirable Heart of Mary)

Blessed Sebastian Valfre (1629-1710): “I fear that Last Day, that day of tribulation and anguish, of calamity and misery, of mist and darkness, that Day on which, if the just have reason to fear, how much more should I: an impious, wretched, and ungrateful sinner!” (Sebastian: Letters From the Saints, NY: Hawthorne Books, 1964)

St. Benedict Joseph of Labre (1748-1783): “Yes, indeed, many will be damned; few will be saved... Meditate on the horrors of Hell which will last for eternity because of one easily-committed mortal sin. Try hard to be among the few who are chosen. Think of the eternal flames of Hell, and how few there are that are saved... I was watching souls going down into the abyss as thick and fast as snowflakes falling in the winter mist.” (Life of the Servant of God, Benedict

Joseph Labre)

St. Anthony Mary Claret (1807-1870): "A multitude of souls fall into the depths of Hell, and it is of the faith that all who die in mortal sin are condemned forever and ever. According to statistics, approximately 80,000 persons die every day. How many of these will die in mortal sin, and how many will be condemned! For, as their lives have been, so also will be their end." (Madrid: Library of Christian Authors, 1947)

The Particular Judgment

by St. Alphonsus Liguori

The Eighth Sunday After Pentecost

"Give an account of thy stewardship,"--Luke, xvi. 2

Beloved Christians, of all the goods of nature, of fortune, and of grace, which we have received from God, we are not the masters, neither can we dispose of them, as we please; we are but the administrators of them; and therefore we should employ them according to the will of God, who is our Lord. Hence, at the hour of death, we must render a strict account of them to Jesus Christ, our Judge. "For we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the proper things of the body as he hath done, whether it be good or evil" (2 Cor. v. 10). This is the precise meaning of that "give an account of thy stewardship," in the Gospel of this day. "You are not," says St. Bonaventure, in his comment on these words, "a master, but a steward over the things committed to you; and therefore you are to render an account of them." I will place before your eyes today the rigor of this judgment, which shall be passed on each of us on the last day of our life. Let us consider the terror of the soul, first, when it shall be presented to the judge; secondly, when, it shall be examined; and thirdly, when it shall be condemned.

Terror of the Soul when it shall be presented to the Judge

"**I**t is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment" (Heb. ix. 27.). It is of faith that we shall die, and that after death a judgment shall be passed on all the actions of our life. Now, what shall be the terror of each of us

when we shall be at the point of death, and shall have before our eyes the judgment which must take place the very moment the soul departs from the body? Then shall be decided our doom to eternal life, or to eternal death. At the time of the passage of their souls from this life to eternity, the sight of their past sins, the rigor of God's judgment, and the uncertainty of their eternal salvation, have made the saints tremble. St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi trembled in her sickness, through the fear of judgment; and to her confessor, when he endeavored to give her courage, she said: "Ah! Father, it is a terrible thing to appear before Christ in judgment." After spending so many years in penance in the desert St. Agatha trembled at the hour of death, and said: "What shall become of me when I shall be judged? The venerable Father Louis da Fonte was seized with such a fit of trembling at the thought of the account which he should render to God, that he shook the room in which he lay. The thought of judgment inspired the venerable Juvenal Ancina, Priest of the Oratory, and afterwards Bishop of Saluzzo, with the determination to leave the world. Hearing the Dies Irae sung, and considering the terror of the soul when presented before Jesus Christ, the Judge, he took, and afterwards executed, the resolution of giving himself entirely to God.

*I*t is the common opinion of theologians, that at the very moment and in the very place in which the soul departs from the body, the divine tribunal is erected, the accusation is read, and the sentence is passed by Jesus Christ, the Judge. At this terrible tribunal each of us shall be presented to give an account of all our thoughts, of all our words, and of all our actions. "For we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil" (2 Cor. v. 10). When presented before an earthly judge criminals have been seen to fall into a cold sweat through fear. It is related of Piso, that so great and insufferable was the confusion which he felt at the thought of appearing as a criminal before the senate that he killed himself. How great is the pain of a vassal, or of a son, in appearing before an angry prince or an enraged father, to account for some crime which he has committed! Oh! how much greater shall be the pain and confusion of the soul in standing before Jesus Christ enraged against it for having despised Him during its life! Speaking of judgment, St. Luke says: "Then you shall see the Son of man" (Luke, xxi 27). They shall see Jesus Christ as man, with the same wounds with which He ascended, into heaven. "Great joy of the beholders!" says Robert the Abbot, "a great terror of those who are in expectation!" These wounds shall console the just, and shall terrify the wicked. In them sinners shall see the Redeemer's love for themselves, and their ingratitude to Him.

"Who," says the Prophet Nahum, "can stand before the face of his indignation" (Nah. i. 6)? How great, then, shall be the terror of a soul that finds itself in sin before this judge, the first time it shall see Him, and see him full of wrath! St. Basil says that it shall be tortured more by its shame and confusion than by the very fire of hell."

Philip II. rebuked one of his domestics for having told him a lie. "Is it thus," said the king to him, "you deceive me?" The domestic, after having returned home, died of grief. The Scripture tells us, that when Joseph reproved his brethren, saying "I am Joseph, whom you sold," they were unable to answer through fear, and remained silent. "His brethren could not answer him, being struck with exceeding great fear" (Gen. xlv. 3). Now what answer shall sinners make to Jesus Christ when He shall say to them: I am your Redeemer and your judge, whom you have so much despised. Where shall the miserable beings fly, says St. Augustine, when they shall see an angry Judge above, hell open below, on one side their own sins accusing them, and on the other the devils dragging them to punishment, and their conscience burning them within? "Above shall be an enraged Judge--below, a horrid chaos--on the right, sins accusing him--on the left, demons dragging him to punishment--within, a burning conscience! Whither shall a sinner, beset in this manner, fly?" Perhaps he will cry for mercy? But how, asks Eusebius Emisenus, can he dare to implore mercy, when he must first render an account of his contempt for the mercy which Jesus Christ has shown to him? "With what face will you, who are to be first judged for contempt of mercy, ask for mercy?" But let us come to the rendering of the accounts.

Terror of the Soul when it shall be Examined

As soon as the soul shall be presented before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, he will say to it: Give an account of thy stewardship, render instantly an account of thy entire life. The Apostle tells us, that to be worthy of eternal glory our lives must be found conformable to the life of Jesus Christ. "For whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son; . . . them He also glorified" (Rom. viii. 20). Hence St. Peter has said, that in the judgment of Jesus Christ, the just man who has observed the divine law, has pardoned enemies, has respected the saints, has practiced chastity, meekness, and other virtues, shall scarcely be saved. "The just man shall scarcely be saved" (1 Pet. iv. 18). The Apostle adds: "Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" What shall become of the vindictive and the unchaste, of blasphemers and slanderers? What shall become of those whose entire life is opposed to the life of Jesus Christ?

*I*n the first place, the Judge shall demand of sinners an account of all the blessings and graces which He bestowed on them in order to bring them to salvation, and which they have rendered fruitless. He will demand an account of the years granted to them that they might serve God, and which they have spent in offending Him. He hath called against me the time, He will then demand an account of their sins. Sinners commit sins, and afterwards forget them; but Jesus Christ does not forget them: he keeps, as Job says, all our iniquities numbered, as it were in a bag. "Thou hast scaled up my iniquities, as it were in a bag" (Job, xiv. 17). And He tells us that, on the day of accounts, He will take a lamp to scrutinize all the actions of our life. "And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with lamps". (Soph. i. 12) The lamp, says Mendoza on this passage, penetrates all the corners of the house, that is, God will discover all the defects of our conscience, great and small. According to St. Anselm, an account shall be demanded of every glance of the eyes. And, according to St. Matthew, of every idle word. "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it on the day of judgment" (Matt. xii. 36).

*T*he Prophet Malachy says that as gold is refined by taking away the dross, so on the day of judgment all our actions shall be examined, and every defect which may be discovered shall be punished. "He shall purify the sons of Levi, and shall refine them as gold" (Malach. iii. 3.). Even our justices--that is, our good works, confessions, communions, and prayers shall be examined. "When I shall take a time, I will judge justices" (Ps. lxxiv. 3.). But if every glance, every idle word, and even good works, shall be judged, with what rigor shall immodest expressions, blasphemies, grievous detractions, thefts, and sacrileges be judged? Alas! on that day every soul shall, as St. Jerome says, see, to its own confusion, all the evils which it has done.

*W*eight and balance are judgments of the Lord. In the balance of the Lord a holy life and good works make the scale descend; but nobility, wealth, and science have no weight. Hence, if found innocent, the peasant, the poor, and the ignorant shall be rewarded. But the man of rank, of wealth, or of learning, if found guilty, shall be condemned. "Thou art weighed in the balance," said Daniel to Belthassar, "and art found wanting" (Dan. v. 27). "Neither his gold nor his wealth," says Father Alvarez, "but the king alone was weighed."

*A*t the divine tribunal the poor sinner shall see himself accused by the devil,

who, according to St. Augustine, will recite the words of our profession, and will charge us before our face with all that we have done, will state the day and hour in which we sinned. "He will recite the words of our profession," that is, he will enumerate the promises which we have made to God, and which we afterwards violated. "He will charge us before our face;" he will upbraid us with all our wicked deeds, pointing to the day and hour in which they were committed. And he will, according to St. Cyprian, conclude his accusation by saying: I have suffered neither stripes nor scourges for this man." Lord, I have suffered nothing for this ungrateful sinner, and to make himself my slave he has turned his back on Thee who has endured so much for his salvation, he, therefore, justly belongs to me. Even his angel-guardian will, according to Origen, come forward to accuse him, and will say: "I have labored so many years for his salvation; but he has despised all my admonitions." Thus even friends shall treat with contempt the guilty soul. All her friends have despised her. Her very sins shall, says St. Bernard, accuse her. And they shall say: You have made us; we are your work; we shall not desert you. We are your offspring: we shall not leave you: we shall be your companions in hell for all eternity.

*L*et us now examine the excuses which the sinner will be able to advance. He will say that the evil inclinations of nature had drawn him into sin. But he shall be told that, if concupiscence impelled him to sins, it did not oblige him to commit them; and that, if he had recourse to God, he should have received from Him grace to resist every temptation. For this purpose Jesus Christ has left us the sacraments: but when we do not make use of them, we can complain only of ourselves. But, says the Redeemer, now they have no excuse for their sin. To excuse himself, the sinner shall also say that the devil tempted him to sin. But, as St. Augustine says, "The enemy is bound like a dog in chains, and can bite only him who has united himself to him with a deadly security." The devil can bark, but cannot bite unless you adhere and listen to him. Hence the saint adds: "See how foolish is the man whom a dog, loaded with chains, bites." Perhaps he will advance his bad habits as an excuse; but this shall not stand; for the same St. Augustine says that though it is difficult to resist the force of an evil habit, "if any one does not desert himself, he will conquer it with the divine assistance." If a man does not abandon himself to sin, and invokes God's aid, he will overcome evil habits. The Apostle tells us that the Lord does not permit us to be tempted above our strength. "God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able" (I Cor. x. 13).

"*F*or what shall I do," said Job, "when God shall rise to judge me? and when He

shall examine, what shall I answer Him" (Job. xxxi. 14)? What answer shall the sinner give to Jesus Christ? How can he, who sees himself so clearly convicted, give an answer? He shall be covered with confusion, and shall remain silent like the man found without the nuptial garment. "But he was silent" (Matth. xxii. 12). His very sins shall shut the sinner's mouth. "And all in iniquity shall stop her mouth" (Ps. cvi. 42). There, says St. Thomas of Villanova, there shall be no intercessor to whom the sinner can have recourse. "There, there is no opportunity of sinning; there, no intercessor, no friend, no father shall assist." Who shall then save you? Is it God? But how, asks St. Basil, can you expect salvation from Him whom you have despised? "Who shall deliver you? Is it God whom you have insulted?" Alas! the guilty soul that leaves this world in sin is condemned by itself before the Judge pronounces sentence. Let us come to the sentence of the Judge.

Terror of the Soul when it shall be Condemned

How great shall be the joy of the just man when, at death, he hears from Jesus Christ these sweet words: "Well done, good and faithful servant; because, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things. Enter thou into the joy of the Lord" (Matth. xxv. 21). Equally great shall be the anguish and despair of a guilty soul that shall see itself driven away by the Judge with the following words: "Depart from Me, thou cursed, into everlasting fire" (Ibid. 41). Oh, what a terrible thunderclap shall that sentence be to it! "On, how frightfully," says the Carthusian, "shall that thunder resound!" Eusebius writes that the terror of sinners at hearing their condemnation shall be so great that, if they could, they would die again. "The wicked shall be seized with such terror at the sight of the judge pronouncing sentence that, if they were not immortal, they should die a second time."

But, brethren, let us, before the termination of this sermon, make some reflections which will be profitable to us. St. Thomas of Villanova says that some listen to discourses on the judgment and condemnation of the wicked with as little concern as if they themselves were secure against these things, or as if the day of judgment were never to arrive for them. The saint then asks: Is it not great folly to entertain security in so perilous an affair? There are some, says St. Augustine, who, though they live in sin, cannot imagine that God will send them to hell. "Will God," they say, "really condemn us?" Brethren, adds the saint, do not speak thus. So many of the damned did not believe that they should be sent to hell; but the end came, and, according to the threat of Ezechiel, they have been cast into that place of darkness: "The end is come, the end is come, . . . and

I will send My wrath upon thee, and I will judge thee." (Ezech. vii. 3, 6)

Sinners, perhaps vengeance is at hand for you, and still you laugh and sleep in sin. Who will not tremble at the words of the Baptist: "For now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree, therefore, that doth not yield good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire" (Matth. iii. 10). He says that every tree that does not bring forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire; and he promises that, with regard to the trees, which represent sinners, the axe is already laid to the roots that is, chastisement is at hand. Dearly beloved brethren, let us follow the counsel of the Holy Ghost—"Before judgment, prepare thee justice" (Exclus. xvii. 19). Let us adjust our accounts before the day of accounts. Let us seek God now that we can find Him; for the time shall come when we will wish but shall not be able to find Him. "You shall seek Me, and shall not find Me" (John. vii. 31). "Before judgment," says St. Augustine, "the Judge can be appeased, but not in judgment." By a change of life we can now appease the anger of Jesus Christ, and recover His grace; but when He shall judge, and find us in sin, He must execute justice, and we shall be lost.

The following prayers are taken from
"Visits to Jesus in the Tabernacle" by Fr.
Francis Xavier Lasance, 1898

A Prayer for Final Perseverance

*E*tternal Father, relying on the promise made by Thy divine Son, "Whatever ye ask of the Father in My name, He will give it to you;" I ask of Thee, in the name of Jesus, the graces of holy perseverance and of loving Thee with my whole heart. For the future, grant me the grace of always perfectly accomplishing Thy holy will.

Prayer to be Preserved from Sudden and Unforeseen Death

*M*y soul, cease from sinning; think on thy sudden passage from life to eternity. While there is still time, be converted; cry out to the Lord, saying: My God, have pity on me--O most merciful Lord Jesus, by Thine agony and bloody sweat, and by Thy death, deliver me, I pray Thee, from sudden and unprepared death.

O most gentle Lord Jesus, by Thy cruel and ignominious scourging and crowning with thorns, by Thy cross and bitter passion, and by Thine own great goodness, I humbly pray Thee let me not die unprepared and pass from this life without the holy sacraments. Jesus, my best beloved, my Lord! by all Thy travails and all Thy sorrows, by Thy precious blood, and by Thy most holy wounds, and by those last words spoken by Thee upon the cross: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and again, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," most ardently I pray Thee free me from a sudden death.

O God, in Whose sight every heart trembles and every conscience is awed! show forth Thy mercy upon us Thy suppliants, that we, who trust not in the excellence of our own merit, may never experience Thy judgments by an unprovided death, but may receive Thy pardon through Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Particular Judgment

*T*his takes place at the moment of death--"It is appointed unto man once to die, and after death, the judgment" (Heb. ix. 27). There is a similarity between the end of the world and the death of the individual: (a) both are certain--"my words shall not pass" (Luke xxi. 33) (b) the time of both is uncertain--"the day and the hour no man knoweth" (Matt. xxiv. 36); (c) both are accompanied by temptations and tribulations--"there shall arise false Christs," etc., "the sun shall be darkened," etc. (Matt. xxiv. 24, 29). The similarity between the particular and the general judgments: (a) it is the same person with his whole life who is judged in both cases; (b) the sentence is irrevocable in both cases.

Sermon by Rev. P. Hehel, S.J.

Taking into contemplation today the particular judgment, let us ask:

I. When shall this particular judgment take place?

II Where shall it be held?

I. *W*e must know before all that there will be a twofold judgment,-- a particular and a general judgment. God will hold for every man a particular or secret judgment. This is the teaching of the Apostle, as well as the teaching of the holy

Fathers. St. Thomas says clearly, "Besides the particular judgment, which takes place directly after the death of every man, there will also be a general judgment." And again: "As soon as the soul leaves the human body, it is irrevocably assigned to an abiding place. It receives its judgment-- either for life or for death, according to its works." All its thoughts, words, and actions during life will be judged in accordance with the way they presented themselves to God at the moment when they happened.

Consequently, this particular judgment takes place at the time when we depart from this life, at the very moment when the soul is separated from the body. "It is a most reasonable and wholesome belief," writes St. Augustine, "that the souls are judged at the time when they are separated from their bodies, before they come to that judgment by which they will be judged again, after they have been reunited with their former bodies." To prove this, the same holy father relates the parable from the Gospel, in which Christ tells of the rich Dives and the poor Lazarus. The Scripture says of these two, that the rich man, as soon as he died, was thrown into hell, while the pious Lazarus was, after his death, borne by the angels into the bosom of Abraham. From this St. Augustine draws the conclusion, that undoubtedly it cannot depend upon the mere will of man after death whether he shall go to heaven--if this were so they would all want to go there--and it is just as reasonable that nobody would, of his own free will, go into hell and subject himself to the thralldom of the devil. If, then, the rich Dives was thrown into hell immediately after death and the pious Lazarus was taken to heaven, it follows, necessarily, that immediately after death the soul of every man will be judged in particular, and after this judgment be assigned either to heaven or to hell. If this judgment was postponed until the last day or the day of the general judgment, then on the one hand the just souls would be left in unceasing anxiety, not knowing whether they would pass the judgment, and on the other hand the godless would still be left in the hope of being saved. Therefore, for a long time there would be no difference between the two; both would linger between fear and hope, as neither of them would be sure whether they were to be saved or lost.

...Therefore, it is certain that at the moment of our death our soul will be judged in accordance with our merits, judged for all eternity. Eternal life or eternal death will be the unalterable decision. Oh, what a terrible moment, upon which the whole of eternity depends! Who would not quake and tremble at this and keep it unceasingly before his mind, as no one can tell the day or hour of his death, and therefore does not know how soon he may be called before this judgment. Therefore our future judge admonishes us kind-heartedly and

cordially, when He says, "Watch ye therefore, for you know not when the Lord of the house cometh: at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning" (Mark xiii. 35). So much of the time when this particular judgment will take place.

II. *As* regards the place where this judgment shall be passed, we must not think that the souls are carried up to heaven and there placed before the throne of God. No, a stained soul will never, in all eternity, have the happiness of feeling even for one moment the delights of heavenly joys; each soul will receive its judgment at the same place where the body happened to be at the time of death, be it on water or on land, in bed or in the street, on the mountain or in the valley, in the fields or in the house. For God is everywhere. For this reason can He, without calling the soul into heaven or having to descend Himself from heaven, pronounce His judgment over each one for eternal life or death at the place where it became separated from the body and make the soul cognizant of such judgment.

At this judgment Jesus Christ shall appear as Judge, the soul as the accused, the angel who was its guardian as advocate, and the devil as accuser. The latter will bring forward everything that the soul had committed during its life on earth in thought, word, or deed against God, against itself and against its neighbors, either in intent or in reality. He will--and this should be borne well in mind--bring forward not only the evil which has been committed, but also the good deeds which the soul might have done and which it left undone or did badly. When St. Charles Borromeo was on his death-bed, he said to the priest who attended him, "Reverend brother, I am afraid to appear before the judgment more on account of the good which I have left undone than the evil I have done." And yet, what a pious and holy life had Borromeo led! How many good deeds this man had done during his whole life! Remember, often, that you will be accused by the devil and condemned by Christ not only for sins committed, but also for good deeds omitted. Against this accuser there is given to each soul an advocate, that angel, namely, who was its true companion and guardian during its pilgrimage through life. He on his side will also bring forward everything good the soul has done. Every good thought, every sigh, breath, or step, which was done with a pure intention for the love of God or our neighbor will be recorded. He will try to cover the imperfections of these works with the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, and will, to frustrate the efforts of the accuser and move the judge to mercy, remind the latter of the most precious blood which He has shed for each accused soul.

*T*he witnesses at this judgment will be the clear and unerring perception which each soul will have in the most perfect degree. As clear as the sun will appear before its eyes the actions of a lifetime. All covering will be withdrawn and the soul will see all its words, its works and thoughts, its good and evil deed in their true light as they appeared in the eyes of God. It will see, whether it is rich in merits or poor, whether it is worthy of heaven or deserving of hell. In this clear self-recognition one's own conscience will give testimony either for or against, and convicted by its own conscience, the soul will not be able to offer excuses but will make a most complete confession. Thereupon, the Judge, who is none else than He who was our Redeemer, will by virtue of His Divine power, His omniscience and justice, render without delay the irrevocable sentence, which will be life or death for all eternity. If we are declared as blessed, we shall also be deemed worthy of heaven on the second and general judgment day; but if the verdict decrees our eternal perdition, we shall receive the same sentence at the last judgment.

"*O*h, how dreadful it is to fall into the hands of the living God." And with each minute this terrible moment comes nearer and nearer. Every minute may bring us the verdict, "Eternal life "or "Eternal death." For we do not know whether we shall not be in the next moment a prey of death. With great earnestness St. James reminds us, therefore, "Behold the judge standeth before the door" (James v. 9).

*Y*es, my dear friends, He stands before our door, before your door, and before my door! As soon as he enters, the time of activity is passed and He demands an accounting of our lives. What will be our fate?

*I*n conclusion, I will mention to you three thoughts of the holy abbot Elias to ponder over. He used to say: "There are three things I am afraid of. The first is when my soul will separate from my body; the second, when I shall have to appear before God my Judge; and the third, when judgment will be passed on me." Remember well these three points. He who will think over them several times a day will lose all desire to do evil.

The Catholic View of Hell

“But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment.” —*Matthew 12:36* “Amen I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing.” —*Matthew 5:26*

The Fear of Hell Saves Souls

Neither is that horrible place without a most blessed result on the salvation of many souls, through the holy and salutary fear which it breeds in them and the loose and low notions of God which it corrects in the unthinking. When Our Lord showed Sister Francesca of the Blessed Sacrament, a Spanish Carmelite, the loss of a soul, and several times in a vision compelled her positively to study the separate tortures of that place, He upbraided her for weeping: “Francesca! Why weepest thou?” She fell prostrate at His sacred feet and said, “Lord! For the damnation of that soul, and the manner in which it has been damned.” He vouchsafed to reply, “Daughter! It hath chosen to damn itself; I have given it many helps of grace that it might be saved, but it would not profit by them. I am pleased with your compassion, but I would have you rather love My justice.” And another time, when she was compelled to fix her gaze upon those pains, the Angels said to her, “O Francesca! Strive hard after the holy fear of God!”

Who can doubt that there are, at this hour, thousands and tens of thousands in the bliss of Heaven who never would have been there if there had been no Hell. Alas for the reproach it is to the unloving hearts of men, but after all, the Cross of Christ has had no better help on earth than the unbearable fire of Hell. Verily it is well for our own sakes to think of that horrid place! As truly as fair France lies across the Channel, as truly as the sun is shining on the white walls, so truly is there such a place as Hell, all alive this hour with the multitudinous life of countless agonies and innumerable gradations of despair. Save the Blessed in Heaven, none live so keen or conscious a life as those millions of ruined souls. It is not impossible that we may go there too. It is not impossible that we may have sent some there already. When we pass along the streets, we must often see those who will inhabit there forever. There are some there now who were not there an hour ago. There are some now in the green fields, or in the busy towns, on comfortable beds, or on the sunshiny seas, who in another hour perhaps will have gone there. This is a dreadfully real truth.

It Is Good to Think of Hell

But what if more than all this be true? What if there was once a day when we

should have gone thither if we had died? What if this hour it holds mere boys and girls, who have sinned far less than we have done, nay, perhaps have sinned but once, while we have sinned a thousand times? Oh, but we may humble ourselves still more. How long should we persevere in serving God if we were certified there was no Hell? Should we have left our sins if it had not been for Hell? Oh, what a thing it is to be upon this good earth, and surrounded by all this hopeful life, when we have actually by our own hand and eye, word and thought and evil painstaking, worked out our right and title to all this everlasting woe. Ah! Just as the mist rises from the barren sea, where the corn grows not and the vines can bear no fruit, and forms the clouds which are to fall in fertilizing showers over hill and dale, so from those broad seas of fire and curse the Divine Compassion rises like a cloud to pour down streams of grace upon the souls of living men.

Let no one ever turn away from the sight of Hell, lest, by little and by little and by very little, a good opinion of himself should grow up within his soul and send him to that drear banishment at last. Indeed it is good, very good, to think of Hell, and of that kind wonder that we are not already there this hour. Nay, do not start—what you see is indeed the white light of earth's sun; fear not: that sound—it is the wind that waves the branches of the wood; be assured, your eyes do not deceive you: those are the village spires that are sleeping in the misty, quiet landscape; all is right so far. We are here, and we are free; but we ought to have been— there, and slaves!

HELL: TORMENT, PAIN & ETERNAL SUFFERING

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (IIIa Supplement to the Third Part, Questions 94, 97, 98 & 99), from the book *A Tour of the Summa*, by Msgr. Paul J. Glenn, published by TAN Books and Publishers.

97. THE PUNISHMENT OF THE DAMNED

1. Those who undergo the punishment of hell are tormented by fire and also by other afflicting agencies. As the person condemned to hell has, in earthly life, put various material things in the place of God, he is justly punished by a variety of afflictions.

2. "The worm that dieth not" will afflict the condemned soul in hell. This means

that remorse of conscience (but not repentance), will incessantly trouble that soul.

3. The "weeping" that will be in hell after the bodily resurrection will not be the shedding of tears (for there will be no bodily alteration in hell), but will be a steady affliction of the head and the eyes.

4. The darkness of hell is a true and material darkness. After the resurrection of bodies, this darkness will afflict the bodily vision of the damned. The fire of hell, as St. Basil says, will have heat but not light for those punished by it.

5. The fire of hell is a bodily fire which now afflicts and detains lost souls; after the resurrection it will torture the bodies of the damned in hell.

6. It seems that the fire of hell is essentially the same as the fire we know on earth, although it doubtlessly has different properties, since it needs no fuel and does not consume what is cast into it.

7. No one can say for certain where hell is located. It seems however, to be suggested by some passages in scripture that hell is "under the earth," that is, that it is located somewhere in the interior of the earth, under the earth's surface.

98. THE WILL AND THE INTELLECT OF THE DAMNED

1. The will of a person in hell is, by its own perverse choice, confirmed in evil, and is changelessly and wholly devoted to evil. Every act of such a will is a sin.

2. Repentance in the true meaning of that word, is a hatred of sin as such. There is no repentance of this kind in hell. But if repentance be taken to mean merely the regret that sin causes suffering, and hatred of sin merely as the cause of suffering, then we can say that there is repentance in hell.

3. ... doubtless the damned wish for some kind of sleep or death or extinction of consciousness that would bring surcease of suffering.

4. As in heaven there is perfect charity, and happiness in the fact of each soul's being saved, so in hell there is perfect hatred and envy, and malicious desire to see others suffer the pains of hell.

5. The damned hate God... in the effects of his justice which they have perversely brought upon themselves.

6. Strictly speaking, there is no meriting or demeriting in either heaven or hell. For the time of meriting and demeriting is the time of life on earth.

7. Knowledge acquired during earthly life will remain in the damned and will be a factor in their suffering.

8. The condemned who are in hell will never think upon God directly, but only in so far as the thought of him is involved in the thought of the divine justice which afflicts them.

9. The damned have knowledge of the glory of the blessed in heaven. When the resurrection of the body restores bodily eyes, the damned will look in vain to see the glorified bodies of the saints. But they will know of heaven, and they will feel the punishment of not being worthy even to look at it.

99. GOD'S MERCY AND JUSTICE TOWARDS THE DAMNED

1. Scripture repeatedly tells us that the punishment of hell is everlasting. For instance, St. Matthew says (25:46) that "the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment." As reward is measured to meet merit, so punishment is measured to meet guilt. But the guilt of mortal sin is the guilt of completely rejecting God and offending him whose majesty is infinite. The guilt of such a sin deserves unending punishment.

2. There is no place for mercy in hell, for mercy cannot be exercised upon what, by its very nature, rejects it. The perverse will of both men and fallen angels in hell is ceaselessly opposed to any mercy that might be shown them. ...

3. Despite God's wondrous mercy, the fallen angels and lost human souls, cast themselves into hell. While they hate their torments, they still retain their perverse will against God. Sorrow for sin, in the sense of rejecting evil and turning to God, is utterly impossible in hell. Hence, even the mercy of the all-merciful God cannot penetrate the rebel wills of the lost and bring them relief.

4. Christians who go to hell are there eternally, just as non-Christians are. Indeed, Christians who knew more than many others who are in hell, are more deserving than those others of endless torment.

5. It cannot be said that those who perform works of mercy during life on earth will necessarily escape the punishments of hell. Even great sinners may sometimes do remarkable deeds of mercy. During earthly life, such deeds may be the means of winning (congruously) contrition for the one who performs them, but they are no guarantee that contrition will be accepted, or that it will endure to the end of life, and so enable the performer of the good deeds to escape hell.

A VISION OF HELL

Saint Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) on one occasion had a vision of hell: "1. A long time after the Lord had already granted me many of the favors I've mentioned and other very lofty ones, while I was in prayer one day, I suddenly found that, without knowing how, I had seemingly been put in hell. I understood that the Lord wanted me to see the place the devils had prepared there for me and which I merited because of my sins. This experience took place within the shortest space of time, but even were I to live for many years I think it would be impossible for me to forget it. The entrance it seems to me was similar to a very long and narrow alleyway, like an oven, low and dark and confined; the floor seemed to me to consist of dirty, muddy water emitting foul stench and swarming with putrid vermin. At the end of the alleyway a hole that looked like a small cupboard was hollowed out in the wall; there I found I was placed in a cramped condition. All of this was delightful to see in comparison with what I felt there. What I have described can hardly be exaggerated. 2. What I felt, it seems to me, cannot even begin to be exaggerated; nor can it be understood. I experienced a fire in the soul that I don't know how I could describe. The bodily pains were so unbearable that though I had suffered excruciating ones in this life and according to what doctors say, the worst that can be suffered on earth for all my nerves were shrunk when I was paralyzed, plus many other sufferings of many kinds that I endured and even some as I said, caused by the devil, these were all nothing in comparison with the ones I experienced there. I saw furthermore that they would go on without end and without ever ceasing. This, however, was nothing next to the soul's agonizing: a constriction, a suffocation, an affliction so keenly felt and with such a despairing and tormenting unhappiness that I don't know how to word it strongly enough. To say the experience is as though the soul were continually being wrested from the body would be insufficient, for it would make you think somebody else is taking away the life, whereas here it is the soul itself that tears itself in pieces. The fact is that I don't know how to give a sufficiently powerful description of that interior fire and that despair, coming in addition to such extreme torments and pains. I didn't see who inflicted them on me, but, as it seemed to me, I felt myself burning and crumbling; and I repeat the worst was that interior fire and despair. 3. Being in such an unwholesome place, so unable to hope for any consolation, I found it impossible either to sit down or to lie down, nor was there any room, even though they put me in this kind of hole made in the wall. Those walls, which were terrifying to see, closed in on themselves and suffocated everything. There was no light, but all was enveloped in the blackest

darkness. I don't understand how this could be, that everything painful to see was visible." (The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila, Volume 1, Chapter 32)

WHAT WILL HELL BE LIKE?

By St. Alphonsus Liguori

Though many of the pagans were true atheists, considering Hell a fable invented to frighten the wicked, the more renowned of the ancient philosophers such as Socrates, Xenophon, Aristotle, Plato and others had no difficulty in admitting the existence of a future life—a Heaven where the good would be rewarded, and a Hell where the evil are to be punished. Only the most perverted of men will deny that there is a God, the Creator and Governor of all things. Such men would prefer to deny the existence of God than to face the just chastisement of their own misdeeds.

We Expect Reward or Punishment

On the one hand, men know perfectly well that God is a just rewarder of good, and at the same time they behold in the world countless wicked men who live in the midst of prosperity, while many of the virtuous live out their lives in the midst of affliction and misfortune. Hence, most people are convinced that after this mortal life, there exists another world in which vice is to be chastised and virtue rewarded as it deserves.

Teaching of Pagan Philosophers

The most famous of the pagan philosophers did not hesitate to teach that there exists in the other life a Heaven and a Hell. Xenophon and Socrates, for instance, remarked that, "Rewards are in store for those who please God, and punishments for those who displease Him." The same sentiments are expressed by Plato, Plutarch and others. While I refrain from quoting passages from these philosophers, I cannot pass over in silence two beautiful passages of the great orator, Cicero. In the first, he exclaims: "I wish to have no part with those who have recently begun to teach that souls die along with bodies, and that all is destroyed by death. Of far more weight with me is the authority of the ancient philosophers and of our own ancestors. They paid religious homage to the dead, and considered that their entrance into Heaven should be made easy for every

good and just man." The second passage is even more to the point: "Those souls, which have been soiled by the vices of this life, will take the false road which separates them from the company of the gods; on the other hand, those who have preserved themselves pure and chaste, will find easy admittance to the divinity, the source of their existence."

Belief of Pagans

Among the fables of pagan peoples, there are numerous tales which, though they are fictitious, nevertheless attest to the belief of these people in the existence of a place of punishment in the future life. For us Christians, however, this belief of ancient pagans, and their philosophers, is but a substantiating argument. For we have the word of God Himself, attesting to the existence of Hell in countless passages of Sacred Scripture.

Where Is Hell Located?

The question as to the place where Hell is situated has been a matter of conjecture among the Fathers of the Church and theologians. St. John Chrysostom, for instance, was of the opinion that it is situated outside the bounds of this universe. More commonly and with more reason, other theologians think that Hell is situated within the earth itself. Some have even gone so far as to declare that it is near the surface of the globe, basing their opinion, rather quaintly, upon the existence of many volcanic mountains such as Vesuvius, the Volcanic Isles, Mt. Etna and others.

Catholic Teaching

Aside from these debatable opinions, a group of heretics known as the Ubiquitists maintained that Hell is not restricted to any determined place, but is to be found everywhere, since God has not destined any special place for the damned. This opinion, however, is evidently false, and contrary to the common belief of the Catholic Church which teaches us that God has established a definite place for the demons and the reprobate, as is evident from several texts of Sacred Scripture. St. Jerome deduces this specifically from a passage in the book of Numbers (Num. 16:31-33).

Hell Is a Definite Place

This assertion is confirmed by a passage of St. Luke (16:22): "But the rich man also died and was buried in hell." The sacred text employs the word "buried,"

because burials are made within the earth.

Moreover, the rich man himself describes Hell as a "place of torment" (Lk. 16:28), confirming the opinion that Hell is a determined and definite place. In another place it is called a "lake"; "Thou hast saved me from those descending into the lake" (Ps. 29:3); and elsewhere, a pool: "And the devil who deceived them was cast into the pool of fire and brimstone." (Apoc. 20:9). It is evident, therefore, that Hell is a determined place, and most probably situated within the earth. But as to where, precisely, it is situated, whether at the very center of the earth or nearer to the surface, cannot be determined from any revealed document. St. Thomas also declared that the dimensions of Hell, which will be the dwelling place of the damned after the resurrection, cannot be determined.

Pains of Hell

Let us now treat of the pains of Hell, and first of all, of that of sense. St. Thomas proves that the fire of Hell is a corporeal and material fire, though for the most part he does not write of the fire which torments the souls separated from their bodies, but of that which the damned are to endure after their corporeal resurrection. Many heretics have maintained that the fire of Hell is not material, but only metaphorical or imaginary fire. There are numerous texts in Sacred Scripture, however, which demonstrate that the fire of Hell is a true, material and corporeal fire. We read, for instance, in the book of Deuteronomy: "A fire is kindled in my wrath, and shall burn even to the lowest hell." (Deut. 32:22). And in the book of Job: "A fire that is not kindled shall devour him" (Job 20:26), revealing that this fire of Hell needs not to be nourished, but, once enkindled by God, burns eternally. There are a number of passages in the book of Isaiah referring to this fire of Hell: "Which of you can dwell with devouring fire? "Which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" "(66:24). "He will give fire, and worms into their flesh, that they may burn, and may feel forever." (Judith 16:21).

Fire of Hell

In the parable of the Gospel, the rich man buried in Hell cries out to Lazarus, "I am tormented in this flame." (Lk. 16:24). He says, "in this flame," to show that the fire of Hell is a fire of a particular type, a fire prepared expressly to avenge the injuries which sin has done to God by carnal pleasures. For, as the book of Ecclesiasticus remarks, "the vengeance on the flesh of the ungodly is fire and worms." (Eccl. 7:19). Hence, St. Thomas argues that this fire will be the instrument of the avenging justice of Almighty God.

Can a Spiritual Soul Feel Fire?

But here a difficulty is posed: how is it possible for corporeal fire to torment the spiritual soul? In answer to this question, we can only say that we know that it can be done. Perhaps the answer lies in this explanation of many theologians. The material fire of Hell will be given an extraordinary power by God, whereby it will be able to bind the spiritual soul to its place of torment, thus causing the soul untold humiliation and pain.

Punishment by Cold

In this same fire, St. Thomas remarks, the bodies of the damned, in addition to the intense heat, will endure bitter cold, passing from one to the other, without knowing a moment of relief. Thus do Scripture scholars explain the passage of the book of Job: "Let him pass from the snow water to excessive heat, and his sin even to Hell." (Job 24:19). Hence, St. Jerome says, the damned in Hell endure all their torments in this one fire.

Remorse of Conscience

In addition to their sufferings from the heat and cold of the fire of Hell, Sacred Scripture enumerates a number of other torments which will afflict the damned. One of these is the "worm," to which the Scriptures refer frequently. Some commentators have explained this "worm" as a material thing, which will feed upon, without consuming, the flesh of the damned. But most theologians explain it metaphorically as the remorse of conscience which will afflict the damned in the fire and darkness of Hell. Forever will they have imprinted on their memories the results of their sins; forever will they repeat the words ascribed to them in the book of Wisdom: "We have erred from the way of truth, we wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction and have walked through hard ways. What hath pride profited us? Or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? . . .Such things as these the sinners said in hell." (Wis. 5:6-14).

Suffering from Devils and Darkness

Added to their own remorse of conscience, the damned will also be tormented by the reproaches of the demons. This will be one of the most cruel punishments of the damned: the devils, who are their enemies, will continually mock them and remind them of their sins. Nor will the sufferings of the bodies of the damned cease here. They will also be afflicted by the terrible darkness of Hell, described by the holy man, Job: "Before I go, and return no more, to a land that

is dark and covered with the mist of death: a land of misery and darkness, where the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth." (Job 10:22).

Pain of Loss of God

A certain author has written, but with little foundation, that the pain of loss is the same for all the reprobate. But it seems far more probable to me and to the majority of theologians that, though the damned are equally deprived of God, this pain will, nevertheless, afflict each according to the measure of his faults and the knowledge he will have in Hell of the God whom he has lost. For it is difficult to believe that one who has lost God by one mortal sin will be tormented in the same degree as one who has lost Him by a hundred sins. It is equally inconceivable to me, for instance, how one who has been in the state of sin for but one day, can be called upon to bear the same degree of punishment as he who has remained in this state for a whole year. For just as he who has loved God more ardently during his life, will enjoy Him more in Heaven, because of the knowledge of the immense good which he will then possess, so also will the damned, who has deprived himself of his God, be more severely tormented in realizing more deeply the great good which he has lost.

Teaching of St. Thomas

St. Thomas describes for us perfectly in what will consist the happiness of the elect and the torment of the reprobate. Insofar as his intellect is concerned, the Saint remarks, man will find complete joy in the vision of God; but, insofar as his affections are concerned, he will find complete satisfaction in the permanent union of his will with the infinite goodness of God. On the other hand, the torment of the damned will consist in being deprived of all divine light in his intellect, and in finding his affections obstinately turned away from the Divine Goodness. Elsewhere the saintly Doctor teaches that, though the punishment of the fire will be more terrifying, this separation from God is, however, a greater torment than that of the fire.

God Makes Heaven

In short, it is God who will be our paradise, for He embraces all goods in Himself, as He Himself once declared to Moses: "I will show thee all good." (Ex. 33:19). Such was also the promise which He made to Abraham because of his merits: "Fear not, Abram, I am thy protector and thy reward exceedingly great." (Gen. 15:1). And what greater reward can He promise than Himself, who is the

one good embracing all other goods?

God Makes Hell

It is also God who will make Hell, for, as St. Bernard remarks, He Himself will be the chastisement of the damned. For just as the elect will be supremely happy because God is for him, and he is for God, so also will the reprobate be unhappy, because God is no longer for him, and he is no longer for God. Let us listen to the threat which God made against those who refused to belong to Him during this life: "Call his name, 'Not my people'; for you are not my people, and I will not be yours." (Osee 1:9). It is in this, then, that the torment of the damned will consist; it consists in the first sentence which Jesus Christ will pronounce over His enemies: "Depart from me into everlasting fire." This eternal separation will constitute Hell for the damned.

Eternal Choice Is Made During Life

For the present, sinners, blinded by the apparent goods of this earth, choose to live far from God and to turn their backs upon Him. And should God, who cannot dwell with sin, wish to enter into their hearts by expelling sin from them, they are not ashamed to repel Him, exclaiming: "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." (Job 21:14). Depart from us, we do not wish to follow Your ways, but our own, our passions, and our pleasures. The great multitude of those, says Sacred Scripture, "who sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake; some unto life everlasting, and others unto reproach, to see it always." (Dan. 12:2). Yes, these unfortunates now sleep in the dust of their blindness; but, in the other life, unfortunately for them, they will awaken and realize the immense good which they have lost in voluntarily losing God.

Greatest Pain of Hell

The sword which shall pierce them with the greatest sorrow will be the thought of having lost God, and of having lost Him through their own fault.

Unfortunates that they are! They now seek to lose sight of God, but once fallen into Hell, they will no longer be able to cease thinking of Him, and in this will their chastisement consist.

St. Augustine says that in Hell, the damned will be forced to think of nothing but God, and that will cause them terrible torment. And St. Bona-venture, expressing the same sentiments, says that no thought will torment the damned more than the thought of God. The Lord will grant to them such a vivid

knowledge of their offended God, His goodness so unworthily spurned, and consequently, of the chastisement which their crimes have merited, that this knowledge will cause them a suffering greater than that of all the other punishments of Hell.

We read in the book of Ezechiel: "Over the heads of the living creatures was the likeness of the firmament, as the appearance of crystal terrible to behold, and stretched out over their heads above." (1:22). Explaining these words, one author says that the damned will have continually before their eyes a terrible crystal or mirror: with the assistance of some fatal light, they will behold, on one hand, the immense good which they have lost in voluntarily losing divine grace, and, on the other, they will view the justly wrathful face of God; and this torment will surpass by a million times all the other punishments of Hell.

On this same subject, the author Cajetan makes the following reflection upon the words of David: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, all the nations that forget God." (Ps. 9:18). The Prophet, says this author, does not here speak of a change of heart, or conversion, but of the spirit of sinners. For just as sinners do not wish to think of God during this life, that they might not be forced to renounce their passions, they will be forced—despite themselves and by a just chastisement—to think continuously of God in Hell.

They would wish to shut out all remembrance of God from their minds, but they will be forced to think always of Him, thus recalling all the benefits which they have received from Him, as well as the offenses which they have committed against Him and by which they have been separated from Him for all eternity.

The Damned Do Not Forget

Let us now consider briefly the condition of the intellect of the damned in Hell. St. Thomas says that the damned will be able to remember all the subjects of natural knowledge which they acquired here on earth, for this acquired knowledge will remain in their souls after death. This is evident from Sacred Scripture as well, from the response of Abraham to the rich man buried in Hell: "Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime." (Lk. 16:25). This, then, is the conclusion of the Angelic Doctor: Just as in the elect there will be nothing that is not a subject of happiness to them, so also in the damned there will be nothing which will not be a subject of torment to them. Hence, the damned will preserve in their memories the things which they knew here on earth, not, it is true, for their consolation, but solely to increase their torment. Moreover, during this life the soul is frequently prevented from considering

thoughts which would be disagreeable to it, because of corporeal sufferings and anxieties; but in Hell the soul will no longer be subject to this influence of the body. Hence, in Hell the soul will no longer be prevented from considering those things which can be a cause of torture to it. Likewise, in Hell the soul of a man will have constantly in its memory all the divine appeals made to it during life, as well as the number of sins which he committed, each of which will procure for him a new Hell.

The Damned Know Nothing about Us

Moreover, says Estius, just as God will procure the satisfaction of the blessed by making them know what concerns us, and especially that which concerns them in a special manner, such as our prayers addressed to them, on the other hand the damned will remain ignorant of all that concerns us, because they are complete strangers to the Church.

Do the Damned Have Faith?

It might be asked whether those Christians who possessed faith in this life, and who have not lost it by apostasy or heresy, will preserve it in Hell. St. Thomas responds in the negative, for in order to believe with a supernatural and theological faith, one must hold with a pious affection of the will to God the revealer.

This pious affection, however, is a gift of God, of which He deprives them as well as the demons. They do, however, believe by a sort of natural faith, to which they are forced by the evidence of external signs, though this faith is not supernatural. It is in this sense that St. James has written that "The devils also believe and tremble" (James 2:19), signifying that their faith is forced and fearful.

Will the damned ever see or behold the glory of the Blessed? St. Thomas answers that at the Last Judgment the reprobate will see the blessed in their glory, without being able to distinguish in what it consists, solely realizing that they are enjoying an inexplicable glory. This sight will afflict them with great sorrow, either because of a feeling of envy, or because of regret at having lost that which they themselves could have acquired. And for their eternal chastisement, this shadow of the beatific vision which they have beheld will remain imprinted in their memory forever.

The Will Is Set on Evil

Let us now discuss the condition of the will of the damned. St. Thomas remarks that the will of the damned, insofar as it is a natural faculty, cannot but be good, since it does not proceed from themselves but from God, who is the Author of nature; the damned have, however, vitiated it by their malice. But when we consider the will of the damned in its use, it cannot but be evil, for it is completely opposed to the will of God and obstinate in evil.

But whence does this obstinacy in evil proceed? Sylvius, in a very clear explanation, says that the obstinacy of the damned results from the nature itself of their state. For, since the damned now find themselves at the terminus of their existence and deprived of all divine assistance, God, by a just judgment, abandons them to the evil which they have voluntarily chosen and in which they have wished to end their life.

It is natural for everything, once it has reached its terminus, to rest in it, unless it be moved by some external power. Now, the damned have terminated their lives with the depraved will in which they have died, and God has resolved to leave them to the evil which they have chosen. Just as the blessed can never possess an evil will, because they are always united to God, in like manner the damned can never turn their will to good, and consequently will always be unhappy, because they are obstinately and irrevocably opposed to the divine will.

Do the Damned Wish Evil to Others?

Because of this evil will of the damned, the question might be asked: 'Do the damned wish that all men be damned?' St. Thomas responds in the affirmative, because of the hatred which the reprobate bear to all men. But here a difficulty presents itself. As the number of the damned increases, the punishment of each individual is aggravated: how, then, can they desire an increase of torment for themselves? St. Thomas says that such is their hatred and envy that they would prefer to suffer more cruelly with many others than to suffer less alone. And it matters little to them that among those whose loss they desire are some whom they loved dearly during life. For the Holy Doctor remarks that all affection which is not based upon love of God vanishes easily; otherwise, the order of justice and right would be reversed in Hell.

Case of the Rich Man in Hell

If such be the case, then how can we explain the solicitude of the poor rich man

in Hell, who besought Abraham to send Lazarus to his brothers on earth, to warn them to do penance lest they also be buried in Hell? ... The Angelic Doctor adds that this reprobate desired to see his brothers escape Hell, lest his own punishment be aggravated by their damnation, for by his bad example he had given occasion for their damnation.

Do the Damned Repent of Sin?

It might also be asked whether the damned repent of their sins. St. Thomas answers that a man can repent of his faults in two ways: directly or indirectly. He can repent directly insofar as he repents by a sentiment of hatred for the sin committed; in this sense, the damned cannot repent of his sin, for since he finds himself confirmed in his perverse will, he loves the malice of his fault. But he can repent indirectly, insofar as he detests his punishment, of which his sin is the cause. Thus the damned will their sin, insofar as its malice is concerned, but detest its punishment, which, nevertheless, can never cease because their sin endures forever.

Hatred of God.

Do the damned hate God? St. Thomas says that God, considered in Himself, is the Supreme Good, and therefore cannot be an object of hatred for any reasonable creature. But He can become such to the damned in two ways: first, as the Author of their punishments, by which He is bound to afflict them; second, because they are obstinate in evil, while He is the infinite Good, they would hate God with their whole heart, even though He punished them but little.

Do the Damned Desire to Be Destroyed?

We ask, finally, whether the damned would prefer to be annihilated and deprived of existence, than to submit to the punishments which they endure. St. Thomas considering the question in itself, answers in the negative for, as he says, a state of non-being is never desirable, for it implies a deprivation of all good. But if this annihilation be considered as an end of all punishment, St. Thomas says that, from this point of view, the state of non-existence presents itself as a good. It is in this sense that Jesus Christ spoke this sentence of Judas: "It were better for him, if that man had not been born." (Mt. 26:24). St. John seems to say the same thing when speaking of the damned in the Apocalypse: "In those days men shall seek death and shall not find it: and they shall desire to die, and death shall fly from them." (Rev. 9:6). This will of the damned,

however, is uncertain, for they wish to continue to exist, that they might always hate God.

Punishment of Hell Is Eternal

These punishments of the reprobate, which we have been considering, will endure forever. This doctrine of the eternity of the punishments of Hell was first denied by Origen, and later by the Socinians and a large number of Protestants. Origen, however, was condemned by the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople, and in general, by all the Fathers of the Church.

This Punishment Is Not Unjust

Nor can the eternity of the punishments of the damned ever be qualified as unjust. For anyone who offends God by a mortal sin merits an infinite punishment for an offense which is infinite. Hence, however severe or long the punishment may be, it can never be proportionate to the offense which has been committed. For the majesty of God is infinite; hence, whoever sins mortally merits an infinite punishment. It therefore appears just that mortal sin be punished by an eternal punishment.

How Punishment Is Measured

It is useless to object that it does not seem just to inflict an eternal punishment for a sin which endures but a moment. For St. Augustine remarks that punishment is not measured by the duration of a fault, but by its gravity. Even at the tribunals of justice here on earth, the penalty of death is imposed upon some crimes which are committed in an instant.

The Angelic Doctor adds that it is but just that the punishment should not cease as long as the fault does not cease. Now, a fault which remains eternally can be remitted only by the grace of God, which man cannot acquire after death. As we have seen above, the will of the damned is obstinate in evil. Hence, he continues to love his sin at the same time that he submits to its punishment. How, then, can God deliver him from his chastisement, while he continues to love his fault? How can God pardon his sin, while the damned is hardened in his hatred for God, if at the same time the Lord offered him pardon and friendship, the damned refused both the one and the other?

Nor can it be objected, as some heretics do, that it is contrary to the goodness and mercy of God to behold one of His creatures suffer eternally from such terrible punishments in Hell. For, as St. Thomas remarks, God has given

superabundant witness of His goodness and mercy toward men. Beholding all men lost by the sin of Adam and their own sins, what great goodness did He not manifest in descending from Heaven to earth to become man, in the endurance of a poor, humble and afflicted life, in pouring forth the very last drop of His Blood amid such terrible torments upon an infamous gibbet?

What greater proof of His goodness could He have given to men than to leave to them His own Body and Blood in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, that they might there find nourishment for their souls, and that, through this means, they might preserve and increase their spiritual forces until death, after which, finding themselves more closely united to God, they might enter into Heaven, there to enjoy eternally the life of the blessed?

The Patience of God

Ah! Most certainly, on the day of judgment, the Lord will make known to the entire world how many mercies, how many lights, how much help He has dispensed to each man during his life! And the numerous ingrates, who, despite such favors, have merited such chastisements, with what patience did He not pursue them, with what love has He not begged them to repent? If, despite such favors, they still would not renounce their passions and earthly pleasures, wished to live and die separated from God, voluntarily abandoning themselves to their eternal ruin, how can it be said that God has not manifested His mercy and goodness towards them?

In lieu of declaring the punishments of Hell not to be eternal, some heretics have invented another opinion, maintaining that the punishments of Hell will be lessened after a time, or momentarily interrupted. But this opinion is expressly contrary to the Sacred Scriptures. Isaias, for instance, speaking of the reprobate proclaims: "Their worm will not die, and their fire will not be extinguished." (Is. 66:24). And in the sentence pronounced against them at the Last Judgment, Jesus Christ will say to them: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."

"There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen; and feasted sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who lay at his gate, full of sores, desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, and no one did give him; moreover the dogs came, and licked his sores.

"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died: and he was buried in hell. And

lifting up his eyes when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom: And he cried, and said: Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame. And Abraham said to him: Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted; and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you, there is fixed a great chaos: so that they who would pass from hence to you, cannot, nor from thence come hither.

"And he said: Then, father, I beseech thee, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torments. And Abraham said to him: They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. But he said: No, father Abraham: but if one went to them from the dead, they will do penance. And he said to him: If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe, if one rise again from the dead." (Lk. 16:19-31).

Fatima Children's Vision of Hell

(NOTE: In 1917 Our Blessed Mother appeared six times at Fatima, Portugal to Lucia dos Santos and Jacinta and Francisco Marto, three small children. During the course of these six world-famous apparitions—that are approved by the Church as worthy of our devotion and propagation—the Blessed Virgin Mary made several startling statements and predictions, among them the outbreak of World War II if people did not change their lives. During the July 13 apparition, she allowed the children to see a vision of Hell. Following is Lucia's description of what they saw.)

At this point, Lucia was heard to say aloud: "Yes, she wants people to recite the Rosary. People must recite the Rosary." The Lady's face then grew very grave and she said: "Sacrifice yourselves for sinners and say often, especially when you make some sacrifice: 'O my Jesus, this is for love of You, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the offences committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.'" At these words, she opened her hands on the three children once again and the light streaming from them seemed to penetrate the earth, and the children beheld a vision of Hell. Lucia cried out in terror, calling upon Our Lady. "We could see a vast sea of fire," she revealed many years later.

"Plunged in the flames were demons and lost souls, as if they were red-hot coals,

transparent and black or bronze-colored, in human form, which floated about in the conflagration, borne by the flames which issued from them, with clouds of smoke, falling on all sides as sparks fall in a great conflagration without weight or equilibrium, amid shrieks and groans of sorrow and despair that horrified us and caused us to tremble with fear.

The devils could be distinguished by horrible and loathesome forms of animals, frightful and unknown, but transparent like black coals that have turned red-hot." Full of fear, the children raised their eyes beseechingly to the Lady, who said to them with unspeakable sadness and tenderness: "You have seen Hell where the souls of poor sinners go. In order to save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If people do what I ask, many souls will be saved and there will be peace." Lucia later stated that although the vision lasted "but an instant," she felt they would have died of fear and terror if Our Lady had not already promised to take them to Heaven.

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