

The Dogma of Hell

Imprimated Book

THE DOGMA OF HELL is the most terrible truth of our faith. There is a Hell. We are as 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. ...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.

...There are in our day men who laugh at, question, or openly deny the reality of Hell. ...These are all the proofs, all the theology of the teachers of impiety. Let us examine:

FIRST: *I do not believe in it.* You do not believe in Hell? ...Will Hell exist any the less because you do not please to believe it? ...

SECOND: 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 were an uncertainty, that the existence of eternal torments were 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?

THIRD: 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? ...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, are you quite sure of it? You say it, you declare it; but you have against you historical, proved, unimpeachable facts. There are 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. This truth is known to us by the infallible word of God; the facts which we adduce serve but to confirm and place it in clearer light.

...Here is one of these facts. It was juridically proved in the process of the canonization of St. Francis Jerome [1642-1716] and under oath attested to by a large number of eye-witnesses: 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 Catharine (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, "*Catharine, 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. (Father Bach, *Life of St. Francis 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 tomorrow.*"

The king did not heed his 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."*"

The Pains of Hell

By Saint 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... 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?

...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 great a torment!"

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 with 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?

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 suf-

fer 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.

RJMI Comment: If you are committing any of the sins listed below in these Bible verses, you are definitely, and without the least doubt, on the road to the Hell you have just read about:

"For know you this and understand: That no fornicator or unclean or covetous person (which is a serving of idols) hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. (Eph. 5:5) Now the works of the flesh are manifest: which are fornication, uncleanness, immorality, luxury, idolatry, witchcrafts, enmities, contentions, emulations, wraths, quarrels, dissensions, sects, Envies, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. Of the which I foretell you, as I have foretold to you, that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God. (Gal. 5:19-21) But the fearful and unbelieving and the abominable and murderers and whoremongers and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, they shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. (Apoc. 21:8)"

All non-Catholics, which includes most of you who think you are Catholic but are not, are among the unbelievers who are on the road to Hell.
"Those who do not believe shall be condemned." (Mk. 16:16)

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HELL

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"Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereto. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it! (Mt. 7:13-14) Every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire. (Lk. 3:9) 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. (Mt. 13: 41-42) Without are dogs and sorcerers and unchaste and murderers and servers of idols and every one that loveth and maketh a lie. (Apoc. 22:15) And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the pool of fire. (Apoc. 20:15) Depart from me, you cursed, into ever lasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels. (Mt. 25:41)"

