

XIV. PURGATORY: HEAVEN

THOSE who thus die with their wills fixed *against* God find their eternal abiding-place instantly. What of those whose wills are united to Him? It will be remembered that here a distinction must be made. The Life of Christ does not vivify every living cell in His Body with equal intensity. A living Member of the Mystical Body may have his will either totally united or partially united with God's will. In the first case, he is totally living with the life of Christ, totally possessed by Him and at death passes instantly into heaven. In the second, there still remains something of self unsubjected to God. He loves God and his soul is indwelt by His Spirit. Yet imperfections remain. God holds the centre of the soul, but there are, as it were, outlying regions still not completely subject to Him. Upon such a man sin still has a certain hold: and this usually in one of two ways: either there is venial sin not repented of: or there is mortal sin, repented of yet not sufficiently.

Venial sin, of course, does not destroy the Supernatural Life of the soul, and therefore does not send a soul to hell: yet it remains a breach of God's law. As such, justice demands that it shall be punished

like any other breach of God's law. Repentance of course would wipe out the debt of punishment. But venial sin is often slight enough, does not stir the soul, is forgotten almost at once: so that frequently there is no repentance, and at death the debt of justice stands.

The second condition is more delicate. When a man commits a mortal sin, he loses the Supernatural Life: when he is truly contrite he regains it. Now contrition is to be measured in two different ways. As to its motive, and as to the degree of its intensity. If a man is *truly* contrite (that is, sorry, for the right motive) and *sufficiently* contrite (that is, as sorry as the gravity of the sin demands) then all is forgiven, guilt and punishment alike. But what of a man whose sorrow, while true and sincere, falls short of the necessary degree of intensity? The guilt of his sin is forgiven: the Supernatural Life is restored to his soul, and God allows him to make up by suffering for what is lacking in his sorrow: in other words, some punishment still remains, even after the guilt is forgiven.

If a man die in either of these states—with venial sin not repented of, or mortal sin repented of but not sufficiently—there is still the debt of justice to be satisfied and the soul brought altogether to freedom from sin, and union with God: and in Purgatory, by God's mercy, this cleansing and compensating suffering is undergone. The souls in purgatory suffer: but the strife is over. They know that heaven is theirs.

A MAP OF LIFE

It now only remains to consider the state of those who enter heaven: whether they enter it immediately upon death or after a space in Purgatory.

HEAVEN

Of heaven there is no need to speak at great length here, because heaven is the end of the road and was therefore treated in some fullness at the beginning of the map—in the third chapter. Scripture tells us three things very clearly: (1) The happiness of heaven is perfect—broken by no present sorrow and no fear of future ceasing. It is happiness of the whole being, the soul's every power acting at its very highest. (2) The happiness of heaven is indescribable and unimaginable. "Eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." The language made by man from his experiences of this life has no power to convey the experiences of the next. The pictures of joy built by our imagination, fed upon the joys of this life, are poor shadows of the joy of heaven.

(3) But if by imagination we can take no grip on heaven's happiness, by the higher faculty of intellect—acting upon the revelation of God—we can know something of it. In heaven we shall see God "face to face": we shall "know as we are known": so says Scripture. Which means that we shall know God, not, as we know things here below, by an idea in the

mind, but direct, God Himself present in our very soul and realized by us as present, realized at the very highest point of intensity. This is what theology calls the Beatific Vision. "We shall be made like to Him," said St. John, "for we shall see Him as He is."

Our soul, then, will have laid hold on God. God is supreme truth, so that our intellect, with no barrier between itself and its supreme object, will be eternally enriched in eternal activity, for God is infinite and our intellect will never exhaust the truth which is its supreme beatitude. But God, too, is supreme goodness: so that our will equally will find no barrier between itself and its supreme object, and will come to rest in eternal love. Not all souls will be equal in heaven. The soul grows naturally by development of intellect and will. Supernaturally—which is what matters here—it grows by the possession of the Supernatural Life. But this it must receive upon earth, for after death it cannot merit. Therefore, souls united with God have not all reached the same degree of development when they come to die. But, greater or smaller, all souls are functioning in heaven with intellect and will at their highest intensity upon their highest object: therefore every soul will know perfect happiness. To summarize what has been said earlier: those very various qualities in the things of earth which cause us happiness are all caused by God, the creator of all things: they are therefore already present in Him, not in the shadowy and imperfect way in which we find them in created

things, but complete and perfect in their highest form. Finding Him, then, we find at an infinitely higher level all things whatsoever which have caused us happiness upon earth.

So much for the essential of heaven—the direct apprehension of the Blessed Trinity. Bound up with that is a fellowship with all the other citizens of Heaven: fellowship with Christ our Lord—the second Person of the Trinity made man—with His mother, with the angels and saints. So that Heaven is not only our relationship with God come to maturity, but also our relationship with all the lovers of God—with all created beings, that is, who have achieved the purpose for which God made them.

Here then, in the very briefest space, we have seen something of the world into which death ushers us. Yet if death ushers us into the next life, it does not choose our place: that is decided by the state of our soul in relation to God. That is what we call the “particular judgment”—the decision made at each man’s death of the place to which each belongs. Till the world ends, we shall live in heaven simply as souls, separated from the bodies which once were ours. In Heaven Christ our Lord is bodily present, that the whole of human nature (not soul only, but the union of soul and body) in its perfection should be present at the right hand of the Father. His body is His natural body, yet glorified: without suffering, or deformity, no longer a cloak to the

soul, but as it were translucent, so that the soul is only the brighter for the body it indwells. And similarly our Lady is bodily present too—so says the doctrine of the Assumption. But in the normal course of God's providence, the souls in Heaven must wait for the Last Day to be reunited to their bodies.

For there is a Last Day. As there is an end to every man's term upon earth, so there will one day be an end to the term upon earth of the human race. When the Mystical Body of Christ shall have grown to its full stature—"unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ"—the human race will have achieved its purpose as a race. All the men who are to be incorporated with Christ—built into His body—will have been thus incorporated, and all will be completely at one with Him. Then will come the end of the world and the General Judgment. Christ will judge the whole world—all men will be in their place for all men to see—and the whole immense plan of God will be seen as a thing perfectly achieved. The bodies of men—glorified, as Christ's is—will be reunited with their souls: and every man—body and soul—will be for ever established in joy or woe.

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There roughly is the map. If it is a good map, a well-drawn map, then one should be able to find one's bearings by it—to find where one stands in

relation to all other things, to find the end of the road and the way to it. So much a good map can do. The best map cannot do more. A map is concerned with the surface and cannot tell you in detail of the treasures that lie beneath. On the field here mapped, there is no point at which one may not dig with immeasurable profit: or to abandon the metaphor, every single truth mentioned is but a single name for a whole world of truth. The Blessed Trinity will yield truth for our meditation for all eternity, and even here below we shall not exhaust what here below may be known. Or if, leaving the intricacies of the map we concentrate on any one point of it—the excellence of our Lady, for instance, or the life of prayer—we shall come upon a mine of truth by comparison with which the bare outlines of a map may seem poor colourless things. But even for the appreciation of any one doctrine, the map is necessary. No truth is merely itself: something pours into it from all other truth: and for a study of any one point of revealed truth there is no better equipment than a general view of the whole.

XIV. PURGATORY: HEAVEN

Discussion Aids

Does the Life of Christ vivify with equal intensity every cell in His Body? In other words, are there degrees of union with the will of God? If a soul is totally possessed by Christ at the time of death, that is, if the will is totally united with the will of God, what becomes of the soul? Describe the conditions of a partial union of the soul with the will of God, subsequent upon venial sin; upon mortal sin insufficiently repented. What happens to a soul passing into the next world in such a condition?

Heaven

What three things do we know of heaven from Scripture? Explain the Beatific Vision as defined by theology. How will both intellect and will be satisfied? Will all souls be equal in heaven? Is there, nevertheless, perfect happiness for all? How are the qualities of things on earth that give us happiness found in heaven? What wonderful happiness is found in heaven in addition to its essence, the apprehension of the Blessed Trinity?

DISCUSSION OUTLINE FOR A MAP OF LIFE

Remark how in this complete fellowship with God and with the lovers of God, the two commandments of the law come to full fruition. What is the "particular judgment"? When shall souls and bodies be reunited? What will be the condition of the Mystical Body at the Last Day? Of what service is the map of life that we have been following?

Practice: Make your fellowship with men on earth a reflection of the complete fellowship that will exist in heaven.