

THE AFTERLIFE

In theology, there is a chapter devoted to afterlife, to the fate of men after death.

For a long time that fate remained mysterious, Adam's fault having plunged the whole humanity in the darkness of complete ignorance of everything concerning the soul, the reasons of life on earth, spiritual life and man's future. Archeology tells us that the Ancient believed in some kind of a vague survival on the material level. Thus, during the Pharaohs times, Egyptians used to bury their dead with food and drinks in order to save them from hunger and thirst.

The divine Revelation gradually taught us that man, after his death, continues to live out of his body, keeping his own personality. For instance: Samuel, after his death reprimands Saul (1S 28, 11-19), Judas Maccabee sees Jeremiah "praying a lot for the people..." (2M 15,11-16) : the Jews prayed for the dead soldiers. They continue to live in the afterlife (2M 12,40-46), Elijah and Moses appear next to Jesus transfigured (Mt 17, 3).

The biblical Revelation also tells us that there are three situations, three states of soul in which a man can find himself in the after life: Paradise, Purgatory or Hell. These three states are not geographical or interstellar places, but feelings of happiness or misfortune, of joy or sadness, due either to success or to failure of the soul during its life on earth. We can already experience these feelings on this earth: how many times have we heard someone say: " I m living hell" – then suicide would occur! Or on the contrary: "I' m in Heaven! I'm so happy!", and the result: blooming and radiance in the eyes! There is also that intermediate situation between hell already lived and heavenly bliss already experienced: the situation of the person searching itself: it is not yet total despair, without being nevertheless happiness, nor joy of having accomplished something worthwhile, especially of having achieved oneself, or having found oneself. That is the state of he who continues his way in the half-light hoping to find.

Following are some biblical verses to explain what has been said:

Heaven

In his parable on Lazarus and the bad rich (Luke 16, 19-26), Jesus shows us these two protagonists living in the after life. The first one is overwhelmed with happiness and the second is suffering hell; an **INSURMOUNTABLE** abyss separates the two men who were neighbors on earth. That parable presents Paradise and Hell. They are nothing else but a state of soul acquired by each one of them on earth. Those who succeed during their life on earth in changing themselves and adapting their way of thinking to the heavenly spirit, will not experience any difficulty to integrate rapidly to the heavenly society. On the contrary, those who would stubbornly stick to their own way of seeing and understanding, without even trying to understand the divine mentality will finally be maladjusted persons in the celestial Homeland. That is Hell.

The intermediate state is Purgatory.

One can deserve Paradise through a sudden change, an intense and immediate act of love before dying. Jesus says to the good thief who expresses his faith and confidence in Him: "In truth I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23, 43).

Heaven is to see God and to finally get to know Him like He is: "Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God" (Mt 5, 8). "And eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17, 3). "I want to be gone and to be with Christ", Paul exclaimed, being conscious of the eternal and perfect happiness that awaited him after his life in the body (Ph 1, 23).

"For those who fear the Lord, all will end well: on their dying day they will be blessed" (Ecclesiasticus 1, 13). To be blessed by God and accepted by Him, that is eternal bliss. On the contrary, Hell is to be cursed by God due to the maliciousness committed.

Heavenly bliss is imperturbable and cannot be lost. It is stable forever: "Store up treasures for yourselves in heaven, where neither moth nor woodworm destroys them and thieves cannot break in and steal." (Mt 6, 20)

Social life in Heaven bathes in mutual love experienced by all its members. There is no place for hatred, envy or jealousy. Total harmony and a perfect and friendly relationship bind together all celestial subjects around God, their good father.

Hell

Hell is the gathering of all those who have a non-reversible conflict with God. It is a state, a feeling of defeat, as they have been vanquished by the divine Power. These are souls forever apart from Light due to their bitter resistance to God. These people never bear in mind God's plan and only do what they want. They go their way, deaf to divine injunctions and indifferent to divine requests.

Such is the case of those who refused Jesus because He did not match their political aims: "Whoever does not believe (in Jesus) is judged **already**" (John 3, 18). That condemnation is already effective in this world for those who are opposed to God's will: "May your will be done". Many are those who prefer their own will to that of God.

Conflicts between men are likely to provoke very severe psychological disruptions. Lovers in conflict have their soul burnt by a moral fire turning their life into an often unbearable hell. Even more so when the conflict is between man and God, the Spring of Life, that invisible fire will consume and exhaust the person who opposes to the divine dynamism.

Certain people think that God is too good to let souls burn in Hell eternally. That would be treating with such a serious subject in a very superficial way, without really understanding its implications:

- 1) The point is not only about God, but about those who **eternally** resist Him. These souls will be cursing God forever for not having done their will, for not having given them a Messiah depending on their liking, for not having given them money, pleasure, power etc...
- 2) It is true that God is immensely good, but He is also immensely righteous. His wrath is another aspect of His love, of betrayed love: "Love is terrible whenever it is not loved" used to say a saint about God.

Seeing that certain souls keep on refusing God's advances for unfair reasons, He finally confirms their desires and drives them away from his pacifying presence. He does not wish to be surrounded by fussy, selfish and over proud persons having delusions of grandeur or any other unbalanced people of any kind!

Here are some biblical texts on that subject:

Dn 12, 2: The impious persons "will awaken to shame and everlasting disgrace".

Judith 16, 17: God will take his revenge from the enemies of the believers, " The Lord Almighty will punish them on judgment day... and they will weep with pain for evermore." This pain is mainly psychological, similar to that of the defeated; it is the shame of those caught red-handed (see Is 66, 24 / Wisdom 4, 19).

Jesus also mentioned the eternal pains of hell. He gave us an example in the parable of Lazarus and the bad rich. It is the "hell fire (Mt 5,22-29 /10,28), where their worm will never die nor their fire be put out" (Mk 9,48), "an eternal fire" (Mt 25,41), "a fire that will never go out" (Mt 3,12), "the blazing furnace" (Mt 13,42), "eternal pain" (Mt 25,46), "darkness" (Mt 8,12), "weeping and grinding of teeth" against God and his own (Mt 13,42-50 / 24,51 /Lk 13,28).

Paul also testifies that those who refuse to be acquainted with God and fight against the Gospel "their punishment is to be lost eternally, excluded from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his strength" (2 Th 1, 9 / Heb 10, 26-31). Those damned pain is due to their distress and their regret in front of the triumph of the Gospel that they had fought with all their soul.

The Book of Revelation also says that those who would have taken sides with the Beast against the Knight (Jesus), "the second death in the burning lake of sulphur, will be their legacy" (21, 8) and there "their torture will not come to an end, day or night, for ever and ever" (20, 10).

According to Peter " this shows that the Lord is well able to rescue the good from their trials, and hold the wicked for their punishment until the Day of Judgement, especially those who follow the desires of their corrupt human nature and have no respect for the Lord's authority" (2P 2, 9-16).

A certain person was telling me that he did not believe in Hell. I knew that Mr so- and-so did harm him a lot, while pretending to be his friend (he sexually abused his wife, stole his money and even his shop. He was just able to save his apartment with its furniture). I then told him: "So Mr so-and-so will also live in eternal bliss in spite of all the evil he has done to you?!" Feeling concerned, he hesitated to maintain that Hell did not exist... even for Mr so-and-so who deserved it so badly! Ask those who do not believe it exists, if Hell does not suit their enemies, George Bush would see very well Saddam Hussein in it, and vice-versa, many others would see Hitler quite well in it, the Israelis would sink all their enemies in it, and first of all the Palestinians. God has also **His** Justice. It rejoices the just persecuted by the impious.

Purgatory

After the severe fault of the first parents of humanity, man's fate has changed. As victims of that fault, the following generations ought to bandage their wounds. This world that was supposed to prepare us for a life of eternal happiness next to God, has turned into a crossroads from which three ways fork : One that goes straight to Heaven, another one which leads immediately to Hell and an intermediate one which is Purgatory and which may continue after physical death, but finally leads to Heaven.

Before creation of man, Heaven existed, God himself being that Heaven. The devils' fall created Hell. Purgatory is a situation peculiar to man after his fall. It is the situation of men of goodwill who are evolving towards the best, towards the healing of the original sin consequences.

The earth ought to be considered as Purgatory by all men, such a place where time should be employed to acquire psychological and spiritual knowledge that had been lost with the original fall.

From the beginning life on earth is destined to be training for eternal life. Life on earth after the fall, before being that training, became a spiritual fighting ground where men are called to take a stand for or against God or the devil. Those who whether consciously or unconsciously choose God, will have first to heal from the adamic wound and then make their training for eternal life. They should not lose that unique chance in view of the fact that reincarnation does not exist, as Paul reveals to us in his epistle (Hb 9, 27). As for those who consciously or unconsciously choose the devil, their infernal fate is already drawn since their life on earth.

As long as time will exist, the third state of soul, Purgatory, will also exist. It will only end with the end of times. That state of soul belongs to those who have been led to commit certain more or less severe irregularities, which can be repaired. It is better to repair on earth the wounds caused to others because the difficulties are a hundred times greater after death. That is the meaning of Christ's words: "When you are going to court with your opponent, make an effort to settle with him on the way (the way of life on earth) or he may drag you before the judge...and the officer have you thrown into prison. I tell you, you will not get out till you have paid the very last penny" (Luke 12, 58-59). The fact that this "prisoner" has the possibility to get out of jail means that his sentence is not eternal. That is Purgatory.

Jesus taught us that he will give men remission for every sin and blasphemy ...but he who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be given remission neither in this world nor in the next (Mt 12,31-32). So there are sins which are forgiven in the afterlife. After that, one is integrated to the celestial society in the appropriate rank. Nevertheless that salvation takes place "like a salvation from a fire", as Paul explains (1 Co 3, 15).

The possibility of forgiving certain sins in the afterlife is revealed in the Old Testament: the Jews prayed for the forgiveness of the dead soldiers. (2 M 12, 40-46).

St John confirms that there is such a sin that may not be forgiven, for which he asks not to Pray. Instead, he asks us to pray for a brother that we see committing a sin that is not a deadly sin, and God will give life to this brother (1 John 5, 16-17).

This text shows that eternal life can be given back already in the life here below to those who do not commit the sin against the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, the sin against the Holy Spirit leads to spiritual death, which means to Hell already in this world.

Thus, we have demonstrated how the earth is a spiritual fighting ground.. All men of good will should spend their life on earth to do their Purgatory. Blessed are those who know how to use physical death as a mere transition to heavenly life. Even better are those who from this world live in Heaven, having taken part into the first Resurrection.