

destination. Besides this a sinner is free to turn aside from this path whenever he wills to. If, therefore, a man wills to go along this path to destruction, in spite of God's clear warning it is not because God is not good but because the sinner is bad.

Up to the last moment of life, the sinner is free to turn from the evil path. But God, who has promised forgiveness to the repentant sinner, has not promised him his own time for repentance. The road of sin may terminate any moment without warning. A sinner may mock or defy God, and God may put up with him for a long or short time, but when the angel of death summons him to judgment, if he is in mortal sin, he will go to hell.

No sin is too great for God's mercy, nor are there any numbers of sins too many for his forgiveness. But if the sinner goes along counting on his own time for conversion or presuming on God's goodness to defy Him, he may find that God's justice will overtake him when he least expects it. This, therefore, must be borne in mind in the consideration of hell, but the sinner has it in his power to turn aside from his doom whenever he wills. Hell is for those who, with open eyes, rebel against the Creator and persist in their rebellion to the end.

Even so, hell is, in a way, a mystery. We believe it not because we understand it, but because God proclaims it. We do not understand the doctrine of the Trinity, yet it is the basis of our faith. We have the same authority for hell that we have for the Trinity. Deny either and you part company with Christ.

For us it is enough to know that God so detests sin that He vanishes forever from His presence the unrepentant sinner. Leprosy is a dreadful thing. We do not understand why a good God permit such an awful scourge to afflict man. But because we do not understand we do not therefore trifle with the dread disease. We avoid it and its proximity. That is what God wants us to do with regard to hell. He wants us to avoid it. He tells us that but one key opens the door to hell, and that no one can turn the key but ourselves. If, therefore, we think that eternal punishment is something terrible, let us keep away from it. We have it in our power to avoid it. Instead of complaining against God's chastisements, let us keep His commandments.

We take precautions against smallpox in cholera. It does no good to deplore or deny those diseases. That would not prevent our contracting them. If instead of decrying hell we would try to lead good lives we would

not be disturbed by the thought of it. Most people who deny hell are doing things, which lead to hell. Worldly people scoff at the idea of hell. But look at the morals of these people. Some of our theaters and magazines and amusements are just what should be expected from people who close their eyes to hell. A man might shut off the light at noon today and say it was night. But that would not make it night. A traveler might close his eyes and walk along gaily in spite of warnings that a precipice was ahead, but that would not keep him from falling into it.

There are times when temptation so strongly so strongly assails us that the fear of hell is the only thing that can save us from falling. The fear of hell has saved many souls. We should try to serve God from love, but if ever our love grows cold, the dread of hell should keep us from offending them.

If there is no hell, what is the significance of the Incarnation and Atonement? If there is no hell, the Christian religion is false. But there is a hell. God has said it. Christ died on the cross to keep us out of it. If we are wise, we will take measures ourselves to keep out of it. Hell is for those only who turn their backs on God.

“Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink (Matt. 25:41-42). “And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire” (Matt. 18:8).

Adapted from *Things Catholics are Asked About*, J.P. Kenedy & Sons, New York, 1927, pp. 151-157.

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Pamphlet 403

Hell Does Exist!

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Hell is a subject not supposed to be mentioned among up to date people except with a shrug of the shoulders or a tilt of the nose. If one takes hell seriously, one is regarded with pity or scorn by those supposedly advanced thinkers. What about hell? Denying smallpox does not do away with it. If there is a hell, our indifference to it or denial of it will not affect its existence. Hell is the most dreadful doctrine of Christianity. Christianity is a religion of love. Hell seems to be the very enthronement of fear. The Old Testament made its appeal, mainly through fear. Christ came to inaugurate the new law of love. Yet he proclaimed the dreadful dogma of hell. How are love and hell reconciled?

Christ, the gentlest being that ever lived, proclaimed the most dreadful doctrine that ever fell on human years. It seems to be a contradiction, this God of love and this dogma of eternal punishment. God is love. God loves us. God so loved the world as to send his only Son among us in order to make us members of the divine family. Christ, the Son of God, when He came among us, showed His love by a life of gentleness, mercy and kindly deeds, surpassing everything in the annals of mankind. Finally, for love of us, He made the supreme sacrifice, laying down His life in pain and shame for our sakes. The love of God for us is therefore beyond question.

But how do we reconcile this love with the awful doctrine of hell? Hell is the punishment of those who spurned God's love. God exhausts every device of love, appealing to the heart of man to the very last moment of life, but if man rejects the divine Lover in life, the rejection is forever, and that is hell. Eternity without the love of God is an eternity of banishment from God, for none may be His companions hereafter who ignore Him here. Nothing defiled can enter heaven. The man who departs this life stained with previous sin is branded so repulsively that heaven, the home of God's friends, could not harbor him.

In heaven, all is love, because God is love. Only those who love God in life can be his lovers in eternity. Now this love of God required of us here is not a sentimental or emotional love, but a love shown by

service. Christ says: "If you love me keep My commandments." Words or sentiments avail nothing if deeds do not attest of love.

Christ was not content with declaring His love for us. He lived it. And if we love Him, we must show it by our lives. "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

Service, therefore, becomes the test and measure of our love of God. Unless we manifest our love of God by keeping His commandments, the rest does not count. Sentiment and emotion are the outcome of fervid natures. The love of God must be shown by our will to do His will. No one can say he loves another person if he opposes the will of that other person.

A sinner is one who opposes God's will. A sinner is one who defies God's authority. A sinner is one who refuses to be subject to God. Hell means that the one terminating one's life as a rebel to God cannot be friends with God in His eternal kingdom. After this life, there are but two permanent abodes, either heaven with God, or hell away from God. Man must choose his eternal abode while he lives. God does everything to induce man to choose the path of the commandments, which lead to eternal blessedness. But if man prefers to be a law to himself, and takes the broad road that leads to destruction, God will let him have his way, for God made man free.

It will thus be seen that God sends no man to hell. On the contrary, He warns the sinner against hell, He shows him, where the path of sin leads, and by appeals to conscience and by His grace poured out in the sacraments, endeavors to change the sinner from his evil and dreadful course.

But if God's warnings and love are spurned, the sinner goes inevitably to his eternal ruin. Instead, therefore, of questioning God's goodness with regard to hell, we should rather be astonished that man's temerity in taking the path that leads to hell. God distinctly proclaims that if His love is rejected, the one who rejects it will be in turn rejected. What rashness in man to presume that God can be trifled with! Do we fancy that because God is love that he is a weakling? That He will submit to have this authority and dignity set at naught? Because a sinner is not physically forced to do God's will does it mean that he can mock God?

For a sinner is a mocker of God. A sinner snaps his fingers in God's face, defying him. That is the meaning of mortal sin. It is a deliberate transgression of God's

law in a serious matter. A man who dies in the state of deliberate transgression against God's law is not qualified to enter into God's kingdom.

But some may say God is too good to punish everlastingly. Is God too good to be true? If he distinctly declares that the sinner goes to everlasting punishment, do we honor God by refusing to believe Him? Why be so solicitous for God's goodness and not solicitous for His truthfulness?

It all comes down to a question of fact; did or did not Christ proclaim the doctrine of hell? If he did, he is to be believed. If the doctrine is dreadful, it is for us to dread sin, which leads to hell. Now Christ proclaimed over and over again, in the clearest and most emphatic manner, that the punishment of him who dies an unrepentant sinner is hell.

If we do not believe Christ, let us put him down as an imposter and reject him. But no one can logically believe in Christ and hesitate to believe in hell. Both fall or stand together. If hell is a false doctrine Christ is a false teacher. And if Christ be false Christianity is a fraud. Let us be done with this matter of sitting in judgment of God, saying that we will shall believe and what we shall not believe.

Revelation must be accepted whole and entire as God's truth, or rejected whole and entire as a fabrication. If one single truth of revelation falls all the Christian religion is false. A religion from God cannot be partly true, and partly false. Our sentiments are not to be the standard of judging God. If we went by sentiment, we should deny the compatibility of the crucifixion with God's love for His Son. If we went by sentiment, we should judge that world calamities are inconsistent with a good God.

We know God is good—He gave us our mothers—He gives us the power to become his children for all eternity in heaven. We know He is good—and yet how explain wars, pestilences, earthquakes, widows, and orphans. We simply cannot sit in judgment on God. God does not ask us to understand Him, but to obey Him. We shall understand God hereafter if we do His will here. God wants our love here and wants it shown by service, not by sentiment. It is all nonsense to enthuse over God's goodness, then turn around, and presume on his goodness to insult him. Every deliberate previous sin is an insult to God. It is equivalently saying to God, "I defy you." We are not brave enough to say that in words, but sin says it in action.

Some may say that sin is not as serious as all that. Well, God is the Judge, and He says it is. After all, it is God's judgment in the matter that counts. Our Lord said, "For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?" (Matt. 16:26). The world is quite considerable thing, yet if we put it in one side of the scale and the soul in the other, the soul outweighs the world, in Christ judgment. Sin destroys the soul. The martyrs were not mistaken. They lost their lives in torture rather than sin. The apostles were not mistaken. All of them suffered direst torments in the fulfillment of their mission.

When we recall what sin is, it should alarm us. If a soldier should deliberately violate the orders of his commander-in-chief in a serious matter, he would know what to expect if found out. God is the Ruler of mankind. His orders are the commandments. No one who violates the commandments is undetected. Every sin is committed in God's presence. Because God is so good that He does not punish on the spot does not mean that He is less offended, but that His patience and mercy are almost without limit to mankind. It is because God is so good that frequently the sinner is so bad. But just because God is so good He is also so dreadful when His patience and goodness are abused.

However, when all is said, hell remains, more or less, a mystery. It is an awful thing, eternal punishment. To understand hell we should have to understand the infinite majesty of God. Eternal punishment is an awful thing. It is also an awful thing to despise the majesty of the Infinite God. And that is what sin doubts. It is only those who died unrepentant who go to hell. Let me make this clear, for a right understanding of the point is important in this consideration.

First of all a sin must be mortal to deserve hell. A mortal sin is a deliberate violation of God's law in a serious matter. Minor or venial sins do not consign a sinner to hell. Purgatory is a temporary cleansing place for minor transgressions, for nothing defiled can enter heaven. A mortal sin is a serious matter. It means a deliberate doing of something, which is known to be seriously forbidden by God. Two things enter necessarily into a mortal sin, knowledge that the thing is previously wrong, and deliberation in doing the wrong thing. If either of these factors is missing, there is no mortal sin.

It will thus be seen that hell is not a trap for the unwary, but a terminal whose path is labeled, a path by which no one can travel without knowing its awful