

Heaven and Hell

The reason that I wanted to teach this class is because our modern world is purporting to support a view of the afterlife that is skewed from our traditional church teachings and from the exact words that Jesus gave us Himself.

Along these lines it is important to reflect on whether doctrine and dogma can change. As Catholics we firmly believe that they cannot. What can take place is that our understanding of a particular truth can evolve over time through the power of the Holy Spirit as we grow in understanding other elements in our world. For example, it was not that long ago that most people believed literally in a seven-day creation. Now we know through scientific research and archeological findings that the earth and its inhabitants came into being over the course of billions of years. We still believe in the solid dogma that God began the process of creation and that he holds all life in existence. We believe that he endowed people with intellect, memory and will. Our understanding of the specifics of the creation story have evolved but the theological truth that God created out of nothing has not.

Development of doctrine is a term used by John Henry Newman and other theologians influenced by him to describe the way Catholic teaching has become more detailed and explicit over the centuries, while later statements of doctrine remain consistent with earlier statements.

When we look at the dogmas of heaven and hell, I would like to focus on three areas: what Jesus said, what was believed by the Church through the Middle Ages and our modern view of the afterlife.

Let us start with Jesus.

The doctrine of hell is uncomfortable for most of us. However, our understanding of hell shapes our view of the gospel, God's holiness, and our fallenness. If we don't accept the reality of hell, we won't rightly understand the glory of the gospel. ***

Reality of Hell

A friend once challenged me to show her where Jesus talks about hell in the Gospels. Even a cursory read-through shows Jesus talked about it plenty. In fact, Jesus talked about hell more than any other person in the Bible. In Luke 16, he describes a great chasm over which "none may cross from there to us." In Matthew 25, Jesus tells of a time when people will be separated into two groups, one entering into his presence, the other banished to "eternal fire."

Jesus talks about or refers to hell 62 times, and describes it vividly. There's no denying that Jesus knew, believed, and warned against the absolute reality of hell.

Jesus doesn't only reference hell, he describes it in great detail. He says it is a place of eternal torment (Luke 16:23), of unquenchable fire (Mark 9:43), where the worm does not die (Mark 9:48), where people will gnash their teeth in anguish and regret (Matt. 13:42), and from which there is no return, even to warn loved ones (Luke 16:19–31). He calls hell a place of "outer darkness" (Matt. 25:30), comparing it to "Gehenna" (Matt. 10:28), which was a trash dump outside the walls of Jerusalem where rubbish was burned and maggots abounded.

1900 phrases of Jesus 62 hell, 192 heaven.

Surprisingly, Jesus said very little about Heaven. He spoke more about eternal life and how one can enter Heaven than He did about the place

of Heaven. Jesus did make a direct reference about Heaven when He comforted the disciples with these words:

John 14:2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

John 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

John 14:4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

With those words, Jesus revealed that Heaven is a real place and that it is the dwelling place of God (His Father's house). Nineteen times Jesus made reference to God the Father dwelling in Heaven:

- Mat 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.
- Mat 5:45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.
- Mat 5:48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.
- Mat 6:1 Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.
- Mat 6:9 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.
- Mat 7:11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your **Father** who is **in heaven** give good things to those who ask Him!
- Mat 7:21 Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.
- Mat 10:32 Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.

- Mat 10:33 But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.
- Mat 12:50 For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.
- Mat 16:17 Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.
- Mat 18:10 Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.
- Mat 18:14 Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.
- Mat 18:19 Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.
- Mat 23:9 Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.
- Mark 11:25 And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.
- Mark 11:26 But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.
- Mark 13:32 But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.
- Luke 11:2 So He said to them, When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.

Jesus also demonstrated that Heaven is the dwelling place of God, when He “lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee” (John 17:1). And, Jesus proclaimed that God reigns in Heaven with these words:

- I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth...(Mat 11:25).

- I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth... (Luke 10:21)

Heaven is a place of joy, rewards, and treasures:

- Mat 5:12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven...
- Mat 6:19 Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal
- Mat 6:20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.
- Luke 6:23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward *is* great in heaven...
- Luke 15:7 I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

Heaven is Perfect

We know from all the words of Jesus that Heaven is the place of eternal life with God after we depart this world. We know that it is a place of rest and peace, as well as of perfect union and communion with our Creator, Lord, and Saviour. We know that is a populated place, prepared by Jesus (John 14:1-3). We also know that while Jesus is preparing Heaven for us, He is also preparing us for Heaven. By the power of His Holy Spirit, we are being conformed to His image. There is no greater aspiration than to become more and more like Jesus. And what was it that Jesus spoke of more than anything? Life! He spoke of the Kingdom of God that was at hand (Gospel of Matthew), the Kingdom of God that was for man (Gospel of Luke), devotion and service to God and others (Gospel of Mark), and assurance of who He is (Gospel of John). If we are to be like Jesus, let's tell people about life. Tell them about the gracious forgiveness of sins that Jesus offers and the new and eternal life that He desires to give them.

Jesus said a lot about both places. He spoke of both Heaven and Hell as being real, literal, physical places and He described both places the eternal dwelling place for the soul. Furthermore, Jesus taught that all people have a choice to make, and that choice will determine their eternal destiny.

As far as hell is concerned, It's interesting in that the apostle Matthew recorded more of Jesus' teachings about Hell than did the other Gospel writers. That shouldn't be surprising because in Matthew's Gospel Jesus is presented as the coming Messiah and King. Matthew records more information about the Kingdom of Heaven than the others so he also records more information about the abode of the dead than the other gospel writers. In Matthew, Jesus makes a direct reference to Hell nine times as compared to Mark and Luke in which Hell is spoken of three times and not at all in John.

Let's walk through the Gospel accounts and hear the words of Jesus regarding the place where unregenerate people will spend eternity.

Jesus' Words About Hell and Eternal Judgment

The Gospel of Matthew, Direct References

1. Matt 5:22 But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell **fire**.
2. Matt 5:29 If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into **hell**.
3. Matt 5:22, 29-30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into **hell**.

4. Mat 10:28 “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in **hell**.
5. Mat 11:23 And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to **hell**; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.
6. Mat 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of **hell** shall not prevail against it.
7. Mat 18:9 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into **hell** fire.
8. Mat 23:15 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of **hell** as yourselves.
9. Mat 23:33 Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the **condemnation of hell**?

The Gospel of Mark

In Mark, Jesus mentioned hell only three times in one passage. However, in that passage, He gave a clear message of warning of the dangers of hell and the presence of flames of fire.

10. Mark 9:43 If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to **hell**, into the fire that shall never be quenched.
11. Mark 9:45 And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into **hell**, into the fire that shall never be quenched.
12. Mark 9:47 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into **hell** fire.

The Gospel of Luke

13. Luke 10:15 And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to **hell**.
14. Luke 12:5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into **hell**; yes, I say to you, fear Him!
15. Luke 16:23 And being in torments in **hell**, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

Jesus also spoke of hell using other terms, such as “destruction,” “fire/flame,” and “condemnation/perishing.”

- Matt 7:13 Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to **destruction**, and there are many who go in by it.
- Matt 7:19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the **fire**.
- Mat 13:40 Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the **fire**, so it will be at the end of this age.
- Mat 13:42 and will cast them into the furnace of **fire**. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.
- Mat 13:50 and cast them into the furnace of **fire**. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.
- Mat 18:8 If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting **fire**.
- Mat 22:13 Then the king said to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer **darkness**; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- Mat 25:30 And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer **darkness**. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- Mat 25:41 Then He will also say to those on the left hand, Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting **fire** prepared for the devil and his angels:
- Mark 9:44, 46, 48 where Their worm does not die, And the **fire** is not quenched.
- Mark 12:40 who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater **condemnation**.
- Luke 13:3 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise **perish**.
- Luke 16:24 Then he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this **flame**.
- John 5:29 and come forth; those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of **condemnation**.
- John 15:6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the **fire**, and they are burned.

Hell is a Real Place

It's a real place that we don't want anyone to go to. The reality of Hell should encourage us to share the gospel of saving grace with all people.

THE MIDDLE AGES

And what an addiction The Divine Comedy inspired: a literary work endlessly adapted, pinched from, referenced and remixed, inspiring painters and sculptors for centuries. More than the authors of the Bible itself, Dante provided us with the vision of Hell that remains with us and has been painted by Botticelli and Blake, Delacroix and Dalí, turned into sculpture by Rodin – whose The Kiss depicts Dante's damned lovers Paolo and Francesca – and illustrated in the pages of X-Men comics by

John Romita. Jorge Luis Borges said *The Divine Comedy* is “the best book literature has ever achieved”, while TS Eliot summed up its influence thus: “Dante and Shakespeare divide the world between them. There is no third.”

Dante’s biases inform much about how we see Hell, Purgatory and Heaven. And he mixes Christian theology and pagan Greco-Roman myth as if both are simultaneously true – or rather, to use another term from contemporary sci-fi/fantasy writing, he “retcons” Greco-Roman myth so that its characters, including the gods, can co-exist with Christianity in a way that makes logical sense. Charon, the Greek mythological figure who ferries souls to the underworld, now ferries the damned to Hell. Satan himself is referred to as Dis, another name for Pluto, the god of the underworld.

In the other two parts of *The Divine Comedy*, Dante imagines various levels of hell and heaven. He describes the Inferno in great detail, vividly describing the torments and agonies of hell; these descriptions, however, do not come from the Bible. Some come from Islamic tradition. “The Qur’anic basis for this account is Qur’an 17:1, and Muslims commemorate annually ‘the night of ascension’ (*lailat al-miraj*) on the 26th of Rajab—the seventh month of the Islamic calendar. It is assumed that the general plot as well as the many small details of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* reflect a fanciful treatment of this Islamic theme” (*op. cit.*, p128).

Some have speculated that perhaps the terrible images of the *Inferno* spring from Dante’s doubt about his own salvation. In any case, the major differences between the *Inferno* and the Bible’s depiction of hell are these:

1. Levels of hell. Dante describes hell as comprised of nine concentric

circles, representing an increase of wickedness, where sinners are punished in a fashion befitting their crimes. The Bible does suggest different degrees of punishment in hell in [Luke 12:47–48](#). However, it says nothing of concentric circles or varying depths in hell.

2. Different types of punishment. Dante's vision of hell involved such eternal punishments as souls tormented by biting insects, wallowing in mire, immersed in boiling blood, being lashed with whips. Lesser punishments involve having heads on backwards, chasing unreachable goals for eternity, and walking endlessly in circles. The Bible, however, speaks of hell as a place of "outer darkness" where there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth" ([Matthew 8:12](#); [22:13](#)). Whatever punishment awaits the unrepentant sinner in hell, it is no doubt worse than even Dante could imagine.

The final section of the poem, *Paradiso*, is Dante's vision of heaven. Here Dante is guided through nine spheres, again in a concentric pattern, each level coming closer to the presence of God. Dante's heaven is depicted as having souls in a hierarchy of spiritual development, based at least in part on their human ability to love God. Here are nine levels of people who have attained, by their own efforts, the sphere in which they now reside. ([Matthew 26:28](#); [2 Corinthians 5:21](#)). In addition, the idea that we must work our way through ascending realms of heaven to approach God is foreign to the Scriptures. Heaven will be a place of unbroken fellowship with God, where we will serve Him and "see His face" ([Revelation 22:3–4](#)). All believers will forever enjoy the pleasure of God's company, made possible by faith in His Son.

Our most important affair is that of our eternal salvation; upon it depends our happiness or misery forever.

Since therefore all the goods of this world will one day end for us, as we shall either leave them or they will leave us, that affair alone should be esteemed great upon which depends eternal happiness or eternal misery.

St. Alphonsus Liguori:

We are born with a rope around our necks, and as long as we live on earth, we hourly approach the gallows, that is, the sickness that puts an end to our life. It would be madness for anyone to delude himself with the idea that he shall not die.

A hundred years from here, at most, and neither you nor I will be any longer in this world; both will have gone into the house of eternity. A Day, an hour, a moment is approaching which will be the last for both you and me; and this hour, this moment, is already fixed by Almighty God; how then can we think of anything else but of loving God who will then be our judge?

Men come into the world in unequal conditions: one is born rich, another poor, one a noble, another a plebeian; but all go out of it equal and alike. BEATITUDE: Blessed are the sorrowing because they shall be consoled. The more one has been afflicted with tribulations, if he suffered them with patience, the more will he be glorified in the kingdom of heaven.

To obtain salvation we must tremble at the thought of being lost, and tremble not so much at the Thought of hell, as of sin, which alone can send us there.

God is merciful; but he is also just. Sinners are desirous that he should be merciful only, without being just; but that is impossible because if he were only to forgive and never to chastise, he would be lacking in justice.

Patience on the part of God towards those who avail themselves of his mercy just to offend him the more, would not be mercy, but a lack of justice

One thing is necessary, the salvation of our souls

Commit this sin, you can afterward confess it.

The SKULL

Let us, at any rate, give heed to suffer joyfully the crosses that God sends us, because they all, if we are saved, will become for us eternal joys.

On one part, it wants to live, in order to hate God, who is the object of its greatest hatred; on the other, it wants to die, that it might not feel the pain it experiences of having lost him, while it perceives that it cannot die. Thus it will live forever in one continual mortal agony.

Punishment that does not continue for a long time is not grievous punishment. On the other hand, punishment, however light it may be, when it continues for a long time, becomes intolerable.

The course of life is nothing but a race towards death, a race which one may not stand still or slow down even for a moment, but all must run with equal speed and never changing stride. St. Augustine

If we could escape death we might justly fear to die. But since it is necessary for the mortal to die, let us embrace the opportunity coming from the divine promise....let us go through the exit of death with the reward of immortality. St. Cyprian.

They all stand in divergent steps in the heavenly temple, to be sure, but in unison they sing one psalm of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord. Places vary, but the praise of the Lord is one. St. Jerome.

St. Augustine on Free Will without Sin

In heaven there will be no need for reason to govern non-existent evil inclinations. God will hold away over man, the soul over the body, and the happiness in eternal life and law will make obedience sweet and easy.

In that final peace which is the end and purpose of all virtue here on earth, our nature, made whole by immortality and incorruption will have no vices and experience no rebellion from within or without.

The souls in bliss will still possess the freedom of will, though sin will have no power to tempt them. They will be more free than ever—so free, in fact, from all delight in sinning as to find in not sinning an unfailing source of joy.

In virtue of the vigor of their minds, the saints in heaven will have not merely a notional remembrance of their own past but also a knowledge of the unending torments of the damned.

St. Augustine. The fact is that there is no way of waving or weakening the words which the Lord has told us that He will pronounce in the last judgement.

St. Gregory the Great: If you believe on the basis of God's word that the souls of the saints are in heaven, you must also believe that the souls of the wicked are in hell. For if eternal justice brings God's chosen ones to glory, does it not follow that it also brings the wicked to their doom?

St. Justin Martyr

Let anyone repeat the claim that our statements that sinners are punished in everlasting fire are just boastful words, calculated to instill terror, and that we want men to live a virtuous life through fear and not because such a life is pleasant, I will make this brief reply that if it is not as we say, then there is no God.

St. Augustine. The fact is that there is no way of waving or weakening the words which the Lord has told us that He will pronounce in the last judgement.

GIVING ALMS AND THE POOR --- SHEEP AND GOATS

The lukewarm: St. Augustine: they are condemned not because they did evil, but because they did not do good.

St. Gregory the Great --- There is one kind of fire in hell, but it does not torment all sinners in the same way, for each one feels its torments according to the degree of guilt. Just as in the world many live under the one sun; yet not all feel the heat of the sun to the same degree---some feel it more, others less----so in hell there are many degrees of burning in the one fire. There is no need of different types of fire to produce different types of burning, either in the world under the one sun or in hell in the torments of one fire.

Torture of the rich man and Lazarus.

Post Vatican II: Christians everywhere are burning the castles of heaven and quenching the flames of hell. In the post Vatican II church the word is out. Religion does not mean otherworldly preoccupation but this worldly service. The religious man does not pine after eternity but labors to build the earth. He leaves the afterlife to afterwards. So caught up in the agony and bliss of this world he is beyond the egocentric worries of a future reward and punishment.

Today the struggle is not for individual salvation but for the communal kingdom of God. God is encountered in the sacrament of the brother and the basic unit of understanding is the community. In this atmosphere, heaven and hell are unmasked as self-interests which could possibly be injurious to the common goal. There are the fruitless anxieties of an individual morality and eschatology.

Heaven and revenge. Thomas Aquinas ==enemies

They were fixed abodes in a three tier universe---heaven above, earth between, and hell below. Today this view of the world is scientifically untenable. As a result heaven and hell, so intimately related with this ancient cosmology, are relegated to false ideas which men once held before "they came of age." For many the loss of heaven and hell is irreparable.

What modern Catholics are experiencing is a failure of the contemporary imagination to grapple with the expanding universe. Heaven and hell are theological realities in search of scientific grounding.

Until there is a scientific basis for the afterlife, modern man's capacity for belief, while not destroyed, is gravely impaired.

A question remains – even with the personal, historical and scientific charges against heaven and hell, can the modern Catholic so quickly and easily jettison them? Heaven and hell have not undergone rigorous intellectual scrutiny and then rejection, they have given way to a new experience. The modern Catholic's new interpersonal, socially oriented stance does not allow heaven and hell their former lordship. This is undoubtedly a good thing. But do not heaven and hell have some role to play in the constellation of Christian symbols through which the Catholic interprets his life and guides his behavior? The modern Catholic did not find new answers to the vexing questions which heaven and hell pose. He merely abandoned the questions. Heaven and hell touch upon sober truths which the Catholic, although he may not want to look at them, can hardly avoid. Heaven and hell may no longer be obsession, but they can never be sluffed off as insignificant.

For the miracle worker heaven and hell should be restored to the center of Christian concern. They must be redone and updated. Heaven can be described interpersonally, and hell analyzed psychologically. Culturally these symbols may be badly wounded but with constant attention they will recuperate to find a new and vigorous life.

Universalism

Doctrine which has ancient Christian roots with Origen and Gregory of Nyssa is today becoming increasingly popular.

“How can a merciful God condemn anyone to hell?”

Not easy to appeal to God’s justice” “God’s mercy is at work while you are on earth, his justice takes over at death. The answer to the question is that God does not condemn anyone to hell. God’s judgment on all men is constant and eternal – he wishes their salvation. Man’s judgment on himself may be quite different. He may not want salvation, he may choose against God. In this case he renders judgment on himself.

Judgment is not so much an action as a process of interaction and dialogue. God’s judgment on every man is salvation. Man’s judgment on himself may be perdition.

Universalism marshals powerful argument. The main thesis and the basis of everyone’s salvation is the goodness and sovereignty of God’s love. Since God is love, he saves man: since God is omnipotent love, he will save all men. Universalism is a logical conclusion from the omnipotent love of God. God’s sovereign love will eventually bring all men to salvation.

One of the major critiques of universalism is that it does not take man's freedom seriously. God eventually pressures man, bends his arm, and drags him reluctantly into salvation.

Overwhelming love which one must answer. He never feels that his freedom is being co-opted for it seems the only thing to do. In fact, in responding to this love he feels more himself.

In this overpowering love, freedom is not jeopardized but attained. And so therein rests his argument on the ultimate mystery of freedom and destiny.

ONLY WHEN MAN IS ASSURED OF HIS ETERNAL SALVATION IS HE FREE TO ACT IN THE WORLD. Christian freedom is not found in the choice between salvation and damnation. It is psychological and moral bondage, the lack of freedom. The man whose salvation is assured can live spontaneously and deal creatively with the problems he encounters. He is not hung up on salvation, he knows it is a gift of God.

The univ. Position provides many insights into the love of God and nature of human freedom. In the last analysis however it seems to trivialize evil and not understand the paradoxical nature of God's acceptance. God accepts and loves man, but the paradox involved is that this acceptance does not insure salvation. God's acceptance of man does not lead to settled assurance but increased struggle.

That all men will be saved is the Christian hope. That all men are saved is a possibility not an inevitability.

Supernatural positivism.

Static perfection is distasteful.

The most deeply felt description of heaven and hell are in terms of justice. Heaven and hell are the greatest moments of man's ethical

imagination. In a world of moral ambiguity, where wrong prospers and right goes unrewarded, heaven and hell introduce clarity and order. The goats are separated from the sheep, the chaff from the wheat, the righteous are vindicated the wicked punished. The world of absolute justice may seem harsh to Christians waned on mercy but to the sufferer of injustice it is heaven.

If heaven is described as everything man desires and the fulfillment of his true nature, hell is everything he fears and the destruction of his true nature.

Hans urs von Balthasar, NOT saying that we have certain knowledge that all people will be saved. But he insists that we are permitted to hope that hell might be empty of men.

Certain theologians have opined that Balthasars “universalism” has contributed mightily to the decline of the Church’s influence in the West and to an attenuating of her missionary impulse.

How can He B respond?

His first move is to remind defenders of a crowded hell that the biblical witness in regard to this issue is complex. Despite the many references to hell and to those who will suffer therein, there are at least as many biblical evocations of universal salvation. “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” Jn 12:32 and “He has made know to us...the mystery of his will...as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earch Eph 1:9-10. “This is good and it is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

It is simply not the case that a clear patristic concensus exists around the issue of a crowded hell. All the Fathers, both E and W reject the

view that hell---empty or not---is created by God. Rather they hold that it is brought about by sinners themselves, whose resistance to the divine love produces suffering in them. Like CS Lewis he says that the door to hell is locked from the inside, by those who, from the bottom of their hearts, want to be left alone.

The church after Vatican II has contributed to a development of doctrine in regard to the issue under consideration. Without ever embracing Origen's apokatastasis panton, B affected a sort of organizing of Augustine, a nuancing of the mass damnata theology that, by the early twentieth century, was found increasingly incredible and, indeed, unscriptural. This development has been rather clearly confirmed in the magisterial teaching of the Church, especial in the Vatican II document Lumen Gentium and Pope Benedict's encyclical Spe Salvi, both of which offer interpretations of our question that are infinitely more generous than anything in the Augustinian tradition.

Pauline attitude vs. Aquinas: Romans 9

I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit—² I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, ⁴ the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. ⁵ Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised!^[a] Amen.

Stated abstractly and dispassionately --- are there many or few who are saved? --- the question remains finally unanswerable and Balthasar acknowledges this. However, Christ's own journey to the

limits of godforsakenness to which the saints just mentioned bore witness, provides ample ground for the hope that all might come to salvation. Because of God's acrobatic display of love ---the Son going all the way down to the very bottom of sin and death and then being drawn back to the Father in the power of the holy Spirit -- we may reasonably hope that even those who have wandered farthest away from God will be drawn into the dynamic of the divined life. E. Stein --- still another female saint that human freedom can, in principle stand athwart God's love, but given what God has accomplished in Christ, it can be, so to speak, "outwitted". The hope of salvation for all should stir up the missionary spirit, not dampen it.

CONCLUSION:

Different levels: virtue of who we are....our capacity for God is deeper.

1. There definitely is a heaven and a hell.
2. To trust in the fact that hell may be empty is foolish.
3. Universalism has strongly affected our worldview.
4. The idea that all good people will go to heaven and no one will be condemned to hell is dangerous.
5. Pascal's wager////FINE...but we act out of love of God first of all.
6. Jesus' words are the bottom line.

St. Pope John Paul II on heaven as a state:

More than a place, hell indicates the state of those who freely and definitively separate themselves from God, the source of all life and joy. This is how the Catechism of the Catholic Church summarizes the truths of faith on this subject: "To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from him for ever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called 'hell'".

Dei Verbum:

Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ, or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience—those, too, may achieve eternal salvation. Nor shall Divine Providence deny the assistance necessary for salvation to those who, without any fault of theirs, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, and who, not without his grace, strive to live a good life. Whatever good or truth is found amongst them is considered by the Church to be a preparation for the Gospel, and given by him who enlightens all men so that they may finally have life.

No salvation outside the church???

In theology, apocatastasis (/æpoukə'tæstəsis/) is the restoration of creation to a condition of perfection.^[1] In Christianity, it is a form of Christian universalism that includes the ultimate salvation of everyone—including the damned in hell and the devil.^{[2][3][4]} The New Testament (Acts 3:21) refers to the

"apocatastasis of all things", although this passage is not usually understood to teach universal salvation.^[5]

1023 Those who die in God's grace and friendship and are perfectly purified live for ever with Christ. They are like God for ever, for they "see him as he is," face to face:⁵⁹⁸

By virtue of our apostolic authority, we define the following: According to the general disposition of God, the souls of all the saints . . . and other faithful who died after receiving Christ's holy Baptism (provided they were not in need of purification when they died, . . . or, if they then did need or will need some purification, when they have been purified after death, . . .) already before they take up their bodies again and before the general judgment - and this since the Ascension of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ into heaven - have been, are and will be in heaven, in the heavenly Kingdom and celestial paradise with Christ, joined to the company of the holy angels. Since the Passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, these souls have seen and do see the divine essence with an intuitive vision, and even face to face, without the mediation of any creature.⁵⁹⁹

1033 We cannot be united with God unless we freely choose to love him. But we cannot love God if we sin gravely against him, against our neighbor or against ourselves: "He who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."⁶¹² Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are his brethren.⁶¹³ To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from him for ever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called "hell."

1034 Jesus often speaks of "Gehenna" of "the unquenchable fire" reserved for those who to the end of their lives refuse to believe and be converted, where both soul and body can be lost.⁶¹⁴ Jesus solemnly proclaims that he "will send his angels, and they will gather . . . all evil doers, and throw them into the furnace of fire,"⁶¹⁵ and that he will pronounce the condemnation: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire!"⁶¹⁶

1035 The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. Immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, "eternal fire."⁶¹⁷ The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs.

1036 The affirmations of Sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Church on the subject of hell are a call to the responsibility incumbent upon man to make use of his freedom in view of his eternal destiny. They are at the same time an urgent call to conversion: "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few."⁶¹⁸

Since we know neither the day nor the hour, we should follow the advice of the Lord and watch constantly so that, when the single course of our earthly life is completed, we may merit to enter with him into the marriage feast and be numbered among the blessed, and not, like the wicked and slothful servants, be ordered to depart into the eternal fire, into the outer darkness where "men will weep and gnash their teeth."⁶¹⁹

1037 God predestines no one to go to hell;⁶²⁰ for this, a willful turning away from God (a mortal sin) is necessary, and persistence in it until the end. In the Eucharistic liturgy and in the daily prayers of her faithful, the Church implores the mercy of

God, who does not want "any to perish, but all to come to repentance":⁶²¹

You knew all my intimate thoughts and cleared up all my doubts. I once told you how astonished I was that God does not give equal glory in heaven to all His chosen. I was afraid they were not at all equally happy. You made me bring Daddy's tumbler and put it by the side of my thimble. You filled them both with water and asked me which was fuller. I told you they were both full to the brim and that it was impossible to put more water in them than they could hold. And so, Mother darling, you made me understand that in heaven God will give His chosen their fitting glory and that the last will have no reason to envy the first. By such means, you made me understand the most sublime mysteries and gave my soul its essential food. —St. Thérèse of Lisieux, *The Story of a Soul*. (New York: Double Day, 2001) 20.