

Eternal Damnation? – II

May 25, 2013

It is idle to pretend that any of us human beings can fathom the mystery of one single soul's damnation, let alone that of the majority of human beings that live and die, but there are certain things that can be said which make it easier to accept that there is a mystery beyond our human possibility of knowing.

The key to the mystery is surely the infinite greatness, or the limitlessness, of God. If he is infinite, then to offend him is to commit an offence which is in a certain way limitless. But the only way for a finite human being to suffer infinitely is for the suffering to have no limit or end in time. Therefore there is a certain proportion between any grave offence committed against God, and an eternal punishment.

As for the infinity or limitlessness of God, it is not too difficult for our reason to grasp it in the abstract. Effects exist all around us which require a cause. But a chain of causes can no more go on for ever than an endless series of links in a chain can hang without a ceiling-hook. So there must exist a First Cause, which we call God. But if this First Cause were composite, or put together out of parts, then whoever or whatever put it together would have to have been prior to the First Cause – impossible. Therefore God is in no way composite, he can only be simple and pure Existence. But existence is not by itself, as such, limited. Any limits on God's being would have to have been put on him by a prior limiter, again impossible. Therefore the First Cause has no limits to his being, God is infinite existence.

In the concrete however, it is not so easy to get our minds around the infinity of God. Our human minds are working all day long on, with and from limited or finite creatures. Only

when we turn our hearts and minds to God are we thinking of the infinite. Hence the common difficulty of prayer, because we can only think of what is limitless goodness by thinking of some limited goodness around us and then thinking away the limits. For instance God is as beautiful as a sunset, only infinitely more so.

It follows that the more we allow ourselves to be immersed in daily living, the less chance have our minds and hearts of grasping who or what is the God behind all the limited beings that make up our daily living. Contrariwise, the more we turn our minds and hearts to the knowing and loving of the unlimited Goodness necessarily behind all the limited good things of our daily lives, the better the access we will have to the mystery of God's infinite goodness and to the corresponding mystery of the ingratitude of so many of his human creatures.

Therefore to lessen – without remotely fathoming – the mystery of souls' eternal damnation, I need to follow St Dominic's example, and to pray. That does not mean fooling myself that God is right when he is in reality wrong. It means my getting to the truth, namely that he is right, and that I – am wrong!

St Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises greatly help to turn heart and mind to God. A Saint prayed along these lines: "O love, thou art not loved. Would that thou wert loved. Give me only to love thee as thou needest to be loved, and then do with me what thou wilt."

Kyrie eleison.