

Catholic Action, be guided by the priest in the parish, by the Bishop or his representative in the diocese, and, as the newer development has it nearly everywhere, by the body of the Bishops within a country.

### *Principles of Catholic Action and Their Application*

Yet, a double distinction is needed to make Catholic Action's work clear in these fields. First, the moral principles are separate from the particular methods of applying the moral principles; for example, there is the distinction between the principle of a world society and the only existing, however lame, approach to it—the League of Nations. Catholic Action should bear heaviest on the moral principles, and when it treats specific applications be conscious of and affirm the difference. Secondly, there is the distinction between being an agency influencing public opinion and being a political party, labor union, farm cooperative society, or employers' association. In its public work Catholic Action is always the former, never the latter.

And certainly the desire for peace and the Christian motives for peace must be inculcated throughout, and the Catholic avenues of God's grace must be more frequently employed through the work of Catholic Action. It is, of course, far from enough simply to know what is right. Throughout Catholic Action the Catholic inspiration and the Catholic way of life must be stressed and expressed. For mere social charity is the soul of the world society and of the economic society, or there is no peace in either.

### *Methods of Propagating Catholic Principles*

Since the first aim of Catholic Action is to train the people in the principles and spirit of peace, among the chief methods are lectures on the subject, parish or lay organization study and discussion groups, the distribution of pamphlets, and arranging for more formal conferences on the means of both international and economic peace. On world peace, considerable carefully prepared material is at hand in the committee reports and other pamphlets of the Catholic Association for International Peace and in publications of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, including study outlines and a general syllabus of the subject. On economic peace, the material is still larger and from more sources.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.—“Code of Social Principles,” prepared by the International Union of Social Studies of Malines (Booklet published by the Catholic Social Guild, Oxford. Obtainable from N. C. W. C. Social Action Department, Washington, D. C.).

Pamphlets on peace of the National Catholic Welfare Conference and the Catholic Association for International Peace—study outlines usually appended (Washington, D. C.).

Pius XI's “Reconstructing the Social Order,” particularly pp. 25-29. For explanatory material consult N. C. W. C. Social Action Department.

# The Homiletic and Pastoral Review

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## Again the Doctrine of Hell

By FRANCIS J. CONNELL, C.S.S.R., S.T.D.

In the October issue of *The Homiletic and Pastoral Review* the Rev. Dr. John O'Brien takes issue with the ideas of the eternity and of the reality of the fire of hell embodied and defended in my article of the September number. From the title of Dr. O'Brien's paper, "Father Connell's Ideas of Hell," one might infer that the doctrines I champion are merely my personal convictions. Let me, therefore, state once for all that I disclaim any originality in this matter; I am only expounding the common teaching of the Catholic Church.

In this paper my plan is: first, to comment on a few particular points in Dr. O'Brien's article; secondly, to examine his objections to what I upheld regarding the mitigation of the punishments of the reprobate and the reality of hell-fire; finally, to discuss the doctrine of the Catholic Church concerning the eternal duration of the unhappy lot of the damned.

First, Dr. O'Brien says of a reference I made to n. 457 in Denzinger's "Enchiridion": "My edition of Denzinger says nothing about the present matter in that place." The reason why Dr. O'Brien cannot find this "unverifiable quotation," as he calls it, is because he has one of the older editions of Denzinger. The more modern editions contain under n. 457 the Decree of Innocent IV to which I referred, and which reads: "Si quis autem absque poenitentia in peccato mortali decedit, hic procul dubio æternæ gehennæ ardoribus perpetuo cruciatur."

Secondly, I suggest that in adducing the testimony of an author, Dr. O'Brien should designate exactly the passage to which he refers. To assert simply, "St. Augustine says" or "St. Thomas says," especially in a discussion of a scientific character, multiplies difficulties for readers who wish to study the question thoroughly. Moreover, it tends to favor inexactness.

Thirdly, I deeply regret Dr. O'Brien's statement: "We may insist all we please on an eternal hell of material fire and tor-

merits, but anyone who is acquainted with the modern mind knows that intelligent Catholics, as well as outsiders, will no longer accept such a teaching." For, in general, it is not good form in a controversy to denounce one's opponents as stupid; and in the present instance the imputation is especially inappropriate, in that it means that anyone who holds what is undoubtedly—to put it mildly—the much more common Catholic view concerning the punishment of hell is rated by Dr. O'Brien as an unintelligent person, whether he be of the clergy or of the laity, whether he be priest, bishop, cardinal or Pope. Such a sweeping denunciation by a Catholic priest is indeed amazing.

Fourthly, in Dr. O'Brien's former article, in the *Homiletic* for June, he asserted that the milder view (that the fire of hell is to be understood metaphorically) has many champions today. In my September article I wrote: "I should like to know who are some of the many champions of the milder view at the present day, and what standing they possess as Catholic theological authorities." As Dr. O'Brien made no reply on this point in his October article, I now repeat my request for the names—with exact citations—of some of these modern protagonists of a merely metaphorical hell-fire.

In his second paper Dr. O'Brien adduces nine authorities in support of his theory that eventually the punishments of the reprobate (at least, the *pæna sensus*) will be mitigated, and asserts that each of these authorities would be worth a whole army of writers who have been copying one another down the ages (presumably the theologians I cited). One naturally infers that Dr. O'Brien's nine authorities are in good standing as exponents of Catholic theology, and that their writings unequivocally favor the mitigation theory. They are: St. Augustine, St. John Chrysostom, St. John Damascene, Prudentius, Petavius, Abbé Emery, Mark of Ephesus, St. Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus. Let us examine the views of each on this question.

I do not know to what passage of St. Augustine Dr. O'Brien had reference, but I know that in *De Civitate Dei* (lib. XXI, c. 24, n. 3; Migne, *P.L.*, XLI, 739), after expounding the theory of mitigation, the Saint says: "I do not oppose it; but neither do

I on that account uphold it."<sup>1</sup> In the face of this clear testimony how can Augustine be named as an advocate of the mitigation theory?

The passage from St. John Chrysostom usually cited in favor of the mitigation view is found in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians (Migne, *P.G.*, LXII, 203). It is simply an exhortation to the faithful to pray for all the dead, even the worst sinners. Certainly, this cannot be regarded as a clear assertion that the damned can be helped by prayer; the more patent sense is that we should despair of no one's salvation.

St. John Damascene has been sometimes said to have been a mitigationist because of some passages in the discourse, "De Eis Qui in Fide Dormierunt," found in the older collections of his writings (Migne, *P.G.*, XCV, 247). *But*, unhappily for Dr. O'Brien, all patristic scholars in modern times admit that this discourse was not written by St. John Damascene at all (Bardenhewer-Shahan, "Patrology," p. 585)!

Petavius, far from supporting the mitigation theory, argued for the opposite doctrine, on the score that the Church does not pray for the damned, which she certainly would do if their pains could be appeased. The only favor he manifests towards the idea of mitigation is to say that it should not be rashly rejected as absurd (*De Angelis*, lib. III, c. 8, n. 18). Such a statement hardly justifies Dr. O'Brien in counting Petavius among his champions.

Mark of Ephesus—many of my readers will be surprised at this—was not a Catholic, but a prelate of the Greek schismatic church, and vehemently hostile to Catholicism. At the Council of Florence he strove to demonstrate from the Greek Fathers various doctrines opposed to the Catholic Faith—for example, the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father alone, the necessity of the *epiclesis* for the eucharistic consecration. It is but natural that he should have found another occasion for the same course of action in the mitigation theory [*Diet. de Théologie* IX(2), 1968 sq.]. If Dr. O'Brien is going to substantiate his views by such authorities, he should not neglect Calvin, who cast doubt on the reality of hell-fire (*Institutiones Christianae*, lib. III, c. 25).

<sup>1</sup> "Quod quidem non ideo confirmo, quoniam non resisto."

As I stated previously (The Homiletic and Pastoral Review, September, 1934, p. 1253), St. Thomas held that the damned are punished less severely from the very beginning than they strictly deserve, and Scotus held that those who die with both mortal and venial sins are punished for these latter only temporarily, so that with the completion of this retribution, their sufferings actually become less. But the mitigation theory to which I took exception is that which holds that after a period, through God's mercy, there will be a substantial alleviation of at least the *pæna sensus*, so that hell will become considerably less uncomfortable for the condemned soul, as Mr. Lunn states. If Dr. O'Brien can find this mitigation theory advocated by either St. Thomas or by Scotus, and will inform us exactly where in their writings it can be found, he will win great fame in the theological world.

The two remaining authorities—Prudentius and Abbé Emery—I concede without objection to Dr. O'Brien.<sup>2</sup> But in view of what has been said in the preceding paragraph, Dr. O'Brien's list of authorities appears much less formidable, and objection can be taken to his assertion: "We have cited some much more prominent theologians [than those named by Father Connell] who hold the contrary view." If the passages of Dr. O'Brien's authorities I evaluated in the preceding paragraph are not those to which he refers, I shall be glad to be apprised of the exact passages in which these authorities defend the theory of mitigation.

Dr. O'Brien also finds in several authorities the confirmation of his views concerning the reality of hell-fire. He quotes St. Jerome to the effect that the majority of interpreters in his day understood the fire of hell to refer to the torments of conscience.<sup>3</sup> But Dr. O'Brien does not mention that in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians (Migne, *P.L.*, XXVI, 522) St. Jerome calls the metaphorical interpretation of hell-fire "a

<sup>2</sup> Prudentius was a poet of the fourth century, and in one of his poems expressed the view that the punishments of hell cease during the festival of Easter (Migne, *P.L.*, LIX, 827). Perhaps he was using the well-known poetic license on this occasion. At any rate, if we are going to have poet against poet in this theological discussion on hell, I shall choose Dante as my authority.

<sup>3</sup> This passage of St. Jerome reads: "Ignis qui non exstinguitur a plerisque conscientia accipitur peccatorum" (*In Isaiam*, lib. XVII, c. 66, n. 24; Migne, *P.L.*, HUH, 676). Of course, *plerisque* could mean "very many" as well as "the majority."

fraudulent snare" (*decipulas fraudulentas*). Dr. O'Brien tells us that St. Augustine spoke of this matter as a controverted question; but St. Augustine's own view is quite unequivocally expressed in *De Civitate Dei* (XXI, 10; Migne, *P.L.*, XLI, 725): "Gehenna illa. . .corporeus ignis erit." Then the Saint goes on to say that this corporeal fire will torment the demons, "spiritus sine corporibus." In the preceding paragraph the Saint proposes a solution to the question how corporeal fire can affect a spirit.

Dr. O'Brien also quotes Billuart for the principle that whenever "fire" in Scripture cannot be understood literally without unsuitability, it should be interpreted metaphorically. But lest any one should think that Billuart himself applied this principle to the fire of hell, as Dr. O'Brien does, let me state that the great Dominican theologian asserted that the doctrine that the fire of hell is material and corporeal, while not *de fide*, must certainly be held by Catholics (vol. II, diss, vi, a. 3).

Space does not permit a discussion of the other authorities adduced by Dr. O'Brien, yet, anyone who impartially and thoroughly studies the full text and context of the pertinent passages of their writings—as given, for example, in the *Dictionnaire de Théologie*, V(2), col. 2201 sq.—will undoubtedly conclude that, in the case of the majority of these writers, there is absolutely no justification for adducing them as opponents of the reality of hell-fire. Indeed, one will clearly see from such a study how unfortunate, from the standpoint of scholarship, is Dr. O'Brien's habit of citing a list of authorities without a single reference or quotation.

Dr. O'Brien says: "Father Connell has cited a decision of the Sacred Penitentiary of April 30, 1890, to show that we must hold that there is material fire in hell; but he passes over the facts that the decision in question was not doctrinal but disciplinary, etc." For the sake of exactness, let me state that I quoted this decision as an argument that there is *real* fire in hell, and explicitly asserted that Catholics are, strictly speaking, not obliged to believe that this fire is *material*. Furthermore, I clearly stated that this decision was disciplinary, not doctrinal. Anyone can read these statements in my article in the September *Homiletic* (pages 1258 and 1259).

Dr. O'Brien continues: "(Father Connell passes over the fact) that it was issued in response to a particular place and situation, and not for the Church at large." The obvious implication is that this Decree entails the obligation to believe in the reality of hell-fire only for the people of Mantua, or only for those who wish to receive the Sacrament of Penance in Mantua. This reply of the Penitentiary, sent to a priest of Mantua, prescribed that penitents who admit only metaphorical, not real, fire in hell are not to be absolved (Ojetti, "Synopsis Rerum Moralium et Juris Pontificii," col. 2341).

Now, from the mere fact that a decision of the Holy See is a response to a particular individual it does not necessarily follow that its authoritative binding power is limited to that individual or to the locality in which he resides, for decisions of this nature may be *equivalently general* (Maroto, "Institutiones Juris Canonici," I, 415). However, if we grant that the Mantuan decision *Per se* had only a particular scope, even in this supposition it provides a positive and potent motive for every Catholic throughout the world to believe in the reality of hell-fire. A Roman Congregation or Tribunal would not oblige the Catholics of a certain region to believe a specified doctrine unless the members of that Congregation or Tribunal were convinced that the doctrine in question is certain and the opposite view devoid of all probability. Hence, the Mantuan decision is lawfully adduced as a forcible argument in support of the reality of hell-fire and of the obligation of all Catholics to believe that doctrine, for it adds the authority of an Apostolic Tribunal to the already existing common consent of Catholic theologians. It is not indeed an infallible decision, for it does not entail the obligation of divine faith or of ecclesiastical faith, but *per se* it exacts, as regards its doctrinal element, the internal acceptance known as *religious assent* (Denzinger, nn. 1684, 2008; Maroto, *op. cit.*, I, 417-418).

Is it not a basic principle of Catholicism that all Catholics are bound to believe the very same doctrines? Yet, in Dr. O'Brien's interpretation of the Mantuan Decree certain members of the Church are obliged by a Tribunal of the Holy See to render internal assent to a doctrine connected with the public deposit of faith, while at the same time the other members of the Church are per-



fectly free to believe the very opposite. In this supposition, a Catholic living in Genoa or in New York City may believe that the fire of hell is merely metaphorical. But if he visits Mantua (or, at least, if he wishes to receive the Sacrament of Penance there), he must force his intellect to hold that the fire of hell is real (a doctrine which is *blasphemous*, according to Dr. O'Brien). However, as soon as he gets beyond the borders of Mantua on his way home (or perhaps, as soon as he leaves the confessional), he can again join the ranks of Dr. O'Brien's "intelligent" people, and hold that the fire of hell is not real! Bucceroni, in his "Casus Conscientiae" (1903), p. 25, treats of a penitent who refuses to admit the reality of hell-fire. He holds that such a person must be refused absolution, without any qualification as to where he goes to confession.

Dr. O'Brien reminds us that the Decisions of the Congregations may be recalled or reversed, as in the case of books consigned to the Index. Quite true—but *they bind until they are revoked*. The present decision has not been revoked.

The words of our present Holy Father are quite appropriate: "The faithful ought to show due obedience, not only when the Church defines something with solemn judgment, but also, in proper proportion, when by the Constitutions and Decrees of the Holy See opinions are proscribed and condemned as dangerous or distorted. . . . It is quite foreign to everyone bearing the name of Christian to trust his own mental powers with such pride as to agree only with those things which he can examine from their inner nature, and to imagine that the Church, sent by God to teach and guide all nations, is not conversant with present affairs and circumstances, or even that they must obey only in those matters which she has decreed by means of solemn definitions, as though her other decisions might be presumed to be false" (*Casti Connubii*, trans. in *Catholic Mind*, January 22, 1931, p. 55).

Dr. O'Brien objects that a literal interpretation of the fire of hell postulates an eternal chain of miracles. Perhaps so, but the literal interpretation of the words, "This is My Body," also postulates tremendous miraculous interventions, and yet the Church has never considered that fact a deterrent to accepting those words literally.

Dr. O'Brien says that it is blasphemous to hold that God will punish with real fire for all eternity His weak, erring creatures. In other words, the Decree of 1890 obliged Catholics to believe something blasphemous. Moreover, if it is blasphemous to hold the eternity of the *pæna sensus*, it is still more blasphemous to hold the eternity of the graver *pæna damni*—in other words, the Catholic doctrine of the eternity of hell's punishments is blasphemous under every aspect.

Now, as to the eternity of the punishments of hell, I contend that the doctrine that those who die in actual mortal sin are punished for all eternity with a twofold punishment—*pæna damni*, or grief at being separated from God, and *pæna sensus*, or suffering inflicted by some exterior agent—is a doctrine that must be believed by all Catholics, because it is taught by the Church's ordinary and universal *magisterium*.

The Church's ordinary and universal *magisterium* is the teaching office which she exercises day after day and year after year by instructing the faithful throughout the world in the truths of Christianity. It is the voice of the Catholic episcopate, the official teachers of Christ's Kingdom under the headship of the Roman Pontiff, proclaiming unanimously and unhesitatingly to their flocks that some doctrine is contained in revelation or is intimately connected with revelation. This *magisterium* functions directly through sermons, pastoral letters, etc., of the bishops, and especially through non-infallible declarations of the Sovereign Pontiff. Indirectly it may reveal itself in many ways—for example, in sermons and instructions preached by priests, in catechisms, in liturgical prayers and customs, etc. (Van Noort, "De Fontibus Revelationis," η. 207 sq.). For these doctrinal expositions, even though their authors are not bishops, come under the jurisdiction of the bishops; so that when they consistently and commonly teach some doctrine as an article of Catholic faith, it is in reality the bishops who are teaching it, by permission and approbation. The Fathers also are accredited witnesses of the ordinary *magisterium*. Many of them were bishops or Popes; all were approved by the Church.

Now, when the various exponents and witnesses of this ordinary *magisterium* throughout the entire Catholic world agree

with at least moral unanimity—especially if this agreement lasts a number of centuries—that a certain doctrine is an article of Catholic faith, we have the same infallible assurance that it is an article as if it were the object of a solemn and definitive pronouncement of Pope or of (Ecumenical Council.

Lest it be imagined that this principle is my own invention, or a wily plan foisted on unsuspecting Catholics by what Dr. O'Brien calls "the garbling of theologians," let me quote the terse, authoritative declaration of the Vatican Council (Denzinger, n. 1792), now incorporated in the Code of Canon Law (Canon 1323): "With divine and catholic faith all those things are to be believed which are contained in the word of God, either written (*i.e.*, Scripture) or handed down (*i.e.*, Tradition), and are proposed by the Church to be believed as divinely revealed, either by a solemn judgment or by the ordinary and universal *magisterium*."

Strange to say, though in my previous article I designated this principle of the infallible teaching authority of the ordinary and universal *magisterium* as a *basic principle* in this discussion, Dr. O'Brien entirely ignored my statement. His whole argument against me in this matter is that the papal and conciliar Decrees I cited are not infallible pronouncements, and therefore have no value towards proving the eternity of the punishments of hell. Of course, I gave these citations merely as a few expositions of the Church's ordinary *magisterium*.<sup>\*</sup> Many other proofs are available.

Numerous passages from the writings of the Fathers attest that from the very beginning the Church has taught as a matter of divine faith the eternity of the punishments reserved for the reprobate. Among others, we can mention St. Clement, Pope and Martyr (*Ad Corinth.*, X, n. 7), St. Cyprian (*Epist. viii*, n. 2), St. Athanasius (*Epist. iv ad Scrap.*'), St. John Chrysostom (*Homilia xi in I Cor.*), St. Leo (*Sermo ix, De Collectis*), St. Irenaeus (*Adv. Hær.*, lib. IV, c. 28, n. 2). Origen and a few lesser writers did indeed deny the eternity of hell's punishments; but the

<sup>4</sup> I did indeed state that the Decree of the Fourth Lateran Council (Denzinger, n. 429) is infallible; and Dr. O'Brien's arguments have not altered my opinion. However, we can abstract from this question, since the ordinary and universal *magisterium* is an adequate criterion of the divine character of the doctrine under consideration.

vehement protests they drew forth from the other writers, who did not hesitate to charge them with heresy, clearly indicate that the teaching Church unequivocally upheld the eternal duration of the punishment of the reprobate. Anyone who wishes to study the patristic argument more deeply can find more than 150 references to the eternity of the pains of hell in the writings of the Latin Fathers, listed in the third volume of the Index of Migne's "Patrology," col. 246.

The Fathers also proposed as the teaching of the Church the doctrine that, besides the grief endured by the damned because of their final separation from God, they will also experience other eternal torments. They enlarge especially on the bodily punishments which the reprobate will endure after the general resurrection. Thus, St. Augustine (*De Civitate Dei*, c. 9, in Migne, *P.L.*, XLI, 723), St. Bede (Migne, *P.L.*, XCII, 777), and St. Basil in the awe-inspiring sermon that appears in the Second Nocturn of the Fifth Sunday of November. Many other testimonies of this nature are cited in Migne's Index.

The Scholastics coined terms—*pæna damni* and *poena sensus*—to express the two species of punishment propounded by the *magisterium* of the Church; and they saw a great congruity in this twofold retribution, corresponding, respectively, to the aversion from God and the inordinate conversion to a creature that are found in every mortal sin (St. Thomas, *Summa*, I-II, Q. Ixxxvii, art. 4). Dr. O'Brien complains of what he calls the arbitrary signification given to these two terms. Now, theologians, like the experts in any science, have a right to choose their own terms for the facts with which they deal; and those who wish to discuss with them theological subjects are supposed to take the recognized terms at their conventional meaning. *Pæna sensus* and *pæna damni* have had the same meaning in theological circles for at least seven centuries, and Dr. O'Brien's protest is certainly not going to effect any change of terminology. His only chance of success is to prove that there is nothing in revelation corresponding to either or both of these terms—and assuredly all that he has said in his paper has done nothing towards proving this.

I remark here that Dr. O'Brien has opened the way to am-

biguity by denominating the *pœna damni* as a *negative* punishment. It is indeed negative in the sense that it arises from the deprivation of a good; but in the case of adults it connotes very positive suffering (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, VII, 210). This point is stressed by the Fathers—for example, St. Augustine (Migne, *P.L.*, XL, 822) and St. John Chrysostom (*Hom. in Matt.*, XXIII, 8). I say “in the case of adults,” for on this point too Dr. O’Brien fails to make a requisite distinction. It is commonly believed that infants who die without Baptism suffer no *pœna sensus*, and endure *objectively* only the *pœna damni*—that is, without subjective appreciation of their loss. This view is eminently reasonable, for it seems quite in accord with divine justice to spare from positive punishment those whose only sin was contracted without their own volition. This opinion was approved by Pope Pius VI (Denzinger, n. 1526). By failing to make this necessary distinction between adults and infants, Dr. O’Brien becomes involved in a rather complicated chain of argumentation on page 34 of his October article.

Testimony to the doctrines proclaimed by the ordinary *magisterium* of the Church is also found in sermons, written or preached by Catholic priests. I would ask any reader of this article how many sermons he has ever heard or read advocating Dr. O’Brien’s views, and how many supporting my contentions. Read the hundreds of sermons on hell that can be found in any large ecclesiastical library, and make the same computation. Why, in the very issue of the *Homiletic* that contains Dr. O’Brien’s latest article there is a clear and orderly sermon on hell by Dom Ernest Graf, O.S.B., presenting the traditional doctrines of the eternity of hell and of its twofold punishment! If Dr. O’Brien be correct, then the bishops of the Catholic Church must have failed grievously for the past nineteen centuries, by permitting sermons to be preached which in reality present only unfounded rigoristic notions.

Catechisms also are witnesses of the ecclesiastical ordinary *magisterium*. I shall cite only two as examples of what all teach—the Catechism of the Council of Trent which, as anyone can see for himself, teaches all that I am defending (Part I, Chap. 8, n. 9), and the recent “Catholic Catechism,” compiled

by Cardinal Gasparri, from which I shall quote two questions and answers (nn. 586-587):

*Q.* What will be the state of the damned in hell?

*A.* In hell..the damned (their souls only before the general judgment, their bodies too thereafter) are tormented with everlasting punishments.

*Q.* What are the punishments endured by the damned in hell?

*A.* The punishments endured by the damned in hell are: (1) the pain of loss—the perpetual privation of the beatific vision of God; (2) the pain of sense—a real fire, etc.

This quotation speaks for itself. It is evident, of course, that

Such carelessness about facts is certainly no credit to Dr. O'Brien's scholarship. Again, Pesch ("Praelectiones Dogmaticæ," III, nn. 366 sq.) shows by exact citations that it was *not* commonly held by the Fathers (as Dr. O'Brien asserts) that the Angels are corporeal. As for the view that the world was created in six days of twenty-four hours, let him look up Hummelauer's Commentary on Genesis.

However, the general fallacy back of Dr. O'Brien's argumentation is that he fails to distinguish cases in which theologians taught something *as their own conclusion* (in which cases they do not furnish absolute certainty of the truth of the proposition, even when they agree) and cases in which they taught *that a doctrine is proposed by the Church as revealed or as connected with revelation*—and this latter is precisely the point at issue. And since the theologians for centuries have unanimously agreed that the Church teaches as *de fide* the doctrine of the eternity of the punishment of the reprobate, and also—either as *de fide* or as *fidei proxima*—the doctrine that this eternity includes both *pæna damni* and *pæna sensus*, we have indubitable assurance that these doctrines are contained in or—in the case of the latter—at least connected with Christian revelation.

It is from the theologians that the future priests and bishops derive their knowledge of Catholic teaching; and the Church must indeed be very remiss if she allows the theologians to combine in leading astray the youthful clerics, as Dr. O'Brien believes has happened. Pius IX asserted that those doctrines are to be held with divine faith "which are taught by the ordinary *magisterium* of the Church spread throughout the world, and accordingly are regarded as pertaining to faith by the universal and constant consent of Catholic theologians" (Denzinger, n. 1683). Dr. O'Brien may object that this is not an infallible declaration (which is quite true), but it is an authoritative pronouncement of the Vicar of Jesus Christ which cannot be discredited by an array of unsubstantiated and erroneous assertions.

Dr. O'Brien brought another point into discussion in the last paragraph of his October paper. I have read it over and over again to be sure I understood it, but, if words mean anything, he

proposes as a tentative view, which a Catholic may strive to substantiate, that the reprobate are eventually annihilated. He says: "It is hard to find even one clear text of Scripture which really proves that the lost survive eternally. That they are lost for ever as far as heaven is concerned, is clear and beyond dispute; but that they continue to exist in their miserable state is quite a different question." And he challenges me to give a text from Scripture that clearly proves the eternal survival of the reprobate. It is indeed a strange meaning that Dr. O'Brien would allow us priests to find in those words of the Canon: "ut ab aeterna damnatione nos eripi jubeas."

Now, to prove that the reprobate survive eternally, I could cite the words of Our Lord: "These [the reprobate] shall go into everlasting punishment" (Matt., xxv. 46); and those of St. Paul: "[The wicked] shall suffer eternal punishment" (II Thess., i. 9). If the wicked are going to suffer eternally, they certainly are going to live eternally. However, Dr. O'Brien would probably deny that these texts clearly affirm the deed, there is no text in Sacred Scripture simple, which cannot be interpreted in an obvious meaning, if a person wishes to do so. Christ established the living voice of the Church as the interpreter of Scripture. The Protestant exegetes excogitated *two hundred* interpretations, "This is My Body," all of them deny that these words do not mean just what they say. ("The Sacraments," II, p. 33). I have no doubt that Dr. O'Brien can prove to his own satisfaction that Christ and St. Paul state that the reprobate exist for all eternity, they do not clearly affirm that they exist for all eternity.

I cannot commend Dr. O'Brien's application of the Canon. "Can you prove this doctrine from revelation?" a query of a Catholic when investigating where the doctrine is revealed, should be: "Does this doctrine as contained in revelation?" The Canon of the Church is the proximate rule of faith for the ignorant, as well as ignorant, priests as well as laity



that the Church teaches something as an article of faith, either through solemn definition or through the ordinary *magisterium*, we have infallible certainty that this doctrine is formally contained in Revelation, either Scripture or Tradition, either explicitly or implicitly.

Dr. O'Brien argues that his theory is in accord with the scriptural expressions "death" and "destruction," used to designate the ultimate fate of the reprobate. Whatever may be the intrinsic value of this argument, we must remember that the authentic interpretation of the inspired word belongs to the *magisterium* of the Church, which has always read in these expressions the unending punishment of the wicked. Dr. O'Brien will surely not be unmindful of the stern words of the Vatican Council: "If anyone shall say that it can happen that sometimes, in accordance with the progress of science, there can be given to dogmas proposed by the Church a sense other than that which the Church has understood or does understand, let him be anathema" (Denzinger, n. 1818).

Plainly, therefore, the theory that the reprobate will eventually lose their conscious individuality, being opposed to the doctrine of faith that the wicked are punished eternally, is utterly untenable.

The Second Plenary Council of Baltimore has the following appropriate words: "The Holy Catholic Church has always taught, and teaches, that the wicked who die in mortal sin will be destined to eternal fire in hell. . . . We therefore absolutely condemn the error of those modern writers who either deny the eternal duration of the punishments of hell, alleging the mercy of God, or so mitigate their severity that they hardly seem adequate to punish the malice of sin according to the most just decree of God. We admonish Catholic writers diligently to abstain from all novel speculations in treating of these hidden counsels of God, and to adopt terms in agreement with sound doctrine" (*Acta*, tit. I, cap. 5, s. 21).

I have no intention of casting discredit on Dr. O'Brien's sincerity. Doubtless his extensive ministerial activities have impressed on him the fact that many non-Catholics are deterred from entering the true Church because of what they deem her

excessively harsh presentation of the manner in which the merciful God treats the sinner in the world to come. Yet, we must remember that when many turned away from Christ with the complaint, "This saying is hard; and who can hear it?" the Master uttered not a single word of compromise, because He was proclaiming the truths He had received from His Father.

The Catholic doctrine of hell is indeed a hard saying, but in this fact we have one more illustration of the old problem of the relation between reason and faith. The Catholic Faith is reasonable, in that reason leads us to the conviction that God is its author, and also in that no doctrine of faith can be proved to be opposed to right reason. But once we have entered into the domain of faith, reason must be content to be guided and directed by the light of revelation as proposed and interpreted by the infallible Church of Jesus Christ. Today, our fundamental principle must be the same as was accepted by the brilliant Bishop of Hippo fifteen centuries ago: "Credo ut intelligam."