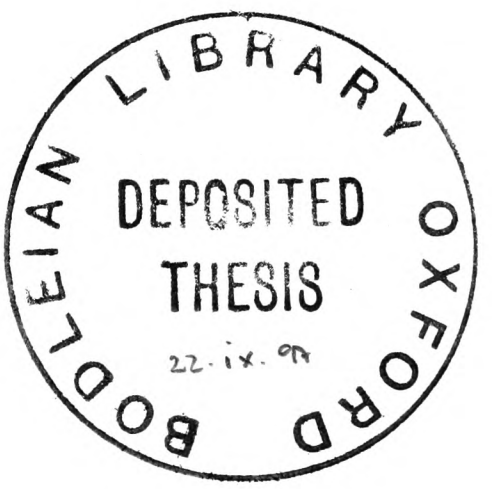
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IDEA OF LIMBO IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Christopher Beiting

Exeter College,

Oxford

HILARY TERM, 1997



Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Modern History, University of Oxford for the degree of doctorate of philosophy

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The medieval period witnessed many attempts at organization, of both the mundane and sacred spheres. The otherworldy realms of heaven and hell are familiar to the modern reader, as is purgatory, but it was during the middle ages that the existence of another realm, limbo, was posited. This realm had its beginnings in questions of Christology and the extent to which Christian salvation could or could not be extended to non-Christian peoples. Its development was also shaped by questions of infant baptism, and the fate of those infants who died lacking this baptism. By the thirteenth century, it becomes more proper to speak of "the limbos", as the idea of limbo is split into two realms: the limbo of the Fathers (limbus patrum), wherein were placed the notable figures of the Old Testament, and the limbo of children (limbus puerorum), wherein were placed unbaptized infants of the Christian era. This thesis examines the development of the idea of limbo, concentrating primarily on works of speculative theology. It begins with the roots of the idea of limbo to be found in the writings of Augustine of Hippo and in the apocryphal Christian work, the Gospel of Nicodemus. From there, the questions of original sin, divine redemption, and baptism which shape the development of the idea of limbo are examined in the writings of several influential twelfth-century authors, including Anselm of Canterbury, Peter Abelard, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Peter Lombard. The earliest uses of the term "limbo" are examined in the works of William of Auvergne and William of Auxerre, and the full theology of limbo is considered in the works of the high scholastic writers Alexander of Hales, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, and Bonaventure. Finally, the thesis concludes with a fusion of theology and art in an examination of the unique depiction of limbo in Dante's Divine Comedy.

Abstract

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What is the afterlife like? This is one of the ultimate questions, asked by men as long as they have been men. With regard to the middle ages, the answer became surprisingly complex. We are familiar with the ideas of heaven and hell, and no doubt of purgatory too, but these three realms of the afterlife were by no means the only ones considered by medieval thinkers. It may surprise the modern reader to know that many scholastic thinkers of the thirteenth century believed that there were not two or three, but five realms to the afterlife. This thesis focuses upon those other two realms. It covers the development in the middle ages of the idea of limbo, from its beginnings as a kind of upper subdivision of hell (limbus inferni), to its mature development as a solution to the problems of where to put two special classes of people in the afterlife: the Fathers of the Old Testament (limbus patrum) and unbaptized infants (limbus puerorum).

The development of the idea of limbo, that is, the bipartite limbo of limbus patrum and limbus puerorum, has been singularly understudied. The best modern study is that of George Dyer, The Denial of Limbo and the Jansenist Controversy, and its more popular companion volume Limbo, Unsettled Question. However, both of these works focus primarily on seventeenth-century period and beyond, and give only brief attention to the medieval era. Jacques Le Goff's The Birth of Purgatory is perhaps the best and best-known recent study of conceptions of the afterlife in the medieval era, but it is limited in its almost-exclusive focus upon purgatory, mentioning limbo only in passing. There were a number of limbo-related theological articles published in the 1940's and 1950's, but these dealt chiefly with difficulties surrounding the theological situation of unbaptized infants, and as such concerned themselves only with the possible existence or non-existence of one facet of the

idea of limbo, the limbus puerorum. To date there has been no in-depth study of the historical and theological roots of both the limbus patrum and limbus puerorum. This thesis is an attempt to remedy that lack.

An exact survey of every author of the Middle Ages who treats the idea of the descent of Christ into hell, or uses the words limbus inferni, limbus patrum, or limbus puerorum would be next-to-impossible. Instead, this thesis examines in depth a number of select authors, who have either recorded ideas that have been influential, or else have examined the idea of limbo in depth with arguments that are particularly interesting. The thesis concentrates solely upon written works, largely of speculative theology, rather than graphic arts, again because of the problem of sources: either they are too numerous for adequate consideration (medieval depictions of the harrowing of hell) or too paltry to justify investigation (medieval depictions of the limbus puerorum before 1300). To a large extent, the idea of limbo in the middle ages is in truth what its later critics have charged it to have been: mainly a theological construct, so theologians must be the primary focus of this thesis.

Two main sources provide the middle ages with their basic notions about limbo, and they have been given extensive treatment. The first is Augustine of Hippo, who is of importance for how he treats the theme of the fate of unbaptized infants. Heretofore, the consensus of Western Christian theological thought had come to the conclusion that unbaptized infants were simply damned. The Pelagian heresy, however, asserted that there was a kind of natural goodness to man, and as such man was capable of avoiding hell by attaining to either heaven, via the route of baptism, or a state called "Eternal Life", which could be attained by virtuous living or innocence. Unbaptized infants attained to this latter state. Augustine, who favoured the doctrine of original sin, rejected these notions entirely, and fulminated against any concept of an Eternal Life in the afterlife. He recognized but two states in the afterlife, salvation and damnation, and categorically rejected the notion that infants in particular have this Eternal Life. His answer was novel: unbaptized infants were

damned, but they had the lightest of all possible damnation From this, it is but a short step to posit a different place to go along with the lightest punishment. This is the root of one type of limbo, the limbus puerorum or limbo of children, as it would later be called.

The second source, dealing with the second class of people who get put in limbo, is the Gospel of Nicodemus, the apocryphal Christian gospel dealing with Christ's descent to the underworld during the Easter triduum and his subsequent harrowing of hell. The Gospel of Nicodemus purports to be an eyewitness account of the actions of Christ in the underworld, and is a very dramatic depiction of Christ's explosive entry into hell, apocalyptic defeat of the devil in mortal combat, and majestic exodus from hell with the souls of the Fathers of the Old Testament who had been imprisoned there. The notion of the harrowing of hell had existed previously to the Gospel of Nicodemus, of course, especially in the various creeds that became formalized into the Apostles' Creed, which includes the phrase "he descended into hell". But what the Gospel of Nicodemus did was present the harrowing in a highly vivid and dramatic format that was easily imagined, and as such easily portrayed in art. It is this image of limbo which entered Western consciousness, and became another kind of limbo, the limbo of the Fathers, or limbus patrum.

The medieval roots of limbo are somewhat arbitrarily considered with the writings of Anselm of Canterbury. Although he nowhere uses the word limbo, Anselm is a theological thinker of great originality who did much to restart theological debate on many topics that have relevance to the development of limbo. His views on original sin and its transmission seem to preclude the idea of a limbus puerorum, and he asserts the absolute damnation of unbaptized infants. But his novel ideas about the Incarnation, although they minimize the dramatic events of the Gospel of Nicodemus, nevertheless help intellectualize the ideas behind the harrowing of hell. Peter Abelard, on the other hand, was the only other early twelfth-century critique of the prevailing theory of Christ's victory over the Devil. He voiced a number of unique ideas, such as a generous theory of the possibility of salvation for

non-Christians. However, few of these ideas were adopted by medieval Christianity, save one, and that was critical: Abelard is the first to assert that the sole punishment of original sin is the lack of the beatific vision. This idea became very popular, and was crucial for the foundation of limbo. By contrast, the ideas of Abelard's foil Bernard of Clairvaux tend to be more conservative, and offer a good portrait of the positions of "mainstream" twelfth-century Christianity, although with a few surprises. Bernard's ideas on original sin and Christ's victory over the Devil are unoriginal, although he does much to reassert the fides aliena idea of the church. However, Bernard also speaks a great deal about the possibility of salvation of non-Christians, especially children, and continues a theme seen in Abelard: mercy. Bernard represents the trend that increasingly considered the plight of unbaptized infants from the position of mercy. An unusual letter-controversy between two Benedictine abbots from the latter portion of the twelfth century, the Conflictus helveticus de limbo patrum, will also be considered in this context, as it demonstrates the fact that there were still questions to be asked about the nature of the Fathers before the advent of Christ. It is also the first readily-verifiable place where the word "limbo" is used.

The late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries witness a transition of consideration of these matters from ordinary to esoteric theology, which is to say, speculative works meant only for the consideration of other theologians. This is evident in two transitional figures, William of Auvergne and William of Auxerre. William of Auvergne actually uses the word "limbo" (in the formulation limbus inferni), and uses it with reference to the repose of the Fathers. But William is more important for his consideration of the situation of unbaptized infants. He continues the carentia visionis Dei idea established by Abelard, but helps pioneer the idea of space in considering their plight. Furthermore, he is the first to speculate upon the possibility of the consciousness and development of unbaptized infants in the afterlife. William of Auxerre, on the other hand, considers these questions from within the highly-disciplined quaestio format of the scholastics, and brings a new intellectual rigour to them,

as well as a new format, the commentary on Peter Lombard's Sentences. He, too, uses the term limbus inferni, as well as the carentia visionis Dei idea of Abelard, and spatial ideas with regard to the situation of unbaptized infants. He also demonstrates himself to be motivated almost wholly by the issue of mercy in these matters.

With the transition to the thirteenth century, we find the most interesting things said about limbo being done by scholastic theologians, particularly the friars. Two early luminaries of the friars movement are particularly important: Alexander of Hales, and Albertus Magnus. Alexander used the limbus inferni terminology, but considers many arguments surrounding it in quite great detail. He focuses on both the situations of the Fathers and unbaptized infants, each in their own division of limbo, and contrasts the two, both in terms of situation, and also their awareness of it. He, too, demonstrates the fact that he is motivated in these matters by the theme of mercy. Albertus Magnus, on the other hand, seems more focused upon the status of unbaptized infants. He is unique as the first to split the limbus inferni into the twofold limbus patrum and limbus puerorum. He also identifies a quinpartite structure to the afterlife that becomes the standard for most scholastic theologians. Finally, he considers a few new themes in on the subject of unbaptized infants: the nature of their bodies after the resurrection, the efficacy of suffrages for them, and situation of aborted fetuses.

Albertus and Alexander were each succeeded by a notable pupil, Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure. Aquinas continues in the footsteps of his master Albertus, preserving and amplifying upon the five realms of the afterlife and the bipartite limbo. His treatment is more disciplined and focused than that of his somewhat digressive master, and is a model of cogency that would prove of particular influence to later centuries. He also adds to William of Auvergne's ideas about the post-mortem development of unbaptized infants. Bonaventure, while adhering to the quinpartite structure of the afterlife and the bipartite limbo, operates more out of a spirit of synthesis and reconciliation than Aquinas. He examines many of the

same themes, but comes to different conclusions, particularly with regard to the situation of unbaptized infants, whom he views as being held in a perpetual mean. What we understand by the word "limbo" in ordinary conversation today probably has its roots in Bonaventure.

Finally, and perhaps unusually, we conclude with Dante Alighieri's portrait of limbo in the Divine Comedy. This will doubtless strike the reader as something of a surprising change of pace given the previous procession of theologians. Nevertheless, Dante is provides a fitting note upon which to conclude a study of the development of limbo. In his Divine Comedy Dante unifies a number of themes and threads in this development. He voices ideas about the Fall, the transmission of original sin, the Incarnation, the harrowing of hell, the position of unbaptized infants, and the possibility or impossibility of salvation for non-Christians. Most of these streams coalesce around his portrait of limbo, in Canto IV of the Inferno, but at the same time, Dante not only sums up his sources, he goes beyond them to create a new and highly personal synthesis. With Dante, art and theology meet, and limbo is given its most memorable presentation ever.

Thus the idea of limbo develops from the doubts of Augustine, through the explorations of twelfth and thirteenth-century theologians, to the poetry of Dante, and beyond. Several factors are responsible for this development. The first of these was heresy. Augustine wrote against the Pelagians, the author of the Gospel of Nicodemus wrote against the Marcionites and Apollinarists, Bernard of Clairvaux wrote against the Cathars, and so on. Heretical groups throughout the first Christian millennium questioned individual things--infant baptism, the nature of Christ's person, the existence and transmission of original sin, the need for Christ's descent into hell--which made for the development of the idea of limbo. Heresy forced mainstream Christian thinkers to consider ideas previously left unconsidered (for whatever reason), reexamine their positions on certain points, or even come up with entirely new ideas. On some points, heretical ideas were adopted in modified form by orthodox

thinkers. Limbo owes a great deal to the Eternal Life idea of the Pelagians, and to some extent is almost a "baptized" version of that idea.

Another reason why the development of the idea of limbo occurred during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was that these were times of increasing complexity and organization. As consciousness of nature, politics, and space became more complex and organized, so, too did consciousness of otherworldy space. Furthermore, the nature of scholastic theological inquiry provided another reason for the development of the idea of limbo. The glossators and authors of the great summae were increasingly pressed to consider as much as possible in their studies. All became grist for their mills, even if the ideas were those of esoteric theology, like limbo. Furthermore, there was an increasing need for organized justification of established Christian practice. Some ideas, such as limbo, were considered simply for what was perhaps no more than completeness' sake.

Finally, and perhaps least tangibly but most importantly, limbo considered with regard to the limbus puerorum was a product of an increasing consciousness of mercy towards the situation of unbaptized infants. It was difficult for most theologians to do what Anselm of Canterbury did and assert the categorical damnation of unbaptized infants. Augustine clearly struggled with the idea, and Abelard was of paramount importance for his formulation of the idea that unbaptized infants suffer only a deprivation of the beatific vision. Most of the writers considered were moved by a spirit of mercy in some way, culminating in the works of William of Auvergne and Thomas Aquinas, who assert the possibility of the unbaptized infant to continue to grow and perfect himself, to the limits of human ability. Limbo, with regard to the limbus puerorum was thus a product of mercy. A severe mercy, but mercy all the same.

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List of Abbreviations

AHST	Alexander of Hales, Summa theologica (Quaracchi, 1921-1948), 4 vols.
AHSent	Alexander of Hales, Glossa in quattuor libros sententiarum, Bibliotheca Franciscana scholastica medii aevi xii-xv (Quaracchi, 1951-1957), 4 vols.
Bernardini	S. Bonaventurae opera omnia, ed. R. Bernardini (Quaracchi, 1882-1902), 10 vols.
Blackfriars	Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica (Oxford, 1964-1981), 61 vols.
Borgnet	B. Alberti opera omnia, ed. A. Borgnet (Paris, 1890-1899), 38 vols.
CCCM	Corpus christianorum continuatio medievalis (Turnholt, 1971-).
CSEL	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum (Vienna, 1866-).
Cologne	S. Alberti Magni operum omnium (Cologne/Münster, 1951-).
Denzinger	Enchiridion symbolorum definitionem et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum, 37th ed., ed. H. Denzinger (Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 1991)
GAOO	Guilielmi Alverni opera omnia (Paris, 1674, rpt. Frankfurt-am-Main, 1963), 2 vols.
In IV Sent	In Quattuor libros sententiarum
Mandelbaum	The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: a Verse Translation (Berkeley, 1980-1982), 3 vols.
Mansi	Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio, ed. G. Mansi (Florence, 1760), 4 vols.
P.G.	Patrologia graeca, ed. J. Migne (Paris, 1857-1866), 162 vols.
P.L.	Patrologia latina, ed. J. Migne (Paris, 1844-1864), 221 vols.
Ribaillier	William of Auxerre, Summa aurea, ed. J. Ribaillier, Spicelegium Bonaventurianum xvi-xx (Rome, 1980-1987), 4 vols.
S.B.O.	Sancti Bernardi opera, ed. J. Leclercq, C. Talbot, H. Rochais (Rome, 1957-1977), 8 vols.
Schmitt	S. Anselmi opera omnia, ed. F. Schmitt (Rome/Edinburgh, 1938-1968), 6 vols.

Sent	Peter Lombard, Sententiae in IV libris distinctae, Spicelegium Bonaventurianum iv-v (Rome, 1971), 2 vols.
ST	Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae
STO	S. Thomae Aquinatis opera omnia (Stuttgart, 1974-1980), 7 vols.
Tischendorf	Evangelia apocrypha, ed. K. Tischendorf (Leipzig, 1876)
Turin/Rome	Thomas Aquinas, Quaestiones disputatae (Turin/Rome, 1965), 2 vols.

I. INTRODUCTION

> We reached the base of an exalted castle
> encircled seven times by towering walls,
> defended all around by a fair stream.
> We forded this as if upon hard ground;
> I entered seven portals with these sages;
> we reached a meadow of green flowering plants.
> The people here had eyes both grave and slow;
> their features carried great authority;
> they spoke infrequently, with gentle voices.
> We drew aside to one part of the meadow,
> an open place both high and filled with light
> and we could see all of those who were assembled...[1]

With these words, Dante paints his unique portrait of limbo in Canto IV of his Inferno. It is surely the greatest artistic depiction of this subject, and is in many respects one of the most unique. For many people, it must have been the first time they had encountered the concept of limbo, apart from a few half-understood notions about unbaptized infants and that figure of speech, "being in limbo". It remains oddly fascinating to the action of the Divine Comedy, that amidst the clamour and bustle and woe that is in the Inferno there was this odd little place of quiet and peace, rather like a college garden here at Oxford. All this was certainly true in my case, and I always wanted to research the history of this strange realm in a little more depth. This thesis is the result of that urge.

Tracing the history of limbo has not been an easy task, for a number of reasons. Chief amongst these is terminology. The concept of limbo, I believe, existed fairly early in the history of Christianity, however, the word itself is not used until fairly late. Christian writers were not initially precise about the words which they used to describe this place until the scholastics of the thirteenth century. Other terms were used to convey the concept. Thus, to understand the history of the idea of limbo, we must begin by looking for the early

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[1]. Dante, Inferno, iv.106-117, "Venimmo al piè d'un nobile castello,/ sette volte cerchiato d'alte mura,/ difeso intorno d'un bel fiumicello./ Questo passammo come terra dura;/ per sette porte intrari con questi savi:/ giugnemmo in prato di fresca verdura./ Genti v'eran con occhi tardi e gravi,/ di grande autorità ne'lor sembianti:/ parlavan rado, con voci soavi./ Traemmoci così da l'un de' canti,/ in loco aperto, luminoso e alto, sì che veder si potien tutti quanti." (ed. Mandelbaum, p.34).

ways the afterlife was described. Some writers considered the idea of "receptacles", or different portions of the afterlife. For our purposes, the earliest receptacles of interest were the "bosom of Abraham" and "hades" or "hell". Since the latter two terms were used to denote places of punishment, and thinkers were progressively unwilling to admit that the souls of the ancient just had been placed alongside those of sinners who were being punished, it was increasingly assumed that while the just were indeed in hell, they were in a different portion of it, a "higher hell". This higher hell was initially regarded as the bosom of Abraham, but since that term had heavenly connotations, in time the Latin word limbus came to be used. Originally meaning "edge" or "fringe" of something (as in the fringe of a garment), it came to be mean a place on the "fringe" of hell proper.[2] Limbus is the root word for this place in several modern languages: English and Italian, limbo; French, limbes; etc.; while the notion is preserved in other languages, such as the German Vorhölle. The twelfth century is the first place the word limbo is used, and it is used in conjunction with the idea of hell, as the formulation limbus inferni. However, the twelfth century also witnessed a great deal of speculation about questions of baptism, and in time the idea of limbo was widened to include more than the Fathers of the Old Testament. Infant baptism came to be an issue of consideration for twelfth-century theologians, and with it questions about a new class of individuals, unbaptized infants. In the thirteenth century the idea of the limbus inferni became subdivided according to two different groups, and it became common to refer to the limbus patrum, or limbo of the Fathers, and the limbus puerorum, or limbo of children (meaning unbaptized infants). Technically, then, it becomes more correct to speak of "the limbos", as the French do[3], rather than limbo, as the English do, although the singular continues to be used to cover both realms. Dante is innovative in creating a kind of third

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[2]. A. Gaudel, "Limbes", Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique ix (Paris, 1926), 760-771, p.760.

[3]. Or as the Scots do, when they speak of "The Borders"; see J. Le Goff, "Les limbes", Nouvelle revue de psychoanalyse xxxiv (1986), 151-173.

limbo, a limbo of virtuous pagans, but his ideas are largely unique, and are not adopted by Western thought. In time, limbo comes almost exclusively to mean the repose of unbaptized infants, and all that it entails. Thus, this thesis traces the way a single idea, limbo, is used to cover a variety of conceptions of and places within the afterlife. Each author to some extent makes the idea of limbo his own, and the reader is urged from the outset to bear in mind that from author to author, the same word is sometimes used to describe slightly different places.

It should be noted at the outset that the idea of limbo has its roots in and it is conditioned by the conceptions of the afterlife of numerous pre-Christian religions. While some religions viewed the afterlife as dualistic, with places of both reward and punishment (as in the Roman Elysian fields and Hades), others were monistic, with but a single, often dark and sad place for the dead (as in the Greek Hades and the Jewish Sheol). These religions, especially the monistic ones, often had traditions of gods or heroes engaging in a catabasis or descent into this place of the dead to accomplish a heroic quest, such as rescuing or attempting to rescue a dead soul--we have the examples Orpheus, Pollux, Theseus, and Hercules from the Greeks; there are many others from around the world. It is from this monistic idea of the afterlife that limbo has its most evident roots. An illustration from Judaism can be seen in the apocryphal Book of Enoch, written in the second or first century B.C., in which Enoch is guided by several angels to the places of the dead.[4] He encounters several categories of the dead in a series of dark pits; one pit, which is illuminated, contains the souls of the just who await the Final Judgement. Enoch's journey demonstrates several features which would be later applied to limbo: the darkness, the awaiting dead, and expectation/arrival of a Liberator. Through the person and redemptive action of Jesus, Christianity transformed the monistic view of the afterlife it had inherited from Judaism into a dualistic one like that of other religions. But everything did not fit so easily into ordered

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4. F. Martin, Le Livre d'Henoch traduit sur le texte ethiopien (Paris, 1906).

afterlife slots, and limbo was one of the ways in which Christianity tried to clear up a few theological loose ends.

I believe that the ultimate roots of limbo as medieval Christians understood it lies in a tension between two themes in the Gospels. On the one hand we have the words of Jesus in Jn.iii.5, "unless a man be born again of water and the spirit, he can not enter the kingdom of God." On the other hand, we have the example given in Lk.xvi.19-26 where Jesus presents the parable of the rich man, Dives (as legend came to name him) and the poor man, Lazarus, who lay on his doorstep. On death, Dives "burned in hell" while Lazarus was "borne away by angels into Abraham's bosom". Although this parable seems to have firmly barred the unbaptized from entry into heaven, nevertheless it also speaks of the virtuous receiving comfort after death in the "bosom of Abraham", the location and nature of which was not specified. Dives could clearly be interpreted to be in hell, but the location of Lazarus was more problematic. All that is immediately apparent is that it is at a distance from the place of torments, separated by a huge chasm, yet it is unclear whether this is a divine place, since there is no real mention of Yahweh being present there at all. One could interpret this place as being heaven, and indeed, the bosom of Abraham became widely used as a term for heaven in theology, liturgy, etc., but this interpretation was by no means universal, and posed a problem regarding Jesus' words from John and for Christian exclusivity. For the purposes of this thesis, we will consider authors who chose to interpret this passage as meaning there was a special place in the afterlife, in or near hell but separate from its worst features, wherein were preserved a special class of people, and it is who goes there that makes for the development of the idea of limbo.

An exact survey of every author of the Middle Ages who makes use of the figure of the bosom of Abraham, treats the idea of the descent of Christ into hell, or uses the words limbus inferni, limbus patrum, or limbus puerorum would be next-to-impossible, and would result in a work of breadth but shallowness. Rather than provide the reader with such a

"whirlwind" tour of the history of limbo, I have instead carefully chosen a number of select authors to examine in depth. I view these individuals in two ways: either they have recorded ideas that have been influential, or else they have examined the idea of limbo in depth with arguments that are particularly interesting. I have chosen to concentrate solely upon written works, largely of speculative theology, rather than graphic arts, again because of the problem of sources: either they are too numerous for adequate consideration (medieval depictions of the harrowing of hell)[5] or too paltry to justify investigation (medieval depictions of the limbus puerorum before 1300). To a large extent, the idea of limbo in the middle ages is in truth what its later critics have charged it to have been: mainly a theological construct. Thus it is to the theologians that we must turn.

Two main sources provide the middle ages with their basic notions about limbo, and they have been given extensive treatment below. The first is Augustine of Hippo, who is of importance for how he answers the question "What happens to infants who die unbaptized?" Despite his own late baptism, his writings take for granted the practice of infant baptism--in fact, he argues from the practice against the Pelagians and others in his support for the idea of original sin, maintaining in effect that the Church would not be baptizing infants if there were no reason to do so. Heretofore, the consensus of Western Christian theological thought had come to the rather brutal conclusion that unbaptized infants were simply damned[6], although there was less consensus amongst the Eastern Fathers.[7] The Pelagian heresy,

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5. "The victory over the powers of evil and death could be strikingly presented to the eyes and thoughts of illiterate persons by the presentation in pictorial art of scenes from this popular treatise. The story of the Descent into Hell is chiselled on the gates of bronze at the entrance of the church, and in fresco and mosaics on its walls within. Sculpture has represented it in high relief in wood and stone on altars, thrones, and tombs. It is found graven on reliquaries and embroidered on chasubles; it is recorded on the metal bindings on religious books and in the miniature paintings within them. It is also commemorated in stained glass windows, as in the Church of St. Germain L'Auxerrois, in Paris." A. Westcott, The Gospel of Nicodemus and Kindred Documents (London, 1914), pp.24-25.

6. See A. Gaudel, op.cit., pp.761-762.

7. J. Baun, "The Fate of Babies Dying Before Baptism in Byzantium", in D. Wood (ed.), The Church and Childhood (Oxford, 1994), 115-125.

however, asserted that there was a kind of natural goodness to man, and as such man was capable of avoiding hell by attaining to either heaven, via the route of baptism, or a state called "Eternal Life", which could be attained by virtuous living or innocence. Unbaptized infants attained to this latter state. Augustine, who favoured the doctrine of original sin, rejected these notions entirely, and fulminated against any concept of an Eternal Life in the afterlife. He recognized but two states in the afterlife, salvation and damnation, and categorically rejected the notion that infants in particular have this Eternal Life. Curiously, however, he did not leap to the logical conclusion and declare that unbaptized infants were simply damned. His answer was novel: unbaptized infants were damned, but they had the lightest of all possible damnation From this, it is but a short step to posit a different place to go along with the lightest punishment, generally a "higher hell" with a lessened punishment. This is the root of one type of limbo, the limbus puerorum or limbo of children, as it would later be called. Most of the medieval authors who explore this concept refer to Augustine or Gregory on these matters in one way or another.

The second source, dealing with the second class of people who get put in limbo, is the Gospel of Nicodemus, the apocryphal Christian gospel dealing with Christ's descent to the underworld during the Easter triduum and his subsequent harrowing of hell, or anastasis as it came to be known in the Greek. The work is appended to the apocryphal Acts of Pilate, and purports to be a recording of the testimony of Leucius and Karinus, formerly dead sons of the high priest Simeon who have been resurrected and bear witness before the Jewish authorities of the actions of Christ in the underworld which they witnessed. The Gospel of Nicodemus is a work of "sound and fury", which describes Christ as smashing down the gates of hell, breaking asunder the chains of those imprisoned there, defeating the devil in mortal combat, and departing from hell with his own. The notion of the harrowing of hell had existed previously to the Gospel of Nicodemus, especially in the various creeds that became formalized into the Apostles' Creed, which includes the phrase "he descended into hell". The

Gospel of Nicodemus is posterior, not anterior to this; current scholarly opinion dates it to the mid-sixth century, and makes it probably a response to Eastern Christological heresies; it does not appear as a subject in art until the early eighth century. However, it is important for doing just that; what the Gospel of Nicodemus did was present the anastasis in a highly vivid and dramatic format that was easily imagined, and as such easily portrayed in art. It is this image of limbo which entered Western consciousness, and became another kind of limbo, the limbo of the Fathers, or limbus patrum.

I have somewhat arbitrarily chosen to examine the medieval roots of limbo with the writings of Anselm of Canterbury. Although he nowhere uses the word limbo, he is a theological thinker of great originality who did much to restart theological debate on many topics that have relevance to the development of limbo. His views on original sin and its transmission seem to preclude the idea of a limbus puerorum, and he asserts the absolute damnation of unbaptized infants. But his novel ideas about the Incarnation, although they minimize the dramatic events of the Gospel of Nicodemus, nevertheless help intellectualize the ideas behind the anastasis. Anselm proved more important in the long run; on the other hand, our second author, Peter Abelard, was most important in his own time. His is the only other early twelfth-century critique of the prevailing theory of Christ's victory over the Devil. He voiced a number of unique ideas, such as a generous theory of the possibility of salvation for non-Christians. However, few of these ideas were adopted by medieval Christianity, save one, and that was critical: Abelard is the first to assert that the sole punishment of original sin is the lack of the beatific vision. This idea became very popular, and was crucial for the foundation of limbo. By contrast, the ideas of Abelard's foil Bernard of Clairvaux tend to be more conservative, and offer a good portrait of the positions of "mainstream" twelfth-century Christianity, although with a few surprises. Bernard's ideas on original sin and Christ's victory over the Devil are unoriginal, although he does much to reassert the fides aliena idea of the church. However, Bernard also speaks a great deal about the possibility

of salvation of non-Christians, especially children, and continues a theme seen in Abelard: mercy. Bernard represents the trend that increasingly considered the plight of unbaptized infants from the position of mercy. An unusual letter-controversy between two Benedictine abbots from the latter portion of the twelfth century, the Conflictus helveticus de limbo patrum, will also be considered in this context, as it demonstrates the fact that there were still questions to be asked about the nature of the Fathers before the advent of Christ. It is also the first readily-verifiable place where the word "limbo" is used.

The late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries witness a transition of consideration of these matters from ordinary to esoteric theology, which is to say, speculative works meant only for the consideration of other theologians. This is evident in two transitional figures, William of Auvergne and William of Auxerre. William of Auvergne actually uses the word "limbo" (in the formulation limbus inferni), and uses it with reference to the repose of the Fathers. But William is more important for his consideration of the situation of unbaptized infants. He continues the carentia visionis Dei idea established by Abelard, but helps pioneer the idea of space in considering their plight. Furthermore, he is the first to speculate upon the possibility of the consciousness and development of unbaptized infants in the afterlife. William of Auxerre, on the other hand, considers these questions from within the highly-disciplined quaestio format of the scholastics, and brings a new intellectual rigour to them, as well as a new format, the commentary on Peter Lombard's Sentences. He, too, uses the term limbus inferni, as well as the carentia visionis Dei idea of Abelard, and spatial ideas with regard to the situation of unbaptized infants. He also demonstrates himself to be motivated almost wholly by the issue of mercy in these matters.

With the transition to the thirteenth century, we find the most interesting things said about limbo being done by scholastic theologians, particularly the friars. Two early luminaries of the friars movement are particularly important: Alexander of Hales, and Albertus Magnus. Alexander used the limbus inferni terminology, but considers many

arguments surrounding it in quite great detail. He focuses on both the situations of the Fathers and unbaptized infants, each in their own division of limbo, and contrasts the two, both in terms of situation, and also their awareness of it. He, too, demonstrates the fact that he is motivated in these matters by the theme of mercy. Albertus Magnus, on the other hand, seems more focused upon the status of unbaptized infants. He is unique as the first to split the limbus inferni into the twofold limbus patrum and limbus puerorum. He also identifies a quinpartite structure to the afterlife that becomes the standard for most scholastic theologians. Finally, he considers a few new themes on the subject of unbaptized infants: the nature of their bodies after the resurrection, the efficacy of suffrages for them, and the situation of aborted fetuses.

Albertus and Alexander were each succeeded by a notable pupil, Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure, respectively. Aquinas continues in the footsteps of his master Albertus, preserving and amplifying upon the five realms of the afterlife and the bipartite limbo. His treatment is more disciplined and focused than that of his somewhat digressive master, and is a model of cogency that would prove of particular influence to later centuries. He also adds to William of Auvergne's ideas about the post-mortem development of unbaptized infants. Bonaventure, while adhering to the quinpartite structure of the afterlife and the bipartite limbo, operates more out of a spirit of synthesis and reconciliation than Aquinas. He examines many of the same themes, but comes to different conclusions, particularly with regard to the situation of unbaptized infants, whom he views as being held in a perpetual mean. What we understand by the word "limbo" in ordinary conversation today probably has its roots in Bonaventure.

Finally, and perhaps unusually, we conclude with Dante Alighieri's portrait of limbo in the Divine Comedy. This will doubtless strike the reader as something of a surprising change of pace given the previous procession of theologians. Nevertheless, Dante provides a fitting note upon which to conclude a study of the development of limbo. In his Divine

Comedy Dante unifies a number of themes and threads in this development. He voices ideas about the Fall, the transmission of original sin, the Incarnation, the harrowing of hell, the position of unbaptized infants, and the possibility or impossibility of salvation for non-Christians. Most of these streams coalesce around his portrait of limbo, in Canto IV of the Inferno, but at the same time, Dante not only sums up his sources, he goes beyond them to create a new and highly personal synthesis. With Dante, art and theology meet, and limbo is given its most memorable presentation ever. The development of the idea of limbo continues after Dante, of course, but it is never quite equalled.

Abraham and Christ's descent into hell, and his eventual adoption of the idea of a subdivided hell, proved to be important for the development of the limbo of the Fathers, although less so, as the idea was entertained and championed by other patristic authors. Ultimately, Augustine (in conjunction with his Pelagian opponents) has more to do with the development of the limbo of children that the limbo of the Fathers. What we see in Augustine is a kind of opening up and subdivision of hell, since it is clear that towards the end of his life he considered the Fathers to have been in their own special portion of hell, and it is equally clear that his final decision on the fate of unbaptized children was that they underwent a milder punishment that anyone else in hell. Augustine recognised only heaven and hell, that is clear, but it is also clear that his hell was an increasingly varied place.

II. THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF LIMBO: AUGUSTINE AND THE "PELAGIAN FABLE"

The thought of Augustine (354-430) and the Pelagians occurred against the backdrop of the Roman Empire in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. This period, of "decline and fall" was one of enormous change and dislocation. By 394 the Emperor Theodosius (379-395) had triumphed over his rival Eugene, who had attempted among other things to revive the practice of paganism. In reaction, Theodosius enforced his earlier edicts of 391 and 392 very strictly, which lead in effect to a complete proscription of paganism throughout the Empire. It is perhaps unsurprising that this proscription and the uncertain events of the day caused people to defect from paganism in large numbers.[1] This influx intensified a pre-existing problem within the church; what to do with these refugees? As a proscribed religion within the Roman Empire, Christianity had not had to concern itself greatly about the moral state of its voluntary converts, but as the imperial state religion it had to absorb a enormous number of individuals of questionable morals and motivations. How should Christianity, heretofore a religion of martyrs and saints, treat these people? The solution initially decided upon was simply to baptize them and complete their moral formation later. Many of these new converts considered their baptism as little more than a talisman which would ensure their salvation with little effort on their part,[2] and continued to lead lives that the church considered lax at best. Such laxity may have been encouraged in others by Manicheanism, which contributed to a sense of inertia regarding the spiritual life.[3] Furthermore, the tables were quickly turned on the fortunes of the Empire by the sack of Rome by Alaric and the Ostrogoths in 410. Now

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[1]. G. de Plinval, Pélage: son écrits, sa vie, et sa réformes: Étude d'histoire littéraire et religieuse (Lausanne, 1943), p.116.

[2]. G. Dyer, Limbo, Unsettled Question (New York, 1964), p.10.

[3]. G. de Plinval, 'Les luttes pélagiennes', Histoire de L'Église depuis les origines, jusqu'à nos jours (Paris, 1937), IV. 80.

it was the whole Empire that "had become full of refugees."[4] In the minds of some Christians, these were sure signs of the end of the world; equally, in the minds of some pagans they showed what a disastrous failure Christianity had been as a force capable of protecting the Empire. The times and situations gave Christian thinkers of all kinds reason to consider many teachings, and decide how to cope in a world that seemed increasingly to be falling apart.

History of the Conflict[5]

Into this world came Pelagius. We know little about him and his origins.[6] He came from the British Isles, that much is certain, and like Augustine he was educated at Rome. Augustine described him as a man "inflamed with the most ardent zeal"[7] in motivating lax Christians to the pursuit of greater sanctity. Pelagius belonged to a class of educated laymen who were able to discuss religious matters with great eloquence and insight. We know of his ideas from his surviving Expositiones xiii epistolarum Pauli[8] and from fragments that survive as quotations in the works of other writers, especially Augustine. While in Rome, Pelagius made the acquaintance of a young law student named Celestius who became his friend, travelling companion, and disciple. Celestius was a great deal more open about his teachings than his master[9] and was more willing to engage in controversy to advance and defend them.

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4. P. Brown, Augustine of Hippo (London, 1967), p.340.

5. For my treatment of these matters, I am exceedingly grateful for the path-breaking work of George Dyer, in his studies The Denial of Limbo and the Jansenist Controversy and Limbo, Unsettled Question. In particular, I shall rely heavily on the analyses of the latter.

6. G. de Plinval, Pélage, pp.47-71.

7. Augustine, De Natura et gratia, i, "homo zelo ardentissimo accensum", (P.L. 44, p.247).

8. A. Souter, Pelagius' Expositions of Thirteen Epistles of St. Paul (Texts and Studies) (Cambridge, 1922-1931).

9. Augustine, De Gratia Christi, et de peccato originali, vi, (P.L. 44, p.388).

Indeed, it has been observed that the propagation of Pelagianism in its early phase has a great deal more to do with Celestius than with Pelagius.[10]

Pelagius and Celestius joined the tide of refugees fleeing Rome, and went first to Sicily and then to Africa. Here they each wrote a different work; Pelagius, De Natura[11], and Celestius, the Definitiones. They parted company at Carthage, Pelagius going to Palestine and Celestius remaining. Celestius began to spread his teachings, but ran foul of the ecclesiastical authorities when he sought ordination. He was first reprimanded by Paulinus of Nola (a former secretary to St. Ambrose) and then excommunicated by Aurelius, bishop of Carthage. Celestius fled, intending to press his case at Rome, but eventually going to Ephesus where he secured ordination. It was at this point that Augustine entered the controversy. He had been concentrating on the Donatist problem and, as such, had not concerned himself with these new matters, but when pressed by Marcellinus, the legate of Aurelius, he responded (in 412) by issuing the work De Peccatorum meritis et remissione, et de baptismo parvulorum.[12] This work displayed his masterly analysis of the situation as in it he synthesised Pelagius' arguments and drew them out to logical conclusions which even Pelagius himself had not reached. Thus, as Peter Brown notes, "Pelagianism as we know it, that consistent body of ideas of momentous consequence, had come into existence; but in the mind of Augustine, not of Pelagius."[13] And central to the Pelagian controversy was the question of infant baptism, as we shall see in greater detail below.

Augustine continued the production of anti-Pelagian works,[14] and sent the theologian Paul Orosius to Palestine to assist Jerome in condemning Pelagius. A synod was called by

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10. P. Brown, op.cit., p.344.

11. Reconstructed in P.L. 158, pp.599-606.

12. P.L. 44, pp.109-198.

13. P. Brown, op.cit., p.345.

14. G. Dyer, The Denial of Limbo and the Jansenist Controversy (Mundelein, IL, 1955), p.6, no.37.

bishop John of Jerusalem in June of 415 to which Pelagius was called. Orosius brought word of Celestius' condemnation and hoped to prove that Pelagius was just as guilty of heterodoxy as his friend, but he failed to grasp the subtleties of Pelagius and his arguments well enough, and failed to secure a condemnation. A second synod to examine Pelagius was held in December of 415 in Disopolis in Lydda under the supervision of bishop Eulogius of Caeseria. Here Pelagius was examined on his views and those of Celestius as well; without hesitation he denied anything in Celestius' thought which smacked even remotely of heresy, especially the question of eternal life without baptism. Pelagius was cleared of all charges of heresy; Augustine maintained that this was so because he had defended himself well verbally and that his accusers were unfamiliar with his writings.[15]

The rest of northern Africa was shocked by the decision of the synod. In 416 one council of bishops gathered at Carthage and another (with Augustine) at Milevus, and both sent letters to Pope Innocent I asking for a condemnation of Pelagius and Celestius, particularly on the question of Eternal Life without baptism. Augustine and four other bishops even sent a private letter to the pope.[16] However, before the matter could be settled, Innocent died and Zosimus succeeded him in 417. Zosimus, who was not first and foremost a theologian and who appreciated the network of friends the Pelagians possessed in Rome, acquitted Celestius in person and Pelagius by letter, although he left the Africans four months in which to make their appeals.[17] The African response was the Council of Carthage, in which over 200 bishops gathered together to condemn Pelagian thought in nine canons. The third canon specifically condemned the idea of a middle place, in quite stringent terms:

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[15]. Augustine, De Gestis Pelagii, ii, (P.L. 44, p.320).

[16]. Augustine, Epistola 177 (P.L. 33, p.764).

[17]. G. Mansi, iv, pp.350-1.

> If anyone should say that when what the Lord said, "In my Father's house there are many mansions" (Jn.xiv.2), it should be understood that in the kingdom of heaven there will be either some middle place, or some other place, where blessed children shall live who have left this life without that baptism without which they are not able to enter the kingdom of heaven, which is eternal life; let him be anathema.[18]

In the meantime, some Pelagian supporters were involved in civic unrest in both Rome and Jerusalem, and incurred the official censure of the emperor Honorius in 418.[19] Faced with imperial displeasure on one hand and the show of massed support against him in Africa on the other hand, Zosimus had no choice but to begin proceedings against Pelagius and Celestius. When summoned to a Roman Synod, Celestius fled, and as a result was excommunicated. To the imperial proscription was added a papal condemnation, the epistle Tractoria.[20] However, Zosimus died in 418, and the Pelagians were able to mobilise support for their positions. Leadership of the movement passed from Pelagius to Julian of Eclanum, who along with seventeen other bishops refused to submit to the Tractoria. They rejected Augustine's ideas as Manichean, and instead celebrated the Five Praises: the praise of "creation, of marriage, of God's law, of free will, and of the hard-won merits of the holy men of old."[21] However, their position was an extremely precarious one, since as bishops they were especially vulnerable to the penalty of excommunication on the grounds of ecclesiastical disobedience, and excommunicated they eventually were. Most submitted and returned to their sees. Julian and Celestius fled, taking refuge ultimately with the patriarch Nestorius in Constantinople, who attempted to intercede with Pope Celestine on their behalf. An ecumenical council was eventually called at Ephesus in 431, the year after Augustine's

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[18]. "Item placuit, ut si quis dicit ideo dixisse Dominum: 'In domo Patris mei mansiones multae sunt' etc. (Jn.xiv.2), ut intelligatur quia in regno coelorum erit aliquis medius, aut ullus alicubi locus, ubi beate vivant parvuli qui sine baptismo ex hac vita migrarunt, sine quo in regnum coelorum, quod est vita aeterna, intrare non possunt; anathema sit." (P.L. 56, p.487).

[19]. P.L. 48, pp.379-386.

[20]. Mercator, Commonitorium super nomine coelesti, v. (P.L. 48, p.8).

[21]. P. Brown, op.cit., p.362.

death. The Council condemned Nestorius, ratified the deposition of Julian, and reinforced the condemnation of Celestius and Pelagius. This proved the death-blow for Pelagianism, although it continued to exist in a modified form known as semi-Pelagianism until it was finally condemned in 539 at the Council of Orange.

Pelagian Thought

What was it about Pelagius's thought that engendered such controversy? To begin with, let us consider the ideas of Pelagius and Celestius, and then the ideas of Julian of Eclanum. Pelagian thought represents one solution to the problem of the massive influx of unregenerate sinners into the church that the late fourth century faced. Pelagius had a boundless faith in human nature. Augustine describes him as

> a man on fire with a burning zeal against those who should in their sins blame the human will and instead, blaming the nature of man, try to find an excuse for themselves in this.[22]

Pelagius believed that man was essentially good, and capable of greatness. In his view, as Dyer notes, man "stood at the pinnacle of creation, capable of ruling both himself and the world."[23] Since he proceeded from this starting point, it is easy to understand the enormous stress that he placed on free will. In his estimation, we are free to choose good or evil. Furthermore, we are fully capable of choosing good by our own powers; nothing hampers us in our choice of goodness. He notes, "that we really do a good thing, or speak a good word, or think a good thought, proceeds from our own selves."[24] Pelagius also believed that

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[22]. Augustine, De Natura et gratia, i, "hominem zelo ardentissimo accensum adversus eos, qui cum in suis peccatis humanam voluntatem debant accusare, naturam potius accusantes hominum, per illam se excusare conantur." (P.L. 44, p.247).

[23]. G. Dyer, The Denial of Limbo., p.11. For further information on the origins of Pelagius' thought, see n.11.

[24]. Augustine, De Gratia Christi, et de peccato originali, i.17, "Si quod bene agimus, loquimur, cogitamus, ideo est et nostrum et Dei". (P.L. 44, c.369).

we could freely choose evil, and that there was nothing in us which inherently directed us towards good or evil. In the phraseology of Augustine's indictment:

> Everything good, and everything evil, on account of which we are either laudable or blameworthy, is not born with us but done by us, for we are born not fully developed, but with a capacity for either conduct; and we are procreated as without virtue, so also without vice; and previous to the action of our own proper will, that alone is in man which God has formed.[25]

Thus because we are capable of doing good, it is our duty to do so; in the same vein, because we are capable of doing good, we are capable of not doing evil. The church requires that we be sinless, maintained Pelagius, and it held up for us the example of men such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Melchizedek whom Scripture tells us were without sin.[26]

Concurrent with this belief in the supremacy of the human will was a disbelief in the idea of original sin. His Expositio in Romanos manages to cover all of St. Paul's critical epistle on this theme without even once advancing his own support for the idea of original sin. Men die, he supposed, because they follow the "example or form"[27] of Adam, not because of any spiritual inheritance. However, where Pelagius was somewhat muted and vague on this point, his disciple Celestius was explicit. He noted that the entire question of original sin was merely "a matter for inquiry."[28] Augustine notes how he stated that "original sin binds no single infant."[29] It is this lack of belief in original sin which made possible the belief in the goodness of man, and in the ability of the unaided will to attain salvation, and it is this belief which first put Pelagius and his followers at loggerheads with Augustine. The issue came to a head around the question of infant baptism, and it is here

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[25]. Ibid., ii.14, "Omne bonum ac malum, quo vel laudabiles vel vituperabiles sumus, non nobiscum oritur, sed agitur a nobis: capaces enim utriusque rei, non pleni nascimur, et ut sine virtute, ita et sine vitio procreamur: atque ante actionem propriae voluntatis, id solum in homine est, quod Deus condidit." (P.L. 44, p.391).

[26]. Pelagius, Epistola ad Demetiriadem, v. (P.L. 33, p.1102).

[27]. Pelagius, Expositio in Romanos, v.12. "exemplo uel forma" (P.L. suppl. 1, p.1136).

[28]. Augustine, De Gratia Christi, et de peccato originali, ii.3, "licet quaestionis res sit ista", (P.L. 44, p.387).

[29]. Ibid., ii.2, "quod parvulorum neminem obstringat originale peccatum", (P.L. 44, p.386).

that a compromise solution was worked out which was critical for our understanding of the development of limbo.

Although we have examples of individuals such as Augustine himself who delayed their own baptism until late in life, it is clear that infant baptism was an accepted and common practice of the time, as we can in part tell from Augustine's own words on the subject.[30] This practice was what caused problems for Pelagius and his followers. If there were no such thing as original sin, there was no necessity for the practice of infant baptism. However, if there was a necessity for infant baptism, then there could not be any truth to the idea of innate human goodness. In any case, the tradition existed, and they had to face it. They could not deny it, for, as Bernard Leeming puts it, "They were anxious to make converts and anxious to be regarded as orthodox."[31] What were they to do? Augustine indicates that Pelagius himself took refuge on the question by equivocating to some extent: "As for infants who die unbaptized, I know indeed where they do not go, yet where they do go, I do not know."[32] But in reality, the Pelagians proposed an interesting solution to their own problem. They created a radical interpretation of the Gospel passage Jn.iii.5, "unless a man be born again of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." This passage clearly admits the necessity of baptism for entry into heaven, but the Pelagians, believing as they did in natural goodness and disbelieving in original sin and the idea that we have inherited anything evil from Adam, noted that the passage said nothing about Eternal Life. What the Pelagians did was to create two different meanings for two previously synonymous terms. The kingdom of heaven could be reached by baptism alone, but Eternal Life could be reached by human will alone, without baptism. Indeed, even the will was not,

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30. Ibid., ii.1. (P.L. 44, p.385) and elsewhere.

31. B. Leeming, "Is Their Baptism Really Necessary?", The Clergy Review xxxix (1954), 66-85, p.74.

32. Augustine, De Gratia Christi, et de peccato originali, ii.23, "Sine Baptismo parvuli morientes, quo non eant, scio; quo eant, nescio." (P.L. 44, pp.395-6).

strictly speaking, necessary, as they believed that a child dying unbaptized would attain to Eternal Life without any application of will in its part, by virtue of its innate goodness.[33] Eternal Life was a good state, but the kingdom of heaven was a more perfect good which required sacramental initiation. Infants required baptism not to cleanse any inherent evil but rather to render them more perfect in the eyes of God and worthy to enter his Kingdom. This was an elegant solution to the problem, but at the same time it is a very human solution; it is, according to B. Pliaut, "more moral than metaphysical, more attentive to the forces of nature than divine activity."[34]

These basic ideas were given more cogency and direction by Julian of Eclanum. He continued in the vein of his predecessors by stressing the primacy of the human will in matters of morals. However, unlike Pelagius, who was mainly concerned with the power of the will to make moral choices, Julian maintained that the will had greater effects, as he spells out in his definition of the term: "Free will, by which man is emancipated from God, consists in the admitting of sins and the abstaining from the possibility of sin."[35] Note his radical interpretation; according to Julian, free will resulted in man's total independence from God. It did not so much render man capable of moral choice as place him in a state of absolute moral equilibrium, totally free to choose. It thus comes as no surprise, given this, that Julian also denied the existence of original sin. The entire idea was distasteful to him; he considered all in man to be entirely good because that is the only way a good God could have created

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[33]. For the origins of these ideas, see B. Pliaut, "Autour de la controverse pélagienne. 'Le troisième lieu'", Recherches de science religieuse xliv (1956), 481-514, p.491, who attributes them to Ambrosiaster, and G. Dyer, The Denial of Limbo, p.15, no.104, who considers several sources.

[34]. B. Pliaut, op.cit., p.482.

[35]. Augustine, Opus Imperfectum contra Julianum, i.78, "Libertas arbitrii, qua a Deo emancipatus **homo est,** in admittendi peccati et abstinendi a peccato possibilitate consistit." (P.L. 45, p.1102).

him. "All that [God] made is entirely good. And through this no one is naturally evil,"[36] he said.

Thus there could have been nothing passed on from a first man who was inherently good, or, conversely, if he had been created in sin, there could have been no hope for a change for the better in him. Julian viewed Augustine's ideas on the transmission of original sin as an attack on the sanctity of marriage, since he asked why God would have solemnised marriage if all it did was result in the procreation of those who were damned.[37] Thus infants were born neither good nor evil, but rather in a state of equilibrium that he termed "innocence"(innocentia)[38], something entirely free from sin. This, of course, begs the question of the necessity of infant baptism, and Julian answered it in a slightly different fashion than did his predecessors Pelagius and Celestius. In Julian's estimation, baptism served two functions: it eliminated sin and added holiness. A person with sin on his soul would be cleansed of it by baptism; a person with no sin on his soul would be made holier. Infants fall into the latter category, and they are baptized according to Julian, "that the sanctity, justice, adoption, inheritance, and fellowship of Christ might be added to them, that they might be members of him."[39] Baptism wrought no essential change in infants, although Julian admitted its importance. He did not stress the idea of Eternal Life as did his predecessors, although it had some bearing on his ideas, since he insisted on the necessity of baptism to enter the kingdom of heaven, and denied that a child dying unbaptized had done anything to merit hell.

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36. Ibid., iii.159, "Malum quippe non exstantis invenitur naturae: sed sicut omnis creatura, in quantum conditur, bona est", (P.L. 45, p.1312).

37. Augustine, Contra Julianum, iii.36. (P.L. 44, p.721).

38. Ibid., iii.10. (P.L. 44, p.707); vi.30. (p.839); vi.32. (p.840), Opus Imperfectum contra Julianum, i.49. (P.L. 45, p.1072).

39. Augustine, Opus imperfectum, i.53, "Hanc igitur gratiam, per quam reis venia, illuminatio spiritualis, adoptio filiorum Dei, municipatis Jerusalem coelestis, sanctificatio, atque in Christi membra translatio", (P.L. 45, p.1076).

Augustine's Responses

Augustine's responses to his Pelagian opponents centre almost exclusively around the question of infant baptism, presenting the early church with a great source of authoritative opinion on the subject, and providing later authors with an important authority whom it was necessary to refute or to whom they could appeal for support for their arguments. Furthermore, Augustine's arguments critically shaped the development of limbo. First, let us examine the arguments he used to answer the objections of his opponents, and then we shall move on to present a more general statement of his arguments as a whole.

Against Pelagius and Celestius

Augustine rejected out of hand the notion of an "Eternal Life" available to the unbaptized. He set about a defence of the church's traditional practice of infant baptism in so doing; he was attempting to prove the existence of damnation for children. If children could be damned, it had to be for a reason, and discovering that reason would prove the existence of original sin. His arguments on this subject are lengthy, recondite, and complex, and as such impossible to summarize adequately in a short space. Instead, I shall concentrate on two of his specific arguments against the Pelagian concept of Eternal Life. Augustine reckoned that this concept of Eternal Life could be seen in two ways, either as a kind of halfway state between heaven and hell, or else as a superior kind of human life. In the first case, Augustine was at great pains to deny the existence of a middle category of salvation by presenting the portrait of the Last Judgement from Matt.xxv.33ff in which Christ separates the good from the wicked by placing the good on his right and the wicked on his left. Augustine considers this figure and notes that it precludes any middle ground:

> This is an absolutely new fable, never before heard in the church, that one could have an Eternal Life which is not the kingdom of heaven, and that one could obtain salvation outside of the kingdom of God. For whosoever will not go to the kingdom of God without doubt will go to damnation. The Lord,

> announcing that he would come to judge the living and the dead, spoke only of his right and left, therefore of heaven and hell.[40]

Augustine's analysis is very strict and very legal; Christ is a judge who passes a very simple sentence:

> But certainly it is useless to question on the merits of one who has not merited anything. Because it does not do to believe that it is possible to have a middle life (vita media) between vice and virtue, not, on the part of the judge, that he can have a middle decision (sententia media) between chastisement and recompense.[41]

Simple questions such as right and left, salvation and damnation, preclude any subtleties of place in Augustine's view. Merit is what matters. And since unbaptized infants have not merited anything, Augustine consigns them to hell:

> Behold I have explained to you what the kingdom is and what eternal fire is so that when you profess that a child is not in the kingdom, you may acknowledge that he is in eternal fire.[42]

There are no alternatives; for Augustine, the very notion of a third place was a nonsense.[43]

Augustine dealt with the second possibility, that Eternal Life might be some form of enhanced life, with another example from Scripture and with some logic. He presents the words of Christ from John iv, 54, "Amen, amen I say to you, unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you." Augustine utilised this passage to indicate that one must have the Eucharist to be able to have eternal life. Since the church only allowed baptized individuals to partake of the Eucharist, an unbaptized child was

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[40]. Augustine, Sermo 294, iii.3, "Hic novum in Ecclesia, prius inauditum est, esse vitam aeternam praeter regnum coelorum, esse salutem aeternam praeter regnum Dei. Primo vide, frater, ne forte hinc consentire nobis debeas, quisquis ad regnum Dei non pertinet, eum ad damnationem sine dubio pertinere. Venturus Dominus, et judicaturus de vivis et mortuis, sicut Evangelium loquitur, duas partes facturus est, dextram et sinistram." (P.L. 38, p.1337).

[41]. Augustine, De Libero arbitrio, iii.66, "sed sane superfluo quaeri de meritis ejus qui nihil meruerit. Non enim metuendum est ne vita esse poteruit media quaedam inter recte factum atque peccatum, et sententia judicis media esse non possit inter praemium atque supplicium." (P.L. 32, p.1303-4).

[42]. Augustine, Sermo 294, iii.4, "Ecce exposuit tibi quid sit regnum, et quid sit ignis aeternus; ut quando confiteris parvulum non futurum in regno, fatearis futurum in igne aeterno." (P.L. 38, p.1337).

[43]. B. Pliaut, op.cit., p.504.

ipso facto barred from it and thus from eternal life.[44] This simple argument was vulnerable to the Pelagian query about the fate of a infant who died baptized but who had never partaken of the Eucharist; would it still be lost? But what Augustine meant was that partaking of the body of Christ was synonymous with living in the body of Christ:

> Would you live by the spirit of Christ? Be in the body of Christ... Thence it is that the Apostle Paul, explaining to us the nature of this bread, says, "One bread, one body are we, being many." O sacrament of piety! O sign of unity! O bond of charity! [45]

Augustine interpreted Paul's use of the Eucharist as meaning membership in the church, and was attempting to show in this that there was no such thing as a natural Eternal Life available to anyone. Such a thing came only through life in the Eucharist which meant a life in the church. One did not need necessarily to have the Eucharist to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but one did have to have a life in the church, which could only be gained by baptism; the faith of the church would extend to assist the salvation of its tiniest members, who did not have personal faith or the experience of the Eucharist themselves.[46] With these thoughts in mind, Augustine turned on the Pelagians. Since an unbaptized infant was thus excluded from both the kingdom of heaven and from Eternal Life, it followed that he was capable of being damned. There had to be a reason why this could happen, and Augustine pressed the Pelagians to give him the reasons why. Either God was somehow cruel and arbitrary, or else there was something innate in infants to warrant damnation. Augustine was thus attempting to press them into admitting the existence of original sin, and with that established, he thus established the necessity of infant baptism.

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[44]. Augustine, Contra Duos epistolas Pelagianorum, i.22. (P.L. 44, p.570).

[45]. Augustine, In Ioannes evangelium, xxvi.13, "Vis ergo et tu vivere de Spiritu Christi? In corpore esto Christi...Inde est quod exponens nobis apostolus Paulus hunc panem, 'Unus panis,' inquit, 'unum corpus multi sumus (1Cor.x,17). O Sacramentum pietatis! O signum unitatis! O vinculum charitatis! (P.L. 35, p.1613).

[46]. See J. Lécuyer, "L'enfant est baptisé dans la foi de l'Église", La Maison-Dieu lxxxix (1967), 21-37.

Against Julian

Augustine extended many of the arguments he had used against Pelagius and Celestius against Julian of Eclanum as well, and, as before, the nature of the argument came to centre around the question of baptism; Augustine concerned himself with this rather than with Julian's notions about the primary power of the human will. Julian believed that baptism served two functions, that of conferring holiness and that of abolishing sin. Such an schema was absurd to Augustine, who questioned what good baptism did according to Julian's estimation:

> Go on, then, go on and say that they are baptized in the sacrament of the Saviour, but not saved; they are redeemed, but not delivered; they are bathed, but not washed; they are exorcised and exsufflated, but not freed from the power of the Devil. Declare likewise, that the blood is also shed for them in forgiveness of sins, but they are not cleansed by forgiveness of any sin. Wondrous are the things you say. New are the things you say. False are the things you say.[47]

What purpose did baptism then serve, asked Augustine? He was attempting to prove that Julian actually did not believe in original sin, but would not come directly out and say it. Why was this sacramental grace necessary if there was no sin or evil to require it? Why should the rite of baptism include an exorcism if humanity were not in some way in the power of the Devil? What did baptism do if not deliver us from the power of the Devil? And how did the Devil hold us except by sin? This was all certainly true of the Old Law, where baptism was prefigured by circumcision, without which the child would perish; Augustine badgers Julian through the mouth of a child of the Old Law:

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47. Augustine, Contra Julianum, iii.9, "Pergite adhuc, pergite, et sicut dicitis, In Sacramento Salvatoris baptizantur, sed non salvantur; redimuntur, sed non liberantur; lavantur, sed non abluuntur; exorcizantur et exsufflantur, sed a potestate diaboli non eruuntur; sic etiam dicite. Funditur pro eis sanguis in remissionem peccatorum, sed nullius peccati remissione mundantur. Mira sunt quae dicitis, nova sunt quae dicitis, falsa sunt quae dicitis", (P.L. 44, p.707).

> My soul shall be destroyed out of my people if I am not circumcised on the eighth day; you who deny original sin and confess a just God, tell me how I have sinned.[48]

If under the Old Law a child could perish without circumcision, why should he not be able to perish under the New without baptism? As he did before, Augustine rejected out of hand the existence of a state of Eternal Life such as Julian advocated. He badgered Julian again, this time about the torment such an Eternal Life might provide for unbaptized children:

> But you, also, who contend that they are, as it were, free from all condemnation, do not wish to think about the condemnation by which you punish them by estranging them from the life of God, and from the kingdom of God so many images of God, and by separating them from the pious parents you so eloquently urge to procreate them. They suffer these separations unjustly, if they have no sin at all, or if justly, then they have original sin.[49]

Augustine returns to the attempt to make the Pelagians admit original sin, but he adds a new idea here--how can there be happiness if there is a separation from God? This idea would be developed by later writers as the theme of the deprivation of the beatific vision and is exceedingly important to the development of ideas about limbo and the condition of the souls within it. Augustine's addition of the sorrowing parents is merely a twisting of the knife.

Themes in Augustine's Responses

Now that we have considered some of Augustine's specific replies, let us provide a few summaries of some of his specific themes. In the first place, Augustine rejects the Pelagian idea of Eternal Life in any form:

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[48]. Augustine, Contra Julianum, vi.21, "Peritura est anima mea de populo meo, si non fuero circumcisus octavo die: qui ergo et originale malum diffitemini, et justum Deum fatemini, quid peccaverim dicite." (P.L. 44, p.835).

[49]. Augustine, Contra Julianum, v.44, Verum vos quoque, qui eos velut liberos ab omni damnatione esse contenditis, cogitari non vultis qua illos damnatione puniatis, alienando a vita Dei et a regno Dei tot imagines Dei, postremo separando a parentibus piis, quos ad eos procreandos tam disertus hortaris. Heac autem injuste patiuntur, si nullam habent omnio peccatum: aut si juste, ergo habent originale peccatum." (P.L. 44, p.809).

> Let no one promise unbaptized infants some middle place of rest and happiness between damnation and the kingdom of heaven such as he pleases and where he pleases.[50]

Augustine was exceptionally severe towards the ideas of Vincentius Victor, who, though usually included with the Pelagians, held somewhat more generous views, believing that unbaptized infants went first to the earthly paradise, and then after the resurrection went to heaven. Augustine, by contrast, thought in only two categories: salvation and damnation, and was unwilling to accept a third alternative. He was a brutal realist when it came to these matters. Eternal Life is a very compassionate, merciful idea--in short, a very human idea, but Augustine did not think in human or sometimes even merciful terms. Rather, he looked at things as they were and pondered the mystery of God's judgements. Nowhere is this more clear than in the attention he paid to the sufferings of little children. This sad fact mystified and fascinated him for a long time; he had considered it long before the Pelagian controversy in his De Libero arbitrio (395) and especially in his Letter 166 to Jerome:

> [Babies] are liable to wasting disease, to racking pain, to the agonies of thirst and hunger, to feebleness of limb, to privation of bodily senses, and to vexing assaults of unclean spirits. Surely it is incumbent on us to show how it is compatible with justice that infants suffer all these things without any evil of their own as the producing cause.[51]

In a merciful, human world, babies would not suffer. Yet they do, and Augustine realised this fact. Pondering this sad situation, among other things, lead him to some answers which constitute our second theme, grace.

Augustine's theology depended on the idea of divine grace. For Augustine, ultimate salvation depended not on innate goodness or on merit of any kind, but rather was totally dependent on the mystery of God's grace. Man has absolutely no claim on it whatsoever;

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[50]. Augustine, De Anima et eius origine, i.11, "et non baptizatis parvulis nemo promittat inter damnationem regnumque coelorum, quietis vel felicitatis cujuslibet atque ubilibet quasi medium locum." (P.L. 44, p.481).

[51]. Augustine, Epistola 166, vi.16, "Languescunt aegritudinibus, torquentur doloribus, fame et siti cruciantur, debilitantur membris, privantur sensibus, vexantur ab immundis spiritibus. Demonstrandum est utique, quomodo ista sine ulla sua mala causa juste patiuntur.". (P.L. 33, p.727).

Augustine notes, "we maintain that the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord is truly grace, that is, it is not given according to our merits."[52] The sufferings of children provided Augustine with an occasion to consider the entire disordered condition of man.[53] The solution came not from man's own efforts, but through God's grace. Unbaptized infants were not saved, baptized infants were; this was the result of God's grace, according to Augustine. One child dies baptized and saved, another dies unbaptized and is lost. Time and again Augustine employs this example as an illustration of his points.[54] But illustrations were all that Augustine could provide; he could not come up with an answer to this problem any more than we can. The mystery of the salvation of infants remained just that to him, a mystery.

Fortunately, for Augustine there was at least a partial solution to the problem; his third major theme, baptism. Baptism was capable of saving the infant, and should be applied as soon as possible. For infants, the salvation comes from the faith of the church, not through their own abilities, and that faith is conferred through baptism.[55] Baptism is what truly provides eternal life. Baptism is what makes an individual able to receive Christ in the Eucharist, and so become one with the church and so with him, since he and the church are one. Similarly, the church is also the bride of Christ, and one can only be a child of God if one is the child of the church. Augustine makes many references to scriptural passages dealing with baptism, noting that it is like Noah's ark, which was the sole means of salvation for a few (1 Ptr.iii.20-21), or that it is a bath of regeneration and renewal (Titus iii.5).[56] Indeed, for Augustine baptism was such an important thing that he cited examples from the

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[52]. Augustine, De praedestinatione sanctorum, xii.23, "qua defendimus gratiam Dei per Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum, vere esse gratiam, id est, non secundum merita nostra dari", (P.L. 44, p.978).

[53]. F. Cayré, "Une rétraction de saint Augustine. Les enfants morts sans baptême", L'Année theologique augustinienne, xii (1952), 131-143, pp.136-137.

[54]. B. Leeming, op.cit., p.80, no.2.

[55]. See J. Lécuyer, op.cit..

[56]. See the index of vol. 60 of the CSEL for extensive citations of passages where Augustine treats these scriptural examples.

supernatural regarding it. He presents the story of a boy who died as a catechumen before receiving baptism whose mother brought him to the shrine of St. Stephen, whereupon the boy came back to life, requested and was given baptism, and thereupon died a second time.[57] He also cites the example of Dinocrates, brother of St. Perpetua, who died at age seven and was seen by her in a purgatory-like place. She prayed for him and he was delivered; Augustine is careful to remind readers that he was saved not just by his sister's faith, since "there is no record...that the boy who died at the age of seven died without baptism."[58] His sin no doubt consisted of a relapse to paganism prompted by his father; nevertheless according to Augustine it is his original baptism, as well as his sister's intercessions, which saved him. In both of these examples, baptism is absolutely necessary for salvation, even a post mortem one.

Finally, we come to the fourth theme in Augustine's works, the fate of unbaptized infants. What happens to them? They are damned. As Augustine had rejected the idea of Eternal Life in preference to a strict schema of salvation and damnation, he could find no place for any kind of salvation without baptism of water or desire, leaving only hell as their fate. As one example, he notes:

> But what can be plainer than the many weighty testimonies of the divine declarations which afford to us the clearest possible proof that without union with Christ there is no man who can attain to Eternal Life and salvation; and that no man can unjustly be damned--that is, separated from that life and salvation? The inevitable conclusion from these truths is this, that, as nothing else is effected when infants are baptized except that they are incorporated into the church, in other words, they are united with the body and members of Christ, unless this benefit has been bestowed upon them, they are manifestly in danger of damnation.[59]

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[57]. Augustine, Sermo 323, iii. (P.L. 39, p.1446) and Sermo 324. (P.L. 39, p.1446-7).

[58]. Augustine, De Anima et eius origine, i.12, "nec illa sic scripsit...ut illum puerum qui septennis mortuus fuerat, sine Baptismo diceret fuisse defunctum", (P.L. 44, p.481).

[59]. Augustine, De Peccatorum meritis et remissione, et de baptismo parvulorum, iii.7, "Quid autem aperius tot tantisque testimoniis divinorum eloquiorum, quibus dilucidissime apparet, nec praeter Christi societatem ad vitam salutemque aeternam posse quemquam hominum pervenire, nec divino judicio injuste posse aliquem damnari, hoc est, ab illa vita et salute separari? Unde fit consequens ut quoniam nihil agitur aliud, cum parvuli baptizantur, nisi ut incorporentur Ecclesiae, id est, Christi corpori membrisque socientur; manifestum sit eos ad

Augustine often returns to this point, that unbaptized infants would suffer eternal death and undergo damnation.[60] Augustine recognised two deaths, one of the separation of soul and body, the other of damnation of both soul and body. This is the end result of original sin, which all humans merit if they are not redeemed by baptism. The Pelagians attempted to modify this harshness by asserting that God rewarded or punished unbaptized infants by salvation or damnation according to the good or evil that they were likely to do in the future; Augustine rejected this out of hand as "absurd".[61] Why, he wondered, could contingent grace not be extended to cover these contingent sins, and have everyone saved? No, the distribution of grace was a mystery, but those infants who died without it were surely subject to a "most grievous damnation."[62] Unbaptized infants were to him, "vessels of contumely, vessels of wrath, and the wrath of God is upon them."[63] They were in the power of the Devil, and left alone they would return to him.

Vigour and Vacillation

We must note, however, that Augustine's views on the fate of unbaptized infants, while seemingly absolute, admit substantial nuance. George Dyer comments upon the "paradox of vigour and vacillation"[64] which marks Augustine's thought in this area. Augustine would have no part in the development of limbo if his ideas were as "open and shut" as they have been presented above; however, they are not. Augustine seems to have recoiled as instinctively as we do from the notion that unbaptized infants were punished in

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damnationem, nisi hoc eis collatum fuerit, pertinere." (P.L. 44, p.189).

60. An extensive list of citations may be found in G. Dyer, The Denial of Limbo, pp.24-5, n.164.

61. Augustine, De Praedestinatione sanctorum, xii.24, "Quod si absurdum est", (P.L. 44, p.978).

62. Augustine, Opus Imperfectum contra Julianum, v.64, "damnatione gravissima", (P.L. 45, p.1505).

63. G. Dyer, The Denial of Limbo, pp.25-26.

64. G. Dyer, Limbo, Unsettled Question, p.15.

the same fashion as obdurate sinners. It is quite clear that he was considerably less severe than posterity has credited him as being.[65] Regarding the actual sufferings of these unbaptized infants, he noted: "And of course, the mildest punishment of all will fall upon those who added no actual sin to the original sin they brought with them."[66] And elsewhere:

> It may therefore be correctly affirmed that such infants as quit the body without being baptized will be involved in the mildest condemnation of all (damnatione omnium mitissima).[67]

Unbaptized infants thus suffer a lesser punishment in Augustine's estimation. For example, when pressed by Julian of Eclanum to declare that unbaptized infants and demons were punished in the same way, he categorically denied it.[68] There was, unfortunately, no way to change the state of these infants, since he held that suffrages offered by the living on behalf of the dead have no effect on those who lived without the faith.[69] Nevertheless, the sufferings of these infants are preferable to their not existing at all:

> But I do not say that children who die without the baptism of Christ will undergo such grievous punishment that it were better for them never to have been born...who can doubt that unbaptized infants, having only original sin and no burden of personal sin will suffer the lightest condemnation of all (damnatione omnium levissima)? I cannot determine amount and kind of their punishment, but I dare not say it were better for them never to have existed than to exist there.[70]

In addition to expressing his position on this particular subject, the above passage also shows us something characteristic of Augustine's thought on these matters as a whole--it shows us

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[65]. E. Portalié, A Guide to the Thought of Saint Augustine (London, 1960), p.212.

[66]. Augustine, Enchiridion ad Laurentium, xciii, "Mitissima sane omnium poena erit eorum qui praeter peccatum quod originale traxerunt, nullum insuper addiderunt", (P.L. 40, p.275).

[67]. Augustine, De Peccatorum meritis et remissione, et de baptismo parvulorum, i.21, "Potest proinde recte dici, parvulos sine Baptismo de corpore exeuntes in damnatione omnium mitissima futuros." (P.L. 44, p.120).

[68]. Augustine, Opus Imperfectum contra Julianum, iv.22. (P.L. 45, p.1417-8).

[69]. Augustine, Sermo 172, (P.L. 38, p.937).

[70]. Augustine, Contra Julianum, v.44, "Ergo autem non dico parvulos sine Christi Baptismate morientes tanta poena esse plectendos, ut eis non nasci potius expediret...quis dubitaverit parvulos non baptizatos, qui solum habent originale peccatum, nec ullis propriis aggravantur, in damnatione omnium levissima futuros? Quae qualis et quanta erit, quamvis definire non possim, non tamen audeo dicere quod eis ut nulli essent quam ut ibi essent, potius expedieret." (P.L. 44, p.809).

something of his doubt. He is not sure of the punishment of unbaptized infants, just that it is preferable to not existing at all. It is here that Augustine displays his vacillation on the subject. He is sure, but he is not sure. In a letter to St. Jerome written in 415, he states his belief in the damnation of unbaptized infants, but adds:

> But when we come to the penal sufferings of infants, I am embarrassed, believe me, by great difficulties, and am wholly at a loss to find an answer by which they are solved.[71]

Elsewhere in the letter he begs St. Jerome, "Teach me therefore, I beseech you, what I may teach to others, teach me what I ought to hold as to my own opinion."[72]

Similar sentiments are expressed in a letter of 418 to Bishop Opatus.[73] Augustine knows, but he does not know. He states a position firmly, but does not understand all the implications of it. He falls back on the idea that "God's judgements are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out."[74] Augustine perhaps realised that the actual answer to this problem surpassed human understanding. It is important to remember that he entered into the question to combat the Pelagian heresy, and the positions they adopted conditioned the responses he made. Some elements of his teachings were simply the result of his being anti-Pelagian.[75] He was sure that unbaptized infants were damned. But as to the nature and effects of that damnation, he would only say that they were mild. He could understand no more, nor could Jerome and Opatus give him a clear answer either. It is entirely possible

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[71]. Augustine, Epistola 166, xvi, "Sed cum ad poenas ventum est parvulorum, magnis, mihi crede, coarctor angustiis, nec quid respondeam prorsus invenio", (P.L. 33, p.727).

[72]. Ibid., "Doce ergo, quaeso, quod doceam, doce quod teneam", (P.L. 33, p.725).

[73]. Augustine, Epistola 190. (P.L. 33, pp.857-866).

[74]. Augustine, De Peccatorum meretis et remissione, et de baptismo parvulorum, i.30, "nisi quia inscrutabilia sunt judicia ejus, et investigabiles viae ejus." (P.L. 44, p.126).

[75]. See W. Van Roo, "Infants dying without baptism. A survey of recent literature and determination of the state of the question", Gregorianum xxxv (1954), 405-473, p.466; F. Cayré, Une rétraction, p.134.

that, but for the Pelagians, he never would have considered the question.[76] But he did consider it, and he was unable to come up with an ultimate answer.

A Third Place in Augustine?

It is the above-mentioned ambiguity in Augustine's writings that leads to his place in the development of the idea of limbo, at least according to the interpretation put on him by later writers. As we have noted, Augustine believed very strongly in rooting his ideas in Scripture. However, his task in this particular area was not helped by the fact that, as Jacques Le Goff points out, "the Bible was imprecise, not to say contradictory, on the subject of the hereafter."[77] This did not make his task any easier, and despite the firmness we have seen him display in condemning the Pelagian Eternal Life in favour of a strict dichotomy of salvation and damnation, the fact remains that Augustine did at times describe the afterlife in more than binary terms. For example, in his Enchiridion ad Laurentium, written in 421, he notes:

> during the time which intervenes between a man's death and resurrection at the last, men's souls are reserved in secret receptacles (abditis receptaculis), at rest or in tribulation according to each soul's deserts, according to its lot in the flesh during life.[78]

This seems to indicate the existence of more than one place in the afterlife, although they are still divided here by the qualities of reward and punishment. The schema grows more complicated as the Enchiridion proceeds to consider the effect of suffrages on the dead. We have seen before that Augustine considered them ineffective for the unbaptized, but he did indicate that they were effective for the following groups:

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[76]. W. Stockums, Das Los der ohne die Taufe sterbenden Kinder (Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 1923), p.146.

[77]. J. Le Goff, The Birth of Purgatory (Cambridge, 1984), p.63.

[78]. Augustine, Enchiridion ad Laurentium, cix, "Tempus autem quod inter hominis mortem et ultimam resurrectionem interpositum est, animas abditis receptaculis continet, sicut unaquaeque digna est vel requie vel aerumna, pro eo quod sortita est in carne cum viveret." (P.L. 40, p.283).

> When, therefore, the sacrifices of the altar or of any kind of alms are offered on behalf of all the dead baptized, they are, for the entirely good [valde boni] thanksgivings; in the case of the not entirely bad [non valde mali] they are propitiatory; in the case of the entirely evil [valde mali], whilst of no profit to them, they do at least console the living.[79]

Here we have a description of three classes of individuals in the afterlife, only one of which, the non valde mali, can be aided by suffrages on their behalf. This adds a confusing note to the right/left saved/damned dichotomy presented in his writings against the Pelagians; suddenly, we are confronted with a third category. This is by no means an isolated example, since in his earlier work, the De Libero arbitrio, he states

> Do not worry, there is, assuredly, a life of some quality intermediate between the life of doing right and the life of sin, and a sentence of the judge intermediate between reward and punishment.[80]

What are we to make of all this, particularly the latter note? In that particular case, it is possible to assert that since the work in question was written between 388 and 395, it represents an early idea of Augustine's, later rejected. However, it must be pointed out that he never issues one of his Retractiones to withdraw this idea, as he did other ideas. Furthermore, the Enchiridion is from comparatively late in his life, and again we find evidence of a third class of person at least, if not a third place in the afterlife. The truth of these matters divides scholars even today. Some have interpreted this section to mean that Augustine was voicing support for Purgatory;[81] others have denied that he even conceived of such a place.[82] Even if it should be judged impossible to come to any exact conclusions

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[79]. Ibid, cx, "Cum ergo sacrificia sive altaris sive quarumcumque eleemosynarum pro baptizatis defunctis omnibus offeruntur, pro valde bonis gratiarum actiones sunt; pro non valde malis propititiones sunt; pro valde malis etiamsi nulla sunt adjumenta mortuorum; qualescumque vivorum consolationes sunt." See p. 639 of G. Edwards' review article of J. Le Goff's Birth of Purgatory "Purgatory: 'Birth' or Evolution", Journal of Ecclesiastical History xxxvi (1985), 634-646, for an analysis of this passage; Edwards correctly identifies that the passage speaks of only three categories of individuals, and that Le Goff is mistaken in his interpretation of a fourth category of the non valde boni.

[80]. Augustine, De Libero arbitrio, iii.66, "Non enim metuendum est ne vita esse potuerit media quaedam inter recte factum atque peccatum, et sententia judicis media esse non possit inter praemium atque supplicium." (P.L. 32, p.1304).

[81]. See J. Ntekeda, L'Évolution de la doctrine du purgatoire chez saint Augustin (Paris, 1966).

[82]. See J. Le Goff, The Birth of Purgatory (Cambridge, 1984), p.62.

about truth of the matter, one certain message emerges from these passages. By touching on the possibility of a third, indeterminate state with or without any final conclusion of his own, Augustine generated controversy, a controversy that still continues today. The idea of a limbo of children as later ages understood it did not exist in the minds of Augustine and his contemporaries;[83] such a concept is more probably a later enlargement of his original ideas.[84] Nevertheless, Augustine is, equally without question, one of the major sources for that later enlargement, because he begins the process of assigning a different punishment, a milder one, to the unbaptized infants in hell; and if the environment of hell is one of the things that provides the punishment of damnation, then the existence of a milder punishment for one class of the damned begs the question of a different place in which this milder punishment was meted out. Such a place would later be called the limbo of children, and Augustine can rightly be seen as having played a critical role in its founding. But the credit - if it is that- cannot lie with Augustine alone, since many of the features of the later limbo of children bear some similarities to the Eternal Life of the Pelagian heretics. The limbo of children thus depends paradoxically as much on the Pelagian heresy as it does Augustine's orthodoxy.

Using a later theological vocabulary, we can now construct a chart of the different views of each, as follows:

THE LIMBO OF CHILDREN
(after Dyer[85])

PELAGIANS	AUGUSTINE	MEDIEVAL LIMBO
Unbaptized children are born in a	Unbaptized children are born in a	Unbaptized children are born in
State of Innocence	State of Original Sin	State of Original Sin

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[83]. B. Pliaut, op.cit., p.514.

[84]. F. Cayré, op.cit., p.138.

[85]. G. Dyer, Limbo, Unsettled Question, p.18.

And sentenced to	And attain	And sentenced to
Neither heaven nor hell	Not to heaven nor any middle ground	Neither heaven nor hell
But rather	But rather are sentenced to	But rather
A middle ground (Eternal Life) which is	Damnation, in which they suffer	A middle ground (limbo) which is
A state of innocence involving		A state of damnation involving
Neither the pain of sense nor the pain of loss	The pain of sense and the pain of loss	Neither the pain of sense nor the pain of loss
But a measure of happiness		But a measure of happiness

Essentially, then, the medieval authors continued the verdict of Augustine, but mitigated the penalty. And all of stems not from Augustine's firm ideas, but rather from his weakness, as George Dyer points out:

> there appear to be elements of hesitation in an otherwise vigorous point of view. These factors of severity, hesitation, and apparent vacillation will all contribute to the controversy of a later century.[86]

Dyer is here speaking about the Jansenist controversy of the seventeenth century regarding the salvation of unbaptized children, but his point is equally valid for the development of the limbo of children in the Middle Ages as well, as we shall see in upcoming chapters.

More Vigour and Vacillation: Augustine and the Bosom of Abraham

Augustine's views on infant baptism influenced the later idea of the limbo of children. But Augustine's thought also influenced another idea, that of the limbo of the Fathers, though his influence here was less. The roots of this particular question lie in the explanations Augustine gave to two different but related things: the figure of the bosom of Abraham in Lk.xvi.22-23, and the question of Christ's descent into the underworld. Both of these, and, indeed, the question of the salvation of unbaptized children, all tie into a larger question, that

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[86]. G. Dyer, The Denial of Limbo, pp.29-30.

of the fate of the soul after death. In examining Augustine's positions on these matters, Eugène Portalié notes that, "this is one of the questions where it is most difficult to pinpoint the thought of Augustine,"[87] and he goes on to point out the conflicting opinions of several modern scholars. As with the question of the salvation of unbaptized infants, there is thus considerable room for argument among modern as well as medieval scholars regarding just exactly what Augustine meant. Nevertheless, we will able to draw some conclusions, below.

In the preceding section, we considered the important sections from Augustine's Enchiridion regarding his admission of the possibilities of more than just the two places of heaven and hell in the afterlife. If Augustine believed this was so, there was room for later critics to indicate that he had expressed the possibility of a limbo of children, or a limbo of the Fathers. Since we have examined Augustine's views on "space" in the afterlife, let us look briefly at his views of the "body" which will occupy that space, the soul. Souls do not have a "body" per se, he reckoned; rather, they have the "likeness " of a body. In the case of the damned, they are "afflicted" with this likeness, and "are subjected to the same experience as the dead flesh itself buried under the earth,"[88] indicating that they undergo some form of suffering and decay. "The soul is able to have in the likeness of its body and all its bodily members,"[89] he notes, and maintains that forces can act upon it in some fashion; "either in rest or in sadness."[90] After the resurrection, the joy and vexation will

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87. E. Portalié, op.cit., p.290.

88. Augustine, De Genesi ad litteram, xii.66, "per illas corporalium similitudines exhibeatur, quod ipsi carni mortuae solet, ut sub terram recondatur." (P.L. 34, p.482).

89. Ibid., xii.62, "tamen habere posse similitudinem corporis et corporalium omnino membrorum" (P.L. 34, p.481).

90. Ibid "sive in requiem, sive in doloribus". It is possible that these opinions are a reaction to the neo-Platonism of Porphyry, who maintained (Sententiae xxxii, 29) that there was an astral body or pneuma which accompanied the body at death. Augustine consistently used the word spiritus to indicate something which was immaterial, though real.

be more intense, since the sensations will be felt with the body as well as the soul[91], but in the afterlife they are no less real.

Augustine may have viewed these sensations as somewhat metaphorical, however, as we can see in one of his positions on the bosom of Abraham, defined in his controversy with Vincentius Victor. Victor maintained that there was a literal corporality to the soul--there must have been, otherwise how could the rich man in hell have recognised Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham? He further maintained that there must thus have been a corporality to the bosom of Abraham as well. Augustine chided him on these views as he pithily pointed out the salient fact that one human bosom could not actually contain so many souls. For his part, he defined the bosom of Abraham in this fashion: as "that remote and separate abode of rest and peace in which Abraham now is."[92] This sets the initial tone for Augustine's view of this place; it is paradisiacal, a place of happiness, to be used synonymously with paradise.[93] Indeed, he could even wish a friend there. Meditating on a long-dead friend from his days at Carthage, Augustine notes in his Confessions:

> Whatever that may be which is signified by that bosom, there lives my Nebridius, my sweet friend...there he lives concerning which he used to ask me so much--me, an inexperienced feeble one! Now he puts not his ear unto my mouth, but his spiritual mouth unto your fountain, and drinks as much as he is able, wisdom according to his desire--happy without end. Nor do I believe he is so intoxicated with it as to forget me, seeing you, O Lord, whom he drinks, are mindful of us.[94]

Here Augustine expands on the imagery presented in Lk.xvi.22ff. The cooling water the rich man desires becomes Christ, the living water. Furthermore, the souls in this realm are

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[91]. Augustine, In Ioannis evangelium, xcix. 10. (P.L. 35, p.1751).

[92]. Augustine, De Anima et eius origine, iv.24 (P.L. 44, p.538), "remotam sedem quietis atque secretam, ubi est Abraham."

[93]. See also Sermo 106, iv.4. (P.L. 38, p.638).

[94]. Augustine, Confessiones, ix.6, "Quidquid illud est quo illo significatur sinu, ibi Nebridius meus vivit...Ibi vivit, unde me multa interrogabat homuncionem inexpertum. Jam non ponit aurem ad os meum, sed spirituale os ad fontem tuum; et bibit, quantum potest, sapientiam pro aviditate sua, sine fine felix. Nec si eum arbitror inebriari ex ea, ut obliviscatur mei, cum tu, Domine, quem potat ille, nostri sis memor." (P.L. 32, pp.765-6).

capable of interceding for the living, as Nebridius may do for Augustine. Finally, observe the note of indecision with which he begins this passage, "Whatever that may be," etc. The Confessions marks one of his earliest uses of this figure, and even from the outset, he is not entirely sure of its exact meaning.

Augustine manifests similar caution when considering the question of where Christ descended when he descended into hell, and what he did there. Let us not forget his penchant for grounding his arguments definitively in Scripture, and the weaknesses inherent in so doing. He, too, was aware of them; as he notes, "I have not found any passage in Scripture, at least in the canonical books, where the term 'hell' is to be taken in a good sense."[95] This observation runs like a theme through many of his works, for example, it appears with almost exactly the same wording in a 414 letter to bishop Evodius[96] and a 417 letter to his brother Dardanus.[97] The "lower" world is not a positive place;[98] Augustine makes use of the word inferi in both a physical and a metaphysical sense, i.e., hell is a place under the earth, and just as heavier material bodies occupy a lower place if left to their own tendencies,[99] so, too in the spiritual order, "the gloomier realm is in a lower position."[100] He goes on, following an apparently popular contemporary etymology, he links the similar Greek words "hades" and "I delight"; the realm is called hades because there is no delight there. Hell is the place that the rich man went; the place Jacob feared to go when he said to his son, "You will drag down my old age with sorrow unto hell." (Gen.xliv, 29). Abraham and Lazarus "were not in the

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[95]. Augustine, De Genesi ad litteram, xii.64, "nondum inveni, et adhuc quaero, nec mihi occurrit inferos alicui in bono posuisse Scripturam duntaxat canonicam.". (P.L. 34, p.482).

[96]. Augustine, Epistola 144, 7. (P.L. 44, p.711).

[97]. Augustine, Epistola 187, ii.6. (P.L. 33, p.83).

[98]. Augustine, De Genesi ad litteram, xii.66. (P.L. 34, p.482).

[99]. Augustine, De Genesi ad litteram, xii.66. (P.L. 34, p.483).

[100]. Ibid., "inferiora sunt omnia tristiora".

midst of that pain."[101] Here again Augustine describes their location with the word "paradise", not equivocating about its nature, but describing it as a place where there is no temptation and where there is a marvellous rest after the sufferings of this life. He is quick to point out the gulf between Abraham in repose and the rich man in torment; to him it is the gulf between heaven and hell, two different realms.

But this heaven-and-hell dichotomy, especially as considered in an explication of the figure of the bosom of Abraham, begs the question of Christ's descent into hell. If only the wicked like the rich man are there, then to whom did he descend, and whom did he rescue? Augustine considers this issue in response to two questions, one which asks what the promise to the thief on the cross, "today you shall be with me in paradise" (Lk.xxiii.43) meant, and another which asks who the "souls in prison" to whom Christ preached were (1Ptr.iii.18-21). To some degree both questions presuppose the existence of a limbo of the Fathers, or at least the fact that there were holy people in hell who required redemption. Augustine, continuing in his treatise De Genesi ad litteram speaks of hell in its most pejorative sense, and notes that Christ:

> did not deign to visit this part of the world. He could not have been ignorant of the fact that some were to be delivered from there in accordance with the mysteries of God's justice, and there he went to deliver them.[102]

Lacking complete understanding, Augustine here falls back on the idea of mystery, making an exact answer beyond human comprehension. He goes on to note that the good thief was brought with Christ into paradise, which he identifies as either the bosom of Abraham or St. Paul's third heaven, "if the abode of the souls of the blessed is not one and the same thing called by different names."[103]

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[101]. Ibid., xii.63, "Neque enim Abraham, vel ille pauper in sinu ejus, hoc est in secreto quietis ejus, in doloribus erat", (P.L. 34, p.482).

[102]. Ibid., xii.66, "nec ipsam tamen rerum partem noster Salvator mortuis pro nobis visitare contempsit, ut inde solveret quos esse solvendos secundum divinam secretamque justitiam ignorare non potuit." (P.L. 34, p.483).

[103]. Ibid., "si tamen non aliquid unum est diversis nominibus appellatum, ubi sunt animae beatorum."

Augustine's letter to Evodius, on the other hand, although written in the same year that the above work was completed (414), nevertheless provides a very involved treatment of Christ's descent into hell as it deals with the question of his preaching to the spirits in prison. Part of the problem is the fact that the passage mentions that these souls were the ones who had been "disobedient when the patience of God waited in the days of Noah when the ark was being built."[104] Why should Christ preach only to these souls? In this letter Augustine deals with the very thorny question of the salvation of non-Christians. Given his love for Latin letters, he would have no doubt been comforted by sure knowledge that the illustrious figures from the Roman past were in paradise. But Augustine is not sure exactly to whom Christ's salvation extends, and concludes that it is "presumptuous" for us to try and decide. He is very severe on those who had achieved great things in the past:

> All these things, indeed, when they are practised with a view not to the great end of right and true piety, but the empty praise of human glory, become in a sense worthless and unprofitable; nevertheless, as indicators of a certain disposition of mind they please us so much that we would desire those in whom they exist, either by special preference or along with the others, to be freed from the pains of hell, were not the verdict of human feeling different from that of the justice of the creator.[105]

Here as before Augustine differentiates between human desires and divine justice; divine justice is what ultimately wins out, and it need not correspond with what we want. This rejection of the glories of the Roman past as things done merely for human glory would become a major theme in his De Civitate dei, but it is enough to note here that Augustine firmly rejected the possibility of the salvation of non-Christians. He also rejected the possibility that Christ during his descent into hell may have emptied it of all the souls that were there, since what is applied to some need not be applied to all. This may be seen

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[104]. Augustine, Epistola 164, i.2, "qui fuerunt aliquando, quando exspectabat Dei patientia in diebus Noe, cum fabricaretur arca", (P.L. 33, p.709).

[105]. Ibid., ii.4, "Quae quidem omnia quando non referuntur ad finem rectae veraeque pietatis, sed ad fastum inanem humanae laudis et gloriae, etiam ipsa inanescunt quodammodo, steriliaque redduntur: verumtamen quadam indole animi ita delectant, ut eos in quibus haec fuerunt, vellemus vel praecipue, vel cum caeteris ab inferni cruciatibus liberari, nisi aliter se haberet sensus humanus, aliter justitia Creatoris." (P.L. 33, p.710).

elsewhere in a sermon composed in 412. Augustine here declares that Christ only saved some of the souls in hell:

> Christ in heaven; Christ on earth; Christ simultaneously both in heaven and on earth...Christ with the Father; Christ in the virgin's womb; Christ on the cross; Christ in the underworld rescuing some of the dead, on that very day Christ in paradise with the thief who confessed.[106]

This passage also gives Augustine's view of the unimportance of chronological time in divine matters; note here the immediacy of Christ, as Augustine describes all of the events of his life happening simultaneously. In the letter to Evodius, he expresses great confusion over the bosom of Abraham; why should Christ have descended into it, since if it is some synonym for paradise, Christ would never have been separate from it. Augustine here continues in the interpretation we have seen earlier by saying that the bosom of Abraham "was not any integral part of hell,"[107] and wonders

> if sacred Scripture had said, without naming hell and its pains, that Christ when he died went to that bosom of Abraham, I wonder if anyone would have dared to say that he descended into hell?[108]

That Christ descended into hell Augustine does not doubt: what confuses him is the question of whom he saved by doing so. He rejects out of hand the notion that hell was emptied of souls because all of those who were there had not had the opportunity to hear Christ's gospel; were this true, anyone who died on earth without hearing the gospel would be entitled to similar treatment. Furthermore, he also rejects the idea that the Name of Christ may linger in hell, just as it lingers on earth in the form of the church, offering salvation; this would be to create a kind of "church in hell", and would mean paradoxically that one should not preach the Gospel to people on earth, relieving them of the guilt of hearing it and not

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[106]. Augustine, Sermo 67, vii, "Christus in coelo, Christus in terra: simul Christus in coelo et in terra...Christus apud Patrem, Christus in utero virginis: Christus in cruce, Christus apud inferos subveniens quibusdam: et autem ipsa die Christus in paradiso cum latrone confitente." (P.L. 38, p.436).

[107]. Augustine, Epistola 164, iii.7, "non utique sinus ille Abrahae...aliqua pars inferorum esse cedenda est." (P.L. 33, p.711).

[108]. Ibid., "Quapropter si in illum Abrahae sinum Christum mortuum venisse sancta Scriptura dixisset, non nominato inferno ejusque doloribus, miror si quisquam ad inferos eum descendisse asserere auderet."

obeying it--far better to avoid the problem and let them hear the Gospel in hell. Unfortunately Augustine does not know what the actual truth of the matter is; he is merely content to reject ideas which he considers patently wrong. He exhorts Evodius to stick to the basics: Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and descent into hell, "from which also he is believed with good ground to have loosed and delivered whom he would."[109] In other matters, Augustine is the voice of caution itself. "Who can be otherwise than perplexed by words so profound as these?"[110] he cries, objecting from the outset that he does not know the exact truth, that Evodius should seek elsewhere for an answer and share it with him, and that we ought to keep investigating St. Peter's confusing statement. His tentative answer is an analogy, that the passage is meant to represent his own time, that his contemporaries were the spirits in prison, and that the salvation represented by the ark from the water of the flood is representative of the salvation offered by the church through the water of baptism. But he concludes as he started, on a note of uncertainty, imploring assistance, although he seems fond of his analogy and thinks it will stand alongside the real answer whatever it may be.

Augustine thus vacillates considerably on the question of the bosom of Abraham and Christ's descent into hell, just as he did on the question of the salvation of unbaptized infants, as we have seen above. However, unlike the latter question, on which Augustine remained outwardly firm but inwardly unsure, the former question shows some signs of Augustine's reaching more definite conclusions later in his life. In a letter of 417 to his brother Dardanus, Augustine considers the question of the meaning of Lk.xxiii.43, which he had considered earlier, but here comes to a different conclusion. In effect, he reverses his earlier position about the meaning of the bosom of Abraham:

> But I would find it hard to say whether the bosom of Abraham where the wicked rich man, from the torments of hell in which he was, saw the poor

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[109]. Ibid. v.14, "a quibus etiam recte intelligitur solvisse et liberasse quos voluit", (P.L. 33, p.715).

[110]. Ibid. iv.11, "Quem non moveat ista profunditas?" (P.L. 33, p.713).

> man reposing, is to be considered under the term paradise or considered as belonging to hell.[111]

Here Augustine begins to go back on his earlier position, and his doubt colours the tone of the rest of his reply. If by the bosom of Abraham we might not mean paradise, and if by hell we certainly mean an entirely evil place, then what does the descent of Christ mean? Augustine responds to himself by saying that "a good answer to this is that he descended there to rescue those who were to be rescued."[112] He does not specify who these might be, but rather goes on to reverse his earlier position by presenting a new view of the geography of hell:

> Besides, if we are to believe there are two regions in hell, one of the suffering and one of the souls at rest, that is, both a place where the rich man was tormented and one where the poor man was comforted, who would dare to say that the Lord Jesus came to the penal parts of hell instead of only among those who rest in Abraham's bosom?[113]

Unfortunately, Augustine does not develop this idea any further, preferring to concentrate upon the meaning of paradise; he wonders if it might mean a "state of being in happiness"[114], and concludes that it means being with Christ, wherever he is.

The firmest answer, however, comes from the twentieth book of his magnum opus, De Civitate dei, where, meditating upon the meaning of Rev.xx.13, he presents the following idea:

> It seems reasonable now, to believe that the ancient saints, who believed in Christ who was to come, stayed in the regions of hell--far off, of course, from the tormented areas of the ungodly until such time as Christ's blood and his descent thither rescued them, we consequently must believe that the virtuous faithful who followed the payment of that redemptive price have

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[111]. Augustine, Epistola 187, vi, "Utrum autem sinus ille Abrahe, ubi dives impius cum in tormentis esset inferni, requiescentem pauperem vidit, vel paradisi consendus vocabulo, vel ad inferos pertinere existimandus sit, non facile dixerim." (P.L. 33, p.834).

[112]. Ibid., "Sed bene respondetur ideo descendisse, ut quibus oportuit subveniret."

[113]. Ibid., "Porro si utraque regio et dolentium et requiescentem id est, et ubi dives ille torquebatur, et ubi pauper ille laetabatur, in inferno esse credenda est; quis audeat dicere Dominum Jesum ad poenales inferni partes venisse tantummodo, nec fuisse apud eos quid in Abrahae sinu requiescunt?"

[114]. Ibid., "Quae si ita sunt, generale paradisi nomen est, ubi feliciter vivitur."

> absolutely no relationship to hell--indeed, that their bodies, as well as their souls, after the resurrection shall reap their deserved reward.[115]

In this, Augustine has come full-circle. From refusing to believe that the Fathers were in hell, he now comes to accept that the solution to his confusions on these matters is to accept the idea of a subdivision of hell into regions, which explains why Christ had to descend into hell, but avoids the troublesome notion that the ancient just underwent penal torments. This is the substance of the idea of a limbo of the Fathers. Although Augustine did not use the term as such, it is clear that as his writings developed, he came to accept the idea behind it.

Some Conclusions

Augustine thus plays a curious part in the development of limbo. It is certain that he had no concept of limbo per se, at least as later ages understood the term. We can safely concede this point to Bernard Pliaut. Augustine's importance comes not from what he knew and set down firmly, but rather from what he did not know, yet set down anyway. While he held a view of the afterlife split into a strict dichotomy of heaven and hell, nevertheless he considered the possibility that there might be subdivisions within that framework. The doubts and uncertainties of an authoritative figure can be enlarged into positive points and certainties by later writers, and this proved true for the way Augustine was treated by posterity. This would not be the only example. As we shall see in coming chapters, a number of the quotations cited above were expounded and fought over by later writers. In the final analysis, Augustine's contribution to the development of limbo must be sought, ultimately, in his formulation of two ideas. Firstly, the notion that unbaptized infants suffered only the mildest form of punishment in hell would be critically important for the development of the limbo of children. Secondly, his questions regarding the figure of the bosom of

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[115]. Augustine, De Civitate dei, xx.15, "Si enim non absurde credi videtur, antiquos etiam sanctos, qui venturi Christi tenuerunt fidem, locis quidem a tormentis impiorum remotissimis, sed apud inferos fuisse, donec eos inde sanguis Christi et ad ea loca descensus erueret, profecto deinceps boni fideles effuso illo pretio jam redempti, prorsus inferos nesciunt, donec etiam receptis corporibus, bona recipiant quae merentur." (P.L. 41, p.681).

Abraham and Christ's descent into hell, and his eventual adoption of the idea of a subdivided hell, proved to be important for the development of the limbo of the Fathers, although less so, as the idea was entertained and championed by other patristic authors. Ultimately, Augustine (in conjunction with his Pelagian opponents) has more to do with the development of the limbo of children that the limbo of the Fathers. What we see in Augustine is a kind of opening up and subdivision of hell, since it is clear that towards the end of his life he considered the Fathers to have been in their own special portion of hell, and it is equally clear that his final decision on the fate of unbaptized children was that they underwent a milder punishment that anyone else in hell. Augustine recognised only heaven and hell, that is clear, but it is also clear that his hell was an increasingly varied place.

III. THE ARTISTIC FOUNDATION OF LIMBO: THE GOSPEL OF NICODEMUS

Having examined the early positions on the salvation of unbaptized infants, the harrowing of hell, and the bosom of Abraham that were taken by Augustine, let us now turn our attention to a more fully-developed view of the limbo of the Fathers. If Augustine represents the major intellectual foundation of these ideas for the Middle Ages, then surely the mid-sixth-century apocryphal Christian work, the Gospel of Nicodemus represents their major artistic foundation. As it is most frequently presented today, the Gospel of Nicodemus is composed of two separate parts. The first portion is called the Acts of Pilate, and it purports to have been written in Hebrew by the New Testament figure Nicodemus. It provides a very detailed account of the trial of Jesus before Pontius Pilate. The work considerably embroiders the account of the New Testament; for example, the images on the military standards of the legionaries in the court room bow to do Jesus homage, against their bearers' efforts. Jesus is eventually condemned to death and then executed, but afterwards his tomb is found empty, to the authorities' consternation. Nicodemus and three others (the rabbis Addas, Fineës, and Egias) eventually see Christ, and are pressed into service as witnesses to give testimony to his resurrection. The Acts of Pilate exist in several recensions and forms and thus have several variant endings, but in the version which concerns us the ending is modified to allow the witnesses to have observed the resurrection not just of Jesus but also of a number of other people. Two of these are sought out; they are Leucius and Karinus, the sons of the high priest Simeon who circumcised Christ, and they each provide a written testimony of their first hand experience of Christ's descent into hell. It is this account which so captured the Christian imagination of succeeding ages. The Gospel of Nicodemus provides a clear and dramatic presentation of Christ's harrowing of hell, and the Middle Ages would later come

to identify that hell as the bosom of Abraham or, more frequently, the limbo of the Fathers, although it does not use these terms.[1]

Unfortunately, the harrowing of hell is a somewhat problematic theological question since "the biblical basis for it is rather thin."[2] There are few references in Scripture to Christ's descent into hell[3]. There are more references which refer to his victory over death, kingship over the living and the dead, and salvation of the ancient dead.[4] Many early Christian writers grappled with this difficult topic, and there are accounts of the harrowing of hell in works which certainly precede the Gospel of Nicodemus as we have it.[5] But the Gospel of Nicodemus became the greatest of these accounts, in part due to the way it wove elements of them into a coherent narrative whole which satisfied the urge to know more about the life of Christ that so characterises the production of Christian apocrypha. The Gospel of Nicodemus scores over other similar works in view of the fact that it is theologically orthodox, despite its literary character.[6] There is a great deal of fantastic material in it, but since it is set by and large in an otherworldly context, it emerges seeming less fabulous than other tales. In addition, the Gospel of Nicodemus also attempts to present the case for Christian orthodoxy in its exploration of the truth behind the descendit ad inferos clause of the Creed, which guaranteed its acceptability by religious authorities in succeeding years. The story of a god or hero descending into the underworld of the dead is quite common to

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[1]. F. Loofs, "Christ's Descent into Hell", Transactions of the Third International Congress for the History of Religions ii (Oxford, 1908), p.292 "To the medieval theologians, and still more in the popular belief, it was to hell to which Christ descended. It is true, the theologians declared, that it was not the very infernus damnatorum to which Christ descended, but the forecourt, the limbo, where the Old Testament fathers dwelt."

[2]. H. Kim, The Gospel of Nicodemus (Toronto, 1973), p.5.

[3]. Matt. xii.40; Eph. iv.8-10; Ps. lxvii.19; Rom. x.6-8.

[4]. Matt. xvi.18, xxvii.52-53; Lk. i.72; Act. x.42; Rom. xiv.9; 1 Cor. xv.55-7; Eph. iv.8-10; Phil. ii.10-11; Col. ii.15; 2 Tim. iv.1; Apoc. i.17-8, v.13.

[5]. The reader is referred to J.A. MacCulloch, The Harrowing of Hell (Edinburgh, 1930), who traces elements and influences on the Gospel of Nicodemus from a wide variety of sources

[6]. J. Hervieux. What are Apocryphal Gospels? (London, 1960), p.165.

many human cultures; whether or not these traditional human myths have any influence on the origin of the Gospel of Nicodemus is unclear.[7] It is arguable, however, that they are not the major influence for several reasons, not the least of which is the unique detail of Satan being bound, a thing which does not happen in similar works from other cultures.[8] Yet, although the origins of the descent story remain obscure, the details and influence of the Gospel of Nicodemus are most evident.

The Influence of the Gospel of Nicodemus

The Gospel of Nicodemus is an influential work, to put it mildly. Authors have had their own varying opinions regarding its importance. G. O'Ceallaigh places it as being nearly as important as the Gospels:

> Apart from the Gospels themselves, there is perhaps no Christian writing which has enjoyed an influence so far flung and so profound as the so-called Gospel of Nicodemus.[9]

A. Westcott goes a step further:

> It may be confidently affirmed that in the Middle Ages the Gospel of Nicodemus was as well, if not better known, than the Canonical Gospels, as it was not so jealously guarded, and served as the basis for the Mysteries or the Miracle plays.[10]

These are both rather broad and sweeping statements that seem, at first glance, to be difficult to take at face value. What was the subject upon which this work exerted its future influence? H. Kim's view is that:

> The influence of the Gospel of Nicodemus in general and of the Descensus story in particular on medieval belief, on medieval art of every kind, and

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7. Among the authors who maintain that it does, see: O. Pfleiderer, Das Christusbild des urchristlichen Glaubens in religionsgeschichtlicher Beleuchtung, (Berlin, 1903), pp.65-71; W. Bousset, Hauptprobleme der Gnosis, (Göttingen, 1907), pp.255-60; P. Gardner, Exploratio Evangelica, (London, 1907), pp.263-74.

8. On the question of the possibility of the transmssion of these myths to Christianity, see: F. Loofs, op. cit., p.301.

9. G. O'Ceallaigh, 'Dating the Commentaries of Nicodemus', Harvard Theological Review lvi (1963), p.21.

10. A. Westcott, The Gospel of Nicodemus and Kindred Documents (London, 1914), p.2.

> above all on medieval literature was so great that it cannot be easily summarized.[11]

Kim expands upon these comments of his mainly in the field of letters: the Gospel of Nicodemus was used in homilies and biographies, in nearly every miracle or mystery play that had an Easter Cycle, and in poetry of all kinds, from Cynewulf to Dante. Nor was this influence confined to the literary sphere alone. The Gospel of Nicodemus was a highly visual, highly dramatic work that lent itself well to visual representation. Thus, in the words of J. Wells:

> The Gospel of Nicodemus had a tremendous influence on medieval faith, on medieval art of all kinds, and on medieval drama...attested by pictorial representation in miniatures, mosaics, manuscript illuminations, ivory carvings, enamel, stained glass and painting.[12]

An attempt to catalogue and analyze all of these works accurately would be the work of a lifetime, and the Gospel of Nicodemus remains somewhat understudied.[13] It will be the purpose of this chapter to perhaps redress this situation to a degree by examining how the Gospel of Nicodemus established the definitive imagery used to describe the limbo of the Fathers in the later Middle Ages.

Origins of the Work

Before we can examine the contents of the Gospel of Nicodemus, we should establish some certainties regarding its form and origin. The standard text used by most modern scholars for study and translation was prepared by K. Tischendorf and presented in his

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[11]. H. Kim, op.cit., p.7.

[12]. J. Wells, A Manual of the Writings in Middle English (New Haven, 1926), p.326.

[13]. See G. O'Cealleagh, op.cit., p.21. W. Hulme attempted a comprehensive study of the theme of the harrowing of hell in art early in the twentieth century, but died before completion: see H. Kim, op. cit., p.7. To the nineteenth-century studies of Maury [A. Maury, 'Nouvelles Recherches sur l'époque...d'Évangile de Nicodême', Memoires de la Société des Antiquaires de France t.xx (Paris, 1850), pp.341-392] and Lipsius [R. Lipsius, Die Pilatus-Acten kritisch untersucht (Kiel, 1871)] can finally be added: J. Charlesworth and J. Mueller, The New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudoepigrapha: a Guide to Publications, with Excurses on Apocalypses (Metuchen, NJ and London, 1987).

Evangelia Apocrypha in 1876.[14] In addition to the standard Greek and Latin texts, there have been versions in many other languages, including Coptic, Syriac, and Armenian.[15] As has been mentioned earlier, the work we have is composed of two distinct parts, the Acts of Pilate and the Gospel of Nicodemus. This is due in large part to Tischendorf, who edited these works all together in his edition. He admits[16] that he named the whole conglomerate the Acts of Pilate after references made in Gregory of Tours' History of the Franks. This is a somewhat inaccurate title, since these two works have historically not always been united. The name Gospel of Nicodemus was applied to the late Latin recension by thirteenth-century writers such as Jacobus de Voragine and Vincent of Beauvais, and this title became the preferred one of the later Middle Ages and afterwards. Regarding the authorship of the Gospel of Nicodemus, there is little we can say with surety. We have no accurate idea of the identity of the author. The introduction mentions the name of one Ananias who claims to have translated the work into Greek around 425. Whether he was the actual author and whether this is an accurate date is open to considerable debate. Previous estimates at a composition date have varied widely, from the early first century all the way to the years 430/441.[17] However, contemporary scholarship has generally followed the pathbreaking study of G. O'Ceallaigh, who has carefully examined the vocabulary used in the Gospel of Nicodemus and concluded that it originated much later than any previous scholar had supposed, in the mid-sixth century--he concludes that the actual date of composition was after 555.[18] He also maintains that the individual responsible for the work was the afore-mentioned Ananias, whom he maintains was a real individual writing in the Byzantine

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[14]. K. Tischendorf, Evangelia Apocrypha (Leipzig, 1876), pp.210-486.

[15]. For a more complete bibliography of some of these editions, see E. Hennecke, New Testament Apocrypha (London, 1963), p.449.

[16]. Tischendorf, op. cit., p.312.

[17]. A good summary of these varying estimates is given by A. Westcott, op.cit., pp.13-15.

[18]. G. O'Ceallaigh, op.cit., p.58.

Empire. At any rate, several things are definite: A): the work does not survive in any manuscript earlier than the ninth century, B): there is no version of the work which reflects an original version existing before the eighth century,[19] and C): the earliest Greek editions date from the twelfth century.[20] The issue of date of composition, although seemingly unimportant, has very great relevance for answering questions of why the work was written, as we shall see below.

Content and Themes in the Gospel of Nicodemus

We now turn to the text of the Gospel of Nicodemus itself to examine its dramatic presentation and themes. For this section, I shall be making use of M.R. James' translation[21] particularly of Latin recension A, since: A), it was the one most influential to the Middle Ages, and B), the Greek recension is merely a paraphrase of Latin A. Latin B has some differences to which I will refer as needed. The chapter divisions are by James after Tischendorf; there are eleven in all, and they serve to divide the work at appropriately dramatic points.

Opening

The Gospel of Nicodemus opens with a chapter (in all probability added after the other chapters were in circulation as an ensemble) that attempts to link it to the events described in the earlier Acts of Pilate. In it, Joseph of Arimathea announces to the Jews that the tombs of Leucius and Karinus, the sons of Simeon the High Priest, were empty and, moreover, that the two had been seen together in the city of Arimathea in prayer, crying out,

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[19]. Ibid.

[20]. R. Cameron, The Other Gospels: Non-Canonical Gospel Texts (Guildford, 1983), p.164.

[21]. M. James, 'The Gospel of Nicodemus, or Acts of Pilate', The Apocryphal New Testament (Oxford, 1924), pp.94-146.

yet "silent as dead men."[22] Annas, Caiaphas, Joseph, Nicodemus, and Gamaliel go to Arimathea, and induce Leucius and Karinus to return to Jerusalem with them to testify about Jesus in the synagogue. Latin B differs somewhat in the details; in it, it is the three rabbis Addas, Fineës, and Egias who see a crowd of the resurrected saints by the river Jordan, among them Leucius and Karinus, and who, at the behest of Annas and Caiaphas, go with Joseph and Nicodemus, first to the saints, then to Leucius and Karinus' homes, where the pair had retired. In all versions, Leucius and Karinus are brought before Annas and Caiaphas, and are unable to speak until they have made the sign of the cross. After that, both men set out to compose a written account of their experiences. Neither speaks much after their mouths have been opened; this is in all probability a dramatic convention which continues the classical tradition of the shades of the dead being silent.[23] At the same time, the author fulfils a Jewish convention: the fact that according to Jewish law, one needs to have two witnesses to give accurate testimony.[24] In any case, in Latin A and the Greek, we move directly from this point into the written account Leucius and Karinus have prepared, while in Latin B the three rabbis read Karinus' account aloud.

Status of the Fathers in Hell

The account begins in Chapter II with a description of the events that have just taken place in hell:

> Now, when we were set together with our fathers in the deep, in the obscurity of darkness, on a sudden there came a golden heat of the sun and a purple and royal light shining on us.[25]

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[22]. Gospel of Nicodemus, Latin A, i.1, "ut mortui silentes." (ed. Tischendorf, p.369).

[23]. For example, see Euripides, Alcestis, i.1144ff and Vergil, Aeneid, vi.24.

[24]. We find this convention observed elsewhere in the Gospels, for example, at the Transfiguration (Mk. ix.3-4; Mt. xvii.3; Lk. ix.30-31) and Ascension (Acts i.10).

[25]. Gospel of Nicodemus, Latin A, ii.1, "Nos autem cum essemus cum omnibus patribus nostris positi in profundo in caligine tenebrarum, subito factus est aureus solis calor purpureaque regalis lux illustrans super nos." (ed. Tischendorf, p.370). Latin B is a bit simple, having "in darkness and the shadow of death" and "a great

This is one of the first major topoi for the depiction of the Fathers in hell: they sit in darkness, and Christ brings light to them, although it is usually represented as a golden light rather than a purple one as described here. The juxtaposition of perpetual darkness and sudden light is what is most important here. Darkness is usually characteristic of the underworld of the dead in most of the legends of the Mediterranean area and elsewhere. After the arrival of the light, several of the people in hell speak. In Latin A these are Adam, Isaiah, and Simeon; in the Greek, Abraham and Isaiah. Here we see another dramatic convention of the work: the people who speak in most cases do so in passages from Scripture. Where possible, each individual quotes words or prophecies from books of Scripture associated with them, in particular prophecies that are fulfilled by the coming of Christ. After these Fathers speak, John the Baptist appears, announcing to all present his work in life of acting as a herald of Jesus and a giver of baptism--in short, he functions as a prophet for Christ in hell as he did on earth.[26] The actions of John the Baptist in hell thus constitute another important theme within the framework of the descent into hell story. John's words in the Greek are interesting, as he proclaims:

> Therefore I say unto you all, that when ye behold him ye shall worship him, for now only is the time of repentance for you, for ye that did worship idols in the vain world that is above, and for the sins which ye have committed: but at another time it is impossible that this should come to pass.[27]

This passage is interesting because it appears to offer the promise of salvation to all of the dead in hell, not just the Fathers. This theme is, unfortunately, not really followed--the only

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light". Gospel of Nicodemus, Latin B, "in tenebris et umbra mortis...subito illuxit nobis lux magna" (ed. Tischendorf, p.401).

[26]. In Latin B there are no speeches at this point. Rather, Satan appears, instructing his servants in hell to "shut up your gates...make fast the locks and the bars of iron", Gospel of Nicodemus, Latin B, ii.2, "portas vestras claudite...serasque et vectes ferreos paulatim iungere." (ed. Tischendorf, pp.401-2). Here we see the images of the bondage of hell; these are often represented in art as lying shattered at Christ's feet as he makes his triumphal entry into hell.

[27]. Gospel of Nicodemus, Greek, ii, "*διὰ τοῦτο λέγω πρὸς ἅπαντας ὑμᾶς, καθὼς ἴδητε αὐτόν, ἵνα προσκυνήσητε πάντες, ὅτι νῦν μόνον ἐστὶ πρὸς ὑμᾶς ὁ τῆς μετανοίας καιρὸς ὑπὲρ οὗ προσεκυνήσατε εἰς τὸν ἄνω μάταιον κόσμον τοῖς εἰδώλοις, καὶ ὑπὲρ ὧν ἡμαρτήκατε· ἐν ἄλλῳ δὲ καιρῷ τοῦτο γενέσθαι ἀδύνατον.*" (ed. Tischendorf, p.303).

people who speak in this work are the Fathers, and they are the only ones mentioned as arising with Christ.

In the third chapter (fourth in Latin B), the words of John's preaching seem to jog Adam's memory, and he has his son Seth relate a story. In it, Seth tells how a dying Adam sent him to the gates of Paradise to beg for the Oil of Mercy to relieve the pains of his dying body. The archangel Michael refuses Seth's request at the gate, and notes how this oil would not become available until the Son of God comes bringing it into the world, five thousand five hundred years hence. Adam sees this promise fulfilled in John the Baptist's words. The mythical Oil of Mercy thus enters later medieval legend via the Gospel of Nicodemus. Following this story, the scene changes in the fourth chapter (third in Latin B) to a dialogue between Satan and Hell. We do not have the powerful being of the Middle Ages here; rather, in the Gospel of Nicodemus Satan is a lesser being, a lieutenant who presides over a realm ruled by a being called Hell (Hades in the Greek). Hell is thus both a realm and a character here; he is, in the words of H. Kim, "personified to make drama possible."[28] Satan begins the dialogue by telling Hell to accept Jesus, since he has just had this wonder-worker killed and believes him to be merely a mortal, noting (in the Greek), "For I know that he is a man, and I have heard him saying: My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."[29] Hell is not sure of Christ's mortality, noting how despite fearing death, Christ in life nevertheless strongly resisted Satan. In Latin B, Hell positively begs Satan not to take him into hell. Satan boasts that he had killed Jesus, providing us with a chronological frame of reference as he notes "for already he hangeth upon a cross."[30] Hell reminds Satan that because of Jesus' actions and power they were unable to keep Lazarus, and again requests Satan not to

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[28]. H. Kim, op.cit., p.5. Kim also points out other examples from literature and legend, such as the Scamander in the Iliad, both a river and a river-god, as well as Hel, the old Norse goddess.

[29]. Gospel of Nicodemus, Greek, iv, "*ἐγὼ γὰρ οἶδα ὅτι ἄνθρωπός ἐστι, καὶ ἤκουσα καὶ αὐτοῦ λέγοντος ὅτι περίλυπός ἐστιν ἡ ψυχή μου ἕως θανάτου.*" (ed. Tischendorf, p.304).

[30]. Gospel of Nicodemus, Latin B, iii.3, "quia iam in cruce pendet", (ed. Tischendorf, p.403).

bring Jesus into hell, lest he "set free all that are shut up here in the hard prison and bound in the chains of their sins, that cannot be broken."[31] Thus we see in this chapter another of the major themes of the overall descent into hell story, the idea of the deception of the powers of darkness. By assuming Jesus to be merely a man, Satan has been deceived as to his true nature, allowing Christ to sneak his way secretly to Satan's realm. Satan thinks he has destroyed Christ on earth, but Christ's power is about to be made manifest as he destroys Satan in hell.

The Coming of Christ

In the fifth chapter we hear the first of Christ's cries outside the gates of hell, as he proclaims in a voice of thunder, "Remove, O princes, your gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in."[32] Hell, in sore affright, casts Satan out to do battle, and firmly bars the gates of hell behind him. David and Isaiah speak words which proclaim prophecies fulfilled, and all of the Fathers abjure Satan to open the gates. At this point in Latin B, chapter VII, there is a variant that deserves our attention. A robber appears at the gates and Satan opens them a little to let him in. All are puzzled by his appearance; he is plainly a robber, but he is carrying a cross. The Fathers inquire after him, and he tells them that he is the thief who was crucified alongside Christ; he came to hell before Christ, who is following immediately. This is an important theological difference between Latin A and B, for in Latin A, as we shall see below, the thief is in Paradise. The author of Latin B appears to believe that the thief cannot proceed to heaven before the rest of the Fathers. But in Latin A and the Greek, after David and Isaiah speak Christ repeats his

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[31]. Gospel of Nicodemus, Latin A, iv.3, "omnes qui sunt hic in crudelitate carceris clausi et in insolutis vinculis peccatorum constricti, solvet", (ed. Tischendorf, p.376).

[32]. Gospel of Nicodemus, Latin A, v.1, "Tollite portas principes vestras, et elevamini portae aeternales, et introibit rex gloriae." (ed. Tischendorf, p.376). The fifth chapter of Latin B is short, and covers only the brief words of Isaiah and John the Baptist as in Latin A, II. The events of Latin A, Chapter V are presented in shortened form in Chapter VI of Latin B; David and Jeremiah are the ones who speak, and Satan attempts cravenly to flee, but Hell and his ministers do not permit him to.

cry, and Satan wonders who this can be. David answers him, and rebukes him sharply. Finally, Christ enters hell:

> ...the Lord of Majesty appeared in the form of a man, and lightened the eternal darkness and brake the bonds that could not be loosed: and the succor of his everlasting might visited us that sat in the deep darkness of our transgressions and in the shadow of death of our sins.[33]

Here is the moment where light comes flooding triumphantly into dark hell. The Greek is even more detailed in its description of the gates of brass shattering, bars of iron being ground down, and the chains of the captives being loosed. This is a highly dramatic moment, and the added detail of the shattered bonds is, as we have noted, extremely popular in iconography.

The Defeat and Binding of Satan

Christ enters hell triumphantly in the sixth chapter (the eighth chapter of Latin B). In Latin A, "Hell and death and their wicked ministers" (just Hades in the Greek) marvel at Christ and speak in paradoxes--he is "so great and so small, both humble and exalted,"[34] and so on. It is this collection of apparent paradoxes about his nature that enabled Christ to deceive Satan into thinking that he was less than he was. The powers of hell wonder who this man is, and ask if he is Jesus, the one who by dying inherited the world. Christ then binds Satan, in a different fashion in each version. In Latin A he is said to "trample upon death and laid hold on Satan the prince and delivered him unto the power of hell",[35] drawing Adam to himself. Latin B echoes this description and amplifies it; during the shattering of

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[33]. Gospel of Nicodemus, Latin A, v.3, "ad inferum supervenit in forma hominis dominus maiestatis, et aeternas tenebras illustravit et indissolubilia vincula disrupit: et invictae virtutis auxilium visitavit nos sedentes in profundis tenebris delictorum et in umbra mortis peccatorum." (ed. Tischendorf, p.378).

[34]. Gospel of Nicodemus, Latin A, "inferus et mors et impia officia eorum...tam magnus et parvus, humilis et excelsus..." (ed. Tischendorf, p.378).

[35]. Gospel of Nicodemus, Latin A, vi,2, "conculcans mortem et comprehendens Satan principem tradidit inferi potestati", (ed. Tischendorf, p.379).

the gates of hell, Satan finds himself "bound with a fetter about his feet"[36], after which Christ simply approaches him and binds his neck and hands behind him. Then Christ is described as having "set his holy foot upon his [Satan's] throat"[37], again engaging in this trampling action. This ritual trampling is more than just an incidental detail. Not only does it represent a ritualised humiliation of an defeated opponent, it was popularly depicted as an imperial motif on Roman and Byzantine coins: the emperor trampling a vanquished foe.[38] The authors of the Latin versions are consciously echoing imperial symbolism here, pointing out Christ's divine nature in doing so; Christian iconography would perpetuate this imperial imagery afterward in this Christian context. In Latin B, Christ charges Hell to keep Satan bound

> until that day when I shall command thee. And he took him from beneath the Lord's feet and he was cast down together with him into the depth of the bottomless pit.[39]

This pit is identified as Tartarus in an earlier chapter; it is important because it reveals that there are different regions in hell. If the pit is the place of punishment for Satan and Hell themselves, it becomes logical to conclude that the Fathers were in a region where there was lesser punishment, if, indeed, there was any punishment at all beyond being held prisoner. We thus have here an artistic justification for the idea of a limbo of the Fathers. At any rate, in Latin B, Satan is bound until Christ wishes otherwise. In the Greek, Satan is "delivered unto the angels"[40] to whom Christ instructs

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[36]. Gospel of Nicodemus, Latin B, viii, "conligatus compede in pedibus." (ed. Tischendorf, p.408).

[37]. Ibid., "pedemque suum sanctum ei posuit in gutture".

[38]. A. Kartsonis, Anastasis, the Making of an Image, (Princeton, NJ, 1986), p.9.

[39]. Gospel of Nicodemus, Latin B, viii, "usque in diem illum quo tibi praecepero. Qui accepto eodem sub pedibus domini demersus est cum eo in profundum abyssi." (ed. Tischendorf, p.408).

[40]. Gospel of Nicodemus, Greek, vi, "παραδοὺς αὐτὸν τοῖς ἀγγέλοις" (ed. Tieshendorf, p.307). Who these angels are is unspecified. The work seems to consider them to be servants of hell, but later iconography will often represent Christ in the company of heavenly angels, who have come along with him during his descent into hell.

> Bind down with irons his hands and his feet and his neck and his mouth. And then he delivered him unto Hades, saying: Take him and keep him safely until my second coming.[41]

Here we again see the three-fold binding of Satan in head, hands, and feet, as in Latin B. Christ is firmer about time here as well; Satan is to be bound until the second coming. Despite the differences in the individual accounts, we see here one more major element of the descent into hell story--the trampling and/or binding of the powers of darkness.

Variations and Asides

In Chapter VII we have a sequence not reproduced in Latin B wherein Hades derides Satan for his actions. Hades curses Satan for killing Christ and not realising who he was, resulting in their humiliation and defeat. We now consider again an idea we have seen earlier in Chapter II of the Greek. In Latin A, Hell says, "All that were sighing in our torments do rejoice against us."[42] Here again we see the possibility of the universal salvation of all of the dead. The Greek here is more specific: Hell laments, "Not one dead man is left in me."[43] This raises some very profound theological questions about salvation that the Gospel of Nicodemus does not really deal with very well, since it only names figures from the Old Testament as being among the ones who are led by Christ to Paradise. We meet the Fathers again in Chapter VIII (Chapter IX of Latin B). Christ takes Adam by the right hand and wishes him peace. Adam falls at his knees weeping, and in Latin B Eve does as well, although she does not utter any words. Latin B is the only version where Eve is mentioned; indeed, she is the only female figure mentioned in the work. This has its effect on pictorial representations of the scene, for some have Christ and Adam together, whilst a few have

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[41]. Ibid., "εἶπε Σιδηροῖς καταδεσμήσατε τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τοὺς πόδας καὶ τὸν τράχηλον καὶ τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ. εἶτα παραδοὺς τοῦτον τῷ Ἅδῃ ἔφη Λαβὼν αὐτὸν κάτεχε ἀσφαλῶς ἄχρι τῆς δευτέρας μου παρουσίας."

[42]. Gospel of Nicodemus, Latin A, vii, "Et omnes qui sub nostris solebant suspirare tormentis insultant nobis", (ed. Tischendorf, p.380).

[43]. Gospel of Nicodemus, Greek, vii, "ἴδε ὅτι οὐδεὶς νεκρὸς ἐν ἐμοὶ χατελείφθη", (ed. Tischendorf, p.308).

Christ, Adam, and Eve. After this tearful reunion of patriarch and descendant, some of the prophets speak, and Christ is entreated to bless Adam and the saints with the sign of the cross. Then he takes Adam by the right hand and leads him forth from hell, followed by the other saints. In Latin A, David, Habakuk, and Micah speak as they are led heavenwards.

This leading forth of the saints is the last major theme in the work, and forms a portion of visual representation in art. But there are a few differences between the versions. In Latin A the saints beg that Christ set up the sign of the cross in hell, whereupon he blesses them with the sign of the cross. In Latin B (Chapter X), the request is fulfilled literally, as Christ "set his cross in the midst of hell, which is the sign of victory, and it shall remain there forever"[44], an interesting detail with some challenging implications. Latin B also had another idea which is not in Latin A. When Christ triumphs, it is said that he "did bite hell, forasmuch as he cast down part into Tartarus, and part he brought again with him on high."[45] "Biting hell" means that Christ took only a portion of it, thus, Latin B avoids the universalism implicit in Latin A and the Greek, since in it Christ only frees some from hell whilst casting the rest down into the pit with Satan and Hell. Latin B also introduces a note of personalism, as Karinus describes the procession heavenwards in the first person with "Then we all went out thence with the Lord,"[46] the first time the first person has been used in the narrative since the very beginning.

Entry of the Fathers into Heaven

Chapters IX and X follow closely in Latin A and the Greek, but they are not reproduced in Latin B. In Chapter IX Christ turns Adam over to Michael the archangel, who

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[44]. Gospel of Nicodemus, Latin B, x, "posuit que dominus crucem suam in medio inferni, quae est signum victoriae et usque in aeternum permanebit." (ed. Tischendorf, p.409)

[45]. Gospel of Nicodemus, Latin B, ix.2, "Tunc salvator perscrutans de omnibus momordit infernum, quantocius partem deiecit in tartarum, partem secum reduxit ad superos." (ed Tischendorf, p.409).

[46]. Gospel of Nicodemus, Latin B, x, "Deinde exivimus exinde omnes cum domino." (ed. Tischendorf, p.409).

conveys him and the others to Paradise. There the saints see two unfamiliar faces and question them; the two turn out to be Enoch and Elijah. A third unfamiliar face presents itself in Chapter X--a man of lowly dress with the sign of the cross on his shoulders. This is the good thief, and his appearance here is a reversal of his appearance in Latin B; in Latin A and the Greek he was ordered by Christ to proceed directly to heaven, and if the angel would not admit him, he was to present the sign of the cross. The angel brought him in, and instructed him to wait and watch the entry of Adam and the other Fathers into heaven. In this interpretation the promise of Jesus is sufficient to allow the the good thief to enter heaven; the thief does not need to descend to hell and follow the Fathers. Latin A and the Greek introduce the first person in the final chapter, Chapter XI, when the account notes that these were the events which "we [Leucius and Karinus] saw and heard."[47] Leucius and Karinus and some others are then specially charged by the archangel Michael to return to life and bear witness to Christ's activities, although silently at first, in the case of Leucius and Karinus. In an interesting excursus, all of the resurrected saints go and are baptized in the river Jordan; it seems that although Christ's presence is sufficient unto the dead for salvation, the living, even the resurrected saints, must have baptism to enter heaven.

And so the account ends. In each recension, the written account of Leucius matches that of Karinus word for word, despite the fact that each was written separately and silently. This echoes the legend of the seventy Jews who, although each was working separately, produced identical Greek translations of the Bible, "an aetiological myth explaining the term 'Septuagint'"[48], although here it is doubtless meant to confer authenticity on the accounts of the two witnesses. After they have presented their works, Leucius and Karinus <u>exeunt</u> in different fashions. In Latin B they return to their tombs. In the Greek, they simply vanish

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[47]. <u>Gospel of Nicodemus</u>, Latin A, xi, "Haec sunt divina et sacra mysteria quae vidimus et audivimus, ego Karinus et Leucius." (ed. Tischendorf, p.385).

[48]. H. Kim, <u>op.cit.</u>, p.6.

from sight. But in Latin A they are first transfigured "and become white exceedingly" and then vanish from sight. The Jews are left wondering by this sight and by the identical written accounts.

Some Reasons for the Composition of the Gospel of Nicodemus

Since we now have some understanding of the origin and contents of the Gospel of Nicodemus, it is time to consider some reasons why this work was written, and why it contains what it does. There are several possible answers. In the first place, especially considered in relation to the Acts of Pilate, the Gospel of Nicodemus enlists the major figure of Roman authority in the Gospels--Pontius Pilate himself--as a witness to Christianity.[49] This not only serves to confound Jewish claims against Jesus, but also gives a stamp of official recognition of the Passion by the authority that by the date of the composition of the Acts of Pilate/Gospel of Nicodemus had become not a hated persecutor to be feared, but rather a legitimate power to be supported by Christianity. This is the reason that would eventually lead to Saint Pilate, a figure who was unofficially canonised by the Coptic church, but (not surprisingly) not by the body of the Church, in the West or the East. In the second place, it has been established that there were references to the early Acts of Pilate mentioned by several early Christian writers. Eusebius records in his Historia ecclesiastica that there were spurious Acts of Pilate composed in 311 or 312 at the behest of the imperial persecutor Maximus Doza, which were commanded to be read in schools and committed to memory by the students.[50] Thus we can conclude that the Christian Acts of Pilate were composed as a counter to these pagan acts.[51] Following in this vein, we come to see, in the third place,

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[49]. B. Altaner, Patrology (Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 1958), p.70.

[50]. Eusebius, Historia ecclesiastica i.9 (PG 20, p.167) and ix.5 (PG 20, pp.806-807).

[51]. E. Hennecke, op.cit., p.444. Hennecke views Justin Martyr's early account as inaccurate.

that these works were composed to establish Christian orthodoxy. It is the considered opinion of H. Kim that the Gospel of Nicodemus does exactly this--that it was composed to document the main tenets of the Apostle's Creed.[52]

Finally, we can see perhaps the most convincing explanation in Anna Kartsonis' magisterial work Anastasis, the Making of an Image, which studies the early graphic depictions of the post-harrowing of hell resurrection of Christ, or anastasis as it is known in the Greek.[53] To understand why the Gospel of Nicodemus was composed we need to understand the mindset that flourished, behind the scenes as it were, at the time of its composition. We have noted before how the references to Christ's descent into hell are scattered and confused at best in Scripture. This did not, however, prevent it from being included in Church doctrine.[54] Nor, for that matter, did it prevent people from attempting to prove a doctrine by plugging the holes in Scripture that deal with it. Kartsonis writes:

> This lacuna has been implicitly considered responsible for the composition of the text of Nicodemus as an unofficial supplement to the Gospel narrative. This assumption had, furthermore, led to the hypothesis which links the creation of the image known as Anastasis with the text of Nicodemus.[55]

This assumption is not entirely true; there have been many different accounts of this event in apostolic and patristic literature, but none as systematic or as artistic as the Gospel of Nicodemus--it alone did not create the Anastasis icon. But why was the Gospel of Nicodemus written? Why bother to try and fill in the lacuna? The answer is heresy. The Gospel of Nicodemus represents an attempt to establish orthodoxy in the face of heresies; Kartsonis identifies the latter:

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[52]. H. Kim, op.cit., p.2.

[53]. A. Kartsonis, op.cit.

[54]. Ibid., p.30.

[55]. Ibid., p.29.

> Incentive to define the narrative and theological content of this story have come from a number of succeeding heresies. The Gnostics, the Marcionites, the Arians, the Apollinarists, and others helped shape its definition.[56]

We must again stress the fact that Christianity is a revelatory, not a philosophical religion; thoughout its history it has experienced before it has considered. Doctrines tend not to be defined until they need to be explained or are publicly challenged. When they are defined, they are defined in a certain way:

> Efforts usually concentrated on refuting current challenges rather than on creating a systematic exposition. As a result, many important aspects of the main Christological problems surrounding Christ's death were not dealt with until a relatively late date.[57]

Some problems were not dealt with until even so late a date as the mid-sixth century. At this time we have questions about the nature of Christ's soul, death, and resurrection from the dead still being considered, as can be seen by the pronouncements of the Council of Three Chapters.[58] It was an entirely appropriate time for a right-thinking individual to attempt to establish orthodox belief about Christ's descent into hell with a piece of well-crafted apocrypha. The limbo of the Fathers received a founding boost here for the same reason the limbo of children did in the writings of Saint Augustine--as an attempt to establish what was true. Something was questioned, and the church needed a definitive answer. The limbo of the Fathers present in embryo in the Gospel of Nicodemus does not borrow from heresy as the limbo of children did from the Pelagians, nor does it suffer the vacillations of a powerful mind as the limbo of children did from Augustine. But it was just as surely born indirectly, because of heresy.

The dates all fit. If the Gospel of Nicodemus was not composed until the mid-sixth century at the very earliest, we can understand why there is no visual depiction of the

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56. Ibid., p.30.

57. Ibid., p.36.

58. A. Mansi, ix, pp.397-400.

anastasis before the early eighth century.[59] Kartsonis' findings are in accord with those of O'Ceallaigh's. The reasons are very simple: it is difficult to portray in art a complex theological idea until it has been fully worked out and is easy to understand. And it helps to have a stirringly dramatic description of the events involved from "eyewitnesses" as well. Such a story seizes the imagination, of artists and of people, as A. Westcott concludes.[60] For these reasons, the Gospel of Nicodemus triumphs and survives to influence medieval art and medieval belief. When a picture can be drawn of a place or thing, that place or thing can become real in the minds of people, particularly those who were unable to read and who obtained a great deal of their religious education from ecclesiastical art. Through the imagery presented in Gospel of Nicodemus, the Middle Ages inherited the concept and assisted in the development of the limbo of the Fathers.

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[59]. A. Kartsonis, op.cit., p.70.

[60]. A. Westcott, op.cit., pp.24-25.

IV. NEW ISSUES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIMBO: ANSELM AND ORIGINAL SIN

Having considered, far from exhaustively, the roots of limbo in the writings of St. Augustine and the Gospel of Nicodemus, we must now turn our attention to the central subject of this thesis, and survey the development of limbo through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The survey can usefully begin with Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109). To be sure, Augustine's writings were read and commented upon, and the Gospel of Nicodemus was used in doctrine, art, and exegesis in the five centuries before Anselm. Nonetheless, Anselm is the right figure with which to begin our survey. Anselm manifests a solid continuity with the body of Christian theological thought preceding him, but at the same time he displays a remarkable ingenuity of inquiry, unique for his age. So he binds two periods, his person an intriguing metaphor for the so-called "renaissance of the twelfth century", despite the fact that the bulk of his work was done outside the chronological, if not figurative, boundaries of that period.

It should be noted, by way of confirmation of this reading, that the span of Anselm's life encompassed some of Europe's most sweeping changes; indeed, R.W. Southern, in his magisterial biography of Anselm, likens the age to the Protestant Reformation or the Industrial Revolution in terms of its significance and in terms of the degree of importance of its changes.[1] Anselm's life encompassed the era of the First Crusade, the Gregorian Reform, the expansion and contraction of the Byzantine Empire, the foundation of the Cistercians and Carthusians, and the birth of what would mature into the scholastic movement. This latter movement in particular was in some degree conditioned by the use of technical and logical procedures on theological questions in a very novel and (to many people) a very unsettling way, as Anselm himself no doubt realised for himself first hand from this theological sparring

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[1]. R. Southern, St. Anselm. A Portrait in a Landscape (Cambridge, 1990), p.4.

match with Roscelin. Heresy became a greater problem for the Church at this time, challenging thinkers to come up with new ways to deal with it. Furthermore, we ought not to overlook the stimulating effects that the too-often overlooked presence of Jewish elements in Anselm's society no doubt provided, as they presented Christianity with an extraordinarily acute critique from the common ground of the Old Testament.[2] Taken in total, all of these events reflected a society in great turmoil and change. The intellectual and spiritual trends in particular would, in time, result in a freeze into a more self-conscious kind of religious orthodoxy. But that would not be until after Anselm's lifetime.

Nevertheless, Anselm was affected by all these developments in many ways. He himself suffered dislocation and exile during some of these events. Yet in spite of all this he presents us with a strangely imperturbable figure, one which was capable of deep and original insights into fundamental things despite the turmoil around him. Although his thought was strikingly original in many areas, we will consider only a few topics within the body of his work, namely, the soteriology (or works of salvation) of Christ versus the Devil, and also the question of original sin and its transmission. Anselm nowhere used the word "limbo", nor did he treat the descent of Christ into hell as seen in the Gospel of Nicodemus in any but the most cursory fashion.[3] Yet for our purposes Anselm was important, both in the way he preserved and reinterpreted Augustine, and also in the way he erected a set of ideas to prove influential for thirteenth-century thinkers.

A New Theory of the Incarnation

First, let us consider the limbo of the Fathers. Anselm makes no direct contribution to the development of this idea. He does not mention the notion of a "higher hell", nor does

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[2]. See R. Southern, op.cit., pp.198-200.

[3]. For an example, see Anselm, Epistola 31 in F. Schmitt, ed. S. Anselmi opera omnia (Edinburgh, 1946-61), iii, p.139.

he treat in depth the idea of the descent of Christ into hell, apart from a few cursory asides in some of his prayers and meditations.[4] What he does contribute to the idea is a major change of focus in its direction, which had important theological implications for its future development, as we shall see in particular in the chapter on Abelard. Anselm's contribution has to do with an examination of the reason why Christ had to undergo the Incarnation and the descent into hell. It was by Anselm's day a commonly-held notion that when Adam and Eve obeyed the Devil rather than God, they handed themselves over to the Devil, who acquired some kind of legal rights over them. As long as the Devil maintained his part of this agreement, he maintained his rights over the descendants of Adam and Eve. However, by attempting to extend his jurisdiction over Christ, who was sinless from birth, the Devil overextended himself, and thus his rights passed lawfully to Christ. The formulation of this idea, as Jasper Hopkins explains, is ultimately Augustine's,[5] and it became very popular in the Middle Ages, since it expressed a difficult theological idea in easy-to-imagine terms. Indeed, echoes of it are clearly present in the Gospel of Nicodemus, as we have seen earlier.

On this subject, however, Anselm displays a little of his famed originality of thought. He rejects this traditional argument entirely:

> Moreover, I do not see the force of that argument, which men are wont to make use of, that God, in order to save man, was bound, as it were, to try a contest with the Devil in justice, before he did in strength, so that, when the Devil should put to death that being in whom there was nothing worthy of death, and who was God, he should justly lose his power over sinners; and that, if it were not so God would have used undue force against the Devil, since the Devil has a rightful ownership of man, but man had freely surrendered to him.[6]

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[4]. See note 3, above.

[5]. J. Hopkins, A Companion to the Study of St. Anselm (Minneapolis, 1972), p.27; see Augustine, De Trinitate xiii.12-15 (PL 42, pp.1026-1029).

[6]. Anselm, Cur Deus homo, i.7, "Sed et illud quod dicere solemus, deum scilicet debuisse prius per iustitiam contra diabolum agere, ut liberaret hominem, quam per fortitudinem, ut cum diabolus eum, in quo nulla mortis erat causa et qui deus erat, occideret, iuste potestatem quam super peccatores habebat amitteret, alioquin iniustam violentiam fecisset illi, quoniam iuste possidebat hominem, quem non ipse violenter attraxerat, sed idem homo ad illud se sponte contulerat: non video quam vim habeat." (ed.Schmitt, ii, pp.55-56).

This particular passage is excerpted from Cur Deus homo; Anselm voices similar ideas at other points in his works.[7] Anselm relied very heavily on Augustine, and this rupture with the current of Augustine's thought is for him little less than staggering. It was also certainly original. In nothing else had he taken so square a stand against a common theological doctrine. True, he had shown great originality in his exposition in the past, but he always came to conservative results. On this point, both his method and conclusions were new.[8] In all of this, Anselm was most concerned with the role and honour of God, and he did not want to admit the Devil as a third party in a contest between man and God. We must remember that Anselm's theology was very God-centred. He did not want to diminish in any way the dignity of God, and he believed that such a legal scrap with the Devil in which God resorted to legal chicanery to obtain victory would make of God nothing more than a thief. One of the hallmarks of Anselm's conception of God was that he did everything in the most fitting way possible, and skirmishing with the Devil on a fine point of a legal contract was not in Anselm's view something that was the most fitting. In was inconceivable to Anselm that the Devil could gain some positive benefit through so negative a thing as sin.

By contrast, Anselm shifted the burden to man's shoulders. Man had been responsible for a grave offence against God by a refusal to submit to God's will, an action which has caused a frustration in the divine order of things and which man himself was not powerful enough to rectify. Man should, but he could not. God could, but he should not, since the fault in this matter was man's. Thus there was need for a God/man, who both should and could make a just reparation for the crime. Reparation had to be made, Anselm believed, rather than just allowing God to forgive man gratuitously for his sin, which seems like a possible answer to this problem, if one removes the Devil and his "rights" over man from the picture. Anselm did not like this solution for two main reasons. Firstly, because

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[7]. See J. Hopkins, op.cit., p.27 for further examples.

[8]. R. Southern, op.cit., p.205.

it was "cheap" grace. A simple blanket forgiveness of God for sin would have make sinners no different from the virtuous, leaving people with no reason not to sin, forgiveness being so easily available. Secondly, this solution would condone disorder, which would destroy the beauty of the universe.[9] Anselm was very impressed by the beauty of universal order as a reflection of the fittingness of God's actions, and he never wished to present any ideas which would go against this conception of God and nature.

This argument of Anselm's was bold and original; and it failed almost completely to convince his contemporaries. Even Abelard, who was the only other major thinker of his age to criticise the so-called "Devil/ransom" theory, did not accept Anselm's argument, as we shall see, although he doubtless relies on Anselm's having questioned the prevailing hypothesis to pave the way for his own inquiries, as it were.[10] Most of Anselm's contemporaries clung to the Devil/ransom theory. This was no doubt due in large part to the nature of Anselm's age. The notion of mankind handing itself over to the lordship of the Devil may have had more "visceral" appeal to a society bound together by ties of lordship and vassalage,[11] with its consciousness of rights and obligations. Furthermore, as R.W. Southern points outs, this was still the era of the penitentials, when people were willing, or perhaps felt a need to undergo harsh penances for their sins. "The warlike and resourceful God who had outwitted Satan was not easily bent to the milder ways of mercy."[12] It is impossible to measure to what degree the events of the Gospel of Nicodemus had captivated the imagination of Europe, but it is highly probably that people found them preferable to Anselm's formulations, however elegant Anselm's notions may have been. This idea of

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9. Ibid., p.212.

10. Ibid., p.211.

11. Although we should point out that in spite of the times in which he wrote, Anselm's work was largely non-feudal in its character; see J. McIntyre, St. Anselm and his Critics: A Reinterpretation of the Cur Deus Homo (Edinburgh, 1954).

12. R. Southern, op.cit., p.215.

Anselm, whereby the Devil was removed from the question of redemption is no doubt why Anselm did no detailed systematic work on Christ's descent into hell. The dramatic imagery encapsulated in the Gospel of Nicodemus had no appeal for Anselm. He was more focused on man's turning to God rather than on his turning away from the Devil. Nevertheless, although Anselm's ideas about salvation were not accepted by his contemporaries, they would become much more popular in the next century.

Anselm and Original Sin

From here we must turn to see what effect Anselm had on the development of the limbus puerorum. Here his influence is more pronounced, although as before he does not use the term, nor does he seem to entertain the concept as such. Nevertheless, he served as a stimulus to restart discussion on this topic, and his input proved to be valuable in the long run. Anselm concerns himself a great deal with the question of original sin, and he speaks very clearly about its effects on man, particularly on unbaptized infants. On these matters he proved to be a great deal less revolutionary, and thus more conventional, than he was on the question of soteriology. Most of his writings which deal with this subject can be found in two works: De Conceptu virginali, written between summer of 1099 and summer of 1100 while he was in exile, and also De Concordia praescientiae et pradestinationis et gratia dei cum libero arbitrio, written between 1107 and 1108. The former work is unusual insofar as it was written with substantial input from Boso, perhaps the only one of Anselm's direct circle of pupils who was capable of approaching his master's brilliance in theology.[13] Anselm's contribution to the question may be assessed by the way he regards original sin, and in the effects he considers it to have had on the human soul. All of this is intimately tied to the actions of Adam, and springs from the question prompting his work Cur Deus homo--why

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[13]. Ibid., p.371. Boso also assisted with the production of Cur Deus homo and appears as a character therein.

the Incarnation?--with the special focus on the question of how a sinless Christ came from sinful humanity.

We can begin our examination of Anselm's position on this in the same way that Anselm does, by asking about the "origin" in original sin. Anselm notes that it can stem either from the origin of human nature, or the origin of each man. Man's sin is "in both his nature and his person";[14] Anselm nominally favours the latter in both cases, but the question is not really of overriding importance to him, and he thus avoids delving into the question of whether God created all human souls at the beginning of time, or whether each is created individually at birth. Nevertheless, he believed that all human nature was present in Adam and Eve, and as a result of their actions "human nature as a whole was weakened and corrupted."[15] In describing this process Anselm uses the concepts of justice and injustice--Adam and Eve's progeny would have remained in a state of original justice with regard to God if they had not fallen, but with the Fall they are in a state of injustice. It behooves man both to try and maintain this original justice, and also to make satisfaction to God for having abandoned it. God is perfectly free to demand this from man, since man could have maintained this justice had he remained unfallen.

But man is fallen, and for Anselm the human soul "cannot even understand justice",[16] especially in cases where the body is weak, such as when it is an infant in the womb. This, then, is original sin, as Anselm understands it. He associates it with the concupiscence of the sexual act, but does not identify it with the act exactly. Original sin is injustice, and is inherent in every man. It is a true personal sin, not just something merely associated with a person, otherwise, as Anselm objects, an infant with only original sin but

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[14]. Anselm, De Conceptu virginali, i, "peccatum sit in natura et persona", (ed. Schmitt, ii, p.140).

[15]. Anselm, De Conceptu virginali, ii, "tota humana natura...tota infirma et corrupta est." (ed. Schmitt, ii, p.141).

[16]. Ibid., "ut nec intelligere iustitiam possit".

having committed no actual sin would not be worthy of condemnation should he die; in fact, he would have no sin at all. Furthermore, if original sin is not a personal sin, then each person is thus born without sin, and so the uniqueness of Christ's sinless birth from a virgin would be destroyed.[17] In short, we inherit not just the penalty of Adam's sin, but the guilt of it as well, and since we derive our nature from Adam, it passes from his nature into our persons. Although Anselm stresses the impossibility of humanity's ever being able to render justice for our actions, he does not mean that humans are incapable of performing any good actions whatsoever. He means, rather, that we are incapable of performing the enormous act required to make up for the Fall and restore our original justice.[18]

The Transmission of Original Sin

Now that we understand Anselm's views on the origins of original sin, we can ask how he considers it is transmitted to each individual. Anselm is original in his exposition when he notes that original sin does not accrue to the infant from the moment of conception. The reason for this has to do with the power of a rational will, since he believes that sin can only be attributed to a rational will.[19] Anselm states quite baldly that "at the moment of conception, the foetus does not have a will",[20] and thus by extension he does not consider it to be a human being. It is unclear whence he derived this notion, although it may have echoes of Aristotle, since it was a common notion adopted from Aristotle and preserved by early Christian writers that a foetus did not acquire a soul until forty days after its conception. Gillian Evans suggests that Anselm maintained this idea partly because of the problems that

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17. Anselm, De Conceptu virignali, iii. (ed. Schmitt, ii, pp.142-143).

18. J. Hopkins, op.cit., p.205.

19. Anselm, De Conceptu virginali, viii. (ed. Schmitt, ii, pp.149-50).

20. Anselm, De Conceptu virginali, xv, "ut dixi, in voluntate, quam in nulla hominis conceptione semen habere cognoscitur", (ed. Schmitt, ii, p.157).

miscarriage posed for his theories.[21] Furthermore, Anselm does not specify at exactly what point a foetus comes to possess a rational will, although he is clear that when a foetus does possess one, he possesses original sin along with it:

> I understand original sin to be nothing other than that sin which is in an infant as soon as he has a rational soul--irrespective of what may have happened to its body (e.g., the corruption of its members) before it was thus animated, or irrespective of what might happen to either his body or his soul afterwards. And on the basis of the aforesaid reasons I think that in all infants who are naturally propagated original sin is equal, and that all who die with only this sin are equally condemned.[22]

Obviously, then, Anselm believed that original sin was attached to the child some time after animation, but before birth, since elsewhere he notes that men are born with original sin. He is quite firm on this: "no infant can be born without sin."[23]

Fortunately this sin is not additive in nature, and infants do not inherit all the other sins that their ancestors have committed.[24] Original sin is a privation of original justice, and where original justice is lacking the situation can not be made worse. Anselm interprets Ex.xx.5 ("I am the Lord thy God...visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation"), which he mentions in this context, to refer to special occasions of divine punishment. Nevertheless, Anselm draws a cause-and-effect relationship between original and personal sin. Adam's sin is a cause, so it is not entirely correct to refer to it as original sin, and this cause produces an effect in his descendants. Thus the sin is not just inherited; more properly speaking it is personal as well. This sounds rather unfair to modern ears, but Anselm clarifies it by way of a rather feudal example. Suppose, he

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[21]. G. Evans, Anselm (London, 1989), p.85.

[22]. Anselm, De Conceptu virginali, xxvii, "Originale igitur peccatum non aliud intellego quam quod est in infante, mox ut habet animam rationalem, quidquid prius in corpore nondum sic animato factum sit--ut est membrorum aliqua corruptio--, vel post sive in anima sive in corpore futurum sit. Quod propter praedictas aestimo rationes in omnibus infantibus naturaliter propagatis esse aequale, et omnes qui in illo solo moriuntur aequaliter damnari." (ed. Schmitt, ii, p.170).

[23]. Anselm, De Conceptu virginali, xxii, "ut eorum nullus possit nasci sine peccato", (ed. Schmitt, ii, p.161).

[24]. Anselm, De Conceptu virginali, xxiv. (ed. Schmitt, ii, pp.166-8).

suggests, that a man and a woman were raised by some lord to a position of great honour, by virtue of his favour alone, and not on the basis of any merit or ability on their part. Now suppose that together they commit some very serious crime. Anselm concludes that it would be entirely reasonable for that lord who had raised them up to send them right back down, even to condemn them to slavery. He concludes:

> Who will say that the children whom they begat after their condemnation ought not to be subject to the same servitude but ought rather to be gratuitously restored to the goods which their parents rightfully lost?[25]

Such is our case with respect to Adam and Eve, Anselm argues. Modern authors might not feel comfortable with this feudal illustration.[26] To Anselm it was perfectly natural.

What, then was the remedy for this situation? Predictably, baptism, which traditionally was held to eliminate original sin in an infant. Anselm followed Augustine quite closely in this matter, by stressing man's inability to save himself. What was necessary for a restoration to the "state for which man was created" was that "satisfaction is made for that sin by which human nature precipitated itself into these very evils"[27]--with the understanding that man himself could not make that satisfaction unaided. Using Augustine's idea directly, Anselm noted that the salvation of baptized infants was done entirely through grace,[28] since although they possessed a rational will, they were incapable of making free choices on their own. Baptism makes up for the original injustice which they possess through their original sin, and purges them of this inherited corruption, which Anselm believed was dishonouring to God.[29] Nevertheless, the tendency towards sin remains in an infant after baptism; what

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[25]. Anselm, De Conceptu virginali, xxviii, "quis dicet filios post damnationem generant eidem non debere subiacere servituti, sed potius ad bona quae parentes iuste perdiderunt gratis oportere restitui?" (ed. Schmitt, ii, p.171).

[26]. Jasper Hopkins presents some notable exceptions; see J. Hopkins, op.cit., p.209.

[27]. Anselm, De Conceptu virginali, xxii, "ad hoc, ad quod homo factus est...per satisfactionem illius peccati, per quod in eadem mala ipsa se praecipitavit." (ed. Schmitt, ii, p.162).

[28]. Anselm, De Concordia, iii.3 (ed. Schmitt, ii, p.266).

[29]. Anselm, De Concordia, iii.8. (ed. Schmitt, ii, p.274).

is abolished is the lack of righteousness and the guilt of being unable to be righteous, all of which cause dishonour to God. The actual corruption and disorderedness of desire remains. Anselm is reluctant to go into the question why this is so, but notes that it has to do with faith--should one be transformed after baptism into a sinless, incorruptible state like unto that which Adam possessed before the Fall, the excellence of the Christian religion would be immediately apparent to all, and thus destroy the two factors, merit and hope, that are the foundations of salvation as Anselm understood it,[30] since they enable us to grow by grace and appreciate heaven. Here as elsewhere, Anselm does not believe in selling "cheap" grace, although, paradoxically, in another place he stresses the ease and availability of baptism, given the fact that any Christian could perform it in time of need, since he believed that it is not the person who baptizes, but Christ.[31]

Anselm and Unbaptized Infants

What, then of the fate of unbaptized infants? Anselm held that they were damned. Even less than his master Augustine did Anselm admit the possibility of a Pelagian escape to this conundrum. "Both Anselm and Augustine are Anti-Pelagian,"[32] Jasper Hopkins writes, although he credits Anselm with being less so. I would argue the reverse on this latter point, because it seems to me that Anselm follows his logic more brutally here than Augustine does. Augustine was willing to posit the existence of a more tolerable damnation for unbaptized infants, but Anselm nowhere makes even that concession. Gillian Evans notes that Anselm would not, in her words, "fudge this issue"[33] (as Augustine had done); despite personal feelings he may have had for the plight of unbaptized children, Anselm had to follow his

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30. Anselm, De Concordia, iii.9. (ed. Schmitt, ii, pp.274-75).

31. G. Evans, op.cit, p.102.

32. J. Hopkins, op.cit., p.157.

33. G. Evans, op.cit., p.98.

logic right through to the end. True, he held that "sin in infants is less than the sin in Adam",[34] making them not as bad as Adam. Nevertheless, the ultimate fate of unredeemed man was twofold: 1. childbirth in labour and infirmity, and 2: eternal banishment from the kingdom of heaven, into hell. All infants are born into this situation, and removal from it is only possible through Christ. "If...original sin is a sin, then it is necessary that everyone who is born with it and does not have it forgiven is condemned."[35] Not for nothing does he title Chapter 28 of De Conceptu virginali "Against Those who Think that Infants Ought not to be Condemned." He raises common objections: 1. that they shouldn't be condemned for the sin of another, 2. that they are too young to be able to discern, and 3. that God should not condemn them more strongly than we mortals feel we should do. Anselm rejects all of these objections, insisting that God is perfectly free to exact from us that which he originally bestowed upon us, that is, a state of original justice.

Anselm thus resisted the Pelagian temptation, even though he could have defended the weaker hypothesis that infants inherit merely a corrupted human nature but not guilt for it, which results in their damnation. Jasper Hopkins identifies several reasons why. First, this particular point is just a part of a larger viewpoint which Anselm was unwilling to sacrifice or modify, since those who do not like the idea of inherited guilt would also not like the idea of inherited defect either. Like Augustine, Anselm was aware of the difficulties of the human situation both from the example of Scripture and indeed from his own often troubled life. He had faced many trials and difficulties, and would not adopt a degree of Pelagianism which would mitigate in any way whatsoever the things he had experienced. The human situation was grave, to be sure, and Anselm in no way wanted to misrepresent it so as to diminish the divine plan or the sacrificial meaning of Christ's death. Second, it is

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[34]. Anselm, De Conceptu virginali, xxii, "qua ratione peccatum minus sit in infantibus quam in Adam", (ed. Schmitt, ii, p.162).

[35]. Anselm, De Conceptu virginali, xxviii, "Quare si quod dixi originale peccatum est aliquod peccatum, necesse est omnem hominem in eo natum illo non dimisso damnari." (ed. Schmitt, ii, p.171).

evident that Anselm held to a theory of universals, so it was perfectly natural for him to believe that all humanity existed in Adam, and thus had sinned in him. Finally, as noted above, Anselm did not want to diminish the efficacy of Christ's sacrificial action, and to admit that infants might have some measure of original justice which would allow them to be saved apart from Christ's death, would be to make a mockery of Christ's salvific actions. Furthermore, the fact that infants die, and even in life suffer sickness and weakness suggested to Anselm either that God was unjust or that infants had original sin, and he was certainly not about to advocate the former.[36] Infants thus had sin, and would be damned if they died with it unredeemed. After baptism, they were no longer blameworthy, and even though they are not able to be just by their own efforts, they are not to be blamed for it--the faith of the Church believes for them, until such time as they are able to believe for themselves.[37] But lacking that, they are blameworthy and damned. Thus because of his logical rigour, there was for Anselm no possibility of a limbus puerorum. Indeed, this rigour even prevented him from using the Augustinian compromise of a poena mitissima. Had Anselm been followed slavishly by the West, there would have been no formulation of the limbus puerorum.

Anselm's Influence

He was, however, not followed slavishly. Anselm left no real school behind him, and was not as immediately popular as was Bernard of Clairvaux, who had the backing of a newer and more popular religious order. Anselm's popularity did not begin until much later. As Gillian Evans observes: "the solid theological worth of his thought brought him back into favour in the beginning of the thirteenth century when the friars in particular made use of him."[38] This is where he really came into his own. P. Toner in particular has noted how

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[36]. J. Hopkins, op.cit., pp.209-10.

[37]. Anselm, De Conceptu virginali, xxix. (ed. Schmitt, ii, p.173).

[38]. G. Evans, op.cit., p.107.

his notions on original sin were rejected by the great men of twelfth-century thought: Bernard, Hugh of St. Victor, Peter Lombard, Robert Pullen, Innocent III, but nevertheless were adopted by Alexander of Hales and thence picked up by Albertus Magnus, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas.[39] It would be these ideas about original sin which would be Anselm's most important contribution to the development of the idea of limbo. True, his rejection of the Devil/ransom theory of the Incarnation would become popular with the scholastics, as it did quite early on for Abelard, and would help force a more intellectual reconsideration of the events behind the anastasis. But it was Anselm's careful examination of the nature and transmission of original sin that was more important for the history of the idea of the limbus puerorum. Although his ideas would seem to preclude the emergence of the idea of limbo, Anselm was critical for restarting debate on the root reasons behind it, and as such, helping to usher in a new era of theological inquiry.

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[39]. P. Toner, 'St. Anselm's Definition of Original Sin', Irish Theological Quarterly, iii (1908), p.426.

V. ABELARD: TRADITION AND INNOVATION

Peter Abelard (1079-1142) makes several contributions to the theological roots of the development of limbo. Many of these are due to the nature of the man himself. Abelard was a man much more willing than most of his contemporaries to engage in innovative speculations on eternal truths, to the consternation of some of his contemporaries. By his application of dialectic to theology he was willing to speculate in areas that had been previously left somewhat vague, with reason. Furthermore, the mere citation of preceding authorities, so typical of early medieval exposition, was not enough for Abelard's style of reasoning, although he did certainly not hesitate to do so when the authorities bolstered his points. In his own way, Abelard, like Anselm, again represents both continuity and innovation.

Like Anselm, Abelard nowhere uses the word limbo. Nor, again, does he really consider the afterlife in spatial terms, save of a few occasions when he considers the nature of Christ's descent into hell, which we shall see below. Yet Abelard remains important for the development of the idea of limbo and by reason of the very contrasts in his character between forces for continuity and those for innovation. He kept alive some ideas of earlier authors on one hand, and was willing to explore new solutions to problems on the other. Granted, some of these new solutions were condemned by the Church and thus not accepted, but he remained a stimulus to debate and reflection.

Abelard's effects in the development of limbo may be observed if we consider the following four themes in his works. In the first place, we must examine Abelard's rather unconventional ideas on the nature of sin, in two areas: on the nature and transmission of original sin, and on the power the Devil holds over man because of it. In the second place, once Abelard's views of original sin are understood, we must examine how he viewed infant baptism, a topic critical to the development of the limbus puerorum. In the third place, his

views on original sin also affect his views on salvation without baptism, especially with regard to the ancient pagan just. Finally, in the fourth place, we should consider Abelard's views on the effects of the descent of Christ into hell, which will allow us to grasp some of his ideas about space in the afterlife.

Abelard's Ideas on Reason

Before we begin, it is important to note a few of the self-imposed restrictions which Abelard placed upon his inquiries. If one considered only the fulminations of his enemies such as St. Bernard, one could come away with the impression that Abelard was a reckless investigator into the things that man cannot know. This is not an entirely justified interpretation. Abelard was aware of the limitations to reason and inquiry, and stated them openly:

> That unique majesty cannot be imprisoned by common and popular ways of speaking, not can that wholly incomprehensible and ineffable One, to whom all things are subject, be the subject of human rules; he cannot be understood by man, who institutes words to express what he understands.[1]

It is curious to note that like Augustine before him, Abelard is brought up short by the ineffability of God, and the inherent limitations of humanity in speaking about him. It is impossible to consider God in common speech, Abelard observes; God can neatly slip out of any constraints human speech and reason put on him. However, at the same time Abelard does not wish to fall into the trap of fideism,[2] which renders any kind of investigation into divine things meaningless. Investigation is what Abelard wishes to pursue, and he clearly believes from the outset that reason may help us to attain an understanding of God.[3] Nor

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[1]. Abelard, Theologia Christiana iii.116 "Aequum equidem est, ut quod ab omnibus creaturis longe remotum est, longe diverso genere loquendi efferatur, nec illa unica majestatas communi ac publica locutione coercatur, nec quod omnino incomprehensibile est atque ineffabile ullis subjaceat regulis cui sunt omnia subjecta, quod nec ab homine intelligi potest, qui ad manifestandos intellectus suos voces instituit." (ed. CCCM xii, pp.236-7).

[2]. R. Weingart, The Logic of Divine Love: a Critical Analysis of the Soteriology of Peter Abelard (Oxford, 1970), p.4.

[3]. E. Gilson, Études de philosophie médiévale (Strasbourg, 1921), pp.26-9.

is this inquiry made in a vacuum, for Abelard recognizes it as a response to the challenge presented to faith by what Abelard perceives is a misuse of reason. For him, God is neither irrational nor entirely supra-rational; although unimaginable superior to man, nevertheless God may be to some extent understood by the philosophical mind. Such a philosophical mind need not even be a Christian one (as we shall see below) but at the same time, we must not infer that Abelard meant that God could be apprehended by merely natural knowledge alone. In the words of Richard Weingart, Abelard thought that "Reason is a gift from God and grace is necessary for its proper functioning."[4] Whoever is doing the reasoning, the inspiration comes from God. Like Augustine before him, Abelard admits his limitations before the subject which he investigates, but unlike Augustine, Abelard is much more willing to provide definite answers without hesitation and vacillation. His One may be incomprehensible and ineffable, but that does not stop Abelard from at least attempting to make a few theological statements.

Abelard on Original Sin

With these limitations in mind, we must first begin by examining Abelard's views on the nature of sin, particularly original sin, since they condition his views on infant baptism and also on the descent of Christ into hell. Abelard's actions in this are in no way unique, since other authors in the twelfth century were also re-examining original sin, Anselm of Canterbury and Gilbert de la Porrée, to name only two.[5] Augustine's ideas on original sin had occasioned problems for many writers, and we see in Abelard another attempt to move around Augustine's rigid definitions. No one doubted the idea of original sin, but the nature and effects of it were being reconsidered. Peter Cramer points out that in the intellectual

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4. R. Weingart, op.cit., p.14.

5. See R. Weingart, op.cit., p.46, n.1, for a more complete summary of this trend.

currents of this time there was a sense of loss of the body, an incapacity, a falling short, which resulted in a kind of theology of failure. He notes:

> The "theology of failure" which is built, by Abelard especially, on these inadequacies, and which is so much a part of the "Renaissance of the twelfth century", finds itself very well expressed by what was coming to seem the oddity of infant baptism; the oddity that the sacrament of the will should be applied, willy-nilly, to a child.[6]

The practice of infant baptism is intimately connected with the doctrine of original sin, and the arguments and considerations which affect the one affect the other. Cramer, in the above-cited passage, calls baptism "the sacrament of the will", and this notion of will was central to Abelard's teachings on the nature of sin.

A section of his Commentaria in epistolam Pauli ad romanos considers the nature and meaning of the word sin, and of the ideas behind it. The answers Abelard comes up with he calls "not so much an assertion as an opinion"[7], and are very important to our understanding of his thought. For Abelard, sin first and foremost involved an act of the will. Sin had to be a deliberate choice; where there was no free will there was no transgression. In his explorations of the meaning of the word peccatum, Abelard held first and foremost that this word was applied "for guilt of the soul and contempt of God, that is, our perverted will by which we stand guilty before God."[8] Thus sin had to be something freely chosen, and a free choice of an action which of its nature was contemptuous of God. Abelard also considered two other meanings for sin: it could mean the punishment for a defined sin, or also the victim of sin (see 2 Cor.v.21). All of this has a bearing on original sin, since Abelard focused on where the act of contempt for God lay. Clearly, it was with the original choice of disobedience on the part of Adam and Eve. But we, their descendants, make no wilful act

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[6]. P. Cramer, Baptism and Change in the Early Middle Ages c.200-c.1150 (Cambridge, 1993), p.221.

[7]. Abelard, Commentaria in epistolam Pauli ad Romanos, ii.v.20 "non tam pro assertione quam pro opinione" (ed. CCCM xii, p.175).

[8]. Ibid., ii.v.19 "...proprie pro ipsa animae culpa et contemptu Dei, id est prava voluntate nostra, qua rei apud Deum statuimur." (ed. CCCM xii, p.164).

of contempt for God. Do we then inherit the sin of Adam and Eve? Not according to Abelard's strict sense, since only they made the act of will, not us. Abelard thus came up with a radically different definition of original sin:

> Therefore, when we say that men are begotten or born with original sin, and that this original sin adhered to them from the first parents, it seems that this is to be referred to that punishment of sin to which they are liable rather than to guilt of the soul or contempt of God.[9]

Following Abelard's meaning in the second definition of peccatum, sin is thus inherited punishment rather than inherited guilt. Adam and Eve's sin was theirs alone; we simply bear the inherited punishment for it, rather than any share in guilt or blame for it. The punishment given to Adam and Eve took the punishment of bodily death and the shattering of the integrity of the human person, which crippled our reason and will and estranged us from our world. Original sin is thus "the debt of damnation itself which we owe, since we are made subject to eternal punishment, because of the fault of our origin."[10] We can think of what we receive in this as being like a debt, as of an inheritance squandered by our first parents, rather than being any inherited guilt for their actions.

This is quite a revision of Augustine's doctrine, and as we shall see, it is not without its problems when one considers all its ramifications. On face value, for example, it seems to obviate the need for infant baptism, and, by extension, to forestall the development of the idea of the limbus patrum. Furthermore, it did not sit well with the contemporary ecclesiastical authorities, and was the eighth article of Abelard's teaching that was condemned by the Council of Soissons, "That we have contracted from Adam not guilt but its punishment."[11]

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[9]. Ibid., "cum itaque dicimus homines cum originali peccato procreari et nasci, atque hoc ipsum originale peccatum ex primo parente contrahere, magis hoc ad poenam peccati, cui videlicet poenae obnoxii tenentur, quam ad culpam animi et contemptum Dei referendum videtur."

[10]. Ibid., ii.v.19, "ipsum damnationis debitum quo obligamur, cum obnoxii aeternae poenae efficimur propter culpam nostrae originis", (ed. CCCM xii, p.171).

[11]. Capitulum haeresum Petri Abelardi, "Quod non contraximus ex Adam culpam, sed poenam." (ed. CCCM ix, p.478).

New Ideas About Salvation

Another ramification of this view which had effects later on concerns the relationship of man with the Devil. Abelard's views on this topic are essentially a continuation and amplification of the ideas of Anselm of Canterbury. Abelard presents several ideas on the subject, of which only a few need concern us. He held that if the Devil had any power over man, he held it not by right, but by the "express permission, or even the assignment, of the Lord."[12] Any rights the Devil held were thus those of a jailer or torturer, given to him by permission of God. The Devil had only seduced man to the Fall, and a seducer has no inherent rights over the person he has seduced. The main evidence for Abelard's arguments on these points, however, comes via an example from Scripture, the celebrated bosom of Abraham of Luke xvi.22ff. By examining this image with relentless logic, Abelard forcefully rejected the theory of the Devil's right over man, in particular as he considered who had been kept there and who Christ in his descent had freed. He remarked that Christ had "delivered his elect only"[13], and wondered what level of control the Devil could have had over them:

> Did the Devil torment that beggar who rested on Abraham's bosom as he did Dives who is damned, although he may have tortured him less? Or had he power even over Abraham and the rest of the elect? When did that wicked torturer have power over him who is described as being carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom--concerning whom Abraham himself pays testimony in the words, "But now he is comforted and thou art tormented."[14]

Abelard places great store by this image as providing a kind of mental picture of the afterlife, and goes on to note the great gulf that is described as separating those in Abraham's bosom from those in hell proper. It is only the latter group over which the Devil exerts any control; Abelard strongly stresses that the gulf fixed between them and the blessed is uncrossable.

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[12]. Abelard, Commentaria in epistolam Pauli ad Romanos, ii.iii.26, "nisi forte quia eum, Domino permittente aut etiam tradente" (ed. CCCM xii, p.114).

[13]. Ibid., "solos electos liberauerit".

[14]. Ibid., "Numquid etiam pauperem illum, qui in sinu Abrahae requiescebat, sicut et diuitem damnatum diabolus cruciabat, licet minus eum torqueret? Aut etiam in ipsum Abraham dominium habebat ceterosque electos? Quomodo tortor ille malignus dominum in eum haberet qui portantus ab angelis in sinum Abrahae commemoraur? De quo ipse Abraham testatur dicens: 'Nunc autem hic consolatur, tu vero cruciaris'".

Thus Abelard's logic and reasoning are conditioned by this view of space in the afterlife. If there is indeed a gulf between the elect and the damned that can not be crossed, it seemed entirely logical to him that the lord of the damned could not exercise across it. Thus Abelard rejected the kind of interpretation of this image that would regard it as an upper hell in the limbus patrum mode. Furthermore, strictly speaking this rendered the whole panoply of imagery that we have seen in the Gospel of Nicodemus superfluous, since as we have seen above, Christ saved only the elect in his descent into hell. There is no need for a breaking of gates, shattering of chains, or defeat and binding of the Devil, if the Devil wields no power over men. However, it should be noted that although Abelard nowhere mentions any of the elaborate imagery of the Gospel of Nicodemus, he did speak of Christ as defeating the Devil[15], albeit in a somewhat oblique form which Richard Weingart describes as "cryptic".[16] It is difficult to understand why Abelard retains imagery which is, strictly speaking, unnecessary, but even when he does use it, there is no mention of any kind of ransom's being paid, or of Christ's tricking the Devil through his purity. Furthermore, it should be noted that this point about the salvific action of Christ was another one of the points upon which Abelard was condemned at the Council of Sens in 1140, "That Christ did not take flesh in order to free us from the yoke of the Devil."[17]

Abelard, Baptism, and the Fate of Unbaptized Infants

Now that we have some understanding of Abelard's unique conceptions of original sin, we can see in more depth where these ideas led him, particularly in regard to the sacrament of baptism. Superficially, it would seem that they would drive him to Pelagianism,

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[15]. Abelard, Sermo 15 (ed. P.L. 178, p.497) and many other places.

[16]. R. Weingart, op.cit., p.138.

[17]. See Denzinger #723 "Quod Christus non assumpsit carnem, ut nos a iugo diaboli liberaret." (ed. Denzinger, p.325).

for if there is no culpa obtained via original sin, it seems that bodily death and the deformation of character are punishment enough for that sin. It is but a short step from here to Pelagius' idea of natural merit, but it is a step which Abelard does not take. Abelard is not a Pelagian, although that is a charge which his adversaries levelled against him.[18] Although he did not follow Augustine's ideas of grace, neither did he adopt Pelagius' ideas of merit.[19] Christ's salvific acts were necessary in Abelard's view. Although Christ did not pay off a debt or challenge the Devil on a right, neither was his atonement, "nothing more than an inducement for man to effect his own salvation."[20] This may be seen especially in Abelard's views on baptism and the fate of unbaptized children.

Abelard clearly minimized the Augustinian teaching on original sin, and correspondingly minimized the necessity of infant baptism. But he did not go so far as to say that it was not necessary. He clearly believed in the damnation of unbaptized children, for although the guilt of Adam and Eve's original sin was not transferred to their posterity, the punishment was. This punishment extended beyond bodily death and the disintegration of personality: all who follow in Adam are liable to the punishment in eternal damnation, even if they did not share in Adam's guilt. For infants, the nature of the damnation was lessened, being "nothing more than to suffer the darkness, that is to lack the vision of divine majesty without any hope of attaining it"[21]; we shall examine this particular point in more detail below. For Abelard, the sacraments were "symbols of sacred reality."[22] Baptism was a

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[18]. Bernard of Clairvaux, De erroribus Abaelardi ix.23; (PL 182, p.1071), and Eps. 192, 330, 331, 332, 336, 338 (ed. S.B.O. 43-44, 266-268, 269-270, 271-272, 275-276, 277-278); Thomas of Morigny, Disputatio catholicorum patrum adversus dogmata Petri Abelardi, iii (PL 180, p.325).

[19]. A. Murray, Abelard and St. Bernard: a Study in Twelfth Century 'Modernism' (Manchester, 1967), p.133.

[20]. R. Weingart, op.cit., p.150.

[21]. Abelard, Commentaria in epistolam Pauli ad Romanos, ii.v.19, "Quam quidem peonam non aliam arbitror quam pati tenebras, id est carere uisione diuinae maestatis sine omni spe recuperationis." (ed. CCCM xi, pp. 168-170).

[22]. R. Weingart, op.cit., p.188.

symbol of the remission of original sin.[23] For infants, baptism obviated the penalty of eternal damnation, while for adults, baptism did this and also removed the guilt from all sins committed before the baptism.[24] Abelard at numerous places uses various scriptural images to describe this sacrament: it is an imitatio Christi, or a participation in the death and resurrection of Christ, or a bridal union with God and the Church.[25] Despite his disagreement with Augustine, Abelard also viewed baptism as conveying a grace, albeit merely a strengthening one to lead the Christian life.[26]

Although Abelard resisted the Pelagian temptation to assign unbaptized infants some natural goodness in the afterlife, it is clear that his own conclusions about their damnation were not entirely satisfying to him. Many of his views on the fate of unbaptized infants that were to have an effect on the development of the idea of a limbus puerorum were occasioned by Abelard's meditations on divine justice and the justice of the fate of unbaptized infants. Two chapters of the Sic et non address this theme[27], but Abelard's arguments are presented much better in the second book of his Commentaria in epistolam Pauli ad romanos, which is what shall be examined here. Abelard found himself with a problem. Having rejected Augustine's views about culpa and original sin in favour of having original sin transmit merely the poena of punishment, he was faced, more than Augustine was, with the problem of God's justice. If, according to Augustine's theory, God had seemed unjust if he allowed an innocent child to inherit the culpa for something he did not do, then according to Abelard's theory God could only appear more unjust for allowing a child who had inherited no culpa to be subject to a poena. How was he to resolve this?

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[23]. Abelard, Commentaria in epistolam Pauli ad Romanos ii.v.19 (ed. CCCM xi, p.161).

[24]. Abelard, Sermo 4 (ed. P.L. 178, p.414).

[25]. Abelard, Commentary in epistolam ad Romanos ii.vi.3 (ed. CCCM xi, p.176); Sermo 4 (ed. P.L. 178, p.414).

[26]. Abelard, Sermo 17 (ed. P.L. 178, p.503).

[27]. Abelard, Sic et non, cvi and clviii (ed. P.L. 178, pp.1484-1501 and 1597-1598).

In the first place, Abelard naturally rejects completely the idea that God is unjust. Since it is God who determines what is good and what is evil, anything he decides must therefore be good, no matter how it appears to us. Furthermore, God's decisions will give to each person what he truly deserves. Abelard notes that God "permits punishment to be inflicted or reward to be conferred on no one undeservingly...justice is what renders to each his due, no more, no less than is his due."[28] Thus God is just no matter what he does, and anything he does to an individual is what they truly deserve, not what men merely think they deserve. While this answer is logically satisfying on face value, it leaves the reader emotionally dissatisfied with respect to unbaptized infants, and Abelard spends some time dealing with this problem, saying that "it is not enough to free God from injury...in regard to this damnation of infants unless we are able to assert some grace of his goodness."[29]

Positive Views of the Status of Unbaptized Infants

How, then, can the damnation of unbaptized children be a reflection of God's goodness? Abelard begins by borrowing the idea that Augustine voiced in chapter 93 of his Enchiridion, that unbaptized infants would suffer the "lightest of all punishments."[30] Proceeding from this premise, Abelard goes on to detail the nature of this "lightest of all punishments". It is only, as noted above, to suffer the exterior darkness, which is a lack of the beatific vision, without any hope of attaining it. This is how Abelard interprets Augustine, and what he believes Augustine actually meant and how we are intended to interpret him. Torment of conscience could be equivalent to that of perpetual fire, he reckoned Augustine had meant, so a simple exclusion could be equivalent to damnation. The

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[28]. Abelard, Commentaria in epistolam Pauli ad Romanos ii.v.19, "Deum uidelicet nulli immerito aut poenam inferri aut praemium conferri permittere...Est quippe iustitia quae unicuique reddit quod suum est, non plus quam quod suum est aut minus", (ed. CCCM xi, p.167).

[29]. Ibid., "non parum est...in hac paruulorum damnatione ab iniuria Deum absoluere, nisi etiam aliquam bonitatis eius gratiam ualeamus adstruere", (ed. CCCM xi, p.169).

[30]. Ibid., "mitissima omnium poena".

poena mitissima idea which we will see so many times throughout this thesis was defined here for the first time. Lack of the sight of God was not a positive punishment, but it was punishment enough. Abelard's version of the poena mitissima theory proved to be a very influential one, and we shall see it crop up again in the works of later writers. Although Abelard does not, as I have said earlier, use the term limbus puerorum, it is clear that he provides an independent theological foundation for it, since it is clear that if unbaptized infants do not enjoy the beatific vision they cannot be in heaven, nor if they suffer no punishment can they be in hell. But even in spite of the fact that they are not suffering, they are still damned, and damnation is a very serious thing. Where is the justice in this?

To provide an answer, Abelard speculated and came up with three possible answers. We should not underestimate their originality, since few other writers had tried to justify God's actions in this matter. The first answer has to do with predestination and God's prescience. Abelard reiterates the Pelagian idea that unbaptized infants may be damned because God foresaw that they would become great sinners in the future. By allowing them to die as infants, he was showing them a considerable mercy, since they would spend eternity condemned to the lightest of all possible punishments rather than having to suffer worse punishments later should they die in mortal sin. For this, Abelard believed, God was just: "Whence children seem to receive not unmeritedly some grace of divine goodness in this remission and alleviation of punishment."[31]

Abelard's second answer has to do with the living. God permitted the damnation of unbaptized infants, he believed, as an object lesson in sinfulness to us. If we see an unbaptized infant damned, which seems a severe punishment for what seems a mild sin indeed, perhaps, in Abelard's estimation, we would become conscious of our own very much greater sins, and take the necessary measures to avoid them. Viewing their fate, we become

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[31]. Ibid., "Vnde nonnullam in hac remissione uel alleuiatione poenae diuinae bonitatis gratiam percipere paruuli non immerito uidentur." (ed. CCCM, xi, p.170).

much more earnest in seeking our own salvation, and more thankful to God for sparing us from a terrible fate such as he did not even spare little infants: "we return to give thanks more fully to him since he freed us by his grace from that perpetual fire even after many crimes in a way by which he had so little saved these [infants]."[32]

Abelard's third answer again has to do with the living, in this case the parents of the dead unbaptized infant. The parents, seeing the fate of their child, may come to reflect upon it and ponder whether they themselves may have had anything to do with it. Perhaps they may have, or perhaps they may be guilty of other sins; in any case, by pondering the example of their dead, damned, unbaptized child, parents and anyone observing them are lead to a greater compunction of heart and a greater fervour in serving God:

> ...seeing this [they] become more fearful towards God and repentant concerning their own sins, since they see so severe a judgement given against the children born from the desire in which all had been born.[33]

Abelard here also clearly preserves the dislike of carnal desire which precedes physical generation and views it as so many of his contemporaries did as a path toward damnation. Nevertheless, for all of the above reasons he considers the damnation of unbaptized children to be far from cause to charge God with injustice. Rather, it should serve to add to his glorification:

> For these or similar reasons I judge God to appear in this matter of that mildest damnation of infants not only not to be accused of injury, but also to be glorified equally in some comparison of his grace towards children and towards others.[34]

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[32]. Ibid., "et ampliores ei gratias referamus cum nos ab illo perpetuo igne post multa etiam perpetrata crimina per gratiam suim liberat, a quo minime illos saluat."

[33]. Ibid., "et tam ipsi quam ceteri hoc uidentes timidiores in Deum et de peccatis propriis magis compuncti uel resipiscentes efficiantur, cum tam seueram in paruulos ex concupiscentia, in qua omnes genuerunt", (ed. CCCM xi, p.171).

[34]. Ibid., "His uel consimilibus rationibus apparere arbitror Deum de mitissima illa damnatione paruulorum non solum iniuriae non esse arguendum, uerum etiam ex nonnulla gratiae suae tam in paruulos, ut dictum est, quam in ceteros collatione glorificandum."

So much for Abelard's ideas. While they appeared perfectly reasonable to him, they largely failed to satisfy his peers, with the result that outside the immediate circle of his pupils, there were few later theologians who used them.[35] Abelard was an original thinker, but like so many original thinkers his unusual insights into some matters were not followed.

The Salvation of Non-Christians

Another of Abelard's insights to be ignored by the majority of his peers concerned salvation of the ancient pagan philosophers. This is a very complicated portion of Abelard's thought which could be dealt with at length, but we shall confine our inquiry to how Abelard's ideas concern baptism and salvation. The reader may recall that Augustine considered the same theme. Augustine was closer to the high point of Roman civilization, and thus was motivated to consider some level of salvation for the notable figures of Roman history. He was so motivated, but he declined to provide for the possibilities of such a salvation, instead charging the Romans with arrogance in their achievements. Abelard was not so ready to condemn. Part of his motive here concerned the above-mentioned positions on salvation, and how this affected baptism. For instance, he maintained that a man who was united by will to God could theoretically do without baptism: "It would be possible for a man to die 'in a state of baptism' before he was yet baptized, and so be saved."[36] Here he is not speaking of martyrdom and a baptism of desire; he is considering a theoretical case, and ultimately rules that although it is possible, it is unlikely, since any man so full of the requisite charity would be drawn to God and would desire baptism. But it is curious how he goes on to deal with the effects of baptism on infants:

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[35]. B. Leeming, "Is Their Baptism Really Necessary?" The Clergy Review (1954), pp.66-85, 193-222, 321-340, p.205.

[36]. Abelard, Commentaria in epistolam Pauli ad Romanos, ii.iii.27, "posset et mori baptizatus in eo tempore in quo nondum est baptizatus, et sic saluari." (ed. CCCM, xi, p.120).

> After baptism, we do not yet call infants and those who have not reached years of discretion righteous, even though they have received remission of sins and are clean in God's sight. For they cannot yet be capable of charity or righteousness, or possess any merits. Nevertheless, if they die in this childish state, when they begin to leave the body and see the glory prepared for them by God's mercy, at that moment, along with discernment, the love of God is born in them.[37]

Here again, intellect and will play a function in salvation, or at least in righteousness. A child who is baptized may be saved, to be sure, it is only made righteous by an extraordinary exterior act of God upon death, which superadds a level of righteousness to the infant's childish innocence. Thus baptism is an important thing for Abelard, but a much more important one is a life of righteousness, consciously and reasonably chosen, since that is what merits salvation.

For Abelard, reason is an important element in faith. This does raise the question of how far reason can go in contributing to and possibly even substituting for faith in extraordinary situations. Abelard considered reason alone to be insufficient--it is a gift from God and contingent upon his grace for its correct functioning.[38] But operating in conjunction with his grace, reason had high attainments in its grasp, not the least of which was salvation, for unlike Augustine, Abelard held that pagan philosophers through the use of reason were capable of attaining some level of knowledge of the Trinity.[39] This was a special form of knowledge, neither the revelation of the Old Law nor the natural knowledge of philosophy, but something altogether different, a kind of supernaturally-guided reason. Abelard's stated purpose in advancing this idea was to prove the existence of the Trinity via the ancient philosophers, and in so doing make it easier for his contemporaries to accept

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[37]. Ibid., "et post baptismum paruulos et qui nullius discretionis sunt, quamuis remissionem perceperint peccatorum, nondum tamen iustos dicimus, quamuis mundi sint apud Deum, qui nondum aut caritatis aut iustitiae capaces esse possunt nec aliqua merit habere. Qui tamen si in hac imbecillitate moriantur, cum incipiunt de corpore exire et uident sibi misericordiam Dei praeparatam, simul cum discretione caritas Dei in eis nascitur." (ed. CCCM xi, p.121).

[38]. R. Weingart, op.cit., p.14.

[39]. See J. Sykes, Peter Abailard (Cambridge, 1932), pp.60-75.

belief in the Trinity, given that it had illustrious roots in prominent philosophers of old.[40] He considered examples from the writings of Cicero, Hermes Trismegistus, Plato, Macrobius, and the Sibylline Oracles, all of which he maintained pointed towards a realization of the Trinity.[41] The twelfth century witnessed the rediscovery of the classical heritage and so had a renewed interest in the great minds of old, but Abelard is the first writer of the twelfth century to assert the possibility of their salvation so boldly.[42] Clearly then, applied and guided reason was capable of leading them to salvation, although, surprisingly, as Ralph Turner remarks, "Abelard did not consider the mechanics of their salvation."[43] This oversight may have been unfortunate, since Abelard was condemned on this point, too, at Soissons on 1121. But the idea itself was an interesting one, which had a long-term effect on the development of the limbus patrum; we can see echoes of it in Canto IV of Dante's Inferno. Furthermore, the consideration of extraordinary salvation led Abelard to consider the actions of Christ in the production of ordinary salvation by the descent into hell. This last now calls for our attention in more detail.

Abelard and the Descent of Christ to Hell

As we have seen above, Abelard's conception of the harrowing of hell was tied into his unique conceptions of the nature of sin. Strictly speaking, there did not need to be a harrowing of hell at all, since Abelard thought the Devil wielded no ius over men. Furthermore Abelard was very strict about the division of the just and the damned in the image of the bosom of Abraham. Nevertheless, he did believe in the harrowing, and although it is not described in the Gospels per se, he considered it believable, classing it among those

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40. R. Turner, "Descendit ad inferos: Medieval Views on Christ's Descent into Hell and the Salvation of the Ancient Just", Journal of the History of Ideas, xxvii (1966), 173-194, p.181.

41. Abelard, Theologia Christiana, i.66-117 (ed. CCCM. xii, pp.76-122).

42. R. Weingart, op.cit., p.13.

43. R. Turner, op.cit., p.181.

things which have been added to Christian truth "by the Apostles and by Apostolic men"[44], doubtless via the Apostolic Creed. Reflection upon the harrowing of hell also gave Abelard cause to consider the nature of salvation, and detail just who was saved and who was not. This can be seen chiefly in his Sic et non in question LXXIV, "That Christ, descending to hell, freed all from there, and the opposite."[45] Abelard considered quotations from Origen, Pseudo-Ambrose, and Ambrose, all of which indicated that Christ freed everybody from hell, Greeks as well as Jews. However, he went on to present quotations from Augustine, Gregory, Jerome, Bede, and others, which indicated that Christ had freed only those who had believed he would come. The overwhelming majority had adopted this latter view.

Yet despite this consensus in the Sic et non, in the Theologia Christiana he preserved the above-mentioned argument about the salvation of the philosophers who had attained a special foreknowledge of the Trinity, although he is not clear how they were saved and does not depict them as being saved in connection with Christ's descent into hell. As a matter of fact, he held some rather unorthodox ideas about the nature of Christ's descent into hell based on his idiosyncratic notions about space, for which he received some censure. He held that God, as a spirit, could not be bound by location nor strictly speaking was able to move spatially. In his exposition on the Apostle's Creed, he held that Christ's actual descent into hell was impossible for this reason.[46] However, despite the fact that this idea garnered objections, it is clear that Abelard in no way denied the reality of the saving actions of Christ, or that he had had a liberating effect upon the souls of the dead. Abelard merely denied the idea of a local motion. Christ did somehow descend and did definitely save the

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[44]. Abelard, Theologia Christiana, iv.126, "ab apostolicis vel apostolicis viris addita sunt." (ed. CCCM xii, p.328).

[45]. Abelard, Sic et non lxxiv, "Quod Christus descendens ad inferos omnes liberavit inde, et contra." (PL 178, pp.1468-71).

[46]. Abelard, Expositio symboli apostolorum (P.L. 178, p.626).

elect, but Abelard's exposition of this traditional idea was a very curious "mixture of orthodoxy and new controversial doctrines."[47]

Conclusions

Before concluding, it should be noted that historically much thought on these issues of infant baptism and the descent of Christ into hell had been driven by the need of Christians to establish orthodoxy in the face of heresy or heterodoxy. Augustine's ideas on infant baptism were in part conditioned by the Pelagian heretics, and the Gospel of Nicodemus was partially occasioned by the various Christological heresies of the early Christian era. It is unclear to what extent Abelard may have been influenced by heterodox thought, if any. Nevertheless, he seemed to be quite aware of the often salutary effect of dissent, and believed that there would always be heretics in the Church who would serve to test the faith of Christians and prevent them from falling into apathy about Church teaching.[48] Of course, by the estimation of St. Bernard and of other figures of his day, it was Abelard who was cast in that role of heretic, and who stirred up their own passionate ire in defence of the Church. It is unquestionable that Abelard served as a stimulus to much debate. Yet how radical and deleterious to the faith Abelard's ideas in the above-mentioned areas ultimately were is questionable. His ideas on original sin were not adopted, and his notions about the nature of the Devil's authority over men were merely part of a twelfth-century trend. His rationalizations for the reasons behind the deaths of unbaptized infants did not convince even his peers, and his ideas about the salvation of ancient philosophers without baptism were condemned. His theories about the descent of Christ in his person tended not to survive outside his school. But his most important contribution for our purpose was his definition of the punishment of unbaptized infants as the deprivation of the beatific vision. This would

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47. R. Turner, op.cit., p.182.

48. Abelard, Theologia scholarium, ii.3 (ed. CCCM xiii, pp.427-8).

prove critical for the development of the idea of limbo. All in all Abelard, like Anselm, served as an excellent stimulus to ideas and helped re-open questions in this field.

VI. MONASTIC THOUGHT: ON BAPTISM AND LIMBO

Having just examined the often pioneering, often heterodox views of Peter Abelard on the questions of soteriology and baptism, it is time to turn to an examination of the works of his foil and bête noir, Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153). In many ways, the two men present a study in contrasts: the former original and innovative, the latter traditional yet innovative as well. The career of Abelard was one of brilliant novelty which ended in personal defeat, while the career of Bernard was marked by a self-conscious conservatism which ended in personal success. If for the purposes of this thesis Abelard is taken as a singular representative of the emerging schoolmen branch of theology of the early portion of the twelfth century, then Bernard will be taken as an outstanding representative of twelfth-century monastic theology. Like both Anselm and Abelard before him, Bernard nowhere uses the word limbo, nor does he even place much emphasis on the descent of Christ into Hell. Nevertheless, he is important for our study because of his involved study of baptismal effects and the possibility of salvation without baptism for infants. All of this, coupled with his influence both in his day and beyond, makes Bernard a fitting subject for examination. Alongside Bernard, we shall also consider the Conflictus helveticus de limbo patrum, a late twelfth-century work that was the product of another monastic order, the Benedictines. The Conflictus represents a different type of monastic exposition, a kind of proto-Scholastic letter-exchange which examines the question of the salvation of the Fathers in great detail. It incidentally provides us with the first verifiable use of the word "limbo." Both Bernard and the Conflictus contribute to the development of the idea of limbo, but in different ways.

A. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX AND THEORIES OF INFANT BAPTISM

The Effects of Original Sin

Posterity has paid great attention to Bernard of Clairvaux's position as an opponent of Abelard. Yet I shall for the most part overlook this enmity except in this section, whose purpose is to examine Bernard's views on the so-called Devil/ransom theory as modified and presented by Abelard. First, though, we should examine what Bernard thought were the effects of original sin, since it was the condition of man that stemmed from this which prompted the Incarnation. In his view, original sin caused man to lose their likeness to God; to have lost their "freedom of counsel and pleasure"[1], although they still retain an image of God, and also their freedom of choice, without which they would lose their humanity. This loss of the divine likeness causes humans to degenerate into the kind of weakness and sin which is the source of all human suffering. Humanity becomes subject to concupiscence in the flesh, although it should be noted that properly speaking Bernard's concupiscence of the flesh was not of the flesh per se--for as we shall see below he had a loftier estimation of the human condition than did many of his contemporaries, perhaps prompted by a desire for the right order of his own often sick flesh--but rather in what a modern author might call the person, and which Jean Leclercq calls the "intimate center where all the tendencies and aspirations of the soul meet and struggle with one another, the lower with the higher."[2] Concupiscence crippled the human person in his faculties of reason and will, especially the latter, which became misdirected toward the things which are not proper to it and which will not cause happiness; in a word, to lust.[3]

Even children are subject to these disordered desires of concupiscence, hence their appellation "children of wrath."[4] The entire order of the world is upset, since it was established to be under man's control, but though sin man consents to instead become the

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1. J. Sommerfeldt, The Spiritual Teachings of Bernard of Clairvaux (Kalamazoo, 1991), p.21.

2. J. Leclercq, Bernard of Clairvaux and the Cistercian Spirit (Kalamazoo, 1976), p.78.

3. Bernard, De Diligendo Deo, viii.23, (ed. S.B.O. iii, p.138).

4. Bernard, Sermo 69 super Cantica canticorum, iii, "quibusdam filiis irae", (ed. S.B.O. ii, p.204).

servant of material creation. Original sin thus results in a deformed human nature that can only be helped by the intervention of Christ, and it is at this point that we may bring Abelard and his arguments into the picture. Bernard's view of the effects of original sin and the necessity of Christ's salvation may be seen most clearly in his Letter 190, written in 1140 to Innocent II to refute the position of Abelard on several issues. Abelard had rejected the notion that man was in any way captive to the Devil and noted that Christ could have redeemed man by another way than he had chosen. This occasioned a furious rebuttal from Bernard. He began his response in Letter 190 by summarizing Abelard's position, and took him to task for his temerity in admitting that all of the Fathers had believed in the notion that the Devil had had some dominion over man, but nevertheless not assenting to their authority.[5] Bernard then went on to select texts from both the Old and New Testaments buttressing his position, concluding the section with a restatement of the fact that the Devil had a just power over man, not from any valid claim on the Devil's part or just subjugation on man's part, but because God had suffered it to be so:

> For anyone is called just and unjust, not from his power but from his will. This power of the Devil over man though not rightly acquired, but wickedly usurped, was yet justly permitted. And in this way man was justly taken captive, viz that the justice was neither in the Devil, nor in man, but in God.[6]

From this point Bernard widens his angle of focus slightly, bringing in the quality of mercy to the question. Man's salvation was an occasion for a display of mercy as well as justice. Through overreaching himself in claiming the sinless Christ, by justice the Devil lost control of the other souls which he had held, since Christ gratuitously freed them from their debts. Here again is the language, if not the concrete imagery, of the Gospel of Nicodemus.

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[5]. Bernard, Epistola 190 v.11, (ed. S.B.O., viii, p.26).

[6]. Ibid., v.14, "Non enim a potestate, sed a voluntate iustus iniustusve quis dicitur. Hoc ergo quoddam diaboli in hominem ius, etsi non iure acquisitum, sed nequiter usurpatum, iuste tamen permissum. Sic itaque homo iuste captivus tenebatur, ut tamen nec in homine, nec in diabolo illa esset iustitia, sed in Deo." (ed. S.B.O. viii, p.29).

Bernard gladly claims a place amongst the freed--if sin was imputed to him by the actions of another, why not salvation as well? One is put in the former state through the flesh but in the latter through faith.

Methods of Salvation

Bernard then moves on to a discussion of the ancient just, the Fathers of the Old Testament. Abelard had held a very firm belief in the bosom of Abraham as a realm of tranquillity, very far from the sufferings of hell. Bernard retorted that even in such a place, the Fathers were "under the power of darkness,"[7] and would have been tormented by the Devil had they not had faith in the future coming of Christ. Bernard emphasized Christ's bloody sacrifice of himself, and applied this principle to the story of Lazarus: "Therefore even then the blood of Christ was bedewing Lazarus, that he might not feel the flames because he had believed in him who should suffer."[8] In these words Bernard seems not to admit the existence of a limbo of the Fathers, since he does not differentiate a place of punishment between the Fathers and the damned, merely a difference in degree of punishment. Like us, the Fathers were subject to original sin, and like us they are saved by the blood of Christ. Blood is the operative principle here; Bernard goes on to concede in some way to Abelard that, yes, another way of salvation could have been chosen by God, but this possibility should not blind us to the efficacy of the way he had chosen. His bloody sacrifice was occasioned by our own bad spiritual condition, and demonstrated what Bernard called "excellence." The death of Christ per se was neither what was pleasing to God not what was desired by him, rather, it was the voluntary submission of Christ, which restored what was lost through disobedience; the blood of Christ was not requested, nevertheless, it

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[7]. Ibid., vii.18, "sub poteste tenebrarum", (ed. S.B.O. viii, p.33).

[8]. Ibid., "Propterea iam tunc sanguis Christi rorabat enim Lazaro, ne flammas sentiret, quod et ipse credisset in eum qui erat passurus." (ed. S.B.O. viii, p.33)

was accepted. "The medicine given was proportionate to the disease"[9]; and what God did, he did most fittingly. In all this, Bernard is at pains to deny the Pelagian heresy (which he mentions by name) of any kind of natural goodness. He reiterates the idea of original sin, inexorable and inescapable.

But if Christ's actions benefit only those who can in some way consciously unify themselves to him, and repay a debt of love, as Abelard asserts, what, Bernard asks, happens to babies?

> What light of wisdom will he give to those who have barely seen the light of life? Whence will they gain power to ascend to God who have not even learned to love their mothers? Will the advent of Christ extend nothing to them? Is it of no avail to them that they have been planted together with him by baptism in the likeness of his death, since, through the weakness of their age they are not able to know of, or to love, Christ?[10]

Like Augustine, Bernard thus falls back on an established practice to refute someone--the practice of infant baptism. Abelard's ideas about the necessity of voluntary love seem to make a mockery out of established Church practice, and condemn infants even if baptized. Bernard offers an alternative. Perhaps, he says, if children are incapable of such a love, by the same token they may not need regeneration, and are not lost. But Bernard is quick to view this option as another example of the Pelagian heresy as before. Here again he acts as a voice of orthodoxy, reaffirming the reality of our human condition and the necessity of Christ's saving actions to change it. All are born yoked to original sin, and need to be delivered from it. Christ's actions in doing so are based entirely on what was most fitting. Here Bernard echoes Anselm, who also focused on the Incarnation as a fitting act, rather than any other act which could have been done more easily. Anselm, as we have seen, differed on the admission of the Devil's rights over man, but shared with Bernard the idea of salvation

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9. Ibid., ix.23, "Siquidem pro qualitate vulneris allata est medicina." (ed. S.B.O. viii, p.36)

10. Ibid., ix.24, "Quid de parvulis? Quam dabit lucem sapientiae vix adhuc captantibus lucem vitae? Unde accendet ad Dei amorem, qui necdum matres suas amare noverunt? Nihilne proderit eis adventus Christi? Nihil quod complantati sunt similitudini mortis eius per baptismum, quoniam nondum possunt, prohibente aetate, Christum saepere aut amare?" (ed. S.B.O. viii, p.37).

as an act of fittingness and mercy, and one which involved an exercise of justice rather than power to be exerted against the Devil.

Bernard and the Salvation of Non-Believers

For Bernard, the way of expressing that saving action of Christ was through baptism. In his career he faced challenges to the standard teachings on baptism from two sources. The first source was from contemporary theologians, and we have seen above what sort of writings Abelard's questioning of the Devil/ransom theory occasioned. Stepping back in time a bit, we should examine his Letter 77 to Hugh of St. Victor, also known as his treatise De Baptismo. Bernard wrote more letters than any other contemporary writer,[11] and for our purposes this is one of the most important. Hugh Feiss observes that it represents one of Bernard's first involvements in a contemporary theological dispute,[12] and it presents an unusually concise view of baptism and the nature of salvation with and without it. The letter was occasioned by a letter of Hugh of St. Victor written to St. Bernard asking four questions. We do not have the exact date of Hugh's letter--it is no longer extant--but Bernard's reply survives, and a composition date has been estimated at 1128.[13] Hugh's letter had been prompted by the writings of a certain unnamed theologian with whom he had difficulties. Throughout the whole of Bernard's reply the individual is left nameless--Bernard's stated reason for doing so is that it allows him to deal with the issues rather than the personality of the writer. Feiss maintains that the person involved probably was Peter Abelard or one of his circle, since the work which was to become Sic et non dates from teaching done during

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[11]. J. Leclercq, The Spirituality of the Middle Ages (London, 1969), p.192.

[12]. H. Feiss, "St. Bernard's Theology of Baptism and the Monastic Life", Cistercian Studies xxv (1990), pp.79-91, see p.79.

[13]. D. Van Deneynde, "Essai sur la succession et la date des écrits de Hughes de Saint-Victor", Spicilegium Pontifici Athenaei Antoniani xiii (1960), pp.132-137.

Abelard's period at the Paraclete between 1122 and 1127.[14] The attribution has merit, but we cannot know for certain.

At any rate, of the four questions which Hugh posed to Bernard, two are germane to the development of limbo. The first concerns the history of salvation, and what means were able to confer it. Bernard begins with a restatement of his adversary's position on Jn.iii.5, noting that the author interpreted the text very strictly, even to the point that if a person desiring baptism died without it, he would be damned. Bernard responds by taking a radically different position than any of the other mainstream authors we have yet seen, one which (unusually) in many ways is the inverse of Augustine's ideas. He declares that such a strict statement is unduly harsh of God, that it is not fitting for the author of life to make a people fitted only for damnation. He goes on to say one must hear to have faith and to be able to hear one must have a preacher, thus it is unreasonable to condemn those who had never heard because they lacked a preacher. The sacrament of baptism is a special grace of God, given not in accordance with any natural law, but rather with the divine plan of God. It is "to be received, not discussed; venerated, not judged; it arises from faith; it is sanctioned by tradition, not discovered by reason."[15] In the days before this special sacrament was promulgated, there were other effective means of salvation. Bernard mentions circumcision for Abraham and his offspring, which was a common enough notion, but interestingly enough, goes on to maintain that amongst the pagans there were "many believers" who managed to expiate original sin through "faith and sacrifices." Furthermore, this primitive faith could also be extended to the children of pagans who were too young to believe

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[14]. H. Feiss, "Bernardus Scholasticus: The Correspondence of Bernard of Clairvaux and Hugh of St. Victor on Baptism", in Bernardus Magister, ed. J. Sommerfeldt (Kalamazoo, 1992) pp.349-378, see p.361.

[15]. Bernard, Epistola 77, i.2, "Sacramentum Dei Altissimi est suscipiendum, non discutiendum, venerandum, non diiudicandum, fide sortitum, non innatum, traditione sancitum, non adinventum ratione." (ed. S.B.O., vii, p.186).

themselves: "for their children the faith of their parents was the sole, best sufficient remedy."[16] This merciful state of affairs has by and large ended by Bernard's time, however:

> Now, however, when the sound of the preachers has gone into the whole world and their words to the end of the earth, lack of hearing can no longer be alleged, and so the contempt [of unbelievers] is inexcusable.[17]

So to Bernard's mind, by his own day the frontiers of medieval imagination had been reached, leaving no one ignorant of Gospel preaching and no one, therefore, able to claim he was inculpable.

The Salvation of Infants

The question arises at what point baptism formally supplanted circumcision. This is the second question which Hugh asks Bernard, and it is a rather important one, given Bernard's rather liberal opinion about the possibilities of salvation for non-believers. The point at which baptism became necessary for salvation was held by some to be Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus early in his ministry (Jn.iii.5), which Bernard calls the cruellest thing possible, since the conversation with Nicodemus was a secret one, and that would have left many thousands of the circumcised and the gentiles using means of salvation that had suddenly and quietly become invalid. Nor did Bernard believe that the old ways became invalid after the post-resurrection command of Jesus to baptize all nations (Matt.xxviii.29). Rather, "the damnation of the unbaptized; the disappointment of the circumcised, and the abrogation of sacrifices" happened only "when there could be no excuse for [them] to be

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[16]. Ibid., i.4, "parvulis autem etiam solam profuisse, immo et suffecisse parentum fidem." (ed. S.B.O., vii, p.187).

[17]. Ibid., i.2, "Nunc vero cum in omnem terram exierit sonus praedicantium et in finis orbis terrae verba eorum, quia dissimulari iam non valet auditus, profecto inexcusabilis est et contemptus." (ed. S.B.O., vii, p.186).

ignorant of that [new] precept."[18] Bernard goes on to make a special case for unbaptized children:

> One should think that, as long as they were not openly forbidden, the old sacraments continued to be valid for infants and for those who did not have the use of reason, because it is believed they were harmed only by the contagion of sin and not by the breaking of a commandment. Is there more? That is for God, and not me, to say.[19]

Bernard is thus more lenient for children than he is for adults in this matter, yet we are again left with a situation which we have seen earlier--Bernard, like Augustine, shies away from a definitive answer, leaving the ultimate matter of the real truth to God, since he does not tell us exactly when there is no further excuse, nor when the old practices were openly forbidden. He repudiates his opponent on the notion of a baptism of desire, for Bernard believes in one very firmly, buttressing his arguments with support from Augustine and Ambrose and from pure reason in the case of individuals who died for Christ and whom the church venerates as martyrs. Infants are a special case in the light of this. Because of their age they cannot have faith in this fashion, for such a faith is a turning of the heart to God, so that when such die unbaptized they are not saved. Nor do they have the kind of personal faith that allows salvation even after they are baptized. Bernard maintains the Augustinian notion of salvation through the faith of another, although here as in his Epistola 190 above he does not use the notion of a faith of the church as a whole, but rather that of another person. This he says is "worthy and pertains to God's goodness";[20] God does not require a faith from someone who has contracted a flaw through no fault of their own. Bernard even goes so far as to say that an infant needs the faith of another, since they were born with the taint of another. The taint of another "can and should" be cleansed by the faith of another, according to Bernard.

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[18]. Ibid., ii.6, "apparet quod damnatio non baptizatorum, et frustratio circumcisorum, et evacuatio sacrificiorum...novi praecepti reus exsistere", (ed. S.B.O., vii, p.188).

[19]. Ibid., "Sane parvulis et necdum ratione utentibus, quia sola creditur nocere peccati contagio, non etiam mandati praevaricatio, tamdiu credendum est antiqua valuisse sacramenta, quamdieu palam inderdicta non fuisse constiterit. An vero ultra? Penes Deum est, non meum diffinire." (ed. S.B.O., vii, pp.188-9).

[20]. Ibid., ii.9, "Dignum nempe est, et ad Dei spectat benignitatem", (ed. S.B.O., vii, p.192).

We should note briefly that Bernard goes on to speak about level of faith of the Fathers. His adversary had maintained that the Fathers had a complete foreknowledge of the life and redemptive power of Christ, much akin to what we possess by looking backwards into history. Bernard denies this categorically: it would have made God either too sparing or far too generous: "Thus, in ancient times, either salvation was exceedingly rare or the number of the perfect was excessive. To think either one is outside the bounds of discretion."[21] If the ancients had known everything about salvation, that would have made them the equals in grace of the people of Bernard's own day, which simply could not be the case. Bernard concluded that they had faith, but not foreknowledge, something like the way in his own day many ignorant or uneducated people had a hope of heaven, although they had no real knowledge or understanding of it.

The Challenge to Baptism--Twelfth-Century Heresy

The second major challenge to the Church's traditional teaching on baptism came from several of the heretical groups of the twelfth century. Bernard set great importance upon preaching. He was not the only contemporary figure to do so--merely one of the most skilled. The twelfth century as a whole witnessed a revival in the art of preaching, both within and outside of the monastery. Many of those preaching did so with great enthusiasm but either poor knowledge or divergent views of what the official church teaching was. And as with so many such challenges, the response of the church was rather inadequate. Gillian Evans notes:

> The business of persuading the heretics that they were in error proved to be far from straightforward, and on the whole the church's preachers seem to have fought a losing battle here for some decades.[22]

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[21]. Ibid., iii.11, "Fuit itaque antiquis temporibus aut perrara salus, aut nimium numerosa perfectio: quorum quidem quodlibet saepere, discretionis terminos excedere est." (ed. S.B.O., vii, p.193).

[22]. G. Evans, The Mind of Bernard of Clairvaux (Oxford, 1983), p.98.

We can see an excellent example of this in the person of Bernard, with specific reference to the question of infant baptism. The whole issue was prompted by a letter from without, as we have seen above in the case of Epistola 72. In 1143 or thereabouts, Everwin of Steinfeld, a Praemonstratensian prior, wrote a letter to Bernard complaining about the discovery of a group of heretics at Cologne who had denied much of the nature of the sacraments of the church.[23] He mentioned a second group of heretics in the Rhineland who denied the efficacy of the sacraments, especially the practice of infant baptism. The leaders of the former group were brought to trial and later were carried off by a mob to be burned. Everwin was particularly upset by the great calm which these men had displayed in going to their deaths, as they desported themselves with great peace and willingness to die for their presumably wrong beliefs. He sought from Bernard a way of refuting these heretics, whom historians of heresy have identified as Cathars.[24] Though these men were dead, other heretics remained, and the alert layman would need some way of refuting them.

As a way of dealing with this situation Bernard was induced to go on a preaching tour of the southwest of France, where he was able to observe the conditions of heresy first-hand. His refutation of them, especially as concerns the particular question of infant baptism, are evident in his sermons: one from those composed Super Cantica canticorum, another for the feast of Palm Sunday. One of his letters to Alphonsus, count of St. Giles, also covers this issue, but it is Sermo 66 super Cantica canticorum which contains the most information and upon which we will focus. Bernard's responses in these matters are somewhat unusual insofar as most of these heretics had denied the authority of the church and the accumulated teaching of the Fathers, especially Augustine. Bernard's responses are unusual in that he makes little use of these sources so commonly used by most medieval thinkers, relying instead

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[23]. P.L. 182, pp.676-80.

[24]. A. Borst, Die Katharer (Stuttgart, 1953), p.4,7,91; B. Kienzle and S. Schroff, "Cistercians and Heresy: Doctrinal Correspondence in some Twelfth-Century Correspondence from Southern France", Citeaux, Commentarii Cistercienses xli (1990), pp.159-166, see p.160.

primarily on scriptural quotations and reason. Jean Didier also notes that the issue of infant baptism was something of a touchpoint for heresy at this time, and that people may have been accused of it a little too hastily.[25]

With this caveat in mind, let us examine Sermo 66, composed circa 1145. The subject of the sermon was "Catch us the little foxes that spoil the vines", verse ii.15 of the Song of Songs, as was its preceeding sermon, and in both cases Bernard interpreted the "foxes" either as temptations or as heretics. In Sermo 66 he makes firm use of the latter interpretation. For our purposes, chapter four of the sermon is of the greatest interest. This chapter opens with Bernard's reiterating support for the practices of infant baptism, prayers for the dead, and invocations of the saints, all of which were brought into question by the Cathars. Bernard's response consists of an invocation of family imagery: the baptized child is aided by the cries of the blood of his brother, Christ and his mother, the church, which join together with the little child's own cries. Bernard notes:

> He demands the help of grace because he suffers violence from nature. It is the innocence of the poor child which cries out; it is his ignorance; it is the weakness of one doomed to die.[26]

Bernard is thus saying that a child cries when it is baptized not because it has been forced into something evil--a charge which had been levelled by heretics--but because it is crying out to the Lord for help. All of the above-mentioned cries: brother, mother, and child, rise to the Father-God, who cannot but help behaving and responding like a father and having mercy.

Bernard goes on to deal with the question of infant faith, using the argument which we have seen before in Sermo 77; although a child does not have faith per se, "his mother imparts her own to him, wrapping him in the sacrament of baptism as in a cloak, until he is

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[25]. J. Didier, "La question de baptême des enfants chez S. Bernard et ses contemporains", Analecta Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis ix (1953), pp.191-201, see p.192, n.5.

[26]. Bernard, Sermon 66 super Cantica, iv.9, "Flagitat auxilium gratiae, quia vim patitur a natura. Clamat innocentia miseri, clamat ignorantia parvuli, clamat addicti infirmitas." (ed. S.B.O. ii, p.184).

ready to embrace it in purity and fullness."[27] The faith of another is sufficient for someone, which Bernard illustrates with the Scriptural examples of the Canaanite woman (Mt.xv.28) and Jesus and the paralytic (Mk.ii.5). He also brings up an issue that is raised a bit more fully in a sermon for Palm Sunday, that of the Holy Innocents, where he notes, "He who was born a little child, and first chose the army of infants (I mean the Innocents) does not now exclude infants from his grace."[28] These children died for Jesus as martyrs and were saved as children without personal faith by the infused faith of Christ. Bernard goes on to conclude his thoughts on this with the example of Christ, who was "born as an infant" and went through all the phases of human life. The principle to which Bernard appeals in this example is one of empathy--Christ having been born as a child can feel compassion for a child and save him.

Bernard expands upon this idea of divine empathy in his letter to Alphonsus, count of St. Gilles, concerning Henry, a Petrobrusian heretic, which was written in the same year as Sermon 66. Bernard here places particular emphasis on the Scriptural passage, "Suffer the little children to come unto me", and notes that the heretic Henry is denying this by his own persistent opposition to infant baptism:

> The Saviour became a child for the sake of children, why grudge him to them?...does this man think that the Saviour does not want children because they are children? If this is the case than it was for nothing that the mighty Lord was born a child, not to say scourged, spat upon, crucified, and done to death.[29]

Here again is this principle; through empathy, Christ is able to offer salvation to infants. Bernard is restating a common notion of his time, the fact that individuals may assist other

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[27]. Ibid., iv.10, "cui mater impertit suam, involvens illi in sacramento, quousque idoneus fiat proprio, non tantum sensu, sed assensu, evolutam puram percipere." (ed. S.B.O. ii, p.184).

[28]. Bernard, Sermo 1 in ramis palmarum, iii, "qui parvulus natus est et primam elegit aciem parvulorum, --Innocentes loquor--, hodie quoque parvulos a gratia non excludit", (ed. S.B.O. v, p.44).

[29]. Bernard, Epistola 241, i, "Quid, questo, quid invidet parvulis Salvatorem parvulum, qui natus est eis?...An putat parvulo Salvatore non egere, quia parvuli sunt? Si ita est, ergo gratis magnus Dominus factus parvus, ut ommittam quod flagellatus est, quod sputis illitus, quod cruci affixus, quod denique mortuus est." (ed. S.B.O. viii, pp.125-6).

individuals in a sort of "corporate principle" of unity. Adults extend their faith to children; the living offer suffrages for the dead; the saints pray for the living. The heretics of Bernard's time represented a major shift in this world-view by focusing more on the individual than on the corporate principle, which is no doubt one reason why Bernard opposed them. However, it is curious that his opposition to them was for all practical reasons so limited. The three sermons and letters cited above are essentially the only places in which he opposes this point of heresy, which is a rather token measure given his own very formidable powers of preaching.[30] Opposition to heresy of this kind had to be left to other members of the Cistercian family.[31]

Form and Content

Furthermore, despite the intensive view of baptism displayed here, elsewhere Bernard took a great practical disinterest in the actual form of baptism. In one letter, he responds to the case of a person who baptized a child using the wrong words. His reply was that the words were near enough to the proper ones and that intention was correct, so the baptism was valid.[32] Christ was the one who did the actual baptizing anyway. Hugh Feiss remarks on this unusual dichotomy between interest in the content but lack of interest in the form of baptism to be emblematic of Bernard's somewhat iconoclastic nature. Bernard would allow a great beauty in words and composition, yet not something graven, like decorative art.[33] In this as in everything, Bernard remained a monk, and a very strict one at that. But more than that, I think it represented Bernard's views of life and salvation. Elsewhere Bernard took a pessimistic view of life after baptism. That disorderly passion which was the result

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30. G. Evans, op.cit., p.98.

31. For an example of one such, see: B. Kienzle and S. Schroff, op.cit., p.159ff.

32. Bernard, Epistola 153, (ed. S.B.O. viii, pp.383-4).

33. H. Feiss, "St Bernard's Theology of Baptism", p.80.

of concupiscence remained; the state of sin was removed, but the sin itself was still present. What was gained in baptism was lost in the world.[34] Because of this, what an individual needed was a second baptism, a baptism into the monastic life, and it was clear that Bernard regarded the monastic profession in exactly this light.[35] Perhaps his lack of attention to the form of infant baptism was based on a concomitant focus on attempts to lead the life of the second baptism, that is, of the monastic profession. Bernard was not optimistic about the ability of the individual to attain salvation in the world, where there was so much corruption and difficulty. Far better, he thought, for men and women to take up orders. Perhaps the fact that this conclusion is so evident in his work stems from the fact that so many of his works were directed to other monks, but I do not consider it an entirely inappropriate conclusion to draw.

Bernard on the Realms of the Afterlife

Bernard thus presents us with an odd mixture of optimism and pessimism. He was optimistic about the saving power of Christ when directed toward the innocent and the ignorant. His views on the salvation of ancient pagans are amongst the most generous of his day, and he presents a spirited defence of the traditional teaching on infant baptism. Yet he is pessimistic about the possibility of the mature soul's obtaining salvation in his own time, without the aid of monastic orders. All in all, this means his writings mark a very curious step in the development of the idea of limbo. His restatement of the need for infant baptism doubtless contributed to keeping alive the current of thought that eventually lead to the limbus puerorum, especially the fides aliena of the church notion. Oddly enough, though, for someone who made such use of Augustine, he did not refer to the idea of a poena mitissima.

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[34]. Bernard, De Circumcisione iii (ed. S.B.O. iv, p.286).

[35]. C. Vuillaume, "La professione monastique, un second baptême?" Collectanea Cisterciensia liii (1991), pp. 275-293; especially pp.282-3.

Furthermore, he presents very little detail on the idea of a limbus patrum, other than in the most sketchy of forms. He stresses the truth behind the salvific actions of Christ, and mentions his descent, but does not make use of the rich drama and theological imagery of the Gospel of Nicodemus. Rather than place the Fathers in a special realm like limbo, Bernard seems to place them amongst the damned, differentiated by the fact that the Fathers possessed a certain impassibility. Bernard's views are theological rather than spatial, which seems somewhat unusual for a popular preacher.

Curiously, Bernard could have spoken out more firmly on the nature of limbo. He clearly follows the Augustinian use of ternary systems[36], and he does at points speak about purgatory, which renders obvious the fact that he did not think merely in terms of the old binary heaven/hell dichotomy. Furthermore, he was unique in that he posited the existence of a quite unusual realm of the afterlife:

> But what about those souls which are already separated from their bodies? We believe they are completely engulfed in that immense ocean of eternal light and everlasting brightness. But if, which is not denied, they wish they had received their bodies back or, certainly, if they desire and hope to receive them, there is no doubt that they have not altogether turned from themselves, for it is clear that they still cling to something of their own to which their desires return, though ever so slightly. Consequently until death is swallowed up in victory [1Cor.xv:54] and eternal light invades from all sides the limits of night and takes possession to the extent that heavenly glory shines in their bodies, souls cannot set themselves aside and pass into God. They are still attached to their bodies, if not by life and feeling, certainly by a natural affection, so that they do not wish nor are they able to realize consummation without them. The rapture of the soul which is her most perfect and highest state, cannot, therefore, take place before the resurrection of the bodies, lest the spirit, if it could reach perfection without the body, would no longer desire to be united to the flesh.[37]

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[36]. M. Pennington, "Three Stages of Spiritual Growth According to St. Bernard", Studi Medievali xi (1969), pp.315-325.

[37]. Bernard, De Diligendo Deo xi.30, "Quid autem iam solutas corporibus? Immersas ex toto credimus immenso illi pelago aeterni luminis et luminosae aeternitatis. Sed si, quod non negatur, velint suo corpora recepisse, aut certe recipere desiderent et sperent, liquet procul dubio necdum a seipsis penitus immutatas, quibus constat necdum penitus deesse de proprio, quo vel modice intentio reflectatur. Donec absorpta sit mors in victoria, et noctis undique terminos lux perennis invadat et occupet usquequaque, quatenus et in corporibus gloria caelestis effulgeat, non possunt ex toto animae seipsas exponere et transire in Deum, nimirum ligatae corporibus etiam tunc, etsi non vita vel sensu, certe affectu naturali, ita ut absque his nec velint, nec valeant consummari. Itaque ante restaurationem corporum non erit ille defectus animorum, qui perfectus et summus est ipsorum status,

Bernard here seems to be proposing the existence of a kind of "limbo of the saved", a place of happiness for the blessed which was not in fact the beatific vision, although it is clearly a subdivision of heaven rather than of hell. This would result in a sort of quaternary structure to the afterlife, with heaven, the "tabernacula" (for want of a better word), purgatory and hell in it. Clearly, if Bernard was going to do this, he could have added a limbo to this system, but did not do so. His notion of the blessed being detained outside of heaven was not really picked up by the mainstream of Western theological thought, but it is very possible that what he did by theorizing it, that is, subdivide the afterlife further, was influential in the structures of the afterlife proposed by thirteenth-century theologians. In any case, Bernard's notions about the possibility of salvation for non-believers seem to have very dim echoes in Dante, if for no other reason than that Bernard chooses to consider them when the body of Western theological thought tended not to.

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ne carnis iam sane consortium spiritus non requireret, si absque illa consummaretur." (ed. S.B.O. iii, pp.144-145).

MONASTIC THOUGHT B: BENEDICTINES AND LIMBO

The Conflictus helveticus de limbo patrum[38] is a collection of ten letters which deal with a dispute over the nature of the figure of the bosom of Abraham (Lk.xvi.22ff) and the question of the repose of the Fathers before the descent of Christ into hell. They represent a kind of proto-scholastic disputation on theology in letter format, a literary practice which was known and frequently employed in the late twelfth century.[39] These letters were written between 1180 and 1195[40] by two individuals. The first was Burchard, first abbot of the Benedictine monastery St. Johann in Thutale (est. 1152). The second was Hugo I (†1199), abbot of the Benedictine monastery at Schaffhausen (est. 1052). Burchard took the view that some souls, though by no means all, were able to enter heaven before the descent of Christ into hell. In doing so he aroused the passionate opposition of his fellow abbots, most notably Hugo of Schaffhausen, but also Berchtold, abbot of the house at Engelberg (est. 1120) from 1178-1197. Hugo opposed Burchard's ideas, and held to the more traditional notion that heaven remained closed until Christ opened it following his descent; as such, the bosom of Abraham was in hell. Both abbots make primary use of quotations from Scripture and the Fathers, and of the latter, particular emphasis is placed upon the ideas of Augustine, and he serves as a major point of contention between both men. The flow of the argument revolves in characteristic medieval fashion around the presentation of authorities on either side of the issue, and on attempts to establish which authority is more "authoritative". Minimal use of critical thought and reasoning is made, and the Conflictus is not settled in either party's favour, although Hugo has the luxury of the last word. Despite lacking the sophistication of

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38. F. Stegmüller, "Conflictus helveticus de limbo patrum" in Melanges Joseph de Ghellinck, S.J., II (Gembloux, 1951), 723-744. The text of the Conflictus has been critically edited on pp.727-744; for more information on the manuscript history of this work, see pp.723-766.

39. Ibid., p.723.

40. S. Cavelti, "Die Streitschift des seligen Abtes Berchtold von Engelberg" in Angelomontana. Blätter aus der Geschichte von Engelberg. Jubiläumsgabe für Abt Leodegar II (1914), 1-175.

Bernard of Clairvaux's more incisive writing, the Conflictus is nonetheless interesting in that it contains the first readily verifiable use of the word limbus in history. Let us examine the nature of the argument in more detail.

Burchard begins the controversy with a letter to Hugh requesting clarifications on a few points of doctrine; evidently a third party (possibly Berchtold of Engelberg[41]) had occasioned debate on the subject. Burchard sets the question: certain exegetes said that all souls of the Fathers were detained in hell before Christ's descent, while others maintained that only a few were. He favours the latter point, "as regards reason and more in following with the canonical Scriptures."[42] He wonders how a soul can have attained its final rest and be in hell at the same time, and supports himself with Augustine's ideas from De Genesi ad litteram about not being able to find hell mentioned in the Scriptures in a good sense.[43] Burchard then considers Lk.xvi.22, and raises the question of the figure of the bosom of Abraham. He attaches great importance to this image and considers it to be more than a figure, since it comes from the only one of Christ's parables where a proper name (i.e., Lazarus) is used. Ambrose calls it a "recess of security" (recessu securitatis[44]) and Burchard agrees, adding support from Augustine, who believed that the word hell only applied to the Dives, the rich man, and also Gregory the Great, who described it as "the secret rest of the Fathers (secreta requies patrum)."[45] Burchard raised some of Augustine's doubts on the question:

> Perhaps in those hells there is another lower part where the impious are dragged who have sinned more...whether this be true or not, may you hold

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41. S. Cavelti, op.cit., pp.153-155.

42. F. Stegmüller, op.cit., p.727, "acutius quantum ad rationem spectat et consequentius auctoritati canonicarum Scripturarum."

43. Augustine, De Genesi ad litteram xii.33, n.63-4, (ed. P.L. 34, p.481).

44. Ambrose, Expositio in Lucam viii.13, (ed. P.L. 15, p.1859).

45. Gregory, Homilia in evangelia 40, ii.2, (ed. P.L. 76, p.1302).

> me as an investigator of the word of God, and not an audacious commentator.[46]

Burchard lays considerable stress on Augustine's confusions on this matter, and believes that this confusion from so illustrious an authority more reflects the truth of his own point--he believes that some of the souls of the just were in hell, but not all. He then moves on to a second point, whether the souls of the just received anything better by Christ's descent, and again he quotes Augustine in a doubtful passage, which he maintains reflects that they did not, since they already had a reward. Furthermore, the Church prays that the faithful may be taken into the bosom of Abraham, and as this is so, how can it be hell? Burchard rejects the idea of middle places: as an animal is either sick or healthy, so a soul is either with God or without him. Moses was given the beatific vision in the flesh: if this was so, how much more should the other souls of the Fathers be given such a reward when out of the body? He closes the letter chiding Hugo for having misattributed a quotation from Bede to Augustine, attempting to shore up his claim on Augustine as his prime authority in these matters.

Hugo's response restates the question: if the Fathers "were at rest, in what way were they in hell? And if in hell, in what way at rest?"[47] He seems very well aware that he is considering more than just a simple question from Burchard; his letter is directed to more learned men beyond him. Hugo begins with one of Augustine's ideas that Burchard had voiced: these matters "ought to be investigated in sacred Scripture."[48] He seizes this idea and pounces upon it: if Augustine is not sure in this matter, he is thus merely voicing nothing

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[46]. Augustine, Ennaratio in Psalmum 85, xiii.18, "Fortassis apud ipsos inferos est aliqua pars inferior, quo trahuntur impii, qui plurimum peccaverunt...sive illud sit, sive non, hic me scrutatorem verbi Dei, non temerarium affirmatorem teneatis." (ed. P.L. 37, p.1094).

[47]. F. Stegmüller, op.cit., p.731, "Si erant in requie, quomodo in inferno? Et si in inferno, quomodo in requie?"

[48]. Augustine, Contra Faustum Manichaeum xxxiii.4, "in Scripturis sanctis indagandum est." (ed. P.L. 42, p.513)

more than an opinion, since "nothing is an authority which neither affirms nor denies."[49] In these matters, Augustine exists merely to spur us on to further examinations of this problem. Hugo notes that Augustine has difficulty voicing the truth in these matters, since at one point "Augustine" notes, "I am not able to bring in mouth what I conceive in mind."[50] Hugo goes on to quote two sermons from Augustine which pronounce very directly on Christ's descent into hell and consequent opening of the gates of heaven, indicating that at some points Augustine is very capable of speaking decisively on these matters. He was not aware that these two sermons (as well as the previous quotation) were from Pseudo-Augustine, and to the modern reader proves Burchard's point about Augustine being confused on these matters rather than his own with this conclusion. But he goes on to consider other authorities. Gregory the Great firmly denies that anyone entered heaven before Christ's coming; he called the bosom of Abraham a "secret rest" (secreta requies[51]). Matthew viii.11 "many will come from the East and the West and will recline with Abraham", etc., is taken to be a future statement, and Hugo interprets it to mean the gentile nations. He appeals to Leo and Isidore, both of whom spoke of the descent of Christ to the dead and the opening of the previously closed gates of heaven. Bede echoes these sentiments, but maintains that the souls of the Fathers were in a "bosom of tranquillity" (tranquillitatis sinu[52]). Hugo concludes that these authorities are enough to prove his point. Borrowing ideas from Peter Comestor, he goes on to describe how the just could be in hell and not suffer:

> There was a place on a higher edge of hell, having moderate light, without all material pains, in which the souls of the predestined were, just up to the descent of Christ into hell. This place on account of its tranquillity is called

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[49]. F. Stegmüller, op.cit., p.732, "et ideo auctoritas nulla est, quae neque aliquid affirmat neque aliquid negat."

[50]. Pseudo-Augustine, Sermo 159, iii, (P.L. 39, p.2059).

[51]. Gregory, Homilia in Evangelia 40 ii.2, (ed. P.L. 76, p.1303).

[52]. Bede, Homilia 2 ii.1, (ed. P.L. 94, p.138).

> the bosom of Abraham, and we say it is like the bosom of a mother, and is said to be of Abraham because he was the first road to believing. For he was the first to proclaim publicly that God was one.[53]

Hugo thus presents the idea of the limbus patrum, although he does not use the particular term. The chasm mentioned in Lk.xvi.22ff cleaves the Fathers off from the damned. Hugo concludes wondering that if all things are possible for God, why could he not preserve his elect "where he willed and how he willed"?[54]

Burchard's response (Letter III) is significant for the vocabulary that it introduces. He attempts to regain Augustine as an authority by pointing out that Augustine's hesitations did not derive from his trying to prove anything, but rather "as a restraint to the recklessness of you and those who believe with you."[55] He contrasts his quotations from Augustine with Hugo's from Pseudo-Augustine; although he does not disprove the latter's attribution, he favours the Augustinian citations he himself has chosen. Similarly, he maintains that Gregory meant the bosom of Abraham to be the secreta requies patrum; Burchard maintains his quotation was presented in this fashion to make Jesus use the term synonymously with the kingdom of heaven. Burchard then goes on to deal with Hugo's description of the position of the Fathers on the edge of hell. He maintains that it is "ridiculous and foolish" to maintain that there are "many bosoms of Abraham":

> that following the doctrine of certain lying teachers (I do not know who), we ought to understand a limbo of hell [limbum inferorum] for the bosom of Abraham, when the prayer of the faithful now beseeches the migrating souls humbly to be received in the bosom of Abraham.[56]

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53. Peter Comestor, Historia scholastica, ciii, "Erat enim in superori margine inferni locus, aliquantam habens lucem, sine omnia poena materiali, in quo erant animae praedestinatorum, usque ad Christi descensum ad inferos, qui locus propter sui tranquilitatem sinus Abrahae dictus est, ut sinum matris dicimus. Et dicebatur Abrahae, qui fuit prima credenda via, ipse enim primus publice praedicavit unum tantum Deum esse."(ed. P.L. 198, p.1589).

54. F. Stegmüller, op.cit., p.735, "ubi voluit et quomodo voluit".

55. Ibid. "sed ad vestram et eorum qui vobiscum sentiunt temeritatem reprimendam posuimus."

56. Ibid., p.736, "Cogimur enim, quod quam ridiculosum et puerile sit, quis nesciat, plures sinus Abrahae fateri, si ut scripsistis, secundum quorundam mendaciloquorum magistrorum doctrinam nescio quem limbum inferorum per sinum Abrahae debemus intelligere, cum et nunc migrantes animas oratio fidelium in sinum Abrahae recipi humiliter precetur."

Thus in this passage Burchard decisively rejects the idea of limbo, and uses it by name (limbum inferorum). During the course of the Conflictus he uses it only this once and only in condemnation; strangely, Hugo makes no use of it at all. The way Burchard uses the word limbo indicates that he is familiar with it, but the way he dismisses it with a pejorative tone makes it appear that it may have been a new theological term that did not meet with his approval. At any rate, he concludes with a brief citation from Augustine about the pains of hell; Augustine judged that hell had substance, but was "spiritual".[57]

Hugo replies (Letter IV) that Burchard has in no way diminished his authorities (Augustine, Gregory, Isidore, etc.). Rather, he maintains that Burchard has not dealt with them adequately and that it still stands that all of the Fathers were held in hell (infero) but "in tranquillity and without the pain of punishment."[58] He attempts to recapture Matt.viii.11 for his own use by quoting an examination of it by St. Jerome, which is substantially in agreement with his own ideas. He provides an interesting description of the church: following Gregory the Great, it is "the place of all the just"[59] and he gives an interesting analysis of it:

> Truly one church is fighting on earth, another expecting reward in purgatory, another triumphing with the angels in heaven.[60]

This is an early description of tripartite Church Militant, Suffering, and Triumphant. Hugo maintains that anyone in any part of it can be said to be in heaven. However, if one is speaking of heaven proper (the Empyrian), in no way can Burchard misconstrue the words of Gregory to apply to it: it is not a secreta requies rest, but rather a "magnificent and open

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57. Augustine, De Genesi ad litteram xii.32, (ed. P.L. 34, p.481).

58. F. Stegmüller, op.cit., p.736, "in tranquillitate ac sine poena supplicii in inferno teneri".

59. Gregory, Homilia in evangelia 38, ii.11, "Ecclesia est locus iustorum" (ed. P.L. 76, p.1282).

60. F. Stegmüller, op.cit., p.737, "Ecclesiarum vero alia est militans in terris, alia stipendia exspectans in purgatoriis, alia triumphans cum angelis in coelis."

one."[61] Moreover, when the church prays for a soul to be taken, she prays for it to go to be received in the bosom of Abraham and in perpetual light. This use of the phrase "perpetual light" is important; if the bosom of Abraham were the final destination of the soul, why do the prayers add the phrase perpetual light to the formula? Clearly the bosom of Abraham and perpetual light are two different things. Hugo also reiterates the future tense of Matt.viii.11 (many will come), and concludes by saying Burchard has still not adequately proven his points.

Burchard's reply (Letter V) is concerned mainly with reestablishing the credibility of his sources while heaping scorn and opprobrium on his opponent. He repeats each one of his quotations from Augustine and considers them to be indicative of Augustine's true opinion (he is, indeed, right, as Hugo's citations are from Pseudo-Augustine). Burchard maintains that Hugos's Augustinian quotations are not canonical, but does not come out and say that they are fradulent. He rejects out of hand the perpetual light argument, and expounds - somewhat diffusely- on the "manifest and open" idea by holding that the "secrets of heaven...cannot be yet known to us presently."[62] Hugo's response (Letter VI) is shock at having been accused of sullying Augustine's good name. He wonders why Burchard resists his own barrage of authorities, and darkly hints that Burchard may be proclaimed anathema for doing so. Hugo goes on to present more quotations from Pseudo-Augustine's sermons, which deal with the descent of Christ into hell and his rescue of the Fathers. Next he turns to the perpetual light argument and some slightly spurious quotations from Augustine which indicates that Lazarus is in "refreshment." (refrigerio; Hugo's quotations are largely genuine, but Augustine does not use the word refrigerio, which must have been interpolated into the text Hugo was using). He concludes that there is a big difference between refreshment and perpetual light; consequently, the latter term is well added, he reckons.

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[61]. Ibid., "illud non potest dici secreta requies, sed manifesta et aperta."

[62]. Ibid., p.739, "quia nondum nobis praesentialiter possent esse nota."

Burchard shifts his own position somewhat in his reply (letter VII). He seems to consider Hugo's final sermon from Pseudo-Augustine more seriously than the earlier ones Hugo uses. He attempts to refute it on a point of logic, noting that while a universal rule may apply to a particular situation, the reverse is not true. Thus, while the last quotation may apply to particular saints being weighed down by original sin and rescued by Christ, it does not mean that they all were. Burchard reiterates the idea that nowhere does Augustine categorically say that all the Fathers were detained in hell until Christ's descent. Furthermore, he also presents the idea that Gregory quoted Matt.viii.11 in the context of the secreta requies patrum in order to prove that Christ was responsible for this idea. He takes the Conflictus in an amusing direction by wishing Hugo off in a bad Latin hexameter couplet. Hugo's reply (Letter VIII) begins by fighting over Augustine. He notes that Augustine has indeed spoken in universals elsewhere, as when he said, "Whatever offspring has been born, he has been bound by original sin."[63] Although this is a genuine quotation, Hugo follows it up with a spurious one alleging that the gates of heaven were opened by Christ for the first time, and in so doing accuses Burchard of ignoring his evidence. Hugo moves to repeat Jerome's comments on Matt.viii.11 and how they support his own. Furthermore, he repeats the secreta requies patrum idea from Gregory, maintaining that the secret rest is wherever the saints are. A final quotation from Gregory's Moralia reinforces all the ideas Hugo has heretofore voiced: the descent of the souls of the Fathers, their powerlessness, their lack of torment in hell, and the descent of Christ to save them--why should Christ need to descend if not to save someone? Finally, Hugo concludes with some Latin hexameters of a quality as dubious as that of his opponent's for Burchard.

Burchard's last answer (Letter IX) wonders why Hugo has so failed to understand his meanings. Burchard does not understand Hugo's meaning when he indicated Augustine was capable of speaking in absolute terms; he does not doubt that Christ descended to save

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63. Augustine, De Nuptiis et concupiscentia, i.24, (ed. P.L. 44, p.429).

individuals bound in original sin, but he just does not consider all of the Fathers to have been in that number, only some. The rest were in the bosom of Abraham. He restates once more his interpretation that by secreta requies patrum Gregory meant heaven. Finally, he restates the arguments he had previously provided from Augustine and once again condemns the sermons of Pseudo-Augustine, although he does not attempt to prove them pseudonymous works. Hugo gets the final statement in Letter X. He in turn does what Burchard did before him; he restates the arguments of his authorities, in this case Gregory and Isidore. He then closes with a ringing denunciation of Burchard, maintaining that as he has not adopted Hugo's views, he can not be called a Catholic.

In the end, it is impossible to tell which man has "won" the debate, since neither of them ends by accepting the other's arguments. Much of the tug of war over Augustine ends in Burchard's favour, since his selections from Augustine are canonical whereas Hugo's are not. But Burchard never really deals with the arguments Hugo brings up from Leo and Isidore, and Burchard's logic surrounding the passages from Gregory and Matt.viii.11 is not as good as Hugo's. Hugo's ideas thus seem to carry more weight, especially as later authors share his interpretation of these matters. At any rate, the Conflictus helveticus de limbo patrum is of interest not only for its less-than-scintillating argumentation, but rather as the source for the first readily-verifiable use of the word "limbo", as well as an early use of the idea of the Church Militant, Suffering, and Triumphant. It is these latter two points that would continue beyond the confines of what is otherwise a personal, local dispute. Furthermore, the use of the word "limbo" in this context implies its currency in the later twelfth century.

VII. WILLIAM OF AUVERGNE: LIMBUS INFERNI AND THE FATE OF INFANTS

William of Auvergne (c.1180-1240) is the first of the figures we will examine who represents a shift into the mature scholasticism of the thirteenth century. The other transitional figure is William of Auxerre, and although as a writer he was an early contemporary of William of Auvergne, we will consider him in the next chapter, largely for stylistic reasons, as his method of writing is more akin to that of the high scholasticism of the later decades of the thirteenth century. Nevertheless, both the Magisterium divinale of William of Auvergne and the Summa aurea of William of Auxerre, both composed within a few years of each other, are important in that each voices in a slightly different way the concept of a limbus puerorum. Moreover, each does so in conjunction with the word "limbo". The work of these two Williams provided the base upon which the rest of the thirteenth century built, as the writers of the high scholastic period worked the limbus puerorum into their elaborate tiers of the afterlife. William of Auvergne unfortunately does not detail the nature of the place of unbaptized infants in his writings very much, but his ideas are otherwise seminal and original.

On William's Magisterium Divinale

The fruit of William's synthesis of the disparate philosophical and theological trends preceding him is his masterwork, the heavily Augustinian Magisterium divinale et sapientale, composed in the early 1230's, which will be the subject of our investigations into William's thought.[1] Our main interest is with a chapter within the tract De Vitiis et peccatis, composed

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[1]. The text used in this chapter is the Frankfurt-am-Main, 1963 reprint of the Orleans, 1674 edition of the somewhat inaccurately-titled Guilielmi Alverni Opera Omnia (hereafter abbreviated GAOO). It should be noted that the sermons reprinted in the volume do not bear consideration as they are most probably the work of William Perrauld; see N. Valois, Guillaume d'Auvergne, évêque de Paris, sa vie et ses ouvrages (Paris, 1889), p.183.

in 1228, which falls within the seventh book[2], although to illustrate specific points in this chapter isolated examples will be taken from elsewhere in the work.

William and the Limbus Patrum

William's chief importance to us is as a contributor to the idea of the limbus puerorum, yet we should not neglect the question why he did not contribute to or dwell at any length upon the idea of a limbus patrum, since he clearly believed in it.

> Similarly, neither were they [unbaptized infants] worthy of the limbo of hell, where the holy fathers were consoled in blessed hope, as Bede says, expecting entry to their homeland above.[3]

The whole of the doctrine of the limbus patrum is here, contained in a brief sentence, and is stated in such a way that we can conclude that William readily maintained it. Yet this is rather perfunctory treatment for such a potentially important idea, especially when we consider the size and scope of the Magisterium divinale. Why did William say no more, given the attention he would later pay to the idea of a limbus puerorum?

Part of an answer can be found, I believe, thanks to the work of Beryl Smalley in examining De Legibus, the fifth book of the Magisterium divinale, which was probably composed around 1230. The salvific power of the Old Law is a theme which we have seen in other authors before; it was generally accepted that the legalia of the Old Testament were given by God but had been superseded by the Gospel, and the Old Law itself was a prefiguration of the New, allegorically via Christ and the sacraments, topologically via moral teaching. Regarding this historical consensus, Smalley comments:

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[2]. Again, note that the order of treatises within this work is also in dispute: See B. Allard, "Nouvelles addtions et corrections au 'Repertoire' de Glorieux: A propos de Guillaume d'Auvergne", Bulletin de philosophie médiévale x-xii (1968-1970), 212-24, p.221, n.2.

[3]. William of Auvergne, De Vitiis et peccatis vii, "similiter nec limbo inferni digni sunt, ubi sancti patres beata spe consolati, ut dicit Beda, supernem patriae ingressum expectabant." (ed. GAOO, i, p.278).

> So indeed I would have said before reading the De Legibus of William of Auvergne. Since reading it I prefer to say that the belief in the allegorical and tropological interpretation of the Old Law was general, but not universal.[4]

The trouble was that much of De Legibus deals with this issue, and William does not entirely share the medieval consensus. Let us not forget that this is the man who would be the official mouthpiece for the burning of the Talmud in 1242, an action which certainly demonstrated antipathy towards contemporary Jews. De Legibus, amongst other things, is very concerned with the exclusivity of the saving power of Christianity. William does not doubt that the Old Law was a preparation for the Jews to serve as the seed bed for the reception of the New Law. But what level of faith the Fathers had in the New Law was beyond William; he preferred to concentrate upon the New. As Smalley writes:

> Did it [David praying to understand the Law (Ps.cxviii.18)] refer to an understanding of the Old Testament Prophecies of Christ? William may have presupposed that such was the case, but how odd that he fails to mention it!...
>
> Had the Old Testament elite an implicit or explicit faith in the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Redemption? De Legibus gives no answer. It raises questions instead, and these are crucial.[5]

William's questioning attitude towards the explicit or implicit faith of the Fathers seems to me to provide a good answer as to why there is no deep exposition of the doctrine of the limbus patrum in the Magisterium divinale--William had grave questions about the faith necessary to fill it, and thus by extension had no interested in providing a definitive answer on the subject while he himself was in such doubt. He certainly believed in the church's tradition of limbo and the incarceration of the Fathers there, but the grave questions and reservations which he felt doubtless account for his not going more deeply into this subject.

William and Embryology

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[4]. B. Smalley, "William of Auvergne, John of La Rochelle, and St. Thomas Aquinas on the Old Law", in St. Thomas Aquinas 1274-1974, ii (Toronto, 1974), 11-71, p.12.

[5]. Ibid., p.39 and 46.

However, William was much more interested in other matters, and one of them is somewhat unusual when we compare him to the some of the authors which precede him. As a consequence of his interest in the soul, William had an interest in embryology. This is manifest in his work De Anima, most probably written sometime between 1235 and 1240. One major focus of the work is on the question of the origin of souls--in part William was trying to refute the platonic notion of the pre-existence of souls. He denied, for example, that a soul came into being in an embryo simply by virtue of the union of the father and mother.[6] Nor did it live through the soul of its mother[7]; instead, from its first coming into being it had a vegetative soul. Only when its body was fully formed could it possess a rational soul, and this came after forty-six days, since it had taken forty-six years to complete the Temple.[8] However, this was not truly a human soul--that was delivered at birth, at which point the rational soul was absorbed into the human soul as a lesser light is absorbed into a greater light.[9] William held that until birth the embryonic body was not of the species "man" but rather of the species "seed of man", since that was what it was developing towards. These careful distinctions were occasioned by the need to deny the charge that there were multiple souls placed in man[10], but for our purposes what they prove is that William had an great and unusual interest in the successive stages of development of a child in utero. His theories on the succession of souls are most probably due to of his source Aristotle, although with a few differences, since Aristotle maintained that an embryo became human forty days after conception if it was male, ninety if female[11], but it is quite reasonable to conclude that

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6. William of Auvergne, De Anima, (ed. GAOO, ii, Suppl., p.105).

7. Ibid., p.105.

8. Ibid., p.109.

9. Ibid., p.107.

10. Ibid., pp.106ff.

11. Aristotle, History of Animals, iii.3.

someone who was interested in how a child formed from potentiality to actuality would be interested in that child after it was born.

The Effects of Original Sin

William's anthropology also considered the effects of original sin, and the point upon which he placed most of his focus was the beatific vision. In the days of Eden, before the Fall, William notes that Adam and Eve were given a special grace by God to enjoy the beatific vision continually--this contemplation so consuming them that they did not notice their own nudity.[12] The Fall changed all that, most notably with regards to the human soul. The soul, which had been meant to perceive both the higher and the lower world equally, lost the power to perceive higher things because of the crippling effects of original sin.[13] Such a process even hobbled the power of reason; in William's own words, "The more the mind progresses along the way of demonstration, the more it approaches darkness and distances itself from the light of principles."[14] This progressive darkness even affected the practice of worldly philosophy, which when left to itself produced a less clear and more imperfect knowledge. The beatific vision thus became an intermittent thing, something certainly not contrary to nature, but rather something in its way extraordinary, permitted only by the sufferance of God, granted by him through a special revelation and a superadded grace.[15] William had no belief in a semi-Pelagian natural faith capable of conveying grace or merit[16]; both came from God, and it was they which allowed the beatific vision. It was this loss upon

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[12]. William of Auvergne, De Universo (ed. GAOO, i, p.1057).

[13]. William of Auvergne, De Universo (ed. GAOO, i, p.1056).

[14]. William of Auvergne, De Bono et malo (ed. J. O'Donnell, Medieval Studies viii (1946), 245-299, p.282).

[15]. William of Auvergne, De Universo, (ed. GAOO, i, pp.1053-4).

[16]. A. Vanneste, "Nature et grâce dans la théologie de Guillaume d'Auxerre et de Guillaume d'Auvergne", Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses lxii (1977), 83-105, p.101.

which William chose to focus as the most debilitating consequence of original sin, and it was the regaining of it after the Resurrection which was to him the greatest reward.[17]

William and the Limbus Puerorum: Original Sin

With these two characteristics of William's thought in mind--his awareness of the development of children on one hand and his focus upon the deprivation of the beatific vision as the most debilitating effect of original sin on the other, we now turn to see how he came to formulate the limbus puerorum, since that realm dealt precisely with these two themes. This investigation is most evident in Chapter seven of De Vitiis et peccatis, a general study of original and actual sin, which is from the seventh book, De Virtutibus et moribus, of the Magisterium divinale. The chapter is titled "A Comparison of Original Sin to all other Sins Whether Actual or Venial", and William sets out to do just that, although his focus is actually more on the nature of the punishment due for original sin. William begins with a pair of questions: how can original sin be sinful for someone if it is done without any voluntary action, either of commission or omission? Secondly, since a person has not personally committed this sin, how can they be held liable to it? Given both of these questions, is original sin not most unfair to the most innocent beings of all, children, since they are entirely ignorant and contract this sin unwillingly? "Therefore", he concludes, "children dying without baptism are punished unjustly."[18] He wonders at the sentence passed by Augustine (actually Fulgentius) in De Fide ad Petrum that unbaptized infants are punished by eternal fire, and also wonders how St. Paul (Eph.ii.3) can note that "all are born children of wrath". Clearly Scripture is not to be disbelieved, so children who are born with original sin

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[17]. After the Resurrection should be stressed on this point, since it seems that, like Bernard of Clairvaux, William believed that the ultimate union with God did not come until after the Resurrection, and that until then, souls were detained in "hidden places of the saints" ("a locis sanctorum seclusis"); see De Vitiis et peccatis vii (ed. GAOO, i, p.278).

[18]. William of Auvergne, De Vitiis et peccatis vii, "Inique ergo puniuntur parvuli pro illo sine baptismo decedentes." (ed. GAOO, i, p.278).

have somehow earned this identification. His response is to draw a distinction between original sin and actual sins. No punishment accrues to original sin, only to actual sin, so that it is not worthy of "the fire of gehenna, nor the worm of conscience, nor even the fire of purgatory."[19] This effectively removes unbaptized infants from both hell and purgatory, as well as taking them from the internal punishment caused by the worm of conscience. Thus, William was able to preserve the words of St. Paul by applying them to original sin. He fudged the opinion of Fulgentius by maintaining that "Augustine" was speaking figuratively, in the way by which any punishment may be called eternal fire. William's point here is less than sound, which demonstrates that despite his great originality, he was not about to challenge the authority of "Augustine." It is odd that he chose this passage rather than using the Augustinian/Abelardian idea of a poena mitissima; we can only speculate on the reasons why. Possibly he stated the argument in order to refute it.

William goes on to illustrate his point by way of an analogy. Consider a leper colony, he notes. Lepers are placed in it to keep them away from healthy people because they are unworthy to live amongst them, lest the leprosy spread. Clearly, such a separation is a form of punishment for the contaminated, but it is not something which is done to persecute the lepers for their illness. They have contracted something which must keep them outside the realm of the clean, but their sickness is through no fault of their own, so they are not guilty of punishment for having it. The same is true of original sin, which William regards as a kind of spiritual leprosy. Continuing the analogy, in William's day leprosy was incurable, and exile was permanent. William believed that purgatory was not required for original sin; he clarifies his reasoning at this point. Unbaptized infants are deterred from purgatory not because it is not a punishment for original sin, but rather because they are not "worthy" of it, since although purgatory is a positive punishment, it is one that is exacted to purify a heaven-bound soul. One cannot go to purgatory without the special addition of

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[19]. Ibid, "idest nec ignis gehennae, nec vermis conscientiae, nec etiam purgatorius ignis."

divine grace and sanctification; purgatory is a hope, in which one expects to attain to heaven. Similarly, William notes that unbaptized infants were not worthy of the "limbo of hell"[20] because the Fathers who had been detained there were awaiting in hope the ultimate entry to heaven. Thus the two otherworldly realms of purgatory and the limbus patrum were realms of hope, a hope which unbaptized infants, with their incurable spiritual disease of original sin, could not even entertain.

Nevertheless, by invoking the limbo of the Fathers, William clearly links it in some way to the state of unbaptized infants, and he goes on to describe their fate thus:

> Wherefore it is clear that the place of children of this kind, namely those who die merely with original sin, who have added no actual sin to it while they lived, are to be in the middle between gehenna and purgatory, where children of this kind, rendered unclean through original sin as it were by leprosy, separated from the hidden places of the saints, are to have in future an eternal home, for they are not to be dragged down to gehenna, since they have not added actual and mortal sin to that original sin.[21]

The logical formula that unbaptized infants are punished solely by the lack of the vision of God does not seem logical to William. In his estimation, the beatific vision was only provided as a result of the grace of God on the individual soul. Lack of the vision of God is the result not of original sin but a lack of grace. William thus places unbaptized infants firmly outside of hell, in a place in the middle between hell and purgatory, as a kind of perpetual spiritual leper colony. Such a place is permanent, but it is not hell nor connected to hell in any way. William does not describe it in much detail, but it is clear that in formulating it the way he does, he has come up with a completely original idea.

The Punishment of Original Sin

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[20]. Ibid, "nec limbo inferni digni sunt".

[21]. Ibid., "Quare manifestum est locum parvulorum huiusmodi, videlicet qui cum originali solo decedunt, qui nullam actuale ei, dum viverent, addiderunt, medium esse inter gehennam, et purgatorium, ubi huiusmodi parvuli tanquam lepra originali immundi, seorsum a locis sanctorum seclusi, perpetuam mansionem sunt habituri; neque enim in gehennam detrahendi sunt, cum illi peccato originali actuale, et mortale non addiderint."

Although William does not describe the place of unbaptized infants, beyond mentioning it in the context of the limbus patrum, he does say a bit more about the state of those in it, as he continues in an examination of grace. Grace is the cause of salvation, and as such is linked to glory. William poses an interesting example: if Adam had died before the Fall, but also before he had been illuminated by grace, he would have enjoyed neither the vision of God, nor a state of glory, despite the fact that he would maintain a state of natural innocence. For William the vision of God is only possible through grace, and not even a sinless Adam could have attained it without that superadded grace. Since unbaptized infants lack grace, of necessity they do not possess glory either, since "glory is not given except to grace" and "grace alone introduces men to glory."[22] The lack of this glory, the lack of the divine vision, is one of the things which unbaptized infants must suffer. William notes that this "darkness" is "common to all the damned and not-saved"[23], which is an interesting choice of terms, since the two categories of "damned" and "not-saved" are clearly not synonymous in William's estimation. Lack of glory is the first darkness which they must bear; the second is the darkness of their "uncleanliness and original corruption".[24] However these two darknesses are not to be considered positive punishments; rather, they are absences, as darkness itself is not something positive, but rather an absence of light.

This explanation of course begs the question of the sadness of this state of twofold darkness, since separation from the vision of God is a rather serious thing, especially if infants know that such is the end to which they as human beings have been created and born. Would they not be sad, knowing that they had lost such a precious thing? No, William replies, there would be no sadness on their part, since sadness is an "actual punishment and

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[22]. Ibid., "cum gloria non detur nisi gratiae...cum sola introducat gratia homines ad gloriam."

[23]. Ibid., "quae omnibus damnatis communis est, et omnibus non salvatis".

[24]. Ibid., "videlicet ipsas tenebras immunditiae, et corruptionis originalis".

sensible to the heart"[25], and they were owed no actual punishments without actual sin. Yet it can be asked how such infants could think without sadness, or not notice the fact that they had not attained blessedness. William responds with an appeal to the masters of his time, and much can be made from this appeal, since if William was not in actual contact with the Parisian theologians of his day about these matters, he was certainly aware of their opinions on these issues. He gleans from the masters the following argument: there are ordinary contemporary men who saw that there were other men who were kings. These ordinary men do not envy the state of the kings, nor does the fact that others are kings make them sad, even though they and the kings are of the same species, namely humanity. So just as ordinary men are not sad that they do not possess a temporal kingdom, so unbaptized infants are not sad that they do not possess the heavenly kingdom.

William's Originality: The Possibility of Change in the Limbus Puerorum

William is in fact unclear about the nature of knowledge amongst unbaptized infants, and goes on to admit two possibilities. On the one hand, unbaptized infants might only retain the level of knowledge which they had when they died, which would mean that they might not even be capable of knowing about their state or the kingdom of heaven which they have not attained. On the other hand, they might be capable of such knowledge, and if so, this changes the nature of their state immensely. Here in life, William notes, "Saracens, pagans, and other infidels"[26] are able to make considerable advances towards the knowledge of God. Granted, to William's mind they would be incapable of actually attaining salvation without the gift of the divine grace which was granted only good Christians, nevertheless they were capable of learning about God and knowing him in some way. All this was possible for non-Christians despite the sum of petty and grave distractions of ordinary life, as well as the fact

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[25]. Ibid., "quoniam dolor iste esset poena actualis, et corde sensibilis".

[26]. Ibid., "patitur in sarracenis, et paganis, et aliis infidelibus".

that these thinkers were crippled by venial and mortal sins. If non-Christians are able to do this in life, William speculates that unbaptized infants might be able "to make immeasurable progress in the knowledge of God"[27] in the afterlife, especially since they suffer no punishments for their (original) sin and have no earthly cares to occupy or distract them. Since the knowledge of God is happiness, as that knowledge grows, so, too does the happiness, and since there would be no temporal limitations on their inquiries, so their happiness would grow without end, although it would be a purely human happiness, one not in any way to be compared to the state of glory which came from the beatific vision:

> Therefore the state of children of this kind would be one of great happiness even if is not to be compared to the happiness of glory; for they would have peace from all disturbances and difficulties, security from dangers, [and] happiness from the continual progress in divine knowledge[28]

This state is not heaven, but it is certainly better than earth in all ways except one: there is no possibility of moving from it to the beatific vision, as there is here on earth despite its disturbances and dangers. William's idea is brilliant in its originality, but despite William's originality, here and elsewhere, he displays the typical medieval dislike of novelty in the next instant, noting that the question of "whether children are able to philosophize so"[29] is nowhere found in the Scriptures, nor in the writings of the saints and dogmatists, not in any scholastic tradition.

William thus does not wish to engage in any unwarranted speculation, and leaves the matter "for higher discussion"[30], lest children and simple believers be scandalized, although he concedes that if God has shown himself to "blasphemous philosophers and sinners"[31],

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[27]. Ibid., "quin possent inaestimabiliter proficere in Dei cognitione".

[28]. Ibid., "ergo huiusmodi parvulorum status multum foelicitatis, etsi non foeliciati gloriae comparandem; haberent enim pacem de omnibus inquietudinibus, et molestiis, securitatem a periculis, iocunditatem ex divinae cognitionis continuis profectibus".

[29]. Ibid., "an parvuli sic philosophari possint".

[30]. Ibid., "Reliquendum ergo est illud discussioni altiori".

[31]. Ibid., "quam philosophis blasphemis, et peccatoribus revelavit."

justice demands that he show himself to unbaptized infants as well. All we can be safely certain of is that we are "children of wrath", which is to say we possess original sin from birth, and that original sin is what occasions God's wrath against us, since it is the root from which all actual sin (which also occasions God's wrath) springs. William concludes with an appeal to predestination: some men are born to the kingdom who are destined to be ejected from it (cf. Rom.ix.22-23; 1Thess.v.9). What is necessary, as William notes elsewhere[32], is the remedy of baptism, which he stresses with some urgency. Change must be made in this life, since the state of unbaptized infants is eternal. Suffrages may avail those in purgatory, but they have no effect on unbaptized infants.[33] William may have been of uncertain mind about their state, but he was sure it was eternal.

William and Esoteric Theology

Now that we have examined what William has said on our subject, we should ask why he said it. Why did he depict the state of unbaptized infants the way he did, and what occasioned his work in the first place? Some possible answers may be gleaned from the writings of Alan Bernstein. Bernstein notes a tension in religious thought between the formal and the popular, especially with regard to Parisian theologians of the thirteenth century.[34] The Parisian masters were at pains to avoid popular concepts which they regarded as too literal or superstitious, especially with regards to their discussions about hell. As such, their writings about hell and purgatory are devoid of the more lurid imagery of torture and suffering which can be seen in contemporary sermon and vision literature.[35] The theologians much preferred to dwell upon the spiritual effects of punishment. William was one such

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[32]. William of Auvergne, De Sacramento baptismi (ed. GAOO, i, p.424).

[33]. William of Auvergne, De Universo (ed. GAOO, i, p.678).

[34]. A. Bernstein, "The Invocation of Hell in Thirteenth-Century Paris", Supplementum Festivum: Studies in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller (Binghamton, NY, 1978), 13-54, p.21.

[35]. See, for example, E. Gardiner, Visions of Heaven and Hell Before Dante, (New York, 1989).

master who wrote in this trend, so much so that Bernstein believes it is appropriate to regard some of his theology as "esoteric", that is, reserved for a few specially trained thinkers rather than to be disseminated to the masses.[36] It seems reasonable to extend to extend this idea to William's opinions about the state of unbaptized infants as well. Rather than providing any physical descriptions, William is very careful to consider only the spiritual conditions of unbaptized infants. Furthermore, when he draws back from his speculation about the ability of children to philosophize, he does so lest he "offend the ears of children, the simple and good"[37]; in short, he provides a piece of esoteric theology, which is not to be taught to the simple faithful. Also, Bernstein notes preachers of the thirteenth century often used hell as a stimulus to behaviour, that is, to confession and penance.[38] It is not unreasonable to extend this idea also to William on unbaptized infants, since he exhorts parents to have their children baptized.[39]

Nor should we overlook the fact that William was a bishop with many contacts at the papal and French royal courts, and because of this he had a very well-developed conception of hierarchy, possibly more so that than other theologians who have studied. This conception, combined with the influence of Pseudo-Dionysius, led him to write in the second book of the Magisterium divinale of the need for the earthly hierarchy to model that of the afterlife.[40] It seems reasonable to infer that the influence went both ways, so that William's

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[36]. A. Bernstein, "Esoteric Theology: William of Auvergne on the Fires of Hell and Purgatory", Speculum lvii (1982) 509-531, p.509.

[37]. William of Auvergne, De Vitiis et peccatiis vii, "parvulorum aures offendat, simplicium, et bonorum." (ed. GAOO, i, p.278).

[38]. A. Bernstein, "The Invocation of Hell", op.cit., p.44.

[39]. William of Auvergne, De Sacramento baptismi, (ed. GAOO, i, p.417).

[40]. D. Luscombe, "Thomas Aquinas and Conceptions of Hierarchy in the Thirteenth Century" in A. Zimmerman, Thomas von Aquin: Werk und Wirkung im Licht neuerer Forschungen, (Berlin/New York, 1988), 261-277, pp.263-4.

sense of hierarchy on earth affected his decisions to map out the hierarchy of the afterlife, with special attention to that undealt-with subject, unbaptized infants.

Finally, we must not overlook the effect which heresy and unorthodox ideas have as a goad to orthodox explication. William was not a slavish follower of his non-Christian sources (e.g., Aristotle). Although he used them, he did not uncritically accept those opinions which he considered to be wrong, and when necessary he opposed them.[41] In his own words, the book De Universo creaturarum was written primarily for the honour of God, but secondarily for the "destruction of errors which exist concerning the universe."[42] Among these errors he mentions the "Manicheans" by name, whom he notes still exist and are most pernicious and deserving of destruction.[43] Obviously he was speaking about the Cathars, who although they had been defeated militarily at the time of the Magisterium divinale, nevertheless remained entrenched and a force to be reckoned with pastorally.[44] As the Cathars had particularly heterodox views about the afterlife and opposed the practice of infant baptism, it is not unreasonable to conclude that they had an effect on why William chose to consider the fate of unbaptized infants, and what the nature of that fate was.

Conclusions

We can surely conclude that with regard to the development of idea of the limbus puerorum, William was a true innovator. He was one of the earliest theologians to utilize the term limbus inferni, and utilize it in the context of the Fathers. But more importantly, William is crucial in the development of the idea of a limbus puerorum. He is original for his use of the idea of space in the question of unbaptized infants. He was the first thinker to

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41. A. Bernstein, "Theology Between Heresy and Folklore: William of Auvergne on Punishment after Death", Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History, n.s., v (1982), 1-44, pp.18-19.

42. William of Auvergne, De Anima, (ed. GAOO, ii, Suppl., p.82).

43. William of Auvergne, De Universo, (ed. GAOO, i, p.594).

44. A. Bernstein, "Theology Between Heresy and Folklore", op.cit., p.43.

shift unbaptized infants from a poena mitissima in hell to a limbus outside of hell entirely. Furthermore, he was compellingly original in his formulation of the possibility of unbaptized infants continuing to advance and grow in the knowledge of God, and as such aspire to a greater degree of happiness in the afterlife than can be possessed in mortal life. This novel idea, timorously voiced and half-held by William, proved enormously influential, and was reiterated by many scholastics, finally reaching a pinnacle in the works of the sixteenth-century Jesuit, Francisco Suarez. Even William's analogy about the happiness of unbaptized infants with respect to our own happiness as we ponder the fact that we are not kings is reused by later writers. William represents the turning point in the history of the idea of limbo, the point where the question becomes one of esoteric theology. Henceforth, the question becomes almost solely the property of academic theologians, apart from a few gifted laymen like Dante. While this means that the question loses popular appeal, it does mean that succeeding authors cover the question in more depth and with more intellectual rigour.

VIII. WILLIAM OF AUXERRE: SYSTEMATIC ARGUMENT AND THE MERCY OF LIMBO

We now turn to the work of one of William of Auvergne's contemporaries, William of Auxerre (d.1231), the second of our transitional figures. William of Auxerre has been described as someone "who occupies a key pivotal position between the earlier scholastic theology of the twelfth century and the full flowering of scholastic genius in the in the thirteenth".[1] William, as we shall see, is much more similar to the body and style of succeeding theological thought than is William of Auvergne, not least because he wrote in the quaestio style. After all, let us not forget that this approach was very novel at his time, nor understate the fact that his was a period of intellectual ferment, to which he himself contributed as he assisted in the task of bringing the works of Aristotle and Arab philosophers to the West.[2] William's importance and influence in the development of Western thought is in the process of being reexamined of late, causing people such as J Gründel to remark:

> For the first three decades of the thirteenth century, one can designate the Summa aurea of William of Auxerre without exaggeration as the largest, most ingenious, and most influential summa-work.[3]

For our purposes, William is most important for the theological and organizational work he does on the limbus puerorum. William makes brief use of the word limbo in connection with the limbus inferni, but he does not develop it. Instead, he provides a very detailed look at the effects of original sin upon an unbaptized individual after death, and it is upon this that we will focus. William is less daring in his theological explorations than William of

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[1]. J. St.Pierre, "The Theological Thought of William of Auxerre. An Introductory Bibliography", Récherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale, xxxiii (1966), 147-155, p.147.

[2]. W. Principe, William of Auxerre's Theology of the Hypostatic Union (Toronto, 1963), p.11

[3]. J. Gründel, Die Lehre von den Umständen der menschlichen Handlung im Mittelalter (Münster, 1963), p.328.

Auvergne was, but he is a great deal more systematic and organized, and it is these traits which were to be preserved along with his arguments by later theologians.

The Summa aurea

We now turn to examine the work in question, the Summa aurea super quatuor libros Sententiarum, or Summa aurea for short. There is a slight disagreement amongst scholars over the exact composition date, but it was most probably written over the years 1215 to 1220.[4] It is unknown where and when the work got the appellation "aurea", whether such was applied in William's day or afterwards, as some manuscripts refer to the work as the Summa theologica, Summa theologiae, or even just Summa.[5] As such, it is not a real commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard at all; rather, William uses the Lombard as more of a springboard for his own ideas and investigations.[6] Throughout his work, he changes the organization of topics within the Sentences and deals with topics which the Lombard does not while omitting ones which the Lombard does, preserving throughout the basic four book organization of the Sentences.[7] On the question of original sin, he sticks very closely to the Lombard, and it is initially upon this theme that we shall focus, since it provides the basis for all of William's other ideas on limbo.

On Peter Lombard and the Sentences

Before proceeding further, we should first examine what Peter Lombard (c.1100-1160) had to say that made him such a subject of intense commentary. His Liber

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4. For excellent summaries of the various arguments, see W. Principe, op.cit, p.158, n.28, and J. Dedek, Experimental Knowledge of the Indwelling Trinity: an Historical Study of the Doctrine of St. Thomas, (Mundelin, 1958), p.23, n.3.

5. R. Martineau, "Le plan de la 'Summa Aurea' de Guillaume d'Auxerre", Études et recherches d'Ottawa, i (1937), 79-114, p.79.

6. M. Nadeau, Foi de l'église, (Paris, 1988), p.215.

7. See R. Martineau, op.cit., esp. pp.79-80.

Sententiarum, completed c.1157-58, attempted to present the whole of Christian doctrine in one work, with heavy emphasis on Scripture, the Fathers (particularly Augustine), and Doctors of the Church, and light emphasis on speculation or novel ideas. The work itself became the standard manual of theology in the Paris schools, and was the major subject of commentary for majority of the rest of the authors to be considered during this thesis. Curiously enough, though, the ideas of Peter Lombard on the roots of limbo are by and large limited and derivative; he himself says little of importance. His ideas may be found in two main areas: the themes of original sin and the nature of hell.

Peter Lombard and Unbaptized Infants

Peter Lombard's ideas on the fate of unbaptized infants occur during his consideration of original sin, in Distinction 33 of book II of the Liber sententiarum.[8] Most of the conclusions he draws are simple repetitions of passages and ideas from Augustine. Thus, he concludes that there is only one original sin, not many[9], and this one original sin is binding upon children from their parents, although it is not additive in nature.[10] With regard to the nature of its punishment, the Lombard adopts Augustine's poena mitissima from the Enchiridion "To be sure, the punishment will be of the mildest for those who have added no other sin to the original sin which they have contracted."[11] He goes on to clarify his position as follows:

> If that is so, therefore they are not obligated by the sin of the preceding parents except Adam. For if they should be punished eternally for the actual sins of their parents and for their own original sin, they would be punished not now less, but much more than their own parents. Therefore they are not

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8. Peter Lombard, Sententiae in IV libris distinctae, Spicelegium Bonaventurianum iv-v (Rome, 1971), hereafter ed. Sent.).

9. Augustine, Enchiridion ad Laurentium xliv and xlvi, (ed. PL 40, p.254).

10. Ibid., xlvii, (P.L. 40, p.255).

11. Ibid., xciii, "Mitissima sane poena eorum erit, qui praeter peccatum quod originale traxerunt, nullum insuper addiderunt." (P.L. 40, p.275).

> punished for the actual sins of their parents, nor for the actual sins of the first parents; but for original sin which is drawn from the parents, children will be condemned: to feel for it no other punishment of material fire or worm of conscience, except that they shall lack the vision of God forever. Therefore children have been bound by one, and not many sins.[12]

Here again the Lombard denies the additive nature of original sin, and reasserts the Augustinian idea of the lightest possible punishment as the punishment for it. But also he adds to this conclusion the ideas of Peter Abelard, which clarify the nature of the punishment as merely the deprivation of the beatific vision. In this passage the Lombard joins Augustine and Abelard for the first time in a way which was to prove enormously influential. Any scholastic who considers the punishment of original sin after the Lombard uses this formula. It is unfortunate that the Lombard does not develop it further, given how important it would become.

Peter Lombard and the Limbo of Hell.

Peter Lombard has less to say about the state and position of the Fathers until the coming of Christ, and what is said is largely in Distinction 50 of Book IV. Here the Lombard considers the nature of hell, and in so doing demonstrates some very sophisticated ideas both about the nature of the afterlife and about the human soul. He refers to hell as the "outer darkness" (tenebrae exteriores, cf. Matt.viii.12), and concludes it is so because "those who are evil within it will be outside the corporeal and spiritual light, namely God...there will be the outer darkness because sinners will be utterly outside of God."[13] This clarifies the nature of the beatific vision somewhat; God is presumed to be both a bodily and a

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[12]. Peter Lombard, Liber sententiarum II.xxxiii.c.2.5 "Quod si est, non igitur peccatis patrum praecedentium obligantur nisi Adae. Sic enim pro peccatis actualibus parentum aeternaliter punirentur et pro suo originali, non iam minus, sed forte magis quam ipsorum parentes punirentur. Non igitur pro peccatis parentum actualibus, nec etiam pro actualibus primi parentis, sed pro originali quod a parentibus trahitur, parvuli damnabuntur: pro eo nullam aliam ignis materialis vel conscientiae vermis poenam sensuri, nisi quod Dei visione carebunt in perpetuum. Uno igitur, et non pluribus peccatis, parvuli obligati sunt." (ed. Sent., i, p.520).

[13]. Peter Lombard, Liber sententiarum IV,50,ii.1-2, "Quia tunc mali penitus extra lucem corporalem et spiritualem, scilicet Deum, erunt...Ibi exteriores tenebrae erunt, quia tunc peccatores pentius erunt extra Deum." (ed. Sent., ii, p.555).

spiritual light, and sinners are excluded from both. This raises a question with regard to those who die in original sin alone, who presumably suffer the same fate. Should they share in the exact same fate as the damned? The Lombard does not pose this question in exactly this fashion, but he does go on to maintain that there is something internal as well as external to the state of the damned:

> Doubtless the "outer darkness" is able to be understood as a certain malignancy of hate and of will, which then will grow in the minds of the reprobate, and a certain forgetting of God, because they will be afflicted and disturbed by the interior and exterior pains of torment to such an extent, that they will bring to mind to think something of God scarcely and rarely or never: as those who are overwhelmed excessively by a weight are stupefied and disturbed to such a degree, that in the meantime they can not extend their thought to anything but the weight.[14]

Thus in addition to the deprivation of the beatific vision, the damned also have the addition of positive punishments, and a psychological state which forever turns them from God. Unbaptized infants no doubt lack the latter two conditions.

But what does all this mean with respect to the Fathers? The Lombard does not ask that question, either, although he does go on to examine the figure of the bosom of Abraham, which in other authors was to prove so influential in the development of the limbus patrum. Sadly, on this matter, the Lombard merely quotes Augustine's words from De Genesi ad litteram[15] on how difficult an image the bosom of Abraham is. Augustine there takes Lazarus to have been at rest and the rich man Dives to have been in torment, and, following him, the Lombard seems to have concluded likewise. The bosom of Abraham for him is heaven, pure and simple. The chasm of Luke xvi.22ff is the gap between the good and the evil: each group is capable of seeing the other, at least until the final judgement, when the evil will no longer see the good. The good are not in any way moved by the plight of the

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[14]. Peter Lombard, Liber sententiarum IV.50.ii.3 "Sane exteriores tenebrae intelligi possunt quaedam malignitas odii et voluntatis, quae tunc excrescet in mentibus reproborum, et quaedam oblivio Dei, quia tormentorum interiorum et exteriorum doloribus adeo afficientur et turbabuntur, ut ab illis ad cogitandum aliquid de Deo vix et raro vel nunquam mentem revocent: ut qui nimio pondere premuntur, adeo stupescunt et turbantur, ut interim in alia cogitationem non extendant" (ed. Sent., ii, pp.555-556).

[15]. Augustine, De Genesi ad litteram, viii.5.9 (P.L. 34, p.376).

wicked, nor is their rest disturbed. The question is, how do the Fathers fit into this scheme? The Lombard speaks very little about their situation, noting only:

> But concerning the ancient fathers, who were held in hell until the passion, it cannot be said inconsistently that they had the virtues of faith and hope, because they believed and hoped they were about to see God by sight; just as they did not see him then, since the knowledge of God by sight was not open to them before the passion of Christ, which once it had been consummated, they crossed over from faith to sight.[16]

Here in this distinction the focus is upon the virtue of hope; it is an unusual place to consider the repose of the Fathers. The Lombard clearly holds to the idea of the harrowing and their subsequent liberation, but he does not detail their state, merely asserting that they were held in hell, doubtless by a more tolerable damnation, like those who were held for original sin alone. There is little room in this formulation for the formation of a limbus patrum. Thus, in the long run, Peter Lombard contributed more to the development of the idea of the limbus puerorum. Most of all, however, he was important as a stimulus to debate.

William of Auxerre and Original Sin

From the Lombard we can turn back to William, and an examination of the Summa aurea can best begin with the question what he considers original sin to be, and how he thinks people, especially children, contract it. He deals with these issues at length mainly in Book II, chapter 14 of the Summa aurea. William begins his investigation of the subject with a statement of the reality of original sin. He believes that it exists and that we inherit it as heirs of Adam. He notes that although Adam made satisfaction for his own initial sin of disobedience, we are not able to share in that particular satisfaction by reason of nature, as "the grace by which man makes satisfaction is from God alone, and not from natural free

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[16]. Peter Lombard, Liber sententiarum III.26.v, "De antiquis vero Patribus, qui apud inferos usque ad passionem tenebantur, non incongrue dici potest quod fidem et spem virtutem habuerint, quia credebant et sperabant se visuros Deum per speciem; qualiter eum tunc non videbant, quia non patuit eis cognition Dei per speciem ante passionem Christi, qua consummata, a fide transierunt ad speciem." (ed. Sent., ii, p.161).

will, and on that account it is not to be drawn from nature."[17] Since grace comes only from God and natural free will is inadequate, any semi-Pelagian solutions to the problems addressed here are not possible.

William restates the argument of nature and person that we have seen earlier; Adam's personal sin affected the human nature of his descendants. We inherit this affected nature, and furthermore we inherit the sin through the concupiscence of the flesh, which makes for two strikes against us (although William notes that Christ was a special case, since he was conceived without concupiscence, and thus did not inherit original sin). William goes on to consider, then refute, the idea that humans inherit multiple original sins; i.e., that the second sin of Adam affected us as much as the first did, and so on with each generation of parents handing on a gradually-increasing accumulation of sins to their descendants. William does not believe that sin is additive; by way of analogy, he notes "completely wet bread is not susceptible to another soaking, and completely boiling water is not susceptible to another boiling."[18] Once the initial nature has been corrupted, it can be corrupted no further. In support of this, William relies on an unusual explanation of human anthropology--the notion that man in the state of Eden was more susceptible to corruption because of the very newness of his nature. To illustrate this, William falls back on an explanation which comes from an odd scientific idea of Aristotle: human nature in its newness was more susceptible to corruption just as a new mirror is stained when a menstruating woman regards herself in it, something which does not happen to an old mirror.[19] William goes on to refute the Gnostic-style idea that the soul is pure but only draws corruption from union with corrupted flesh, and does this by defining corruption in two ways. In the first place, he notes that the soul is

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[17]. William of Auxerre, Summa aurea, ii.14.1, "gratia qua homo satisfacit a solo Deo est, et non a naturali libero arbitrio, et ideo non potest contrahi per naturam." (ed. Ribaillier, p.511).

[18]. Ibid, "sicut pannus madescens ex toto non est susceptibilis alterius madefactionis; et aqua calefacta ex toto non est susceptibilis alterius calefactionis."

[19]. Aristotle, On Dreams, ii.

passible and can suffer from too much of any outside force--this corruption is inflicted by God for the sin of Adam. The corruption of the flesh itself and of vice is from Adam's work alone, and William notes that "from this corruption or rottenness is born sin in the souls of children."[20] This corruption, which is a punishment to the flesh, is what introduces guilt into the soul, and the guilt adheres to it with such a firm grip that succeeding grace is not able to dislodge it.

William goes into more detail on these matters elsewhere. On these points he is very heavily influenced by Augustine, whom he quotes extensively in his responses regarding the transmission of guilt and the difference between the potential concupiscence of original sin in children and the actual concupiscence of adults. These arguments are important for us because William focuses on the effects of original sin in conjunction with baptism. Throughout he describes one of the effects of original sin using the term fomes (literally tinder), in the sense of a proneness to arousal or burning, and begins by dealing with the question of whether original sin is in fact this fomes. He concludes that it is not, that baptism destroys the fomes insofar as it is a sin, but not insofar as it is a proneness. Before baptism, fomes is a stain on the soul, liable to produce damnation, but afterwards it is merely a sign that we are all descendants of Adam--by way of analogy, William likens the situation to the "way a stain is inseparable from the moon."[21]

The Effects of Baptism

Baptism is the key which changes human nature in these matters, and William draws a parallel to the early anthropology of man in terms of the change engendered in the soul by baptism. Before baptism, a soul is "in a state of nature and newness" which is less able to

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[20]. Ibid. "et ex hac corruptione sive feditate nascitur peccatum in animabus parvulorum." (p.513).

[21]. William of Auxerre, Summa aurea, ii.14.2, "et quodam modo macula in luna inseparabilis." (ed. Ribaillier p.517).

resist corruption; afterwards, it is "in a state of grace, when it is not so passible."[22] Elsewhere he underlined the importance of baptism. Original sin is mortal, he notes, requiring both temporal and eternal death, but after baptism, "no punishment is owed for it."[23] Nevertheless, the body still must die, which begs the question of death. Why is a soul infused to a body that is doomed to die? Is such an act fair of God? William responds to these questions in a number of ways. Firstly and most importantly, he notes that the rules of life are the way they are because God wished to preserve the order of creation as he had established it. Man was to be generated from man naturally. If sin were to enter the process and be propagated along with the generation, this would be a sad after-effect, but God did not wish to alter the basic pattern he had established. Furthermore, William reckoned that this situation was a way of keeping man humble, since man had fallen through the sin of pride. Such a weakness of the flesh would contribute to the ongoing process of humility. Also, as William notes by way of Augustine, it is always better to be than not to be, a fact which again absolves God of the charge of injustice. Additionally, by retaining natural generation even despite the contamination of original sin, man is retained in the state of life he was created to be in, which is a source of happiness for him. Finally, William observes "nor does God do injury to a soul, if he does not give it eternal life."[24] Here again is an idea we have met before, most recently in the works of William of Auvergne--the notion that salvation is a superadded grace, and that a person who is not awarded it is not done any positive harm.

Elsewhere William covers the related question of why baptism, which removes original sin, does not remove the penalties of bodily death and other miseries of life. To this

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[22]. Ibid., "quoniam prius invenit eam in statu nature et novitatis, sed post baptismum in statu gratie, quando non est ita passibilis." (p.518).

[23]. William of Auxerre, Summa aurea, ii.14.5, "Post baptismum nulla debetur ei poena", (ed. Ribaillier, p.521).

[24]. William of Auxerre, Summa aurea, ii.14.4, "nec facit Deus iniuriam anime, si non dat ei vitam eternam." (ed. Ribaillier, p.520).

William gives several answers. The first and most important one is again an idea we have seen before, the answer that were baptism to confer immortality, people would seek it out for that end alone, rather than as a step toward eternal life. Furthermore, the fact of death and the attendant miseries of life provide a strong inducement to focus upon eternal life. Finally, William reiterates the idea that by having to suffer death and other indignities in life, man is humbled, and through that humility combats the pride which had led to the Fall.

The Punishment of Unbaptized Infants

Throughout these discussions of original sin, William makes reference to the plight of infants as a test case for his theories. There are several arguments which he uses all along, and it is fitting to examine them in a bit more detail. At one point, he responds to the objection that if ignorance is an excuse for sin, children, who are entirely ignorant and who have contracted their sin through no fault of their own, are completely innocent of original sin. William's response is that while ignorance and incapability do indeed excuse sin, original sin is a different case. It is a "natural infection" which does not stem from the omission of an action. Incapability to act does indeed excuse from an omitted action, but that does not apply in the case of original sin, which still adheres to infants. "We say that sin is generated naturally in the soul of a child, not from nature according to its first institution, but naturally, that is from the corruption which grows in it by nature."[25] William draws this idea out: the child is not blameworthy in himself, so the blame is not to result in a sensible punishment, but the original sin in that child becomes a cause for blame, and in William's eyes, "makes him unworthy to be presented in the sight of God."[26] From this naturally

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[25]. William of Auxerre, Summa aurea, ii.14.1, "Dicimus quod naturaliter generatur peccatum in anima pueri, non de natura secundum primam institutionem, sed naturaliter, id est de corruptione que inolevit pro natura." (ed. Ribaillier, p.515).

[26]. Ibid., "quia facit indignum presentari conspectui Dei."

develops the Abelardian idea which we have seen before and which William holds, that the punishment of unbaptized infants is a deprivation of the beatific vision.

This point is raised in several places, along the argument in Book II, chapter 14, but is most prominently developed in Book I, chapter 13, especially in connection with the issue of God's justice. The question is presented: is it just of God to punish unbaptized infants by depriving them of the beatific vision; that is, the enjoyment of his presence? Is such a punishment deserved, or is it greater than what is deserved? In the first place, William voices an objection in the form of a syllogism: unbaptized infants are punished by a deprivation of the beatific vision; this is a worthy punishment for original sin; therefore they are punished by a worthy punishment. His own opinion is somewhat different, and is surprisingly merciful. He agrees that the beatific vision is in fact a reward for the faithful, and unbaptized infants certainly do not have this reward. He admits that "in the way in which children are said to be punished, the deprivation of the vision of God is a punishment fitting for original sin."[27] This definition is somewhat grudging, and William rejects the common conclusion drawn by the syllogism in the objection. For William it is a false syllogism, every bit as wrong as the syllogism: Socrates sees a man; Plato is a man; therefore Socrates sees Plato. William goes on to draw careful attention to the idea that there are many different kinds of deprivation. God, for His part, "punishes children with a lesser deprivation than what is fitting"[28] for them. Deprivation in and of itself does not have a degree in William's estimation, but the thing of which the deprivation deprives someone can have a degree. William relies on Augustine's definition[29] that God's radiance is everywhere, and depending upon where a person is, he can perceive more or less of it. Thus one can be deprived of it

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[27]. William of Auxerre, Summa aurea, i.13.2, "quo parvuli puniri, concedimus quod carentia visionis Dei est poena condigna originali", (ed. Ribaillier, p.251).

[28]. Ibid., "Deus punit eos minori carentia quam sit condigna." (p.252).

[29]. Augustine, De Libero arbitio ii.16.43, (P.L. 32, p.1264).

in different amounts depending on where one is in relation to God. So to William, one form of deprivation of the divine vision is greater than another, and this fact has special relevance as far as unbaptized infants are concerned. He concludes "Whence...God inflicts a lesser deprivation of his vision than original sin exacts on children."[30] They are kept far from God, but not as far as their sin deserves to be. William thus admits to a notion of divine mercy, even within the Augustinian framework. For him, unbaptized infants do not just suffer a deprivation of the vision of God, they suffer a lesser deprivation of that vision than their original sin would have earned them. Presumably this is a function of their location in the afterlife, although this is never spelled out; but whatever causes it, it is a sure sign that William interprets their situation with a greater emphasis on mercy.

There are other objections to such a scheme, and William goes on to deal with them. It is again easy to charge God with injustice, William allows, as he again lifts an argument from Augustine[31]: original sin is the least of sins, yet it is punished by the greatest punishment, the deprivation of the vision of God. William responds to this with the maxim that the deprivation of the vision of God is a great punishment as far as damnation, but much less as far as sense. This particular formulation occurs several times elsewhere in his works in various forms.[32] William also considers the objection from logic that since the enjoyment of the vision of God produces the greatest glory, separation from it should produce the greatest punishment. For William this objection is again faulty logic, since the supremely Good does not have an opposite, because to say so would be to accord substantive existence to the supremely evil. More analogies illustrate this point: if a sweet drink produces delight, the deprivation of that sweet drink will not necessarily cause sadness. A similar point

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30. William of Auxerre, Summa aurea, i.13.2, "Unde dicimus quod Deus minorem carentiam visionis sui parvulis infligit quam exigat peccatum originale." (ed. Ribaillier, p.252).

31. Actually Pseudo-Augustine, De Spiritu et anima, xlvi (P.L. 40, p.822).

32. E.g., in ii.14.5 (ed. Ribaillier, p.521).

utilizing the joy drawn from contemplating a geometric truth which lacks an opposite is derived from Aristotle's Topics.[33] Finally, William considers the argument that the deprivation of the vision of God is worse than the fires of hell, since the damned would much prefer to be in hell and have the vision of God than not to be in hell and be deprived of the vision of God. To this he responds as he did to the previous objection, that the argument is based upon faulty logic, and the comparisons between the deprivation of the vision of God and the fires of damnation are not appropriate. William here restates the traditional differentiation between the punishments of damnation and of sense; unbaptized infants enduring only the former.

Variant Readings

A variant reading added as an appendix to the Ribaillier edition expands on some of these themes somewhat, with particular regard to God's mercy. This variant focuses on the divine punishment of unbaptized infants, dealing with whether or not such a punishment is worthy, as we have seen before, and considering several truncated versions of the objections thus far mentioned. Of interest is an objection raised from the Sentences that "the punishment of children is the greatest punishment", which is the closest William comes to relying on the arguments of Peter Lombard in these matters. His semi-geographical argument about the degree of magnitude of an absence is explained as follows:

> But we say well that children could well be deprived of the vision of God more than they are deprived of it. For although they do not see God face to face, nevertheless they see and perceive and sense something of the overflowing of the goodness of God, which is everywhere. And according as someone senses and perceives less from the overflowing of the vision of God, as he recedes more from the vision of God; and so he is able to more and less be deprived of the vision of God; and according as he senses and perceives more, as he approaches more to the vision of God; so he is able to

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[33]. Aristotle, Topics, i.3.

> be deprived of the vision of God more and less; and so someone is able to have a greater darkness than he has.[34]

Here is a more detailed expansion of an idea we have seen William entertain earlier. Motion towards and away from God produces a greater or lesser deprivation of the beatific vision. The presence of God is the beatific vision. The closer someone is to God, the more of that vision he enjoys; similarly, the farther someone is from God, the more he is deprived of the beatific vision. Unbaptized infants, who are very far from God, should lack the beatific vision almost completely. Nevertheless, God allows them to perceive something of his overflowing, omnipresent Goodness. He has a reason for allowing this: "Wherefore we say that the Lord imposes on children a lesser deprivation than original sin demands, and so he acts mercifully with them."[35]

The key word here is mercy, and this is a much more evident theme throughout the variant text. William is also careful with this thought in mind to make exacting definitions of his terms. He is quick to agree, for example, that separation from God is the highest pain, but is careful to consider pain according to two definitions: damnation and torment. The statement is true according to the first definition, false according to the second. This focus on duality continues into his final consideration: the question of mercy. "God, because of his mercy, punishes [unbaptized infants] less than is merited."[36] According to one view of the nature of God, such a conclusion is false. But William seems to favour another definition, another sense, as he notes, "But in this sense, partly from justice, partly from

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[34]. William of Auxerre, Suma aurea,i.Appendix 45, "Sed bene dicimus quod parvuli bene possent magis carere visione Dei quam careant. Licet enim non videant Deum facie ad faciem, vident tamen et percipiunt et sentiunt aliquid de circumfluentia bonitatis Dei, que ubique est. Et secundum quod aliquis minus sentit et percipit de circumfluentia bonitatis Dei, magis recedit a visione Dei; et ita magis et minus potest carere visione Dei; et secundum quod magis sentit vel percipit, magis accedit ad visionem Dei; et ita magis et minus potest carere visione Dei; et ita aliquis potest habere maiores tenebras quam habeat." (ed. Ribaillier, p.361).

[35]. Ibid., "Unde dicimus quod Dominus minorem carentiam infert parvulis quam exigat peccatum originale, et ita misericorditer agit cum eis."

[36]. Ibid., "Deus de misericordia punit minus condigno." (p.362).

mercy, he punishes them less than is fit."[37] Justice and mercy are best balanced in these matters, and William chooses not to place too much emphasis on the importance of justice. Mercy is the operative principle for God's actions in so many things. Even if the salvation which is accorded to the just in paradise is due to justice, nevertheless, William maintains, "it is from mercy by reason of its foundations."[38]

The Status and Place of Unbaptized Infants

Now that we know William's position on the effects of original sin on unbaptized infants, we should examine just a bit more concerning both the status of those infants, and the location of their abode in the afterlife. The first of these can be seen in a section from Book IV, chapter 18, and deals with the passibility of unbaptized infants. Here again William plays with two definitions of a term in order to tease out an answer. What is impassibility? He reasons in the objections that impassibility is either a privation of the potential of suffering in a body, or else the potential to resist violence. Neither seems an adequate definition for him. If the former is true, the Devil is not passible (since he cannot suffer in the body). The latter seems more credible, yet if it is so, only glorified bodies will have impassibility. Thus, it seems that "children dying without baptism will not have impassibility of this kind."[39] William reasons that insofar as impassability is the potential to resist violence, it comes ultimately in two forms, the privation of both dying and the potential of dying. He believes that Adam in the state of Eden only had the former, and would have needed the Tree of Life to obtain the latter. Unbaptized infants do not share in this. Nor, he pointed out, can we say that because they do not suffer ipso facto they are impassable. He explains:

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[37]. Ibid., "Sed in hoc sensu, partim de iusticia, partim de misericordia punit minus condigno."

[38]. Ibid., "tamen ex misericordia ratione fundamenti."

[39]. William of Auxerre, Summa aurea iv.18.3, "parvuli decentes sine baptismo non habebunt huiusmodi impassibilitatem." (ed. Ribaillier, p.495).

> For the fact that they will not be able to suffer will not be from the power of their bodies, but from the justice of God, who does not permit anyone to be punished unjustly by any bodily punishment.[40]

Thus the lack of both impassibility and punishment for unbaptized infants operates from divine justice. However, the fact that the said infants are still passible and yet not in a state of punishment argues for a special location for them, free from any active agents which could cause a suffering that William so categorically denies they have. Like William of Auvergne, William of Auxerre has here implicitly attained the concept of the limbus puerorum, although he does not use that particular term to describe it.

William does, however, use the term limbo (or rather limbus inferni) elsewhere, in Book II, tractatus XV, Chapter III, where he deals with the question of whether an individual (presumably a child), upon reaching the age of discretion, can die with both original sin and venial sin, and where such an individual would be punished in the afterlife, since as we have seen above, individuals with original sin alone have a special place in the afterlife. First of all, the natural question of whether such a situation is possible is raised; can an individual just at the age of reason sin exclusively venially? After all, if such an individual still has original sin, it is obvious that he does not have faith (presumably via baptism) which might mitigate his sin, and so it seems that any sin he would commit would automatically become mortal sin rather than remaining venial sin. The question touches slightly upon the issue of virtuous pagans, for William insists that man is capable of thinking about God "under the natural leadership of reason"[41], and by doing all that he could reasonably be expected to do in order to gain enlightenment from God. Thus William concludes that someone at the age of discretion could indeed be guilty only of a sin merely venial.

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[40]. Ibid., "Quod enim non poterunt, non erit ex potentia corporum, sed ex iustitia Dei, que non permittit aliquem puniri iniuste aliquo pena corporali."

[41]. William of Auxerre, Summa aurea, ii.15.3, "naturali ductu rationis", (ed. Ribaillier, p.546).

But where would such an individual be punished? This question draws William into a conundrum:

> Either [he] will be punished for venial sin in purgatory or in hell or in the limbo of hell. Not in purgatory, because that place is for saints alone; nor in hell, because he has not mortal sin; nor in limbo, since that place is for children alone.[42]

Thus we have the term limbo applied to a place for children, the limbus puerorum in all but name. William, as we shall see below, deals little with the actions of Christ during the triduum and his freeing of the Fathers from limbo. William here uses the idea of a limbus inferni, but applies it to the notion of a limbus puerorum, rather than a limbus patrum. Clearly this realm is on the outskirts of hell, and clearly in it (based upon what we have seen above) there is neither the beatific vision nor any positive punishment. William does not go so far as to speculate anything about the possible spiritual development of the inhabitants therein, as William of Auvergne does, yet he clearly admits the concept in its full-blown form. William goes on in the question to consider the nature of sin with an interesting geometric illustration:

> Whence it is accustomed to be said that the punishment in hell for mortal sin is like a solid, that in hell for venial sin is like a surface, that in purgatory for venial sin is like a line, that in the present for venial sin is like a point.[43]

It is interesting to note the geometric expansion of the punishment of sin, from a point in life to a "solid" in hell. Each type of punishment and place is an expansion in dimension, with the punishment of mortal in hell being the largest and most solid of them all. The elements of geometry thus come easily to William in his free-ranging penchant for analogy.

However, within the above schema, it should be noted that there is indeed a place in hell for the punishment of sin specifically and exclusively venial. William goes on to remark

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[42]. Ibid., "Aut punietur pro veniali in purgatoria aut in inferno aut in limbo inferni. In purgatoria non, quia ille locus est sanctotum tantum; nec in inferno, quia nullum habet mortale; nec in limbo, quoniam iste locus parvulorum est tantum."

[43]. Ibid., "Unde solet dici quod pena illata in inferno pro mortali est sicut soliditas, illata in inferno pro veniali est sicut superficies, illata in purgatorio pro veniali est sicut linea, illata in presenti pro veniali est sicut punctus." (p.547).

that an individual dying at the age of discretion "will be punished in the exterior part of hell for venial sin alone with original sin"[44] Such a person is to be regarded as a child, and sometime around the attainment of reason and death is given a special illumination by God to consider the creatures of the world and then move by a process of deliberation from the creature to the creator. This provides a time to consider God and know, honour, and love him in soul, if not in the actuality of bodily actions. "Otherwise", William notes, "God would be acting too strictly with such."[45] Such a person is to be regarded as a child, and accorded the same treatment. He will be in hell, but presumably in a situation akin to that of unbaptized infants. He will be laden with a positive punishment, although a light one--certainly "less in amount than that which is brought in hell for mortal sin".[46] Thus for William, there is a limbo of hell for unbaptized infants, and a more tolerable damnation for what are functionally children who have merely minor sins.

William and the Limbus Patrum

William does not mention the limbus patrum, or deal with the condition of the ancient Fathers before the advent of Christ. It is difficult to say why not, since Peter Lombard, his model, did so. He touches on many of the themes, but does not go into detail. William adopts wholeheartedly the Anselmian theory of the Incarnation, the notion that a God/man was necessary to make satisfaction between God and man for the Fall. He also adopts the related idea that the expiatory death of the God/man was the "most fitting" way that this satisfaction could be made.[47] By adopting the Anselmian theory of the redemption, William rejects the Devil/ransom theory, in so doing eliminating much of the attendant dramatics

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[44]. Ibid., "Dicimus quod iste punietur in exteriori parte inferni pro solo veniali cum originali."

[45]. Ibid., "Aliter Dominus nimis stricte agaret cum talibus".

[46]. Ibid., "minor est in infinitum quam illa que infertur in inferno pro mortali."

[47]. For a more detailed exploration of this theme, see J. Rivière, Le dogme de la rédemption au début du moyen âge, (Paris, 1934), p.421.

which accrue to that theory in the Gospel of Nicodemus. Lack of focus on Christ's victory over the Devil makes for a decreased interest in his activities in the underworld during the triduum and thus minimizes the importance of the limbus patrum in William's thought. The only real focus that is placed on Christ's actions during the Triduum is on the issue whether he was still human at the time.[48] Was the whole (totus) Christ present wholly and entirely (totum) in the tomb and at the same time in hell? These questions are dealt with in a very philosophical way at some length, but essentially only focus upon Christ's nature while he was in hell, rather than upon his actions. Similarly, William does not place too much stress on the salvific powers of the Old Law. The question whether Abraham merited entry into paradise, for example, absorbs an entire chapter of the Summa aurea.[49] William concludes that Abraham by his faith did indeed merit this reward, but his situation was like that of a man who had inherited land which had a debt attached to it. The land could only be claimed by the beneficiary when the debt was paid off, which in this case was through the redemptive actions of Christ. It is unusual that throughout his treatment of this question, William never mentions exactly where Abraham waited until this debt was paid. William does not bring into the argument the idea of a limbus patrum or even redefine the limbus inferni. Like William of Auvergne before him, William of Auxerre chooses to place his emphasis on the limbus puerorum rather than the limbus patrum, for many of the same reasons.

Conclusions

In summary, it is clear that William of Auxerre, in his Summa aurea, represents a continuation of the trend of his contemporary William of Auvergne in the transition from early to high-scholastic thought. Both men occupy a pivotal position in the development of limbo. Every major thirteenth-century writer after William of Auxerre whom we shall

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[48]. See W. Principe, op.cit., pp.91-92.

[49]. William of Auxerre, Summa aurea, iii.7.3. (ed. Ribaillier, p.91).

examine writes in a similar way, and in many cases uses the same ideas. The Summa aurea "enjoyed in its time a very great vogue,"[50] and certainly an influence beyond that. Such facts have always been known, however, as W. Principe notes, "the range and importance of this influence...have become more clearly understood from recent studies of particular topics"[51] To those lists of topics, I think we can add limbo. William has nothing to do with the development of the idea of the limbus patrum, but was important for that of the limbus puerorum. He brings to the question the structured rigour of the quaestio format of exposition, which makes his inquiries more disciplined and penetrating. Like William of Auvergne, he uses the phrase limbus inferni, but unlike him applies it wholly to unbaptized infants. He expands the carentia visionis Dei idea of Abelard; for William, not only are unbaptized infants punished only by a deprivation of the beatific vision, they are punished by a lesser deprivation than their inherited sin deserves. This punishment is the greatest with regard to damnation, but the least with regard to sense. William also pioneers the question of passibility, concluding that while unbaptized infants are passible, they are protected from any active agent capable of giving them harm. William also adds the question of space to the argument, noting how the greater/lesser lack of the beatific vision is due to how close/far from God's radiance the unbaptized infants are. Finally, and most importantly, William's inquiries are clearly and self-evidently motivated by mercy. Other authors question God's justice in these matters; William is one of the earliest to explain how in the matter of unbaptized infants, God acts out of mercy, too.

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50. P. Godet, "Guillaume d'Auxerre", Dictionnaire de théologie catholique, vi, (Paris, 1913), col.1976.

51. W. Principe, op.cit., pp.15-16.

IX. ALEXANDER OF HALES AND THE BIPARTITE LIMBO

With William of Auxerre, we have entered fully into the sophisticated theological analyses of the thirteenth century. The major authors of this scholastic theology were the new orders of friars, and it is time to turn our attention to them. An excellent example of the transition in theology from schoolmen to friars was Alexander of Hales (ca.1185-1245) who himself went from being a schoolman to being a Franciscan friar, thereby giving the Franciscan Order its first chair at the University of Paris. Although there is some difficulty determining exactly what he wrote, there survive both a commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard and also a theological Summa, both attributed to him, which makes him a fine example of early-to-mid-thirteenth century scholasticism. For our purposes, these types of works also proved to be the formats in which the development of limbo would be studied, shaped, and expounded upon. Alexander has many interesting things to say on the subject of limbo, and was influential in promulgating one of the milieux in which it was to be discussed--the Sentence-commentary. Although he left no individual school as some of his ideological predecessors in the history of limbo did, his work was nevertheless taken up by his brothers in the Franciscan order, who would assist it to reach a fuller development.

Alexander's Writings

Alexander studied and lectured upon the Sentences of Peter Lombard. Alexander, however, did something unique; in his courses on theology he began what was to become the extremely important custom of replacing the lectures on the Scriptures with lectures on the Sentences. All this he did shortly after William of Auxerre had completed his Summa aurea, and the effects were to be far-reaching. Roger Bacon, who otherwise held Alexander in high regard, deplored this change in concentration from the Scriptures to the Sentences, and viewed it as one of the prime causes for the decline of theology at Paris. His writings

indicate he pinned the blame for it squarely on Alexander.[1] Beryl Smalley seems to have shared Roger's reservations, noting that this practice was "a step towards separating creative thought on doctrine from the task of lecturing on scripture."[2] Such a view is not universal; A. Emmen, by contrast, regarded it as a part of "Alexander's emphasis on speculative theology, use of philosophy, and study of the Fathers [which] initiated the golden age of medieval scholasticism."[3] Thus, however they are regarded, it is clear that Alexander's Sentence-commentaries are important. Various editions of them circulated for years, some of which followed the divisions in the Lombard's original work[4], but it was not until 1945 that F. Henquinet and V. Doucet found what they maintained was authentic text in the Assisi archives.[5] This work has been published in a valuable critical and first edition under the title Glossa in quatuor libros sententiarum Petri Lombardi, which the editors date from the years 1222 to 1229.[6] It represents what are probably a series of notes by a student on the lectures of Alexander, which places them "midway between a literal commentary and a fully-developed series of questions on the text of Peter Lombard."[7] For the purposes of this investigation, we will regard this work as representing the thought of Alexander, even if it is not his actual writing.

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[1]. Roger Bacon, Fr. Rogeri Baconi opera hactenus inedita, I (London, 1859), p. 328ff.

[2]. B. Smalley, "The Gospels in the Paris Schools in the Late 12th and Early 13th Centuries: Peter the Chanter, Hugh of St. Cher, Alexander of Hales, John of La Rochelle", Franciscan Studies xxxix (1979), 230-254; xl (1980), 298-368, p.343.

[3]. A. Emmen, "Alexander of Hales", New Catholic Encyclopedia i (1967), 296-297, p. 296.

[4]. A. Vacant, "Alexandre de Halés" Dictionnaire de théologie catholique i (1930), 772-785, p.775.

[5]. F. Henquinet, "Le Commentaire d'Alexandre de Halès sur les Sentences enfin Retrouvé", Studi e Testi cxii, vol.2 (1946), 359-382.

[6]. W. Principe, William of Auxerre's Theology of the Hypostatic Union (Toronto, 1963), p.14.

[7]. A. Emmen, op.cit., p.296.

Slightly more problematic with regard to the question of authorship is our second work by Alexander, the so-called Summa fratris Alexandri or Summa theologica.[8] This large work was initially a project of Alexander's, but he died before it could be completed. The bull De Fontibus paradisi acknowledges this fact as it instructs William of Middleton and others to complete it.[9] Roger Bacon, although he admits the existence of an Alexandrine Summa "weightier than a horse", nevertheless noted that this work was substantially the product of people other than Alexander.[10] Such a conclusion would not be an historically inaccurate one, as the creation and maintenance of studia wherein older friars could rely on teams of younger or more inexperienced friars to act as research assistants, "was a specialty of the mendicant orders"[11], Beryl Smalley records. Apart from Roger Bacon's objections, the Summa was by and large accepted in later centuries as almost exclusively the work of Alexander, at least up until the latest portions of the nineteenth century. At that point, scholarly objections were raised, and the authenticity of the entire work was called into doubt.[12] This problem of authenticity has yet to be fully resolved.

Some conclusions may be drawn, however. The Summa had been left unfinished in 1245 at Alexander's death, but after the papal bull instigated its completion, another version, still incomplete, was produced in 1260 under the guidance of William of Middleton and his team. This later work is what is meant by the original Summa fratris Alexandri. V. Doucet estimates that the first three books of this version had been substantially compiled before 1245

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8. Alexander of Hales, Summa theologica, 4 vols. (Quaracchi, 1921-1948). All page references henceforth will be to this edition, hereafter abbreviated AHST.

9. Alexander of Hales, Summa, i, (ed. AHST, p.vii).

10. Roger Bacon, op.cit., p.326.

11. B. Smalley, op.cit., p.251.

12. For the history of this controversy, see V. Doucet, "The History of the Problem of the Authenticity of the Summa", Franciscan Studies, vii (1947), 26-41, 274-312.

or before the death of Alexander.[13] A more finalized version of the Summa was imposed by the ministers general of the Franciscan Order in 1331, and again in 1373. A. Emmen estimates that this finalized work preserves only portions of the original Summa fratris Alexandri; most of the first and second books being intact, along with fragments of the third (the fourth being reconstructed).[14] The facts of this situation induce some hesitation in adopting the Summa wholeheartedly as an example of Alexandrine thought. Yet it is very tempting to ask along with Victorin Doucet "has [Alexander] not handed over his writings (to others) and in such measure is not the Summa basically his own work, or principly his?"[15] As long as we realize the group character of the composition, such a conclusion does not seem completely untenable. Even if it is, there is no reason why we cannot take the position adopted by Etienne Gilson:

> This does not mean that the Summa is of no historical interest. Despite its composite character, it has a unity of its own, due to the fact that its component fragments are all borrowed from Franciscan theologians belonging to the same doctrinal school.[16]

For the purposes of this thesis, it will be treated as representing at the very least the thought of Alexander, even if it was not actually composed by him.

Original Sin and Divine Justice

The term "limbo" appears several times in the works of Alexander, and he clearly did much to bolster the consideration and development of it as an idea. He examines it both by name and also in conjunction with the questions of unbaptized infants and the descent of Christ into the dead during the triduum, making Alexander the first scholastic really to

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13. Ibid., p.310.

14. A. Emmen, op.cit., p.296.

15. V. Doucet, "A New Source of the 'Summa Fratris Alexandri': The Commentary on the Sentences of Alexander of Hales", Franciscan Studies 6 (1946), 403-417, p.404.

16. E. Gilson, History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages (London, 1955), p.327.

consider both of these two disparate things at the same time. However, he devotes more space on this issue to the question of unbaptized infants, and so it is upon that subject that we will primarily focus. We shall begin as most of our other authors began, with the question of original sin, since it is this that provides the necessity for baptism. Alexander does not voice any new ideas on this subject. In his view, original sin comes to us via Adam, who held a unique position as a singular individual and as the origin of the entire human race. He follows Anselm on these notions; we are all sons of Adam by descent, but as sinners we participate in the person of Adam.[17] The question of inherited original sin was for him a matter of original justice; Adam lost this justice, and so his descendants never inherited it. Following the words of St. Paul in Eph.ii.3, all of Adam's descendants are born "children of wrath", although Alexander distinguishes this passage, noting that it is meant to be speaking about those "who do not have the operation of free will."[18] Since all children are children of wrath, Alexander asks whether original sin is a punishment, and if so, how it operates. He concludes:

> It should be said that original sin is called a punishment alone with regard to proneness, but it is a punishment and a blame with regard to lack of due justice. For it is a punishment in that it is drawn from the corruption of the flesh of the parents; and it is blame in comparison to that which is owed through that lack [of due justice] to the lack of the vision of God. Therefore it should be said that, according as it is a proneness, it is called a punishment of itself with regard to the lack of due justice.[19].

Here we see a continuation of the Anselmian notion of original sin as a lack of justice.

For Alexander original sin thus becomes both a punishment and a cause for punishment at the same time. He believed the corruption itself is carried in the flesh of the

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[17]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent. II, d.33, 1, (ed. AHSent, pp.312-313)

[18]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent, II, d.32, 14, n.b."de parvulis qui non habent motum liberi arbitrii", (ed. AHSent, p.312).

[19]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent. II, d.32, 7, "Dicendum quod originale dicitur poena solum prout pronitas est, sed est poena et culpa prout est carentia debitae iustitiae. Est enim poena prout contrahitur ex corruptione carnis parentis; et est culpa in comparatione qua per illam carentiam obligatur ad carentiam visionis Dei. Dicendum ergo quod, prout est pronitas, diciutr poena sui ipsius prout est carentia debitae iustitiae." (ed. AHSent, p.310)

parents, not in the soul. Later in his exposition he wonders why there is a sin in all this, since he established that although the flesh may be corrupt, the soul is clean. Does this union of cleanliness to corruption not place God at fault, making him the author of original sin for putting a "clean" soul into a "dirty" body? This is a very difficult question, and Alexander's response is original and somewhat strange; his ideas are all predicated upon the idea that "the soul naturally desires the body."[20] God is merciful in giving the soul what it desires, but also just in allowing it to be punished after it attains union with corrupt flesh. After all, he argues, either the soul knew that the flesh was corrupt, and so entered into sin by uniting with it, or else it did not know this, and was labouring under ignorance, which is a form of divine punishment to begin with. Alexander also maintains a rarefied version of an Anselmian idea, the notion that original sin is not additive in nature. Infants inherit only the original sin of their parents, not their parents' accumulated actual sins. In the same way, there is no cumulative addition of original sins either, merely the first original sin which flowed from the first parents. In all of this it is clear that the central guiding principle is an Anselmian one, that of justice.

Questions of original justice lead us to ask, as Alexander did, about natural justice; specifically whether it was just for one person to be punished for the sin of another. Here he must deal with Scriptural examples: the leprosy of Naaman (4Kng.v.27), the punishment of Israel for the sins of Achan (Jos.vii.1-5), and so on. Clearly, the body of evidence is that God punishes descendants for the sins of their ancestors, and since such is the will of God, it must be just. Thus inherited original sin can be regarded as just, theologically, although Alexander couples his exposition of this idea with other arguments about God's mercy. Following Augustine on the idea of descendants being punished for the sins of their ancestors, he observes that, "It should be said that they are to be punished by temporal punishments, not

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[20]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., II, d.32, 10, "anima naturaliter appetit corpus." (ed. AHSent, p.311).

eternal ones."[21] In his estimation this theory of punishment is real, but can only take the form of actual punishments in this life. Such an idea has a substantial bearing on the question of unbaptized infants, as we shall see below, but initially we should consider what Alexander believed were the effects of original sin. He presents two schemas. On the one hand, he sets up a variety of effects. Original sin has two punishments, eternal and temporal, which take place in two areas, the body and the soul. Eternal punishment on the part of the body is the lack of the divine endowment of the body. Eternal punishment on the part of the soul is a deprivation of the beatific vision. Temporal punishment on the part of body is death and suffering, while temporal punishment on the part of soul is the "failing of power or thought or goodness."[22] On the other hand, Alexander deals with the effects of original sin as fomes and concupiscence. Ambrose is his chief source for the understanding of fomes as a "weak condition which arises to an illicit desire" which is "in the flesh causally, in the soul subjectively."[23] Habitual desire, or concupiscence, also is an effect of original sin, and there is no escaping it or fomes.[24]

Baptism, its Effects, and Children

What, then, is the solution to these problems? Since the advent of Christ, it is baptism. Heretofore circumcision had been effective, but Alexander places lesser focus upon

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[21]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., II, d.33, 17 "dicendum quod puniri possunt poena temporali, sed non aeterna." (ed. AHSent, p.323).

[22]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., II, d.33, 16, "defectus potentiae vel cogitationis vel bonitatis." (p.322). Variant texts quote passages on the temporal punishments of the soul, which are sickness, ignorance, malice, and concupiscence. The temporal punishments of the body are divided into internal and external, internal being fomes and corruption, and external, being "the arrows of the Lord... cold, heat, hunger, thirst, labour, sickness, and death." ("Sagittae Domini...frigus, calor, fames, sitis, labor, morbus, et mors"). It is unclear whence these passages came; see Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent. d.33, 16, n.22 (ed. AHSent, pp.322-323).

[23]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent. II, d.32, 3, n.11, "in carne causaliter, in anima subiective", (p.307). For a more detailed look at what fomes denotes, see IV, d.4, 18, n.a (ed. AHSent, p.87-88).

[24]. Alexander believed that even the Virgin Mary was afflicted by both, although in her case concupiscence was "conquered by glory and right reason" (a gloria, a ratione recta omnino superata) Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent. II, d.32, 3, n.a, (ed. AHSent, p.307), and although she had fomes, she was constitutionally unable to act upon it, Ibid., (ed. AHSent, pp.307-8).

it; as we shall see below. Alexander's main concentration is upon baptism, and he covers it and its effects in too great a depth for us to examine here. There is a convenient summary of its effects in Book 4 of his commentary on the Sentences:

> In contrite adults [baptism is]: an augmentation of virtue to act, the weakening of fomes, the impression of a sign, the community of the heavenly society, immunity from exterior satisfaction, the remission of venial sin committed perchance after contrition and before baptism, strength to resisting, full remission, absolution from the obligation to be baptized by which man was held previously.[25]

Note that amongst these effects Alexander lists only a weakening of fomes. It remains, as does concupiscence. The reasons why baptism does not remove either are threefold: first, lest man should seek baptism more for the sake of his body than for the sake of his soul; secondly, that man might be humbled in his weakness; and thirdly, that man might have something against which to struggle for the exercise of virtue.[26] In another book, Alexander relies on the Glossa to argue that concupiscence is innate to the human person and is scattered throughout the flesh; baptism merely provides a weapon against it. For, assuming a person survives after baptism, he still "has concupiscence with which he fights and which he conquers with God aiding him."[27] This notion presumes that baptism involves the addition of grace; a variant text, discussing what the term fomes denotes, concludes that "it is weakened through baptism".[28]

Alexander recognizes several kinds of baptism. Chiefly, baptism takes the form of water, but it can also be by blood, through martyrdom, or by penance through contrition and desire. This answer of baptism by desire leads Alexander to another question: what happens

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[25]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent. IV, d.4, 19, "In adulto contrito: augmentum virtutis ad agendum, debilitatio fomitis, impressio characteris, communitas supernae societatis, immunitas exterioris satisfactionis, remissio venialis forte post contritionem et ante Baptismum commissi, robur ad resistendum, plena remissio, absolutio ab obligatione qua prius homo tenebatur baptizari." (ed. AHSent, p.88).

[26]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., II, d.32, 1, n.c, (ed. AHSent, p.305).

[27]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., IV, d.4, 18, "habet concupiscentiam cum qua pugnet eamque Deo adiuvante superet." (ed. AHSent, p.87).

[28]. Ibid., n.c "sed per Baptismum debilitatur" (ed. AHSent, p.88)

to a person who sincerely intends to be baptized, but for some reason (such as dying on the way to being baptized) is not? Alexander's answer is connected to the idea of baptism by penance: such an individual will be saved, through the mercy of Christ. However, the question of merit enters into this answer: a person in this category had neither the signatory imprint of baptism, nor the merits which come from baptism or martyrdom or penance. What then? They will be saved, notes Alexander, but will neither possess merits nor have their temporal sins remitted. This exception brings us to the special case of children. In the normal course of events, Alexander believed that baptism conferred the following effects to children:

> But in children it is full remission of original sin, the collation of virtue which they have in potential but is not operating, the debilitation of fomes, the impression of a sign, the remission of venial sin if any is contracted at that age, the incorporation in Christ.[29]

He also believes baptism confers other benefits to children as well. Following Augustine, he inquires about the punishment which accrues to baptized children who nevertheless have committed venial sins; do they undergo "purgatorial torments"? The answer is no; such children, beyond infancy and seemingly capable of reason are yet weak in reason and can only partially fulfil the commands of the Maker. Nevertheless, God acts entirely out of mercy with them, and not only delivers them from hell, but also spares them even purgatory.[30] Alexander follows an idea which we have seen has its origins in Augustine--the notion that baptized children, notwithstanding their lack of intelligence or conscious choice, become a part of the body of Christ. This makes them members of him and gives them a share in his actions and also of the charity of other believers. By extension, Alexander concluded that such baptized infants cannot lack charity, and so they possess justice.

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[29]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., IV, d.4, 19, "In parvulo vero plena remissio originalis peccati, collatio virtutum [quibus] est in habitu potens, non operans debilitatio fomitis, impressio characteris, remissio venialis si aliquod in illa aetate contrahitur, incorporatio Christo." (ed. AHSent, p.88).

[30]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., IV, d.4, 24 (ed. AHSent, p.93).

But when one considers the powers of a church of believers, the actions of some of those believers comes to mind. Alexander follows this train of thought when he considers the practice of prayer for the dead and how it applies to deceased baptized infants. He notes that Augustine considered prayers for the saints to be an injury to them; if this is so, does not the same conclusion apply to children in "baptismal innocence"? If prayer either obtains good or removes evil, what does it do to baptized infants, who do not need the former nor possess the latter? His response is somewhat unsatisfying; all he can come up with is the observation that there are no special prayers for deceased children made by the Church, just a general prayer for the faithful dead, which presumably covers such children as well. Much of this confusion stems from the fact that these cases are not normal; Alexander assumes that infant baptism is the norm, and furthermore that it is something extremely important, something which is "a sacrament of necessity; ...[which] ought not to be put off"[31]. Children, however, lack a very great deal. Without baptism they do not possess justice, grace, virtue, or charity. Furthermore, given their state of unsophistication they cannot obtain a baptism by penance or through unfulfilled intention. Yet as Alexander established above, there are only temporal punishments passed to descendants for the sins of their ancestors, not eternal ones. So what is the nature of the punishment of unbaptized infants?

The Fate of Unbaptized Infants

Certainly this punishment is not an actual one; that much Alexander reestablishes. "For actual punishment is said with respect to some agent in the soul"[32], and there is no such active punitive agent for unbaptized infants. Their punishment is a negative one, as we have seen mentioned above--it is the lack of the beatific vision. This shows how far the

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[31]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., IV, d.4, 14c, "illud est sacramentum necessitatis; et ideo non est differendum" (ed. AHSent, p.84).

[32]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., IV, d.4, 15b "Actualis enim dicitur respectu alicuius agentis in animam" (ed. AHSent, p.85).

Abelardian idea has progressed, until it has become the standard answer to this problem. In Alexander's schema, this is the eternal punishment on the part of the soul, as we have seen above.[33] Throughout discussions on this subject, Alexander makes twofold distinctions about the nature of original sin. While dealing with the question of the effects of baptism, he notes that its punishment is twofold, a certain "proneness" and the "deprivation of the vision of God"[34], the latter of which is removed in baptism, but the former of which remains.

This point is amplified in a variant reading; habitual concupiscence, which provides the source for a victory over sin by the exercise of virtue, remains after baptism, but the "essential punishment of original sin...namely the lack of the vision of God...is taken away with its state of guilt."[35] This idea of a state of guilt is repeated elsewhere in another variant text, wherein Alexander connects the idea of a state of guilt to the action of the will, which results in "an obligation to perpetual darkness."[36] This stems from a threefold distinction about the nature of evil, the first being ignorance of good, the second being an inclination to evil, the third being actual evil actions themselves. Original sin with regard to will is of the first category, since the will does not know the good and remains entirely ignorant. Alexander also indicates that the original sin fits into the second distinction of sin as well by contracting its actus versus its status: "The act of original sin is proneness according to the lack of due justice, is an obligation according to the lack of the vision of God according to disposition."[37] Here again Alexander is motivated by the Anselmian notion of original sin

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[33]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., II, d.33, 16, (ed. AHSent, p.322).

[34]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., II, d.32, 1b, "scilicet carentia visionis Dei" (ed. AHSent, p.306).

[35]. Ibid., nd, "...est poena essentialis originalis peccati...et ista deletur cum suo reatu, scilicet carentia visionis tollitur" (ed. AHSent, p.305).

[36]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., II, d.32, 2, n.a, "obligatio ad tenebras perpetuas." (ed. AHSent, p.306).

[37]. Ibid., "sed actus originalis est pronitas ad peccatum; reatus vero, secundum carentiam debitae iustitiae, obligatio ad carentiam visionis Dei secundum affectum."

as a lack of due justice, as we have seen. He advances a threefold system in another book where he examines the question of why original sin is punished by the deprivation of the beatific vision. He places the blame upon the actions of Adam. Adam sinned in three ways: first by desiring to eat the apple, second, in desiring to live forever, and third, in desiring the knowledge of good and evil. The deprivation of the beatific vision was a punishment for the third sin, and an appropriate one: because Adam had sought to be like God, the presence of God was denied to him and heirs.[38]

However, while this is a neat and logical answer, it begs the question of mercy, and indeed, of fittingness. In another section, Alexander poses the question of whether the deprivation of the beatific vision is indeed the lightest of all possible punishments. Which is worse, hell or the lack of God? In the minds of some very prominent authorities deprivation of the vision of God is the greatest punishment. Furthermore, in conjunction with this question Alexander poses another question of what category unbaptized infants fall in, since they seem to be fitted neither to heaven nor hell. Where will they be punished? He supports the question with Augustine's query: "On the right, the kingdom of the king, on the left, damnation with the Devil, nowhere has been left in which you are able to put children."[39] This seems to pose a problem, but Alexander concludes that unbaptized infants do indeed go to the place of the damned. However, just as there is a twofold punishment for sins, so he distinguishes a twofold damnation. With regard to punishment, there are two kinds, specific and general. Specific punishments are directed at sense; they come about as a punishment for personal sin, and result in "sadness and suffering."[40] This causes pain on account of the suffering of the body. General punishment, on the other hand, is a result of

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[38]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., II, d.32, 12 (ed. AHSent, p.311).

[39]. Augustine, De Peccatorum meritis et remissione, et de baptismo parvulorum, iii.3, "A dextris regnum, a sinistris damnatio cum diabolo; nullus locus relictis est in quo ponere queas infantes." (P.L. 44, p.189).

[40]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., II, d.33, 8c, n.a, "tristitia et passio" (ed. AHSent, p.317).

original sin alone, and is the punishment of the sin of another. This causes the lack of the vision of God, and Alexander thinks that "sadness follows from this."[41] In this instance, Alexander records the fate of unbaptized infants as a negative one, since there is still a state of interior sadness, despite the lack of exterior pain.

Alexander explores this idea in more depth further in his works. He asks: do unbaptized infants know that they lack the vision of God? If they do, it seems that they have some kind of actual punishment. Much of the question of the lack of the beatific vision is connected with the question of whether or not they have such a knowledge. At one point, Alexander considers the effects baptism has with regard to the deprivation of the beatific vision, and remarks that baptism helps mitigate the effects of a punishment "connected with the cognitive power of the soul."[42] Sadly, he leaves the extent and exact nature of the connection unspecified, but it does seem to indicate that there is a cognitive power in unbaptized infants. However, regarding their knowledge of their own state, he concludes:

> If they have the use of cognitive power, it is permitted that they should know themselves to lack [the vision of God, but] because of this they should not be said to have actual punishment. For actual punishment is said with respect to some agent in the soul.[43]

Here again is the restatement of the idea that they suffer no actual punishment, although it seems that Alexander maintains that they have some kind of sadness, which indicates that their condition is at least unhappy, if not to some extent punitive.

Divine Justice and Mercy

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41. Ibid., "hanc consequitur tristitia".

42. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., IV, d.4, 17c, "haec retorquetur ad cognitivam vim animae" (ed. AHSent, p.86).

43. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., IV, d.4, 15b, "si habent usum virtutis cognitivae, licet cognoscerent se carere, non propter hoc dicerentur habere poenam actualem. Actualis enim dicitur respectu alicuius agentis in animam." (ed. AHSent, p.85).

We have seen above that Alexander clearly believed that one person could be punished for the sins of another, although only temporally with regard to actual sins. The punishment of original sin is an extension of this idea, although mitigated, insofar as there is no actual punishment for the sin of another, namely Adam. To Alexander, this was a clear fact. But one may again ask: is it just that it happens? Is it just of God to do this? What purpose does it serve? These questions touch on the eternal conundrum of divine justice versus divine mercy, and it has a bearing here on the issue of unbaptized children. After all, this is not simply a question of their eternal end, since Alexander quotes from Augustine the famous lines about children and sufferings in this life, even though after baptism they lack original blame.[44] Innocent children die prematurely in this life--how just is their punishment now? Moreover, what about their eternal punishment without the vision of God if they die unbaptized? If God is merciful, as Alexander has established elsewhere, where is the mercy in this? Such a punishment may be just, but it seems unmerciful, especially since no part of it is relaxed:

> ...because either he would relax with regard to the duration of that punishment or with regard to its harshness. He does not relax with regard to duration, because the punishment itself is infinite with regard to duration and is perpetual; similarly he relaxes nothing concerning harshness, because deprivation of the vision of God, since it is a privation, does not admit to more or less.[45]

The final words from this citation are influenced by William of Auxerre, and demonstrate Alexander's debt to him. Furthermore, since the guilt of all unbaptized infants is equal, they are punished by an identical punishment from which nothing is relaxed--again all very just, but seemingly unmerciful. Alexander raises further objections. Since the deprivation of the vision of God is the greatest punishment, and original sin is the least sin,

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[44]. Augustine, De Libero arbitrio iii.23, (P.L. 32, p.1304).

[45]. Alexander of Hales, Summa IV, Par.1,Inq.1,Tra.6,Qu.3,Tit.2,Ar.3, 7.1, "quia aut relaxaret quoad diuturnitatem poenae istius aut quoad acerbitatem. Non relaxat de ea quoad diuturnitatem, quia poena ista est infinita quoad diuturnitatem et perpetua; similiter nihil relaxat de acerbitate, quia carentia visionis Dei, cum sit privatio, non recipit magis et minus." (ed. AHST, p.393).

it seems that those dying with original sin alone are punished by the greatest punishment for the least sin. Furthermore, since the vision of God is the greatest glory, the deprivation of that vision must be the greatest punishment, since glory and punishment are opposites, and again the least sin receives the greatest punishment. Finally, since the vision of God confers the greatest happiness, the lack of it would confer the greatest sadness, and things are as before.

The answers to these and other objections for Alexander lie in some very precise distinctions amongst kinds of justice and kinds of mercy. We need not examine all of them, but a few should demonstrate the pattern of Alexander's thought. He subdivides justice into two different areas of seemliness, which enable him to show that God may punish the just in accordance with merit, but spare them from mercy. There is a "seemliness" of power, "Whence that he justifies one, and not another he does by the seemliness of his power."[46] This idea accounts for how God was able to choose Jacob and reject Esau, since in all other ways the two were alike. Likewise there is a "seemliness" of wisdom, whereby God may elect one and not another in accordance with the foreknowledge that one will use that election better than another will. There are also several subdivisions of mercy, chiefly with regard to relieving suffering, but also with regard to making up for the shortcomings of something else. Alexander maintains that God does not demonstrate mercy in the former way, but rather in the latter, as he makes up for the ultimate shortcoming which is non-existence. God shows mercy to his creation by allowing it to come into being and also by sustaining it, since things cease to be without God's efforts. Thus, Alexander laboriously attempts to distinguish between various kinds of justice and mercy to show that God is capable of both, but not as humans simply understand them. With these distinctions carefully drawn, Alexander goes on to consider how they apply to the plight of unbaptized children. Throughout, he is guided

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[46]. Alexander of Hales, Summa I, Par.1,Inq.1,Tra.6,Qu.3,Tit.2,Ar.3,7 "Unde quod unum iustificat, alium non, hoc facit iustitia potestatis" (ed. AHST, p.393).

by Anselm's maxim "Nothing is more alien to God that he should allow a rational nature which he made for eternal happiness, to perish altogether."[47] This point is advanced with reference to the salvation of the gentiles, but it is clearly meant to apply to other situations as well.

Divine Justice and the Fate of Unbaptized Infants

First, then, how is it just, or by what merit is there, that children are made to suffer, both in this life and by implication in the afterlife, if they are deprived of the beatific vision? Alexander's answer relies very heavily on John Damascene, as he cites a large quote from Expositio fide orthodoxae. Someone who is just is allowed to have bad things happen to them for essentially seven reasons. In the first place, bad things happen to allow any hidden virtue of that person to be made manifest to others, as in the case of Job. In the second place, it can be so that something wonderful can come from something which seems to be bad, as salvation came from the crucifixion. In the third place, it can be so that a person will not either fall to sin or into pride, as was the case with St. Paul. Fourthly, some punishments are made for the education of others, as was the case with Lazarus and the rich man. Fifthly, some punishments are made so that glory will come to some other person connected only peripherally with the punishment, as happened to Christ when he cured the man born blind. Sixthly, some punishments are meant both to raise the esteem of the sufferer and to inspire others, as is the case with martyrs. Finally, some are allowed to fall into punishments for the purpose of conferring humility, especially in the case of a virtuous person who is allowed to fall into sin.[48] As Alexander concludes:

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[47]. Anselm, Cur Deus homo ii.4, "at si nihil pretiosius cognoscere Deus fecisse quam rationalem naturam ad gaudendum de se, valde alienum est ab eo, ut ullam rationalem naturam penitus perire sinat." (ed. Schmitt, ii, p.99).

[48]. Alexander of Hales, Summa I, Par.1,Inq.1,Tra.6,Qu.3,Tit.2,Ar.3, 4.a (ed. AHST, p.395).

> Therefore punishment does not always regard the merit of the sufferer, but sometimes the glory of God, just as in the man born blind; other times for the utility of others, that namely it might kindle the zeal for God in others and progress towards virtues and strike fear to the sinners.[49]

The sufferings of unbaptized children are of this kind. They exist not on account of the merit of children, but for the instruction of others. There is justice in their sufferings, Alexander concludes, but it is not the justice of person, "which regards the merit of the person suffering, but justice in general, which regards the utility and correction for others."[50] This particular conclusion is directed mainly at the real-world sufferings of baptized infants, but by extension can easily apply to the plight of unbaptized infants as well.

Second, then, how is the eternal punishment of unbaptized infants in accordance with divine mercy? Alexander uses a metaphor which he borrows from Augustine's Soliloquies: "God is that which is, which understands, which makes others to understand, just like the sun which shines and illuminates other things."[51] Consider God to be like the sun, Alexander suggests. Now, consider two men. The first man sees by the light of the sun, but he does not see the sun himself. The second man by implication is in darkness: he neither sees the sun nor by the sun. Which one of these two suffers a greater deprivation of the vision of the sun? The second, of course. To Alexander the state of unbaptized infants is like that of the first person, not the second. In this case, their perceptions extend to "everything which they comprehend through the intellect"[52] rather than what they physically "see", but the point is easy to grasp: "whence although they do not see that fount of light itself, God, nevertheless

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[49]. Ibid., "Punitio ergo non respicit semper meritum parentis, sed aliquando gloriam Dei, sicut in caeco nato; aliquando utilitatem aliorum, ut scilicet accendat zelum Dei in aliis et profectum ad virtutes et incutiat timorem in peccatoribus."

[50]. Ibid., "quae respicit meritum perosnae patientis, sed iustitia generalis, quae respicit utilitatem et correctionem in aliis."

[51]. Augustine, Soliloquiorum i.8, "Deus est quod est, quod intelligit, quod cetera intelligere facit, sicut sol qui fulget et qui cetera illuminat." (P.L. 32, p.877).

[52]. Alexander of Hales, Summa I, Par.1,Inq.1,Tra.6,Qu.3,Tit.2,Ar.3, 7.1, "in omni eo quod comprehendunt per intellectum." (ed. AHST, p.397).

they see and understand other things through him."[53] Thus, they do not suffer a complete blindness either of intellect or vision. Although they cannot see or understand God himself, nevertheless they can see and understand things by him. Thus, in Alexander's estimation, they are punished, in accordance with justice, but they are punished with mercy as well, because they do not suffer a complete deprivation of the vision of God.

Several conclusions are possible by implication. It seems reasonable to conclude that the situation of the damned is like that of the person in the second part of Alexander's example, who neither sees the light nor by the light, since the damned certainly have a complete lack of the vision of God. Furthermore, although Alexander does not say as much, it is reasonable to conclude that by saying that unbaptized infants can see and understand through God that a:) they have some measure of both perception and reason, and thus are capable of both sight and understanding, and b:) that in their situation, there are things which can be perceived and understood, things upon which these faculties may be exercised. Alexander is thus clearly following in the footsteps of William of Auvergne, although he is not as bold in his assertions as William was. He goes on to respond to some objections which he raised previously. All of these objections came from converse statements: e.g., as the union with God is the greatest x, so the separation from God is the greatest counter-x. Alexander's response to all these is grammatical, and comes via Aristotle.[54] In a situation where there had been union, lack of that union is indeed a sadness or a punishment. However, in a situation where there never was any such union to begin with, lack of that union is not a punishment. Some pleasures have opposites and some don't. True, the pleasure which is drinking is opposed to the punishment which is thirst. But the pleasure which comes from the knowledge of a geometrical theorem does not have an opposite--any peasant who does not know this fact does not suffer from it as he would suffer from thirst.

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[53]. Ibid., "unde licet non videant ipsum fontem lucis, Deum, tamen vident et intelligunt cetera per ipsum."

[54]. Aristotle, Topics, i.13.

So viewed in this negative sense, none of the objections raised are valid, since none of the great goods which derive from the union with God have any corresponding opposites. Even Augustine's words on the least being punished by the greatest punishment are meant to be understood in this fashion.

Place in the Afterlife and the Nature of Christ in the Descensus

Thus it is reasonable to conclude that Alexander believed that unbaptized infants suffer the lightest of all possible punishments. Furthermore, they were capable of at least perceiving and knowing their environments through the radiated presence of God, which like the light of the sun they could perceive by (unlike the damned), but could not perceive directly (unlike the saved). This leads us to our third and final question; perception and knowledge imply space of some kind, so where are these children? And we may also ask whether there is any connection between them and the Fathers of the Old Testament, given that William of Auxerre had previously linked the two groups. The answer is, in limbo, and we can see this in Alexander's question on the actions of Christ during his descent into hell. Alexander considers the natures of the person of Christ during the descent, the actions taken by him then, and the state of the Fathers which prompted Christ's deeds. He also encourages a process which reaches its maturity in the work of Albertus Magnus, that of linking and subdividing different kinds of limbo.

Let us begin by examining the mechanics of Christ's descent during the triduum. Alexander raises several questions about exactly where Christ was during the triduum: was he in the tomb, in hell, or in heaven? For example, Alexander reminds us that Christ was said to be "a priest forever"; did this mean he remained one during the triduum?[55] And if so, how? What part of him remained human, what divine, and what were the actions of each nature and part? The objections raised and the answers given are too subtle and complicated

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[55]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., III, d.22 (L), 15. (ed. AHSent, p.257).

to follow fully, but suffice it to say that Alexander responds to them by using a distinction drawn between person and nature, between totus and totum. A concise summary of Alexander's theory runs as follows:

> In the first way it is said that the whole (totus) Christ was both in hell and in the sepulchre in the triduum and not wholly (totum), because whole pertains to person, which was perfectly and fully everywhere; but wholly pertains to nature, which according to human nature he was not everywhere nor also was he perfectly in the sepulchre nor perfectly in hell, but only in part.[56]

This distinction between human and divine nature is what makes the actions of Christ during the triduum possible. Strictly speaking there is also another nature, of humanity united to divinity. Human nature, since it is creates, "is circumscribed and in one place alone, but divine substance, because it is uncircumscribed, is everywhere."[57] However, a human nature joined to a divine one is enabled to share in this ubiqitousness; this explains how Christ may be really present in the form of the Eucharist on many altars all over the world at the same time[58], for, as Alexander notes, "a creature joined to the creator is able to be in many places at the same time."[59] However, human nature itself is only able to exist in one place, and so although Christ always maintained this human nature, he did so in a particular place.[60]

Having seen how Alexander carefully draws these distinctions, we may move on to the question of Christ's actions during the triduum, and the very important question of space in the afterlife. Granted that Christ has a divided nature, can he be said to have descended,

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[56]. Alexander of Hales, Summa IV, Inq.un.,tract.5,q.2,cap.5,art.1 "Primo modo dicitur totus fuisse Christus in triduo et in inferno et in sepulcro et non totum, quia totus pertinet ad personam, quae quidem perfecte erat ubique et plene; totum vero pertinet ad naturam, quae quidem secundum humanam naturam nec erat ubique nec etiam perfecte in sepulcro nec perfecte in inferno, sed secundum partem." (ed. AHST, p.235)

[57]. Ibid., "est circumscripta et in uno solo loco; substantia vero divina, quia incircumscripta, ubique est."

[58]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., III, d.22, 5b (ed. AHSent, p.254) and elsewhere.

[59]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., III, d.22, 5.b, "sicut creatura coniuncta Creatori, in pluribus locis simul esse potest." (ed. AHSent, p.254).

[60]. Alexander of Hales, Summa I, inq.un, tract.5, qu.2, chap.5 (ed. AHST, p.235).

given the facts that divine nature is uncircumscribed and also that it is ubiquitous and does not change place? Alexander's response is that ascent and descent are indeed possible with regard to divine nature and should be understood with regard to it, rather than to human nature. The objections raised pertain to the "properties of the creature"[61], rather than those of the creator. The divinity is to be understood in light of the Gospel passage "He was in the world, and the world was made through him" (Jn.1:11-13), insofar as it can be in the world and outside it at the same time. Thus Christ is capable of ascension and descent, as are we if we participate in him.

Distinctions about Hell

Now that we have seen how Alexander establishes the possibility of descent, let us turn to the reasons for it. What exactly is meant by hell? This is an important distinction, and Alexander supports the need to establish it with Augustine's objection: "the name of hell is not found anywhere in the Scriptures in a good sense."[62] How could Christ descend there if it is a place of punishment alone? Alexander's answer is to make a complex description of hell according to a twofold distinction. In one sense, hell can be described as a state, which is eternal punishment itself, such that demons who are outside hell nevertheless continue to exist in a "shadowy air" because they carry their punishment with them.[63] Alexander supports this with an example from Jerome; a man with a fever still burns if he is set on an ivory table, thus demons, even if worshipped as gods in temples made of precious materials like ivory, still continually burn with the fires of hell.[64] Christ did not descend

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[61]. Alexander of Hales, Summa I, inq.un, tract.5, qu.2, ar.2, "proprietates creaturae" (ed. AHST, p.236).

[62]. Augustine, Epistola 187, ii.6 "Non facile alicubi scripturarum nomen inferni invenitur in bono." (P.L. 33, p.834).

[63]. Alexander of Hales, Summa I, Inq.un, tract.5, qu.2, cap.4, "aëre caliginoso". (ed. AHST, p.233).

[64]. More probably Bede, Expositio super epistolas catholicas, iii, (P.L. 93, p.27).

to this hell, since he was not lowered into a state of punishment. However, if we refer to hell as being a place, descent is possible for Christ; as Alexander puts it:

> [hell] and is the name of the lowest place destined for the souls of the damned; and in this way the saints are said to have descended to the underworld (ad inferos) or to hell (in inferno) and the soul of Christ (as well).[65]

Note that Alexander here distinguishes between the words inferos and infernus; this is very important, as we shall see.

Since it is clear that Alexander believed that Christ could descend, and did go to hell, we can ask why. Alexander gives several answers. One is in continuity with the body of the harrowing-of-hell thought, and that is the idea of illumination. Christ descended into hell in order to illuminate those who were there, and Alexander supports his position on this with reference to a passage from John Damascene.[66] But more importantly, Christ descended for the purpose of rescuing in the words of Augustine "those whom it was fitting to rescue", that is, the Fathers. Alexander does not detail them or their status to the degree that, say, the Gospel of Nicodemus does. However, it is clear that he viewed the state of the Old Law as being imperfect at best. Elsewhere he considers four types of universal laws: the laws of the flesh, the law of nature, the law of Moses, and the law of grace. All of these laws operate from will: the first, from the will of sensuality; the second, from natural will. The third and fourth, though, are more interesting: the Law of Moses operates from "the inferior portion of reason", while the law of grace operates from "the superior portion of reason."[67] Thus to Alexander the law of Moses is in an inferior position to the law of grace of his own time. He contrasts the two: the law of grace results in a motion towards love, but the law of Moses

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[65]. Ibid., "et est nomen loci infimi deputati animabus damnatis; et hoc modo dicebantur sancti descendisse ad inferos vel in inferno et anima Christi."

[66]. John Damascene, Expositio fide orthodoxae, iv.29, (P.G. 94, p.1102).

[67]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., II, d.32, 4 "secundum superiorem partem rationis/secundem inferiorem partem rationis" (ed. AHSent, p.308).

merely results in a motion away from evil, "whence the end of the latter is fear, and of the former, love."[68] These words are not to denigrate the salvific power of the Old Law; elsewhere he refers positively to the power of circumcision in connection with baptism, noting that circumcision was effective in removing blame and punishment before the advent of baptism and the Resurrection of Christ.[69]

Despite this, the Fathers could not enter heaven upon their deaths, despite the efficacy of circumcision. Why? In Alexander's opinion, this was because "their sins had been dismissed with regard to blame, but not with regard to punishment."[70] Punishment was for two things: original sin and actual sin, and circumcision was only effective against the latter. Original punishment corresponded to original sin, and thus remained to need fulfilling. "Original sin is in all of nature",[71] Alexander notes, and since all human nature subsisted in Adam, it was corrupted by his sin, and he could not make satisfaction for it since he could not restore it.

Alexander and the Limbus Inferni

Thus the holy Fathers were bound to hell by original punishment for original sin, and it should come as no surprise that like William of Auxerre before him, Alexander placed them in the limbo of hell, the limbus inferni, using that term to describe their place. Alexander also described their status within it. For instance, do they suffer any punishment? He responds to this questions with distinctions, diminishing the degree in his questions. "[T]here

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68. Ibid., "unde huius finis est timor, et illius finis est amor."

69. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., IV, d.4, 17b. (ed. AHSent, p.87).

70. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., II, d.33, 14, "dimissum erat eorum peccatorum quoad culpam, sed non quoad poenam." (ed. AHSent, p.320).

71. Ibid., "peccatum originale est totius naturae".

was a certain anxiety but not a sadness"[72] in limbo, he notes; the Fathers were in a condition which was purely psychological. A variant reading notes that the Fathers suffered neither from any sensible punishment nor from any torments of the worm of conscience.[73] He expands upon the states: anxiety in the soul can come from desiring something and not possessing it, whereas sadness can come from actual evil or the absence of a present good. Thus the Fathers had only anxiety.

Alexander then goes on to link two similar but disparate ideas of limbo under a common vocabulary by asking whether the status of the children in the limbo of hell differs from that of the Fathers. Both the ancient Fathers and unbaptized infants are considered here to occupy the same place, the limbo of hell. However, they have different conditions. Although it is true that both classes of individuals were "disconnected and separated from God"[74], the holy Fathers were aware of this separation and sensed it. Because of this, they were saddened by the fact that they were kept in delay from their true home. Children, on the other hand, "neither sense nor discern this."[75] Although these two classes of individuals are linked by a common end--separation from God, they are nevertheless separated by mental state--perhaps one might even go so far as to call it a punishment, although punishment of a very mild sort, one of awareness of their loss, with the Fathers being aware of it and the unbaptized infants not being aware. Alexander places both groups in a common location, but the development of Christian theology had consigned unbaptized infants and the damned to a common location at the beginning of the Christian era, with the result that theologians who differentiated on the basis of difference of punishment eventually came to separate into

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[72]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., II, d.33, 9b, "erat anxietas quaedam, sed non dolor." (ed. AHSent, p.318).

[73]. Ibid., n.a. "Dolorem itaque qui est ex aliqua poena sensibili non habuerunt sancti, nec dolorem qui est ex conscientia remordente." (ed. AHSent, p.318).

[74]. Ibid., 9c "utrique sin inconiuncti Deo et separati."

[75]. Ibid., "Sed pueri non hoc sentiebant nec discernebant."

different spatial locations. The nature and conceptions of space in the afterlife had thus changed markedly since the era of Augustine, and it is a distinction which would continue.

The Geography of the Afterlife

Since we have mentioned the old subdivision of hell idea, we should look at how Alexander places limbo in the afterlife. There are some problems resolving this schema with respect to scriptural evidence. Consider Luke xvi.26: "A great chasm has been fixed between us and you, so that they might not cross" etc. This passage is cited in 3 Sent., and seems to argue for a sharp division between what Alexander would understand as the limbo of hell (where Lazarus was) and hell proper (although when he cites this particular passage it is not in this context). In two places and in one variant reading on this topic, Alexander quotes Augustine's commentary on Genesis: "Because there are two hells, one which is above us, another which is below our feet, the son of God was sent"[76], which reinforces the notion we have seen in earlier writers, that there is a lower and a higher hell, the higher being at least a place of lesser punishment, later to be called "limbo". An arrangement like this leaves Alexander with something of a problem. In the first place, the quotation from Luke was raised not to establish a point of geography, but in support of Wisdom ii.1 "There is no man who has returned from hell", to express geographically by means of a separating chasm the idea that there is no intercourse between hell and the other areas of the afterlife. Far more difficult for Alexander was the problem raised by the Psalm "You snatched my soul from the lower hell" and other supporting texts. It is quite clear, for Alexander, that Jesus Christ was meant to descend to limbo to retrieve the Fathers, and that Alexander supports the idea of a bifurcate hell, with limbo occupying the "upper hell" position.

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[76]. Augustine, Ennaratio in Psalmum 85, xvii, "Propter duo inferna, quorum unum superius et alterum sub pedibus, missus est Dei Filius" (P.L. 37, p.1094).

With this spatial layout in mind, what do the passages mean? Alexander sums up the situation nicely:

> And since it is called limbo, where the souls of the saints were destined to be liberated, and this is the higher hell, but the lower hell was the place of punishment, where were not destined the souls of the to-be liberated, but of the permanently damned, concerning which hell is said: "In hell there is no redemption" etc.; therefore if he did not descend to hell unless for the sake of the souls to be liberated, therefore he did not descend to the lower hell.[77]

However, the evidence from the Psalms and elsewhere seems to indicate the contrary, that "Christ descended to the lower hell, not only to limbo"[78], which of course begs the question why. Alexander does not seem greatly influenced by the elaborate imagery of the descensus-story as related by the Gospel of Nicodemus, so the possible option of Christ descending into the lower hell personally to vanquish the Devil does not seem to appeal to him. Rather, Alexander chooses to deal with the problem by making some exacting distinctions. What is meant by "low", he asks, and replies that low or lower can be understood three ways: about merit, punishment, or place. In this situation Alexander applies merit to those people who are in a state of mortal sin, since they merit hell, and states somewhat oddly that they are snatched forth from the lower hell when they are converted from their sins to penance, which can only happen in this life. With regard to reason of punishment, Alexander applies it to eternal damnation, which is the lowest state of all, and one from which there is no exit. Finally, Alexander considers it in a very unusual way with regard to mortal life, which he notes "because of the miseries which we sustain here, is called hell."[79] He buttresses this argument, which he makes in two different books, with a figurative quote from Augustine,

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[77]. Alexander of Hales, Summa I, Inq.un, tract.5, qu.2, cap.4, "Et cum limbus dicatur, ubi erant animae sanctorum liberandorum, et hic erat infernus superior, infernus vero inferior erat locus suppliciorum, ubi erant animae non liberandorum, sed perpetuo damnatorum, de quo inferno dicitur: "In inferno nullo est redemptio" etc.; si ergo non descendit ad infernum nisi propter animas liberandas, ergo non descendit ad infernum inferius." (ed. AHST, p.233)

[78]. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., III, d.22(L), 24, "Ergo Christus descendit ad infernum inferius, non solum ad limbum" (ed. AHSent, p.260)

[79]. Alexander of Hales, Summa I, Inq.un, trac.5, qu.2, cap.4, "qui propter miserias, quas hic sustinemus, dicitur infernus." (ed. AHST, p.234)

and notes that lower hell is applied to the hell beneath this life, which itself is a hell, insofar as "the body is called dead because of sin" (Rom.viii.10); since we are in a place abounding with the dead, we are in hell.

Thus, in the words of Augustine, Christ acted as a liberator in both hells, by being "born into the one hell and dying in the other."[80] This triumph of figurative language over clarity is the sense in which Alexander intends the passage to be interpreted. He thus preserves both the bipartite division of hell into both hell and limbo and the theological notion of Christ descending only to limbo. He writes:

> I respond: sometimes hell is taken generally and without distinction, as there, but sometimes in a distinguishing sense, so the higher is called limbo, the lower the place of punishment.[81]

Oddly enough, Alexander does not seem to view this area as non-functional in the Christian era, as William of Auvergne did. A variant reading mentions the story from the life of Gregory the Great of the emperor Trajan, who returned to life and received baptism because of the prayers of a widow. When considered in these matters, Trajan is usually mentioned as a special case of post-mortem baptism in the question of the salvation of non-believers, but Alexander seems to think he needed special inclusion in the schema of limbo, so he noted that Trajan "did not descend except to limbo, not the lower hell."[82] Thus Trajan represented the position of the Jewish Fathers, but from within the timeframe of the Christian era, since he was allowed to enter heaven through the sacrament of baptism rather than the direct salvific actions of Christ. Doubtless with limbo maintained in this schema as a place for unbaptized children, it was not unreasonable for Alexander to maintain that Trajan went there, as a

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80. Augustine, Ennaratio in Psalmum 85, xvii, "ad hoc nascendo, ad illud moriendo." (P.L. 37, p.1093).

81. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., III, d.22(E), "respondeo: quandoque infernus sumitur communiter et per indistinctionem, ut ibi: quandoque distincte, ut limbus dicatur superior, locus cruciatus inferior." (ed. AHSent, p.260).

82. Alexander of Hales, In 4 Sent., III, d.23, 13b "Et si dicatur quod non descendit nisi ad limbum, non ad inferius infernum." (ed. AHSent, p.256).

special case of someone with only original sin upon them, although yoked to a virtuous life rather than an untimely death.

Conclusions

In summary, Alexander of Hales holds a crucial position in the development of the idea of limbo. Thematically he begins with the restatement of the idea of original sin in the person of Adam and also the idea of original justice, both of which place him firmly in the Anselmian tradition. He was important in promulgating the Anselmian notion of a divine God/man being a necessary mediator between God and man on the question of original sin.[83] It has even been suggested that Alexander may have been chiefly responsible for preserving Anselm and introducing him to the Parisian schools.[84] He is standard in his depictions of the effects of original sin in terms of concupiscence and fomes. Baptism provides the remedy for original sin and diminishes its other deleterious effects, and like Augustine, Alexander insisted that it made one a member of the body of Christ. The after-effects of a death with only original sin on the soul are in line with another trend, that of Abelard, and Alexander follows this trend in insisting that such people are punished only by a deprivation of the beatific vision. He is divided on the nature of this deprivation, at one point indicating that it is with some measure of sadness, at another stating that it is not, but he is quite clear in noting that such infants do have the abilities to perceive and think, and can certainly come to know of God, if not actually know him. Alexander is most important for linking the conditions of unbaptized infants and the Fathers under the common name of a place, limbo. He does not subdivide it, but he does subdivide hell into hell and limbo, and this what matters. The Fathers and unbaptized infants are considered together, the former having been anxious about their otherworldly state, the latter, untroubled. Limbo is a developed place,

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[83]. See W. Principe, op.cit., p.197.

[84]. B. Smalley, op.cit., p.323.

and it is very different from hell. It is to limbo that Alexander insisted Christ descended, and from which he withdrew the Fathers. The sentiment is that of the Gospel of Nicodemus, even though the imagery is a little less detailed.

X. ALBERTUS MAGNUS AND THE ORGANISATION OF LIMBO

Albert the Great (ca.1200-1280) is one of the key figures in the development of limbo, and, indeed, in medieval theological thought. In an age of prodigious writers, his work stands out for its quantity and variety. H.M. Féret went as far as to claim that "among the great doctors of the Middle Ages, Albertus Magnus is, without doubt, the one who wrote the most, and on the most varied subjects"[1], and Féret has not remained alone in that opinion.[2] Furthermore, the surviving corpus of this amazing output doubtless excludes at least several more works now lost.[3] In succeeding generations Albertus' own prominence was eclipsed by that of his disciple, Thomas Aquinas, who has stood the test of time much better. Albertus was not canonized until 1931, and despite a continual popularity and cultus amongst his German countrymen, he remains singularly under-studied outside of Germany.[4] J. Weisheipl illustrates the situation particularly well, lamenting the lack of serious studies of Albert available, particularly in English,[5] nor is he alone.[6] For us, Albertus is important for the scientific precision which he brought to a single subject, one of hundreds which he considered, namely limbo. He continues the disciplined format of exposition within a Sentence commentary and Summa, as we have seen earlier in the work of Alexander of Hales, but to this disciplined form, Albertus adds a rigorous investigation and distinction

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1. H. Féret, "Albert le Grand", Catholicisme, i, (Paris, 1948), p.266.

2. Cf, for instance, P. Mandonnet, "Albert le Grand", Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique, i, (Paris, 1930), p.668.

3. H. Wilms, Albert the Great: Saint and Doctor of the Church (London, 1933), p.157.

4. Despite this, there are a number of very useful biographies; see, for example, M. Schooyans, Bibliographie philosophiqe de Saint Albert le Grand (1931-1960) (Sao Paulo, 1961), and A. Layer, "Albertus-Magnus Bibliographie 1930-1980", Jahrbuch des Vereins für Augsburger Bistumsgeschichte, xv (1981), 71-112., and M. Laurent and M. Congar, "Essai de Bibliographie Albertienne", Revue Thomiste, xxxvi (1931), 422-468.

5. J. Weisheipl, Alberus Magnus and the Sciences: Commemorative Essays 1980 (Toronto, 1980), p.ix.

6. H. Wilms, op.cit., p.xiii.

never before seen. He provides a detailed geographical description of the position of limbo and its internal divisions, as well as a careful examination of its nature and qualities in both philosophical and theological senses. For these reasons, his work is critical to our survey.

Albertus' Works- Source and Editions

In studying the actual works of Albertus, we are somewhat limited in terms of what is available. Albertus' works were collected and printed under the title Opera omnia by the Dominican Pierre Jammy in 1651, comprising 21 folio volumes (Lyon, 1651). This work was later reissued in 38 octavo volumes by August Borgnet (Paris, 1890-99), and was for the longest time the standard edition. A new critical edition that will comprise 40 volumes was begun in Cologne in 1951 by B. Geyer, president of the Albertus Magnus Institute, but is at present incomplete. None of these series includes the complete works of Albertus, many of which seem to have been, and the Borgnet edition in particular includes several works attributed to Albertus that are actually by other authors such as Hugh Ripelin. Albertus' studies of limbo occur in his earlier works.[7] The first of these is his tract De Resurrectione which is actually an independent work, although it has been added to the other works: De Sacramentis, De Incarnatione, [De Resurrectione], De IV Coaequavis, De Homine, and De Bono. Together, these works form the larger Summa Parisiensis,[8] which were comprised of Albertus' public disputations while he was a master at the University of Paris; the tracts De IV coaequavis and De Homine circulated for centuries as the Summa de creaturis. The other work which concerns us also dates from Albertus' early days in Paris--his commentary on the Sentences, upon which he was working contemporaneously with the Summa Parisiensis. This work as printed in the Borgnet edition is an ordinatio, that is, an edited

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[7]. For the chronology of these, see O. Lottin, "Commentaire des Sentences et Somme théologique d'Albert le Grand", Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale, viii (1936), 117-153, p.137.

[8]. P. Glorieux, Répertoire des Maîtres en Théologie de Paris, 1, p.63.

version prepared for the stationers, the fourth book of which was definitely completed after March, 1249.[9] This commentary is not perfect in form: H. Wilms finds in it a sort of unresolved Aristotelianism, in that Albertus simply draws up a series of arguments for and against, presenting a solution that is lacking in clarity and precision.[10] Albertus' commentary also closely followed the order of the original Sentences, even to the point of repeating material in various spots--it is evident that such an inefficient style displeased him, since he tried to change it by the time of his later Summa theologiae.[11] Nevertheless, the ideas he expresses about limbo in both of these works are at the same time in tune with early Christian thought, and also strikingly original.

Christ During the Triduum, and Qualities of the Places in the Afterlife

Let us follow Albertus' treatment of limbo thematically rather than chronologically, and begin with the relevant portion of his commentary on the third book of the Sentences. Albert's study of limbo begins theoretically with the question of the location of Christ during the triduum, and in posing this question in Article III of the 22nd distinction, he, like Alexander of Hales, follows closely in Peter Lombard's footsteps. His treatment of the question is standard, as is his solution--he accepts the Lombard's distinction between totus and totum, and notes that "the whole (totus) [Christ] is everywhere, but not wholly (totum)."[12] "Christ" is philosophically divided into three substances and two natures, which made it possible for him to be in the tomb, in hell, and everywhere during the triduum, since "he did not have personality from his human nature, or from man because he was man, but rather he

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9. J. Weisheipl, Albertus Magnus and the Sciences, p.22.

10. H. Wilms, op.cit., p.115.

11. Ibid., p.47.

12. Albertus Magnus, In III Sent. d.xxii, c, art.iii, "totus est qbique, non autem totum", (ed. Borgnet, xxviii, p.392).

had it from the eternal."[13] This conclusion establishes the philosophical possibility of a descent into hell, which is what Albertus considers in fourth article, "Whether Christ Descended into Hell." He begins with the overall objection that it seems incongruous that Christ should go to so ignoble a place as hell, but concludes with the authority of Scripture (Phil.ii.10, Ps.xxiii.7-9, Acts ii.24, etc.) and the Creed implying the descent of Christ to hell. Interestingly enough, among these responses Albertus sees fit to include a response from the Gospel of Nicodemus, in the form of the claim by the enslaved David to have prophesied the coming of the now-present Christ.[14] This tells us a great deal about how highly Albertus regarded the Gospel of Nicodemus, since he quotes it as an authority alongside Scripture and the Creed.

From this point Albertus makes a further set of distinctions, employing a vocabulary developed from the early Christian picture of the afterlife: did Christ descend to the lower hell? He concludes not with a very elaborate explanation involving qualities, which as we shall see is a characteristic style that he uses frequently in these discussions. Hell, he states, can be realised in two ways. The first way is interior, and like Alexander of Hales before him, Albertus notes that demons carry an interior hell with them at all times, even when they are outside the confines of hell proper. The second way is exterior, and Albertus again differentiates by qualities, this time of light and darkness. A place can be dark and inflicting punishment, and such a place is hell proper. If on the other hand the place is dark but does not inflict punishment, it is the limbo of children, (limbus puerorum, Albertus' term). However, such a darkness is not complete if there is some light coming from the people within. Thus, there can be a place in this scheme for a place which is dark but whose inhabitants have some light because they are being purged, and this is (presumably)

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[13]. Ibid, "non enim habet personalitatem a natura humana, vel ab homine secundum quod homo, sed potius habuit eam ab eterno."

[14]. Albertus Magnus, In III Sent. d.xxii, c, art.iv (ed. Borgnet, xxviii, p.392).

purgatory. Finally, Albertus reasons that there can be a place which is "dark...having something of light because of the great faith of the inhabitants there"[15], which is the limbo of the holy Fathers (limbus sanctorum patrum). By this careful distinction Albert means us to understand that the only hell to which Christ descended was the limbus patrum, since it was the only place from which people were freed. Christ did this because he was made on behalf of man, not himself, so it was for our sake that he took this action.

Albertus then deals with the problematic image of the bosom of Abraham and punishment by noting that the latter is not applied to the "inhabitants of limbo [who were] in sure hope"[16], but rather is applied to those in hell proper who have not hope; and he personifies their lack of hope into the great chasm between them and the blessed. Interestingly, here he does not see this metaphor as the geography of hell and the limbus patrum as so many other writers did. He goes on to clarify the idea of the "deepest hell." This place is for demons alone; Albertus prefers to regard the place to which Job and the Fathers descended as "deepest limbo" (profundissimus limbus), and draws a distinction between Christ's descent considered simpliciter and quodammodo; Christ having descended to the deepest hell quodammodo. Furthermore, Albertus' treatment of the condition of Dives in hell gives us a little better view of the nature of the limbus patrum. Was Dives, who sought release from punishment, in hell or the limbus patrum? Divine mercy would not work to effect a reduction of punishment (of sense and damnation) in the limbus patrum, for there was none there, although it was capable of gaining "relaxation". So Dives was in hell, a different place form the limbus patrum. Albertus goes on to examine the psychology of Dives, concluding that what Dives was really seeking from Abraham was ultimately not salvation but the chance to return to life. He presumed that if someone was to be resurrected on behalf of Dives' kin, it would not be Lazarus, since Abraham would not return Lazarus

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15. Ibid., "locus tenebrosum aliquid de luce habens propter magnam fidem et spem habitantium ibi".

16. Ibid., "hoc non dictum est de habitantibus in limbo certa spe", (ed. Borgnet, xxviii, p.393).

to his former wretched life, thus Dives would be able to return instead. Albertus thus concludes that "he was not at that time in limbo, but went there through Christ"[17], and only when his entreaty was refused did he seek the state which Lazarus enjoyed with Abraham, which Albertus characterizes as, "a slight relaxation from punishment which had not been given to him, but had been given to the inhabitants in limbo because of their merits."[18] Of course, in the end he was granted neither.

The Nature of the Limbo of the Fathers

Now that Albertus has drawn a careful distinction between the non-heavenly realms of the afterlife, he goes on to consider the nature of the limbus patrum in greater detail in Article V, "Whether Christ Illuminated Those who were held in Limbo?" It is interesting that he chooses to use the word "limbo" in this question, which we have seen phrased as "illuminated those who were in hell" by earlier authors. The entire tone of this question changes when the distinction between realms is made, and Albertus simply denies any objections by a repetition of the ideas mentioned in the preceding article, as he notes that Christ did indeed "show his divinity" to the saints in hell:

> and for them he turned the place of a horrible prison into a paradise to this extent that they saw his divinity face to face, having paid the price of redemption.[19]

The price was paid, no doubt, through faith. He goes on to clarify his solution by explaining that even though the word "hell" is used throughout his quotes and exposition, what is meant in any discussion of these matters is the concept "limbo", where the Fathers were. Furthermore, even if they had been in hell proper, they could still have been illuminated by

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[17]. Ibid., "et ille non erat tunc in limbo, sed per Christum advenit."

[18]. Ibid., "petivit relaxantem aliquantulum de poena quae non dabatur ei, sed dabatur habitantibus in limbo propter meritum eorum."

[19]. Albertus Magnus, In III Sent., d.xxii, c, art.5, "et eis locum horrendi carceris in paradisum convertit, quoad hoc quod facie ad faciem deitatem ejus videbant, soluto pretio redemptionis." (ed. Borgnet, xxviii, p.394).

Christ while the damned around them would not have been, since such an illumination could only have been perceived by eyes which were purified by grace and glory, which the saints would have had but the damned would have lacked. And since the Fathers were actually in limbo rather than hell, there would have been the possibility of illumination, since as Albertus defined it, limbo was, "not the commendation to perpetual darkness, but rather temporary darkness up until the redemption which was made through Christ."[20] It was possible for Christ to make the promise he did to Dismas about being with him in paradise that day if one understands paradise as Albertus does, which is according to a series of distinctions of interior and exterior. Paradise understood interiorly is the "open vision of the divinity"[21], which Dismas enjoyed while in the presence of Christ, whereas paradise understood exteriorly for the body is Eden and exteriorly for the soul is heaven. Closely related to these questions are those raised in the last Article, VI, "How Long was Christ in Hell?", which is raised particularly with reference to the promise given to Dismas by Christ on the cross. Was it instantly, or at the moment of Christ's resurrection? In view of the above interpretation of Christ's promise to Dismas, it is clear that Albertus means for this passage not to be taken literally. Christ did not lead the Fathers out of hell until the third day, since he had to complete his tasks of defeating death and illuminating the underworld.

The Nature of the Limbo of Children

Now we have seen that Albertus identifies five places in the afterlife, and definitely distinguishes the differences between the limbus puerorum and the limbus patrum, separating the established notion of "limbo" into two places with distinct names. Furthermore, he examines each place in depth, in questions found in the treatise De Resurrectione. He begins

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[20]. Ibid., "limbus non erat damnatus perpetuis tenebris, sed potius temporalibus usque ad redemptionem quae facta est per Christum."

[21]. Ibid., "visio aperta deitatis".

with the limbus puerorum, in Question 7 of the third tract. The first article asks why children go to limbo, and as such are intimately connected with reasons of original sin. Why should unbaptized children have to go limbo? If the reason is because of original sin, then their punishment is unjust, since original sin is not their fault. Furthermore, what happens to those souls during the Final Resurrection? Since they are not counted among the blessed, it does not seem that they will receive a glorified body, yet neither should they suffer the torments of the damned, since they have no personal sin.

Albertus' ideas follow the formulations of Anselm of Canterbury very closely. The punishment of unbaptized children is due to original sin, which, in Albertus' estimation had tainted all of human nature that was in Adam at the time when he committed his sin. Adam would certainly have been rewarded with virtues had he obeyed God's commands, but he did not, and thus we justly inherit original sin, since we draw our nature from Adam's. Albertus does not spell out the reason explicitly, but it is clear that the means by which the sin is spread is through the concupiscence involved in the generative act, desire being punished in desire--he notes of man that "it was just that he should derive harm from that from which he would have gained advantage."[22] Albertus concludes, as Anselm did, that original sin was of nature, rather than of person, and was passed on to each man as part of his nature. More interesting is Albertus' subsequent statement about the post-resurrection status of unbaptized infants. He concludes that these infants will be resurrected "in a state which is appropriate for an age of thirty years."[23] This presumably will not be a glorified body like that of the saints, since Albertus insists that it would be a physical body like Adam's, although without the need for food and sleep. Logically, we can thus conclude that it would be more perfect than a mortal body like the one we possess currently, although Albertus admits that it would

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[22]. Albertus Magnus, Tract III de resurrectione ex parte malorum tantum, q.7, art.1, "Unde a quo reportasset lucrum, iustum fuit, ut reportaret nocumentum." (ed. Cologne, xxvi, p.318).

[23]. Ibid., "quod resurget in statura, quae competit aetati triginta annorum".

still carry the stain of fomes, which would at that time not be punitive in nature, but rather would exist only to impede the further glorification of these resurrected infants.

But all these events are in the future; what of the nature of the limbus puerorum now? The second Article of the Question asks where it is, and in so doing provides us with some further insights into Albertus' views of the geography in the afterlife. His objections begin with the etymology of the word "limbo"; he notes that the word comes from "fringe", and wonders where this put the limbus puerorum--on hell's fringe? Albertus preserves the etymological meaning of limbo by insisting that it is indeed next to hell, although distinct from it, which means that there can be fire in hell but not in the limbus puerorum. Albertus is also quite definite in allowing that the limbus puerorum is closer to hell than purgatory is--despite the fact that there are punitive fires in purgatory and not in the limbus puerorum, this does not make purgatory more like hell. Rather, the spatial distinction is one which is based on spiritual qualities rather than superficial likenesses. Souls in purgatory are undergoing a process of purgation which will bring them closer to God, whereas unbaptized infants are forever confirmed in their state. In Albertus' own words: "Children in limbo are separated more from God than are the holy souls who are in purgatory."[24]

Finally, Albertus asks about the punishment which children in limbo undergo. What of the worm of conscience, and the nature of the deprivation of the beatific vision? Are children not in a twofold darkness? Not necessarily. Albertus takes great care to clarify what the worm of conscience means. The worm of conscience is "from irredeemable sin voluntarily done from one's own fault"[25], and this does not apply to children, since their situation is predicated by the sins of another. They suffer no pain, either internally or externally.

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[24]. Ibid, art.2, "quod pueri in limbo magis elongati sunt a deo quam sanctae animae, qui sunt in purgatorio".

[25]. Ibid., art.3, "qui vermis est de peccato irremissibili voluntarie perpetrato propria culpa", (ed. Cologne, xxvi, p.319).

Albertus thus follows the idea established by Abelard, that such infants merely suffer "the lack of the vision of God; which is the punishment of loss and not the punishment of sense."[26] With regard to the questions of the darkness that unbaptized infants suffer, Albertus conceded that they are indeed in an interior darkness, but notes that it is one thing to be in such a darkness and another thing to suffer from it. Unbaptized infants do indeed lack an internal light, but this is not their fault, but rather that of someone else. Albertus returns to the ideas of William of Auvergne to further his point:

> Nevertheless [unbaptized infants] have a natural knowledge of God and all creatures, not grace nor that which is in the word, because no one is deprived of natural thought after death, neither the damned nor the Devil.[27]

This idea is not far from that of William about unbaptized infants being capable of philosophy, although Albertus says nothing about the infants being capable of intellectual progress, or lacking material distractions, etc. Furthermore, with regard to exterior darkness, Albertus speaks a little about the future state of unbaptized infants after the Resurrection. He has explained a little about their bodies; here he speaks a little more about their state. They will remain in the limbus puerorum, and it will remain a dark place (for whatever reason, possibly because Albertus means us to believe that it remains inside the earth; he is not too clear on this point). However, although the place will be dark, and the infants in their thirty-year old bodies will have physical means of perception, they will nevertheless not suffer from that darkness, since Albertus believes that: "the vision and the actions of bodily senses after the resurrection will not be informed from the outside, but from inside."[28]

The Fate of Aborted Fetuses

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[26]. Ibid., "carentia visionis dei, quae est poena damni et non poena sensus."

[27]. Ibid., "Havent tamen dei et omnium creaturarum cognitionem naturalem, not gratuitam nec eam quae est in verbo, qui naturali cognitione nullus privatur post mortem, nec damnatus nec diabolus".

[28]. Ibid., "quod visio et actus sensum corporalium post resurrectionem non informabuntur ab exteriori, sed ab interiori".

Albertus does not limit his quests in these matters merely to unbaptized infants. It is well-known that he possessed a lively interest in all matters scientific, and among them was the study of embryology.[29] This interest was more than a merely passing one--Albertus devoted approximately 31% of his works on biology to the question of human generation.[30] Not surprisingly, his views on this subject are largely Aristotelian--he saw the embryo as developing a series of souls: vegetative, sentient, and rational, and believed that the embryo did not become human until its rational soul had been infused, which happened when the embryo had a recognizable human shape. This process occurred at animation, which Albertus estimated at two months, and coincidentally identified was the point at which abortion should be considered murder.[31] Many of the ideas on embryology that Albertus held are neither new nor unusual for the medieval period. However, what is novel for us is the fact that Albertus was aware enough of the fate of aborted embryos to ask what befell them, which he does in Article 44 of his commentary on Book IV of the Sentences. Here he asks what will happen to aborted fetuses and freaks (monstra is the term used, implying deformed humans such as Siamese twins) on the Resurrection. Presumably he means fetuses aborted after animation, since he followed Augustine in not considering them to have a rational soul before animation.[32] The question is not a frivolous one, and deals with the absolute beginnings of the human person.

Albertus begins his examination with an objection: how can aborted fetuses enjoy the rebirth of resurrection if they have not previously had the first birth into life? This was a

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[29]. For more details of his embryological studies, see A. Delrome, "La morphogenèse d'Albert dans l'embryologie scolastique", Revue Théologique xxxvi (1931), 352-360 and L. Demaitre and A. Travill, "Human Embryology and Development in the works of Albertus Magnus", in J. Weisheipl, Albertus Magnus and the Sciences, (Toronto, 1980), 404-440.

[30]. L. Demaitre and A. Travill, "Human Embryology and Development in the works of Albertus Magnus", in J. Weisheipl, Albertus Magnus and the Sciences, (Toronto, 1980), 404-440, p.410.

[31]. Albertus Magnus, In IV Sent., d.31, art.18 (ed. Borgnet, xxx, pp.250-251).

[32]. Ibid.

common question, usually asked to assert the inefficacy of prenatal baptism. Albertus' response is a formulation that is worth quoting in full:

> It should be said that birth is twofold, namely in the uterus and from the uterus. In the uterus there is animation, which is here called the formation of the fetus. However, they do not have birth outside the uterus. But resurrection follows the first birth, and not merely the second.[33]

Thus it is clear that Albertus is interested in the fate of even the humblest souls, and we can say that for him they are functionally no different than other unbaptized infants. After the Resurrection they do not inherit the gifts of the blessed, but they will participate in the Resurrection itself, and be given bodies of mature adults of thirty years. They will also have a sort of impassability, not like that of the saints, but rather like that Adam would have had, had he not sinned. Albertus does not specify where these fetuses would spend eternity, but since their reward is identical to that of unbaptized infants, presumably they, too, would be in the limbus puerorum.

The Status of the Fathers in the Limbus Patrum

Albertus also examines the other limbo, the limbus patrum, in some detail in Question 8 of De Resurrectione. This investigation follows the same format as his previous one into the nature of the limbus puerorum. He begins with a question of the justice of the situation of the Fathers: why did they need to descend to limbo? Were not their legalia prefigurations of the sacraments of the Christian era, and did they not lead lives of great rectitude? Albertus' ideas are quintessential Anselm; yes, the Fathers were able to do all that a human could do to make up for original sin, but more was needed to be done than a human could do, and this required the actions of Christ. This reply touches on the mystery of the

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[33]. Albertus Magnus, In IV Sent. d.xliv, I, art. 44, "Dicendum, quod duplex est nativitas, scilicet in utero, et ex utero. In utero est animatio, quae dicitur hic formatio perpuerii. Et ex utero autem nativitatem non habent. Sed resurrectio sequitur primam nativitatem, et non secundam tantum." (ed. Borgnet, xxx, p.602).

Incarnation, which Albertus examines in detail elsewhere[34], and which need not concern us. Original sin thus remained in the Fathers, and Albertus uses a kind of natural science metaphor to note that a certain weight (pondus) remained in them which dragged them down to the underworld (at this point he uses the word inferos rather than infernus).

Having established a quasi-geographic/spatial image for the limbus patrum, Albertus goes on to consider its location. Since the Fathers were there, it must have been a place of some excellence; would it not be at some distance from hell? However, there is the evidence of the descent into hell from the Creed and other authorities. Albertus' response is to detail the lower regions of the afterlife in a way which again merits quotation in full:

> We say that the limbus patrum is next to hell, just as the Creed says, and it joins the rim of hell to the limbus puerorum. But that distance which is spoken about in the Gospel is understood as far as concerns the distance of merit and consolation, and also it is a higher place than hell as far as hell is the place of the damned.[35]

Again, the distinctions here are based primarily on qualities, the more excellent realm being more highly placed than the less excellent one. Thus the limbos and hell are placed in descending order of excellence in this fashion:

Limbus puerorum

Limbus patrum

Hell

Albertus also asks whether the limbus patrum continues to exist, since the Fathers are now, of course, in heaven. He concludes that there is no more reason for it to be there, and yet it still exists "Wherefore it remained so far as substance is concerned, but not so far as

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[34]. Albertus Magnus, Tract I de incarnatione (ed. Cologne, xxvi, p.171).

[35]. Albertus Magnus, Tract III de resurrectione ex parte malorum tantum q.8 art.2, "Dicimus, quod limbus patrum est iuxta infernum, sicut dicit Symbolum, et est ora inferni coniuncta limbo puerorum. Distantia autem, de qua dicitur in Evangelio, intelligitur quantum ad distantiam meriti et consolationis, et etiam locus altior est quam internus quoad locum damnatorum." (ed. Cologne, xxvi, p.320).

reason"[36], which presumably means that the realm is still there, though physically unoccupied. Possibly it serves as an extra buffer zone between hell and the limbus puerorum. Finally, as he did for the limbus puerorum, Albertus considers the punishment meted out by the limbus patrum. Even before the objections, he begins his examination of them, unusually, with the bold statement that "there was there neither worm nor fire."[37] However, he has established that the limbos and hell are dark realms--possibly inside the earth--and goes on to query whether the Fathers had to suffer from any form of darkness. Since in Lk.i.79 Zachary had said that Christ came to illuminate those "who sit in darkness and in the shadows of death", it seems that the Fathers endured some form of external darkness (Albertus notes here that the shadow of death is meant to mean external rather than internal darkness). Furthermore, it is asked whether this darkness was a punishment. Albertus concludes that the Fathers suffered no positive punishments. There was no punishment of sense in the limbus patrum, nor was there any sort of internal darkness, since the Fathers were illuminated interiorly by the "light of faith."[38] He interprets "shadow of death" to mean the postponement of the beatific vision which the Fathers had to undergo because of the presence of their original sin. The illumination of faith thus obviates the punishment of the exterior darkness which exists in limbo. Merely physical darkness is not really a punishment to "a soul having exited from the body."[39] If the Fathers endured any discomfort at all, it was not from the punitive effects of external darkness; rather, it was from the fact that they were forced to endure a long wait in a state of such "meanness" (ignobilitatem).

The Number of Places in the Afterlife

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36. Ibid., "Unde remansit quantum ad substantiam, sed non quantum ad rationem, ut possit dici limbus patrum."

37. Ibid., art.3, "Et constat per praedicta, quod non fuit ibi vermis nec ignis."

38. Ibid., "lumen fidei."

39. Ibid., "non sunt poena animae exutae a corpore".

After having considered the two limbos separately, Albertus also goes on to examine them in conjunction with other areas of the afterlife, both in Question 5 of the tract De Resurrectione and in Book IV, art. 45 of his commentary on the Sentences. Let us begin with Article 45, which contains in embryo some ideas which are developed more completely in Question 5. Article 45 deals with the question of receptacles in the afterlife, following on an earlier question of whether all souls are held together in receptacles to await the Final Judgement and reward, which was an idea popular with some Greek theologians, and one which Albertus decisively rejects.[40] It asks whether there are five receptacles: heaven, hell, purgatory, and the limbos, adding the idea of limbo to the more established locations of heaven, hell, and by then purgatory, and considers the possible existence of a widely varying number of receptacles.

Albertus' answer is to view things in terms of categories. Places in the afterlife can be described in his estimation according to the categories of ends and the categories of merits, and how these groups fit together in various combinations. The realms of the afterlife are divided according to ends and ways, that is, those places which are eternal and those which lead eventually to one of the eternal places. Personal merit helps to determine where one goes. The permanent place for those of good merit is heaven, while the permanent place for those of evil merit is hell. However, hell is seen in two ways. If the evil merit which leads to hell is personal, it results in "the lower hell of the damned" (inferior infernus damnatorum). If, however, it is inherited merit--from original sin (Albertus calls it "alien merit contracted from nature"), the result is the limbus puerorum, "which is a higher hell."[41] The "ways", or temporary realms, are fixed on a defect of merit, since they do not send one anywhere permanently. If there is a defect of personal merit, the result is purgatory; if it is

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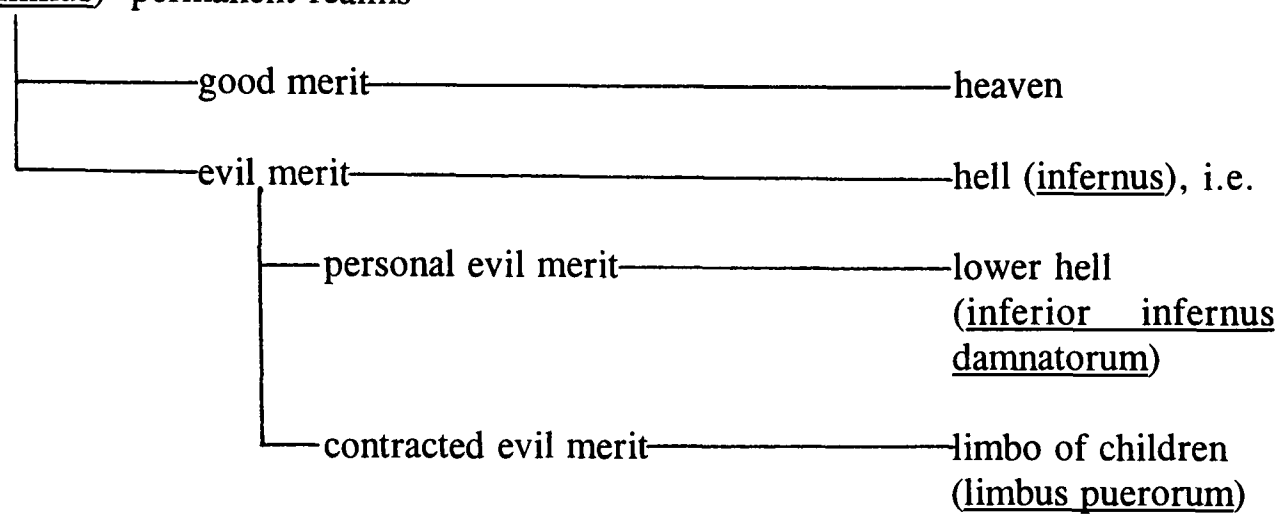
40. Albertus Magnus, In IV Sent., d.xxi, d, art.10, (ed Borgnet, xxix, p.875).

41. Ibid., "qui est infernus superior".

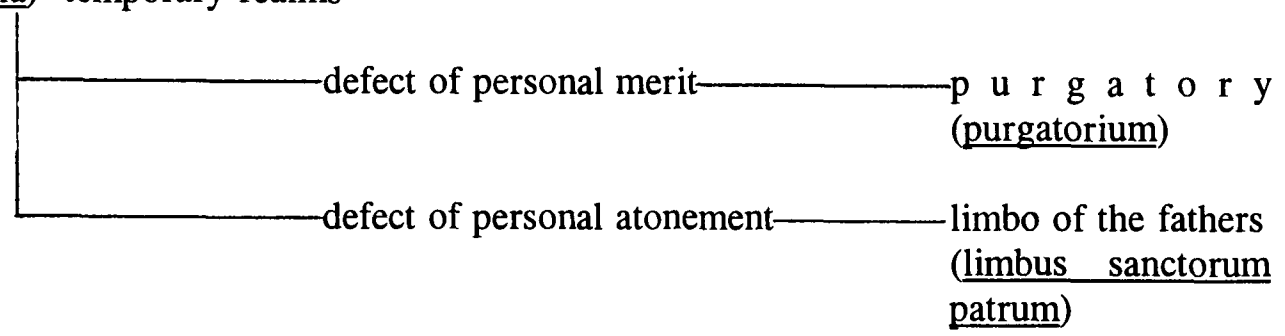
a defect of atonement, it is the limbus patrum before the advent of Christ. The following diagrams should make these ideas clearer:

REALMS OF THE AFTERLIFE ACCORDING TO END AND MERIT IN ALBERTUS MAGNUS

I. End (terminus)--permanent realms



II. Way (via)--temporary realms



This explanation is involved, and yet orderly, and results not in three, six, or an infinite number of realms of the afterlife, but just five. Notice in the diagram that Albertus ranks the realms of the afterlife according to merit, rather than type of sin. This is because he tends to link venial and mortal sins, since venial sins tend to lead to mortal ones, even if only by omission. Darkness is not used in this schema, either (but see below), since he remarks:

> the punishment of sense cannot be without darkness: because darkness leads to aversion, and the punishment of sense to conversion: and for that reason

> no place is only of sensible punishment, just as no sin is mortal having only conversion.[42]

Purgatory thus becomes a special case; since the people in it are illuminated by grace, and are being punished sensibly, there is no such thing as a "purging darkness". Albertus admits that demons and the Devil are punished in the "shadowy air", but does not consider it a realm. Of chief importance, then, is the fact that here Albertus establishes the quinpartite structure of the afterlife, with regard to the quality of merit.

Qualities of the Receptacles

Having established that there are, indeed, five realms to the afterlife, Albertus elsewhere deals with the question of what those places are like. Some of his formulations in Question 9 of De Resurrectione are the same as those in the commentary on the Sentences. He begins his examination of the receptacles of souls with an examination of their ends, in much the same way as he did earlier. A receptacle of souls is either the "end of a way or it is a way."[43] An end that has joy is heaven. The opposite of joy is punishment, which is either that of damnation or damnation and sense. Here Albertus presumes that the punishment of sense implies a prior punishment of damnation, because there is no punishment of sense alone. The punishment of damnation alone, here as elsewhere, he identifies as the lack of the vision of God. An end that has the punishment of damnation alone is the limbus puerorum, and one with the punishment of damnation plus sense is gehenna. A fate which is a way to an end also comes with a punishment, either damnation alone, that is, the limbus patrum, or damnation plus sense, alias purgatory. Again, a diagram may help to clarify these distinctions:

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[42]. Ibid., "dicendum, quod poena sensibilis non potest esse sine tenebris: quia tenebrae sequuntur ad aversionem, et sensibilis poena ad conversionem: et ideo nullus est locus sensibilis poenae tantum, sicut nullum est peccatum mortale habens conversionem tantum." (ed. Borgnet, xxx, p.604).

[43]. Albertus Magnus, Tract III de resurrectione ex parte malorum tantum q.9, "vel est terminus viae vel est via." (ed. Cologne, xxvi, p.320).

REALMS OF THE AFTERLIFE ACCORDING TO END AND PUNISHMENT IN ALBERTUS MAGNUS

I. End (terminus viae)

- joy — heaven (regnum caelorum)
- punishment
  - damnation only — limbo of children (limbus puerorum)
  - sense and damnation — hell (gehenna)

II. Way (via)

- punishment of damnation only — limbo of the fathers (limbus patrum)
- punishment of damnation plus sense — purgatory (purgatorius)

From this point, Albertus proceeds to consider the receptacles of the afterlife with regard to the categories of merit. This produces an argument which is very similar in nature to that in his commentary on the Sentences: good personal merit results in heaven, bad in hell, while bad inherited merit results in the limbus puerorum. However, here in De Resurrectione, he chooses to mix the categories of merit rather than consider deficiencies of merit, so his final category is of good joined to evil. In this construction, the admixture results in venial sin, and as such is considered a form of evil merit, "because the good of grace is not joined to it."[44] Thus, if the admixture is joined to actual sin which is one's own fault, it will result in purgatory; if it is joined to another's fault, it will result in the limbus patrum. No mention of the impermanence of the latter two realms is made; possibly Albertus meant it to have been firmly established in the previous paragraph. In a diagram, the whole looks like this:

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[44]. Ibid., "quia illi non coniungitur bonum gratiae".

REALMS OF THE AFTERLIFE ACCORDING TO PERSONAL MERIT IN ALBERTUS MAGNUS

Merit

- Good alone — Heaven
- Bad alone
  - Own fault — Hell
  - Another's fault — Limbo of children
- Good and bad mixed
  - Venial sin, own fault — Purgatory
  - Venial sin, another's fault — Limbo of the Fathers

After having established this, Albertus then goes on to consider these realms with regard to punishment. In this scheme they are described not in terms of ends or merits, but rather in terms of qualities of the punishments. He distinguishes four qualities: injurious, dark, luminous, and delightful (afflictivum, tenebrosum, luminosum, and laetificativum). He then describes the realms in terms of the way he pairs these punishments together. Oddly enough, he tends not to regard these qualities as absolutes, and so in some matchings qualifies them. When paired, the realms look like this:

REALMS OF THE AFTERLIFE ACCORDING TO QUALITY IN ALBERTUS MAGNUS

Luminous + Delightful	Heaven
(Injurious) + Dark	Gehenna
Primarily Injurious + (A Little) Dark	Purgatory
Not Injurious + Primarily Dark	Limbo of children
Not Injurious + (A Little) Dark	Limbo of the Fathers

Albertus here qualifies the notion of a 'little dark' as meaning "that it puts off the vision of God"[45], a mitigation of the absolute carentia visionis dei that is the punishment for original sin. Actually, there is some confusion here, as Albertus' schema is meant to call hell entirely dark: that it is injurious is a secondary matter, so it is proper to call it entirely dark as well. The rest of the categories are not meant to be taken as absolutes, though no one realm is entirely luminous, or entirely injurious, etc. Luminosity, in itself a primary category, is the cause of happiness, so any place which is luminous will also be delightful. Furthermore, injuriousness is another primary category, which can exist simpliciter (it involves fire as well, which makes it injurious), and since every injurious place harms, it also implies darkness. Darkness, however, can be of different kinds, as Albertus observes:

> But darkness is of two causes, namely from the lack of the light of fully formed faith, and from the lack of the vision of God through sight. And for that reason something can be primarily dark that lacks both kinds of light, and something (can be) in some respects dark, namely because it has another light.[46]

Hence the different levels of darkness are used to describe every level of the afterlife which is not heaven. Heaven is luminous because it has a twofold light, since there one has the open vision of God exteriorly; this vision implies the possession of faith interiorly.

The whole section ends with what might seem to the overstretched reader as a logical conclusion: since Albertus has so multiplied the realms of the afterlife, can one not continue keep doing so? After all, the division of merit and sin is unequal for all, and if these are the deciding factors about where one ends up in the afterlife, should there not be an almost infinite number of places for each individual, with a unique load of merit and sin, to go to? Albertus must see some logic to this point, since he responds to it pithily:

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[45]. Ibid., "scilicet quantum ad dilationem visionis".

[46]. Ibid., "Sed tenebrosum est a duplici causa, scilicet a carentia luminis fidei formatae et a carentia visionis dei per speciem. Et ideo potest aliquid ese simpliciter tenebrosum quod utroque limine caret, et aliquid secundum quid tenebrosum, scilicet quod habet alterum lumen." (ed. Cologne, xxvi, p.321).

> it should be said, that the receptacles are accepted from general divisions of merit, for they [i.e, the inhabitants of the receptacles] will be distinguished according to special mansions in the receptacles.[47]

Thus the area of subdivisions might be large, but the actual number of receptacles remains five.

Suffrages and the Limbos

We should not conclude this section without examining one more question about the limbos, and that is their permanence. Since the Fathers have been freed during Christ's descent during the triduum, it is generally concluded that the limbo of the Fathers is empty, whereas the limbo of children still exists and will continue to exist. But what about the individuals who are or were in each? Was (or is) it possible for the living to affect them? Specifically, were or are suffrages of any benefit for the Fathers and unbaptized infants in the limbos? Albertus considers this question for both limbos, beginning with the limbus patrum. Were suffrages of benefit to the Fathers? Generally, Albertus concludes they were not, since the Fathers lived worthy lives and thus had nothing to be purged. Or else perhaps suffrages were of no benefit to them, since they had attained "no punishment of judgement."[48] However, the main reason why is Anselmian: although the Fathers had "in all things which were able to be done by man...made satisfaction"[49], there was still need of a mediator of God and man to pay the price for Adam's debt. The Fathers were in a condition of "happy hope" awaiting that mediator. They fit into Augustine's non valde mali category, but that was because they were valde boni, and as such had no need of suffrages. Quite the contrary: not only did they not need them, they were rather so excellent that "they were able to aid those

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47. Ibid., "dicendum, quod receptacula accipiuntur a generalibus divisionis meriti; secundum specialis enim distinguuntur mansionis in receptaculis".

48. Albertus Magnus, In IV Sent., d.xlv, A, art.5, "qui nullam propter se experitur poenam judicis". (ed. Borgnet, xxx, p.613).

49. Ibid., "quia in omnibus satisfecerunt, quae ab homine fieri poterant".

others who were in purgatory more fully than they were able to be aided by [suffrages]."[50] Some people die in a deficiency of merit and thus in need of suffrages; in Albertus' view, the Fathers "entered the tomb rather in a state of abundance, and having been buried they slept in peace until the advent of Christ."[51] The language here is more measured that the analytic logic we have seen earlier, and in so being succeeds in making the condition of the Fathers seem much more positive.

The position of unbaptized children is another matter. It might seem that suffrages should benefit them; since their sin is through another, it seems that the actions of another (particularly the church!) should be of benefit to them. However, for Albertus the issue is not one of deserving, but rather of grace, as it had been for Augustine.[52] While sensible and merciful objections can be raised, the plain fact is that the only path to heaven is through grace. Unquestionably, infants died before receiving grace through the sacrament of grace, namely baptism, and Albertus maintains "someone dying without grace is not open to the reception of grace"[53], again underlining the notion of the static character of the human soul after death. In Albertus' own words:

> they have been confirmed in another state, and on that account: sin is made immovable, not from the magnitude of the sin, but from the state and the divine judgement.[54]

Thus grace provided by another can be of no use to someone who is frozen in a state without it. Furthermore, the question of venial sin does not enter into this formulation, since the position of unbaptized infants is due to divine judgement rather than their own sin. They

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50. Ibid., "unde potius alios qui erant in purgatorio juvare poterant, quam juvarentur ab ipsis."

51. Ibid., "sed potius in abundantia ingressi sunt sepulcrum, et defossi securi dormierunt usque ad Christi adventum".

52. Augustine, De Praedestinatione sanctorum, xii.23, (P.L. 44, p.978).

53. Ibid., art.6, "sed decedens sine gratia, imperceptibilis est ad gratiae perceptionem", (ed. Borgnet, xxx, p.614).

54. Ibid., "et ideo peccatum efficitur immobile, non ex magnitudine peccati, sed ex statu et sententia divina."

have no personal sin, it is true, they are not valde mali, but neither are they valde boni or really anything at all. They have done no acts either of good or of evil, and do not benefit from suffrages. These do not aid them any more than they aided the Fathers, but unlike the Fathers, it is because their status in the afterlife is permanent.

Conclusion

Albertus Magnus is one of the major figures in the development of limbo in the Middle Ages. Much of what he wrote served to maintain continuity with the preceding body of thought. He preserves the totus/totum distinction of the natures of Christ, which aided in the theoretical explications of the possibilities of Christ's descent to the dead, or, more properly, to limbo, as Albertus describes it. Furthermore, he maintains almost in their entirety the ideas of Anselm on the necessity of a God/man to make atonement for original sin, which is a crucial point in understanding the necessity of the limbos. Albertus is the first to bequeath to the West the practice of considering the limbos as two distinct places, both united and distinguished by a common name. After Albertus, the limbus patrum and the limbus puerorum would almost always be considered two separate places. Albertus also presents a number of very detailed and novel views on these limbos, which although they were not always adopted by later authors, nevertheless paved the way to the consideration of the limbos as specific places. While distinctions in these areas had been made in the past, Albertus is very important in that he helped to make them geographical by considering them with regard to space. He is also much like William of Auvergne in assigning a merciful fate to unbaptized children after the Resurrection--a thirty-year old body with a kind of Adamic impassability--but is novel both in considering the state of aborted fetuses, and in adding them to the category of unbaptized infants. Furthermore, he contributes to a continuing historical trend by considering the effects of suffrages on the Fathers and on unbaptized children. Despite their occasional complexity and strangeness, Albertus' distinctions about the nature

of the receptacles of the afterlife result in some of the most detailed examinations about the theory behind the limbos that the Middle Ages produced. Albertus gives us five realms of the afterlife, three permanent and two temporary, in the following order:

Heaven

[Purgatory]

Limbus puerorum

[Limbus patrum]

Hell

After him, most scholastics number the receptacles of the afterlife with these five; perhaps in different orders, true, but almost always these five.

XI. THOMAS AQUINAS AND THE SYSTEMATIZATION OF LIMBO

The major writings of Thomas Aquinas (c.1224-1274) may best be categorized by the word "system". With Aquinas, scholastic theology reaches its zenith, and the subject matters of his writings are treated with a systematic investigation that had not been equalled. His treatment of limbo is no exception; he is thorough in examining it, covering its distant origins in the questions of original sin and the Incarnation, through a detailed consideration of the harrowing of hell, down to an extensive treatment of the plight of unbaptized infants and the limbus puerorum. Although he is less preoccupied with the actual geography of the afterlife than William of Auvergne or Albertus Magnus, he is correspondingly more focused upon the theological and philosophical reasons behinds those realms, and the status of the souls within them. Aquinas preserves the notion of the bipartite limbo bequeathed to him by his master, Albertus Magnus, but goes further than his master in examining the reasons behind the realms; and always, throughout his investigations, there is the continual, underlying support of a well-crafted structure. Thomas Aquinas provides us with one of the most systematic expositions of limbo, and given his stature as a thinker, it is important to examine him in detail.

Works

For the purposes of this chapter, we shall only examine excerpts from a select few works of Aquinas' vast literary corpus. The first work of importance is his commentaries on Peter Lombard's Sentences, which date from the period 1252-1256 when he lectured on them at the University of Paris. A Sentence-commentary was expected of every master, and Aquinas' is unusual in that it breaks up the order in which the exposition of the Sentences flows, making it a study or scriptum rather than a true commentary. Rather than follow the Lombard's order, Aquinas chooses instead to consider things as they proceed from God as

their source, or return to him as their end,[1] which sets a pattern of exitus and reditus that becomes a common theme of circular motion common to many of Aquinas' writings. Another work to be considered stems from a series of disputed questions that have their roots in Aquinas' work from his time as a master at Paris from 1256 to 1259. During this time, Aquinas held frequent informal disputations on various topics, usually fortnightly. From these quaestiones disputatae, one particular question, on evil (De Malo) is of interest in the present context. Its dating is still a subject of controversy[2], but it was most probably completed before 1268. Finally, there is Aquinas' magnum opus, the Summa theologiae, the second of his great summae, begun in 1266 and left unfinished on his death. In spite of the authoritative position this work came to occupy in the history of Western Christian thought, there is every evidence to indicate that Aquinas meant the work for beginners, and intended it to fill a practical gap in the theological education of his era.[3] Although the work was left uncompleted, a Supplementum to its Third Part was created out of Aquinas' scriptum on the Sentences some time after 1274. This was produced by a group of his students, primarily his secretary Reginald of Piperno. I shall examine portions of the Summa theologiae and the Commentary.

This examination is made possible by remarkable continuity which Aquinas maintained throughout the extent of his career. It is impossible to speak of an "early Aquinas" or a "later Aquinas". What he thought during his Commentary on the Sentences is what he thought in later life, although there were, of course, refinements in many of his individual arguments.[4] Not only is Aquinas' thought consistent, it is heavily represented by

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1. J. Aertsen, "Aquinas's Philosophy in its Historical Setting" in N. Kretzmann and E. Stump, The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas (Cambridge, 1993) 12-37, p.16.

2. J. Weisheipl, Friar Thomas d'Aquino (Oxford, 1977), pp.363-4.

3. B. Davies, The Thought of Thomas Aquinas (Oxford, 1992), p.7.

4. J. Weisheipl, op.cit., p.x.

these particular works, which in total make up a little more than a third of his entire literary output.[5]

Original Sin

Before considering the complexities of Aquinas' arguments about limbo, we should examine his views on original sin, which of course has a bearing on limbo. Aquinas covers the question of original sin in depth in the Summa theologiae, but fortunately he does so with a view to uncovering the simplest elements.[6] Aquinas has a particular view of the state of prelapsarian man. Man was created to enjoy the full beatific vision, but he did not enjoy this in Eden, although he retained there a greater ability to perceive God than we do. Adam nevertheless possessed many other special graces from God. He had virtues which directed his reason correctly and enabled him to keep the elements of his will and body in harmony and under the control of reason.[7] Furthermore, he was immortal, by virtue of divine gift, as long as he remained subject to God.[8] Sadly, Adam fell into sin, which Aquinas defined as actions contrary to God's eternal law. With Adam's disobedience, sin entered into the world and into human nature. Several earlier theories about the transmission of original sin were rejected by Aquinas. He denied the idea that a tainted soul is passed on from father to son as a seat of sin, that a soul receives sin from contact with corrupted flesh, and that guilt was passed along through reproduction in the same way that bodily defects could be passed along. Concupiscence is a by-product of original sin, not its primary transmitter. Aquinas

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5. This conclusion is based on Mark Jordan's analysis of the total word count on Aquinas' corpus: the Commentary on the Sentences amounts for 17.2% of the total, the Summa theologiae 18.1%, for a total of 35.3%; see M. Jordan, "Theology and Philosophy" in Kretzmann and Stump, op.cit., 232-251, p.232, n.2.

6. For a greatly detailed study of these matters, see the appendices following v.26 of the Blackfriars edition of the Summa theologiae.

7. Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae 1a.95.3, hereafter abbreviated ST, (ed. Blackfriars, xiii, p.114).

8. Thomas Aquinas, ST 1a.97.1, (ed. Blackfriars, xiii, p.136).

placed himself in the Anselmian tradition that original sin was a privation of original justice.[9] Original justice, as Aquinas defined it, was "a definite gift of grace divinely bestowed upon all human nature in the first parent."[10] When it was removed, man became subject to all manner of ills, both in mind and in body:

> just as human nature was injured in the soul by the disordering of the powers, so also it became corruptible by reason of the disturbance of the body's order.[11]

Original sin was thus a shattered harmony of bodily powers as well as a corrupted habit of souls. All of the divine gifts that come with original justice were meant to be passed along with human nature, but after sin their absence was passed along instead.

But how could one man's sin affect all of his progeny? To some extent, this is because of shared nature, an idea we have seen in other authors. The whole human race is in Adam, with regard to nature: "All who are born of Adam can be considered as one man by reason of sharing the one nature received from the first parent."[12] Thus, we all share in the nature of Adam. For Aquinas, all human beings shared in a kind of unity: a person can be considered as a single person, but also as a part of a group or "college". One could consider men as being like parts of a body. Since what the head does affects every part of the body, what Adam, the head of the human race, did could affect all mankind. Furthermore, when one considers man according to this corporate principle, the question of individual quilt for original sin is resolved. I may have done nothing personally to merit original sin, but if I am part of a body that sins, I share in the body's guilt and in that body's

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9. Thomas Aquinas, ST 1a.2ae.85, (ed. Blackfriars, xxvi, p.80).

10. Thomas Aquinas, ST 1a.2ae.81,2, "erat quoddam donum gratiae toti humanae naturae divinitus collatum in primo parente..." (ed. Blackfriars, xxvi, p.14).

11. Thomas Aquinas, ST 1a.2ae.85,5 "sicut vulnerata est humana natura quantum ad animam per deordinationem potentiarum...ita etiam est corruptibilis effecta per deordinationem ipsius corporis" (ed. Blackfriars, xxvi, p.96).

12. Thomas Aquinas, ST 1a.2ae.81,1, "omnes homines qui nascuntur ex Adam possunt considerari ut unus homo, in quantum conveniunt in natura quam a primo parente accipiunt." (ed. Blackfriars, xxvi, p.8).

condemnation.[13] Essentially, what this represents is Aquinas' historical consciousness. This is more than the notion of "all man being in one man" that was common to Western theologians since Augustine. Rather, as the Blackfriars editors point out, "it is a unity that may be called continuity."[14] My act of sinful will is intimately connected with the motion of my body that carries it out. Similarly, there is a connection between the disordered nature in all mankind and the act of sinful will in the past that caused it. Hence original sin is a real and intimate continuity of ourselves with our father Adam.

But one can ask, is this just, and also, how can it be remedied? Should we be punished for Adam's sin? Aquinas does not view the problem in this way. Rather, he notes that what Adam lost in the deprivation of original justice were things which were supernatural to him. Original sin is thus the privation of superadded grace, not anything which was meant to be strictly proper to human nature. Human nature is just left to itself; it is the source of its own disorder.[15] Original sin is not the addition of a positive evil but rather the loss of something supernatural which would have helped keep the human faculties in balance. Thus post-lapsarian mankind is not intrinsically any different from a hypothetical man created merely with the endowment of nature (although practically he is, since he needs something extra to place his person in balance again; see below). It is then not unjust of God to deprive us of something which was meant to be over and above our nature. Nor has the situation remained permanently insoluble. What mankind needs is grace. Aquinas makes little distinction between concepts of healing grace (gratia sanans) and elevating grace (gratia elevans). For him, grace is necessary both to cleanse and to elevate, since it exists not to

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[13]. Thomas Aquinas, De Malo iv.1, (ed. Turin/Rome, ii, p.525). Note that most of the argument stems from De Malo iv. In the Summa theologiae Aquinas merely relies on the idea of the common origin of man, and does not stress the collegiate analogy.

[14]. See Appendix 7, ed. Blackfriars, xxvi, p.138.

[15]. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, ST 1a.2ae.82, 1 ad 1&3; 2 ad 2; 4 ad 1&3 (ed. Blackfriars, xxvi, pp.30-32, 34, 42).

heal the basic human nature, but rather to make up for superadded gifts. In the Christian era, that grace is conveyed through the sacrament of baptism. As Aquinas explains:

> It is basic that according to the Catholic faith, we are bound to hold that the first sin of the first man passes to posterity by way of origin. On this acount, children are brought to baptism as needing to be cleansed from some infection of sin. The contrary is part of the Pelagian heresy, as Augustine points out in many of his books.[16]

Baptism acts to convey grace, which removes the habit of original sin. Sadly, the disordered impulses still remain, but they are not a sin, per se.

The Incarnation

The question of original sin leads directly to that of the Incarnation, as Aquinas himself states in quite bald terms: "Everywhere in sacred Scripture, the sin of the first man is given as the reason for the Incarnation."[17] Aquinas was not sure that this was the only reason for the salvation of man, "since by his infinite power God had many other ways to accomplish this end."[18] Nevertheless, in a way that is clearly strongly influenced by Anselm, he believed that the Incarnation was the "most fitting" way to this end. Aquinas gave several reasons for the importance of the Incarnation, but the most important was that of making satisfaction for sin. His way of examining this issue is again very close to that of Anselm. When one has sinned, it is not enough simply to stop sinning. If you have walked away from someone you love, in order to restart your relationship with him it is not enough to simply stop walking. You have to return to him. Furthermore, you must make satisfaction for your actions. In the case of sin, man's satisfaction is all the more important,

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[16]. Thomas Aquinas, ST 2a2ae.85,5, "dicendum quod secundum fidem catholicam est tenendum quod primum peccatum primi hominis originaliter transit in posteros. Propter quod etiam pueri mox nati deferuntur ad baptismum, tanquam ab alia infectione culpae abluendi. Contrarium autem est haeresis Pelagianae ut patet per Augustinum in plurimis suis libris." (ed. Blackfriars, xxvi, p.6).

[17]. Thomas Aquinas, ST 3a.1,3, "unde, cum in sacra scriptura ubique incarnationis ratio ex peccato primi hominis assignetur." (ed. Blackfriars, xlviii, p.18).

[18]. Thomas Aquinas, ST 3a.1,2, "Deus enim per suam omnipotentem virtutem poterat humanam naturam multis aliis modis reparare" (ed. Blackfriars, xlviii, p.10).

since sin transgressed divine justice and as such demands punishment as compensation to restore the balance of justice.[19] In the case of sin, the sinner must either choose a penance or endure a penance selected by God. However, the satisfaction or penance can be done by someone other than the person who has committed the sin. The trouble is, with regard to original sin, satisfaction by man is impossible, since it is a sin against God, and a sin against God "has a kind of infinity from the infinity of divine majesty."[20] How, then, can satisfaction be made?

Aquinas' solution was that of Anselm; what was needed was the intermediary of a God/man. In a passage that could have come out of Cur Deus homo Aquinas says:

> Justice demands satisfaction for sin. But God cannot render satisfaction, just as he cannot merit. Such a service pertains to one who is subject to another. Thus God was not in a position to satisfy for the sin of the whole of human nature; and a mere human being was unable to do so...Hence divine wisdom judged it fitting that God should become human, so that this one and the same person would be able both to restore the human race and to offer satisfaction.[21]

Thus Jesus himself was the God/man, able to render fitting satisfaction for man's transgression. Since the sin was against the infinite majesty of God, what was needed was a satisfaction of infinite efficacy, such as could only be rendered by Christ. Furthermore, since Christ was sinless, he alone could satisfy for sin properly. His dignity in himself alone was greater than that of all humanity combined, and thus capable of satisfying for all humanity. Christ's actions were thus the most fitting way that satisfaction could be made, although they were by no means the only way. "God could have freed man otherwise than

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[19]. Thomas Aquinas, ST 1a2ae.87,6.

[20]. Thomas Aquinas, ST 3a1.2.ad2, "tum etiam quia peccatum contra Deum commissum quandam infinitatem habet ex infinitate divinae majestatis" (ed. Blackfriars, xlviii, p.14).

[21]. Thomas Aquinas, Compendium theologiae.200, "...divinae iustitiae ordo, secundum quam exigitur satisfactio pro peccato. In deo autem satisfactio non cadit, sicut nec meritum, hoc enim est sub alio existentis. Si igitur neque deo competebat satisfacere pro peccato totius naturae humanae, nec purus homo poterat...conveniens igitur fuit deum hominem fieri, ut sic unus et idem esset qui est reparare et satisficere posset." (ed. STO, iii, p.621).

by Christ's passion, for nothing is impossible with God",[22] Aquinas insists, in contrast to Anselm, who believed that there could have been no other means of salvation. Christ's sacrifice does more than make satisfaction, however. Satisfaction alone is of limited worth, since a person could hear of it and still remain unchanged in their sinful actions. It is not enough that we be saved. We must also be restored. This is done through merit and grace. Christ possessed a fullness of grace, which flowed from him to others, uplifting them. This grace is conveyed through the intermediary of the church:

> Grace was in Christ...not simply as in an individual man, but as in the Head of the whole Church, to whom all are united as members to a head, forming a single mystic person. In consequence, the merit of Christ extends to others insofar as they are his members.[23]

Thus in salvation as in sin, Aquinas reiterated the collegiate model of humanity. As the body of human nature shares in the sin of its head, Adam, so the mystical body of humanity, the church, is saved by the salvation of its head, Christ. The means of salvation is hence incorporation in that body, which was possible only through baptism. As Aquinas says further:

> Adam's sin is communicated to others only through bodily generation. In similar fashion Christ's merit is communicated to others only through the spiritual regeneration of baptism, by which we are incorporated into Christ.[24]

Sin and salvation are intimately connected. As we are condemned through another, so we are saved by another. The merits Christ possessed are extended to us, and the grace which he was given overflows to us. Original sin is thus cleansed by baptism in the Church.

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[22]. Thomas Aquinas, ST 3a.46,2 "possibile fuit Deo alio modo hominem liberare quam per passionem Christi, quia non est impossibile apud Deum omne verbum" (ed. Blackfriars, liv, p.8).

[23]. Thomas Aquinas, ST 3a.19,4, "dicendum quod...in Christo non solum fuit gratia sicut in quodam homine singulari, sed sicut in capite totius Ecclesiae, cui omnes uniuntur sicut capiti membra, quibus constituitur mystice una persona. Et exinde est quod meritum Christi se extendit ad alios inquantum sunt membra ejus." (ed. Blackfriars, l, p.104).

[24]. Thomas Aquinas, ST 3a.19,4.ad3., "Sicut peccatum Adae non derivatur ad alios nisi per carnalem generationem, ita meritum Christi non derivatur ad alios nisi per regenerationem spiritualem, quae fit in baptismo, per quam Christo incorporamur." (ed. Blackfriars, l, p.104).

Christ in Limbo

But what of those who died before the advent of Christ? As others had done before him, Aquinas chose to include in his system a careful examination of the actions of Christ during his descent into hell. This is considered in greatest depth in Question 52 of the Tertia pars of the Summa theologiae, which is divided into eight articles, not all of which are germane to our investigations. It is here that we encounter the evident roots of limbo, and much of the theological background of the limbus patrum, in the form of a number of questions. The first question (Article One) asks, 'Was it right for Christ to descend into hell?' Aquinas' response concludes that Christ's descent was appropriate; and he gives three reasons why. First, since Christ came to bear our sins and our human nature, he had to experience everything humans do. Thus, not only did he have to experience death to liberate us from death, he had to descend to hell to deliver us from hell. Such an action was "most fitting" (conveniens). Second, it was again fitting for Christ to descend to hell to free the prisoners of hell, since he had defeated their captor, the devil, by his passion. Third, Aquinas adopts the familiar idea of Christ's illumination of hell. Christ wanted to show his power in hell "by visiting and enlightening it"[25], although at this point Aquinas does not cite any of the passages about illumination of the underworld which are present in Scripture or the Gospel of Nicodemus. Hell is a negative place, but Christ did not go there to be punished, but rather to liberate those who were being punished. To the second objection, Aquinas draws out an unusual notion of the sacraments. Christ's death was a "universal cause of salvation."[26] But universal things have to be applied in particular ways. The living have the sacraments to configure us to Christ's passion, but the dead needed his descent to configure them to his passion. This reason should not be taken to mean that Aquinas

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[25]. Thomas Aquinas, ST 3a.52.1r, "etiam potestatem suam ostenderet in inferno, ipsum visitando et illuminando" (ed. Blackfriars, lii, p.154).

[26]. Thomas Aquinas, ST 3a.52.1.ra2, "causa universalis humanae salutis", (ed. Blackfriars, lii, p. 154).

approved of universalism, of course; Christ's descent only applied to specific categories of the dead, as we shall see below.

Next Aquinas asks, 'Did Christ descend to the hell of the damned?' is somewhat more involved. The objections mainly come from Scripture or Augustine, as Aquinas notes the many passages in both sources which refer to a descent to hell. He even speaks of the sorrows of hell (Acts.ii.24), observing that

> there is no suffering in the hell of the patriarchs (inferno patrum) and of the infants (inferno puerorum), for these were not punished by the pain of sense, but only by the pain of loss which traces back to original sin.[27]

It is odd that here, and, indeed, throughout the body of this question, that Aquinas does not choose to use the word "limbo", since he had done so years before in his Commentary on the Sentences. Nevertheless, it is clear that even in the objections he maintains the idea that those in the limbos are punished only by the pain of loss. Aquinas' answer revolves around a complex description of how a thing occupies a place. He suggests two ways: by the effect the thing produces, and by its essence. In the former way, Christ descended to "each of the hells": to the hell of the damned, to chastise its occupants; to purgatory (Aquinas classes purgatory alongside hell), to bring hope to its occupants; and to the hell of the Fathers, where "he brought the light of eternal glory"[28], again making use of the theme of illumination. With regard to the second sense, Aquinas gives the following answer:

> Christ's soul descended to that place only in hell where the just were being held, so that he might, as to his soul, visit in their place those to whom he had, according to his divinity, inwardly visited by his grace. Thus while he was in one part of hell, the effects of his presence were felt in all parts of hell, just as, by suffering on one spot on earth, he by his passion delivered the whole world.[29]

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[27]. Thomas Aquinas, ST 3a.52.2.ob2, "Sed dolores non sunt in inferno patrum, neque etiam in inferno puerorum, qui non puniuntur poena sensus propter peccatum actuale, sed solum poena damni propter peccatum originale." (ed. Blackfriars, lii, p.156).

[28]. Thomas Aquinas, ST 3a.52.2.r "lumen aeterne gloriae infundit", (ed. Blackfriars, lii, p.158).

[29]. Ibid., "anima Christi descendit solum ad locum inferni in quo justi detinebantur, ut quos ipse per gratiam interius visitabat secundum divinitatem, et eos secundum animam visitaret et loco. Sic autem in una parte inferni existens, effectum suum aliqualiter ad omnes inferni partes derivavit, sicut et in uno loco terrae passus, totum

Thus, considered with regard to essence, space does not matter. Christ in one place could radiate his effects and power to many places. He did not move locally, but extended the effects of his power. He loosed sorrows in hell; and Aquinas divides up sorrows by type: sorrows of punishment (from which Christ had already preserved the Fathers, "as a physician is judged to have cured a disease which he has prevented by medicine"[30]), and the sorrows of glory deferred, which he cured by bringing that glory. Aquinas rejects the of theme of Christ's preaching in hell (cf. 1Ptr.iii.19); entirely. Christ's actions in hell were powered by his passion, not his preaching: such an action was only a "manifestation of his divinity"[31], or, perhaps, following Augustine, as meant metaphorically about those in the prison of this life. In this section Aquinas also address the troublesome image of the bosom of Abraham, with which Augustine had had such problems (cf. Letter 164 to Evodius). Aquinas considers the image in two ways: the bosom of Abraham can mean a place of rest, with no pain of sense, and as such it is not hell. Or it can mean the loss of a yearned-for glory, which would make it a place of suffering, a hell. Since that glory has been fulfilled by Christ's advent, there is no further connotation of suffering in the image of the bosom of Abraham, and today is taken entirely to mean the repose of the blessed.

The third question asks, 'Was the whole Christ in hell?' and Aquinas concludes that the whole Christ was indeed in hell, making use of the distinction between nature and person and between totus and totum. Christ was more than the sum of his parts: "All places taken together could not contain his immensity. Rather, his immensity contains all things."[32] Furthermore, the fourth question asks, 'Did Christ remain in hell for any length of time?' and

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mundum sua passione liberavit."

30. Thomas Aquinas, ST 3a.52.2.ad2um, "sicut medicus dicitur solvere morbum, a quo praeservat per medicinam." (ed. Blackfriars, lii, p. 158).

31. Thomas Aquinas, ST 3a.52.2.ad3um, "potest quam manifestatio divinitatis ejus", (ed. Blackfriars, lii, p.160).

32. Thomas Aquinas, ST 3a.52.3.ad3um, "sed nec omnia loca simul accepta ejus immensitatem comprehendere possunt", (ed. Blackfriars, lii, p.162).

considers specifically Christ's words to Dismas the good thief in Lk.xxiii.43. Aquinas concludes that Christ was in hell as long as his body was in the tomb, "so that his soul might be led forth from hell at the very same moment his body was issuing from the tomb."[33] Aquinas uses the associated themes and imagery from the Gospel of Nicodemus: Christ shattered the gates of hell immediately, and freed the Fathers immediately, but they all remained together in hell until the Resurrection. While they waited, Christ shone the light of glory over the Fathers, making a kind of Paradise for them. It was this form of paradise which Christ meant that the good thief would enjoy in his promise on the cross.

Having considered the nature and background behind Christ's descent into hell, Aquinas spends the next half of the Question dealing with the four categories of people detained in penal realms: the Fathers, the damned, unbaptized infants, and those in purgatory. The fifth question (Article Five) deals with the Fathers, and whether Christ released them. Aquinas' response reiterates the idea that in his descent Christ "was acting by the power of his passion"[34], a power which freed humanity from both sin and the debt of punishment. Men have a debt of punishment for two kinds of sin, the actual sins they commit, and original sin. The debt of punishment of original sin was "bodily death and the exclusion from the life of glory"[35]; it was by this that the Fathers were held and from this that they were liberated by Christ's passion and descent. Aquinas here again addresses Augustine's confusion over the bosom of Abraham (cf. his Letter 164 to Evodius) which demonstrates how far the nature of that image had changed between the eras of the two men. Aquinas had to go through elaborate ratiocinations to adapt Augustine's authority to his own cause. Aquinas maintained that what Augustine was really trying to say was that he was arguing against those who

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[33]. Thomas Aquinas, ST 3a.52.4.r "ut simul anima ejus educeretur de inferno, et corpus de sepulcro." (ed. Blackfriars, lii, p.164).

[34]. Thomas Aquinas, ST 3a.52.5.r "operatus est in virtute suae passionis." (ed. Blackfriars, lii, p.166).

[35]. Ibid. "mors corporalis, et exclusio a vita gloriae", (ed. Blackfriars, lii, p.168).

maintained that the Fathers had undergone "sufferings of a penal nature."[36] Aquinas believed that the Fathers did indeed possess a beatific presence, but that it was merely a hope of the real thing, and not the genuine presence, that the Fathers were "blessed in their hope, although not yet perfectly blessed in actual fact."[37] Furthermore, Aquinas goes on to restate the idea of the twin debts of punishment. During their lives, the Fathers were freed by Christ from all actual and original sins. He also freed them from the debt of punishment for actual sin, but not from the debt of punishment of original sin. Hence, the Fathers needed his descent. The second situation applies to us today: through baptism and belief in Christ we are forgiven everything except the debt of punishment for original sin, which is bodily death. The Fathers thus had to remain in hell until Christ's presence there brought them the fruit of his passion. His presence with them was part of their glory.

The sixth question deals with whether Christ freed some of the damned from hell, chiefly with regard to the evidence of passages from Scripture that use the same infernal terminology that Aquinas applied to the hell of the Fathers. Aquinas' response is to arrange the texts in such a way that the authoritative ones indicate that only the elect were released. The operative idea here as before is that Christ descended into hell by the power of his passion, and only those who were joined to that passion were released. Those in hell either had no faith in Christ's passion, of if they had faith, they "had no likeness in charity to the suffering Christ."[38] Similar arguments are used in the seventh question, whether infants who died in original sin alone were freed, since, like the Fathers, they had only original sin, and the Fathers were freed. Aquinas' answers are concerned with faith and charity, and provide a more thorough development of an idea presented earlier. Christ's descent into hell "freed

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[36]. Thomas Aquinas, ST 3a.52.5.ad1um, "doloribus poenarum fuisse subjectos." (ed. Blackfriars, lii, p.168).

[37]. Ibid., "erant beati in spe, licet nondum essent perfecte beati in re."

[38]. Thomas Aquinas, ST 3a.52.6.r, "nullam conformitatem ad charitatem Christi patientis." (ed. Blackfriars, lii, p.172).

only those who by their faith and charity were united to his passion."[39] As children unfortunately do not possess reason, they were unable to make the choice that the Fathers did to gain faith, and thus could not claim the same reward. Nor did they profit from the faith of their parents, since they did not possess baptism, the "sacrament of faith" (sacramentum fidei). The Fathers, on the other hand, possessed faith, and through faith, grace. Only through grace can one enter heaven, and children lack this necessary grace entirely. Infants are not among the "many" to whom Christ's grace extends: Adam's sin is passed physically through physical generation, but Christ's grace is passed spiritually through spiritual regeneration, a regeneration which infants do not share. The descent of Christ does not count as baptism for them, despite being powered by the same source, since baptism is only administered in life, and change is impossible after death. Lacking baptism and life, infants lack all possibility of change.

Finally, Aquinas considers the eighth question, 'Whether Christ's descent into hell freed the souls in purgatory?' Clearly, by the question and his answer to it, Aquinas shows that he considered purgatory as a realm coexisting with the other realms of the afterlife, even alongside the limbo of the Fathers. By considering it where he does, it is also clear that he views it in a more penal light than did other scholastic authors. His answer to the question hinges on an idea he derived from Gregory's Moralia: Christ "does not allow us to go to that place from which his descent has set others free."[40] That is to say, after his descent Christ sealed off the hell of the Fathers, but he must have left purgatory alone, since people still go there. Christ's descent to hell was powered by his passion, and this passion was an eternal power. It did not cease to have effect after his descent, but is still as powerful today as it was then. Thus, if at the time of Christ's descent to hell there were some souls in purgatory

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[39]. Thomas Aquinas, ST 3a.52.7.r, "in illis solis effectum liberationis habuit qui per fidem et charitate passionis Christi conjungebantur" (ed. Blackfriars, lii, p.174).

[40]. Gregory, Moralia xiii.43, "nos illo ire non patitur, unde jam alios descendo liberavit" (P.L. 75, p.1038).

who were sufficiently purified to be like the souls who in our time are freed from purgatory by Christ's passion, "there is no reason why they were not delivered from purgatory when Christ descended into hell."[41] This would only be for a specific set of souls, however; souls are not delivered from purgatory en masse because they are there for individual personal defects, and undergo individual penances. Christ's descent was an act of atonement which had to be applied to those in purgatory on an individual by individual basis. "Exclusion from the glory of God was a general defect, pertaining to all human nature."[42] The Fathers were delivered from their realm en masse because they possessed only their general defect and no personal ones.

More Precise Examinations of the Afterlife

The Summa theologiae gives involved theological reasons for the actions of Christ, but does not detail the realms of the afterlife in great depth. Aquinas died before he could complete the final questions of the Summa, which would deal with otherworldly matters, but a Supplementum to the Tertia pars was stitched together out of his Commentary on the Sentences some time after 1274. This was done by some of Aquinas' students, principly Reginald of Piperno, but also Peter of Alverna. Since, as we have noted, there is remarkable consistency in Aquinas' thought, we can go back to his Commentary as his students did for the information that is lacking in the Summa. His treatments of limbo, which in the Commentary he names as such, rather than infernus puerorum or infernus patrum, are found largely in Distinction 45 of book IV. First, though, let us begin by examining the terminal segment of the Distinction, in which Aquinas asks whether so many realms of the afterlife ought to be distinguished. His arguments on this point closely parallel those of his master

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41. Thomas Aquinas, ST 3a.52.8.r, "tales nihil prohibet per descensum Christi ad inferos a purgatorio esse liberatos", (ed. Blackfriars, lii, p.178).

42. Thomas Aquinas, ST 3a.52.8.ad3um, "exclusio a gloria Dei erat quidam defectus generalis pertinens ad totam humanam naturam." (ed. Blackfriars, lii, p.178).

Albertus Magnus from Article 5 of De resurrectione, and detail a number of ways in which the realms of the afterlife can be multiplied. One curious one is whether there is a special realm for the Fathers after their delivery from limbo--since they had to wait for the glory of their soul in a special place, should they also have to wait in a special place for the glory of their bodies, namely, during the Final Resurrection? Addressing all of these objections leaves a bewildering variety of places in the afterlife: how many should there be?

Aquinas' response is to consider the number of realms of the afterlife according to the question of the status of the individual souls therein. He proceeds in a very similar way to consider the realms of the afterlife according to the qualities of merit in a way that is again very similar to that of Albertus Magnus. He categorizes the receptacles in a way which is worth quoting in full:

> I respond that it should be said, that the receptacles of souls are distinguished the souls' diverse statuses. For a soul joined to a mortal body is in a state of meriting; but having exited from the body it is in a state of receiving good or evil for its merits. Therefore after death either it is in a state of receiving its final reward, or it is in a state of being impeded from it. But if it is in a state of receiving its final reward, this is twofold: either with regard to good, and so it is paradise, or with regard to evil, and so by reason of actual sin it is hell, but by reason of original sin it is the limbo of children. But if it is in a state where it is impeded from receiving final reward, this is either on account of a defect of person, and so it is purgatory, in which souls are detained such that they do not receive their rewards straightaway on account of sins which they have committed; or on account of defect of nature, and so it is the limbo of the fathers, in which were detained from obtaining glory on account of the guilt of human nature, which was not yet able to be expiated.[43]

These logical formulations are a little confusing, so as with Albertus, a diagram of these categories should help:

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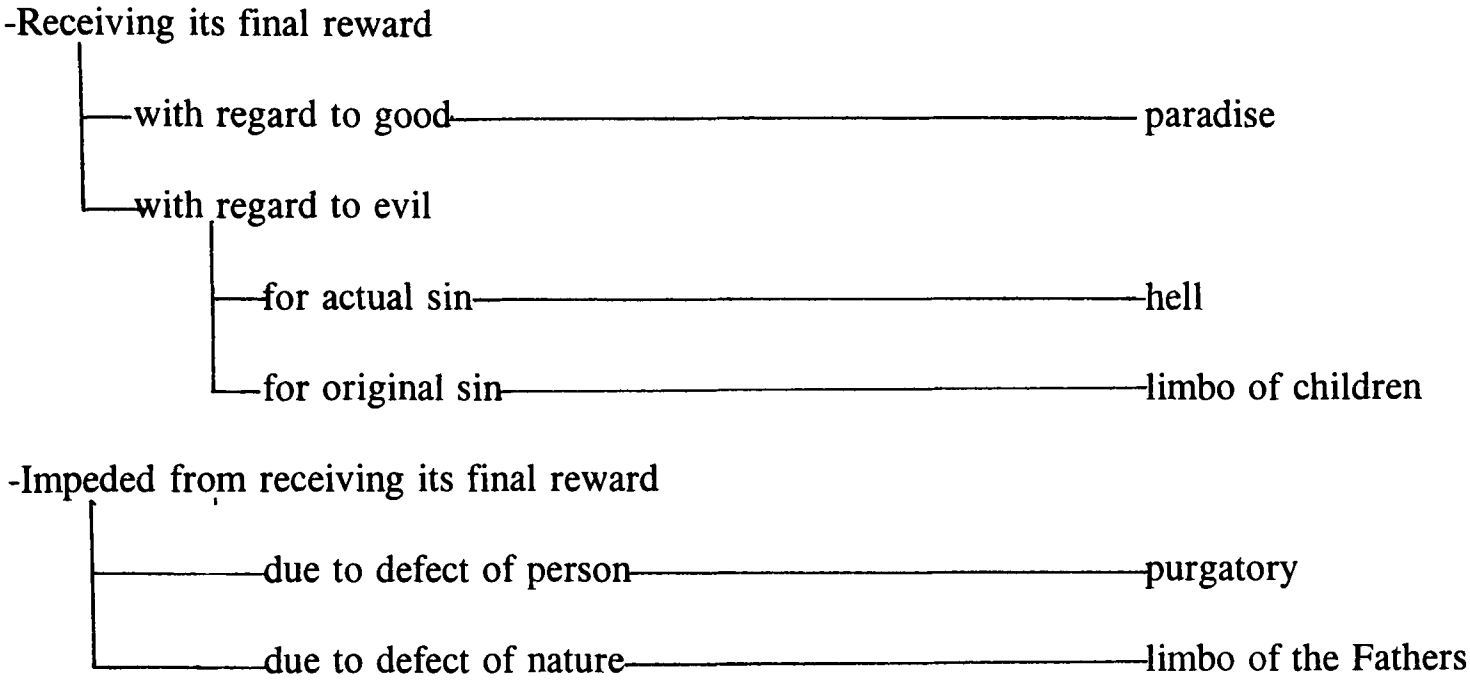
[43]. Thomas Aquinas, In 4 SN ds45.qu1.ar3.co, "Respondeo dicendum, quod receptacula animarum distinguuntur secundum diversos status earum. Anima autem conjuncta mortali corpori habet statum merendi; sed exuta corpore est in statu recipiendi pro meritis bonum vel malum. Ergo post portem vel est in statu recipientis finale praemium, vel est in statu quo impeditur ab illo. Si autem est in statu recipientis finalem retributionem, hoc est dupliciter; vel quantum ad bonum, et sic est paradisus; vel quantum ad malum; et sic ratione actualis culpae est infernus, ratione autem originalis est limbus puerorum. Si autem est in statu quo impeditur a finali retributione consequenda; vel hoc est propter defectum personae; et sic est purgatorium, in quo detinentur animae, ne statim praemium consequantur propter peccata quae commiserunt; vel propter defectum naturae, et sic est limbus patrum, in quo detinebantur patres a consecutione gloriae propter reatum humanae naturae, qui nondum poterat expiari." (ed. STO, i, p.653).

REALMS OF THE AFTERLIFE WITH REGARD TO POST-MORTEM STATUS OF THE SOUL, ACCORDING TO AQUINAS



By this scheme Aquinas comes up with the familiar five realms of the afterlife, three permanent ones (paradise, hell, and the limbus puerorum), and two transitory ones (purgatory and the limbus patrum). These categories of merit are the only deciding factors which he uses, and thus he is able to reduce the proliferation of realms that he presents in the objections. Thus there is not merely one realm in the afterlife, since good happens in one way but evil happens in many ways: there is one realm for reward, but several for punishment. Similarly, though there is one state of merit or demerit, there are several states for receiving according to demerit, hence the need for several penal realms. Since there are different places of punishment for original sin, "on that account a twofold limbo corresponds to that sin."[44] The aer caliginosus of the demons is a place in which demons are assigned to try us, not a place granted to them as a result of merit, so it is not a realm, nor is the terrestrial paradise, since it "pertains more to the state of the traveller than that the state of

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[44]. Thomas Aquinas, In 4 SN ds45.qu1.ar3.ra3, "et ideo illi culpae respondet duplex limbus" (ed. STO, i, p.653).

those receiving for their merits"[45], nor is the earth itself despite the fact that souls undergo purgation here, since they do so only as an example for our edification. There are not an infinite number of realms of the afterlife, since "diversity in punishment or rewards does not diversify the state, and it is according to diversity that receptacles are distinguished."[46] Finally, with regard to the curious objection about the Fathers, Aquinas notes that they have to wait no longer for their rewards. The reward of the body is an overflowing from the reward of the soul, and the Fathers have earned their reward. Aquinas fixes the number of the receptacles of the afterlife firmly at five.

The Infernal Realms

We can, however, go on to determine how Aquinas positions the realms of the afterlife, that is, how he determines what I have called their geography. He does this during his examination of the descent of Christ into hell in Distinction 22 of Book III of his Commentary. Many of the issues dealt with here are repeated and amplified in Question 52 of the Tertia pars of the Summa and as such do not need repetition, but there are a few places where Aquinas' earlier arguments in the Commentary are more detailed, and as such worthy of attention. Thus, in this section we see some more of Aquinas' thoughts about salvation history. Aquinas believes that because of the debt of original sin, all men descended to "hell" (infernus) before the passion of Christ, grouping all the non-heavenly realms of the afterlife under that title. However, he makes several distinctions about hell, with regard to both place and punishment. He conceives of hell as being fourfold:

> To the second question it should be said, that hell is fourfold. One is the hell of the damned, in which are darkness and the lack of the divine vision, both with regard to the lack of grace, and the fact that there is sensible punishment

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[45]. Thomas Aquinas, In 4SN ds45.qu1.ar3.ra5, "pertinet magis ad statum viatoris quam ad statum recipientis pro meritis", (ed. STO, i, p.653).

[46]. Thomas Aquinas, In 4SN ds45.qu1.ar3.ra7, "quod diversitas graduum in poenis vel praemiis non diversificat statum, secundum cujus diversitatem receptacula distinguuntur" (ed. STO, i, p.653).

> there; and this hell is the place of the damned. Another is the hell above that, in which are darkness both because of the lack of the divine vision and because of the lack of grace, but there is not there sensible punishment: and it is called the limbo of children. Another is above that one, in which are darkness with regard to the lack of the divine vision, but not with regard to the lack of grace, but there is there the punishment of sense; and it is called purgatory. Another is greatly above it, in which is darkness with regard to lack of the divine vision, but not with regard to the lack of divine grace, nor is there sensible punishment there; and this is the hell of the holy fathers; and to this place alone Christ descended with regard to place, but not with regard to the experience of darkness.[47]

This formulation gives us several things. First and most importantly, it tells us how Aquinas arranges the realms of the afterlife, as follows:

[Heaven]

Hell of the Fathers

Purgatory

Limbo of Children

Hell of the Damned

His order is different from Albertus'. Presumably heaven, although not mentioned in the quotation above, is at the top of this scheme, but we should notice how Aquinas places the limbus patrum closest to it, "greatly above" the other penal realms. Here again he chooses to view purgatory as a penal rather than a heavenly realm, but it does lie exactly in the middle between heaven and the hell of the damned. Curiously enough, the two "temporary" realms, the limbus patrum and purgatory, are in the middle and next to each other. When they are undone, the order will look as follows:

Heaven

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[47]. Thomas Aquinas, In 3SN ds.22.qu2.ar1b.co, "Ad secundam quaestionem dicendum, quod quadruplex est infernus. Unus est infernus damnatorum, in quo sunt tenebrae et quantum ad carentiam divinae visionis, et quantum ad carentiam gratiae, et est ibi poena sensibilis; et hic infernus est locus damnatorum. Alius est infernus supra istum, in quo sunt tenebrae et propter carentiam divinae visionis, et propter carentiam gratiae, sed non est ibi poena sensibilis; et dicitur limbus puerorum. Alius supra hunc est, in quo sunt tenebrae quantum ad carentiam divinae visionis, sed non quantum ad carentiam gratiae, sed est ibi poena sensus; et dicitur purgatorium. Alius magis supra est, in quo est tenebra quantum ad carentiam divinae visionis, sed non quantum ad carentiam gratiae, necque est ibi poena sensibilis; et hic est infernus sanctorum patrum; et in hunc tantum Christus descendit quantum ad locum, sed non quantum ad tenebrarum experientiam." (ed. STO, i, p.336).

Limbo of Children

Hell of the Damned

This results in the limbus puerorum being placed closer to heaven, the middle ground heaven and hell. With regard to the qualities of the four penal realms, a chart can be constructed as follows:

REALMS OF THE AFTERLIFE ACCORDING TO THEIR QUALITIES, IN AQUINAS

REALM	ELEMENTS WHICH ARE PRESENT			
	Darkness?	Beatific Vision?	Grace?	Punishment/Sense?
Hell of the Damned	YES	NO	NO	YES
Limbo of Children	YES	NO	NO	NO
Purgatory	YES	NO	YES	YES
Hell of the Fathers	YES	NO	YES	NO

Clearly, with respect to these categories, the realms get better as one moves "up", gaining the vital quality of grace and losing the punishment of sense. Curiously, Aquinas elsewhere describes the idea of paradise as threefold as well: the earthly paradise, where Adam was placed; the empyrian, the celestial paradise of the body; and the beatific vision, which is the paradise of the soul.[48] It is this three-fold distinction which enables Aquinas to posit that Christ stayed in the limbus patrum until the Resurrection and yet could still make good his promise on the cross to Dismas, the good thief. Aquinas does not itemize the celestial realms here as he does the infernal ones; the empyrian and beatific vision seem to be place and quality, respectively, but it is worthwhile to record that he does consider them.

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[48]. Thomas Aquinas, In 3SN, ds22.qu2.ar1c. (ed. STO, i, p.336).

Aquinas also considers each of the limbos in detail in Distinction 4 of his Commentary on the Sentences. He first asks if the limbo of hell (limbus inferni) is the same as the bosom of Abraham. It seems not: the chief reason being Augustine's famous remark about never finding hell in a good sense in Scripture. Aquinas' overall answer to the problem is a complex one, but he maintains that the terms "limbo of hell" and "bosom of Abraham" are synonymous. The solution has to do with merit and with faith: "after death the souls of men are not able to find rest except by the merit of faith."[49] The first man to have faith was Abraham, and hence the name of the repose of the Fathers is called the bosom of Abraham in his honour. However, their status has changed over time, with respect to the advent of Christ. Before Christ's coming, their status involved "a certain rest through exemption from punishment"[50], hence it was called the bosom of Abraham. Yet at the same time it also involved a lack of rest, with regard to the delay of the beatific vision, hence it was also called the limbo of hell. It is called the former because of "what was good in it" and the latter because of "its deficiencies."[51] However, for Aquinas the two terms are no longer synonymous:

> Therefore before the advent of Christ the limbo of hell and the bosom of Abraham were one place accidentally and not essentially, and consequently after the advent of Christ nothing prevents the bosom of Abraham from being, and from being entirely distinct from limbo, since things which are one accidentally may be separated.[52]

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[49]. Thomas Aquinas, In 4SN ds45.qu1.ar2a.co, "animae hominum post mortem ad quietem pervenire non possunt nisi merito fidei", (ed. STO, i, p.652).

[50]. Ibid., "quidem quietem per immunitatem poenae".

[51]. Thomas Aquinas, In 4SN ds45.qu1.ar2a.ra1, "quod habebat de bono...quod habebat de malo" (ed. STO, i, p.652).

[52]. Thomas Aquinas, In 4SN ds45.qu1.ar2a.co, "Limbus ergo inferni et sinus Abrahae fuerunt ante Christi adventum unum per accidens, et non per se; et ideo nihil prohibet post Christi adventum esse sinum Abrahae omnio diversum a limbo; quia ea quae sunt unum per accidens, separari contingit." (ed. STO, i, p.652).

Thus the bosom of Abraham is today a positive term, since it connotes the Fathers' enjoyment of the beatific vision, and since that enjoyment is what all Christians seek, the Church may pray for her faithful to be brought there.

The next question considers whether the limbo of hell is the same as the hell of the damned, contending that either "limbo is the same as hell, or a part of hell."[53] Aquinas' solution to the difficulty comes from a consideration of two factors: quality or situation. If one considers the qualities of limbo and hell they are distinct. Both places involve some form of punishment, but in hell there was the punishment of sense which lasted forever, while in the limbo of the Fathers there was no punishment of sense, and of course the realm did not last after the passion of Christ. The location becomes a little easier to understand considered according to the second factor: situation. The situation in both cases involved punishment. Aquinas' view is that:

> it is probable that hell and limbo are in the same place, or that they are continuous as it were, yet so that the limbo of the Fathers is called a certain higher part of hell.[54]

Here Aquinas adapts the old formulation about a "higher hell" almost entirely, in this passage not specifying the complex relationship between the hells we have seen earlier. Doubtless the important word here is "continuous"; limbo being in some sense a continuation of the infernal realms. In this question, the accent is on the notion of gradation of punishment: those who have the greatest guilt obtain a "darker and deeper place in hell", while the Fathers had a "higher and less dark place."[55] Christ either "bit" or went to hell (cf. Hos.xiii.14, the Creed) as considered to be the same place as the limbo of hell with regard to situation.

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[53]. Thomas Aquinas, In 4SN ds45.qu1.ar2b.ag1, "ergo limbus est idem quod infernus, vel pars inferni." (ed. STO, i, p.652).

[54]. Thomas Aquinas, In 4SN ds45.qu1.ar2b.co, "sic probabile est quod idem locus, vel quasi continuus, sit infernus et limbus; ita tamen quod quaedam superior pars inferni limbus patrum dicatur." (ed. STO, i, p.652).

[55]. Ibid. "obscuriorem et profundiorem locum...supremum et minus tenebrosum locum habuerunt".

Job (Job.xvii.16) bewailed the fate of hell when he was bound only for a part of it. "All penal places are included under the same heading"[56], Aquinas concluded.

Aquinas' third question asks whether the limbo of children is the same as the limbo of the Fathers, which seems to be so, given that both suffer original sin alone. Here he considers the two limbos simultaneously, and refers to the limbo of the Fathers as such, rather than as the limbo of hell. However, Aquinas concludes that the two realms are not the same. He maintains that since for actual sin both hell and purgatory is owed, and for original sin both the limbo of the Fathers and the limbo of children is owed; given the fact that hell and purgatory are not the same place, neither should the two limbos. With regard to quality, both limbos must be different, since the Fathers had faith and grace, while children do not. However, with regard to situation:

> it is probably believed that the place of both was the same, unless the repose of the blessed was in a higher place that the limbo of children, as has been said about limbo and hell.[57]

Here again Aquinas seems to be considering all penal places under one location. The limbo of the Fathers and that of children are both a "limbo"; he considers the former closer to heaven, as we have seen. The Fathers and children are different by situation, since their original blame was different. By their faith the Fathers had made up for original sin with regard to infection of person, but it remained attached to their nature, until Christ made satisfaction for it. Original sin remained in person and in nature for children. Since the Fathers had only a slight defect of person, their punishment was the lightest: for them "the

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[56]. Thomas Aquinas, In 4SN ds45.qu1.ar2b.ra3, "quia sub eodem includitur omnis locus poenarum." (ed. STO, i, p.652).

[57]. Thomas Aquinas, In 4SN ds45.qu1.ar2c.co, "probabiliter creditur utrorumque idem locus fuisse; nisi quod requies beatorum adhuc erat in superiori loco quam limbus puerorum, sicut de limbo et inferno dictum est." (ed. STO, i, p.652).

very delay of glory is called a certain kind of punishment."[58] However, infants are impeded eternally, and as such, both groups of people require different locations.

The Limbo of Children

Having seen how Aquinas views the geography of the afterlife, the effects of the descent of Christ, and the nature of the limbo of the Fathers, it is time to address his views on the state of unbaptized infants in the afterlife. Elsewhere we have seen him consider the limbus puerorum, but his Summa theologiae does not present detailed views of their status. Instead, they can be found largely in Distinction 33 of the second book of his Commentary on the Sentences.[59] The theme is the penalty for death for those dying in a state of original sin alone, and thus is functionally a treatise on the limbus puerorum, although the term is not used there. It begins with the question of whether those dying in original sin alone should be punished by the pain of sense, which seems plausible for a number of reasons. Aquinas, however, believes they should not. He appeals to the poena mitissima idea of Augustine, to indicate that children do not suffer sensible punishment. Such would be illogical: since punishment is equal to enjoyment of sin (cf Apoc.xvii.7), a sin in which there is no pleasure entails no sensible punishment. Aquinas invokes the ideas of Gregory Nazianzus, who distinguishes between several classes of the baptized: those who reject baptism, those who neglect baptism, and those who fail to receive it thorough no personal fault.[60] Gregory indicates that the last group will not be damned, since they have no personal sin "and have suffered rather than caused their loss [of baptism]."[61] However, neither will they be saved:

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[58]. Thomas Aquinas, In 4SN ds45.qu1.ar2c.ra2, "ipsa dilatio gloriae quaedam poena dicatur." (ed. STO, i, p.652).

[59]. Which in turn was edited into the Tertia pars of the Summa between Question 70, On the condition of the soul separated from the body, and Question 71, On suffrages for the dead, by Nicolai, one of Aquinas' students. Modern editions of the Summa tend to include this in an Appendix, if, indeed, they include it at all.

[60]. Gregory Nazianzus, In Sanctum baptisma (PG 36, pp.359-427).

[61]. Ibid., "atque hanc jacturam passi potius fuerint, quam fecerint", (PG 36, p.390).

Gregory invokes the idea of a mean: such are worthy of neither punishment nor honour. It is clear that this latter idea is what motivated Aquinas, leading him elsewhere to speak of the limbus puerorum. But here he speaks of original sin, and its nature and effects. This sin comes to us via our origins, and not through personal fault. As a result, it does not deprive us of anything in nature, but rather something superadded to nature, which is to say the beatific vision. Aquinas makes his conclusion quite baldly: "the loss of this vision is the proper and only punishment of original sin after death."[62] There is no pain to this loss; it is a loss of a superadded gift, and one which by ordinary human nature we could not have reached anyway.

> Aquinas, however, goes on from this point to develop another idea:
>
> > On the other hand, those who are under sentence for original sin will suffer no loss whatever in other kinds of perfection and goodness which are consequent upon human nature by virtue of principles.[63]

Thus Aquinas here provides an indication of influence from the ideas of William of Auvergne; although at this point not to the same degree. Unbaptized infants may still maintain the sum total of their human goods (he expands upon this idea below). Aquinas' position focuses chiefly on the idea of the "pain of loss." The only pain unbaptized infants suffer is the pain of loss. Original sin is the least sin, and because it is not voluntary it is not punished greatly; the pain of loss is enough. Pain in the afterlife is different. Although there is sensible punishment for original sin in this life, it is caused by natural things: pain in the afterlife is caused by divine justice. Furthermore, since the concupiscence of original sin conveys no pleasure, as such it deserves no sensible pain. Finally, Aquinas concludes with an important idea about post-Resurrection bodies. Infants will enjoy the privilege of impassability as do saints, but not for the same reasons. Saints will lack the capacity to

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[62]. Thomas Aquinas, In 2SN ds33.qu2.ar1.co, "et ideo carentia hujus visionis est propria et sola poena originalis peccati post mortem", (ed. STO, i, p.223).

[63]. Ibid., "In aliis autem perfectionibus et bonitatibus quae naturam humanan consequuntur ex suis principiis, nullam detrimentum sustinebunt pro peccato originali damnati."

suffer, given as a gift of God, but unbaptized infants will be shielded from all active agents which can cause suffering. This is an action of divine mercy, rather than a divine gift, as it was for the saints. Here, Aquinas again demonstrates conformity with established theological ideas, in this case, those of William of Auxerre.[64]

The next question Aquinas address asks whether unbaptized infants suffer any kind of spiritual affliction (over and above physical pain) from their state. His response to this question gives us a very clear portrait of the status in which he reckons unbaptized infants are. It would seem that the deprivation of the beatific vision is a serious thing, worse even than the pain of hellfire. Aquinas' response considers the nature of the things which cause sorrow. In the afterlife, one feels sorrow because of sin or because of punishment. The damned despair over sins which they have committed which can never be cleansed (this is part of the "worm of conscience"), but on this point, Aquinas reiterates Augustine's poena mitissima idea, and notes that in no way can the souls of unbaptized infants share the same punishment as the damned, since such a punishment is not mitissima. Furthermore, one cannot grieve over punishment per se; it has been instituted by the will of God, and is part of divine justice. Finally, since reason does not allow one to be disturbed by something one could not avoid, unbaptized infants will not be disturbed, since "in these children there is right reason disturbed by no actual sin."[65] Thus, unbaptized infants suffer no sorrow with regards to their state.

Aquinas continues to consider three possible explanations regarding a state that would allow unbaptized infants to feel no sorrow. The first indicates that they will suffer no sorrow because their reason will be so very much in the dark that they will not know what they have lost. This explanation seems unlikely to Aquinas, since he believes that a soul, freed from

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[64]. William of Auxerre, Summa aurea iv.18.3, (ed. Ribaillier, p.495).

[65]. Thomas Aquinas, In 2SN ds33.qu2.ar2.sc2, "Sed in pueris est ratio recta nullo actuali peccato obliquata." (ed. STO, i, p.224).

the burden of its body, should be able to know the things "reason is able to explore, and many more besides."[66] Thus, Aquinas stands very firmly in the tradition of the capacity of infants to use natural reason which William of Auvergne established.[67] The second explanation is that they have a perfect knowledge of all things subject to reason. This allows them to come to know God, and by so doing feel a little sorrow for not being with him, although this sorrow is mitigated, since they will also be able to know they are not being punished for any act of their own will. This explanation, too, seems unlikely to Aquinas: there can be no little suffering for so great a loss, so it would not be a poena mitissima. Furthermore, he again concludes, "since original sin is free of all pleasure its punishment is free from all pain."[68] The third argument is the one Aquinas seems to favour: that unbaptized infants "will know perfectly everything subject to natural knowledge."[69] They will know they are deprived of the beatific vision, and they will know why, but their knowledge will not cause them any pain. Aquinas's examination of the reasons for this continues an idea developed in the previous article, that one cannot grieve for the loss of that which one was not meant naturally to have, any more than normal people grieve because they do not have wings or are not kings. Normal adults who have the use of free will can prepare themselves to receive the grace by which they can attain eternal life. Infants, however, are different from adults in this: they were "never adapted to possess eternal life."[70] Such an end was beyond both their nature and their abilities, since they could perform no action to gain it for themselves. They need the help of others to attain salvation, through baptism,

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66. Thomas Aquinas, In 2SN ds33.qu2.ar2.co, "ratione investigari possint, et etiam multo plura." (ed. STO, i, p.224).

67. William of Auvergne, De Vitiis et peccatis vii, (ed. GAOO, i, p.278).

68. Thomas Aquinas, In 2SN ds33.qu2.ar1, "unde delectatione remota a culpa originali, omnis dolor ab ejus poena excluditur." (ed. STO, i, p.224).

69. Ibid., "in eis est perfecta cognitio eorum quae naturali cognitioni subjacent".

70. Ibid., "pueri nunquam fuerunt proportionati ad hoc quod vitam aeternam haberent".

which operates from superabundant grace, conveying to them what they have not merited on their own. They will not grieve in this state; on the contrary, Aquinas maintains:

> they will in nowise grieve for being deprived of the divine vision, nay, rather, they will rejoice that they will have a large share of God's goodness and their own natural perfections.[71]

Thus their state is a positive one, in which they remain constantly conscious of God's goodness.

Later Conclusions on the Limbo of Children

Fifteen years later, Aquinas returned to this question in his treatise De Malo. In it he reiterated substantially the three arguments just rehearsed, but added to them the question of supernatural knowledge. What sort of knowledge do unbaptized infants possess? Certainly they have natural knowledge, that much has been established, but what of supernatural knowledge? Aquinas believes that they do not possess supernatural knowledge, which comes only through faith, a faith which they lack of their own energies, and which is not conferred to them through the sacrament of faith, baptism. All this has been established, but the question remains: under what form of knowledge does knowledge of the final end of man fall? Is knowing that we are destined for the beatific vision natural or supernatural knowledge? It would seem to be the former, but if it is so, it would seem unbaptized infants would thereby be saddened. Aquinas changes his position in the Commentary here to insist (following 1Cor.ii.9, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those who love him.") that the full knowledge of the supernatural end of man is proper only to the saints, and is a glory "above human thought." Full knowledge of the final destiny of man is a gift of the Holy Spirit, and is a revelation of faith. Since unbaptized infants have no faith, they lack this knowledge:

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[71]. Ibid., "et ideo nihil omnio dolebunt de carentia visionis divinae; immo magis gaudebunt de hoc quod participabunt multum de divina bonitate, et perfectionibus naturalibus."

> And therefore, the souls of children do not know themselves to be deprived of such a good, and on that account they are not sad, but they possess what they have from nature without sadness.[72]

Thus, unbaptized infants possess a certain kind of ignorance, of higher things at least.

Aquinas' response to the objections raised clarify the issue further. In Distinction 33 of book 2 his Commentary, he allows that John Chrysostom's ideas about being deprived of the beatific vision as a worse punishment than hell are true, but only for those who have free will and know they have lost heaven. Lacking free will means that unbaptized infants do not suffer. They have no capacity to reach such an end, and while we here on Earth can certainly grieve over the loss of a limb or an inheritance, we can do so because these are things over which we have some kind of claim, and we do not have a claim on salvation. While being without what we desire can certainly cause pain, unbaptized infants are separated from God only with regard to the beatific vision. It should be noted that:

> they are not wholly separated from him: in fact, they are united to him by their share of natural goods, and so will also be able to rejoice in him by their natural knowledge and love.[73]

The nature of their knowledge is further clarified in De Malo: unbaptized infants know a certain beatitude, but only according to common reason, not in specific reason, so they are not saddened.[74] They have every natural good:

> children dying in original sin, although they are separated from God forever with regard to the absence of glory which they do not know, yet are not separated with regard to the participation in the natural goods which they do know.[75]

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[72]. Thomas Aquinas, De Malo, qu5.ar3.r, "Et ideo se privari tali boni, animae puerorum non cognoscunt, et propter hoc non dolent; sed hoc quod per naturam habent, absque dolore possint." (ed. Turin/Rome, ii, pp.549-550).

[73]. Thomas Aquinas, In 2SN ds33.qu2.ar2.ra5, "Non tamen ab eo penitus sunt separati, immo sibi conjunguntur per participationem naturalium bonorum; et ita etiam de ipso gaudere poterunt naturali cognitione et dilectione." (ed. STO, i, p.224).

[74]. Thomas Aquinas, De Malo, qu5.a3.ad1um, (ed. Turin/Rome, ii, p.550).

[75]. Thomas Aquinas, De Malo, qu5.a3.ad4um, "pueri in originali decedentes, sunt quidem separati a Deo perpetuo quantum ad amissionem gloriae quam ignorant, non tamen quantum ad participationem naturalium bonorum quae cognoscunt." (ed. Turin/Rome, ii, p.550).

Aquinas' more mature reasoning preserves the unbaptized infants from a superior knowledge which would cause them disquiet, but preserves for them every natural good. What does that make them like? He concludes, "it is the natural state of the separated soul that it should flourish not less, but more, in thought than souls which are here."[76] Thus in Aquinas the ideas of William of Auvergne reach their conclusion, and we have infants, capable of philosophizing.

Furthermore, such infants are capable of philosophizing eternally. The limbo of children is a permanent realm, like heaven or hell. It will not end, and there is no altering the condition of those within it. Suffrages are of no utility for them, since suffrages do not work for those who die without faith. Aquinas stresses again the static character of the post-mortem soul, since "the status of the dead is not able to be changed through the works of the living."[77] Unbaptized infants are deficient in grace, and after death one cannot gain grace. Augustine's theories on the non valde malus status of unbaptized infants are meant to be applied to the baptized non valde malos, not unbaptized infants. They are forever static in their nature. Indeed, it seems that they serve no useful cosmic purpose, although they retain natural knowledge. Is theirs a wasted existence? No, says Aquinas. In their own limited way they participate in the divine goodness, and for Aquinas that is better than not to exist at all. Thus, unbaptized infants do serve a useful cosmic purpose. Knowing God is sufficient reason for their existence. In the words of B. Gaullier, "these infants manifest the glory of God, by participating naturally in divine goodness."[78]

Conclusions

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[76]. Thomas Aquinas, De Malo, q.5, a.3, r, "est autem naturale animae separate, ut non minus, sed magis in cognitione vigeat quam animae quaesunt hic." (ed. Turin/Rome, ii, p.549).

[77]. Thomas Aquinas, In IV Sent., ds.45, q.2, a2c (ed. STO, i, p.654).

[78]. B. Guallier, L'état des enfants morts sans baptême d'après saint Thomas d'Aquin (Paris, 1961), p.137.

The very position Aquinas acquired, not only in his own lifetime, but also in later centuries, demonstrates the importance of his ideas about limbo. By virtue of his stature, his ideas were very influential. Doubtless they would have been much more so had Aquinas been able to complete the sections of his Summa theologiae concerning the afterlife. His writings were preserved especially by the Dominican Order, and occupied privileged positions in Christian thought. During the Council of Trent, his Summa theologiae was considered alongside the Bible as an authoritative source, and in 1878, Thomism was declared the official philosophy of the Catholic Church. Thus his ideas on limbo were exceptionally well-dispersed. He helped to continue the readoption and support of Anselm's ideas, with his own additions. He presented a more positive view of original sin and Christ's Incarnation. His ideas on the descent of Christ into hell and the condition of the Fathers are in harmony with the body of thought on these matters of his time, though presented with a great deal of in-depth examination. It is his treatment of the condition of unbaptized infants that represents an original contribution, as he adapts the ideas originally of William of Auvergne and extends them into a positive viewpoint of their status. This positive view, so evidently in contrast with that of our next author, Bonaventure, would, after the Jansenist controversy in the seventeenth century, come by and large to become the popular opinion of the Catholic faith from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. In that regard, the ideas of Aquinas can be said to have triumphed.

XII. BONAVENTURE: SYNTHESIS AND LIMBO

With the writings of Bonaventure (c.1217-1274) we are at the height of scholastic inquiry about limbo. Bonaventure both restates a number of traditional arguments within the disciplined format pioneered by earlier writers, and also adds new ideas to his investigation. Of particular interest for our survey is the position he takes on the fate of unbaptized infants; none of our other authors devotes as much space to this particular question as Bonaventure does, nor examines the question as thoroughly. Bonaventure also investigates the salvific actions of Christ in the underworld in some detail, and thus focuses a little on the limbo of the Fathers as well. Dealing with the root reasons behind both of these places, he provides an inspired synthesis of the ideas of Augustine and Anselm. His natural scholastic eclecticism is less focused than that of Thomas Aquinas, and nowhere near as personal as that of Albertus Magnus. Despite this, it is more harmonious, and as such a more pleasing synthesis, if one more difficult to follow. For all of his intellectual achievements he has been regarded by some as the summit of the Franciscan Order; for our purposes, he certainly seems so. Let us then examine his contribution to the development of limbo.

On Bonaventure's Commentary on the Sentences

We will confine our examinations of Bonaventure's work to his Commentary on the Sentences, in which he gives his most detailed examinations into the subject of limbo. Fixing the date of composition of this work is somewhat difficult; at its extreme limits, the dates are between 1248 and 1256, although more modern writers confine the dates to between 1250 and 1252.[1] The order in which the four chapters were written has been subject to debate. It was thought that they were written in the order in which Bonaventure read the Sentences, that is:

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[1]. See J. Kinn, The Preeminence of the Eucharist, (Mundelin, 1960), p.69, n.7.

I, II, IV, III.[2] More recent scholarship proposes an alternative order: I, IV, II, III[3], which is more consistent with the internal references. In any event, Bonaventure's commentaries follow the divisions, though not the order, of Peter Lombard's work.[4] Bonaventure composed his Commentary in a particular fashion: first he worked as a determinans under the direction of a master, reading the four books of the Sentences cursorie for four years. From this period dates the Dubia circa litteram magistri, which were included in the Opera omnia text by the Quaracchi editors, although they were taken from a different manuscript than the Sentence commentaries[5] (we will, however, refer to them at some points, below). These dubia are interesting insofar as they are in many ways similar to the Glossa of Alexander of Hales, demonstrating one more influence of the master upon the student.[6] At points, passages of Bonaventure's Commentary seem to have been taken entirely from Alexander's Summa, but upon careful consideration, it is evident that Bonaventure's treatment of Alexander's extracts and ideas is more exact; in short, he surpasses his master both in terms of style and of insight.[7]

The edition cited below is the critical one from the Quaracchi Opera omnia[8]. Before its publication, there were several incunabula and early printed editions.[9] The divisions of

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[2]. J. Bougerol, "Pour des 'Prolegomena postquam' Critique de S. Bonaventre, Quaracchi 1882-1902" in M. Asztalos, The Editing of Theological and Philosophical Texts (Stockholm, 1986), p.125.

[3]. Ibid.

[4]. On their content, see E. Smeets, "Bonaventure (Saint)", Dictionnaire de théologie catholique II (Paris, 1904), 962-986, p.967.

[5]. J. Bougerol, Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure, (Paterson, NJ, 1963), p.101.

[6]. Ibid., pp.102-105 covers this matter in some detail, but concludes that further work needs to be done on the subject.

[7]. E. Smeets, op.cit., p.968.

[8]. For the development of this edition, see I. Brady's excellent article "The Edition of the Opera Omnia of Saint Bonaventure", Archivum Franciscanum Historicum lxx (1977), 352-76.

[9]. For more information on these, see E. Smeets, op.cit., p.966. J. Bougerol, "Pour les 'Prolegomena Postquam'", p.124 covers the earliest editions in more depth than does Weems, giving descriptions of form.

the current text into chapters and arguments is a result of the Quaracchi editors; earlier versions do not present the text in this fashion.[10] The Quaracchi edition is well-edited and authoritative, with excellent apparatus, so much so that E. Gilson was moved to call it "admirable" and "a model of its kind"[11], although his seminal study The Philosophy of Bonaventure is in large part an extended critique of the interpretation of Bonaventure's work as presented in the scholia of the text by the Quaracchi editors. Bonaventure's Commentary is thus important in and of itself and for what it portended for his later work. As a work composed early in his career, it represents his first attempt at a theological synthesis. True, he would attempt another, the Breviloquium, but that work would depend on the groundwork he laid with the Commentary.[12]

Far from being a mere journeyman work, then, the Commentary represents in large part Bonaventure's doctrine as it remained throughout his life. Themes from it are evident in his preaching, for example,[13] as well as his other works. Thus we can observe a remarkable consistency in his positions, and assert that, like Thomas Aquinas, what Bonaventure stated in early life, he meant in later life. There is one limitation; the Commentary is the product of a specific school of theology considered in a specific way, so much so that its doctrines remain the same in Bonaventure's later life, though its execution of them does not. It is a Sentence commentary, like many others. If we had this work alone, we could certainly recreate Bonaventure's doctrine, but not his importance or style. As E. Gilson perceptively remarks, "we should not even have suspected how much his thought contained that was profoundly original and unique."[14] For our purposes this may not hold

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[10]. J. Bougerol, "Pour les 'Prolegomena Postquam'", p.124.

[11]. E. Gilson, The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure, (Paterson, NJ, 1965), p.xi.

[12]. J. Bougerol, Introduction to Bonaventure, p.99.

[13]. Ibid., p.135.

[14]. E. Gilson, op.cit., p.35.

universally, but it does act as a caveat for the reader who wishes to pursue Bonaventure's style, which can be better found elsewhere. Nevertheless, the novelty of his ideas shine through even in this early work.

The Commentary: Themes

Let us now turn our attentions to Bonaventure's concept of limbo, beginning with an introductory investigation of some of the themes of his writing as a background. We start with the question of original sin, which is the ultimate cause of the necessity of limbo. Bonaventure clearly accepts the reality of original sin, which can be logically inferred from an examination of the human condition. Since it is clear that there is suffering in the world, it seems that it is unjust of God to have created man simply to suffer through no fault of his own. Therefore, there must have been some fault which causes the condition of human suffering, and Bonaventure accepts the traditional Christian idea of the Fall of Adam and Eve, with suffering being the inherited punishment for their fault.[15] Bonaventure also embraces the traditional idea that Adam was not merely a man, but rather the source of human nature as well.[16] Adam could have passed on his own justice and immortality to all who were born from him, but since he sinned, he was prevented from passing on these two gifts to his posterity.[17] However, this theory leads to a problem, as Bonaventure is quick to point out:

> The question is, therefore, essentially what is original sin. Since by both the Master [of the Sentences] and Augustine it is said to be concupiscence...while in his work De Conceptu virginali it is said by Anselm to be lack of original justice, the question is, how can these positions both be true, and which of them is it better explained what original sin is?[18]

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[15]. Bonaventure, In II Sent. d.30, a.1, q.1 (ed. Bernardini, ii, p.716).

[16]. Ibid.

[17]. Ibid., q.2, (ed. Bernardini, ii, p.720).

[18]. Bonaventure, In II Sent., d.30, a.2, q.1, (ed. Bernardini, ii, p.722).

Bonaventure is thus caught between two different schools and two different definitions of original sin: those of Augustine and of Anselm. Is original sin concupiscence or privation of original justice?

Bonaventure's solution concerns the nature of actual sin. Actual sin is not a privation of a good, pure and simple; it always involves someone turning to a created good, wherein they can not find the justice which they should. He explains by way of an analogy: if someone is paralyzed, they are not, properly speaking, totally immobile, for to be totally immobile they would have to be dead. Rather, they retain a certain motive force which continues to exist, but which is incapable of moving the body. Original sin is like paralysis; it is not merely the absence of the good, but it also involves an inclination toward a worldly good which cannot satisfy it. This latter inclination is concupiscence. Bonaventure's position is thus an attempt to synthesize the ideas of Anselm and Augustine along the lines of his own definition of original sin, which can be summed up as follows:

> original sin is concupiscence, which, by its immoderation, includes the privation of original justice; or also: original sin is the privation of original justice which includes the disorder of concupiscence.[19]

However, in order to classify this position, Bonaventure also later in the same article adopts a definition of original sin along the lines of William of Auxerre, who defined original sin as a fomes intensum; Bonaventure spoke of an "immoderate and intense concupiscence."[20] This would seem to indicate a slight preference on his part for the Augustinian side of the question; such an interpretation has generally been accepted by most modern scholars, but not all.[21]

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[19]. O. Lottin, "Le péché originel chez Bonaventure", Récherches de théologie ancienne et moderne xii (1940) 275-328, p.289.

[20]. Bonaventure, In II Sent. d.30, a.2, q.1 "concupiscentia immoderata et intensa." (ed. Bernardini, ii, p.722).

[21]. See B. Marthaler, "Original Justice According to St. Bonaventure", Franciscan Educational Conference xxxviii (1957), 166-175, p.168 for a summary of some of the schools of interpretation of these questions.

Original Sin and Children--Arguments Pro and Con

In his exposition of original sin in Distinction 30, Bonaventure mentions the situation of children suffering punishments in this life, and he mentions it in conjunction with the question of God's justice. These issues are developed further in Distinction 33, article 3[22], in which he concentrates wholly on the eternal punishment of original sin. There are two questions: whether those dying with original sin alone are punished by material fire, and whether they are punished by interior pain or the deprivation of the beatific vision. Throughout this article Bonaventure adopts a curious position in speaking about the punishment for original sin; he speaks of the deceased in terms of souls and bodies; it is unclear whether he refers to the eternal punishment following the Final Resurrection, or whether he means that souls enduring punishment are endowed with bodies as well--possibly the latter. Bonaventure's conclusions are in a spirit of synthesis and compromise. They also offer the reader an interesting summary of the history of the question until Bonaventure's day. He notes overall that the prevailing Augustinian views can be interpreted in two ways. In the first place, the lightest of all punishments can mean just that, which means that unbaptized infants do sustain a very light punishment, not in an absolute sense, but in relation to the other eternal punishments. He further notes that existence of any kind, even in punishment, is preferable to non-existence, and that thus allowing someone to exist in punishment is still merciful of God, "although it shows more of justice than of mercy."[23] He concludes this interpretation with a bit of parallelism: it is appropriate that since in original sin there is both a lack of original justice and also a presence of concupiscence, so the punishment of original sin involves both the lack of the vision of God and the presence of eternal fire.

Unbaptized Infants and Exterior Pain

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[22]. Bonaventure, In II Sent. d.33, a.3 (ed. Bernardini, ii, p.792ff).

[23]. Ibid., "quamvis plus manifestetur iustitiae quam misericordiae" (ed. Bernardini, ii, p.794.)

Despite the seemingly ironclad logic of the preceding interpretation, Bonaventure does not seem convinced by his own argument. Like any modern reader, he seems to be moved by a desire for a more merciful solution, especially since, as he points out, God sometimes acted more mercifully toward hardened sinners than he does with unbaptized infants in this situation. Accordingly, Bonaventure presents a second opinion, that children lack original justice and the grace of the Holy Spirit, which he defines as the "pledge of eternal inheritance" (pignus heriditatis aeternae). Thus, unbaptized infants lose their eternal inheritance, which was to enjoy the vision of God. He continues:

> But because there was defilement in the flesh, for that reason they are placed in a vile location, namely in hell; but because they do not have in themselves actual delight in sin, neither in spirit nor in flesh, for that reason they do not feel the sharpness of the punishment of fire.[24]

Again, Bonaventure adopts this idea definitively, and remarks that it should be taken as the definitive position of the Lombard. This is a continuation of ideas we have seen earlier in Albertus Magnus, that unbaptized infants feel no positive pain despite their position.

In and of itself this conclusion would seem to preclude the existence of a limbus puerorum, arguing initially for a model based on unbaptized infants being in hell proper, yet untouched by its punishments. Nevertheless, this impression is not accurate, as we shall see below. He interprets the words of Augustine/Fulgentius from De Fide ad Petrum about infants who die in original sin being punished eternally as having been spoken "with regard to the lack of the vision of God and also with regard to the vileness of place."[25] He then engages in a bit of odd historical interpretation, wherein he observes that Augustine took the stern position he did in order to root out a heresy which denied the necessity of infant baptism (Bonaventure presumably means the Pelagian heresy, though he does not name it as such). He interprets the "Augustinian" position on the punishment of unbaptized infants as one of

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[24]. Ibid., "quia vero in carne fuit foeditas, ideo ponuntur in loco vili, utpote infernali; sed quia non habuerunt in se actualem delectationem peccati, nec in spiritu nec in carne, ideo non sentiunt poenae ignis acerbitatem."

[25]. Ibid., "quantum ad carentiam visionis Dei et quantum etiam ad vilitatem loci."

excessive severity, taken in order to counter an extreme heresy, and thus hopefully turn the tide of truth back to a more moderate answer as a mean between the two extreme positions. He does note that in the Enchiridion Augustine had maintained that the punishment of unbaptized infants was the lightest, and that the Lombard had accepted this idea. Children experience sufferings and punishments in this life, but Bonaventure maintains that such divine punishments are not punitive, but rather are to encourage development, as in the cases of Tobias and Job. In such cases "the kindness of mercy is joined to the severity of justice."[26] There is no point in applying a punishment meant to encourage development eternally, nor is there any mercy in it. Regarding the possibility of the punishment of the source of sin, the flesh, Bonaventure maintains that it is only a source of sin; it does not make the soul of a child lustful, per se, but merely prone to lust. Nevertheless, the flesh does receive some share in the punishment since it "is deprived of its robe and is placed in a vile and dark place"[27], when it should have gone to heaven after baptism.

Finally, Bonaventure considers the passibility of the bodies of unbaptized infants. He accedes to the point that they are passible, but insists that they are in a special position with regard to impassability. Either something does not suffer because of its own innate virtue (impassability), or because of some other divine dispensation. Bonaventure explains this idea as follows:

> Whence just as the same fire punishes greater sinners more than lesser sinners, so in the same fire the bodies of those who have sinned in actual sin are punished. But the bodies of children even if they are certainly spun around in those infernal fires, they do not feel suffering, and nevertheless they do not have the gift of impassability, because they do not conquer the strength of the fire through this which they have from their own virtue...[just at the passible damned] are not consumed by the fires, so the bodies of children by the same divine virtue are perpetuated in life, that they do not

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[26]. Ibid., "severitati iustitiae coniuncta est benignitas misericordiae".

[27]. Ibid., "sic etiam caro privatur stola sua et in loco vili et tenebroso ponitur".

> desire food nor drink, nor however do they have that firmness and solidity, which glorified bodies have.[28]

Here we see in great detail the actuality as well as the theory behind Bonaventure's ideas on the state of unbaptized infants. Though not impassable, they are preserved from suffering by divine fiat. They are different from the damned in that the damned have desires, such as for food and drink, and unbaptized infants do not. Nevertheless, here again Bonaventure differentiates according to quality than according to location. All of those undeserving of heaven in this passage are lumped together in the same spot. The image of children "spun around in those infernal fires" is not exactly a comforting one, nor does it accord with his stress on divine mercy as seen in earlier passages. Bonaventure clarifies this further in a succeeding question.

Unbaptized Infants and Interior Pain

The second question in this article asks whether children dying in original sin alone are punished by any interior pain. There are good authorities on both sides of the question, and Bonaventure's conciliatory spirit is strained by the predicament of resolving them. As always, he tries to follow authorities, but on this particular question he does not see Scripture speak openly, nor the Saints answer expressly. Thus he is forced to rely on the positions of the doctors of theology, who are undecided. Therefore, he must choose one of three options. As the first possibility, he surmises "children will lack both consciousness and pain."[29] Certain infants will lack consciousness because justice demands it; they will lack sadness because mercy demands it. With regard to justice, Bonaventure posits that unbaptized infants

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[28]. Ibid., "Unde, sicut idem ignis magis cruciat maiorem peccatorem quam minorem, sic in eodem igne patiuntur corpora eorum qui peccaverunt peccato actuali. Parvulorum vero corpora, etiam si in ipsis infernalibus volutentur, passionem non sentiunt, et tamen non habent impassibilitatis dotem, quia non superant vim ignis per hoc quod habent a propria virtute...ut ab ignibus non consumantur; sic et parvulorum corpora eadem virtute divina in vita continuantur, ut non indigeant cibo nec potu; nec tamen habent firmitatem et soliditatem, quam habebunt corpora gloriosa." (ed. Bernardini, ii, pp.794-795).

[29]. Ibid., "parvuli carebunt et cognitione et dolore."

will have no more consciousness than they did in life, and since they died as infants, that means nothing. Nor is there any intellectual growth on their part, as in the case of congenital morons, who die knowing nothing more than they did when they were born. With regard to mercy, since children do not have actual blame they do not have actual fault, so "by his just judgement God deprives them of all things which could bring pain into themselves."[30] Thus they have no pain because they have no knowledge. With regard to the second possibility, Bonaventure considers it based on the objection that it is difficult to understand why a soul separated from the body does not have consciousness--after all, at the very least it no longer has the body distracting it. In this opinion, infants have both consciousness and pain, which is a mitigated version of some of Augustine's ideas. Since they have consciousness, they will know for what end they have been made, and that they do not have it. This realization will cause them pain. However, this pain is the pain of loss; since they have done no actual evil of their own, they will not suffer from remorse, particularly that form of remorse which is called the worm (vermis) of conscience, hence they will be in pain, but nothing like that of an adult.

However, this second possibility does not satisfy Bonaventure either, due to its inconsistencies: he wonders how pain can exist without suffering, hope, murmuring, or despair. So Bonaventure argues for a third possibility "that the souls of children will lack actual pain and affliction, but nevertheless will not lack consciousness."[31] The essence of this argument depends on the concept of mean (medium), which is a natural focus for a synthesist like Bonaventure. He posits a mean for infants between the ends of the blessed and the damned. They truly fit in neither camp, but rather hold the mean place between both: like the blessed, they lack all affliction, both interior and exterior; like the damned, they are

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30. Ibid., "et ideo iusto suo iudicio privat eos Deus omnium eorum cognitione, quae possent eis inferre dolorem."

31. Ibid., "videlicet quod animae parvulorum carebunt actuali dolore et afflictione, non tamen carebunt cognitione." (ed. Bernardini, ii, p.797).

deprived of the beatific vision and the bodily light. Moreover, this middle position is reinforced by their interior state: they know they are not saved, and as such are in desolation, but they know they are not damned as well, and so are in consolation as well. Their spiritual state is one giant balanced scale: their consciousness and emotions are poised such that "sadness does not weigh them down, nor does happiness restore them."[32] And despite this seemingly futile eternal state, their very existence cannot be said to have been in vain, for, since, God shows justice to the damned and mercy to the blessed, he shows justice and mercy to unbaptized infants. Far from being an exception to the rule or a lacuna in the system, unbaptized infants are to Bonaventure another occasion for the demonstration of divine glory. Children remain as a perpetual mean. They do not grow or change after death, nor do they perform any sort of work. Bonaventure describes their situation in such a fashion:

> the fair-mindedness and immutability of divine justice consolidates them perpetually in the same state both with regard to the body as to the soul, both the cognitive and the effective soul, that they neither make progress nor fall short, nor are they made happy nor sad, but they always remain so uniformly, that they are material for the praising of divine justice, which is so fair-minded and just, that no good remains unrewarded, no evil remains unpunished, and it might hold a middle most perfectly between overabundance and decrease.[33]

Infants thus do not feel spiritual sadness. Properly speaking, they do not feel anything at all. They simply exist, as a demonstration of divine principles. Such a state is not a happy or a positive one--indeed, when the modern mind conjures up an image of limbo, Bonaventure's picture is probably the one that arises--but at the same time it is not non-existence, which (as we have seen) is to Bonaventure one of the worst things possible. The idea that the deprivation of heaven is the worst punishment Bonaventure interprets to apply only to adults--to infants who lack remorse and the worm of conscience it is meaningless.

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[32]. Ibid., "ut nec tristitia deiiciat, nec laetitia reficiat."

[33]. Ibid., "quod divinae iustitiae aequitas et immutabilitas in eodem statu quantum ad corpus et quantum ad animam, sive quoad cognitivam et quoad affectivam, perpetualiter eos consolidat, ut nec proficiant nec deficiant, nec laetentur nec tristentur, sed semper sic uniformiter maneant, ut sint materia laudandi divinum iudicium, quod sic est aequum et iustum, ut nullum bonum remaneat irremuneratum, nullum malum remaneat impunitum, et perfectissime teneat medium inter superfluum et diminutum."

Furthermore, there is no pain in desiring that which one does not have; we on earth are in no pain because we desire heaven and do not possess it, and the situation is the same for infants. He states "so it ought to be understood in the case of children that their status suffices them; nor do they raise their eyes to a wealth which they are not able to have."[34] The notion of mean applies to their concupiscence--since they had no chance to exercise it in life, so they will have no chance to exercise it in the afterlife. As part of original sin it will still operate, but Bonaventure observes that by God's action infants "will be placed between flight and appetite, so that neither will dominate, and at the same time neither will they have actual joy nor actual punishment."[35] They are preserved in the mean, one extreme restraining the other. Such a status was different from that of the Fathers in limbo, since it is agreed that the Fathers had faith, the belief in future glory, and the grace of God which granted them their foreknowledge of Christ and its attendant faith in the first place. Infants are entirely different, lacking the consolation that the Fathers possessed. While it is true that when someone is deprived of something without just cause it is worse than when they are deprived with just cause, Bonaventure argues that this only applies to an unjust punishment. Infants know why they are deprived, but since the cause of their state is from someone else, they feel neither pain nor remorse. Finally, Bonaventure concedes that infants do preserve some affections, but their case is special. The affections of the blessed are stilled by the presence of God; this is done through the enjoyment of God and also through the divine gift of impassability. Infants have their affections "fixed by the judgement of divine equity"[36]; this is not a divine gift, as in the case of the blessed, but rather the result of divine action.

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[34]. Ibid., "Sic et in parvulis intelligendum est esse, quod eis sufficiat status suus; nec elevant oculos ad opes, quas habere non possunt."

[35]. Ibid., "collocati erunt inter fugam et appetitum, ita quod neutrum eis dominabitur; et ideo nec habebunt actuale gaudium nec actuale supplicium; num enim reprimitur per alterum."

[36]. Ibid., "quod affectiones parvulorum stabiliuntur iudicio aequitatis divinae", (ed. Bernardini, ii, p.798).

Salvation History and Baptism

Now that we have understood the effects of original sin in Bonaventure's schema, we should consider briefly the historical remedies for it, before moving on to an examination of the position of the Fathers in limbo. Bonaventure has clear notions about the phases of salvation history and what means were necessary to defeat original sin. In many ways he reiterates the formulations of Bernard of Clairvaux[37], and also demonstrates the influence of Joachim of Fiore's historiography. The first phase of salvation history came after the Fall of Adam, and lasted until the covenant with Abraham. In that time people had only the law of nature to guide them, and could dimly perceive through it some of the reality and saving power of God.[38] Following Hugh of St. Victor, Bonaventure asserted that in this age, no sacramental ritual was necessary for salvation, only a profession of faith, which opened the individual to grace. This profession alone was all that was necessary to overcome original sin. Sola fides--terminology borrowed from Gregory the Great[39]--sufficed in profession of adults, and in profession on behalf of children. All that was necessary was that the parents make "either a sign, or a word, or an act of heart"[40] on behalf of the child. Any accompanying rites which were performed conveyed no salvific value per se, but served a useful social function.

The second period followed the covenant made with Abraham, wherein God revealed himself to one people in order to prepare for the gospel of salvation. This resulted in the creation of a written law, inspired by divine revelation, which was superior to the natural law, although it tended to inspire only servile fear in order to accomplish good works.[41]

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37. For a more in-depth study of this question see G. Scarfia, "Sacramenta fidei: Faith's Role Within the Sacraments", Franziskanische Studien lxx (1988) 235-309.

38. Bonaventure, In IV Sent. d.1, p.1, q.1, ff.2-3 (ed. Bernardini, iv, pp.11-12).

39. Gregory, Moralia iv.3, (P.L. 75, p.635).

40. Bonaventure, In IV Sent., d.1, p.2, a.1, q.2 (ed. Bernardini, iv, p.34).

41. Bonaventure, In IV Sent., d.40, q.2 (ed. Bernardini, iii, p.885).

After Abraham, the end of salvation remained the same--personal faith in a future Redeemer--but allied to it was the necessary ritual of circumcision. Although necessary, and a portent of future sacraments, circumcision was incapable of fully conferring grace. Nevertheless, Bonaventure relied on the positions of the Hugh of St.-Victor rather than those of Gilbert de la Porée, in insisting that they were the necessary means of salvation, comprising as they did the public profession of faith in the coming Redeemer.[42] Circumcision was more effective than the natural law alone; it sanctified children according to the precision of a specific ritual rather than the often-variable faith of the parents. While it did not perfectly convey grace, as baptism would later do, it did convey it partially, and it worked to remit an infant's original sin and partially restore its spiritual faculties.[43]

The final period--indeed, the final period in the history of the world[44]--was the period of the Incarnation, when men were ready to accept a law of love. Baptism is the means of infant sanctification in this era, and it is far superior to circumcision in that it symbolizes salvation by a profession of faith better, joins a person to the Church, and is in general less burdensome than circumcision.[45] This sacrament, however, does not obviate the validity of sola fides. No one can be saved without a personal profession of faith in the passion of Christ--adults must make this for themselves, and on behalf of children who are undergoing baptism. Baptism is more effective than earlier methods because the often-unreliable sola fides of the parents or guardians has been subsumed into the totally reliable fides ecclesiae.[46] The faith in the power of Christ's redemption in Bonaventure comes via

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[42]. Bonaventure, In IV Sent., d.1, p.1, q.5 (ed. Bernardini, iv, pp.25-6).

[43]. Bonaventure, In IV Sent. d.1, p.2, a.2, q.3 (ed. Bernardini, iv, p.44).

[44]. For more on Bonaventure's view of history, see J. Ratzinger, The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure (Chicago, 1971).

[45]. Bonaventure, In IV Sent. d.3, p.1, a.1, q.3 (ed. Bernardini, iv, pp. 68-9).

[46]. Bonaventure, In IV Sent., d.4, p.2, dub.4 (ed. Bernardini, iv, p. 117).

Anselm's teaching of satisfaction and the merit of the human nature of Christ.[47] The passion of Christ imparts its efficacy to more than just baptism; it does to to all the sacraments. The presence of a powerful sacrament like baptism changes the nature of salvation via profession of faith. Properly speaking, via the medium of baptism the child is no longer saved through the fides parentum, but rather through the more effective fides ecclesiae. Baptism unites children, who can make no profession of faith themselves, to the passion of Christ. Furthermore, the act of pledging a child to baptism has another factor--that of merit. If a child is given to baptism by unbelieving parents, the merit of the Church (or the merit of the saints in heaven) will make up for their unbelief, although the merit of the Church should always suffice.[48] Baptism, then, is the remedy for original sin, in the last age of the world, and is that which obviates the banishment of children to limbo.

The Fittingness of the Sanctification of Christ

But we can ask about the action which put the power into the sacraments, the passion of Christ. Why was it necessary? In brief, we can say a little about the actions of Christ, which Bonaventure examines in Distinction 20 of Book III of his Commentary. God acts out of fittingness in the matter of salvation; he cannot let his creation perish nor allow his plan for it to be frustrated. It is not fitting that the Adversary be allowed to keep possession of the souls in limbo,[49] nor, ultimately, to let the human race perish. The actions of one man must not destroy the race nor allow it to be destroyed. Furthermore, the power of the Devil needed to be defeated. In Distinction 19, Bonaventure makes use of an image which appeared in the works of Peter of Tarantaise and William of Auvergne--the Devil's two hands.

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47. For more on this concept, see G. Scarfia, "The Role of the Church's Faith Within the Sacramental Theology of Bonaventure", Franciscan Studies xxxix (1979 (1982)), 206-209.

48. Bonaventure, In IV Sent. d.4, p.1, dub.2 (ed. Bernardini, iv, p.105).

49. Bonaventure, In III Sent., d.20, q.1, f.2 (ed. Bernardini, iii, p.417).

Bonaventure views the Devil as having had two hands, one of which he used to sweep the souls of the just to limbo, the other which caused other men to come to evil.[50] The actions of Christ are necessary to amputate the former arm of the Devil and weaken the latter, thereby freeing us from the Devil's power. Such a salvation had to be done by Christ, rather than by any mere human being, for various reasons. In the first place, a mortal man could not mediate between man and God, since the man himself would be in need of reconciliation and thus could not be a fitting mediator. This is a much softened version of Anselm's ideas of man being unable to make satisfaction to God. In the second place, offending the dignity of an infinite being is an infinite offence, which no mere mortal can satisfy. Thirdly, mankind has great value, more than one mere man could satisfy. This argument and its antecedent owe much to the ideas of Anselm of Canterbury. Fourthly, just as Adam transmitted his guilt to man, so there was need of someone to infuse justice to man, which no mere man can do. Finally, Bonaventure views salvation as a kind of re-creation, but if it is an act of creation, we are in debt to him who performs it, and we cannot owe to the creature what we should owe to the Creator. Thus, strongly influenced by Anselm (or perhaps Alexander of Hales' interpretation of Anselm[51]), Bonaventure concludes that man has need of a God/man to make satisfaction, and, indeed, to recapitulate and remake man. The alternative, for the just at least, is limbo.

The Actions of Christ with Regard to the Just

Granted that the actions of Christ were necessary and have resulted in sacraments powered by his passion, we can inquire about the mechanics of salvation, particularly with regard to the time of the Law and circumcision. What about the time of changeover from

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[50]. Ibid., d.19, a.1, q.3 (ed. Bernardini, iii, p.406)

[51]. J. Gonzales, "The Work of Christ in Saint Bonaventure's Systematic Works", in S. Bonaventura 1274-1974 vol.IV, 371-385, p.376.

phase of salvation history to another? What were the effects of the fulfilment of faith in the future Redeemer when that Redeemer finally came? What was the status of those saved by circumcision and what happened to them after the action of redemption? Bonaventure's main investigation into these questions comes in Book III, Distinction 22 of his Commentary, the final three questions of which are worth investigating. In Question 4 he asks whether Christ descended to the underworld (inferos, a term he largely uses throughout, rather than infernus). He concludes that Christ did, and bases his answers on twofold distinctions. In the first place, he distinguishes between hell as a punishment (poena) and as a place of punishment (locus poenae). Understood the first way, hell could not have been the place where Christ descended, since of course he was not under obligation to a punishment, either of damnation or of sense. Understood the second way, a descent to hell is possible: as Bonaventure puts it: "he descended as much to that part, in which the just were, who were detained by merit of the sin of the first parents, which indeed is usually called limbo."[52] Here Bonaventure divides hell into parts; clearly there were more than one, since Christ descended to the "part" where the just were. This Christ did not by necessity, but "by his own will and power."[53]

The second answer, which concerns why Christ descended to snatch forth the just, is again divided in two. In the first place, Christ descended for the consolation of the imprisoned: Christ in his death illuminated those in hell just as in his birth he illuminated those on earth. Part of the consolation of the just was due not only to the fact that Christ was illuminating them with divine glory, it was due to their sense of dignity that Christ had deigned to come to them personally. The second reason was for "confounding of the adversaries" (confutationem adversariorum); Christ wished to face the demons of hell

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[52]. Bonaventure, In III Sent., d.22, a.1, q.4, "Descendit enim quantum ad illam partem, in qua erant iusti, qui detinebantur merito peccati primi parentis, quae quidem pars consuevit limbus appellari" (ed. Opera omnia iii, p.459).

[53]. Ibid., "non compulsus necessitate, sed sua voluntate et potestate."

personally, triumphing over them by despoiling them against their will. Christ did not descend to hell because he merited it, but rather to destroy and despoil hell. He could have freed the Fathers from afar by divine fiat, but to Bonaventure such a triumph demonstrates dignity, and Christ was not acting out of a spirit of dignity but rather a spirit of love and service. Christ wanted to save, rather than awe, the Fathers, and desired "that we ought to have the spirit of delight and love [rather] than the spirit of servitude and fear."[54]

The Liberation of Souls from Hell

Bonaventure speaks about the liberation of souls in Question 4; in Question 5, he examines the mechanics of the process in detail. Whom did Christ liberate from hell? Was it everyone there? One of his difficulties refers to Ps.lxxxv.13, about being snatched from the lower hell: if Christ went to the lower hell to liberate souls thence, how much more, then, did he liberate souls from the upper hell as well, thus despoiling all hell? This problem betrays an interesting consciousness of a bipartite hell and the problems of applying traditional passages of Scripture to such a model. Whom, then, did Christ liberate, and from which hell? The flaw in a universalist argument is particularly telling:

> the doubt is especially concerning children, who died in pure original sin. For if these did not have any sin except that of Adam, and the merits of Christ were of force for those for whom free will was not useful: it seems, that he snatched them from hell; or if he did not snatch them, it is asked why he did not.[55]

For his response, Bonaventure resolves the problem of universalism with the notion of merit, in concluding definitively that Christ did not rescue any from hell save his elect. Though the passion of Christ indeed sufficed for all, it was not effective for all, only those who were in

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[54]. Ibid., "malebat enim, quod haberemus spiritum dilectionis et amoris quam spiritum servitutis et timoris." (ed. Bernardini, iii, p.460)

[55]. Ibid., "et specaliter dubium est de parvulis, qui decesserunt in puro originali. Sic enim illi non habent aliud peccatum nisi peccatum Adae, et pro illo satisfecit Christus, et merita Christi valent illis qui non utuntur libero arbitrio; videtur, quod eos eripuerit de inferno; aut si non eripuit, quaeritur, quare non eripuerit." (ed. Bernardini, iii, p.461).

a state of merit, a state gained only by those who either were or would be his members. This Bonaventure reinforces with the quote from Hosea which was applied to Christ as "biting" hell, and concluded that this is the pattern of salvation: only a portion of hell was removed. He maintains that the ides of the "deepest hell" (profundissimus infernus) found in Job means two things: the lower hell which is sub terra and the hell which is supra terram. Since hell can be understood in several ways, Bonaventure chooses to focus on the qualities of punishment as being a more precise describer of place, so the damned have a punishment of damnation and sense (both together). However, if the punishment is not eternal, it is a different matter:

> a certain place is assigned to those to be punished merely for a time, whether it is with the punishment of damnation or the punishment of sense, just like that place, in which were the holy Fathers and others who had died with grace: and it is called limbo, or the bosom of Abraham.[56]

Bonaventure thus places the just--note that he does not limit this category to the Fathers of the Old Testament alone, but includes "others" (presumably pagans who had had implicit faith in the coming Redeemer)--in limbo, which he identifies with the bosom of Abraham, as so many other authors did. Christ descended to limbo alone, the higher (superiorem) part of hell, but not the middle (medium) or furthest (ultimam) part of hell.

Bonaventure identifies the hell supra terram with the shadowy air in which demons exist: deep with regard to heaven, deeper than earth, deepest with regard to the other hells; it is to the latter that Job feared he would descend. The lower hell of the Psalms is in respect to the earth, not the actual lower part of the status inferni, from which there is no escape. The issue of mercy also becomes important. No mercy certainly operated for those who were in hell, but for those who were in limbo there was no liberating mercy (misericordia liberans), since, of course, the just were stuck there, but because they suffered no positive

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[56]. Ibid., "quidam vero deputatis his qui puniendi sunt solum ad tempus, sive sit poena damni, sive poena sensus, sicut ille, in quo erant sancti Patris et alii, qui decesserant cum gratia; et vocatur limbus sive sinus Abrahae." (ed. Bernardini, iii, p.462).

punishments, they did have a kind of mercy which Bonaventure calls relaxing (relaxans). No liberating mercy operated, but relaxing mercy certainly did. But is Christ's victory over the Devil in any way diminished if he left people behind after his harrowing? No, says Bonaventure, displaying a very sophisticated knowledge of evil when he notes that the sinners in hell tend toward non-being (non-esse), rendered as nothingness by their sin. As such the victory of Christ is in no way diminished, "just as the fullness of the heavenly city is in no way diminished through the absence of evil."[57] Finally, on the issue of universalism, Bonaventure follows Albertus Magnus in maintaining that the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice is only for those sinners who are in a state of "a way" or are "en route" (in statu viae). These people can profit from it because they can gain merit. The damned are no longer in such a state. This static nature of the dead applies, by extension, to his reply about unbaptized infants. Children, he reasons, cannot be freed

> because they were not in a state in which they were capable of the graces of Christ, nor could the merits of Christ stand in as a suffrage for them, nor could his satisfaction for the sin of Adam be extended to them. For he extended himself to those who were made his members through faith, or through some sacrament of faith. Whence, just as infants dying in original sin will lack blessed life forever, so also those who had already been thrust down in hell.[58]

Unbaptized infants, then, here as in Book II, are viewed by Bonaventure to be perpetually in hell without possibility of suffrage or change. Since he believed that even pagans in the pre-Mosaic age could attain salvation for their children through a profession of faith, there appears to be no excuse for anyone who did not obtain salvation for their children.

When did Christ Lead the Souls to Heaven?

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[57]. Ibid., "sicut in nullo diminuta est plenitudo civitatis supernae per absentiam malorum."

[58]. Ibid., "qui non erant in statu, in quo essent capaces gratiae Christi; nec merita Christi poterant eis suffragari, nec satisfactio eis pro peccato Adae ad eos habebant extendi. Ad illos enim se extendit, qui membra eis efficuntur per fidem, vel per aliquod Sacramentum fidei. Unde sicut parvuli decedentes in originali carent in perpetuum vita beata, sic et illi qui iam in inferno erant detrusi."

The final question to be asked in this section concerns the question when Christ brought the souls of the just to heaven, and adds the factor of time into a consideration of the afterlife. Following Lk.xxiii.43, "Today you shall be with me in paradise." Bonaventure asks whether the transfer of the just was immediate, at the moment of Christ's resurrection, or at the final resurrection, leaving the Fathers waiting until they were lead "from the limbo of hell." (de limbo inferni) His solution to this whole dilemma is unusual. He makes the now traditional distinction between heaven as a place and heaven as a reward: the just enjoyed heaven as a reward through the presence and illumination of Christ, "whence, existing also in that place of hell, they had paradise and an open sight of God, which is none other than eternal life."[59] This satisfies the promise made to the good thief in the gospel of Luke, but it does not tell us how long the just had to stay in limbo. Bonaventure's explanation of this point focuses on the person of Christ and his actions. Christ was meant to be the head of everyone; as such all of his actions after the Passion were delayed, but for our benefit. Thus there was time between the Passion and Resurrection so Christ could prove his death, and time between his Resurrection and Ascension so he could prove that he had risen from the dead. Since no soul could go to heaven before Christ's, and Christ had to stay to prove himself to us, "it is from this cause that the souls of the saints were not lead straightaway from limbo nor placed straightaway in heaven."[60]

Thus, in contradiction to the timeframe advocated in the Gospel of Nicodemus, the souls of the just did not enter heaven until the Ascension. This was not to insult them; rather, it was for our benefit, another example of Christ's solicitude. Paradise for the good thief Dismas meant the beatific vision. Although the gates of hell were open and no force was holding Christ or the other souls in hell, nevertheless from "rational cause" (ex

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[59]. Ibid., "Unde in loco etiam infernali existentes, habuerunt paradisum et apertam Dei visionem, quae non est aliud quam vita aeterna."

[60]. Ibid., "hinc est, quod animae Sanctorum nec statim fuerunt de limbo eductae nec statim in caelesti paradiso fuerunt locatae." (ed. Bernardini, iii, p.464).

rationabili causa) he was held back to complete his mission on earth. Bonaventure views the open gate as a confusing metaphor in a threefold way, Christ's death having opened it with regard to merit, Christ's resurrection with regard to exit from limbo (egressum de limbo), but Christ's ascension with regard to ascent to heaven--only in the latter opening were they empowered to ascend to heaven. The practical objection of angels who are blessed yet can go to earth to work for the salvation of men is also raised--in the same way their glorification can be put off for the work of salvation; so could the glorification of the Fathers. Finally, while it is true that martyrs and saints fly to heaven straightaway, this is due to their ability to join with their "head", since they are the "body." Such is not the same case with the Fathers.

Some Dubia on These Matters

The Quaracchi editors have appended some Dubia of Bonaventure to the end of most of the Distinctions, and the quartet appended to Distinction 22 contain some elements which are germane to the present topic. Bonaventure asked, as others had done, how Christ had illuminated hell. The damned deserve no consolation, particularly that of divine illumination, which is the greatest consolation. Since Christ descended to hell without a body his light would of necessity have to be spiritual, so how would it not shine on everyone there? Bonaventure's answer is logical and typical.

> the shining forth of material light is different to that of spiritual light. For the shining forth of material light changes sight naturally, but the shining of spiritual light changes voluntarily; whence no one sees it, unless one to whom it shows itself voluntarily. And for that reason that light is said to shine in hell and to have illuminated hell, because it shone upon some in hell, but not all, because it neither wished to illuminate all, nor did all have suitable eyes.[61]

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[61]. Ibid., d.23, dub.1, "Dicendum, quod secus est de irraditione lucis materialis et lucis spiritualis. Nam irradiatio lucis materialis immutat visum naturaliter, irradiatio vero lucis spiritualis immutat voluntarie; unde nullus eam vidit, nisi cui se ostendit voluntarie. Et ideo lux ista splendere dicitur in inferno et infernum illuminasse, quia aliquos de inferno irradiabat, non tamen omnes, qui nec omnes volebat illuminare, nec omnes habebant oculos proportionales."

Spiritual light is thus different than bodily light; Bonaventure follows Albertus here in presenting the metaphysics of light in hell. He also speaks in these Dubia about the parts of Christ.[62] Where, exactly, was Christ during the triduum? Was the whole Christ in hell? Bonaventure investigates this by examining the precise meanings of totus and totum. Grammar in this situation precludes clear understanding, he observes, given the way the words can be understood in different ways. He draws a distinction between person and nature in the use of the word totus; the person of Christ, he notes, "is composed of three substances and two natures."[63] Christ's human nature does not have any parts, and properly speaking was dead during the triduum, but the person of Christ lived on, and was "most perfectly in heaven and on earth and in hell at the same time."[64] Thus the whole (totus) can be everywhere, but not wholly (totum), since Christ is composed of two natures, and the human nature remained behind in the tomb, mortal.

The Organization of the Afterlife

In Book III of his Commentary, Bonaventure has spoken in great length about the salvific action of Christ's passion, and its effects on the Fathers. This investigation provides the theory; in Book IV, Distinction 45 he provides more of the background by detailing the afterlife and the receptacles within it. It is in these areas that Bonaventure further maps out the geography of the otherworld, at least in philosophical terms. Two of the questions in this distinction are worth examining in some detail. The first is question 1 of article 1, concerning the receptacles of souls before the advent of Christ. This deals with the definition of the proper meaning of hell and how the ancient just went there, and in many respects it

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62. For a fuller and more complete exposition of this argument, see the Breviloquium, c.9; (ed. Bernardini, v, p.250).

63. Ibid., dub.2 "quod persona Christi componitur ex tribus substantiis et duabus naturis".

64. Ibid., "quia persona Christi perfectissima simul erat in caelo et in terra et in inferno." (ed. Bernardini, iii, p.465).

is similar to Book III, Dist.22, Q.4. Bonaventure's answer is a careful distinction about the ways in which the word "hell" can be used, as it was in Book III, Dist.22, q.4. His definition is clearer here, however:

> [The word] hell is applied not only to the lowest place with the punishment of sense and damnation and also a lower place accompanied by the punishment of damnation alone, namely limbo, which is either the limbo of children, or the limbo of the Fathers (or bosom of Abraham).[65]

Here at last Bonaventure identifies the existence of a limbus puerorum by name as a place rather than a state of preservation from punishment, as is stated in Book II, Dist. 33. Otherwise the distinction made is the same: a differentiation between a punishment of damnation and one of sense.

Bonaventure goes on to add another qualification based on degree: there is a lowness in hell with regard to status and location. So, for example, hell can be designated by its "highest" (summo) part--in this case it means the greatest amount of punishment and the lowest place, intended for the damned, who are punished without hope by the punishment of sense. Hell can also be described as a "lower" (inferior) place, in which there is only the punishment of damnation. This place is called limbo; Bonaventure notes "it was to this place that the holy Fathers descended before the coming of Christ and that unbaptized infants now descend."[66] It initially appears that the two different realms are subsumed in one place but this impression is misleading. He goes on to declare that "the Fathers were in a higher part and the children in a lower part"[67] of limbo. Both lacked the beatific vision, but the Fathers had expectation of it whereas children do not. The Fathers were placed higher up than unbaptized children, since they were expecting to see God; this schema can more properly

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[65]. Ibid., "Infernus dicitur tum locus infimus cum poena sensus et damni, tum locus inferior cum sola poena damni, scilicet limbus, qui est vel limbus parvulorum, vel limbus Patrum sive sinus Abrahae." (ed. Bernardini, iv, p.940).

[66]. Ibid., "Et in hunc descendebat ante Christi adventum sancti Patres, et descendunt nunc parvuli non baptizati."

[67]. Ibid., "quod Patres fuerunt in parte superiori, et parvuli in parte inferiori."

be said to have been in the bosom of Abraham. Thus the position of the Fathers can be described in a multitude of ways. It can be called

> hell, but because it was lower and because it was in some way a place of mystery; limbo, because there was the punishment of lacking; but the bosom of Abraham, because there was the expectation of glory.[68]

Actually, as far as Bonaventure is concerned, it is more accurate to refer to the place of the Fathers as the bosom of Abraham, which has good connotations, rather than hell, which usually has bad connotations. The bosom of Abraham was not a place of punishment, but rather one of glory, as he puts it, either through the fact that evil was absent from it, or through the fact that it was a place full of good people. Therefore, when the word "hell" is distinguished in such a fashion, its true nature becomes obvious, so much so that Bonaventure merely states this as a conclusion, and refuses to refute any of the objections which were raised to the question earlier.

The Post-Resurrection Afterlife

Question 2 of this distinction is more detailed, and asks about the receptacles of souls after the advent of Christ. By extension, this touches on the question of whether there is any structure and order in the afterlife at all. Are there fixed receptacles? Bonaventure naturally says "yes" with two carefully drawn distinctions. In the first place, he classifies three states in the afterlife: remuneration, quiet expectation, and purgation. To these can be added qualities of place: either fixed or indeterminate, both with regard to us on earth and with regard to itself. The state of remuneration can be described as a fixed receptacle, both for us on earth and for itself, and it corresponds to fixed ends, namely heaven and hell. However, not everyone can go straight to a fixed end after they die: for some "the door is closed" (ianua est clausa); for others, some form of purgation is necessary. For those in the

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[68]. Ibid., "Ille ergo locus dicebatur infernus, et quia inferior et quia aliquo modo locus erat miseriae; limbus, quia erat poena carentiae; sed sinus Abrahae, quia erat exspectatio gloriae."

former category, Bonaventure applies the state of quiet expectation, which he attaches to the quality fixed, with respect to itself, but not with relation to us on earth. It exists and is fixed in the afterlife, but as for us here on earth "it is not known through the Scriptures where limbo is."[69] For those for whom some purgation is necessary, there is a state of purgation, which Bonaventure calls an indeterminate place, both in se and with respect to us. It is indeterminate and not fixed because everyone's purgation is different and can happen in a variety of places, although Bonaventure believes that most probably the majority of souls are purged together.

This whole argument is confusing and, it may be suggested, flawed, so Bonaventure proceeds to draw a much more complete map of the afterlife according to a schema of merits and ends. Put in its most simple fashion, there is merit and sin. Good merit earns paradise, and the three kinds of sin earn other places: venial sin leads to purgatory, original sin leads to limbo, and mortal sin leads to hell. As for the question of space in all this, Bonaventure adds the following about the latter three:

> And it can well be and it is probable enough, that those three places are graded on different levels, but nevertheless are around the same place, as can be deduced from the sayings of the saints, and from those things which have been said above.[70]

Thus the penal locations are all probably closest together, separated into levels, although Bonaventure speaks somewhat guardedly about this, not wanting to innovate, but rather to synthesize with the help of authorities.

Finally, Bonaventure gives an extensive description of the receptacles of the afterlife with respect to the category of ends. This, too, is worth looking at in depth. At its most basic, the afterlife can be described according to two categories: glory or punishment. These are the two final and ultimate ends. Glory leads to heaven; it comes about because love

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[69]. Ibid., d.45, a.1, q.2, "quia nescitur per Scripturas, ubi sit limbus." (ed. Bernardini, iv, 941).

[70]. Ibid., "Et bene potest esse et satis probabile est, quod gradatim se habeant ista tria loca, sed tamen circa eandem partem sint, sicut colligi potest ex Sanctorum dictis, et ex his quae in praecedentibus dicta sunt."

merits it, and love is of one species. No further distinguishings are necessary here. Punishment, however, can be divided two ways: either there is the punishment of damnation, which conveys the soul to limbo, or the punishment of sense, which conveys it to hell. Limbo and hell can also be subdivided according to time of punishment. Limbo punished for a time (ad tempus) is the bosom of Abraham, which is the higher part, while limbo punished simply (simpliciter) is limbo, presumably the limbus puerorum. Hell applied ad tempus is purgatory, hell simpliciter is hell proper. As in the case of the arguments of Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, a diagram may be of some assistance:

REALMS OF THE AFTERLIFE ACCORDING TO RETRIBUTION IN BONAVENTURE

Type of Retribution		Place
Glory		Heaven
or		
Punishment		
	Damnation	Limbo, i.e.,
		for a time — The bosom of Abraham
		simply — Limbo
	Sense	Hell, i.e.,
		for a time — Purgatory
		simply — Hell proper

Bonaventure thus concludes that souls have a definite series of receptacles in the afterlife, and comes up with the scholastic five. He does note that with regard to purgatory, souls can be purged in a variety of places depending on their sins and inclinations, although

he does conclude that "in accordance with the common law there is a common place."[71] Bonaventure's scheme here is unusual in that it places purgatory fairly low, close to hell, in the position where other authors have put the limbo of children. Bonaventure chooses to make the major classification according to type of punishment rather than duration of punishment, which results in both of the limbos being kept together in one category.

It should be said that Bonaventure does not definitely keep to this schema, although by and large we can say that it is representative of his thought. In terms of discrepancies, we have seen how earlier he philosophically posited the condition of unbaptized infants as being in hell, tumbled about insensate and unharmed by fires which buffet but do not punish. He reveals more about the geography of limbo in Book IV, Distinction 20, Article 1, Question 6 of the Commentary, wherein he investigates the matter of the location of purgatory: is it above, below, or in the middle (presumably of the earth, although he does not specify). So, on the beginning of the "above" position, he notes that:

> Those just souls were snatched from the power of shadows, and since it is said of those men, and it is especially true about them, whom they could not bring to evil[72]

i.e., since the Devil is the prince of the air, the just in limbo had to be imprisoned above the earth, in the air where the Devil ruled. In contrast, when arguing the "below" position, Bonaventure notes that purgatory is below the earth by using the principle of similarity, since "the limbo of the holy Fathers was a place of purgation; but it is agreed that that limbo was either hell or next to hell."[73] This point is proven in the Creed and Col.ii.15; it is interesting that at this point he does not use the idea of the bosom of Abraham to describe the repose of the just, but here seems to apply punitive, purgative qualities to it. His answer on

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[71]. Ibid., "licet secundum legem communem sit aliquis locus communis." (ed. Bernardini, iv, p.942).

[72]. Ibid., d.20, p.1, a.1, q.6 "Animae illae iustae erutae sunt de potestate tenebrarum, quoniam hoc dicitur de omnibus viris iustis, et de illis maxime verum est, quos non possunt ad malum pertrahere" (ed. Bernardini, iv, p.525).

[73]. Ibid., "quia limbus sanctis Patris fuit loco purgatorii; sed constat, quod limbus aut fuit infernus, aut iuxta infernum" (ed. Bernardini, iv, p.526).

this matter is somewhat emblematic of all of his endeavours in writing about the afterlife--given his desire to proceed in the footsteps of authority, when he finds the authorities divided he must synthesize a truth from them, viz.:

> It should be said, that it has not been determined by the Saints, not can argument be adduced easily concerning this matter, according as it is permitted to have different opinions: and according to the three parts of the problem different people have different opinions.[74]

As with other arguments we have seen, Bonaventure synthesizes answers from disparate opinions. With regard to the question of Purgatory's location he is at a loss, since he must deal with evidence from sources such as Gregory the Great which depict people performing penances at places in the physical world.[75] His solution in this case is to draw a distinction between common law and divine dispensation. According to the former, purgatory is below the earth "just as limbo ought to be believed to have been below and not above, even so is the place of purgatory."[76] According to the latter, individuals can make their purgatory all around us either as a specific punishment for them, or for our purposes, to serve as an example for us, or to elicit our suffrages. Purgatory is thus below us or in the middle; the argument about the Devil is specious, since in and above the earth the Devil reigns only through association, rather than through local habitation--the just souls, properly speaking, were snatched from below. In the end, though, this argument demonstrates that as far as permanence goes there are really only two realms:

> since there are no merits save a twofold one, namely good and evil, according to the common law there alone ought to be a twofold place

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[74]. Ibid., "Dicendum, quod istud a Sanctis determinatum non est, nec rationes multum efficaces ad hanc materiam adduci valent de facili, pro eo quod licitum est his varie sentire; et secundum tres partes propositi problematis inventi sunt diversi diversa sentire".

[75]. Gregory, Dialogues, iv.57, (P.L. lxxvii, pp.424-5).

[76]. Ibid., "sicut limbus inferius fuisse credendus est, non superius, sic locus purgatorius."

> corresponding to the rewards for both: one noble, which is above, the other ignoble, which is below.[77]

On these two points Bonaventure has theological surety, and thus for him they are the only ones worthy of true attention.

Conclusion

Bonaventure occupies an important position in the history of the development of limbo. In the first place, given his cautious and conciliatory style of exposition, he performs a useful role in extracting the prevailing ideas of traditional authorities and synthesizing them to derive his conclusions. In particular, he analyzes the arguments of Augustine well, and evaluates them in confluence with the Franciscan ideas of Alexander of Hales. Bonaventure's arguments are somewhat less sparse than those of other scholastics such as Aquinas--and, though less precise, often are better presented. Bonaventure's depiction of original sin, as both concupiscence and a lack of original justice, is an inspired fusion of the ideas of Augustine and those of Anselm; and Bonaventure deserves credit both for appreciating the value of the latter and for working to perpetuate his ideas. Bonaventure's studies of the effects of justification under pagan and Mosaic law are not as inspired, but nevertheless are comprehensive and still of value. His preservation of the idea of a fides aliena, and especially a fides ecclesiae, as providing the generating power of baptism puts him firmly within the tradition of scholastic and early scholastic thought. His arguments in support of the descent of Christ to limbo are well-presented; his ideas on the totus/totum split on the person of Christ are fairly standard, but his ideas about the just being lead to heaven only at the actual time of the resurrection are quite unusual and innovative--they represent a comprehensive challenge to the dominant paradigm bequeathed to the West by the Gospel of Nicodemus.

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[77]. Ibid., "Unde cum non sit nisi duplex meritum, scilicet bonum et malum, secundum legem communem solum debet esse locus duplex correspondens retributione utriusque: unus nobilis, qui est supremus, alter ignobilis, qui est infimus" (ed. Bernardini, iv, p.527).

Bonaventure's two main innovations in these areas, however, are in his schema of the afterlife and in his study of the fate of unbaptized infants. His schema of the afterlife is unusual in placing purgatory "below" limbo--such a practice is usually not done in scholastic studies of the afterlife, but Bonaventure's ideas have a certain logic to them. They also have a simplicity and clarity which makes them more appealing than the more convoluted formulations of, say, Albertus Magnus. In this schema he preserves and advances the notion of a bipartite organization to limbo, and he achieves an elegant alliance of the concept of the bosom of Abraham and the limbo of the Fathers. Oddly, he spends little time focusing upon the ultimate "permanency" of these places in the afterlife, and thus does not dwell upon the notion of the limbus patrum and purgatory as places which are destined to be "closed" one day.

Where Bonaventure is truly innovative, however, is in his study of the status of unbaptized infants in the afterlife. His answers to these matters are a mix of severity and mercy. Not for him are the possibilities of the philosophical development of infants as seen in William of Auvergne. Bonaventure operates according to a principle of reconciliation of authorities, a principle which reaches its highest expression in this argument, where he seeks a doctrine of the mean. To him unbaptized infants are ultimately neither one thing nor another in their fates. He depicts them as conscious without pain, balanced in their status by upward and downward-driving forces. They have awareness but are in the darkness which is the lack of the beatific vision. They neither make any progress nor fall short in anyway. Ultimately, they are neither happy nor sad. For Bonaventure their status is the resolution to a logical dilemma: how to reconcile the absolute justice of God with his plenitude of mercy. Bonaventure's work is thus an exercise in balance and logic; two conflicting divine qualities reconciled and harmonized. Not all succeeding writers who dealt with limbo followed Bonaventure's ideas, although Dante certainly did, as we shall see. Future writers did not preserve Bonaventure's synthesis: Suarez would eventually return to the idea of infant

philosophical development which William of Auvergne had pioneered, and the Jansenists would return to a punitive form of Augustinianism which condemned unbaptized infants to hell. The synthesis of mercy and justice would not hold. Yet, oddly, to the twentieth-century mind the word "limbo" connotes a state of nullity much as Bonaventure described it with respect to unbaptized infants: neither one thing nor another, neither happy nor sad. To the extent that such an idea still survives, Bonaventure's synthesis can be said ultimately to have triumphed.

XIII. DANTE AND THE TRIUMPH OF LIMBO

So he set out, and so he had me enter
on that first circle girdling the abyss.
  Here, for as much as hearing could discover
There was no outcry louder than the sighs
that caused the everlasting air to tremble.
  The sighs arose from sorrow without torments,
out of the crowds--the many multitudes--
of infants and women and men.
  The kindly master said, "Do you not ask
who are these spirits whom you see before you?
I'd have you know, before you go ahead,
  they did not sin; and yet, though they have merits,
that's not enough, because they lacked baptism,
the portal of the faith that you embrace.
  And if they lived before Christianity,
they did not worship God in fitting ways;
and of such spirits I myself am one.
  For these defects, and for no other evil,
we are now lost and punished just with this:
we have no hope, and yet we live in longing."
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  We reached the base of an exalted castle
encircled seven times by towering walls,
defended all around by a fair stream.
  We forded this as if upon hard ground;
I entered seven portals with these sages;
we reached a meadow of green flowering plants.
  The people here had eyes both grave and slow;
their features carried great authority;
they spoke infrequently, with gentle voices.
  We drew aside to one part of the meadow,
an open place both high and filled with light
and we could see all of those who were assembled...[1]

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[1]. Dante, Inferno, iv.22-42, 106-117, "Così si mise e così me fé intrare/ nel primo cerchio che l'abisso cigne./ Quivi, secondo che per ascoltare,/ non avea pianto mai che di sospiri/ che l'aura etterna facevan tremare;/ ciò avvenia di duol sanza martìri,/ ch'avean le turbe, ch'eran molte e grandi,/ d'infanti e di femmine e di viri./ Lo buon maestro a me: 'Tu non dimandi/ che spiriti son questi che tu vedi?/ Or vo' che sappi, innanzi che più andi,/ ch'ei non peccaro; e s'elli hanno mercedi,/ non basta, perché non ebber battesmo,/ ch'è porta de la fede che tu credi;/ e s'e' furon dinanzi al cristianesmo,/ non adorar debitamente a Dio;/ e di questi cotai son io medesmo./Per tai difetti, non per altro rio,/semo perduti, e sol di tanto offesi/ che sanza speme vivemo in disio.'...Venimmo al piè d'un nobile castello,/ sette volte cerchiato d'alte mura,/ difeso intorno d'un bel fiumicello./ Questo passammo come terra dura;/ per sette porte intrari con questi savi:/ giugnemmo in prato di fresca verdura./ Genti v'eran con occhi tardi e gravi,/ di grande autorità ne'lor sembianti:/ parlavan rado, con voci soavi./ Traemmoci così da l'un de' canti,/ in loco aperto, luminoso e alto, sì che veder si potien tutti quanti", (ed. Mandelbaum, pp.30-32, 34).

Dante's portrait of limbo, from Canto IV of the Inferno, represents the culmination of the idea of limbo on many fronts. His depiction of limbo neatly summarizes many elements of the theological thought which preceded it, particularly with regard to the scholastics, especially Bonaventure. His limbo also represents the culmination of those popular and artistic trends which were too numerous for this thesis to have examined. In one sense, Dante's limbo represents the triumph of the artistic: we are, after all, dealing with a poem (and a vernacular one at that) rather than a Summa or a Sentence-commentary, a poem which in many ways owes more to the Gospel of Nicodemus than the theology of Augustine. Yet we should not let Dante's artistic skill blind us to the substantive theological thought which his work contains. Most importantly, we should not overlook the new direction in which Dante attempts to take limbo. Regarding Dante's overall portrait of the afterlife, J. Schnapp has expressed the view that "the author of the Commedia felt called upon less to alter preexisting traditions, than to extend and systematize them"[2], but this conclusion was not entirely the case for Dante's limbo. Summing up previous developments on limbo was not enough for him. By placing Virgil and the virtuous pagans in limbo, Dante radically transformed the nature and purpose of limbo in a way striking in its originality. Paradoxically, it was this novel direction which made Dante's limbo worthy of further examination. The body of this chapter will examine, not the limbo of the Fathers or the limbo of children, but rather Dante's limbo of virtuous pagans.

Original Sin and the Incarnation

We can begin our analysis of Dante as we did for so many of our other authors, by considering the root cause of limbo within the human condition, namely in original sin and the Incarnation. Dante deals with these questions mostly toward the end of the Commedia,

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[2]. J. Schnapp, "Introduction to Purgatorio", in R. Jacoff, The Cambridge Companion to Dante (Cambridge, 1993), 192-207, p.192.

in the rarefied philosophical discussions of the Paradiso. These questions are raised and dealt with in Canto VII, in the Sphere of Mercury, where the figure of Beatrice explains the meaning of Justinian's words in the previous canto. This canto has been described as the "most doctrinal of cantos"[3]; in it, Dante expresses confusion about how "just vengeance can deserve just punishment"[4], which provides Beatrice with an opportunity to address the question of the Incarnation and original sin. The question of original sin is dealt with in a somewhat cursory fashion. Adam, "the man who was not born" proved unable to accept any limitation on his will and so sinned "damning himself, [he] damned all his progeny."[5] This was due to the corruption of his nature, which was passed on to his descendants. This corrupted human nature, which was "good and pure" in and of itself, and condemned man to centuries of error. Man was excluded from the possibility of entering heaven because of the nature of Adam's sin, by which he which had deliberately turned from the divine will to his own way, truth, and life. By focusing on its own will, human nature was excluded from God's, as a "nature that was sundered from its maker."[6]

Original sin had another effect: it crippled the ability of man to resemble God with regard to divine attributes. Originally, a nature which was in conformity with divine goodness was made free, "not constrained/ by an influence of other things."[7] However, this special liberty had been compromised by original sin: Dante is informed that if man loses any part of these special gifts, he loses them all, which cripples the essential nobility of human nature. The end result is a kind of void in human nature which can only be filled by a just atonement for the pleasure which was procured so wrongly. Just as original sin cost man

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3. R. Jacoff, "'Shadowy Prefaces': an Introduction to Paradiso", in R. Jacoff (ed.) The Cambridge Companion to Dante (Cambridge, 1993), 208-225, p.213.

4. Dante, Paradiso, vii, 21, "punita fosse, t'ha in pensier miso", (ed. Mandelbaum, p.56).

5. Ibid., ll.26-7, "quell'uom che non nacque,/ damnando sé, damnò tutta sua prole".

6. Ibid., ll.31-2, "u'la natura, che dal su fattore/ s'era allungata".

7. Ibid., ll.71-72, "perché non soggiace/ a la virtue de le cose nove." (ed. Mandelbaum, p.58).

entry to paradise, so, too, it cost man these special dignities of nature. And the loss would be perpetual, since it was incurred when man's "nature sinned so totally/ within its seed."[8] Dante thus uses Anselmian language and concepts throughout here: divine goodness "impresses an imprint"[9] that does not change in and of itself.

However, this sad condition of man was changed by the Incarnation. Dante expresses this event in terms of natures: fallen human nature was reunited to the divine nature of its creator. This induces the paradox mentioned above--with the Crucifixion, divine nature subsumed into human nature was justly punished, but at the same time done a great wrong. "God and the Jews were pleased by the same death"[10]; Dante goes on to explain how the pattern of redemption was "most fitting" in a way that should be quite familiar to the reader by now. He raises the dilemma thus: God could either pardon man outright, or man could make recompense for his sins. Since, of course, man was not powerful enough to make satisfaction by himself, the impetus had to come from God. It is of the nature of God to act generously and through self-giving, so that in the salvation of man "God showed greater generosity/ in giving His own self that man might be/ able to rise than if He simple pardoned."[11] Only through this act of giving--of the Incarnation--could fitting justice be made, since Dante believed that all other ways fell short. Thus the evil of original sin is made up for in a way that is most fitting via the Incarnation, this theory clearly demonstrates that Dante has adapted the ideas of Anselm from Cur Deus homo.

Dante's Limbo: an Introduction

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8. Ibid., ll.85-86, "Vostra natura, quando peccò tota/ nel seme suo", (ed. Mandelbaum, p.60).

9. Ibid., l.69, "la sua imprena quand' ella sigilla." (ed. Mandelbaum, p.58).

10. Ibid., l.47, "ch'a Dio e a'Guidei piacque una morte".

11. Ibid., ll. 115-117, "ché più largo fu Dio a dar sé stesso/ per fal l'uom sufficiente a rilevarsi,/ che s'elli avesse sol da sé dimesso", (ed. Mandelbaum, p.60).

Now that we understand Dante's conception of original sin and the Incarnation, we can turn to his portrait of limbo in the Commedia. Dante's construction presents us with a number of unusual features. Superficially it does not appear to be a Christian place at all. It should be viewed against the backdrop of the rest of the Inferno. Oddly enough, as Kennelm Foster points out, apart from groups like the heretics and simonists, there are few people in the Inferno who seem to be there for transgressing specifically Christian laws. They have sinned against the rules of reason rather than the rules of divine law, and would fit into nearly anyone's schema of hell.[12] The inhabitants of limbo are set in a juxtaposition--either consciously on Dante's part or unconsciously--against those who are further down in hell. The noble pagans represent the ideals of human behaviour against which the rest of the denizens of the Inferno have fallen short. They live in a privileged position with a measure of happiness[13], in a realm of moderate light in which "a fire/ wins out against a hemisphere of shadows"[14] that make up lower hell. It is arguable that Dante's limbo and his actions within it are patterned on the Elysian Fields of Aeneid VI, with Virgil as his guide and Virgil's text as his model and source.[15] Differences become more pronounced as the poets descend lower into hell proper, and Virgil's authority carries less weight, such as at the gates of the City of Dis. When these differences emerge, they tend to enhance the Christian nature of the poem.

But in limbo, the pagan Virgil is in his element, where he is addressed as "the estimable poet."[16] Classical poetry informs Dante's portrait of limbo: most of the

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12. K. Foster, God's Tree: Essays on Dante and Other Matters (London, 1957), p.54.

13. E. Gilson points out that limbo is the only place in the Inferno where anyone is described as smiling. E. Gilson, Dante the Philosopher (New York, 1943), p.230.

14. Dante, Inferno iv.68-69, "un foco/ ch'emisperio di tenebre vincia.", (ed. Mandelbaum, p.32).

15. K. Brownlee, "Dante and the Classical Poets", in R. Jackoff, The Cambridge Companion to Dante (Cambridge, 1993), 100-119, p.103.

16. Dante, Inferno iv, 80, "l'altissimo poeta", (ed. Mandelbaum, p.34).

Commedia is strongly influenced by, if not an extended encounter with, Statius, Lucan, and Ovid, as well as Virgil. Encounters and experiences are modelled on the Thebaid, the Pharsalia and the Metamorphoses in addition to the Aeneid: indeed, Dante meets three of the above-mentioned poets in limbo, and encounters Statius in purgatory. These four Latin poems of epic length are treated by Dante as if they were literal history, a practice not unknown to other medieval authors, but used by Dante in a way that was "virtually unique in its rigor, consistency, and complexity."[17] Dante's limbo thus reflects this use of his sources. It is unique in that everyone in it is an actual historical figure, at least as Dante understood history. Apart from infants, only briefly mentioned, limbo is described as being full of a series of individuals, rather than classes of people. However, Dante's strict use of his sources also gave him the freedom to interpret them and use them as he wished. His historical figures are presented as real, at lest as he understood the concept, but only to the degree that they served his poetic needs. Dante picks and chooses these figures to serve a representative function[18], and limbo, like the rest of the Commedia, is at its core meant to serve as a moral example. Limbo is a permanent realm.[19] On one level it is meant to show the limitations of the purely human.[20] No one ever leaves it; Virgil attests that no one was able to leave it before the Harrowing, nor can anyone do so voluntarily after that time save by divine fiat, as he himself did.

Absences From in Dante's Limbo

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[17]. K. Brownlee, "Dante and the Classical Poets", in R. Jackoff, The Cambridge Companion to Dante (Cambridge, 1993), 100-119, p.101.

[18]. E. Gilson, op.cit., pp.267-8.

[19]. A. Valensin, "Dante a-t-il cur a l'éternité des limbes", Annales du centre universitaire mediterranéean vi (1952-3) pp.191-196.

[20]. J. Schnapp, "Introduction to Purgatorio", in R. Jacoff, The Cambridge Companion to Dante (Cambridge, 1993), 192-207, p.194.

Dante's limbo lies as much in what it is as in what it is not. Heretofore, we have seen limbo divided into two realms, a limbus patrum and a limbus puerorum, for the Fathers and for unbaptized infants, respectively. How did Dante include these two traditional groups in his new schema? Unbaptized infants scarcely figure:

> The sighs arose from sorrow without torments,
> out of the crowds--the many multitudes--
> of infants and women and men.[21]

Within the confines of Canto IV, this brief mention is all that infants receive. They are not detailed as characters, being quite literally only faces in a crowd. Here they are treated merely as a category, and Dante preserves only the vestiges of the idea of a limbus puerorum. In the Purgatorio, Virgil describes their state in more detail, as he identifies himself and his place in the afterlife to his fellow-Mantuan Statius in Ante-Purgatory:

> There is a place below that only shadows--
> not torments--have assigned to sadness: there,
> lament is not an outcry, but a sigh.
> There I am with the infant innocents
> those whom the teeth of death had seized before
> they were set free from human sinfulness;
> there I am with those souls who were not clothed
> in the three holy virtues--but who knew
> and followed all the other virtues.[22]

This is the most extensive description we receive of infants in limbo. They are damned to Inferno for their uncleansed original sin, but to a punishment that is merely internal, producing longing rather than torment. It is a place removed from both the beatific vision and bodily light, here described as being in shadows, although elsewhere in Inferno IV there is light noted. With regard to unbaptized infants, Dante is here in the company of Bonaventure and a great deal removed from the likes of William of Auvergne. In limbo,

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[21]. Dante, Inferno, iv.28-30, "ciò avvenia di duol sanza martìri,/ ch'avean le turbe, ch'eran molte e grandi,/ d'infanti e di femmine e di viri." (ed. Mandelbaum, p.30).

[22]. Dante, Purgatorio vii.28-36, "Luogo è là giù non tristo di martìri,/ ma di tenebre solo, ove i lamenti/ non suonan come guai, ma son sospiri./ Quivi sto io coi pargoli innocenti/ dai denti morse de la morte avante/ che fosser da l'umana colpa essenti;/ quivi sto io con quei che le tre sante/ virtù non si vestiro, e sanza visio/ conobber l'altre e seguir tutte quante." (ed. Mandelbaum, pp.56-8).

infants are to some extent unformed human beings, and since they are undeveloped, they are not worthy of dramatic attention.

The situation of unbaptized infants can be handily contrasted with the state of baptized infants in the Paradiso. These are found in Canto XXXII, in the Tenth Heaven, wherein Bernard points out to Dante the inhabitants of the Celestial Rose. The denizens of the Rose are split in two semicircles, half from A.D. times, half from B.C., the latter being the Old Testament figures who were rescued from limbo during the Harrowing. Baptized infants are placed just below the dividing line, on the A.D. side. They provide the occasion for Bernard to expound upon the quality of merit:

> ...[there] sit
> souls who are there for merits not their own,
> but--with certain condition--others' merits;
> for all there are souls who left their bodies
> before they had the power of true choice.
> Indeed, you may perceive this by yourself
> their faces, childlike voices are enough,
> if you look well at them and hear them sing.[23]

These infants are in direct contrast to those in limbo. Whereas the latter sigh, these sing. Whereas the latter are condemned for the actions of others, these are saved by the actions of others. Neither group have merited their state on their own, but rather have been the result of the actions of others. Unlike the undifferentiated crowd of infants in limbo, the infants of the Paradiso are ordered in hierarchy and rank. The only criterion for this is their "proclivity at birth" (primiero acume), a neat inversion of the Abelardian idea that God would only damn infants if He knew they would turn out bad. Here God saves and orders them according to what they would have been. Curiously, amongst these infants there are many who were not, properly speaking, Christians. The words of Bernard explain:

> In early centuries, their parents' faith

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[23]. Dante, Paradiso xxxiii.41-48, "a mezzo il tratto le due discrezioni,/ per nullo proprio merito si siede,/ ma per l'altrui, con certe condizioni:/ ché tutti questi son spiriti asciolti/ prima ch'avesser vere eleziono./ Ben te ne puoi accorger per li volti/ e anche per le voci püerili,/ se tu le guardi bene e se li ascolti." (ed. Mandelbaum, p.284).

alone and their own innocence, sufficed
for the salvation of the children; when
  Those early times had reached completion, then
each male child had to find, through circumcision,
the power needed by his innocent
  member; but then the age of grace arrived,
and without perfect baptism in Christ,
such innocence was kept below, in Limbo.[24]

Thus the possibility of salvation was open even to pagans, or at least to their children, through the fides aliena of their parents. This law was replaced by the law of circumcision of the Abrahamic covenant, and then by the baptism instituted by Christ.

This idea of the ages of salvation comes from the works of Bernard of Clairvaux--fittingly, as Dante is using him as the mouthpiece of these ideas in the canto. The salvation of infants provides a contrast to the state of the virtuous pagans in limbo--it seems odd that the faith of pagan parents can save their children, but not save themselves. Part of this is due to mystery: Bernard notes that God "bestows his grace diversely, at His pleasure--/ and here the fact alone must be enough."[25] This accounts for the reason why some infants attain to baptism and some do not: the mystery of predestination and divine election. But in this case of saved pagan infants, I think that the truth can be found in the apposition "and their own innocence" (con l'innocenza). Dante was not a Pelagian, and did not subscribe to a theory of natural goodness and salvation for man, despite his fondness for classical humanism. It seems that he followed in the footsteps of the scholastic idea that lacking God's grace it is impossible for anyone to be upright. Sooner or later they would fall into sin inevitably, based on the pull of concupiscence on the mature will. The saved pagan infants of the Celestial Rose were shielded by their own innocence, granting them salvation before reaching the age or reason; saved by the fides aliena of their pagan parents who were strong in the four

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[24]. Ibid., ll. 76-84, "Bastavasi ne' secoli recenti/ con l'innocenza, per aver salute,/ solamente la fede d'i parenti;/ poi che le pime etadi fuor compiute,/ convenne ai maschi a l'innocenti penne/ per circuncidere acquistar virtute; ma poi che 'l tempo de la grazia venne,/ sanza battesmo perfetto di Cristo/ tale innocenza là giù si ritenne." (ed. Mandlebaum, p.286).

[25]. Ibid., ll. 65-6, "a suo piacer di grazia dota/ diversamente; e qui basti l'effetto." (ed. Mandelbaum, p.284).

cardinal virtues, but who could not resist falling into sin themselves. This situation lasted until the institution of circumcision.

The second factor that is missing in Dante's limbo is the other category, the limbus patrum. We have seen over the course of time how the limbus patrum emerged as a separate and direct part of the afterlife, a realm of its own, though generally agreed to be empty after the Harrowing. Such is not the case with Dante. He lumps all the limbo-dwellers together into one limbo, which endures. He describes the Harrowing thus, through the mouth of Virgil:

> ...I beheld a Great Lord enter here;
> the crown he wore, a sign of victory.
> He carried off the shade of our first father
> of his son Abel, and the shade of Noah,
> of Moses, the obedient legislator,
> of father Abraham, David the king,
> of Israel, his father, and his sons,
> and Rachel, she for whom he worked so long,
> and many others--and he made them blessed;
> and I should have you know that, before them,
> there were no human souls that had been saved.[26]

This is all. As with the limbus puerorum, Dante's treatment of the limbus patrum is curiously brief. There are a few brief references to the harrowing elsewhere. Inferno ii, 28-32 mentions the fact that Christ went to hell. Inferno viii, 125-6 has Virgil mention the demons' intransigence in not letting him and Dante through the City of Dis with reference to the fact that "They used it once before at a gate/ less secret--it is still without its bolts"[27], meaning, of course, the main gate to hell. Finally, it is mentioned in Inferno xii, 37ff, as "the coming of the One who took/ from Dis the highest circle's splendid spoils"[28], which

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[26]. Dante, Inferno, iv.53-63, "quando ci vidi venire un possente,/ con segno di vittoria coronato./ Trasseci l'ombra del primo parente,/ d'Abèl suo figlio e quella di Noè,/ di Moïsè legistra e ubidente;/ Abraàm patrïarca e Davìd re,/ Israèl con lo padre e co'suoi nati/ e con Rachele, per cui tanto fé,/ e altri molti, e feceli beati./ E vo' che sappi che, dinanzi ad essi, spiriti umani non eran salvati." (ed. Mandlebaum, p.32).

[27]. Dante, Inferno viii.125-6, "ché già l'usaro a men segreta porta", (ed. Mandlebaum, p.70).

[28]. Dante, Inferno xii.38-9, "che venisse colui che la gran preda/ levò a Dite del cerchio superno", (ed. Mandlebaum, p.100).

resulted in part in the collapse of some of the bridges over the Seventh Circle of hell. But these are all. Dante was clearly aware of the Gospel of Nicodemus, and has appropriated some of its elements to his poem: the descent of Christ, the shattering of the gates of hell, the rescue of the Fathers, and the spoliation of hell. However, the elements are all that remain; as Amilcare Ianucci observes, Inferno IV would have been a natural place for Dante to recapitulate in depth the events of the Harrowing of hell, yet curiously, Dante does not do it.[29] This is due to the fact that Dante's emphasis is elsewhere, his concentration on the state of the virtuous pagans rather than the Fathers, as we shall see below.

There are, in fact, several types of the Descent into hell in the Commedia which figure more prominently than Christ's. At some level, the entire Inferno represents the Descent, with Dante as the protagonist, although in this case there is no concomitant despoiling of hell. Far more blatant is the incident at the gates of the City of Dis, mentioned above. There, demons guard the gates of the city and refuse to allow Virgil and Dante through. Despite their sacred mission the poets are helpless, until an angel descends, routs the demons, and with a contemptuous glance strikes the door with his wand, opening it. He chides the demons for their recalcitrance, noting "Your Cerberus, if you remember well/ for that had both his throat and chin stripped clean.[30] This is a reference to Hercules' rescue of Theseus from hell by his defeat of Cerberus, whom he mauled, yet another descent into hell. The whole episode, as A. Ianucci notes, is "a paganized version of the harrowing of hell, governed by the laws of Dante's cultural syncretism."[31] But over and above these examples, the entire guiding impetus of the poem is driven by a harrowing, that of Beatrice. In Canto II, it is recounted how she descended into limbo to enlist the aid of Virgil (Inferno

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[29]. A. Ianucci, "Limbo: the Emptiness of Time", Studi Danteschi, lii (1979-80), 69-128, p.91.

[30]. Dante, Inferno, ix.98-9, "Cerbero vostro, se ben vi ricorda, ne porta ancor pelato il mento e 'l gozzo." (ed. Mandelbaum, p.76).

[31]. A. Ianucci, op.cit., p.94.

ii, 61-66). The timing of this event has been estimated at noon, by Jerusalem time, on Good Friday, AD 1300[32], which is reminiscent of the time Christ is assumed to have died and begun His own descent into hell. In other words, Beatrice "reenacts the redemption--Dante's and mankind's."[33] In both of these harrowings, then, the object of the harrowing is Dante himself, by extension acting as a symbolic Everyman.

Presences in Dante's Limbo

Dante's limbo is a unique creation. Although he pays homage to the traditional depiction of limbo as it had developed over the years, in practice he ignores it, placing little focus on the actual figures of the unbaptized infants and the Fathers. Thus, having seen what Dante's limbo is not, it is time to see what his limbo is. As mentioned above, Dante's limbo is almost entirely meant to be the home of the virtuous pagans. Furthermore, unlike other descriptions of limbo that we have encountered (save that of the Gospel of Nicodemus), there is a definite landscape and geography present, much of which is undoubtedly meant to be symbolic.[34]

The events of Canto IV run thusly. After Virgil's cursory description of Christ's harrowing of hell, the poets descend from a wood towards where Dante sees a "fire/ win out against a hemisphere of shadows"[35] (possibly symbolizing the moral virtues). Dante then inquires about the light and why the souls therein enjoy it, and is told that their enduring reputation earned them heaven's grace. Dante and Virgil then encounter four more poets "in

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[32]. For an extensive examination of this thesis, see Ibid., p.95, n.45.

[33]. Ibid., p.97.

[34]. I am indebted to the entry on limbo from P. Toynbee's A Dictionary of Proper names and Notable Matters in the Works of Dante (rev.ed., C. Singleton, Oxford, 1968), p.391, from which many of the following interpretations are derived. Some other variant interpretations will be presented below.

[35]. Dante, Inferno, iv.68-9, "un foco/ ch'emisperio di tenebre vincia." (ed. Mandelbaum, p.32).

aspect...neither sad nor joyous"[36]: Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan, all of whom hail Virgil and include Dante in their number. The poets speak amongst themselves of lofty subjects, and then come to an exalted castle (nobile castello--perhaps representing philosophy) encircled by seven walls (possibly the four cardinal virtues of prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice, plus the additional virtues of wisdom, knowledge and understanding)[37] and a river (their meaning unclear; though perhaps they denote eloquence), over which the poets walk as if it were solid ground. They enter the city through seven gates (perhaps the seven liberal arts) and come upon a green meadow covered with flowering plants (meaning also unclear, possibly fame). Dante then obtains his first detailed view of the denizens of the nobile castello; they are people with:

> eyes both grave and slow;
> their features carried great authority;
> they spoke infrequently, with gentle voices.[38]

Amid this stoic, meditative crowd, gathered in a part of the meadow that is wider and brighter, Dante sees several classes of people, "great-hearted souls"[39] all.

The first group of these people is composed of: Electra, Hector, Aeneas, Julius Caesar, Camilla, Penthesilea, Latinus, Lavinia, Lucius Junius Brutus, Lucretia, Julia, Marcia, and Cornelia. All of these figures are from the histories of Troy and Rome, and as such are given first place in Dante's attentions. Next, Dante mentions Saladin, who is sitting by himself at some distance from the others, the only figure presented who is not from classical antiquity, and the only Moslem Dante considered worthy of special treatment in a hell where the towers of the city of Dis are described as looking like minarets. After this Dante sees a series of scientists and philosophers: first Aristotle, then closest to him Socrates and Plato.

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36. Ibid, l.84, "semblianz' avevan né trista né lieta." (ed. Mandelbaum, p.34).

37. Note that these latter three are not the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity.

38. Dante, Inferno, iv.112-4, "Genti v'eran con occhi tardi e gravi,/ di grande autorità ne'lor sembianti:/ parlavan rado, con voci soavi." (ed. Mandelbaum, p.34).

39. Ibid., l.119, "spiriti magni", (ed. Mandlebaum, p.36).

Around them are gathered Democritus, Diogenes, and Anaxagoras; Thales, Empedocles, Heraclitus, and Zeno; Dioscorides, Orpheus, Tully, Linus and Seneca; Euclid and Ptolomy; Hippocrates, Avicenna, Galen, and Averroes. In Purgatorio XXII other denizens are mentioned: Juvenal, Terence, Caecilius, Plautus, and Varro, as well as Persius, plus Euripides, Antiphon, Simonides, Deiphyle, Argia, Ismene, Hypsipyle; and finally Manto, Thetis, and Deidomia and her sisters. After Dante and Virgil's encounter with these luminaries of antiquity, they part company with the other four poets and descend further into hell.

Essentially, then, there are several classes of people in limbo. All are united by the common fact that "they did not sin".[40] But within this division there is a distinction drawn on the basis of merit. The unbaptized infants died before attaining the use of reason, and thus not could not acquire merits. Adults on the other hand did acquire merits, and of these there are two types. The first group possess merits, but lack baptism, which is to say that they could be virtuous non-Christians even unto Dante's age. Saladin, from line 129, is one such (actually, the only example mentioned). The other group is comprised of people who lived before Christianity, but "did not worship God in fitting ways"[41], that is, the virtuous pagans, among whose number Virgil classes himself. Dante's focus upon them to such a degree is highly unusual. Historically, there were Christian theologians, Peter Abelard among them, who put a case for the inclusion of these people amongst the number that Christ harrowed from hell.[42] However, as A. Ianucci says, "no one before Dante placed the virtuous pagans in limbo and left them there."[43] These pagans had the four cardinal virtues to perfection, but lacked the three theological ones. Their existence is in antithesis to that of the other

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[40]. Ibid., l.34, "ch'ei non peccaro", (ed. Mandlebaum, p.32).

[41]. Ibid., l.38, "non adorar debitamente a Dio".

[42]. See S. Harent, "Infidèles (Salut des)", Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique, vii (1923), 1748-1752.

[43]. A. Ianucci, op.cit., pp.72-3.

figures in hell, particularly Satan, for they have comradeship and fellowship, in contrast to the antagonism of those in other parts of the Inferno, and the desolate isolation of Satan.[44] Yet despite their light, comradeship, and erudition, their overall existence is a sad one. Amidst the glorious company, Dante sees fit to mention the sighs:

> There was no outcry louder than the sighs
> that caused the everlasting air to tremble.
> The sighs arose from sorrow without torments...[45]

and their faces, which are "neither sad nor joyous."[46] These are a people "who have no hope, yet [who] live in longing."[47] They have a privileged existence with regards to the rest of the denizens of hell, and even with regard to earthly humans, and yet despite this, Dante sees fit to stress the hopelessness of their condition in a way which is more poignant to his audience of the twentieth-century than that of the fourteenth. Why he constructs his limbo in this way reveals much about his views of the nature of humanity, the doctrine of the harrowing of hell, and, ultimately, the nature of tragedy and comedy.

Dante: Humanism and the Natural Moral Order

In one sense, it is not inappropriate to credit Dante's focus on the virtuous pagans of limbo (to the detriment of infants and the Fathers--its traditional denizens) to his humanism and reverence for the great figures of the past. Some of Dante's other writings reveal what was then a novel approach to the questions of the nature of man and his terrestrial destiny. Throughout De Monarchia as well as in the Convivio, Dante certainly maintained that man had a specific destiny on earth in addition to his permanent destiny in the afterlife. This was

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44. C. Ryan, "The Theology of Dante", in R. Jacoff (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Dante, (Cambridge, 1993), 136-152, p.143.

45. Dante, Inferno, iv.26-28, "non avea pianto mai che di sospiri/ che l'aura etterna facevan tremare;/ ciò avvenia di duol sanza martìri", (ed. Mandelbaum, p.32).

46. Ibid., l.84, "sembianz' avevan né trista né lieta", (ed. Mandlebaum, p.34).

47. Ibid., l.42, "che sanza speme vivemo in disio." (ed. Mandelbaum, p.32).

a classical notion, derived mainly from Aristotle, whom Dante followed in the Convivio in asserting that a man can attain perfection through the practice of philosophy. This early humanism proved problematic for Dante in some ways, drawing him to the glories of classical paganism as well as medieval Christianity. Kennelm Foster has likened this simultaneous two-way attraction of Dante to a stage in a man's youth, "except that paganism was a stage in the history of Dante's race."[48] This kind of humanism proved problematic for Dante in another way as well, for while such a principle is easily applicable to the writings of a worldly man who is active in his society, as Dante was, it loses a bit of its force when one applies it to an otherworldly writing such as the Commedia.[49] Such an ideal seems to be tied to time and history, and as such is somewhat different to honour in the eternity of the afterlife.

For Foster, limbo is one of the ways Dante tried to deal with the twofold direction in which his interests pulled him, hence the "Two Dantes" of the title of his study. It seems that the pagans of limbo have all the criteria for fulfilling the natural human end on earth. They have achieved their human goodness entirely through natural means, even if the theological virtues were lacking.[50] Dante has great respect for the pagans of his Commedia, so much so that the first two books of it can on one level be seen as an extended praise of the virtues of one pagan, Virgil. Throughout the entire work, whenever a pagan is criticized, the only defect which is really focused upon is his lack of faith.[51] Dante's pagans are good without God. His portrait of them seems to overturn centuries of Augustine grace-theology in favour of an ideal of Aristotelian natural goodness which was being rediscovered in the Christian West at a time when philosophy was becoming a separate and distinct discipline

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48. K. Foster, The Two Dantes and Other Studies (London, 1977), p.156.

49. Ibid., p.143.

50. K. Foster, God's Tree, p.52.

51. K. Foster, The Two Dantes, p.174.

from theology.[52] Dante's limbo seems on one level to be a response to the then-new notion of human perfectibility, as distinct from humanity elevated by divine grace. Foster estimates that there was a very short amount of time elapsed--perhaps three years--between the completion of Convivio IV, which stresses this ideal of human perfectibility, and Inferno IV, the canto of the noble pagans.[53] He sees at least a few areas of thematic influence of the former upon the latter. Do the pagans of limbo represent the highest human achievement, Man in contrast to Christian Man? And have we thus come full circle to Pelagianism again, with limbo as a kind of Eternal Life? Does Dante's limbo represent human perfectibility on its own terms?

The answer is surely "no." Dante can in no way be credited with being a Pelagian. Throughout these rarefied theological questions, we should not forget the sighs and grave faces of the denizens of limbo. Dante's ideal of perfect humanity is to be found in the Earthly Paradise, at the summit of the mount of Purgatory, rather than in limbo. Had he desired to stress the perfection of his pagans--had he been a Pelagian--he would have placed them in within the Earthly Paradise. Without doubt, there is a tension in Dante over the fate of the pagans, indeed, between paganism and Christianity, but it is unwise to stress the positive aspects of their condition too strongly, as some commentators are tempted to do. Dante's pagans represent human limitations as much as they do human achievements. The nobile castello can indeed be seen as a portion of the Convivio in the Commedia[54], but at the same time, it functions to put philosophy in its place. Dante and the poets have a long discussion in Canto IV, but "concerning things about which silence here/is just as seemly as our speech was there."[55] Dante's reticence at this point is remarkable, in view of the detail

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[52]. Ibid., p.214-5.

[53]. Ibid., p.239.

[54]. A. Renaudet, Dante Humaniste (Paris, 1952), p.123.

[55]. Dante, Inferno, iv.104-5, "parlando cose che 'l tacere è bello,/ sì com'era 'l parlar colà dov'era." (ed. Mandelbaum, p.34).

he goes into at other points in the Commedia to explain conversations with the other figures he encounters. Surely the words of the poets and philosophers of limbo would be more illuminating than those of the sinners who occupy lower hell? And yet we are given the words of the latter, rather than those of the inhabitants of the nobile castello. It seems that Dante's limbo is meant to stress the limits, as well as extol the virtues, of humanism and philosophy.[56] Dante's pagans are silent because they have spoken in life. Their words in the afterlife are of no benefit to Dante's readers. There has indeed been a shift in the aims of the author from the Convivio of a few years before. Philosophy has to be the handmaid of Theology, and Revelation the power behind Reason. As Ianucci puts it, "the theological structure, instead of suffocating the poetry, is the very source of it."[57]

Dante has not let his fondness for the achievement of the pagans blind him to the necessity of grace for ultimate salvation. We can see in them Dante's judgement upon a phase of human history, as unbaptized or as given over to the misuse of reason; these are individuals without saving grace, or even the possibility of ever having been offered grace, as Foster concludes.[58] There are exceptions, of course: we have the extraordinary case of the Trojan Ripheus and the saved pagan infants of heaven. But it is clear that Dante means Ripheus to be a special case, and the infants saved through their parents' sacrifices died before attaining the use of reason. The pagans thus represent the limitations of human nature. We have drawn a distinction between two kinds of grace: the grace which cleanses from sin (gratia sanans), and the grace by which God raises man to heaven (gratia elevans). Dante seems to have believed that through the use of their reason and natural faculties, his pagans had obtained some level of virtue on their own, independently of the operation of gratia

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56. A. Ianucci, op.cit., p.101.

57. Ibid.

58. K. Foster, The Two Dantes, p.188.

sanans.[59] Yet at the same time, they also lack gratia elevans, or if they have it, they have it only in a mysterious and partial way, sufficient only to raise them from the rest of hell. It should not be ignored, for example, that the denizens of limbo, for all their achievements are never described as praying, nor even does Virgil, save for the one point in the Purgatorio (xiii, 16-21) in which he addresses God through the sun-symbol.[60]

Virgil is Dante's guide towards grace through two-thirds of the Commedia. But he also represents something more, as do all the limbo-dwellers. They are a symbol of man in need of grace, not gratia sanans, but a full gratia elevans, the possession of which would have allowed Virgil into Paradiso like Ripheus. All the limbo-dwellers represent the finiteness of human nature when grace is not present; human nature as good and noble and capable of great things, but incomplete, whether considered per se or with regards to paganism, "the Empire minus its fulfilment in the Church, as 'that Rome' of which Christ was not yet a Roman"[61], as Foster puts it.

The pagans of limbo, therefore, present us with a paradox. To live a good life, man does not need divine grace, yet lacking it, he is condemned to "an eternity of unsatisfied longing."[62] This takes the idea of the gulf between nature and grace to its largest possible extreme. Intellectually, morally, civilly--the pagans are the paragons of human achievement, but spiritually they are still children, and as such they are kept in the place of children for all eternity.[63] Dante is clearly saddened by their plight, but it should be noted that the poem as a whole also reflects Dante's own limitations. Guided by Virgil, he is still under the sway of human reason, which finds the situation of the pagans so sad; it is not until Dante is farther

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[59]. Ibid., p.227.

[60]. Ibid., p.244.

[61]. Ibid., p.248.

[62]. Ibid., p.249.

[63]. A. Ianucci, op.cit., p.81, n.21.

along in his journey and is guided by revelation, in Canto xx of the Paradiso, that he accepts the mystery of predestination and God's will.

Divine Comedy to Divine Tragedy

Limbo is more than just a slice of the Convivio in the Inferno. It is also a slice of pre-Christian literature in a Christian setting, that is to say, the fate of the virtuous pagans in limbo is more like a Greek tragedy than a Christian comedy (using "comedy" in the medieval, rather than the modern sense), or even a Christian tragedy of possibility.[64] In place of powerful yet capricious pagan gods we have the omnipotent Christian God, who, although just and merciful, issues judgements that to man are often inscrutable. Nowhere is this more clear than in Dante's limbo. Furthermore, in order to accomplish this shift from comedy to tragedy, Dante had to take firm hold of the whole motif of the harrowing of hell from the Gospel of Nicodemus (and elsewhere) and invert it. As has been amply demonstrated here, the Harrowing is only peripherally covered in Canto IV of the Inferno. Indeed, the imagery of the Harrowing is often better used elsewhere. But what we do see in Inferno IV is a juxtaposition of images--the Fathers have been removed but the virtuous pagans remain. The entire tone of the Gospel of Nicodemus is a joyous one of burgeoning light, fulfilled expectations and spiritual release. This tone is completely inverted in Canto IV, where we have only a fixed oasis of light, the voicing of expectations that can never be fulfilled, and the sadness and melancholy that comes from the fact that there can never be true spiritual release from limbo.[65] We perceive only the sighs and sombre expressions of the limbo-dwellers. The idea of the Harrowing of hell was for centuries firmly tied to the idea

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[64]. Best differentiated by "What a pity it was this way" versus "What a pity it was this way when it might have been otherwise." A. Ianucci, op.cit., p.77.

[65]. Ibid., p.98.

of comedy; it represented the "cosmic turning point of history"[66] and was so firmly linked with it that it was almost impossible to conceive of the Harrowing in different terms. Only someone like Dante, with a fondness for pagan culture, a grand vision of history, and an interest in tragedy as well as comedy could try and overcome centuries of tradition.[67] As A. Ianucci concludes: "Theologically it was a risky move; poetically a daring one. But Dante carried it off brilliantly."[68]

Limbo is a contrast between two peoples. Virgil's speech about the Harrowing enumerates a string of figures from Jewish history: Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Isaac, Rachel, and David. Far from being chosen randomly, these figures neatly summarize the salvation history of the Jewish people and the Six Ages of the world as identified by Augustine.[69] This is sacred history, but Dante's focus in this canto is secular history, and he uses it to set forth the limits of pagan man. The second string of names mentioned in limbo are Romans--most of the named figures barring a few Greeks and Arabs, are connected with the history of Rome, or that of Troy, its mythological ancestor. For Dante, secular history is almost completely synonymous with the history of the Roman people. He believed that they had a sacred destiny like unto that of the Jews: it was Rome which was to provide the Emperor who would guide man to the summit of perfection in the natural order, which in the schema of the Commedia is meant to be the Earthly Paradise.[70] However, when Christ comes into limbo, he takes the Jews and leaves the Romans. The latter remain behind; through no fault of their own, exiles, which was a position with which Dante, himself an exile for so much of his life, could no doubt sympathize. Dante does not make use of the

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66. Ibid., p.104.

67. Ibid., p.105.

68. Ibid., p.104.

69. Augustine, Enarrationes in Psalmos xcii.1 (P.L. 37, p.1182).

70. A. Ianucci, op.cit., pp.107-108.

idea of Christ preaching in hell that other writers had used: for him, change was impossible after death.[71] Ironically, it is the coming of Christ which changed the nature of limbo. Before that, it was the Elysium of the pagans, a place of happy ignorance. However, after the Harrowing, the pagans realized what they had missed in life. Elysium thus becomes the limbo of the nobile castello; happiness becomes sadness, and contentment unfulfillable desire. As A. Ianucci states:

> The event tears them out of the context of pagan culture and inserts them abruptly into the flow of Christian history. All continuity is shattered. The state of natural bliss that they had enjoyed in the Elysian Fields is now seen as inadequate by the light of the supernatural bliss that they have irrevocably lost.[72]

The imagery of Canto IV serves to reinforce the pagans' useless existence. The description of the nobile castello occupies a mere six lines (106-111) and is largely bereft of descriptive imagery--it is a shadow of its inspiration, the Elysian Fields of Book vii of the Aeneid. Indeed, Dante mined the imagery of the Elysian Fields of the Aeneid much more for the Earthly (Purgatorio XVIII) and Celestial Paradises (Paradiso XXXI).[73] The seven walls of the castello serve no doubt to symbolize the four moral and three intellectual virtues, but they also represent the isolation of the castello from revelation and grace. The castello is lit, to be sure, but that light is a wan, pale one compared to the bank of the shadows of hell which surround it, illustrating how pitifully human reason illuminates the darkness of the human condition. The river encircling the castello that the poets ford as if on hard ground stands in direct contrast to the river Lethe that flows about the Earthly Paradise, or the river of lights in Paradise. Limbo's river leads nowhere. It circles eternally and also acts symbolically to keep the pagans closed within. Dante may wash in Lethe and enter the Earthly Paradise, as a type of baptism; the poets of limbo are unable even to enter the rock-

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[71]. Ibid., pp.108-9.

[72]. Ibid., p.110.

[73]. Ibid.

hard water of their river, and so remain unchristened. All that they have are their memories. What is needed in the afterlife is faith, as Statius so well points out in the Purgatorio: "faith/without which righteous works do not suffice."[74] The pagans do not have this, and limbo serves both to praise their achievements, and condemn their limitations. "Dante's despoiled Elysium is an image of the extent to which Eden can be recovered without Christ"[75], remarks Ianucci, and within the context of the Commedia it is but a pale reflection of what is to come.

Counterpoint: Divine Justice and Salvation

Dante's limbo can be contrasted with the occasional figures of other pagans who are outside it elsewhere in the Commedia. Antepurgatory, for example, is set in direct contrast with limbo. If the latter is a "diminished Elysium, the antepurgatory is a heightened Elysium."[76] It is illuminated by the sun, symbol of divine wisdom, and washed by the wide shores of an ocean, whose waters permit baptism. It, not limbo, is guarded by Cato, the guardian of the Elysian Fields from Virgil's Aeneid. The situation of the souls in antepurgatory is especially telling: they are the souls of the late-repentant, whose salvation was gained at the last moment through a final act of piety or sincere repentance. This final act made up for a lifetime of sin, whereas for the souls in limbo a lifetime of virtue counts for nothing. This heightens the plight of those in limbo and increases their tragedy.[77] In purgatory souls change: they receive grace and the restoration of their natural virtues. Such

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[74]. Dante, Purgatorio, xxii.59-60, "la fede, sanza qual ben far non basta." (ed. Mandelbaum, p.194).

[75]. A. Ianucci, op.cit., p.111.

[76]. Ibid., p.115.

[77]. Ibid., pp.116-7.

does not happen in the static limbo; in purgatory, as Foster points out, "Aristotelianism is integrated into Christianity; in Dante's limbo it is not."[78]

In examining Dante's limbo we face a situation of divine predestination: in Scripture Esau was destined to serve Jacob, and in Dante's limbo the pagans are meant to serve the Christians.[79] Virgil's Fourth Eclogue foretold a future event that he and his peers could not enjoy. Their tragedy is heightened by the fact that there are a very few notable pagans who have managed to pass beyond their state and enter heaven. The most famous of these, is, of course, Trajan, who is met in Canto XX of the Paradiso as the first light round the brow of the Eagle. Trajan's situation is unique: Dante treats as history the legend that he was miraculously raised to life by the prayers of a grieving widow to receive baptism at the hands of Gregory the Great.[80] He had been in hell, and resuscitation gave him the chance to change his will and love the true God, such that at his restoration to death, he went to heaven. It is important to stress the fact his situation was unique; later authors would note that God granted Gregory's request with the caveat that he should never again make such a request.[81]

More unusual, and problematic, was the case of the Trojan Ripheus, the fifth light in the eye. While Trajan was an anomaly of human design, Ripheus was the result of God's mysterious action. In Dante's history, he was given a revelation of God's nature which caused him to abandon "the stench of paganism and rebuke/ those who persisted in that perverse way."[82] Dante notes that Ripheus was baptized by the three woman accompanying

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78. K. Foster, The Two Dantes, p.253.

79. A. Ianucci, op.cit., p.118.

80. Such a legend was also apparently subscribed to by Thomas Aquinas: see: Summa theologiae III Suppl. q.71, a.5, ad 5, although he noted that in this case prayer did not change the divine will, but rather acted as its instrument.

81. C. Smith, "Descendit ad Inferos", Journal of the History of Ideas xxvii (1967), pp.87-88.

82. Dante, Paradiso, xx.125-6, "da indi il puzzo più del paganesmo;/ e riprendiene le genti perverse." (ed. Mandelbaum, p.180).

the chariot in the Earthly Paradise, that is to say, the personification of the three theological virtues. Doubtless Ripheus possessed the four cardinal virtues in abundance, and God's revelation gave way him the extra three he needed for salvation. His case is an excellent counterpoint to the state of the souls in limbo. Ripheus is an obscure character, known only from legend as being "most just"; his story is a poetic fabrication, and only Dante would have thought to have put him in heaven.[83] It is precisely this obscurity which so condemns the other limbo-dwellers: if one desired to place a pagan in heaven, would not someone more famous, like Aristotle or Julius Caesar, be more appropriate?[84] Dante's choice of Ripheus highlights the mystery of predestination, contrasting God's will with our own.

Finally, we have the third, and in some ways most peculiar, example: that of Cato, who serves as the guardian to antepurgatory. Dante seems to express no surprise that a pagan should be the guardian of the Christian realm of purgatory, and, moreover, the first person he sees upon his exit from hell. Cato reveals to him that he had been among the spirits of limbo, but was pulled from there along with the Jews during the Harrowing (Purgatorio i, 88-90). He now serves as the Guardian of antepurgatory, and will be among the blest at the end of the world. Most curious is the question of why he is chosen by Dante to be among the saved, since he was a suicide, and moreover was a suicide to gain freedom from Caesar, the architect of Dante's beloved Empire. Dante's other works reveal a high degree of regard for Cato, even to the point of having him signify God (Convivio IV, xxviii, 15-19). It is possible that Dante regarded his death as an action of sacrifice for his country which made it a type of Christ's sacrifice for mankind. Probably in that action he was given a vision of the future similar to the one Ripheus received. The pattern of his death made him particularly fitted to his position: he had lived in darkness, and repented of his paganism late in life. Thus like the other souls of antepurgatory he is kept far from heaven. Ianucci views his action as a

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[83]. R. Jacoff, op.cit., p.216.

[84]. A. Ianucci, op.cit., p.126.

symbol for Dante of "the victory of man's will over the consequences of history."[85] Since Cato's action was unique, his special salvation was also unique. But note that in the cases of each of these three saved pagans, Trajan, Ripheus, and Cato, their special offer of salvation came to them in life (even if it took Trajan two attempts). They had to overcome their paganism, which Dante presents as a negative thing (as in "the stench of paganism"). It is not simply a question of a mere lack of the theological virtues. Change was possible for them, and for anyone, only in life. The salvation of these three elect pagans only serves to accentuate the tragedy of the situation of the countless other pagans in limbo.

Dante the pilgrim in the poem does not always grasp the reasons for these special salvations, and it is clear that the plight of the virtuous pagans in limbo remains to haunt him even up unto the Paradiso. Their situation, along with the question of the salvation of Trajan and of Ripheus, clearly provided him the impetus to express his doubts to the Eagle.[86] In response, the Eagle sees fit to give him a lesson on divine justice:

> How distant, o predestination is
> your root from those whose vision does not see
> the Primal Cause in Its entirety.
> And, mortals, do take care--judge prudently:
> for we, though we see God, do not yet know
> all those whom He has chosen...[87]

The Eagle provides a response rather than an explanation, at least as far as the twentieth-century reader is concerned. It is a simple reiteration of the power of God, and a reminder of the limitations of humanity. Nor is it addressed to Dante alone, since in the second stanza above the Eagle address the reader directly.

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[85]. A. Ianucci, op.cit., p.124.

[86]. K. Foster, The Two Dantes, p.143.

[87]. Dante, Paradiso, xx.130-135, "O predestinazion, quanto remota/ è la radice tua da quelli aspetti/ che la prima cagion non veggion stretti/ E voi, mortali, tenetevi stretti/ a giudicar: ché noi, che Dio vedemo,/ non conosciamo ancor tutti li eletti", (ed. Mandlebaum, p.180).

Curiously, the limitations of human nature extend beyond the grave, since even the blessed souls who make up the Eagle do not know the full truth of the number of the saved, despite the fact that they enjoy the Beatific Vision. The blessed do not regret this limitation; rather, it is for them an occasion of praise, since it gives them a chance to submit to God's will, which submission is always for good. When Dante realizes this, he, too, accepts his limitations in this matter, and notes, "I saw my shortsightedness plainly."[88] Once he accepts this, the solution becomes clear. What troubled his intellect in limbo and dogged his thoughts throughout his journey becomes understandable in the Paradiso through faith. Only when Dante makes this submission of will does he find peace, a realization which he describes as "gentle medicine."[89]

The reader, then, may draw three conclusions about the whole question. First, the issue of predestination is a mystery, due to the simple fact that the mind of God is infinitely greater than ours--even the blessed of the afterlife, as Dante portrays them, are no better off than we are, even when they are in possession of the beatific vision. Secondly, mankind's notions of justice are derived from God, Who Himself is perfectly just, thus making our questions and limited insights merely reflections of God, and, indeed, impossible without Him. Thirdly, in the case of predestination, the lack of Christian baptism or faith is not an absolute bar to salvation, since "God can always, so to say, break his own rules."[90]

The Emptiness of Time; the Triumph of Bonaventure

With his limbo, Dante has succeeded brilliantly in turning comedy to tragedy. The situations of Trajan, Ripheus, and Cato only serve to enhance the plight of the souls in limbo. The first, freed from death by an undeserved prayer, and the latter two, saved by mysterious

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88. Ibid., l.140, "per farmi chiara la misa corta vista".

89. Ibid., l.141, "soave medicina."

90. K. Foster, The Two Dantes, p.183.

visions, attain salvation while their pagan fellows and contemporaries are condemned. Three noble but unnoteworthy figures are spared limbo, while greater luminaries are left behind to pass their eternity in frustration. Such is the essence of Christian tragedy: it is so for the limbo-dwellers, when it might have been otherwise. For them, death has come as the ultimate transformation, from the glories and achievements of this life, to the stasis of the afterlife. They can only live in the past. The Harrowing of hell, which freed the Hebrews, left them behind, and paradoxically left them worse off than before, by giving them a brief taste of vision for which all men were created, a taste which could never be satisfied. Their situation thus reflects what Ianucci refers to as "the emptiness of time", and as Foster notes, "there is nothing for them to do."[91] The souls in Dante's limbo do not do, they simply are. In this existential state we see the triumph of the ideas of Bonaventure, whose notions of the state of souls in limbo was clearly the motivation for Dante's portrayal.[92] Dante's souls know a certain spiritual sadness but no positive pain. Furthermore, they are not meant to be have a wasted existence, either: they serve a purpose, which illustrates God's justice and mercy simultaneously and perfectly. But Dante's vision extends beyond his sources, and his use of limbo fulfils other ends as well. In one sense, it is a commentary on the limits of man unenlightened by grace, since for all his fondness for them, and for all their earthly greatness, Dante's pagans are not saved. In another sense, it is a chapter in a grand theology of history, a vision which is Christian in nature and hence teleological and comic, yet which does not exclude tragedy. Dante stands all previous views of limbo on their heads. He downplays the idea of a limbus puerorum and changes the focus away from the magnificent comedy of the Harrowing of hell. By adding virtuous pagans into the mixture in a way wholly unprecedented and uniquely individual, Dante pauses in the grand sweep of his opus to insert a moment of tragedy. In stressing the isolation and confinement of the nobile castello of

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[91]. Ibid., p.245.

[92]. Viz, Bonaventure, In 2 Sent., d.33, q.2, Resol.

limbo, Dante "completely overturns the tone and meaning of the traditional medieval depiction of Limbo"[93], Ianucci writes. Dante's attempt was daring and intensely personal, but it succeeds.

Subsequent Criticism of Dante's Limbo

In a sense, Dante's portrait of limbo may have been too unique, too personal. Despite the success of the Commedia, he had early detractors, particularly clerics who objected to the theological unorthodoxies in the poem.[94] In the fifteenth century, for example, Antoninus objected to the presence of infidels in a state of quasi-salvation:

> Truly, in this he seems to have erred more than a little because he describes the ancient philosophers to be in the Elysian Fields, since according to the Catholic faith it does not do to give such a status to those who depart from this life having the use of reason.[95]

This objection was not raised more often by other commentators, which is unusual, since from straightforward theological grounds it is a reasonable one. What is more telling, I think, is the fact that this particular usage of limbo was so uniquely Dante's that no other author adopts it.[96] Other Christian writers had striven to find salvation for the great figures of antiquity. None left them in hell. The extent to which we find the existence of the virtuous pagans in limbo unpalatable is the extent to which we fail to appreciate Dante's tragic sense, or his Christian vision. While his vision of limbo was unique, it was nonetheless

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93. A. Ianucci, op.cit., p.127.

94. P. Hawkins, "Dante and the Bible", in R. Jacoff, The Cambridge Companion to Dante (Cambridge, 1993), 120-135, p.133.

95. Quoted in A. Soletti, Le Vite di Dante, Petrarca, e Boccaccio, p.152, "Verum in hoc videtur errasse non parum quia antiquos sapientes...describit esse in Campis Elisiss...cum secundum fidem catholicam non sit dare tale statum in alia vita...ad illos qui habentes usum rationis de hac luc migrarunt..."

96. A. Ianucci, op.cit., p.90.

important; a high spire within a larger work that was "the ultimate expression of Gothic aesthetics."[97]

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97. R. Montano, "Dante Alighieri" in New Catholic Encyclopedia (Washington, D.C., 1967), iv. 640-645, p.645.

XIV. CONCLUSIONS (AND NEW DIRECTIONS)

From the doubts of Augustine, though the increasingly complex and precise formulations of twelfth and thirteenth-century theologians, the idea of limbo bloomed in poetry in Dante. Several factors shaped and encouraged its development. The first factor was heresy, which advanced new ideas and in turn forced orthodox Christianity to produce new ideas or modify old ones. Augustine struggled against the Pelagians, the anonymous author of the Gospel of Nicodemus contended with Marcionites, Apollinarists, and others, Bernard wrote against the Cathars, and so on. The idea of Limbo owes much, in particular, to the idea of Eternal Life of the Pelagians, and to some extent is an almost "baptized" version of that idea. The second factor for limbo's development is the increased consciousness of space evident along the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. A. Gurevich points out how this change in consciousness of space developed, and details its effects on medieval man's relationship to nature and the socio-political sphere;[1] by extension, it seems as though conceptions of the afterlife were also affected. As people's spatial awareness and consciousness of space grew, so, too, did their attempts to map out space in the afterlife. An increasingly space-conscious and organized society sought out an increasingly organized afterlife. The third factor is to some extent an extension of the second: it is the extremely comprehensive nature of scholastic theology. Thirteenth-century thinkers, exploiting the disciplined format of scholastic theology, sought to cover as much material as they could. In a sense, all became grist for their mills, and as such some things just had to be considered, even if they were esoteric. Limbo is a prime example. There is, however, a fourth factor, which is in some ways more difficult to notice, and yet may be the most important of all. Limbo is a product of mercy. The idea of the complete damnation of unbaptized infants could be fully accepted by only a few minds such as Anselm of Canterbury. Augustine clearly struggled with the idea, and

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[1]. A. Gurevich, Categories of Medieval Culture (London, 1985). pp.90-91.

Abelard picked up where he left off, asserting a punishment simple of exile and deprivation. Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure; most of the authors considered here seem to be motivated by a spirit of mercy. William of Auxerre is particularly memorable, with his full-out statement that not only is God merciful, but he imposes, on unbaptized infants, a lesser lack of the beatific vision than original sin would merit. William of Auvergne and Thomas Aquinas take these ideas to their fullest extent, but asserting the possibility of unbaptized infants to continue to grow and perfect themselves, to the limits of human ability. The continuing development of the idea of limbo, particularly with respect to unbaptized infants, represents a continuing Western trend of mercy; a severe mercy, to be sure, but mercy all the same.

Nevertheless it is still difficult to say why the idea of limbo develops the way it does. The limbus patrum, thanks no doubt to the Gospel of Nicodemus and also the fact that its existence was rooted in the officially-accepted theology, such as the Creed, takes a greater place in the European psyche, and it appears very frequently in the visual arts, drama, and poetry throughout the Middle Ages, particularly the later Middle Ages. However, for some reason, it dies out in popularity, and vanishes as an artistic subject around the time of the Reformation. It has still remained a quiet article of faith for mainstream Christianity. As an example, consider the following entries from the current Catechism of the Catholic Church:

> 635 Christ went down into the depths of death so that "the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear him will live". Jesus, "the author of life", by dying destroyed "him who has the power of death, that is, the Devil, and [delivered] all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage." Henceforth the risen Christ holds "the keys of Death and Hades" so that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth."
>
> In Brief
>
> 636 By the expression "He descended into hell", the Apostle's Creed confessed that Jesus really did die and through his death for us conquered death and the devil "who has the power of death."

> 637 In his human soul united to his divine person, the dead Christ went down to the realm of the dead. He opened heaven's gates for the just who had gone before him.[2]

The Catechism does not use the terminology limbus patrum, but it is clear that it employs the concept. In three brief paragraphs, we have the events of the Gospel of Nicodemus in a summary: the descent into the lands of the dead, the victory over the power of the Devil, the liberation of the Fathers, the ancient just, and the opening of heaven. Even the Christological mechanics of the descent are resolved: Christ descended in his human soul, united to his divine person. All of this is cut and dried, resolved, and scarcely involves the modern reader. We do not perceive it on a visceral level, as earlier Christians did, and it is unlikely that any modern believer would find the teaching difficult, or any modern artist choose the anastasis as the subject of his art.

With the limbus puerorum, matters are different. It never became a popular artistic subject per se. Dante appends it to his limbo, and other poets who ape him in depicting otherworldly journeys in later years also tend to mention the limbus puerorum as one of the realms of the afterlife.[3] There are depictions of it, particularly in illustrations of Dante,[4] but these are infrequent, particularly compared with the panoply of imagery surrounding the Harrowing of hell and the anastasis. Perhaps this lack of a popular portrayal reflects the fact that no theological consensus on the existence and nature of the limbus puerorum was ever reached. While most scholastic theologians of the thirteenth century and later admitted its existence, and Jesuits such as Suarez approved it categorically,[5] the Church itself made no official pronouncement. For example, the Second Council of Lyons in 1274 concluded the

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[2]. Catechism of the Catholic Church (London, 1994) pp.144-145.

[3]. D. Owen, The Vision of Hell: Infernal Journeys in Medieval French Literature (Edinburgh, 1970).

[4]. For example, a late fourteenth-century illustration of Canto IV of the Inferno (Rimini, Biblioteca Gambalunga, MS. D. II. 41 f.11v) depicts Dante and Virgil approaching the nobile castello, while groups of nude infants walk about or talk amongst themselves.

[5]. F. Suarez, Commentaria ac disputationes in tertiam partem diui Thomae (Acalá de Henares, 1590-1595); see qu.59, ar.6, d.57, sec.6; qu.56, ar.2, d.50, sec.3; qu.56, ar.2, d.50, sec.5, etc.

following, which was adapted from the profession of Faith sent to Michael Palaeologus by Clement IV:

> However, the souls of those who die in mortal sin, or with original sin alone, shortly go down to hell, to be punished with different punishments, however.[6]

This conclusion was repeated almost exactly in 1439 in the decrees of the Council of Florence. Here the Church approves the idea of a limbus puerorum implicitly, but does not approve it explicitly. Only the fact that there is a different punishment for those dying in original sin alone is preserved. Similar developments occur in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The pseudo-Calvinist Jansenist movement resurrected the old notion that anyone dying unbaptized was damned to punishment, and it singled out the idea of limbo as a subject of vehement attack.[7] They were joined in their condemnations by Augustinians of that time also attacked the idea of limbo, maintaining that unbaptized infants suffer only a lesser punishment in hell. Papal decrees of 1759 and 1794 essentially reassert the basic ideas voiced in the Councils of Florence and Lyons. In doing so they condemned Jansenist rigor and gave guarded approval to the Augustinian position, but did so without rejecting the Jesuit ideas such as those of Suarez out of hand. The official Church seemed content to let the idea of a limbus puerorum remain merely a theological "option".

Little seems to have changed since then. A survey[8] of catechetical materials of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries revealed that only half of the catechisms of the nineteenth century surveyed taught the idea, only two using the name "limbo". Of the early twentieth-century catechisms, a third taught the doctrine, but only a sixth mentioned the name. A similar equivocation continues today. Pius XII gave an address to a convention of

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6. H. Denzinger, Enchiridion symbolorum, 858, "Illorum autem animas, qui in mortali peccato vel cum solo originali decedunt, mox in infernum descendere, poenis tamen disparibus puniendas", p.381.

7. For more on this, see: G. Dyer, The Denial of Limbo and the Jansenist Controversy (Mundelin, IL, 1955).

8. See G. Dyer, Limbo, Unsettled Question (New York, 1964), pp.89-90.

Italian midwives in 1951, in which he underlined the importance of infant baptism. He held that without grace it was impossible to enjoy the beatific vision, noting:

> In an adult an act of love may suffice to obtain him sanctifying grace and so supply for the lack of baptism; to the child still unborn, or newly born, this way is not open.[9]

The middle portion of this century witnessed a small flurry of theological debates about this subject[10], and increasingly the old Augustinian rigor was questioned. The current Catechism has this to say:

> 1261 As regards children who have died without baptism the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God, as she does in her funeral rites for them. Indeed the great mercy of God who desires that all men should be saved, and Jesus' tenderness toward children which caused him to say "Let the little children come to me, do not hinder them" allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without Baptism. All the more urgent is the Church's call not to prevent little children coming to Christ through the gift of holy Baptism.[11]

Here we have an intriguing exercise in equivocation, in some ways like that agony of indecision which Augustine himself underwent. The Catechism begins by flirting with universalism, hoping with great hope (and no doubt operating out of a spirit of great mercy) that there is some way of salvation for unbaptized infants. However, all this passage does is hope, it does not pronounce categorically. Indeed, it seems somewhat contradictory to assert the possibility of salvation for unbaptized infants at the beginning of a paragraph, and urge baptism at the end of the paragraph. Either they need it or they do not. Fifteen centuries later, we are no closer to the truth than Augustine was.

Thus unlike the limbus patrum, the limbus puerorum remains today what it always was: a theological construct. There is no theological consensus, no authoritative statement.

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9. Pius XII, Acta Apostolicae Sedis xxxxiii, Dec. 20, 1951, "Un atto di amore può bastare all'adulto per conseguire la grazia santificante e supplire al difetto del battesimo; al non ancora nato o al neonato bambíno questa via non è aperta." p.841.

10. See G. Dyer, op.cit., pp.93-135.

11. Catechism of the Catholic Church, op.cit., pp.285-286.

As long as one asserts the importance of infant baptism, one may pick or choose from theologians what to believe. The failure of the idea of the limbus puerorum to capture the imaginations of ordinary Christians, to move from a realm of speculative theology to one of practical belief has resulted in its failure to be adopted by the Church-at-large. Today most people who have an opinion on the subject tend to favour the hopeful spirit of the prospect of salvation for unbaptized infants. When the prospect of a limbus puerorum is explained, people tend to envisage a state of neutrality, like Bonaventure posited. Such is the hold upon our language of the phrase, "being in limbo". The possibility of a positive non-heavenly state for unbaptized infants, begun in William of Auvergne and Aquinas and raised to such a height in Suarez and his fellow Jesuits, no longer seems to appeal.

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