

ks. Grzegorz Świecarz

Faculty of Theology, University of Opole, 1 B Wojciecha Drzymały Str.,
45-342 Opole, Poland
E-mail address: swiecarz@op.pl

Hell in the hope of salvation for all

Abstract

The New Testament shows hell as: the abyss (cf. Lk 16.23), fiery hell (cf. Mk 9.44; Mt 5,22-29), the burning stove (cf. Mt 13,42-50), the lake of fire and sulfur (cf. Rev 19.20), eternal fire (cf. Mt 18.8), abyss (cf. Lk 8.31), place of passion (cf. Lk 16.28), Tartar sows (cf. 2 P 2 , 4) and others. Looking at all these terms, we can conclude that hell is not something pleasant for man, but only leads to his doom. It is an eternal payment for sins committed. Rejection of God's love closes us for eternal participation in joy and future life with the Creator. In this way, man condemns himself to eternal presence without Him.

Keywords: new will, hell, abyss

Introduction

The teaching that flows from the Old and New Testaments shows that after death there is a state of eternal punishment, which is the result of human actions during life. An unconverted sinner, that is, one who in his mortal life, "having God's eschatological orientation, did not accept the gift of God's grace, is condemned forever, that is, he becomes his own hell." The Bible considers this possibility, which is why it tries to guard against its occurrence. Like salvation he carries in the Scriptures - especially with John - the name of eternal life, so to miss him can be called eternal death.

Jesus, however, did not come to earth to oppress man or throw him into hell. He came to "seek and save what was lost" (Lk 19:10), but he cannot force man into heaven because he respects his freedom. God's message is still full of hope and foretells eternal joy for the saved. Only in this perspective should we consider the reality of hell. Those who are in hell are not known to God, but they are strangers. For man, the most important thing is that he would know God and that He would know us and would like to admit us at the end of time.

1. Opinion of the church regarding hell

The Church believes in both the happiness of the righteous and the punishment of hell that will meet anyone who has turned away from God. He also believes that it will cover all human being. Hell exists and takes away hope for human salvation, just as there is God's love and human freedom. Love is not imposed, nor is freedom that can answer God no. Despite this answer, God still loves a man who condemns himself to loneliness and misery.

Theology, however, considers the possibility of mitigation of the punishment of hell, which is associated with "inequality of punishment." God allows the suffering of those who have moved away from God's love to be eased, but it is not possible to ease the punishment to the point where hell ceases to exist. This is impossible because of God's justice and the free decision of every person who chooses a state of condemnation. It should be emphasized that "this last view is not a dogma of faith, but it can be described as a teaching generally accepted by the Church, based on numerous passages of the Holy Scriptures" (cf. Mt 10,15; Rom 2,6; Rev 13:20).

Man himself already here on earth chooses what state of mind he will get after death. A man living without God, i.e. rejecting him in his life, condemns himself to hell, and thus makes a conscious choice of frustration, making himself a subject suitable only for throwing into the fire of hell, i.e. for eternal damnation. This is the definitive defeat of a man who has condemned himself to be in such a state forever. The realization of this reality not only deprives us of hope for salvation, but also "has the right to cause unbearable pain, spreading for all eternity, assuming that this defeat is beyond any possibility of repair.

2. Protecting against the punishment of hell

To save yourself from the punishment of hell, you should not stop just focusing so as not to commit mortal sins, but you must also fight against evil inclinations and avoid dangerous opportunities for sin. It is about seeking a holy and Christian life, which is in accordance with the teaching of Jesus Christ himself. It is worth fighting for your salvation and not to destroy your own life. Unfortunately, the damned discovers that he has "lost God through his own fault; it is also extremely bitter that

his rejection of God and hatred of God are irreversible. " It is unpleasant, but hell takes root in evil forever, depriving him of eternal happiness and joy. There is only one inscription at the gates of hell: entrance; there is no way out. Bearing in mind the possibility of total and eternal loss of the hope of salvation, or hell, it should be emphasized that the biblical foundations from which we came out, and the church's tradition do not contain a statement about any man who has been condemned and stays in hell forever. It is only a real possibility of condemnation.

Hell exists, regardless of whether someone believes in it or negates it. The existence of eternal punishment is a dogma of the Catholic faith. God has revealed this truth, and the Catholic Church constantly proclaims it and reminds the faithful.

Teaching about the penalty of eternal damnation is talking about supernatural and eternal reality. Unfortunately, no one in the world can express or grasp the great eternal truths. If the Bible teaches about heaven that "neither the eye could see, nor the ear did not hear, nor did the heart of man understand how great things God had prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor 2: 9), so too - no one can understand what awaits incapable sinners.

When we consider the doctrine of eternal hell, disturbing questions often arise spontaneously: Can God's mercy be reconciled with the eternal suffering of the damned? If God's will is human salvation, can there be a state of condemnation? Why can't the damned change his condition?

3. Church teaching

From the teaching of the Catholic Church and biblical revelation, we learn that hell is eternal. Eternity means a state of permanence. Which means that the suffering of the damned will never end.

Teaching about the eternity of hell, although it causes a lot of problems and controversy, has been preached in the Church for centuries. This problem was and still remains, however, very difficult to explain fully theological. Despite the difficulties, the Church has always taught the existence of hell, stressing that it is eternal, just as heaven is eternal.

God Himself revealed to people the eternity of the punishments of hell that await those who transgress God's commandments, given out of love. In the Scriptures, where hell is mentioned, there is always an assurance of its eternal duration. The eternal duration of hell is as unmistakable as the existence of God Himself.

A man living in this world, how unhappy he would be, but he hopes that someday, sooner or later his suffering will end. In eternity, however, suffering will have no end.

Cardinal Thomas Spidlik has a different approach to reflections on the eternity of hell. The cited author believes that the images of infinitely long suffering caused many doubts and fear of God in people. For many people saw in them a denial of God's infinite love, as well as an obstacle to the happiness of the saved, staying in heaven, seeing the suffering of their relatives and friends. To free himself from these hardships and doubts, Cardinal Spidlik believes that the Christian concept of eternity must first be clarified.

A man who, at the time of death, ends his life on earth, does not definitively end his existence, but goes into a completely different dimension of duration. This new way of life is no longer space-time, but devoid of any boundaries.

Bishop Louis Gaston de Segur states that eternity is not time. Eternity is not a time that consists of consecutive moments, and creating

minutes, hours, days, years and ages together. In eternity - notes Bishop Louis Gaston de Segur - there are no moments that would follow each other and be different from each other. Eternity is a way of existence that is completely different from that on earth.

What is eternity also corresponds to Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical *Spe Salvi*. The Pope teaches that "eternity is not a series of consecutive calendar days, but something that resembles the moment of final fulfillment, when fullness embraces us and we embrace fullness. It would be a moment of immersion in the ocean of infinite love, in which time - before and after - no longer exists ...".

Explaining the concept of eternity, Cardinal Thomas Spidlik concludes that eternity should not be identified with time. For eternity will not be a time that lasts forever. Eternity will rather be the anamnesis of past time. This means that everything that man has done and what has happened in the world will not be erasable. This is connected with the fact that every good and every evil done by man will gain eternal value. Blessed in heaven, they will rejoice to see the good they have done, but those who do evil will no longer be able to undo or repair it.

An Anglican theologian John Wenham, studying the teachings of Jesus about eternal condemnation, notes an interesting detail. Jesus, in the same sentence, speaking of eternal life and eternal punishment, used the same adjective. As an example, the quoted author points to the words of Jesus in the Gospel according to St. Matthew: "Go away from me, cursed, into the eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41), and to the concluding words of Jesus: "And the righteous will go to eternal life" (Matthew 25:46).

The reason for the eternal punishment of hell is not only the lack of time in eternity itself, but also the lack of grace. For time alone is not

enough to convert. You also need grace to convert. In earthly life, God gives us grace for conversion, which becomes the beginning of the resurrection. Grace can be rejected, however, by despising God's mercy. There will be no more grace for sinners in eternity. Without grace, however, it will not be possible to convert and forgive sins. Therefore sin and the consequence of sin will last forever, and punishment will last forever.

When studying the teaching of eternal hell, the above mentioned authors start from the notion of eternity. The theologians of eternity, quoted above, define eternity as an unchangeable state beyond the time that begins at the moment of our death. Therefore, hell, as a possible posthumous possibility, is also eternal, so it will never end. The quoted authors also emphasize that already on earth we can choose hell when we completely reject God's forgiveness. After death, this state will only be perpetuated for eternity.

In hell, condemned souls suffer double punishment. It is a punishment of deprivation of seeing God (*poena damni*) and a punishment of senses (*poena sensus*). For every grave sin carries a double anger: the sinner's total turning away from God and turning to creation, and therefore this double punishment belongs to the sinner.

The first punishment, the loss of sight of God, expresses the personal side of the hellish Passion, which is expressed in the biblical words: "Go away from me, you cursed, into eternal fire". (Mt 25, 41). This punishment is understood as the result of man's negative response to God's call. The punishment of the senses, on the other hand, is expressed in words in the Bible: "There's gonna be crying and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 25:28).

All other punishments in hell result from the double punishment described above. One can say that hell is also a lack of true and real social coexistence, a lack of love, and consequently chaos and inner disorder, loneliness. All listed effects are contained in this double punishment, loss of heavenly happiness (*poena damni*) and being subjected to some unknown material punishment (*poena sensus*).

The suffering in hell is so great that it cannot be expressed in our categories. This inability to understand and express the drama of departing from God forces Scripture to enrich language with symbolic images. From these symbolic images is derived in theology the science about the existence in hell also the punishment of senses, means "pain inflicted by a condemned external factor and perceived by its receptors, normally called senses".

Material punishment used to be combined with the action of hellfire, understood literally: it was supposed to be material fire. Contemporary theology, on the other hand, considers fire to be an image used by Scripture and does not give it the role of a tormenting factor for the condemned. In so doing, however, it does not oppose the existence of a sensory penalty.

The nature of material punishment in hell, also known as the punishment of the senses, has caused many problems and difficulties for theologians. Contemporary theology departs from the literal understanding of fire, which symbolizes material punishment. Theologians, however, do not negate the fact of the existence of material punishment, but - "do not agree on the qualifications of science, and also do not equally explain the nature of this fire and the attitude towards spiritual beings". Ubaldo Terirnoni, stating that the nature of the torment of the senses cannot be definitively defined and that "the biblical

revelation and the Magisterium of the Church take a restrained position in relation to (poena sensus)".

If God is Love, as the Bible teaches, hell should not be possible, but the Church teaches us the real possibility of eternal condemnation. Theologians are telling us to look at this problem from a different angle. Father Ubaldo Terrinoni clearly states that a full reflection on eternal life and the possibility of eternal condemnation should be carried out in the light of God's love.

God is full of love and mercy even towards sinners. In Christ's conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus Himself explains that God does not want to condemn man, but his salvation: "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him (Jn 3:17). In considering the truth about the incarnation of the Son of God and God's redemption work, God does not want either sin or eternal hell, but the eternal happiness of man.

But the truth about the infinite love of God does not deny the existence of hell. For God loves and trusts man so much that he has given him the free will to choose what his life on earth and in eternity will be like. God cannot give man eternal happiness by force, against his will.

Blessed John Paul II spoke in a decisive way about the Love of God and the possibility of eternal condemnation. During one of his audiences, Pope John Paul II stated that "God is an infinitely good and merciful Father. However, a man who has to answer him freely can, unfortunately, choose to reject his love and forgiveness definitively and thus forever deny himself the joyful communion with him. It is precisely this tragic situation that Christian doctrine points to when it speaks of condemnation or hell.

Analyzing the mystery of God's love, we come to the conclusion that God, who wants happiness for all, at the same time wants that happiness for man himself. God has promised to work with those who desire heaven but do not force anyone to be happy. God does not violate the freedom of man.

Apart from the infinite love of God, hell reveals another mystery. The great mystery of human freedom, which man is unable to comprehend. God created man so that he could make free choices. In freedom, however, man can lead to the loss of himself and his own enslavement.

The Bible tells us that the Apostles asked the Lord Jesus whether all believers would be saved or only a few. As Father Czesław Stanisław Bartnik emphasizes, Christ did not give an answer to this question, at least the inspired Books did not record such an answer. Rather, Jesus preached the doctrine of salvation or salvation. As we read in the Bible, God's will is "that all men should be saved" (1Tm 2,4). Revelation does not, however, rule out who will be condemned and whether it will be a large number. As the author notes above, the question of the Apostles is repeated to this day by successive followers of Christ. Theologians are also trying to provide answers. And as usual, the answers are different.

Father Josef Finkenzeller emphasizes that "the harmonization of the eternity of hell with the universal saving will of God is one of the most difficult problems in the history of theology in general and no satisfactory answer to this question has been found to this day.

In the third century, the great writer of the Church, Orygenes, hoped that also in the next life, people would have the opportunity to repent and do penance. Father Zdzisław Józef Kijas points out that according

to Orygenes' teaching, there was a possibility of changing the decision after death. So if someone was a living adversary of God, after his death he still had the opportunity to change his wrong choice and could stand for God.

Father Czesław Stanisław Bartnik states that - apart from Orygenes - in the first centuries a group of theologians appeared, who dealt with the problem of salvation of all non-Christians. Among them were such authors as: Dydym Bledy, Teodor from Mopsuestia, St. Gregory from Nysa, St. Gregory from Nazi Germany, St. Ambrose, Eriugen. The theologian quoted above emphasizes that these fathers referred to the doctrine of the so-called apocatastasis, according to which one day there will be an omnipresence, a return to the ideal state of beginnings. Then even the greatest sinners will be saved.

The precise definition of apocatastasis is given by Father Jozef Finkenzeller. The quoted author states that this is a "definitive introduction to the state of perfect happiness of all creation, including sinners, condemned and demons"²⁰. Another author, Zbigniew Danielewicz, points out that it is important that Orygenes' views on universal salvation were strongly exaggerated by his pupils. This led to the fact that the theory of apocatastasis, which spreads among the theologians, was rejected by the Church at the Synod of Constantinople.

Father Edward Sienkiewicz believes that although the Church's Magisterium is opposed to the doctrine of apocatastasis, which negates the burden of human freedom, it must be reminded that the Church has never stated definitively that someone is in hell. The Biblical texts on hell are intended to remind us of the immanent risk to every human being. Father Józef Zdzisław Kijas emphasizes that Orygenes did not explicitly

claim that everyone would be saved. Alexandria's scholar only hoped that God would succeed in saving everyone.

Another author, Jan Ambaum, is also of the opinion that Orygenes did not preach the theory of the renewal of all things as a dogma. The author, quoted above, points out that Orygenes spoke rather of a hypothesis of universal salvation which could remove many tensions in the Christian faith. Orygenes, with his intellectual modesty, defended his views as a hypothesis.

Father Lucjan Napoleon Balter states that the possibility of salvation of all, including the reconciliation of Satan with God, is treated very positively by Father Waław Hryniewicz - precisely as hope. The hope that God, in a way that is known only to himself, without violating human freedom, will lead everyone to reject his own condemnation and accept salvation. The author, quoted above, believes that if the Bible speaks of a 'new heaven and earth' as a hope for a new, fully reconciled world, then it would be difficult to reconcile the fact that next to this ideal world there is somewhere near a world of condemned beings. Father Lucjan Napoleon Balter is of the opinion that the mistake of Father Waław Hryniewicz's concept is that he proclaims the hope of universal salvation, not as hope, but as a 100% certainty.

Conclusion

Ending our considerations, let them be a good summary of the words of Father Czesław Stanisław Bartnik, who teaches that "one can - and should - proclaim the possibility of salvation of everyone under certain conditions and hope for universal salvation, that I and that all people will be saved by God's grace. But one cannot proclaim that someone has actually condemned himself or that salvation is and will

be a numerically common fact, as apocatastasis claims. Christ did not reveal this to us. The hope of universal salvation is therefore perfectly justified, and God wants it, and "everything is possible with God" (Mk 10: 23-27), but apocatastasis, according to which everyone will be saved, is not a Catholic teaching ... "

Theologians unanimously believe that it would be a great mistake and a threat to Christianity to preach the doctrine that one cannot be damned because there is no hell. The authors cited above state that one cannot go so far as to conclude that this is a mystery that Jesus did not reveal to us. Theologians strengthen their views with mystical experiences of saints. They also believe that, without removing Catholic teaching about the possibility of condemnation, one can and should hope that no one will condemn. It is necessary to undertake specific actions to make this hope come true, remembering that God is the source and fulfillment of hope and salvation for all.

To sum up, hell is eternal and already in earthly life, we can usher in a state that will only be established in eternity. Hell did not create God, but only let them in, respecting the free will of man in which someone may not desire God. Theologians also point out that suffering in hell will be caused by a lack of love, i.e. the absence of God.

Bibliography

1. Barrett, Por CK, NT VII, and Listy do Koryntian. "Nowy Testament." (2010).
2. Mędała, S., and Ewangelia według świętego Jana. "Nowy Komentarz Biblijny." *Nowy Testament* 4: 225.

3. Popowski, Remigiusz, and Michał Wojciechowski. "Grecko-polski Nowy Testament." *Wydanie interlinearne z kodami gramatycznymi* (1994).
4. Święte, Pismo. "Stary i Nowy Testament, red. ks." *M. Peter, ks. M. Wolniewicz, Poznań* (2006).
5. Testament, Grecko-polski Nowy. "przeł." *R. Popowski, M. Wojciechowski, Warszawa* (1994): 904.
6. Schillebeeckx, Edward. *Jezus: het verhaal van een levende*. Nelissen, 1975.
7. Kotecki, Dariusz. *Jezus a Bóg Izraela w Apokalipsie św. Jana*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2013.
8. Dąb-Kalinowska, Barbara. "Ziemia, piekło, raj." *Jak czytać obrazy religijne, Warszawa* (1994): 134-135.
9. google.pl