

## Catholic Eschatology

November 19, 2006

In case of rapture, this car will be unmanned...In case of rapture; may I have your car?

... In case of rapture; may I have your garage?!?!

...Brief overview is given of the developed Catholic Eschatological system...speaks of the "four last things" (death, judgment, heaven, and hell).

Eschatology: A belief or a doctrine concerning the ultimate or final things, such as death, the destiny of humanity, the Second Coming, or the Last Judgment.

The superiority of Catholic eschatology consists in the fact that, without professing to answer every question that idle curiosity may suggest, it gives a clear, consistent, satisfying statement of all that need at present be known, or understood, regarding the eternal issues of life and death for each of us personally, and it also provides clear statements regarding the final end of the cosmos of which we are a part.

### Individual Eschatology

Death;

1. The particular judgment
2. Heaven, or eternal happiness
3. Purgatory, or the intermediate state
4. Hell, or eternal punishment

### *Death*

Death, which consists in the separation of soul and body, is presented under many aspects in Catholic teaching, but chiefly

- As being actually and historically the consequence and penalty of Adam's sin (Genesis 2:17; Romans 5:12, etc.);
- The end of man's period of probation, the event which decides his eternal destiny, though it does not exclude an intermediate state of purification for the imperfect who die in God's grace...purgatory
- As being universal, though as to its absolute universality (for those living at the end of the world) there is some room for doubt because of I Thess...

### *Particular Judgment*

That a particular judgment of each soul takes place at death is implied in many passages of the New Testament, entry of each soul into heaven, purgatory, or hell.

## *Heaven*

- ⇒ Heaven is the home of the blessed
- ⇒ Where the blessed enjoy, in the company of Christ and the angels, family and friends
- ⇒ The immediate vision of God face to face, being supernaturally elevated by the light of glory so as to be capable of such a vision
- ⇒ There are infinite degrees of glory corresponding to degrees of merit
- ⇒ All are unspeakably happy in the eternal possession of God
- ⇒ Only the perfectly pure and holy can enter heaven
- ⇒ For those who have attained that state, either at death or after a course of purification in purgatory, entry into heaven is not deferred, till after the General Judgment

## *Purgatory*

- ⇒ Purgatory is the intermediate state of unknown duration
- ⇒ In which those who die imperfect, but not in unrepented mortal sin, undergo a course of purification...to qualify for admission into heaven
- ⇒ They share in the communion of saints and are benefited by our prayers and good works
- ⇒ The denial of purgatory by the Reformers introduced a dismal blank in their eschatology and, after the manner of extremes, has led to extreme reactions

## *Hell*

- ⇒ Hell, in Catholic teaching, designates the place or state of men (and angels) who, because of sin, are excluded forever from the Beatific Vision
- ⇒ There will be no supernatural bliss...no happiness...only pain
- ⇒ Hell is the state of those who are punished eternally for unrepented personal mortal sin
- ⇒ With varying degrees of punishment corresponding to degrees of guilt and its eternal or unending duration
- ⇒ Hell is a terrible and mysterious truth, but Christ and the Apostles clearly and emphatically teach it
- ⇒ Wrong view that looks forward to the ultimate conversion of all sinners and the voluntary disappearance of moral evil from the universe.

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## **Universal and Cosmic Eschatology** (es ka tology)

1. The approach of the end of the world
2. The resurrection of the body
3. The general judgment
4. The final consummation of all things

### *The Approach of the End of the World*

**1. General Preaching of the Christian Religion.** Jesus says: "And this gospel of the kingdom, shall be preached in the whole world

**2. Conversion of the Jews.** According to the interpretation of the Fathers, the conversion of the Jews towards the end of the world is foretold by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans

**3. Return of Enoch and Elijah.** The belief that these two men, who have never tasted death, are reserved for the last times to be precursors of the Second Coming

**4. A Great Apostasy.** The Fathers and interpreters understand by this revolt a great reduction in the number of the faithful through the abandonment of the Christian religion by many nations.

**5. The Reign of Antichrist** the Antichrist, who, says St. John (1 John 2:18), is to come in the last days...it is generally admitted that before the Second Coming there will arise a powerful adversary of Christ, who will seduce the nations by his wonders, and persecute the Church.

### **6. Extraordinary Disturbances of Nature**

**7. The Trumpet of Resurrection.** Several texts in the New Testament make mention of a voice or trumpet which will awaken the dead to resurrection

**8. "The Sign of the Son of Man Appearing in the Heavens."** In Matthew 24:30..the appearance in the sky of the Cross on which the Savior died or else of a wonderful cross of light.

### *The Resurrection of the Body*

- ⇒ It is Catholic teaching that all the dead who are to be judged will rise, the wicked as well as the Just, And that they will rise with the bodies they had in this life...but glorified...

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## *The General Judgment*

**Those to be Judged...**All men, both good and bad, will appear in the judgment to give an account of their deeds. The angels and the demons will not be judged directly, since their eternal destiny has already been fixed; yet, because they have exercised a certain influence over the fortunes of men, the sentence pronounced on the latter will have a corresponding effect on them also.

**Object of the Judgment...**The judgment will embrace all works, good or bad, forgiven as well as forgiven sins, every idle word, and every secret thought...the secret sins of the just will be made manifest, in order that judgment may be made complete and that the justice and mercy of God may be glorified. This will not pain or embarrass the saints, but add to their glory.

**Form of the Judgment...**The conduct of each individual will be made plain not only to his own conscience but to the knowledge of the assembled world. It is probable that in one instant, through a Divine illumination, each creature will thoroughly understand his own moral condition and that of every fellow creature.

### **Results Of The General Judgment**

The Divine purpose being accomplished, the human race will, as a consequence, attain its final destiny. The reign of Christ over mankind will be the sequel of the General Judgment.

### *The Consummation or End of All Things*

- ⇒ Mention also of the physical universe sharing in the general consummation...perfection
- ⇒ What, precisely, this process will involve, or what purpose the renovated world will serve is not revealed...there will be a glorious Kingdom of Christ of which "there shall be no end".

The end is coming...ever see someone carrying the sign...for each one of us the end is coming...no one knows the hour...but we do not need to know it...if we are vigilant in our prayer, are striving to become holy and trusting in the mercy of God.