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FOURTEEN QUESTIONS ABOUT HEAVEN BY PETER KREEFT

As we continue our journey deeper into our faith, we encounter many questions such as: what does that mean? Is this all there is? These questions at first may seem small but often lead to more wider and bigger questions drawing us into a deeper understanding, as we unpack the layers of truth.

In this issue of the magazine we will be looking at the question of **Heaven** guided with fourteen questions and answers by Peter Kreeft. So let's delve deeper into:



1. **Will we know everything in Heaven?**
2. **Will we all be equal in Heaven?**
3. **Do the blessed in Heaven see us now?**
4. **Do Ghosts come from Heaven?**
5. **Will we have emotions in Heaven?**
6. **Will we feel sorrow in Heaven for those in hell?**
7. **Will we be free to sin in Heaven?**
8. **What will we possess in Heaven?**
9. **Will we wear clothes in Heaven?**
10. **Are there animals in Heaven?**
11. **Is there music in Heaven?**
12. **How big is Heaven?**
13. **Is Heaven serious or funny?**
14. **Why won't we be bored in Heaven?**



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Q1: WILL WE KNOW EVERYTHING IN HEAVEN?

Of course not. Why would someone think that? There are two reasons, and the first one is simply a confusion between Heaven and divinity. We will

remain human in Heaven, therefore finite, therefore our knowledge will remain finite. True, we will share in divine life, but this is just a share. In fact, we share in divine life now, if we are reborn in Christ; our souls nurture a foetal Christ. But I have not observed that fact generating omniscience in myself or any other.

When you come to think of it, knowing everything would be more like Hell than Heaven for us. For one thing, we need progress and hope: we need to look forward to knowing something new tomorrow. Mystery is our mind's food. If we truly said, "I have seen everything",^[1] we would conclude, as did the author of Ecclesiastes, "all is vanity".^[2] For another thing, the more knowledge, the more responsibility.^[3] Only omnipotence can bear the burden of omniscience; only God's shoulders are strong enough to carry the burden of infinite knowledge without losing the joy.

The second reason we may think our heavenly knowledge is infinite is the theory that on earth we have already an access, a potency, for all knowledge; that the brain is a "reducing valve", not a generator.^[4] Perhaps the Fall lowered the curtain between us and all truth, which we now see "through a glass, darkly";^[5] and in Heaven the curtain will rise again. Thus, the knowledge we now have is both a memory^[6] and a prophecy of Paradise.

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Q1: WILL WE KNOW EVERYTHING IN HEAVEN?



But even if this theory is true it does not entail our omniscience. Even if there is no curtain in Heaven, even if our consciousness there dashes against no wall or limit, still we remain like the tiny figures in a Chinese landscape: small subjects in an enormously larger objective world. Even if we then escape from the tiny hut in which we are now imprisoned and through whose smudged windows or chinks in whose walls we now must look – even if we wander freely in the country of light – we are in the light, not the light in us.

Our first and last wisdom in Heaven is Socratic, just as it is on earth: to know how little we know. If there is no end of the need for humility in the moral order (the saint is the one humble enough not to think he is a saint), the same is true of the intellectual order (the wise man is the one humble enough to know he has no wisdom). It all depends on the standard of judgment: by earthly standards most of us are moderately saintly and moderately wise; by Heavenly standards all of us, even in Heaven, are children. And by the standard of the infinite, inexhaustible perfection of God, we remain children forever. Happy children, fulfilled children, but children.

Perhaps this will be one of the supreme tests: would we choose the childlikeness of Heaven or the promise of "maturity", of "humanity come of age" in Hell? Will we suffer gladly the blow and shock to our pride that is Heaven's gift of eternal childhood (thus eternal hope and progress) or will we insist on the "successes" of "self-actualization" that Heaven denies us and Hell offers us? If the latter, we will find despair instead of hope, ennui instead of creative work, and the emptying out of all our joy. Jesus' teaching, "Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven",^[7] is not something to be outgrown. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, when asked which are the four most important virtues, replied, "Humility, humility, humility, and humility."^[8] It is only the foolish egotist who thinks that our smallness relative to the infinite riches of objective reality is a problem to be overcome.

End Notes:

^[1] Ecclesiastes 1:14.

^[2] Ecclesiastes 12:8.

^[3] James 3:1; Luke 12:48.

^[4] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: New American Library, 1959), p. 324; Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 22-24.

^[5] 1 Corinthians 13:12 (KJV).

^[6] Pascal, *Pensees*, trans. Krailshiemer (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 117, 131.

^[7] Matthew 18:3

^[8] *De gradibus humilitatis*, I, 1.

Q2: WILL WE ALL BE EQUAL IN HEAVEN?



By God's grace, no! How awful that would be – almost as awful as knowing everything. Having no heroes,^[9] being unable to look up to anyone, would be Hell, not Heaven.

We modern egalitarians are tempted to the primal sin of pride in the opposite way from the ancients. The old, aristocratic form of pride was the desire to be better than others. The new, democratic form is the desire not to have anyone better than yourself.^[10] It is just as spiritually deadly and does not even carry with it the false pleasure of gloating superiority. Flat, boring, repetitive sameness is simply not the structure of reality in a theistic universe,^[11] either on earth or in Heaven. However, in Heaven, as on earth, each of us will be or do something no one else will be or do as well. No one will be superfluous.

If He had no use for all these differences, I do not see why He should have created more souls than one Your soul has a curious shape because it is a hollow made to fit a particular swelling in the infinite contours of the divine substance, or a key to unlock one of the doors in the house with many mansions . . . each of the redeemed shall forever know and praise some one aspect of the divine beauty better than any other creature can.^[12]

God's justice is not ours. It surprises ours in a double way. On the one hand, the one-hour workers receive the same pay as the all-day workers, in Christ's parable.^[13] "He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent empty away."^[14] "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low."^[15] But on the other hand, to him who already has, more will be given, and "from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away."^[16] Human justice is outraged by both halves of Christ's paradoxical justice.

Justice does not mean equality. In a poem, in the universe, in mathematics, in architecture – everywhere there is natural justice, justice means inequality, yin and yang, male and female, higher and lower, East and West, light and darkness, land and water. No flat, dull repetition but uniqueness. In human relationships too, justice does not mean equality, but treating equals equally and unequals unequally.^[17] Is it just to treat a pig like a man? If so, it is also just to treat a man like a pig. One of the astonishing blind spots of modernity is its unquestioning fixation on equality.

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Q2: WILL WE ALL BE EQUAL IN HEAVEN CONTINUED?



Of course there are degrees of perfection in Heaven; it is quite the divine style. There are degrees of perfection in everything God created (though not in everything we create). Equality is a man-made legal fiction designed as a wall of defence against tyranny, a medicine against a disease.

"We must all be guarded by equal rights from one another's greed, because we are fallen. just as we must all wear clothes for the same reason. But the naked body should be there underneath the clothes, ripening for the day when we shall need them no longer. Equality is not the deepest thing, you know. "

"I always thought that was just what it was. I thought it was in their souls that people were equal."

"You were mistaken That is the last place where they are equal. Equality before the law, equality of incomes - that is all very well. Equality guards life; it doesn't make it. It is medicine, not food . . . "

"But surely in marriage . . . ?

"Worse and worse Courtship knows nothing of it; nor does fruition It is not your fault. They never warned you. No one has ever told you that obedience - humility - is an erotic necessity."[\[18\]](#)

Why is there no jealousy in this hierarchical, aristocratic, non-egalitarian Heaven of authority and obedience? Because all are cells in the same body. The kidney does not rebel because it is not the eye.[\[19\]](#) Jealousy is the principle of Hell. There is no Hell in Heaven.

End Notes:

- [\[9\]](#) Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Macmillan, Free Press, 1973).
- [\[10\]](#) C. S. Lewis, "Screwtape Proposes a Toast" in *The Screwtape Letters and Screwtape Proposes a Toast* (New York: Macmillan, 1961).
- [\[11\]](#) C. S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), pp. 18, 140-42.
- [\[12\]](#) C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), p. 147.
- [\[13\]](#) Matthew 20:1-16.
- [\[14\]](#) Luke 1:52-53.
- [\[15\]](#) Isaiah 40:4 (KJV).
- [\[16\]](#) Matthew 13:12.
- [\[17\]](#) St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, 142, 2.
- [\[18\]](#) C. S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 148.
- [\[19\]](#) 1 Corinthians 12:14-26.

Q3: DO THE BLESSED IN HEAVEN SEE US NOW?



The living often say they feel the dead present and watching them. Is this illusion or fact?

It is fact. The Bible says we are surrounded by "a great cloud of witnesses".[\[20\]](#) The context is speaking of the dead. They are alive. For God is "not God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him".[\[21\]](#)

Reason confirms revelation here. Does their love for us cease? Does it not rather increase in purity and power? And do not their vision and understanding also increase?

"The Communion of Saints" means not only (1) love and understanding among the blessed in Heaven and (2) love and understanding among the redeemed on earth but also (3) love and understanding between those two groups, the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant, temporarily separated by death.[\[22\]](#)

What difference does this make? Well, what difference does it make to you if you believe you are being watched by a thousand living human eyes? Multiply this consequence by millions and by the increase in love and understanding in Heaven. Throw in literally innumerable angels,[\[23\]](#) all of them sharing mightily in God's love and knowledge. Then you have the difference it makes: the exponent of infinity.

The link connecting the Church Militant with the Church Triumphant, the link connecting Heaven and earth, is the incarnate Christ. We participate in what Christ does, and Christ links Heaven and earth. He is still on earth as well as in Heaven (1) by His Spirit and (2) in His Mystical Body, the Church, His people. Christianity does not worship an absent Christ. And just as He can be on earth even when He has gone to Heaven, so can we – in Him. The cells in the one Body are all living cells, but only a very few of them are living on earth.



End Notes:

- [\[20\]](#) Hebrews 12:1.
- [\[21\]](#) Luke 20:38.
- [\[22\]](#) *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. IV, p. 171.
- [\[23\]](#) Hebrews 12:22; St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, 50, 3.





Q4: DO GHOSTS COMES FROM HEAVEN?

First of all, Scripture strictly forbids us to call them up^[24] as Saul called up the ghost of the prophet Samuel by means of the Witch of Endor's necromancy. Because of this deed, he lost his kingdom and perhaps his soul.^[25]

The reason for the stricture is probably protection against the danger of deception by evil spirits. We are out of our depth, our knowledge, and our control once we open the doors to the supernatural. The only openings that are safe for us are the ones God has approved: revelation, prayer, His own miracles, sacraments, and primarily Christ Himself. He has made a straight and safe road for us from earth to Heaven, through the dark woods of the innumerable, unknowable, and unpredictable spiritual forces that are to us as fire to an infant or a juggernaut to an ant. The danger is not physical but spiritual, and spiritual danger always centres on deception. The Devil is "a liar and the father of lies".^[26] He disguises himself "as an angel of light".^[27]

Nevertheless, without our action or invitation, the dead often do appear to the living. There is enormous evidence of "ghosts" in all cultures. What are we to make of them? Surely we should not classify the appearances of the wives of C. S. Lewis and Sheldon Vanauken, just to take two Christian examples, as demonic?

We can distinguish three kinds of ghosts, I believe. First, the most familiar kind: the sad ones, the wispy ones. They seem to be working out some unfinished earthly business, or suffering some purgatorial purification until released from their earthly, business.^[28] These ghosts would seem to be the ones who just barely made it to Purgatory, who feel little or no joy yet and who need to learn many painful lessons about their past lives on earth.

Second, there are malicious and deceptive spirits – and since they *are* deceptive, they hardly ever *appear* malicious. These are probably the ones who respond to conjurings at séances. They probably come from Hell. Even the *chance* of that happening should be sufficient to terrify away all temptation to necromancy..

Third, there are the bright, happy spirits of dead friends and family, especially spouses, who appear unbidden, at God's will, not ours, with messages of hope and love. They seem to come from Heaven. Unlike the purgatorial ghosts who come back primarily for their own sakes, these bright spirits come back for the sake of us the living, to tell us all is well. They are aped by evil spirits who say the same, who speak "peace, peace, when there is no peace".^[29] But deception works only one way: the fake can deceive by appearing genuine, but the genuine never deceives by appearing fake. Heavenly spirits always convince us that they are genuinely good. Even the bright spirits appear ghostlike to us because a ghost of any type is one whose substance does not belong in or come from this world. In Heaven these spirits are not ghosts but real, solid, and substantial because they are at home there. "One can't be a ghost in one's own country."^[30]

That there are all three kinds of ghosts is enormously likely. Even taking into account our penchant to deceive and to be deceived, our credulity and our fakery, there remain so many trustworthy accounts of all three types of ghosts – trustworthy by every ordinary empirical and psychological standard – that only a dogmatic a priori prejudice against them could prevent us from believing they exist.^[31] As Chesterton says, "We believe an old apple-woman when she says she ate an apple; but when she says she saw a ghost we say, 'But she's only an old apple-woman.'"^[32] A most undemocratic and unscientific prejudice.

End Notes:

- ^[24] Deuteronomy 18:10-11; Isaiah 8:19.
- ^[25] 1 Samuel 28.
- ^[26] John 8:44.
- ^[27] 2 Corinthians 11:14.
- ^[28] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act 1, scene 5, lines 9-22.
- ^[29] Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11.
- ^[30] C. S. Lewis, *The Silver Chair* (New York: Macmillan, 1953), p. 205.
- ^[31] C. S. Lewis, *Miracles*, chap. 1.
- ^[32] G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1946), p. 279.

Q5: WILL WE HAVE EMOTIONS IN HEAVEN?

Emotions move us; we do not move them. They are a form of passivity. We will be far more active in Heaven than we ever were before, since our spirits (which are activity) will rule rather than being ruled by our bodies (which are passivity). Nevertheless, we will *have* bodies, therefore passivity, therefore emotions, though they will not be at the unfree whim of heredity, environment, animal instinct, propaganda, others' demands, and the many other forces that presently condition us. Even when our spirits are perfectly free, they can feel. Even now, it is the spirit that feels, not just the body. It is a prejudice imported from Greek philosophy, not a notion found in Scripture, that feelings should be dominated by rational thought. The centre of the self which the Greeks located in reason,^[33] Scripture locates in the "heart", that which loves. This centre is no more a *feeling* than it is *thinking*; it is the prefunctional root of both.^[34] or it is a deeper feeling and a deeper thinking: the heart has its reasons which the reason does not know".^[35]

But since our thinking and our feeling are equal functions of the heart, we will retain our feeling in Heaven just as we will retain our thinking. All our humanity is perfected, not diminished, in Heaven.

- ^[33] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 7.
- ^[34] Hermann Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, trans. David Freeman (Phillipsburg, NJ.: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1953). Cf Proverbs 23:7; 4:23.
- ^[35] Pascal, *Pensees* (trans. Krailshaimer), 423.



ST BONIFACE III (607) ST DEUDEDIT (ADEODATUS I) (615 - 18) BONIFACE V (619 - 25) HONORIUS I (625 - 38) SEVERINUS (640) JOHN V THEODORE I (640 - 42) (642 - 49) ST MARTIN I (649 - 55)

JOHN II (532 - 35) ST AGAPETUS (535 - 36) ST SILVERIUS (356- 37) VIGILIUS (537 - 55) PELAGIUS (556 - 61) JOHN III (561 - 74) BENEDICT I (574 - 79) PELAGIUS II (579 - 90) (THE GREAT) (590 - 604) SABINIAN (604 - 606) BONIFACE III (607)

JOHN V (685 - 86) CONON (686 - 87) ST SERGIUS I (687 - 701) JOHN VI (701 - 705)

ST EUGENE I (655 - 57) ST VITALIAN (657 - 72) ADEODATUS (II) (672 - 76) DONUS (676 - 78) ST AGATHO (678 - 81) ST LEO II (682 - 83) ST BENEDICT II (684 - 85)

Q6: WILL WE FEEL SORROW IN HEAVEN FOR THOSE IN HELL?

We seem to face a dilemma here. On the one hand, Scripture assures us that "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away".[\[36\]](#)

On the other hand, the blessed dead seem sometimes to manifest sorrow, like Mary at LaSalette, weeping for the sins of the world.[\[37\]](#) And C. S. Lewis says, "as there may be pleasures in Hell (God shield us from them), there may be something not all unlike pains in Heaven (God grant us soon to taste them)".[\[38\]](#) What could this mean?

Might it be that the sorrow appears only during our first, purgatorial stage? At this point the pains of separation may affect not only the earthly bereaved lover but also the heavenly beloved. As Lewis says, "I can't help suspecting the dead also feel the pains of separation (and this may be one of their purgatorial sufferings)".[\[39\]](#) But this would not explain the tears of Mary, who is certainly beyond Purgatory.

Might it be that the sorrow is only an appearance, like angels' bodies, put on for our sake? But the purpose of appearance should be to teach, not to deceive, if the appearance comes from Heaven.

To solve this problem let us look at the greatest suffering, that which is made possible by love. The more you love, the more you can suffer. That fact creates the following problem: Does God the Father suffer? The affirmative answer to that question has been declared a heresy (Patripassianism);[\[40\]](#) yet how can God love us, and remain aloof and invulnerable? As Kierkegaard says, the unhappiness that comes from the inability of lovers to understand each other is infinitely more profound than that [unhappiness] of which men commonly speak, since it strikes at the very heart of love . . . This infinitely deeper grief is essentially the prerogative of the superior . . . in reality, it belongs to God alone . . . Men sometimes think that this might be a matter of indifference to God, since he does not stand in need of the learner [us]. But in this we forget – or rather, alas! we prove how far we are from understanding him; we forget that God loves the learner.[\[41\]](#)

The dilemma, then, is this: If God cannot suffer, how can He really love us? But if He can suffer, how is He God? To answer this question would also be to answer the question of whether and how we can suffer in Heaven, for Heavenly children resemble their Heavenly Father.

The answer requires us to distinguish between two ingredients of earthly love and caring, an active and a passive ingredient, that are together in fact but distinguishable in thought. Say a parent loves a child who has done something harmful to himself. The parent's love speaks two words to the child. The first word, the word of active caring for the other, says, "How could you do this to yourself?" The second word, the word of passivity and vulnerability, says, "How could you do this to me?" God loves us with the first love only, and the blessed in Heaven will love as God loves. We cannot blackmail God. We cannot make Him wring His hands by holding our breath until we turn blue in the face.[\[42\]](#) He truly loves and cares, yet He is invulnerable – not by being aloof but by being supremely active, not passive.[\[43\]](#)

If our spirits are similar enough to God, we too can love without sorrow or vulnerability because we love only with the active feeling of caring, not the passive feeling of being hurt. For our spirits then are not controlled by our bodies, by heredity and environment. C. S. Lewis' experience of his dead wife's presence and love was like that:

It was quite incredibly unemotional Yet there was an extreme and cheerful intimacy. An intimacy that had not passed through the senses or the emotions at all.... Can that intimacy be love itself - always in this life attended with emotion, not because it is itself an emotion, or needs an attendant emotion, but because our animal souls, our nervous systems, our imaginations, have to respond to it in that way? If so, how many preconceptions I must scrap! A society, a communion, of pure intelligences would not be cold, drab and comfortless It would, if I have had a glimpse, be – well, I'm almost scared at the adjectives I'd have to use. Brisk? cheerful? keen? alert? intense? wide-awake? Above all, solid. Utterly reliable. Firm. There is no nonsense about the dead.

When I say "intellect" I include will. Attention is an act of will. Intelligence in action is will *par excellence*. What met me was full of resolution.[\[44\]](#)

Yet on the other side of the dilemma, will Heaven lack the greatest of all beauties of earthly art, the beauty of sorrow, of great tragedy? Nothing of value is simply lost in Heaven; all is preserved and transformed. Earthly indicators are to be read (though with caution) as pointers to Heavenly realities.

And on earth, pain and pleasure are strangely akin at their peak, like death and life. When a thing is enormously beautiful, it hurts. What Heavenly fact is imaged in this earthly mystery?



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JOHN VII (705 - 07) SISINNIIUS (708) CONSTANTINE (708 - 15) ST GREGORY II (715 - 31) ST GREGORY III (731 - 41) ST ZACHARY (741 - 52) STEPHEN II (752) STEPHEN III (752 - 57) ST PAUL (757 - 67) STEPHEN IV (767 - 72) ADRIAN I (772 - 95) ST LEO III (795 - 816)

STEPHEN V (816 -17) ST PASCHAL I (817 - 24) EUGENE II (824 - 27) VALENTINE (827) GREGORY IV (827 - 44) SERGIUS II (844 - 47) ST LEO (847 - 55) BENEDICT III (855 - 58)

ST NICHOLAS THE GREAT (858 - 67) ADRIAN II (867 - 72) JOHN VIII (872 - 82) MARINUS I (882 - 84) STADRIAN III (884 - 85) STEPHEN VI FORMOSUS (891 - 96) BONIFACE VI (896) STEPHEN VII ROMANUS (896 - 97) THEODORE II (897) JOHN IX (898 - 900)

Q6: WILL WE FEEL SORROW IN HEAVEN FOR THOSE IN HELL? CONTINUED



Perhaps the ultimate fact of all, the nature of God, the inner life of the Trinity as a system of self-giving.^[45] Perhaps this is the deepest reason of all for pain on earth, and the solution to the evil": Why does a good and loving God allow so much earthly suffering? To train us for Heaven's joy and to enact, to incarnate, to manifest the ultimate law of reality on our human level: the law of death and life, blessed self-death (no longer blessed for fallen creatures) leading to eternal life. "All pains and pleasures we have known on earth are early initiations in the movements of that dance."^[46] This is the supreme joy in all existence, the joy of God's inner life of self-giving, the secret forever incomprehensible to the rebel, angelic or human, who says "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven".^[47]

End Notes:

- [36] Revelation 21:4 (KJV).
- [37] *A Woman Clothed with the Sun*, ed. John J. Delaney (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1961).
- [38] C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, p. 152.
- [39] C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (New York: Bantam, 1976), p. 64.
- [40] *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (1921), vol. X, p. 449. Cf. Helen Waddell, *Peter Abelard* (New York: Viking, 1959), p. 265.
- [41] Soren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, chap. 2 in *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, ed. Robert Bretall (New York: Modern Library, 1946), pp. 164, 166.
- [42] C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (New York: Macmillan, 1975), p. 120.
- [43] *Ibid.*, p. 121: "The action of Pity will live forever; but the passion of Pity will not." See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, 3, 1; *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, 16, 5, on God as purely active. [44] C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*, pp. 85-88.
- [45] C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, p. 152.
- [46] *Ibid.*, p. 153.
- [47] Milton, *Paradise Lost*, book I, line 262.

Q7: WILL WE BE FREE TO SIN IN HEAVEN?



Here is another dilemma . If we answer no, we seem to lack something: free will. If we answer yes, we lack something else: moral perfection. The Heavenly question thus lands us squarely into an earthly and present issue concerning the nature of freedom and of morality and may help us to puncture one of modernity's most pervasive and destructive illusions: the association of freedom with rebellion and of obedience with unfreedom.

Suppose we change the question so as to avoid the ambiguity of the word *freedom*. Are we able to sin in Heaven? If not, it seems we are programmed and determined rather than free. If so, if temptation is possible in Heaven, Heavenly security against sin is gone. One of the best things to look forward to at death, say the saints,^[48] is that "he who has died is freed from sin".^[49] If there is even a possibility of sin in Heaven, that possibility may be actualised, for if the actualisation of a possibility is impossible, then it is not a possibility but an impossibility.

How can we preserve both free will and sinlessness in Heaven? Once again, God is our model and solution: we solve this pseudo-problem in the same way God does. He is both free and sinless. How? Let us judge our freedom by His, rather than vice versa.

What do we mean by "freedom"? Sometimes (1) *political* freedom, freedom from tyranny, oppression, or the denial of our rights; sometimes (2) *physical* power, ability to act, freedom from hindrance; and sometimes (3) *spiritual* power to choose ("free will"). Of course we will have all three in Heaven, but why won't we be able to sin, since we will have free will?

Because we will also have a fourth freedom, the most important one of all: freedom from sin, from what makes us not ourselves. We will be free to be the true selves God designed us to be, free to be determined by God. This determination does not remove our freedom but *is* our freedom, for even now freedom is not simply indeterminateness; it is freedom to be determined by final causes (purposes) rather than efficient causes (things and events that already exist and act upon us). Our free will means that our present is determined by our future rather than by our past. Final causes are at present only mental pictures and desires. To say we are determined by final causes means that we, like God, create by knowing; that as creative artists our knowledge antecedes and determines the truth of its object, the work of art, rather than conforming to its object, as scientific and empirical knowledge does. But we are objects to God (though subjects to the world); we too, therefore, are true only when we conform to God's knowledge of us, God's artistic plan for our identity. Since our highest freedom means freedom to be ourselves, we are most free when we are most obedient to God's will, which expresses His idea of us. Thus freedom and obedience coincide. To obey God is to be free in the most radical sense: free to be me, free from inauthenticity, free from false *being*, free from the alien within, not just free from the alien without, the oppressor.



Q7: WILL WE BE FREE TO SIN IN HEAVEN?



This explains a paradox frequently met in earthly experience: that at the moment of freest choice it feels most like destiny, and at the moment of most destined choice it feels freest. Caesar's crossing the Rubicon, choosing someone to marry, a conversion decision - these all feel *both* more free *and* more destined than ordinary choices.

C. S. Lewis' explanation of this principle is that it is all of us that chooses; nothing is left over.^[50] Therefore there is nothing in us that opposes the choice; it is certain; it is wholly determined. But it is also wholly free because it is wholly *self*-determined. The whole self chooses, the divided will^[51] is healed.

The answer to our question, then, is that "freedom to sin" is a self-contradictory concept. Sin is inauthenticity and freedom is authenticity; sin is our false self and freedom is our true self Sin is part of Hell and freedom is part of Heaven. The question cannot be resolved, only *dissolved*, because it confuses Hell with Heaven.

End Notes:

^[48] "St. Alfonso Liguori, *Preparations for Death*, ed. Rev. Eugene Grimm (Baltimore, Md.: John Murphy & Co., 1926).

^[49] Romans 6:7.

^[50] C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1955), pp. 229, 237.

^[51] St. Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII, 8-9.

Q8: WHAT WILL WE POSSESS IN HEAVEN?



Nothing and everything. Saint Francis of Assisi and others devoted to poverty understand this paradox. Saint Paul speaks of "having nothing, and yet possessing all things"^[52] because possessed by God: "all [things] are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's."^[53]

Heaven is pure communism. There is no private property in Heaven. (Earthly communism, even when not atheistic, is another "too-soon" mistake of Utopianism.) "In Heaven there is no ownership. If any there took upon him to call anything his own, he would straightway be thrust out into hell and become an evil spirit."^[54] For the ultimate possession is the self, and if even that is given away, nothing else can be held (because there is no *holder*); and that *is* given away:

The golden apple of selfhood, thrown among the false gods, became an apple of discord because they scrambled for it. They did not know the first rule of the holy game, which is that every player must by all means touch the ball and then immediately pass it on. To be found with it in your hands is a fault; to cling to it, death. But when it flies to and fro among the players too swift for eye to follow, and the great master Himself leads the revelry, giving Himself eternally to His creatures in the generation, and back to Himself in the sacrifice, of the Word, then indeed the eternal dance "makes heaven drowsy with the harmony."^[55]

As MacDonald says, "the heart cannot hoard",^[56] only the hand. As Marcel says, the true self cannot possess or have anything because I do not *have* my own body as my body *has* things: I *am* my body.^[57]

No one can possess goodness, truth, beauty, love, life, light, God. But Heaven *is* these things. Therefore no one can possess Heaven. Whenever, even now, we think of truth or goodness as something we *have* we become self-righteous, narrow, and defensive. To *have* truth is to be dogmatic; to *have* goodness is to be proud; to *have* beauty is to be vain; to *have* joy is to be miserable with fear of losing it. God, I AM, pure subject, is the only Haver. He cannot be had, nor can His attributes or His Kingdom of Heaven.

Thus, we must learn detachment to enter Heaven. Willy-nilly, death detaches us from everything, even ourselves. We must learn to "die before you die. There is no chance after."^[58] Learning detachment from the world, which can be possessed, is our training for learning detachment from the desire to possess Heaven, which cannot be possessed. Asked whether he thought he would possess any of his beloved library books in Heaven, C. S. Lewis replied, "Only those I gave away on earth."^[59]

End Notes:

^[52] 2 Corinthians 6:10 (KJV).

^[53] 1 Corinthians 3:21, 23.

^[54] *Theologia Germanica*, LI

^[55] C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, p. 153.

^[56] George MacDonald in C. S. Lewis, ed., *George MacDonald: An Anthology* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), p. 119 (no. 287).

^[57] Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having*, trans. Katherine Farrer (Boston: Beacon Press, 1951), pp. 137, 237.

^[58] C. S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1957), p. 279.

^[59] C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1970), p. 216.



Q9: WILL WE WEAR CLOTHES IN HEAVEN?



Those who claim to have caught glimpses of Heaven report a strange and surprising answer to this question; and the fact that so many have said the same surprising thing without previous acquaintance with each other lends weight to the testimony.

They say that it is hard to classify the blessed as either clothed or naked.^[60] If clothed, it is as if the clothing were a part of the body, an organic growth, rather than an accidental, foreign covering: it reveals rather than conceals, and it is natural and necessary rather than artificial and^[61] accidental. If naked, it is shameless and not arousing erotic desires. It is not the result of "naking",^[62] the process of taking off the clothes that in our present state are natural, thus attaining a state of nudity that is (in our present state) unnatural. (Nudist camps are *not* "natural".)

The principle behind the naturalness of Heavenly clothing is the overcoming of the distinction between appearance and reality. In Heaven, light reigns; we know and are known.^[63] On earth, shadows reign, reality hides behind appearances as a mercy to fallen and weakened eyes.^[64] We need the double-lensed sunglasses of reason and faith to know truth now; in Heaven we shall see the truth naked and direct. When reality appears and no longer hides, so will we.

The clothing of Heaven is described in Scripture as "white garments".^[65] White is the colour of light. Light reveals. On earth, clothes partly conceal and partly reveal, just as language does.^[66] In Heaven all is revealed. "Nothing is hid that shall not be made manifest."^[67]

Here, truth is *aletheia*, overcoming of *Lethe*: forgetfulness, appearance, concealment. So clothing hides the body, and the truth about the body is reached by unveiling, naking. In Heaven, the truth will be *in* the appearances (fully revealed, fully apparent), so the truth of the resurrection body will be revealed in its clothes. As the Son perfectly expresses the Father, clothes will express the body.

Our heavenly clothes may express our earthly story and success. Socrates will have his philosopher's robe. Heroes will wear the clothes associated with their heroism.^[68] Jesus will wear His crown of thorns. Each thorn will be a diamond.

End Notes:

- ^[60] C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, p. 107. Cf Martin Ebon, *The Evidence for Life after Death* (New York: New American Library, 1971), p. 112.
^[61] C. S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, pp. 360-64; *The Great Divorce*, p. 107.
^[62] C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1957), p. 147.
^[63] 1 Corinthians 13:12.
^[64] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, 1, 5 ad 1.
^[65] Matthew 17:2; Revelation 3:5, 18; 7:9; 19:8.
^[66] Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 81.
^[67] Luke 8:17.
^[68] Bruce Palmer, *Of Orc-Rags, Phials, and a Far Shore: Visions of Paradise in The Lord of the Rings* (Kansas City, Mo.: T-K Graphics, 1976), p. 25.

Q10: ARE THERE ANIMALS IN HEAVEN?



The simplest answer is: Why not? How irrational is the prejudice that would allow plants (green fields and flowers) but not animals into Heaven!^[69] Much more reasonable is C. S. Lewis' speculation that we will be "between the angels who are our elder brothers and the beasts who are our jesters, servants, and playfellows".^[70] Scripture seems to confirm this: "thy judgments are like the great deep; man and beast thou savest, O Lord".^[71] Animals belong in the "new earth,"^[72] as much as trees.

C. S. Lewis supposes that animals are saved "in" their masters, as part of their extended family.^[73] Only tamed animals would be saved in this way. It would seem more likely that wild animals are in Heaven too, since wildness, otherness, not-mine-ness, is a proper pleasure for us.^[74] The very fact that the seagull takes no notice of me when it utters its remote, lonely call is part of its glory.

Would the same animals be in Heaven as on earth? "Is my dead cat in Heaven?" Again, why not? God can raise up the very grass;^[75] why not cats? Though the blessed have better things to do than play with pets, the better does not exclude the lesser. We were meant from the beginning to have stewardship over the animals;^[76] we have not fulfilled that divine plan yet on earth; therefore it seems likely that the right relationship with animals will be part of Heaven: proper "petship". And what better place to begin than with already petted pets?

End Notes:

- ^[69] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III (Supplement), 91, 5
^[70] C. S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, p. 378.
^[71] Psalm 36:6.
^[72] Revelation 21:1.
^[73] C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, pp. 138-39.
^[74] C. S. Lewis, *Miracles*, p. 78.
^[75] Psalm 90:5-6. *If we are "like grass", and we are raised, grass can be raised too.*



Q11: IS THERE MUSIC IN HEAVEN?

First of all, the Bible says so.^[77]

Secondly, great earthly music is particularly Heavenly, a sign or pointer beyond itself to Heaven. What was dimly suggested in all earthly music that moved us so much that the ancients necessarily ascribed it not to men but to gods^[78] – goddesses, the nine Muses – is precisely Heavenly music. That is why we were moved here; it reminded us of There, which is our home.

Third, it may well be *in* music that the world was created,^[79] and that music is the original language. Spoken poetry is to music what prose is to poetry.^[80] Poetry is not ornamented prose, and music is not accompanied poetry. Prose is ossified poetry,^[81] and poetry is half of music.

It is not that music is in Heaven; Heaven is in music. Heaven is "the region where there is only life, and therefore all that is not music is silence".^[82] Heaven is both silent, like the contemplative mystic, and full of sound, like a dance or a symphony.

End Notes:

^[77] Revelation 14:3.

^[78] Plato, *Ion*, 533c-35c; Isadore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, bk. III, chap. 15.

^[79] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), p. 25; C. S. Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), chap. 9.

^[80] Martm Heidegger, "Holderlin and the Essence of Poetry" in *Existence and Being*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Chicago: Regnery, 1967), pp. 281, 283-84; "The Nature of Language", *On the Way to Language*.

^[81] George MacDonald in C. S. Lewis, ed., *George MacDonald: An Anthology* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), p. 113.

^[82] *Ibid.*, p. 19.



Q12: HOW BIG IS HEAVEN?

The very nature of space, and therefore of size, changes in Heaven. Meaning determines size, rather than size, meaning. The New Jerusalem's measures are symbolic, not physical.^[83]

Heaven is big enough so that billions of races of billions of saved people are never crowded, yet small enough so that no one gets lost or feels lonely. And we can travel anywhere in Heaven simply by will.^[84]

End Notes:

^[83] Revelation 11:1

^[84] Plotinus, *Enneads*, I, 6, 8; Raymond Moody, *Life after Life* (New York: Bantam, 1976), p. 52.

THE HOLY FATHER'S INTENTIONS FOR THE MONTH OF APRIL:

General: That governments may foster the protection of creation and the just distribution of natural resources. (See also www.apostleshipofprayer.net)

Missionary: That the Risen Lord may fill with hope the hearts of those who are being tested by pain and sickness. (See also www.apostleshipofprayer.net)



Q13: IS HEAVEN SERIOUS OR FUNNY?



The very distinction is too funny to take seriously. The distinction between humour and seriousness is strictly earthly. Here on earth, much humour is "comic relief" from the grim business of "real" life. But in Heaven, humour is high seriousness. It is the inner secret of God and the blessed.^[85]

Even on earth, saints play with their lives in the most outrageous way. Saint Thomas More ended his life with a bad joke, telling the axe man "please do not chop my beard in two; *it* has not committed treason."^[86] Jesus has the most perfect sense of humour of all.^[87] We do not often see it, because we think of humour as *jokes*. But the most perfect humour is in the very situation itself, especially irony,^[88] the contrast between appearance and reality. "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her"^[89] is irony. It could be more clumsily and directly rendered, "You judgmental fools are worse than that adulteress - taking out splinters with logs in your eyes."^[90] There is great irony in the Sermon on the Mount: "Consider the lilies of the field they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."^[91] In other words, "You're sillier than the lilies. Who do you think you are anyway? God?"^[92] He'll take as good care of you as the lilies, won't he?" There is irony in "You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me."^[93] That is, "You're trying to read the sign as if it pointed to itself" It is the same irony as Pilate's "What is truth?"^[94] as Truth stands in front of him. Finally, there is Jesus' ironic remark to Nicodemus, who cannot understand being "born again" and asks whether he must return to his mother's womb: "Are you a teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand this?"^[95] You experts know everything except what it's all about.

Jesus is our best indicator of Heaven, and if there is humour in Jesus, there is humour in Heaven. Jesus is the manifestation of the Father, and if there is humour in the personality of the Son, there is humour in the personality of the Father. For some reason, people think of the Persons of the Trinity as *lacking* personality, as nebbishes. In fact, the three fullest personalities in all reality are the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. They are *characters!* They designed ostriches, for goodness' sake (literally). And – supreme joke – us.

Many of the resuscitated perceive and share Heavenly humour, even God's laughter at repented and forgiven sins.^[96] We can laugh only when we are free, detached. The saint can laugh at life in his martyrdom, and once freed from sin (but not till then) we can laugh even at sin in Heaven. Detachment is necessary for humour. And in Heaven there is perfect detachment, even from self (*ek-stasis*, "standing-outside-oneself") Therefore in Heaven there is perfect humour.

The saint and the clown share the secret of levity, the union between the two meanings of "light": truth (opposite of falsehood and darkness) and levity (opposite of gravity and heaviness). Saints *levitate!* Body follows spirit.

But Heavenly humour is not the opposite of seriousness, only of joyless seriousness. Saints, mystics, and the resuscitated take life *more* seriously than others do. Everything gains an infinite importance, an "eternal weight of glory."^[97] Joy is a serious matter – too good to be wasted on jokes. The saint does not usually tell jokes,^[98] because he does not need to, to relieve the joylessness, to relieve sadness, to distract from the heavy, practical world. "Joy is the serious business of Heaven."^[99]

End Notes:

^[85] G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1957), pp.298-99.

^[86] E. E. Reynolds, *The Field Is Won: The Life and Death of St. Thomas More* (Milwaukee, Wisc.: Bruce, 1968), pp. 265-66.

^[87] Henri Cormier, *The Humor of Jesus*, trans. David Heiman (New York: Alba, 1977).

^[88] Soren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, trans. M. C. Lee (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

^[89] John 8:7.

^[90] Matthew 7:3.

^[91] Matthew 6:29 (KJV).

^[92] Matthew 6:27.

^[93] John 5:39.

^[94] John 18:38.

^[95] John 3:10.

^[96] Raymond Moody, *Life after Life* (New York: Bantam, 1976), pp. 64-73, 156; *Reflections on Life after Life* (New York: Bantam, 1977), pp. 29-40; Philip Swihart, *At the Edge of Death* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1978), pp. 60-63.

^[97] 2 Corinthians 4:17.

^[98] Like Alyosha in Dostoyevski's *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), part I, bk. 1, chap. 4, p. 18.

^[99] C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964), p. 93.

Q14: WHY WON'T WE GET BORED IN HEAVEN?

Because we are with God, and God is infinite. We never come to the end of exploring Him. He is new every day.

Because we are with God, and God is eternal. Time does not pass (a condition for boredom); it just is. All time is present in eternity, as all the events of the plot are present in an author's mind. There is no waiting.

Because we are with God, and God is love. Even on earth, the only people who are never bored are lovers.



USEFUL CONTACT INFORMATION

	<p>PARISH WEBSITE, INTRANET & E-MAILS http://www.saints-francis-and-mary.org.uk http://www.dignet2.co.uk bernard.barrett@dignet2.co.uk Parish Priest: Fr. Bernard Barrett</p>	<p>PLEASE NOTE DIGNET2 IS THE PARISH INTRANET FOR ADMIN PURPOSES ONLY AND IS NOT THE WEBSITE</p>
<p>PARISH DETAILS FOR CHURCH OF ST FRANCIS DE SALES Radcliffe Street, Wolverton Tel: 313162. Priest's Residence: 22 Stratford Road, Wolverton, MK12 5LJ</p>	<p>PARISH DETAILS FOR CHURCH OF ST MARY MAGDALENE 105 High Street, Stony Stratford. Tel: 564363. Parish House: 105 High Street Stony Stratford, MK11 1AT</p>	<p>GENERAL ENQUIRIES CONTACT Dawn Clark or Angela Tavener who are based at St Mary's Presbytery Monday and Wednesday between 9.30 & 11.30 each week or e-mail office@dignet2.co.uk</p>
<p>PARISH SURGERY SESSIONS Sessions are available for Parishioners with Fr. Bernard with 15 minute slots. To book a session please contact Dawn at the Parish Office as usual between 09.30 to 11.30 on Monday and Wednesday to arrange a surgery time. Note: surgery sessions are usually held once a month on a Saturday morning.</p>	<p>HOSPITAL CHAPLAINCY TEAM If you are a Catholic or you know some one who is a Catholic who is going into MK General Hospital please notify the Catholic Chaplaincy team: 07906 492486 It is important that you do this - the hospital are no longer permitted to contact the Church, under new Data Protection Law.</p>	<p>PRAYERS FOR THE SICK/DECEASED To add someone to the sick list for the monthly Healing Mass, contact the parish office: office@dignet2.co.uk. To add someone to the recently deceased list please contact Jo Farragher (jofarragher@hotmail.com) for the list for St Mary's, or Bob McCormick bob.mccormick@dignet2.co.uk for the list for St Francis. Or call the Parish Office on 564363 for the bidding prayers for either Church.</p>
<p>NEED TO PUT A NOTICE IN THE NEWSLETTER Contact Noreen or Dawn on newsletter@dignet2.co.uk or see Dawn in the Parish Office. Copy deadline: Tuesday's at 12 noon OR HAVE A POSTER GENERATED FOR PARISH ACTIVITIES - please contact Dawn or Noreen (2-weeks notice required)</p>	<p>NEED A MASS BOOKLET IN ANOTHER LANGUAGE? - 50p per copy Then speak to Dawn in the Parish Office. Languages available are: French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Czech, Polish</p>	<p>NEED TO BOOK THE PARISH MEETING ROOM E-mail: office@dignet2.co.uk Or call the Parish office 564363 during office hours. We try to accommodate all groups needing to use the meeting room - priority is given to those who need the audio-visual facilities. We can accommodate small groups in the parish library if necessary.</p>
<p>EMERGENCY CALL PROCEDURE ONLY If you cannot get hold of Fr. Bernard at the Presbytery at Stony Stratford or Wolverton, and it is an emergency then contact one of the following who have an emergency number: Dawn Clark (07761 583307) Janet Tate (01908 510216) Derick Rooney (265819) Mary Baker (312171)</p>	<p>REPAIRS/CHURCH MAINTENANCE Any repairs/maintenance needed please notify the maintenance team on e-mail: maintenance@dignet2.co.uk SVP CONTACT Tel: 07919 557288 or e-mail: svp@dignet2.co.uk</p>	<p>CURRENT AND NEW PARISHIONERS If you would like to register onto the Parish Database, you can do this on on-line by accessing - www.dignet2.co.uk and selecting the option "Parish Database" LEGION OF MARY CONTACT Tel: Mary (Legion President) on 07921 480027 or email: legion@dignet2.co.uk</p>
<p>BAPTISMS BY APPOINTMENT ONLY You must speak to Fr. Bernard after a Sunday Mass. Contacts: Pauline Hart on 511897 or Christine Simmons on 371896 Email: baptism@dignet2.co.uk</p>	<p>MARRIAGES ONE YEAR'S NOTICE REQUIRED Contact Janet Tate. Tel. MK 510216 or email: marriage@dignet2.co.uk</p>	<p>RCIA & CONVERTS COURSE Contact Fr. Bernard Tel: 313162 or E-mail: bernard.barrett@dignet2.co.uk</p>

MASS INTENTIONS

If you wish a Mass to be offered, complete a Mass Intention Form and pop it into the Parish Office at St Mary's. Please specify *either* which Church you would like the intention said in, *or* a date. Remember to **include money for a Mass Card, if you need one and money for a stamp, if you need the card posted to you.** (Masses may be rescheduled if a funeral Mass takes place). **PLEASE NOTE THAT MASS CARDS COST 60P.** Mass dates are not final until published in the newsletter - Masses can be moved at any time for an **urgent** Pastoral need - e.g. Masses for recently deceased parishioners, gravely ill or sick parishioners, or the **first** anniversary of a former parishioner, which take priority over other anniversaries /dates.