

**THE FOUR LAST THINGS:
DEATH, JUDGMENT,
HELL, HEAVEN**

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The four last things: death, judgment, hell, heaven by Martin von Cochem

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MARTIN VON COCHEM

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HELL, HEAVEN**

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DEATH.
JUDGMENT.
HELL.
HEAVEN.

BY
FATHER MARTIN VON COCHEM, O.S.F.C.

"Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin."

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THE FOUR LAST THINGS.

PART I. ON DEATH.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE TERRORS OF DEATH.

It appears to me unnecessary to say much about the terrors of death. The subject has been sufficiently enlarged upon by various writers ; besides, every one knows and feels for himself that life is sweet and death is bitter. However old a man may be, however broken in health, however miserable his circumstances, the thought of death is an unwelcome one. There are three principal reasons why all sensible people fear death so much :

First, because the love of life, the dread of death is inherent in human nature. Secondly, because every rational being is well aware that death is bitter, and the separation of soul and body cannot take place

without inexpressible suffering. Thirdly, because no one knows whither he will go after death, or how he will stand in the Day of Judgment.

It will be well to explain the second and third of these reasons rather more fully, in order on the one hand that those who lead a careless life may perhaps be awakened thereby to a fear of death, and learn to avoid sin, and on the other that each one of us may be warned to prepare for death, lest we be overtaken by it unawares. Every one shrinks instinctively from death, because it is bitter, and painful beyond description to human nature. The soul of man is subject to many anxieties, apprehensions and sorrows, and the body is subject to pain and sickness of all kinds, yet none of these pains can be compared to the agony of death. A man who loses his good name and his property feels acute grief, but he does not die of it. All suffering and sickness, all grief and anguish, however terrible, is less bitter than death. Hence we see death to be a mighty monarch, the most cruel, the most relentless, the most formidable enemy of mankind. Look at a man wrestling with death, and you will see how the tyrant overpowers, disfigures, prostrates his victim.

Now why is death so hard, so terrible a thing? It is because the soul has to separate itself from the body. Body and soul were created for each other, and so intimate is their union that a parting between them seems almost impossible. They would endure

almost anything rather than be torn asunder. The soul is fearful of the future, and of the unknown land to which she is going. The body is conscious that as soon as the soul departs from it, it will become the prey of worms. Consequently the soul cannot bear to leave the body, nor the body to part from the soul. Body and soul desire their union to remain unbroken, and together to enjoy the sweets of life.

In one of his epistles to St. Augustine, St. Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, relates what was told him by a man who had been raised from the dead. Amongst other things, he said : " The moment when my soul left my body, was one of such awful pain and distress that no one can imagine the anguish I then endured. If all conceivable suffering and pain were put together they would be as nothing in comparison with the torture I underwent at the separation of soul and body." And to emphasize his words, he added, addressing St. Cyril : " Thou knowest that thou hast a soul, but thou knowest not what it is. Thou knowest that beings exist called angels, but thou art ignorant of their nature. Thou knowest also that there is a God, but thou canst not comprehend His being. So it is with everything that has not corporeal shape ; our understanding cannot grasp these things. In like manner it is impossible for thee to understand how I could suffer such intense agony in one short moment."