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HENRY GREY GRAHAM, M.A.



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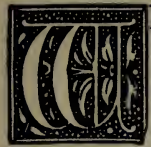
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PURGATORY.



WE may as well say at the outset that we begin by assuming certain principles as universally admitted. These principles we shall state, but shall not stop to prove. (1) For example, we suppose that all readers of this pamphlet admit that the soul exists in perfect consciousness after the death of the body, that there is no break in the continuity of its existence, no destruction of the man's individuality. I am taking for granted that as Christians they believe that death is merely the liberation of the soul from the body, and that, freed from its earthly tenement, the soul continues to exist alone with its memory, its understanding, its will, as before. (2) I take for granted that this truth excludes any idea of sleep or unconsciousness, still more of any annihilation on the part of the disembodied soul. There is no such condition as that: it is a pagan conception. Rather are we led to suppose that the soul's faculties of knowing, and remembering, and understanding, and willing are quickened and purified by entering upon a purely spiritual state. (3) Consequently the expression "prayers for the dead" is not altogether happy, but is rather misleading. The holy souls are not dead, but living. It should be "prayers for the departed." No soul once created ever dies, in the sense of being extinguished like a candle. The only death that is possible is eternal separation from God its Creator, by loss of sanctifying grace, which is the life of the soul. (4) Lastly, as regards the name "purgatory." Perhaps it is strongly resented by many to whom the name suggests weird pictures of a fiery furnace in which the bodies of men and women are tumbling over one another, scorched by flames and writhing in agony. Needless to say such scenes are merely intended to teach in a pictorial and



striking manner the fact of suffering in the intermediate state, and suffering by fire. Purgatory is a word formed from the Latin, and signifies a place of *purification* and cleansing, and has been found a convenient term to denote the place and state of certain disembodied souls. But the word itself is of little importance, and ought not to annoy or repel anyone. The important thing is the doctrinal truth conveyed by the word. To Catholics the expression is dear and precious, because they know what it means. To Protestants it is hateful, simply because they do not know what it means, or rather because they think it means something which Catholics know very well is both grossly false and fantastically absurd.

The Catholic Teaching.

Now, as clearness and exactness of definition are absolutely essential for the proper understanding of this, as of every other religious question, let us first see precisely what the Church teaches as matter of faith about purgatory. Her principal *de fide* decrees on the subject—decrees, *i. e.*, declaring that the doctrine set forth has been revealed by God, and is therefore binding on the conscience under pain of heresy—are those of the Council of Trent (sess. 25), “that there is a purgatory, and that the souls there detained are assisted by the suffrages of the faithful, but especially by the most acceptable sacrifice of the altar,” and the Council of Florence which had previously (A. D. 1439) defined, “If men have died penitent in the love of God, and before they have made satisfaction by fruits worthy of penance for sins of omission and of commission, their souls are purified after death by the pains of purgatory; and to the relief of these pains avail the suffrages of the faithful, sacrifices of Masses, prayers, alms, and other offices of piety.” The Penny Catechism of Christian Doctrine puts the whole teaching simply thus (under Article ix. of the Creed): “Purgatory is a place where souls suffer for a time after death on account of their sins.” It will be noticed at once how guarded and exact is the Church’s doctrine on the subject. All we are compelled to believe as part of the faith is (1) that there is a purgatory, (2) souls suffer there after

death for their sins, and (3) we can help to relieve them. And this, be it remembered, is the professed belief not only of the Catholic Church, East and West, but also of the Greek and Oriental schismatic Churches, bodies now unhappily separated from Rome, but at the time of the Council of Florence forming part of her communion.

Nevertheless, in addition to these simple dogmatic statements, and more or less naturally and necessarily flowing from them, there are other points of belief held in general by Catholics concerning the purgatorial state, though not categorically defined as articles of faith. (1) For example, it is perfectly certain that the holy souls are saved; they are in a state of grace, of friendship with God, otherwise they could never have entered purgatory at all. And not only so, but they are aware of it; they knew it at the moment of the particular judgment, which each one received at death; and this, we may believe, is the greatest consolation amid their suffering. (2) Not only are they in a state of grace, but they are confirmed in grace; there is no possibility of their ever losing it. They cannot sin in the least degree; there is no source or cause of sin present to them. (3) As to the nature of the punishments of purgatory, it is certain at all events that the holy souls suffer the *pain of loss*. This consists in their being debarred for a time through their own fault from enjoying the vision of God in heaven—God Who is the supreme object of their love, and Whom they ardently desire to see. This suffering is undoubtedly keener than any other. Cardinal Newman, in his beautiful poem, *The Dream of Gerontius*, pathetically describes the agony of the soul as torn in two directions—on the one side, eagerly longing to fly to God, its last end, and yet kept back by the consciousness of its imperfections, which it feels render it as yet unworthy to enter heaven.

“And these two pains, so counter and so keen—
The longing for Him when thou seest Him not;
The shame of self at thought of seeing Him—
Will be thy veriest, sharpest purgatory.”

(4) Further, it is the common teaching that the holy souls undergo some *pain of sense*, some positive suffering

through the application of fire, and it is most generally believed that it is a real material fire, though such has never been defined as a dogma of faith. The Greeks have never shared this belief, holding for the most part that the sufferings are purely spiritual and subjective; and it is but right to add that the Church has not condemned this view.

(5) As to the intensity of these punishments, nothing is known or taught for certain. There is the severe opinion held by St. Thomas, that the least pain of purgatory is greater than the greatest pain of this life; and there is the milder view favored by St. Bonaventure, that the greatest pain of purgatory is greater than the greatest pain of this life. But whichever way the truth lies—and probably in this world we can never know for certain, as we are dealing with an order of things altogether different from our own, and pure spirits are not under ordinary conditions of suffering—this much at least is undisputed, that the sufferings of the imprisoned souls are very bitter and severe, and that they will differ in different persons according to the debt of punishment to be paid. Yet we may be sure that the sufferers never complain, or think their lot too hard, or wish for an end to it, but are wholly reconciled to the will of God and recognize His justice in their punishment, and even rejoice in their tribulation, like the martyrs in the midst of the flames, assured that these will ultimately conduct them to the Beatific Vision.

(6) Where purgatory is we know not; neither can any man tell the length of time during which a soul may be detained there. Only this we know, that it will be proportioned to the measure of sin or the punishment due. That it is possible, however, for a soul to suffer for a long period of time, as we count time, is proved from the fact that the Church sanctions the practice of offering Masses for a soul for many years, and even generations; but, of course, for all souls purgatory will cease at the Day of Judgment, as our Lord teaches us in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel.

(7) It will be seen, then (to sum up), that only those souls go to purgatory that have either "departed this

life in venial sin, or that have not fully paid the debt of temporal punishment due to those sins of which the guilt has been forgiven." Temporal punishment is defined as "punishment that will have an end either in this world or in the world to come," and so is distinguished from eternal punishment, which is hell. The only way the Holy Souls can discharge their debt is by suffering on their own part, or by being assisted by their friends in the ways aforementioned. Strictly speaking, these souls can do naught but suffer; and even their sufferings are not meritorious or satisfactory, in the theological sense of the words. They can merit or satisfy no more; the time for that ended at death. They can do nothing to help themselves; and so they look to us to assist them in discharging their debt, even to the last farthing.

(8) And the reader will not fail to observe that the Catholic doctrine knows nothing of that hazy and illogical idea as to "imperfections" and "flaws and cavities" of one's nature being the subject-matter of the purification, and as to the "perfecting and developing of the spiritual nature," and the "modelling of an unshaped character," and "growth and advancement and progress" that is supposed to take place in the Intermediate State. Imperfections and defects and cavities and weaknesses and ignorance are not culpable or punishable unless they are voluntarily caused by the person's own fault, when they partake, to a more or less degree, of sin; and then only could they be brought within the range of purgatory. Unfortunately, we find in Protestant books on this subject such expressions as "the purifying process between death and judgment" (*i. e.*, the General Judgment), the "spiritual cleansing and purification," the wiping out of disfigurements, and the "cleansing ordeal," not only applied to the removal of sin and its consequences (which is correct), but also made to include "growth and progress and development of character" and the "perfecting of the spirit" and the "training of the mind to higher knowledge and the spirit to loftier gracefulness," and the "mounting the higher rungs of the ladder of knowledge," and the "purging of our spiritual eyesight and training in a clearer atmosphere," and much more to the same

effect—all which is utterly outside the function of purgatorial discipline. These writers, whether Lutheran or Anglican, mix up two things, imperfections and sins, in the most gratuitous and undiscerning manner, and the vagueness of their language fitly cloaks the obscurity of their thought. They will speak of “Roman perversions” of the primitive doctrine, and of the “many subordinate evils which have made the Roman doctrine of purgatory a byword,” and characterize it as “materialistic, revolting, childish, and calculated to do immeasurable harm;” and yet we shall see that Rome’s conception of purgatory is the only logical and unassailable one, and hers is the only doctrine that fits in, not only with Scripture and tradition, but even with reason and common-sense. Her teaching on this, as on all other dogmas of the faith, is clear, intelligible, and precise, whilst the opinions of heretics are nebulous, confused, and contradictory, in conflict at once with a true philosophy of man’s nature and the theology revealed by Jesus Christ.

Mistakes and Perversions.

From all that has been said, it will be seen at a glance how simple and how guarded the Catholic doctrine is, and how many fantastic and fallacious ideas about it are at once brushed away. For example, (*a*) we can only laugh at the gross notions some ignorant people seem to have about the *bodies* of any persons being in purgatory, or about the priest extorting Mass after Mass out of his poor dupes on the plea of getting their friend’s body out of the dark prison leg by leg and arm by arm. Of course there are no bodies, but only souls, in purgatory. (*b*) Again, some seem to imagine Catholics believe that *all* must go to purgatory after death. This is truly a quaint mistake. There are three states or places after the separation of the soul from the body at death, and into one or other of these the soul of every man must go—heaven, hell, or purgatory. Into which he will enter depends entirely upon the state of his soul. Some may go straight to heaven or straight to hell; others may go to purgatory; but which go into which, the Church never claims to determine. Certainly, she will tell you

without doubt or hesitation what precise conditions are required for entrance into each particular place. A man in mortal sin goes at once to hell. A man in venial sin, or with some punishment still due to sin, goes to purgatory. A man without either goes straight to heaven. But whether these conditions, or what conditions, are found in any single individual at death, she does not pretend infallibly to judge. Not even the priest who dealt with the soul as confessor in its last moments could tell for certain. That is hidden from man and known to God alone.

(c) Once more, the Catholic doctrine has no room for that novel conception, popular in some quarters, that there is a probation for certain souls after death, a "preaching of the Gospel in the intermediate state," and a chance given to the heathen of being saved which they never had on earth; nay, even a second chance for those not heathen, who made a bad use of their opportunities in their earth-life. All this straining after "the larger hope," and the "vast possibilities of the intermediate state" is nothing but the merest speculation and the rankest heresy. It rests primarily upon far-fetched and inadmissible interpretations of a few texts of Scripture (such as 1 Peter iii. 18-20). It is unsupported by tradition, and condemned by the constant teaching of the Church Catholic. It is founded upon a false theology concerning God's will to save, and His provisions for saving, every soul upon earth; namely, the theology which affirms that there can be no possibility of salvation for those who never hear Christ's name.¹ The supporters of this doctrine argue that since millions die without so much as having heard any mention of Christ's name, God must let them hear that name and give them a chance of salvation in the next world. This theory is not only, as we have said, a pure imagination, but it is entirely unnecessary in the true scheme of theology, which is that of the Catholic Church, which is that of Jesus Christ. A man's destiny is fixed irreversibly at death. "In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be" (Eccles. xi. 3, A. V.). At the moment

¹Chambers, *Our Life After Death*, p. 151.

a man dies, he is either saved or lost: for at that moment his soul appears before God to receive its particular judgment. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. ix. 27, A. V.). But before he dies, he (whether Christian or non-Christian) has had his chance of salvation. It is a dogma of faith that Almighty God offers to all men grace sufficient to save their souls in this world, for He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter iii. 9, A. V.). If men refuse or neglect to partake of the grace that flows like a river all about them, the sin and the loss and the damnation is their own. Hence there is neither sense nor truth in the supposition that after putting off the body of flesh, they may again be put on trial. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2, A. V.)—now or never.

The Proof.

This, then, being the teaching of Rome on the subject of purgatory, the question naturally arises, How do you prove it to be true? has it been revealed by God? is it a doctrine taught by Jesus Christ and His Apostles? We shall proceed to show that the doctrine of purgatory is not only a Christian truth, but is a necessary truth as well. There is, and cannot but be, a purgatory; and we shall draw our proofs from the threefold authority of Reason, Scripture, and Tradition. To begin with:

(A) REASON.

Our own reasoning about God's justice, about sin, and about punishment for sin convinces us that there must be some such place. Take a man, for example, who at death is fit for neither heaven nor hell, a man, let us suppose, who dies, not, certainly, as the enemy of God, not in mortal sin, with no grievous, deliberate, unrepented crime upon his soul; yet not perfectly free from those *smaller sins* into which the best of people will sometimes fall. He cannot as yet enter heaven; that is certain, for nothing defiled shall enter there (Rev. xxi. 27). Yet he is assuredly not

bad enough for the torments of hell, for I am supposing he is free from deadly sin. What is the only proper place for that man's soul? Purgatory, wherein he will be purified and cleansed. He is not yet fitted, and feels he is not fitted, to endure the Beatific Vision; he would not wish for it. But at this point we may expect to hear the voice of the objector.

1. "If he is a Catholic, all his sins, great and small, will have been forgiven, either by confession, or by an act of perfect contrition where confession was not possible." I answer, If so, then undoubtedly there will be no venial sin left to be forgiven. But this is not my case. All Catholics do not die so. I am supposing, and it is not hard to suppose, the case of a man who has had no time or chance to make either a confession or an act of contrition, as, for example, in sudden death; what of such an one? He must certainly obtain remission of his sins "in the world to come," the intermediate state, to which our Lord alludes (in Matt. xii. 32) as a place of forgiveness.

2. But our departed brother was a Protestant, perhaps; does that make any difference? "He was saved by faith; he made his peace with the Lord; the Blood of Christ cleansed him from all sin." These are comfortable words, albeit vague. But what exactly do they involve when analyzed? That perfect sorrow will cancel the guilt and stain of sin in a Protestant as well as in a Catholic, of course we all admit; but suppose the Protestant dies *not* sorry for some venial sin, what then? suppose he still has affection for it? suppose (and this will apply equally to a Catholic in regard to his confession and contrition), suppose he had committed some lesser sin and was never sorry for it, or was careless or neglectful or indifferent about it? Will Almighty God forgive us unless we are genuinely sorry? Assuredly not; we are taught the very contrary. "A broken and a contrite heart, indeed, He will not despise;" but the Blood of Christ cleanseth the soul of no man who is not contrite.

3. Those, therefore, who will not admit an intermediate state are driven to take refuge in the supposition (for it is nothing more) that the man's sins are washed away in some mysterious manner at the moment of death; that be-

fore he draws his last breath, or with his last breath, his sins and faults are cancelled and utterly done away, and he steps straight into the Heavenly Jerusalem. But let us calmly examine the psychological and theological accuracy of such a theory. Here is a man, let us say, with a small sin upon his soul unrepented of—sufficient to bar his entrance into heaven, but not sufficient to commit him to hell; how can the mere act of dying wipe out that sin? The act of dying is a physical, material fact; it simply means the soul leaving the body; that and nothing more. Death can only touch the body of man; it cannot change his spiritual condition. I mean that the condition of a man's soul as regards its sin and its grace, is no more changed by going out of the body than your body, gentle reader, is changed by going out of the house. The gasping out of one's breath, the extinction of the spark of life, the flight of the soul from its temple of flesh—where has God taught us that this is invested with the power of instantaneously blotting out the guilt and stain of sin, and of transforming the sinner suddenly into a saint, ready to enter at once upon the Beatific Vision? The idea is fictitious and irrational. "This theory," says the late Dr. Luckock, "invests a mere physical process with the sanctifying influence which can only be exercised through the operation of the will." Moral perfection and spiritual cleansing cannot so be accomplished. It is by the voluntary coöperation of the person with the Grace of God that such a result is reached, not certainly by any unseen, mysterious, and almost magical agency, as in the mere act of dying. "To state," says Rev. A. Chambers, though he uses the illustration to prove a different contention, "to state that a repentant murderer, the moment after execution, will have a character devoid of fault and a spirit replete with grace, is as contrary to sense as saying that the Israelites, as soon as they had crossed the Red Sea, reached the Land of Promise. There is no more reason for thinking that the work of perfecting can be brought about suddenly by the disrupting hand of death, than there is for supposing that the cracking of the shell will make the newly hatched chick a full-grown fowl." In the case of a man, Catholic or non-Catholic, dying burdened with the guilt of venial sin,

we hold that there can be but one destination, at least immediately, for him. Neither heaven nor hell is "his own place," but purgatory, where the guilt will be removed by the perfect act of charity which, according to St. Thomas, the soul makes on its release from the body. Justice demands that not until the guilt and stain and punishment of sin have been completely wiped out can the soul be admitted to the ineffable Presence of God, Who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on iniquity" (Hab. i. 13, A.V.).

4. And here we come upon another argument suggested by reason for the existence of purgatory, namely, the varying *degrees* of *punishment* that different souls deserve before they can enter heaven. It is a certain fact that punishment is due to every sin, great or small. The guilt is remitted by the Sacrament of Penance, and the eternal punishment as well, should the sin have been mortal. But over and above, there often remains a debt of temporal or temporary punishment which must be undergone, some time and in some place, before the soul is entitled to enter upon the full fruition of God's Presence.

Now Protestants, as a rule, do not admit the existence of this penalty or chastisement; they know nothing, and have heard nothing and learned nothing about it, and, along with indulgences it is probably the last point of Catholic doctrine that the majority of inquirers and converts come to believe or understand. Yet it is plainly taught in Holy Scripture, and, when grasped, it at once appeals to us as harmonizing with and flowing from the true teaching about sin, and God's justice in punishing it. We need only refer to the case of our first parents (Gen. iii. 16-19), of Moses (Num. xx. 11, 13), of the Israelite murmurers (Num. xiv. 26), of David (2 Kings—[2 Sam. A.V.]—xii. 13-18), and to other examples of the same kind related in the Bible, to find clear proof of the Catholic doctrine that though the guilt and stain of sin have been blotted out, there often remains something still to be suffered in the way of temporal punishment. I have used the word "often" advisedly: for we do not contend that the debt of punishment, though it is due, must always be exacted from the penitent. It is quite possible that he

should have such intense sorrow for sin, such perfect love of God, such a firm purpose of amendment, as may move his Heavenly Father to cancel the debt of chastisement outright. Who can measure the efficacy of the tears of St. Peter or the contrition of St. Mary Magdalen or St. Margaret of Cortona? "Wherefore I say to thee: many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much" (Luke vii. 47). Hence if a person died in perfect dispositions—dispositions perfect enough, I mean, to gain a plenary indulgence, which amounts to a remission of all the temporal punishment due—he would without doubt pass immediately to his heavenly reward. But often this does not and cannot happen; and so we content ourselves with asserting (what is enough for the case in hand) that where a person is not possessed of such perfect charity and contrition as to exclude all affection for sin and justify him fully before God—in such an event there is a punishment of penalty to be undergone, either here or in purgatory. Supposing, then, a man guilty of sin had not in fact discharged his debt of punishment in this life, either by penance or good works or indulgences—and in these days Christians, taken generally, do not hunger after penance, and mortifications as they once did—what alternative faces him but to discharge his debt in purgatory? The inexorable justice of God demands it. "Amen, I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing" (Matt. v. 26).

5. But the justice of God makes a further demand. It demands that punishments shall be meted out to sinners in proportion to the measure of their sin: that some be beaten with few stripes and others with many. No one assuredly will hold that a man who has lived a grossly sinful life and is converted on his deathbed, and, even so, is snatched from hell, so to speak, is entitled to pass as speedily and directly to the enjoyment of eternal bliss as the man whose hair has whitened in the service of God and in the steadfast practice of every virtue. God will "render to every man according to his works" (Matt. xvi. 27). It would be violating every true conception of Divine Justice to suppose that the notorious and inveterate sinner, who is barely dragged into a state of grace, should

of a sudden find himself, on leaving this world, as exempt from all punishment as the man who has sweetly expired in the most perfect love of God, and who has perhaps attained this degree of perfection by heroic penance or martyrdom. That the latter should enter at once into the Beatific Vision we can well understand; it is, indeed, a Catholic doctrine that martyrs do so. But that the former should immediately share the same felicity could not be held by anyone who calmly and judicially weighs the merits of the case. "We dare not, it is true" (to quote the Anglican, Dr. Luckock, *The Intermediate State*, p. 64), "limit the power of Omnipotence to 'fulfill a long time in a short time,' and to efface at once the results of a whole life; but general observation shows that stains which have been gradually contracted are for the most part gradually removed; and reason suggests that man's cleansing after death will bear at least some relationship to his cleansing in this life."

But perhaps it will be objected that I have chosen an extreme comparison. It is true; I have done so purposely for the sake of greater clearness, and any scheme of theology that claims to be true must provide for all cases, even extreme. But put the matter more moderately, if you will. It is undoubtedly the fact that some commit many sins, others commit few. Some serve God faithfully for sixty or seventy years; others are cut off two or three years after turning to Him; while others again continue to outrage His Divine Majesty up to the very last, and are hardly converted when they are called to their account. Now, I ask, are these all to begin their after-life at exactly the same level? Are the former to be in no more favorable case than the latter? It cannot be. Do we not know that some expiate their sins, here and now, by punishments, whether inflicted by God or by themselves, much more than others? And are we to say that a prodigal who has years of accumulated sin cancelled by one confession—a confession, possibly, made through imperfect contrition, the fear of hell—satisfies God's demands by the perfunctory performance of a trifling penance, as fully as Saints like St. Paul of the Cross, or like St. Alphonsus and St. Aloysius, who never

lost their innocence and whose whole lives nevertheless were, as one may say, one terrific mortification? To ask the question is to answer it. The simple truth is that at death some have ascended almost to the very top of the ladder; others have but planted their feet on the lowest rung. It is (to vary the simile) as if the first had all but finished their course, whilst the latter had only started. These, therefore, must wait and suffer the penalty justly due to their many sins by undergoing the purifying fire, and by being delayed in reaching the supreme object of their love, and by experiencing keen pangs of remorse at the sight of their brethren hovering, as it were, at the very portals of heaven and within a little of being admitted to the joy of their Lord.

The act of dying, as we have seen, can of itself work no spiritual transformation; it cannot bend or crush with mechanical precision all souls into one uniform groove. We start our after-life exactly where we left off here. That all who die in the love of God will ultimately see Him face to face is indeed a truth most blessed and consoling; but before that consummation, some may have long to wait and suffer. By God's mercy they have been saved; in His justice they must still be punished. A father may forgive his child, yet he may chastise him; and only by contradicting every analogy in the world of experience and of reason, only by whittling away the attributes of justice and fair dealing in the Divine character, and by eliminating from Holy Scripture its teaching as to the retribution that follows sin—only thus could we picture the dying saint and the trembling, terror-stricken deathbed penitent being ushered side by side, with equal step, into an equal place in the life beyond.

(B) SCRIPTURE.

But now let us advance another step in our proofs for purgatory. The Protestant at this point will naturally object. "Grant the existence of purgatory is reasonable; admit, if you will, that it even appears necessary; yet it is not in the Bible; it is not only not supported, but is even contradicted by Holy Scripture, which knows only two

places after death—heaven and hell.” Our reply is that this doctrine is Scriptural, and that it is Christ’s teaching and that of His inspired Apostles. But before adducing the passages in proof, there are one or two points to bear in mind regarding the strength and value of the Scriptural proof of purgatory.

1. In the first place, the Catholic Church does not rest the proofs of her doctrine *exclusively* on Holy Scripture. She does not claim to find texts explicitly conveying her every dogma. We might cite, as examples of this, Infant Baptism, the number of the Sacraments, Indulgences, and the Immaculate Conception. It is true she never could admit or teach a doctrine which was opposed by Holy Scripture, because that would amount to contradicting the Holy Ghost. Not all that Jesus Christ taught is fully and plainly expressed in the New Testament. Certainly, it is there implicitly: it is often hinted at or implied; or it follows logically from some other doctrine clearly enunciated. But whatever of our Lord’s teaching is veiled or hidden in the written Word, is certainly contained in tradition, that unwritten Word of God which was taught by Jesus Christ, deposited with His Apostles, and handed down and unfolded by them and their successors, with the assistance of the Holy Ghost, Who came that He might “teach them all things and bring all things to their remembrance” (John xiv. 26; xvi. 13). The result is that when you come to the reading of Holy Scriptures with the Catholic doctrine already in your mind, you can find it there plainly enough; you discover and recognize it in passages which before were simply unintelligible. Supposing, then, that neither the name purgatory nor the existence of such a place were taught in so many words in the Bible, that would be no argument against its truth. Yet, of course, the case for purgatory is far stronger than that.

2. In the next place, we must remark that it need be no surprise if we find less in Holy Scripture about purgatory than about either heaven or hell. We must not demand more testimony from such a witness about the intermediate state than can reasonably be expected. The Scriptures for the most part are intended to teach us, by pre-

cept and example, how to live on earth, how to know and love and serve God here below; for upon this assuredly depends our hereafter. And again the Scriptures are designed to reveal, though in a lesser degree, the rewards and punishments that are reserved for us at the Judgment Day; to show the ultimate destiny both of the man who has lived a good life and of him who has lived a bad one; to depict, in short, heaven and hell. Hence, from the very nature of the case, we should expect to hear less about that middle state which intervenes between death and the general judgment. A man's final destiny, as has been said, is already fixed at death; consequently upon due preparation for that event attention is most naturally concentrated by Holy Scripture. We should not be astonished, therefore, if information less full is vouchsafed us about that state which, in its purifying and cleansing operation, merely puts the finishing touch upon a work of sanctification already substantially accomplished.

3. From this it follows of course that the quotation by Protestants of texts promising heaven as a reward is beside the point. "In My Father's house there are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you. . . . I will take you to Myself, that where I am, you also may be"—these words of our Lord, and the desire of St. Paul "to be dissolved and to be with Christ" (Phil. i. 23), "to be absent rather from the body and to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 8) and the expression of St. John, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" (Apoc. xiv. 13), import nothing against the Catholic doctrine. Neither Jesus Christ nor His Apostles necessarily imply that the entrance into heaven after death, though assured, will be immediate. Our divine Lord Himself did not immediately after death pass into heaven. Scripture broken up and taken piecemeal can be quoted to prove almost anything. According to this principle, and with equal plausibility, Catholics might argue from our Lord's declaration (Matt. xxv. 34), that only at the Last Day, when all nations are gathered together for the general judgment, and not till then, can anyone possess the kingdom prepared for him—a conclusion which is certainly false. Scripture requires to be examined as a

whole and interpreted by an infallible authority. Let us, then, produce our Scripture proofs.

(a) To begin with the Old Testament, there is the classical text in 2 Mach. xii. 43-46. "It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins." Protestants, I know, call this book "apocryphal," and deny that it is inspired; their reforming forefathers deliberately cast it out of the sacred volume of which it had formed an integral part, no less than the Four Gospels, ever since the Canon was settled in the fourth century. "Finding" (as has been acutely remarked) "that they could not by any evasion weaken the force of the text, they impiously threw overboard the Books of Machabees, like a man who assassinates a hostile witness." But even so, they must at least admit that as historical records these books are genuine and trustworthy; and, as such, the passage quoted shows that both author and Jewish people at that time (the centuries immediately preceding the birth of Christ) believed that prayers and sacrifices were advantageous to the faithful departed. Such a belief, of course, involves a purgatory. It is, moreover, an established fact that the Jews now, as then, believe in the existence of some middle state, and offer prayers to God for the souls there detained, both in public and in private worship. An examination of the liturgy or of an authorized prayer-book of the Jewish Church to-day, will convince the reader that the children of Israel have never forgotten or neglected the sacred duty of praying for their deceased brethren. Now note what follows from this. Our Lord by His silence approved of the doctrine and the practice; never once did He reprove or condemn it. He was present habitually at the solemn liturgical services of Synagogue and Temple and joined in them; doubtless in private He made use of the ordinary Jewish prayers and devotions; yet never once did He object to this feature in them. It was His rule, as we know, to denounce corruptions of faith and morals introduced by Scribes, Pharisees, and priests, and to lay bare the human traditions with which they had overlaid the Word of the Lord. But among them He does not reckon the

pious custom of praying for the dead, and from this we are entitled to conclude that the custom is a lawful one, and the doctrine, which it presupposes, true.

(b) In Matt. xii. 32 our Saviour says of a certain sin that it should be forgiven "neither in this world, nor in the world to come." From this, surely, it is fair enough to infer (with St. Augustine and other eminent commentators) that there are some sins which may be forgiven in the world to come. But that could not happen either in heaven or in hell.

(c) St. Paul in a famous passage (1 Cor. iii. 11-15) declares that "fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is," and that the man "himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." Where is this fire? Not certainly on earth and not in heaven; and as certainly not in hell, for that fire torments but does not save. Hence the Apostle must refer only to the temporary purifying flames of purgatory. And this interpretation is not a modern or Popish invention; it is the unanimous voice of the Fathers of Christendom, as anyone may prove for himself by consulting the relative passages in the writings of Origen, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and others of like authority.

(d) Further, that St. Paul himself actually practised the custom of praying for the dead seems morally certain from his own words in 2 Tim. i. 16-18, taken together with 2 Tim. iv. 19. "The Lord grant unto him to find mercy of the Lord in that day" is the prayer he offers for Onesiphorus, his former fellow-laborer at Ephesus. That this man was no longer among the living when the Apostle uttered this supplication on his behalf, appears clear enough from the fact that the Apostle sends no salutation to him in his letter to St. Timothy, but only to his household; for him he only prays that he "may find mercy" with Christ at the Day of Judgment. And such is the opinion, not only of Catholic commentators, but also of Protestants like Luther and De Wette.

(e) Other passages might be cited from Holy Scripture conveying more or less directly the doctrine of purgatory, such as Matt. xvi. 27; Matt. v. 25, 26, and Apoc. xxi. 27; but we shall content ourselves with adducing

only two more that strike us as much to the purpose. I ask, now, if there be no third place in the world beyond, how can we possibly explain that much-debated passage in St. Peter's First Epistle (iii. 18-20) about the spirits in prison, and the promise to the good thief upon the Cross, "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise?" (Luke xxiii. 43.) On the Catholic interpretation, the sense is perfectly clear. After expiring on the Cross, our Blessed Lord's soul, accompanied by that of the penitent thief, descended to Limbo, that place where the souls of the just who died before Christ were detained. The "Paradise" to which He went assuredly was not heaven, for He Himself declared to St. Mary Magdalen after His Resurrection, "I am not yet ascended to My Father" (John xx. 17). Nor yet was it hell, the place of the damned. The words of the Psalmist (Ps. xv., A. V. Psa. xvi.), "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell," quoted by St. Peter (Acts ii. 31) as applying to our Lord, cannot refer to the place of everlasting torment, for the soul of our Divine Redeemer was certainly never in such a place. Hence it must have been Limbo, Hades, the prison, Paradise, call it what you will. And the reason why the souls of the just of the Old Law, such as Abraham and Moses and the Prophets, were there detained was simply because they could not go up to heaven till Christ opened it for them. This He did only when He ascended forty days after His Resurrection. Before that event, He declared, "no man had ascended into heaven" (John iii. 13). But at His Ascension He opened the gates of heaven, which had been shut ever since the expulsion of Adam and Eve (Gen. iii. 24), and took with Him a great company of redeemed and purified souls. To Catholics, then, acknowledging a middle place, the visit of our Saviour with the good thief to the spirits in prison presents no difficulty. But on the Protestant theory that no such place exists, or ever existed, what satisfactory interpretation can be given to these passages? I venture to say, none. No place whatever is to be found for the millions of souls that departed this life, before the coming of the Redeemer, with the guilt of venial sin, or with some debt of temporal punish-

ment not yet discharged. And precisely for this reason I have known a Protestant teacher reject and refuse to utter these words in the Creed, "He descended into hell," well knowing that the expression postulated a middle state which he did not believe in. Would that all Protestants were as logical in perceiving the flagrant Popery of the Apostles' Creed!

(C) TRADITION.

It now only remains to bring forward our third great set of proofs for purgatory and prayers for the departed, the testimony, namely, of Tradition. That Protestants in general set little or no store by tradition is too well known, and hence some might consider it useless and superfluous to set such evidence before them. Nevertheless, though they may not acknowledge its value as proving purgatory to be a doctrine of Christ and His Apostles, they will at least be forced to admit—those of them, I mean, who make an impartial review of the evidence—that it completely destroys the popular contention that it is a late invention of cunning priests, designed to squeeze money out of sorrowing Christians to purchase Masses for the souls of their dear departed. If we can show (to quote the words of Monsignor Gaume) that "it is a fact, as certain as the existence of the sun, that since the time of the Apostles the Church has never ceased to offer prayers and sacrifices for her departed children," surely it will be allowed that a good case has been made out for the Apostolic origin of the doctrine we are expounding, and if it is of Apostolic authority it follows of necessity that it has the authority of our Divine Lord.

We shall best present the testimony of Tradition by dividing it into three parts: (1) The Catacombs, (2) The Early Fathers, (3) The Primitive Liturgies.

I. *The Catacombs.*

These may be comprehensively described as underground cemeteries, excavated by the early Christians, under stress of persecution, for the entombment of their dead, and for the celebration of the sacred Mysteries of

our religion. The inscriptions on the walls, referring to their dead, date, according to archæologists, from the first to the fifth century of our era. They cover a period, therefore, that non-Catholics speak of as pure and uncorrupted by the malign influence of Rome. "It is the record" (to use the words of the Anglican Dean Luckock, *After Death*, p. 85), "of an age to which we may turn with confidence for guidance in difficulty, for on no period of the Church's history has the true spirit of her Founder left so clear an impress. We accept, therefore, whatever indication it may give of primitive usage or doctrine with feelings of satisfaction, assured that we should find nothing but the calm, deliberate, belief of the generations for which it speaks."

What, then, do these inscriptions teach us? They reveal, with the utmost clearness, the belief of the primitive Christians in the doctrine of an Intermediate State and in the efficacy of prayers for the departed. Take a few examples out of multitudes. "Peace to thy soul, O Zosima, and peace to Fortunata my sweetest daughter." "Hilaris, may you live happily with your friends; may you be refreshed in the peace of God," "Kalemeros, may God refresh thy spirit, together with that of thy sister Hilara," "Bolosa, may God refresh you," "Heraclea, Roma, may thy soul [go] into refreshment," "Timothea, mayest thou have eternal light in Christ," "O Lord, let not the spirit of Venus be overshadowed," "Beloved one, may thy spirit be in peace," "Peace with thee, Lais. May thy spirit rest in good," "Remember, O Lord Jesus, our child," "May thy spirit rest well in God. Pray for thy sister," "Mayest thou live in peace and pray for us," "Mayest thou live in the Lord and pray for us." The last three are remarkable in that they contain not only prayers for the departed, but also invocation of saints. It would be easy to fill several pages with inscriptions of this kind, taken from the museums and catacombs of the city of Rome, and the interested reader can find a hundred more for himself in such standard works as Northcote and Brownlow's *Roma Sotterranea*; but enough has been produced to impress on anyone the general character of these epitaphs. They implore for

the departed soul peace and light and refreshment and rest in God and in Christ. It may be objected that many of the expressions are nothing more than "pious acclamations." But the same might be said of the *Requiescat in pace* ("May he rest in peace"), and yet Catholics using these words undoubtedly intend a direct prayer for the souls of the departed. We claim that these ancient mural inscriptions show, with a clearness unmistakable to all who are not wilfully blind, that our first fathers in the faith had an intense belief in the truth which Wisdom had made known, that "the souls of the just are in the hand of God, and the torment of death shall not touch them. . . . but they are in peace" (Wisd. iii. 1, 3), that though many might be in heaven, as the martyrs, still there were others who needed light in their darkness, rest in their trouble, refreshment from the heat of the purgatorial fire, and peace, to end their sufferings. "In a word" (to quote a comprehensive sentence of Provost Northcote), "they proceed upon the assumption that there is an incessant interchange of kindly offices between this world and the next, between the living and the dead; they represent all the faithful as living members of one Body, the Body of Christ; as forming one great family, knit together in the closest bonds of love; and this love finding its chief work and happiness in prayer, prayer of survivors for those who have gone before, prayer of the blessed for those who are left behind." Whence could have originated this doctrine and this practice? Our answer is, it has its origin in the Deposit of the Faith, taught by Jesus Christ and transmitted by the Apostles; and it is the only answer that can be given.

2. *The Early Fathers.*

Turning now to our second class of witnesses for Christian tradition, we meet the constant and unanimous teaching of the earliest *Fathers and Doctors of the Church*—that is to say, those of the first four or five centuries. Protestants themselves do not call in question the existence of a full-grown belief in purgatory in the centuries that followed. "For more than thirteen hundred years," said Calvin, "the practice of praying for the dead has

existed." To relate all, or even any considerable part of these primitive testimonies, would of course be impossible within the limits of these pages: we must select but a few that may stand as specimens of all. They will be sufficient to substantiate the Catholic claim that the immediate successors of the Apostles, handing down Apostolic doctrine, teach, unrebuked and unquestioned, the practice of praying for the departed, and rather take for granted, than attempt to prove, the existence of the intermediate state between heaven and hell. Tertullian, for example, in the second century, speaks frequently of it, and says that the usage was founded on tradition. "The faithful wife," he says, "will pray for the soul of her deceased husband, particularly on the anniversary of his falling asleep." St. Cyprian (third century) speaks of the custom of celebrating the Sacrifice for the repose of souls as being already practised by the bishops who preceded him. Eusebius, the historian (fourth century), describes how at the funeral of Constantine the Great, the priests and people, with tears and much lamentation, offered up prayers and sacrifice for the repose of his soul. St. Cyril of Jerusalem (same century), explaining to the faithful the custom of praying for the dead, says: "We pray for our parents and our bishops, and in general for the souls of all our departed ones in the firm hope that they receive great consolation from the prayers that are offered for them in the holy and awful Sacrifice." St. Ephrem (same century) begged his brethren to assist his soul after death with their prayers. St. Ambrose (same century) prayed God for the deceased Emperor Theodosius: "Give perfect rest to thy servant Theodosius, that rest which Thou hast prepared for thy saints." St. John Chrysostom, our final witness for the fourth century, decidedly declares that it was "*ordained by the Apostles* that mention should be made of the dead in the tremendous mysteries, because they knew well that they would receive great benefit from it." In the fifth century St. Augustine composed a treatise on our duties to the dead, in which prayers for their repose continually occur. "That," he says, "which cannot be doubted is that the prayers of the Church, the Holy Sacrifice, alms, bring relief

to them, and obtain a more merciful treatment for them than they deserved." And who does not remember the touching request made to him by his holy mother St. Monica when at the point of death: "Lay this body anywhere: let not the care of it in anyway disturb you. This only I request of you, that, wherever you be, you would remember me at the altar of the Lord." That her son faithfully fulfilled her dying request, and interceded for her with God, often in the most impassioned language, is known to all who are familiar with the life of the illustrious Doctor.

These few examples must here suffice; they may be multiplied to any extent by the reader who consults works dealing with this part of the subject. And we may safely assert that no one reading the early Fathers, with a mind unwarped by prejudice, can help seeing that they not only taught the doctrine, but themselves practised the custom of offering prayers for the faithful departed, and that both in their private devotion and in the solemn services of the Church. If you say "I do not care what the Fathers taught and did; I care only for what Christ and His Apostles taught and did," I answer, I am helping you to find out that very thing; for these teachers I am quoting are merely handing down what they were taught by Jesus Christ and His Apostles. They began to flourish immediately after the death of the last of the Apostles; they were in the full stream of Apostolic tradition; the Gospel was as yet, according to Protestants, untainted by Roman corruptions. It is inconceivable, then, that these holy and learned men should have inculcated and encouraged such belief had they not received it from their predecessors in the faith. They could not have invented a practice, involving the momentous addition of a third place after death, and foisted it on Christian communities without resistance and reproof. Neither gradually nor suddenly could such a doctrine have crept in without being detected as at variance with the teaching of the Apostles. Popes and bishops, whether individually or acting in councils, zealous custodians of the faith delivered to the saints, kept sleepless guard over the Apostolic teaching and constitutions, and from their watch-tower could at once have signalled

the entrance of false or spurious or unauthorized doctrines. Yet no voice was ever raised against the constantly reiterated doctrine of Purgatory and Prayers for the Dead. We can only conclude, then, with St. Isidore, a Doctor of the seventh century, who declares, "Because the oblation of the Sacrifice and prayer for the repose of the faithful departed, are made in the Church throughout the world, we believe that this custom has come from the Apostles."

3. *The Primitive Liturgies.*

Once more, the faith of the Church finds expression in its forms of prayer, according to the saying *lex credendi, lex orandi*. The Church could never, in the solemn celebration of her Sacred Mysteries, authorize prayers involving false or unscriptural doctrine. Now, it is as certain as anything in history can be, that prayers for the faithful departed formed an integral part of her liturgy during the first five centuries. A liturgy may be described as "the established formulary of public worship, containing the authorized prayers of the Church." The principal liturgies are found to range themselves in several great families or classes. They are, for example, the Liturgy of St. James (Jerusalem), the Liturgy of St. Mark (Alexandria), the Liturgy of St. Peter (Rome), the Liturgy of St. Basil and of St. John Chrysostom (Constantinople), to mention but a few of the more widely spread in various regions. They range in date, according to varying estimates, from the second to the fifth century. Now, no one pretends to deny that every one of the liturgies, without exception, contains direct intercession for the departed. In that of St. James, for instance, the priest prays, "Remember, O Lord God, the spirits of all flesh of whom we have made mention, and of whom we have not made mention, who are of the true faith; from righteous Abel unto this day: do Thou Thyself give them rest there, in the land of the living." These words again are from St. Mark's Liturgy: "Give rest, O Sovereign Lord, our God, to the souls of all those who are in the tabernacle of the saints in Thy Kingdom." St. Cyril's has this: "Be merciful, O Lord. Grant rest to our fathers and brothers

who have fallen asleep, and whose souls Thou hast received." Similar expressions are to be found in them all. And not only the liturgies used by the Roman Catholic Church throughout the world, but, what is more significant still, those of the earliest heretics who broke off from her contain the same petitions and intercessions. From the fourth and fifth centuries, when the Arians and Nestorians fell away, to the ninth, which witnessed the Greek schism, various Christian communities lapsed into heresy and schism, severing their union with the Apostolic See. Yet they took with them the ancient liturgies, and never ceased the holy practice of offering sacrifice for their dead. A very cursory perusal of the Armenian, the Chaldean, the Coptic, the Maronite, the Syriac, or other Oriental rite, will satisfy any inquirer on the point. He will find in all a formula almost identical with that repeated every day in the Roman Missal: "Remember, O Lord, Thy servants who are gone before us with the sign of the faith and sleep in peace. To these, O Lord, and to all who rest in Christ, grant, we beseech Thee, a place of refreshment, light, and peace, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord."

If these Eastern Churches, separated from the Roman See for so many centuries, yet hold the same belief and follow the same practice as we do, then there is surely good reason to think that, in common with us, they received this doctrine from the Apostles. We may conclude, therefore, that Protestants, in rejecting this salutary practice, are following after novelties, and have cut themselves adrift from the whole of Christendom, East and West, from Apostolic times down to the present hour.

Conclusion.

Much might be added now on the devotional and practical sides of this subject, but this must be learned elsewhere. In a last word, however, we cannot help noting how the custom of interceding for departed Christians is beginning to obtain among non-Catholics. And the reason is not far to seek. For one thing (*a*) Protestants no longer believe, as they used to

do, in the *eternity* of hell; and as a hell that is not eternal is no hell at all, but simply a purgatory, the Catholic doctrine perforce is finding wide acceptance. Believing in the "larger hope," in salvation for all, in a second chance after death, and trading upon the supposed impossibility of a never-ending punishment, our separated brethren see every reason for continuing to pray for departed sinners; and what is this but an approximation to the Catholic doctrine? As hell gradually vanishes, purgatory takes its place. They are beginning to say there is something in the old Catholic doctrine after all.

(b) But besides this, it is a *natural instinct* in the human heart to pray for departed friends. It is contrary to human nature and to reason suddenly to stop praying for a soul for which you have prayed all your life, simply because it has been separated from the body; for what has distance to do with it? And so it is to-day that, among those who are returning to this ancient practice, the love of the heart is asserting itself over the dogmatism of sect, and many Protestants freely pursue their loved ones beyond the grave with supplications for their repose. Not to do so appears to them heartless and illogical. And they experience a comfort and a joy, as Catholics do, in the holy custom. They feel the black gulf is bridged across, and that they are still knit together in the bonds of a common love and sympathy. The sting of death and the sharpness of its sorrow is mitigated by the constant remembrance of them, by the thought that they are still bound to these dear departed by the golden chain of prayer, and can pray for, and help, and even speak to them, as of old. Death is robbed of much of its terror, and the separation of friends becomes endurable. With this beautiful belief, the Christian standing at the open grave is no longer mute and puzzled, but finds vent for his grief in earnest petitions to God on behalf of his loved ones. Funeral services are no longer a mere empty pageant, with lengthy prayers designed to glorify the departed and sympathize with the living. Tombstone inscriptions and anniversaries are no more a meaningless formality. But these and other pious customs become clothed with deep

and real significance, and are used as a practical means of assisting the souls of the dead to arrive at their heavenly home. What more touching and beautiful sight, indeed, can anywhere be witnessed than that which may be seen in Catholic lands as often as the Day of All Souls (November 2d) comes round? The entire population of village or city is seen making its way to the "campo santo" (the cemetery), in hundreds and in thousands, to visit their dead, carrying with them wreaths and crosses and flowers, kindling lamps that symbolize the light of faith, and breathing prayers for the welfare of the souls that have gone before. There, at least, one sees and realizes the meaning of that article of the Creed, "the Communion of Saints." Let us whisper a fervent prayer that such once more may be the faith and devotion of every Christian as in days gone by, and that all, bound together as one family in submission to the Roman Church, may find themselves assisting at the offering of the Holy Mass for the living and the dead, and with one heart and one voice send up to Almighty God the hal-
lowed prayer—

Requiem eternam dona eis, Domine,
Et lux perpetua luceat eis!
Requiescant in pace!
Amen!

POSTSCRIPT.—The writer acknowledges his indebtedness for some ideas, and even phraseology, both to non-Catholic authors, such as Luckock, Chambers, and others (works cited), and to the usual theological and controversial books by Catholics.

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