

# PURGATORY QUESTIONS

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1. Do the Scriptures speak about praying for the dead?

The Second Book of Machabees tells us that after Judas had defeated Gorgias, he came to bury the slain Jews. "Making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachmas of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead." II Mach. XII, 43. Evidently Judas did not regard their sins to be grievous, for he says, "because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness had great grace laid up for them." That praying for the dead was a Jewish practice is manifested in these words: II Mach. XII, 45. "It is, therefore, a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins." II Mach. XII, 46.

2. But the Books of Machabees are not contained in the Protestant Bible so why quote it to prove your doctrine?

The reformers rejected these books from the Bible precisely because they taught the doctrine of praying for the dead. If you Protestants deny that the Books of Machabees are two of the inspired books of the Bible then you must admit them as historical records of Jewish faith in praying for the dead.

3. Does the New Testament speak of your Purgatory?

Not in name but in fact. Mt. 12, 32: "He that shall speak against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him neither in this world, nor in the world to come." St. Augustine and St. Gregory gather from these words that some sins may be remitted in the world to come; and consequently that there is a Purgatory. St. Paul I Cor. 3, 13-15: "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." St. Paul tells us in these words that the soul shall be judged, suffer for a time and then be saved. The only place to suffer for a time before being saved is Purgatory. St. Mt. 5, 25-26 speaks of the Prison, "and thou be cast into Prison. Amen I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence, till thou pay the last farthing."

4. Did the early Christians believe in Purgatory?

The tombs of the martyrs and the catacombs are filled with definite evidence to prove that the early Christians certainly believed in Purgatory. On their tombs we read: "In your prayers remember us who have gone before you ... "Mayest thou have eternal light in Christ." Tertullian (160-240) speaks of anniversary Masses for the dead: "We make on one day every year oblations for the dead, as for their birthdays." "The faithful widow . . . offers prayers on the anniversary of his death." St. Monica just before dying made this request of her son St. Augustine: "Lay this body anywhere; let not the care of it in any way disturb you. This only I request of you, that you would remember me at the altar of the Lord, wherever you be." St. Augustine then petitions And inspire, that as many as shall read these words may remember at Thy Altar, Monica, Thy servant." Hence no sane student of history can deny the fact of this universal custom of the early Church, i. e., of praying for the dead because she believed in Purgatory.

5. Did the Jews believe in Purgatory?

Certainly the Jews believed in offering prayers and sacrifice for their departed friends and relatives and they still believe in this custom for they are found always at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. In their liturgy for funerals of Hebrews the prayers for the dead read as though they were Catholic prayers for the dead.

6. Did Luther believe in Purgatory?

No. Fr. Conway in "Question Box," says, "Luther's false theory of justification by faith alone led him to deny the distinction between mortal and venial sin, the fact of temporal punishment, the necessity of good works, the efficacy of indulgences, and the usefulness of prayers for the dead. If sin is not remitted but only covered; if the 'New Man' of the Gospel is Christ imputing His own justice to the still sinful man, it would indeed be useless to pray for the dead that they be loosed from their sins. Luther's denial of Purgatory implied either the cruel doctrine that the greater number of even devout Christians were lost, which accounts in some measure for the modern denial of eternal punishment, or the unwarranted assumption that God by 'some sudden, magical change' purifies the soul at the instant of death."

Protestant prayers for the dead, if ever they pray for the dead, are a waste of time and are meaningless unless they admit a Purgatory.

7. Christ sent the good thief immediately into Paradise. I don't see the need of your Purgatory.

The good thief gained Paradise immediately because of his perfect contrition and anyone dying in the state of contrition that is judged perfect by God immediately merits Heaven. Whether our contrition is perfect or imperfect depends on God's judgment. The Book of Wisdom (VII, 25) declares that "nothing defiled cometh" into the presence of the Spirit of Wisdom. St. John in the Apocalypse describes the new Jerusalem and says (XXI, 27), "There shall not enter into it anything defiled." This means that souls must be purified of slight blemishes of venial sins which involve temporal punishment still to be suffered. Common sense tells us that some are not worthy to enter at once into Heaven and that they are not bad enough to be doomed to hell. There must, therefore be an intermediate state where the soul is cleansed of its defilement. It is contrary to nature not to pray for the departed friend or relative. The instinct of nature creates a hope that everything is all right with the departed, and, if not, there is found a latent urge to help with prayer and sacrifice. Purgatory robs death of its terrors. When the Reformers denied this doctrine they drove a stiletto into the Scriptures and the unbroken tradition of the Christian Church. They choked and stifled the inherent cravings of our hearts. If I can pray for my mother when she is alive then why not when she is dead, that she, too, be loosed of her sins? Can we not then hear the cry of Job: "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends, because the hands of the Lord hath touched me." Job XIX, 21. Tennyson gives testimony to the natural yearning of the human heart and to the Christian tradition, when he writes:

*"I have lived my life, and that which I have done  
May He within Himself make pure; but thou,  
If thou shouldst never see my face again,  
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice  
Rise like a fountain for me night and day."*

8. I am interested in your dogma concerning Purgatory. Must I be a Catholic before I can understand that invention of your Church.

No. You must be a non-Catholic to suspect that the Church did invent it. The idea that there is no Purgatory is the invention of Protestants. The Reformers corrupted the true doctrine, and many good Protestants, realizing this, are returning to the Catholic religion of their forefathers. Meantime, if I could discover, or you could show me, when and where the Church invented this doctrine, I promise to spend the rest of my life exposing the Catholic Church as a merely human institution making outrageous claims upon men.

9. Why make people afraid of such a horrible place as Purgatory, when you know that it does not exist?

I know that it does exist. And if you deny it because to you it seems a horrible place, you must deny hell also because it is far more horrible. And if you deny hell, you deny Christianity. And is it not a more horrible thought that there would be no Purgatory? In that case you would have but Heaven and hell. All not quite fit for Heaven could not hope to escape hell. It is a much more pleasant thought that there are people not quite good enough for Heaven, yet not bad enough for hell, and that these are sent to Purgatory until they are purified sufficiently for Heaven.

10. What is the nature of your doctrine on Purgatory?

It can be summed up very briefly. At death the soul of man, if quite fit, goes at once to Heaven; if not quite fit, to Purgatory; if quite unfit, to hell. The soul which has repented of all its sins, and has fully expiated them in this life, is quite fit for Heaven at once. The soul which departs this life in a state of unrepented mortal sin can never be fitted for Heaven, and goes to hell. But a soul which has sincerely repented of its sins, yet has not fully expiated them, secures immunity from hell by repentance, and goes to Purgatory until it has expiated all its deficiencies.

11. Does God want to roast you merely because you have the misfortune to be alive? He knows that you had no say in the matter.

God does not want to roast me. It is not a misfortune to be alive, though it is blame-worthy to have misused one's existence. Nor did I want a say as to whether I should receive the gift of existence. People can leave me a fortune tomorrow without consulting me. But I did have a say in my infidelities to God's grace, and for that I am responsible and do not wish to excuse myself.

12. Have you been so atrociously wicked as to deserve Purgatory?

There is no need to be atrociously wicked in order to need purification, any more than there is need to be on your deathbed before you need medicine. But there is need to attain to a high standard of purity and holiness before one could be fit to enter the glory of God's presence.

13. Do Protestants go to Purgatory?

All who die in the charity of Christ whether they have known Him or not escape hell. If they are not good enough to enter Heaven they go to Purgatory. Between souls united to Christ in Heaven and on earth and in Purgatory there flourishes a most intimate relation. We ask each other's prayers on earth; we do not believe that our holiest and best lose their power to pray for us merely because they have been transferred to Heaven, so we often ask them to continue so doing. In the Communion of Saints we have the Church Triumphant assisting the Church Militant, and the Church Militant by prayers and indulgences assisting the Church Suffering. Hence you see that the Church has nothing to do with hell. But she has a very intimate connection with both Purgatory and Heaven. The Church has nothing to do with hell, because it is no use praying for those who are in hell and there is no need to pray for those who are safely in Heaven, it is obvious that there is a place of temporal suffering, or purification, or purgation—Purgatory. Since Protestants admit only a Heaven and a Hell it is absurd and useless for them to pray for the dead.

14. Would God destine so good a man as George Washington for Purgatory just because he was not a Catholic?

Purgatory is not a final destiny. Every soul that goes there is saved, and is ultimately admitted to the very Vision of God. Good Protestants as well as good Catholics will go there if they are not quite perfect at death. There is no dispensation. And where is the man who has not his imperfections?

15. A man has every chance to repent in this life.

He has. And if he does not, he will not even go to Purgatory if his sins be grave. Purgatory is not a place for repentance, but for purification. If two men repent on their deathbeds, one of whom broke one commandment and the other, all the commandments often, both are saved by their repentance. But they are not both equal before God. They will suffer relative purifications in Purgatory.

16. This dogma of Purgatory was invented by Pope Gregory in 600 A. D., and was made an article of faith by the Council of Florence in 1439.

If not invented until 600 A. D., why did St. Monica, in the fourth century, implore her son St. Augustine, as she lay on her dying bed, that he would pray for her soul whenever he went to the Altar to offer the Mass? And how would you account for the inscriptions in the catacombs recording prayers for the dead offered by the Christians of the first centuries? Or, if you would go back earlier, what will you do with the teaching of Scripture itself. The Council of Florence merely recalled previous definitions.

17. What is your Romish reply to the challenge of Article XXII in the Book of Common Prayer?

That Article of the Church of England says that the Romish doctrine of Purgatory is grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but is rather repugnant to the Word of God. The reply is that the Article is quite erroneous, and that many Anglicans realize the fact. Thus an Anglican clergyman unsays that Article definitely in this book entitled, "The Catholic Religion—A Manual of Instruction for Members of the Church of England." He speaks of a place of mercy "provided in the intermediate state, in which evil will be completely purged. When this purification is accomplished, such souls enter into perfect peace," p. 193. On the following page he suggests that, at the Reformation, men were too eager and rejected much that was true—including the intermediate state. In no less than six different places he urges prayer for the dead just as Catholics pray for the dead, and, as he shows from Scripture, both the Jews and St. Paul prayed for the departed. On p. 379, he writes, "Still more desirable is the celebration of the Holy Eucharist for the repose of the soul of the departed." Thus this Anglican clergyman goes back to the Romish doctrine of Purgatory. I am not quoting from a book unacceptable to the many. My copy is of the 19th edition, completing 207 thousand.

18. How can an Anglican clergyman who has sworn to accept the articles of Religion, teach such doctrine?

I do not see how he can do so. Romish theologians are simple children compared with the capacity for mental gymnastics manifested by Rev. Vernon Staley, the author of the book, in his efforts to salve his conscience. He says in effect that the doctrine of Purgatory is all right, but that Anglicans must not use the word Purgatory. He admits the thing but not its terminology. He calls it a place or process of cleansing, but he will not call it Purgatory, which means the same thing. It is as if we Catholics had invented the word theatre. Then this exponent of Anglicanism would insist

upon using the word play-house, and swear that he did not agree with the Catholic Church concerning houses of entertainment. In substance he declares Article XXII to be false and unscriptural.

19. You speak of Scripture, but the Bible mentions only Heaven and hell.

It does not. It certainly mentions an intermediate state to which the soul of Christ went after His death on the cross. 1 Pet. III, 19. This state was neither Heaven nor hell, but the Limbo of the Fathers of the Old Law. In addition to this, Scripture mentions the purgatorial state. In any case, it would not matter if the Bible did mention but two places. My mentioning only London and New York could not prove the non-existence of Paris. It would be a different matter if Christ had said, "There is no Purgatory." But He did not.

20. How do you prove the existence of such a state?

In Matt. V, 26, Christ, in condemning sin, speaks of liberation only after expiation in the prison. "Thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing." In Matt. XII, 32, He speaks of sin which "shall not be forgiven either in this world or in the world to come." Any remission of the effects of sin in the next world can refer only to Purgatory. Above all St. Paul tells us that the ray of judgment will try each man's work. That day is after death, when the soul goes to meet its God. What is the result of that judgment? If a man's work will not stand the test St. Paul says that "he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." 1 Cor. III, 15. This cannot refer to eternal loss in hell, for no one is saved there. Nor can it refer to Heaven, for there is no suffering in Heaven. Purgatory alone can explain this text. As a matter of fact, all Christians believed in Purgatory until the Reformation, when the Reformers began their rejection of Christian doctrines at will. Prayer for the dead was ever the prevailing custom, in accordance with the recommendation of the Bible itself. "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins." 2 Mach. XII, 46. Prayer for the dead supposes a soul not in Heaven where it does not need the help of prayer, nor in hell where prayer cannot assist it. Some intermediate state of purification and need, where prayer can help, is necessary. And the doctrine is most reasonable. "There shall not enter into the new Jerusalem anything defiled." Apo. XXI, 27. Yet not all defilement should cost man the loss of his soul. Small offenses are punished by fines or by temporary imprisonment, after which the delinquent is liberated. Those who deny Purgatory teach the harder and more unreasonable doctrine.

21. God would not demand expiation after having forgiven the sin.

What you think God would do or would not do cannot avail against that which He does do. When David repented of his great sin God sent the prophet Nathan with the message to him, "The Lord hath taken away thy sin. Nevertheless, because thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, thy child shall surely die." 2 Sam. XII, 14. To forgive the guilt of sin, and purify the spiritual scar and stain, which that disease of the soul leaves, by expiatory suffering, is better than to leave the soul still unpurified and indebted to God's justice. I, too, could fully forgive a friend his offense should he have robbed me, yet still insist that he make good the damage he has wrought me.

22. What is the punishment of Purgatory?

When the soul leaves the body, that which can think, remember, love, hate, be happy or miserable, has gone from that body. A corpse cannot do these things. And the soul, with these capabilities, goes into a new state of being as a separated spirit. And my true self, separated from the distractions of this world, will perceive clearly and fully its own unfitness for God's presence, a perception which will mean unspeakable suffering. The exact nature of this suffering we do not know, but it is compared in Scripture to the action of fire afflicting a sensitive body. Although it is not defined as a dogma that there is a real fire of Purgatory, it is the general opinion of theologians that there is a real fire somewhat analogous to the fire of hell. However it be explained, the fact that purgatorial suffering awaits the imperfect has been revealed by God

23. When did God make Purgatory?

Heaven, of course, always existed. For where God is, there is Heaven. Hell was made when the devil and his followers fell from grace. There was no Purgatory for them. Purgatory, then, was made when men began to sin and die with sins repented of, but not fully expiated by the sufferings of this life. Men under the Old Law went to Purgatory just as those do who live under the New Law.

24. Where is Purgatory?

God has not deigned to satisfy our curiosity on that point, and the knowledge is not of practical importance to us. The fact that there is a Purgatory has been revealed by God. And when He reveals a fact, we cannot say to Him, "Well, I for one refuse to believe it until You tell me more about it." God proves a thing by saying it, for He is truth itself. We have but to prove that He said it.

25. How do you know that there are any souls in Purgatory?

I know that 100,000 people die daily. I refuse to believe that they all go to hell, and feel quite sure that they are not all fit for immediate entry into Heaven. Moreover, you would find far more difficulty in endeavoring to show that there are no souls in Purgatory.

26. How do you know that you can help the souls in Purgatory by your prayers?

God would not have inspired the Jews to pray for the departed if such prayers were of no avail. Christians have always prayed for the dead, a practice fully warranted by the doctrine of the Communion of Saints. And if we can pray for our dear ones who are in trouble in this life, our prayers can certainly follow them in their future difficulties. All prayer is addressed to the same God who is as present to the souls of our dear departed as He is to us.

27. Is your own personal conviction such that you will want others to pray for you?

It is. All who have the Catholic faith believe in prayer for the dead. It is not a doctrine for the laity only. And I sincerely hope that friends will pray for me and have Masses offered on my behalf when God has taken me from this world. I shall need them. Nothing defiled will enter Heaven, and if at death one's soul is not absolutely perfect in virtue proportionately to the grace it has received, it is defiled by imperfection of some sort. "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1 Jn. 1, 8. Masses and prayers offered for me after my death will help to expiate such imperfections as I unfortunately possess.

28. So you expect to get redemption on the nod! You are fortunate.

I am. And not a soul will be saved who does not owe it to the death of Christ on the cross, and who will not admit that this was a purely free and gratuitous gift wholly undeserved by men. Mass merely applies the satisfactory value of Christ's death to my soul. Meantime, those who deny Purgatory and the necessity to expiation wish to obtain salvation much more "on the nod," as you call it, than Catholics.

29. Joseph McCabe says that Purgatory is the most lucrative doctrine ever invented by priests.

He is the last man from whom you should seek information about the Catholic Church. I am a priest, and know as much about the Catholic Church as Joseph McCabe ever did. And my judgment is not warped by hatred. The doctrine of Purgatory was revealed by God. It is not a lucrative doctrine invented for financial reasons. Popes, Bishops, and priests all believe in it on exactly the same footing as the faithful, and it is my consolation that many priests have already promised to offer Mass for me as soon as they hear of my death. And they will receive nothing for doing so.

30. Yet priests accept offerings for Masses under false pretenses.

They do not. A priest will accept an offering on the understanding that he will say a special Mass for the intentions of the person making the offering. In accepting an offering from one person he forfeits the support he would receive from another in exercising his ministry on that other's behalf.

31. It is a source of revenue which no priest dare fail to utilize. The selling of Masses must be most profitable.

That remark shows that you do not understand the nature of Mass offerings at all. Priests do not sell Masses, and the people do not pay for Masses. The Mass cannot be bought or sold. Even were I to say that the priest offers the Mass and is paid, not for the Mass, but for his time and services, any evil element such as you suggest would be excluded. It matters little whether a chaplain be given a salary for a year's service, or a special offering for a special service. However the explanation is deeper than that. In the Old Law the people brought tithes and percentages of their goods and dedicated them to God. The gift was directly made to God, and once given, ceased to belong to the giver and belonged entirely to God. Then God made use of these gifts for the support of His religious ministers, inviting them to be His guests. The same spirit characterizes Catholic practice. A Catholic wishes to offer the sacrifice of the Mass to God. He is not compelled to do so. Now the Mass is a sacrifice instituted by Christ, but it supposes the outward necessities, bread, wine, altar, vestments, and a living human being authorized by God to offer it in the name of Christ and of the Church. The Catholic offers to God all that is necessary, and indeed offers a personal sacrifice by contributing towards the upkeep of the altar and towards the very life of the priest who is to stand at the altar on his

behalf. Since he has made this offering to God, the Mass is applied according to his intention. Thus, when you attack the idea that the priest sells the Mass to a Catholic, you are not attacking Catholic doctrine or practice at all.

32. Your harnessing Purgatory to the idea of offerings to God is most ingenious. So the Church is equal to God?

I do not harness Purgatory to the idea of offerings to God. I give the simple Catholic explanation, according to the doctrine of Christ as recorded by St. Paul. "They that serve the altar partake with the altar. So also the Lord ordained that they who preach the gospel should live by the gospel." 1 Cor. IX, 13-14. And as a matter of fact Purgatory does not necessarily come into it. It is a question of offering Mass for any intention whatever. Some Masses are offered for those we love and who have departed from this world. Nor is the Church made equal to God. She is but commissioned by God to attend to matters connected with His due worship. If I wished to give a friend a valuable plant in his garden, I would not be elevating the gardener to the status of my friend.

33. How can you as an honest man support the extortion of hard-earned money from the poor?

I could not support extortion, but I can honestly say that only a person absolutely ignorant of things Catholic could imagine that money is extorted from the poor for Masses.

34. Don't priests visit the bereaved and tell them that so many dollars are required per week for Masses?

No. Catholics are taught the truth from the pulpit in general. They are told that it is good to have Masses offered for the dead if possible; as indeed it is. Apart from that, the matter is left to the spontaneous desire of individuals. And they are never required to have such Masses offered.

35. If you do not extort, you press home the fact that, unless such Masses are said, the soul of the loved one will remain in Purgatory.

That is not true. There are many ways in which we can help our deceased relatives and friends, apart from having Masses offered for them. We can offer our own assistance at Mass, and our Holy Communion; we can offer any prayers we wish, or our sufferings, and acts of Christian mortification. It is good to have Mass offered specially for them if possible. But that is not the only way in which we can help them. Nor has anyone ever maintained that a soul necessarily remains in Purgatory until Masses shall have been offered.

36. Why don't priests pray for the souls of the poor without payment of money which only the rich can afford?

Priests pray every day for the souls in Purgatory without payment of money, and without any discrimination between the rich and the poor. When someone asks for a special intercessory Mass, offering the customary stipend, the priest will comply with the request. But this is in addition to his personal prayers for the dead.

37. But would they say Masses for the poor?

Thousands of Masses are said every year for the poor by thousands of priests, when no offering at all is made. As a matter of fact the law of the Church obliges a parish priest to offer Mass every Sunday and on every Holy Day of Obligation for his parishioners, excluding all private requests and offerings. And every priest in a spirit of charity, often offers Mass for the special intentions of poor people who cannot afford any offering.

38. The fact remains that the Catholic Church derives millions from Masses, as Joseph McCabe points out.

Naturally the offerings of millions of people would amount to millions. That is to be expected. Nigh a million people in the various cities contribute some millions yearly for various transport services; but the individual traveller is not unreasonably burdened, and the officials do not receive exorbitant remuneration. Your point proves nothing save the numerical strength of the Catholic Church.

39. So Purgatory has been able to extort millions?

It extorts nothing. The truth revealed by God inspires Catholics to have Masses offered for their departed friends and relatives. And those Catholics, who can afford to do so, desire by personal sacrifice to render the offering of the Sacrifice of the Mass their own special offering to God.

40. From offerings for Masses in England about a quarter of a million is raked in yearly.

Proportionately to their numbers that averages a penny per week from individual Catholics, and yields about sixty cents per week to the individual priest.

41. In the United States it means a sum of between one and two millions a year.

The margin of difference is rather wide; however, taking the amount as two millions, for the Catholic population of the United States the average is again less than ten cents a year from the individual towards the support of priests from

this source. And at McCabe's maximum, the individual priest would receive the average income of one dollar per week from such Mass-offerings.

42. Setting out the millions at so much per head is unsound, if ingenious. Not everyone pays, and those who do are made to feel it.

My argument is not unsound. It is unsound to talk of millions without mentioning the distribution of the sources from which they come. Nor is any Catholic made to feel that he is paying. In fact, no Catholic is made to pay in any sense of the word, for there is no obligation to have Masses offered at all for one's personal intentions.

43. Can any honest man be proud of all this?

The New Testament says that he who serves the altar should live by the altar. I Cor. IX, 13-14. And certainly the man who devotes the whole of his life to the welfare of his people can quite honestly accept a small percentage from the earnings of those to whose welfare he is devoted. The priest has to live. He is more constantly at his work than the man who controls a transport system for the convenience of citizens and who derives his living from the small contributions of those who use those services. And the priest's work is more important and more responsible. Moreover, the average priest barely gets a living, and many have to be subsidized or they could scarcely live at all.

44. At any rate, has not the soul of a rich man a better chance than the soul of a poor man?

We cannot make such a comparison. The rich man who provides for the offering of Masses for the repose of his soul has a better chance of diminishing his Purgatory than the rich man who makes no such provision.

45. I want my question answered. A rich man leaves \$1,000 for Masses for his soul. A poor man leaves but \$1. Who has the better chance of entering Heaven?

If both died in a state of unrepented mortal sin, neither of them has any chance. If both died in a state of grace, both will certainly enter Heaven. All souls which depart this life in a state of grace will eventually enter Heaven. However, some souls need more purification in Purgatory than others. The question, then, is whether the wealthier man will secure the more rapid purification, and enter Heaven more easily than the poor man. Not necessarily. The \$1 may easily have been the greater generosity relatively than the \$1,000. The dispositions of the poor man could easily have been more pleasing to God than those of the rich man. The very poverty and suffering of the poor man in this life was already expiation; so much so that Christ practically says that Heaven belongs almost by special right to the poor, declaring that the rich with their life of comfort and self-indulgence will enter Heaven with great difficulty. The poor man might scarcely need the few Masses he asks, whilst the rich man, with all his Masses, may have far more to expiate. Then, too, the departed can benefit by Masses and prayers within certain limits only. Anything over and above those limits would be applied to other souls. St. Augustine clearly taught in the fourth century, "There is no doubt that our prayers can benefit those who so lived as to deserve to be benefited by them." He recommends sacrifice on their behalf, whether of the altar, or of prayers, or of almsgiving, adding, "Although they do not benefit all for whom they are offered, but those only who deserved during life to benefit by them." But we can safely leave the adjusting of all these things to God.

46. How do priests know when a soul escapes from Purgatory?

Souls do not escape from Purgatory as criminals from jail, or birds from a cage. When they are sufficiently purified for the vision of God they are admitted to Heaven. And no one knows when this occurs, unless God gives a special revelation, a favor we have no right to ask.

47. Then you might be praying for a soul not in Purgatory at all!

That is quite possible. Granted that we believe in Purgatory, that our prayers can help the dead, and that we do not know for certain whether our dear ones are emancipated from their purifications or not, we continue praying for them. We give them, rather than ourselves, the benefit of any doubt. We argue that our prayers may possibly benefit them, not that they may possibly be wasted. And we would certainly risk saying too many for them rather than allow them to run the risk of being deprived of help.

48. On that score, Catholics would go on praying and having Masses said as long as they live.

Quite so. Is it a fault to be generous as long as one lives? And are such earnest prayers harmful? I am a priest. My own mother has gone to God. I shall certainly offer Masses for her as long as I am able to do so and am free from other obligations. If, long before my death, her purification is finished and she is enjoying the happiness of Heaven, I

know that not a single prayer or Mass will be wasted. There are other souls in Purgatory, and no Catholic begrudges the application of his prayers and sacrifices to other souls should his own dear ones have no need of them.

49. I must confess that I find all this rather baffling.

You are outside Catholicity, and no more understand the spirit of the Catholic religion than a man standing outside a Cathedral can discern the wonderful beauty of the stained glass windows from within. But a reasonable man would say, "Well, I can hardly expect to perceive the real sense and design from here. But there must be something in it, and if I cannot enter the building I must be content to be without an understanding of that window's real beauty." But you stand outside the building of Catholic doctrine, stare at practices you cannot expect to understand from outside, and express astonishment that you see nothing in them.

50. Purgatory would be a stumbling block for me were I to become a Catholic.

John L. Stoddard whilst in the quest for the sure light of religious truth received this illuminating letter from a Catholic friend: "There is hardly a religious system of antiquity in which some similar provision (to Purgatory) is not found. It was left for the 'Reformers' of the sixteenth century to reject this immemorial dogma of the Church. When they denied the sanctity of the Mass and many other sacramental features of Catholicism, the doctrine of Purgatory went with the rest. If the souls of the dead pass instantly into an eternally fixed state, beyond the efficacy of our intercessions, then all our requiems, prayers and similar practices are vain. But if, on the contrary, we believe in the Communion of Saints, that is, in the intercession of the threefold Church, militant on earth, suffering in Purgatory, and triumphant in Heaven, then we on earth can influence, and be influenced by, the souls who have crossed the border. Few, indeed, quit this life in a state of purity and grace which warrants their immediate entrance into Heaven. Still fewer, let us hope, are those to whom the blessed refuge of Purgatory, that halfway house of our dead, is closed. I cannot conceive how Protestants can believe as they do on this point, nor is it astonishing that their rejection of Purgatory, has been followed in the case of many, by the elimination of a belief in hell; for the latter doctrine, taken alone, is monstrous. In fact, all Catholic doctrines are interdependent; they stand or fall together. You cannot pick stones out of the arch, and expect humane and beautiful conceptions imaginable. How many mothers' aching hearts has it not soothed and comforted with hope for some dead, wayward son."

51. Was this letter the cause of Stoddard's quitting Agnosticism for Catholicism?

It made a powerful appeal and served as one of the stepping stones to the conversion of this famed lecturer and writer. In his book, "Rebuilding a Lost Faith," he says this: "The doctrine of the Catholic Church in reference to Purgatory states that there is such a place, in which souls suffer for a time, before they can be admitted to the joys of Heaven, because they still need to be cleansed from certain venial sins, infirmities and faults, or still have to discharge the temporal punishment due to mortal sins, which is as yet uncanceled, though the lasting punishment of those sins has been forgiven and removed through Christ's atonement. Furthermore, the Church declares, that by our prayers and by the acceptable sacrifice of the Mass we may still help those souls, through the merits of Christ. Beyond this statement the Church's formal doctrine does not go; but it is not an article of Catholic faith that there is in Purgatory any material fire. It is generally believed that souls in Purgatory suffer spiritual anguish from the fact that they then feel acutely, as they could not do on earth, the perfect happiness from which they are for a time excluded, while they must also understand the enormity of the sins which they committed against their Heavenly Father and their Savior."

52. Why should suffering be required to cleanse us?

According to Rev. J. B. McLaughlin, O.S.B., in his book, "Purgatory or The Church Suffering," we have this answer: "Some have thought of God as a hard creditor, fixing the tax of pain for every sin or every sinner. But we must not think that right and wrong are fixed arbitrarily by God; for they rest on His very nature. Not, it is right that we should suffer for sin, since God so commands; rather, He commands it because it is right. And in His goodness He has made us like Himself; giving us light not only to see what is His will, but also to see to some extent what He sees. Therefore, let us try to see why it is right that after repenting our sins we must suffer for them. Consider a spirit, angel or man, that defies God and disobeys His will. Imagine that God consents to this; treats the rebellious spirit as a welcome friend, as a fitting companion for the sinless angels and for God Himself. Imagine that God creates spirits such that they can find eternal and untroubled happiness in defying their Maker, and can bask unrebuked in His love. Do we not feel at once that this is not God that we are picturing? That in some way eternal justice would be violated if



these things were possible, and the holiness of God would be profaned? If God be God, such defyings and rebellion and all unholiness must be hateful to Him. His very nature requires that all sin shall bring its own punishment on the sinner. Again, consider the sinner who discovers and realizes what he has done in defying his Maker. He sees at once that punishment unthinkable is his due. Only two alternatives seem possible to him: the despair of devils and of Judas, if he has lost all love for God; or, if he keeps any root of love, then the wish to suffer to the limits of his nature that in some way he may acknowledge the majesty and the holiness that he has outraged. To him comes the gift of hope; the seemingly unbelievable yet certain knowledge that God's all-mastering power can so change him from his sin that he shall be as if he had never sinned. The Magdalen shall dwell unabashed with the spotless Mother of God; yea, and with God Himself. With this hope to enlighten him, the sinner sees he is to make an atonement far ampler than he had thought. He will suffer now, and by his sufferings not only atone to the Majesty he had insulted; but also will restore to God the servant and friend who seemed lost, rendering up his own soul newmade in the fires of God's love."

53. What reasons do you give that there should be suffering for sin?

"There are, therefore, two reasons for suffering for sin: first, atonement to God; and second, the remaking of our souls. And we can see that suffering for these purposes may well last long. If we look at the suffering endured to atone to God, there is no reason why it should ever end, except His mercy. And the remaking of our souls is slow. A wound or sprain is received in an instant, but very slowly is it healed. A sin is committed in an instant by an act of will, and forgiven in an instant when the will submits in love to God; but the mischief wrought by the sin in our nature is deep, and slow to mend." See McLaughlin, "Purgatory."

54. Are Catholics the only ones who believe in Purgatory?

The Jews have believed in Purgatory and even amongst the pagans we find the same belief. "False religions," says McLaughlin, "such as Buddhism and Spiritualism, have recognized this fact, that at death most men are not yet fitted for eternal rest. All false religions are built of fragments of truth, built up into a nightmare of falsehood. Here the question they face is a real question. All our lives we see before us a high standard calling us to live up to it, and at death we have not reached it; how are we to reach it after death? They invent wild and sometimes ghastly answers. But the true answer is: by the power of God, through the purifying power of suffering; and this we name Purgatory. These false religions think only of the perfecting of man's soul, not of giving God His due. And thereby they leave out the highest part of man's perfection. Certainly man should grieve that he has lowered and degraded himself by sin, and should rejoice to rise to better things. This grief is a necessary part of the whole agony entailed by sins; but if it stand alone it is merely pride, part of a great rejection of truth. For the chief cause of agony ought to be the knowledge that he has ill-treated God, despised His majesty, outraged His holiness, rejected His love. The soul in Purgatory, realizing what is due to God, loving Him with its whole being, will wish above all things to atone for its sin by suffering worthy punishment. If it could be content to leave in the smallest degree unrepaired the wrongs it has done to God, it would be far from the perfection that is possible to saints even in this life. In Purgatory the soul longs to suffer in order to be clean, to suffer in order to reach God; but above all these is its longing to suffer in order to make amends to the Divine Majesty, Holiness, Love. For its love of God is everything to it now; its desire for its own purification and happiness is part of its love for God."

55. What was Luther's error on Purgatory?

"The Church had to condemn an error of Luther's, that the souls in Purgatory sin ceaselessly, by desiring rest and shrinking from their sufferings. This error comes from not understanding that all sin is in the will, and in the act of the will; the act whereby we choose definitely to do this and not that. Besides this act of choosing, there are many other desires in our nature; and these may be the cause of sin, or the material of sin, or the effect of sin; but they are not sin. Consider a man who has a long-standing dislike of another, which has often led him to follow trains of thought hostile to that man, and ending in finding further reasons for disliking him. Sin was committed in the act of consenting to follow these thoughts. Suppose some day he recognizes that his dislike is unjust, and from that time resolutely shows outward kindness to the man, and turns away instantly from all thoughts against him. His will is acting rightly, but against the grain; for the old habit of dislike is still in him, ready to break out into action at any moment if he would allow it. It is true that this dislike is a wrong one. And precisely because he sees that it is wrong, the man is constantly repressing it, doing all he can to wear it down and hoping some day to find that it is dead. The existence of the desire

is therefore wrong, a result of sin, but not sinful. And it is no longer the cause of sins, but is now the material of virtuous acts every time that the will resists it and acts against it. Such as this are the habitual desires, attractions, and repulsions that the soul may carry with it to Purgatory, because they have not yet been worked out of its being in this life. In Purgatory they must be removed from the soul; not now by work, nor by the soul's resisting them and acting against them, but merely by suffering. In Purgatory such a dislike could never lead to sin. For in this world it leads to sin because the soul is still in the body. Through the senses, through the humors and state of the body, the will is provoked or drawn to indulge these desires or dislikes; and at the same time and for the same reasons, it easily loses sight of God and His love.

"In Purgatory all the distractions of the body are gone; and the soul's love for God absorbs it continuously and prevents it attending to any other desire. The bad desire or repulsion is latent in the soul, as it is in this life at the times when it does not trouble a man. But in Purgatory there is no possibility of its ever breaking out into action. It is simply burning out slowly in the fire of suffering. Luther did not suggest that the suffering soul could sin in this way, but in the very fact of finding its sufferings painful. We have seen that to the soul it is intensely painful to be held away from God, to know that it has insulted Him and is unfit to approach Him. Plainly it is right that these things should be painful to the soul; it would be wrong if the soul could be satisfied with them. And the soul's act of will is to accept this pain because it is right. This act of will is completely pleasing to God, but wins the soul no higher place in heaven. For its place in heaven was won during its life on earth."

56. How long will souls be kept in Purgatory?

"It is the constant teaching of the Church," says Rev. J. B. McLaughlin, O.S.B., "that all purgation will be completed when the general judgment comes at the end of the world. All the souls that are to go to Heaven will at that judgment be reunited to their bodies and enter into their everlasting reward. But as to the duration of the purgation of individual souls we know nothing from our Lord's teaching. He tells us in a parable, 'thou shalt not depart thence till thou pay the last farthing.' This shows the need of perfect purity before we can enter Heaven; but reveals nothing about the length of time of imprisonment. The Church allows perpetual Masses to be arranged for one soul. This is because she does not know how long that soul may be suffering, nor how much atonement God will accept on its behalf from men. We have to remember that all times are alike present to God. There is nothing unlikely in supposing that prayers and Masses now being offered for one who died before the Reformation were the means of that soul entering into Heaven many hundreds of years ago, as our Lord's Passion was the means of saving Adam's soul. The visions God has allowed of souls begging for prayers many years after their death are evidence that these souls have been in suffering all that time. And if there are authentic visions where souls have also told that their Purgatory was to last many years yet, these also may be believed without fear of contradicting Catholic teaching. Those who are alive at the end of the world, and whose souls are stained with venial sin or owe a debt of punishment, must have their purgation like other such souls before they can enter Heaven. About these, people have wondered over two questions, of which God has not taught us the answers. First, as to their bodies. Are they to pass alive into Heaven or hell, or are they to die and rise again at once? And as to their souls, when are they to suffer their Purgatory, since they are not judged till the general judgment, and after that judgment there is no Purgatory? This is asking Almighty God how His doings are to be fitted into the tiny measures of time and space that He has made for our bodily life. He gives us glimpses to let us know how narrow is our vision, and that we must be content to know that He is infinitely above our understanding. We must not attempt to limit what He can do in what we call the 'moment' of judgment. 'Of this one thing be not ignorant, my beloved, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.' And on our side we know that a moment of intense anxiety, waiting to know will a falling stone crush a child, seems like an age. The work of purgation to be done in these souls is the same as in the souls of the martyrs. In the martyrs it is done in their sometimes brief dying. As easily can God do it at the last day."

57. Was Purgatory always believed in by the early Christians?

"The belief in Purgatory is an excellent example of what is meant by tradition in the Church. When the belief is challenged, when we are asked to cease praying for the dead, it is sufficient to answer, 'But we have been praying for them since the time of the Apostles.' The mere fact of praying for them implies the belief that these souls are not yet in Heaven, nor hopelessly lost in hell; that they will reach Heaven in the end; that our prayers may help them. And this,

duly weighed, is seen to imply further that the bond which holds together God's spiritual family or communion is not mere justice, but love. Once we realize that the work of His kingdom is to spread in our hearts love for God and love for each other, it seems quite natural that those, who have offended Him should be helped by each other's prayers. All this belief is embodied in the most effectual way in the practice of praying for the dead; for by learning that practice and the meaning of it, and by doing it, we learn it not simply as a thing to believe, but as a fact to be dealt with, and calling for action. In the Church from the beginning there has been the practice of praying for the dead and offering the Mass for them. Very early we find recorded the custom of offering special prayers and Masses on the thirtieth day and on the anniversary of death. The writers speak of these things simply as the established traditional practice of the Church. This traditional practice of the Church is a running stream of witness to her belief. And when we find the earliest written references to it speak of it as the traditional and unquestioned practice of the Church, we have an argument to show that the doctrine was believed and acted on from the time of the Apostles. When Popes and Councils are called on to define a doctrine that heretics are challenging or perverting, they demonstrate what the Church has always believed by examining the practices which the Church has followed or encouraged, and pointing out what truths are implied in these practices. The infallible declaration of Popes and General Councils is argument enough for a Catholic; for the living voice of the Church teaching even in St. Peter's time was no surer nor holier than is the living voice of the Pope today, seeing that always it is the voice of the Holy Spirit, leading Christ's Church into all truth, and bringing back to her mind whatever Christ taught her. But it is sometimes an encouragement, and always a joy, to find St. Gregory the Great or St. Augustine talking of the prayers and Masses offered for this soul and for that, and the hope of benefiting such souls, in the same matter-of-fact and simple way as a school child talks of them today," etc. See "Purgatory or The Church Suffering," by Rev. J. B. McLaughlin, O.S.B.

In his "Discourse on Purgatory," Dr. Forbes states:

"Let not the ancient practice of praying, and making oblations for the dead, received throughout the universal Church of Christ, almost from the very time of the Apostles, be any more rejected by Protestants, as unlawful or vain. Let them reverence the judgment of the primitive Church; and admit a practice strengthened by the uninterrupted profession of so many ages."

The noted historian, W. Mallock, in "Is Life Worth Living," says:

"As to this doctrine of Purgatory—which has so long been a stumbling block to the whole Protestant world—time goes on, and the view men take is changing. It is becoming fast recognized on all sides that it is the only doctrine that can bring a belief in future rewards and punishments into anything like accordance with our notions of what is right and reasonable. So far from its being a superfluous superstition, it seems to be just what is demanded at once by reason and morality, and a belief in it to be not only intellectual assent, but a partial harmonizing of the whole moral ideal."

Rev. W. T. Lardge, a non-conformist minister of Preston, England.

"It is a simple and self-evident truth, both from the Scriptures and common sense; that there must be an intermediate world between Heaven and hell immediately on leaving this world. This doctrine was at one time acknowledged by the Church at large. As Christians you are bound to admit the reality of that doctrine, if you believe in the Bible as the Word of God."

In the "Life of Johnson," by Boswell, the author asks a question of the man whose life he is writing, and receives this answer:

"What do you think, sir, of Purgatory, as believed by the Roman Catholics?" Johnson: "Why, sir, it is a very harmless doctrine. They are of opinion that the generality of mankind are neither so obstinately wicked as to deserve everlasting punishment, nor so good as to merit being admitted into the society of blessed spirits; and, therefore, that God is graciously pleased to allow of a middle state, where they may be purified by a certain degree of suffering. You see, sir, there is nothing unreasonable in this."

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