

The Future State, Purgatory, and Masses for the Dead



Good news for Catholics: There is no such place as Purgatory!

This is chapter X of a book written in 1941 entitled, "[Our Priceless Heritage Christian Doctrine In Contrast With Romanism](#)" by Henry M. Woods, D.D, LL.D.

What does the Word of God teach concerning man's future state after death?

The Word of God teaches that after death there is a *glorious heaven*, where the righteous shall forever dwell with the Lord in joy and peace; and an *awful hell*, where the wicked shall forever dwell, receiving the just punishment for their sins. To the righteous our Lord Jesus Christ, the Almighty King, shall say: "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." To the wicked He shall say: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into *life eternal*." Matt. 25:34, 41, 46.

Though sinful men in their folly wish to deny that there is a hell, yet the awful fact remains the same; for God, who cannot lie, declares it. The clearest statements of eternal punishment are made by the loving Saviour, who "gave His life a ransom for us." And He made them to warn us to "flee from the wrath to come," and lay hold on eternal life. No man, however great a sinner, need go down to eternal darkness; a way of escape has been provided through Christ's precious blood; "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." If any man fails to be saved, it is his own fault, because he has rejected God's offer of mercy in Christ. And at last every lost soul will confess that God is good, and that his own condemnation is just, because he *refused Christ's blood-bought redemption*. John 3:16-19, 36; 5:24, 29; Matt. 13:41, 42, 49, 50; Heb. 2:3.

THERE IS NO INTERMEDIATE STATE, NO PURGATORY

Does the Word of God teach that after death there is any other place beside heaven and hell?

The Word of God teaches that after death there is a heaven and a hell, and no other place. There is *no intermediate State*; all men must go either to heaven or to hell. Matt. 25:46, Rom. 2:5-10, Luke 16: 22, 23.

Does the Church of Rome teach these plain declarations of the Word of God?

It does *not*; for it teaches that beside heaven and hell there is a place called Purgatory. This is said to be a place of torment, to which good people who have been redeemed by Christ must go after death, to suffer punishment in part for their sins! The Church of Rome falsely declares that our Saviour Jesus Christ "hath delivered us from the guilt, but *not from all the punishment that was due to our sins.*" Also, "that beside the blood of Jesus Christ, there is a Purgatory for the expiation of our sins; and that the souls of the children of God, when they go out of the body, go to this place of torment"; and "that whoever does not believe this, shall be damned." Council of Trent, sess. 6, 30. Bellarmine, De Purgat., 1:10-15, and the Council of Florence.

What Scripture proof does the Church of Rome give for this horrible dogma?

No real proof whatever. On the contrary, this teaching *conflicts* with many passages of the Word of God.

Why should true Christians wholly disbelieve Purgatory?

1. Because Purgatory has *no Scripture foundation*, and because God's Word warns of the *great sin of adding anything whatever* to the doctrines He has revealed. Deut. 4:2, 12:32, Rev. 22:18.
2. The doctrine of Purgatory *greatly dishonors the Saviour*, by *belittling His glorious redemption* as only partial and incomplete, whereas Scripture everywhere represents it as *perfect and complete*. If, as the Church of Rome alleges, good Christians must suffer torment in Purgatory to expiate their sins, then Christ's salvation is only partial and defective. But thanks be to God, Christ paid the sinner's *whole debt*, and completely delivers from *all punishment forever*.
3. Many Scriptures declare that the believer is *fully justified*, and therefore "there is now no condemnation." Rom. 8:1, Rom. 3:24-26. Scripture says plainly no accusation can be laid against those whom God has redeemed. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died," and therefore *full atonement for sin has been made*. Rom. 8:33, 34, Rom. 5:20, 21. Again, "He that believeth shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. John 5:24. Note carefully the passing is not to torment in purgatory, but to life, eternal life! Further, since Scripture assures us that the precious blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, that the soul of the believer is made "whiter than snow," then there is no need of the "purifying fires of torment." I John 1:7, Ps. 51:7, Is. 1:18, Heb. 1:3.
4. Any intermediate State is disproved by the many Scriptures which show that man's destiny is eternally fixed at death; thereafter there can be no hope of cleansing or deliverance. "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." II Cor. 6:2, Today, while life lasts, is the time for repentance, to "make our calling and election sure." "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." The word "Today" is repeated five times in the third and fourth chapters of Hebrews, showing that the present life, the immediate present, is the *time to seek deliverance from sin* and find *complete salvation*

in Christ.

Many texts exclude purgatory or any intermediate state, by showing that there is *no interval between death and the soul's award*, its entrance into the eternal state, whether of happiness or misery. The transition from this world to heaven or hell is immediate. St. Paul said, "To me to live is Christ, to die is gain"; death would at once bring the eternal award. But death would not be gain, if Paul had first to go to torment! Phil. 1:21, 23.

Again, "absent from the body, present with the Lord." II Cor. 5:1, 6-8. Simeon having seen the infant Christ, prayed, "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace"; but his prayer was mistaken, if he were going to torment in purgatory and not to heaven. Our Lord said of Lazarus that he was "comforted in Abraham's bosom"; but this would not have been true, if he went to purgatorial torment. Of Dives it is said, "the rich man died and was buried, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments"; the connection shows that his death and burial were immediately followed by his suffering the torments of hell. Luke 16: 3, 25.

5. When the thief on the cross prayed in repentance, Christ replied, "Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise," that is, *in heaven*. If purgatorial fire really existed, one would surely expect it in the case of this man; but Christ in mercy took him that very day to heaven. Scripture declares God's children die "in Christ." I Cor. 15:18, and those who thus "die in the Lord" are said to *rest from their labors*." Rev. 14:13. But this could not be true if they went to the torments of purgatory.

There are a multitude of other texts which clearly disprove the odious doctrine of Purgatory. See the great number of texts which speak of the *blessedness of the righteous*, of all those who trust in Christ for salvation. Reference is made to these 12 times in Matthew and 12 times in Luke's Gospel, 7 times in Revelation, and often in other places.

"Blessed are the poor in Spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven."

"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God" (*not torment*) .

"Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing" (*watching and waiting for His coming*).

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." They enjoy the blessed rest of heaven, and do *not suffer the torments of fire*.

"Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." They enjoy the glorious marriage feast in heaven! See also the number of texts which assure faithful believers that at death there will be an end to all the trials and sorrows of earthly life; "And there shall be no more death neither sorrow, nor crying; for the former things are passed away." "They shall hunger no more neither thirst any more,—for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes!"

So far from punishment and torment being the lot of the righteous dead, God's Word represents Christians entering heaven, "clothed in the white robes of Christ's righteousness, and palms of victory in their hands, shouting Hallelujah!" "Blessing and honor, glory and power unto Him who sitteth upon the Throne and unto the Lamb forever! Unto Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, unto Him be glory forever and ever!" No. Thank God there is no dark Purgatory of suffering and torment awaiting the true Christian, but only rest, peace and joy with Christ forever. It is a shame that covetous men for the sake of wealth should blacken and misrepresent the Glorious Gospel of Christ by such false teachings as Purgatory, in order to work on the feelings of bereaved souls with the harrowing fear of torment, and thus *make gain!*

Roman priests quote I Peter 3:19 to support their dogma; does this text prove that there is a purgatory?

This text gives no ground whatever for asserting that there is such a place. The Church of Rome's mistaken notion is, that while Christ's body lay in the grave after His crucifixion, His soul went to purgatory to preach to the lost. They were lost, were condemned, because they were "disobedient"; they had rejected God's warnings and offers of mercy through Noah, "for 120 years." But this contradicts the Roman theory, for "the lost" do not go to Purgatory, only Good Christians are supposed to go to Purgatory, the lost go to hell! The word "prison" refers to hell, for in Rev. 20:7, Satan is spoken of as "loosed" from "his prison," and Jude 6 and II Peter 2:4 both speak of the angels in hell, in "*everlasting chains.*" The expression "spirits in prison" means the spirits who are now in prison or hell; they were not in prison at the time they were preached to. The natural interpretation is, that Christ, through His servant Noah, preached to unbelievers before the flood, but they refused to repent, rejected His offers of mercy and, as a result, are now in the prison of hell. The text is a warning against disobedience to God and rejection of the Gospel. Compare II Peter 2:5, where Noah is spoken of as "a preacher of righteousness." Similarly in I Peter 4:6, the Gospel was preached to the ancients who are now dead, who suffered persecution from men in the flesh, that they might be led to repentance and live unto God in the Spirit. Compare Gal. 3:8, where it is said the Gospel was "*before-preached to Abraham.*"

The Papal dogma of Purgatory is not only contrary to Scripture, dishonors the holy character of God, His mercy, justice, and love, but also contradicts the testimony of early Christian leaders, who rejected this false dogma. The Roman Church now teaches that "pious and justified souls who departed this life in a state of grace" must go to *Purgatorial torments!* *Catechism of Trent*, I, v. 5. Perrone, *Prael. Theol.* The pains of Purgatory, both physical and mental, are the same as the pains of hell, except as regards duration. Benedict XIV, *De Sacrif. Missae*, II, ix, 3, 6; xvii, 3.

This directly contradicts what the Book of Wisdom, which the Roman Church accounts canonical, declares: "But the souls of the righteous are in the hands of God, and there shall *no torment touch them.* Their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us as utter destruction, but *they are in peace.*" Wisdom iii, 1-3. Though the dead are justified souls, which according

to the Council of Trent, includes sanctification, union with Christ and the full enjoyment of faith, hope and charity (Conc. Trident VI, vii) yet the Catholic Church represents them as *pursued by "the wrath, anger and vengeance of God!"* (Cardinal Wiseman, *Lecture ii.*)

PURGATORY CONTRADICTS OTHER ROMANIST DOCTRINES

Venial sins are declared to be punished in Purgatory although it is also declared that venial sins are *so trifling that no one is bound to confess them at all!* St. John Chrysostom took the Protestant or true Scriptural view, saying, "Where there is grace, there is remission; where there is remission, there is no punishment." *Hom. VIII, in Epist. ad Rom.* St. Bernard declared: "God acts with *liberality*; he forgives *entirely.*" *Serm. de Fragmentis.* Leading authorities testified against Purgatory and Indulgences. "We have no testimony in the Scriptures, nor among the Fathers, in favor of Indulgences, but only the authority of some modern authors." St. Antoninus, Archbishop of Florence, 1459. *Summ. Theol., I, 3.*

Cardinal Fisher, 1535, wrote: "Since it was so late before Purgatory was admitted into the Universal Church, who can be surprised that in the earlier period of the Church, *no use was made of Indulgences?*" Fisher, *Adv. Luter,* 18.

Thus the overwhelming testimony of Holy Scripture and of the Fathers proves that the dogma of Purgatory is *utterly baseless*; there *is no such place.* Purgatory was an invention of the Roman priests in the Dark Ages, and became a fixed dogma of the Church of Rome *as late as the year 1488,* that is, less than a century before the Protestant Reformation. Think of it taking popes and priests 14 centuries to find out that there was a place called Purgatory! Could anything be imagined more false and repulsive than this dogma? The Priest called to the bedside of a dying man, administers what is called "extreme unction," and pronounces "full and final absolution." And yet the man is hardly buried before money is cruelly demanded from his mourning relatives to pay for masses to be said "in order to *shorten the period of his torment in purgatorial fires!*"

So shameless was the rivalry of shrines in France, in offering special bargains for Masses that the Roman Church was called *La religion d'argent,* "the creed of money." St. Peter gives a special mark by which to recognize false teachers in the Church, "Through covetousness shall they with feigned words *make merchandise of you.*" II Peter 2:3.

What is the doctrine of the Reformed Church regarding the State of believers after death?

The Protestant doctrine is the *apostolic doctrine of Holy Scripture,* simply and beautifully stated in the Westminster Shorter Catechism, No. 37: "The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and *do immediately pass into glory*; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the Resurrection." I Thess. 4:14, Rom. 8:23, II Cor. 5:6-8, I Cor. 15:51-57. Thus the Reformed Church believes there is a heaven and a hell, but no intermediate place, no purgatory. We thank God for

the unspeakable comfort and hope which the Reformed doctrine gives to thousands, as they stand by the open grave of their beloved dead! Rev. 14:13.

If the dogma of Purgatory is directly contrary to Scripture, as we have seen, and so repulsive to right-minded people, why does the Church of Rome persist in teaching it?

Because the Papal hierarchy *love money*, and the fear of purgatorial torment is a great source of revenue. Belief in purgatory is the *false foundation of Masses for the dead*. The laity are taught that their beloved dead are suffering the torments of fire, but that release may be had by liberal payment for masses. The secular press in Romanist countries often contains notices of bequests for masses and advertisements of lotteries or raffles "for suffering souls in purgatory," saying, "Will you for the small sum of one dollar leave your loved ones in torment?"

A Roman Church in Mexico not long ago published this announcement of a lottery, "At the last drawing the following numbers were successful, and their purchasers may be assured that their well-beloved ones are now delivered from purgatory: No. 841. The soul of the lawyer, James Vasquez, is released, and is now in heavenly joy. No. 43. The soul of Signora Calderon has been rendered happy forever. No. 762. The soul of the aged widow, M. de Parras, has been forever set free. A new drawing will take place in this Church of the Virgin, and for four successful lots four tortured souls will be transported from purgatory to heaven! Tickets at five francs each may be procured from the priest. Will you leave your beloved to languish eternally in purgatory to save yourself five francs?"

Sir Hiram Maxim related this actual occurrence in Ireland. A Roman Church member died and left a will, in which there was the usual bequest for masses to be said for the dead man's soul in purgatory. The local priest called and demanded £100 to say the masses. The executor asked how many masses would be said for that sum, and being informed, told the priest to return in two weeks. When he returned, the executor informed him that he had written to the Vatican where the masses had been said for £20, and showed the Vatican's receipt and certificate. The priest left in anger, but the grieving relatives of the deceased were kept, at least in part, from being swindled by an avaricious priest!

As the Gospel of God's free grace, which the Roman Church professes to believe, is bestowed "without money and without price," one might reasonably suppose that the ordinary dictates of humanity would lead Roman priests to perform services for the dead without charge. But alas, it is not so! Ordinarily it is, no payment, no masses, and therefore, no "repose for the soul." Mercenary leaders saw in this invention *an opportunity to amass wealth too great to let slip!* The harrowing appeal to the fear and affection of relatives to deliver the dead from torment is rarely made in vain. And so the cruel delusion of masses for the dead, like Indulgences, continues to be practiced, casting a blight on those who ought to rejoice in the full salvation of God, and bringing reproach on the Holy Name, which is above every name, because *merchandise is made of His precious atonement!*

No one can prevent the Roman hierarchy from making gain of the fears and sorrows of their people, but one should protest with all the energy of his soul against their dishonoring the Christian religion by calling this false and ignoble superstition a part of its God-given doctrines!

THE GRAVE ABUSE OF INDULGENCES STILL CONTINUES

Surely in later times the Church of Rome must have perceived this grave error, and wished to abolish it?

Alas, no! Although the popes knew that Indulgences were wholly contrary to Scripture, and conducive to bad morals, they could not resist the temptation to make easy money by the sale of them. The demoralization which resulted from this practice was terrible, and *spread like poison through the Church*. In 1250, Grosseteste, bishop of London, England, protested to the pope that the low morality of the priesthood was due to purchasable pardons. "Rome was a fountain of pardons for all violations of the Decalogue (Ten Commandments)." Flick, page 590. Schick, a Roman Catholic writer, records that Pope Paul III drew revenue *even from brothels in Rome!* A commission of Cardinals reported to him that pardons and dispensations produced indescribable scandals, and begged him by the blood of Christ to put an end to them!

At the Council of Trent, Claude d'Espence said of the Papal Court: "the sins of men are her *golden harvest*, the evidence of which is her super-abundant wealth. When money is the object, everything is permitted; there is no crime for which one cannot buy a dispensation at Rome! As soon as the money is paid into the chest the sin is forgiven. The only unpardonable offense is to be poor! It was reported on good authority that pope Pius IV (died 1565) in six years amassed a fortune of six million scudi, or about *6 million U.S. dollars!*

Of pope Pius VI (died 1799) and his Court, Bishop Ricci wrote: "Rest assured *no one in Rome knows what religion is*. The pope is near Florence; the scandals of his entourage help much to destroy him in the eyes of the people."

Even in this "enlightened" 20th century, the popes still issue Indulgences and Dispensations, for the practice is very profitable. Indulgences are not openly sold as in the time of the Reformation, but it is well understood that "the faithful" *must not come empty handed!* At Easter, 1926, the pope offered Indulgences to all who came on pilgrimage to certain Churches in Rome, and a cardinal was sent to dispense them. The writer saw him sitting with a rod in his hand, and a long line of people passed before him. Each one in the line was tapped with the rod, and thereby was supposed to receive the papal Indulgence. The Cardinal apparently did not know whom he was tapping, and it seemed to be equally a matter of indifference to the careless crowd who were supposed to receive the Indulgences!

Again in 1933, Pius XI proclaimed a "holy year" and urged the faithful to come on pilgrimage to Rome, promising indulgences to all who visited certain Churches, and repeated certain prayers. While no sale was announced, it was

generally understood that *pilgrims must not be unmindful of "Peter's pence."* The outward form of Indulgences may be changed, but the same God-dishonoring practice remains in principle, a practice with which true religion cannot coexist. Watchful Rome, where wealth and worldly advantage are concerned; but sleeping Rome concerning Spiritual truth and forsaking error! O, that God would raise up another Luther to awaken the sleeping church, and to proclaim again with trumpet tones the free grace of God in Christ,–

The Just Shall Live By Faith!

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