

# Purgatory

By Father Faber.

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There have always been two views of purgatory prevailing in the Church, not contradictory the one of the other, but rather expressive of the mind and devotion of those who have embraced them.

The first view is embodied in the terrifying sermons of the Italian Quaresimali, and in those wayside pictures which so often provoke the fastidiousness of the English traveller. It loves to represent purgatory as a hell which is not eternal. Violence, confusion, wailing, horror, preside over its descriptions. It dwells, and truly, on the terribleness of the pain of sense which the soul is mysteriously permitted to endure. The fire is the same fire as that of hell, created for the single and express purpose of giving torture. Our earthly fire is as painted fire compared to it. Besides this, there is a special and in-definable horror to the unbodied soul in becoming the prey of this material agony. The sense of imprisonment, close and intolerable, and the intense palpable darkness, are additional features in the horror of the scene, which prepare us for that sensible neighbourhood to hell, which many Saints have spoken of as belonging to purgatory. Angels are represented as active executioners of God's awful justice. Some have even held that the demons are permitted to touch and harass the spouses of Christ in those ardent fires. Then to this terribleness of the pain of sense, is added the dreadful pain of loss. The beauty of God remains in itself the same immensely desirable object it ever was. But the soul is changed. All that in life and in the world of sense dulled its desires after God is gone from it, so that it seeks Him with an impetuosity which no imagination can at all conceive. The very burning excess of its love becomes the measure of its intolerable pain. What love can do even on earth we learn from the example of Father John Baptist Sanchez, who said he was sure he should die of misery, if any morning he rose he should know that he was certain not to die that day. To those horrors we might add many more which depict purgatory simply as a hell which is not eternal.

The second view of purgatory does not deny any one of the features of the preceding view, but it almost puts them out of sight by the other considerations which it brings more prominently forward. It goes into purgatory with its eyes fascinated and its spirit sweetly tranquillised, by the face of Jesus, its sight of the Sacred Humanity at the particular Judgment which it has undergone. That vision abides with it still, and beautifies the uneven terrors of its prison as if with perpetual silvery showers of moonlight which seem to fall from Our Saviour's loving eyes. In the sea of fire it holds fast by that image. The moment that in His sight it perceives its own unfitness for heaven, it wings its voluntary flight to purgatory, like a dove to her proper nest in the shadows of the forest. There need be no Angels to convey it thither. It is its own free worship of the purity of God.

In that moment the soul loves God most tenderly, and in return is most tenderly loved by Him. The soul is in punishment, true; but it is in unbroken union with God. — 'It has no remembrance,' says St. Catherine of Genoa most positively, — 'no remembrance at all of its past sins or of earth.' Its

sweet prison, its holy sepulchre, is in the adorable will of its heavenly Father, and there it abides the term of its purification with the most perfect contentment and the most unutterable love. As it is not teased by any vision of self or sin, so neither is it harassed by an atom of fear, or by a single doubt of its own imperturbable security. It is impeccable; and there was a time on earth when that gift alone seemed as if it would contain all heaven in itself. It cannot commit the slightest imperfection. It cannot have the least movement of impatience. It can do nothing whatever which will in the least displease God. It loves God above everything, and it loves Him with a pure and disinterested love. It is constantly consoled by Angels, and cannot but rejoice in the confirmed assurance of its own salvation. Nay; its very bitterest agonies are accompanied by a profound unshaken peace, such as the language of this world has no words to tell.

No sooner has a soul, with the guilt of no mortal sin upon it, but owing to God a debt of temporal punishment, issued from the world, and been judged, than it perceives itself to be confirmed in grace and charity (according to St. Catherine). It is incapable either of sinning or of meriting any more; and it is destined by an eternal and immutable decree to enter one day as a queen into the kingdom of the blessed, to see, to love, and to enjoy God, the perpetual fountain of all felicity.

In that instant all the sins of its past are represented to the soul, whether mortal or venial, even though they have been remitted in lifetime by Contrition and the Sacrament of Penance. But after this transitory and instantaneous view of them, the soul remembers nothing more about them. The Saints' words are: — 'The cause of purgatory, which these souls have in themselves, they see once for all, in passing out of this life, and never afterwards.' The reason of this exhibition of sins is, she teaches us, to enable the soul in that moment, by an act, no longer indeed meritorious, but nevertheless a real act of the will, to detest all its sins afresh, and especially those venial sins for which it had not contrition in lifetime, either through the weakness of an imperfect heart, or through the accident of a sudden death, that so it may be strictly true, that no sin whatever is pardoned unless the sinner makes an act of detestation of it.

After this momentary view of sins and formal detestation of them, the soul perceives in itself 'their evil consequences and malignant legacies', and these form what the Saint calls — 'the impediment of seeing God.' — 'The rust of sin,' she says, — 'is the impediment, and the fire keeps consuming the rust; and as a thing which is covered cannot correspond to the reverberation of the sun's rays, so, if the covering be consumed, the thing is at length laid open to the sun.'

As soon as the soul perceives itself to be acceptable to God, and constituted heir of paradise, but unable, because of this impediment, to take immediate possession of its inheritance, it conceives an intense desire to be rid of this hindrance, this double obligation of guilt and punishment. But knowing that purgatory alone can consume these two obligations, and that it is for that very end God condemns the soul to fire, it desires itself to endure the punishment. — 'The soul separated from the body' (these are the Saint's words), 'not finding in itself this impediment which cannot be taken away except by purgatory, at once throws itself into it with right good will.'

'Nay, if it did not find this ordinance of purgatory aptly contrived for the removal of this hindrance, there would instantaneously be generated in it a hell far worse than purgatory, inasmuch as it would see that because of this impediment it could not unite itself to God Who is its end. Wherefore, if the soul could find another purgatory fiercer than this, in which it could the sooner get rid of this impediment, it would speedily plunge itself therein, through the impetuosity of the love it bears to God.'

But this is not all. The Saint goes on to teach that if the soul, labouring under this impediment, were free to choose between ascending at once, as it is, to paradise, and descending to suffer in purgatory, it would choose to suffer, although the sufferings be almost as dreadful as those of hell. These are her words: — ‘Of how much importance purgatory is no tongue can tell, no mind conceive. So much I see, that its pain is almost as if it were that of hell; and yet I see also that the soul which perceives in itself the slightest flaw or mote of imperfection, would rather throw itself into a thousand hells, than find itself in the presence of the divine Majesty with that defect upon it; and, therefore, seeing purgatory to be ordained for the very taking away of these flaws, forthwith it plunges into it, and it seems by its bearing, as I see, to conceive that it finds there an invention of no little mercy, simply in the being able to get rid of this impediment.’

When the righteous soul has thus arrived in purgatory, losing sight of everything else, it sees before it only two objects — the extremity of suffering, and the extremity of joys. A most tremendous pain is caused by knowing that God loves it with an infinite love, that He is the Chief Good, that He regards the soul as His daughter, and that He has predestined it to enjoy Him for ever in company with the Blessed: and hence the soul loves Him with a pure and most perfect charity. At the same time it perceives that it cannot see Him or enjoy Him yet, though it so intensely yearns to do so; and this afflicts it so much the more, as it is quite uncertain when the term of its penal exile, away from its Lord and paradise, will be fulfilled. This is the pain of loss in purgatory, of which the Saint says that it is — ‘a pain so extreme, that no tongue can tell it, no understanding grasp the least portion of it. Though God in His favour showed me a little spark thereof, yet can I not in any way express it with my tongue.’

Now let us examine the other object, the extremity of joy. As it loves God with the purest affection, and knows its sufferings to be the will of God in order to procure its purification, it conforms itself perfectly to the divine decree. While in purgatory, it sees nothing but that this pleases God; it takes in no idea but that of His will; it apprehends nothing so clearly as the suitableness of this purification, in order to present it all fair and lovely to so great a majesty. Thus, the Saint says: — ‘If a soul, having still something left to be cleansed away, were presented to the Vision of God, it would be worse than that of ten purgatories; for it would be quite unable to endure that excessive goodness and that exquisite justice.’ Hence it is that the suffering soul is entirely resigned to the will of its Creator. It loves its very pains, and rejoices in them because they are a holy ordinance of God. Thus in the midst of the ardent heats it enjoys a contentment so complete that it exceeds the grasp of human intelligence to comprehend it. — ‘I do not believe,’ says the Saint, — ‘that it is possible to find a contentment to compare with that of the souls in purgatory, unless it be the contentment of the Saints in paradise. This contentment increases daily through the influx of God into those souls, and this influx increases in proportion as the impediment is consumed and worn away. Indeed, so far as the will is concerned, we can hardly say that the pains are pains at all, so contentedly do the souls rest in the ordinance of God, to whose will pure love unites them.’

In another place, St. Catherine says that this inexplicable jubilee of the soul, while it is undergoing purgatory springs from the strength and purity of its love of God. — ‘This love gives to the soul such a contentment as cannot be expressed. But this contentment does not take away one iota from the pain; nay, it is the retarding of love from the possession of its object which causes the pain; and the pain is greater according to the greater perfection of love of which God has made the soul capable. Thus the souls in purgatory have at once the greatest contentment and the greatest suffering; and the one in no way hinders the other.’ As to prayers, alms, and Masses, she asserts that

the souls experience great consolation from them; but that in these, as in other matters, their principal solicitude is that everything should be — ‘weighed in the most equitable scales of the Divine Will, leaving God to take His own course in everything, and to pay Himself and His justice in the way His own infinite goodness chooses to select.’

When she looked at herself with the light of supernatural illumination, she saw that God had set her up in the Church as an express and living image of purgatory. She says: — ‘This form of purification, which I behold in the souls in purgatory, I perceive in my own soul now. I see that my soul dwells in its body as in a purgatory altogether conformable to the true purgatory, only in such measure as my body can bear without dying. Nevertheless, it is always increasing by little and little, until it reaches the point when it will really die.’ Her death was indeed most wonderful, and has always been considered as a martyrdom of Divine Love. So truly from the first has her position been appreciated, as the great doctor of purgatory, that in the old life of her, — the ‘vita antica’, examined by theologians in 1670, and approved in the Roman process of her canonisation, and which was composed by Marabotto, her confessor, and Vernaza, her spiritual son, it is said: — ‘Verily it seems that God set up this His creature as a mirror and an example of the pains of the other life, which souls suffer in purgatory. It is just as if He had placed her upon a high wall, dividing this life from the life to come; so that, seeing what is suffered in that life beyond, she might manifest to us, even in this life, what we are to expect when we have passed the boundary.’ This is a mere epitome of her wonderful and exquisitely beautiful treatise, which has given St. Catherine a rank among the theologians of the Church.

I suppose there is none of us who expects to be lost. We know and feel, with more or less of alarm, the greatness of the risk we are running; but to expect to be lost would be the sin of despair. Hell is only practical to us as a motive of greater diligence, greater strictness, greater circumspectness, greater fear. It is not so with purgatory. I suppose we all expect, or think ourselves sure, to go there. If we do not think much of the matter at all, then we may have some vague notion of going straight to heaven as soon as we are judged. But if we seriously reflect upon it, upon our own lives, upon God’s sanctity, upon what we read in books of devotion and the lives of the Saints, I can hardly conceive any one of us expecting to escape purgatory, and not rather feeling that it must be almost a stretch of the divine mercy which will get us even there. It would more likely be vain presumption than heroic hope, if we thought otherwise. Now, if we really expect that our road to heaven will be through the punishment of purgatory, for surely its purification is penal, it very much concerns us to know what is common to both the views of purgatory, which it appears prevail in the Church.

First, both these views agree that the pains are extremely severe, as well because of the office which God intends them to fulfil, as because of the disembodied soul being the subject of them. Both agree, also, in the length of the suffering.

This requires to be dwelt upon, as it is hard to convince people of it, and a great deal comes of the conviction, both to ourselves and others. This duration may be understood in two ways: first, as of actual length of time, and, secondly, as of seeming length from the excess of pain. With regard to the first, if we look into the revelations of Sister Francesca of Pampeluna, we shall find, among some hundreds of cases, that by far the great majority suffered thirty, forty, or sixty years.

This disclosure may teach us greater watchfulness over ourselves, and more unwearied perseverance in praying for the departed. The old foundations for perpetual Masses embody the same sentiment. We are apt to leave off too soon, imagining with a foolish and unenlightened

fondness that our friends are freed from purgatory much sooner than they really are. If Sister Francesca beheld the souls of many fervent Carmelites, some of whom had wrought miracles in lifetime still in purgatory ten, twenty, thirty, sixty years after their death, and still not near their deliverance, as many told her, what must become of us and ours? Then as to seeming length from the extremity of pain, there are many instances on record in the Chronicles of the Franciscans, the life of St. Francis Jerome, and elsewhere, of souls appearing an hour or two after death, and thinking they had been many years in purgatory. Such may be the purgatory of those who are caught up to meet the Lord at the Last Day.

Both views agree again in holding that what we in the world call very trivial faults are most severely visited in purgatory. St. Peter Damian gives us many instances of this, and others are collected and quoted by Bellarmine. Slight feelings of self-complacency, trifling inattentions in the recital of the Divine Office, and the like, occur frequently among them. Sister Francesca mentions the case of a girl of fourteen in purgatory, because she was not quite conformed to the will of God in dying so young: and one soul said to her: — ‘Ah men little think in the world how dearly they are going to pay here for faults they hardly note there.’ She even saw souls that were immensely punished only for having been scrupulous in this life; either, I suppose, because there is mostly self-will in scruples, or because they did not lay them down when obedience commanded. Wrong notions about small faults may thus lead us to neglect the dead, or leave off our prayers too soon, as well as lose a lesson for ourselves.

Then, again, both views agree as to the helplessness of the Holy Souls. They lie like the paralytic at the pool. It would seem as if even the coming of the angel were not an effectual blessing to them, unless there be some one of us to help them. Some have even thought they cannot pray. Anyhow, they have no means of making themselves heard by us on whose charity they depend. Some writers have said that Our Blessed Lord will not help them without our co-operation; and that Our Blessed Lady cannot help them, except in indirect ways, because she is no longer able to make satisfaction; though I never like to hear anything our dearest mother cannot do; and I regard such statements with suspicion. Whatever may come of these opinions, they at least illustrate the strong way in which theologians apprehend the helplessness of the Holy Souls. Then another feature in their helplessness is the forgetfulness of the living, or the cruel flattery of relations who will always have it that those near or dear to them die the deaths of Saints. They would surely have a scruple, if they knew of how many Masses and prayers they rob the souls, by the selfish exaggeration of their goodness. I call it selfish, for it is nothing more than a miserable device to console themselves in their sorrow. The very state of the Holy Souls is one of the most unbounded helplessness. They cannot do penance; they cannot merit; they cannot satisfy; they cannot gain indulgences; they have no Sacraments; they are not under the jurisdiction of God’s Vicar, overflowing with the plentitude of means of grace and manifold benedictions. They are a portion of the Church without either priesthood or altar at their own command.

Those are the points common to both views of purgatory; and how manifold are the lessons we learn from them, on our own behalf as well as on behalf of the Holy Souls. For ourselves, what light does all this throw on slovenliness, luke-warmness, and love of ease? What does it make us think of performing our devotions out of a mere spirit of formality, or a trick of habit? What diligence in our examens, confessions, Communions, and prayers! It seems as if the grace of all graces for which we should ever be importuning our dear Lord, would be to hate sin with something of the hatred

wherewith He hated it in the garden of Gethsemane. Oh, is not the purity of God something awful, unspeakable, adorable?

He, who is Himself a simple act, has gone on acting, multiplying acts since creation, yet he has incurred no stain! He is ever mingling with a most unutterable condescension with what is beneath Him — yet no stain! He loves His creatures with a love immeasurably more intense than the wildest passion of earth — yet no stain! He is omnipotent, yet it is beyond the limits of His power to receive a stain. He is so pure that the very vision of Him causes eternal purity and blessedness. Mary's purity is but a fair thin shadow of it, and yet we, even we, are to dwell in His arms for ever, we are to dwell amid the everlasting burnings of that uncreated purity! Yet, let us look at our lives; let us trace our hearts faithfully through but one day, and see of what mixed intentions, human respects, self-love, and pusillanimous temper our actions, nay, even our devotions, are made up of; and does not purgatory, heated seven-fold and endured to the day of doom, seem but a gentle novitiate for the Vision of the All-holy?

But some persons turn in anger from the thought of purgatory, as if it were not to be endured, that after trying all our lives long to serve God, we should accomplish the tremendous feat of a good death, only to pass from the agonies of the death-bed into fire, long, keen, searching, triumphant, incomparable fire. Alas! my dear friends, your anger will not help you nor alter facts. But have you thought sufficiently about God? Have you tried to realise His holiness and purity in assiduous meditation? Is there a real divorce between you and the world which you know is God's enemy? Do you take God's side? Are you devoted to His interests? Do you long for His glory? Have you put sin alongside of our dear Saviour's Passion, and measured the one by the other? Surely, if you had, purgatory would but seem to you the last, unexpected, and inexpressibly tender invention of an obstinate love, which was mercifully determined to save you in spite of yourself. It would be a perpetual wonder to you, a joyous wonder, fresh every morning, a wonder that would be meat and drink to your soul, that you, being what you know yourself to be, what God knows you to be, should be saved eternally. Remember what the suffering soul said so simply, yet with such force, to Sister Francesca: "Ah! those on that side of the grave little reckon how dearly they will pay on this side for the lives they live!" To be angry because you are told you will go to purgatory! Silly, silly people. Most likely it is a great false flattery, and that you will never be good enough to go there at all. Why, positively, you do not recognise your own good fortune, when you are told of it. And none but the humble go there. I remember Maria Crocifissa [died 1855, canonized 1954,] was told that although many of the Saints while on earth loved God more than some do even in heaven, yet that the greatest Saint on earth was not so humble as are the souls in purgatory. I do not think I ever read anything in the lives of the Saints which struck me so much as that. You see it is not well to be angry; for those only are lucky enough to get into purgatory who sincerely believe themselves to be worthy of hell.

But we not only learn lessons for our own good, but for the good of the Holy Souls. We see that our charitable attention towards them must be far more vigorous and persevering than they have been; for men go to purgatory for very little matters, and remain there an unexpectedly long time. But their most touching appeal to us lies in their helplessness; and our dear Lord, with His usual loving arrangement, has made the extent of our power to help them more than commensurate with their ability to help themselves. Some theologians have said that prayer for the Holy Souls is not infallibly answered. I confess their arguments on this head do not convince me; but, conceding the point, how wonderful still is the power which we can exercise in favour of the departed! St. Thomas

has at least taught us that prayer for the dead is more readily accepted with God than prayer for the living. We can offer and apply for them all the satisfactions of Our Blessed Lord. We can do vicarious penance for them. We can give to them all the satisfactions of our ordinary actions, and of our sufferings. We can make over to them, by way of suffrage, the indulgences we gain, provided the Church has made them applicable to the dead. We can limit and direct to them, or any one of them, the intention of the Adorable Sacrifice. The Church, which has no jurisdiction over them, can yet make indulgences applicable or inapplicable to them by way of suffrage; and by means of liturgy, commemoration, incense, holy water, and the like, can reach efficaciously to them, and most of all by her device of privileged altars. The Communion of Saints furnishes the veins and channels by which all these things reach them in Christ.

Heaven itself condescends to act upon them through earth. Their Queen helps them by setting us to work for them, and the Angels and the Saints bestow their gifts through us, whom they persuade to be their almoners; nay, we are often their almoners without knowing that we are so. Our Blessed Lord vouchsafes to look to us, as if He would say: Here are my weapons, work for me! just as a father will let his child do a portion of his work, in spite of the risk he runs in having it spoiled. To possess such powers, and not to use them, would be the height of irreverence towards God, as well as of want of charity to men. There is nothing so irreverent, because nothing so un-filial, as to shrink from God's gifts simply because of their exuberance. Men have a feeling of safety in not meddling with the supernatural; but the truth is, we cannot stand aloof on one side and be safe. Naturalism is the unsafe thing. If we do not enter the system, and humbly take our place in it, it will draw us in, only to tear us to pieces when it has done so. The dread of the supernatural is the unsafest of feelings. The jealousy of it is a prophecy of eternal loss.

It is not saying too much to call devotion to the Holy Souls a kind of centre in which all Catholic devotions meet, and which satisfies more than any other single devotion our duties in that way; because it is a devotion all of love, and of disinterested love. If we cast an eye over the chief Catholic devotion, we shall see the truth of this. Take the devotion of St. Ignatius to the glory of God. This, if we may dare to use such an expression of Him, was the special and favourite devotion of Jesus. Now, purgatory is simply a field white for the harvest of God's glory. Not a prayer can be said for the Holy Souls, but God is at once glorified, both by the faith and the charity of the mere prayer.

Again, what devotion is justly more dear to Christians than the devotion to the Sacred Humanity of Jesus? It is rather a family of various and beautiful devotions, than a devotion by itself. Yet see how they are all, as it were, fulfilled, affectionately fulfilled, in devotion to the Holy Souls. The quicker the souls are liberated from purgatory, the more is the bountiful harvest of His Blessed Passion multiplied and accelerated. An early harvest is a blessing, as well as a plentiful one; for all delay of a soul's ingress into the praise of heaven is an eternal and irremediable loss of honour and glory to the Sacred Humanity of Jesus. How strangely things sound in the language of the sanctuary! Yet so it is. Can the Sacred Humanity be honoured more than by the adorable sacrifice of the Mass? But here is our chief action upon purgatory. Faith in His Sacraments as used for the dead is a pleasing homage to Jesus; and the same may be said of faith in indulgences and privileged altars and the like. The powers of the Church will flow from His Sacred Humanity, and are a perpetual praise and thank-offering to it. So, again, this devotion honours Him by imitating His zeal for souls. For this zeal is a badge of His people, and an inheritance for Him.

Devotion to our dearest Mother is equally comprehended in this devotion to the Holy Souls, whether we look at her as the Mother of Jesus, and so sharing the honours of His Sacred Humanity, or as Mother of Mercy, and so especially worshipped\* by works of mercy, or, lastly, whether we regard her, as in a particular sense, the queen of purgatory, and so having all manner of dear interests to be promoted in the welfare and deliverance of those suffering souls.

*Footnote on 'worshipped':* I do not refrain from the use of this word as the English translation of cultus weary experience shows that objectors obstinately repeat their objections, whatever we do to abate them, and they rather triumph over the show of weakness, than appreciate the charity of such like condescensions. We lose by them ourselves, without gaining opponents.

Next to this we may rank devotion to the holy Angels, and this also is satisfied in devotion to the Holy Souls. For it keeps filling the vacant thrones in the angelic choirs, those unsightly gaps which the fall of Lucifer and one-third of the heavenly host occasioned. It multiplies the companions of the blessed spirits. They may be supposed also to look with an especial interest on that part of the Church which lies in purgatory, because it is already crowned with their own dear gift and ornament of final perseverance, and yet, it has not entered at once into its inheritance as they did. Many of them also have a tender personal interest in purgatory. Thousands, perhaps millions of them, are guardians to those souls, and their office is not yet over. Thousands have clients there who were specially devoted to them in life.

Neither is devotion to the Saints without its interests in this devotion for the dead. It fills them with the delights of charity, as it swells their numbers, and beautifies their ranks and orders. Numberless patron saints are personally in multitudes of souls. The affectionate relation between their clients and themselves not only subsists, but a deeper tenderness has entered into it, because of the fearful suffering, and a livelier interest because of the accomplished victory. They see in the Holy Souls their handiwork, the fruit of their patronage, the beautiful and finished crown of their affectionate intercession.

But there is another peculiarity in this devotion for the dead. It does not rest in words and feelings, nor does it merely lead to action indirectly and at last. It is action itself, and thus it is a substantial devotion. It speaks and a deed is done; it loves and a pain is lessened; it sacrifices, and a soul is delivered. Nothing can be more solid. We might also dare to compare it, in its pure measure, to the efficacious voice of God, which works what it says, and effects what it utters and wills, and a creation comes. The royal devotion of the Church is the works of mercy; and see how they are all satisfied in this devotion for the dead. It feeds the hungry souls with Jesus, the Bread of Angels. It gives them to drink in their incomparable thirst, His Precious Blood. It clothes the naked with a robe of glory. It visits the sick with mighty powers to heal, and at the last consoles them by the visit. It frees the captives with a heavenly and eternal freedom, from a bondage drearer far than death. It takes in the strangers and heaven is the hospice into which it receives them. It buries the dead in the Bosom of Jesus in everlasting rest. When the last doom shall come, and our dearest Lord shall ask those seven questions of His judicial process, those interrogatories of the works of mercy, how happy will that man be, and it may be the poorest beggar amongst us who never gave any alms because he has had to live on alms himself, who shall hear his own defence sweetly and eloquently taken up by crowds of blessed souls, to whom he has done all these things while they waited in their prison-house of hope.



Another point of view, from which we may look at this devotion for the dead, is as a specially complete and beautiful exercise of the three theological virtues, of faith, hope, and charity, which are the supernatural fountains of our whole spiritual life.

Neither is this devotion a less heroic exercise of the theological virtue of hope, the virtue so sadly wanting in the spiritual life of these times. For, look what a mighty edifice this devotion raises: lofty, intricate, and of magnificent proportions, into which somehow or other all creation is drawn, from the little headache we offer up to the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, and which has to do even with God Himself. Yet upon what does all this rest, except on a simple, childlike trust in God's Fidelity, which is the supernatural motive of hope? We hope for the souls we help, and unbounded are the benedictions which we hope for in this regard. We hope to find mercy ourselves, because of our mercy; and this hope quickens our efforts without detracting from the merit of our charity. If we give away our own satisfaction, and the indulgences we gain, to the souls in purgatory, instead of keeping them for ourselves, what is this but a heroic exercise of hope? We throw ourselves upon God. We hardly face the thought that we ourselves are thus sentencing ourselves, it may be, to abide years and years longer in that unconquerable fire. We shut our eyes, we quell the rising thought, we give our alms, and throw ourselves on God. We shall not be defrauded of our hope. Who ever trusted Him, and His trust failed? No! No! All is right when it is left to God.

As to the charity of this devotion it dares to imitate even the charity of God Himself. What is there in heaven or on earth which it does not embrace, and with such facility, with so much gracefulness, as if there were scarcely an effort in it, or as if self was charmed away, and might not mingle to distract it? It is an exercise of the love of God; for it is loving those whom He loves, and loving them because He loves them and to augment His glory, and multiply His praise. There are a hundred loves of God in this one love, as we should see if we reflected on those Holy Souls, and realised all that was implied in the final entry of a soul into everlasting bliss. It is love towards the Sacred Humanity, because it magnifies the copious redemption of Jesus. It honours His merits, satisfactions, ordinances and mysteries. It peoples His heaven, and it glorifies His Blood. It is filled with Jesus, with His spirit, with His work, with His power, with His victories. No less is it an exercise of love to our dearest Lady, as I have shown before; and to the Angels and Saints. How abundant is its charity to the souls themselves; who can exaggerate, whether to give them the good measure of all the Church tells us to do, and some spontaneous alms besides; or the full measure of all our satisfactions during lifetime, and which are not by justice due elsewhere, as St. Gertrude gave them; or the measure shaken together, which adds that which shall be done for us when we are dead, like Father Munroy's heroic act of self-renunciation; or the measure running over, which heaps upon all the rest special works of love, such as promoting this devotion by conversions, sermons, and books, and by getting Masses, Communions, penances, indulgences, from others for them. All men living on the earth, even unconverted sinners, are included in it, because it swells the Church Triumphant, and so multiplies intercessors for us who are still warring upon earth. To ourselves also it is an exercise of charity, for it gains us friends in heaven; it earns mercy for us when we ourselves shall be in purgatory, tranquil victims, yet, oh, in what distress! and it augments our merits in the sight of God, and so, if only we persevere, our eternal recompense hereafter.

Now, if this tenderness for the dead is such an exercise of these three theological virtues, and if again even heroic sanctity consists principally in their exercises, what store ought we not to set upon this touching and beautiful devotion!

But a further excellence in this devotion is to be found in its effects upon the spiritual life. It would seem as if it were a devotion specially intended for interior souls. But the fact is, that it is so full of doctrine, and embodies so much that is supernatural that we need not be surprised at the influence it exercises over the spiritual life. In the first place, it is a hidden work from first to last. We do not see the results, so that there is little food for vain-glory; neither is it a devotion the exercise of which appears in any way before the eyes of others. It implies, moreover, an utter ignoring of self, by making away with our own satisfactions and indulgences, and keeping up a tender interest in an object which does not directly concern ourselves. It is not only for the glory of God, but it is for His greater glory, and for His sole glory. It leads us to think purely of souls, which is very difficult to do in this material world, and to think of them, too, simply as spouses of Jesus. We thus gain a habit of mind which is fatal to the spirit of the world and to the tyranny of human respect, while it goes far to counteract the poison of self-love. The incessant thought of the Holy Souls keeps before us a continual image of suffering; and not merely passive suffering, but a joyful conformity to the will of God under it. Yet this is the very genius of the Gospel, the very atmosphere of holiness.

Furthermore, it communicates to us, as it were, by sympathy the feelings of those Holy Souls, and so increases our trembling, yet trustful, devotion to the adorable purity of God; and as, except in the case of indulgences applied to the dead, it requires a state of grace to make satisfaction for the sins of others, it is a special act of the lay priesthood of the members of Christ. The spirit of the devotion is one of pensiveness; and this is an antidote to frivolity and hardness, and tells wonderfully upon the affectionate character which belongs to high sanctity. We can tell what will come after patient years of thus keeping constantly before our eyes a model of eagerness, unspeakable, patient eagerness, to be with our dearest Lord? It is almost omnipotent, almost omnipresent; because it is not so much he who lives as Christ who lives in him! What is it we are touching and handling every day of our lives, all so full of supernatural vigour, of secret unction, of divine force, and yet we consider it not, but waste intentions and trifle time away in the midst of this stupendous supernatural system of grace, as unreflecting almost as a stone embedded in the earth and borne round unconsciously in its impetuous revolutions, day by day.

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