

follow as to the Messianic expectation of the essentially Jewish passage (Apoc. iv.), in which reference is made to the lion of the house of Judah; but with this we cannot now deal. The meaning of the four emblems can scarcely be doubted. The fanciful application made through so many centuries is devoid of foundation.

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ART. V.—PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD.

The living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything, neither have they *any more* a reward, neither have they any portion for ever in anything done under the sun.—Eccles. ix. 5, 6.

If the tree fall towards the south or towards the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.—Eccles. xi. 3.

THE lesson given us in these texts is clear. They teach us that the fate of the dead is fixed; as the Latin Vulgate renders it: “*Viventes enim scient se esse morituros, morituro vero nihil moverunt amplius, nec habent ultra mercedem.*” Where the tree falls there will it lie; and nothing that we can do in their behalf can avail them, or add to their happiness. Their future doom is fixed: “*Nec habent partem in hoc cœculo et in opere, quod sub sole geritur*”; for they have no part or portion in anything done under the sun on their behalf by the prayers or intercession of the living. “For it is written, Every one of us shall give an account of *himself* to God” (Rom. xiv. 12); “Whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Cor. xi. 15). Again, our Lord said even: “Every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matt. xii. 36). St. John gives us in a vision the scene of the last judgment: “The book of life” was opened; “and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works” (Rev. xx. 11); “and they were judged every man according to their works.” How, then, can a man be justified before God by the prayers of the living, much less by payments to a priest, on tariff prices, to offer masses for the souls of the dead? If the theory is reasonable, then the unfortunate defunct who may have no charitable friends to perform these offices for him would have less chance than his more fortunate brethren. It is wiser to leave the dead to the tender mercies of the Almighty, and He will deal to each a righteous judgment. The Lord alone knoweth the heart of man, “is gracious

and merciful," long suffering and of great goodness. Why then, seek to interfere in that judgment?

"Prayer for the dead" is neither a doctrine nor a practice of the Church of England. Our reformers, by successive stages, eliminated this pious but superstitious practice from our Church service.

The teaching of the Church of England is clearly set forth in the third part of the sermon concerning prayer in the Homilies:¹

Now, to entreat of that question whether we ought to pray for them that are departed out of this world or no. Wherein, if we will cleave only unto the Word of God, then must we needs grant that we have no commandment so to do. For the Scriptures doth acknowledge but two places after this life: the one proper to the elect and blessed of God, the other to the reprobate and damned souls, as may be well gathered by the parable of Lazarus and the rich man.

Then, after quoting St. Augustine's exposition of Luke xvi. 19-26, the Homily quotes Eccles. xi. 3, as confirmed by John iii. 36, and observes that Augustine "doth only acknowledge two places after this life, heaven and hell. As for a third place, he doth plainly deny that there is any such to be found in all Scripture." Chrysostom and Cyprian take a similar view. The Homily continues:

Let these and such other places be sufficient to take away the gross error of purgatory out of our heads; neither let us dream any more that the souls of the dead are anything at all holpen by our prayers; but as the Scriptures teacheth us, let us think that the soul of man, passing out of the body, goeth straightways either to heaven or else to hell, whereof the one needeth no prayer and the other is without redemption. The only purgatory wherein we must trust to be saved is the death and blood of Christ, which, if we apprehend with a true and steadfast faith, it purgeth and cleanseth us from all our sins, even as well as if He were now hanging upon the cross. "The blood of Christ," saith St. John, "hath cleansed us from all sin." . . . He that cannot be saved by faith in Christ's blood, how shall he look to be delivered by man's intercessions? Hath God more respect to men on earth than He hath to Christ in heaven? "If any man sin," saith St. John, "we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins."

The subject of prayer for the dead is inseparably involved with the question whether Christianity is a Divine revelation or a mere human invention. If the latter, prayer for the dead certainly forms an essential part of it; but if a Divine revelation, then is prayer for the dead finally and irrevocably excluded. From the first line of the Old Testament to the last of the New not one jot or iota occurs to sanction it. The paramount and vital fact, therefore, still remains unassailed

¹ Oxford edit., 1844, p. 299.

and unassailable, that in these sacred records not a vestige is to be traced of prayers for the dead, nor even the faintest allusion to such a practice. Whoever, therefore, values his religion as a revelation from on high, and not a fond conceit of man's invention, must resolutely banish prayers for the dead from his convictions. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

As a sentimental and pious emotion there would appear no immediate objection to the practice. In most cases, perhaps, it would be limited to an affectionate remembrance of a dear departed relative or friend; and this is the only plea that can be advanced. But the practice in the Church of Rome is inseparably connected with two dangerous delusions. One, that the defunct is in a state of torment, in that imaginary abode called purgatory—yea, even those who die in grace and the faith of Christ, but who have not performed "satisfaction" in this life, the penalties imposed by a priest in their so-called sacrament of "penance"; and prayers are offered to the Almighty to relieve them from that distressing position or state. It calls in question the justice and judgment of God. The other delusion is, that the bereaved relatives are too often induced to pay to the Church tariff prices to assume that duty by requiem masses, which are pretended to relieve the defunct; and if prayers for the dead were formally sanctioned by our Church these results must follow.

The practice was one of the first innovations in the Christian Church, but on a very different footing or intention as subsequently "developed" in the Roman Church. In the New Testament, neither in the discourses of our Lord, nor in the records of the Evangelists, nor in the letters of the Apostles to the various churches which they organized or directed, nor yet in the pastoral epistles to individuals entrusted with the superintendence of particular churches, is there the faintest suggestion of a practice which now forms a portion of the universal teaching of the Church of Rome. But some three hundred years after Christ we do find some kind of prayers for the dead; but these were offered, not to relieve souls from a state of torment, but for those believed to be in a state of perfect peace (for whom Romanists do not now pray)—for all righteous persons deceased: patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, the blessed Virgin Mary, etc., whom they did not pray *to*, but *for*; they prayed for a consummation of their happiness, and that the Lord would grant them His promised mercy in the day of judgment. Hence we find in the early liturgies coming from the East such prayers. For example, in the liturgy of the Church of Constantinople, said to be

that of Chrysostom (A.D. 400), we find the following prayer: "We offer unto Thee, O God, this reasonable service for those who are at rest in the faith; especially for our most holy, immaculate, and most blessed Lady, the Mother of our Lord, the ever blessed." And in the liturgy of the Church of Egypt, ascribed to Basil (A.D. 370), Gregory Nazianzen and Cyril of Alexandria, we have the following: "Be mindful, O Lord, of Thy saints, our holy Fathers, the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, especially the holy, glorious, and ever-blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of our Lord."¹

But all these prayers have been eliminated from modern Roman service-books, and they have substituted prayers *to* in the place of *for* the righteous dead. A notable example of this I may mention of Leo I., Bishop of Rome (A.D. 440 to 461). In the ancient missals the Church of Rome prayed *for* the soul of Leo, which at a later period was changed into a prayer to God by the intercession of "St. Leo" on behalf of themselves, by their new doctrine making him an intercessor for us, who by the old doctrine was supposed to intercede for us.

From these early prayers the late Dr. J. H. Newman admits that the doctrine of purgatory is a natural development; and Dr. Wiseman, in his "Moorfields Lectures,"² said: "I have no hesitation in saying that the doctrines—praying for the dead and purgatory—go so completely together, that if we succeed in demonstrating the one, the other necessarily follows." But he was met by the terms of the early liturgies. In p. 66 he says: "There is no doubt that in the ancient liturgies the saints are mentioned in the same prayer as the other departed faithful, from the simple circumstance that they were so united before the public suffrages of the Church proclaimed them to belong to a happier order." But he does not tell us when that took place. It was not until the year 1438, at the Council of Florence, that this council undertook to deliver a dogmatic decision on the vexed question with the Fathers as to the state of souls after death. The Jesuit Veron, in his "Rule of Catholic Faith,"³ tells us that this question "has since been decided in the affirmative by the Council of Florence—namely, whether the souls of the blessed are received in heaven, and enjoy the clear vision of God before the resurrection and the last day of judgment."

And here I may quote a remarkable passage from the late

¹ Elliot, in his "Delineations of Popery," 1851, p. 278, and Hall, "Doctrine of Purgatory and the Practice of Praying for the Dead Examined," 1843, give many extracts from these liturgies.

² Vol. ii., p. 254, 2nd edition, 1851.

³ Waterworth's translation, 1833, p. 82.

Dr. J. H. Newman's work on "The Prophetical Office of the Church"¹ while a minister in our Church. He quotes the observations of the Benedictine editors of the works of the Venerable Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (died A.D. 397), in the "Admonit. in Lib. de Bono Mortis":

The following passage [he writes] occurs in this introduction to one of the works of St. Ambrose² on occasion of that Father making some statement at variance with the present Roman views of the intermediate state: "It is not, indeed, wonderful that Ambrose should have written in this way concerning the state of souls; but what seems almost incredible is the uncertainty of the holy Fathers on the subject from the very times of the Apostles to the Pontificate of Gregory XI. [1370-1378] and the Council of Florence [1438]; *that is, for almost the whole of fourteen centuries—for they not only differ from one another, as ordinarily happens in such questions before the Church has defined* [the italics are Dr. Newman's], but they are even inconsistent with themselves, sometimes all wrong, sometimes denying to the same souls the enjoyment of the clear vision of the Divine nature." It may be asked, How is it the fault of the Benedictines if the Fathers are inconsistent with each other and with themselves on any point, and what harm is there in stating the fact if it is undeniable? But any complaint with them [the Romanists] would be on a different ground, viz., that they profess to know better than the Fathers; that they, or, rather, the religious system which they are bound to follow, consider questions to be determinable on which the early Fathers were ignorant, and suppose the Church is so absolutely the author of one faith that what the Fathers did not believe we must believe, under pain of forfeiting heaven. Whether Rome be right or wrong, this instance contains an acknowledgment, as far as it goes, that their religion is not that of the Fathers.

As to purgatory, that belief was first raised to an article of faith by the Council of Florence (1438), by a decree passed at the second session:

We decree . . . that if any true penitents shall depart this life in the love of God, before that they have made satisfaction by worthy fruits of penance for faults of commission and omission, their souls are purified after death by the pains of purgatory, and that for their release from these pains the suffrages of the faithful who are alive are profitable to them; to wit, the sacrifices of the masses, prayers and alms, and other works of piety which, according to the appointment of the Church, are wont to be made by the faithful for other believers.³

The beatified "Martyr" Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, in his "Confutation of Luther," admitted that—

There is no mention at all, or very barely, of purgatory in the ancient Fathers. The Latins did not at once, but by degrees, admit this doctrine, and the Greeks do not believe it at this day. And purgatory, *being so long unknown*, it is no wonder that in the first times of the Church there was no use of indulgences; for they had their beginning after men had been awhile scared with the torments of purgatory.⁴

¹ London, 1837, pp. 78, 79.

² Amb. Oper., tom. i., p. 385, Paris, 1686.

³ Labb. Concil., tom. xiii., col. 515, Paris, 1671.

⁴ Roffens, Luth. Confut., Art. 18, p. 200, Colon., 1559.

It is clear, therefore, that prayer for the dead in its modern phase and purgatory are developments of the early practice of the Church; and that such a practice must ultimately lead to the efficacy of masses for the dead, for the relief of souls supposed to be suffering the torments of purgatory.

An interesting question here presents itself, What evidence comes from the monumental records of the countless multitudes of Christians buried in the Catacombs for hundreds of years? I believe one or two modern inscriptions have been produced having some reference to a prayer for a departed one. It must be remembered that the Catacombs continued in use till the twelfth or thirteenth century; and in the course of 600 years, and of 600 miles of tombs—as De Rossi informs us they would be if laid out in a straight line—the contemporaneous opinions of Rome would, of course, be reflected in the Catacombs of Rome. A modern inscription may be competent evidence for a modern opinion, but a very different proof indeed of an ancient one. “Make a distinction between times,” says St. Augustine, “and the Scriptures will be consistent.” Apply the same to my argument—an appeal from modernism to antiquity; but the production of some isolated inscriptions from the Catacombs will not establish an ancient authorized practice; nor have we any evidence when during those thirteen centuries the inscriptions were made, or by whom. But it is somewhat imprudent for a Roman Catholic to appeal to the Catacombs. Those evidently lately written inscriptions are dangerous ground for a Papal foot to tread. On the graves of 7,000,000 Christians computed to be buried there in the first three centuries,¹ no mention of the Virgin ever occurs, no “Ave Maria,” no “Ora pro Nobis,” no “Requiescat in Pace,” no cross, and, of course, no crucifix. Next to the Bible, the Catacombs bear testimonies most confirmatory of Protestant, and most destructive of Roman Catholic belief. The learned and most laborious Roman Catholic, Professor Jules de Launay, entered them as an ardent Romanist, and quitted them a staunch Protestant. Mr. Hemans, author of “Ancient Christianity and Sacred Art in Italy,” once a convert from the Anglican to the Roman Communion, retraced his steps after studying the Catacombs.

“Roma veduta, fide perdute,” is a common Italian proverb; and if the moral and religious atmosphere of Rome above ground is apt to engender doubts of the soundness of the Papal creed, subterranean Rome is sure to confirm them. Hence Dr. Charles Maitland’s permission to copy some of the

¹ Farrar, “Lives of the Fathers,” vol. i., cap. i., p. 70.

inscriptions in the Lapidarian Gallery was withdrawn, and the surrender demanded of those he had already made.¹ Hence the suppression of Rusul Rochette's book. Like the martyrs it describes, it was too faithful to be supposed to live.² Hence the attempts of De Rossi to shore a tottering cause by the rotten props of mistranslation and forgery. Too thoroughly prejudiced for the candour required in an antiquarian, he entered the Catacombs predetermined to find the Roman Catholic faith there, and where he could not find it he created it. The "Roma Sottorranea," compiled in a similar spirit by Northcote and Brownlow from De Rossi's work, was heralded into the world as about to achieve great things for Rome, but how poor the results may be seen in Mariotti ("Testimony of the Catacombs," Part II., p. 83).

But this, to some extent, is a digression—the temptation was too great to be avoided. Enough has been said to show that there is as little authority for prayers for the dead in the ancient Catacombs as in the still more ancient Scriptures. Why, then, seek to introduce or encourage now a practice fraught with dangerous results, totally unsanctioned by the divine Lawgiver, and unknown to the Church? If, however, the word "prayer" is used in the widest sense, including praise and thanksgiving, no doubt our own favourite service gives hearty thanks for those who, being delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity, and pray that the dead, as well as the living, may have the time hastened of their perfect consummation and bliss, in strict accordance with the close of the revelation to the living and beloved disciples.

As for those who, on the close of their time of probation, have been righteously doomed to a state of punishment, it is no less the conclusion of reason than of Scripture, that it would be arrogant presumption to expect that our prayers will reverse the verdict of the Most High, and transfer to heaven those who have been judged worthy of it, and for those who have already been accepted as denizens of heaven; surely it is our part to rest not only content, but joyful. Still less should we borrow from the heathen an imaginary purgatory, confessedly unknown to the Scriptures, and for many centuries to the Church, and fancy that any multitude, however great, of private prayers will reverse the deliberated award of Him in whom truth, wisdom, and justice are combined. Can more unbecoming arrogance be imagined than for the creature thus to presume to dictate to his Creator—

¹ Dr. Charles Maitland, "The Church in the Catacombs," chap. i., p. 8, London, 1846.

² *Ibid.*, cap. iv., p. 151.

Snatch from His hand the sceptre and the rod,
Rejudge His justice, and be God of God?

Desperate attempts have been made to enlist the Fathers in support of the modern theory. The "Leading Case" relied on is the prayer offered up by Augustine, the African bishop, on behalf of Monica his mother. We find the following passage in his "Confessions":

Although she having been made alive in Christ, even while not yet released from the flesh, so lived that Thy name should be praised in her life and conversation, yet I dare not say that from the time that Thou didst regenerate her in baptism no word came out of her mouth contrary to Thy commandments.

He therefore prayed for her forgiveness. But mark the sequel. He adds: "I believe Thou hast already done what I ask, but accept, O Lord, the free-will offering of my mouth." But Augustine had no belief in an intermediate state of temporal torment. He thus states the faith of the Catholic Church. In his tenth Homily on the First Epistle of St. John he recognised only a state of bliss or a state of misery.

For as to the man who lived and is dead, his soul is hurried off to other places, his body is laid in the earth . . . [as to the soul] either in Abraham's bosom he rejoices, or [as to the body] in eternal fire he longs for a drop of water.

Again, in his nineteenth Homily on St. John:

They that have done well will go to live with the angels of God; they that have done ill to be tormented with the devil and his angels.

Again,

The first place in which the Catholic faith, by Divine authority, believes in is the kingdom of heaven; the second is hell, where all apostates and those who are alienated from the faith of Christ shall suffer everlasting punishment. Of any third place we are entirely ignorant, neither shall we find that there is any such place in the holy Scriptures.¹

In his eightieth epistle "Ad Hesychium," he observes:

In whatever state his last day shall find each person, in the same state the last day of the world shall find him; for such as every man in this day shall die, such in that day shall he be judged.²

Jerome wrote:

While we are in the present world we may be able to help one another, either by our prayers or by our counsels; but when we shall come before the judgment-seat of Christ neither Job, nor Daniel, nor Noah can entreat for anyone, but everyone must bear his own burden.³

But, in the estimation of any faithful member of the Church of England, the opinion of any Father whatever, when un-

¹ Pelag., *Hypognost.*, tom. vii., p. 884, Lugduni, 1562.

² Tom. ii., p. 399.

³ Hierom., *Lib. iii.*; Comment in Galat., cap. vi., tom. iv., col. 311, Paris, 1706.

authenticated by the warranty of Holy Writ, is of no more avail than the fine dust in the balance would be as a counterpoise to the standard weights of the Temple. On this, as on one of its choicest foundation-stones, is reared our Church's belief that the "Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man to be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." And not only to the Church of England, but to Protestants of every denomination, and to Romanists themselves, is it essential to resist the encroachments of insidious doctrines, the most effectual engines ever invented for the aggrandisement of the priesthood (I allude to payment for masses for the dead, the hiring of a priest for delivering souls from purgatory), and the impoverishment of the laity. We want no solitary father confessor buzzing in the ear of a sick person that he must purchase alleviation of purgatorial pains by no small sacrifice of the family inheritance. Round the bed of the dying Protestant stand affectionate friends and relatives, sorrowful, no doubt, but not with the agonizing sorrow that the object of their distress must be plunged, the very moment of his departure, into the excruciating tortures of purgatorial fires.

Theirs rather is the consolation, or rather the triumphant feeling :

Is this a death-bed where a Christian lies ?
Yes ; but not his—'tis death itself that dies.

As energetically, though not, perhaps, so beautifully, was the same sentiment expressed by the Christian Virgil at a time when Roman priests would fain persuade us that purgatory was the predominant creed of Christendom :

Dei perennis numen adserentibus
Nihil pavori est ; mors et ipsa subjacet.¹

Both writers being alike inspired, as by many other cheering passages of Scripture, so especially by I Cor. xv. 55, 57 : "O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? The sting of death is sin ; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

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¹ Prudentius, Peristephanon, x. 288.