

God? Moreover, is it not written "Out of hell there is no redemption."

We may have witnessed their faults, but have we not often witnessed their heartfelt sorrow and humility too? Does not the Royal Psalmist proclaim this consoling fact: "A contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise?" (Ps. 50-18).

Is it not, then, more in harmony with our thoughts of God's justice and mercy that there should be a middle state for such souls? Have not all peoples believed in such a state, and in the efficacy of prayer offered in behalf of those condemned for a time to suffer therein? What but pride or presumption could prefer a private opinion to this immense weight, carrying with it, as it does, the greatest learning, holiness, and authority? And, if at times, it seems strange that a God of infinite goodness suffer these holy souls to linger so long amid such fearful torments, marvel not, but recall to mind the many and striking examples recorded in the sacred pages of the chastisements inflicted by the Almighty on what we call venial sin. His just anger spares neither Moses nor David. Nadab, Abiu, and others fail in the observance of mere ceremonial rites under the Old Law, in matters, too, of seemingly little import, and in circumstances which should apparently excuse them. Yet God's dread ire fell heavily upon them. Oza thoughtlessly stretches forth his hand to uphold the tottering Ark, when lo! he is immediately struck dead in the sight and to the great consternation of the whole people! Why all this severity? Because the awful purity of God's majesty so deeply abhors the least blemish, that, were we able to close for ever the dread gates of hell, save all who are burning therein, free Purgatory and secure the salvation of all mankind by telling one little, the least lie, it were unlawful to do so. For, whatever accidental glory the Almighty might receive from the salvation of so many myriads, it would not adequately atone for the outrage inflicted upon the Godhead by this single violation of truth.

From the remotest times till the fatal schism of the sixteenth century, the dogma of Purgatory was believed and cherished everywhere throughout the Christian world. Churches and cloisters were everywhere reared, rich foundations were made vividly to remind the survivors of their obligation to pray for the departed. Covetous men gloated over the sight of the spoils which would fall to their lot if the dogma of Purgatory could be denied. Hence the wicked assertion that it was an innovation, a new-fangled doctrine due to the wiles of a crafty and designing priesthood, and the ignorant simplicity of a superstitious and priest-ridden people. Hence the cry which was at once taken up and repeated to our own days: "Purgatory has neither Scriptural nor historical grounds to warrant our belief therein." The dogma of Purgatory an innovation? Prayers for the dead a new-fangled doctrine? Far from this. We fearlessly proclaim that they are older than Christianity itself. The dogma of Purgatory and prayers for the dead are clearly taught in the Old and obviously implied in the New Testament. They are to be found in the writings of the chief Fathers and Doctors of the Church. Embodied in all the ancient Liturgies of the East and the West, they are taught in all the religious systems of old, whilst the doctrine is one of the most reasonable and consoling to the human heart. We have said that the dogma is older than Christianity, that it is unmistakably taught in the Old Testament. Open the Inspired Pages for the Proof of our assertion. Do we not read in the 12th chapter of the second book of Machabees, verses 39 to 46, that one hundred and fifty years before the light of the Gospel dawned on the world, after a long and glorious victory, the first care of Judas Machabeus was to pray to the Lord in behalf of those of his brethren who died amid the triumph of war? Was he not afraid lest, though they fell fighting for God and their country, some sins they may have committed rendered them displeasing to the Almighty? Hear the very words of Holy Writ: "The day following Judas came . . . to take away the bodies of them that were slain, and to bury them . . . and making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection. For if he had not hoped that those that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead. And because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness, had great grace laid up for them. It is

therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from sins." Does not the inspired penman here praise Judas Machabeus for this act of piety towards the dead? Does he not present him as a model to future ages? Are not these striking words of Holy Writ strong Scriptural grounds warranting our belief in Purgatory? Do they not amply prove its existence? The dead for whom the Inspired Writer declares it a holy and a wholesome thought to pray are not in heaven. The citizens of heaven are confirmed in grace, hence they can need no prayers. It cannot be for the dead who are banished to hell. For, confirmed in woe, the inmates of hell are beyond all hope of salvation. Wherefore, prayers for either are useless. Again, the sins to be forgiven the dead by the prayers of the living are not mortal. One single mortal sin were enough to hurl the offender into the depths of hell. The demons were damned for one single sin of pride. If the sins from which the dead are delivered through the prayers of the living are not mortal then they must be venial sins. If venial, they are enough to prevent those dying with such stains on their soul from entering into the kingdom of heaven, for it is of faith that "There shall not enter into it anything defiled" (Apoc. XXI., 27). Yet such faults and defilement must be expiated and atoned for. The dead cannot expiate them in this world. They must do so in the next, in the place of expiation, which we call Purgatory. If we pray for them, we hasten their deliverance and do "a holy and a wholesome thing." What have the so-called reformers done to snatch this and other no less glorious monuments of our faith from the Catholic Church? Finding it impossible to weaken the force of the foregoing passage, like an unscrupulous criminal in presence of an adverse witness, they boldly denied the books of the Machabees to be canonical. Yet St. Augustine declared in the fourth century that the Books of the Machabees were everywhere received as canonical. Have they not the same authority as the Holy Gospel or any other part of the Bible? On what other authority save that of the Catholic Church rests the Canon of Holy Writ? Long centuries before the sad schism of the sixteenth century snatched so many children from the bosom of the true Church, long before there was any dispute about Purgatory or prayers for the dead, was not the Catholic Church everywhere recognised as the sole depository, the faithful guardian of the Word of God contained in the sacred pages of Holy Writ. Was it not through her judgment alone that the world knew what was canonical or not? What right had anyone to reject the authority of books which for sixteen hundred years Christ's Infallible Church had pronounced to be inspired? What right save the fact that these inspired books condemned their opinions which were the offspring of their arrogant pride, and the cause of their unnatural revolt? But waiving for the moment the question of their inspiration, who would dare deny their truthfulness as grand historical monuments, proving to a demonstration, that to pray and offer sacrifice for the dead was the prevailing practice among the Jews? Furthermore, we know that our blessed Lord came "not to destroy but to perfect the law." He would purify the Jewish Church from all false traditions. He condemns the Pharisees for prohibiting works of charity on the Sabbath day. He rebukes them for their many innovations in doctrine and discipline. But nowhere does He ever rebuke the Jews for their belief in a middle state, or in praying for the dead, though He well knew this practice to prevail amongst them. Far from this, more than once does He use words which obviously imply the doctrine of Purgatory.

Turn to the New Testament, open the Gospel of St. Matthew. Do we not hear Eternal Truth declaring in the 12th chapter, "Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come." What is the obvious meaning of these divine words? Is it not that there are some sins forgiven in the next life? Now it cannot be in heaven, since "nothing defiled can enter therein." It cannot be in hell, where the blood of Jesus Christ, says St. Bernard, is not applied, and out of which there is no redemption. It must, then, be in a middle state between heaven and hell, that is to say, in Purgatory, out of which our dear Lord affirms that one shall not go until the last farthing be paid. Listen to the entire text. "Be at agreement with thy