

which the souls of the just will acquire that perfect and unspeakable purity which must fit them for the Beatific Vision, and without which they could never endure the sight of God. In the traditions of the ancient pagans we find many traces of a belief in this middle state; the existence of it is affirmed clearly in the Old Testament in the Book of the Maccabees, where we are told that Judas made his offering in the temple for his fallen soldiers, "Because it is a holy and a wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins." The doctrine of Purgatory rests on the strongest proofs, proofs from Scripture, from the ancient Fathers, from the practice of the faithful from earliest times, from the sense of the whole Christian people from the days when they carved in rough letters on the slabs in the Roman Catacombs a request for the prayers of those who passed by the way for the souls of the deceased. The Council of Trent lays down for us that the sinner must undergo a temporal punishment either in this life or the next in order to obtain full remission of his sins and be worthy to enter the Kingdom of Christ: it declares that Purgatory exists and that the souls therein detained are helped by our prayers, and especially by the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar.

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Many theological questions suggest themselves, but their discussion does not concern us at present. At the threshold of the month of November let us rather rest on the fact that Purgatory exists, and that it is at this moment full of souls whom we can help when they cannot help themselves. They have the certainty of being saved to comfort them; they recognise that their pains are but a preparation for eternal happiness; they adore the justice of God and would not have their torments curtailed by a moment if by such a means they had to go before Him not wholly purified. But they suffer; and as their suffering is by way of atonement for an offence against an infinite Being they assuredly suffer terribly. Which of us can look into the sanctuary of his soul without recognising how much he has to expiate before he attains such stainless purity as God will demand before revealing His glory to the soul after death? What man was there ever, apart from her who was conceived without sin and who lived unstained even by the slightest contact with the world through which she passed, who had no cause to do penance for his shortcomings? And for the generality of Christians who shall be saved only so as by fire who shall say that the period of expiation shall be either short or easy? We cherish through God's infinite mercy the blessed hope that our own dear dead are safe; but to presume that they do not suffer were at once rash and uncharitable to them. The doctrine of the Church ought to teach us to believe that the friends who have gone from amongst us, parents who loved us, brothers or sisters whose loss left us lonely, personal friends whom we loved as our own kin and who through our affection became half of our soul, are calling out to us in these poignant words of Job which the Church has put into their mouths, "*Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you that are my friends, for the hand of the Lord has touched me.*" The powerful hand of God is laid upon them in chastisement. They cannot help themselves. They call upon us—*at least you that are my friends*;—upon the friends who loved them and who can help them. There in a word is the doctrine of Purgatory inasmuch as it concerns us who enter upon the month of November now. And can we forget it?

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Let not St. Paul's reproach be verified in us. Let it never be said of us that we are without love. And if we forget our dead how true of us will it be! They are not separated from us. In the light of our Faith we see them and possess them still; and if the mortal means of communication be ended there remains now that other wonderful union which the love of God has given us that the dead whom we have loved may still be ours after death. *I believe in the Communion of Saints.* The bonds which united us are not broken; and though we may not hear their beloved voices again, nor touch

their vanished hands any more, we can do as much as ever, if not more than ever, for the friends who have gone from us; and if there be sadness at this time in thinking that they suffer there should also be joy in the knowledge that we are able to help them and that they will be able to realise that we have not forgotten them nor ceased to love them because we see them no more. Our prayers and our merits may be made theirs. There is no moment in which we cannot achieve something towards shortening their pains. If we have not ceased to love them, if our love is stronger than death, how we will respond to the call of the Church during this month of November dedicated to the suffering souls! The days when they could hear Mass are ended. Remember what the Mass is; and remember, too, that we can apply our Masses for them. Our own poor prayers may be vitiated through human infirmity, but there is the Mass by which we can make God Himself help us to help our dead friends, through which we can communicate to them the infinite merits of the Passion, in which we can renew and strengthen and purify our love for them every day in November.

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In the name of religion men have tried to rob us of the assurance that our dead are with us still, snatching from the hands of sorrowing humanity that consolation which nothing could replace; but the great heart of mankind realises in spite of all false teaching that God is not as cruel and as hard as men would make Him, and they who have been taught to look on Catholic belief in union with the departed souls as superstition have been brought by the war, with its revelations of sorrow and its purifications of anguish, to see God as they have never seen Him hitherto. Christ Who wept by the grave of Lazarus taught us how to love our friends and how to mourn for them. In His love He would not have us mourn as they that have no hope; and so He gave us, out of His ineffable compassion and tenderness, the Communion of Saints to be our solace and our stay in the dark night of our grief. In Him we are all brothers. He died for us all. And while we remember in particular our own friends let us try to follow Him afar off by embracing in our remembrance of the dead every soul in Purgatory that calls upon our pity. They and we remain always in that great society of Christ's mystical Body of whose members He said *By this sign shall it be known that ye are My disciples that ye have love one for another.*

.. NOTES ..

Heredity

Eoin MacNeill has not lost his wit through having been imprisoned for trying to stop the Sinn Féin Rising. Speaking at Kilkenny last month he said: "A speaker in East Clare had stated that he was a Sinn Féiner because his father and grandfather were Sinn Féiners; and a brilliant member of Mr. Redmond's Party retorted: 'And if your father and grandfather were fools what would you be?' 'I suppose,' replied the Sinn Féiner, 'I would be a member of the Irish Party.'"

Baby Week

We have been asked to help in reminding the public of the great waste of human life due to neglect of the babies all over the world. Whilst recognising the importance of the movement we regret that those who devote themselves to it do not go deeper. The loss of life through the neglect and the ignorance of parents is certainly appalling; but it is nothing compared to the loss of population due to the crimes of parents of all classes of society. Begin with them and teach them their duty. Teach them that the man or woman who frustrates wilfully the ends for which God joined human beings in wedlock is almost a murderer. Go to the Government and tell its members that they are destroying the Dominion by their support of schools in