

FROM PAINFUL PRISON TO HOPEFUL PURIFICATION:
CHANGING IMAGES OF PURGATORY IN SELECTED U.S. CATHOLIC
PERIODICALS, 1909-1960

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ABSTRACT

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Prior to 1960, U.S. Catholic periodicals regularly featured articles on the topic of purgatory, especially in November, the month for remembering the dead. Over the next three decades were very few articles on the topic. The dramatic decrease in the number of articles concerning purgatory reflected changes in theology, practice, and society. This dissertation argues that the decreased attention to the doctrine was the result of changing images associated with the doctrine. Throughout the history of the doctrine, images varied between those that emphasized purgatory as a painful prison for the dead and those images that emphasized hopeful purification or growth as an image of purgatory. The contrasting images tended to induce fear or hope and were associated with liturgical practices such as funeral liturgies and “extreme unction.” As theologians of the twentieth century retrieved patristic and biblical sources of these and other practices, the images of souls in a painful prison were replaced with the more hopeful images.

Changes in the understanding of and practices associated with purgatory over the course of two millennia are analyzed using five recurring themes: the nature of purgatory, the inhabitants of purgatory, time associated with purgatory, connections between the living and the dead, and practices associated with purgatory. The sources of material about purgatory are divided into five categories: official Church teaching, popular understanding, narratives, theological reflections, and practices. All of these sources and themes can be found in the periodicals of the twentieth century. *America*, *Ave Maria*, *Ecclesiastical Review/ American Ecclesiastical Review*, *Liguorian*, *Homiletics and Pastoral Review*, and *Oratre Fratres/ Worship* all contain articles about purgatory, especially in the month of November. Some of these periodicals addressed a predominantly lay audience and some targeted a predominantly clerical audience. The images of suffering souls are frequently used to encourage prayers to alleviate their suffering. As the hopeful images became more normative, the urgency of praying for the deceased lessened. The decreased attention to purgatory occurred prior to Vatican II.

Concurrent with the changing images of purgatory was a changing U.S. Catholic identity. As Catholics become more affluent the “culture of suffering” seemed irrelevant. As the upwardly mobile Catholics moved to the comforts of the suburbs from the challenges of city neighborhoods, the images of purgatory also changed. Practices evolved so that there was less need to pray for the dead and, therefore, less sense of connection with the dead. This seems to be an unintended consequence of the changing images. Theologically the retrieval of eschatology as central to the message of Jesus pushed the traditional notions of “Last Things” to the margins. The theology of Vatican II reflected a shift in eschatology from the next world to this world and from individual

salvation to corporate salvation. Images of fire as hopeful purification at the moment of death become part of the theological discussion after Vatican II.

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CHAPTER 1

A HISTORY OF THE ORIGINS OF THE DOCTRINE OF PURGATORY

Introduction

Purgatory is a uniquely Catholic doctrine and is a doctrine unique within Catholicism. The doctrine of purgatory has served as a marker of Catholic identity. The teaching has sparked disagreement with Eastern Orthodox Christians and with Protestant Reformers. The Orthodox rejected the materialistic way in which purgatory had been described by the Catholic proponents. Reformation leaders criticized the doctrine's thin biblical backing.

Within Catholicism purgatory is unique in that the idea grew out of a practice. Praying for the dead would make no sense unless the dead were in need of prayer. Although the teaching on purgatory is a minor doctrine, it does give some insight into the changes and continuities within the Catholic Church. The underlying idea of purgatory is relatively simple – even good people have not yet been perfected when death occurs, and they must undergo some purification to enter into the presence of God. The idea is simple, but the history of purgatory is complex. Although “purgatory” might best be classified as a subject addressed in the theological category of “eschatology,” the doctrine also interacts with areas of theological study such as soteriology, fundamental theology, ecclesiology, theological anthropology, and moral theology

This chapter will focus on the early intellectual and imaginative sources for the doctrine. The next chapter will focus on the developments in the understanding of purgatory from the time of the Reformers to the twentieth century. The purpose of the first two chapters of this study is to establish that the doctrine of purgatory has had an extensive and complex history. Many of the ideas, debates, and actors will later be referenced in the twentieth century. The history gives a context to the puzzle of how such a historically dynamic doctrine could have such a diminished impact in such a brief amount of time.

Preface

Beyond the first two chapters, this dissertation will focus on the change in images and practices associated with the doctrine of purgatory in the middle of the twentieth century, particularly in the United States. There is a noticeable decline in reference to purgatory in U.S. Catholic periodicals after the 1950's, especially in November, the traditional month of prayer for the dead. Accompanying the decline in writing about purgatory was a decline in practices connected with purgatory for many U.S. Catholics. This phenomenon has been called the "disappearance" of purgatory.¹ Considering the extensive history of the doctrine, the change in consciousness of purgatory did occur in a relatively brief amount of time. The focus of this dissertation is examining the context of this historical phenomenon. The main argument of this dissertation is that the doctrine of purgatory was "purified" over the twentieth century as a result of a change in the way

¹ See Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 187. Although not using the exact phrase, the diminished attention to purgatory among Catholics following Vatican II as been noted by various authors such as John E. Thiel, "Time, Judgment, and Competitive Spirituality: A Reading of the Development of Purgatory," *Theological Studies*, 68, no.4 (December 2008): 741-742; Robert E. Burns, "'The Examined Life' Is Purgatory a Dead Issue?," *U.S. Catholic*, 49, no.10 (November 1984): 2; Andrew M. Greeley, "Purgatory Doesn't Belong in Limbo," *U.S. Catholic*, 57, no. 4 (April 1992): 29; Robert J. Schreiter, C.P.P.S. "Purgatory: In Quest of an Image," *Chicago Studies*, 20, no. 2 (August 1985): 167-169.

purgatory was imagined. In this dissertation Catholic periodicals are grouped into those addressing a predominantly clerical audience, those addressing a devotionally oriented lay audience, and those addressing a predominantly lay audience concerning social issues. In viewing these articles according to themes and sources, as discussed below, images representing purgatory clustered in two types – one emphasizing punishment along with painful suffering and the other emphasizing purification along with growth or healing. The more punitive images were discontinued, and the other more hopeful images were continued after Vatican II.

Much of the change was associated with theological movements of *ressourcement*. The retrieval of biblical and patristic sources of liturgy shifted many of the official prayers of the Church from a tone of Good Friday to Easter Sunday. Accompanying the liturgical changes, Church writers retrieved a sense of eschatology imbuing all of theology. This, in turn, diminished a focus on the theological category of “Last Things” in general and purgatory in particular. The images from the early Church emphasized resurrection over punishment favoring more hope filled images of purification. Eschatology now viewed this world rather than only the next and corporate salvation rather than individual. Although not tracing its history back to the time of the Patristic era, the images of Dante were retrieved and recognized as in line with a hope filled view of the doctrine of purgatory.

Three associated arguments are also presented in this dissertation. The second, more historiographic argument is that this change occurred before Vatican II. Often it is assumed that the Second Vatican Council was responsible for the decline in attention to this doctrine. The research presented in this dissertation finds the decline to occur before

the Council. A third argument is that the change in imagery can be interpreted as a symbol of changing U.S. Catholic identity. A final argument is that the change had the unintended consequence of diminishing the sense of communion with dead in the consciousness of U.S. Catholics.

The first argument is that the doctrine of purgatory has continued as a teaching of the Catholic Church, but how that teaching is imagined has changed. Robert Schreiter, one of the few theologians to directly address the phenomenon of purgatory's "disappearance", gives much of the credit for the phenomenon to changing liturgical practices.² He points to changes in funeral liturgies, the sacrament of anointing of the sick, and the sacrament of reconciliation. Schreiter notes that it is difficult to distinguish "causes" and "symptoms" of phenomena such as the diminishment of the notion of purgatory. The liturgical changes were associated with theological movement of *ressourcement*. Schreiter expresses a main contention of this dissertation, that the "disappearance of purgatory" is not so much a change in doctrine as a change in imagination. People's religious imaginations are strongly shaped by their religious practices. This dissertation will expand on Schreiter's observation using Catholic periodicals as a source. In examining these articles we will include other practices that were both initiated and ended in the twentieth century. Schreiter also points to the changed understandings of "time" and "space" in the afterlife as influencing the way Catholics understand purgatory. This dissertation can be viewed as an expansion of

² Schreiter, Robert J. C.P.P.S., "Purgatory: In Quest of an Image," *Chicago Studies* 24 no.2 (August, 1985): 167-179. The periodical was primarily written for priests to deal with practical issues in the wake of Vatican II. So, his approach was less strictly doctrinal than pastoral.

Schreiter's explanation of the diminished influence of the doctrine of purgatory as a change in imagination.

A simple definition for imagination is "the activity whereby people make images."³ Thought is grounded in our images. The underlying assumptions of our thinking are based in the imagination. Imagination has an ordinary pre-conscious function of receiving and synthesizing information. Other terms such as "concept" could be used as a synonym for "imagination." This dissertation will use the term "imagination" because of its broader connotations. There are a variety of sources, including narratives and visions, which combine into the history of the doctrine of purgatory that makes "imagination" preferable to other terms.⁴

Imagination has been understood in a broader fashion in theology and the spiritual life by significant figures in the Church. John Henry Newman wrote about the importance of imagination in his *An Essay in Aid of A Grammar of Assent*.⁵ The clearest example of his reference to imagination is when Newman distinguishes real and notional apprehension and assent. Real apprehension is the broader understanding "in the realm of the affective, the imaginative, and the experiential."⁶ So the person is more fully

³ Bednar, Gerald J., *Faith as Imagination: the Contribution of William F. Lynch, S. J.* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1996), 57.

⁴ Bednar notes that the Catholic Church has had a history of caution when mixing theology and imagination. Scholastic theology was not open to imagination. As late as 1950 Pope Pius XII's encyclical, *Humani Generis*, reaffirmed scholastic theology as the theology for the Catholic Church. The encyclical presented scholasticism as the guard of the "deposit of faith" from "novelties." Although the encyclical did not explicitly condemn the use of the imagination, the scholasticism championed by the letter considered the imagination a barrier to truth. In recent years the titles of several theological works name many types of "imagination": apocalyptic, eschatological, exegetical, literary, metaphorical, midrashic, moral, multicultural, poetic, prophetic. For some these labels are attempts at finding an identity marker for a particular religious group's style of perceiving reality. This has certainly been the case with Catholic thinkers referring to the analogical or sacramental imagination

⁵ John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, ed. I. T. Ker. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

⁶ David M. Hammond, "Imagination in Newman's Phenomenology of Cognition," 29 *Heythrop Journal* (1988): 22.

involved in real apprehension. Notional apprehension is more abstract and deals directly with propositions. The notional also tends toward more conditional assent whereas the real pushes for unconditional assent. The imagination is more involved with the real type of apprehension. The imagination links “the affective dimension of the knower and the objects of knowledge”.⁷ In Newman’s thought this “real” apprehension is important in leading to the decision to believe. “To give real assent to it (a proposition or dogma) is an act of religion; to give a notional is a theological act. It is discerned, rested in, and appropriated as a reality, by the religious imagination; it is held as a truth, by the theological intellect.”⁸ So, for Newman, the imagination is more than just the formation of mental pictures. Imagination is a way of making sense of the world and of tapping into our deepest values. It is the imagination that stirs our affections and in turn motivates us to action.

Another figure of great influence in the Catholic Church is Ignatius of Loyola. His *Spiritual Exercises*⁹ introduced the use of imagination as a way of deepening one’s understanding of Scripture passages and of discerning the will of God. Certainly Jesuits have had a major impact on Catholic theology in the past century.¹⁰ For Ignatius God communicates through our imagination and can use the imagination to spur us to visualize and feel the negative effects of our sin and the positive results of following a moral path. These imaginings lead us to conversion.

⁷ Ibid., 24.

⁸ Newman, *ibid.*, 98.

⁹ Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, trans. Anthony Mottolo. (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1964).

¹⁰ See Avery Dulles, “Jesuits and Theology: Yesterday and Today,” *Theological Studies* 52 (1991) 531 and 532.

Ignatius of Loyola is writing in a post-Reformation context to bring imagination into the spiritual practices of his followers. Newman is writing in a very different context, post-Enlightenment England, to offer a way of understanding faith that can appeal to the modern mind. Taken together Newman and Ignatius support the idea that a change in how we imagine purgatory can result in a change in action. If we do not imagine the dead as in a state of suffering, we will not be urgently spurred to pray for them or have Masses said for them. If we are not told to imagine the plight of our dead relatives, we decrease the sense of connection with them.

Scripture is often the source for the Christian imagination. One of the most basic examples of how imagination has influenced our concept of purgatory is the changing interpretation of a passage from I Cor. 3:12-15:

Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire.¹¹

Paul's "fire" has been mulled over throughout the centuries. This was one of the seminal passages for imagining purgatory. That "purging" fire vacillated between being imagined as closer to the end of time or closer to the time of death; its nature was imagined as material or spiritual; the fire's duration could be brief or eternal; its purpose was considered either punitive or cleansing. The various ways of imagining this fire influenced practices associated with praying for the dead such as the remembrance of All

¹¹ *New Revised Standard Version*. <http://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/1-corinthians/3.html> Accessed 2/15/13.

Souls Day and visiting cemeteries. If the “fire” of purgatory was imagined as painful torture, family members had a moral obligation to do what they could to help. If the “fire” was a metaphor for spiritual growth after death, then the moral obligation was removed. Given the scientific understanding of the universe of the twentieth century, the literal interpretations of fire had to be dismissed.

In addition to Scripture, practices shape the Christian imagination which in turn shapes belief. *Lex orandi, Lex credenda*. This dissertation will view the imagination as the mediator between practice and belief. The doctrine of purgatory is rooted in the practice of praying for the dead. The practices influenced imagination, imagination in turn influenced belief, and belief influenced subsequent practice.

What was lost in letting go of many of the practices connected with purgatory was the urgency of praying for the dead. The Catholic tradition takes a step beyond remembering the dead. Catholics pray for the dead. For much of the Church’s history, this prayer was understood as a way of relieving the suffering of those who were experiencing pain in purgatory. Today the purpose is understood not so much to change the condition of the dead but to reaffirm our unity in the Body of Christ. Whereas the Church was once referred to as divided into the Church Militant, Suffering, and Triumphant, today the Church is imagined as Pilgrim, Purifying, and Glorified. Prayer for the dead is rooted in the Catholic sense of humans as social beings. It is rooted in the doctrine of the Communion of Saints. It is also rooted in the very realistic appraisal that most people die without being moral reprobates or moral heroes. We need one another for perfection. It is a deeply felt human need to connect with the dead. Prayer for the

dead brings Christ into this basic human need. Praying for the dead affirms that the Church's unity reaches across the grave.

There is not a strong articulation of an “anthropological” grounding for praying for the dead. We could say we pray for the dead because it makes us more aware of who we are. We are always indebted to the generosity of others. Others depend on us. We are our brother's keeper. By praying for others we remind ourselves that we find Jesus incarnated in the relationships we have. The humble acknowledgement that we have responsibility to will what is best, even for the dead, makes us human and Christian. Although recent theology has shunned the legalistic implications of words like “obligation” and “duty”, praying for the dead may be grounded in a basic human need to connect with loved ones who have passed away. This is analogous to why we give praise and thanks to God. It is “our duty and obligation always and everywhere to give You thanks and praise” not because it adds anything to God, but it is our proper relation with God.

This dissertation is not arguing for a restoration of the traditional concept of purgatory. Perhaps it is best to let the word “purgatory” “disappear” if it is too closely connected to a legalistic and punitive view of God and the meaning of life. However, there are other aspects of how purgatory functioned that have been unintentionally lost. The social aspects of the doctrine should not be abandoned. Many of the practices associated with purgatory tied the living with the dead. A reinvigorated doctrine of the Communion of Saints could carry the lost sense of communion with the dead.

This dissertation will also argue that the doctrine “disappeared” prior to Vatican II. The “disappearance” of purgatory would logically be lumped in with the changes that occurred following the Second Vatican Council. However, many of the theological and imaginative underpinnings of the doctrine had changed throughout the middle of the twentieth century. The changes led many to find the doctrine irrelevant even prior to the 1960’s. As with the periodicals, the documents of Vatican II avoid the word “purgatory” although the concept of purification after death is retained.

For U.S. Catholics of the early to mid-twentieth century purgatory was a symbol of identity. Purgatory was one of a handful of doctrines that marked Catholics as different from their Protestant neighbors. The changes in how purgatory was imagined reflect the changes in how American Catholics have understood themselves. There is an interaction between U.S. Catholic culture and the understanding of the doctrine. Robert Orsi’s¹² analysis of mid-century American Catholic devotionalism illuminates the context for purgatory. Orsi finds that Catholics took pride in a “culture of suffering” that distinguished them. The sufferings of this life could assist the dead. Orsi speaks of mid-century U.S. Catholics as being “in between.” Many Catholics experienced the ambivalence of being in between the Catholicism of the ethnic enclaves and the Catholicism of the suburbs. Of course, purgatory itself could be a metaphor for being “in between.” So the popularity of purgatory in the 1950’s may have been a symbol of the ambivalence and the need to find meaning in the suffering felt by many Catholics. The purification of punitive images of purgatory would have signaled an end to the culture of suffering and the ambivalence of being in two worlds.

¹² Robert Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars who Study Them* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005).

Themes

Studying the history of a doctrine presents some unique methodological challenges. One organizing approach has been to study themes over time.¹³ Certain themes do seem to recur over time. These themes center around purgatory's nature, timing, inhabitants, connections with this world, and practices associated with purgatory.

One theme that recurs in the history of purgatory centers on the nature and purpose of purgatory. We can characterize this as the punitive view of purgatory versus the educative view. Is purgatory primarily a place of punishment for sin, a prison, or even torture chamber? Or is purgatory a place of spiritual and moral growth, a school, or a mountain to climb? Is the "fire" of purgatory literally painful or only a metaphor for spiritual cleansing? This theme is closely allied with the imaginative issue of the "location" of purgatory. Is purgatory primarily the upper chamber of hell, associating purgatory with pain and punishment? Or is purgatory actually the entrance hall to heaven, associating purgatory with purification and salvation? Also is purgatory a literal place or a state of being?

A second recurring theme concerns time and purgatory. When does purgatory occur? Is it more closely connected with the Last Judgment or with the moment of death? Does purgation for sin happen primarily in this life or the next? These are the cosmic scale questions. Other time-related questions involve the connection of eternity

¹³ In Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang's, *Heaven: A History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), they find that over the course of Christian history the concept of heaven has alternated between what they call a "theocentric" and an "anthropocentric" view of heaven. The theocentric understanding of heaven emphasizes that heaven is primarily, or even exclusively, being in the presence of God. This is often called the beatific vision. The anthropocentric understanding emphasizes that heaven is a paradise of connections with those we have loved and admired in this life. This is one description of the communion of saints. Although not extensively mentioned by McDannell and Lang, purgatory would seem to be needed for the theocentric view of heaven.

and purgatory. How long does a soul stay in purgatory? How can someone shorten his or her stay?

A third area of speculation concerns the inhabitants of purgatory. Are the souls in purgatory completely passive and dependent on the mercy of God? Do souls have any agency after death? Are they aware of others in the afterlife or in this life?

Another theme that emerges is the connection of the living and the dead. Is the connection with loved ones severed at the moment of death? If purgatory is a painful experience, can the living help the dead? Can the dead help the living? If so, do the dead communicate with the living? In a sense purgatory is the doctrine that is associated with ghosts. There is a long tradition of narratives involving communication from the dead, often seeking help from the living. The doctrines of the communion of saints and the mystical body of Christ also address this issue.

A fifth theme relates to the practices associated with purgatory. The practices are not always easily classified as public or private, clerical or lay. Who takes responsibility for the dead? Is it primarily the task of the priest, relatives, or all of the faithful?

Most of these are themes dealing within “in house” issues concerning purgatory. Many of the questions indicate a scholastic approach to the doctrine. Other theological approaches and larger themes have also influenced the understanding of purgatory. Discussions about death, salvation, the church, the person, and God have influenced the understanding of purgatory. These “larger” issues emerge in the later centuries. Time periods differ in the attention given to the above themes so the themes emerge in an unsystematic way.

Sources

Because of the diversity of sources for the idea of purgatory, they also need to be organized for study. The doctrine of purgatory is expressed and imagined in a variety of ways over the centuries. The imaginary interpretations of purgatory are drawn from a variety of sources. There is no explicit mention of purgatory in Scripture, but certain passages have laid a foundation for thinking about the doctrine. Apocalyptic literature, mystical visions, folklore, apparitions, and non-Christian mythology have influenced the understandings of purgatory. So, purgatory has frequently been the subject of popular religion. The popular imaginings associated with this simple idea also interact with changing theological ideas about God, salvation, sin, and the Church.

Because of the volume and variety of sources connected with purgatory, the sources will be divided into five areas: theological reflections, imaginary and visionary narratives, associated practices, popular understandings, and official teachings.¹⁴ Each of these five areas will be explored for six time periods: early and patristic era, medieval era, reformation/ early modern era, modern era, nineteenth century, and the twentieth century.¹⁵ The current chapter will begin with an overview of pre-Christian and scriptural connections. The first two time periods will be explored in this chapter and the latter four in the next chapter.

¹⁴ Each of these categories has its own historical context and development. “Theological reflection” changes with time and location, but this paper will use the term to refer to reasoned approaches to faith. “Narratives” refers to a wide range of material including visionary, journey narratives, apocryphal writings, apparitions and poetry. These sources often approach the topic with the use of imagination. Private revelations as well as deliberately constructed works of fiction are grouped together. “Practices” includes rituals associated with funerals, burials, and cemeteries as well as liturgies and devotional practices. Material objects, such as gravestones and church architecture, fit within this category. “Popular understandings” often derive from the imaginary narratives and are often expressed in popular practices. The message of preachers often shapes the popular understanding. “Official teachings” refers to statements from church councils and popes. These are often the result of theological disputes.

¹⁵ Admittedly, this is an artificial schema to give an overview of the sources and themes. Neither the source areas nor the time periods are discrete entities.

Disagreements over the Origins of Purgatory

The history of the doctrine of purgatory has been contested among groups of Christians. Where to situate the beginnings of purgatory has been a major point of disagreement. For the Reformers of the 1500's a central criticism of the Catholic Church involved the selling of indulgences. The whole notion of purgatory was rejected because of the corrupt practices surrounding the doctrine. Protestant historians wanted to show that the idea of purgatory itself was a fabrication. To do this it was necessary to show a time that purgatory was "invented". For Catholic historians the goal was to show that purgatory had been implicit in the teachings and practices of the Church since the beginnings of Christianity.

The most extensive history of the doctrine of purgatory is Jacques LeGoff's *The Birth of Purgatory*.¹⁶ This book traces many of the major influences on the idea of purgatory from pre-Christian times until the thirteenth century. LeGoff contends that purgatory did not "exist" until the thirteenth century. It is only in the thirteenth century that LeGoff finds extensive use of the noun "*purgatorium*." Prior to that time the word was only used as an adjective, such as "purgatorial fire." The application of scholastic thought to the afterlife and in reaction to heretical ideas crystallized the previously disorganized ideas. Although the scholastic theologians more clearly articulated the doctrinal groundwork for purgatory, Le Goff gave the greatest credit to Dante as giving birth to purgatory as a place. Dante's genius was to combine the teachings of the school men with the imaginative narratives that had been told about purgatory. Although LeGoff's main thesis may sound like a creation of Protestant historiography, he identifies

¹⁶ Jacques LeGoff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

himself as agnostic. Further, he does acknowledge many and complex ideas leading up to the thirteenth century. It should also be noted that Michel Foucault, although not an actual historian, has had a strong influence on the Annales school. Foucault's writings emphasize power relations as a lens to view history. Although LeGoff acknowledges the influence of "power" in shaping the understanding of purgatory, his main goal is to identify underlying ideas that emerge from Medieval society.

Jacques LeGoff has been a central figure in the French Annales¹⁷ school of historical studies. Named after the journal (*Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*) that was founded in 1929 to offer an alternative form of writing history, the movement has gone through its own history of change. Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, the founders, envisioned a new way of telling history. They encouraged an interest in all levels of society, interdisciplinary methods of study, and a focus on group mental frameworks (*mentalities*) rather than events. A second generation of writers, under the leadership of Fernand Braudel, added an emphasis on regional history and a rejection of a Marxist interpretation of history. The third generation, of which Le Goff is a member, has been more diverse. LeGoff fits with the emphasis on interdisciplinary and cultural approaches to the study of history. Prior to writing on the influence of the "mentality" of purgatory, LeGoff had written about the concept of time in the Middle Ages.¹⁸

LeGoff's early critics have pointed out that the idea of purgatory was more like an evolution than a "birth". While the emergence of a noun to describe the doctrine marks a

¹⁷ Other Annales historians wrote on similar topics, notably Philippe Aries, *The Hour of Death* (English version, 1981) and Jean Delumeau, *Sin and Fear: The Emergence of a Western Guilt Culture 13th – 18th Centuries* (English version, 1990).

¹⁸ Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School, 1929-89* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990). In a 2003 interview by Josef Tancer ("The History of Innovation and Revolt" *Eurozine* 2003-09-05 www.eurozine.com) LeGoff states that he prefers the term "historical anthropology" for his work, rather than "mentalities" because it allows for material culture. He also discusses his position that the Middle Ages end with the beginning of the nineteenth century.

part of the evolution, it is not an indicator of the final construction of the idea.¹⁹ Further, the lack of a name did not mean that the concept was not already accepted by many thinkers.²⁰ Despite analytical flaws, the work of LeGoff still presents the most extensive research in this area²¹ and so his work will guide much of the description of the development of the concept of purgatory in this chapter.

More recently, some historians have written histories that challenge LeGoff's thesis. One contrast to LeGoff's analysis can be found in the work of Peter Brown. Influenced by the Annales school, the Oxford-trained Brown also presents an interdisciplinary approach to historical studies. Whereas LeGoff is a Medievalist, Brown's focus is on the time of transition from imperial Rome to Christendom. His work focuses on late antiquity as the beginning of purgatory.²² Although, like LeGoff, Brown sees the concept of purgatory developing over centuries, he centers the beginnings with the rise of Irish penitential manuals and forms of penance in the sixth and seventh centuries. In Brown's view, prior to Augustine Christians modeled an afterlife based on the Roman idea of "imperial amnesty." The all-powerful emperor could dismiss taxes or penalties at will. Likewise the all-powerful God could dismiss the punishment due to sin. Augustine introduced a more "purgatorial" concept of God purifying the dead. Gregory added to Augustine with visionary stories of connection with the afterlife. Brown also

¹⁹ Graham Robert Edwards, "Review Article - Purgatory: 'Birth' or Evolution?," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 no.4 (October, 1985): 634-646. Edwards finds that LeGoff's focus on a specific "birth" leads to misinterpretation of sources. These include errors in interpreting Cyprian and Augustine, and minimizing the influence of Gregory and Bede.

²⁰ Alan E. Bernstein, "Book Review," *Speculum* 59 no.1 (January, 1984) 179-183. Other criticisms include a lack of connection between the various sources of intellectual history.

²¹ Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Civilization, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) finds LeGoff's analysis "subtle, perceptive, and convincing." 280.

²² Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000*, Second Edition (Malden, Mass, USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003). Also "The Decline of the Empire of God: Amnesty, Penance, and the Afterlife from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages" in *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, edited by Caroline Walker Bynum and Paul Freedman, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000) 41-59.

notes the rise of the cult of saints led to Christian cemeteries in the fifth and sixth centuries. Traditionally Christians had been buried in the Roman way. Christians now wanted to be buried near those who would be first to arise at the time of the resurrection of the dead. This leads to a sense of gradation in the afterlife, or a need for purification. In the sixth and seventh centuries the Irish monastic practice of confession of sin and penance connected with the need to be purged of sin now and in the afterlife. Brown finds this to be a different form of Christianity than what had developed from the ending of the Western Roman empire. So Brown situates the beginnings of purgatory in the visions and practices of Irish monks in the seventh century.²³

A recent re-evaluation of the beginnings of purgatory is offered by Isabel Moreira.²⁴ Her reading of late antiquity texts places the true beginnings of purgatory in the writings of the contemporaries Bede and Boniface. These Anglo-Saxons referenced visions of their time, rejected Origen's tendency toward universal salvation, and made explicit the connection between intercessory prayer and assistance to the dead. Moreira finds Bede as a writer in the style of the fathers of the Church. She finds his writing to offer the theological foundation that would allow the concept of purgatory to dominate the imagination of the Middle Ages. So Moreira rejects both Brown and LeGoff's placement of the beginning of purgatory. She places the beginnings of purgatory as we know it in eighth century Northumbria.

Moreira expands her argument with tracing some of the historiography of the history of purgatory. As mentioned above, the Reformers wanted to show that the

²³ One recent book references his work as emphasizing the Irish visions of the afterlife. Claude Carozzi's *Le voyage de l'ame dans l'au; dala d'apres la literature latine (Ve-XIII siècle)*. (Palais Farnese: Ecole Francais de Rome, 1994) is reported as support for Brown's interpretation in Isabel Moreira, *Heaven's Purge Purgatory in Late Antiquity*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) 114-118.

²⁴ *Heaven's Purge: Purgatory in Late Antiquity*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) .

doctrine of purgatory was a Catholic invention. By placing purgatory in the “Dark Ages” the doctrine was positioned as one aspect of cultural decay that would require the Reformation to set Christianity straight. One line of argument was that the barbarian and pagan influences of the late antique period brought the concept of purgatory into Christianity. Moreira finds both LeGoff and Brown to rely on aspects of the “barbarian historiography.” Further the concept of purgatory seemed even more degenerate to Reformers because of papal support such as Gregory.²⁵

For the purposes of this paper, the debate over the “beginning” of purgatory highlights some of the complexity of the doctrine. LeGoff emphasizes the poetic imagination of Dante, Brown emphasizes the penitential practices of Irish monks, and Moreira emphasizes the theology of Bede and the practice of praying for the dead. One reason for viewing several sources over the course of Christian history is to note that different sources were weighted differently according to era. The debate substantiates the point that purgatory, although a minor doctrine, has had a dynamic impact on Christianity throughout its history.

Old Testament Afterlife

In *Heaven: A History* Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang provide an interesting history of the development of the pre-Christian Jewish understanding of the afterlife. The authors show that in ancient Judaism there were a variety of views about the afterlife. To reduce all of the Old Testament to a belief in Sheol is simplistic. A varied approach to the afterlife in ancient Judaism led to various possibilities for Christians in imagining the afterlife. Jewish understanding of the afterlife would be

²⁵ Ibid., 7-9.

shaped by encounters with Assyrian, Babylonian, and Greek influences. The perspectives that developed differ on the balance of focus on this world versus the next, the connection of the living and the dead, and the imagined reward or punishment.²⁶

As has been noted, there is no mention of the word “purgatory” in the Bible. However, Christian thinkers from Augustine through Thomas Aquinas to today have found scriptural warrant for the teaching on purgatory. The passage that has endured as the foundation for the doctrine of purgatory is taken from the Second Book of Maccabees. However, the Reformers rejected the entire book itself as one of the apocryphal or deuterocanonical books.

The passage most consistently used to support the idea of purgatory is II Maccabees 12:41-46.²⁷ This is the clearest example of the value of prayers for the dead. After a victorious battle against the Seleucid Greeks, Judas Maccabee wanted to honorably bury his men who had been slain. When preparing the deceased, it was discovered that many had been carrying amulets dedicated to idols. The survivors inferred that this sin had led to their death in battle.

They all therefore praised the way of the Lord, the just judge who brings to light the things that are hidden. Turning to supplication, they prayed that the sinful deed might be fully blotted out. The noble Judas warned the soldiers to keep themselves free from sin, for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened because of the sin of those who had fallen. He then took up a collection among all his soldiers, amounting to two thousand silver drachmas, which he sent to Jerusalem to provide for an expiatory sacrifice. In doing this he acted in a very excellent and noble way, inasmuch as he had the resurrection of the dead in view; for if he were not expecting the fallen to rise again, it would have been useless and foolish to pray for them in death. But if he did this with a view to the splendid reward that awaits those who had gone to rest in godliness, it was

²⁶ McDannell and Lang, *ibid.*, 1-22.

²⁷ Moreira finds this passage rarely used during the Patristic era. She finds it to be used extensively as a proof text after the Reformation. (20)

a holy and pious thought. Thus he made atonement for the dead that they might be freed from this sin.²⁸

The author of this passage is writing some time after 124 B.C. about events that had occurred between 180 and 160 B.C. The theologically significant ideas from this passage are that sins can be expiated even after death and that the prayers and sacrifices of the living can aid the expiation of those sins. This is the key idea behind purgatory and an important statement about the connection of the living and the dead.

It is also worth noting that the action straddles the divide between public and private. The action is initiated by the “lay” leader with the collection coming from the soldiers for a public sacrifice by the priests at the temple. This would remain one of the attributes of the doctrine and practices of purgatory – not only “intermediate” between heaven and hell, but in between private and public, lay and clerical.

Scripture scholars have also noted that the action of Judas Maccabee and the interpretation of the author may have differed. In the context of his time Judas Maccabee was probably making a sin offering for the living. He did not want the survivors of the battle to be polluted by the sins of the dead. The writer of the passage makes the comment about the way in which this helps the dead.²⁹

New Testament

In the New Testament there are two Gospel passages frequently referenced in discussions of purgatory.

²⁸ *New American Bible*. An English translation of the Vulgate renders the key line as, “It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins.”

²⁹ Jeffrey A. Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead: The Posthumous Salvation of Non-Christians in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 26-29.

1. Matthew 12: 31-32 speaks of the inability to forgive the sin against the Holy Spirit “either in this age or the age to come.”(NAB) One translation is “In this world or the world to come.” The passage implies that sin can be forgiven after death. If sins can be forgiven after death, then heaven and hell may not be the only options.

2. Luke 16: 19-26 is the parable of poor Lazarus who, at death, was carried “by angels to the bosom of Abraham” and the rich man who, at death, was in “the netherworld, where he was in torment.” The rich man pleads with Abraham to send Lazarus to dip his finger in water “to cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.” Abraham replies that a “great chasm” lies between them and cannot be crossed. Nor can the dead return to warn the living relatives of the rich man.

Jacques Le Goff points out aspects of the parable that would later influence medieval understandings of the afterlife. For Le Goff this parable shows that the place of the condemned is within visual range of the place of the blessed. Hell is dominated by thirst. And the name for the abode of the just is “the bosom of Abraham.” These would be explained as the places to wait until final judgment.

Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang analyze the parable in a different context. They point out that the Christian understanding of the afterlife differs from the Sadducees and Pharisees. Jesus was Galilean, and Galilean Judaism differed from the urban, Temple centered Judaism found in Judea. The Galilean view was more other-worldly in its hopes for the redemption of Israel. In the parable above, the Christian view of the afterlife was that Abraham had already passed into the next world. Apocalyptic Judaism assumed the dead were waiting for the Last Judgment. The New Testament authors understand the afterlife to be almost exclusively focused on God. Communion with God

is the supreme value, dwarfing any other afterlife concerns. This focus on God minimizes concern for family. The new, more important, bond is to Jesus and his heavenly Father and those connected with them. Paul and John of Patmos both encourage “being in the world but not of the world.”³⁰

So the New Testament promise does not concern itself with purgatory. In the interpretation of McDannell and Lang, the New Testament is “either/or.” Either one follows Jesus to the eternal Jerusalem or one rejects Jesus and is thrown into “a lake of sulphur and fire.” The analysis of McDannell and Lang offers an example of contemporary understanding of the eschatology of the Gospels. Their analysis underlines how distant a concept like purgatory may have been from the thought of the New Testament authors.

The New Testament passage most frequently connected to the concept of purgatory is not found in the Gospels. In addition to the passage from Maccabees, the Scriptural passage that would be most discussed with the doctrine of purgatory is I Cor 3:11-15.

...For no one can lay a foundation other than the one that is there, namely, Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, or precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, the work of each will come to light, for the Day will disclose it. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire (itself) will test each one's work. If the work stands that is built upon the foundation, that person will receive a wage. But if someone's work is burned up, that one will suffer loss; the person will be saved, but only as through fire. (NAB)³¹

³⁰ McDannell and Lang, *ibid.*, 27-32.

³¹ The Vulgate renders verses 13-15: “Every man's work shall be manifest. For the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire. And the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.” www.latinvulgate.com (See page 5 for earlier discussion.)

In this passage, Le Goff points out, Paul is referring to a Day of Judgment. So he is envisioning the apocalyptic view of judgment. The quality of each person's "work", or life, will be tested by "fire." This is the earliest understanding of purgatory. In general terms, at judgment each person's life and works must be tested to determine their quality. "Fire" could be taken literally or symbolically. Le Goff discusses the significance of this:

The nature of purgatorial fire was much discussed from patristic times onward. Was it punitive, purifying, or probative? Modern Catholic theology distinguishes between the fire of Hell, which is punitive, the fire of Purgatory, which is expiatory and purifying, and the fire of judgment which is probative. But this is a late rationalization. In the Middle Ages, all three were more or less confounded. Purgatorial fire was considered akin to hellfire; though not eternal, it burned just as fiercely while it lasted. When, later, the fire of judgment was reduced to an individual judgment that followed closely after death, purgatorial fire and the fire of judgment were, in practice, usually identified.³²

So Paul's passage on "purifying" fire, combined with the Maccabean practice of praying for the dead, laid the primary biblical foundation for the doctrine of purgatory.

Taking an approach differing from the "proof text" approach, in a recent article, Gray A. Anderson rejects the traditional Protestant argument that there is no biblical basis to the concept of purgatory. He finds biblical themes that correspond to the elements of the doctrine of purgatory. Anderson uses the story of King David to illustrate that sin may require continual transformation, or sanctification, even after forgiveness. Anderson also uses stories of the raising of Tabitha in the Acts of the Apostles and the baptism of Cornelius to show that their "good works and giving of alms" made them more open to the work of God.³³

³² Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, *ibid.*, 43 and 44.

³³ Gary A. Anderson, "Is Purgatory Biblical?," *First Things* 21, no. 11 (November 2011): 39-44.

Patristic and Early Medieval (Late Antique) Era

The Patristic era³⁴ was shaped by the experiences of martyrdom, the rise of ascetic forms of Christian living, the evolving of the Christian community into a more organized church structure, the assimilation of Greco-Roman thought, and the acceptance of Christianity as the religion of the empire. Although the term purgatory had not yet been coined, the ideas and practices that made up purgatory continued to develop. At the beginning of this era Christians were still focused on a final, and relatively imminent, judgment which would be followed by a resurrection of the dead. There is little record of systematic reflection concerning the status of individuals between death and that judgment. By the end of the patristic era, there was more of an emphasis on the individual soul going to heaven. The final judgment was pushed into a more distant future.

Recent scholarship has highlighted the contributions of the time after the end of the unified Roman political system. The early middle ages shaped an understanding of the afterlife for Western Christians that would continue throughout the Middle Ages.

Theological Reflection: The “Fathers” of Purgatory³⁵

Le Goff chooses several of the patristic thinkers to be considered the “fathers of purgatory.” An abbreviated list of the people he chooses as fathers are Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Augustine, and Gregory.³⁶

³⁴ This era includes the better part of the first Christian millennium. Much of the theological analysis occurred in what is traditionally called the Patristic era and many of the narratives and practices developed in the centuries after the dissolution of the Western Roman Empire.

³⁵ LeGoff also mentions Jewish and Christian apocryphal and apocalyptic writings as influencing views of the afterlife. The Book of Enoch (170 BCE) and the Fourth Book of Ezra (120 CE) describe different levels of hell. The Christian Apocalypses of Peter and of Ezra present dualistic images of the afterlife. The Apocalypse of Paul details the many tortures of hell, but distinguishes an upper and a lower hell. LeGoff considers this to be a precursor of purgatory.

LeGoff recognizes the paradox involved in naming two of the Alexandrian Greek theologians as fathers of purgatory. The Eastern Christian churches would eventually disagree with the Western understanding of purgatory. Additionally, the work of Origen was based on ideas that would be condemned as heretical.³⁷

Clement (d. 215) combined Greek philosophy with Judeo-Christian religious ideas. Both Clement and Origen followed the Platonic idea that chastisement by the gods was a means of education and salvation. Clement seems to have been the first to distinguish between sinners who were “tainted” and those who were “besmirched” by sin at the time of death. These two groups of sinners would receive different types of chastisement after death. Those who were only tainted by sin would have to pass through a spiritual fire to be cleansed of sin. Those who were besmirched would be brought through an extended fire.

Joseph Ratzinger notes that Clement of Alexandria worked in the context of the controversy with Valentinian Gnostics. Whereas the Gnostics said that the true Gnostic could not be touched by the destructive fire of judgment, Clement reinterpreted the fire as “purifying” and “educative”.³⁸ Ratzinger praises Clement as laying the foundation for purgatory.

Origen (d. 253/254), Clement’s student, expanded on the idea of God using fire to purify after death. Origen proposed that since all are sinners, all will need to be purified. He located this purification after the general resurrection of the dead. He expected this to happen in the foreseeable future so he, like many of the Christians of this era, was not

³⁶ Cyprian, Hilary of Poitiers, Ambrose, Jerome, Ambrosiaster, and Ceasarius of Arles are authors also mentioned.

³⁷ LeGoff, *ibid.*, 52.

³⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1988), 222-225.

greatly concerned with the status of the dead between death and Judgment Day.

Following Judgment Day the souls of the righteous (“tainted” by sin) would be purified and enter Paradise on the eighth day. The souls of the wicked (“besmirched” by sin) would have to continue burning in the spiritual fire for “a century of centuries.”

The idea of Origen that would later be condemned was *apokatastasis*, or a universal salvation. Origen taught that even hell was temporary. The souls of everyone would continue to progress after death. Caroline Walker Bynum thought that Origen offered one of the more philosophically tenable positions concerning the resurrection of the dead. Bynum’s analysis of Origen is that he is one of the few thinkers who understood change as a quality of the human body. The resurrected body would not be an exact material replica of the earthly body.³⁹

These Alexandrian fathers did expound some of the aspects that would later be taken to form the doctrine of purgatory: the soul can be purified after death; there is a foreshadowing of venial and mortal sin, and there is a link between penitence and the fate of the soul.

Tertullian was a North African Latin theologian who died after 220. He theorized about the fate of righteous souls after death while awaiting resurrection and judgment. Tertullian thought that the righteous waited, not in heaven, but in *refrigerium interim*, a state of happiness described in the Gospels as the “bosom of Abraham.”⁴⁰ He also advocated the Roman custom of making offerings for the dead on the anniversary of the person’s death. Tertullian initiated some aspects of the afterlife that would be incorporated into the concept of purgatory. He proposed the idea of an interim state after

³⁹ Walker Bynum, *ibid.*, 63-70.

⁴⁰ Le Goff, *ibid.*, 47.

death and also promoted the importance of the living making offerings for the dead.

Tertullian's "bosom of Abraham" differed from purgatory in purpose (waiting versus purification) and in duration (until the resurrection versus until sins were expiated).

Ratzinger finds Cyprian to be an important interpreter of Tertullian. Cyprian transformed Tertullian's rigorist view that had envisioned all in Hades prior to the resurrection. Cyprian was addressing the pastoral problem of those who had renounced Christ to avoid martyrdom. Cyprian asserted those who had died in the faith would be saved. Those who had been weak could be readmitted to communion by doing penance. This purification could continue into the next life.⁴¹

Other than the writers found in the canon of New Testament, it would be difficult to find a writer of the first millennium more influential on Christianity than Augustine of Hippo. As with many Christian doctrines, his influence on the understanding of purgatory is considerable.⁴² Augustine introduced key terminology such as "purgatorius" (as in "purging fire"), "temporarius", and "transiterius."⁴³ These terms would be pivotal in medieval discussions of purgatory. Augustine's ideas would form the foundation for the understanding of purgatory during the Middle Ages.

Because Augustine's own views changed, many scholars have found it helpful to divide his writings into those before and after 413. Scholars have usually characterized the early Augustine as more influenced by Platonic thinking and later Augustine as more materialistic.⁴⁴ One scholar, Joseph Ntedika,⁴⁵ assembled Augustine's writings on

⁴¹ Ratzinger, *ibid.*

⁴² Because of the breadth of Augustine's contributions, his work will be noted in other sections.

⁴³ Le Goff, *ibid* 62-63.

⁴⁴ Walker Bynum, *ibid.*, 95 fnt 132.

purgatory to trace the evolution in his thought. Le Goff's analysis of Ntedika's work is that Augustine only formulated ideas about purgatory as a secondary concern to more fundamental issues such as salvation, faith and works, and hell. However, Le Goff agrees that Augustine did show a change in his thinking on purgatory.

Some of Augustine's major contributions to the understanding of purgatory included a more thorough explanation of the role of the living in praying for the dead, a sense of the tribulations of this life beginning the purgatorial process, and that those who are damned cannot be aided by the living.

He would also lay the groundwork for some of the fear-provoking images of purgatory. Before 413, Augustine would write a statement which would be frequently quoted in later ages: "Although some will be saved by fire, this fire will be more terrible than anything a man can suffer in this life."⁴⁶ This emphasis on the negative and painful aspects of purgatory, Le Goff calls the "infernalizing" of purgatory.

After 413 Augustine's views narrowed. His explanation of the fate of the soul after death and before final judgment emphasized harsh penalties for souls that were less than perfect. Le Goff gives three reasons for the narrowing of Augustine's views. First, Augustine was dealing with a group called the *miseriordes*. There are no known first hand sources about the group, but Augustine described them as heirs of Origen. Apparently the *miseriordes* believed that all people would eventually be saved, even the most evil of sinners and perhaps Satan. In response to this group, Augustine distinguished everlasting and purgatorial fire. His point was that there was the possibility of eternal damnation.

⁴⁵ Joseph Ntedika, *The Evolution of the Doctrine of Purgatory in Saint Augustine* (Paris: Louvaine Publications, 1966).

⁴⁶ Augustine of Hippo, *Commentary on the Psalms* 38.3. As quoted in Le Goff, *ibid* 68.

A second set of ideas to which Augustine responded was millenarian. These ideas from Spain forced Augustine to specify the workings of final judgment. Although many would have to pass through fire after death, some would find this resulting in forgiveness at final judgment, and others would find damnation. The millenarian expectation of an imminent end to the world was countered by Augustine's expectation of purgatorial process in the afterlife, prior to final judgment.

Le Goff speculates that a third reason for the tightening of Augustine's approach to the afterlife was the sack of Rome in 410. In the minds of many Christians, this event marked not only the end of the Roman Empire, but the beginning of the end of the world. In response to those who blamed Christianity for the fall of Rome, Augustine would write *City of God* (426-437).

LeGoff also claims that Augustine distinguished four types of people after death. There are the godless who are consigned to Hades; martyrs and saints who are with God; those who are not entirely evil; and those who are not entirely good. The latter two categories are those who must undergo purgatorial fire.⁴⁷

The last of the great "fathers" of purgatory was Pope Gregory the Great (made pope in 590). Gregory made the teaching of Augustine more concrete, at times materialistic. One of Gregory's contributions was to specify a geography of the afterlife. There was an upper and a lower hell. The righteous inhabited the upper hell. Although

⁴⁷ Edwards, *ibid*, disagrees on this point. His reading of Augustine finds that there were only three categories: the entirely good, the entirely evil, and the not entirely evil.

Gregory is often cited as one of the great promoters of purgatory, his ideas were often communicated as narratives, so his contributions will be discussed below.

These early seminal Christian thinkers would continue to influence understandings of purgatory through the twentieth century. Augustine and Gregory would continue to be extensively referenced in discussions about purgatory. Although LeGoff refers to this as the “pre-history” of purgatory, later Catholic thinkers would consider these fathers were describing the doctrine of purgatory even if they did not use the name.

According to LeGoff the early Middle Ages contributed little direct theological understanding on the topic of purgatory. Although there was little theological speculation about purgatory during this period, classification of sins developed in many of the evangelized territories of Europe. Distinctions between mortal and venial sins became accepted. This would lay a rationale for the existence of purgatory.

Peter Brown (and Isabel Moreira) reject this characterization of the early Middle Ages. These were not “Dark Ages” if one means there was an intellectual decline. Nor were “barbarians” mindless primitives. The Christianity of this time should not be characterized as having fallen from a pristine early Church form of Christianity. It is from 550 to 750 (or 850 for Moreira) that many of the lasting aspects of Western Christian imagination emerge.⁴⁸

What the spiritual leaders of the seventh century may have lacked in zest for those aspects of speculative theology that we as modern persons tend to value, they more than made up for in a heroic effort to cover all known life, in this world and the next, in the fine web of a Christian notion of sin and forgiveness.... After the seventh century, a new style of

⁴⁸ Brown, *The Rise of Western Christianity*, *ibid.*, 20-24.

Western Christianity emerged. It was greatly preoccupied with issues of merit, sin, and identity....⁴⁹

Imaginative Narratives: Dreams, Ghosts, and Journeys

A work mistakenly ascribed to Tertullian was the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*. In 203 Septimus Severus persecuted the Christians of Africa. Near Carthage Perpetua and Felicity along with three men were martyred. The *Passion* is an autobiographical record of Perpetua's time of imprisonment with the editor adding an account of her eventual execution.

During her stay in prison, Perpetua dreamt of her dead younger brother, Dinocratus. In this dream Perpetua saw her brother in a dark place, burning, thirsty, and dirty. His face was scarred by a sore. There was a water basin, but the lip of the basin was above his reach. Perpetua was aware that Dinocratus was being tried. Upon waking she began to pray for him daily.

Perpetua had another vision a few days later. In this vision she states,

I saw the place that I had seen before, and Dinocratus, his body clean, well dressed, refreshed, and where the sore had been I saw a scar; and the lip of the basin I had seen had been lowered to the height of a child's navel, and water flowed out of it continuously. And above the lip was a golden cup filled with water. Dinocratus drew near and began to drink from it, and the cup never emptied. Then, his thirst quenched, he began playing happily with the water, as children do. I awoke and I understood that his penalty had been lifted.⁵⁰

In understanding the "pre-history" of purgatory, Le Goff feels that this vision should "neither be exaggerated nor minimized." He points out that the images differ from the medieval purgatory. The place is not a valley or a mountain. It is more like

⁴⁹ Brown, "Amnesty, Penance, and Afterlife," *ibid.*, 58-59.

⁵⁰ As quoted in Le Goff 49-50.

Paradise. There is also no mention of judgment or punishment. However, Le Goff does concede that this passage would be continually referenced in the years to come. This vision describes a place that is not Hades or the bosom of Abraham or heaven or hell. The youth is suffering, presumably because of sin. The prayers of a living and worthy relative relieve the thirst and pain of the person.⁵¹

Although Augustine's contributions were primarily academic, his opinion also shaped the future of purgatorial narratives. Augustine's influence over the future Catholic approach was even found in his approach to ghosts. In a writing entitled *On the Care to be Given to the Dead* (421-423) Augustine discusses ghosts. He analyzes appearances in dreams and stories of the spirits of the unburied beseeching relatives to bury them. Just the fact that he discusses these phenomena sets a precedent for the future. Augustine seems to have a skeptical attitude, but does not totally dismiss the experiences that have been reported to him. He does conclude by advocating prayers, the giving of alms, and Masses as an aid to the dead. There was a mixture of certainty about what had been revealed in Scripture and a hesitation about imagining beyond that. "What Augustine bequeathed to the Middle Ages was this mixture of certainty and skepticism."⁵²

Gregory used anecdotal stories, or *exempla*, about the dead returning (from the upper part of hell) to communicate with the living. In one story a deceased deacon appeared to a bishop in a bath house to ask for prayers to be released from punishment.

⁵¹ Ibid., 50-51.

⁵² Le Goff, *ibid.*, 85.

In another a ghost returns to encourage the Eucharist as a way to assist him. In a third story, a monk who had hidden three gold coins for himself, returned to his brother to let him know that thirty days of Masses had released him from his punishment.

These stories would set a narrative pattern that would be followed in the Middle Ages and beyond. The stories told of the close bond between the living and the dead. Gregory's tales also tended to locate the place of purgatory on earth. One story seemed to associate the mouth of hell with a volcano. This would later be viewed as an entrance to purgatory.

Le Goff points to the political use of the afterlife. In one tale Gregory relates a story of a hermit who witnessed the dead King Theodoric being cast into a volcano near Sicily. Theodoric had unjustly persecuted Christians and was punished for this. Le Goff points out that as the image of purgatory evolved, the church gained more flexibility in using purgatory as a "weapon". The enemies of the church could receive a variety of punishments in the afterlife.⁵³

The period from the time of Gregory in the late 500's to 1100, LeGoff labels as "doctrinal stagnation and riot of imagination". LeGoff finds the "riot of imagination" about the afterlife to have originated from the influence of barbarian groups. Although Moreira finds the label "barbarian" to be stereotypical, it is agreed that stories of journeys into the afterlife became common. Often these visions gave vivid and detailed descriptions of the punishments assigned to categories of sinners in the afterlife. These visions also located the time of the purgatorial fire closer to the individual's death than the general last judgment.

⁵³ Ibid. , 88-95.

One example was Bede's *Vision of Drythem*, written before 735. It tells the story of a pious layman who has a "near death experience." He was led by a being of light through a narrow valley. One side was battered by snow, hail, and intense cold; the other side was engulfed in flames and intense heat. The souls of the dead were on both sides and the wind would blow them from side to side. Drythem's companion assured him that this was not hell. His companion explained that the valley was for those who had not done penitence in life for their sins. At Judgment Day they would be accepted into the Kingdom of Heaven. Drythem eventually encountered a meadow of beauty with inhabitants dressed in white. This was for those who had done good, but were not perfect. The guide tells Drythem that there are also some who go directly to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Le Goff points out that this vision contains almost all of the elements of purgatory. However, it does not use the word "purge." It also differs from purgatory because it is a binary system (probably based on Augustine) in which there is an "almost hell" and an "almost heaven."⁵⁴

A German monk, Wetti, died in 824 after telling the story of his vision while he suffered through illness. An angel would take Wetti to a beautiful mountain range surrounded by a wide river. He sees many being tortured and is told that this is a place of purgation. Priests who had broken their vows, abbots who had sinned, and bishops who had not prayed for them were being tortured on the summits of these mountains. He even sees Charlemagne who is being tortured for his sexual sins. The angel tells Wetti that most of these will eventually be saved.

⁵⁴Ibid., 112-116.

So this vision gives a very strong image of purgation in the afterlife. The vision also locates the place of purgation on mountains. These elements foreshadow the purgatory of Dante.

Moreira finds that a close and critical reading of these various visions reveals that they are often arguing particular theological and pastoral points. Several of the visions are recorded several decades after the original experience, indicating a possibility of framing the visions in a certain way. She shows that there is often ambiguity about the geographical origin of the stories. The visions are often recorded in a monastic and missionary context. Monastic concerns with penance and missionary concerns with appealing to an audience unfamiliar with biblical and patristic sources shaped the telling of the visions.⁵⁵

Practices

As we have indicated in the discussion of the Book of Maccabees the practice of praying for the dead pre-dates Christianity.⁵⁶ The early Christians wrote epitaphs on graves of Christians praying for their salvation. Although the Roman catacombs have frequently been cited in Catholic texts as evidence of the ancient belief in purgatory, LeGoff feels that this is overstated.⁵⁷ He bases this contention on the fact that the prayers seek *refrigerium* for the departed rather than a relief of punishment. The remembrance of the dead, included in the Eucharistic prayer near the time of Gregory, also can be

⁵⁵ Moreira, *ibid*, 125-129.

⁵⁶ While customs for mourning the dead have developed in Judaism from this time, the actual ritual of praying for the dead, the Mourner's Kaddish seems to have emerged around the 13th century. This may have developed in response to some of the atrocities associated with the Crusades. (See Ronald L. Eisenberg, *The JPS Guide to Jewish Traditions*. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2004), 91-101 and 394.

⁵⁷ LeGoff, *ibid.*, 122-124.

interpreted as seeking mercy at the final judgment. For our purposes, the fact that this practice developed and continued is important. No matter how the abode of the dead was imagined, the living understood that their prayers aided the dead.

Augustine again contributes to this aspect of Christian life. He criticizes the pomp associated with the Roman pagan funerals. Using the funeral to display wealth contradicts the Christian emphasis on detachment from the things of this world. Augustine's emphasis on simplicity of funerary rituals would be echoed throughout the centuries.

Augustine, beginning with *Confessions*, promoted prayers for the dead as his mother had requested. The most famous of Augustine's early works was his *Confessions*, written from 396-397. This was written after the death of Monica, his mother. Her death prompted much of his reflection about the afterlife. In a prayer within the *Confessions* Augustine asks God to forgive any trespasses Monica had committed. Augustine also tells that his mother's dying request was to be remembered at Mass. Although he knew that his mother had lived a good and holy life, he called on his readers to pray for her. So Augustine definitely promoted the need for the living to pray for the dead.

While Augustine promoted prayer for the dead early in his life as a Christian, it was later (426-427), in *City of God*, that he would clarify the limits to prayers for the dead.

For the prayer of the Church itself, or even the prayer of devout individuals, is heard and answered on behalf of some of the departed, but only on behalf of those who have been reborn in Christ and whose life in the body has not been so evil that they are judged unworthy of such mercy, and yet not so good that they are seen to have no need of it.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*. 21.24. As quoted in Le Goff *ibid* 67.

So the saints and the damned did not need the prayers of the living.

Augustine also specified how the living could help the dead. Prayer, almsgiving, and especially the Eucharistic sacrifice could aid the dead. Also those who repent and do penance in this life can ameliorate the purgation to be faced in the next life.

Over the course of centuries funeral prayers and intercessory prayers were standardized. Funerary psalms contained themes of purification. This did not necessarily correspond to a fully imagined sense of purgatory. Isabel Moreira argues that Bede, in the eighth century, articulated a theology which joined prayers for the dead and relief from purgatory.⁵⁹ So, it may have taken quite a while for the medieval sense of relieving the suffering of the dead to emerge. For Bede, “friends” could intercede for deceased comrades through fasts, alms, prayers with weeping, and masses.

In the tenth century Cluny revived the spiritual life of monasteries throughout Europe. Monasteries had been praying for the dead during Mass and during the Liturgy of the Hours over the course of centuries. In addition to funeral Masses and the memento of the dead within the Mass, the dead were remembered on anniversaries. Benefactors would also be remembered in prayer on special occasions. Necrologies were developed which listed the names of the dead on calendars. These lists were circulated to other monasteries who would add the names of their own dead. So by the end of the first millennium there was a widespread practice of remembering the dead.

⁵⁹ Moreira, *ibid.*, 166.

This practice expanded some time between 1024 and 1033 when the monks of Cluny set aside the day after All Saints' Day to be a special day of remembering all of the dead. This became All Souls' Day, and the practice spread throughout Christendom.

Abbot Odilo died in 1049 and a story spread that was attributed to him. A monk was returning to France from Jerusalem. A storm forced him to take shelter on a small island between Sicily and Thessalonica. The island was inhabited by a hermit who spoke with the monk after the storm. The hermit claimed that the dead were purged of their sins at the mouth of a near by volcano. He could hear the voices of the dead being tortured by demons. The voices of the dead cried out to the community of Cluny to relieve them. The prayers and suffrages of Cluny sent many to heaven. The hermit charged the monk to take the story back to Cluny. After the monk's return the abbot proposed that all of the monasteries remember the dead on the day after All Saints' Day.

A few years later Peter Damian would write a biography of Abbot Odilo. In the thirteenth century the medieval classic, *The Golden Legend*, would retell Peter Damian's story with the insertion of purgatory as a place. Although the monks of Cluny may not have had Le Goff's exact image of purgatory in mind, they did give the dead a date of commemoration on the calendar.

Popular Understandings

Augustine claimed that during his time Christians were more familiar with *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity* than the Gospels. This indicates that the popular imagination was often colored by the narrative presentations of the afterlife more than the theological reflections. The number of narratives involving punishment and torture

indicates that the common understanding tended toward a fear of purgatory.⁶⁰ The practices of praying for the dead became necessary for souls trapped in a tortuous afterlife of purgation.

Official Teachings

Prior to the millennium, little official teaching was made concerning purgatory. Final Judgment was often considered imminent. So Gregory's writings would remain the standard for centuries. His papacy had given credence to the narratives concerning the afterlife.

Medieval Era

It is in the twelfth century that Le Goff locates the "birth of purgatory." For LeGoff it is this century and the next that establishes the details of purgatory. The twelfth century in Europe was a time of great advances socially. The feudal system, although harsh for peasants, almost doubled the population of Latin Christianity within a century and a half. With new technologies and methods, farming improved. This created an agricultural surplus that meant fewer people had to work the land. This allowed for a growth in urban areas. A middle class emerged with a new set of values. Spiritual and intellectual revival resulted from the social development.

Purgatory found its place as man's social imagination expanded to embrace the other world as well as this one. This was also a time of new religious certitude, which also affected Purgatory. In short Purgatory was part of a comprehensive system involving both the social structure and the way it was conceived, and this new system was an achievement of the twelfth century.⁶¹

⁶⁰ See also Eileen Gardiner's two books. *Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell: A Sourcebook* (New York: Garland Publishing Co., 1993) and *Visions of Heaven and Hell Before Dante* (New York: Ithaca Press, 1989).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 132.

We have seen that the most recent scholarship has tended to find a significant transition in the understanding of purgatory in the seventh or eighth centuries. However, even at the beginning of the twelfth century there were many ambiguities and differing opinions about the afterlife and eschatology. Augustine's and Gregory's ideas were still considered authoritative. There was agreement that there was a heaven for the martyrs and saints whereas hell awaited unrepentant and extreme sinners. However, questions remained about the fate for the rest of the deceased believers. No clear consensus had emerged about who underwent purgation, when purgation occurred, and where it occurred. The nature of purgation had something to do with fire, based on I Cor 3: 10-15. In LeGoff's analysis this changed by 1200 and became dogma by 1300. By the end of the century (no earlier than 1170) the word "purgatorium" was in common use. The image of "purgatorial fire" transformed into "purgatory."

A characteristic of this time was a preoccupation with justice. In LeGoff's view purgatory may have been less about salvation than about justice. The "just rewards" for sinners were projected into the afterlife. The ideal of justice was promoted and the social mechanisms to create a just society were established. In some ways the Church imitated legal mechanisms that were initiated by governments. Canon law had its beginnings in this time.⁶²

As law developed with new specifications of crimes and determination of guilt, the concept of sin also evolved. Sin was based in intention and not in ignorance. So

⁶² Ibid., 210-213.

contrition for sin became more important than punishment for sin. Penance, the punishment to make satisfaction for sin, became an important part of the spiritual life. If the sinner was contrite and confessed, but had not made satisfaction for sin, the penalty would be met with the fire of purgatory. Venial and mortal sins were more clearly distinguished. The practice of private confession was a way of gaining forgiveness for private sins.

So the idea of purgatory was defined as part of a system of sin and redemption. Venial sins were worthy of *venia*, i.e. pardon, in purgatory and mortal sins led to spiritual death. So purgatory took on mechanistic and legalistic connotations based on its development during this time.

Andrew Skotnicki⁶³ has noted the common origins of prisons and the doctrine of purgatory. Both grew out of the monastic tradition. The eleventh century Gregorian reforms brought about a legal revolution which normalized prisons. “The metaphor for the Gregorian revolution was Purgatory – itself a juridic, legal structure, a subterranean prison that fundamentally altered the idea of time and the geography of the world after death.”⁶⁴

These centuries were also a time for an expansion in the use of mathematical calculation. Legal courts calculated times for punishment. Systems of accounting were initiated in royal courts. A similar system began to be imagined with purgatory. The punishment for sins corresponded to imagined lengths of time. Also suffrages could be established as relieving a soul of time in purgatory.

⁶³ “God’s Prisoners: Penal Confinement and the Creation of Purgatory,” *Modern Theology* 22 no.1(January 2006): 85-110.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 86.

These centuries were also the beginnings of cartography. With Crusaders returning from lengthy trips, the European view of the world changed. The territory represented on maps expanded and became more accurate. If maps of this world became important, the imagined map of the other world was also important.

Theological Reflections: Scholastic innovation and synthesis

Le Goff attributes the “birth of purgatory” to a specific milieu. Paris in the latter half of the twelfth century was a crossroads for two different types of theology. The first wave of scholasticism from the urban schools encountered the spiritual theology of monasticism.

LeGoff cites an impressive array of thinkers who weighed in on various aspects associated with purgatory.⁶⁵ Hugh of Saint Victor connected purgatorial punishments with the sacraments. He associated confession, penance, the remission of sin, and extreme unction with purgatorial punishment. Saint Bernard (d. 1153) spoke of purgatorial places and purgatorial fire in his sermons. Gratian of Bologna, whose compilations of writings formed the basis of canon law, included lists of suffrages for the dead. Peter Lombard, the secular priest (and bishop of Paris for one year), adjusted Augustine’s views in his influential book, *Sentences*. Lombard began to group the “not entirely good” with the “not entirely bad” so that Augustine’s four tiered grouping of the dead moved toward a three tiered grouping.

If the twelfth century was the birth of purgatory, for LeGoff, the thirteenth was the organizing of purgatory. The creative impulses of the twelfth century were reined in

⁶⁵ Skotnicki (ibid., 95-96) suggests a more foundational theological idea is Anselm’s (1033-1109) doctrine of the atonement. Christ’s death atoned for the original sin that separated humanity from God but did not alleviate all the evil humans chose to do. God’s mercy could forgive those sins, but God’s justice required restitution for the sin. The sacrament of confession could rescue one from eternal damnation, but not temporal expiation.

and systematized in the thirteenth. This movement of intellectual systematization was dominated by scholasticism. The main scholastic thinkers came from the new mendicant orders. Although the mendicant scholars debated issues such as the remission of venial sins, the location of purgatory, and penalties in purgatory, there was a general consensus about some of the key issues. They all accepted the existence of purgatory, a time limit to penalty in purgatory, and the reality of fire.⁶⁶

LeGoff's description implies that once the scholastic synthesis around purgatory was achieved, there was no further change in the doctrine. To borrow Walker Bynum's imagery, Le Goff seems to portray the idea/ doctrine of purgatory as switching from a seed/ plant process in the first millennium to a static "statue" in the second millennium.⁶⁷ As will be shown the concept of purgatory continued to develop.

Albert gave a great deal of attention to purgatory. Le Goff believes he gave the idea theological status. He gave a clear geography of the otherworld. He divided the otherworld into the three main places – heaven, hell, and purgatory. He also made the limbo of children an upper place in hell. He said that the limbo of the patriarchs was part of purgatory, but had been emptied and sealed off since the coming of Christ.

Although Albert may have given purgatory theological status, it was his student, Thomas Aquinas, who would have the greatest impact on later generations. Thomas, as with the other scholastics, gave purgatory only a minor status in his theological system. Aquinas touched on the topic of purgatory in several of his works. His early response to Peter Lombard's *Sentences* and several of his polemical works such as *Contra errores*

⁶⁶ LeGoff, *ibid.*, 237-256.

⁶⁷ Walker Bynum, *ibid.*, 1-17.

Graecorum contain mentions of purgatory. Ironically the section of the *Summa theologica* on the last things was unfinished at the time of his death. So some of his students added a *Supplement* based on his earlier writings and their notes.

This compilation of excerpts distorts Thomas's thought in two ways: by making it more rigid and less inventive than it was originally, and by passing off a relatively early version of Thomas's teachings as the crowning achievement of the entire theological edifice. On the other hand the Supplement has the advantages of being coherent and of citing Thomas verbatim; it also represents what late medieval clerics took to be Thomas's definitive position concerning the problems of the hereafter.⁶⁸

In LeGoff's view Thomas only dealt with purgatory because it was "required." To Thomas purgatory, a temporary state, may have seemed a trivial matter.

In the *Supplement* three sections relate to issues related to purgatory. The section on abodes of the dead is divided into seven questions; the section on purgatory is divided into eight parts; and the section on suffrages for the dead is divided into fourteen parts. So, in total, the Supplement alone has 29 articles associated with purgatory. Topics covered include limbo, a typology of receptacles for the dead, appearances of the dead to the living, who punishes the dead, who can gain suffrages, and for whom. Because these issues appear throughout the future theology of Purgatory, I will list the eight questions that deal with purgatory and, for the sake of space, extremely brief summaries of answers.

1. Is there a purgatory after this life? (Yes, divine justice requires it.)
2. Is it in the same place that souls are purged and the damned punished? (Based on private revelation and statements by the saints, the location of purgatory is probably twofold. The common belief is that purgatory is located below the earth, next to hell.

⁶⁸ LeGoff, *ibid* 268.

However, it seems that some are punished at various locations on the earth for the instruction of the living.)

3. Does the punishment of purgatory exceed any temporal punishment in this life?

(While Thomas avoids a quantitative proportionality between sin in this life and punishment in the next, he does say that the least pain in either purgatory or hell is greater than any pain we experience in this life.)

4. Is this punishment voluntary? (In the sense that they know this is the way to be saved, yes.)

5. Are the souls in purgatory punished by demons? (No, but they may like to watch.)

6. By the punishment of purgatory is venial sin expiated as to guilt? (Yes)

7. Does purgatorial fire eliminate the application of the punishment? (Yes, but it is unclear whether Thomas conceives of the fire as metaphorical or real.)

8. Is one person set free from this punishment more quickly than another? (Yes, based on 1 Cor 3:10-15.)

In discussing suffrages Thomas discusses the issue within the context of the communion of the saints and the bond of the living and the dead. He disagrees with Aristotle's idea that there can be no communication between the living and the dead. In terms of spiritual life and charity, the dead are connected to the living through the love of God.

In Thomas' answers to various questions, he did borrow legal and economic terminology. At times he speaks of transferring suffrages as if a soul is making a legal exchange of property. Overall, Thomas is more interested in sin and the condition of the

soul. He is willing to say that a place or state of purgation exists, but he is not as interested in the details.

Le Goff makes some interesting observations on the scholastic approach to purgatory. For all of the use of reason employed by the scholastics, the teachings on purgatory were still a mixture of imagination and reason. Scholasticism's approach to purgatory was:

The rationalization of a belief which, as we have seen, arose as much from imagery as from reasoning, as much from fantastic tales as from authorities, and which did not develop in any straightforward way but rather through countless meanderings, hesitations, and contradictions, culminating finally in a tightly knit fabric of beliefs.⁶⁹

Although purgatory may appear to be a “tightly knit fabric of beliefs”, there were differences between the key thinkers of the time. As we will see, even in church documents, there was not consistency in how purgatory was described. Despite Le Goff's emphasis on the noun/ place of purgatory, the noun was not always the way the church would describe the purgatorial fire.

One other point made by Le Goff was that the scholastics may have “located” purgatory under the earth, but they did not necessarily “infernalize” purgatory. Good angels rather than demons were the assistants in purgatory. Purgatory was temporary, so purgatory was a place of hope. Le Goff lays the blame for the infernalization of purgatory at the feet of the style of preaching, often by the mendicant orders, which considered fear as a method for countering heretical groups.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 259.

Narrative Imagination: Medieval journeys to purgatory

Following the increase in scholastic analysis of purgatory and monastic practice of praying for the dead, new stories of fantastic journeys circulated in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. These stories often involved journeys from this world to another world and back. These continued the type of story exemplified by the visions of Drythem and Charles the Fat. Now there were journeys that re-imagined purgatory.

Some of the “ghost” stories, similar to those recorded in Gregory’s *Dialogues*, also underwent a change. The spirits of those in purgatory would be granted a furlough to beseech the living for Masses to alleviate their suffering. Another purpose of the appearances was to warn the living of their fate if they did not repent. Often these episodes took place within dreams.

Several of the journey stories came out of monasteries. A common element of the medieval journeys into the afterlife was to observe sinners being tortured. Some visions saw this as a purgatorial action; other visions did not comment on the eternal fate of the sinners. So some visions did not include a journey to purgatory. The story of “Saint Patrick’s Purgatory” is one of the last visions from this period and one of the most popular stories of the Middle Ages. The account was written near the year 1200.

The story from the Middle Ages is based on a legend associated with St. Patrick. At a time when he was having a difficult time converting the locals, Patrick was given a vision of a hole in the ground. If someone, motivated by faith, spent a day and a night in this hole or cavern, he or she would be purged of all sins and witness the tortures awaiting sinners and the rewards awaiting the good in the next life. Patrick built a church next to the site and stationed priests to watch over the entrance to purgatory.

Based on this background, a knight named Owein accompanied a Cistercian monk to Ireland as his translator. Owein related his experience of the cavern. After preparing with two weeks of prayer, Owein was taken to the hole. The story has the feel of a knightly quest. When he enters the hole he encounters twelve monks who tell him that he will be surrounded by demons on his journey. The demons will tempt him, but he must not submit to the temptations. Owein continues and overcomes the influence of the devils by speaking the name of Jesus. Along the way he sees sinners being tortured in various “rooms” in gruesome ways. Eventually he comes to a bridge over a river of fire. The bridge looks impossible to cross, but Owein again calls on the name of the Lord and is able to safely cross. On the other side he comes to a gate that is opened to him by two “archbishops” who explain that he has witnessed the pains sinners must undergo to enter where they are, the earthly Paradise. If Owein returns and leads a good life, he may forego the tortures he has witnessed. Owein returns, goes on a crusade to Jerusalem, returns and offers his services to the Cistercians.⁷⁰

This story presents an image of a definite heaven, hell, and purgatory. Although some of the imagery will change, it includes the need for prayers for the dead. The story also names a specific earthly location as the mouth of purgatory.

Not to be outdone, Italians also had traditional stories locating the entrance to purgatory on the volcano of Mt. Etna in Sicily. These described seeing the dead living in a place seeming more like a pagan Paradise, rather than hell. Was purgatory on a mountain, above the earth (i.e. closer to heaven) or in a cave, below the earth (i.e. closer to hell)? Le Goff points out that Augustine’s descriptions of the purgatorial fire led believers to look for a more negative view of purgatory. This is referred to as the

⁷⁰ Ibid., 193-200.

“infernalization” of purgatory. As it was located under the earth, it took on the characteristics of hell rather than heaven.⁷¹

Popular Practices

If there was ambiguous acceptance of purgatory on a theological and magisterial level, there was unambiguous acceptance of the doctrine on a popular level. By 1300, purgatory was mentioned in sermons, wills, and vernacular literature. Associated with the social changes surrounding the understanding of purgatory, were new approaches to death. Purgatory bolstered a new emphasis on the “hour of death.” There was a sense of preparation of one’s soul for death. People were interested in avoiding not only hell, but also minimizing the punishments of purgatory.

Pope Boniface VIII helped the popularity of purgatory by proclaiming a year of jubilee in 1300. Modeled after the biblical year in which debts were forgiven, this year forgave debts to God. In other words, penances due to sin were forgiven. This concept of “indulgence” had grown out of the penitential practices of the Carolignian period. The originally titled “relaxation” of the penance associated with sins had been associated with the practice of pilgrimage.⁷² With the rise of canon law in the eleventh century, “indulgence” took on a more legalistic meaning. The pope granted a plenary indulgence (the lifting of all the punishment associated with sin) to all who would make the pilgrimage to Rome. Prior to this time, a plenary indulgence was only granted to

⁷¹ Ibid., 201-205.

⁷² Robert W. Shaffern, *The Penitents’ Treasury: Indulgences in Latin Christendom, 1175-1375* (Scranton and London: University of Scranton Press, 2007): 45-47.

crusaders. Crusaders were considered the pilgrims who had “left everything” to follow and defend Christ.⁷³

This also signaled an extension of the pope’s power over purgatory, a power that had theoretically been supported by the writings of both Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas. On Christmas Day in 1300, Pope Boniface extended the plenary indulgence not only to those who had made the pilgrimage, but also to those who had died on their way to Rome or who had firmly resolved to make the pilgrimage, but were prevented from doing so. So the pope seemed to have released certain souls from purgatory.

Originally the intention was to celebrate a year of jubilee every century. With the Black Plague people felt a need for being cleansed of sin and petitioned the pope for another jubilee year. Pope Clement VI allowed another jubilee in 1350. Thousands of Europeans made the pilgrimage to Rome to receive a plenary indulgence. Clement VI also connected indulgences with money and the Treasury of Merit. The Treasury of Merit had been proposed in the 1200’s as the basis for indulgences.⁷⁴ The Treasury would contain all of the infinite merit of Christ and the great saints that could be dispensed to pay for the punishment due to sin. In his Ninety-Five Theses Martin Luther would argue that the pope did not have control over the Treasury of Merit.⁷⁵

Women religious were often assigned to pray for the dead. In sermons to the Beguines, they were exhorted to free the prisoners from purgatory. In these sermons

⁷³LeGoff, *Ibid* 330-331.

⁷⁴ Recently, Robert W. Shaffern (*ibid*) has argued that the image of the Treasury of Merit emerged from “bottom-up” more than from “top-down.” Although scholars of the thirteenth century systematized the Treasury of Merit, the concept had been in use for centuries prior to this. The image of salvation as redemption or ransom from slavery or of Christ paying the debt was expressed in liturgy and popular understanding as a treasury that would redeem people from evil prior to the 1200’s. (80-88)

⁷⁵ Robert W. Shaffern (*ibid*) has traced the historiography of “indulgence” since the time of Martin Luther. The concept has often been the subject of polemical apologetics between Protestant and Catholic authors. (1-33)

which referred back to traditions of praying for imprisoned Christians, there was a strong emphasis on the close ties between the living and the dead. Another key element in all of the sermons was the close connection with penance.⁷⁶

It was during this time, associated with the Dominicans, that confraternities based on occupations began to develop. For example, barbers would have an agreement that they would take care of funeral needs for its members. These groups would be associated with religious orders that would agree to say Masses for the members on the anniversaries of their death or on the anniversaries of their parents' deaths.⁷⁷

The Popular Understanding of Purgatory: Hope versus Fear

During the 1200's the popular interest in purgatory increased dramatically. This was shown in the sermons of the time and in the work of the new religious orders. A common technique in sermons was to use *exempla*, or anecdotes, about the condition of the dead in purgatory. Similar to the stories in Gregory's *Dialogues*, these stories showed some variations in theme. The contrasting themes would continue into the twentieth century.

In the early part of the 1200's Cistercian monks were still the most effective preachers to the common people. The Cistercian stories about purgatory often involved deceased monks appearing to fellow monks, nuns, or relatives to ask for masses or prayers. Sometimes a prior would be visited to deliver a reminder to someone who was supposed to be offering suffrages for the dead. A deceased monk often first appeared dressed in black as a sign of penance. After the suffrages had been offered the monk

⁷⁶ LeGoff, *Ibid.*, 318-320.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 327-328

would return in white to thank the petitioner and to reveal for what sin satisfaction had been made.

The dramatic surprise in many of the stories involved the overturned expectations of the listeners. For example an abbot known for his holiness appeared to a nun to ask for masses. When the nun asked what sin he had committed, he told that he had been overly concerned with building projects that would expand the monastery. So, even the holy could be in need of suffrages. On the other hand there were stories of the most reprehensible members of society, usurers and apostates, who were helped out of purgatory by the prayers of spouses, family members, and religious.

This line of stories used in sermons gives the message that our point of view is not necessarily God's point of view. God is strict, but God is also merciful. Purgatory represented hope for sinners and hope for the surviving relatives of sinners.⁷⁸

By the middle of the thirteenth century, the new mendicant orders had become the most renowned preachers among the common people. In some records of sermons by a Dominican monk, similar techniques were used to preach about purgatory, but with a very different tone. Stephen of Bourbon (1195-126?) composed sermons on purgatory intended to inspire fear. Purgatory was a place of punishment to be feared. Stephen listed the tortures of purgatory to his listeners. His *exempla* were at times "infernalized" versions of much older stories. One story of pagan origins that told of seeing the dead on a mountain resting on a bed in a pleasant atmosphere was changed to the dead being tied to a bed of torture. Stephen would chide his listeners about how quickly the living forget the dead. After describing the tortures of the afterlife, Stephen would list the many possibilities for suffrages for the dead.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 306-310.

Robert W. Shaffern has observed that LeGoff and others have portrayed the medieval period as having a significant divide between the elite and popular culture. The clerical elites, in this view, imposed their fear-based purgatorial ideas onto the passive popular culture. ‘...Purgatory damaged medieval spiritual life as a kind of feral species that led to the extinction of natural, folkloric popular culture.’⁷⁹ Shaffern argues that clergy and laity held the same religious ideas. The traditions of praying for the deceased had been passed down through the centuries. In examining the lives of the saints from this time he finds at least as many hope-filled as fear-based understandings of purgatory.

Official Church Teaching on Purgatory

The purgatory of the Middle Ages also emerged from an atmosphere of contention with heresy. A number of heretical groups denied the existence of purgatory or purgatorial fire. These groups had a common opposition to prayers for the dead. Some of these groups were not even named. Their teachings are known through the polemical writings opposing them. The Waldensians and Cathari were the most widely known intellectual enemies of orthodoxy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The teachings of the Greeks were the focus of the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries.

The Greeks did not significantly differ in practice from the Latin Church. They had prayers for the dead and suffrages. Disputes between the two Christian Churches centered around theological issues such as the nature of purgatorial fire. The theological disputes were compounded by political disputes. It was this tension that led to the first official statements about purgatory.

⁷⁹ Shaffern, *ibid.*, 117.

In 1254 there seemed to be a change toward agreement between the two churches. The pope, Innocent IV, sent a letter to the Greeks of Cyprus. In the letter some questions were set aside, such as whether the purgatorial fire takes place before or after the Last Judgment. The letter describes the common beliefs about sin being purged after death and the power of suffrages. The letter also asks the Greeks to agree to the name “Purgatory” since they could find no name for the place of purgation within their own traditions.⁸⁰

The Second Council of Lyons in 1274 was called to attempt a reunion of the Latin and Greek churches. At the council a common understanding of purgatory was expressed in an appendix to the constitution. LeGoff interprets the text as “less advanced” than the letter of twenty years prior. In Le Goff’s opinion the lack of the word “purgatory” is disappointing. There is also no mention of a place or of fire. To Le Goff this appears to be a “backpedaling” for political reasons. This interpretation seems to be a case of LeGoff dismissing evidence contrary to his thesis.

An alternative interpretation is that there was not complete consensus even in the Latin church, and therefore “purgatory” and fire were not worthy of being defined as central teachings. According to Le Goff’s own research the word “purgatory” had only come into vogue within the previous century. There was universal agreement about neither the nature of the purgatorial fire nor about the location of purgatory. So, it is possible that this teaching was an actual “advance” in understanding.

The Council of Florence in 1438 attempted reunion of the Greek churches with the Latin church. An agreement was reached on purgatory. The statement from the

⁸⁰ As quoted in LeGoff, *ibid.*, 283-284. LeGoff considers this letter to contain the first official definition of Purgatory. Because the pope would die within a few weeks it is unclear that there was an official response.

Second Council of Lyons was accepted. The representatives “agreed to disagree” on issues such as the nature of the fire in purgatory.

The Summit of Imagination: Dante

Dante Aligheri (1265-1321) is universally considered a poetic genius. While in exile from his home city of Florence, Dante composed the *Divine Comedy*, an unparalleled poem. Between 1302, the date of his exile, and 1319 he completed the first two sections – the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*.

Le Goff praises Dante’s Purgatory:

...Dante’s extraordinary work makes a vast symphony out of the fragmentary themes whose history I have attempted to trace. *Il Purgatorio* is the sublime product of a lengthy gestation. It is also the noblest representation of Purgatory ever conceived by the mind of man, an enduring selection from among the possible and at times competing images whose choice the Church, while affirming the essence of the dogma, left to the sensibility and imagination of individual Christians.⁸¹

This will be a brief and inadequate summary of Dante’s great work.

Although *Purgatorio* could be classified as a “narrative journey”, it is treated separately because of its importance. Dante’s work is more art and theology than vision. Dante’s work has been the subject of analysis and interpretation since it was written. Dante’s *Purgatorio* is a classic artwork of Western civilization that has inspired other literary, musical, and visual works of art. Dante’s poem integrates imagery and characters from classical literature as well

⁸¹ Ibid., 334.

as Christian with the best of theology, political commentary, liturgical prayers and practices, and spiritual insight.

Dante begins his journey into the realms of the afterlife on Good Friday, 1300. After traveling through Hell with his guide, Virgil, Dante emerges to behold the stars. He enters the realm of purgatory at sunrise on Easter morning, 1300. This means that Dante situates purgatory on, not below, the earth; and associates the time with resurrection, rather than death. Purgatory is a mountain on an island in the sea of the Southern hemisphere. This is an area inaccessible to the living. The atmosphere is a definite contrast to hell. The air is clean and there is beauty and hope. People sing and pray. So, Dante's purgatory is not "infernalized." Dante metaphorically recognizes that purgatory is a place of hope more than pain or fear. The soul is destined for God.

Cato⁸² greets the pair and instructs them about the ante-chamber of purgatory. Virgil and Dante see people preparing to ascend the mountain. At the top of the mountain is the entrance to the earthly Paradise. Many have delayed their ascent because they repented late in life. Dante notes that the wait of many of the souls has been shortened because of the Jubilee of 1300. The indulgences offered by Boniface VIII increase the numbers and pace of those climbing the mountain. The pair observes the souls as they climb through each of the terraces to reach the summit.

Purgatory has seven levels. Each level corresponds to one of the seven capital sins. On each level a different sin is purged. If sin is a failure to love, then the seven

⁸² Cato, the Roman Stoic who had opposed Caesar's Triumvirate, was known for incorruptibility. Dante presents him as one of the pagans who is a saved soul.

deadly sins represent different categories of lacking love. The purgation is accomplished by three processes. The soul undergoes a punishment suited to that particular sin, the soul considers the example of virtues opposite the deadly sin, and the souls pray. The climbing of the mountain represents spiritual progress. The first three levels are pride, envy, and wrath. These are perversions of love of neighbor. The final three are avarice, gluttony, and lust. These seek “good but without measure.” At midpoint is sloth, the lacking or slow love. As the souls ascend the climb becomes easier. The genius of Dante is that his greatest work is also an instruction for spiritual progress in this world.⁸³

From a theological standpoint, Dante remains with the Church. Dante does use “artistic license.” For example, the theological consensus of the day was that purgatory cleansed venial sins. Dante does not clearly draw a distinction between mortal and venial sin. However, purgatory is definitely a representation of the need of many to be purged of sin before entering heaven. The prayers and suffrages of the living can assist those traveling through purgatory. Dante’s portrayal of purgatory shows that salvation is assured and the time of purgation is temporary. Purgatory is a place of penance and of hope. Through the centuries Dante would be cited for both understandings of purgatory. In the context of his entire writing, it is clear that Dante situates the mountain of purgatory closer to heaven than to hell.

Conclusion

Although the direct Scriptural basis for the doctrine of purgatory is thin, the doctrine has roots throughout the first fifteen centuries of Christianity. Throughout the

⁸³ Robert Barron, *The Strangest Way: Walking the Christian Path* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002): 76-93.

centuries recurred the themes of the nature of purgatory, time, inhabitants, connections to this world, and practices. Theologically Clement and Origen, Augustine and Gregory, Boniface and Bede, Albert and Thomas all wrestled with the concepts of the purgation of sin, the afterlife, and the role of prayer. Practices connecting the living and the dead changed from simple prayers for the dead, but these continued throughout the centuries. Popular understanding switched from a collective and impending to an individualized and delayed view of the afterlife. Latin Church teaching was defined in reaction to Greek teaching, but was restrained. Imaginative visions, stories, and eventually art expressed the changing understanding of purgatory in the first fifteen centuries of the Church. These themes and sources would continue into the twentieth century.

CHAPTER 2

A HISTORY OF PURGATORY IN THE SECOND MILLENIUM: CONTROVERSY AND THE DEVELOPING DOCTRINE

The Protestant Reformation and Early Modern Catholicism

The Protestants of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries brought a major challenge to Catholic teaching on purgatory. Within the complexity of issues during the Reformation era, the doctrine of purgatory was a clear point of contention between Catholics and Protestants. The spark that ignited the Reformation was the selling of indulgences. Individuals bought indulgences to save themselves or loved ones from the fires of purgatory. The Protestant criticism of purgatory is often reduced to a purely intellectual critique. The vehemence of the Protestant rejection indicates more was at stake than theological correctness. “Political” issues of clerical and economic power were also deeply intertwined with “intellectual” issues such as a thin biblical foundation and a reliance on tradition, much of which was dismissed as the product of imagination.

Purgatory became a symbol of the divide between these two types of Christianity. For Protestants purgatory became a symbol of the non-biblical, oppressive, corrupt Catholicism. For Catholics purgatory was an aspect of the ancient responsibility of the living to pray for the dead and an example of the balance of God’s justice and mercy. From the Catholic perspective, Protestants had gone wrong in relying only on Scripture

without the interpretive lens of Tradition. The Protestant objections probably intensified the Catholic conviction about purgatory.

Protestant Rejection of Purgatory: Lutheran, Calvinist, Anglican

The steadiness of the attacks on Purgatory by adversaries of the official Roman Church is impressive. All of the Church's enemies were agreed that a man's fate in the other world depended only on his merit and God's will. On this view, the game is up at death. After death (or after Last Judgment) the soul goes directly either to Heaven or to Hell; there is no redemption between death and resurrection. Hence there is no Purgatory and it is futile to pray for the dead. No admirers of the Church, heretics denied that the institution has any role in determining the fate of the soul after death and opposed its attempts to extend its power over men by claiming such a role.⁸⁴

Craig Koslofsky has written about the development of thinking on purgatory among some German theologians influential in the early Reformation.⁸⁵ Martin Luther attempted to reform the doctrine and practices associated with purgatory prior to rejecting the doctrine altogether. In thinking about purgatory Martin Luther was influenced by the thought of Wessel Gansfort (c. 1410 – 1489), a humanist connected with the Brethren of the Common Life and Thomas a' Kempis. Luther had already formulated many of his own ideas before reading Gansfort, but was struck by the similarities in thinking.

Gansfort accepted the idea of a purgatory, but radically reshaped the dynamics commonly envisioned. His reading of I Corinthians told him that there was a purifying fire after death. This spiritual fire was automatic. Neither the sacraments nor the intercessions of the Church had power to assist the dead.

Gansfort compares the state of the soul in purgatory to dawn before daylight. In this life the "saints" travel in darkness with need of "lamplight." After death, believers

⁸⁴ LeGoff, *ibid.*, 169.

⁸⁵ Craig Koslofsky, "Separating the Living from the Dead: Wessel Gansfort and the Death of Purgatory," *Essays in Medieval Studies* 10 (1993): 129-138. <http://www.illinoismedieval.org/ems/VOL10/koslofsky.html> (accessed July 8, 2008).

are gradually enlightened and prepared for the “daylight” of God. The non-punitive doctrine of Gansfort foreshadows later teachings by Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510).

Martin Luther shifted from a position similar to Gansfort’s in 1517 to a total denial of purgatory by 1530. In an early response to questions on his Ninety Five Theses, Martin Luther accepted the existence of purgatory. His critique of the practice of selling indulgences led him to reject the idea that purgatory involved satisfaction for sin. Because purgatory involved purification, the church need not and could not render assistance. So, Luther had arrived at a position similar to that of Gansfort.

After his break with the authority of the Catholic Church, Luther’s position began to shift. Because there was no Scriptural warrant for purgatory, he postulated a doctrine of “soul-sleep.” This ruled out an intermediate state after death. All souls would “sleep” until Final Judgment. In practice, Luther took an agnostic view of the effect of prayer on the souls of the departed. “Dear God, if this soul is in a state in which it can be helped, I pray that you would be merciful to it.”

By 1530, after years of disputation, Luther rejected the idea of purgatory or any purgatorial process. He removed any reference to purgatory from his earlier works.

Koslofsky concludes his exploration with a critique of these positions.

The reformers had replaced the relatively clear teaching of the Roman church with silence or confusion. This confusion calls our attention to the reformers' single point of agreement: the souls of the dead are irrevocably cut off from the world of the living. No reformer suggested that the true or reformed Christian church could still intercede for the dead in any way.⁸⁶

Koslofsky points out that in reforming the doctrine of purgatory the Reformers rejected one of Christianity’s earliest traditions, prayers for the dead.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 138.

John Calvin, taking the Reform to a greater extreme than Luther, also rejected the doctrine of purgatory. Calvin emphasized the total dependence of humanity on the grace of God. The doctrine of purgatory implied, to Calvin, that the justification by Christ was insufficient.

We should exclaim with all our might, that purgatory is a pernicious fiction of Satan, that it makes void the cross of Christ, that it intolerably insults the Divine Mercy, and weakens and overturns our faith. For what is their purgatory, but a satisfaction for sins paid after death by the souls of the deceased? Thus the notion of satisfaction being overthrown, purgatory itself is immediately subverted from its very foundation.

It has been fully proved that the blood of Christ is the only satisfaction, expiation, and purgation for the sins of the faithful. What, then, is the necessary conclusion but that purgation is nothing but a horrible blasphemy against Christ? I pass by the sacrilegious pretences with which it is daily defended, the offences, which it produces in religion, and the other innumerable evils, which we see to have come from such a source of impiety. *Institutes of the Christian Religion, III, 5*⁸⁷

This quote gives some sense of the bitter, contentious tone that would accompany Protestant and Catholic relations over the centuries to come.

Although Stephen Greenblatt identifies himself as a literary critic, he gives a good summary of the Protestant and Catholic positions on Purgatory during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England. Although Luther and Calvin may have been the most influential Reformers, the British reformation may have had a more significant influence on the United States⁸⁸. Greenblatt also demonstrates that the doctrine of purgatory was bitterly contested because of its social, political, and economic connections.

⁸⁷ Quoted in John A. Hardon, "The Doctrine of Purgatory," Ignatius Press (2001), Catholic Culture Website, <http://www.catholicculture.org/library/view.cfm?recnum=4677> (accessed July 10, 2008)

⁸⁸ Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 1.

To describe the Protestant position Greenblatt relies heavily on the polemic tract by Simon Fish entitled *A Supplication for the Beggars*. This was addressed to King Henry VIII and charged that the poor were made poor by the priests' extorting money from them on the promise of lessening the pain of purgatory. Fish was providing a political argument to justify Henry's eventual control of the Catholic Church in England. His argument was not primarily theological. Apparently the work of Fish was influential on King Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. Another person who became aware of Fish's work was the king's chancellor, Sir Thomas More.

In response to Fish, More wrote one of his more polemical works, *The Supplication of Souls*. More countered Fish's heretical book by arguing that the charge of the Catholic Church being a school of sedition and rebellion was totally false. Clerics were supporters of the king and the order of the kingdom. Further, More argued that the condition of the poor souls in Purgatory required much greater sympathy than the condition of those materially deprived.

Within the text, More presents a defense of the doctrine of Purgatory. More quotes the Second Book of Maccabees and First Corinthians about prayers for the dead and purifying fire after death. After appealing to Scripture, More offers the witness of the fathers of the Church, the tradition of the Church, and metaphors drawn from common experience. More would have been aware that the Protestant Reformers would have found these arguments unconvincing. He also risks an appeal to ghosts. More asks the readers to remember those who have died. There is a link between the living and the dead which is highlighted by More.

In More's view Fish and other heretics were bent on destroying the precious sense of community; all that would be left would be ignorant selfishness and

greed, a world in which each generation would be cut off from the last. To prevent this disaster, More desperately reminded his readers of the powerful claims upon them not only of the Catholic Church but also of their own personal ghosts.⁸⁹

The argument between Fish and More gives a sample of the larger argument which took place between Protestants and Catholics during the Early Modern and Modern periods.

Greenblatt tries to get at the core of the reasons for the Protestant rejection of purgatory. To say that the English Protestants rejected Purgatory as non-Scriptural does not get at the depth of the hatred for the doctrine. For many, purgatory was the main issue in the debate between Catholics and Protestants. This was because an entire economic system rested on this concept. “The whole social and economic importance of Purgatory in Catholic Europe rested on the belief that prayers, fasts, almsgiving, and masses represented a valuable commodity – “suffrages” as they were termed – that could in effect be purchased, directly or indirectly, on behalf of specific dead persons.”⁹⁰

Often the criticism of the Purgatorial system took an anticlerical turn. Priests, bishops, and monks were growing rich off the poor who paid for the prayers for the dead. Greenblatt points to royal advisors’ coveting of the *mortmain* system. Under these “dead hand” statutes, the faithful could donate property or goods to the Church in return for prayers for themselves or other souls in Purgatory. Once donated, the property was no longer accessible for revenue for the king. These donations, frequently in wills, provided for classes of priests and religious houses who were employed to say Masses for the dead. Frequently ignored by the critics was that the same system also endowed hospitals and

⁸⁹ Ibid., 144-145.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 19.

schools. The critics of Purgatory declared it a fraud used to manipulate the naïve through fear.⁹¹

For Greenblatt's purposes the criticism he finds most intriguing is the Protestant accusation of purgatory as a work of imagination.

Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Protestants of all persuasions return again and again to this set of ideas: not only the fraudulence of Purgatory, its lack of scriptural basis, and its corrupt institutional uses but its special relation to dream, fantasy, and imagination...At moments in the Protestant polemic the emphasis falls almost entirely on the emptiness of the fictive imagination, as if "imagined" were inevitably synonymous with "untrue."⁹²

For many of the Protestant critics, the basic problem with Purgatory was that it was "poetry."⁹³ This non-scriptural product of the Catholic imagination resulted in some very real consequences. The Catholic Church gained great wealth from the use of this "poetry."

When in 1545 and 1547, with zealous Protestantism in the ascendant, the English Parliament acted to dissolve the whole system of intercessory foundations created to offer prayers for souls in Purgatory, the lawmakers and bureaucrats found themselves faced with an enormous task. They had to strike at colleges, free chapels, chantries, hospitals, fraternities, brotherhoods, guilds, stipendiary priests, and priests for terms of years, as well as at many smaller funds left to pay for trentals (the cycle of thirty requiem masses), obits (the yearly memorial service), flowers, bells, and candles.⁹⁴

Greenblatt demonstrates the effectiveness of the English attack on Purgatory by examining the work of John Donne in the 1620's. Donne spoke powerfully about death without any mention of Purgatory. His writings describe Purgatory as a "dead name."

⁹¹ Ibid., 30-31.

⁹² Ibid., 35 and 37.

⁹³ Ibid., 36. Greenblatt quotes William Tyndale and other leading Protestants as using the term "poetry" as a synonym for an imagined product of Scriptural doctrine. So, whereas "hell" could be proven from Scripture, "purgatory" was only imagined or "poetry."

⁹⁴ Ibid., 39.

Popular Understanding

Eamon Duffy has written an alternative to the “Protestant historiography” of the Reformation period.⁹⁵ In describing the British turn from Catholic to Protestant, historians have often assumed that the relatively swift shift in religious loyalties was based on a popular contempt for “things Catholic.” The people of England were assumed to be ready to “progress” beyond the superstitions of Catholicism. Duffy presents exhaustive evidence to the contrary. He finds that the turn to Protestantism is more accurately described as imposed by elites rather than welcomed by the common folk.

Duffy describes the way Catholic England imagined purgatory. Added to St. Patrick’s purgatory were other stories such as the Gast of Gy, the vision of Tundale, the visions of Bridget of Sweden, and the vision of Lazarus. These described gruesome tortures such as being pierced with meat hooks through a part of the body involved in sin, being boiled in molten metal, or being forced to drink scalding venom. The tortures were matched with the sin being purged. A common characteristic of these stories was “detailed vividness.”⁹⁶

These were visions of purgatory, not hell. The purpose of these visions was to chasten and convert the listeners. The present life was a much better area for repentance than the next life. If one could avoid sin in this life, he or she could avoid punishment in the next life. This life is the time given to learn charity. One of the most popular Gospel passages was the Last Judgment in which the dead were separated into the sheep and the goats. Those who practiced the works of mercy were welcomed into the Kingdom of heaven.

⁹⁵ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 339.

The popular vision of purgatory differed from the vision of Dante. Dante had portrayed purgatory as the entrance to paradise. Late medieval England viewed purgatory as closer to hell. Whereas Dante's mountain was a place of purgation and healing, the English imagination emphasized punishment. The visions in England were not always consistent. Some saw only demons in purgatory, others saw angels. Some saw the pain of purgatory as differing from hell only in duration; others considered the pains of purgatory to differ in kind from hell.

Purgatory was a place in which the charity of God reached. Hell was beyond the reach of God's charity. The charity and loving bonds of the living could reach to the dead. The dead would occasionally return to warn the living and to secure prayer for themselves. Kin and friends were expected to assist those who could not help themselves. It was unclear whether the dead could pray for the living. To neglect the dead could bring their wrath. Thomas More wrote that the first pain of purgatory was the shame of meeting old friends for whom one had forgotten to pray.

Practices

Duffy shows that previous work has overlooked the reaction of the "common people" to the Reform. Duffy studies the reactions at the level of the parish. He presents evidence of a great deal of popular support for the return to Catholicism during Mary's reign. The Catholic objects, which were supposed to have been destroyed during Henry's reign, reappeared with astonishing rapidity. Many of the objects had been hidden in homes or barns.

When Elizabeth took the throne the return to Protestant “stripping of the altars” was a much more labored process. Duffy interprets this as a lack of support for the new approaches to religious life. He concludes that the people of England, although favoring traditional religion, were pragmatic in their approach and loyal to their monarch.

In 1563 the Thirty-Nine Articles were accepted as the basis of Anglican belief.

Article XXII states:

The Romish doctrine concerning Purgatory, Pardons, worshipping and adoration as well of Images as of Relics, and also Invocation of Saint, is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture; but rather repugnant to the word of God.⁹⁷

Duffy characterizes the reform in England as an assault on popular religious traditions by those in power rather than a groundswell of dissatisfaction with the Catholic approach. To support this thesis, Duffy describes the state of belief in pre-Reformation England. Duffy’s research again counters the Protestant historiography of a “spiritually bankrupt, medieval religion ready to throw off the oppressive yoke of Catholicism.”⁹⁸

Duffy accepts that the focus on the next life (and avoiding the pains of purgatory) extensively influenced the religious life of the late Middle Ages. The cult of the dead was expressed in art and literature. Paintings of the *danse macabre* showed that death was the inevitable fate of all people. The play, *Everyman*, presented the pilgrimage of death. The Mass was valued for its efficacy in saving individuals from the pains of purgatory. Even the physical structure of the church was shaped by these beliefs. Wills often specified gifts, such as ornamentation or furniture, for the local church so that these

⁹⁷“Of Purgatory,” *Articles of Religion*. In *The Book of Common Prayer*, 1571.
<http://www.eskimo.com/~lhowell/bcp1662/articles/articles.html> (Accessed July 8, 2008).

⁹⁸ Duffy, *ibid.*, 4.

good works would assist the benefactors in the next life. The newly wealthy merchant and professional classes wanted to “use their wealth as post-mortem fire insurance.”⁹⁹ The popularity of Masses for the dead even brought about an entire class of clergy whose primary role was not as a parish priest, but as a “contract priest” to say Masses for benefices.

While Duffy concedes that the late Middle Ages had an ostensible preoccupation with death, he does not agree that this was a morbid or un-Christian approach.¹⁰⁰ The focus on death was not necessarily an escape from the present life. Wills were not strictly about property. They were also religious documents making provision for “the hour of death.” The typical will showed a “practical and pragmatic sense of the continuing value of life and the social relations of the living, with a determination to use the things of this world to prepare a lodging in the next.”¹⁰¹

Preaching from the time often seems to employ imagery intended to evoke fear and horror. A close reading of sermons from the time would show that believers were reminded of their mortality to inspire them to live a life of virtue and social concern. The instruction on the pastoral care for the dying also differed from the caricature of fear-evoking approaches. Duffy argues that the “art of dying” instructed priests to be compassionate and to lead the dying through repentance and reconciliation to a confidence in Christ’s mercy. The deathbed was also a communal experience involving family, friends, and neighbors.

⁹⁹ Duffy, *ibid.* , 302.

¹⁰⁰ Here Duffy is countering the interpretation of Johan Huizinga in *The Waning of the Middle Age* (1965), 134 ff.

¹⁰¹ Duffy, *ibid.* , 303.

Intercession for the dead can be interpreted as a “means of prolonging the presence of the dead within the community of the living.”¹⁰² The dead were remembered on the seventh and thirtieth day after burial and the one year anniversary. In addition November 2 was the “Commemoration of All Souls.” The souls of the dead were powerless to help themselves, so they relied on the memory of the living. The blessing of family meals was often accompanied by a “De Profundis” for deceased parents. Wills often kept the memory of the dead alive through bequests to the church. The poor were given a donation with the expectation that they would pray for the departed. “Bede-rolls”, lists of all deceased benefactors of the parish, were read at least annually as a way of praying for and remembering the dead. The effect on the living was to extend the sense of community to include those who were deceased.

In addition to the focus on death and care for the dying, there were a variety of religious practices connected to the doctrine of purgatory. The popular religious practices were shaped by Church teaching and the journey and appearance stories discussed earlier.

There was a sense of the mystical body of Christ. One could pay a debt for another. The deathbed care was meant to assure that the soul died in faith, hope, and charity. Often wills were used to assure this. Money was given to the poor who would come to the funeral to make sure that the deceased was remembered in prayer.

Public intercession for the dead was highly formalized and organized. The Office of the Dead, requiem masses, psalms, and litanies of saints were all part of the system. Those who could afford it could pay for five Masses to represent the five wounds of

¹⁰² Ibid.

Christ; and occasionally a trental, thirty Masses over thirty days, would be used to ease the pains of purgatory. Although some of these practices met with theological criticism prior to the Reformation, they were extremely popular.

Duffy concludes that purgatory was well integrated into both the popular religious imagination and religious practice of pre-Reformation England. There was nothing to suggest that devotions connected to purgatory were on the wane. Duffy's work demonstrates the close connection between practices and imagination. The English imagining of Purgatory supported a wide variety of practices, and the practices reinforced the popular imagination. When the Reformers wanted to overthrow the system, they "stripped the altars" or regulated the practices to stifle the imagination.

Church Teaching and Official Practices in response to Protestant Challenges

The Council of Trent, in its first session, in the Decree on Justification (issued in 1547) declared anathema anyone who denied the debt of temporal punishment and the possibility of remission either in this life or in the next.

Fifteen years after that decree, and shortly before its closing sessions, the Council of Trent issued a special Decree on Purgatory. This decree accompanied other "rushed" decrees on sacred images, invocation of the saints and indulgences. It was a summary statement that included cautions:

The Catholic Church, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, in accordance with Sacred Scripture and the ancient tradition of the Fathers, has taught in the holy councils, and most recently in this ecumenical council, that there is a purgatory, and that the souls detained there are helped by the prayers of the faithful, and especially by the acceptable Sacrifice of the Altar.

Therefore, this holy council commands the bishops to be diligently on guard that the true doctrine about purgatory, the doctrine handed down from the holy Fathers and the sacred councils, be preached everywhere, and that Christians be instructed in it, believe it, and adhere to it.

But let the more difficult and subtle controversies, which neither edify nor generally cause any increase of piety, be omitted from the ordinary sermons to the poorly instructed. Likewise, they should not permit anything that is uncertain or anything that appears to be false to be treated in popular or learned publications. And should forbid as scandalous and injurious to the faithful whatever is characterized by a kind of curiosity and superstition, or is prompted by motives of dishonorable gain (*DB 983*).¹⁰³

This short statement would be the key to the doctrine of purgatory over the next few centuries. The doctrine can be condensed to two ideas: purgatory exists and the prayers of the faithful can help the souls in purgatory. The bulk of the statement is an encouragement to bishops to teach the doctrine in a way that is not confusing or manipulative.

The council would leave the implementation of the reforms and the communication of the doctrine of Trent to the pope. This was carried out thoroughly. Seminaries were built to train priests, breviaries and missals standardized prayers, the Index of Forbidden Books kept Catholics from the influence of heretical ideas, and catechisms presented a uniform set of teachings. The catechisms were written in response to Martin Luther's catechism. The Jesuit Peter Canisius published the most popular German versions. His tone was more polemic than the official Roman catechism

¹⁰³ Quoted in Hardon, *ibid.* For an alternative English translation see "The Council of Trent: Twenty Fifth Session: Concerning Purgatory," *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent*, ed. and trans. J. Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848), 232-233, in Hanover Historical Texts Project, <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent/ct25.html> (accessed 11/14/12).

of 1566. By the end of the century the moderate tone of the Roman catechism would recede before the argumentative tone of Canisius.¹⁰⁴

Fellow Jesuit Robert Bellarmine's (1542-1621) first assignment was to teach theology at the Louvain. This seven year tenure allowed him to become very familiar with Protestant teachings. In 1576 he became a professor of Controversial Theology at the Jesuit College in Rome. It was during this time that Bellarmine wrote his three volume *Disputations on the Controversies among Christians*. The *Disputations on the Controversies* systematized many of the teachings of the Council of Trent in response to the challenges of the Reformers. He would also publish a small catechism. Bellarmine's catechism was adapted to become the official Roman catechism. This would form the basis of most catechisms until the twentieth century.

Within this work, Bellarmine mildly expanded the explanation of the Tridentine doctrine of purgatory. In discussing the sacrament of Penance, Bellarmine mentioned that avoiding penance in this life will lead to greater suffering in purgatory, and that some who suffer in this life will avoid pain in purgatory.¹⁰⁵ In the section on the communion of Saints, he says that those in purgatory are helped by "maffes, praises, and goode works". His brief speculation opened the door to the idea that those in purgatory could also intercede for the living.¹⁰⁶ His work, with various references to the need for "Heretiks" to confess their sins and return to the Church, set the anti-Protestant approach to theology over the next few centuries.

¹⁰⁴ Robert Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1999), 58-59.

¹⁰⁵ Roberto Francesco Romolo Bellarmino, "*An Ample Declaration of the Christian Doctrine: Composed in Italian by the renowned [sic] Cardinal, Card. Bellarmin.*" ,trans. Richard Hadock (1635), 351, in *Early English Books Online*, <http://eebo.chadwyck.com> (accessed April 3,2013).

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 98-99.

The Roman Missal of 1517 contained masses for the deceased faithful, for funerals, for anniversaries of death, and prayers for daily masses for the dead. So the doctrine of purgatory was being communicated by the catechisms and the practices associated with purgatory were communicated through the missals. The Roman Ritual of 1614 had even more emphasis on rites for dying and funerals. These were “provided in abundance.” They tended to present an image of God as judge and were often based in fear rather than hope.¹⁰⁷

Narrative Imagination: Catherine’s Vision

While many of the medieval narratives continued to circulate, one vision revealed a new understanding of purgatory. Caterinetta Fieschi Adorná or Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510)¹⁰⁸ made a unique and influential contribution to the understanding of purgatory. Her “vision” of purgatory was a contrast to many of the fear-inducing stories of journeys through purgatory. Although lacking the detail of Dante, the spirit of her vision had a similar hope-filled quality. Catherine’s understanding of purgatory was engulfed in the concept of God’s love. She referred to purgatory as a state more than a place. Purgatory was definitely a process of being purified rather than a place of punishment. She inverted the understanding of many of the issues about purgatory debated in scholastic circles.

Catherine was from a noble family in Genoa and was given in marriage to a member of another noble family when she was sixteen. The marriage was a disaster.

¹⁰⁷ James F. White, *Roman Catholic Worship* (New York and Mahwah, N.J: Paulist Press, 1995) , 21 and 39.

¹⁰⁸ Although Catherine’s writings were prior to the Reformation, many of those influenced by her writing were influential in the Catholic Reform that followed the Reformation.

Catherine secluded herself for the first five years in what seems to be a depressed withdrawal. Her husband squandered their money to the point of bankruptcy and fathered a child by his mistress. In 1473, while struggling with what was apparently a bout of incapacitating depression, she experienced a profound sense of the mercy of God. This has been described as a conversion experience, a mystical experience, or a second birth. Benedict Groeschel considers this to be a healthy development in her personality. After this experience Catherine became “more open, freer, and less driven in her personality and in her work.”¹⁰⁹ She switched her preoccupation with penitence and confession to a practice of daily communion. She worked at the local hospital and eventually became its administrator. Her husband also changed his ways. They agreed to live in a continent marriage and focused their energies on serving the sick and poor of Genoa.

Catherine herself was illiterate so her teachings were probably recorded by one of her associates. It is likely that the writer was Ettore Vernazza, a younger and educated associate. Under the influence of Catherine’s teachings, Vernazza also initiated the Oratory of Divine Love. This group would produce many of the leaders of the Catholic Reform.

What has been called Catherine’s “Treatise on Purgatory” is more recently called “Purgation and Purgatory.” This brief text presents Catherine’s ecstatic vision of God’s love and “the conditions of the souls of the faithful in purgatory.”

Catherine understands the purgatorial fire to be the purifying love of God. The souls in purgatory experience great joy because the “rust” of sin is being cleansed so they

¹⁰⁹ Benedict Groeschel, “Introduction.” In *Catherine of Genoa: Purgation and Purgatory, the Spiritual Dialogue* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1979), 5.

can more directly experience the love of God. “There is no joy save that in paradise to be compared to the joy of the souls in purgatory.” Paradoxically the souls in purgatory experience both joy and suffering. As the soul is “consumed” by the love of God, the duration of that suffering diminishes. However, “the souls in purgatory do not consider that punishment as suffering for, content in God’s will, they are one with Him in pure charity.”

As it is being drawn upwards, the soul feels itself melting in the fire of that love of its sweet God, for He will not cease until He has brought the soul to perfection. That is why the soul seeks to cast off any and all impediments, so that it can be lifted up to God; and such impediments are the cause of the suffering of the souls in purgatory.¹¹⁰

In Catherine’s vision even the souls in hell have less punishment than deserved. The damned souls are punished eternally, but, because of God’s mercy, not as intensely as they deserve.

This vision also puts an interesting twist on the prayers of the living. The souls are being acted upon by God and have lost their ability to choose.

And if the living were to offer alms for the benefit of the souls in purgatory, to shorten the assigned time of their purgation, still those souls could not turn with affection to watch, but would leave all things to God, who is paid as He wishes. If those souls could, in gratitude, turn their attention, that would distract them from the contemplation of the divine will- and that distraction would be hell.¹¹¹

So Catherine’s vision emphasizes the purification of the souls in purgatory. Any suffering is a letting go of the sin of self-centeredness. Catherine’s view is more mystical than moral. God’s mercy and love overwhelms any sinfulness and any sense of time. She seems little concerned

¹¹⁰ “*Purgation and Purgatory*”, *ibid.*, trans. Serge Hughes, 79.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

with indulgences, prayers for the dead, or even the connection of the living and the dead.

The influence of Catherine's vision is vast. Robert Bellarmine, Francis de Sales, Cardinal Bérulle, Frederick von Schlegel, nineteenth century Protestant ministers in the U.S., Isaac Hecker, Mrs. George Ripley, leaders of the Oxford Movement, Friedrich von Hügel, and George Tyrrell are some of the later thinkers who would be influenced by Catherine's vision.¹¹²

Baron Friedrich Von Hügel was a thinker associated with the Catholic Modernists of the early twentieth century. His book¹¹³ on Catherine of Genoa straddles the line between psychology and theology. He describes the life and experiences of Catherine. Catherine's description of purgatory combines the suffering of awareness of one's own sinfulness with the joy of knowing that one will be with God soon. The soul is attracted to purgatory because that is the way to God. The soul's process of purgation is represented by several images from Catherine's visions. Von Hügel relates her imagery of sunlight being blocked by a covering. The sun (God) continually shines: the covering (sin) must be burnt away to allow the sunlight to penetrate the object (the soul).

The Modern Era: 1650-1900

Following the controversies of the Reformation era, new challenges emerged. Thinkers of the Enlightenment or "Age of Reason" challenged all of the Western Christian churches with skepticism about the invisible world. Whereas the Reformers

¹¹² Groeschel, *ibid*, 1-42.

¹¹³ Friedrich von Hügel, *The Mystical Element of Religion As Studied in Saint Catherine of Genoa and Her Friends*, 2nd ed. (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1923) .

had questioned Church authority, Enlightenment thinkers questioned faith itself.

Ironically, the emphasis on rationalism influenced the workings of the Church. Faith was often considered an assent to intellectual propositions rather than a lived response to God's revelation. The intellectual challenges were accompanied by political and social revolutions that found the Catholic Church under attack. The 1700's and 1800's were a time of crisis and hostility toward Christianity.¹¹⁴ The Church could respond to the various challenges by accommodating to the modern world, resisting it, or reinterpreting the Christian tradition in a way that was congruent with the modern world.¹¹⁵

The aspect of Christianity that the Enlightenment thinkers valued was morality. Religion was appreciated for nurturing the sense of good and bad, right and wrong within people. The modern view of Christianity was a "system of morality with ceremonial accoutrements."¹¹⁶ Other beliefs and practices associated with the medieval Church - relics, pilgrimages and processions, Mary, and saints - were often dismissed as superstitions by Enlightenment thinkers.

An emphasis on the individual also characterized modern thought. This individualism influenced pious practices. Individual devotions often took precedence over communal practices.

James C. Livingston has observed that "Modernity" was constructed not only by the ideas of the Enlightenment such as individual autonomy, critical inquiry, the secular state, and focus on the present world, but also movements characterized as Romantic.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Joseph A. Komonchak, "The Enlightenment and the Construction of Roman Catholicism" *CCICA Annual*, (1985), 33-34.

¹¹⁵ James C. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought, Volume I: The Enlightenment and the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997), 2.

¹¹⁶ White, *ibid* 48.

¹¹⁷ Livingston, *ibid*, 3.

The nineteenth century romantic thinkers were more open to realities beyond the sensory. Imagination was valued as an important dimension of human experience. Some theological movements were influenced by romanticism. “Purgatory” was one of the doctrines being buffeted by the winds of the Modern era.

Theology for Seminaries

The Scholastic thought of the Middle Ages filtered through the Tridentine polemic style and the rationalistic approach of the Enlightenment to produce a Catholic theology of the early Modern era. The Catholic Church was now responding to both the criticisms of Protestant Reformers and the modern critics. Both of these were viewed by much of the Catholic hierarchy as challenges to authority. Joseph A. Komonchak has described the situation thus:

The Church did not emerge from the theologically mediocre eighteenth century and from the politically disastrous experiences of the Revolution with great intellectual resources. Catholic philosophy and theology for most of the first half of the nineteenth century was for the most part uncritical and eclectic.¹¹⁸

The teaching of the Jesuit Francisco Suarez was one of the most influential examples of this Catholic theology of the 1700's. Suarez emphasized the pain of loss and the pain of sense in purgatory. Fire was a part of purgatory which was considered an actual place.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Komonchak, *ibid.*, 44.

¹¹⁹ Francisco Suarez, “*De Purgatorio*” *Omnia Operes Volume 22*, in Internet Archive and Google Books, <http://www.sydneypenner.ca/SuarLat.shtml> (pp. 879-931). An English translation can be found in Mrs. J. Sadlier, *Purgatory* (New York: D and J Sadlier Company, 1886), 17-22.

In reaction to the Reformation, Catholic teaching had emphasized dogmatic teaching. The polemic tone of the catechisms of Canisius and others has been previously noted. These Tridentine catechisms continued to be the basis of Catholic teaching on purgatory throughout the modern eras. During the 1800's Roman authority over Catholic intellectual life expanded. Theological manuals standardized the teaching of priests. The philosophical synthesis of Thomas Aquinas, the greatest thinker of an idealized Christendom, was promoted as the solution to the challenges of the Enlightenment.¹²⁰

Theology for the Pious

Two of the most influential Catholic writers in modern Catholicism were Francis de Sales and Alphonsus Liguori. The writings of these two saints continued to be widely cited into the twentieth century. Both were influential among theologians and among the laity. They helped to form Catholicism's popular spirituality. Both wrote of purgatory and incorporated practices connected with purgatory into their spirituality.

Francis de Sales (1567-1622) became bishop of Geneva in 1602. He managed to restore much of the Catholicism of the Calvinist city through his writings, preaching, administrative reform, and personal example of holiness. His book, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, was intended to lead the laity to a deeper spiritual life. Although de Sales does not discuss "purgatory" in this book, he does go into detail about "purification" of one's sinfulness and desire to sin. He cites Catherine of Genoa as one of his inspirations. Like Catherine, Francis presented purgatory as a process of purification. Purgation is an

¹²⁰ Joseph A. Komonchak, "The Enlightenment and the Construction of Roman Catholicism," *CCICA Annual* (1985), 44-46.

ongoing process in the way of true devotion. Contrition, confession, and penance are integral aspects of this process. Francis de Sales presents a “spiritualized” understanding of purgatory focused more in this life than in the next.¹²¹

Francis emphasized the consolation rather than the pain of purgatory. DeSales spoke fondly of departed friends and frequently encouraged others to pray for the dead. He felt that praying for the dead included the other works of mercy. He compared praying for souls in purgatory to acts such as visiting the sick or ransoming prisoners; giving spiritual food, drink, or clothing to the poor souls; or even helping to give counsel or forgiving offenses.¹²²

The person to provide both a bridge and a counter to the enlightened view of religion was Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787). He founded the Redemptorists, wrote extensively about morality, couched Catholic teachings and practices within an emotional language, and initiated new forms of devotion. He established a “moral theology” which was in line with the ethical ideals of the enlightenment. In his emphasis on an emotional devotionism he countered the rationalistic attitudes of his time. Liguori emphasized visits to the Blessed Sacrament with a pious, private, emotional connection that would shape the will in a moral direction.

¹²¹ Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, trans. and ed. John K. Ryan (New York: Doubleday, 1955). Original definitive edition published in 1619.

¹²² From “St. Francis de Sales on Purgatory” in Mrs. J. Sadlier, *Purgatory* (New York: D and J Sadlier Company, 1886), 46-47. Mrs. Sadlier’s book provided an English translation of many primary sources on purgatory for U.S. Catholics in the Nineteenth century. The book was intended to “promote devotions to the souls in purgatory.” The book offers an eclectic collection of writings by famous authors, poems, “history”, and devotional stories. The selection from St. Francis de Sales was cited from *Consoling Thoughts of St. Francis de Sales*, arranged by Rev. Fr. Huguet, pp 336-7.

Liguori's impact would be felt through the twentieth century. He advocated more frequent communion, but seemed to advocate a spiritual communion as an equal practice. Liguori was offering devotions that would appeal to the individualism of the Enlightenment, but also appeal to the emotions that were shunned by the same. This approach proved so successful that later Catholic reformers would have difficulty with restoring the original purposes of the liturgy.

Ten generations or more were nourished in an individualistic piety that for them provided a satisfactory substitute for being a liturgical community. A one-sided diet produced what from today's perspective seems like a malnourished version of Christian worship.¹²³

Liguori also promoted and produced novenas for several purposes, including All Souls Day. In addition, his preaching was effective and an alternative to both the Jesuits and the Jansenists.

Liguori also wrote on dogmatic topics. His *An exposition and defence of all the points of faith discussed and defined by the Sacred Council of Trent : along with a refutation of the errors of the pretended reformers and of the objections of Fra Paolo Sarpi*¹²⁴ is essentially a catechism. His section on purgatory gives some indication of the official teaching in the mid-eighteenth century.

The section on purgatory, as with the documents from Trent, is only a small portion of the text. Liguori spends a page quoting the Council's declaration on purgatory, summarizing it and stating what the council recommended while avoiding discussion of the "more subtle" aspects of the doctrine. This is followed by sixteen pages on the doctrine of purgatory. Liguori presents six proofs (primarily based on Scripture) for the existence of purgatory, nine arguments against purgatory with accompanying refutations,

¹²³ White, *ibid.* 59.

¹²⁴ Alphonsus Liguori, Translated from the Italian by a Catholic clergyman. (Dublin: James Duffy, 1846).

five disputed questions, three objections to suffrages for the dead and accompanying refutations, and a question on prayers by the dead.

The image and message behind much of Liguori's discussion is that purgatory is prison, God is the prince or king who acts out of justice as well as mercy, and sins require punishment in addition to forgiveness.¹²⁵ Compared to previous times there is much clarity about purgatory: it occurs after death and before the Last Judgment, it forgives and remits the punishment for venial sins, it only remits the punishment for already forgiven mortal sins, and the main punishment is deprivation of the vision of God. Despite his clarity, Liguori acknowledges differing opinions about the place of purgatory (where the sin occurred, hell, under the earth, and being deprived of the vision of God). He is certain that purgatory involves pain of sense (although the fire may be material or metaphorical). However, there are differing views of how the pain of purgatory compares to the pain of this world. The prayers of the living can assist the dead, but there are differing opinions about whether the dead in purgatory can pray for the living.

Theology for Converts

One reaction to the rationalism of the eighteenth century was the Romanticism. Whereas the rationalists had dismissed aesthetics and the authority of the past, Romantics valued the beauty of nature and respected history. In England one expression of this movement could be found in the Oxford movement. This began as a movement of religious devotion and discipline within the Anglican Church. Many of the Romantic thinkers across Europe reacted against the excesses and cruelties of the French revolutionary period. In England, the Oxford movement was initiated in the 1830's in

¹²⁵ Liguori often seems to be following Bellarmine, but cites a number of church fathers as well as visions and church practices.

reaction to a perceived secularization of society. The Tractarians sought a supernatural aspect of religion that they found missing in much of the thought of the day. They turned to early Christianity, the patristic era, for resources to restore a Christianity focused on holiness.¹²⁶ Many of the leaders of the movement would convert to the Catholic Church.

One of the early initiatives was to revive the practice of praying for the dead. Investigations of patristic sources led to a renewed appreciation for the doctrine of the communion of saints. This doctrine, when combined with the pietistic emphasis on sanctification, supported the legitimacy of praying for the dead. Early Tractarians were careful to distinguish these prayers for the dead from the “abuses” associated with the Catholic doctrine of purgatory.

One of the leaders, E. B. Pusey, remained Anglican but accepted the idea of an “intermediate state” after reading the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity*. He would eventually encounter the descriptions of purgatory by Catherine of Genoa. In correspondence with John Henry Newman, he said, that this would have kept Article XXII from being included in the Thirty Nine Articles. “...It appeared to him that Anglicans had been seeing the intermediate state too much in terms of joy, and the Romans too much in terms of suffering, but, rightly regarded, they were two sides of the same thing.”¹²⁷

John Henry Newman discussed the condition of the souls of the faithful departed even prior his conversion to Catholicism. In both a sermon on “The Intermediate State”

¹²⁶ James C. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought, Volume I: The Enlightenment and the Nineteenth Century*. 2nd ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997), 162 – 170.

¹²⁷ Geoffrey Rowell, *Hell and Victorians: A study of the nineteenth-century theological controversies concerning eternal punishment and the future life*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 104-105

(1835) and his *Tract 90* (1841) Newman preached that an intermediate state was needed for maturation to appreciate the vision of God. This showed God's mercy rather than punishment. He viewed this state as a time of purification and waiting, but salvation was certain. The early sermons of Newman included an appreciation for the communion of saints as the mystical body of Christ, but he was cautious about what he considered a Catholic idolatry in praying to the dead.¹²⁸

Newman disagreed with the universalism being promoted by many of his countrymen. He stated that the divine attributes of justice and mercy did not contradict one another, even though this may be beyond human ability to comprehend.

An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine explored the doctrine of purgatory as a key example of true doctrinal development. Newman considered purgatory as the development of two ideas: the Greek image of fire through which all must pass on the last day and the Latin-African legalistic tradition. The doctrine of purgatory logically followed from the experience of sin following the sacrament of baptism. Penance, purgatory, and merit were implied in the doctrines of baptism and sin.¹²⁹

Narrative Imagination: Art and Poetry

As has already been shown, following Trent, the Catholic teachings that contrasted with the teachings of the Reformers were emphasized. This was communicated through the art and architecture. The themes of paintings were often centered on Catholic teachings. For example Guercino painted "St. Gregory and the

¹²⁸ Fr. Juan R. Velez, "Newman and Last Things" *Downside Review* 119 (January 2001) : 52-53.

¹²⁹ John Henry Cardinal Newman. *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. 6th ed.. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 388-395.

Souls in Purgatory.” The main Jesuit church was Gesu in Rome. This was an example of a baroque style church. Space and light were focused on the central areas where sermons were preached and Mass was celebrated. The artwork included a painting of purgatory. With the emphasis on standardization, this model church was copied wherever Jesuits founded churches.¹³⁰

After his conversion in 1845 Newman spoke of purgatory rather than the intermediate state. In 1865 he published his poem *The Dream of Gerontius*. The poem met with much praise and some expected criticism. Sir Edward Elgar, a renowned composer, set *Gerontius* to music.¹³¹ Gerontius was a believer facing death. He prepares for death and passes through purification to find the happiness of meeting God. This was Newman’s image of the ideal Christian death. Newman portrays the suffering of purgatory to be the sense of shame about one’s own sinfulness and the inability to immediately encounter God. The popularity of the poem indicates that it touched on many of the hopes of Victorian England. Rowell summarizes how Newman’s poem countered both many of the Catholic images of purgatory and the Protestant movement away from purgatory.

Judicial categories are replaced by an emphasis on the holiness of God and the unworthiness of man, which removes the possibility of unfruitful speculation as to the amount of satisfaction God requires, and is at the same time closer to the patristic imagery of the purifying fire of judgment...Purgatory is a place of preparation for heaven, not a lesser hell, where souls are tortured by demons.¹³²

¹³⁰ R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal 1540-1770*. 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 170.

¹³¹ Ibid., 60.

¹³² Rowell, *ibid.*, 160-161.

It has been noted that there are similarities between Newman's image of purgatory and that of Catherine of Genoa. Although Newman did not read Catherine prior to his writing the poem, they had a common emphasis on purgatory as the loss of self and the soul being acted on by the love of God.¹³³ Newman offered an alternative to Liguori's image of purgatory as prison.

Practices and Popular Understanding: Devotionalism

During the century following Trent, Catholic piety became more individual and personal. Printed books of devotion gave all literate Catholics a new access to prayer. These new forms of piety supplemented rather than supplanted the piety of the Middle Ages. Confraternities continued to grow in number. Often these were "mutual aid" communities in which members took care of funeral and burial arrangements. Membership ensured that the deceased would have someone praying for him or her after death.¹³⁴

Catholic devotions refer to non-liturgical or para-liturgical actions that are meant to enhance one's religious life. Often they do not require a priest and are frequently individual. Examples include Eucharistic adoration, prayers to saints, and praying the rosary. A number of devotions centered on avoiding purgatory or helping those in purgatory.

One example began in the 1670's when Margaret Mary Alacoque had received a series of revelations. These revealed the Sacred Heart of Jesus and promised a holy death to anyone who attended Mass for nine consecutive first Fridays. This practice continued

¹³³ Jane M.C. James, "Judgment and Purgatory in Newman's *The Dream of Gerontius* and in the *Treatise on Purgatory* of St. Catherine of Genoa" *Downside Review* 118 (April 2000) : 142.

¹³⁴ Bireley, *ibid.*, 209.

through the 1700's.¹³⁵ Novenas became popular. One novena was associated with All Souls' Day for the souls in purgatory.

A specific devotion for the souls in purgatory was the Heroic Act of Charity. Several popes, including Pius IX, approved this devotion. Individuals would commit all of their works of satisfaction in this life and any prayers for them after death to the souls in purgatory. Mary would distribute these merits as she saw fit. As with many devotions, this was viewed as originating from a supernatural source. Most of the devotions could be tied to a particular saint, apparition, or private revelation. The heroic act was attributed to St. Gertrude.¹³⁶

As was mentioned in the section on the Middle Ages, popular understanding is often influenced by the teaching of priests. Preaching in seventeenth and eighteenth century France has been studied by Jean Delumeau.¹³⁷ Although many took a balanced approach to Purgatory, there were "men of anger" who delivered sermons on an infernalized image of Purgatory. Missionary sermons by Jansenists and Jesuits used fear to motivate their listeners to remain Catholic during the Age of Reason and later to "convert" sinners. Terms such as "avenger", "vengeance", and "justice" recurred in the sermons on Purgatory.¹³⁸ Purgatory was presented as a prison and place of torture. Graphic descriptions of the worst pains in human life were used as a starting point for the unimaginable pain of purgatory. The cry for help from friends and relatives was

¹³⁵ White *ibid.* pp. 34-36.

¹³⁶ Ann Taves, *The Household of Faith*. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 40.

¹³⁷ *Sin and Fear: The Emergence of a Western Guilt Culture 13th -18th Centuries*, trans. Eric Nicholson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 388-389.

dramatically portrayed in the sermons. Listeners were encouraged to waste no time in arranging for masses to be said for their relatives and for themselves. The sensationalistic evangelizing was accompanied in some places by paintings in chapels that portrayed the fires of purgatory.¹³⁹

One indication of the popularity of purgatory continued into the nineteenth century was the founding of a religious order dedicated to helping the souls in purgatory. Eugenie Smet founded the Society of Helpers of the Holy Souls in Paris in 1856. The order took a fourth vow to practice the Heroic Act of Charity. Supposedly Fr. Faber, one of the priests associated with the Oxford movement, on his deathbed, requested that the sisters be brought to England. Two sisters finally arrived in 1872 and the order was well established within a decade. In 1892 seven sisters would arrive in New York and also establish convents in the United States.¹⁴⁰

Rowell notes the change in English Catholic devotions between 1750 and 1850. In the mid-1750's a "restrained piety" could be found in the popular *Garden of the Soul* by Bishop Challoner. There was little mention of future life and extremely restrained descriptions of hell. The main pain of hell and purgatory was the deprivation of the vision of God.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 399.

¹⁴⁰ <http://www.congregationofhelpers.org/> is the website for the British community. There are other communities around the world today. http://www.helpers.org/Society_Of_Helpers.html is the website for the U.S. community, now only located in Chicago. In the congregation's name the reference to "Holy Souls" or "Holy Souls in Purgatory" is no longer included. The website describes their mission as, "To journey with others in the quest for a more human life and to go right to the end in helping those we meet attain the goal of their creation, the vision of God." Eugie Smet, or Sr. Mary of Providence, would be beatified by Pope Pius XII in 1957.

In 1850 the English translation of Alphonsus Liguori's works were published. Liguori's form of devotion had already been popular in continental Europe for several decades. Liguori encouraged reflection on the Last Things as an incentive to Christian living. The moment of death required great preparation. Believers imagined the torments of hell in graphic detail. Liguori tied this eschatological perspective in with morality to produce a strongly emotional form of devotion. As has been discussed earlier, Liguori's image of hell emphasized the punitive and legalistic.¹⁴¹

The Catholic converts from the Oxford movement tended to take an eschatological stance between the "restrained piety" of the Enlightenment period and the emotionally charged "Liguorianism." They tended to view purgatory as a "school" more than a "prison."

Official Church Teaching and Practices: Book of Indulgences

Popes and the church hierarchy encouraged many devotions as an alternative to secular ideals. Some devotions were used as ways of centralizing papal authority and countering the secular revolutionary zeal of the time. Assigning indulgences to devotions was one way to defend against the attacks from the secular nations. Pius IX represented an apex of associating indulgences with particular prayers and practices.¹⁴² Publishers, in putting together English language prayer books used the *Raccolta*, the official Vatican sourcebook of indulgenced prayers. This "collection" of indulgenced prayers was first

¹⁴¹Rowell, *ibid.*, 154-157.

¹⁴² Ann Taves, *The Household of Faith* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 27. Also Komonchak, *ibid.*, 37-41.

published in 1877. The majority of the prayers and practices in the 450 pages had indulgences attached by Pope Pius IX himself.¹⁴³

The Nineteenth Century United States

Joseph P. Chinnici, OFM has written extensively on the history of Catholic spiritual life in the United States. In one of his historical surveys, the subject of purgatory seems to tie closely with the immigrant Catholic Church of the early 1800's. The chapter about Bishop John Hughes of New York is entitled "The Triumph of the Purgative Way."¹⁴⁴ Hughes had been born in Ireland in 1797 and immigrated to the United States in 1817. He was educated at Mount St. Mary's College in Emmitsburg, Maryland and eventually named bishop of New York in 1838. Hughes would continue in this position until his death in 1864. Bishop Hughes was a strong defender of the Catholic immigrants with a strong interest in forming Catholics who were Americans. Hughes' views of the Catholic religion were shaped by the polemical context of the United States. Early in his career he published a pamphlet answering nine theological objections to Catholicism. One of these issues discussed was purgatory. He was one of several U.S. bishops in this century who addressed the issues connected with the doctrine of purgatory

Many of the elements of the nineteenth century context are crucial to understanding the U.S. Catholicism of the twentieth century. A rise in devotional spirituality accompanied the influx of European immigrants. Within Protestant

¹⁴³ James M. O'Toole, *The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 134-135.

¹⁴⁴ Joseph P. Chinnici, OFM., *Living Stones: The History and Structure of Catholic Spiritual Life in the United State.*, (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 52-67.

communities, evangelical revivals became a popular method of winning converts and eliciting enthusiasm for living the Christian life. The combination of devotional spirituality and revivalism in the Catholic Church resulted in parish missions. The preaching of missions often relied on the doctrine of purgatory to move participants.

Anti-Catholic sentiment was prevalent during the century. Catholics were often “outsiders” in the U.S. culture. Within the Catholic community some favored integrating into the surrounding U.S. culture and others favored isolating themselves. A defensive, polemic quality was often evident in discussions between Protestants and Catholics. Despite this atmosphere of controversy (or because of it), several well-regarded Protestants converted to Catholicism in the 1800’s.¹⁴⁵ These converts tended to explain Catholic doctrines to their Protestant friends with a more irenic tone.

In the late 1800’s and early 1900’s several works on Purgatory were published. Perhaps the book that gives the broadest understanding of the doctrine in the nineteenth century was a unique book entitled *Purgatory: Doctrinal, Historical, and Poetical* (edited) by Mrs. J. Sadlier published in 1886.¹⁴⁶ Mary Anne (Madden) Sadlier was an Irish immigrant who had married James Sadlier in 1846. He, along with his brother, was a publisher of Catholic literature. The business was located in New York, but expanded to Montreal. Mrs. Sadlier spent time in each of the cities. The book is dedicated to her son, Francis X. Sadlier, S.J., who died in November of 1885, three months after his ordination.

Out of the various books discussing purgatory and related topics published in the United States over the next century, this may be the most “American.” The diversity of

¹⁴⁵ Christine M. Bochen, *The Journey to Rome: Conversion Literature by Nineteenth-Century American Catholics*. (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988).

¹⁴⁶ Mrs. J. Sadlier, *Purgatory: Doctrinal, Historical and Poetic*. (New York: D & J Sadlier Co., 1886).

types of writing reflected the diversity within the U.S. Catholic Church. Mrs. Sadlier was aware that other books discussed the “dear and precious” doctrine of purgatory. She set out to create a book that addressed a general audience and went beyond the “doctrinal and devotional.” The book is a compilation of over 150 writings by various authors.¹⁴⁷ The book’s structure reflects the varied sources on the doctrine of purgatory. So, Sadlier’s book will provide many of the examples for this time period.¹⁴⁸

Theology: Apologetic

The predominant tone of U.S. Catholic theology on purgatory in this century could be characterized as “apologetic.” The doctrine of purgatory was certainly a divisive issue between Protestants and Catholics. Protestant groups still relied on the arguments of the Reformation period and considered purgatory a “Satanic invention.” However, the Oxford movement did influence groups in the U.S. So, there were those Protestants who were willing to concede that there was a certain logic to an intermediate state after death.

One of the most notable converts to the Catholic Church in the 1800’s was Isaac Hecker. He had gone from a fellow traveler with Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Transcendentalists to become Catholic and a Redemptorist priest. He would eventually found the Paulist order. His 1855 *Questions of the Soul*¹⁴⁹ is apologetic with a more Romantic than scholastic approach. Hecker tells his own story and makes the case that

¹⁴⁷ The book is divided into five sections: Doctrinal and devotional (19 selections); Anecdotes and Incidents (19 selections); Historical (20 selections); Thoughts of Various Authors on Purgatory (26 selections); Legendary and Poetical (67 selections); and an Appendix (6 selections).

¹⁴⁸ It is worth noting that this book was published several years prior to *Aeterni Patris* (1879). There are no selections from Thomas Aquinas, nor from Alphonsus Liguori, in the book. Another point worth noting is that many of Sadlier’s articles and poems would appear again in the religious publications of the twentieth century. *Ave Maria* would later copy some of these articles directly from Sadlier’s book.

¹⁴⁹ Reprinted New York: Arno Press, 1978.

the human heart can best find fulfillment within the Catholic Church. For those of an ascetic and mystical temperament the religious orders offer a lifestyle most closely modeled on the life of Christ.

Without using the word “purgatory”, Hecker notes the need for purification. The Catholic Church offers means of penance and self-denial to prepare the soul to “become all pure and bright ...to stand before him who is purity, love, and light itself.”¹⁵⁰ Hecker speaks of Extreme Unction to prepare the soul for its final destination, and, even without the sacrament, one can go through the process of purification.

The first section of Sadlier’s book, mentioned above, consists of “Doctrinal and Devotional” sources. Presumably the “devotional” sources are saints who have written about purgatory: Catherine of Genoa, Augustine, Francis de Sales, Gertrude, several early Church Fathers, and Thomas a Kempis . On the “doctrinal” side, Bishops Hughes (of New York), Lynch (of Toronto), and Gibbons (of Baltimore) are North American prelates quoted. Suarez, “A Paulist priest,” F.H. Weninger, S.J., and Father Faber also contribute to the chapter.

The opening section is taken from Suarez. The section emphasizes that purgatory is a corporeal place, it involves both pain of loss and pain of the senses, and that it is a prison. Suarez also notes that God permits apparitions of these souls from time to time. The harshness of Suarez’ pain imagery is balanced by Catherine’s emphasis on the love of God. Other saints emphasize the effectiveness of prayers for the dead.

Cardinal Gibbons argues for the legitimacy of purgatory by citing the ancient liturgical prayers for the dead found in many Christian groups. All of the Catholic rites,

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 216.

the Eastern Orthodox churches, and the groups that split from the majority Christian Church in the first millennium have all retained prayers for the dead. He concludes that purgatory is a consoling doctrine that unites the living and the dead with the “golden link of prayer.”

While Gibbons makes the case for purgatory based on traditional practices, Bishop Hughes uses Scripture to explain the doctrine of purgatory. God is a God of justice, and Scripture contains instances of punishment for sin occurring even after the sin has been forgiven. David was punished with the death of his son even after he had been forgiven. Hughes goes on to challenge his listeners who would say that purgatory is not in Scripture to find where the Bible says to worship on Sunday rather than the Sabbath. Bishop Lynch exhorts Catholics to pray for the dead. Penance in this life will lessen the pains of purgatory. He reminds his listeners that it is their duty to pray for the dead.

In a later section entitled “Thoughts by Various Authors” Archbishop Spalding of Baltimore argues against those who claim that the doctrine of purgatory did not exist until the Council of Florence. He cites sources similar to those of Gibbons to show that prayer for the dead had been a part of the Christian Church since the beginning.

Some managed to avoid the polemic tone in discussions of the doctrine. A few years later a book from France, *Purgatory: Explained by the Lives and Legends of the Saints*, was translated. This book by the Jesuit F.X. Shouppe was written in 1893 and explained purgatory with dogmatic teaching, the teachings of the fathers of the Church, and particular revelations. Shouppe states in his preface, “We propose not to prove the existence of Purgatory to skeptical minds, but to make it better known to the pious

faithful who believe with a divine faith this dogma revealed of God.”¹⁵¹ The book is an example of how the dogmatic and devotional aspects were closely intertwined during this time.

Narratives: Poetry and Ghosts

Based on Sadlier’s book and other publications, there seemed to be a very real focus on the dead. What the poetry and the narratives of this time emphasized was the thin border between the living and the dead. Although there was the melancholy of separation, there was still a connection.

The second section of Sadlier’s book is entitled “Anecdotes and Incidents.” Most of these stories come from *Ave Maria* magazine, the 1877 *Almanac of the Souls in Purgatory* (published by a Purgatorial Society based in Montreal), and a book published in Britain entitled *Footsteps of Spirits*. These narratives are intended as evidence about purgatory and the importance of prayers for the dead.

Some stories are taken from the lives of saints, but several are stories from North America. A “ghost story” from Bardstown, Kentucky involved a man purchasing a plantation to be given to the Jesuits. The guests were kept awake by rapping. The current owners of the estate said that the noises had begun when the woman who had previously owned the home had died. When the guests told the tale to the Jesuit community, they suggested that there might be a “supernatural origin” to the noises. So a Jesuit priest returned with the guests to investigate, and heard the noises. He sprinkled holy water, said some prayers, and spoke Latin to the spirit. The spirit replied in Latin.

¹⁵¹ F.X. Shouppe, *Purgatory: Illustrated by the Lives and Legends of the Saints*, Translated from the French, (Reprint Rockville, Illinois: TAN Publishers, 1973. Original imprimatur 1893).

The deceased person still owed a debt to the local shoemaker. Once the current owners paid the debt, the rapping ended.

Other narratives tell of the benefits of praying prayers like the *De Profundis*¹⁵² for the dead. One story from Maryland tells of the practice of saying a *De Profundis* for the souls in purgatory each night and the person is awakened on time. Another story recounts being saved from bandits because of asking help of the souls. The lesson is often that those who remember to pray for the souls in purgatory will be rewarded or protected.

These stories represent a change from earlier “apparition” stories. Whereas previous narratives encouraged listeners to pray for the dead, these tend to focus on the ways the dead can aid the living. Repayment of debts and honoring promises become more significant.

Sadlier’s book also contains several traditional “legends” connected to the doctrine of purgatory. “Purgatory of St. Patrick” as well as sections from Dante’s *Purgatorio* and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* are included. Newman’s “Dream of Gerontius” and several works by Sir Walter Scott are included.

In addition to the “Dies Irae” over forty poems and hymns are included. These come from Catholic and non-Catholic sources. The poems reflect on the month of November, memorial services, and the view of the dead for the living. The poems are attempts to console the living and encourage them to pray for the dead. They are also cautionary tales to encourage the living to live well.

¹⁵² See Appendix for several of these prayers.

U.S. Practices

The immigrant purgative way was complemented by a devotional spirituality. This spirituality combined the practices of a variety of immigrant groups. Ann Taves' *The Household of Faith*¹⁵³ examined prayer books and devotional manuals from nineteenth century to analyze devotionism. Her book details how technological improvements allowed for printing of manuals in large quantities. She also considers the growth of devotionism to be intertwined with the phenomenon of parish missions (Catholic revivals)¹⁵⁴.

The papal indulgencing of prayers led to an expansion of popular devotions. Publishers of Catholic prayer books were quick to include prayers that had been indulgenced (the Way of the Cross, Stations of the Cross, etc.) even though these had not been familiar in the U.S. The fostering of devotions, thus, standardized Catholic devotional practices internationally. The attaching of indulgences to devotions also led to the administration of the devotions by the parish priest. Devotions also served a function of distinguishing Catholics from non-Catholics.¹⁵⁵

Taves catalogued the various forms of devotion and classifies them into thematic categories. The most popular devotions were associated with particular religious orders. For example, devotion to the Sacred Heart was encouraged by Jesuit preachers. Often the mission preachers would establish confraternities or sodalities to continue the devotion

¹⁵³ Ann Taves. *The Household of Faith*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986.

¹⁵⁴ See Jay P. Dolan, *Catholic Revivalism: The American Experience, 1830-1900* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978). Admittedly, both Taves and Dolan have been criticized for their simplistic interpretation of devotionism as the imposition of papal power on a docile laity. While this dissertation will avoid this interpretation, much of their research provides a valuable context for the time period.

¹⁵⁵ Taves, *ibid*, p 111.

within a parish after the mission had concluded. Devotions associated with the Blessed Sacrament (Forty Hours), Mary (the rosary), and Jesus (the Way of the Cross) were the most popular. There were confraternities dedicated to praying for the souls in purgatory and connected with the month of November, but in Taves' work these were the fewest confraternities in number in the nineteenth century.

In Sadlier's book, the section entitled "Historical" does not fit contemporary standards of history. A more appropriate title might be "Ethnic customs concerning the dead." The section includes several articles by Anna T. Sadlier (Mary Anne's daughter) on remembrance of the dead in various parts of Europe. Often these were associated with All Souls' Day and the month of November.

The parish mission was one of the most influential conveyers of devotional practices. *Charity for the Suffering Souls: An Explanation of the Catholic Doctrine of Purgatory* was authored by Rev. John A. Nageleisen and granted an imprimatur in 1895. Nageleisen was identified as a missionary priest of the Precious Blood order. The book probably represents one version of a parish mission. In the preface Nageleisen laments that most people do not concern themselves with purgatory. Either they are infidels, separated from communion with the Catholic Church, unaware of their duty to pray for the poor souls, or negligent Catholics. The purpose of the book was to counter this disbelief, ignorance, and lack of zeal. Further the book was meant to give a practical guide in helping the poor souls in purgatory.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ John A. Nageleisen, *Charity for the Suffering Souls* (Reprint Rockford, Illinois: TAN Publishers, 1977 original imprimatur 1895), x-xv.

The book offers a dizzying amount of information on Purgatory: evidence of its existence, replies to the opponents of Purgatory, torments, consolations, duration, and location of purgatory. The lengthiest part of the book is given to the means of relieving souls.¹⁵⁷

To continue the fervor of the mission, confraternities were established. These groups would agree to pray for the dead and meet regularly. Similar to the mission confraternities were the *bona mors* or “good death” associations. These were groups which promoted “the grace of dying well.” They emphasized the communal and interdependent character of Catholicism. The purpose was to have many people praying for one another to receive the grace of Christ. At the moment of death the prayers of others could alleviate some of the agony of death. Also intercessory prayer could lessen each member’s period of purification after death. One pamphlet from 1846 describes this benefit of part of the Bona Mors Society:

Neither will their Charitable Assistance cease with your life; because you will leave behind you an Assembly who will daily pray for the Repose of your Soul, and solicit Jesus Christ as long as you are retarded, to hasten your Entrance into Eternal Bliss, which is the Final End of this Association.¹⁵⁸

Other practices that were encouraged included visits to cemeteries, special prayers in November, praying the *De Profundis*¹⁵⁹, and offering one’s own merits for the souls in purgatory.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 343-353.

¹⁵⁸ Joseph P. Chinnici and Angelyn Dries, editors, *Prayer and Practice in the American Catholic Community* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2000), 28-29.

¹⁵⁹ Psalm 130 (129 in the Vulgate). See Appendix for *De Profundis*, *Miserere*, and *Dies Irae*.

Popular Understanding: Household of Faith

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the spiritual devotions, based on the works of Francis de Sales, encouraged a focus on the life of Christ. Taves uses the image of “the household of faith” to describe the worldview accompanying later devotional practices. Mary, the saints, angels, and the deceased, as well as the persons of the Trinity, were accessible through devotions. Citing Isaac Hecker, F.W. Faber, and Orestes Brownson, Taves shows the close connection between heaven and earth. With God the Father, Mary our mother, Jesus the elder brother, and the saints as siblings, Catholics imagined themselves as part of a family combining the living and the dead. This understanding of the mystical body of Christ or communion of saints viewed those in purgatory as one part of the “household of faith” in need of the devotional assistance of the living. The dead could, in turn, aid the living through miracles.¹⁶⁰

Church Teaching

The nineteenth century included significant battles between the Catholic Church and modernity. Democratic revolutions throughout Europe had weakened the Church’s political influence. The Papal States had been taken from the control of the Pope. Intellectual movements threatened the very basis of faith.

In response the Catholic Church underwent a process of centralizing authority. The 1870 Vatican Council affirmed the doctrine of papal infallibility. Modern errors were condemned. Devotions were standardized. An ultramontane form of Catholicism dominated the views of the faithful. The doctrine of purgatory was an important support to the papacy. The pope could indulge devotions and prayers.

¹⁶⁰ Taves, *ibid.* See especially Chapter 3 “This World and the Other World.”

With *Aeterni Patris* in 1879, Leo XIII attempted to unify Catholic thought around the teaching of Thomas Aquinas. This led to a Neo-Thomism and Neo-Scholasticism that promulgated a view of purgatory that continued to emphasize the pains of purgatory.¹⁶¹

The Twentieth Century: The “Purging” of Purgatory

This section will primarily focus on the United States. However, much of what would take place in the United States was a reaction, response, or imitation of the great theological movements taking place in Europe. So it will be necessary to mention some of the more significant European voices in theology. The source for the early to mid-twentieth century theology on purgatory will be several books from the time.

The changes in narratives, practices, and popular understanding connected with purgatory will be covered more extensively in chapters 3 (practices) and 4 (narratives and popular understanding) ahead. The source for these topics will be articles in the U.S. Catholic periodicals of the time. The present section will begin with a focus on the cultural context and then present the theology of the early and mid twentieth century.

Changes in approaching death

Gary Laderman has studied the cultural history of death in the United States. His research has traced the complexities involved with the rise of the funeral industry. Between the deaths of Washington in 1799 and Lincoln in 1865 funeral practices shifted. Urbanization, market forces, and the massive casualties from the Civil War allowed the

¹⁶¹ Komonchak, *ibid.*

funeral industry to take shape. The cornerstone practice was embalming. This practice required professionals rather than family members.¹⁶²

In the twentieth century, life expectancy climbed dramatically. This meant that the encounter with a corpse became a rare occurrence. Deaths began to take place in hospitals more frequently than in homes. In the twentieth century embalming became the accepted practice in the U.S. Catholics began to seek out the services of funeral directors. Laderman's assessment is that the work of funeral directors succeeded because they responded to the needs of families. Some religious leaders criticized the new practices as pushing religious concerns to the side and adopting the trappings of paganism. However, the majority of the religious leaders worked closely with the funeral homes and their directors. In dealing with funeral homes, the family's concerns were centered on the body of the deceased more than his or her soul.¹⁶³

Funeral homes gained a foothold ... because of one simple fact that applied throughout the country: Enough customers were willing to pay funeral directors to care for and dispose of their dead. But the success of these homes depended on a complicated set of historical circumstances, cultural negotiations, and changing religious sensibilities that gave death new meaning, and the dead a new role, in the everyday lives of Americans.¹⁶⁴

One strategy of the funeral directors was to make the services associated with the funeral home psychologically and spiritually healing for the living. They avoided a negative emphasis on sin and the reality of death. This shift paralleled changes in emphasis concerning the meaning of Extreme Unction and

¹⁶² Gary Laderman, *The Sacred remains: American Attitudes Toward Death, 1799-1883* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996).

¹⁶³ Gary Laderman, *Rest in Peace: A Cultural History of Death and the Funeral Home in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

funerals. If the emphasis was on consoling the living, attention shifted away from prayers to assist the dead. The focus shifted from the afterlife to this life.

Although life expectancy in the United States increased, in the twentieth century death on a mass scale also became a reality. New weapons of warfare, disease, and tyrannical dictators led to large numbers of death. So, paradoxically, as the immediate contact with death and dead bodies decreased, the awareness of catastrophic death on a global scale increased. These sudden and numerous deaths did not allow for individual preparation for death. Again, the focus shifted from saving individual souls in the next life to preventing massive evil in this life.

Overview of early twentieth century theology

The encyclical, *Aeterni Patris*, by Pope Leo XIII in 1879 elevated the work of Thomas Aquinas as the intellectual standard in the Catholic Church. So Aquinas was now viewed as the authority about purgatory. The debates of the Middle Ages about the nature of the punishment in purgatory, the duration of punishment, and whether the punishment was voluntary were revived. Thomas' skepticism about apparitions came into play. Thomistic opinions on purgatory had been questioned by later scholars. So the doctrine of purgatory became an avenue for opening the tight grip of Thomism.

Neo-Thomism would dominate the seminary education in the U.S. until the 1950's. Modernism, *nouvelle theologie*, and transcendental Thomism were movements that offered some theological alternatives. The U.S. tended to receive these ideas later than Europeans and filtered these approaches through a pragmatic American view.

In the neo-Scholastic approach “Purgatory” would be studied as part of an ahistorical dogmatic theology. However, the historical critical approaches to Scripture and history led to an examination of the sources of the doctrine of purgatory. Narrative sources and those that had been categorized as “imagination,” such as private revelations, were purged from theological thinking about purgatory.

This “purging” of apparitions, visions, and imagination did not take place quickly. A devotional form of Catholicism remained committed to many of the practices of assisting the souls in purgatory. Attitudes toward the present world and the life after death shifted in the twentieth century. Those affirming this world tended to view the afterlife as an afterthought. The goal of a Christian’s life was to build the Kingdom of God in the here and now. Purgatory might be a needed adjustment after death, but was not as important as focusing on serving others in this life.

Earlier in this chapter the nineteenth century British interest in hell was summarized. Following that interest in hell there appeared, in English translation, books dealing with eschatology and with purgatory in particular.¹⁶⁵ The authors of these books were not only from England, but also Germany and France. Each of the three countries had its own nuances on the issues connected with the afterlife. For British and Irish Catholics there was a certain pride in the acceptance of an “intermediate State” by many of the Protestants. The German writings tended to have a renewed sense of historical and biblical sources. The eschatology and apocalypticism of Jesus became a highly debated subject among German Scripture scholars. The French sources showed signs of Jansenistic influence or the rejection of those influences. Some of the books were

¹⁶⁵ The English version of Bishop P.W. Keppler’s *The Poor Souls in Purgatory* (St. Louis, Mo. and London: B. Herder Book Co, 1923) lists 42 books in English on the Poor Souls.

targeted for a theologically educated audience and focused on dogma. Others were more “pastoral”, but intended for priests as an aid to sermons and advice in the confessional. Still others were addressed to an educated laity with a combination of dogmatic and devotional elements.

Out of various books translated into English in the early twentieth century two stand out as taking a different direction on the doctrine of purgatory. Both are critical of the reliance on visions or imaginings about purgatory. One is by Joseph Pohle, a former professor of apologetics at the Catholic University of America. His 1917 book entitled *Eschatology (or) The Catholic Doctrine of the Last Things: A Dogmatic Treatise*¹⁶⁶ was translated into English by Arthur Preuss. This was one of a series of books by Pohle on dogmatic theology.

The other book was by another German, Bernhard Bartmann. His *Purgatory: A Book of Christian Comfort* was translated into English in 1936. The translator was Dom Ernest Graf, O.S.B., a key figure in the liturgical movement. Bartmann’s book was intended for a general, but educated, audience.

Joseph Pohle

Pohle divides his work into traditional scholastic categories. The first part addresses the eschatology of man as an individual and the second deals with the eschatology of the human race. The first section begins with the final things: death, particular judgment, heaven, and hell. A fifth chapter is on “purgatory.” Most chapters are centered on “the existence of” and “the nature of” the topic. In comparison with other

¹⁶⁶ By St. Louis and London: B. Herder Book Company. Republished in 1971 Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.

works, Pohle's description could be called "succinct" or "restrained." He frequently distinguished aspects of doctrines that are required for belief from those that are not required.

Pohle defines purgatory as "a state of temporary punishment for those who, departing this life in the grace of God, are not yet entirely free from venial sins or have not yet fully paid the satisfaction due to their transgressions."¹⁶⁷ Pohle notes that "thinking Protestants" recognize the gap in their theology without the doctrine of purgatory.

Pohle names Thomas Aquinas and Robert Bellarmine as key sources. However, in an era when Thomism was dominant, Pohle does not accept Thomas uncritically. On three topics, Pohle either disagrees with Aquinas or cites Bellarmine over Aquinas. One disagreement is that Aquinas had suggested that purgatory was "connected with hell." Pohle states that it can equally be argued that purgatory is connected with heaven because the poor souls will eventually be admitted to heaven. A second disagreement is the nature of purgatory. Pohle identifies the deprivation of the vision of God as the primary pain of purgatory. Because there is "no certainty in these matters", he sees no need to take Aquinas' extreme view that the slightest torture in purgatory is worse than all of the combined tortures on this earth. The third point of contention is when Pohle discusses the issue of whether the souls in purgatory can pray for the living. Pohle sides with Suarez and Bellarmine that the souls can intercede for the living. Here is a third instance in which Pohle disagrees with Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas had felt that the souls were

¹⁶⁷ Joseph Pohle, *Eschatology (or) The Catholic Doctrine of the Last Things* (St. Louis and London: B. Herder Book Company, 1917), 77.

superior to the living in that they could no longer sin, but were inferior in that they were being punished and needed the prayers of others. Pohle replies that asking souls to intercede is a probable aid, and it is possible that God will aid both the dead and the living without the former being aware.

As for the “pain of sense” Pohle admits that theologians tend to accept that it exists. He identifies the source of this concept as the passage from I Cor 3:12 that indicates that one must pass through a purgatorial fire. Among the fathers of the Church, Clement, Origen, and Augustine as well as later fathers seemed to consider this fire to be a figure of speech and not “material fire.” Pohle blames the Scholastics of the Middle Ages for overreaching on this issue. “The value of their teaching is discounted by the fact that they were uncritical, ascribed too much importance to unauthenticated visions and private revelations, and tried to prove the reality of the purgatorial fire from the existence of volcanoes, and so forth.”¹⁶⁸ For these reasons a number of modern theologians reject the existence of a material fire in purgatory.

The souls are cleansed in purgatory through *satisfactio*. Bonaventure had coined this term for those who could not make satisfaction. Since they can no longer actively attain merit, they must passively suffer. The duration of purgatory is a subject of debate. Pohle says that God is merciful and the duration is probably not extremely long. However, God probably assigns punishment according to the guilt of the sin.

Pohle’s final section on purgatory involves “Succoring the Dead.” The teaching that the souls in purgatory can be aided by the Masses, prayers, and good works of the

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 88.

living is based in the doctrine of the Communion of Saints. The “spiritual union of the faithful with one another” is sometimes referred to as the “mystic union of the militant, the triumphant, and the suffering Church of Christ.” The idea that the faithful departed can be aided by the suffrages of the living, Pohle admits, is not well confirmed in Scripture.

He distinguishes between the meritorious and the satisfactory value of good works. Merit involves an increase in sanctifying grace and cannot be transferred. Satisfaction is an expiation of punishment due and may be surrendered for another. Pohle observes that this doctrine supports Pius IX’s approval of “heroic acts of charity.”

The work of Pohle reinforces how little is actually said in the doctrine of purgatory. He bases the teaching in Scripture and Tradition. Pohle has a critical sense of history. He rejects many of the visions and imaginings of the Middle Ages. Pohle uses scholastic categories, but rejects Aquinas’ judgment on several issues. Purgatory is closer to heaven than to hell, but still involves punishment, primarily from the pain of losing the vision of God. Although there is a connection of the living and the dead, there is perhaps less urgency in praying for the dead if purgatory is not as painful or as close to hell as once imagined.

Bernhard Bartmann

Although aimed at a different audience, Bernhard Bartmann’s book would agree with several themes from Pohle. In Ernest Graf’s “Translator’s Note” he admits to leaving out a few pages on “St. Patrick’s Purgatory” for fear of offending Irish readers. He states that “it will be a definite gain if we base our ideas of Purgatory on Scripture and

theology rather than on visions and revelations.” However, Graf warns that Bartmann may be over-critical in his assessment of visionaries. Graf will be cited in a later chapter as one of the leading figures in the liturgical movement.

The subtitle of Bartmann’s book is “A Book of Christian Comfort.” This implies that purgatory is often not understood as a doctrine of comfort. Bartmann finds support for the doctrine of purgatory to be a source of comfort in the prayers of the Church. The new preface for the funeral Mass, the readings, and the Mass for All Souls all gave a message that, in death, life was not ended, but changed, and changed for the better. Bartmann states that this doctrine should be part of the “glad tidings” of salvation promised in the message of Jesus.

Bartmann strongly rejects the view of purgatory as differing only from hell in terms of duration. He blames this negative view of purgatory on the vision-literature of the Middle Ages. An uncritical reading of private revelation and an uncritical acceptance of sources promoted an inaccurate view of purgatory. Bartmann finds the past views of purgatory to be informed by “pagan demonology” and akin to belief in witchcraft. “These things are but instances of mass hysteria. It is high time for our teaching on Purgatory to base itself exclusively on a dogmatic foundation as is prescribed by the Vatican Council for every other dogma.”¹⁶⁹ For support, he refers to a dictum by Thomas Aquinas that in dogmatic theology everything must be viewed from God’s standpoint. He also refers to Aquinas as stating that we should not support eternal truths by bad or inadequate arguments.

¹⁶⁹ Bernhard Bartmann, *Purgatory: A Book of Christian Comfort*, trans. Dom Ernest Graf, O.S.B. (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne Ltd. 1936), xv.

Bartmann states that the doctrine of purgatory arose from three truths. First, God is holy and cannot contact that which is not. Second, the reality of human life is that not all who die in faith have obtained purity or the holiness needed to be in God's presence. Third, the idea of the mystical body of Christ suggested intercession for the departed.

In discussing sources for the doctrine of purgatory, Bartmann cites the Councils of Trent and the Vatican as limiting sources to Scripture and Tradition. Bartmann's analysis of the history of the doctrine warns that even Bellarmine might have been overreaching in his study of the background of the doctrine. By looking for analogies in the teachings of "Jews, Mohammedans, and Pagans", he may have let less subtle minds mix genuine with erroneous teachings.

The person who opened the gates to misinformation in the Middle Ages was Gregory the Great. Since Gregory's time, Bartmann finds three sources to be most frequently mixed with Scripture and Tradition. These are the Jewish Apocrypha on the afterlife; Christian mystical vision literature; and the imaginings of the afterlife from pagan sources. A fourth source in recent times is theosophy and the spiritualistic movement.

Another problematic carry-over from the Middle Ages is the issue of location. Bartmann sees the materialistic concern with the location of purgatory (and hell) as a problem from relying on older sources. He observes that thinkers of the patristic era were very cautious in dealing with this.

In discussing how sin is cleansed in purgatory, Bartmann switches a traditional image of purgatory. The punishment of purgatory must involve repentance and contrition. So "purgatory is no hell-like dungeon – rather it is a hospital where ailing

souls patiently await complete restoration to health.”¹⁷⁰ Bartmann offers another image of purgatory. Because the dead are contrite, they seek to be conformed to God’s will.

“Purgatory is but one sustained act of worship, with all the powers of the soul.”¹⁷¹

In discussing the temporal punishment in purgatory, Bartmann points out that we know neither the amount of punishment nor the standards by which God expiates the punishment. The pain of purgatory is significantly different from the pain of hell because psychologically those in purgatory have hope. Their primary pain is the loss of the vision of God (*poena damni*). This is the pain caused by the loss of the beatific vision. Upon entering eternity the soul would be aware of the attraction of God and be pained by not being able to be in God’s presence immediately.

In a chapter entitled, “How May We Help the Souls in Purgatory?” Bartmann emphasizes that our intercession is never a mechanical process. We intercede with God and it is God’s mercy that allows souls to enter into heaven. Thomas is the key source in this chapter. The Church prays for all of the dead and cannot limit the mercy of God.

Bartmann devotes a chapter to “Misrepresentations and Exaggerations.” The first issue he addresses is that purgatory should not be treated as parallel to hell. This misinterpretation can be found in some post-Tridentine theologians as well as in the thought of many in the Middle Ages. Both Thomas Aquinas and Gregory opined that the pain of purgatory differed only in duration from the pain of purgatory. Bartmann criticizes preachers such as Bishop Keppler¹⁷² for exaggerating the pains of purgatory. To say that the souls in purgatory suffer greater pain than all of the pains of this world

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 126.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 128.

¹⁷² Bishop P.W. Kettler, *The Poor Souls in Purgatory*, trans. Stephen Landolt, ed. Arthur Preuss. (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1923).

taken together has no backing. Bartmann concludes that it is easier to portray the pain of sense, both verbally and visually, than to portray the pain of loss.

The emphasis on the pain of sense can be traced to Augustine. Whereas Origen had identified “fire” as only referring to the final judgment, Augustine argued that fire was for purifying the faithful who had died with sin. Augustine was also countering those (heretical groups) who felt that, since “fire” only occurred on the last day, they might as well “wait it out” (morally speaking). So the whole idea of “pain of the senses” was Augustine’s response to specific concerns of his time.

Another misinterpretation that Bartmann discusses is the meaning of “poor souls.” Among German-speaking Catholics the “poor souls” referred to those souls who were not remembered by their relatives. These souls had been condemned by God so God could not help them, the world had forgotten them so the world could not help them, and they were unable to help themselves. So these souls were considered to be the most in need.

Bartmann corrects this idea by pointing out that the dead have lost nothing spiritually. The souls of the faithful departed cannot sin or be tempted, are on their way to God, and actually have more of God than those who are living. So to call them “poor” sounds inaccurate. He also points out that saying God abandons the souls in purgatory limits God’s mercy. The burden of proof would seem to be on those who say God withholds mercy.

To say that souls are utterly helpless and cannot help themselves is also problematic. The souls can still make supplication to God in purgatory. In fact, the

growing theological opinion, according to Bartmann, seems to be that the dead can pray for the living.

Bartmann rejects other “rigorist” positions. Souls are aware that they are saved. Devils are not torturing the souls in purgatory (a myth portrayed in religious art). God’s justice goes beyond our justice, meaning God uses more mercy than justice.

In discussing the duration of purgatory Bartmann makes a statement that would seem to apply to several related issues. Because the dead are beyond the earthly experience of time, “The only possible answer to this question of duration, and the only one in keeping with truth is, *Silence*.”¹⁷³

Bartmann concludes his work with very positive messages about purgatory. First, he states that, for Catholics experiencing a death with some time for preparation, it is very possible to avoid purgatory. He cites the example of Augustine who did penance at the end of his life. He also cites Aquinas and Trent on the efficacy of Extreme Unction. Even for those who die suddenly, without recourse to the sacrament, it is possible to make an act of contrition.

The final chapter describes the “joys of purgatory.” In addition to the fundamental joy of the thought of God, the soul in purgatory experiences patient endurance, like the hospital patient assured of healing. The soul also experiences faith, hope, and charity.

So Bartmann has presented a purgatory without “indulging the imagination.” Although he does cite Dante, Francis de Sales, and Catherine of Genoa he avoids the

¹⁷³ Ibid., 200.

overly negative imaginings about purgatory. He has minimized the idea of the “pain of sense.” He has supported the idea of praying for the dead but limited the urgency of the practice. Purgatory is definitely closer to heaven than to hell. Those who go through the ordinary processes of penance have nothing to fear. Bartmann has made purgatory “comfortable.”

Salient Points of Pohle and Bartmann

1. Concerning sources of information both authors reject the “narrative imagination” of the Middle Ages as an authentic source of revelation about the doctrine of purgatory. Popular understandings associated with those imagined views were also criticized. A return to the patristic and biblical sources was encouraged.
2. In regard to the “theme” of duration and location, this meant an acknowledgment that we really cannot ground any ideas about the duration of purgatory or the literal location of purgatory in revelation.
3. The nature and purpose of purgatory is more analogous to a healing, or even worship, than punishment.
4. The inhabitants are hopeful. There is prayerful interaction between the souls in purgatory and the living.
5. The doctrine of the Communion of Saints or Mystical Body of Christ supports the practice of praying for the dead. This practice is not a mechanical process. The Church prays to God who bestows mercy on all the members of the Church.
6. Aspects of the theology attributed to Thomas Aquinas proved problematic. Thomas had connected purgatory closer to hell than heaven; overemphasized the “pain of the senses” of purgatory; and had rejected the idea that souls in purgatory

could pray for the living. All of these were challenged. So, theologically, both authors were providing a more nuanced view of neo-Thomism.

7. Purgatory should be a doctrine of comfort and not of fear.

Both books presented a critical view of the doctrine of purgatory. Although these books appeared in the early part of the twentieth century, the message was not universally put into practice. Two later books from France show the continuation of the traditional punitive understanding of purgatory.

Martin Jugie

The French writer, Martin A. Jugie, A.A., wrote a book on purgatory that took a more devotional approach.¹⁷⁴ The book is collected from articles written for the magazine *Croises du Purgatoire*. In the United States, the English translation arrived in 1949, over a decade after Bartmann's book. Much of the book is a re-telling of the Catholic teaching on purgatory. Jugie discusses the Catholic doctrine of purgatory, prayer for the dead, and the "sweet reasonableness of purgatory." Jugie bases much of his exposition on Thomas Aquinas and private revelations. He cautions against overemphasizing that purgatory involves purification. The primary work of purgatory is expiation. If purification is placed before expiation, Jugie fears that this belittles God's charity.

Jugie also is aware that some question the validity of private revelations and visions of purgatory. Why are there more visions of purgatory than heaven or hell? He argues that God permits these "miracles" for two reasons. These arguments are more pastoral than theological. First, because the doctrine of purgatory is primarily consoling,

¹⁷⁴ Martin A. Jugie A.A. *Purgatory and the Means to Avoid It*. Translated from the Seventh Edition by Malachy Gerard Carroll. (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1949).

it is easy to become lukewarm in striving for heaven. Believers can allow the debt of sin to build up. So, the fear resulting from these visions inspires a life of mortification and perfection.

Second, it is easy to forget the sufferings of the dead. Apparitions of souls in purgatory are a great way to increase the awareness of the sufferings of the dead. These visits evoke charity for those in purgatory and motivate believers to act on behalf of the dead.

In order to avoid purgatory, Jugie advises a life of sacraments. Baptism, frequent confession, frequent communion, and extreme unction are advocated. Following the teaching of Benedict XV, Jugie also recommends a “Mass of the Living” as more effective than a “Mass of the Dead.” Further, Jugie recommends attitudes such as a spirit of penance, acceptance of suffering, detachment from earthly things, constant remembrance of the last things, and asking for one’s purgatory on earth.

In the final section of the book, Jugie discusses “certain excellent acts of charity.” These are devotions for the souls in purgatory. Jugie advocates an “Apostolate of Purgatory” because praying for the souls in purgatory is more important than praying for sinners. He recommends praying for the “most deserted souls”, including the vast number of pagans who have no one to rescue them. Jugie cites the revelation of the Marian apparition at Fatima as supporting this.

Jugie also recommends the Heroic Act as worthwhile. He considers that the individual’s generosity will be rewarded by the mercy of God. An even more intense variation of the Heroic Act is to offer oneself as a victim for others. This involves asking God to place the suffering of others on us. This can include the suffering of the souls in

purgatory. St. Catherine of Siena and Gemma Galgani who had died in 1903 and been beatified in 1940 were presented as examples. Jugie says that these devotions are able to be understood as within the Communion of Saints.

Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange

One of the main champions of neo-Thomism was the Dominican, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange. An English version of his book entitled *Life Everlasting* was published in 1952¹⁷⁵. The book is based on the four last things: death, judgment, heaven, and hell. Garrigou-Lagrange combines death and judgment into one section and adds two other sections. The opening section is entitled “Soul Immensity in Our Present Life” and the fourth section is on “Purgatory.”

While the book’s topic is eschatology, there is a strong emphasis on mystical writings. His concept of “soul immensity” is derived from the writings of mystics such as Tauler and Louis de Blois. He connects this idea of the great depth and height of the soul with Thomas’ writings on the will. Purgatory fits into this concept by considering the purgatorial sufferings of this life.

Garrigou-Lagrange considers John of the Cross’ “Dark Night of the Soul” to be a “Purgatory before death.” The trials and sufferings of this life are a way of breaking through the superficial attachments and routines that keep us from God. Following the thought of John of the Cross, Garrigou-Lagrange says that the purgatory before death involves a passive purification of both the senses and the spirit. The purification of the senses involves the loss of consolations on which we have depended. Loss of friends, financial difficulties, illness, or family trials can accompany this first stage.

¹⁷⁵ Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange OP, *Life Everlasting*, trans. Patrick Cummins OSB. (St. Louis and London: B. Herder Book Co., 1952; 2nd printing, 1956).

Once the individual is relying only on knowledge, the purification of the spirit begins. This is a purification of motivations. The individual learns humility, faith, hope, and love. Saints such as Theresa of the Infant Jesus, Vincent de Paul, and Paul of the Cross exemplify this process. This purgatory before death leads to a “mystic death” of egoism and spiritual pride. Garrigou-Lagrange prescribes this purgatory before death as what the world needs today. This infusion of otherworldly connection is needed more than worldly change.

What will reconvert the world of today? Only a constellation of saints can lead the masses back to Christ and the Church. Mere democratic aspirations, as conceived by Lamennais and others, are not sufficient. There is need of the love of a Vincent de Paul if we would reach the depths of the modern soul. Everlasting life must again become, not a mere word, but an experienced reality.¹⁷⁶

Garrigou-Lagrange seems to yearn for a return to a monarchical form of government. In addition to the above dismissal of democracy, he also elevates Louis XVI as an exemplar of someone who experiences the purification of the senses.

In his section on purgatory, Garrigou-Lagrange follows a traditional outline. He starts with arguing against the errors of the Protestants. After quoting the Council of Trent he cites Thomas, Maccabees, Matthew’s passage about the sin against the Holy Spirit, and I Corinthians about purifying fire. He divides the tradition into the early times, focused on prayers for the dead, and the times after Augustine, focused on the actual purification taking place after death.

Arguments of appropriateness are offered to those who are not believers. Plato is quoted with a description of those having to undergo pain to expiate sins after death. Theological reasons are given such as the need to rid the soul of venial sin or the remains

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 36.

of sin. He agrees with the theologians who have said that the pain of sense exists as well as the pain of deprivation. Garrigou-Lagrance concludes this section with an appeal for charity to the poor souls.

Salient Points of Jugie and Garrigou-LaGrange

1. Both rely on Thomistic sources and on historically recent (since the Medieval period) private revelations – Marian apparitions and mystical experiences.
2. The location of purgatory and the duration of time in purgatory are deduced from mystical visions. Agreeing with what was understood to be the teaching of Thomas, they envisioned purgatory closer to hell than heaven, and duration depends on the expiation required.
3. Purgatory is not only about purification; it also involves expiation. Both emphasize the “pain of sense” in purgatory. They both stress the importance of penitence and the need to pray for the dead. This corresponds with an image of purgatory as prison.
4. The inhabitants of purgatory seek earthly assistance to relieve their suffering. They cannot give aid to those on earth.
5. A wide variety of methods are encouraged to help the dead. Offering one’s own sufferings is greatly admired. Both see purgatory as a way of shaping individual personality and spirituality in this life. It is a gift to receive one’s purgative suffering in this life. They accept fear as a motive in doing this.
6. Theologically, they situate the doctrine of purgatory with the “last things.” They accept teaching that had been attributed to Thomas such as the pain of purgatory and the inability of those in purgatory to assist the living.

7. Fear is a valuable way to lead the faithful to avoid purgatory.

Jugie and Garrigou-Lagrange were published in the United States after World War II. However, the approach of Pohle and Bartmann would eventually surface as the predominant approach to purgatory. Also after the war, the following authors were published who give examples of mid-twentieth century interpretations that fall more in line with Pohle and Bartmann.

Romano Guardini

A very different understanding of purgatory is presented in Romano Guardini's *The Last Things*. Originally written in 1940, the translation of the German second edition was published in the United States in 1954.¹⁷⁷ Guardini discusses “purification after death” with some borrowing from depth psychology. He begins with exploring the complexity of human intention. Because of the complex intentions a pure intention is difficult.

One example he uses is truth-telling. Not only does one have to tell accurate information, one has to tell it in a way that does not mislead the hearer or support a lie to oneself. In addition to doing good things, such as telling the truth, one also has to be good. This requires having pure intentions in many aspects of life. At the moment of death few have achieved this.

After death, the one thing an individual can do is suffer. This suffering is the process of contrition for past wrong-doing. Many of the things for which we require

¹⁷⁷ Romano Guardini, *The Last Things: Concerning Death, Purification after death, Resurrection, judgment, and Eternity*, trans. Charlotte E. Forsyth and Grace B. Branham (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965; original copyright Pantheon Books, 1954).

contrition are unconscious. Guardini's purgatory sounds very much like psychological therapy.

Yves Congar

Congar situates purgatory within the category of salvation. When he is writing¹⁷⁸, in the 1950's, the subject of "salvation" had not been adequately addressed in recent years. Congar notes that atheism had challenged views of God and afterlife. A simple definition for salvation such as "avoiding the wrath of God and my soul entering into heaven" seems unrelated to the real questions of the day. Congar interprets the contemporary mood as needing to combine an understanding of salvation as "moving beyond the world" with an understanding of "the world fulfilling itself." Congar also notes that salvation is not just for the soul, it is also for the body. Salvation is not just for individuals, we hope for total, cosmic salvation.

Congar notes the importance of separating our images of purgatory from the essential doctrine. He is shocked by the images of purgatory as a torture chamber. "Nonsense" is what Congar calls F.X. Schouppe's calculation of days in purgatory prison. Congar is much more comfortable with Catherine of Genoa's image of purgatory as the purifying work of a loving God.

Side stepping entangled controversies over Scripture, Congar interprets passages from Maccabees and I Corinthians in the symbolic manner of the Church Fathers. Judas Maccabees offers an indication that God wants us to pray for the dead. Although Paul is

¹⁷⁸ Yves Congar, *The Wide World My Parish: Salvation and its Problems*, trans. Donald Attwater (Baltimore, Maryland: Helicon Press, 1961).

not speaking about purgatory, “the Church’s teaching can easily be written into his words and the ideas they suggest.”¹⁷⁹

Purgatory involves making satisfaction for sin. While God forgives our sin, we must act in a way that accepts the forgiveness. The idea is not so much about punishment as taking action to show that we are reconciled. Congar also notes that individuals can help one another in this process. This is one meaning of the communion of saints.

The key idea behind purgatory is “cleansing.” Fire is the biblical image used to speak of the detachments necessary for salvation. Referring to both Origen and Catherine, Congar mentions the idea of “mystical purifications.” These bring suffering, but are loved by those who endure them because the “purification” brings them closer to God.

One final image is offered from Origen and other Eastern thinkers. Purgatory could be compared to the tollbooths encountered by travelers. As they journey, travelers are relieved of their excess baggage.

Salient Points from Guardini and Congar

1. There is a search for new metaphors for purgatory. Bartmann had compared purgatory to a hospital, Guardini to psychological depth therapy, and Congar to tollbooths.
2. By interpreting purgatory under the category of salvation, Congar widens the understanding of purgatory to be about more than individuals.
3. Congar points out the need to separate essential doctrine from the images that accompany them. Guardini is implicitly doing this by adopting a new image for purgatory.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., page 64.

Themes

Five recurring themes in the history of purgatory were listed in the beginning of chapter one. These can act as a measure of the changes in the doctrine of purgatory.

The nature of purgatory shifted to an emphasis on purification over punishment. New ways of imagining purgatory were expressed. In the twentieth century the issue of “fire” became non-existent. Certainly purgatory had no physical location, and its imaginative location was closer to heaven than to hell. A humbler approach to speaking about the afterlife developed.

The issue of time in purgatory became “nonsense.” In an age when physicists questioned the traditional understanding of time, the image of years in eternity seemed incongruous. However, purgatory was still associated with death more than Final Judgment. Most theologians seemed to consider purification to be a process beginning in this life.

The inhabitants of purgatory became less defined. Catherine’s image of being consumed by the love of God has been used by many. This image implies a passive stance toward God.

The connection of the living and the dead was not well specified in the mid-twentieth century. The communion of saints suggested the usefulness of praying for the dead, but no reciprocity. Mid-twentieth century theology did not accept visits from or to purgatory.

The interest in purgatory was connected with practices of praying for the dead and integration into the liturgies. The U.S. Catholic periodicals of the twentieth century

trace changes that occur in practices. The next chapter will review some of the pertinent changes in practice.

By mid-century, for many, the recurring themes seemed irrelevant. The focus of morality was shifting from sin to reconciliation; eschatology shifted from the final things to the Kingdom of God; soteriology shifted from individual salvation to social justice; anthropology from the soul in a body to the body-spirit; and spirituality from penitence to psychology. Theologically, purgatory was disappearing behind larger issues.

Also, the “disappearance of purgatory” by 1960 involved a change in how the doctrine was imagined. By basing theology in Scripture and Tradition, and avoiding many of the private revelations, purgatory could no longer be imagined in the vivid and horrific ways of the past.

CHAPTER 3
PERIODICALS ON PURGATORY 1:
LITURGICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND DEVOTIONAL PRACTICES

The key phenomenon being explored in this dissertation has been termed the “disappearance of purgatory.” Because this phenomenon occurred in the latter half of the twentieth century, the remaining chapters will concentrate on the time immediately preceding this, the early and mid-twentieth century. Chapters One and Two gave a survey of the historical background of the concept of purgatory. Five themes were traced (the nature of purgatory; time; inhabitants; connections with this world; and associated practices) over the course of several time periods. We have seen that by the mid-twentieth century the interpretations of these themes had greatly changed. The themes themselves were shifting as scholastic categories were being morphed by more personalist and biblical understandings.

Throughout the first chapters the sources for the doctrine of purgatory were also grouped into five categories (theological reflection; narratives; practices; official teaching; and popular understandings). Chapter Two concluded with significant theological reflections found in English-language books published in the early and mid-twentieth century. The final section showed the theological tensions and emerging understanding of purgatory in the twentieth century. Another source, official Church

teaching, was shown to be expressed by neo-scholastic concepts during this period. The current chapter will cover the same time period as the final section of Chapter 2 (early through mid-twentieth century) but will focus on the liturgical and devotional practices as presented in Catholic periodicals. The change in how purgatory was imagined throughout the devotions and practices could be characterized as a shift from Good Friday to Easter Sunday.

Practices

“Practices associated with purgatory” was both one of the five themes and one of the five sources. It should be evident that practices are essential to understanding the doctrine of purgatory. The doctrine is founded in the practices of first century Judaism and early Christianity. As the doctrine became more defined, the associated practices became more complex. An important aspect of the Reformation period can be interpreted as an attempt to reform corrupt practices associated with purgatory escalating into a rejection of the doctrine and any practices associated with purgatory. Because of the volume of information within Catholic periodicals on practices, the theme/source will merit its own chapter. The next chapter will focus on church teaching, narratives, popular understandings, and theology as presented in the periodicals of the twentieth century.

Doctrines are not abstract ideas, but are embedded within human life. The doctrine and the practices shape one another. Alasdair MacIntyre’s seminal work on moral theory provided the basis for practice-oriented thinking. MacIntyre retrieved Aristotlean teleological and virtue-based philosophy as a remedy to the moral confusion

of the modern era. Virtues operate within a context of practices. When considering purgatory, the central practice which seem to connect to this doctrine is remembering and praying for the dead.

Building on MacIntyre's work, Craig Dykstra and Dorothy Bass have suggested ways of considering "practices" from a theological position.¹⁸⁰ These authors find the concept useful as a way of studying what it means to live a Christian way of life. The "Christian way of life" is embodied in ordinary activities of everyday life. Focusing on an entire "way of life" may be too broad a concept for fruitful study and focusing on individual activities may be too narrow.

"Practices" also offer a way to combine individual activities and beliefs. Examples of Christian practices include hospitality, keeping the Sabbath, discernment, shaping communities, forgiveness, and dying well. Dykstra and Bass define Christian practices as "things Christian people do together over time to address fundamental human needs in response to and in light of God's active presence for the life of the world."¹⁸¹

This definition adds a sense of God's presence to MacIntyre's philosophically based definition. In explaining the meaning of their definition, Dykstra and Bass' acknowledge their debt to MacIntyre. They offer four characteristics of Christian practices:

1. Christian practices address fundamental human needs and conditions.
2. Christian practices involve a deep knowing and awareness of God and creation.

¹⁸⁰ Craig Dykstra and Dorothy C. Bass, "A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices," in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 13-32.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. p. 18.

3. Christian practices are social and historical.
4. Christian practices share in the mysterious dynamic of fall and redemption, sin and grace.¹⁸²

If purgatory is viewed as a practice of remembering the dead, then this description fits well. Dykstra and Bass suggest one other insight that may prove helpful in exploring purgatory. Practices can become ways of trying to gain control. Without the insight of life as grace, practices can become corrupted. Theologically, God is the one who heals, makes whole, who saves. The human tendency to seek mastery or control can lead practices away from their original purpose.

Robert Schreiter, one of the few theologians to directly address the phenomenon of purgatory's "disappearance", gives much of the credit for the phenomenon to changing liturgical practices.¹⁸³ He points to changes in funeral liturgies, the sacrament of anointing of the sick, and the sacrament of reconciliation. Schreiter notes that it is difficult to distinguish "causes" and "symptoms" of phenomena such as the diminishment of the notion of purgatory. He expresses a main contention of this dissertation, that the "disappearance of purgatory" is not so much a change in doctrine as a change in imagination. People's religious imaginations are strongly shaped by their religious practices. So certainly Schreiter is correct that liturgical change was a major contributor to the diminished attention to the doctrine of purgatory. This dissertation will expand on Schreiter's observation using Catholic periodicals as a source. In examining these

¹⁸² Ibid., pp. 22-27.

¹⁸³ Robert J. Schreiter, C.P.P.S. "Purgatory: In Quest of an Image" *Chicago Studies*, 24no.2 (August 1985): 167-179. The periodical was primarily written for priests to deal with practical issues in the wake of Vatican II. So, his approach was less strictly doctrinal than pastoral.

articles we will include other practices that were both initiated and ended in the twentieth century.

U.S. Catholic Periodicals

In the twentieth century periodicals in the United States became a significant form of communication for U.S. Catholics. These publications brought all five sources about purgatory and related issues into the homes of American Catholics. So U.S. Catholic periodicals can serve as a window into the way U.S. Catholics understood purgatory and the relation with the dead in the twentieth century.¹⁸⁴ By using periodicals we can also chronicle the changes over time in the understanding of and practices connected to the doctrine of purgatory.

During the nineteenth century the newspaper was the predominant means of print communication for American Catholics. In the twentieth century, magazines would supplant newspapers as the preferred means of print communication for Catholics. In 1880 forty-six Catholic newspapers and ten Catholic magazines existed; in 1900, seventy-three newspapers and eighty-two magazines existed. The magazines were generally Catholic versions of secular or Protestant publications.¹⁸⁵ Often the intended audience was the expanding Catholic middle class and the content centered on family concerns and religious devotions. Whereas newspapers were frequently published by

¹⁸⁴ Robert Orsi's *Thank You, St. Jude* is an exemplary model of how periodicals can be used as tool for historical, theological, and anthropological analysis.

¹⁸⁵ Una M. Cadegan, "Running the Ancient Ark by Steam: Catholic Publishing," Chapter 20, in *A History of the Book in America*, ed. David G. Hall, vol. 4, *Print in Motion: The Expansion of Publishing and Reading in the United States, 1880-1940*, ed. Carl F. Kaestle and Janice A. Radway. (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2009):395.

dioceses, the magazines were usually published by religious orders as a part of their mission.

In 1908 the U.S. was removed from being considered mission territory. This combined with U.S. Catholics involved in World War I signaled entrance into the mainstream of American society. The focus of Catholic publishing shifted from “protection of an immigrant faith to a conscious awareness of the varying needs of a maturing community.”¹⁸⁶ Mimicking trends in secular and Protestant publishing, Catholic magazines became more professionally produced. A Catholic news service was established, and Catholic colleges offered courses in journalism. “The Catholic press adopted increasingly modern methods to achieve seemingly premodern goals.”¹⁸⁷

Some insights can be gained by simply observing the number of articles over time. In tracing the entries listed under “Purgatory” in the *Catholic Periodical Index*, some patterns emerge. From the 1930’s through the 1950’s there were an average of five articles written per year about Purgatory. Frequently there were eight or more articles. Prior to the 1930’s there was a greater number of articles published on the topic of purgatory. In the early 1960’s the subject decreased as a topic of discussion. In the years 1965 through 1972 (volumes 14, 15, and 16), for the topic “purgatory,” the *Catholic Periodical and Literature Index* lists no articles in American publications. Volume 14 does not even have “purgatory” listed as a topic. The volume immediately prior lists only two entries. Throughout the remainder of the 1970’s only two entries are listed each year. This sudden decline in popular and scholarly interest defines what has been referred to as “the disappearance of purgatory.”

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 402.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 403.

Another pattern is the disproportionate number of articles about Purgatory published in November. From the beginning of the century until the early 1960's it was a given that many Catholic periodicals would run an article or at least a "reminder" for the November issue. November was the month for remembering the dead. All Souls' Day was November 2, but the entire month was focused on ways of helping the poor souls in purgatory. The tradition begun by the monastery at Cluny continued into the twentieth century. The November articles suggest a simple methodology. By surveying the articles of particular magazines in November, some insights may be gained about the portrayal of Purgatory over time. This chapter will present a summary and analysis of the articles concerning practices and devotions connected with purgatory. The next chapter will look at other writings from Catholic periodicals concerning purgatory.

The "disappearance" of purgatory can be established near 1960. After that time there is a dramatic decline of attention given to purgatory. Almost no articles are written on the topic over the next several decades. Coincidentally 1960 is also the year of the election of John F. Kennedy. In many narratives of U.S. Catholic history, this marks the acceptance of Catholics into U.S. society and symbolizes the assimilation of Catholics into American culture.

Naming a beginning point for our study is a bit more arbitrary. There is not a corresponding "appearance" of purgatory in the United States. Admittedly, the devotional revolution of the nineteenth century introduced a number of practices connected with purgatory. Periodicals did not become a widespread means of communication until the twentieth century. In 1909 the Jesuit periodical *Sacred Heart Messenger* took on a new name, *America*, symbolizing its mission to engage U.S. society

with Catholic values. In the previous year, the United States was removed from being considered a mission area for the Catholic Church. So, symbolically this time represents the social acceptance and socioeconomic rise of Catholics in the United States. The 51 years from 1909 to 1960 represent a change in American Catholic identity and in U.S. Catholic publications. These dates will also be mentioned in a later section of this chapter as significant to the liturgical movement.

By surveying several periodicals we can view a spectrum of perspectives addressed to U.S. Catholics in the early and middle decades of the twentieth century. The periodicals selected can be divided into four groups according to purpose and audience. They also tend to vary in number of articles dedicated to topics connected to Purgatory. The periodicals intended for predominantly clerical audiences included *Homiletics and Pastoral Review (HPR)* and *Ecclesiastical Review/ American Ecclesiastical Review (ER/ AER)*. These primarily addressed the needs of diocesan clergy. October and November volumes of these periodicals frequently contained sermons for All Souls' Day and to encourage prayers for the dead during the month of November. From 1909 to 1960 *Ecclesiastical Review/ American Ecclesiastical Review* published 47 pieces on Purgatory or All Souls' Day. Close to half of these were brief statements or clarifications of Vatican regulations relating to the practices of All Souls Day. In the same time period *Homiletics and Pastoral Review* also presented about 8 of the "Vatican regulations" columns, but also printed 15 articles and 25 sermons on the topics.

Although *Oratre Fratres/ Worship (OF/W)* was also intended for a predominantly clerical audience, it had a specialized topic and reforming spirit that distinguished it from the other clerical publications. On occasion lay contributors were published in OF/W.

OF/W was edited and published by members of the Benedictine order from the monastery at Collegeville, Minnesota. The fact that the name of the periodical changed from a Latin, male-oriented title to an English, gender-neutral title indicates the focus on reform. *Oratre Fratres/ Worship* began in 1927. During the next 23 years, it published 21 articles related to purgatory.

Ave Maria (AM) was intended for the Catholic laity. There were sections of the magazine that were intended for children as well as adults. This was a devotional weekly published by the Holy Cross priests. During the 51 years of this study, *Ave Maria* presented 83 articles connected with topics related to purgatory. Some of these were poems and some were two paragraph reminders to pray for the dead, but this was still a significant amount. Similar in audience and intention was *Liguorian*. This devotional, family oriented Catholic publication published by the Redemptorist order. The *Liguorian* especially was originally intended as an extension of parish missions that had been preached by members of the Redemptorist order. *Liguorian* did not begin publishing nationally until 1926. Between that time and 1960, the Redemptorist periodical printed 57 articles on purgatory themes.¹⁸⁸

America was and is intended for an educated Catholic audience that was both lay and clerical. Although some articles and columns were spiritual or devotional, the main purpose was having Catholics engage the American society and culture. So *America* has been more focused on political and social issues than the other periodicals. It is published by the Jesuits. *America* only presented 14 “November” articles in the 51 year span, but the articles differed significantly from one another.

¹⁸⁸ Although not studied as systematically as the other periodicals, *Sign* magazine, by the Precious Blood order, also fits in this category and will be referenced occasionally.

Overview of the Liturgical Movement

Even prior to Vatican II, the twentieth century changes in liturgy and related areas were vast. The office and breviary were changed under Pius X. The liturgical calendar was studied and re-worked. Canon Law was revised. The age of first communion was lowered and frequent communion was encouraged. The sacraments of Confession and Extreme Unction were being reassessed. In the United States *Oratres Fratres/ Worship* chronicled major changes in the liturgy. The liturgical movement retrieved the centrality of Eucharist, the active participation of the people in the liturgy, and a connection of liturgy with the issues of the contemporary world. Behind these changes were the renewed understanding of the Church as the Mystical Body and a historical perspective that sought to retrieve the life of the Church prior to the time of Trent and the Middle Ages. Accompanying these liturgical changes was an emphasis on Catholic Action. The pastoral focus for Catholics shifted from the afterlife to the here and now. The concept of purgatory and the practice of praying for the dead were being marginalized in the official liturgies.

Pope Pius X is remembered as having an ambivalent role in Catholic intellectual life. Pius both suppressed theological inquiry and initiated liturgical reform. In 1907 Pius X condemned Modernism, thus stifling Catholic theological ferment over the next several decades. Only two years later, in 1909, he also inaugurated the reform of the breviary and liturgy. During his reign the Code of Canon Law was also revised. In the first half of the twentieth century, the leaders of the liturgical movement in the United States often

referred to fulfilling the reform begun by Pius X. Paradoxically the reign of Pius X was also a time of repressive stifling of dialogue with modern intellectual currents.¹⁸⁹

The liturgical movement challenged the devotional practices that had become widespread in the nineteenth century. Devotional practices arising from the laity are more difficult to assess, but there was certainly an abundance of ways to give spiritual help to the dead. Writings about popular devotions¹⁹⁰ during November continued into the 1950's. For most Catholics in the U.S., there was little awareness of the significant theological and liturgical movements taking place. What was suppressed and what was encouraged would come to fruition several decades later. Both the suppressed theological ideas and the encouraged liturgical reform would be expressed in a way that shattered and re-worked the imagination of many Catholics at Vatican II.

The liturgical changes influencing the understanding of purgatory and communion with the dead were focused on the understanding of the sacrament of Extreme Unction, the funeral rites, and the church's liturgical calendar. From 1909 to 1926 the Catholic periodicals addressed to the clergy occasionally reported on Vatican pronouncements about revisions to the liturgy of the hours. Occasionally an historical perspective was taken toward the Mass. Overall the popular connection with the liturgical movement was limited. Far more popular (as judged by frequency of articles) were the variety of practices to win souls from purgatory.

¹⁸⁹ See R. Scott Appleby, *"Church and Age Unite": The Modernist Impulse in American Catholicism*. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992); "Recent Studies of Modernism" *U.S. Catholic Historian*, 20 no.3(Summer, 2002); or Patrick W. Carey *The Roman Catholics in America* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1996); et al.

¹⁹⁰ The term "popular" can have different meanings. In this dissertation, it will refer to practices and ideas arising from non-hierarchical sources. At times, these "popular" practices and ideas are accepted and encouraged by Church authorities.

In 1926 *Oratre Fratres* was first published. This periodical would serve as the main bulletin of the liturgical movement in the U.S. The approach of OF was a striking contrast to the other Catholic periodicals of the time. Whereas there was a sense of excitement and discovery and reform in the writings of OF, the other periodicals often continued with a polemical tone toward Protestants and a scolding tone about the obligation to assist the poor souls. Purgatory is rarely mentioned directly in OF.

It is difficult to comprehend the scope of changes brought by Virgil Michel and other pioneers of the liturgical movement. The Catholic Mass of a century ago would be an almost incomprehensible experience to Catholics today. The clergy-centered liturgy and Latin language channeled the laity into a passive role within the Mass. The people were to hear the Mass, not participate. People would say the rosary or other private devotions as a means of some spiritual agency.

The liturgical movement promoted active participation in the liturgy. Congregational singing, response, and vernacular language were aspects of this active participation. The theological basis of this movement was the Mystical Body of Christ. The liturgical movement of the 1920's and 1930's was very closely integrated with a sense of social justice. Concerns seemed to shift from praying for those who were suffering in purgatory to helping those who were suffering materially.¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ Keith F Pecklers, *The Unread Vision: The Liturgical Movement in the United States of America, 1926-1955* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998).

U.S. Catholic religious life and November at the turn of the century¹⁹²

In the previous chapter the rise of a devotional style of Catholicism in the nineteenth century was noted. Devotionalism had been encouraged by initiatives to assert papal authority by granting indulgences to various practices. This along with the preaching of parish mission revivals and subsequent confraternities made praying for those in purgatory a common aspect of U.S. Catholicism in the early twentieth century. We have already mentioned Anne Taves' study which catalogued devotions from prayer books of the nineteenth century. Purgatory and prayers for the dead were an aspect of this movement. November was the month set aside for this.

So, for Catholics the practice of praying for the dead was incorporated into the liturgical calendar. Thomas E. Wangler describes a triad of liturgical, devotional, and civic calendars which overlap in fashioning the religious life of Bostonian Catholics in the years of Cardinal O'Connell's governance (1907-1944). A century earlier the Catholics of Boston, and the United States, had centered their religious life only on Sunday worship. Model Catholics would attend High Mass on Sunday morning, go home for a meal, and return in the late afternoon for Vespers and Benediction. These practices followed the themes of the liturgical year.

In the mid-1800's, as we have seen, the devotional revolution swept through the Catholic Church. Prayer books, catechisms, and even the manual of the 1889 Third Plenary Council of Baltimore added devotions such as the Way of the Cross, novenas, and litanies to saints. These led to a "devotional calendar." May and October were the months dedicated to devotions to Mary. First Fridays were dedicated to the Sacred Heart.

¹⁹² Thomas E. Wangler, "Catholic Religious Life in Boston in the Era of Cardinal O'Connell," in *Catholic Boston: Studies in Religion and Community, 1870-1970*, ed. Robert E. Sullivan and James M. O'Toole, (Boston: Roman Catholic Archbishop of Boston, 1985).

Although Wangler does not explicitly mention November, it seems logical that the devotional calendar would associate November with prayers for the dead. As with other months of the devotional calendar, November had obligations associated with it. The identification of November as the month dedicated to prayers for the dead gives a basis to our study of periodicals published in this month.

The third calendar, centered on civic holidays, emerged with the addition of holidays such as Thanksgiving, Washington's Birthday, and Columbus Day. The three calendars combined into an integrated calendar of liturgical, devotional, and civic memorials and practices.

These calendars represented several forms of Catholicism co-existing. Wangler finds that these styles of Catholicism operated under two major sets of symbols. The first was the life of Jesus, which was interpreted in a self- and world-denying way. The second was the heavenly court with its saints and angels, what Anne Taves had termed "The Household of Faith." These two symbols represented an origin and a final destination for sacred history and all of Christian life. At the Mass these symbols were joined together. Catholics would unite with Christ and also partake in the heavenly communion. By praying at Mass, Catholics had a sense of themselves worshipping Christ with the heavenly hosts. Wangler shows how the symbols for both the life of Christ and the eschatological communion with saints and angels were integrated in the décor of churches built in the O'Connell era.

The devotional calendar was more clearly associated with the second symbol connected with eschatological communion. Although the devotional practices would continue into the middle of the twentieth century the supporting symbol in church

artwork would gradually decline in favor of a Eucharistic Christ. Wangler attributes the decline of the eschatological symbol to the “streamlining” of the descriptions of the heavenly court in the Baltimore Catechism and the emphasis by Pope Pius X on early and frequent communion.

So Wangler portrays a Catholicism moving away from an eschatological symbolism in its liturgical practices from the beginning to the middle of the twentieth century. Although he never mentions All Souls’ Day, the movement away from images of the heavenly court signifies a moving away from an interest in afterlife, including purgatory.

Continuity: The Memento of the Dead¹⁹³

Before delving into some of the devotional, sacramental, and liturgical changes of the twentieth century, it may be worthwhile to realize that not all had changed. Although there is only one article devoted to the topic, it is worth mentioning a common and continuous prayer by the Catholic Church. Imbedded within every Eucharistic prayer at every Mass is a prayer for the dead, the faithful departed. A 1924 article reflects on the lines:

*Memento etiam, Domine, famulorum famularumque tuarum qui nos
praecesserunt cum signo fidei, et dormiunt in somno pacis. In
Christo quiescentibus, locum refrigerii, lucis et pacis.*

These lines reflect the practice of praying for the dead. The author traces the text from II Maccabees; John Chrysostum’s attribution of prayer for the dead to the apostles; Augustine’s prayers for Monica; and Gregory’s story of a priest visited by a spirit of a dead person in need of prayer. Although the prayer does not mention purgatory

¹⁹³ The Benedictine Monks of Buckfast Abbey “Liturgical Notes for the Month: The Mass (continued) – The Memento of the Dead” *HPR*, 24 no. 5(February 1924) : 483-488.

specifically, the author from Buckfast Abbey makes the connection. “In our daily Mass power is given to us to empty Purgatory and open the gates of the heavenly mansions.”¹⁹⁴

In the same article the author makes a clear distinction between the public and private prayer of the priest.

As the official prayer of the Church, the priest can only pray publicly for those who have died marked with the sign of faith.

As a private person, however, he may mention the names of any of his friends, whether they were in visible communion with the Church or not. It is, as a matter of fact, our bounden duty not to exclude anyone from our personal, private supplications – though it would not be lawful to mention, at the altar, the name of one who has been under a sentence of excommunication and has died unrepentant or unabsolved.¹⁹⁵

This remembrance of the dead in the Eucharistic prayer has been a practice of the Church since the times of the Roman persecutions. The theological context of this prayer has changed dramatically over the decades since 1924. Asking God to welcome the “faithful departed” to a “place of refreshment, light, and peace” no longer equates with the goal to “empty purgatory.” However, the sense of communion with and remembrance of the dead continues to be an aspect of the central prayer of the Church.

Changes for Clerical Spirituality: Breviary¹⁹⁶

In 1908 the four volume revised breviary was published. This was the first major revision since 1568. The Council of Trent and Pope Pius V had revised and standardized

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 486.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 485. An interesting observation from an article that includes a quote from George Tyrell’s *Nova et Vetera*.

¹⁹⁶ “Studies and Conferences: The New Rubrics of the Breviary,” *Ecclesiastical Review* 56 no. 3 (March 1912): 338-350 and “New Decrees and Decisions of the Holy Father and the Roman Congregations,” *HPR* 12, no.5 (February 1912): 463-464.

breviaries which differed from diocese to diocese. In 1911 the English version of the common breviary was published followed by rubrics for its usage. Some of the major changes included the order of the Psalms, the revision of the Vulgate, and the recitation to be shorter and more intelligible. Feasts were given rankings and re-organized.

“Commemoration of All Souls” now used only the Office and Mass of the Dead to replace the Office and Mass of the day. If November 2 fell on a Sunday, then the Commemoration of the Dead was observed on the following day. In previous centuries Jansenistic influences on the breviary had been expunged, but there still remained a strong emphasis on prayers for the dead. The early twentieth century revision clarified and simplified the office. In doing so, some of the extraneous prayers for the dead were eliminated. This may have been a change fairly invisible to lay Catholics, but the change would be felt by vowed religious and clergy. The changes reduced the sense of obligation to constantly pray for the dead.

November devotional practices: All Souls’ Day Masses, *Toties Quoties* indulgences, Visiting cemeteries, and Heroic Acts

Recent studies have examined the history of devotional practices¹⁹⁷. In the United States, practices such as the sacrament of Confession, veneration of saints, fasting, and Eucharistic devotions distinguished Catholics from their Christian neighbors throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. None of the studies have focused

¹⁹⁷ James M. O’Toole, ed. *Habits of Devotion: Catholic Religious Practice in Twentieth Century America*. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004); Joseph P. Chinnici, and Angelyn Dries, ed.. *Prayer and Practice in the American Catholic Community* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2000); Joseph P Chinnici, OFM, *Living Stones: the History and Structure of Catholic Spiritual Life in the United States*. (New York: Macmillan, 1989); James P. McCartin, *Prayers of the Faithful: The Shifting Spiritual Life of American Catholics* (Cambrdge, Massachsetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2010).

explicitly on practices concerning purgatory or communion with the dead. As was presented in Chapter One, the very doctrine of purgatory grew out of the practice of praying for the dead. The phrase, *lex orandi lex credendi*, indicates the symbiotic relationship between prayer and belief. To examine how the belief in purgatory diminished, it is necessary to examine how the practices associated with that belief changed.

As with other studies of the history of religious practices, there are difficulties with research. Most of these practices have both a public and a private dimension. The actual private dimension is rarely documented and therefore difficult to assess. Catholic periodicals can illuminate the public dimension and the intended private dimension.

Out of the articles connected with purgatory, the largest number was devoted to practices. Within these articles associated with practices, the lengthiest articles dealt with changes in the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick¹⁹⁸ as well as funeral liturgies. These articles appeared primarily in the periodicals intended for clergy (*Ecclesiastical Review*, *Homiletics and Pastoral Review*, *Oratio Fratres/ Worship*) Besides these sacramentally and liturgically oriented articles, however, the most frequent articles in November were reminders about devotions to free souls from purgatory. This was especially true of the periodicals aimed at a lay audience and having a devotional bent (*Ave Maria*, *Liguorian*, *Sign*). The majority of the devotionally oriented articles fit within a time from 1917 through 1940.

¹⁹⁸ The sacrament of reconciliation was not as directly connected with purgatory, and so articles dealing with the changes in that sacrament were not reviewed.

Some authors have identified the end of World War I to the mid-1950's as the high point of American Catholic devotionism.¹⁹⁹ Joseph P. Chinnici has suggested a more nuanced division of this time into devotional eras.²⁰⁰ Although the devotions appeared similar throughout the era, the forms and underlying motives changed in response to cultural circumstances. The devotionism that emerged in the U.S. during the immigrant era changed over the course of three separate time periods: the time between World War I and World War II; the Cold War era; and the Sixties.

The European immigrants had brought a variety of devotions such as devotions to saints, indulgenced prayers, the rosary, sodalities, stations of the cross, novenas, and Eucharistic adoration. After World War I these prayer forms began to change their “social base.”²⁰¹ They switched from being based in parish life, neighborhoods, ethnic identities, and a sacrificial ethic to being institutionally linked to diocesan and national ecclesiastical structures associated with the retreat and Eucharistic movements. Devotions to saints took on new meaning, including models to soldiers. The Depression era called on devotions to function differently than in the immigrant era. “In short, while the devotional practices of the 1930s often appeared superficially similar to their predecessors, they were constantly reflecting a changing pattern of prayer, which located the community within a specific historical, political, economic, theological, and cultural era.”²⁰² Almost all of the articles below were published during this Depression era between the wars.

¹⁹⁹ Both JayDolan and Robert Orsi refer to this.

²⁰⁰ Joseph P. Chinnici OFM, “The Catholic Community at Prayer: 1926-1976,” in *Habits of Devotion: Catholic Religious Practice in Twentieth Century America*, ed. James M. O’Toole (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004): 9-88.

²⁰¹ Ibid, 62.

²⁰² Ibid, 53.

After the beginning of World War II the focus of devotions switched to battling godless Naziism and Communism. This involved protecting the “American Way of Life”, comprised of values such as family and economic free enterprise. None of the articles with a devotional bent appeared during the Cold War era.

Two of the practices most closely associated with All Souls’ Day originate in the time between the world wars. The practice of gaining “toties quoties” plenary indulgences and the saying of three Masses were both part of the Catholic approach to relieving the suffering of those in purgatory. Both were initiated by papal decree.

The “toties quoties” or “as frequently as desired” plenary indulgence refers to the practice of being able to visit a church on November 2, say the approved prayers, and free a soul from purgatory. The Vatican decree for this practice was promulgated on June 25, 1914.²⁰³ This would have been one of the final decrees during the papacy of Pope Pius X. The plenary indulgence could only be used for the souls in purgatory. The person obtaining the indulgence had to have received the sacrament of reconciliation within the eight days preceding the church visit. The person also had to receive communion within the three days prior to the visit. During the visit the person would have to say six “Paters”, six “Aves”, and six “Glorias” for the intentions of the pope. The popularity of the practice was evidenced by the continuing communications from the Vatican. Throughout the next forty years Vatican decrees would clarify the rules and adapt the practice to the needs of working Catholics.²⁰⁴ So this led to the odd custom of people

²⁰³ “Analecta: ‘Toties Quoties’ Plenary Indulgence is Granted for the Souls of the Dead on Nov.2,” *ER* 51, no. 5(November 1914): 577.

²⁰⁴ “Studies and Conferences: Gaining A Plenary Indulgence,” *ER* 56, no. 2(February 1917): 186-187; “S and C: Plenary Indulgence for Holy Souls,” *ER* 86, no. 5 (May 1932): 539-540; “S and C: Conditions for

walking out of the church and then immediately back into the church to gain multiple plenary indulgences.²⁰⁵

Another distinctive feature of All Souls' Day was the number of Masses celebrated on that day. In 1917 Benedict XV expanded the attention given to November 2 by allowing all priests to say three Masses on All Souls' Day. One Mass would be celebrated for the intention of the pope, one was for those in purgatory, and one would be for the intention of the priest. The priest could only receive a stipend for the discretionary Mass. This practice was an expansion of a Spanish custom. The Pope made this practice universal in response to the loss of life during World War I. The extra Masses were a way to help the many souls who had entered purgatory as a result of the war. Additionally the added revenues would help compensate local churches for the loss of property that had occurred during this era.²⁰⁶

Other devotions associated with All Souls Day were described in the pages of *Ave Maria*. *Ave Maria* was a periodical written for a lay Catholic audience. Many of the October and November articles in AM exhorted readers to remember the dead and offer prayers, alms, sacrifices, and good works for them so that they might be freed from purgatory. This was the Catholic duty or obligation especially on All Souls' Day, but also throughout the month of November. These November obligations were so expected that articles were run almost verbatim after ten years. The November 20, 1909 article entitled "The Claims of the Departed" was run again with minor editing on November 13,

Gaining 'Toties Quoties' Indulgences," *ER* 90,no.3(March 1934): 315-316; "S and C: 1. 'Toties Quoties' Indulgence on All Souls' Day (and) 2. Indulgences Granted 'Under the Usual Conditions (and) 3. Indulgence on 2 November in Semi-Public Oratory" *ER* 103 (September 1940): 293-295.

²⁰⁵ In the 1950's Catholic grade school children were encouraged to make visits to free the souls in purgatory. For some, this became a competition to see who could free the most souls from purgatory.

²⁰⁶ Edward L. Heston, CSC, "The Tradition of All Souls' Day," *AveMaria* 56,no. 18 (October 31, 1942): 551-554. The background for this practice will be discussed more extensively in the next chapter.

1920. The parts edited out were specific examples of devotions: indulgenced ejaculations, Rosaries, the Stations of the Cross, and being a lay affiliate of the Helpers of the Holy Souls. The article warns not to be presumptuous about the sanctity of deceased friends and relatives. Everyone in purgatory can use the help of earthly intercessors.

Another article, “The Duty of the Month”, was originally run in the November 1, 1913 issue and repeated in a slightly edited format in the November 5, 1927 issue. This article tells readers to examine their conscience about their care for the dead.

Given that the examination is at all thorough, not a few among us should assuredly be stricken with remorse and shame for our flagrant ingratitude toward departed relatives and friends and benefactors.... The deplorable fact is that we forget our dead all too soon, and do all too little for their relief even while we keep their memory green.²⁰⁷

This passage reflects the general tone of many of the All Souls’ Day articles from the first four decades of the twentieth century. After 1940, there was less sense of obligation, duty, or guilt involved. Both of the above articles strongly encourage Masses to be said for the dead, and, if that is not possible, to attend Mass daily to offer that for the dead.

While the theme of Catholics’ obligation to remember the dead was repeated each November, the methods or practices varied. In addition to the *toties quoties* indulgence, other methods of assisting those in purgatory included:

- Simply carrying a rosary could grant 100 days indulgence for the souls in purgatory.²⁰⁸
- Attending daily Mass was recommended for those who could not afford an offering for a Mass to be said for the dead.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ “The Duty of the Month,” *AM* 77, no. 18 (November 1, 1913): 565 and 26, no. 19 (November 5, 1927): 597.

²⁰⁸ “A Precious Indulgence Applicable to the souls in Purgatory,” *AM* 28, no. 19 (November 10, 1928): 596-597.

- In answering the appeal of the holy souls, “any act of mortification, any deed of kindness or almsgiving, performed with purity of intention, and offered in their behalf, is of unquestionable value and of undoubted efficacy.”²¹⁰
- Two articles mention the Heroic Act of Charity. Apparently dating to 1885, the Congregation on Indulgences gave a special blessing for anyone who offers his or her satisfactory works for the souls in purgatory. Essentially one is volunteering to spend a longer time in purgatory so that others may be freed.²¹¹
- Ending devotional prayers with: “May the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace.”²¹²
- Visiting cemeteries during the octave of All Souls’ Day and praying could gain a plenary indulgence each day, under the usual conditions of confession and communion. Visits on other days would result in a partial indulgence.²¹³
- Concluding every Hail Mary with beseeching Mary to pray for us “at the hour of our death.”

World War I had witnessed a shocking number of casualties, but it had been followed by the 1918 Spanish Flu epidemic that resulted in an even greater loss of life. The combination of these tragedies would certainly lead to a cultural mourning and need for connection with those who had been abruptly ripped from the social networks of this

²⁰⁹ “Notes and Remarks,” *AM* 10, no. 19(November 8, 1919): 599.

²¹⁰ “The Appeal of the Holy Souls,” *AM* 22, no. 19(November 7, 1925): 597.

²¹¹ Sr. M. Paula “The Consolation of Purgatory,” *AM* 40, no. 19(November 10, 1934): 595.

²¹² Oliver E Boyle “November Reminds Us,” *AM* 42, no. 18 (November 2, 1935): 545-548.

²¹³ Stanislaus Woywood “Roman Documents,” *HPR* 35, no. 4 (January 1935): 420.

life. For those still retaining an image of purgatory as prison, prayer for the dead was a moral obligation.

Using Chinnici's division of devotional time periods, the periodicals could be viewed as instruments of transitioning U.S. Catholics from the immigrant family-centered devotions concerning purgatory to post-World War I more parish-centered devotions. The two new devotions, the November 2 "toties quoties" visit and three Masses, took place in the church. Physically this was centralizing the devotion. The World War II era would transition U.S. Catholics to focus on the issues of this world.

In the 1950's there were some articles that indicated a revival of emphasis on prayers for the dead. There was less rhetoric about obligation and the pain of those who suffered in purgatory. Connecting with the dead throughout the year was encouraged as the devotional calendar seemed less rigid.²¹⁴ One magazine was still giving very clear instruction on the requirements for gaining a plenary indulgence for a visit to church on All Souls' Day.²¹⁵ The revival of interest could be considered part of the anti-Communist sentiment of the period. Praying for the dead was a religious practice that godless Communism would not tolerate.

After the Depression era articles and one article from the Cold War era, only one *Ave Maria* article about purgatory was published. This appeared in 1962. "All Souls' Day" by Magdalene Wise Tuomey is subtitled "How One Family Celebrates This Day Liturgically."²¹⁶ The article certainly had a different tone than the previous devotional articles. The article first surveyed All Souls' Day customs from around the world – a Puerto Rican procession to decorate and bless graves; Austrians placing vigil lights on

²¹⁴ Lolitta Marshall, "November, Every Month," *AM* 84, no. 18 (November 3, 1956): 14.

²¹⁵ D.F. Miller, "Pointed Paragraphs," *The Liguorian* (November 1955):694.

²¹⁶ Magdalene Wise Tuomey, "All Souls' Day," *AM* 96, no. 10 (October 27, 1962):13.

graves and saying prayers; Poles writing names of the dead on special paper for the priest to read the following Sunday; in Brittany a table is set for the souls of the dead, special prayers are said before bed, and bells summon people to pray throughout the night; in England and Scotland special cakes were made and symbolically offered to the holy souls and then given to the poor. This survey of European practices emphasized the variety of practices unified around the common goal of communion with the dead.

This article represents a new approach to devotions. The title indicates the shift in location of devotions from the church to the nuclear family. The title also emphasizes the blending of the devotional with the liturgical. After noting the many customs from around the world that are connected with All Souls' Day, Tuomey states that her American heritage gives her no set rituals. So, at her home, the ritual they consider is what she refers to as the Sacrament of the Sick. She walks her children through the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick so that her children will not fear death and will naturally pray for the grace of a happy death. There is no mention of praying for the souls in purgatory. There is no mention of purgatory.²¹⁷

Let the children think that it is a simple matter to become a saint, so they will be assured that for them heaven lies just beyond the door called death. Then, the thing is not to worry about dying, but to spend time working at being saints.²¹⁸

So, even in *Ave Maria*, the periodical that had reminded Catholics of their November duty throughout the Depression era, and even on All Souls' Day, purgatory had "disappeared."

²¹⁷ Ibid., 13.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 13.

Most of the practices in this group of articles centered on All Souls' Day and the month of November. In 1909 the practices met the needs of immigrant Catholics for identity and helping those deceased relatives who suffered even more than themselves. Historically unusual practices such as the *toties quoties* indulgence and three Masses on All Souls' Day had an ultramontane origin and centralized the spirituality of U.S. Catholics. These mixed with other, more popularly based devotions, to give Catholics a variety of ways to fulfill their obligation to the dead. By the early 1960's, it seems that All Souls Day had lost its association with practices. Without the practices, purgatory was not part of the Catholic imagination.

Pastoral Changes: Care of the Dying

One area of change that can be traced in the clerical publications might be considered "pastoral care of the dying." How were the clergy supposed to minister to those in danger of death? Should the priest emphasize the need to avoid the pains of purgatory or should he reassure and comfort the individual? The image of purgatory would certainly shape the priest's approach. On the other hand, the impact on the believer may have also shaped the priest's approach. Should the individual face death with fear or hope? Obviously this is a simplification of the issue, but the question points to changes confronting the Church and its attitude toward the afterlife.

Some articles recommended direct confrontation with those who refused the sacrament of Extreme Unction. Others took a more conciliatory route. In a 1910 sermon on "Extreme Unction" Reverend William Graham opened with the statement, "To die well is even more important than to live well."²¹⁹ This expresses a sentiment that

²¹⁹ Graham, *ibid.*, 748.

was common in the early part of the twentieth century and seems rare today. The emphasis on preparation for death led to differing pastoral approaches.

In 1924 Bishop John S. Vaughan, DD tried to impress upon priests the seriousness of their role in helping the sick and the dying and the importance of the last rites.

If a mistake is made, if there be one grave omission, we can never recall the soul, we can never repair the loss. That tremendous obligation, therefore, *surpassing all others*, which binds man to secure for himself a death in the grace of God, binds us, as the agents and appointed ministers of this work to secure such a death for every one committed to our care....²²⁰

Bishop Vaughn encouraged priests to be expedient in attending to those in peril of death. He told them to instill faith, hope, and charity in the faithful facing death. By submitting to the will of God at the point of death souls could bypass the fires of hell and the pains of purgatory.

He also cites traditional warnings that the two major temptations for those facing death are despair and presumption. The bishop says that in his experience this is very rare. “Especially the poor and laboring classes” welcome the priest. He described his one and only encounter with a dying woman who was “presumptuous.” After encouraging her to take advantage of the sacrament of penance, she, a woman of “bad character”, refused. “At last, I felt that the only thing to do was to use threats, and to warn her of the appalling judgment she was calling down upon herself. She remained

²²⁰ Bishop John S. Vaughan, “The Pastor and his Flock: The Sick and the Dying,” *HPR* 24, no. 8 (May 1924): 818.

utterly unmoved.”²²¹ After he told her that God would send her to the everlasting fire, she disagreed. She told the bishop that God would not be so cruel to “an old woman.”

This is an interesting story. The unrepentant woman seems to speak the common attitude of today. The minister who condemns her for the sin of “presumption,” seems presumptuous by today’s standards. He tells her what God’s judgment will be.

In this same time period that Bishop Vaughn wrote, recent psychological and therapeutic approaches were being integrated with issues of pastoral care. Although never directly mentioning purgatory, Charles Bruehl was intent on showing that the Catholic faith was psychologically therapeutic. In the 1920’s Charles Bruehl wrote on topics such as “Fear and Guilt” and “The Therapeutic Value of Religion.”²²² Bruehl found that hope and optimism were central to Christianity. The Christian faith in the resurrection offers a fundamentally positive view of the universe as opposed to much of modern literature which he reported as having an ambiguous or negative view. Fear of death has its place, but if that fear is too intense, it can be harmful. He advised against sermons that induce fear and guilt.

A decade and a half later another concern was voiced in *America*. John P. Delaney, in 1939, with the shadow of war in Europe approaching, wrote an exhortation to pray for the souls in purgatory. His approach was critical of identifying those in purgatory as “poor souls.” He reminded his readers that they are “holy souls.” Those in purgatory are in a better place than those on earth. “However severe their suffering, there

²²¹ Ibid., 822.

²²² Charles Bruehl, “Pastoralia: Fear and Guilt,” *HPR* 26, no. 1(October 1925): 1-8 and “Pastoralia: The Therapeutic Value of Religion,” 26, no. 7(April 1926): 671-678.

are few of us who would not exchange any joy here below for the joy in suffering of the souls in purgatory.”

His approach was based in what might be called moral or pastoral anger. Delaney was present with an elderly woman who was on her death bed. Instead of facing her final hours with joy and hope, she trembled at the thought of Purgatory.²²³ Delaney expressed outrage at a good woman having to struggle with unnecessary fear and guilt in her final hours of life. So this article seems to indicate a shift from the use of threats and fear to save souls to an approach that shuns the use of fear as a pastoral tool. In light of advancing psychological and therapeutic concepts, purgatory as a motivator seemed inappropriate.

Sacramental Changes: Extreme Unction or the Anointing of the Sick

Related to a changing understanding of purgatory was the changing understanding of the sacrament of extreme unction or anointing of the sick. Into the twentieth century some disagreement among theologians and some misunderstanding among many Catholics lingered about this sacrament. When the clerical periodicals discussed the changing understanding of the sacrament, there was an implicit change in attitude about purgatory from fear to hope.

One misunderstanding was the popular notion that this sacrament was only to be administered on the deathbed. Some had referred to the sacrament as the “Sacrament of the Dying.” This understanding goes against the text from the epistle of James that recommended anointing and prayer by presbyters for those who are sick. The shift from associating the sacrament with certain death to associating the sacrament with

²²³ John P. Delaney, “The Poor Souls Not Quite So Poor,” *America* 62 (Nov. 18, 1939): 151.

God's healing of the sick parallels some of the other liturgical changes of the twentieth century. Even the name of the sacrament had reinforced the false idea. The meaning of "extreme" seemed to refer to the end of life and a preparation for death. In reality, the original meaning was that this sacramental ritual anointing usually followed the others (Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders).²²⁴

Another misunderstanding concerned the effect on the recipient's status after death. Although authors seemed to agree that Extreme Unction could save one from the fires of hell (by forgiving mortal sin), it was not universally agreed that the sacrament could save one from the pains of purgatory.

In 1907 Joseph Kern, SJ had already published his groundbreaking book on Extreme Unction. He had retrieved the understanding of the sacrament as "anointing of the sick." He called attention to the sacrament as originally having healing properties and took an optimistic view of releasing one from purgatory. That is, anointing not only forgave sins, but remitted the temporal punishment due to sin. The articles in *HPR* and *ER* generally concurred with Kern's approach, although few actually mentioned the issue of purgatory. Although the articles and sermons through the 1920's were written based on various sources such as catechisms²²⁵, the code of canon law²²⁶, moral concerns²²⁷, sacramental theology²²⁸, and scripture²²⁹ there was general agreement that the primary

²²⁴ Richard E Power, "God's Healing,," *OF* 3 (January 27, 1929) 79.

²²⁵ William Graham, "An Exposition of Catholic Teaching: XLIV. Extreme Unction," *HPR* 10, no. 9 (June 1910): 748-754 and P. Hehel SJ, "Short Sermons on the Catechism: XLIII. Extreme Unction," *HPR* 13, no. 10(July 1910): 866-870.

²²⁶ Stanislaus Woywood OFM, "The Sacrament of Extreme Unction," *HPR* 22, no. 7 (April 1922): 761-769.

²²⁷ G. Murray CSSR, "Casus Moralis: Extreme Unction," *HPR* 25, no. 12 (September 1925): 1315-1318.

²²⁸ Dom Ernest Graf OSB, "Devotional Studies of the Sacraments: The Sacrament of Extreme Unction," *HPR* 25, no.12(September 1925): 1295-1301 and The Benedictine Monks of Buckfast Abbey "Rites and Ceremonies of the Sacraments: XI. Extreme Unction" 28, no. 11(August 1928): 1206- 1211.

purpose was to strengthen the seriously ill person spiritually, emotionally, and possibly physically.

OF/Worship offered articles that went more in depth about the sacrament. These articles continued deepening and expanding the reflection on the sacrament. *OF/Worship* very strongly favored the retrieved understanding of the sacrament. This shift in understanding was evident in 1929 in Richard E. Power's article on "God's Healing." Power emphasized the sacrament's ability to heal body and soul. Both are needed for our functioning as persons. Power compared Extreme Unction to the other sacraments. He did note that this sacrament is the only sure means of "purging the soul from mortal sin."²³⁰ Power encouraged what might be considered "pastoral sensitivity" when dealing with the sick. "It is not right to become hysterical (even piously so), or to be nagging the weak and the suffering with ill-advised practices and exhortations. But one should not forget that the sick person is first of all an immortal spirit and not merely a sensitive creature in distress."²³¹ He does not explain how someone becomes "piously hysterical" or what the "ill-advise practices and exhortations" are, but these may have to do with the fear of purgatory or hell.

Although Power includes discussion of the granting of a plenary indulgence as a way of remitting the temporal punishment due to sin, he downplays the role of indulgences. The only explicit mention of purgatory in the article is a footnote to this section. "They (indulgences) are sanctioned by God and spiritually helpful to us; but

²²⁹ Thomas P. Phelan LLD, "Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost: Extreme Unction," *HPR* 31, no. 12 (September 1931): 1329-1334.

²³⁰ Power, *ibid.* 80.

²³¹ *Ibid.* 81.

they should not be sought merely to evade punishment. St. Francis de Sales says: Most of those who dread Purgatory do so for selfish reasons and not for the glory of God.”²³² So Power is one who associates the sacrament of Extreme Unction more with healing and resurrection than with penance and fear of punishment. This parallels the changes described below concerning funeral liturgies. Funeral liturgies can be seen as shifting away from a Good Friday approach and toward Holy Saturday.

Over a decade later, in 1944, Suso Mayer OSB, expanded some of Power’s themes. For humans, Mayer contended, there are no greater fears than sickness and death. In Christ, though, we are given hope and light in those difficult times. Mayer encouraged the *ars morendi*, the art of dying happily. When Christians take advantage of the assistance offered by Christ in preparing for death, the moment of death can become a time of strength and hope.²³³

In discussing the “Sacrament of Healing for the Sick” Mayer referenced Thomas Aquinas and the Council of Trent. The effects of the sacrament of extreme unction were to increase sanctifying grace, console the sick with confidence in the mercy of God, and deliver the sick person from the “remains of sin” that may not have been fully healed in the sacrament of Penance. Mayer felt that the first two effects had been under emphasized in recent years. ²³⁴

Mayer emphasized the way the sacrament prepares one for death. In this context, Mayer did discuss purgatory. If extreme unction prepares one for immediate entrance into heaven, does purgatory become unnecessary? He answers that not all have to pass

²³² Ibid 83.

²³³ Suso Mayer OSB, “In Sickness and in Death,” *OF* 18 (July 23, 1944): 406.

²³⁴ Ibid. 410.

through purgatory to gain entrance into heaven, but we should not neglect praying for those in need. Although we do not know if a particular person is in purgatory, our prayer is “never wasted.”²³⁵ God will apply that assistance to someone else in need.

One final idea that Mayer promoted was the monastic custom of the sacrament of extreme unction being administered by several priests and a large gathering of the faithful. This tradition is the basis of the tolling of the church bells at the time of death. The ringing of the bell calls all the family and faithful to pray for the person entering eternal life.²³⁶

The article which most directly connected purgatory and extreme unction was reprinted from the August, 1946 issue of *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record*. Alexander Gits, SJ blamed the Jansenists and post-Reformation polemics for the over-emphasis on the necessity of purgation in the next world. Jansenist confessors had imposed intolerable penances for granting absolution. In reaction to the Protestant denial of purgatory, post-Tridentine writers and preachers emphasized the need to be purged of sin in the next life. They neglected the expiatory effects of extreme unction.

Some of the debate centered on the meaning of the “remains of sin” remitted by extreme unction. Those who had been influenced by the Jansenists did not believe the penalties due to sin could be taken away. So they did not believe that the “remains of sin” that extreme unction remitted included the penalties for sin. In other words, the

²³⁵ Ibid., 412.

²³⁶ Stephen Greenblatt (in *Hamlet in Purgatory*, ibid. 43-44, 265, and 274) discusses the tolling the bells in England. Catholics had used the practice to signal the need to pray for the dead, a sense of the communion of the living and the dead. The Protestant interpretation was to limit the tolling of the bells to signal the beginning of a funeral.

quasi-Jansenists did not believe that Extreme Unction provided a certain entrance into heaven. This attitude was apparent in the English and Maynooth catechisms.

Gits noted that this had not been the tradition of Trent or the pre-Tridentine tradition. St. Egbert of York in the 700's, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Duns Scotus are all in agreement that the sacrament of extreme unction, when received in good disposition, prepares the recipient for avoiding not only hell, but also purgatory. After Trent, Suarez and others had continued this line of thinking.

Gits dismissed several arguments countering the positive view of the effects of extreme unction. He cited Suarez to dismiss the idea that the recipient needed the disposition of a saint to overcome purgatory. In contradiction to the argument that sacrifices for the dead would no longer be needed, Gits said that Masses for the Dead were still needed for those "many souls who die without the sacrament and are forgotten by their own relatives."²³⁷ Some argued that immediate reward after death would make people careless in serving God. Gits provides an anecdote of someone who was more motivated to do good when extreme unction was explained. Finally, Gits dismissed the Jansenist reliance on private revelations to support their views. He points out that "optimistic" revelations concerning purgatory were common before the Reformation but unmentioned after. Gits concluded that private revelations are too influenced by the ideas of the time to be used as a basis of decision.

²³⁷ Alexander Gits SJ, "From Other Lands: Purgatory and Extreme Unction," *OF* 20 (November 3, 1946): 556.

Another Jesuit, Clifford Howell, wrote about the sacraments of reconciliation and anointing of the sick in an article entitled “The Health of the Mystical Body” in 1951.

After giving a history and analysis of the early practice of reconciliation, Howell turned his attention to the anointing of the sick. He acknowledged that his work was based on the thought of Fr. H. A. Reinhold and two fellow Jesuits, Fr. Kern, SJ and Fr. Feld, SJ.

Following the theme of the previous writers on this topic, Howell wrote, “There is no warrant for the pessimism wherewith so many Catholics seem to regard death. Many speak and behave as if they thought that nobody but a great saint has any chance of going to heaven except through purgatory.”²³⁸ He summarized the common ideas that only great saints would go directly to heaven. Most people would have to be prayed through purgatory.

Howell strongly rejected the idea that he was denying the doctrine of purgatory. He specified that he doubted the assumption that extreme unction prepares the soul for purgatory rather than heaven. To Howell “it seems much more probable that they leap, so to speak, out of their death-beds straight into their thrones in heaven!”²³⁹ Like Gits, Howell backed his argument with pre-Tridentine thinkers, the Council of Trent, and Suarez.

This reinterpretation of the sacrament from preparation for death to strengthening the living indirectly weakened the emphasis on purgatory. The attention shifted from the next life to this life. The presumption was that purgatory was a less fearful and less

²³⁸ Clifford Howell SJ, “The Health of the Mystical Body,” *OF* 25 (June 1951) :307.

²³⁹ *Ibid* 308.

probable destination.²⁴⁰ Salvation began in this life rather than when one escaped this Vale of Tears.

Liturgical Changes: Funerals and Burial Rites

In a 1910 sermon in HPR²⁴¹, the Reverend H. G. Hughes outlined some of the Catholic practices connected with the burial of the dead. His sermon was addressing concerns raised by non-Catholics, particularly Anglicans, about several practices. He divided his sermon into four parts: the Office of the Dead, the Requiem Mass, the absolutions and burials, and cremation.

Hughes acknowledges the beauty of the “Protestant” prayers for the dead, but criticizes the limited quality of the prayer. The Protestant prayers focus on returning the “clay” of the human body to the dust from which it came, the Catholic prayers focus on the immortal soul. The key difference between the two is the doctrine of purgatory. The Protestant services, drawn from the Catholic worship, omitted any prayer for the deceased. The Anglican liturgy presumes entrance into “bliss” after death.

(The Catholic Church) has no delusions concerning the dread truth that Divine justice has its claim as well as Divine mercy in its pitiful indulgence. She realizes that a soul with a heavy load of offenses against God, even though they have been forgiven by means of the saving sacraments of Penance and Extreme Unction, is yet liable to a debt of temporal punishment; and, moreover, is imperfect and weighed down by evil habits and dispositions that must need be purged away before that soul can bear the blinding light of the presence of God.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ Schreiter *ibid.*, 170.

²⁴¹ H.G Hughes, “An Exposition and Defense of Catholic Teaching: IV. Fifty-one Sermons on the Liturgy of the Church –XLVIII. The Burial of the Dead,” *The Homiletic Monthly*, 10,no.12(September 1910): 869-878.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 871.

The “Office of the Dead” consisted of vespers, matins, and lauds. These were often recited in the presence of the corpse. Many of the readings were taken from the Book of Job.

The Requiem Mass was and is the central rite for Catholics when praying for the dead. Hughes takes some time to chide the then recent custom of spending money on flowers and a grand funeral rather than on alms for Masses. Hughes criticizes useless pomp when the soul needs practical help. Again, the rationale is the need to lessen the suffering of souls in purgatory.

The requiem Mass involved black vestments and the omission of prayers of praise. The emphasis was on supplication, prayers for mercy on the soul of the departed, and awe in the face of judgment. Hughes recommends the *Dies Irae* as “at once a sublime prayer, a most impressive sermon, and a meditation that cannot fail to move and to convert.”²⁴³ This lengthy sequence, was situated between the readings.

After the Mass was concluded, the priest led prayers before leaving the church for the cemetery. The two key psalms recited at this time were the “De Profundis” (“Out of the Depths” – Psalm 129 in the Vulgate) and the “Miserere” (“Have mercy on me” – Psalm 50 in the Vulgate) prayer for pardon. These were, at times, the only prayers said in English.²⁴⁴

So, the 1910 article represents several aspects that would change over the coming decades: a contentious approach toward “Protestants”, a lack of participation by the laity in the liturgy (as represented by only a few prayers in the vernacular), an urgency about

²⁴³ Ibid, 875. See Appendix for Latin versions and English translation.

²⁴⁴ “Answers to Questions: Prayers in English at Funerals,” *HPR* 10, no. 32 (July 1932): 1076-1078. See Appendix for current translations.

praying for the dead to be delivered from punishment in purgatory, and an emotional tone of awe and fear.

Near the same time that Hughes was extolling the dignity and solemnity of the Catholic approach to the dead, there were historical studies being done that raised questions about the funeral and burial practices of Catholic Christians. Throughout the next few decades articles would focus on the historical development of the requiem Mass. These articles struggled to move beyond the medieval rituals and retrieve the practices of the early and patristic church.

In a 1912 *ER* article²⁴⁵, by Celso Constanini of Italy, the liturgy was analyzed from the archeological evidence of early Christian art. The article is divided into Baptism, Mass, Agape feasts, Vestments and Liturgical Utensils, Funeral Rites and Customs.

Agape feasts had been associated with Eucharist, funeral, and weddings. The funeral agape feasts seem to be rooted in Hebrew customs. Romans adopted the Hebrew feasts. One difference between the pagan funeral feast and the Christian funeral feast was the guest list. “While the pagans invited none but relatives to funeral banquets, the Christians preferably invited the poor and the widows to the Martyr tombs in the Catacombs.”²⁴⁶ Because these feasts became “intemperate”, by the sixth century, they were no longer used. Other distinguishing characteristics of Christian funerals were the ban on cremation (based on the belief in the resurrection of the body) and the lack of pomp associated with funerals.

²⁴⁵ Celso Constanini, “The Liturgy in Early Christian Art” *ER* 46, no. 1 (January 1912): 71-80.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

The early Christians considered burial of the faithful a sacred duty. One practice Christians derived from the surrounding culture was the observance of anniversaries of death. A light was suspended outside the tomb and re-lit on anniversaries of death. Prayers were said on the seventh, thirtieth, and anniversary days after the person's death.

This historical study implicitly questioned the Catholic practices dealing with the dead. The early church had different emphases than the liturgy of the early twentieth century. The tone of the early church was more hopeful than the tone of the liturgy incorporating "The Day of Wrath."²⁴⁷

This wrestling with the historical meaning of Catholic rituals associated with the dead was best articulated in articles found in *OF/Worship*. The articles dealing with funerals and burials were published throughout the decades of the 1930's through the 1960's. All of these articles spoke about the funeral rituals interacting with the surrounding culture. The ritual was shaped by and helped to shape the historical context. In the terminology of recent theology, the authors were saying that the funeral requiem must be inculturated.

In October, 1932 Julia Grant wrote about "In Hora Mortis Nostrae." She exhorted her readers to appreciate the rich traditions of the Church for those facing death. Grant warned that popular approaches are threatening the ancient and powerful traditions. The early Church had customs which differed from the pagan world. Grant calls on her readers to resist the surrounding culture. "...Few stop to consider that in the attempt to follow the modern trend, we are gradually slipping back into the paganism which the

²⁴⁷ See Appendix for text.

early Christians so steadfastly opposed.”²⁴⁸ Grant reminds readers that in the early Church Christians prepared for the moment of death. St. Augustine’s funeral for his mother provided a touching glimpse at an early practice. During the Middle Ages Masses were multiplied for those who had died. On their burial day some individuals could have thirty Masses said for them. The pall at one time was an elegant gift from the pallbearers. The pall was converted into vestments after the funeral. The body, as temple of the Holy Spirit, was buried out of respect. Tombs were simple and coffins were not used until the 1600’s. Simplicity was the tradition of the Church; extravagance in funerals is a sign of pagan customs. Bereavement was also characterized by simple practices such as prayer and almsgiving, actions which would help the departed. Grant sees the buying of flowers and coffins to be an affront to the Church’s traditions.

Over a decade later in 1943 Leon Lukaszewski wrote an article entitled “It is a Holy and Wholesome Thought to Pray for the Dead.” This article reminisces about the customs of funerals three decades earlier. The funeral and burial were lengthy processes. All those in attendance were considered to be participating in the work of mercy of burying the dead. Mourning would continue for a year after the burial. By the time of his writing, Lukaszewski witnessed funerals that were done with greater efficiency. Much of the actual burial was left to others. Even the period of mourning was shortened.

The cause of this hurried mourning was World War I. Millions of men had buried friends in common graves without ceremony. With enemies near, it was a risk to the soldiers’ own lives to do otherwise. The period of mourning seemed unnecessary when so many funerals followed in quick succession.

²⁴⁸ Julia Grant, “In Hora Mortis Nostrae,” *Orate Fratres* 6 (October 29, 1932): 536.

Although Lukaszewski seems to criticize the streamlined funeral, he also admits that much of the ceremony was pomp. The same ceremonies would be used for non-believers. Even mourning is not a necessary part of Christian funerals. Practical help is favored over expensive grief. The Christian has less reason to mourn than others because of the belief that death is an improvement. On the other hand, Christians also are the only ones who believe that grief can be turned into assistance for the dead.

Writing during the terrible events of World War II, Lukaszewski urges offering penance and mourning by praying for the dead at Mass on the anniversary of the death. He also urges prayers for those who are not Catholic.

In this month of November, when atheist Russians and atheist Germans are dying beside unknown Catholics who have no sacraments to help them, and unknown non-Catholic Christians who know no sacraments, surely we can do our mourning for these, as well as for our own departed-even though our mourning be a glad *Te Deum*.²⁴⁹

One of the more scholarly articles reviews the initial edition of *Studies in Christian Antiquity* series of books from Catholic University. Edward E. Malone OSB noted in his 1944 article that U.S. ecclesiastical reviews had recently published many articles dealing with ancient Christianity. By the time of this article, the first five editions had been published. These works incorporated recent archeological findings along with documentary studies. Malone hoped that these studies would rival European scholarship.

The first publication of the *Studies in Christian Antiquity* series was printed in 1941 and was entitled *Death and Burial in Christian Antiquity*. The author, Alfred C.

²⁴⁹ Leon Lukaszewski, "It is a Holy and Wholesome Thought to Pray for the Dead," *Orate Fratres* 17 (October 31, 1943): 570.

Rush CSSR, gave examples of pagan burial customs which had been adapted or rejected by Christianity. It is interesting that these studies wrestled with Christianity's relation to the surrounding culture. Malone notes that Christianity's role in shaping and being shaped by the culture was not simple. "When no vital principle was involved the Church adapted herself to the current usage; when this accommodation proved impossible she substituted practices of her own; when neither accommodation nor substitution could be achieved she sublimated what could not otherwise be disposed of."²⁵⁰ Like the earlier article by Grant, although the word "inculturation" is never used, many of the issues sound similar to recent theological concerns.

Examples of Christianity's wrestling with accommodation/ substitution/ sublimation can be found in the encounter with the pagan burial customs. The pagan custom was to gather at a burial place on the third, seventh, and the thirtieth day, after the burial, and on the anniversary of the burial to eat and drink. A portion of this *refrigerium*, or refreshment, was also left for the dead. The timing was based on the theories of ancient physicians about the soul leaving the body in stages. These days represented different stages in the process.

The custom continued until the time of Augustine. Ambrose suggested substituting prayers and suffrages in place of eating and drinking. However this was still done on the third, seventh, thirtieth, and anniversary days. So this encounter of Christian belief with the pagan world resulted in both accommodation and substitution.

Evidence of the contrast between Christian and pagan views of the afterlife can be found by studying the epitaphs of the two groups. Whereas Christians showed a joyful and hopeful attitude, the pagan inscriptions were often gloomy and mournful. The

²⁵⁰ Edward E Malone OSB, "Studies in Christian Antiquity," *OF* 18 (December 3, 1944): 18.

interaction of pagan and Jewish customs with Christian interpretations shaped other related actions such as the preparation of the body for burial, viaticum, closing the eyes and mouth of the deceased, the “clamor of the dead”, the appropriate color of clothing, and wakes.

Edward J. Sutfin in the November 1952 issue of *Worship* also examined the meanings of Christian burial. He contrasted Holy Saturday with the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed. Sutfin considered Holy Saturday, the remembrance of Christ’s time among the dead, as the obvious feast for the souls of the faithful departed. The discrepancy between the spring and autumn feasts can be explained by considering the burial rituals of the Church.

Although he never used the term “paradox”, Sutfin found complementary trends in the Church’s paschal “Alleluia” for the early martyrs and the Lenten “Liberia” for the dead of the Middle Ages. These tendencies can be united in the mystery of the Parousia.

Sutfin traced the history of funeral customs and remembrance of the dead. The early Church associated funerals with Easter. In the early Middle Ages attempts were made to associate funerals with the rites of Holy Week, and especially Good Friday. In a similar fashion Sutfin noted the association of Extreme Unction with the sacrament of Penance rather than with Viaticum. He noted that some of the more direct connections (e.g. sprinkling the dying person’s room with ashes and laying the dying person on a hair-cloth) are no longer observed. Also in previous times the corpse was clothed in white and wakes were accompanied by the singing of psalms. After the eighth century the hymns were dropped, again in imitation of Good Friday.

If we could summarize Sutfin's point, it might be that the current (1950's) practices associated with the dying and the dead are associated with Good Friday whereas the Church originally associated these with Easter.

Forty years after the Hughes sermon appeared in HPR, in a 1951 issue of the same periodical, J.H. Darby wrote about the "Requiem Mass of the Roman Church."²⁵¹ In this article Darby reports on the history of the requiem liturgy. He shows that the first official requiem liturgy would have occurred around 314, following the legalization of Christianity. Darby notes that the funeral liturgy of the early Church communicated joy, hope, and praise. "Alleluias" were part of the fourth century requiem liturgy. Hughes had presented the lack of praise as appropriate for a liturgy seeking the mercy of God.

Darby suggests that "the discontinuance of the Alleluias in Requiem Masses after the fifth century reflects the gloom and sense of frustration as the Church entered on those perilous times of the Dark Ages which form the background of the *Dies Irae*."²⁵² Darby finds the addition of the *Dies Irae* in the Middle Ages to be the most dramatic change the atmosphere of the liturgy.

Darby points out that the first requiem masses were based on celebrations of the victory of the martyrs. The tone of these rituals incorporated a hope for the resurrection of the dead in contrast to the pagan and Jewish rituals which were limited to a profound respect for the body of the dead. Another source for the prayers of the original requiem liturgy was the non-biblical apocalyptic writing of the first few centuries. These writings

²⁵¹ J.H. Darby, "The Requiem Mass of the Roman Church," *HPR* 52, no. 2 (November 1951): 117-121.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 117.

added some unusual and non-biblical aspects to the liturgy, such as an emphasis on the Archangel Michael.

Darby admits to the beauty and power of the Dies Irae, but finds the thirteenth century poem, attributed to the Franciscan Thomas of Celano, to distort the emphasis on “light, peace, and life” found in the early liturgy. He suggests that minor changes would retrieve the original atmosphere of the liturgy. Darby praises the recent preface to requiem Mass with its positive emphasis. Darby suggests that the positive emphasis might be more relevant to the twentieth century. “One welcomes the triumphant note of this Preface as one more of the many challenges flung out by the Church in our time against the new godless humanism, which insists that death is the end of all.”²⁵³

So Hughes had appealed to the ancient practice of praying for the dead to justify Catholic funeral practices in contrast to Protestant practices. Darby appeals to recent scholarship on the early history of liturgical practices and to biblical scholarship to question the current Catholic funeral practices.

In some articles we can sense a resistance to the liturgical changes being suggested by these historical studies. At the same time that Darby was implicitly questioning the use of the Dies Irae in the funeral liturgy, a series of articles was being written in praise of the poem. The Right Reverend Monsignor Paul E. Campbell contributed a series of five articles to the *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* between 1949 and 1954.²⁵⁴ Each of the articles praised the Dies Irae as an unsurpassed poem and guide

²⁵³ Ibid., 121.

²⁵⁴ Paul E. Campbell, “Dies Irae, Masterpiece of Latin Poetry,” (February, 1949); “The Last Judgment and the Dies Irae,” (December 1952); “The God of Justice,” (June 1953); “Justice and Mercy in the Dies Irae,” (April 1954); “The Redeemer in the ‘Dies Irae’” (September 1954) *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*

to the spiritual life. Campbell considers it to be as much a classic of Catholic spirituality as *The Imitation of Christ*. While Campbell accentuates the literary and dogmatic merits of the poem, he does not directly address Darby's concerns about its appropriateness for the funeral liturgy.

In November 1960 Barnabas Mary Ahern, CP reflected on the Jewish roots of the Christian requiem. Ahern explained the context of 2 Mac. 12:43-46. At that time it was the epistle for the second Mass on All Souls Day. Ahern explained the importance of the Jewish writers' corporate sense of identity. Many of the soldiers of Judas Maccabee had died as martyrs. However, many of those dead were discovered to be wearing amulets, a sign of idolatry. So the survivors took up a sin offering for those who had nobly given their lives for the nation of Israel, but may have strayed from total fidelity to the god of Israel. The spirit of Maccabees continues in the modern Jewish Kaddish service.

This idea of corporate identity gives a backdrop to All Souls Day.

... Just as the Maccabees saw death in the light of God's beautiful and all-embracing plan for the whole nation, so too the Church's loving solicitude for the sufferers in purgatory springs from her vital awareness that, as the Body of Christ, hers is a corporate destiny. It is the *whole Church* that must come to glory...²⁵⁵

Ahern noted that this totality of the Church's mission was emphasized in 1957 when Pope Pius XII beatified Mother Mary of Providence (Eugenie Smet), foundress of the Helpers of Holy Souls.

²⁵⁵ Barnabas Mary Ahern CP, "Jewish and Christian Requiem," *Worship* 34 (November 1960): 610.

The next article to deal with funerals would come in December 1966 by Aelred Tegels OSB. This is after the time of purgatory's "disappearance." The editor would write about "The New Funeral Rites" being tested in St. Louis and Atlanta. These new rites would emphasize resurrection and proclamation of the Word. The "Libera Me" and "Dies Irae" were dropped, black vestments were not prescribed, and a Bible service could be used in place of the Office of the Dead. There was no mention of purgatory or communion with the dead in the article.

These articles traced the dramatic shifts from 1910 when Reverend Hughes took pride in the beauty and profundity of the funeral and associated ritual. At that time purgatory was a logical backdrop to the rituals. Robert Shreiter has shown the importance of the seemingly minor change from black vestments to white. Black had emphasized the colors of the mourners and emphasized the ambiguous state of the dead. White implies a connection of the dead with the Risen Christ. In imagining the state of the dead, they shift from being closer to hell toward being closer to heaven. "Black could help locate the departed soul in the ambiguous purgatorial place; white can do that...only with the utmost difficulty."²⁵⁶

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that there were dramatic changes in devotional practices, sacraments, and funeral liturgies all of which changed the urgency of praying for those in purgatory. The "memento" of 1924 clearly illustrated that the practice of praying for the dead has continued to be an important aspect of Catholic practice, but the vivid image of

²⁵⁶ Schreiter, *ibid.*, 170.

purgatory connected with the prayer has disappeared. For clergy and vowed religious, minor changes in the breviary signaled a switch in focus from the afterlife to this life. For faithful Catholics, the devotional calendar had designated November as the month to pray for the dead. Newly indulgenced practices from the twentieth century were added to the devotional practices from the previous centuries. These devotions seemed to be widely practiced during the immigrant and Depression era, but responded to different needs in each era. The devotional periodicals continued to advocate practices connected to the dead, but over the course of the decades the tone of the exhortations became less aggressive and less legalistic.

Pastoral care for the dying and the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick were re-evaluated to align them more with the hope of the resurrection than the suffering of the cross. Likewise the funeral liturgy became a celebration of entrance into the resurrected eternal life rather than an attempt to “pray” the deceased out of a painful purgatory. Underlying these changes were historical studies that retrieved early Church and patristic attitudes and practices. Historical events, such as the mass death associated with the world wars, also shaped the practices of Catholics.

The decline of devotionism, an ecumenical spirit, the liturgical renewal, and the retrieval of the original meaning of sacraments all worked together to undercut practices connected with purgatory. Without the practices, the concept of purgatory was not in the foreground of the Catholic imagination. As the frequency of Catholic prayers for the dead decreased, so did the relevance of purgatory.

CHAPTER 4
PERIODICALS ON PURGATORY 2:
OFFICIAL TEACHING, POPULAR UNDERSTANDING, NARRATIVES, AND
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

As has been shown in previous chapters, the practices associated with praying for the dead were an interesting stew of indulgenced prayers and ceremonies from the Vatican, ethnic European traditions, local customs, and lay devotions. They were a mix of official and popular practices. In origin the practices preceded the articulation of the doctrine. The sources for information and inspiration about purgatory were also diverse. Council teachings, reflections from Church fathers, liturgical prayers, debates from the Middle Ages and the Reformation period, apparitions or private revelations, personal anecdotes, and other sources all contributed to a major aspect of Catholic life. As described in the previous chapter, this mix of sources and practices is mirrored in the articles from Catholic periodicals of the twentieth century.. As a way of organizing the diverse sources in the first chapters, the information was grouped into categories of official teaching, popular understanding, practices, narratives, and theological reflection. The articles centering around practices were presented in the previous chapter. This chapter will discuss the articles from U.S. periodicals connected with the other four categories.

The basic doctrine articulated at the Council of Trent remains throughout the twentieth century, but the way that doctrine was imagined changed dramatically between 1909 and 1960. The popular understanding of purgatory, as reflected in published homilies, could be characterized as moving from praying for the “poor souls” to praying with the “holy souls.” The narratives moved from motivational ghost stories to the multifaceted poem of Dante. Theological debates moved purgatory from bordering hell to bordering heaven. The world was provided new images of the importance of prayers for the dead. In the U.S. *ressourcement* traced the origins of a simpler way of imagining purgatory. And the liturgical movement would lead to a rejection of some of the punitive images of purgatory.

Official Teaching: The Standard Message

Over the first six decades of the twentieth century there was a fairly set message repeated to U.S. Catholics on All Souls Day. This message could be found in the homilies from those periodicals intended for a clerical audience (HPR and AER) and in November columns from the editors of devotional periodicals intended for a lay audience (AM, Sign, and Liguorian). The message was very similar to that found in catechisms of the day. The standard message for All Souls Day was based on the teaching of the Council of Trent and assumed to be derived from Thomas Aquinas. So this message was considered the official teaching of the Catholic Church.

One way to organize the “standard message” is around the three aspects of the Council of Trent’s statement on purgatory.²⁵⁷ The simple message that Trent defined in

²⁵⁷ As interpreted through the manualist, propositional, ahistorical Catholic theology of the early and mid-twentieth century.

reaction to the Reformers can be paraphrased as: 1. purgatory exists; 2. those in purgatory suffer; 3. those on earth can help those in purgatory.

Most sermons and November columns can be understood as explaining or expanding on one or more of these aspects of Trent's teaching. Some of the following statements were debated and changed over the decades. These will be discussed in more detail later. The following is a composite summary constructed primarily from sermons in *Homiletics and Pastoral Review* and editorial columns in *Ave Maria*. This is intended to be a reflection of the thinking of most priests and laity during this time period. Each of the statements below was mentioned in at least two sources. The message was so set that a few All Souls Day columns were even re-printed years later.

Purgatory exists.

- Purgatory is not a Catholic invention.
- The doctrine is based on the practice of praying for the dead. II Mac 12: 46 states that "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins." Even if Protestants do not accept this book as part of the canon, they should accept it as an accurate history.
- Over the centuries there have been apparitions of souls in purgatory and private revelations of the reality of purgatory.
- Purgatory is reasonable. Most people are not so evil as to merit hell. However, most people die with some unforgiven sin (or at least owe the temporal punishment due to sin). Therefore, it makes sense that, after death, souls need to be purged of sin before entering heaven.
- Purgatory is the creation of God's justice and God's mercy.
- Purgatory is a consoling doctrine.

Those in purgatory suffer.

- Both Augustine and Aquinas have stated that the pains of purgatory are greater than any pain experienced on earth.
- Aquinas says that the pain of purgatory differs only from the pain of hell in duration.
- There are two types of pain in hell – the pain of loss and the pain of punishment.
- Tradition has identified the pain of punishment as fire.
- Apparitions of souls in purgatory and private revelations have described the suffering in purgatory.

- The souls in purgatory can best be described as (choose one) “suffering”, “poor”, “holy”, or “saved.”
- The souls in purgatory are helpless and can do nothing to alleviate their own suffering.

Those on earth can help those in purgatory.

- November is the month to remember those in purgatory.
- In charity, we have a duty and obligation to help the souls in purgatory.
- The Mass is the most important way to help those in purgatory.
- There are many other prayers, suffrages, practices, and ways to help those in purgatory.
- Those in purgatory are aware of what we do or do not do for them.
- By helping them now, those souls will help us when they are in heaven.

Perhaps it is also worth noting what is NOT said in the standard message. All Souls Day and the message of purgatory are not focused primarily on the individual’s attainment of salvation. Purgatory does not seem to be used primarily as a way to frighten people into moral behavior. The practices are not encouraged by the priests primarily to gain monetary offerings for Masses. Nowhere in the writings could be found the phrase “offer it up for the poor souls in purgatory.” Although the teaching of Trent is fairly simple, the “standard message” interprets that teaching as a defensive, punitive, and juridical model of purgatory.

While this model of purgatory may seem constricting to most of today’s Catholics, the standard message offered a simple and clear vision. Perhaps the most repeated part of the message is the need to help those who are helpless. “Charity” or compassion for those who have gone before us is the main message.

Popular Understanding: Homilies in *Homiletic Monthly*/ (after 1920) *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*

As the name implies, this monthly periodical provided homily outlines and examples of homilies for priests throughout the twentieth century. The homilies are written by various priests from the English speaking world. The homilies are centered on the readings for the Sundays and special feasts of the month. HPR also provided lengthier articles and series of articles on issues of importance and new developments in Catholic theology. These include issues such as controversies over the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, Biblical studies, new scholarship on the Mass, funeral rites, canon law on cemeteries, and the insights and influence of modern psychology on pastoral care. HPR also kept its readers up to date on Vatican decrees and some of the finer points of church law. HPR, along with *American Ecclesiastical Review*, functioned as professional journals for priests. In previous centuries we have seen that preaching strongly influenced the way people understood purgatory. The graphic portrayals of the suffering souls were used by preachers to motivate listeners to convert. Similar methods were used by the mission preachers of the nineteenth century.

In HPR there are time periods when sermons are provided for All Souls' Day or the Feast of All Souls and periods when the occasion is not remembered. The sermons dealing with issues concerning the souls can be grouped into three time periods. From 1908 through 1914, there is a sermon provided in every October issue for the remembrance of All Souls. Frequently the sermon for this occasion is lengthier than the sermon provided for the Feast of All Saints. For the years 1915 through 1921, no sermons for All Souls Day are presented. All Saints' Day and the Sundays of November

are remembered, but not All Souls Day. Even the Sundays in November do not give notice to purgatory or remembrance of the dead. After 1922 there are no sermons explicitly for All Souls Day, but over the next decade several Sunday sermons (for the 22-25th Sundays after Pentecost) in November focus on purgatory and actually discuss All Souls Day. Between 1932 and 1950 there are no sermons for November focusing on purgatory. The longest series of sermons on purgatory are published in the 1950's and early 1960's. In 1951, there is one November Sunday sermon that includes exhortations about methods to help the dead. Each volume from 1953 through 1963 includes a sermon for All Souls' Day. After this, purgatory is not a theme for November sermons.

So we can group the sermons into three time periods: the early All Souls Day sermons (1908-1915); the Sunday sermons (1922-1932); and the mid century sermons (1951-1963). The publication offered no explicit rationale for why sermons were not focused on All Souls Day or purgatory during the two "gaps" in time.²⁵⁸ The times do correspond with historical periods of immigration; economic Depression; and the Cold War.

1908-1914

As described in the previous section, the basic teaching of the Council of Trent, the doctrine can be divided into three aspects: 1. purgatory exists; 2. those in purgatory suffer; and 3. the prayers and works of the living can help those in purgatory. Almost all

²⁵⁸ This requires greater explanation. The earlier "gap" corresponds to the time priests were permitted to celebrate three Masses on All Souls Day. For the sake of time, the sermon may have been omitted. The later "gap" may represent a backing away some of the emphasis on duty or obligation to pray for the poor souls. It is also possible that All Souls Day was viewed as a shadow of All Saints Day during these times. It may just be an editorial decision. Perhaps the times of economic depression and world war brought more focus on this world rather than the next.

of the All Souls' Day sermons of the twentieth century contain at least some aspect of the "standard message." The seven sermons from 1908-1914²⁵⁹ are no exception, but they do offer some interesting variations. Generally, the sermons give evidence for the existence of purgatory, describe the intensity of suffering of the poor souls, and tell how to alleviate their sufferings. Many base the sermon on the reading from II Maccabees 12:46 "It is a holy and wholesome thing to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins."

Thomas White's 1908 sermon sketch begins with the sentence, "On this day few hearts are unconcerned, few eyes without tears." It is difficult to imagine Catholics today being as emotionally impacted by All Souls' Day. White's sermon contrasts how both head and heart are needed on this day. Reason, or the head, leads to a belief in purgatory and sentiment, or the heart, leads us to pray for the deceased. The 1909 translation of Cardinal Corsi's sermon is very different from the others. He takes a passage from Job to encourage reflection on one's own coffin. Reflecting on our own death will lead to living a more virtuous life. Dom Lambert in 1910 explains that praying for the dead is holy in that it makes us more aware of the holiness of God, and it is wholesome in that it helps us to overcome our own vices. In 1911 Fr. Gerrard takes an apologetic approach noting that Protestant Christians lack a way of connecting with or helping the dead. This deficiency is the cause of the then-current interest in spiritualism. If others had a healthy sense of being able to help the dead, they would not turn to charlatans. Fr. Murphy's 1913 sermon focuses on the long tradition of praying for the

²⁵⁹ Thomas White, "All Souls' Day," 9, no.1 (October, 1908): 2-3; Cardinal Corsi, "All Souls' Day: Man's Last Abode on Earth," 10, no. 1 (October, 1909): 5; Dom Lambert Nolle OSB, "All Souls," 11, no. 1 (October 1910): 27-33; Thomas J. Gerrard, "All Souls' Day," 12, no. 1 (October 1911): 30-36; Rt. Rev. Bishop J. S. Vaughan, "Feast of All Souls: Purgatory," 13, no. 1 (October 1912): 32-39; Stephen Murphy OMI, "Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, The Feast of All Souls: Suffrages for the Dead," 14, no. 1 (October 1913): 37-42; E.F. Sutcliffe SJ, "All Souls' Day: The Holy Souls," 15, no. 1 (October 1914): 23-30.

dead and notes that it is a duty and obligation to pray for the dead. If we have been commanded to pray for our enemies, it is even more important to pray for our dead friends and relatives. In 1914 Fr. Sutcliffe distinguishes the various types of suffering in purgatory and notes that there are many ways to help these souls, including the Heroic Act. Perhaps most dramatic in his recommendations to pray for the souls is Bishop Vaughan in 1912. He notes that, for many, the dead are “out of sight, out of mind.” He gives a variety of reasons to pray for those who have died. The suffering in purgatory is beyond what we have ever experienced on earth, the suffering of the souls is continual, these souls are helpless to assist themselves, they are paying a debt on a sin that was forgiven, and they may reciprocate out of love. They may be helpless, but they are aware of who is actually helping them. The bishop makes the feeling of being watched very real.

They (our friends and relatives in purgatory) are keenly alive to the fact that our prayers and penances, our almsdeeds and our Communion can bring them rest and solace, joy and peace, and a speedy end to their torments, but they also see that, for the most part, we seldom give the matter a thought, or trouble ourselves about them at all. What must be the surprise, when they note the indifference and coldness of the many near relations and dearly loved companions, whom they have left behind them. What must be their feelings, when they think that instead of helping them, these so-called friends are intent only on their own amusement and enjoyment? and that those who have inherited their possessions, and have been enriched by their legacies and gifts have scarcely a thought to bestow upon them in the hour of their greatest need!

So this might be an example of instilling “Catholic guilt” and would be considered highly manipulative by today’s standards, but it does raise the issue of one’s responsibilities for the dead.

Taken together, this early twentieth century group of homilies focuses on the importance of assisting the dead through prayer. This is couched within a sense of

connection with the dead. For immigrants these connections may have eased the sense of alienation in the American culture. Praying for the dead gave a sense of belonging and identity not found among the Protestant neighbors.

1922-1932

Similar themes occur in five sermons that were published between 1922 and 1932.²⁶⁰ In 1922 M. Columbkille Clasby discusses purgatory as the logical outcome of the doctrine of the communion of saints. The Church Militant is yearly reminded to pray for the Church Suffering. Clasby then describes the meaning and doctrine of purgatory and what can be done to help those in purgatory. Richard Cookson in 1924, more briefly than Bishop Vaughan in 1912, reminds his listeners that their friends and relatives are suffering in purgatory and seek help. Cookson calls on his listeners to make amends for “past apathy, neglect, and forgetfulness, by praying, not once in a while, but every day of our lives.” He lists the *De Profundis* and many indulgenced prayers that can aid the souls in purgatory. J. S. Lineen’s 1928 homily is not actually about purgatory. It is about preparing for one’s own death. “Man was created to prepare for death.” Lineen urges his listeners to seek the “death of the just.” In 1929 Thomas Chetwood admits that the Church says little about purgatory. Chetwood couches purgatory in the context of the love and mercy of Christ and the frailty of human nature. His approach is more imaginative and less juridical than previous homilists. He points to monuments as examples of the natural instinct to remember the dead. He states that the Church offers a

²⁶⁰ M. Columbkille Clasby, “Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost: Purgatory,” 23, no. 1 (October 1922): 89-93; Richard Cookson, “Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost: Our duty to the Dead,” 25, no. 1 (October 1924): 70-75; J.S. Lineen, “Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost: The Point of Death,” 29, no. 1 (October 1928): 86-89; Thomas B. Chetwood SJ, “Twenty-Sixth Sunday after Pentecost: Purgatory,” 30, no. 1 (October 1929): 92-98; A. den Brinker, “Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost: Mass for the Deceased,” 32, no. 1 (October 1931): 85-89; Lambert Nolle OSB, “Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost: The Practical Significance of the Funeral Rites,” 32, no. 12 (September 1932): 1329-1333.

consoling doctrine. Using a variety of metaphors, he says that God's love surrounds those who have passed beyond the thin veil of death. We are asked to send our love to those who have died. Their love returns to us. They see life now as it really is. He concludes with a prayer that emphasizes the communion of the living and the dead:

O blessed souls, just as our love can reach you through that love of God that binds us all together on both sides of the grave, so your love can reach us through that same all-supporting, all-uniting love of God. Show your love for us by making us see with your eyes the things that are all around us. Borne by that Omnipresent Love, may your love float back to us, giving us the wisdom and appreciation that will bring us safe through this short journey of time to the realms of peace and bliss which is your possession for all eternity!

The language is focused on love rather than duty or obligation.

A. den Brinker explains the effects of the "Mass for the Deceased" in 1932. The sacrificial character of Mass makes it the most powerful means of helping the poor souls. The Mass is offered for both the living and the dead and never fails in its good effect for the dead. It is an easy obligation to have Masses offered for deceased friends and relatives.

In 1933 Lambert Nolle OSB discusses the ways in which the funeral rites stir our faith, hope, and charity. Contrasting with the scenes of terror connected with the last judgment in the Sequence of the Mass, the prayers of the funeral rite give hope.

In this time between the wars, many of the themes of assisting the dead remain the same as in the earlier period. However, as Joseph P. Chinnici described²⁶¹, this time was one of centralization of devotional life. The devotions shifted from being centered on the neighborhood parish to diocesan and national movements. Chinnici cites records from

²⁶¹ Joseph P. Chinnici OFM, "The Catholic Community at Prayer: 1926-1976," in *Habits of Devotion: Catholic Religious Practice in Twentieth Century America*, ed. James M. O'Toole (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004): 9-88.

the retreat, Eucharistic, and Sodality movements as evidence of this changing social base. He notes that through Catholic Action the popular devotional expressions became more aligned with “institutional structures, organizational hierarchies, diocesan and national secretaries.”²⁶²

Between 1933 and 1951, the number of November sermons varied. Some years might have homilies for all the Sundays and All Saints Day. Other years would only cover two of the Sundays. During that time, HPR began periodically having guest homilists writing homilies for the entire month rather than a single Sunday or feast day. So the homilies often connected with one another. Even some of the November “sets” of homilies that discussed death (e.g. 1934 -death/ resurrection of the body/ hell/ heaven; 1945 – heaven/ the end of the world) did not include discussions of purgatory or lengthy admonishing to pray for the souls in purgatory.

1951-1963

In the 1950’s sermons for All Souls Day re-emerged.²⁶³ In 1951 there was a return to the theme of using November to pray for the poor souls in purgatory. Using the gospel of Matthew’s story of the death of the ruler’s daughter, John P. Sullivan OP reminds listeners that, like Jesus, they have the power to raise souls to new life. With November approaching, Catholics are encouraged to use the power they have through

²⁶² Ibid., 52.

²⁶³ John P. Sullivan OP, “Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost: Power over Life and Death,” 51, no. 12 (September 1951): 1112-1114; Vincent P. McCorry SJ, “All Souls Day: The Souls in Purgatory,” 56, no. 1 (October 1955): 48-50; John J. Keating CSP, “Feast of All Souls: Remember the Dead,” 57, no. 1 (October 1956): 57-58; Jerome Dukette OFM Conv., “From Dust to Dust: Feast of All Souls,” 58, no. 1 (October 1957): 73-75; Joseph Minihan, “Mystery of God’s Justice and Mercy,” 59, no. 1 (October 1958): 63-64; William B Faherty SJ, “The Poor Souls are Saved: Feast of All Souls,” 60, no. 1 (October 1959): 56-57; Leslie Rumble MSC, “Prayers for the Departed: Feast of All Souls,” 61, no. 1 (October 1960): 61-63; Robert Voight, “Holy Souls in Purgatory: All Souls’ Day,” 62, no. 1 (October 1961): 62-64; Charles W. Paris, “Death’s Lesson: Hope- All Souls’ Day,” 63, no. 1 (October 1962): 56-58; John E. Coogan SJ, “‘When No Man Can Work’: Feast of All Souls,” 64, no. 1 (October 1963): 64-66; Cyprian Truss OFM Cap., “Heaven for Eternity: Feast of All Saints,” 65, no. 1 (October 1964): 70-71.

rosaries, indulgenced prayers, Masses, and penances to ransom souls and make friends with the poor souls.

From 1955 through 1963 there were, for the first time since 1914, homilies written for All Souls' Day. Throughout this time three Masses were still being offered on All Souls' Day and the "toties quoties" plenary indulgence could still be gained from church visits. Many of these sermons sounded very similar to the message of previous years. The basic message again can be condensed as, "Here are scriptural, tradition-based, and reason-based reasons for the Catholic belief in purgatory. The souls there are suffering from both loss and external pain. They are helpless to help themselves. We can help them through our prayers and good works."

In some ways some of these homilists sounded more defensive than previous years. Several emphasized that purgatory was "dogma." Several noted that Protestants were more open to the teaching of purgatory. Leslie Rumble, in 1960, cautioned against "sentimentalists" who held that departed souls go straight to heaven.

Several wrestled with ways to explain the pain of purgatory. Although no one in this group stated that the pain was literally "fire", some did say that fire was the best image for the pain of purgatory. John Keating emphasized the pain of loss rather than sensory pain in 1956. He used the painful separation of the newly married couple with the husband going off to war as an analogy for the pain of purgatory.

The list of suggested ways to help the souls often included the rosary and always the Mass. In the final year, 1963, John E. Coogan SJ, a labor priest reminded listeners about the "heroic act" of offering all good deeds and indulgences for the poor souls. None

of the homilists painted detailed pictures of the loved ones who were in heaven or used strongly emotional appeals.

However, some homilists indicated some changes in how purgatory was imagined. In 1955 Vincent P. McCorry suggested that November, rather than being called the Month of the Holy Souls, would better be called the month of the Communion of Saints. After giving some of the traditional teaching, he stated that November 2 is not a day of mourning because the holy souls or poor souls are already saved.

Two homilies include telling people that the current theological consensus was that if a person lived a good life and received Extreme Unction, he or she would escape purgatory. Two homilists point out that it is more correct to call those in purgatory “holy souls” than “poor souls.” The clearest statement of change in attitude or imagining of purgatory can be found in the 1959 homily by William B. Faherty, SJ. Most of his proof comes from the prayers found within the liturgies of the day. Although somber vestments, no flowers, and the chanting of the *Dies Irae* created a sad atmosphere, the readings, the prayers, and the teaching of the day indicated a different reality for Faherty.

We seem to think of purgatory as the back porch of hell rather than the front porch of heaven. True, these souls are suffering a terrible pain of loss, but it is not the permanent hopeless loss which the damned know. It is not eternal darkness, but a short summer night which will soon give way to eternal day.... The Scripture passages chosen by the Church for the three Masses urge not sorrow, but hope and confidence.

Faherty quotes Paul’s “Death where is thy sting?” from the first Mass of the day; Judas Maccabees’ hope for remission of sin from the second Mass; and the resurrection promises in all three Gospels.

This set of Cold War era sermons usher in the disappearance of purgatory. Keating had emphasized the pain of loss rather than “fire”, McCorry called November the

month of the Communion of Saints, and Faherty imagined purgatory connected to heaven rather than hell. These all differed from the standard message. Taken together the homilists presented a new model of purgatory. By re-interpreting, the moral obligation to pray for the dead was removed.

Narratives:

Apparitions, Ghosts, and Spiritualism

Closely related to the popular understanding of purgatory are the narratives used to support that understanding. We can find in the early part of the twentieth century remnants of the stories from the Middle Ages of souls released from purgatory to plead for prayers. None of the “ghost stories” were reported to have occurred in the twentieth century.

Ave Maria is the only periodical studied to regularly report apparitions in support of the doctrine of purgatory. The stories frequently have someone from purgatory returning to plead for Masses or prayers to relieve them from their suffering. Even in the 1865 first volume of *Ave Maria*, there are stories of those who receive direct communication from the souls in purgatory. The issues immediately preceding²⁶⁴ and immediately following²⁶⁵ November 2 present several devotional articles on All Souls’ Day and prayers for the dead.

Both issues contain narratives about visits from the souls of the deceased to appeal for prayers. The November issue, in the children’s section of the magazine,

²⁶⁴ “Marie Denise, of Devotions for the Dead” 373-375 and “Children’s Department: Little Children, forget not the Souls in Purgatory” *AM* 1, no. 24 (October 28, 1865): 383- 384.

²⁶⁵ “Children’s Department: Intercourse Between the Two Worlds” *AM* 1, no. 25 (November 4, 1865): 399-400.

contains an article about the private revelations of St. Catherine of Bologna. She had heard souls complaining that friends had forgotten to pray for them. The October issue reports a type of “ghost story” from 1640. A 16 year old girl, living in a boarding school in Luxemburg, began to see apparitions of the deceased sister of her father’s first wife. The visitor appeared throughout the octave of All Saints, progressively communicating more to the girl. The apparition eventually revealed its identity as a deceased relative and asked for three Masses said to fulfill a vow taken in life. On a later visit the apparition asked for alms to be given to the poor to compensate for an unfulfilled vow to make a pilgrimage.

The October issue also presents the story of “Marie Denise” from the 1600’s in Turin. Marie had been given the special calling to devote herself to the service of the souls in purgatory. She was regularly aware of being accompanied by many of the souls from purgatory. Even as she took vows to enter a convent of the Visitation order, souls watched. Sister Marie Denise told others that she preferred to communicate with the dead more than with the living. She spent many years praying and offering sacrifice for one soul she had seen suffering in purgatory. He was a prince who had been killed in a duel. Her “long martyrdom” eventually yielded a vision of the Prince, “slightly raised above the bottom of the burning abyss.”

Until 1924 several similar stories recorded encounters or apparitions of souls from purgatory. These seem to be ghost stories with a message for Catholics. Like the 1865 reports, these apparitions are second hand reports from an earlier century. All occur in

Europe, mostly in France. All involve an appeal for more prayers or Masses to be said to alleviate the sufferings of the souls in purgatory.

One story²⁶⁶ reported by Abbé Jean Hay told about Louise Chauvieres who died in 1873 at the age of 66 in Normandy, France. Before dying she had made her husband promise to have Masses said and prayers offered for her. When her husband, Jean Senechal, did not follow through on this promise, he began to hear noises and see shadows around the house. Eventually, Louise appeared to him to ask for the Masses and prayers. Despite her appearing in fire, Jean recognized Louise and followed her instructions to request the money for the Masses from their daughter. Louise left burn marks on his nightcap where she had touched as proof that the request came from her.

Imbedded within a lengthier article on purgatory are two stories²⁶⁷ of apparitions from purgatory. One story comes from the time of St. Bernard. A brother who had died at the Abbey of Clairvaux appeared to his brothers to thank him for his deliverance from purgatory. He commended the sacrifice of the Mass as a means of deliverance. In the same article, a man in a French neighborhood had seen his deceased father who encouraged him to go to the local parish mission to pray for him.

Another story²⁶⁸ involved a beatified woman. Blessed Mary of the Angels died in 1714 and was beatified by Pope Pius IX in 1865. She prayed to let her suffer the equivalent of the pains needed for the release of the souls in purgatory. After bouts of pain and illness, souls would appear to her to thank her. Her spiritual director could temporarily command her to be cured out of holy obedience.

²⁶⁶ "A Visitant from Purgatory." *AM* 71, no. 20 (November 12, 1910): 629.

²⁶⁷ Anna T. Sadlier, "The Lessons of the Hour," *AM* 73, no. 21 (November 18, 1911): 654-656.

²⁶⁸ "A Benefactress of the Holy Souls." *AM* 77, no. 20 (November 15, 1913): 628-629.

One story is retold from a book by Dr. Lapponi, the physician for both Popes Leo XIII and Pius X. In 1683, a knight of the Holy Sepulchre, Domenica Denza was awakened by a voice and the appearance of a woman who had recently died. She begged him to let her husband know that she needed Masses said for her. As proof she left the burned impression of her hand on his bedcover. The handprint was later matched with the woman's glove to prove the size of the hand. Also a twist of the little finger verified a defect of hers.

One article²⁶⁹ chronicles the experiences of the Belgian Redemptorist Sister Mary Seraphine from September to December of 1870. After the death of her father in September, she began to hear his voice asking her to take pity on him. He would eventually appear to her in flames. Throughout the months she would find out that her saintly father suffered in purgatory for impatience and other faults. One was opposing her entrance into the convent. He requested masses and Stations of the Cross. He was permitted to visit his daughter because of the good works he had performed in his life. On the evening of All Souls' Day, he appeared and was comforted that many souls had gone to heaven that day. At Midnight Mass on Christmas her father appeared to Sister Seraphine for the last time. He appeared "resplendent as the sun at noon."

A story²⁷⁰ that seems to fit into this genre in the sense of personal testimony is told by "Thamonda", a convert to Catholicism. She tells the story of her brother's animosity to the Catholic Church and how she was able to obtain his conversion. During a retreat in a convent at Malta, she confided her concerns to one of the sisters. The sister told the convert that she would recommend the intention to a fellow sister who had died

²⁶⁹ "Apparitions of a Soul from Purgatory." *AM* 16, no. 22 (November 25, 1922): 684-687.

²⁷⁰ Thamonda. "The Prisoners of the King." *AM* 20, no. 22 (November 29, 1924): 681-684.

two years previously. The sister recommended entrusting your deepest concerns to the intercession of the Holy Souls. Within a year “Thamonda’s” brother went through a miraculous healing of a medical condition and within the next year converted to Catholicism and entered the priesthood. This is a change from earlier apparition tales. Now the focus is as much on the Holy Souls as intercessors as being in need of prayer.

The only story about an apparition in the United States was found within a later article in 1942 in AER. Joseph Stang reported that the founder of the Latrobe Pa. Benedictine monastery, Fr. Boniface Wimmer, wrote about a novice in 1859. The novice had an encounter with a deceased monk who needed his seventeen Masses, which he had neglected to say, to be said in order for him to escape the suffering of purgatory. The vision continued throughout November until a few days before Christmas.²⁷¹

Overlapping the same time period are articles expressing alarm at the growing phenomenon of “Spiritualism.”²⁷² It seems that a popular interest, especially in England, but also moving into the United States, was the use of “mediums” and séances to connect with the dead. This is an interesting contrast to the “apparitions” above. Often the editors acknowledge that there is a human need to make connection with those who have been separated by death. The writers of *Ave Maria* are quick to condemn spiritualism as a dangerous path leading Catholics away from the Church. At times the articles state that séances have been shown to be fraudulent. Some HPR sermons also mention that purgatory is a better connection with the dead than spiritualistic practices.

²⁷¹ Joseph Stang, “S and C: Helping the Poor Souls,” *ER* 107, no. 5 (November 1942): 371-376.

²⁷² “Not a Negligible Danger,” *AM* 64, no. 22 (November 27, 1909): 691-692; “A Great and Growing Evil,” *AM* 26, no.18(October 29, 1927): 565; G.K. Chesterton, “A Don in Purgatory,” *AM* 4, no. 21 (November 18, 1916): 641-643.

One cautionary article from *AM* was a book review by G.K. Chesterton. Although never naming the book, Chesterton criticized the author, A.C. Benson, for attempting to write about the afterlife without theology and without any sense of Christian revelation. Apparently Benson attempted to give an imaginative journey of a soul based on scientific understandings of the universe, including heaven and hell.

A 1931 article contrasted “religious cults” that promise communication between the living and the dead with the doctrine of purgatory. The human need to connect with separated loved ones makes people susceptible to fraudulent spirit communications. The communication with those in purgatory is based on faith.²⁷³ The advantage to praying for the dead is that the prayers help them whereas the séance does not and is open to evil spirits.

In an increasingly scientific and secular culture, the ghost stories may seem out of place. In some ways they can be understood as a reaction to the rationalism and scientism of the twentieth century.²⁷⁴ The stories reinforce the basic teaching of the communion of saints. There is a connection between the living and the dead. The living can help the dead and vice versa.

²⁷³ P.J.C. “The Mercy of Purgatory” *AM* 34, no. 19 (November 14, 1931): 629.

²⁷⁴ T.J. Jackson Lears in *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981) offers an analysis of the rise of “occultism” in turn of the century U.S. culture. He finds the interest in saints and ghosts to be rooted in the same need for intense feeling. “It is possible to see this same dual significance in the waves of popular occultism which have repeatedly washed over the American cultural landscape from the turn of the century to our own time. On the one hand, satanist cults and horror films offer mass-produced thrills to society satiated with routine; on the other they reflect a widespread suspicion that modern enlightenment can never fully banish the terror and strangeness from the universe. Theological formulae have faded but the impulse behind them persists. Popular occultism, however simpleminded or sleazy in its expression, embodies longings which can only be called religious. Like contemporary occultism, the late-nineteenth-century fascination with archaic fantasy and myth suggested an inchoate protest against the disenchantment of the world, a muted insistence that mystery could survive in a rationalized universe.” (173)

The Great Narrative: Dante's Multifaceted Imagination

In contrast to the ghost stories, with little historical backing, the poetry of Dante was a classic reflection on the meaning of Christian life. Soon after being elected pope, Benedict XV, in November 1914, issued his first encyclical letter, *Ad beatissimi Apostolorum*. This letter called for a reduction of the struggle, initiated by his predecessor, between factions within the Church over Modernism.²⁷⁵ Toward the end of his pontificate, in April 1921, Pope Benedict XV delivered the encyclical *In Praeclara Summorum*. In anticipation of the sixth centenary of the death of Dante Aligheri the pope wrote the letter to praise Dante and to claim him for the Catholic Church. In keeping with Benedict's efforts to bring peace within the Church, and perhaps with an openness to *ressourcement*, the letter resolved an ongoing dispute over the orthodoxy of Dante. Theologically, Dante's poem was easily within Catholic teaching on Mary, Scripture and Tradition, salvation, and other major doctrines.²⁷⁶

The letter also may have been a response to those outside of the Church who had admired Dante's work without acknowledging his foundation in Catholicism. Near the turn of the century some U.S. authors who had rejected much of the rational and mechanistic tone of modern life found Dante to be an example of a simpler and more pure view of life. Dante brought morality and art together. Some had viewed his criticisms of some popes as the foreshadowing of the Reformation. This romanticizing of Dante was only possible by ignoring the scholastic and Catholic structure of his work.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁵ Richard P. McBrien, *Lives of the Popes: The Pontiffs from Peter to John Paul II* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), 355-358.

²⁷⁶ Patrick J. Carroll CSC, "Dante's Catholicity," 29, no. 16 (April 20, 1929): 520-525.

²⁷⁷ T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 155-160.

Ave Maria and *Ecclesiastical Review* published lengthy articles about Dante between 1909 and 1930. A few years later *Oratre Fratres* also published articles based on the *Purgatorio*. Dante's *Purgatorio* gave an opportunity to enrich thinking on purgatory and related topics by approaching issues from different disciplines. Historical, literary, theological, and liturgical scholars, as well as devotional writers, all contributed perspectives on Dante and his work that pushed the boundaries of the very tightly crafted "standard message" on purgatory.

Several factors converged to bring about the resurgence of interest in the great Florentine poet and author. One was the fascination with things medieval. The consensus in many quarters of the Catholic Church was that the thirteenth was the greatest century and the apex of Christianity. Another related factor was the emphasis on Thomism and neo-Scholasticism.²⁷⁸ Dante's imaginative portrayal of the afterlife balanced the rationalistic interpretation of Thomas' thought. Some articles emphasized the similarities between the *Summa* and the *Divine Comedy*. Other articles pointed out some of the differences.

Where Dante ran afoul of some critics was his criticism of some popes. Dante's less famous works separated temporal and spiritual authority in the church. In the hell of his *Inferno*, Dante had happened upon three popes. These writings made him popular among some Protestants and suspect among some of the Catholic hierarchy.

²⁷⁸ Philip Gleason, "American Catholics and the Mythic Middle Ages," in *Keeping the Faith: American Catholicism Past and Present* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987): 11-34. Originally published in *Catholic Historical Review*, 1971.

Ave Maria

If we look at the way purgatory was often portrayed in the U.S., it is interesting that Dante was praised as a genius for his portrayal of the afterlife. *Ave Maria*²⁷⁹ did emphasize that the souls in Dante's purgatory were being assisted by the prayers, alms, Masses, and supplications of the living. However, Dante's purgatory was not as frightful as that presented by some of the contemporary Catholic preachers. Dante's purgatory was a place of music, companionship, clean air, and hope. The pain of purgatory was balanced with examples of virtue. Dante's purgatory was not the purgatory of the rigorist preachers of the nineteenth and early 20th century.

An early contrast to Dante's *Purgatorio* was *The Revelation of the Monk of Evesham*. This is one of the few books that escaped Henry VIII's destruction of the great monastic libraries. Dated 1196, the work is very similar to Dante's work of 1192. It provided an allegory with a listing of the consequences of moral failings. Apparently the surviving text is introduced by a Protestant author who recommends the work on literary grounds, but condemns the doctrine of purgatory.²⁸⁰

After a period of illness and near death, a monk of Evesham had prayed for the grace to experience the condition of the souls in purgatory. In a vision, he is led by St. Nicholas through the outer concentric circles of purgatory to the center of Paradise. The three circles of purgatory have different punishments corresponding to the sins of the inhabitants. The monk encounters bishops, knights, kings, monks, and craftsmen. Each is

²⁷⁹ "Dante," 2, no. 20 (Nov 13, 1915): 609-616; "Dante and Saint Thomas," Cardinal Mercier, trans. Roy Temple House 13, no. 4 (Jan 22, 1921): 97-100; "Maurice Barres Speaks of Dante," 14, no. 5 (July 30, 1921): 146-147; P.L. Connellan, "Dante's Influence on Art," 14, no. 4 (Oct 1, 1921): 417-425; Anna T. Sadlier, "Celebrations of the Year," 14, no. 26 (Dec 24, 1921): 808-813; "The Poet of Purgatory," 18, no. 18 (Nov 3, 1923): 545-548; L.A.K. "More Honor to Dante," 28, no. 26 (Dec 29, 1928): 821; Patrick J. Carroll CSC, "Dante's Catholicity," 29, no. 16 (April 20, 1929): 520-525.

²⁸⁰ H. Cecil Pool, "An English Divine Comedy," 71, no. 20 (November 12, 1910): 609-614.

surprisingly either rewarded or punished. *Ave Maria* takes this book as support for the doctrine of purgatory. It is noteworthy that the Monk's view of purgatory is much more punitive than Dante's.

Ave Maria, as the name implies, fostered a devotion to Mary.²⁸¹ In November issues Mary is frequently referred to as the Queen of Purgatory. Almost all of the articles discussing Mary and purgatory reference Dante's *Purgatorio*. The articles point out that Mary's name is more frequently used than any other in Dante's work. Another exemplary touch is that all of *Purgatorio*'s portraits of Mary are based in the Gospel stories. In the middle book of the *Divine Comedy* Dante had portrayed purgatory as an island-mountain with seven levels. The souls have to climb through each level, doing penance for each of the seven capital or deadly sins. On each level Mary is presented as the exemplar of the virtue that counters the sin.

For those struggling with pride, a sculpture of Mary's fiat gives an example of humility.²⁸² For the envious, Mary's notice that "They have no wine" shows compassion.²⁸³ In contrast to the sin of wrath, Mary is silent after hearing that Jesus was performing his Father's business in the Temple.²⁸⁴ The sinners on the fourth level must run to overcome sloth. Mary's haste in visiting her cousin Elizabeth exemplifies zeal or

²⁸¹ Emily Hickey, "Our Lady and the Holy Souls" 67, no. 19 (Nov 7, 1908): 592-593; "Mary as the Model of Christian Virtues in Dante's 'Purgatorio,'" trans. from *Der Katholik*, 75, no. 18 (Nov 2, 1912): 545-561 and 75, no. 19 (Nov 9, 1912): 587-591; "Mary, Queen of Purgatory" 79, no. 21 (Nov 21, 1914): 641-645; Darley Dale, "St. Thomas Aquinas, Dante, and Our Lady," 2, no. 6 (Aug 7, 1915): 161-165; "A Poet's Prayer," 4, no. 19 (Nov 4, 1916): 597; Emily Hickey, "Christ's Mother and the Holy Souls," 24, no. 20 (Nov 13, 1926): 627-630[A reprint of the 1908 article].

²⁸² Although not referenced in the article, the passage can be found in Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum, (New York: Everyman's Library, Alfred A. Knopf, 1995) Canto X:40-55, p. 260.

²⁸³ Ibid., Canto XIII:28-29, p. 274.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., Canto XV: 87- 93, p. 285.

industry.²⁸⁵ The fifth level purifies those who have allowed greed or avarice to control them. Dante shows Mary's contentment with the poor lodging at Bethlehem to counter greed.²⁸⁶ The wedding at Cana again provides an example of virtue. Rather than being gluttonous, Mary thought of others and showed temperance.²⁸⁷ On the final level of lust or impurity, Mary states "I know not man." as a model of chastity.²⁸⁸

*Ecclesiastical Review*²⁸⁹

John T. Slattery wrote one of the most scholarly articles associated with the topic of purgatory from the *Ecclesiastical Review*.²⁹⁰ The article contains a wealth of footnotes and employs a sophisticated historical analysis. It is an amazing article when considering that the Modernist crisis had occurred only a few years prior. Slattery is demonstrating that a faithful scholar, the "supreme poet of Catholicity," can be critical of church politics and still maintain orthodoxy.

Slattery begins and ends the article by referring to the recent encyclical of Pope Benedict XV on Dante. As mentioned earlier, the pope had offered his own tribute on the 600th anniversary of the death of Dante, asserting that "Dante is ours."

²⁸⁵ Ibid., Canto XVIII: 97-100, p. 301.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., Canto XX: 19-24, pp. 308-309.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., Canto XXII: 142-144, p. 321.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., CCanto XXV: 127-128, p. 334.

²⁸⁹ Joseph G. Hubbert C.M., "*For the Upbuilding of the Church*": *The Reverend Herman Joseph Heuser, D.D., 1851-1933. (Volumes I-III)* (Ph.D. dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 1992). This offers extensive background on the *American Ecclesiastical Review*. Fr. Heuser, the founding editor is presented as attempting to steer the AER through extremes in several controversies. He also was dedicated to attracting writers that would keep his readers up to date to theological thought and movements while loyal to Rome. Although he was not editor during much of the time here, the articles discussed fit with this policy.

²⁹⁰ John T. Slattery, "Dante's Attitude toward the Church and the Clergy of His Time," 65, no. 3 (September 1921): 223-247.

Slattery deftly defends Dante against all arguments questioning his orthodoxy. He shows that Dante's book *De Monarchia*, which contended that the authority of the church should be restricted to purely spiritual matters, was placed on Trent's Index because it would be a dangerous book in the hands of the church's enemies, not because of heresy. Slattery conceded that Dante had made historical mistakes, but those did not make his work heretical.

Dante had also been critical of abuses of the priesthood. Slattery demonstrates that this was based on a high standard he held for the clergy. In the *Inferno*, St. Bonaventure condemns the Franciscans, St. Thomas Aquinas condemns the Dominicans, and St. Benedict condemns the Benedictines for their degeneracy. Slattery gives examples of how members of each order, at the time of Dante, had strayed from the original mission of the founder.

Slattery also provides a detailed context for Dante's condemnation of three different popes. Dante wrote in a time of great political intrigue for the papacy. Nepotism and the politically motivated relocation to Avignon gave grounds for criticizing some popes. Another pope had been condemned by Dante on the basis of misinformation that had circulated at the time. Again, Slattery conceded that Dante was not an accomplished historian.

One final section of Slattery's article asserted the genius of Dante's choice of "heroes." Neither Thomas Aquinas nor Bonaventure had yet been canonized, but Dante extolled the virtues of each. Slattery praised Dante for joining dogmatism and mysticism.

Slattery analyzed how Dante's image of purgatory was shaped and certainly peopled by the concerns of his day. This analysis gives an understanding to why *Purgatorio* continues to enlighten readers and how much of our understanding of purgatory is a work of the imagination. It is understandable that Dante's work gives new generations an opportunity to speculate on how purgatory might be re-imagined in their own time.

Whereas Slattery had defended Dante on the grounds of his historical context, Robert R. Bandini defended Dante more on the grounds of his literary and theological context.²⁹¹ Bandini says that Dante was speaking metaphorically and poetically rather than literally. His article focuses on Dante's orthodoxy both in regard to sacramental penance and the status of souls in purgatory. Another claim of this article is that Dante differs with Thomas Aquinas on two issues to adopt the "consensus fidelium" or "consensus theologorum."

Dante's image of purgatory differs from some of his contemporaries in that he clearly distinguishes purgatory and hell. Thomas may have been influenced by the more fearful images of hell. Whereas popular concepts of purgatory involved fiery dungeons, Dante presented purgatory as a mountain surrounded by a gentle sea. Climbing the mountain required exertion, but not necessarily torture. Bandini considers Dante's image to be "revolutionary."

²⁹¹ Robert R. Bandini, "The Orthodoxy of Dante's Purgatory," *ER* 83, no. 5 (November 1930): 463-473.

Bandini shows that Dante had a detailed theological knowledge. He knows that penance without divine grace is insufficient to allow entrance into purgatory. Dante emphasizes that purgatory includes not only divine justice, but also divine love. “Dante emphasizes the idea of refinement, or purification, accomplished not so much through suffering as through the yearnings of love. The path of Purgatory is but the laborious quest for spiritual beauty.”

Dante also communicates the importance of prayer for the souls in purgatory. In the poem, the spirits continually ask for prayers from the living. The souls cannot pray for themselves. A related area in which Dante disagrees with Thomas concerns prayers of the dead for the living. The souls in purgatory are always praying for those on earth. Aquinas held the opinion that only a “superior” may pray for an “inferior.” Dante held to a more popular belief that the dead can still help those in earth.

A further area of disagreement between the two giants of the time deals with the knowledge that souls in purgatory had of the events on earth. Thomas thought that the souls in purgatory lacked even a general knowledge of the happenings on earth. Dante thought that the souls in purgatory had detailed information about the past, present, and future. The disagreements between the two are within the area of theological opinion, and not defined church doctrine.

Oratre Fratres/ Worship

In a trio of articles (March 17, 1940; January 26, 1941: April, 1950) Dunstan Tucker OSB examined the influence of the main liturgies of the Catholic Church on the *Divine Comedy* of Dante Alighieri. Tucker contended that even Catholic commentators

on Dante had missed the significant ways that the liturgy had shaped Dante's work. The first of Tucker's articles presents evidence that Dante's imagination was strongly shaped by the liturgy of Holy Week. Tucker explained the lacunae in the work of previous Dante commentators because "the golden age of the liturgy was already in its decline in Dante's time." In Tucker's view Dante had been one of those "whom the liturgy had transformed and made whole and elevated." As evidence, Tucker presents Dante's affection for the local cathedral, his quotes from parts of the Mass, and his knowledge of the Compline service. What Tucker finds most striking is Dante's use of the liturgical calendar to structure his work. Dante enters hell on Good Friday and emerges into purgatory on Easter Sunday morning. The *Exsultet* prayer of the (at that time) pre-dawn Easter morning service shapes Dante's description of his entrance into purgatory.²⁹²

A second article explains Dante's use of baptism as a symbol of redemption in the *Purgatorio*. The scene in which Dante's face is washed with dew should be interpreted allegorically as baptism. The literal interpretation of the *Purgatorio* is that Dante is describing the afterlife. Tucker shows that, using the literary devices of the thirteenth century, the poem should be interpreted allegorically. In this way the primary meaning is not about what will happen after death, but what should be happening during this life.

The *Purgatorio* represents life on earth; the Christian life is continually purgational, for baptism does not take away the inclination to sin. Dante himself had sinned in life, and like the rest of mankind, was obliged to practice penance in order to obtain mastery over his innate evil tendencies.²⁹³

²⁹² Dunstan Tucker OSB, "The Divine Comedy and the Liturgy of Holy Week," *Orationes Fratres* 14 (March 17, 1940) :204.

²⁹³ Ibid. "Baptism in Dante's *Purgatorio*." *Orationes Fratres* 15 (January 26, 1941) :116.

The final article by Tucker discusses in more detail the influence of the Holy Saturday liturgy. Prior to the eleventh century the activities of Holy Saturday (today's Easter Vigil) happened before sunrise on Easter morning. This was based on the Gospel accounts of the Resurrection. When Dante arrives on the shore of purgatory, he first looks up at the beauty of the stars. Tucker shows that this is an imaginative rendering of the Holy Saturday epistle which tells listeners to "seek the things that are above...." Dante imaginatively adapts the liturgy to his story.

A few insights can be gained from Tucker's analysis. First, the liturgical movement was trying to retrieve a pre-medieval "golden age of liturgy." Many of the liturgical innovations dealing with the dead came during the Middle Ages and after the Reformation. They were trying to restore a liturgy which transformed and inspired individuals. The question remains as to accuracy of their history and the effectiveness of this movement. Second, Dante the imaginative "creator" of purgatory had intended the mountain of purgatory to be an allegory for the present life. Many have read Dante literally, going against the intentions of the author. Third, Dante's view of purgatory is connected with the Holy Saturday liturgy which is the most triumphant, celebratory, and hope-filled of all of the Catholic liturgies. Purgatory is a doctrine that is unabashedly positive. Fourth, liturgy shapes imagination which in turn shapes life and liturgy.

The nineteenth and early twentieth century ghost stories had presented a literalist understanding of purgatory. These stories supported the "Standard Message". In contrast, when the articles on Dante are considered together, they give an expanded view of purgatory and *Purgatorio*. There is less emphasis on the suffering of souls in purgatory

and more on the process of growing in holiness. *Ave Maria's* devotional reading of the text finds a positive view of purgatory and a rich understanding of Mary. The articles in *Ecclesiastical Review* read *Purgatorio* in both its historical and theological context and yield insights into the Church's need for continual reform, the place of Thomas, and the role of imagination. The articles in *Orate Fratres* read *Purgatorio* through the lens of liturgy to find that the text is intended as an allegory for this life rather than a literal description of the afterlife. While the imaginative narrative and visionary literature would be dismissed in later years, much of the way it was being interpreted was leading to a more positive understanding of the doctrine of purgatory.

Theological reflections:

Debates on the Pains of Purgatory and Hell

Many aspects of the Standard Message conflicted with the thinking of the twentieth century. The second statement of Trent may have been the most contested during the time period being studied. The Council of Trent did not provide details about the intensity or duration of suffering in purgatory. The statement did not even give the purpose of the suffering. In a sense the details were then left to the theological and devotional imagination. The debate over the pains of purgatory involved issues such as the authority of theological opinion, the importance of theological consensus, the role of private revelation, and the attributes of God.

One side was generally referred to as "rigorist." These writers followed Thomas Aquinas in saying that the suffering in purgatory was the same as the suffering in hell, but differed in duration. These writers located purgatory closer to hell than heaven and emphasized that God's sense of justice required sinners to make satisfaction for the

temporal punishment attached to sin. The “milder” view of purgatorial pain could cite Bonaventure and Bellarmine in support of their position. These often appealed to the visions of St. Catherine of Genoa. She had agreed with Thomas that the pain of purgatory was greater than any imagined on earth, but the predominant experience in purgatory was joy. The greatest pain was loss of God. These writers located purgatory closer to heaven than to hell and emphasized that God’s love was the agent of purification of sinners.

An example of the rigorist position can be found in a 1926 catechism by the Christian Brothers reviewed by the *Ecclesiastical Review*. As a test of the *Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, No. 4²⁹⁴ the editors had received questions from readers. These were grouped into seven topics which related to “present-day issues of theological controversy”. The topics are: 1. The power of bishops; 2. The pain of sense in purgatory; 3. The moral obligation of civil law; 4. The precept of annual confession; 5. The sanctuary light; 6. The matter of the order of priesthood; 7. Remarriage after divorce.

For the second issue the Catechism stated that the pain of sense “consists in physical suffering, caused by real fire, whose mysterious power acts on the soul as if the soul were still united to its body.” This suffering caused by real fire “is generally admitted by theologians.” It is founded on numerous testimonies of the Fathers. Although the editor states that the Church has not defined the precise nature of this punishment, the opinion of Thomas Aquinas is clear. Not only is the fire of punishment “corporal”, Aquinas goes on to say that the pain of sense will be severe.

²⁹⁴ “S and C: The Christian Brothers’ Course of Religious Instruction” *ER* 75, no. 3 (September 1926): 294-305.

In 1934 *Homiletics and Pastoral Review* published several articles that debated ideas about hell. This would have an indirect influence on considerations about purgatory. According to Thomas Aquinas the fires of purgatory differed from the fires of hell only in terms of duration. These articles debated many issues including the role of limbo; how literally to understand the “fires” of hell; the authority of papal statements, of statements by various theologians, of scripture; and various other issues. John A. O’Brien carefully critiqued Francis J. Connell CSSR’s article which took a rigorist view of hell and related topics.²⁹⁵

One set of criticisms involves Fr. Connell’s distinction between the punishments in hell – the *poena damni* (negative, or pain of being deprived of God) and the *poena sensus* (positive, or pain of being punished). Fr. Connell had argued that the *poena sensus* comes from an external source inflicting pain. O’Brien cites this as one example in which Fr. Connell uses a “mechanical interpretation of certain words of Scripture.” In addition to using a literal interpretation of selected Scripture passages, O’Brien finds Connell exaggerating the negatives in the tradition. O’Brien finds that since the Middle Ages (since Innocent III and Peter Lombard) there has been a tendency to emphasize the horrors of hell. Even Dante contributed to the “rigorist” view of hell by drawing from pagan and rabbinical sources for much of the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*.

In favor of a “milder” view of hell, O’Brien cites a group of significant theologians, including Augustine and Aquinas, as opposed to Connell’s sources “who have been copying one another century after century.” O’Brien further challenges the claim by Connell that Catholics are required to believe doctrines held with “moral unanimity” by theologians over several centuries. O’Brien lists twenty doctrines that

²⁹⁵ John A. O’Brien, “Father Connell’s Ideas of Hell,” *HPR* 35, no. 1 (October 1934): 31-44.

were held for centuries and are no longer accepted. Two of these concern purgatory.

One questions a teaching from Thomas Aquinas:

(xv) Did not even St. Thomas Aquinas speak approvingly of the opinion that the slightest suffering of Purgatory exceeds the greatest pain of this world, which is wild conjecture that few would care to endorse today?...²⁹⁶

The other doctrine is discussed in item (xix). The position of the Council of Florence is discussed. Although the Latin bishops had pushed for the punishing fire to be understood literally, the Greek metaphorical approach to the fire of hell was not condemned.

Connell had described the fire of hell as real, material, eternal, and active.

O'Brien states that Connell is simply repeating not the official, but the popular belief.

O'Brien shows that there are insurmountable problems of logic and inconsistency in holding that hell involves material fire. In summarizing his position, O'Brien could also be speaking about some of the issues involving purgatory.

We may insist all we please on an eternal hell of material fire and torments, but anyone who is acquainted with the modern mind knows that intelligent Catholics, as well as outsiders, will no longer accept such a teaching. Neither can they be intimidated into accepting it. And the surest way to destroy all dogma and all faith in God with intelligent people today is to insist that this irrational and revolting doctrine is a dogma that must be held on faith.... It should be the business of theologians to explain and defend, not to invent revelation, and to explain it in a way that is sound and reasonable and not irrational and blasphemous.²⁹⁷

Material fire punishing immaterial souls is illogical. If fire was metaphorical in hell, it was also metaphorical in purgatory. The older Catholic tradition supported a metaphorical interpretation.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 38.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 43.

Similar to Connell, Joseph C. Fenton wanted to revive an opinion by Thomas that met with much opposition. Joseph C. Fenton's 1936 article²⁹⁸ tries to answer "Can the souls in purgatory pray and actually pray for the Church Militant?" Fenton says most manuals of theology answer in the affirmative, but the Church's greatest Doctor, Thomas Aquinas, answers in the negative. Because the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ was gaining interest at that time, Fenton reasoned that this doctrinal conflict needed to be re-evaluated.

Fenton argued in support of the Thomistic position. He attributed the manual tradition's position to Robert Bellarmine. Fenton assumed that Thomas expressed the common opinion of his day. The argument of Aquinas was that the souls in purgatory were capable of prayer, but they were not capable of intercessory prayer for the living.

In Fenton's view, the Mystical Body has an order and a hierarchy, and the souls in purgatory cannot intercede for those still living. Since the souls in purgatory are there because of sin and are passively awaiting salvation, they cannot help those outside of their realm. Unlike the Church suffering in purgatory, souls in heaven and on earth are both capable of active prayer for others. Because the souls in purgatory have not yet reached their end, they are inferior to us and incapable of praying for us.

One traditional analogy which supported Thomas' opinion was the location of purgatory. In physical location, heaven was above our world and hell was below. Medieval scholars disagreed about the location of purgatory. Thomas located purgatory below us; and, on this point, Robert Bellarmine agreed. Other theologians had, at one time, claimed that the Holy Souls were cleansed above us.

²⁹⁸ Joseph C. Fenton, "Help From the Holy Souls," *ER* 95, no.5 (November 1936): 447-459.

Fenton dismissed Bellarmine's arguments as unpersuasive. Bellarmine had stressed the unity of the Church. Christ was the head, and all of the members were joined together. This meant that even those in purgatory could help the living. As support for the help that came from purgatory Bellarmine provided two stories of miracles.

Fenton analyzed both examples and found that the miracles were not directly caused by the prayers of those in purgatory. In the story by St. Gregory about St. Paschasius, Fenton noted that it was the prayer of the bishop, Germanus, which freed Paschasius from purgatory after Paschasius had appeared and asked for prayer. In a story by St. Peter Damien, again, the living Saint Severinus was able to free a priest from purgatory through intercession.

Fenton noted that some later theologians appeal to the "common sense of the faithful." Fenton dismissed this as an element foreign to the "perennial theology." It sounds like Fenton's goal was to promote a hierarchical image of the Mystical Body along with the sense of sin. He also wanted to continue to acknowledge Thomas as the greatest of theologians.

A Franciscan priest, Fr. Theophorus, responded to Fenton and disagreed with the assertion that Thomas Aquinas represented the theological consensus of his time.²⁹⁹ Alexander of Hales, a Franciscan, had written about intercession for the souls in purgatory and had apparently given a basis to the position of Thomas. Richard of Middleton, another Franciscan wrote a few years following Thomas and disagreed with both Alexander and Thomas about praying to the souls in purgatory.

²⁹⁹ Fr. Theophorus, OFM "Studies and Conferences: To the Editor- Help from the Souls in Purgatory," *ER* 96, no. 4 (April 1937): 405-410.

By 1282 Richard's approach was accepted and the teaching of Thomas was rejected in the theological circles in Paris.

The whole force of Richard's argument lies in his teaching that love, caritas, is the basis of worthy prayer; the holy souls died in a state of charity...; their love remains active even in Purgatory; and they are friends of God. Hence it is apparent that they really pray for us. But if they really pray for us, it follows that we can invoke their aid, that we can pray to them.³⁰⁰

This article shows a complete reversal of the question within a few years after the death of Aquinas. Further, there is evidence that Bellarmine was aware of Richard's arguments.

So by giving an historical and intellectual context for Thomas' teaching, this article shows that the theological speculations of Thomas are to be taken as opinions and not as doctrine. The quote above also indicated an understanding of the Mystical Body which prioritized love over a hierarchical order.

So by 1940 many accepted a "milder" view of purgatory. Those who accepted a less literal interpretation of Scripture, studied the original sources of the Christian tradition, and read Thomas Aquinas in his historical context found little support for the "rigorist" interpretation of purgatory. The "holy souls" were not suffering from literal fire and had some autonomy in prayer. Purgatory was associated with love and heaven rather than punishment and hell.

War Relief and Purgatory

The First World War was waged in Europe from 1914-1918. The war resulted in the deaths of about 1,000,000 U.S. servicemen and approximately 9 million people globally. Even more fatal was the Spanish flu. Between 1918 and 1920 an estimated 50

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 409.

million people around the world died because of the influenza pandemic. In the U.S. 500, 000 to 675, 000 died from the flu. In 1918, the editor of *Ave Maria* noted, “Comparatively few among our readers, probably, can affirm that they have not lost within the past three or four years a relative or friend to whom in charity, if not in justice, they owe a debt of faithful remembrance and effective aid.”³⁰¹ One article observes that the common man can become indifferent to death. “The almost daily repetition of the story of such massacres eventually blunted our sensibilities, and we found ourselves accepting the interminable rolls of the killed as mere matters of course.”³⁰²

In response to these tragedies, the articles in *Ave Maria* encouraged renewed devotions to alleviate the suffering of the dead in purgatory. With increased death, there was a greater need for Masses, rosaries, recitation of the Seven Penitential Psalms, and making the Way of the Cross to increase the indulgences for those who were in purgatory.³⁰³ These prayers for the dead were more practical and economical than the more secular customs such as wearing black for mourning.³⁰⁴

Besides praying for the dead, Catholics had a tradition of praying for the dying. The Bona Mors Society (“The Congregation of the Bona Mors in Honor of Jesus Dying on the Cross and His Sorrowing Mother”) had been established in 1648 to obtain the grace of a happy death for those who were alive and to obtain a speedy release from purgatory for those who were dead. A Confraternity (“The Archconfraternity of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus and the Compassionate Heart of Mary for the Help of the Dying”) with similar goals had been established in 1864. Both groups had been

³⁰¹ “Notes and Remarks,” *AM* 8, no. 18 (November 2, 1918): 565.

³⁰² “After Life’s Fitful Fever,” *AM* 6, no. 1 (July 7, 1917): 21-22.

³⁰³ “The Month of the Holy Souls,” *AM* 4, no. 19 (November 4, 1916): 597.

³⁰⁴ “Mourning in War-Time” *AM* 6, no. 18 (November 3, 1917): 564-565.

increasing in numbers in recent decades. A 1918 *Ave Maria* article states, "...At this particular crisis in the history of the world devotion to the dying may well be looked upon as a quasi-obligation incumbent upon the faithful throughout our whole country." This type of prayer was viewed as an act of charity. Although a "happy death" for Catholics of the time implied receiving Extreme Unction and Viaticum in the company of loved ones praying together, this was not the case for many of the people of this era. To console those who worried that their loved ones did not experience a "happy death", the editor points out that the most important aspect of a happy death was that they died in a state of grace. So, even though the death may be sudden, it could still be "happy".³⁰⁵

A 1922 article in *Sign* magazine noted the thousands of soldiers who, in the previous few years, had died and been buried under the sign of the cross. The article observed that devotion to Christ crucified and devotion to the faithful departed are closely linked.³⁰⁶

Also in 1922, a lead column for the November issue of *America* discussed the poor souls in purgatory. Issues of the day are reflected in concerns for the missions and Catholic Action. This article exhorts its readers to remember to pray for the poor souls in purgatory. The article lists the various areas in need of "social work" from local levels such as tenements to international levels such as "the famine-stricken areas of Europe." The greater need is to help those in purgatory. In paraphrasing St. Francis de Sales, the article reminds its readers that, in bringing relief to the souls in purgatory, "we practice almost all of the works of mercy at one and the same time."³⁰⁷

³⁰⁵ "Notes and Remarks," 8, no. 8 (August 24, 1918): 246 and "A Devotion for Our Times," *AM* 8, no. 11 (September 14, 1918): 342-343.

³⁰⁶ S.A. Mallon, "Calvary and Purgatory" *Sign* 2, no. 4 (November 1922): 157-158.

³⁰⁷ "The Souls in Duress," *America* 28 (Nov. 4, 1922): 62.

One detailed 1924 article describes a plan for a “moneyless drive” for the souls in purgatory.³⁰⁸ Building on the “mania” for drives that had emerged during the war years, the author encourages a drive to build up a spiritual treasury for those who are “entirely helpless.” During November children should be encouraged to “collect” for the poor souls in purgatory as they have collected for babies in mission countries. Over seven days different groups would be remembered in prayer- relatives and friends; benefactors and enemies; those who have been in purgatory for ten years or more; those who are forgotten or have no one to pray for them; soldiers who died in World War I; those who did not help the Poor souls while in this life; and bishops, priests, brothers, and sisters. Booklets would be used to record the spiritual offerings.

Mass death had not been experienced by most who were living at the time. The reaction was charity. The charity was directed more to the afterlife than to this world. The earnestness and passion behind the calls to help the poor souls cannot be doubted. The writers generally acknowledged the good work being done for those in need around the world. Catholics wanted to add another group to the list to help.

World War II did not create the same type of reaction. In 1942, with World War engaged, an *America* column reflected on “The Church Suffering.” Emphasis was placed on the Communion of Saints which united the Church- Militant on earth, Suffering in purgatory, and Triumphant in heaven. The “geopolitics” which divides people on earth does not extend beyond the grave. The article points to the millions who have died in the war and the need to pray for them. However, there is also a hope that the “Holy Souls” will “bring to this agonized world some share in the peace which is now theirs.”³⁰⁹

³⁰⁸ C.M De Heredia, SJ., “For a Moneyless Drive,” *AM* 20, no. 17 (October 25, 1924): 513-516.

³⁰⁹ “The Church Suffering,” *America* 68 (Oct. 31, 1942): 98.

Sign magazine connected aspects of the war with purgatory in two articles in 1948. Ignatius Smith OP considered those in purgatory to be “displaced persons.” Just as humanitarians help refugees who are exiled from their home and alone, the faithful should help those displaced persons in purgatory. Another article calls for a “November Relief Plan.” Taking pride in American generosity after the war, the editor claims that November is the equivalent of a Marshall Plan for the dead.³¹⁰

A few aspects of these articles to note are that the All Souls’ Day articles incorporated the difference between Catholic approaches to charity and the other humanitarian approaches. Catholics were called on to care for those who were suffering in this life, but also those who suffered in the next. Several articles suggested using the organizational strategies of humanitarian approaches. In some respects this was the “American Way” of helping the poor souls in purgatory.

A “political” aspect of the Church’s response to war was the 1917 decision by Pope Benedict XV to allow priests to say Mass three times on All Souls’ Day. Apparently Benedict had become aware of this Spanish custom while a nuncio in Madrid. Benedict had two motives in granting this privilege:

1. provide for those who had died in the “useless slaughter” of WWI
2. provide compensation for the Masses of which the Church had been deprived because of the widespread seizure of church property.

This decision was portrayed as a continuance of the charity shown by the Church to the victims of disasters throughout the world. Whereas the pope may have been frustrated in

³¹⁰ Ignatius Smith OP, “Displaced Persons” *Sign* 28 (November 1948): 44 and “November Relief Plan” pp 5 and 6

the face of the war's worldly challenges, he could certainly help those in the Church Suffering.³¹¹

In the January 24, 1937 issue of *Oratre Fratres* Gerald Ellard SJ wrote on a then unexamined aspect of liturgical history. His article entitled "The Spanish Revolt Enters the Liturgy" traced examples of "war memorials" entering the liturgy. Ellard showed that several liturgical innovations were based on intercession or thanks for particular military engagements.

The most recent example given by Ellard was from the previous year, 1936. Just prior to All Souls' Day, Pope Pius XI had ordered prayers for the intention of the Pope to be directed for the dead of the Spanish Civil War. (One of the three Masses on All Souls Day was offered for the intention of the Pope.) As has been mentioned above, previously Pope Benedict XV had, in response to the "awful hectacombs of the first year of the World War", universalized the Spanish custom of three Masses on All Souls Day.

Ellard provided other examples of the liturgy being used as a war memorial: Pope Leo XIII had added prayers after the low Masses to be offered for the troubles connected with Italian unification; once the "Italian question" was settled, Pius XI re-dedicated these prayers to the cause of peace and freedom for Christians in Communist Russia; in response to World War I the Preface of the Dead was included in every Requiem Mass; the feast of Seven Sorrows reminded believers of the sorrows of Pope Pius VII at the hands of Napoleon Bonaparte; the feast of the Holy Name of Mary gave thanks for victory over the Turkish Muslims at Vienna in the 1600's; the feast and month of the Rosary were meant to recall the 1571 Battle of Lepanto; and even the third Agnes Dei

³¹¹ Edward L. Heston, CSC, "The Tradition of All Souls' Day," *AM* 56, no. 18 (October 31, 1942): 551-554.

("Grant us peace!") was instituted by Pope Innocent III in response to the twelfth century wars in Italy. Ellard concludes that the Church offers a variety of war memorials and that the Church continually prays for peace.

This is an interesting use of liturgy and prayer. Today it is difficult to imagine such a focus on the needs of those in purgatory. This approach did not go without criticism, as will be discussed below.

History in Ecclesiastical Review/ American Ecclesiastical Review (AER)

Since its audience was clerical, many of the articles and brief reports in AER discussed issues related to liturgy and have been discussed in the previous chapter. AER kept its readers informed of Vatican directives concerning changes in the breviary, Masses for the Dead, official devotions associated with All Souls' Day, funeral rites, and Extreme Unction. All of these reflected changes in thinking and effected changes in understanding of many concerning the dead.

AER also published some historical articles of good quality. While some of these articles trace a history of devotions, others take a more critical historical approach and report on previously unexamined sources on the doctrine of purgatory. One historically based article from 1912 discussed liturgical art and several in the 1920's dealt with aspects of the life and work of Dante. These are discussed in other areas.

These articles reflected the editorial policies of AER established by Fr. Herman Heuser. He sought to serve the American Catholic clergy by expanding their education on a variety of topics, including Church-related art, and the most recent theology.³¹² In addition these articles reflected the theological movement in Europe of returning to

³¹² Hubbert, *ibid.*, 52-92.

historical, especially patristic, and biblical sources of the faith – *ressourcement*.³¹³

Without explicitly naming the movement, these articles were exposing an American audience to the trends challenging the scholastic categories of theology.

This section will summarize four articles that appeared between 1944 and 1960. These articles give a reverse chronology of sources dealing with purgatory. Previous articles had appealed to the thought of Thomas Aquinas. In the 1940's and 1950's articles move from "A Ninth Century Canonist on Purgatory" (1944) to "An Eighth-Century Exegete on Purgatory" (1945) to "A Sixth-Century Sermon on Sin" (1952). The trajectory culminates in the 1960 article "The Biblical Theology of Purgatory." The pattern reveals the move of Catholic theology from grounding in Thomism to grounding in Scripture.

A set of historically based articles appeared in the 1940's. Henry G. J. Beck presented a well referenced article showing that the concept of "purgatory" had pre-dated the Middle Ages.³¹⁴ His research showed that "purgatory" had been used as a noun as early as the 800's. Previous studies could only trace the noun usage as far back as the Hildebert of LeMans (1055-1134).³¹⁵ Augustine, Gregory, and thinkers of the Patristic era had used "purgatory" only as an adjective.

Beck believed that none of the modern era writers, including Bellarmine and Suarez, had this text from 853/856 available to them. The text is from a canonist,

³¹³ James C. Livingston and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, *Modern Christian Thought, Volume II: Twentieth Century* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2000): 234.

³¹⁴ Henry J.G Beck, "A Ninth Century Canonist on Purgatory" 111, no. 4 (October 1944): 250-256.

³¹⁵ Jacques LeGoff says that a sermon using "purgatorium" is erroneously attributed to Hildebert, and the error is perpetuated by even well-respected scholars. The sermon dates from 1178. Ibid 176. LeGoff does not discuss Hincmar, but Isabel Moreira does (Ibid 176).

Hincmar, Archbishop of Rheims. In one *obiter dictum* by Hincmar, many of the key ideas about purgatory are summarized. Beck divided the document into ten assertions about purgatory. These included that purgatory exists, those in purgatory will be saved, they undergo punishment, and they can be helped by the prayers and good works of the living. Beck notes that no later statement has as great a “fullness” of the church’s teaching. He shows how each of the ten points corresponds to a later statement by a council or pope. Hincmar had even justified Masses for the dead on the basis of II Mac 12:43.

Hincmar also writes of a vision of the recently deceased King Charles the Bald who implored his bishop and counselors to help him be released from the tortures of purgatory. Beck is amazed that 400 years before Lyons II and 700 years before Trent there is such a full explanation of purgatory.

Building on the October article by Beck, Sr. M. Thomas Aquinas Carroll found that the paragraph attributed to Hincmar of Rheims could also be found in a work one hundred years prior to Hincmar’s work.³¹⁶ Bede the Venerable (673-735) has a paragraph with only one word that differs from Hincmar’s.

Bede goes into more detail about the types of offenses which might be purged-constant idle chatter or immodest use of community goods. The list sounds similar to a list of faults enumerated by Benedict. The passage does cast some doubt that either Hincmar or Bede used “purgatorium” as a noun. In another passage, Bede uses “purgatorio” to modify “igne.”³¹⁷

³¹⁶Sr. M. Thomas Aquinas Carroll, “An Eighth-Century Exegete on Purgatory,” 112, no. 4 (April 1945): 261-263.

³¹⁷ Isabel Moreira agrees with this interpretation.

Bede also provided a popular concept of the pains of Purgatory. Drythelm was reported as having a vision of another world in which the souls of the dead were in a vast valley. One side of the valley had flame and intolerable heat. The other side is constantly struck by raging hail and cold snow. The souls here are those who still have to make penance for their sins. Their final judgment will be positive, and they may be helped by the prayers, charity, fasts, and especially the Masses of the living.

Henry G.J. Beck contributed another article several years later.³¹⁸ Beck again provides a relatively unknown source that had shaped Catholic teaching on purgatory. This article is primarily a translation of a sermon preached prior to 542 AD. St. Caesarius, Archbishop of Arles from 502 – 542, wrote and preached this sermon. It is primarily a catalogue and classifying of sins. This was one of the most widely copied homilies throughout the Middle Ages. Caesarius' theology developed out of his concrete care of souls rather than out of speculation. Without using the terms, it gives the Catholic teaching about venial and mortal sin.

The sermon is based on the third chapter of the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians. The sermon gives many examples of lesser sins (*minuta peccata*) and capital sins. The first type of sin can be cleansed by good works or fasting in this life or a fire which passes (*per ignem transitorium*) in the next life. The length and severity of the purgatorial fire will vary according to the seriousness of sin. "The purgatorial fire will be far more severe than any torment which can be seen or imagined or known in this world."

³¹⁸ Henry G. J. Beck, "A Sixth-Century Sermon on Sin," 127, no. 5 (November 1952): 321-329.

Those who commit capital sins without the “medicine of penance” will be cast into unending fire.³¹⁹

One final article grounded the doctrine of purgatory in Scriptural scholarship. The article by Ernest Lussier, SSS was intended to view the theology of purgatory in the light of Biblical exegesis.³²⁰ One of the most frequent arguments by the Reformers of the 1600’s was that the doctrine did not have any Scriptural backing. Luther and others deleted the books of Maccabees from the canon, thus eliminating some of the strongest Biblical warrant for purgatory.

Lussier recognizes that Catholic tradition would accept the doctrine even if direct Biblical support did not exist. Purgatory is a corollary of doctrines concerning the nature of God and sin. However, Lussier contends that there is a firm Scriptural basis for the doctrine of purgatory.

The doctrine of purgatory is contained implicitly in two passages: II Macc 12:43-46 and I Cor. 3:10-17. Much of the article is focused on how some apologists created false questions about purgatory and misinterpreted Scripture passages to support the doctrine. Bellarmine and Eck had appealed to passages from the Book of Kings which referred to honoring the dead with banquets and mourning. To read these as supports for the idea of purgatory is anachronistic. The only Old Testament passage supporting the idea that souls of the dead can be purified with prayers from the living is in II Mach 12. The passage should be read in the context of the developing understanding of the afterlife

³¹⁹ LeGoff dismisses Caesarius as using “purgatory” as an adjective and not as a noun. Moreira admires his sermons as a “treasure trove of exegetical thinking put to the service of moral education” but agrees that Caesarius is in line with Augustine’s purgatorial fire at the end of time. (Ibid 80-84).

³²⁰ Ernest Lussier SSS, “The Biblical Theology of Purgatory,” 142, no. 4 (April 1960): 225-233.

in Hebrew thought. There was not yet a clear idea of a soul separating from a body or even of immortality.

In the New Testament, Lussier rejected using any parable as descriptions of purgatory. So the parable of the judge requiring the servant to be imprisoned until he paid his debt is not a reference to purgatory. Lussier rejects the passage about the sin against the holy spirit as necessarily implying that there will be sins forgiven in the next life.

The passage most frequently cited by most Catholic commentators is I Cor 3:10-17. In this passage the “purifying fire” corresponds to other passages about the “fire of God’s judgment” (II Thes 1:8). The metaphor of fire is intended to symbolize purification. In this passage those being purified are negligent preachers.

At times Lussier comments that “theologians” would explain certain phrases as referring to “merit” or “satisfaction.” Although he acknowledges that patristic and historical scholars would have supporting views of purgatory, this article represents a “purification” of the doctrine of purgatory. Lussier summarizes biblical scholarship to that point. Although there is scriptural backing to purgatory, the backing is minimal.

As we have seen historical and biblical debates about the origins of purgatory have re-surfaced in contemporary times. For the Catholics of the middle of the twentieth century, these articles cracked any literal and rigorist understandings of purgatory.

*HAR and “Timely Tracts”*³²¹

Hans A. Reinhold was a priest who had fled Germany in 1936 because of his criticisms of Naziism. He had been friends with several of the initiators of the liturgical movement in Germany. In the United States he eventually located himself in the state of Washington. After the death of Virgil Michel in 1938, Reinhold (known as HAR) was asked to continue Michel’s dynamic and practical column entitled “Timely Tracts.” Reinhold would continue in this position until 1954. Reinhold was quick to praise those thinkers who made substantial contributions to the liturgical movement, and he was equally quick to criticize those who would water down the reform he envisioned. He connected the liturgical movement with social concerns.³²² For these reasons he may have been the most articulate writer in the U.S. to assist in the disappearance of purgatory.

In a series of articles in 1939 Reinhold laid groundwork for analyzing the liturgical calendar. The series was entitled “More or Less Liturgical.”³²³ At the beginning of the liturgical movement, Reinhold recalled that “liturgical” was not necessarily a positive term. Often it originally connoted “artsy” or “flighty.” As

³²¹ This section overlaps some of the concerns and issues of the previous chapter on liturgy and practices. Because HAR retrieves Bartmann’s work and introduces some of Congar’s ideas, these articles clearly articulate an alternative to the “rigorist” position on purgatory. These articles bring both the liturgical and theological issues to a point of congruence and clarity.

³²² Information on the life and thought of H.A. Reinhold can be found in his own autobiography, *H.A.R.: The Autobiography of Father Reinhold* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968); Kathleen Hughes, ed., *How Firm a Foundation: Voices of the Early Liturgical Movement* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1990); and Keith F. Pecklers, *The Unread Vision: The Liturgical Movement in the United States of America: 1926-1955* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1968).

³²³ H.A. Reinhold, “More or Less Liturgical,” *OF* 13 (February, March, April 1938): 152 ff., 312 ff., 257 ff.

discussions in Germany continued, the meaning of the word became more refined and, eventually, a positive term.

Reinhold first dismissed a series of inadequate criteria for evaluating liturgy or the importance of particular liturgical feasts. “Liturgical” was not synonymous with “art,” but artistic criteria were important. The liturgical revival was not primitivist or historicist, but it did rely on an understanding of the early church’s practices and the historical development of those practices. There are different rites and different periods of liturgical development. None of these can be considered “perfect.” Breviaries, missals and rituals have gone through reforms throughout the Church’s history. Nor is liturgy doctrine, although doctrine can act as a test of liturgy. Liturgy is also not private devotion, although the “sentimental attachment” of the faithful plays a role in shaping liturgy and feasts. Another mistake is to consider spiritual or moral fruitfulness as the determinant of the importance of liturgy, although this is a welcome outcome. Even the legalisms and rubrics of the church do not determine the relative importance of different liturgical feasts in the church calendar.

Rather than establishing set criteria for evaluating liturgical feasts, Reinhold grouped the feasts of the church into five categories. The “most liturgical” were those that celebrated the life of Christ: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Candlemas, Lent, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost. A second group was based primarily on repetitions of other celebrations: Assumption, Annunciation, Visitation, Transfiguration. Reinhold thought these should be observed primarily as “clerical feasts.” The third group was of lesser liturgical value and interfered with the flow of the major liturgical cycle: Seven Sorrows, Holy Cross, and St. John the Baptist. A fourth group were created for extra-liturgical

purposes. These were a “kind of propaganda” meant to correct a particular attitude or teaching of the time period. Examples include Trinity, Corpus Christi, Sacred Heart, Kingship of Christ, Holy Name, Immaculate Conception, Holy Family, Maternity of Our Lady, Solemnity of St. Joseph. Reinhold considered that these feasts come and go. They have more educational value than liturgical value. The final group was simply the feasts of saints. Reinhold classified these as liturgically important and second only to the first group. He considered the memorials of saints to be “little Good Fridays and Easters” fixed by Providence.

Building on this critique of the liturgical calendar, Reinhold wrote a “Timely Tract” in 1943 entitled “The Purists.” He explained why he considered himself to be a liturgical purist.

What I mean (by “purists”) is a class of thoughtful minds who refuse to be stampeded into every newest trend no matter how widespread, and who insist, often annoyingly so, that foundation and structural beams are more important than venetian blinds. In the field of liturgy, we have purists too. I am personally convinced that periodical purification of the liturgy, like the reforms of Gregory the Great, of Trent, and of Pius X, are necessary, and I hope...that we are not going to remain permanently half-way reformed.³²⁴

In contrast to the “pure” liturgical reform of Pius X, Reinhold now observed liturgical innovations of doubtful importance. He was especially perturbed by the recurrence of the doctrinal and propagandist variety (Group 4) of feasts which he considered a return to mistakes of the Middle Ages.

³²⁴ H.A. Reinhold, “The Purists,” *OF* 17 (October 31, 1943): 559.

Reinhold distinguished feasts such as the Triduum and Lent which had “developed like a logical, physical and organic growth out of the central, undiluted seed: the passion and resurrection of our Lord.”³²⁵ This “organic” liturgical year developed and remained coherent for centuries. Reinhold considered the Feast of Trinity as the first example of a theological intrusion. The Church had refrained from making the doctrine of the Trinity a part of the liturgical calendar for centuries. This decision initiated a trend of feasts that “used liturgy for a purpose.”

Theological speculation, individual mysticism, popular devotion and apologetic considerations brought an avalanche of feasts: Corpus Christi, Sacred Heart, Kingship of Christ, Holy Family, Angel feasts, Maternity, Rosary, Seven Dolors (twice), Assumption, Annunciation of Our Lady, and clouds of votive masses, many of them now discarded.³²⁶

Reinhold particularly targeted his criticism at two recent events which might have been unnoticed because they were begun during periods of war. One was the new Common of the Popes. Reinhold was careful not to question the primacy of the pope, but he criticized the motivation for the new prayer as administrative rather than liturgical.

The more lengthy criticism was aimed at the introduction of three Masses on All Souls’ Day. This custom had originated in Spain, “the classical land of partial vision of wholes.”³²⁷ In this context Reinhold critiqued the then current attitude concerning All Souls’ Day.

While our calendar still links All Souls very closely to All Saints by calling it a “commemoration,” as if it were only one facet of the brilliant feast of All Saints, and thus gives it a peaceful, triumphant and glorious

³²⁵ Ibid., 561.

³²⁶ Ibid., 562.

³²⁷ Ibid., 563.

glow, popular devotion, private revelations, a certain kind of sermons and the black pomp of so many churches have completely isolated these two days from one another. After the second Vespers of All Saints with its heavenly visions, everything nowadays seems to crash into dark gloom and bleak desolation....³²⁸

This description allowed Reinhold the opportunity to promote Bernard Bartmann's book on purgatory which had (a decade earlier) accentuated the positive aspects of the doctrine of purgatory. The doctrine had gone astray in the Middle Ages when, as an example, one mystic claimed to have released thirty thousand souls from purgatory. In contrast, the Council of Trent was very moderate in its claims about purgatory.

The three Masses of All Souls' Day, in Reinhold's analysis, were very different from the three Masses of Christmas. Each of the Christmas Masses had different times and different wordings. The All Souls' Day Masses were said in a row with no break in between.

Reinhold anticipated criticisms of his position on the grounds that "the people" decided on the basis of piety rather than factual standards. He responded by saying that the popular opinion has not brought true reform. "The pressure has in the past always been one way, surging up from below: diluting, unfocussing, throwing out of perspective, emphasizing the secondary things over the primary ones, broadening, flattening, pulling away from the objective, floating towards the subjective and its arbitrariness of feeling and emotion."³²⁹ Reinhold did say that the people need knowledge of the general direction of reform or they would continue to bog down the reform of Pius X.

³²⁸ Ibid., 563.

³²⁹ Ibid 565.

In the May, 1952 column of “Timely Tracts” Reinhold once again critiqued the common practices connected with the doctrine of purgatory. This time he based his article on a summary and analysis of a 1949 address by Yves Congar, O.P. Congar’s address on purgatory had been delivered at the Vanves liturgical week centered on the topic of “The Mystery of Death and Its Celebration.” Reinhold noted that the American milieu may not have accepted such a topic. “In a country of ‘memorial parks’ instead of cemeteries, where people ‘pass away’ instead of die, and where mourning is not worn in order to spare the nerves of happy and forgetful contemporaries, anyone proposing ‘Death’ for a liturgical week theme might be politely ignored or fear a shocked outcry over such rude manners.”³³⁰

Once again Reinhold lamented the poor reception of Fr. Bartmann’s book on the topic of purgatory. He noted that Congar approved of Bartmann’s optimistic presentation of the doctrine of purgatory, but Congar’s reflections took a different approach. Congar wanted to use the doctrine as a way of healing schism with “separated brethren.” As part of Congar’s address he introduced two methods which would become very influential: dialogue and *ressourcement*. “Dialogue” was the irenic approach to Orthodox and Protestant Christians which included listening as well as criticizing or instructing. Reinhold noted that “popular” piety could obscure “official” prayers and teachings. *Ressourcement* involved returning to the sources by focusing on a central truth of the faith in the context of the Christian mystery.

Reinhold expanded on Congar by criticizing understandings of purgatory which go far beyond the simple definition of Trent. The unintelligible offertory of the Requiem Mass and the misconstrual of Scripture as proof of purgatory got promoted in the

³³⁰ H.A. Reinhold, “All That Rest in Christ,” *Worship* 26 (May 1952): 299.

classroom as the Catholic understanding. This approach put unnecessary blocks to unity with Protestants and Orthodox.

Reinhold prescribed a balanced view of purgatory that emphasized “the perfecting, transfiguring aspect of purgatory as a complementary to the now exclusive teachings of penal satisfaction.”³³¹ At the same time Congar could not accept the early Reformers total rejection of the need for satisfaction.

On a pastoral level, Reinhold notes the need for balance. Overemphasis on gloom leads to disbelief. Although he admitted the inadequacy of the summary Reinhold presented six points from Congar’s article.

1. Respect the limitations of promulgated dogma. Exaggeration can lead to further division.
2. The doctrine of purgatory must be viewed within the whole pattern of salvation from resurrection to second coming.
3. The individual member of the Body has to be viewed within the context of Christ’s “passing” to the Father.
4. The continuous passing to the Father is characterized by cleansing, liberation, and expiation. The “expiation” is only one part and involves spiritual “interiority” rather than torture.
5. The three-fold process of cleansing, freeing, and satisfying justice is part of the Church’s work on earth.
6. Purgatory must be viewed in its collective character and in the light of the second coming.

³³¹ Ibid 301.

Reinhold praised Congar's insights for "opening doors that once were slammed in acrimony, until so many recesses of the vast structure were closed that it became harder and harder to breathe."³³²

Conclusion

Between 1909 and 1960, the "standard message" on purgatory had shifted considerably. Purgatory still existed, and there was some way in which souls were purged, and the living could connect with the dead, but many of the specifics had changed. The homilies, a traditional way to shape popular understanding, no longer aimed to defend Catholic teaching on purgatory from Protestant attacks. The apologetic tone was replaced by an ecumenical concern. Although there were a number of All Souls Day sermons in the 1950's, they were associating purgatory with heaven and the communion of saints. The emphasis was now on "holy souls" rather than "poor souls".

Ave Maria stopped printing ghost stories after the 1920's. The flurry of articles about Dante's understanding of purgatory trumped the rigorist view. The study of Dante further helped loosen the grip of a rigid manualist Thomism. Although the genius and Catholicity of Dante's vision was accepted, the ghostly narrative would be dismissed as medieval inventions.

Theologically, purgatory was undergoing a reassessment or re-imagining based on the movements of the twentieth century. The statement that the pain of purgatory was greater than any on earth was put in the context that the joy of purgatory was also greater than any on earth. The doctrine of purgatory was also contextualized using historical methods to show that the teaching had changed over time. Purgatory gave hope to those

³³² Ibid 303.

who had lost loved ones in the war. However, the doctrine had also been used in the liturgy to advance papal political concerns. The pain of purgatory had been debated with the result that the “rigorist” view was rejected. This meant that the urgency and obligation to assist those in purgatory was disappearing. Hans Reinhold questioned the role of purgatory in the liturgical calendar. He also praised Yves Congar’s *ressourcement* which challenged any literal understanding of purgatory and sought union with other Christians.

Parallel to these changes, Catholics were moving from a position of being on the periphery of American society to being assimilated into the American experience.

CHAPTER 5

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Introduction

Previous chapters have demonstrated that the changing images associated with purgatory had reduced the urgency of praying for the dead. Purgatory could no longer be understood with categories of time and space. Pain or “fire” in the afterlife was difficult to explain on levels both logical and theological. Liturgical changes were also underway that countered the devotional practices associated with purgatory. The image of Mystical Body shifted from emphasizing the Church’s connection of the living with those beyond death to the connection among those separated in this life by status or geography.

This chapter will focus the social and cultural context of twentieth century U.S. Catholicism that coincided with the changes in the themes connected with purgatory. If purgatory “disappeared” prior to Vatican II, it may have been associated with a style of Catholicism that also declined during the 1950’s. The practices connected with purgatory may have been associated with a Catholic subculture that was dissolving. So the social and cultural conditions underpinning a purgatorial and penitential view of life were disappearing.

Whereas previous chapters traced historical and theological developments about the doctrine and practices associated with purgatory, this chapter will present sociological and cultural studies to illuminate aspects of the decline of interest in purgatory. The

chapter will begin with a view of the “big picture” of theoretical descriptions of religious change that might situate the “disappearance of purgatory” within larger religious changes. Then, the chapter will review some of the key changes within mid-century American Catholicism. The social and cultural changes following the Second World War had profound influences on the religious and spiritual life of American Catholics. Three different scholars offer perspectives that can help to contextualize the decline of purgatory as part of a larger American Catholic shift in spirituality and practice. A final section will highlight recent studies that indicate that aspects of purgatory have persisted among the general population.

Theories of Modern Religious Change

Interest in purgatory declined within a broader context of movements that influence religious change. In this section we will consider three primary areas that offer a broader context for the decline of interest in purgatory. One theory gives an explanation of characteristics of modern religion. Another will interpret the secularization theory in a useful way. A third will offer an understanding of religion that gives insight on what was happening in mid-twentieth century U.S. Catholicism. Admittedly, tracking religious change on a societal level runs a risk of oversimplifying trends and collapsing important geographic and social differences.³³³ Hopefully the problems with large scale theoretical views can be corrected with the more focused views of the later sections.

³³³ Robert Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004): 189. Orsi critiques the commitment of the academic study of religion to evolutionary models – “from primitive to modern, infantile to mature...”

Several sociological theorists have articulated theories accounting for the changes in religious behaviors and beliefs over the course of centuries. While historians may critique this broad perspective, theories can be useful in giving a context to religious change. These theories try to explain the unique aspects of modern religion. Robert Wuthnow has summarized the work of some of these theorists.³³⁴ The most famous of the key theorists referenced by Wuthnow is Robert Bellah. Although Robert Bellah's work has been expanded over the years, his typology gives some structure to religious change. Subsequent theorists³³⁵ have proposed alternative typologies, but Bellah's stages give one understanding of religious change over the course of human history. Common to all of the theories is a view that modern forms of religion have become privatized and less dependent on institutions.

Bellah's outline distinguished five ideal-typical patterns of religion. Bellah labeled these patterns or stages as primitive, archaic, historic, early modern, and modern. Each stage involves greater differentiation and complexity. Bellah identifies the modern stage as beginning in the nineteenth century. The key distinction between modern and earlier stages is the collapse of the dualism between this world and the supernatural world. In the modern era, the sacred and the profane are mixed. Now religious claims are grounded in the human condition. Religious symbols are not a contrast to the secular world, but point to a deeper meaning. The modern religious adherent can work with the symbols of religion on several levels. There is a difference between literal fact and myth. Truth can be found within the symbols.

³³⁴ Robert Wuthnow, *Rediscovering the Sacred: Perspectives on Religion in Contemporary Society* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1992) : 83-108.

³³⁵ Wuthnow also discusses Jurgen Habermas and Niklas Luhmann.

This theory's description of modern religion gives a context to the changes in understanding of purgatory. The concepts that were often taken literally in the Middle Ages were interpreted symbolically in the modern era. The decline in interest and practice concerning purgatory can be understood as part of the melding of this world with the supernatural world. For the modern reader, Dante's description is less about what happens in the afterlife and more about spiritual growth in this life. Modern interpreters would view purgatory as giving a deeper meaning to this life. The modern symbol of purgatory represents the reality that few people die without some regrets, imperfections, selfishness, or sin. So, Bellah's theory might explain the decreasing influence of the doctrine of purgatory as an aspect of the Western movement from otherworldly to this-worldly focus and from literal to symbolic interpretation of religious imagery.

Another sociological theory has suggested that religions will change to the point of disappearance. Although that interpretation of the secularization theory has generally proven inaccurate, there are some variations of the theory that can shed light on our topic. Sociologists have debated the secularization thesis since the beginnings of the discipline. Sociology originated in France as a discipline hostile to religion in general and the Catholic Church in particular. Throughout the modern era, Enlightenment thinkers have predicted the imminent demise of religion. In the view of some intellectuals, religion would come to be regarded as a vestige of primitive thinking. Religion has turned out to be a much more complex phenomenon than these sociologists originally envisioned. In more recent years, the discussion has centered on the "privatization of religion."

The proponents of the secularization thesis had predicted that modernity and progress will eventually make religion an unnecessary part of Western life. According to this way of thinking the decline in attention given to purgatory could be explained as part of the alleged declining influence of religion within modern society. Whether one considers religion to be “dying” in Western society depends on several factors. Those supporting a “secularization” approach have observed data such as church attendance in Europe and conclude that religions seem to be declining. “Postsecularists”, such as Andrew Greeley, note that church membership and new religions seem to thrive in the United States and conclude that religion is flourishing.³³⁶

It should be noted that the secularization theory (or theories) has involved a complex and contested discourse within and between the disciplines and various sub-disciplines of sociology and history. Jose Casanova has distinguished three meanings of secularization.³³⁷ Christian Smith has offered seven defects in the theory of secularization.³³⁸ A recent article claims that a 2009 book “has come to bury the secularization thesis.”³³⁹

Robert Orsi summarizes the state of the discussion thus:

No one any longer holds the secularization thesis to be universally true: there has been too much evidence to the contrary for the idea to stand that over the last two centuries religious belief and commitment have been slowly but inexorably disappearing from the modern world, religion’s authority contracting and its explanatory reach diminishing in proportion to the spread of science and critical scholarship. This was surely not how modernity played out in the United States or in the cultures of Asia and Africa, and even in Europe the history of religion varies by region and

³³⁶ Andrew K.T. Yip, “The Persistence of Faith Among Non-heterosexual Christians,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41, no. 2 (June 2002): 199-212.

³³⁷ Jose Casanova, *Public Religions In the Modern World* (University of Chicago Press, 1994).

³³⁸ Christian Smith, editor. *The Secular Revolution*. (University of California Press, 2003).

³³⁹ Austen Ivereigh, “God Makes a Comeback: An Interview with the Economist’s John Micklethwait” *America* (October 5, 2009): 11-14.

according to different national historical circumstances. Abandoning the outlines of a single story, scholars now talk of alternative modernities and of varying patterns of negotiation across the globe in the encounter of inherited religions with the social, political, and economic circumstances of modernity. Scholars no longer have to present the powerful religious idioms of the modern world as atavistic holdovers of a vanishing time or as distorted reactions against modernity, which makes a richer religious history of modernity possible.³⁴⁰

The sociologist David Yamane³⁴¹ has argued for a more nuanced “neo-secularization” paradigm. He first corrects “postsecularists” by stating that the “secularization” paradigm does not argue that religion will disappear in the face of modernity, but will instead be transformed and changed. Yamane further contends that the transformation takes place on macro, meso, and micro levels. While they are interrelated, Yamane suggests that religious changes should be considered on societal, organizational, and individual levels. Further, “‘secularization’ is best understood not as the decline of religion, but as the declining scope of religious authority and, more specially, the declining sphere of influence of religious authority structures.”³⁴²

Yamane’s classification of three levels for the understanding of secularization offers useful constructs when considering the “disappearance of purgatory.” On a societal (macro) level the process of secularization can be viewed as the privatization of religion. Religion is more frequently excluded from the public sphere and relegated to the private sphere. This approach would suggest that afterlife concerns (including purgatory) became privatized rather than public. One articulation of this trend is voiced by British sociologist Tony Walter’s observation of a major change in concern for the

³⁴⁰ Robert A. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them*. (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 11-12.

³⁴¹ David Yamane, “Secularization on Trial,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, no. 1 (March 1997): 109-22 and “A Sociologist Comments on Sommerville” *JSSR* 37, no. 2 (June 1998): 254-256 (cited in Yip. *Ibid.*).

³⁴² *Ibid.*

afterlife in Western culture. He finds a lack of consideration of death in today's public life.³⁴³ He offers three examples supporting this observation. First, morality and current ethics rarely, if ever, make appeals to eternal punishment or reward. Only in the twentieth century has this emphasis been dropped. Second, among most churches there is very little mention of heaven or hell today. Walter claims church leaders are in a dilemma between looking foolish by proclaiming a hell with real physical punishment and undermining traditional teaching with a denial of hell. Third, theologically and ethically the benefits of religion are thought to be found almost entirely in this world.³⁴⁴ So, on a macro level, society has become focused on this world and unconcerned with an afterlife. So, as a society, not only purgatory, but the entire afterlife has "disappeared" from public discourse. This fits with Bellah's description of modern religion. The sharp distinction between the sacred and the profane, the afterlife and this life has morphed in the modern era.

On an organizational level (meso), Yamane's understanding of secularization would say that religious authority structures tend to be losing their control over the beliefs and practices of individual members. In the Catholic Church the mid-twentieth century may be described as a voluntary loss of control. The language of "obligation" and legalism was replaced with the language of charity and relationship. Traditional practices such as abstaining from meat on Fridays became voluntary practices. Popes decreased the use of indulgences and emphasis on All Souls' Day. The "disappearance of purgatory" could be considered part of this process. Praying for the dead was less

³⁴³ Admittedly, he is writing prior to the attacks of September 11, 2001.

³⁴⁴ Tony Walter, *The Eclipse of the Afterlife: A Sociology of the Afterlife* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1996).

frequently considered a “duty” or “obligation.” The Church hierarchy as “gatekeeper” to purgatory was less emphasized.

On the individual (micro) level there is a transformation, perhaps not of quantity, but of the quality of beliefs and practices. Individuals today tend to construct their own beliefs and practices rather than rely on authoritative sources. One’s beliefs about the afterlife are choices that construct one’s own identity rather than designate membership in a particular religious group. This may be another way of saying there is a shift in religious imagination.

The primary focus of the previous chapters has been on these levels represented in the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church (meso) and individual believers (micro). The purgatorial practices of early and mid-twentieth century U.S. Catholics relied on a symbiotic relationship of organizational and individual religion. Popular religion may represent an area on both the meso and micro levels. Yamane (and Bellah) offer a larger context of the modern movement toward privatized religion and focus on this life.

In a 1995 book Andrew Greeley challenged the secularization thesis on several levels. Greeley offers a different understanding of religious change based on a different definition of religion. The central thesis of his book is that by defining religion as poetry rather than prose there is no decline in religion. Greeley re-framed religion as being less about institutions and more about stories. In his book Greeley proposes a five phase model of the origins of religious heritage:

Religion, I propose, begins in *experiences* that renew hope, is encoded in the preconscious (creative intuition, poetic dimension, agent intellect, call it what one will), in *symbols*, shared with others in *stories*,

which are told and constitute a story-telling *community*, which enacts the stories in community *rituals*.³⁴⁵

For our purposes, this understanding of religion would allow us to frame the “disappearance of purgatory” as a change in symbols or stories. The underlying experience may still exist, but its expression has changed. Because other parts of the Catholic Christian “story” had changed, the story of purgatory also had to change.

He further distinguishes between the popular tradition and the high tradition. Greeley describes these two traditions as interacting in a “checks and balances” manner. The high tradition (theology, authoritative teaching, and some practices) keeps the popular tradition (popular understanding, narratives, and some practices) from veering into magic and superstition while the popular tradition keeps the high tradition from being divorced from the lives of most believers. Greeley dubs these the prose (high) and poetic (popular) traditions within a religion. Greeley makes a further helpful distinction between the popular tradition and folk religion.

Folk religion is a mixture of the stories of a religious tradition with stories of pre-existing animistic or magical traditions, a blending of which the elaborately poetic traditions, like Catholicism or Hinduism, seem especially prone, but from which no tradition of any of the world religions is immune. In the absence of effective conversation between the high tradition and the popular tradition, folk religion is inevitable.³⁴⁶

One type of popular Catholicism, historically encouraged by the hierarchical Church is devotionism.

The theoretical views have situated the “disappearance of purgatory” within the larger movements of modern religion’s turn from the otherworld to this world and from a

³⁴⁵ Andrew Greeley, *Religion as Poetry* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 23.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

literal to a symbolic understanding of religious teachings. Religious changes have taken place differently on different levels of society. On the societal level religion has become privatized; on the organizational level religious authority has decreased; and, on the individual level, the quality of belief has shifted. Insight can be gained from considering religion as popular community centered around story rather than an institution.

The Dissolution of the Catholic Subculture

Before going further into changes in U.S. Catholic devotionism and spirituality in the twentieth century, it will be helpful to review some of the relevant social and cultural changes of the twentieth century.³⁴⁷ Concurrent with liturgical changes discussed in an earlier chapter were changes in the living conditions of American Catholics. So the mid-twentieth century marked two major passages in American Catholicism.

First the old inner-city immigrant communities born of the industrial era began to disappear as second, third, and fourth generations, born or raised in the United States, moved to other areas of cities and to the new rings of suburbs. Second, liturgical reforms initiated by the Second Vatican Council....” (Latin Mass replaced by the vernacular, ending prohibition of meat-eating on Friday, ending of Tuesday night novenas, the waning cult of saints) “introduced new ways of relating to and thinking about the sacred among Catholics worldwide and in the United States.”³⁴⁸

In the first two decades of the twentieth century the Catholic population had expanded with new waves of immigrants. They formed tightly knit neighborhood parishes centered around the parish church. The period from 1920-1945 had very slow

³⁴⁷ Eras and statistics for this section from Patrick W. Carey, *The Roman Catholics in America* (Westport, Conn.: 1996)

³⁴⁸ Orsi, *ibid*, 8.

population growth among Catholics. The U.S. had limited immigration. In both Europe and the U.S., Mystical Body imagery was a widely used image for the Church.

Originally, the term emphasized the union of the church on earth with the church in the next world (the connections among the Church Militant, Triumphant, and Suffering). By mid-century the focus was on this world. Catholics were united with those who were in other parts of the world or from other socio-economic backgrounds. The changing meaning of this image signaled a switch in focus from the next world to this world.

Catholic Activism demonstrated the switch in emphasis. During the same time, outside of the U.S., the Mexican revolution (1910-35), the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), and Russian communism resulted in much religious persecution. Solidarity with the victims of these conflicts led some Catholics to positions conflicting with the dominant U.S. position.

The twenty years following the Second World War showed “unprecedented economic prosperity, worldwide economic and political influence, and a widespread resurgence of religion in the midst of cold war anxieties over communism.”³⁴⁹ In this period, Catholics withdrew from ethnic enclaves. The total Catholic population increased by 90 percent; bishops by 58 percent; clergy by 50 percent; women religious by 30 percent; and seminarians by 127 percent. Hospitals, schools, and colleges were being built. Catholic school students increased by 120 percent and Catholic college students (with help from the GI Bill) increased by 300 percent. The students in Catholic schools

³⁴⁹ Carey 9.3

only accounted for about half of all Catholic students. American Catholics also contributed greatly to Catholic Relief Services and foreign missionaries.³⁵⁰

In addition to the movement to different types of neighborhoods and expansion of institutions, consumer inventions changed life. The lives of middle-class women were made easier through automation and time-saving devices, such as the electric washing machine and dishwasher. “While the traditional ascetical practice of penance had emphasized the importance of sacrifice, highlighting the wartime values of thrift and rationing, a new era of disposable and planned obsolescence required a different motivation and more subtle discernment.”³⁵¹ Television made media visual. Medical breakthroughs meant that vaccines conquered diseases that had made death an expected part of childhood. Although subtle, in 1951 fasting regulations were eased.

While there was a great revival of piety in terms of church attendance, contributions, and subscriptions to religious publications, there were questions about the influence on the moral life of the nation. A young Andrew Greeley questioned the ability to be spiritually changed in the midst of affluence. Questioning the consumer culture came from different sources. Spiritual movements came from a variety of sources at the same time: Fr. Patrick Peyton promoted family prayer; Bishop Fulton J. Sheen inspired television audiences that “Life is Worth Living”; Fr. James Keller and the Christopher movement supported middle class values with the slogan “It is better to light one candle

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 93-94.

³⁵¹ Joseph P. Chinnici and Angelyn Dries, ed. *Prayer and Practice in the American Catholic Community* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2000), 182.

than to curse the darkness.” Thomas Merton’s *Seven Storey Mountain* ignited an interest in contemplative prayer.

So, at mid-century the entire lifestyle radically changed for many U.S. Catholics. Change occurred in numbers, institutions, and quality of life. Prior to 1945, war, economic depression, social disillusionment, and a stagnation in Catholic population characterized the social situation for many. The theological focus over the middle decades of the twentieth century shifted from the next world to this world. On a personal level life for many American Catholics had moved from one of drudgery, rationing, poverty, and sacrifice to one of increasing ease, affluence, and leisure. Experientially, if life was no longer a “vale of tears”, purgatory as a fiery punishment may have been difficult to imagine. The new consumer society and affluence were bound to change the Catholic view of life and the universe.

Devotionalism and Spirituality

The social and cultural changes American Catholics encountered in the middle decades of the twentieth century could be expected to have an impact on religious attitudes and practices. Several scholars have tried to interpret these changes using a combination of sociological, cultural, and psychological analysis.

Culture of Suffering

Catholic devotions refer to non-liturgical or para-liturgical actions that are meant to enhance one’s religious life. Often they do not require a priest and are frequently individual. These have been associated with European immigrants and have a strong emotional element. Examples include Eucharistic adoration, prayers to saints, and praying the rosary. Outside of Catholic circles devotionalism has often been considered

superstitious, primitive, or idolatrous. Within the Catholic circles, devotionism can be considered an example of the Catholic, sacramental view of the world. Prayers for the souls in purgatory and the practices associated with All Souls' Day can be considered part of this devotional Catholic faith.

An invigorated devotional Catholicism dominated the U.S. church in the nineteenth century. Many devotions were encouraged by popes and the church hierarchy as a response to the cultural and social implications of the Enlightenment.³⁵² Within academic circles, the study of devotionism represents a departure from the focus on institutions and elites. In the late 1980's some scholars argued that studying the lives and religion of "ordinary people" would provide a richer and more accurate portrayal of Catholic history.

Although devotional practices continued into the twentieth century, there are differences between nineteenth and twentieth century devotionism. Joseph Chinnici has studied the prayers and practices of U.S. Catholics from a historical perspective. As has been mentioned earlier, during 1920-1945 Catholics in the U.S. contended with a variety of societal crises that shaped their spirituality. Wars, disease, and economic depression influenced the way Catholics related to the sacred. Chinnici's reading finds that these crises brought a new type of devotionism.

This new devotionism, different from its nineteenth century counterpart, was combined with a strong feel for the importance of intercession, knowledge of invisible companionship, the need to bear

³⁵² Joseph A. Komonchak, "The Enlightenment and the Construction of Roman Catholicism.," *CCICA Annual*, (1985). Komonchak's article intends to show that "central features of Roman Catholicism that appears to have dissolved after the Second Vatican Council were inspired by the Church's opposition to the working out in society and culture of the implications of the Enlightenment." 36.

the sufferings of others, and practices which gave meaning to life through participation in the sufferings of others.³⁵³

This is a description of the attitudes and practices connected with purgatory.

Catholics were expected to pray for the souls in purgatory to relieve the souls of their suffering. The suffering endured in this life could free those being purged in the next life. Into the early twentieth century stories were still published of the souls returning to ask for supplications. This demonstrated a sense of invisible companionship.

Robert Orsi³⁵⁴ has become the major exponent of an approach to the study of religion called “lived religion.” This approach integrates anthropological and ethnographical research into the study of people’s lived experience of religion. He has explored the lives, beliefs, and practices of twentieth century Italian immigrants in the U.S. Orsi subverts much of the previous analysis of devotionalism. Prior scholarship had portrayed devotional practice as based in primitive, magical thinking and imposed by authority.³⁵⁵ Orsi’s work presents devotional practices as giving a sense of identity and agency to the participants. In his book on devotion to St. Jude, the desperate situation of Catholic women in mid-twentieth century was vividly described. Orsi showed that their devotion to St. Jude gave women the space to imagine ways out of these impossible situations. It was also a way to re-frame suffering and illness.

³⁵³ Chinnici *ibid* 117.

³⁵⁴ Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); *Thank You, St. Jude: Women’s Devotion to St. Jude Thaddeus* (New Haven: Yale University, 1988); *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005).

³⁵⁵ Jay Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 226-240.

Orsi's most recent book, Between Heaven and Earth, considers the relational quality of Catholics and divine beings. He recasts "devotions" as relationships. He also locates devotions within what he terms a "culture of suffering." For many mid-century Catholics, pain was "a ladder to heaven." Pain created saints. Tom Dooley's cancer was seen as a divine gift.³⁵⁶ Devotional writing described suffering in language that was romantic. The general idea was that we live in a vale of tears. Shut-ins and cripples were given the opportunity to suffer in silence.

The grace of this suffering could be redistributed to others. Catholics considered themselves more spiritually elite than Protestants because they knew how to suffer. As the American culture became consumer oriented, valuing achievement and performance, pain and suffering was viewed as an obstacle. So Catholics lived a countercultural ethos. Suffering could be redemptive.

Orsi notes the ironic timing that pain was valorized as subculture dissipated. "The ethos of pain was being elaborated in Catholic magazines alongside tips for arranging new furniture, recipes, beauty hints, and ways to throw birthday parties for children, all written in the upbeat prose of women's magazines."³⁵⁷

The mid-century culture of suffering may have been a response of uneasiness to the middle-class success Catholics were achieving.

The children of immigrants, in transition from one way of life to another, constructed for themselves an ethos that proclaimed pain (not hard work, ambition, or a desire for success) as a road to the greatest achievement (which was sanctity, not a bigger apartment, a new car, or a good job). They clung to an image of themselves as sufferers while

³⁵⁶ For a chronicle of the complexity of Tom Dooley's life, work, and American involvement in South East Asia, see James T. Fisher's *Dr. America: The Lives of Thomas A. Dooley, 1927-1961* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997).

³⁵⁷ Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, ibid., 33.

their circumstances steadily improved, which in turn allowed them to transform their envy and uneasiness into judgment on the social world they aspired to when those circumstances did not improve quickly enough. The elaboration of the ethos in the last century gave suburban Catholic culture a distinct tone.³⁵⁸

A careful reading shows that the ethos did not really help those who were suffering. Orsi uses a 1950 article “Letter to Shut-Ins” by Thomas A. Lahey, C.S.C. to show the “cruelty of the discourse of the holy cripple.”³⁵⁹ Basically by being deprived of the joys experienced by those who are healthy, they have the opportunity to release countless souls from purgatory. Those souls will be waiting to greet their crippled intercessors in heaven.

Orsi points out that the author was describing what he imagined and wanted the cripples’ lives to be. “Their accounts were prescriptive, pretending to be descriptive.”³⁶⁰ This insight helps to explain the rejection of the doctrine of purgatory by many. This was the doctrine functioning as a control mechanism. In other chapters of the book, Orsi shows that children played a role as special intercessors for the dead as well as “victim souls.” Again, the doctrine functioned in an ambivalent manner. On the one hand it gave special status and even agency to those who lack power, but also distances those from the “normal”.

Orsi’s analysis of mid-century American Catholic devotionism illuminates the context for purgatory. This “culture of suffering” was part of the Catholic identity. There was a connection between the living and the dead. Cripples, children, and saints had used their own sufferings and prayer in ways that helped those who were in

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 42.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 44.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 45.

purgatory. Orsi advocates researchers gaining insight from being “in between.” (In his case, being “in between” the group of devotees of St. Jude and scholars critical of the devotion.) Many Catholics experienced the ambivalence of being in between the Catholicism of the ethnic enclaves and the Catholicism of the suburbs. Of course, purgatory itself could be a metaphor for being “in between.” So the popularity of purgatory in the 1950’s may have been a symbol of the ambivalence felt by many Catholics. The “disappearance of purgatory” would have signaled an end to the culture of suffering and the ambivalence of being in two worlds.

Dwelling and Seeking Spiritualities

Catholic devotionism could be classified as one aspect of American spirituality. The sociologist Robert Wuthnow has studied the spirituality of Americans in the twentieth century. He defines spirituality as “all the beliefs and activities by which individuals attempt to relate their lives to God or to a divine being or some other conception of a transcendent reality.”³⁶¹ Wuthnow examines the larger changes in American spirituality of which Catholic devotionism was one part.

Using interviews, research studies, and large- scale opinion surveys Robert Wuthnow distinguishes “dwelling” and “seeking” forms of spirituality among Americans. Prior to 1960 Americans followed a spirituality within a “spiritual home” of their church. From the beginning of the twentieth century to the religious revival of the 1950’s, Americans practiced their spirituality within the context of organized religion. Today

³⁶¹ Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950’s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), viii.

many people claim to be “spiritual but not religious.” Wuthnow identifies them as spiritual seekers. Rather than looking to an individual organized religion, many people today select a patchwork of religious beliefs and practices. One positive example of blending the two forms of spirituality can be found in the Rule of St. Benedict. Benedict combined stability (dwelling) and *conversatio* (seeking). Benedict also promoted the practice of obedience. This final, practice-oriented spirituality is what Wuthnow advocates as a bridge between the other two spiritualities. He sees this as a way of retrieving the best of both forms of spirituality.

Although he does not speak about purgatory, Wuthnow’s distinction can give some helpful context for understanding the decline in practices connected with purgatory. Wuthnow’s analysis delineates the changes in American religious patterns in the second half of the twentieth century. Historically, as we have seen, the understanding of purgatory has varied from being viewed as a dwelling (one of three “places” for the soul after death), a process (the process or journey of purification), and has involved practices (praying for souls). If U.S. religion in the first half of the twentieth century was dominated by dwelling types of spirituality, the conception of purgatory would also be static. The word “purgatory” would be identified with a place, no matter how punitive or benevolent. In a seeking, negotiated spirituality the idea of “place” would be rejected as unconnected.

Wuthnow provides a description of 1950’s American spirituality as a baseline for the changes that would occur over subsequent decades. In Wuthnow’s assessment religious belief and practice during the 1950’s was dominated by dwelling spirituality.

Jews and Protestants as well as Catholics found their spiritual lives closely connected to a place. Catholics (as they had throughout much of the twentieth century) identified themselves as being from neighborhood-parishes such as “St. John’s” or “Sacred Heart.” These mid-century citizens often lived within ethnically exclusive communities. In the 1950’s people who did not have strong spatial attachments, such as Hollywood stars, intellectuals, and spies, were suspect.

Wuthnow analyzes this territorial spirituality as resulting from a more settled life. The immigrants of the early twentieth century often identified “home” as being the country or village from which they had immigrated. They would send letters and earnings to that home. When first arriving in the U.S. most immigrant groups built a church. This was both the sacred space and a connection to home. European communities were perceived as centered around churches (or synagogues). The children of these immigrants and the children of earlier immigrants inhabited small towns in the heartland of the U.S. These towns and ethnic enclaves frequently centered around a church and incorporated the religious practices in that community.

After the Second World War, the 1950’s showed a nostalgia for earlier times of domestic tranquility. In Wuthnow’s analysis, organized religion had a monopoly on spirituality. One study had found that fewer than half of nineteenth century Americans belonged to local congregations. In the 1950’s over three fourths of Americans claimed membership in local congregations. One societal issue that led to the importance of local congregations was the movement out of the ethnic neighborhoods. The local congregation provided the social cohesion more easily found when living in proximity to

others of the same group. The church was viewed as “home.” For Catholics, devotional practices tied the home and church together. Attending Mass, going to confession, saying rosaries, and novenas were practices that connected families and parish churches. The line between public and private was blurred. Devotional practices were practiced both during the Mass and at home.

The monopoly of organized religion over 1950’s American spirituality was reinforced by new social conditions. The 1950’s was the decade of families. Following the Depression and World War Two there was a dramatic increase in marriages and births. Most new houses were constructed with family rooms. By the end of the decade a third of all households included children under the age of six and over half included children under eighteen.³⁶²

With the baby boom, the local congregation was a source of support in raising families. The church was a kind of surrogate home. Additionally, the extended family was also important. Grandparents and cousins were frequently geographically close. This close connection would still be felt even after death.

While the generation born in the 1950’s associated spirituality with home, congregation, and family, they differed from earlier generations. With the advent of vaccines, life in this world seemed less precarious. Previous generations had written to home (their country of origin) with ideas of the afterlife as a reuniting with separated relatives. The 1950’s generations did not have the same ties with relatives in Europe.

Correlatively, images of the afterlife began to shift in all branches of popular religion. Polls showed that most Americans believed unquestioningly in the existence of an afterlife but getting there was now

³⁶² Wuthnow, *ibid.*, 36.

easier, for heaven was readily available to all who tried hard, either by living good lives or by saying a simple prayer that expressed their trust in God, and it was temporally more distant, complementing a full life on earth rather than threatening to cut it short. Indeed, popular depictions of heaven increasingly used worldly images to show what it was like, by implication arguing that heaven was not such a bad place because it was at least as good as the here and now.³⁶³

As people literally moved away from the churches built by immigrant parents, they had to seek new sacred spaces. Life became more complex. Although many retained a spirituality of dwelling (although often divided among several locations), a spirituality of seeking emerged. Spirituality became privatized, disconnected from a local congregation, and negotiated.

From Wuthnow's connection of social conditions and spirituality it is possible to understand how the image of purgatory functioned within the context of 1950's U.S. Catholicism. First, in the first half of the twentieth century with the immigrants the church was a "home." For Catholics this "home" was extended into the afterlife – the Church triumphant and suffering. Those who suffered in purgatory were part of the extended family. They were imagined into the home of the church. Immigrants still identified with their country of origin as "home." They still felt strong emotional ties to those who had remained at home. It is not too much of an emotional shift to feel strong ties to those who had died. Prayer for the souls of the dead was a way of maintaining connection with the deceased.

In the 1950's praying for the souls in purgatory was part of what Catholics did. It gave a sense of identity. It was part of the boundary marking Catholic from non-

³⁶³ Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950's* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 29.

Catholics. With the end of the Depression, world wars, and diseases, life expectancy increased. Because this world was less hostile the afterlife also seemed less hostile. Many of the homilies of the 1950's emphasized the "blessed souls" rather than the "poor souls." The torture associated with purgatory of previous centuries no longer described how Catholics imagined the afterlife. There was certainly a connection with the church being purged, but progress could happen in this life without pain so it could happen in the afterlife.

Competitive and Noncompetitive Spiritualities

Another approach to twentieth century spirituality is taken by John Thiel. John Thiel³⁶⁴ has written about the disappearance of purgatory. He recognizes the indifference about the doctrine and practice of purgatory in the late twentieth century. He attributes this to an end of what he considers a Catholic competitive spirituality. Thiel offers the concept of "eschatological anxiety" to describe the human fear connected with the resolution of each individual's earthly life. In Christianity this eschatological anxiety developed especially after the realization that the return of Christ would not happen soon. So how could Christians ease the fear of Judgment? Assurance about the afterlife came from following Christ as closely as possible.

If Christ made the supreme sacrifice on the cross, martyrs were valorized as being the best imitation of Christ. Biographers of saints realized that martyrdom was a guarantee of eternal life. Because some of the great saints were not given the opportunity for martyrdom, their sanctity had to be proven by a lifestyle resembling martyrdom. Both

³⁶⁴ John E. Thiel, "Time, Judgment, and Competitive Spirituality: A Reading of the Development of the Doctrine of Purgatory," *Theological Studies* 69, no.4 (December, 2008), 741-785.

Athanasius writing about Antony and Bonaventure writing about Francis had to promote the asceticism of their spiritual heroes. Although it did not involve a martyr's heroic death, an ascetic life still sacrificed life, albeit over a longer period of time. Monastic and religious life became favored as ways of living an ascetical, sacrificial life. In Christendom it was rare that the laity faced the prospect of martyrdom. Lay people also lacked an ascetical lifestyle that imitated the martyr's discipleship. So, time was extended for the laity. Since most Christians could not follow Christ to the point of death or its facsimile in this life, they could suffer like Christ in the next. This helps to explain the vivid descriptions of tortures in the medieval period. Thiel observes that many of the descriptions paralleled and may have been patterned after the tortures endured by those who had been martyred for their faith.

Thiel claims that this system of ascetical competition was undercut by Vatican II's emphasis on the universal call to holiness and the common priesthood of all the faithful. These teachings subverted the "competitive advantage" of the ascetical vocations. Additionally, the Council's emphasis, promoted by Karl Rahner, on grace rather than sin helped to calm the eschatological anxiety felt in the face of Judgment.

Thiel presents the "disappearance of purgatory" as an authentic development in doctrine.

The loss of competitive religion may have resulted in a paucity of vocations to the ascetical life, but the rise of a noncompetitive style of faith has witnessed a new appreciation for the baptismal responsibilities of all believers. The loss of competitive religion may have diminished the practice of auricular confession, but the rise of a noncompetitive style of faith may have increased Catholic devotion to the Eucharist and its reception, perhaps the clearest ritualistic expression of a noncompetitive Catholic sensibility. The loss of competitive religion may have resulted in a loss of devotion to the saints and their heroic spiritual achievements, but the rise of a noncompetitive style of faith

may have led to a new awareness of the social dimension of Catholic ethics in an increasingly globalized world.³⁶⁵

Thiel admits that he is stretching his argument historically. The theological influences that he references will be discussed in the next chapter.

Considering the work of Wuthnow, Thiel, and Orsi together gives an interesting picture of the American Catholic change in spirituality. The Catholic switch from a competitive to a noncompetitive spirituality and the American switch from a dwelling to a seeking spirituality paralleled one another. The U.S. immigrant “culture of suffering” was difficult to sustain when suffering seemed distant.

Individually these theories can all give the appearance of discrete “before and after” categories. Orsi cautions that history is “braided” rather than a single linear strand. The types of spirituality presented here did not change in an instant. The reality of change in the post-war era was multivalent. Centuries old ideas behind “competitive spirituality” were melting with theological changes. American society moved away from the tightly knit neighborhoods which allowed for a seeking form of spirituality. Catholics found themselves to be enjoying the affluent lifestyle of their neighbors, making a “culture of suffering” irrelevant. Taken as a group, these studies show that the social and cultural conditions that gave purgatory its relevance disappeared in a relatively short span of time.

These sections have given a social and cultural context for the “disappearance of purgatory.” The next section jumps several decades forward to find social and cultural clues to “where purgatory went.”

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 784.

Research on Contact with the Dead, Ghosts, After Death Communications, and Near Death Experiences

It has been puckishly observed that what Catholics reject from their traditions, someone else retrieves. Fasting becomes dieting, clerical collars become turtlenecks, and confession becomes psychotherapy. This quip points to the idea that many traditional practices and teachings persevere by fulfilling some human need. A basic human need associated with the doctrine of purgatory is the desire to connect with deceased loved ones. Whereas having Masses said for relatives or visiting their graves had been viewed as means of helping the deceased through the pains of purgatory, the practices also helped the living deal with grief and maintained a sense of unity with loved ones. With the “disappearance” of Catholic practices that connected the living and the dead, there has been an increase in secular narratives of interaction between this life and the next. Using sociological and cultural studies, this section will point to studies that show the ongoing need for connection with the dead.

Since the 1970’s, Andrew Greeley has researched and interpreted sociological data about belief in the afterlife. Often this research is used to counter arguments about the “secularization theory”. Although his research does not specifically target beliefs about purgatory, the research on afterlife beliefs offers a context for the changes in Catholic belief and practice. Secularization theorists found support from data such as decline in church attendance in Europe and trends away from orthodox beliefs. Greeley has been at the forefront of finding contrary evidence. Among other findings, Greeley and his colleagues³⁶⁶ have reported an increase in afterlife beliefs among Americans in

³⁶⁶ Andrew M. Greeley, and Michael Hout, “Americans’ Increasing Belief in Life After Death: Religious Competition and Acculturation,” *American Sociological Review* 64, no.6 (December 1999): 813-835. Also

the twentieth century; American exceptionalism in terms of religious belief and practice; and a complex European map in terms of increased and decreased religious belief and practice.

Greeley takes the surveys of “belief in life after death” one step further. He reported that, in 1976, a high number of people in the U.S. also report experiences of “contact with the dead.” If we consider this phenomenon as an aspect of purgatorial practices, this research may help to give a more nuanced view of what has actually changed in beliefs about purgatory. 25% of the U.S. population claimed to have “really” had contact with the dead. Higher correlations were found with the elderly and teens, women, blacks, the uneducated, Jews and Episcopalians, and the widowed.

Almost twenty years later Greeley re-worked some of this data. In a 1995 book Greeley entitled one chapter “Religious Stories and Contact with the Dead.”³⁶⁷ Here Greeley critiqued a sociological study about widows’ “hallucinations” of their dead husbands. Greeley renamed the widows’ experiences as “contact with the dead.” The original study³⁶⁸ focused on nursing homes. Greeley expanded the study to “widowed” men and women who reported a “contact” with a dead spouse.

Using NORC data, Greeley cited a similar percentage of the U.S. population reports experiences of contact with the dead. About 64% of the “widowed” in both the original article and the NORC data reported “at least once or twice” having contacts with a dead person. In the general population 40% of those surveyed also reported

“Reply to Stolzenberg: ‘Getting to the Truths That Matter’,” *American Sociological Review* (March, 2001): 152-158.

³⁶⁷ *Religion as Poetry*: This chapter (Greeley, *ibid*, pp. 217-227) is an expansion and update of a previous article by Greeley: Andrew Greeley, “Hallucinations among the Widowed,” *Sociology and Social Research*. 71, no. 4 (July, 1987): 258-265.

³⁶⁸ P. Richard Olsen, et al., “Hallucinations of Widowhood,” *Journal of Medical Geriatric Sociology* 33(1985) :543.

experiencing “contact with the dead.” So, while the majority of the widowed population reports this experience, a substantial portion of the general population also reports “contact with the dead.”

Using correlational data, Greeley finds that the high incidence among the widowed population correlates with age, religiousness (defined by reported frequency of prayer), and images of God as Lover (rather than God as Judge). Since this is correlational data, Greeley points out that the causal direction cannot be determined. The common interpretation would be that people who are elderly, pray frequently, and have an image of God as Lover are more likely to experience “contact with the dead.” Greeley argues that it is also possible that the causality can go in the opposite direction. In other words, a bereaved person’s experience of “contact with the dead” can shift their image of God in the direction of Lover.

Greeley gives support to this finding with another statistic. He finds that those who have lost a sibling in the past year (rather than a parent or child who, Greeley suggests, may not have shared as much of the person’s life as a spouse or a sibling) report the same high frequency of “contact with the dead” as widowed respondents. This group also scores high on a religious imagination question (i.e. God as Lover). Greeley suggests that this supports the idea that a “contact with the dead” alters one’s religious imagination in a positive way rather than the religious imagination predisposing one for the experience.

Greeley recognizes the complexity of study in this area of research. He also notes the strong bias in the social sciences against topics such as “contact with the dead” which might suggest the reality of such occurrences. Social science has to take an agnostic view

of questions dealing with the spiritual. Greeley notes the history of the Society for Psychic Research concerning the issue of whether the “dead return.”

While a reading of the long history of the debate might lead one to conclude that those who answer “yes” have ever so slightly more evidence on their side than those who answer “no,” the issue has not been settled and is not likely ever to be settled by techniques of empirical science.³⁶⁹

Greeley argues that the prevalence of reports alone makes the phenomenon worthy of study.

For the purposes of this dissertation, Greeley’s work gives an empirical basis to one facet of the doctrine of purgatory. At least, the doctrine seems to correspond to a common human experience. In the U.S., experiences of contact with the dead are fairly widespread. Two fifths of the U.S. population, including some who even identify themselves as atheists, report at least one experience of “contact with the dead.” At the time of Greeley’s published research, this statistic had not been explained or further analyzed by social scientists. In other centuries these might have been interpreted as visitations from purgatory. Today they are often dismissed as “hallucinations.” Underlying both the doctrine of purgatory and the “hallucinations” of the widowed is the need for connection with those who are on the other side of death. The religious imagination gives an interpretive lens for individuals to explain these contacts. For Catholics, whether or not the term “purgatory” is used, there is a tradition of interaction between the living and the dead.

Frequently throughout Western history interaction between the living and the dead is narrated through ghostly apparitions. In recent decades several social histories

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 227.

have been written about these contacts.³⁷⁰ The histories generally conclude that characteristics of these apparitions change reflecting cultural changes. So, the ghosts of the medieval times requested Masses and supplications to release them from purgatory. During the Reformation, Protestants interpreted apparitions as demons disguised as the dead. The ghosts of the Enlightenment period gave proof of life after death for a skeptical culture. Today's ghosts rarely speak, but return to help the living. Owen Davies reflects on the phenomenon:

Our dreams and reveries constantly conjure up images of the departed. They pervade our consciousness. Even if we do not believe in them, they are still with us as we watch, read and hear; they are engrained in our language...Perhaps there is a subconscious fear that if we lay aside the belief in ghosts we will lose an element of our humanity.³⁷¹

In a very general way, these social histories extend the import of Greeley's research across time. The "contact with the dead" has been formulated differently in different cultural environments, but it has been a constant part of human society.

These histories of ghosts have frequently centered on British society. One recent study has also analyzed a related experience as an aspect of the American culture. Susan Kwilecki³⁷² presents a cultural analysis of the phenomenon she calls After Death Communication. ADC involves the messages individuals receive from deceased relatives and friends. So, this is synonymous with Greeley's "contact with the dead."

³⁷⁰ R.C. Finucane, *Ghosts: Appearances of the Dead and Cultural Transformation* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1996) and Owen Davis, *The Haunted: A Social History of Ghosts* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) are two examples.

³⁷¹ Davis, *ibid.*, 249.

³⁷² Susan Kwilecki, "Twenty-First Century American Ghosts: The After-Death Communication – Therapy and Revelation from beyond the Grave," *Religion and American Culture* 19, no.1 (Winter 2009): 101-133.

Kwilecki uses the term to distinguish these from reports of “haunting” or “poltergeist.” In recent years, popular television shows, movies, and books have focused attention on these reports. These experiences seem to be much more accepted in current U.S. society.

Kwilecki compares the current reports to the reports by spiritualists of the nineteenth century. The ghosts of the nineteenth century seemed to appear within a context of the debates between science and religion. Sensory experiences of spirits demonstrated immortality in an empirical way. Another factor was dissatisfaction with orthodox Calvinism.

Rather than dissent, today’s perceivers of ghosts are faced with a marketplace of spiritual choices. Today, ADC offers confirmation of immortality either within or totally separate from traditional church organizations. So, ADC fits well with the “autonomous or individualistic construction of faith” characteristic of the late twentieth century. Additionally the ADC is therapeutic. The deceased who return seem to be better versions of themselves and they offer comfort and well being to the individuals they visit. Ghostly visitors return to seek forgiveness or offer forgiveness. In contrast traditional ghosts were often fearful and dangerous. These deceased visitors do not cajole and chastise the living, like Marley visiting Ebenezer Scrooge. Instead they offer healing and spiritual enlightenment.

The afterlife envisioned in this view is one of continuous improvement. Those who are overly self-centered at the point of death condemn themselves to lower regions of the afterlife, temporarily. This sounds like a variation on the traditional understanding of purgatory.

The After-Death Communication, however, reintroduces the dead into family life, healing, and faith. But it is hardly business as usual. The

ADC reverses the historical pattern of obligation, wherein survivors owed the deceased offerings, prayers, and obedience. Now, meek and selfless spirits attend the living, asking nothing in return, except perhaps to be forgiven. This is unsurprising in light of the cultural portals through which the dead have returned – medicine, on the one hand, with its dedication to painlessness, and an approach to the divine, on the other, that places nothing higher than the wants of the individual.³⁷³

So, the U.S. culture seems to endorse one element of purgatory – contact with the dead. Additionally there is a sense of “lower regions” of the afterlife that souls need to endure to rise to “higher regions” of the afterlife. This supports traditional imagery of place and process of purification. However, the roles are reversed from the earlier centuries. There is no mention of the obligation of the living to help the dead. The dead now serve the living. Kwilecki attributes this to the therapeutic and narcissistic tendencies in U.S. culture.

Although not given as much attention as in previous decades, Near Death Experiences also offer a window into contemporary culture’s understanding of the afterlife. Near Death Experiences refer to the narratives, imagery, and emotions experienced by individuals who had been close to dying, but were resuscitated. Researchers who collected the testimonies found several recurring themes in these testimonies. In the last two decades of the twentieth century several books about the subject were very widely read.

Carol Zaleski³⁷⁴ has written about the striking similarities and differences between these accounts and the otherworld journeys from medieval times. She does not provide a

³⁷³ Ibid., 123.

³⁷⁴ Carol Zaleski . *The Life of the World to Come: Near-Death Experience and Christian Hope* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) and *Otherworld Journeys: Accounts of Near-Death Experience in Medieval and Modern Times* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

continuous chronology over the course of Western history. Rather, she compares and contrasts two forms of “otherworld journeys” contained in two very different historical contexts. Zaleski provides a very brief summary of her findings:

Here (in the contemporary study of NDE’s), as in the chapters on medieval vision lore, we will learn of sudden exit from the body; travel across tunnels, paths, or fields; encounters with luminous guides and spirits; glimpses of heavenly bliss; reluctant reentry into life; and an aftermath of psychological and spiritual transformation. Yet we will find striking difference as well: gone are the bad deaths, harsh judgment scenes, purgatorial torments, and infernal terrors of medieval visions; by comparison, the modern other world is a congenial place, a democracy, a school for continuing education, and a garden of unearthly delights.³⁷⁵

She points out that both the medieval stories and the contemporary NDE’s are works of narrative imagination. Interpreting these theologically, she considers them to be works of religious imagination. In times of cultural change or exchange, individuals need to reorient themselves in their relation to the cosmos and direction in life. These narratives provide that imaginative reorientation.

Zaleski’s analysis of NDE’s concludes that they are both “imaginative and real.” They are real experiences mediated by religious imagination. They put people in touch with the deepest ideals of life and imaginatively transport them across the boundary of death. Zaleski proposes that we have a need to imagine.

Specifically addressing the concerns of contemporary culture and purgatory, Zaleski points to the NDE characteristic of “life review.” Many of those who have undergone the experience report viewing the events and decisions of their life presented

³⁷⁵ Ibid *Otherworld Journeys* , 7.

very rapidly in their consciousness. Frequently, they have the opportunity to view these events and decisions objectively. Zaleski suggests this is the contemporary equivalent of purgation.

This section has cited studies pointing to a human need to connect with departed loved ones. The experiences of ghosts and after death communication point to a basic need for this. Of course, this does not make a statement about the reality of such experiences. It only points out that the practices associated with purgatory may have given a channel for this basic need. Zaleski's analysis of Near Death Experiences gives an explanation about the role of religious imagination in experiences of the other world.

Conclusion

This section has situated the sudden decline of interest in purgatory within the context of the modern era of religion. Bellah's theory of modern religion explains that there is a shift of focus from afterlife to this life and a shift from literal to symbolic focus on religious doctrines. Considering that Bellah marked the modern era as beginning in the nineteenth century, the question could be reversed to ask why it took so long for purgatory to decline. Or, if there is a general loss of interest in the afterlife, why did heaven and hell not "disappear"?

A partial answer is that different social configurations will experience religious change in different ways. Since this dissertation has relied on Catholic religious publications to measure the "disappearance" the change we view is on the meso- or

institutional level. So, there may be a general trend of declining religious authority, but that needs to be specified for the U.S. context.

Andrew Greeley has proposed an understanding of religion that tries to account for change without presuming an inevitable decline. Greeley's defining religion as poetry rather than prose points to the need to examine religious imagination. The interaction of "high tradition" and "popular tradition" helps to explain the dynamic aspects of the doctrine of purgatory.

Examining the first half of the twentieth century gives a social context that may have supported the doctrine of purgatory. Like devotion to St. Jude, devotion to the souls in purgatory may have given psychological support to Catholic immigrants feeling separated from their homes in Europe. The idea of suffering having a positive benefit was a consoling message for people enduring economic depression, war, and death of children. Purgatory fit neatly into a culture of suffering. Those who suffered could exchange their pain for the pain of those in purgatory. It is noted this may have been the view of those who were external to the suffering.

The idea of purgatory also fit within a dwelling type of spirituality. Devotions could be observed both in the home and the church. Praying for the dead united families across time and space.

Purgatory also fits within Thiel's competitive spirituality. Thiel's explanation of the Catholic theological transition from sin to grace foreshadows some of the theological studies which will be presented in the next chapter. Thiel attributes the disappearance to Vatican II. The current dissertation points to a few years prior. In the U.S. the

combination of social conditions, theological change, and liturgical developments made the decline of purgatory and its practices seem rather sudden.

This chapter has also implicitly asked, “Has purgatory really disappeared?” When we look at popular culture, there is still an interest in connection with the dead and with “life after death.” The studies we have reviewed show that the interest is filtered through cultural lenses. Zaleski has argued that this shows the need for religious imagination. Within these encounters with the dead and life after death we can find a culturally filtered form of purgatory. A life review may be a form of purgatory for the current age.

CHAPTER 6

THEOLOGICAL INTEGRATION

This chapter will first summarize the findings of the previous chapters that have explored the twentieth century changes in liturgy and devotional practices, how religious publications presented purgatory and related subjects, and the cultural context. Further, the present chapter will attempt to specify the theological changes that brought about the “disappearance of purgatory.” In the U.S. context, that transformation of the doctrine of purgatory is represented by a particular author writing prior to Vatican II. Purgatory “disappeared” before, not as a result of, Vatican II. Although changed practices and new theological understandings led to a re-imagined and diminished attention for the doctrine of purgatory, the teaching can be found during and after the Vatican II era.

Summary

Chapter Two had concluded the historical overview of purgatory with the five recurring themes. Each theme changed over the course of the centuries. The first theme, the nature and purpose of purgatory, had switched from the punitive images of the Middle Ages to more developmental or healing metaphors in the twentieth century. The theme of time became irrelevant, although the idea of particular judgment at the moment of death retained a hold on believers. The third theme involved the inhabitants of purgatory. The description of the inhabitants had changed. At one time the occupants of purgatory were clearly imagined as passive recipients of punishment. In the twentieth

century autonomy became such a key element in modern man's self concept that it is almost unimaginable that souls would be totally passive in the next life. The theme dealing with the connection between the living and the dead shifted throughout the centuries. On a popular level the living often sought to help and to be helped by the dead. On an official level there was less acceptance of this. The final theme relates to the practices associated with purgatory.

Chapter Three focused on this last theme. The twentieth century saw many changes in liturgical practices. The breviary was renewed with less emphasis on prayers for the dead. The devotional calendar, emphasizing an eschatological communion, declined in favor of a more Eucharist- and Christ – centered calendar. There was a shift from emphasizing preparation for the next life to living the present life well. Extreme Unction became Anointing of the Sick. Funerals and the associated liturgies retrieved a sense of hope rather than fear. The *Dies Irae* was dropped, and black vestments were changed. All Souls' Day and its rituals were less emphasized. The changes were primarily based in historical retrieval of the original intentions of the liturgical celebrations. These changes were initiated with Pope Pius X and continued with the historical research of liturgical reformers. Devotional practices, often initiated by the people, followed the official changes. The changes from the 1909 to 1960 were dramatic. In tone, the switch was from Good Friday to Easter Sunday.

Chapter Four surveyed the articles from U.S. Catholic periodicals dealing with purgatory. The most striking aspect is the sheer volume of articles. Prior to 1960, most

U.S. Catholic periodicals had at least one article each year devoted to a topic associated with purgatory. *Homiletics Review* and its subsequent incarnations regularly published sermons for All Souls' Day. *Ave Maria* contained articles every November exhorting its readers to pray for the dead.

Because many of the early articles repeated themselves, sometimes word for word, a “standard message on purgatory” was used to summarize the teaching. The “standard message” can be summarized in three statements, mirroring the teaching of Trent: purgatory exists; those in purgatory suffer; and those on earth can help those who suffer. Much of the standard message was defensive and punitive in tone. However, a great emphasis was placed on “charity” for those souls who could not help themselves.

HPR went through three phases of publishing sermons for All Souls' Day. The final phase, from the 1950's, showed signs of mellowing the image of suffering in purgatory. Purgatory existed, but it was not as painful. The urgency to alleviate the pain of souls through prayer was thus diminished.

Historical studies from AER pushed the teaching about purgatory to earlier periods in Church history. However, when pushed to Scripture, the teaching was very limited.

There were debates over the nature of suffering in purgatory that foreshadowed changes in understanding of the doctrine. A “rigorist” approach emphasized the pain experienced by souls in purgatory. This approach was tied to Aquinas. So, the debates over pains in purgatory were also debates over the authority of the Thomistic/ neo-Scholastic approach. Eventually, the “milder” approach won out. The Thomistic monopoly also gave way to other types of theology.

The mass death experienced with World War I and the flu epidemic motivated many to pray for the dead. This may have been a constructive way of coping with the great loss of the time. By World War II the tone was different. Some articles reversed the flow of prayer, asking the dead to pray for the living. Others used the images of “war relief”, the Marshal plan, and “displaced persons” to motivate prayers for the dead.

Purgatory also related to concerns about the growth in spiritualism. Catholics had traditions of connecting with and assisting the dead, whereas spiritualism was a way of manipulating those who mourned the loss of loved ones.

Dante was retrieved for different purposes. Pope Benedict XV had proclaimed Dante a Catholic triumph. Periodicals used this retrieval of Dante to emphasize varying messages. *Ave Maria* noted the Marian emphasis in Dante and encouraged greater devotion to both Mary and the souls in purgatory. Dante was also a subject for historical contextual analysis. Dante’s criticism of particular popes was defended against charges of heresy. Dante could also disagree with Thomas Aquinas and still be orthodox. Dante’s orthodoxy was supported by his deep understanding of the liturgy of his time.

Perhaps the periodical that questioned the “standard message” most consistently was *Oratre Fratres/ Worship*. The liturgical renewal questioned practices that had developed over the centuries with little connection to the messages and practices of early Christians. Hans A. Reinhold, in particular criticized the imbalance in the liturgical calendar. All Souls’ Day and other observances were based on popular piety and “propaganda” rather than revelation. Reinhold brought the insights of Yves Congar to an American audience. Reinhold noted that the U.S. culture avoided the topic of “death.” So, the doctrine of purgatory was not easily discussed in an American context. For

Contra the doctrine of purgatory had been exaggerated in opposition to Orthodox and Protestant challenges. Purgatory needed to be viewed within its limited role in Christian salvation. The Church on earth should focus on cleansing, liberating, and making satisfaction in this life.

Concurrent with the imaginative and intellectual changes were vast cultural changes for American Catholics. The post-war generation experienced affluence and transition from the socially isolated Catholic neighborhoods. In 1919 the Spanish flu had dominated the experience of American life; in 1951 new vaccines were dramatically decreasing the threat of infant death. The Catholic population exploded; buildings were erected; Catholics raised families next to non-Catholic suburban neighbors; the consumer culture promised material security. For U.S. Catholics, life was no longer expected to be a vale of tears.

The spirituality accompanying these social changes has been described in different ways. Orsi describes Catholic devotionism of the mid-twentieth century as grounded in a culture of suffering, exemplified by the practice of the “victim soul”. Wuthnow describes the American experience as evolving from a dwelling to a seeking form of spirituality. Thiel takes a long view of history and finds the mid-twentieth century as the demise of a competitive form of spirituality. For Thiel this explains the “disappearance of purgatory.”

Although purgatory may not be the prevalent doctrine that it once was, there are indications that the relation of the living and the dead, the experience behind the doctrine,

still needs to be addressed. Many in the U.S. population claim an encounter with the afterlife. These experiences have been studied with sociological and cultural analysis. Greeley has used survey data to show that the idea of contact with the dead seems to be a fairly widespread phenomenon. Encounters with ghosts and near death experiences have occurred throughout history. Although these are interpreted through the lens of cultural values, they point to a very human experience – the desire for connection with those we have lost through death. Without a sense of praying for and with the dead, we find other ways of connecting.

Theology of Mid-Twentieth Century

We will now review some salient theological trends that accompanied the decline in interest in purgatory. Decades prior to Vatican II, change was occurring in many areas of theology. We have touched on some of this change in earlier chapters, but we will try to point to more direct links in this chapter. Behind the many articles of early and mid-twentieth century American Catholicism were European movements in theology.

At mid-century Catholic theology was struggling with the limitations of neo-Scholasticism. In France and Germany Catholic theologians were questioning the narrow focus of neo-Scholasticism. The theological ferment was felt in all areas of theology, including eschatology. Writing an introduction to a collection of theological essays, Robert Gleason, SJ, in 1966, summarizes the situation thus:

The last two decades have witnessed a remarkable renaissance of all branches of Catholic theology. Sacred Scripture, too, has seen a flourishing revival since the publication in 1948 of the Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. As a result of recent investigations, new perspectives on old problems have been opened up and theology has also posed new problems requiring extensive speculation. There is scarcely an area of

theological thinking which has not been in some way affected by the wave of new speculation and research.³⁷⁶

Gleason ties the theological fermentation to the new appreciation for Scripture. Pope Pius XII's encouragement of Biblical studies was also a limited acknowledgment of historical-critical methodology. This methodology which sought a reading of texts in their original contexts had already been at work.

This new historical consciousness represented by the *ressourcement* of *Nouvelle Théologie* theologians and by the expanded Thomism of others had already challenged the classicist approach of the neoscholastic theology. For the purposes of this dissertation, these new understandings of Scripture, history, Church, the purpose of human life, and other areas connected with great changes in eschatology. We have already seen the liturgical changes leading to a re-evaluation of practices connected to purgatory. These changes led to a reduction in concern with the afterlife and especially purgatory.

Writing in 1966, Gleason briefly surveys the changes in emphasis in a wide variety of theological concepts. The approach to faith and revelation had become less rationalistic and propositional. The historical-critical approach to Scripture led to new understandings of the intended meanings of the authors. The understanding of tradition and all areas of dogmatic theology were being re-thought as a result. The image of the Church as predominantly a juridical institution was being replaced with biblical images such as the people of God. Christology was shifting its focus to the psychology of Christ.

³⁷⁶ Robert W., Gleason SJ, editor. *A Theology Reader* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1966), ix.

Insights from Orthodox and Protestant theology were being incorporated. Morality was being re-centered on biblical teachings on love. Grace was understood as the divinization of humans rather than just that which must be balanced with human freedom. Within this dynamic mix eschatology was also being re-evaluated.

With the emergence of many ‘theologies’ of history there has come a renewal of interest in the transformation of the universe by Christ and in the study of the last things. Eschatology has become in many ways the storm center of theology today, with new theories on the meaning of death, of the relationship of man after death to the cosmos, etc.³⁷⁷

One writer summarizes the theological changes as three “paradigm shifts.” Leading up to Vatican II, theology changed in three ways. First, Catholic theology changed from a classicist (truth is unchangeable and certain for every future time and culture) to a historically conscious worldview (the expression of a theological truth is historically conditioned). This change was contiguous with the acceptance of a historical critical approach to Biblical studies. Second, there was a switch from a deductive to an inductive method of theology (switch from starting point as abstract truth applied to humans to starting point as the concrete human condition). Third, the theological tone shifted from an apologetic to a foundational approach (from a defensive to an explanatory approach).³⁷⁸ All of these shifts influenced eschatology and, in turn, the understanding of purgatory.

³⁷⁷ Ibid. Note that Gleason uses (without reference) Hans Urs von Balthasar’s image of “storm center” for eschatology in the twentieth century.

³⁷⁸ Maureen Sullivan, O.P. *The Road to Vatican II: Key Changes in Theology* (New York/Mahwah, N.J. : Paulist Press, 2007), 12-16.

Protestant Eschatology in the Twentieth Century

Peter Phan³⁷⁹ traces the movement of eschatology from the periphery to the center of theology in the twentieth century. Rising out of the biblical quest for the historical Jesus, Phan summarizes nine eschatologies.

- Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer contended that the central purpose of Christ's mission was to proclaim the immanent coming of an otherworldly Kingdom of God.
- Karl Barth disagreed with the purely ethical interpretation of the Kingdom by these men, and identified eschatology with God's transcendence.
- Rudolf Bultmann interpreted the Kingdom through the lens of existential philosophy. Authentic existence came for individuals when they face the future in their decisions.
- Oscar Cullmann opposed Bultmann with a theology of salvation history. Eschatology is grounded in historical facts and events that lead in a linear timeframe toward an endpoint.
- Joachim Jeremias combined elements from the previous scholars to propose that the Kingdom was neither fully present nor fully future. Its total realization will come at the end of time.
- Wolfhart Pannenberg suggests that universal history is the realm of God's self-revelation. The fulfillment of this will only come at the end of time.

³⁷⁹ Peter Phan, *Eternity in Time: A Study of Karl Rahner's Eschatology* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1988), 26-31.

- Jürgen Moltmann emphasizes Christian hope in the future. We cannot predict. We can only anticipate the future promised in the Resurrection. The Church must become a “co-worker” with the coming Kingdom.
- Johannes Metz would say that the Kingdom of God is not a utopia of human, progress, but the gift of God in response to our solidarity with the victims of society.

Although all but Metz were Protestant, these influenced Catholic theologians as dialogue partners. These approaches to eschatology are a dramatic alternative to the “Four Last Things” approach of neoscholasticism. Themes of the Kingdom of God and resurrection pushed theology away from themes of heaven, hell, and purgatory.

Shifts within Catholic Eschatology

In addition to Protestant theologians, Catholics were also aware of thinkers who were skeptical of Christian ideas and practices. The continued influence of Feuerbach and Marx spurred some to criticize religion as the way of keeping the masses under the control of the elite. The idea that religion was a projection-mechanism particularly targeted teachings on the afterlife. By focusing its members on the world to come, the Church was accused of discouraging action in this world for social change that would benefit those most vulnerable in society. So, some of the underpinnings of Catholic teaching on purgatory were being shaken by modern secular intellectuals.

The Catholic approach to eschatology of the previous centuries was summarized as the Last Things. As has been mentioned, this neoscholastic approach made

eschatology irrelevant. Peter Phan concludes that the basic truths of the Last Things were “universally and peacefully accepted. And, in the same process, eschatology unfortunately became a secondary and irrelevant appendix of dogmatic theology. Dealing with matters beyond the range of human experience, it quickly degenerated into empty speculation on irrelevancies.”³⁸⁰ In response to the outside influences of Protestant and secular thought as well as internal theological ferment, Catholic theologians were shifting emphases in eschatology. Three of these were:

A. From Last Things to Death

Seminary theology of the first half of the twentieth century limited eschatology to the “Last Things.” *De Novissimis* was the final chapter of books on dogmatic theology. Since it dealt with things beyond this world, it was generally an interesting, but speculative topic. Zachary Hayes describes the situation thus:

Roman Catholic theology entered the (twentieth) century deeply immersed in the neo-Scholastic, handbook style of theology. Here eschatology was seen as the doctrine about those things which awaited the individual person in death and beyond (death, judgment, purgation, heaven, hell) and that which awaited the whole human race at the end of history (the return of Christ, the general resurrection, and the general judgment). This style tended to see the ‘last things’ as objects, predictable events, and places in the world beyond. It was described by Yves Congar as a physical style of eschatology.³⁸¹

Hayes attributes the shift in theological focus from “Last Things” to death as a reflection on the doctrine of the Assumption. In 1950, reflection on the Marian doctrine incorporated new thinking on the ways that humans entered the next life. The tone of the discussion used contemporary personalist and existential forms of philosophy to focus on

³⁸⁰ Phan, *ibid.*, 18.

³⁸¹ Zachary Hayes O.F.M., *Visions of a Future: A Study of Christian Eschatology* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1989), 11.

the human experience of death. Rather than emphasize conjecture on what happens after death, some theologians noted the lack of theology on the human experience of death. Considering that the death of Jesus was the source of salvation, this seemed to be a theological oversight. Theological reflection on eschatology took on an anthropological tone, instead of the “physical style”. Some theologians stressed the last moment of life as the entrance into eternity. That moment was a summing up of the person’s life and a decision to accept or reject God.

B. From neo-scholastic tradition to scriptural and historical sources

If one mid-century papal doctrine opened the doors to a more anthropological approach to eschatology, another papal document opened the doors to re-thinking the sources of eschatology. The quotation above, from Robert Gleason, indicates the 1948 publication of *Divino Afflante Spiritu* as a watershed for theology. The turn to the biblical sources of theology gave greater weight to the types of eschatology being discussed in Protestant theology. The emphasis on biblical sources also showed the scant attention given to the afterlife in many of the scriptural books.

C. From the individual to the social

Peter Phan describes the shift from a first millennium collective view of eschatology to an almost exclusively individual view. Phan traces this theological stunting as the result of the treatise of Benedict XII³⁸² defining the beatific vision and

³⁸² *Benedictus Deus*, 1336. “...all these souls, immediately (*mox*) after death and, in the case of those in need of purification, after the purification mentioned above, since the ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ into heaven, already before they take up their bodies again and before the general judgment,

punishment in hell as BEFORE the general judgment. This set the structure of how eschatology would be treated, a division into individual and collective eschatologies. So, there was an individual judgment immediately after death, and there was a collective judgment at the end of the world. These two “final things” did not overlap. With the return to biblical and patristic sources, the social aspect of eschatology was once again integrated with the individual.

Initiators of the Shift

Among Catholic theologians several were particularly influential in bringing about significant change in eschatology. The following is a brief list and description of some of the more influential theologians in the twentieth century. These all moved Catholic thinking away from the monolithic neoscholasticism.

Yves Congar

The influence of Yves Congar has been noted earlier in this dissertation. Although he is better known for reflections on ecclesiology and church reform, Yves Congar is often cited for some key thoughts on eschatology, and purgatory in particular. In Chapter Two, along with Guardini, Congar’s work gave an example of the continuation early twentieth century thinking of Pohle and Bartmann. In Chapter Four, we cited H.A. Reinhold’s reliance on Congar in *Worship*.

...Yves Congar spoke of the shift from a physical style to a more anthropological style of eschatology. By this he meant that the older form of Scholastic and neo-Scholastic eschatology was largely concerned with depicting the last events of history and the geography of the world beyond

have been, are and will be with Christ in heaven...” “On the Beatific Vision of God,” <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Ben12/B12bdeus.html> (accessed 11/15/2013).

this one, whereas the tendency of contemporary theology is to see eschatology principally in terms of the fulfillment of God's creative intent in humanity and in the world of God's creation. The primary focus of such reflection is not on the nature of the final "things," but on the final, life-giving, fulfilling relation between God and humanity, and through humanity, with the world.³⁸³

So, Congar recognized the shift to an anthropological style of eschatology. Also, implied within this insight, is an openness to this world, rather than the next. The final "thing" is a relationship between God and humanity and between God and the world.

Congar also warned about reifying ideas. The "final things" were especially prone to this. Even though the Council of Trent had cautioned against the tendency, the original meanings associated with the hope about life after death had become literal images rather than symbols. Over time, the original process of purification had become, in popular thinking, a place or thing. The images of God's completing the soul had hardened into images including real fire and a torture chamber. Congar clearly rejected the past images of purgatory. He stated that, concerning purgatory, "Christian iconography should be banned almost in its entirety."³⁸⁴ So the doctrine of purgatory had to be returned to its original form. Congar advocated a role for theology to critically reflect on the images and "de-reify" them.³⁸⁵

Karl Rahner

³⁸³ Hayes, *ibid*, 69-70. Citing Yves Congar, "Fins derniers," in: *Revue de Sciences Philosophiques et Theologiques* 33 (1949): 463-484.

³⁸⁴ Y. Congar, "Le purgatoire", in *Le mystere de la mort et sa celebration* (Paris 1956) : 311. Quoted in Luis M Bermejo, S.J. *Life beyond Death: The Risen Christ and the Transfiguration of Man* (Gujarat Sahitya Prakash Anand: India, 1985), 66.

³⁸⁵ Ladislaus Boros, S.J., *The Mystery of Death* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965) :134.

Karl Rahner was enormously influential in theological thought in the twentieth century. Although much of Rahner's thought has been analyzed, Peter Phan has noted a lack of study of Rahner's thoughts on eschatology.³⁸⁶ Phan understands this oversight because Rahner avoided a systematic approach. However, Phan points out that Rahner explored eschatological topics throughout his career. As early as 1954, Rahner published criticisms of the neoscholastic approach to eschatology found in seminary manuals.³⁸⁷ In an article originally published in 1953, and published in English in 1963³⁸⁸, Rahner gives a basis to re-imagining the doctrine of purgatory. Reviewing recent work on the history of indulgences, he suggests that sin and temporal punishment could be viewed less juridically. If sin contained its own punishment, then the pain of purgatory would be better understood as the pain of growth rather than extrinsically imposed vindictive punishment. He allows that purgatory could be understood as maturing and as "an integration of the whole stratified human reality" rather than punishment. His thinking on purgatory would continue to change after Vatican II. After Vatican II, Rahner would impact theological reflection on topics such as "the intermediate state" and the hermeneutics of eschatological statements. For this section of the dissertation, we will focus on his earlier writings in two areas: the development of dogma and death.

His writings on the development of dogma, following the 1950 teaching on the Assumption, allowed for a new understanding of the tradition.³⁸⁹ Two articles³⁹⁰, one

³⁸⁶ Peter C. Phan, *Eternity in Time: A Study of Karl Rahner's Eschatology*. (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1988), 24.

³⁸⁷ Ibid p 19.

³⁸⁸ Karl Rahner, "Remarks on the Theology of Indulgences," *Theological Investigations Vol II: Man in the Church* trans. Karl-H. Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1963).

³⁸⁹ Mary E. Hines, *The Transformation of Dogma: An Introduction to Karl Rahner on Doctrine* (New York/ Mahweh: Paulist Press. 1989), 65- 98.

published in 1954 and one in 1958, presented Rahner's early thought on the subject. The 1954 article addressed an issue associated with the doctrine of the assumption. How could such a "new truth" be connected with the "old truth"? Theories of doctrinal development that emphasized logical transitions were inadequate. The key to Rahner's explanation was a shift in the theological starting point. Instead of proposition, doctrine develops from an experience or event. This emphasis on experience over proposition explained how "new" doctrines can emerge based on the Church's reflection on the original revelation.

The 1958 article expands on the earlier work. Germane to our study is an insight about simplification as a process of development. Rahner notes that development of doctrine can mean the decline of a doctrine. While most theories on the development of doctrine explained the emergence of "new" teachings into the Church's consciousness, Rahner's theory allowed for the transition of theological doctrines from foreground to background as well. This gives a theological justification to the "disappearance of purgatory." Although "purgatory" was not explicitly mentioned in these articles, they explained the diminishment of doctrines.

One of Rahner's most significant contributions was his emphasis on theological anthropology. When applied to eschatology, Rahner's ideas created a dramatic shift in perspective. For Rahner, eschatology is anthropology in the future tense. Rahner's early writings on death shifted the theological discussion away from the "Last Things" to the human experience of death. Neoscholastic eschatology had focused on what happens after death. Heaven, hell, purgatory, judgment occur after life. Death marks the end

³⁹⁰ Karl Rahner, "The Development of Doctrine," *Theological Investigations I* (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1963), 39-77 and "Considerations on the Development of Doctrine," *Theological Investigations IV* (New York: Crossroad, 1973), 3-35.

point of an historical human life. The attention of the Church had been limited to helping individuals attain a “happy death.” Rahner found this to be problematic.

He proposed three reasons for theology to focus on death itself rather than what came after death. First, death is a central mystery of human existence. Rahner’s anthropological focus is obvious from this statement. Rahner considered death to be more than a biological phenomenon. A human death means the end of an individual’s historical existence. It marks the end of human freedom. Second, the death of one man, Jesus, is the fundamental event of salvation and human history. Third, it is in death that humans attain their destiny. The human pilgrimage finds its end point in death.³⁹¹ These ideas helped to shift theological attention away from the Last Things and toward this life, as viewed from its final moment. In his thinking on death, Rahner also offers a new understanding of the traditional image of death as the separation of body and soul. After death the soul enters a new relation with the world, experiencing itself as being in harmony or disharmony with what is objectively right in the world. This understanding allows for imagining purgatory as a maturing process.³⁹²

Phan also praises Rahner’s ability to balance individual and collective eschatology. The neoscholastic teaching on the Last Things had overemphasized the individual. In manuals of theology since the Middle Ages, individual and collective eschatology were treated separately. In Phan’s estimation, Augustine’s *City of God*, which balanced the individual and collective, had been lost in the arguments of the

³⁹¹ Phan, *ibid*, 80.

³⁹² Rahner, Karl, *On the Theology of Death* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961), 24.

Reformation and Counter Reformation. In addition, Rahner situated the topic of “death” under the heading of theological anthropology, rather than eschatology.³⁹³

So, Karl Rahner’s early teachings may not have directly demythologized, deconstructed, or rejected the doctrine of purgatory, but it did create a context for its diminishment in Catholic thought. By showing that doctrinal development can mean decreased attention for certain doctrines, Rahner justified a lack of focus on the Last Things. By shifting attention to death, the focus of theology shifted from the next world to this life. By using human experience and Scripture as theological starting points, there was less backing for the doctrine of purgatory.

Ladislaus Boros

The Hungarian Jesuit, Ladislaus Boros, built on Rahner’s focus on death. His book on *The Mystery of Death* was published in English in 1965. His central idea was that death was the final decision, the culmination of an individual human existence. It was at the moment of death that a person chose to say “Yes” to God or rejected God. After death, there is no choice.

Death gives man the opportunity of posing his first completely personal act; death is, therefore, by reason of its very being, the moment above all others for the awakening of consciousness, for freedom, for encounter with God, for the final decision about his eternal destiny.³⁹⁴

So this is the “final decision” of human life. Purification is associated with this.

Following the thinking of Congar, Boros rejects the “reifying projections” of purgatory.

Images of time and space may have helped Christians understand the process of

³⁹³ Ibid, 22-23.

³⁹⁴ L. Boros, *The Mystery of Death* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), ix.

purification, but these same images have corrupted the original meaning. When explaining purification with the categories of time and space, the process became concretized with images of great suffering. Boros wrote that turning purgatory into a “gigantic torture chamber, a cosmic concentration camp in which hapless creatures are punished to the accompaniment of shrieks and groans” has overstepped the mark.

In Boros’ view, the “final decision” of an individual human life is a meeting with God that involves a stripping process. This involves pain. Boros gives the analogy that human existence is like layers of rock over a volcanic fire. The layers of self-seeking are broken through by the love of God at the moment of final decision. So, integrating man’s reality into God’s love involves suffering.

Boros cites several biblical examples of how encounters with God are painful - Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, the Transfiguration of Jesus, John’s Apocalypse. Given these biblical precedents, the encounter with Christ, at the moment of death, would be our purgatory.

Hans Urs Von Balthasar

Hans Urs Von Balthasar is frequently cited for his pithy summaries of the state of eschatology. Three quotes are frequently used. The earliest quote, from the 1950’s, states that eschatology has been the “storm center” of theology in the twentieth century.³⁹⁵ This image highlighted the lack of agreement among theologians on issues in the area of eschatology. In 1960, he stated that the “eschatological office” which had been almost shut down in the nineteenth century, according to Ernst Troeltsch, had now

³⁹⁵ Referenced in Hayes, Zachary. *Visions of a Future*, (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1989), 11.

been working overtime since the turn of the century.³⁹⁶ With this quote, Von Balthasar was noting the shift of eschatology from the periphery to the center of theology.

In several articles, beginning in 1958, Von Balthasar paraphrases Augustine to point out that meeting God in Jesus is the summary of eschatological hope. “God is the creature’s Last Thing. He is our heaven when we gain him, our hell when we lose him, our judgement when we are examined by him, our purgatory when we are purified by him...but he is all this...in his Son Jesus Christ.”³⁹⁷ Here Von Balthasar is agreeing with the anthropological shift of Congar, Rahner, and Boros.

Much of the most influential theology by Hans Urs von Balthasar would be published after Vatican II. When taken together with the other “initiators”, we find a significant agreement on an eschatology being grounded in anthropology, rejecting the traditional punitive images of purgatory, focusing on death more than afterlife, and emphasizing the moment of encounter with Jesus Christ as a key eschatological event.

The U.S. Interlocutor: Purgatory “Disappears”

Just prior to Vatican II, two American Jesuits published different surveys of Catholicism for the U.S. audience. In 1959 John Walsh, S.J. published *This is Catholicism*. The question and answer format evoked the catechism style. His hope was to present Catholicism in a way that avoided polemic and interested non-Catholics as well as Catholics by appealing to reason. Out of the fifty-two sections, purgatory was

³⁹⁶ Referenced in Phan, Peter. *Eternity in Time*. (Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1988), 26.

³⁹⁷ H. Von Balthasar, in J. Feiner, ed., *Frage der Theologie heute* (Zurich 1958). Quoted in Luis M. Bermejo, S.J. *Light Beyond Death: The Risen Christ and the Transformation of Man*. (India 1985) 75. Also in L. Boros, *ibid*, p135.

included as part of section 39 on “Sorrow and Reparation.” Using words from previous centuries Walsh presented purgatory as a doctrine that Catholics found both “reasonable and comforting.” In section 42, “Earning One’s Way,” praying for the dead was explained. Prayer for deceased parents is not only recommended but obligated.

While some of Walsh’s explanations of Catholicism decreased the defensive and polemic tone of theology of the time, the format and vocabulary had more in common with the Baltimore Catechism than the documents of Vatican II. His book reflected little of the theological ferment that had been occurring in the previous decades. Another Jesuit had written on eschatology in the year prior with an approach that communicated the dynamic changes occurring in Catholic theology.

Robert W. Gleason, S.J.’s book, *The World to Come*, was published in 1958³⁹⁸. The date corresponds closely with the “disappearance” (or sharp decrease in frequency) of articles concerning purgatory in U.S. Catholic periodicals. This book presented a clear understanding of eschatology that differed from the neo-scholastic approach. Gleason would eventually become the chairman of the theology department at Fordham University. He is a key figure for understanding the change in attention given to purgatory in the United States for several reasons.

First of all, Gleason wrote about purgatory and Last Things in Catholic magazines during the critical late 1950’s/ early 1960’s time prior to Vatican II. His articles were published in a variety of Catholic magazines.³⁹⁹ It was rare to find an author published

³⁹⁸ Robert W. Gleason, SJ, *The World to Come* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1958).

³⁹⁹ Robert W Gleason, S.J.,. “The Departed Souls,” *America* 100 (Nov. 1, 1958), 135-136; “Studies on the Assumption: Scripture” *Thought* 27 (1951), 512-539; “Toward a Theology of Death” *Thought* (1957); “Hell” *Thought* (1957); “Spiritual Thought for the Month: Purgatory,” *Sign* 41 (November, 1961), 45.

across the spectrum of Catholic magazines. Gleason's ubiquitousness indicates that he was a respected "expert" on eschatological issues, and especially on purgatory.

Second, he is the voice of the "new theology" of the time. In his book, he offers a view of traditional topics of Death, Judgment, Hell, and Heaven. Along with these chapter titles are also chapters on "Life, Law and Love", Sin, Redemptive Suffering, and Resurrection. Each chapter gives a Scriptural background from both the Old and New Testament. Each topic is covered with a view to historical development. Psychology and theology are used as sources. Gleason's tone is ecumenical, referencing Martin Luther in a positive way. Freud and Heidigger, Pascal and Aquinas are all referenced. Most of his references are from French sources, including Danielou, de Lubac, and Rondet. So, he apparently offers an American link to *Nouvelle Théologie*.

Gleason's book opens with a chapter on "Life, Law and Love." Clearly this is not a propositional approach. He claims Christianity as a unique religion because of its central focus on love. The God of the New Testament is love. This contrasts with the impersonal god of the Greek philosophers. Sin is a breaking of God's law and of the relationship with God.

His subsequent chapters on sin, death, judgment, redemptive suffering, hell, resurrection, and heaven are organized in a similar pattern. With the exception of the brief chapter on "Judgment", Gleason first summarizes the Old Testament and New Testament teachings and then gives an historical exploration of the topic. In most chapters he concludes with the approach of "modern theologians."

The chapter on death summarizes the state of theology. As we have seen, Rahner called for more work on a theology of death. Gleason answers this call. Gleason retrieves

the New Testament and Patristic emphasis on resurrection of the body without much speculation about life after death. He also notes that theologians from Thomas to Suarez focused “excessive attention to questions more curious than decisive.”⁴⁰⁰ He continues to criticize the medieval and early modern approach to the afterlife.

It was natural that in the sixteenth century the tract on the Last Things should take on the polemic and apologetic tone characteristic of the theology of the period. If the biblical themes of the victory of Christ, the common triumph of the Parousia, receive less attention than the particular judgment and purgatory, this was normal in the age which stressed the importance of the individual and was much concerned with indulgences, remuneration, and the fate of the soul immediately after death....What has been of greater interest to modern theologians is not so much the state of individual souls after death and before resurrection as the experience of death itself, the meaning of which engages a major portion of modern theological thinking on the Last Things. The separation of body and soul, the passage of the soul to heaven, hell, purgatory, or limbo: such would have been the summary account of the medieval theologian. But today’s theologians prefer to explore the idea of death on more speculative grounds.⁴⁰¹

So, in these paragraphs, Gleason is dismissing several centuries of theology as out of alignment with the tradition of the early Church. Purgatory is shelved as medieval and tridentine theology. The new interest of theologians is death itself rather than the afterlife. So, for Gleason, in a sense, purgatory has already “disappeared” from theological interest.

This is further illustrated by entitling a chapter as “Redemptive Suffering” rather than “Purgatory.” After affirming the unanimous Christian tradition “that the soul after death and before its reception into heaven is in a state of cleansing suffering,”⁴⁰² Gleason divides this chapter into “Suffering in the Old Testament,” “The Faith of the Church,”

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., 65.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid 65-66.

⁴⁰² Ibid 85.

and “Purification and Growth.” His only reference for this chapter is Bernhard Bartmann’s *Purgatory*, published in the U.S. in 1936.

Gleason examines the themes of the historical books of the Old Testament. He finds little interest in the meaning of individual suffering. The suffering of the individual is a background of drama of God’s invitation and Israel’s rejection of that invitation. Israel sins which results in suffering. Isaiah introduces the theme of the Suffering Servant. Although the prophetic literature gives examples of those who suffer for God’s word, there is no philosophy of suffering.

In Wisdom writings, the book of Job explores the theme that suffering happens, even for the just. God’s ways are beyond our comprehension. Job does contain hints of a justice after this life. The Books of Maccabees are more explicit about a resurrection for the just. Gleason notes that Maccabees gives the beginnings of purgatory, but much of the Church’s tradition has overstated the intention of the author.

Gleason does not even attempt a section on the New Testament. Instead, he grounds the doctrine in the practices of the early Church. He notes that the Church, both East and West, had prayed for the dead from the beginning. Prayers during liturgy as well as inscriptions on Christian tombs indicated a belief in an “intermediate state.” Gleason notes historical changes. The original prayers were for all of the dead. As funeral ceremonies became more refined, the prayers identified individuals who were in need of prayer. Christians also had prayed that their own sins be forgiven. Major sins required harsh penances. So this led to the question about those who had not done penance. By the 700’s confraternities emerged who prayed for the dead.

Gleason's history of purgatory notes that the term "purgatory" did not exist in the early church. The dead occupied "resting places" or "storerooms" until the end of time. Origen's application of I Cor 3:13 to the final judgment led to the image of fire as purifying the soul. There was no doctrine requiring a belief that souls in purgatory were tortured by fire. Gleason noted that concepts of place and time could not be applied to the afterlife. Summarizing the thought of Bartmann, Gleason wrote:

Popular preaching has also done a great disservice at times to the notion of purgatory by presenting it as a vast torture chamber where God exercises his 'vengeance' upon the souls imprisoned there. The medieval mind, avid as it was of mystical visions and particularly preoccupied with the state of the dead, was over-rich in 'revelations' concerning purgatory. These detailed descriptions, which create horror in the modern mind, are not to be taken as Christian doctrine.⁴⁰³

Gleason's chapter may be misnamed. The title is "Redemptive Suffering", but the final section's name may be more appropriate – "Purification and Growth." Having rejected the notion of torture, Gleason turns to mystical literature for images of purgation. The interior suffering of mystics presents a better image than the externally imposed torture of the medieval imagination. Gleason borrows from Catherine of Genoa to speak of "flames of love" purifying the soul in a joyful fashion. The love marred by selfish motives in this life is purified in the presence of Love in the next life. "Liberation", "growth", "healing", "fulfillment", and "maturing" are all words used to describe the process of purification. Gleason compares the suffering of purgatory to overcoming psychological resistance in therapy. He says the suffering of purgatory is comparable to the pain and anguish accompanying maturing through the various stages of human

⁴⁰³ Ibid, 100.

development. The process should not “strike fear into the hearts of those who are concerned for their beloved dead.”⁴⁰⁴

In an article for the November 1, 1958 *America*, Gleason explains some of the complexities of purgatory. Perhaps most significantly, he ends the article by situating the doctrine of purgatory within the Paschal Mystery.

It (purgatory) must be viewed in the light of the great Christian victory, of the Paschal mystery which surrounds it and which it prolongs. It is but one more aspect of the central mystery of Christianity – the mystery of the victory of Easter, when the Risen Christ foreshadowed the victory of his Church... At bottom, the mystery of purgatory, like every other mystery of the Catholic faith, is a resonance of the victory of Easter.⁴⁰⁵

In this article Gleason clearly brings the doctrine of purgatory out of an individualistic, punitive understanding to an ecclesiological and Christological context. If pushed to come up with the point when and where purgatory disappeared, this might be it. Although his book and article were published in 1958, two years prior to the “disappearance of purgatory” as indicated by published articles, Gleason’s articles on purgatory would appear over the next three years. Gleason is writing for an educated, but not clerical audience. For American Catholics, the urgency to help those in purgatory was no longer needed. The process of purgation was one of “joyful suffering” and growth. Why would there be an obligation to help with that? Socially, American Catholics could now focus on the world. The immigrant enclaves had dispersed to the suburbs. John F. Kennedy would soon be chosen for the highest office in the U.S. A greater sense of Catholics’ agency and autonomy in this world perhaps meant less need

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid 104.

⁴⁰⁵ Robert W. Gleason S.J., “The Departed Souls,” *America* (November 1, 1958):136.

for involvement in the next. So, purgatory may not have disappeared, but instead have become irrelevant. Purgatory was a doctrine and set of practices associated with the immigrant's cult of suffering. Perhaps it was more important to pray for those who suffered behind the Iron Curtain or to pray for peace in an atomic age.

Gleason presents a hopeful understanding of purgatory to the upwardly mobile mid-century American Catholics. However, his new understanding leaves some questions unanswered. Gleason fails to answer whether there is a continued need to pray for the dead. Was the practice just a joining of Jewish and Greco-Roman traditions? We should not fear for our beloved dead, but should we pray for them? An even more basic question asks if there is still any connection between the living and the dead? The origins of the doctrine are rooted in practices. Gleason does not really give a theological basis for those practices. If anything, it sounds like he is discouraging practices associated with purgatory. On pastoral grounds, he no longer wants to use fear as a motivator. However, he does not speak of the Mystical Body or Communion of Saints. Is prayer for the dead now a wish? Is it solidarity with the dead? Is it simply remembering? Is it guilt? What motivates the Church to pray for the dead? Does it give us hope "... for those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith."? If Gleason represents the voice of the "new theology" that could be associated with the disappearance of purgatory, then the unanswered questions indicate that the doctrine had not so much "disappeared" but transformed.

Vatican II

Based on what we have surveyed, purgatory had already “disappeared” prior to Vatican II. In Chapter Two, it was shown how the traditional themes of the nature of purgatory, its location and duration, its inhabitants, the relation to the living, and practices had either become irrelevant or had changed. New, or retrieved, images had developed. In this chapter, we have shown a shift away from scholastic categories had turned theology in an anthropological direction. Eschatology was no longer just the “Last Things.” Eschatological views suffused theology. To state the switch ironically, purgatory disappeared because eschatology re-appeared. The documents of Vatican II mirrored this trend.⁴⁰⁶

With the changes of Vatican II, some feared the actual doctrine of purgatory would be changed. In 1962, with Vatican II under way *America* ran a brief three paragraph column following news pieces on Jimmy Hoffa, “Negro Self Image”, Montessori education, and “Interracial Oscars.” After briefly reminding readers of the traditions of praying for the dead, the article concluded with, ‘It is impossible, of course, even to think of changing the doctrine about purgatory and the Holy Souls.’⁴⁰⁷ Ironically, the magazine would not present another article on the subject until 1995.

Vatican II did not present a systematic explanation of eschatology, but the Council documents did move eschatology from the margins to the center of Christian thought. *Lumen Gentium* presented eschatology as part of the church.

⁴⁰⁶ See, for example, “The Church” from *Third Council Speeches of Vatican II* edited by William K. Leahy and Anthony T. Massimini (Glen Rock, New Jersey:Deus Books, Paulist Press, 1966) , 3-14. All four speeches in this section include “Eschatology” in the title.

⁴⁰⁷ “Souls in Purgatory,” *America* 107 (November 10, 1962), 1024.

As a pilgrim in this world, the Church's hope is beyond this world.⁴⁰⁸ By situating eschatology within the ecclesiological document, Vatican II gave eschatology a christocentric and pneumatological orientation. The work initiated by Christ continued with the Church and awaited fulfillment in the end times. The traditional doctrines, such as purgatory, were retained but stated in a restrained way, using biblical language.⁴⁰⁹ Further, in *Gaudium et Spes* the Council linked eschatology to the building up of this world. "Eschatology is not only individual and otherworldly but also and primarily collective and this-worldly."⁴¹⁰

As for the actual teaching of Vatican II on "purgatory," the word is not mentioned. Although the concept is still present in the documents, the expression or way of imagining the doctrine had changed. One way to understand the change is to compare with the Council of Trent. Both Trent and Vatican II wrote little about the doctrine of purgatory. However, the two councils differed in locating the doctrine.

Trent couches a discussion of purgatory within a document on justification. So, purgatory was associated with a juridical and individual approach to salvation. As mentioned above, Vatican II alludes to purgatory

⁴⁰⁸ Phan, Peter C. "Roman Catholic Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry Walls (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 218. See also www.vatican.va/.../vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html "Chapter VII: The Eschatological Nature of the Pilgrim Church and its Union with the Church in Heaven" Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, Pope Paul VI, November 21, 1964 (Accessed 4/12/2012).

⁴⁰⁹ LG, "Fully conscious of this communion of the whole Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the pilgrim Church from the very first ages of the Christian religion has cultivated with great piety the memory of the dead,(6*) and "because it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins", also offers suffrages for them. " 50

⁴¹⁰ Phan, *ibid.*

within *Lumen Gentium*, the document on the Church. Instead of a document analyzing salvation in legalistic terminology, Vatican II approaches the doctrine of purgatory within the context of loving relations among members of the Body of Christ. Robert Ombres, O.P. summarizes the conciliar document's teaching:

All Christians are united by the ecclesial bonds of charity, and await on earth as pilgrims, or as undergoing purification after death, or in glory, for death to be finally defeated. So it is that the union of wayfarers with those who sleep in the peace of Christ is in no way interrupted, but rather their unity is reinforced by an exchange of spiritual goods.⁴¹¹

Lumen Gentium acknowledges the unity of the Mystical Body of Christ and goes on to remember the tradition of praying for the dead in this same context.

In recent years, theologians have debated the meaning of Vatican II. Some have argued that Vatican II was continuous with the history of the Catholic Church. They would argue that there was no "before" and "after." The Council did not represent a sea change in the Catholic Church. Others have argued that Vatican II was indeed a change from previous councils and represented significant change. Joseph Komanchak has claimed that there are three positions regarding the interpretation of Vatican II: those who applaud the Council as a break with an oppressive past; those who lament the Council as a break with the Church's courageous resistance to modernity; and those who claim the Council to be part of the Church's process of continual reform.⁴¹² In the last category were some of those who had been present, such as Henri de Lubac and Joseph Ratzinger.

⁴¹¹ Robert Ombres OP, *Theology of Purgatory* (Butler, Wisconsin: Clergy Book Service, 1978), 49.

⁴¹² Joseph A. Komonchak, "Vatican II as 'Event'," in *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?* ed. David G. Schultenover (New York and London: Continuum, 2008), 24-51.

John W. O'Malley has called attention to a hermeneutic for interpreting the council. While he agrees that there are ways the council was both continuous and discontinuous, he worries that overemphasizing continuity with the past will ignore the significant discontinuities. When compared to previous councils Vatican II differed in a variety of ways: length (two years of preparation and four years of meeting); breadth (international); the extent of consultation; leadership from theologians who had been previously silenced; the presence of observers from outside the church; the laity and "all humanity" were addressed; and modern communications quickly made the council accessible to all.⁴¹³

O'Malley proposes that one of the most significant and least recognized discontinuities was the form or genre of the documents. Most of the writings were "pastoral" rather than "dogmatic." The model for past councils was a legislative governing body promulgating legal pronouncements. The canon was the predominant form. Vatican II used a panegyric form, "the painting of an idealized portrait in order to excite admiration and appropriationIt derives from neither the legal tradition of classical antiquity nor the philosophical /dialectical but from the humanistic or literary."⁴¹⁴ The technical term is an epideictic. One aspect of this genre is a focus on the "big issues."

Whereas Komanchak investigated the interpretation of the Council as an "event" and O'Malley emphasizes the distinctive "form" of the Council's documents, Steven Schloesser argues that the Councils "context" made it unique. A simplified way of

⁴¹³ John W. O'Malley, S.J., "Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?," in *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?* ed. David G. Schultenover (New York and London: Continuum, 2008), 52-91.

⁴¹⁴ O'Malley, *ibid*, p. 74.

stating this is that Komanchak analyzed the “what”, O’Malley analyzed the “how”, and Schloesser analyzed the “why” of Vatican II.

Schloesser views the Council as a response to the historical situation of the mid-twentieth century. The Council opening coincided with the October 1962 Cuban Missile crisis. So, for the bishops, the Council was an ethical imperative. Because of the unprecedented threats facing the international community, the bishops felt a responsibility to address the world situation with the resources of the Catholic Tradition. Schloesser says it is obvious that Vatican II was a NECESSARY break with the past because of the Cold War context.⁴¹⁵

Now that the council’s participants have largely passed away and the event is passing from memory to history, we can see what they could not: the council was a response to cataclysmic shifts in the mid-twentieth century. It is precisely because those shifts were so enormous – consequences of the Jewish Holocaust, of global war that claimed between 50 and 60 million lives, of the invention of the atomic bomb and the possibility of human annihilation, of the Cold War and the Soviet totalitarian empire, of decolonization and the end of Western hegemony – that the council needed to go back to the big issues and revisit fundamental questions. What or who is God? What or who is the human person? What is the point of human existence? What is salvation? If salvation is available to those outside the Church, what is the Church? What is its role in history? ...Situating the council historically can illuminate its deeply anxious concerns, its need to respond humanistically to the fragmentation of the world as well as to the brutal inhumanity its participants had eye-witnessed. Seen against this horizon, the council’s rupture with the past appears not only as a historical possibility. It seems to have been an ethical necessity.⁴¹⁶

So, the traditional concerns of a Church Council seemed small in comparison to the issues faced by the world of the twentieth century. Schloesser cites examples of schemas being quickly rejected by the bishops for being too

⁴¹⁵ Stephen Schloesser S.J., “Against Forgetting: Memory, History, Vatican II,” in *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?* ed. David G. Schultenover (New York and London: Continuum, 2008), 92-152.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid. 94 and 95.

small. The decade prior to the Council had been overshadowed with the fear produced by nuclear brinkmanship. The terrifying climax, the Cuban Missile Crisis, would occur from October 16 to 28, 1962, just five days into the Council.

On October 25, Pope John XXIII gave an unscheduled speech in French addressed to “all men of good will.” Both the *New York Times* and *Pravda* published accounts of the speech. Six months after the crisis, John XXIII published *Pacem in Terris* (April 11, 1963), again addressed to “all Men of Good Will.” The Council would follow the Pope’s lead in struggling to address the needs of the world rather than only the internal workings of the Church.

Along with the Cold War another historical context was the process of decolonization. Vatican II occurred during a process of dozens of colonial nations declaring independence, often with violent struggles for power. This showed the decline of European hegemony and a concurrent need to speak to the needs of a global Church.

If we accept Schloesser’s description of the context of the Council,⁴¹⁷ we can add another reason for the “disappearance of purgatory.” The doctrine was “too small” to address the fears and concerns of the twentieth century. Existentialism and atheism, the intellectual progeny of a century of unprecedented wars and dashed hopes of modernity, asked questions that made the doctrine seem irrelevant. When the world was faced with annihilation and questioning the very existence of God, concern for the souls in purgatory could seem incongruous. The historical situation called for a focus on the overwhelming threats facing this world. We have seen that Robert Gleason’s book already re-positioned

⁴¹⁷ John W. O’Malley’s more recent book *What Happened at Vatican II?* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, England, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008) portrays the council as dealing more with the “Long Nineteenth Century” than with the twentieth century.

the doctrine of purgatory as a footnote to Catholic Tradition. Vatican II reinforced this understanding by its “big picture” view.

Elizabeth Johnson’s description of Vatican II’s debate over Mary is germane to this discussion. Johnson admits to painting the history of Marian theology in broad strokes. Johnson contrasts the way Mary was viewed in the first millenium with the way she was viewed in the second millenium. Mary had not been given particularly special status in the first centuries of the Church. The Christological councils had proclaimed her Theotokas but this was intended to say more about Jesus than about Mary. In the second millennium, the juridical character of the church gained prominence. With a growing concern for penance and sin, Mary was viewed as an intermediary between sinful humans and God. This approach grew with visions of Mary as well as reactions to the Reformation. The Marian dogmas of the Immaculate Conception (1854) and the Assumption (1950) represented the apex of this approach. These two approaches confronted one another in the second session of Vatican II.

At the Council factions divided over the placing of Mary in the documents. Johnson refers to this as the “Clash of the Titans.” The groups favoring Mary viewed with a special status, similar to Christ, (based on the second millennium interpretation) wanted a separate document on Mary as Mediatrix. The groups who favored a return to the first millennium traditions (based in the biblical, liturgical, and ecumenical movements) wanted the discussion of Mary to be placed within the context of the Church. She would be among the saints, not necessarily over them.

Alberto Melloni confirms some of the drama of this period in the Council. Cardinal Santos of Manila presented the reasons for a separate schema on Mary,

emphasizing that incorporating Marian doctrine within the Church doctrine would belittle the role of Mary. Cardinal Konig of Vienna presented the reasons for incorporating the schema on Mary within the schema on the Church. Theologically, this would avoid an overly institutional understanding of the Church and incorporate an eschatological hope. Melloni notes that much “lobbying” for each position took place prior to the vote, and during the process of writing.⁴¹⁸

With the closest vote of the Council, on October 29, 1963, the measure passed that the discussion of Mary would be placed within the document on the Church. In Johnson’s view, commentators interpret this vote as the “mentality of nonhistorical, authoritarian orthodoxy accompanied by a piety that focused on the world to come was outvoted by the forces for renewal that called the church to enter into history and engage the social and political implications of the gospel.”⁴¹⁹ Others have characterized the sides as those who emphasized the papal teachings on Mary from the previous two centuries versus those who wished to provide a more biblical and patristic foundation for Marian doctrine and piety.⁴²⁰ The second group is characterized as motivated by ecumenical concerns. The same groups led the opposing points on a number of issues. Although the vote passed by a slim margin, the revised chapter was accepted by a near unanimous vote a year later,⁴²¹ on November 18, 1964, in the third session of the council.

⁴¹⁸ Alberto Melloni, “The Beginning of the Second Period: The Great Debate on the Church,” in *History of Vatican II, Vol. III*. Ed. Giuseppe Alberigo, English version edited by Joseph A. Komonchak (Maryknoll, Orbis, 2000), 95-97.

⁴¹⁹ Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 128.

⁴²⁰ Joseph A. Komonchak, “Toward an Ecclesiology of Communion,” in *History of Vatican II, Vol. IV*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo, English version edited by Joseph A. Komonchak (Maryknoll, Orbis, 2003), 52-53.

⁴²¹ Donal Flanagan points out that the “two divergent Mariological tendencies” are both embodied in the document. The tension between the two sides was not resolved. In “The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the Mystery of Christ and the Church” *Vatican II: The Constitution on the Church, A Theological and Pastoral Commentary*, edited by Kevin McNamara (Chicago, Ill: Franciscan Herald Press, 1968) 323

John W. O'Malley notes the close vote, but sees the divide as more connected with underlying issues. He characterizes the two opposing sides as simply "the majority" and "the minority."⁴²² The same leaders argued for a variety of opposing positions. O'Malley minimizes the vote on Mary's inclusion in *Lumen Gentium* as secondary to later contested votes on issues of collegiality and papal primacy. For the purposes of this dissertation, we will focus on one of O'Malley's three "issues-under-the-issues".⁴²³ The issue of change, whether characterized as development, *ressourcement*, or *aggiornamento*, was central to many of the debates. Should Church practice and understanding be grounded in the last two centuries or the first millennium?

In a sense, the votes on Mary confirmed the "disappearance of purgatory." The doctrine of purgatory, like the document on Mary, was now grounded in the first millennium. Vatican II shifted theological concern from the Last Things, or structures of the world beyond, to theological reflection on Christian hope, beginning in this world. Mary, included within the Church's document on its understanding of itself, represents a hope for the final union of all members of the Church. As the placing of a chapter on Mary within the document on the Church signified a theology which incorporated rather than separated Mary from the rest of the Church, so those who were being purified were not envisioned as being in a separate place, but were included in the communion of saints. The original vote also signified a shift from an approach based in private revelations and devotions with a triumphalistic tone to an approach based in biblical and patristic sources with an ecumenical tone.

⁴²² John W., O'Malley S.J., *What Happened at Vatican II?* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 292.

⁴²³ The other two are "the relation of the center to the periphery" and "the style in which the church operates." Ibid p 302.

It is also significant that in the time between the sessions another chapter was added to the document. Preceding the chapter on Mary was included Chapter VII “On the Eschatological Nature of the Pilgrim Church and Its Union with the Church in Heaven.” It was within this chapter that brief mention of the final things was included. Perhaps more importantly, the chapter signified the connection between the historical Church on earth with the glorified Church in heaven, as represented by Mary. The image of Church shifted from “Church Militant, Suffering, and Triumphant” to “Church on Pilgrimage, Being Purified, and Glorified.”

Twentieth Century Theology after Vatican II

In the twentieth century, following Vatican II, several of the major Catholic theologians continued reflecting on the doctrine of purgatory. This section will briefly summarize the work of Karl Rahner, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Hans Kung, and Joseph Ratzinger.

Karl Rahner

The impact of Karl Rahner has already been discussed, but his influence continued to be strongly felt after Vatican II. In keeping with his focus on anthropology, he considers eschatology as Christian anthropology in a future tense.⁴²⁴ Three of his articles seemed particularly influential. His “Hermeneutics of Eschatological Assertions”, published in English in 1966⁴²⁵, marked a major contribution. Rahner noted that advances in scientific knowledge revolutionized cosmology which, in turn,

⁴²⁴ Rahner, Karl. *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*. Translated by William V. Dych (New York: Seabury Press, 1978) 431.

⁴²⁵ Rahner, Karl. In *Theological Investigations, Vol. IV: More Recent Writings*. Translated by Kevin Smyth. (Helicon Press: Baltimore, Md. 1966) 323- 346. Based on a lecture given in 1960.

challenged literal interpretations of eschatological statements. An even more basic challenge was the change in the understanding of human knowledge. The “turn to the subjective” gave a new way of understanding reality. Catholics, however, had not yet wrestled with the theological principles for interpreting eschatological statements. He proposed seven theses to guide this process.

The first four theses deal with the idea that eschatological statements are about the future and that future grows out of the present. The future, from a human view, has a quality of hiddenness and mystery. For humans, eschatology gives self-understanding. Revelation says that human fulfillment and salvation is hidden in Christ who is already with us.

His fifth thesis distinguishes eschatological and apocalyptic (false eschatology) statements. “To read from the present out into the future (*Aussage*) is eschatology, to read from the future back into the present (*Einsage*) is apocalyptic.”⁴²⁶ This is the heart of Rahner’s claim. The source for Christian eschatology is the present situation. Anything else makes the present a ghost. Rahner’s theses avoid both the “false apocalyptic” approach which says we know the future and a “misleading demythologizing” approach which would limit the many dimensions of existence in need of salvation.⁴²⁷

In the sixth thesis Rahner presents the only mention of purgatory. The sixth thesis outlines some consequences of the earlier principles. One consequence is that eschatological statements refer to the *whole* human being. Salvation is for both the body and soul, both the individual human and the human race. Scripture attests to both the fulfillment of the individual at death and the fulfillment of humanity with the resurrection

⁴²⁶ Phan *Eternity in Time* ibid 69.

⁴²⁷ *Theological Investigations* vol IV, ibid, 336-337.

of the flesh at the end of time. Rahner merely mentions that this supports the idea of an intermediate state and of purgatory.⁴²⁸

The final thesis could be summarized as saying that the goal of working with eschatology is not demythologization but re- or transmythologization. The goal is to discern the key assertions and ask if these are elements of Christology and anthropology. Theologians need to distinguish between the form and content of eschatological statements. Since thought involves imagination, eschatological statements need to be expressed anew in each age with appropriate images and language.

Rahner also wrote two articles with a significant bearing on the doctrine of purgatory: “The Intermediate State”⁴²⁹, published in English in 1981, and “Purgatory”⁴³⁰, published in English in 1983. The first claims that an intermediate state between death and final consummation is a “little harmless mythology.”⁴³¹ Rahner traces the idea to the 1336 constitution *Benedictus Deus* by Pope Benedict XII. The idea of a time between individual death and the final judgement was not the main teaching of the doctrine. The perfection of the human soul and the glorification of the body were the key ideas. Scripturally, as described in the New Testament, the individual, body and soul, is “in paradise” at the moment of death. The underlying idea of the intermediate state assumes a separation of the body and soul. Rahner concludes that the idea of an intermediate state was “a stage in the history of theology, but no more than that.”⁴³² To think of time after

⁴²⁸ Ibid., 340-341.

⁴²⁹ Karl Rahner, “The Intermediate State,” in *Theological Investigations, Vol XVII ; Jesus, Man , and the Church*, translated by Margaret Kohl.(Crossroad: New York 1981),114-124.

⁴³⁰ Karl Rahner, “Purgatory” In *Theological Investigations, Vol XIX: Faith and Ministry*, translated by Edward Quinn (Crossroad: New York, 1983),181-193.

⁴³¹ Karl Rahner, “Intermediate State” *ibid* p 123.

⁴³² *Ibid* 118.

death goes against contemporary ideas from physics. Philosophically, the spiritual aspects of human life cannot be separated from the material. Rahner compares the doctrine of the intermediate state to ideas such as the earth being the center of the universe, angels being located between the earth and the moon, and all humanity being descended from one pair of ancestors. These are ideas that formed the intellectual framework of revelation, but were not the key aspects of the Tradition.

The 1983 article on “Purgatory” is presented as a dialogue between two theologians. The first theologian notes that the pope supports the traditional doctrine of purgatory. The second raises a host of questions illustrating the difficulty in knowing the traditional meaning of purgatory. The first interprets purgatory in terms of Rahner’s theological anthropology. He suggests that purgatory could be identified with the depth and intensity of pain encountered in death. Purgatory is not an external punishment. It is the intrinsic and painful integration of the many levels of oneself. Following this intricate analysis, the first theologian concludes, “to be honest... it must be admitted that the doctrine of purgatory does not seem particularly important today even to the devout Christian.”⁴³³

The second theologian begins his analysis with the “traditions of mankind.” He tries to find similarities in reflections on the continuance of human existence after death. He wonders what happens to the majority of humans after death. Are Christian eschatological statements binding on all humans? He suggests a “modified theory of the

⁴³³ Rahner, “Purgatory” *ibid* 187

transmigration of souls” as an explanation of what happens to souls who do not freely choose themselves (e.g. unbaptized infants).⁴³⁴

This article may produce more questions than answers. The two theologians signify the divided nature of Rahner over the question. Traditional doctrine, mythology, and the human experience of death are all difficult to separate. The second theologian concludes the “purgatory” article with “If, when I pray, I say that I hope and believe in eternal life ...I am surrendering myself unreservedly but in hope to the eternal mystery which is called God and says yes to myself.”⁴³⁵

Hans Urs von Balthasar

Hans Urs von Balthasar was both a friend and critic of Karl Rahner. One observer characterizes the two as agreeing that neo-scholasticism was unsatisfactory and modernity posed problems, but disagreeing on what was unsatisfactory about neo-scholasticism and what problems were posed by modernity. In style, Rahner based his work in philosophy whereas von Balthasar took a more literary approach.⁴³⁶ Their approaches to eschatology differed also.

A key theme for von Balthasar, and many twentieth century theologians, is universal salvation, or *apokatastasis*.⁴³⁷ Von Balthasar finds

⁴³⁴ In *Foundations*, *ibid.*, p. 442, Rahner considers the “interval” of purgatory as a starting point for dialogue with Asian religions on the doctrine of reincarnation. “This is a possibility, at least on the presupposition that this reincarnation is not understood as a fate for man which will never end and will continue on forever in time.”

⁴³⁵ *Ibid* 193

⁴³⁶ Karen Kilby, “Balthasar and Rahner,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. Edward T. Oakes, SJ and David Moss (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 256-268.

⁴³⁷ Hans Urs Von Balthasar, , *Dare We Hope “That All Men Be Saved”?* ,trans. David Kipp and Lothar Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988).

competing and seemingly irreconcilable ideas in Scripture. On the one hand, many passages indicate sinners can be lost for eternity. On the other hand God wishes to save all people. In Von Balthasar's view, Origen weakened the idea of God's judgment by turning hell into a kind of purgatory. On the other hand, Augustine overemphasized judgment and hell, depriving Christians of the hope of universal salvation.⁴³⁸ Von Balthasar sides with those who hope in the mercy of God. We cannot know with certainty, but we can hope in God's ability to persuade even the most unrepentant.

Von Balthasar bases some of this on one of the most distinctive aspects of his eschatology, the importance of Holy Saturday.⁴³⁹ Beyond his salvific act of dying on the cross, Jesus took on the alienation of death. So, Jesus' descent into hell redeems that which is most alien to God, and gives the basis to the hope that all may be saved. Von Balthasar also relied on mystical sources such as John of the Cross, Theresa of Avila, Therese of Lisieux, and especially Adrienne von Speyr to propose that Jesus suffered the ultimate possibility of being human by entering hell.⁴⁴⁰ His reading of Scripture, tradition, and the visionary sources, along with fellow theologians, leads him to conclude that there is no distinction between particular and final judgment. This conclusion also

⁴³⁸ Geoffrey Wainwright, "Eschatology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. Edward T. Oakes, SJ and David Moss (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 113-127.

⁴³⁹ See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993) Translated (Authorized English translation of *Theologie der Drei Tage*, Benzinger Verlag, Einsiedeln, 1970) with an Introduction by Aidan Nichols, O.P. Recently, VonBalthasar's emphasis on Holy Saturday as a continuation of the suffering of Good Friday rather than a glorious prelude to Easter has been criticized as out of touch with the Catholic Tradition. See Alyssa Lyra Pitstick, *Light In Darkness: Hans Urs Von Balthasar and the Catholic Doctrine of Christ's Descent into Hell* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007).

⁴⁴⁰ Mark A. McIntosh, *Christology from Within: Spirituality and the Incarnation in Hans Urs Von Balthasar*.(Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996).

eliminates the need for an intermediate state between the two.⁴⁴¹ In his view judgment, or the encounter with God at death, contains a purifying aspect we have called purgatory. Fire is the biblical metaphor for encountering the purifying power of God. In line with his other thinking, Balthasar states that purgatory originated with Holy Saturday, “when the Son walks through ‘hell’, introducing the element of mercy into the condition of those who are justly lost”.

⁴⁴² Relying on the visionary writings of Adrienne von Speyr, he describes aspects of the purification moment/process: purgatory is experienced in isolation, the soul sees itself in the Lord’s mirror, the full weight and interconnectedness of sin is experienced, the suffering and joy of purgatory are one, and the love of the cross releases one from the moment of purification as transformed.⁴⁴³

It is interesting that von Balthasar makes use of what we termed narrative sources. Many twentieth century theologians had rejected private revelation as a medieval source for theology.

Hans Küng

One of the most popular works on eschatology in the years following Vatican II was *Eternal Life?* by Hans Küng.⁴⁴⁴ Küng thinks through the challenges offered by Feuerbach, Freud, Marx, and others to the Christian belief

⁴⁴¹ Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory, Volume 5, The Last Act*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), trans. Graham Harrison, (Original German in 1983), 346-360.

⁴⁴² Ibid 363.

⁴⁴³ Ibid 364-369.

⁴⁴⁴ Hans Kung, , *Eternal Life? Life After Death as a Medical, Philosophical, and Theological Problem* , trans. Edward Quinn (New York: Crossroad, 1991) Original English version in 1984; original German version in 1982.

in eternal life. The book only briefly addresses the doctrine of purgatory. He accepts the idea of purification as the “particle of truth, the real core, of the problematic idea of purgatory.”⁴⁴⁵ Küng dismisses the images of fire, time, and separation of body and soul as embarrassing anachronisms. In a way similar to Von Balthasar, Küng states, “Purgatory is God Himself in the wrath of his grace. Purification is encounter with God in the sense that it judges and purifies, but also liberates and enlightens, heals and completes man.”⁴⁴⁶ He notes that dying into eternity, beyond time and space, means that there is no sense in praying with or to the dead. It is worthwhile to preserve their memory and guide them in the process of dying, but anything more is unnecessary.

Joseph Ratzinger

In 1977, while still a professor, then-Father Ratzinger published a book on eschatology.⁴⁴⁷ The book was intended as a textbook for theology students. Ratzinger’s goal was to present a “de-Platonized” eschatology.⁴⁴⁸ He recognizes the influences of existentialism and Marxism have led to an eschatology with no reference to the final things. He also recognizes the tendency to ground eschatology only in Scripture with no reference to the Christian tradition that has evolved since that time. Ratzinger also notes that there are secular eschatologies. Within the Church, he notes that the doctrine of last things was marred by individualism and otherworldliness. As a remedy for this tendency,

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid 137.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid 139.

⁴⁴⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life* (Washington, D.C.:Catholic University of America Press, 1988) ,trans. Michael Waldstein, Translation edited by Aidan Nichols, O.P.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid xiii.

Ratzinger analyzes some of the prayers of the Church. “If turning to Christ in prayer was then as now the heart of all Christian existence, it follows that analyzing the structure of prayer should help us to grasp the inner makeup of early Christianity.”⁴⁴⁹ The early Christian practices of praying to the East (symbol of Christ’s once and future resurrection) rather than to the Temple; the Litany of Saints; and the final line of the Our Father all point to a communal, embodied understanding of eschatology.

Ratzinger bases the development of the doctrine of purgatory on Scripture and several of the early Fathers of the Church: Tertullian and Cyprian, Clement and Origen. Thus, he offers a view in keeping with the Eastern Church and without the abuses found by the Protestant churches.

In discussing the “Permanent Content of the Doctrine of Purgatory” Ratzinger points out that the doctrine must be interpreted christologically. I Cor. 3: 10 -15 states that the “wood, hay, and straw” must be burned away to reveal the gold, silver, and precious stones built on the foundation of Jesus Christ. Frequently in the past, this passage was interpreted as referring to the purgatorial fire. Ratzinger interprets the passage “in terms of the Lord himself as the judging fire which transforms us and conforms us to his own glorified body.”⁴⁵⁰ Further this is not externally imposed, but “heartfelt submission to the fire of the Lord which will draw him out of himself into that purity which befits those who are God’s.”⁴⁵¹ Referencing von Balthasar, he states that purgatory is the “inwardly necessary process of transformation in which a person becomes

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid 7.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid 229.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid 230.

capable of Christ, capable of God and thus capable of unity with the whole communion of saints. Simply to look at people with any degree of realism at all is to grasp the necessity of such a process.”⁴⁵² He grounds this understanding of purgatory in the Church’s doctrine of penance. Ratzinger describes penance as the grace of “constant readiness for reform which marks the forgiven sinner.”⁴⁵³

Ratzinger also discusses the basis of praying for the departed. One basis for this practice is that humans are social beings. We are ourselves only in relation to others. “Whether others curse us or bless us, forgive us and turn our guilt into love – this is part of our own destiny. The fact that the saints will judge means that encounter with Christ is encounter with his whole body.”⁴⁵⁴ Again, this concept of being “judged” by the saints through their intercession is referenced to von Balthasar.

Another basis for the practice of praying for the dead is that death does not end the love of the communion of saints. “The capacity, and the duty, to love beyond the grave might even be called the true primordial datum in this whole area of tradition – as II Maccabees 12:42-45 first makes clear.”⁴⁵⁵ Ratzinger points out that this is a point of unity with the Churches of the East. While they may not accept the Western notion of expiation, praying for the dead has been practiced throughout the Church’s history.

⁴⁵² Ibid 231.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid 232.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid 233.

Church Teaching Since Vatican II

Following the Second Vatican Council, in 1967, Pope Paul VI reaffirmed indulgences as part of the Catholic tradition.⁴⁵⁶ In doing this, he also corrected the image that many had held of purgatory. He withdrew the practice of remission of days or years in purgatory and replaced that with a distinction between plenary and partial remission. In 1970 reformed funeral rites were introduced. Robert Schreiter⁴⁵⁷ notes that the prayers shifted from a focus on supplication before God that the departed be spared their deserved punishment to the resurrection aspect of the paschal mystery. The liturgical colors of black and violet were replaced with white. Imaginatively this shifted the location of purgatory closer to heaven than to hell. In addition the Roman Missal discouraged frequent votive Masses for the dead other than anniversary and funeral Masses. Taken together, these changed both the temporal and spatial imaging of purgatory. “This dual undermining of both the sense of location and of duration of purgatory has been the principal contributor to purgatory now having a more abstract and vague, and therefore less engaging, character.”⁴⁵⁸ While Schreiter’s insight explains the pastoral diminishment of the significance of purgatory, the magisterial pronouncements of the Catholic Church have shown a desire to preserve the doctrinal core of purgatory.

Since that time three official documents have directly addressed eschatological concerns: a 1979 letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith⁴⁵⁹; a 1992

⁴⁵⁶ Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution *Indulgentiarum doctrina* (1 January 1967)
<http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_constitutions/documents>

⁴⁵⁷ “Purgatory: In Quest of an Image” *Chicago Studies*, 24, no. 2 (August 1985): 167- 179.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid 171.

⁴⁵⁹ “Letter of the S. Congregation for the doctrine of the faith on Certain Questions concerning Eschatology” English translation in Jacques Dupuis, ed. *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Faith* (New York: Alba House, 2001), 1026-27. Also on found at
<www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19790517_escatologia_en>

document by the International Theological Commission entitled “On Certain Current Issues in Eschatology”⁴⁶⁰, and the 1993 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.⁴⁶¹ In all three of these documents, Peter Phan points out that “the eschatological synthesis is remarkable for its decidedly Trinitarian, Christological, pneumatological, and ecclesial emphasis.”⁴⁶² Several papal documents, since the 1970’s, have also discussed teaching on purgatory.

The 1979 letter offers seven points affirming several doctrines such as the resurrection of the dead, the soul, and the assumption of Mary. Many of the points are a reaction to recent anthropological perspectives. The document reaffirms the use of the word “soul” for the self after death. The third point affirmed the meaningfulness of prayers and religious acts offered for the dead. The seventh point stated the belief in the existence of heaven, hell, and purgatory; and the distinction among them. In Appendix I of the 1988 edition of his book, then-bishop Ratzinger discusses the letter.⁴⁶³ He states the importance, for Christian faith, of a hope for and belief in life after death. The Congregation had found that theological debates were having a negative impact on the faith of many. Ratzinger shows that recent biblical scholarship had rightly emphasized the centrality of the hope of the resurrection of the whole person. Many viewed this as a rejection of any type of dual approach to anthropology. Ratzinger argues that the “soul” does not reject the idea of resurrection. The “soul” can be immortal and resurrected. He

⁴⁶⁰ English translation in *Irish Theological Quarterly* 58 (1992): 209-43. Also at <http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_1990_problemi-attuali-escatologia_en.html>

⁴⁶¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* www.vatican.va/archive/ccc/index.htm Accessed 6/13/2012

⁴⁶² Peter C. Phan, “Roman Catholic Theology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry Walls (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 221.

⁴⁶³ Ratzinger, *ibid*, 241-260.

further argues that the soul is a Christian concept, not a philosophical one. The basis for the immortality of the soul is its relation to the Eternal.

In still another Appendix⁴⁶⁴ then-Cardinal Ratzinger updated the controversy over resurrection and immortality. Ratzinger cites a list of theologians whose work had thrown doubt on the existence of the soul. He notes that, in one version, the doctrine of “resurrection IN death” does not fit with the practice of praying for the dead. Ratzinger finds it telling that one theologian had to struggle with a way to connect the practice to his new understanding of the afterlife.

The 1992 document reaffirmed most of what was in the 1979 letter and expanded on it. Significant points included acceptance of an intermediate state; the practices of praying for the dead and the burial rite imply a “post mortem purificatory phase”; the doctrine of reincarnation must be repudiated; and , in developing eschatology, the principle of *lex orandi, lex credendi* must be followed.

Also published in 1992, the Catechism reaffirms traditional eschatological doctrines, including purgatory. Over thirty years after purgatory “disappeared” an article directly dealing with purgatory would be published in *America*. In the 1990’s the Catechism was being prepared for publication. William H. Shannon compared the original 1990 draft with the 1993 revision for the June issue. After critiquing much about both versions of the Catechism, Shannon found aspects of the revision which gave him hope. One of those hopeful areas was in the new understanding of purgatory. Purgatory was now simply described as a “purification” after death. The adjective “painful” was dropped as well as any reference to “temporal punishment” due to sin. “This new

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid 261-274.

understanding of purgatory fits much better with a notion of God who is never vindictive and whose love is unconditional.”⁴⁶⁵

Pope John Paul II announced his intention to continue the teaching of Vatican II. His addresses regularly mentioned purgatory. In 1998 he addressed the millennium of what had been called All Souls’ Day with an address that connected it to the centrality of the resurrection.⁴⁶⁶ Much of the traditional understanding of purgatory was reconfigured with a more Christological and social emphasis. The most direct reference to the teaching on purgatory is from the 2007 encyclical, *Spe Salvi*, by now-Pope Benedict XVI.⁴⁶⁷ Much of the thought from his 1977 book was included in this letter on Christian hope. The final section of the encyclical addresses the Last Judgement as hope. The pope points to the need to turn from individualistic notions of salvation. He also seems open to the idea of one judgment, the encounter with Christ.

Some recent theologians are of the opinion that the fire which both burns and saves is Christ himself, the Judge and Saviour. The encounter with him is the decisive act of judgement. Before his gaze all falsehood melts away. This encounter with him, as it burns us, transforms and frees us, allowing us to become truly ourselves. All that we build during our lives can prove to be mere straw, pure bluster, and it collapses. Yet in the pain of this encounter, when the impurity and sickness of our lives become evident to us, there lies salvation. His gaze, the touch of his heart heals us through an undeniably painful transformation “as through fire”. But it is a blessed pain, in which the holy power of his love sears through us like a flame, enabling us to become totally ourselves and thus totally of God.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁵ William H. Shannon, “The Catechism of the Catholic Church,” *America* (June 5, 1993)168.

⁴⁶⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Letter for the Celebration of the Commemoration of the Millennium of the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed*
<http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/1998/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19980602_cluny_en.html>

⁴⁶⁷ Pope Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, www.vatican.va/.../documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi_en.html Accessed 6/13/2012.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid 47

The encyclical defends the practice of praying for the dead and even “offering small sufferings up”. This is based on the interconnectedness of all humans. “The belief that love can reach into the afterlife, that reciprocal giving and receiving is possible, in which our affection for one another continues beyond the limits of death—this has been a fundamental conviction of Christianity throughout the ages and it remains a source of comfort today.”⁴⁶⁹ The pope’s letter grounds this practice not in a sense of duty but in love that reaches beyond death.

Conclusion

Previous chapters had outlined theological, liturgical, and social trends that allowed for the disappearance of the doctrine of purgatory. This chapter has focused on changes in late twentieth century Catholic theology and Church teaching. The twentieth century has been described as the century of eschatology. Because of biblical, historical, and anthropological studies, eschatology was placed in a central role in theological thinking. Ironically, this and the social challenges of the twentieth century overshadowed the doctrine of purgatory. As this chapter has shown, the popular interest in purgatory may have declined, but the theology and teaching has continued. The word “purgatory” may be too closely associated with images that no longer connect with Christian experience. The purpose of this dissertation has not been to retrieve the doctrine of purgatory. Perhaps there is a question, how do Christians re-imagine practices of

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid 48.

communion with the dead? The Christian hope remains centered in Christ. How that hope is expressed will change with different contexts. Underlying the doctrine of purgatory is a basic Christian message:

...He has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (Eph 1:9-10)

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APPENDIX

Traditional Prayers Associated with Purgatory

There are seven Penitential Psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143) which have traditionally been recited at funerals and in the Liturgy of the Hours. The two most frequently cited are the *De Profundis* (Psalm 130 or 129 in the Vulgate) and the *Miserere* (Psalm 51 or 50 in Vulgate). The Psalm itself is divided between an expression of despair “out of Sheol” and an ultimate hope in the mercy of God. The prayer has been used an example of a “genre” of petitionary prayer. The *De Profundis* “erupts whenever a man or woman finds himself or herself trapped in the bowels of despair, bereft of answers or resources. The soul wallows in affliction; nothing remains but utter abandonment to divine mercy.”⁴⁷⁰

Psalm 130 (De Profundis)

I Out of the depths I call to you, LORD;

Lord, hear my cry!

May your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy.

If you, LORD, keep account of sins,
Lord, who can stand?
But with you is forgiveness
and so you are revered.

II I wait for the LORD,

my soul waits
and I hope for his word.

⁴⁷⁰ Zaleski, Phillip and Carol. *Prayer: A History*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005. P. 102

My soul looks for the Lord
more than sentinels for daybreak.

More than sentinels for daybreak,
let Israel hope in the LORD,
For with the LORD is mercy,
with him is plenteous redemption,
And he will redeem Israel

from all its sins.⁴⁷¹

The *Miserere* is the key psalm of repentance, associated with David's sin revealed by Nathan. Unlike Saul, who had turned away from God, David repents and casts himself on the mercy of God.

Psalm 51 (Miserere)

For the leader. A psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

I Have mercy on me, God, in accord with your merciful love;

in your abundant compassion blot out my transgressions.

Thoroughly wash away my guilt;

and from my sin cleanse me.

For I know my transgressions;

my sin is always before me.

Against you, you alone have I sinned;

I have done what is evil in your eyes

So that you are just in your word,
and without reproach in your judgment.

Behold, I was born in guilt,

in sin my mother conceived me.

Behold, you desire true sincerity;

and secretly you teach me wisdom.

⁴⁷¹ <http://www.usccb.org/bible/psalms/130> Accessed 4/3/13.

Cleanse me with hyssop,⁷ that I may be pure;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
You will let me hear gladness and joy;
the bones you have crushed will rejoice.

II Turn away your face from my sins;

blot out all my iniquities.
A clean heart create for me, God;
renew within me a steadfast spirit.
Do not drive me from before your face,
nor take from me your holy spirit.
Restore to me the gladness of your salvation;

uphold me with a willing spirit.
I will teach the wicked your ways,

that sinners may return to you.
Rescue me from violent bloodshed, God, my saving God,
and my tongue will sing joyfully of your justice.
Lord, you will open my lips;

and my mouth will proclaim your praise.
For you do not desire sacrifice⁷ or I would give it;
a burnt offering you would not accept.
My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit;
a contrite, humbled heart, O God, you will not scorn.

III Treat Zion kindly according to your good will;

build up the walls of Jerusalem.
Then you will desire the sacrifices of the just,
burnt offering and whole offerings;
then they will offer up young bulls on your altar.⁴⁷²

⁴⁷² <http://www.usccb.org/bible/psalms/51> Accessed 4/3/13.

Because these are psalms seeking forgiveness, they were often prayed for the dead so that they would be cleansed of the sin that kept them in purgatory. At various times this was an obligation of charity for the faithful since the deceased could do nothing to free themselves from the sufferings of purgatory.

A poem from the thirteenth century was used in funeral and All Souls Day Masses until the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council. The *Dies Irae* set a somber tone in these settings. This poem is attributed to Thomas of Celano (1200-c.1265), a Franciscan.

Latin Text from the Graduale Romano Seraphico, Ordinis Fratrum Minorum, typis Societatis S. Joannis Evangelistae, Desclee & Socii, Paris, 1932, in the sequence for the Missa pro Defunctis, pp. 97-100.

Latin Text from the Roman Breviary of 1975 [Liturgy of the Hours: According to the Roman Rite, Catholic Book Publishing Co., New York, 1975, vol. IV, pp. 2013-2015.

*A Literal English Translation by **The Franciscan Archive**⁴⁷³*

Dies irae, dies illa
Solvat saeculum in
favilla,
Teste David cum
Sibylla.

Dies irae, dies illa
solvat saeculum in
favilla,
teste David cum
Sibylla.

Day of wrath, day that
will dissolve the world into
burning coals,
as David bore witness with the
Sibyl.

⁴⁷³ http://www.franciscan-archive.org/de_celano/opera/diesirae.html Accessed 4/3/13. "The English translation published here has been released to the public domain by its author. Items within round () brackets are English words added to clarify the meaning of the denoted or connotated Latin signification. Items in square [] brackets, are translations of terms in the Latin text from the new Breviary. Items in braces { } represent translations of Latin terms which have simultaneous double meanings."

Quantus tremor est futurus, Quando iudex est venturus Cuncta stricte discussurus!	Quantus tremor est futurus, quando iudex est venturus cuncta stricte discussurus!	How great a tremor is to be, when the judge is to come briskly shattering every (grave).
Tuba mirum spargens sonum Per sepulcra regionum, Coget omnes ante thronum.	Tuba mirum spargens sonum per sepulcra regionum, coget omnes ante thronum.	A trumpet sounding an astonishing sound through the tombs of the region drives all (men) before the throne.
Mors stupebit et natura, Cum resurget creatura Iudicanti responsura.	Mors stupebit et natura, cum resurget creatura iudicanti responsura.	Death will be stunned and (so) will Nature, when arises (man) the creature responding to the One judging.
Liber scriptus proferetur, In quo totum continetur Unde mundus iudicetur.	Liber scriptus proferetur, in quo totum continetur unde mundus iudicetur.	The written book will be brought forth, in which the whole (record of evidence) is contained whence the world is to be judged.
Iudex ergo cum sedebit, Quicquid latet apparebit: Nil inultum remanebit.	Iudex ergo cum sedebit, quicquid latet apparebit; nil inultum remanebit.	Therefore when the Judge shall sit, whatever lay hidden will appear; nothing unavenged will remain.
	O tu, Deus maiestatis, alme candor Trinitatis, nos coniunge cum beatis.	O Thou, God of Majesty, nourishing brilliance of the Trinity, join us with the Blessed.
Quid sum miser tunc dicturus? Quem patronum rogaturus? Cum vix iustus sit securus.	Quid sum miser tunc dicturus, quem patronum rogaturus, cum vix iustus sit securus?	What am I the wretch then to say? what patron I to beseech? when scarcely the just (man) be secure.

Rex tremendae maiestatis, Qui salvandos salvas gratis, Salva me, fons pietatis.	Rex tremendae maiestatis, qui salvandos salvas gratis, salva me, fons pietatis.	King of tremendous Majesty, who saves those-to-be-saved free, save me, Fount of piety.
Recordare, Iesu pie, Quod sum causa tuae viae: Ne me perdas illa die.	Recordare, Iesu pie, quid sum causa tuae viae, ne me perdas illa die.	Remember, faithful Jesus, because I am the cause of your journey: do not lose me on that day.
Quaerens me sedisti lassus: redemisti crucem passus: tantus labor non sit cassus.	Quaerens me sedisti lassus, redemisti crucem passus; tantus labor non sit cassus.	Thou has sat down as one wearied seeking me, Thou has redeemed (me) having suffered the Cross: so much labor let it not be lost.
Iuste iudex ultionis, donum fac remissionis, ante diem rationis.	Iuste iudex ultionis, donum fac remissionis ante diem rationis.	Just judge of the avenging- punishment, work the gift of the remission (of sins) before the Day of the Reckoning.
Ingemisco, tamquam reus: culpa rubet vultus meus: supplicanti parce Deus.	Ingemisco tamquam reus, culpa rubet vultus meus; supplicanti parce Deus.	I groan, as the accused: my face grows red from (my) fault: spare (this) supplicant, O God.
	O tu, Deus maiestatis, alme candor Trinitatis, nos coniunge cum beatis.	O Thou, God of Majesty, nourishing brilliance of the Trinity, join us with the Blessed.
Qui Mariam absolvisit Et latronem exaudisti, Mihi quoque spem dedisti.	Peccatricem qui solvisit et latronem exaudisti, mihi quoque spem dedisti.	Thou who forgave Mary [the sinful woman], and favorably heard the (good) thief, hast also given me hope.
Preces meae non sunt dignae:	Preces meae non sunt dignae,	My prayers are not worthy, but do Thou, Good (God),

Sed tu, bonus, fac benigne, Ne perenni cremer igne.	sed tu, bonus, fac benigne ne perenni cremer igne.	deal kindly lest I burn in perennial fire.
Inter oves locum praesta, Et ab haedis me sequestra, Statuens in parte dextra.	Inter oves locum praesta et ab haedis me sequestra, statuens in parte dextra.	Among the sheep offer (me) a place and from the goats sequester me, placing (me) at (Thy) right hand.
Confutatis maledictis, Flammis acribus addictis: Voca me cum benedictis.	Confutatis maledictis, flammis acribus addictis, voca me cum benedictis.	After the accursed have been silenced, given up to the bitter flames, call me with the blest.
Oro supplex et acclinis, Cor contritum quasi cinis: Gere curam mei finis.	Oro supplex et acclinis, cor contritum quasi cinis, gere curam mei finis.	Kneeling and bowed down I pray, My heart contrite as ashes: Do Thou {, my End,} care for my end.
Lacrimosa dies illa, Qua resurget ex favilla Judicandus homo reus: Huic ergo parce, Deus.	Lacrimosa dies illa, qua resurget ex favilla iudicandus homo reus: huic ergo parce, Deus.	That sorrowful day, on which will arise from the burning coals Man accused to be judged: therefore, O God, do Thou spare him.
Pie Jesu Domine, dona eis requiem. Amen.		Faithful Lord Jesus, grant them rest. Amen.
	O tu, Deus maiestatis, alme candor Trinitatis, nos coniunge cum beatis. Amen.	O Thou, God of Majesty, nourishing brilliance of the Trinity, join us with the Blessed. Amen.

None of these prayers mentions purgatory. However, within the context of an understanding of the dead suffering and in need of our prayers, these works supported the

practices associated with purgatory. Aside from a connection with purgatory, each speaks to God, recognizing the smallness of the petitioner in comparison to the vastness of God. Each petitions God for rescue or mercy or salvation from eternal suffering. While they have been relegated to the background of Catholic consciousness in favor of more positive prayers, it is interesting to note that they are also prayers of hope.

In their recent book on prayer, the Zaleskis propose an alternative to the traditional ways of categorizing prayer into abstract categories such as praise, petition, thanksgiving, etc. They suggest four archetypes based in images of men and women at prayer. These are called the prayers of the refugee, the devotee, the ecstatic, and the contemplative. They consider the *De Profundis* to be an archetypal form of the “Prayer of the Refugee” or petitionary prayer. In its most basic form it is a human call for help in the midst of suffering and confusion. They cite a basic formula for the *De Profundis* type of prayer. “I hit bottom. I call for help. I await a reply.”⁴⁷⁴ They trace examples as diverse as Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, Samuel Johnson’s book of prayers, as well as Islamic and Native American prayers. In the twentieth century, they find the quintessential example of the *De Profundis* prayer in the Twelve Step program of the Alcoholics Anonymous movement founded by William Griffith Wilson.⁴⁷⁵ From admitting powerlessness over alcohol, surrendering to the mercy of a higher power, and seeking an ongoing pattern of connection with the will of God the addict cries “out of the depths” for God to “have mercy” and save him or her from the “day of wrath.”

The Zaleskis also offer some insights on the purpose of prayers of petition and intercession. If God is omniscient and all loving, won’t God know about and provide for

⁴⁷⁴ Zaleski, Phillip and Carole, *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 120-127.

our needs? Saint Augustine had preached that prayer does not change God as much as it transforms the person praying. The act of prayer helps to purify our vision from a focus on the temporal to the divine.⁴⁷⁶ Saint Thomas Aquinas takes a different approach. He suggests that there are favors obtained from God only by our asking. We pray, not to tell God our needs, but to remind ourselves of our need for divine help. We pray, not to change God's mind, but to obtain that which God wants us to have through our asking. This shows that, in God's plan, we are not merely passive recipients, but God expects us to co-create with God. The act of petitioning God helps the petitioner to gain confidence in God and recognize God as the source of all blessing.⁴⁷⁷

A specific type of petition prayer is "intercessory prayer." We pray for others. We hope that our own merits will help others. There is an aspect of sacrifice in this type of petition. In John's Gospel, Jesus prays for his disciples at the Last Supper. The Zaleskis note that this type of prayer can be found in many religious traditions. Mahayana Buddhism claims the seeking merit for others to be the heart of saintliness. Islamic prayer says that Muhammad will intercede every believer at the hour of judgment.

Intercessory prayer shows the connection of all people. In prayer we bear one another's burdens and foreshadow the coming of the New Jerusalem. The Catholic tradition of asking saints and angels to intercede shows the bonds between the living and the dead. In Dante's *Purgatorio*, those ascending to the next level intercede for those

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid, pp. 99-100. Based on Saint Augustine, "On the Lord's Sermon on the Mount," in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Christian Literature, 1886-90), 6:38.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., pp 100-101. Based on Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae83.2 (Blackfriars; New York: McGraw-Hill; London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964), 53.

behind them. The living pray for the dead, but the dead also pray for the living. There is an interconnection of the living and the dead.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid. pp. 86-88. See Dante Aligheri, *Purgatorio*, canto XI, 1-24.