

NOVEMBER 11.

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**ALL SOULS; OR THE COMMEMORATION  
OF THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED.**

By purgatory, no more is meant by Catholics than a middle state of souls; viz. of purgation from sin by temporary chastisements, or a punishment of some sin inflicted after death, which is not eternal.<sup>1</sup> As to the place, manner, or kind of these sufferings, nothing has been defined by the Church; and all who with Dr. Deacon except against this doctrine, on account of the circumstance of a material fire,<sup>2</sup> quarrel about a mere scholastic question in which a person is at liberty to choose either side. This doctrine of a state of temporary punishment after death for some sins, is interwoven with the fundamental articles of the Christian religion. For, as eternal torments are the portion of all souls which depart this life under the guilt of mortal sin, and everlasting bliss of those who die in a state of grace, so it is an obvious consequence that among the latter, many souls may be defiled with lesser stains, and cannot enter immediately into the joy of the Lord. Repentance may be sincere, though something be wanting to its perfection; some part of the debt which the penitent owes to the Divine Justice may remain uncanceled, as appears from several instances mentioned in the holy scriptures, as of David,<sup>3</sup> of the Israelites in the wilderness,<sup>4</sup> of Moses and Aaron,<sup>5</sup> and of the prophet slain by

<sup>1</sup> See the Council of Trent, Sess. 25. Pope Pius IV's Creed, Bossuet's Exposition, and Catech. of Montp.

<sup>2</sup> Deacon, Tr. on Purgatory.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Kings (or Samuel) xiv. 10 and 13. ib. xxiv,

<sup>4</sup> Num. xiv. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Num. xx. 24. Deut. xxxii. 51.

a lion,<sup>1</sup> which debt is to be satisfied for, either in this life or in the next. Certainly, some sins are venial, which deserve not eternal death; yet if not effaced by condign penance in this world, must be punished in the next. Every wound is not mortal; nor does every small offence totally destroy friendship. The scriptures frequently mention these venial sins, from which ordinarily the just are not exempt, who certainly would not be just if these lesser sins into which men easily fall by surprise, destroyed grace in them, or if they fell from charity.<sup>2</sup> Yet the smallest sin excludes a soul from heaven so long as it is not blotted out. Nothing which is not perfectly pure and spotless can stand before God, who is infinite purity and sanctity, and cannot bear the sight or the least iniquity. Whence it is said of heaven: *There shall in no wise enter into it any thing defiled.*<sup>3</sup> It is the great employment of all the saints or pious persons here below by rigorous self-examination to try their actions and thoughts, and narrowly to look into all the doublings and recesses of their hearts; continually to accuse and judge themselves, and by daily tears of compunction, works of penance, and the use of the sacraments, to correct all secret disorders, and wipe away all filth which their affections may contract. Yet who is there who keeps so constant a guard upon his heart and whole conduct as to avoid all insensible self-deceptions? Who is there upon whose heart no inordinate attachments steal; into whose actions no sloth, remissness, or some other irregularity ever insinuates itself? Or whose compunction and penance is so humble and clear-sighted, so fervent and perfect, that no lurking disorder of his whole life escaped him, and is not perfectly washed away by the sacred blood of

<sup>1</sup> 3. Kings (or 1 Kings) xiii.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. xiv. 18. James iii. 2. Matt. xii. 36. Matt. vi. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Apoc. xxi. 27.

Christ, applied by these means or conditions to the soul? Who has perfectly subdued and regulated all his passions, and grounded his heart in perfect humility, meekness, charity, piety, and all other virtues, so as to bear the image of God in himself, or to be holy and perfect even as he is, without spot? Perhaps scarce in any moment of our lives is our intention or motive so fervent, and so pure or exempt from the least imperceptible sinister influence and mixture of sloth, self-complacency, or other inordinate affection or passion; and all other ingredients or circumstances of our action so perfect and holy, as to be entirely without failure in the eyes of God, which nothing can escape. Assiduous conversation with heaven, constant watchfulness, self-denial, and a great purity of heart, with the assistance of an extraordinary grace, give the saints a wonderful light to discover and correct the irregularities of their affections. Yet it is only by the fervent spirit and practice of penance that they can be purified in the sight of God.

The blessed Virgin was preserved by an extraordinary grace from the least sin in the whole tenour of her life and actions; but without such a singular privilege, even the saints are obliged to say that they sin daily; but they forthwith rise again by living in constant compunction and watchfulness over themselves.<sup>1</sup> Venial sins of surprise are readily effaced by penance, as we hope of the divine mercy: even such sins which are not discovered by us, are virtually repented of by a sincere compunction, if it be such as effectually destroys them. Venial sins of malice, or committed with full deliberation, are of a different nature, far more grievous and fatal, usually of habit, and lead even to mortal sin. Those Christians who shun these more wilful offences,

<sup>1</sup> Prov. xxiv. 16.

yet are not very watchful over themselves, and labour not very strenuously in subduing all their passions, have just reason to fear that some inordinate affections taint almost the whole body of their actions, without being sufficiently repented of. And the very best Christians must always tremble at the thought of the dreadful account they have to give to God for every idle word or thought. No one can be justified before God but by his pure and free mercy. But how few even among fervent Christians bring, by his grace, the necessary conditions of cleanness and disengagement of heart and penance, in so perfect a manner as to obtain such a mercy, that no blemishes or spots remain in their souls? Hence a saint prayed, *Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.*<sup>1</sup> No soul which leaves this world defiled with the least stain, or charged with the least debt to the Divine Justice, can be admitted in the kingdom of perfect purity and unspotted sanctity, till she be perfectly purged and purified. Yet no man will say, that a venial sin which destroys not sanctifying grace, will be punished with eternal torments. Hence there must be a relaxation of some sin in the world to come, as is sufficiently implied, according to the remark of St. Austin in these words of Christ, where he says, that the sin against the Holy Ghost *shall not be forgiven in this world, nor in the world to come.*<sup>2</sup> Christ exhorting us to agree with our adversary or accuser by appeasing our conscience, mentions a place of punishment out of which souls shall be delivered, though not before they shall have paid the last farthing.<sup>3</sup> St. Paul tells us,<sup>4</sup> that he whose work shall abide the trial, shall be rewarded; but he

<sup>1</sup> Psalm cxliii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xii. 32. S. Aug. l. 21. de Civ. Dei, c. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. v. 27.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 13. On these texts see the Catechism of Montpellier, t. 2. p. 312. ed. Latine.

who shall have built upon the foundation (which is Christ or his sanctifying grace) wood, hay, or stubble, or whose imperfect and defective works shall not be able to stand the fiery trial, shall be saved, yet so as by fire. The last sentence in the general judgment only mentions heaven and hell, which are the two great receptacles of all men, both the good and the bad for eternity, and after the last judgment there will be no purgatory. It is also very true of every man at his death that on whatsoever side the tree falls, on that it shall always lie; the doom of the soul is then fixed for ever either to life or death: but this excludes not a temporary state of purgation before the last judgment, through which some souls enter into everlasting life. This doctrine of a purgatory will be more evidently proved from the following demonstration of the catholic practice of praying for the souls of the faithful departed.

The Church of Christ is composed of three different parts: the Triumphant in heaven, the Militant on earth, and the Patient or suffering in purgatory. Our charity embraces all the members of Christ. Our love for him engages and binds us to his whole body, and teaches us to share both the miseries and afflictions, and the comforts and blessings of all that are comprised in it. The communion of saints which we profess in our Creed, implies a communication of certain good works and offices, and a mutual intercourse among all the members of Christ. This we maintain with the saints in heaven by thanking and praising God for their triumphs and crowns, imploring their intercession, and receiving the succours of their charitable solicitude and prayers for us: likewise with the souls in purgatory, by soliciting the divine mercy in their favour. Nor does it seem to be doubted but they, as they are in a state of grace and charity, pray also for us; though the Church never addresses public suffrages to them



not being warranted by primitive practice and tradition so to do. That to pray for the faithful departed is a pious and wholesome charity and devotion, is proved clearly from the Old Testament, and from the doctrine and practice of the Jewish synagogue. The baptisms or legal purifications which the Jews sometimes used for the dead, demonstrate their belief that the dead receive spiritual succours from the devotion of the living.<sup>1</sup> In the second book of the Machabees<sup>2</sup> it is related, that Judas the Machabee sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to the temple for sacrifices to be offered for the dead, *thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection.*—*It is therefore a holy and a wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins.* This book is ranked among the canonical scriptures by the Apostolical Canons, Tertullian, St. Cyprian, St. Hilary, St. Ambrose, St. Austin, the third council of Carthage, &c. Some ancients call it apocryphal, meaning that it was not in the Hebrew canon compiled by Esdras, it being writ after his time: and Origen and St. Jerom, who gave it that epithet, sometimes quoted it as of divine authority. The catholic Church admits the deuterocanonical books of those which were compiled after the time of Esdras, as written equally by divine inspiration. If some among the ancients doubted of them before tradition in this point had been examined and cleared, several parts of the New Testament which are admitted by Protestants, have been no less called in question. Protestants, who at least allow this book a historical credit, must acknowledge this to have been the belief and practice of the most virtuous and zealous high-priest, of all the priests and doctors attached to the service of the temple, and of the whole Jewish nation: and a belief and custom which our Blessed Redeemer no

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 29. Ecclus. vii. 37.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Mac. xii. 43. 46.

where reprehended in them. Whence the learned Protestant, Dr. Jeremy Taylor, writes thus:<sup>1</sup> "We find by the history of the Machabees, that the Jews did pray and make offerings for the dead, which appears by other testimonies, and by their form of prayer still extant, which they used in the captivity. Now it is very considerable, that since our Blessed Saviour did reprove all the evil doctrines and traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees, and did argue concerning the dead and the resurrection, yet he spake no word against this public practice, but left it as he found it; which he who came to declare to us all the will of his Father, would not have done, if it had not been innocent, pious, and full of charity. The practice of it was at first, and was universal: it being plain in Tertullian and St. Cyprian," &c.

The faith and practice of the Christian Church from the beginning is manifest from the writings of the primitive fathers. In all ancient liturgies (or masses) express mention is made of prayer and sacrifice for the dead.<sup>2</sup> St. Cyril of Jerusalem, expounding to the catechumens the several parts of the liturgy, says,<sup>3</sup> that in it we pray for the emperor and all the living: we also name the martyrs and saints to commend ourselves to their prayers; then mention the faithful departed to pray for them. "We remember," says he, "those that are deceased, first the patriarchs, apostles, and martyrs, that God would receive our supplications through their prayers and intercession. Then we pray for our fathers and bishops, and in general for all among us who are departed this life, believing that this will be the greatest relief to those for whom it is made

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Jer. Taylor, *Lib. of Proph.* l. 1. sect. 20. n. 11. p. 345.

<sup>2</sup> Beausobre, in his *History of Manicheism*, (l. 9. c. 3. not.) pretends that St. Cyril of Jerusalem had altered the liturgy on this article; but he is solidly refuted by the learned Henry a Porta, professor at Pavia. *Append. ad tractat. de Purgat. Mediolani*, 1753.

<sup>3</sup> *Catech.* 19. n. 9. p. 328. ed. Ben.

whilst the holy and tremendous victim lies present." These words of this father are quoted by Eustratius, in the sixth age, and by Nico the monk.<sup>1</sup> St. Cyril goes on, and illustrates the efficacy of such a prayer by the comparison of a whole nation which, in a joint body, should address their king in favour of persons whom he should have banished, offering him at the same time a crown. "Will not he," says the father, "grant them a remission of their banishment? In like manner, we, offering our prayers for the dead, though they are sinners, offer not a crown, but Christ sacrificed for our sins, studying to render the merciful God propitious to us and to them." Arnobius, speaking of our public liturgies, says:<sup>2</sup> "In which peace and pardon are begged of God for kings, magistrates, friends, and enemies, both the living and those who are delivered from the body." In the Apostolical Constitutions is extant a very ancient fragment of a liturgy, from which Grabe, Hicks, and Deacon borrow many things for their new models of primitive liturgies, and which Whiston pretended to rank among the canonical scriptures. In it occurs a prayer for the dead: "Let us pray for those who are departed in peace."<sup>3</sup> There is no liturgy used by any sect of Oriental Christians, though some have been separated from the communion of the Church ever since the fifth or sixth centuries, in which prayer for the dead does not occur.<sup>4</sup> The most ancient fathers frequently speak of the offering the holy sacrifice of the altar for the faithful departed. Tertullian, the oldest amongst the Latin Christian writers, mentioning certain apostolical traditions, says: "We make yearly offerings (or sacrifices) for the dead, and for the feasts

<sup>1</sup> See the notes of the Benedictins, *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> L. 4. *adversus Gentes.*

<sup>3</sup> *Constit. Apost. l. 8. c. 13.*

<sup>4</sup> See Le Brun, *Litur.*



of the martyrs.”<sup>1</sup> He says, “that a widow prays for the soul of her deceased husband, and beseeches for him, and his company in the first resurrection, and offers (sacrifice) on the anniversary days of his death. For if she does not these things, she has, as much as lies in her, divorced him.”<sup>2</sup> St. Cyprian mentions the usual custom of celebrating sacrifice for every deceased Christian.<sup>3</sup> Nor can it be said that he speaks in the same manner of martyrs. The distinction he makes is evident: “It is one thing to be cast into prison not to be released till the last farthing is paid, and another thing through the ardour of faith, immediately to attain to the reward: it is very different by long punishment for sin to be cleansed a long time by fire, and to have purged away all sin by suffering.” St. Chrysostom reckons it amongst the dreadful obligations of a priest, “that he is the intercessor to God for the sins both of the living and the dead.”<sup>5</sup> In another place he says: “It is not in vain that in the divine mysteries we remember the dead, appearing in their behalf, praying the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world, that comfort may thence be derived upon them. He who stands at the altar, cries not out in vain: Let us pray for them who have slept in Christ. Let us not fail to succour the departed; for the common expiation of the world is offered.”<sup>6</sup> The Protestant translators of Du Pin observe, that St. Chrysostom, in his thirty-eighth homily on the Philippians, says, that to pray for the faithful departed in the tremendous mysteries was decreed by the apostles.<sup>7</sup> Mr. Thorndike,

<sup>1</sup> L. de Cor. c. 3.

<sup>2</sup> L. de Monog. c. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Ep. 1. Ed. Oxon. See Fleury, t. 2. p. 273.

<sup>4</sup> Ep. Cypr. ep. ad Antonian. Pam. et Baluzio 52. Fello 55.

<sup>5</sup> De Sacerd. l. 6. p. 424. ed. Montfaucon.

<sup>6</sup> Hom. 51. in 1 Cor. t. 10. p. 393.

<sup>7</sup> Du Pin, Cent. 3. ed. Angl. S. Chrys. hom. 3. in Phil. t. 11. p. 217. ed. Mont.

a Protestant theologian, says:<sup>1</sup> "The practice of the Church of interceding for the dead at the celebration of the eucharist, is so general and so ancient, that it cannot be thought to have come in upon imposture, but that the same aspersion will seem to take hold of the common Christianity." Prayer for the faithful departed is mentioned by the fathers on other occasions. St. Clement of Alexandria, who flourished in the year 200, says, that by punishment after death men must expiate every the least sin, before they can enter heaven.<sup>2</sup> The vision of St. Perpetua is related by St. Austin, and in her acts.<sup>3</sup> Origen in many places,<sup>4</sup> and Lactantius,<sup>5</sup> teach at large, that all souls are purged by the punishment of fire before they enter into bliss, unless they are so pure as not to stand in need of it.

To omit others, St. Austin expounds those words of the thirty-seventh psalm, *Rebuke me not in thy fury*, of hell; and those which follow: *Neither chastise me in thy wrath*, of purgatory, as follows: "That you purify me in this life, and render me such that I may not stand in need of that purging fire."<sup>6</sup> In his *Enchiridion*<sup>7</sup> he says: "Nor is it to be denied that the souls of the departed are relieved by the piety of their living friends, when the sacrifice of the Mediator is offered for them, or alms are given in the Church. But these things are profitable to those who, whilst they lived, deserved that they might avail them.—There is a life so good, as not to re-

<sup>1</sup> Just Weights and Measures, c. 16. p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> Strom. l. 7. p. 794. 865.

<sup>3</sup> See S. Aug. Serm. 280. p. 1134. her Life, 7 March, and Orsi Diss. de Actis SS. Perpet. et Felicit.

<sup>4</sup> L. 5. contra Cels. p. 242. Hom. 23. in Num. Hom. 5. et 8. in Exod. &c.

<sup>5</sup> Lactant. l. 7. Instit. c. 21.

<sup>6</sup> S. Aug. in Ps. 37. n. 3. p. 295.

<sup>7</sup> Enchir. c. 110. De Civ. Dei, l. 21. c. 24. l. de Cura pro Mortuis, c. 4 et serm. 182. (ol. 32.) de verb. ap. where he says, that prayer for the dead in the holy mysteries was observed by the whole Church.

quire them; and there is another so wicked, that after death it can receive no benefit from them. When, therefore, the sacrifices of the altar or alms are offered for all Christians, for the very good they are thanksgivings; they are propitiations for those who are not very bad. For the very wicked, they are some kind of comfort to the living." This father teaches that a funeral pomp and monument are comforts of the living, but no succour of the dead; but that prayer, sacrifices, and alms relieve the departed.<sup>1</sup> He repeats often that sacrifice is offered in thanksgiving to God for martyrs, but never for their repose. "It is an injury," says he, "to pray for a martyr, to whose prayers we ought to be ourselves recommended."<sup>2</sup> And again: "You know in what place (of the liturgy) the martyrs are named. The Church prays not for them. She justly prays for other deceased persons, but prays not for the martyrs, but rather recommends herself to their prayers." This he often repeats in other places. St. Austin,<sup>3</sup> and St. Epiphanius,<sup>4</sup> relate, that when Aërius, an impious Arian priest, denied suffrages for the dead, this heresy was condemned by the universal Church. How earnestly St. Monica on her death-bed begged the sacrifices and prayers of the Church after her departure, and how warmly St. Austin recommended the souls of his parents to the prayers of others is related in their lives.<sup>5</sup>

The like earnest desire we discover in all ancient Christians and saints. St. Ephrem in his testament entreats his friends to offer for him, after his departure, alms, prayers, and oblations,

<sup>1</sup> Serm. 182. (ol. 32. de verb. ap. t. 5. p. 827. et l. de Cura pro Mortuis, c. 1. et 13.

<sup>2</sup> Serm. 159. fol. 17. de verb. ap. n. 1. t. 5. p. 705. ed. Ben. Serm. 224. p. 1143.

<sup>3</sup> S. Aug. l. de hæres. c. 53.

<sup>4</sup> S. Epiph. hæc. 75. n. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Conf. l. 9. c. 13. n. 36, &c.

(or masses,) especially on the thirtieth day.<sup>1</sup> St. Athanasius tells Constantius that he had prayed earnestly for the soul of that emperor's deceased brother Constans.<sup>2</sup> Eusebius relates,<sup>3</sup> that Constantine the Great would be buried in the porch of the church of the apostles, "that he might enjoy the communication of the holy prayers, the mystical sacrifice, and the divine ceremonies." The same historian testifies<sup>4</sup> that after his death, "numberless multitudes poured forth prayers to God with sighs and tears for the soul of the emperor, repaying a most grateful office to their pious prince." St. Paulinus upon his brother's death wrote to his friends, earnestly recommending him to their prayers, that by them his poor soul amidst scorching flames might receive the dew of refreshment and comfort.<sup>5</sup> St. Ambrose, writing to one Faustinus, who grieved immoderately for the death of his sister, says: "I do not think your sister ought to excite your tears, but your prayers: nor that her soul is to be dishonoured by weeping, but rather recommended to God by sacrifices."<sup>6</sup> In his funeral oration on the great Theodosius he prays thus: "Give perfect rest to thy servant Theodosius."<sup>7</sup> And again: "I loved him; therefore I follow him unto the country of the living. Neither will I forsake him till by tears and prayers I shall bring the man whither his merits call him unto the holy mountain of the Lord."<sup>8</sup> He mentions the most solemn obsequies and sacrifices on the thirtieth,

<sup>1</sup> T. 2. ed. Vatic, p. 230. 236.

<sup>2</sup> S. Athan. Apol. ad Constant. t. 1. p. 200.

<sup>3</sup> De Vita Const. l. 4. c. 60. p. 556. et. c. 70. p. 562.

<sup>4</sup> Ib. c. 71. p. 562.

<sup>5</sup> S. Paulin. ep. 35. ad Delfin. p. 223. ep. 36. ad Amand. p. 224, &c.

<sup>6</sup> S. Ambr. ep. 39. ad Faustin. t. 2. p. 244. ed. Ben.

<sup>7</sup> "Da requiem perfectam servo tuo Theodosio, requiem illam quam præparasti, sanctis tuis." n. 36. t. 2. p. 1207, ed. Ben.

<sup>8</sup> Dillexi, et ideo prosequor illum usque ad regionem vivorum; nec deseram donec fletu et precibus inducam virum quo sua merita vocant in montem Domini sanctum." ib. n. 37, p. 1208. See also his funeral oration on Valentinian, page 1193. t. 2.

sometimes fortieth day;<sup>1</sup> for so long they were continued: but, on the third, seventh, and thirtieth days with particular solemnity.<sup>2</sup> St. Gregory the Great mentions that he having ordered thirty masses to be sung for a monk named Justus, on the thirtieth day after the last mass was said Justus appeared to Copiosus his provost, and said: "I was in pain, but now am well."

It appears from Ven. Bede's history, and the account of his death,<sup>3</sup> also from a great number of letters of St. Boniface, St. Lullus,<sup>4</sup> and others, how earnest and careful our ancestors were, from their first conversion to the faith, in mutually desiring and offering sacrifices and prayers for their deceased brethren, even in distant countries. In the foundations of churches, monasteries, and colleges, in pious instruments of donations, charters, sepulchral monuments, accounts of funerals, or last wills and testaments, as high as any extant, from the time of Constantine the Great, especially from the sixth and seventh ages downwards,<sup>5</sup> mention is usually made of prayer for the dead. In the great provincial council of all the bishops subject to the metropolitical see of Canterbury, held at Cealchythe or Celchythe by archbishop Wulfred, in presence of Kenulf, king of Mercia, with his princes and great officers in 816, it was enacted:<sup>6</sup> "As soon as a bishop is dead,

1 S. Ambr. de Obitu Theodosii, n. 3. p. 1197. t. 2.

2 See Gavant, *Comm. in Missal*. par. 4. tit. 18. p. 275. Mention is made of these days, after the person's death, by the *Apost. Constit.* l. 8. c. 42. *Palladius in Lausiac.* c. 26, &c. See on them *Cotelier*, not. in *Constit. Apost.* ib. and especially *Dom. Menard.* in *Concor. Regular.* and in *Sacram. S. Greg.*

3 *Dial.* l. 4. c. 55. t. 2. p. 466.

4 See their lives.

5 See *Fontanini*, *De Vindiciis Veterum Codicum*; *Miræus*, *Donat. Belg.* and other *Diplomatics*, &c.

6 *C. 10. ap. Spelman*, *Conc. Brit.* vol. 1. p. 327. *Johnson's English Eccl. Laws and Canons*, vol. i. ad an. 816. *Conc. Labbe*, t. 7. p. 1489.

let prayers and alms forthwith be offered. At the sounding of a signal in every church throughout our parishes<sup>1</sup> let every congregation of the servants of God meet at the basilic, and there sing thirty psalms together, for the soul of the deceased. Afterward let every prelate and abbot sing six hundred psalms, and cause one hundred and twenty masses to be celebrated, and set at liberty three slaves, and give three shillings to every one of them: and let all the servants of God fast one day. And for thirty days after the canonical hours are finished in the assembly, let seven Belts of Pater Nosters<sup>2</sup> also be sung for him. And when this is done let the Obit be renewed on the thirtieth day. (*i. e.* Dirge and mass sung with the utmost solemnity.) And let them act with as much fidelity in this respect in all churches as they do by custom for the faithful of their own family, by praying for them, that by the favour of common intercession, they may deserve to receive the eternal kingdom, which is common to all saints." What was here ordered for bishops was customary in each family for their own friends, sacrifices being continued for thirty days: doles distributed, which were alms for the repose of the departed soul; and beadsmen and beadswomen for alms received were obliged to say the beads daily at the tomb of the deceased person: monuments of which are found on many ancient gravestones, and in the old writings of all our churches, where such things have escaped the injury of the times. St. Odilo, abbot of Cluni

<sup>1</sup> The first signals used in churches were a board or iron plate with holes, to be knocked with a hammer, &c. which is retained still among the Greeks, and in the latter part of Holy Week among the Latins. Bells were used in England before this time, (as appears from Bede, Hist. l. 4, c. 23. ad an. 680.) but not universally.

<sup>2</sup> *Beltidum Paster Noster*. Belts of prayers mean, a certain number of studs fastened in belts or girdles like the string of beads that are now in use. See Sir Henry Spelman's Glossary, v. Beltis, ed. novissimæ.



in 998, instituted the commemoration of all the faithful departed in all the monasteries of his Congregation, on the 1st of November; which was soon adopted by the whole western church. The council of Oxford in 1222, declared it a holiday of the second class, on which certain necessary and important kinds of work were allowed. Some diocesses kept it a holiday of precept till noon: only those of Vienne and Tours and the order of Cluni the whole day: in most places it is only a day of devotion.<sup>1</sup> The Greeks have long kept on Saturday sevensnight before Lent, and on Saturday before Whitsunday the solemn commemoration of all the faithful departed; but offer up mass every Saturday for them.<sup>2</sup>

It is certainly a *holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead*.<sup>3</sup> Holy and pious because most acceptable to God, to whom no sacrifices are more honourable and pleasing than those of charity and mercy, especially spiritual, and when offered to persons most dear to him. The suffering souls in purgatory are the chosen heirs of heaven, the eternal possession of which kingdom is secured to them, and their names are now written there amongst its glorious princes. God most tenderly loves them, declares them his spouses, enriches them with the precious gifts and ornaments of his grace, and desires to shower down upon them the torrents of his delights, and disclose to them the light of his glory. Only his justice opposes and obliges him to detain them in this distant banishment and in this place of tor-

<sup>1</sup> The Dies Iræ is ascribed by Bzovius (ad an. 1294) to cardinal Ursini or Frangipani: by others to Humbert, fifth general of the Dominicans, &c. The true author was probably some contemplative who desired to be unknown to the world. Mr. Crashaw, says Wharton, (Essay on Pope, p. 87.) has translated this piece very well, with a true poetical genius and fire; to which translation Lord Roscommon is much indebted, in his admired poem On the Day of Judgment.

<sup>2</sup> Leo Allat. de Dom. p. 1462. Thomassin, Tr. des Fêtes, et Bened. XIV. De Festis SS. in Diocesi Bononiensi.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Mach. xii. 60.

ments till their debts are discharged to the last farthing. Such is his hatred of the least sin; and such is the opposition which the stain of sin bears to his infinite justice and sanctity. Yet his tender mercy recommends them to the charitable succours which we, as their fellow-members in Christ, have in our power to afford them; and he invites us to appease his anger by interposing our prayers in order to avert them from the weight of his justice. If a compassionate charity towards all that are in any distress, even towards the most flagitious, and those who only labour under temporal miseries and necessities, be a most essential ingredient of a Christian spirit; and that in which the very soul of religion and piety towards God consists: if the least alms given to the poor be highly rewarded by him, will he not exceedingly recompense our charity to his friends and most beloved children in their extreme necessity? All works of mercy draw down his most abundant graces, and will be richly repaid by Him, who at the last day will adjudge the immortal crowns of his glory to this virtue. But, except the leading others to God by our instructions and prayers, what charity, what mercy can we exercise equal to this of succouring the souls in purgatory? A charity not less wholesome and profitable both to them and to ourselves, than pious in itself, and honourable to God. If we consider who they are, and what they suffer, we shall want no other motives to excite us to fervour in it. They are all of them our fellow-members in Jesus Christ. We are united with them by the bands of sincere charity, and by the communion of saints. Every one of them is that brother whom we are bound to love as ourselves. The members of one and the same body conspire mutually to assist one another, as the apostle puts us in mind; so that, if one of these members suffer, the others suffer

with it; and if one be in honour, the others rejoice with it. If our foot be pricked with a thorn, the whole body suffers with it, and all the other members set themselves at work to relieve it. So ought we in our mystical body. It would be impious and cruel to see a brother in the flames, and not to give him a hand, or afford him some refreshment if we can do it. The dignity of these souls more strongly recommends them to our compassion, and at the same time to our veneration. Though they lie at present at a distance from God, buried in frightful dungeons, under waves of fire, they belong to the happy number of the elect. They are united to God by his grace; they love him above all things, and amidst their torments never cease to bless and praise him, adoring the severity of his justice with perfect resignation and love.

Those of whom we speak are not damned souls, enemies of God, separated or alienated from him: but illustrious conquerors of the devil, the world, and hell; holy spirits laden with merits and graces, and bearing the precious badge of their dignity and honour by the nuptial robe of the Lamb, with which by an indefeasible right they are clothed. They are the sons of God, heirs of his glory, and saints. Yet they are now in a state of suffering, and endure greater torments, than it is possible for any one to suffer, or for our imagination to represent to itself, in this mortal life. They suffer the privation of God, says the council of Florence, the most dreadful of all torments. No tongue can express what a cruel pain this is to a soul separated from the body, impetuously desiring to attain to God, her centre. She seems just enjoying him, attracted by his infinite charms, and carried towards him by a strong innate bent not to be conceived: yet is violently repelled and held back. Whence the poor soul suffers an incomprehensible agony

and torment. It is also the opinion of St. Austin and other learned fathers, founded in the words of St. Paul, and the traditionary authority of eminent prelates of the first ages, that they also suffer a material fire like that of hell, which being created merely for an instrument of the divine vengeance, and blown up by the anger of God, with the most piercing activity torments even spirits not clothed with bodies, as our souls in this life feel the pain of the corporeal senses by the natural law of their union with our bodies. Though it be no article of faith, that the fire here spoken of is not metaphorical, to express the sharpness of these torments, yet that it is real and material is the most probable opinion grounded in the most venerable authority. "The same fire torments the damned in hell and the just in purgatory," says St. Thomas;<sup>1</sup> who adds<sup>2</sup> "The least pain in purgatory exceeds the greatest in this life." St. Austin speaks to this point as follows:<sup>3</sup> "It is said, *He will be saved, as it were, by fire.* Because it is said, *He will be saved,* that fire is contemned. Yet it will be more grievous than whatever a man can suffer in this life. You know how much wicked men have suffered here, and can suffer. Good men may undergo as much: and what did any malefactor ever endure which martyrs have not suffered for Christ? All these torments are much more tolerable. Yet see how men do all things rather than suffer them. How much more reason have they to do what God commands them, that they may escape his torments!" Venerable Bede says, "Purgatory fire will be more intolerable than all the torments that can be felt or conceived in this life." Which words are but a repetition of what St. Cæsarius of Arles had

<sup>1</sup> S. Tho. Suppl. qu. 100, a. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ib. n. 3.

<sup>3</sup> S. Aug. in Ps. 37. t. 4. p. 295.

wrote before to this purpose.<sup>1</sup> "A person," says he, "may say, I am not much concerned how long I remain in purgatory, provided I may come to eternal life. Let no one reason thus. Purgatory fire will be more dreadful than whatever torments can be seen, imagined, or endured in this world. And how does any one know whether he will stay days, months, or years? He who is afraid now to put his finger in the fire, does he not fear lest he be then all buried in torments for a long time?" Do we think that God can find torments in nature sufficient to satisfy his provoked vengeance? No, no. He creates new instruments more violent, pains utterly inconceivable to us.<sup>2</sup> A soul for one venial sin shall suffer more than all the pains or distempers, the most violent colics, gout, and stone joined in complication; more than all the most cruel torments undergone by malefactors, or invented by the most barbarous tyrants; more than all the tortures of the martyrs summed up together. This is the idea which the fathers give us of purgatory. And how long many souls may have to suffer there we know not.

The Church approves perpetual anniversaries for the dead; for some souls may be detained in pains to the end of the world, though after the day of judgment no third state will any longer subsist; God may at the end of the world make the torments of souls which have not then satisfied his justice so intense in one moment that their debts may be discharged. For we know that he will exact a satisfaction to the last farthing. How inexorable was he in punishing his most faithful servant Moses for one small offence.<sup>3</sup> How inflexible with regard to David<sup>4</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> S. Cæsar. Hom. 1. p. 5. vel in app. Op. S. Aug. t. 5.

<sup>2</sup> See Bourdaloue, Lorient, Le Rue, &c.

<sup>3</sup> Dent. iii. 24, 25.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Kings (Samuel) xxiv. 15.



other penitents! nay, in the person of his own divine Son!<sup>1</sup> This, even in the days of his mercy: but, after death, his justice is all rigour and severity, and can no longer be mitigated by patience. A circumstance which ought particularly to excite our compassion for these suffering souls is, that these holy and illustrious prisoners and debtors to the divine justice, being no longer in the state of meriting, are not able in the least to assist themselves. A sick man afflicted in all his limbs, and a beggar in the most painful and destitute condition has a tongue left to ask relief; the very sight of his sufferings cannot fail exciting others to pity, comfort, and succour him. At least he can implore heaven: it is never deaf to his prayers. But these souls have no resource but that of patience, resignation, and hope. God answers their moans, that his justice must be satisfied to the last farthing, and that their *night is come in which no man can work.*<sup>2</sup> But they address themselves to us, and not having a voice to be heard, they borrow that of the Church and its preachers, who, to express their moans, and excite our compassion, cry out to us for them in the words of Job; *Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, at least you my friends; for the hand of God hath smitten me.*<sup>3</sup> Gerson, the pious and learned chancellor of Paris, represents them crying out to us as follows:<sup>4</sup> “Pray for us, because we are unable to help ourselves. You who can do it, lend us your assistance. You who have known us on earth, you who have loved us, will you now forget and neglect us? It is commonly said, that a friend is tried in the day of need. What necessity can be equal to ours? Let it move your compassion. *A hard heart shall fare ill at the last*

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvi. 36.

<sup>2</sup> John ix. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Job xix. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Gerson, t. 3. p. 193.



*day.*<sup>1</sup> Be moved by your own advantage,"  
&c.

Did we behold those dungeons open under our feet, or had we a view of the torments which these souls endure, how would this spectacle affect us! How would their pains alone speak to us more pathetically than any words! How would our eyes stream with tears, and our bowels be moved, to behold innumerable holy and illustrious servants of God, and our brethren in Christ, suffering "by wonderful, but real ways,"<sup>2</sup> more than our imagination can represent to itself! Here perhaps lies a parent, a brother, a bosom-friend and companion. For if we may be permitted to dive into the secrets of the divine judgments, we shall be persuaded that the number is very small of those that departing this life pass immediately to glory without having some satisfaction to make, some debt to cancel. Who can flatter himself that his soul is so pure before God, as to have no unperceived irregular attachment or affection, no stain which he has not perfectly washed away? How rare is the grace for a soul to leave this infected region without the least spot! the judgments of God are hidden and unsearchable: but their very inscrutability makes us tremble. For we know that he will judge justices, and woe even to the commendable life of man if it be discussed according to the rigour of justice, as St. Austin says. Does not St. Peter assure us, that the just man himself will scarce be saved? If then we have lost any dear friends in Christ, whilst we confide in his mercy, and rejoice in their passage from the region of death to that of life, light, and eternal joy, we have reason to fear some lesser stains may retard their bliss. In this uncertainty why do not we earnestly recommend them to the divine clemency?

<sup>1</sup> Ecclus. iii. 26.

<sup>2</sup> S. Aug. de Civ. l. xxi.

Why do we not say with St. Ambrose in his funeral discourse on Valentinian the Younger, who was murdered in 392 at twenty years of age, whilst a Catechumen:<sup>1</sup> "Give the holy mysteries to the dead. Let us, with pious earnestness, beg repose for his soul.—Lift up your hands with me, O people, that at least by this duty we may make some return for his benefits." Afterward joining with this emperor his brother Gratian, who was dead before him in 383, he says:<sup>2</sup> "Both blessed, if my prayers can be of any force! No day shall pass you over in silence: no prayer of mine shall ever be closed without remembering you. No night shall pass you over without some vows of my supplications. You shall have a share in all my sacrifices. If I forget you let my own right hand be forgotten." With the like earnestness this father offered the holy sacrifice for his brother Satyrus. Perhaps the souls of some dear friends may be suffering on our account; perhaps for their fondness for us, or for sins of which we were the occasion by scandal, provocation, or otherwise; in which cases motives not only of charity, but also of justice call upon us to endeavour to procure them all the relief in our power.

If other motives have less weight with us, we certainly cannot be insensible to that of our own interest. What a comfort shall we find to eternity in the happy company of souls whose enjoyment of bliss we shall have contributed to hasten! What an honour to have ever been able to serve so holy and glorious saints! With what gratitude and earnestness will they repay the favour by their supplications for us, whilst we still labour amidst the dangers and conflicts of this world! When Joseph foretold Pharaoh's chief butler the recovery of his dignity, he said to him: *Remember*

<sup>1</sup> S. Ambr. de Obitu Valent. n. 56. t. 2. p. 1189. ed. Bened.

<sup>2</sup> Ib. n. 78. p. 1194.

*me, when it shall be well with thee ; and mention me to Pharaoh, that he may bring me out of this place.*<sup>1</sup> Yet he remembered not Joseph, but forgot his fellow-sufferer and benefactor. Not so these pious souls, as St. Bernard observes:<sup>2</sup> only the wicked and depraved, who are strangers to all feelings of virtue, can be ungrateful. This vice is far from the breasts of saints, who are all goodness and charity. Souls delivered and brought to glory by our endeavours will amply repay our kindness by obtaining divine graces for us. God himself will be inclined by our charity to show us also mercy, and to shower down upon us his most precious favours. *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*<sup>3</sup> By having shown this mercy to the suffering souls in purgatory, we shall be particularly entitled to be treated with mercy at our departure hence, and to share more abundantly in the general suffrages of the Church, continually offered for all who have slept in Christ. The principal means by which we obtain relief for the suffering souls in purgatory are sacrifice, prayer, and almsdeeds. The unbloody sacrifice has always been offered for the faithful departed no less than for the living.<sup>4</sup> "It was not in vain," says Saint Chrysostom,<sup>5</sup> "that the apostles ordained a commemoration of the deceased in the holy and tremendous mysteries. They were sensible of the benefit and advantage which accrues to them from this practice. For, when the congregation stands with open arms as well as the priests, and the tremendous sacrifice is before them, how should our prayers for them not appease God? But this is said of such as have departed in faith."

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xl. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Serm. 5. in Fest. Omn. Sanct. n. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. v. 7.

<sup>4</sup> See Card. Bona, Liturg. l. 2. c. 14. Le Brun, sur les Liturgies des quatre premiers siècles, t. 2. p. 40, 41, 330, 364, 408, &c.

<sup>5</sup> Hom. 3. in Phil. t. 11. p. 217, ed. Montfaucon.