

# Information Desk

What Proof Is Scripture About Purgatory?  
Confessionals Means More Than Telling Lies

St. Bernard's Seminary

Q. What proof is there in Holy Scripture for the Catholic doctrine about purgatory?

A. First, it should be noted that the Catholic Church is not obliged to prove all her doctrines from Scripture. The Bible was never meant to be a complete record of all God's message to men. The Apostles were sent to preach, not to pass out Bibles.

For the doctrine of purgatory, however, there is a most convincing proof in the Second Book of Maccabees, Chap. 12, verses 41 to 46. This passage has been chosen by the Church as the reading for the Anniversary Requiem Mass.

During the wars of the Maccabees, some of the Jewish soldiers had taken as the spoils of war some of the gifts that had been offered to the idols of Jerusalem. The taking of such booty was contrary to the law. All the survivors of the battle prayed to God that the sin which had been committed might be forgiven. Judas Maccabee, the leader of the Jewish army, "sent twelve thousand drachmas of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead because he considered that those who had fallen asleep with God in as had great grace laid up for them. It is therefore a holy and a wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins."

Here we have the historical fact that Judas Maccabee, the soldiers, the priests of the temple, believed in the existence of a state of purification after death, and believed that sacrifice of a state of earth would be beneficial for souls detained there. Besides the fact we have scriptural commendation of their deed as "holy and a wholesome thought."

Q. It seems to me that the Confessionals makes it much easier to commit sin. A Catholic can say, "I can commit this sin, and then go to confession and have it forgiven."

A. This is a hoary objection to the confessional, usually raised by those who have never been to confession, and based upon an imperfect understanding of Catholic doctrine.

If the Church taught that all a sinner has to do to obtain forgiveness, is to enumerate his sins to the priest, then the confessional might be attacked as a means of making sin easy. But the Church teaches that more than mere confession of sins is necessary; the penitent must also have contrition, and this includes a firm and sincere resolution to sin no more. The Church teaches in the clearest and most unmistakable manner that unless there is true sorrow for sin and a genuine purpose of amendment, the

Thus, if a Catholic were to confess his sins, the while intending to return to them, there would be no real forgiveness. Only a poorly instructed Catholic would think otherwise.

Q. What do we really mean when we speak of "faith"? Is it a blind trust or feeling that something is true, which may not be true? Sometimes I think that some Catholic doctrines are contradictory to reason, and then I try to fall back on faith.

A. The catechism tells us that faith is a supernatural virtue by which we accept as true what God has revealed to us, because God can neither deceive us, nor be deceived Himself.

Faith, like reason, is a means whereby we know something. It is a way of obtaining truth. The relationship between faith and reason is like the relationship between a telescope and the eye. As the telescope perfects the eye, and assists it to see what it could not see unaided, so faith perfects reason, and enables it to know what it could not know without faith. There is no conflict between the telescope and the eye; similarly there is no conflict between faith and reason. The stars cannot be perceived with the naked eye; to observe them, an astronomer must use a telescope. "Faith back on the telescope." But no astronomer would consider the use of a telescope "unscientific." "A blind dependence on a tool," "something unworthy of a human being." So too there are some truths which man cannot perceive by his reason alone; to come to a knowledge of them, he must "fall back on faith."

The astronomer accepts what his telescope tells him; the Catholic accepts what his faith tells him. In neither case is there a blind irrational way of acting.

If you have questions concerning Catholic history, doctrine, or practice, send them to The Information Desk, 2300 Lake Ave., Rochester 15, N. Y. Moral problems should be presented to the priest in the confessional. Questioners should sign their letters, but names will not be printed in this column.

Posthumous Works Published Milwaukee (NC) Posthumous publication of "The Significance of Beauty in Nature and Art," by Dr. Herbert E. Cory, professor of liberal arts at the University of Washington, has been announced here by the Bruce Publishing Company. Dr. Cory, convert teacher and philosopher whose "The Emancipation of a Freethinker" won wide recognition when it was published in 1941 died in February of this year.

## Cardinal Asks 'Family' Peace Conference

Copenhagen (NC)—The atmosphere of a family council, that pervades the peace conference if the world is to have a lasting peace based on justice and charity, His Eminence Bernard Cardinal Griffin, Archbishop of Westminster, told a huge rally of Catholics during a visit here to the Capital of Denmark.

It marked the first visit of a British Cardinal to Denmark since the "information" over 400 years ago. His Eminence was invited to this country by Bishop John Theodore Sahr, O.S.B., Vicar Apostolic of Denmark, whom he met at the Buffalo Centennial Eucharistic Congress. In his address the Cardinal laid down the necessary principles for the establishment of international relations. These are, he said:

1. THE RIGHTS of the human persons are derived not from membership in any State or Party but from membership in the human family.

2. All authority comes from God and the multi-published brotherhood of man can have no meaning unless it is based on the Fatherhood of God. If we deny the rights of God, in the same measure the rights of man are destroyed.

3. God's dealings with men reflect not merely the justice of God but especially God's love, so that international relations must be permeated with charity. Hatred is always an insurmountable obstacle to charity, and therefore to peaceful relations.

4. Justice and charity demand that the powerful must not oppress the weak and consequently, the well-being and prosperity of each race or nation must be the concern of all.

Finally, the Cardinal said, the peace conference ought to be a family council. How far nations have slipped from this ideal is obvious at the meetings of the United Nations where one would hardly imagine that the various members of the conference had fought side by side in a recent war, he added.

## Louder Pilgrims Total 1,500,000

Paris (RNS) — Upwards of one and a half million pilgrims visited the Shrine at Lourdes during 1945. It has been estimated that of this total 876,713 travelled there in 276 special trains.

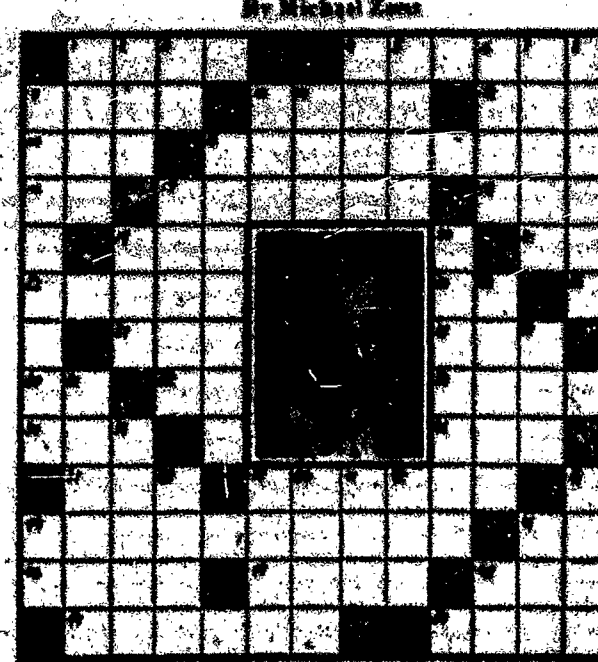
Nearly 53,000 men and 73,000 women bathed in the waters at Lourdes during the year. Six transport companies have indicated they plan services to the Shrine city in 1946. At the same time it was disclosed that a diocese New York-Louder's French government agreed to widen the airstrip at Tarbes airport.

Priest To Represent 'Rats' Melbourne, Australia (NC) The Rev Owen Steele of Beau desert, Queensland, has been chosen to represent the Australian "Rats of Tobruk" Association at the unveiling of a Tobruk Memorial in North Africa in January. Father Steele serves as a chaplain in the Ninth Australian Division throughout the Tobruk siege and later at El Alamein.

Man 57 Years Montreal (NC) Fifty-seven years a member of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, Sister Marie de Ste. Cecile, the former Zephire Broderick, died at the motherhouse here at the age of 76.

## Who? What? Follow the Clue

By Michael Kane



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## The Literary Cavalcade

By John O'Connor

Christmas, the celebration of the birth of the world's Redeemer, has been a perennial inspiration to the poets of every age up to (but not including) our own.

POETS OF the past have expressed thoughts and written work that centered more about the central fact of history than the vicissitudes of this, the great card era. Indeed, it is perfectly possible to write out a thesis in which the dominant theme of a period can be expressed in the poems written during that period especially those poems devoted to or