

**ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER No. 187**

**“PURGATORY”**

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**“PURGATORY”**

**The Essay of this Newsletter is taken from  
Chapter 5 of the forthcoming book:  
*POPULAR BELIEFS: ARE THEY BIBLICAL?***

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## UPDATE ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

### **How is the Writing of *POPULAR BELIEFS: ARE THEY BIBLICAL?* Coming Along?**

The research and writing of the new book *Popular Beliefs: Are They Biblical?* is coming along well, in spite of my overseas travelling. In fact, during the past two weeks of my stay in England, I was able to complete by God's grace chapter 5 and 6, dealing with "Sunday Sacredness" and "Purgatory." The chapter on "Purgatory" is posted in this newsletter.

As you can tell by reading these newsletters, considerable time and efforts have gone into reasarching and writing these chapters. What has helped me immensely is the peaceful setting of the accommodation provided to me by a lovely professional couple. At home I am constantly interrupted by telephone calls, visitors, and by my assistant who needs instructions. Here in London there are no interruptions or destructions. I can read, think, and write 17-18 hours in perfect peace. Only my dear wife calls me a couple of times a day to ensure that I am taking the supplementary pills she has given me to help eliminate the presence of cancer in my liver. I tend to forget to take the pills, because now I feel like a new man, with more energy than ever before.

When I think that last February several oncologists from leading cancer centers in the USA told me that I had only a few months to live, because my liver was infested with a 3 pounds cancer, I can hardly believe that my cancer is practically gone. The last Pet/Cat scan taken on May 30th, shows that 98% of the cancer cells have been shut down. What can I say: THANK YOU GOD FOR GIVING ME A NEW LEASE ON LIFE. I AM READY TO SERVE YOU UNTIL THE LAST DAY OF MY LIFE.

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Truly I can say that these past two weeks in England have been richly blessed by God. Not only the Lord gave me the wisdom and strength to write two lengthy chapters for a total of about 90 pages, but He also enabled me to speak at two major rallies, one in London and the other in Leeds, Northern England. In both places the reception and response surpassed my fondest expectations.

To give you an idea, on the first weekend in London I sold out the 500 books and recordings that I brought along on the plane for the three rallies. Mind you that I have been in London about 20 times during few years, speaking in all the major churches. It is evident that many of our believers in Great Britain are eager to deepen their understanding and experience of Bible truth. They really appreciate the visit of a scholar who helps them to understand more fully the meaning and relevance of the Adventist message for today. I consider it a real privilege to minister to our believers.

Every time I come to London, I stay with a lovely Adventist professional couple. They have adopted me as their son, though we are of the same age. If your travel plans call for a visit or a stop in London, feel free to contact Gary and Araxi. They will offer you an enjoyable Bed & Breakfast at a reasonable price. Their email is [gary@advent.plus.com](mailto:gary@advent.plus.com). For a picture of their home, garden, and accommodation, click at this link: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/Promotions/BED&BREAKFAST.htm>

My last appointment is at the Camp Hill SDA Church, a 700 members congregation in Birmingham, about two hours north of London. I have presented my seminars twice before in this lovely church, and I look forward to another Blessed experience of worship and fellowship. I am scheduled to fly home next Monday, November 5. Going home is the best part of all my trips.

### **Financing the Printing of *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?***

In my previous newsletters I told you that some fellow believers have promised to raise funds for the printing a large quantity of the new book *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* The idea is to offer to churches and individual members FREE OF CHARGE.

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This means that if sufficient funds are received to cover the editing and printing costs of the book, we will offered it for only the cost of shipping and handling, that is, about \$2.00 to 3.00 a copy, instead of the regular price of \$25.00 for a book of this size. If the funds received cover only part of the printing costs, then the price will be adjusted accordingly.

So far we have received a few contributions. If you feel impressed to contribute to this project, feel free to contact me. I will tell you where to send your contribution, so that you can receive a tax deductible receipt.

### **A Renewed Sense of Purpose in my Life**

As I am working on this new book an average of 15-17 hours a day, the conviction is developing within my heart that the Lord is prolonging my life for a purpose. He still wants to use me to make contributions to the mission of His church before I am laid to rest. One of the contributions is the writing of this timely book *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* This book may well prove to be my most important contribution to the mission of our Adventist Church.

There are million of people in our society who sincerely believe Satan's deceptive teachings. We need to help them understand that they are sincere but sincerely wrong. They need to accept God's saving truths before it is too late. There is no greater joy than calling people "out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Pet 2:9).

This is what the new book is all about. It is designed to help sincere people understand why some of their popular beliefs are unbiblical and why the Adventist beliefs are biblically sound and relevant to the times in which we live. This is the kind of book that hopefully you can give with confidence to anyone interested to know what is the difference between what they believe and what we Adventist believe.

The essay you are about to read on "PURGATORY" is a good example of what this book is designed to accomplish. It is designed to help sincere people understand why the popular belief in the purging fires of purgatory, is unbiblical. The doctrine of purgatory and its accompanying teachings about the treasury of merits, indulgences, and prayers for the

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death, highlights the fundamental difference between the Catholic and the biblical view of salvation.

In Catholic teachings salvation is dispensed by the church, especially through the sacramental system. The church has the authority to grant partial or plenary (full) remission of the temporal punishment of sin by selling memorial masses and indulgences. These can alleviate, shorten, and even eliminate the time spent in the purging fires of purgatory.

By contrast, in biblical teaching salvation is a divine gift of grace, not a human achievement. Jesus died to pay the penalty for all of our sins (Rom 5:8). “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed” (Is 53:5).

We agree with Catholics on the necessity for “purgatory” or “cleansing” of our sins, before we can enter into the glorious presence of the Lord. But we disagree on how this cleansing is achieved. Catholicism insists that after baptism believers must expiate their sins by penance in this world, and by the purging fire in purgatory. But Scripture teaches that only the blood of Christ cleanses our lives from sin.

I would urge to take time to read this chapter. It will help you understand the fundamental difference between the Catholic and the biblical (Adventist) view of salvation.

### **New Project: Sharing the Good News of the Sabbath with Words and Songs**

I sense that another reason the Lord has given me a new lease on life, is to enable me to proclaim the Sabbath in a more appealing way with the help of an outstanding lyric soprano, Cristina Piccardi. She came to Andrews University recently from Brazil with her husband who is a seminary student.

When I officially met Cristina Piccardi on October 6, 2007 after hearing her singing three times during the divine service at Andrews University Pioneer Memorial Church, I immediately sensed that the Lord is

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providentially bringing us together to proclaim our timely message in an appealing way through words and songs. Cristina shares my Italian cultural heritage and is by far the best Adventist lyric soprano I have ever heard in all my travels. Though she is only 25 years old, she has won international awards as an opera singer. In fact, she has sang as the leading soprano with several wellknown symphonic orchestras. But after five years of opera singing, she felt the call to sing sacred music that will touch the hearts of people with God's love.

You can enjoy a preview of Cristina's singing by clicking at this link <http://www.biblicalpherspectives.com/cristina/> You can see and hear her singing one stanza of THE HOLY CITY.

We are both excited at the thought of ministering to God's people together with words and songs. Our first seminar together will be in about two weeks on November 16-17, at the Avon Park SDA Church, a 900 members congregation located near Orlando, Florida. We are both praying and preparing ourselves for this important event that will be video-recorded.

Cristina will sing for about half an hour before my Friday evening testimony and half an hour Sabbath morning before my meditation on how to keep the Sabbath to gain the greatest blessings out of it. Then on Sabbath afternoon she will give a one hour sacred concert from 4 to 5 p.m., before my final lecture entitled "The Sabbath Under Crossfire," which deals with the latest Sabbath/Sunday developments.

If you live in the Orlando area, you do not want to miss this memorable opportunity to hear an outstanding Adventist Soprano, as well as some exciting news about the rediscovery of the Sabbath by ministers and congregations of different denominations. The rediscovery of the Sabbath is an unprecedented phenomenon of our time, which reminds us of Ellen White's prediction that in this final hour of world history "the Sabbath will be proclaimed more fully" (*Early Writings*, p.33).

In fact, on December 21-22, 2007, both Cristina and myself have been invited to present the SABBATH SEMINAR with words and songs at the annual convention of the FRIENDS OF THE SABBATH, held this year in Lexington, Kentucky. The coordinator has informed me that for

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the past several years this annual convention has brought together between 500 to 700 non-SDA sabbatarians, belonging to different congregations that have recently accepted the Sabbath. We look forward to a blessed time together with sabbatarian friends of other churches. We hope that some Adventists will attend the meetings.

### **Would you like us to Present a Seminar at your Church in 2008?**

If your church wishes to explore the possibility of inviting Cristina and myself to present a seminar on the Sabbath, or Second Advent, or Christian lifestyle, feel free to contact me by phone (269) 471-2915 or by email <[sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com](mailto:sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com)>

**We will gladly mail you FREE OF CHARGE the video recording of the seminar to be taped in a few days at the Avon Park SDA Church, near Orlando, Florida. This DVD recording will give an opportunity to your church board to evaluate both Cristina's singing and my preaching. Since seeing is believing, the best way to introduce the new format of my seminars, is to give you a chance to watch a video recording of both of us in action.**

To receive your FREE DVD recording of our seminar, please email us your name, address, phone number, and church name. We will be glad to call you and give you the list of the open dates.

The cost of the seminar is very reasonable, consisting primarily of the refund of two airline tickets and two hotel rooms. We plan to design a new color flier and attractive posters, featuring the pictures of both of us. We will supply the fliers and the posters.

We have already received several invitations for 2008, but we still have several open weekends. If we hear from you in time, we will do our best to reserve a weekend for your church.

Properly promoted, the seminar can draw your community people, eager to hear Cristina singing so passionately about the love of God with her outstanding soprano voice. Her community Sacred Concerts are always well received.

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**“PURGATORY”****Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi****Retired Professor of Theology, Andrews University****The Essay of this Newsletter is taken from****Chapter 5 of the forthcoming book:*****POPULAR BELIEFS: ARE THEY BIBLICAL?***

During the five years I studied at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome from 1969 to 1974, occasionally I worked as a tourist guide. One of the sites I liked to show to tourists is called *La Scala Santa* or *The Holy Stairs*, which consists of 28 marble steps, protected by wooden boards. It is located opposite the Basilica of San Giovanni Laterano.

According to Catholic tradition, the stairs were part of the *praetorium* of Pilate in Jerusalem, which Jesus ascended during his Passion. Medieval legends claim that *The Holy Stairs* were brought from Jerusalem to Rome about 326 by Helena, mother of Constantine the Great.

Devout pilgrims are eager to ascend *The Holy Stairs* on their knees, reciting prescribed prayers, because they are promised to receive indulgences for themselves and their loved ones in purgatory. On September 2, 1817 Pope Pius VII granted to pilgrims ascending the stairs in the prescribed manner, an indulgence of nine years for every step. An indulgence is the remission or limited release from the temporal punishment believers must suffer in this life or in purgatory for venial (minor, forgivable) sins they have committed.

One day I took to the *The Holy Stairs* an inquisitive American tourist, who bombarded me with probative questions. When we entered the *Holy Stairs*, the Passionist Father caring for the shrine, gave us a small card with the picture of the *Holy Stairs* on the one side, and the instructions on how to receive nine years of indulgence per step on the other side.

After reading about the nine years of indulgence per step, the American tourist asked the Passionist Priest: “Please, Father, could you explain to me what will happen if I ascend the *Holy Stairs* in the prescribed manner four times, earning a total of 1008 years of indulgences, but I need only for 500 years of indulgence to transit from purgatory to paradise? What is God going to do with the 508 extra years of indulgence that I worked for?” The priest responded in a pastoral manner, saying: “My son, do not worry about the extra indulgences, because God will automatically apply them to your relatives in purgatory.”

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This experience illustrates how the fear of purgatory motivates pious Catholics to undertake pilgrimages to “holy shrines,” to perform disciplines like ascending the *Holy Stairs*, fasting, alms giving, the recitation of prayers for the dead, and even to pay for memorial masses, all in the hope of shortening the temporal punishment in purgatory for themselves and/or their loved ones.

### The Experience of Luther

When Luther was sent to Rome in the Fall of 1510 to resolve some disciplinary reforms of the Augustinian convents in Germany, he wished that his parents were dead that he might help them out of purgatory, by celebrating the Mass at the St. John Lateran basilicas across the street, and by ascending the famous *Holy Stairs*. However, the results of that experience proved to be totally different.

“He ascended on bended knees the twenty-eight steps of the famous Scala Santa . . . that he might secure the indulgence attached to this ascetic performance since the days of Pope Leo IV in 850, but at every step the word of Scripture sounded as a significant protest in his ear: ‘The just shall live by faith’ (Rom 1:17).”<sup>1</sup> Upon hearing these words, according to Luther’s son, Paul, he realized the inconsistency of what he was doing with the words he had just heard. So he got up, turned around, and walked down the stairs.

Later toward the end of 1512, Luther revisited Romans 1:17, while preparing his lectures on the book of Romans. He read again: “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, ‘He who through faith is righteous shall live’” (Rom 1:17). This text became for Luther “a gate to Paradise,” because it lifted away the oppressive burden of having to prove himself worthy to God. An unspeakable joy flooded his heart.

With his newfound peace, Luther could no longer tolerate the crass abuses of the church, personified by the notorious salesman Johan Tetzel, a Dominican friar commissioned to sell indulgences to fund the construction of St. Peter in Rome. His sales pitch included the infamous ditty: “As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs.”

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Luther blasted this ditty expressly in several of his 95 Theses that were nailed to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517: “27. They preach only human doctrines who say that as soon as the money clinks into the money chest, the soul flies out of purgatory. 28. It is certain that when money clinks in the money chest, greed and avarice can be increased; but when the church intercedes, the result is in the hands of God alone.”<sup>3</sup>

Luther’s challenge of the Doctrine of Purgatory was the first shot across the bow that marked the beginning of the Reformation. At that early stage, however, Luther opposed primarily the abuses of this doctrine, not the doctrine per se. Later, however, the doctrine of purgatory was openly rejected by Luther and other Reformers “who taught that the souls are freed from sin by faith in Christ alone without any works, and therefore, if saved, go straight to heaven.”<sup>4</sup>

Of all the Catholic teachings, the doctrine of purgatory offers the clearest understanding of the Catholic system of salvation as a *dispensation* of her church. To understand how the system works, we need to consider a cluster of related beliefs such as the treasury of merits, prayers to and for the dead, and indulgences for the dead.

### **Objectives of this Chapter**

This chapter examines the popular belief in purgatory by considering several significant components of this doctrine. Our procedure is first to define the Catholic arguments for purgatory and then to present a biblical response to such arguments. This is the outline of the topics examined in this chapter.

- 1) The Catholic Doctrine of Purgatory.
- 2) A Historical Glimpse of the Doctrine of Purgatory
- 3) Biblical Reasons for Rejecting Purgatory

## **THE CATHOLIC DOCTRINE OF PURGATORY**

The Doctrine of Purgatory is a unique and essential belief of the Roman Catholic Church. It is based on her teaching that salvation is a gradual process of sanctification that starts with the sacrament of baptism when sanctifying grace is initially infused in the new born baby, and continues throughout the present life and in most cases after death in purgatory.

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The process of sanctification makes the soul holy and inherently pleasing to God. The sanctification of the soul is achieved through prayer, fasting, almsgiving, pilgrimages to holy shrines, indulgences, and especially memorial masses. These good works make the soul increasingly attractive to God.

Simply stated, the Catholic Doctrine of Purgatory consists of the following components:

1) Christ's atoning sacrifice delivers us only from the '*reatus culpae*'—guilt of our sins' and the punishment of eternal death.

2) For all the sins committed after baptism, the believer must make satisfaction by penance and good works.

3) Before a soul can enter heaven, it must be purified from all sin and satisfy the demands of divine justice.

4) If the satisfaction and purification of the soul is not completed in this present life, it must be accomplished after death in purgatory.

5) The eucharist (Mass) is a propitiatory sacrifice that can secure the pardon of post-baptismal sins, in accordance to the decision of the officiating priest. Therefore if a memorial Mass is celebrated on behalf of a soul in purgatory, it reduces and alleviates her temporal punishment.

6) The pope and his representatives, the priests, have the power to forgive sins, that is, to exempt penitent sinners from the obligation to make satisfaction for their sins. Usually this is done by granting a partial or full (plenary) indulgence, which reduces or eliminates the temporal punishment in purgatory.

Our study will show that this Catholic teachings ignores that the sanctification/purification of our lives is an *experiential* process that occurs in this life, not after death in purgatory (cf. 1 Cor 3:10-13; 2 Cor 5:10; Rom 8:1-6). For believers the only experience after death, as we have shown in chapter 3, is their glorification on resurrection morning at Christ's coming. Shortly we shall see that in scripture sanctification is not a process of *paying* for our sins that continues in purgatory, but a process through which God by His grace delivers us from the *presence* and *power* of sin in our present life.

### **The Goal of Purgatory**

In Catholic theology the goal of purgatory is to achieve the complete cleansing of every vestige of sin before the soul can come into the presence of God. Thomas Aquinas explains this teaching with clarity. I

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will quote frequently from him, because he is rightly regarded as the most influential Catholic theologian who perfected the Catholic beliefs like no one had ever done before.

At the Pontifical Gregorian University where I spent five years, theology students were required to take courses on Aquinas' theology, known as "Thomistic Theology," because his *Summa Theologica* is still regarded as the most comprehensive rational definition and defence of Catholic doctrines. He is fondly called "The Angelic Doctor."

Aquinas clearly states: "The chief purpose of the punishment of Purgatory is to cleanse us from the remains of sin; and consequently the pain of *fire only* is ascribed to Purgatory because fire cleanses and consumes."<sup>5</sup> What Aquinas is saying is that while in hell the pain is inflicted by various types of tortures to punish the wicked eternally, in purgatory the pain is caused *only* by fire, because fire cleanses and consumes the remains of sin. By cleansing the remains of sin, purgatory is seen as the logical extension of the process of salvation that begins in this present life — a process that is administered by the Church.

The fire of purgatory is essentially the same as the fire of hell. The difference is not in the nature of the fire but in its function. Quoting Pope Gregory, Aquinas explains: "Even as in the same fire gold glistens and straw smokes, so in the same fire the sinner burns [in hell] and the elect is cleansed [in Purgatory]. Therefore the fire of Purgatory is the same as the fire of hell . . . Purgatory is either close to, or the same place as hell."<sup>6</sup>

Aquinas illustrates the function of purgatory by comparing it to the payment of a debt. "Whoever is another's debtor, is freed from his indebtedness by paying the debt. And, since the obligation incurred by guilt is nothing else than the debt of punishment, a person is freed from that obligation by undergoing the punishment which he owed. Accordingly the punishment of Purgatory cleanses from the debt of punishment."<sup>7</sup>

Catholic teachings differentiate between the expiatory punishments of this present life and those suffered in purgatory. In his book *The Doctrine of Purgatory*, Jesuit scholar John A. Hardon, S. J., explains the difference in this way: "We should also distinguish between the expiatory punishments that the poor souls in purgatory pay and the penalties of satisfaction which souls in a state of grace pay before death. Whereas before death a soul can cleanse itself by freely choosing to suffer for its sins, and can gain merit for this suffering, a soul in purgatory can not so choose and gains no merit for the suffering and no increase in glory. Rather, it is cleansed according to the demands of Divine Justice."<sup>8</sup>

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## Can Physical Suffering per se Purify Sinners?

The notion that the souls in purgatory have no choice but to suffer passively and patiently in the purifying fire until God is satisfied that they have been purified sufficiently to earn admission to paradise, suggests that physical suffering per se can purify sinners, even without being able to make moral choices through the free exercise of the will. This teaching, as we shall see, is clearly contradicted by the biblical view of salvation, which is achieved through the suffering of Christ, not of sinners. Suffering per se can harden sinners, like in the case of the impenitent thief crucified next to Christ.

Scripture teaches that Jesus “made purification of sins” (Hebrews 1:3) on the cross. His blood can cleanse the vilest penitent sinner (Hebrews 9:14). There is no temporal punishment remaining for which believers must atone in purgatory for the vestiges of sin, because Jesus paid it all: “He Himself is the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:2). This fundamental “Good News” of the Gospel is denied by the Catholic Doctrine of Purgatory.

## The Roman Catholic Penitential System

The doctrine of purgatory is an integral element of the Roman Catholic penitential system. According to that system, sin consists of *culpa et poena*, that is, of guilt and punishment. Through His sacrifice, Christ bore our *guilt* and released us from the *eternal punishment* of hell. But, the sinner must bear the *poena*, that is, the *temporal punishment* of sins and make satisfaction by penance and good works. This satisfaction must be completed and the soul must be purified from all sin, before it can enter paradise.

Every sin debits temporal punishment to the sinner’s account. Acts of penance, suffering, and indulgences credit this account. Since sinners may not be able to make full satisfaction for their sins in this life, the punishment of purgatory in the afterlife is necessary to balance the ledger.

Thomas Aquinas explains the latter concept saying: “If one who loves and believes in Christ, has failed to wash away his sins in this life, he is set free [from his sins] after death by the fire of Purgatory. Therefore there remains some kind of cleansing after this life. . . . One who after

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contrition for his fault and after being absolved, dies before making due satisfaction, is punished after this life in Purgatory. Wherefore those who deny Purgatory speak against the justice of God.”<sup>9</sup>

Pope Paul VI reiterated this teaching in his *Apostolic Constitution on Indulgences*, promulgated on January 1, 1967. The Pope stated: “That punishment of the vestiges of sin may remain to be expiated or cleansed . . . even after the remission of guilt, is clearly demonstrated by the doctrine of purgatory. In purgatory, in fact, the souls of those ‘who died in the charity of God and truly repentant, but before satisfying with worthy fruits of penance for sins committed and for omissions,’ are cleansed after death with purgatorial punishments”<sup>10</sup>

This teaching that sins forgiven under the authority and regulations of the Catholic Church, must still be atoned through punishment inflicted upon the penitent sinners in this life and, for most people, also after death in purgatory, derives from the Catholic doctrine of satisfaction, not from scripture. According to this doctrine, before a sin can be absolved (forgiven), reparation must be made by fasting, almsgiving, recitation of prayers, pilgrimages, indulgences, and other good works.

### **A Denial of the Good News of the Gospel**

The Catholic doctrine that forgiven sinners must still pay the punishment of their sins, runs contrary to the Good News of the Gospel, that “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). This text clearly states that God is faithful and just, both to forgive us and to cleanse us when we confess our sins. The cleansing from sin is a divine provision of grace, not a human achievement by suffering patiently in the flames of purgatory. The blood of Christ cleanses us from all sins. Were not Paul’s sins all forgiven at the moment he believed? Did Jesus tell the penitent thief that he would eventually be with Him in paradise, after paying the due punishment for his sins in purgatory?

It is unfortunate that the Catholic doctrine of satisfaction denies the all-sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice, by claiming that God, after forgiving the guilt of sin through the sacrifice of His Son, still expects forgiven sinners to pay for the *temporal* punishment of their sins. This is called the *temporal* punishment to distinguish it from the *eternal* punishment inflicted upon the unsaved in hell.

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The whole issue boils down to this question: Is salvation a divine gift of grace or it is a human achievement by works? Did Christ die only to bear *only* our *guilt* and the *eternal punishment* of our guilt, but not its *temporal punishment*? Does the Bible distinguish between the *temporal punishment* we must bear and the *eternal punishment* that Christ has borne for us? Can guilt be legally transferred upon an innocent person? In our human system of justice, the guilt cannot be transferred to an innocent person, but certain penalties, like the payment for a speed ticket, can be done by an innocent party, such as a parent on behalf of a guilty child.

The Bible makes no artificial distinction between the guilt or the punishment of our sins paid by Christ's sacrifice. It simply tells us that "God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom 5:8). "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3). "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. . . . and *the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.* (Is 53:5-6).<sup>11</sup> Texts like these clearly teach that Christ's atoning sacrifice paid in full the punishment of our sins. The teaching that penitent sinners must suffer themselves the temporal punishment of their sins, is a clear denial of the all-sufficiency of Christ's atoning death. This fundamental biblical truth will be expanded shortly.

### **The Duration of Purgatory**

The punishment of purgatory is temporal, not eternal like that of hell, because "the purifying fire will not continue after the General Judgment"<sup>12</sup> In other words, according to Catholic teachings, the purging fire of purgatory will last only until the General Judgment executed at Christ's Return. After the final judgement, purgatory will be shut down and there will be only heaven and hell.

This teaching is contradicted by the fate of penitent sinners who die or are alive when Christ comes to shut down purgatory. Will these sinners be given a special dispensation to enable them to enter paradise without first being purified by the cleansing fire of purgatory? Does God have a double standard, one for those who die long before the great judgement Day, and other for those who die immediately before that Day? And what about believers who are alive at the time of Christ's Coming? Will they be admitted to paradise without the purgatorial cleansing of venial (minor) sins? Questions such as these highlight the irrationality of the doctrine of purgatory.

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## The Intensity of Purgatory

“The pains of Purgatory,” writes Aquinas, “are more grievous than all the pains of this world.”<sup>14</sup> The intensity and duration of the purgatorial pains are proportional to the gravity of the sins committed in this life. This means that believers may have to endure the expiatory and purifying fire of purgatory for a few hours or for thousand of years, depending on their “sin load.”

Aquinas explains this Catholic teaching, saying: “Some venial [minor] sins cling more persistently than others, according as the affections are more inclined to them, and more firmly fixed in them. And since that which clings more persistently is more slowly cleansed, it follows that some are tormented in Purgatory longer than others, for as much as their affections were steeped in venial sins.

“Severity of punishment corresponds properly speaking to the amount of guilt: whereas the length corresponds to the firmness with which sin has taken root in its subject. Hence it may happen that one may be delayed longer who is tormented less and *vice versa*.”<sup>12</sup>

The suffering of the souls in purgatory can be alleviated or their duration shortened, by offering prayers, almsgiving, indulgences, and especially the sacrifice of the Mass. The reason is that purgatory is administered by the authority of the Pope and his representatives, the priests. They have the right to decide at their discretion whether to remit entirely or partially the penalty of sins to be expiated by the souls detained in purgatory. This teaching is based upon the dispersion of the “treasury of merits,” which is a “heavenly bank” administered by the Catholic church. The bank contains the merits of Christ, Mary, and the saints. Shortly we shall see that this teaching grossly misrepresents the biblical view of salvation as a divine gift of grace, and not a dispensation of the church.

### A HISTORICAL GLIMPSE OF THE DOCTRINE OF PURGATORY

A historical survey of the origin and development of the Doctrine of Purgatory would take us beyond the limited scope of this chapter. The most we can offer here is a glimpse of a few significant developments.

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## The Origin of Purgatory

The origin of purgatory runs parallel to the origin of the belief in the immortality of the soul, because the two beliefs are closely connected, the former dependant on the latter. It was the belief in the survival of the soul that contributed to the development of the doctrine of purgatory, a place where the souls of the dead are purified by fire before ascending to paradise.

If the Christian church at large had remained true to the biblical wholistic view of human nature, and had rejected the Greek dualistic view of the mortal body and immortal soul, it would have never developed the doctrine of purgatory or of hellfire. The reason is simple. If the soul, as shown in chapter 2, is the animating principle of the body that ceases to exist with the death of the body, then there is no survival of the soul in purgatory, hell, or paradise. These and a host of other unbiblical beliefs that have plagued Christian church throughout the centuries, would have never seen the light of day.

Adolph Harnack, a renown nineteenth century German historian, argues that purgatory entered the Church via the Hellenistic dualistic philosophy and thus represents an intrusion of “unbiblical” and “unrealistic ideas into Christianity.”<sup>15</sup> I fully concur with this view. In fact, we noted in chapter 2 that Plato’s dualistic view of human nature, found its way into the Christian church toward the end of the second century. It was promoted first by Tertullian, and later on by Origen, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas. The same is true of some of the premises of purgatory which entered the Christian church at about the same time, though the formal definition of the doctrine of purgatory did not occur until the twelve century.

### Greek “Purgatory” Adopted by Hellenistic Jews

The notion of a purification of the soul by fire after death is part of the Greek philosophy developed by Plato. “The idea of a purification by fire after death became familiar to the Greek mind, and was taken up by Plato, and wrought into his philosophy. He taught that no one could become perfectly happy after death, until he had expiated his sins; and that if they were too great for expiation, his suffering would have no end.”<sup>16</sup>

The Greek belief in the purification of the soul after death was eventually adopted by Hellenistic Jews during the inter-testamental period. This can be inferred from 2 Maccabees 12:42-46, which speak of Judas

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Maccabeus (died 161 B. C.) sending two thousand silver drachmas to the Jerusalem Temple to pay for sin offerings on behalf of fallen soldiers. “He made atonement for the dead, so that they might be set free from their sins” (2 Mac 12:46).

This is the primary text used by Catholic apologists to defend the view that “the Jewish people believed in the existence of a state of purgation where souls are cleansed before entering heaven.”<sup>17</sup> Shortly we shall see that this argument ignores four things. First, 2 Maccabees is an apocryphal book which does not belong to the inspired Old Testament canon accepted by the Jews and most Christians.

Second, praying for the dead is condemned in another apocryphal book 2 (4) Esdras 7:105, thus showing that even the apocrypha disagree on prayers for the dead.

Third, a closer look at the text indicate that prayers and sacrifices were offered for the dead, not to alleviate their suffering in purgatory, but to plead for God’s mercy on the Day of the Resurrection. The analysis of this text will be done shortly.

Lastly, the Old Testament never speaks of the purification of souls after death before entering paradise. The reason, as shown in chapter 2, is that the fate of the soul is connected inextricably with the fate of the body—the latter being the outward manifestation of the soul.

The Platonic teaching of the immortality and purification of the soul after death, found its way into Hellenistic Judaism during the inter-testamental period, as indicated by 2 Maccabees, written in the second century before Christ. Some scholars maintain that Christians may have adopted the practice of praying and giving offerings for the dead from Hellenistic Judaism.<sup>18</sup> This is altogether possible, since we noted in chapter 2 that Plato’s teachings on the immortality of the soul, found its way into the Christian Church through Hellenistic Jewish writers like Philo and Josephus.

## **Purgatory in the Early Church**

The Doctrine of Purgatory as known today was developed in the late Middle Ages, but the premises of purgatory are already present in the early church, especially by the practice of praying for the dead. In the catacombs there are several examples of how the faithful offered prayers for their departed relatives and friends.<sup>19</sup>

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An ancient liturgy of the fourth century illustrates the custom of offering prayers for the dead: “Let us pray for our brother who has fallen asleep in Christ, that the God of the highest charity towards men, who has summoned the soul of the deceased, may forgive him all his sin and, rendered well-disposed and friendly towards him, may call him to the assembly of the living.”<sup>20</sup>

Some writers before Augustine explicitly teach that souls still stained with sin need to be purified after death before they can enter paradise. Cyprian (died 258) taught that penitents who die before being absolved by Sacrament of Penance, must satisfy the remaining requirements after death before their admission to paradise.<sup>21</sup>

Both Clement of Alexandria (about 150-215) and his disciple, Origen (about 185-254), developed not only the teaching of the immortality of the soul, but also the view of the purification of the soul after death,<sup>21</sup> drawing from the notion of the purifying function of fire in the Bible. Origen taught that the souls of the elect immediately entered paradise, but those which are not yet purified, passed into a state of punishment, penal fire, conceived as a place of purification.<sup>22</sup>

Augustine (354-430) laid the foundation, not only for the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, but also for that of purgatory. He defended the existence of purgatory as a matter of faith, and taught that the deceased are “benefited by the piety of their living friends, who offer the Sacrifice of the Mediator [memorial Masses], or give alms to the Church on their behalf.”<sup>24</sup>

Toward the end of his book *The City of God*, Augustine discusses a concept that sounds like Purgatory. He wrote: “But temporary punishments are suffered by some in this life only, by others after death, and by others both now and then; but all of them before that last and strictest judgment. But of those who suffer temporary punishments after death, all are not doomed to those everlasting pains which are to follow that judgment.”<sup>25</sup>

### **Purgatory in the Middle Ages**

After Augustine there are no significant new developments for several centuries in the doctrine of purgatory. In fact, in his book *The Birth of Purgatory*, Jacques Le Goff argues that purgatory was “born” in the late twelve century, when purification after death was first said to be carried out in a specific place called *purgatorium*, the Latin term for purgatory.<sup>26</sup> This view has been rightly criticized as being too restrictive, because, as we have seen, ancient documents indicate that long before

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the twelfth century Christians were offering prayers and Masses for the dead, believing that they could influence their destiny. The coining of the term *purgatorium* represents simply the refining of existing beliefs.

After the twelve century, the Doctrine of Purgatory was amplified and systematized by Thomas Aquinas, the Council of Lyons (1274), Florence (1439), and especially the Council of Trent (1545-1563). They rationalized the state and purpose of purgatory by arguing that its cleansing fire was needed to purify Christians of venial (minor) sins and to pay the debt of temporal punishments still owed for such sins.

The Council of Trent summarized and formalized the Doctrine of Purgatory, largely as a response to its rejection by the Reformers. The Council placed an anathema upon those who denied the need to pay the debt of temporal punishment in purgatory. "If anyone says that, after receiving the grace of justification the guilt of any repentant sinner is remitted and the debt of eternal punishment is blotted out in such a way that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be paid, either in this life or in purgatory, before the gate to the kingdom of heaven can be opened: let him be anathema."<sup>27</sup>

Shortly before its closing sessions (1563), the Council of Trent issued a special *Decree on Purgatory*, which summarized the previous definitions and cautioned against some of the abuses that gave rise to the Protestant opposition: "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 [Mass].

"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."<sup>28</sup>

*The Catholic Encyclopedia* notes that "the Council of Trent (Sess. XIV, can. xi) reminds the faithful that God does not always remit the whole punishment due to sin together with the guilt. God requires satisfaction, and will punish sin..."<sup>29</sup> This portrayal of a vengeful, punitive God, demanding the full satisfaction for every sin ever committed, negates the biblical view of a loving God, willing to sacrifice His Son to atone for all our sins.

This official definition of the Catholic Doctrine of Purgatory by

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the Council of Trent, was reaffirmed at the Second Vatican Council and is reiterated in the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, this doctrine represents a radical denial the biblical view of salvation as a divine provision through Christ's atoning sacrifice to liberate and purify sinners from the power and penalty of sin. The notion of purgatory to purify the souls of penitent sinners through fire, "the prayers of the faithful, and especially by the acceptable Sacrifice of the Altar [Mass]," is foreign to Scripture. It represents a misguided attempt to make salvation a human achievement, rather than a divine gift of grace.

### **Obsession with the Suffering in Purgatory**

The medieval obsession with the state of the souls in purgatory led to the flourishing of incredible legends about the cruel sufferings endured by the souls imprisoned in purgatory. These legends inspired the graphic imagination of the greatest medieval literary fiction, Dante Alighieri's *Purgatory*, the second book of his *Divine Comedy*.

Dante's Purgatory is a lofty island-mountain, the only land in the southern Hemisphere, consisting of seven level terraces, each inhabited by a different group of sinners, doing penance to expiate their sins committed on earth. For example, the proud are forced to circle their terrace for aeons bent double in humility; the slothful have to run around crying out examples of zeal and sloth; while the lustful are purged by fire.

Mystics such as Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510) also made the suffering of purgatory a central theme of their visionary teachings, thus fixing the idea in the Western mind. In her *Treatise on Purgatory*, Catherine wrote: "When gold has been purified up to twenty-four carats, it can no longer be consumed by any fire; not gold itself but only dross can be burnt away. Thus the divine fire works in the soul: God holds the soul in the fire of Purgatory until its every imperfection is burnt away and it is brought to perfection, as it were to the purity of twenty-four carats, each soul however according to its own degree."<sup>30</sup>

The desire to assist the suffering souls in purgatory led to a thriving demand for masses and indulgences in order to lessen the time and intensity of their suffering. The merchandising of purgatory eventually became the major contention in the great religious crisis known as the Reformation.

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## The Rejection of the Doctrine of Purgatory

During the Middle Ages, the Albigenses, Waldenses, and Hussites all denied the existence of purgatory, mostly on the ground of their understanding of salvation as a divine gift of grace. But the major rejection of the Catholic Doctrine of Purgatory came at the time of the Reformation.

Martin Luther initially accepted the belief in Purgatory. In 1519 he said that its existence was undeniable. But by 1530 he came to the conclusion that Purgatory could not be proven to exist from biblical passages. Later that year he rejected the concept of Purgatory entirely.

Since that time, every major Protestant denomination rejected the Catholic notion of a state of purification in purgatory between death and the celestial glory. John Calvin (1509-1564) set the theological groundwork for the rejection of purgatory, by teaching that salvation is a divine gift of grace alone, without the need of satisfaction for sins in purgatory. He wrote: "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."<sup>31</sup>

Calvin's rejection of purgatory was reaffirmed in numerous Reformed Confessions of Faith, like the *Westminster Confession of the Presbyterian Church*, which says: "Prayer is to be made for things lawful, and for all sorts of men living, or that shall live hereafter; but not for the dead, nor for those of whom it may be known that they have sinned the sin unto death."<sup>32</sup>

*The Thirty-nine Articles* of the Anglican (Episcopal in the USA) Church (1563), are equally clear. They place the existence of purgatory in the same category with image worship and invocation of the saints: "The Romish Doctrine concerning Purgatory, Pardons, Worshipping and Adoration, as well of Images as of Reliques, and also invocation of Saints, is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God."<sup>33</sup>

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The study of the biblical view of salvation led Protestant Reformers to reject the whole doctrine of purgatory and to dismantle all the practices associated with it. The result was, not only a religious reformation but also a social and economic revolution.

### **Recent Attempts to Quench the Fire of Purgatory**

In recent times attempts have been made to quench the fires of purgatory, by defining it as a state of being immersed in Christ's love rather than being imprisoned in a place of purifying fire. For example, Pope John Paul II used his Wednesday general audience in late July and early August 1999, to discuss topics related to life after death. Repeating his theme in the two previous talks on heaven and hell, at the August 4 general audience the Pope said that "Purgatory does not indicate a place, but a condition of life. Those who, after death, live in this state of purification are already immersed in the love of Christ, which lifts them out of the residue of imperfection."<sup>34</sup> He then encouraged Christians to pray and do good works on behalf of those in purgatory.

Commenting on this model shift from a place of suffering to a state of purification, Marcus Gee wrote in *Globe and Mail*, "Having tried to take the puffy clouds out of heaven and the fire and brimstone out of hell, the Pope is now attempting to demystify God's waiting room purgatory."<sup>35</sup>

This is an important model shift from the idea of purgatory as a debtor's prison where imprisoned souls are to pay off the temporal punishment of their sins, until they reach "a process of purification," to a more humane purgatory where souls are "immersed in the love of Christ." But the pope is still eager to retain the idea that souls in purgatory need our "prayers and good works" to help them through the process. This is not surprising since the contributions priests receive for memorial masses to be offered to help souls transit through purgatory, still remain a major source of income of the Catholic Church.

### **Purgatory is Still a Major Source of Income for the Catholic Church**

I learned about the income generated by Purgatory in a most practical way from a conversation with Father Masi, a classmate at the Gregorian University in Rome. He was serving as the parish priest of the Church of San Leone Magno (St. Leo the Great). One day he asked me

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for a ride because his car was being repaired. While driving him home, I asked him: “How many members do you have in your parish?” He replied: “About 16,000.” I followed up with two other questions: “What is the average attendance to your Sunday Masses and how much offering do you receive?” He replied: “The attendance ranges between 150 to 200 members and the offering is only between 2000 to 3000 lire, that is, between 2 to 3 dollars each Sunday.”

Surprised by such a low attendance and offering, I asked him the final question: “How do you survive?” He replied: “Mostly from the donations we receive at the time of baptisms, weddings, and funerals. On those occasions, Catholics make generous donations to the church. The largest donations come in the form of properties given to the church by dying members, eager to pay for memorial masses to be celebrated on their behalf or on behalf of their loved ones. On the basis of the size of the donations, a priest commits himself to offer a certain number of masses to shorten the stay of the donors in purgatory.

### **The Catholic Doctrine of Purgatory has not Changed**

In spite of recent attempts of Pope John Paul II to mitigate the fire of hell and purgatory by interpreting them as a condition of the soul, rather than fiery places of punishment, the fact remains that the traditional view of purgatory as the place where souls undergo the final purification by fire before being admitted to paradise, still remains the official teaching of the Catholic Church.

The new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, largely based on the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, clearly affirms: “All who die in God’s grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.

“The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned. The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent. The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a *cleansing fire*. As for certain lesser faults, we must believe that, before the Final Judgment, there is a *purifying fire*.”<sup>36</sup>

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## Catholic Defence of Purgatory

The Catholic Church appeals both to Scripture and Tradition to defend their dogma of Purgatory. Four major texts are cited in support of purgatory, namely, 2 Maccabees 12:42-46, Matthew 12:42-46, Matthew 12:32, and 1 Corinthians 3:15. None of these texts, as shown below, teach the purification of souls in purgatory.

The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* openly acknowledges that “the doctrine of purgatory is not explicitly stated in the Bible.”<sup>37</sup> Neither is it taught implicitly in Scripture, since the Roman Catholic use of Scripture to support purgatory violate the contextual meaning of each passage. A brief examination of these passages follows at this point.

### 2 Maccabees 12:42-46

The classic text used to defend purgatory, is found in the Book of Maccabees (2 Macc 12:42-46). This text is used to prove the alleged Jewish belief in the existence of a state of purgation where souls are cleansed before entering heaven. The context of the text is the story of Judas Maccabeus (died 161 BC) who led out the Jewish rebellion against the Syrian rulers because they attempted to force the Jews to adopt Greek beliefs and lifestyle. He successfully defeated the Syrian army and renewed religious life by rededicating the temple; the feast of Hanukkah celebrates this event.

In the process of gathering the bodies of the Jewish soldiers who had fallen in battle, amulet of idols, which the Law forbade them to wear, were found under their shirt. Judas and his men concluded that the soldiers had died because they had committed this sin of disobedience. The text continues describing what happened next: “So they all blessed the ways of the Lord, the righteous Judge, who reveals the things that are hidden and fell to supplication, begging that the sin that had been committed should be wholly blotted out.

“And the noble Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves from sin, after having seen with their own eyes what had happened because of the sin of those who had fallen. He also took a collection, amounting to two thousand silver drachmas, each man contributing, and sent it to Jerusalem, to provide a sin offering, acting very finely and properly in taking account of the resurrection. For if he had not expected that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to

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pray for the dead; or if it was through reward destined for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, so that they might be set free from their sin” (2 Mac 12:42-46).

Catholic writers argue that this text shows that the Jewish people in pre-Christian times believed “in a state of purgation after death and in the ability to help the faithful departed by prayers of intercession on their behalf.”<sup>38</sup>

### **A Response to the Catholic Use of 2 Maccabees 12:42-46**

Our response to the Catholic use of this text to prove purgatory, can be stated by the following five major points.

First, 2 Maccabees is not part of the inspired canon of the Old Testament, but of what are known as the Apocrypha books. These books were not accepted by the Palestinian Jewish community who treated as canonical (inspired) only the current 27 Old Testament books . In 90 A. D. the Council of Jamnia formally excluded the Apocrypha from the canonical Hebrew Scripture, declaring that the *Tanakah* was complete, that is, the entire revelation of God to His people concerning His promise.

Second, the teaching of this passage about giving money to pray and offer sacrifices for the dead, is in itself sufficient to prove the lack of Divine inspiration in this book of the Maccabees. No other book of Holy Scripture contains this doctrine, which is negated by the biblical view of divine forgiveness. In fact, ask yourself, Why would God ask living believers to pay money to relieve people in Purgatory? What good is earthly money to God? In fact, to whom will the money go? Obviously, it goes to Church officials’ coffers. This whole teaching of paying of money to relieve the suffering of loved ones in Purgatory just smacks of an ecclesiastical money scheme, rather than of a divine provision of forgiveness.

Third, the Apocrypha were not accepted by Jesus and the apostles, who never quoted them in the New Testament. They were rejected also by important early Church Fathers, like Jerome, the great biblical scholar who translated the official Roman Catholic Latin Bible, called *Vulgate*. Jerome distinguished between the *libri canonici* and *libri ecclesiastici*, the latter referring to the books of the Apocrypha, a term that was not yet in current use. They were formally added to the Roman Catholic Bible by the Council of Trent only after the Reformation (1546 A. D.),

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in a futile attempt to support purgatory and prayers for the dead which Luther attacked. Yet, even the Council of Trent inconsistently rejected some apocryphal books, such as (2 [4] Esdras 7:105 ), because it speaks against praying for the dead (see chap. 9).

Fourth, it is important to note that 2 Maccabees 12:42-46 contradicts the Catholic Doctrine of Purgatory, because Judas prayed for the fallen soldiers on “*account of the resurrection. For if he had not expected that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead.*” The point to note in this text, is that prayers and sacrifices were to be offered for the dead, not to alleviate or shorten their sufferings in purgatory, but to gain more blessings for them on resurrection Day. Praying that the sin of the dead might be forgiven on resurrection day, is not the same as praying for the alleviation of their sufferings in purgatory. Both teachings are unbiblical, but two errors do not add up to one truth.

Fifth, the text is unbiblical by teaching that prayer and sacrifice for the dead can atone for their sins. By sending money to offer sacrifices for fallen soldiers, Judas Maccabeus was not following the Old Testament Scriptures. Among the many precepts of the Law of Moses, there was no sacrifice intended for the dead. The text as it stands clearly contradicts the Catholic Doctrine of Purgatory, because it speaks of God’s dealing with sinners at the resurrection, not in purgatory.

### **Matthew 12:32: Forgiveness of Sin After Death?**

The second passage used by Catholics to support the concept of forgiveness of sin after death, is Matthew 12:32 which reads: “Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit, will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.”

Catholic theologians interpret this text to mean there are sins which are not forgiven in this life that may be forgiven after death in purgatory. Ludwig Ott, a foremost Catholic apologist, argues that this text “leaves open the possibility that sins are forgiven not only in this world but in the world to come.”<sup>39</sup> On a similar vein John Hardon, S. J., states: “Here Christ recognizes that there exists a state beyond this world in which the penalty due for sins, which were pardoned as to guilt in the world, is forgiven.”<sup>40</sup>

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The same interpretation is found in the new *Catholic Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “As for certain lesser faults, we must believe that, before the Final Judgment, there is a purifying fire. He who is truth [Christ] says that whoever utters blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will be pardoned neither in this age nor in the age to come. From this sentence we understand that certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come”<sup>41</sup>

### **A Response to the Catholic Use of Mathew 12:32**

The Catholic use of this passage to support their belief in the forgiveness of sins after death, is a slender thread on which to hang a weighty doctrine. Three major considerations discredit the Catholic interpretation of this text.

First, as stated by Norman Geisler and Ralph Mackenzie, “the text is not speaking about forgiveness in the next life after suffering for sins, but the fact that there will be *no forgiveness for this sin in ‘the world to come’* (Matt. 12:32 , emphasis added) How can the denial that this sin will not ever be forgiven, even after death, be the basis for speculating that sins will be forgiven in the next life?”<sup>42</sup>

Jesus simply wanted to emphasize the gravity of the sin against the Holy Spirit which would *never* be forgiven, as the parallel passage in the Gospel of Mark records: “But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will *never* be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin” (Mark 3:29; NIV).<sup>43</sup> To say that something can never happen either in this world or in the world to come, is a familiar way of saying that it can never be forgiven under any circumstances.

Second, purgatory involves the forgiveness only of venial (minor) sins, but the sin against the Holy Spirit is not venial, but mortal because it is unforgiveable. How can a statement about the unforgiveable mortal sin in the next life, support the Catholic teaching that non-mortal sins will be forgiven then?

Third, more significant still is the fact that Christ is not speaking about punishment, which Catholics argue will occur in purgatory, but about the unforgiveable nature of the sin against the Holy Spirit. Christ’s statement can hardly be used to support the belief in a purgatory, where the debt must be paid to the last ‘penny,’ either by the pains of torment or by the payment of living relatives, or a combination of the two.

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Fourth, even if Christ's statement did imply punishment, it would be for the unsaved, not for those who are ultimately saved, as is the case with those who go to purgatory. A statement about the punishment of the unsaved, cannot be legitimately used to defend the belief in the purgatorial punishment of the saved.

In the light of the above considerations, the Catholic use of Matthew 12:32 to support their doctrine of purgatory, shows the lack of real biblical support for the doctrine.

### **1 Corinthians 3:11-15: Sin and its Punishment or Service and its Reward?**

A third text Catholics use to defend their doctrine of Purgatory is 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, which reads: "For other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid; which is Christ Jesus. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay stubble: 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."

Catholics believe that in this verse Paul "affirms the reality of purgatory." John Hardon, S. J, writes: "In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul says that 'the fire will assay the quality of everyone's work,' and 'if his work bums he will lose his reward, but himself will be saved, yet so as through fire' (1 Cor 3:13, 15). These words clearly imply some penal suffering. Since he connects it so closely with the divine judgment, it can hardly be limited to suffering in this world, but seems to include the idea of purification through suffering after death, namely in purgatory."<sup>44</sup>

Similarly, Ludwig Ott notes that "The Latin Fathers take the passage to mean a transient purification punishment in the other world."<sup>45</sup> The new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* interprets "the fire" mentioned in this text as the cleansing and purifying that the soul suffers in purgatory to make expiation for sin<sup>46</sup>

### **A Response to the Catholic Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 3:11-15**

It must be admitted that 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 is a difficult text to interpret, but the Catholic interpretation of this text ignores the following three important points.

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First, in this text Paul is speaking about the *testing of works* on the Day of Judgment and not about the *suffering of souls* in purgatory. The Apostle says that “the fire will test each one’s work,” that is, the works of every Christian will be tested and everyone will be rewarded accordingly. Unworthy works will be burned up and the individual will lose the reward though he himself will be saved. Simply stated, the question here is not about *sin* and its punishment, but about the *reward* for service rendered by those who are already saved.

Second, “the text says nothing about believers suffering the temporal consequences for their sins in purgatory. They are not burned in the fire; only their *works* are burned. Believers see their works burn but they escape the fire.”<sup>47</sup> If the fire was referring to the purgatorial cleansing of sin, rather than to the testing of works, why should those who had built with gold, silver, precious stones suffer along with those who had built with unworthy wood, hay and straw?

Third, the “fire” mentioned in the text does not purge our soul from sins, but “discloses” and “test” our “work.” Verse 13 says clearly, “the work of each will come to light, for the Day will disclose it. It will be *revealed with fire*, and the fire will *test the quality of each one’s work*.”<sup>48</sup> Contrary to Catholic teachings, there is nothing in this passage about purging from sin. The focus is on the rewards believers will receive for their service.

What Paul seems to saying here is that the work of some believers will stand the test of the final judgement while that of others will disappear. The emphasis is on the importance of producing works acceptable to God. We can work for God for the wrong reasons and selfish motives.

The meaning of the last verse 15 is problematic. The NIV reads: “He himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames” (1 Cor 3:15). This may be a proverbial expression meaning “saved by narrow escape,” or as we would say today “escaped by the skin of his teeth.” Paul seems to be driving home this point. Thank God that you have been saved, but what are you going to do with this opportunity? Will you squander it, or will you serve the Lord wholeheartedly?

## Conclusion

The above analysis of a few texts commonly used to prove the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory, has shown that such doctrine lacks biblical support. The notion of a purgatorial process after death to remove the vestiges of sin, is foreign to Scriptural teachings. The Bible never presents

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personal sufferings or works as the expiation or satisfaction of our sins. It is not the flames of purgatory that cleanses penitent sinners from their sins, but “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

In reading Ludwig Ott’s *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, regarded as a standard Catholic authority on dogma, it is interesting to note how many times he admits that the doctrine of Purgatory “is not explicitly revealed in Scripture” or that “express scriptural proofs are lacking.”<sup>48</sup> These phrases point to the fact that purgatory has no basis in Scripture. Not only the doctrine lacks biblical support, but it also openly contradicts the biblical view of salvation.

### **BIBLICAL REASONS FOR REJECTING PURGATORY**

There are several biblical reasons for rejecting the Catholic doctrine of purgatory. For the sake of brevity and clarity, we mention six major reasons.

#### **1) The Doctrine of Purgatory is not Taught in the Bible**

The first and most obvious reason for rejecting the Catholic doctrine of purgatory, is the fact that it is not taught in the Bible. We noted earlier that even its advocates admit that “is not explicitly revealed in Scripture.” Having adopted the doctrine on extra-biblical grounds, especially on the teachings of some church fathers, Catholic theologians have sought to find here and there a passage which can be explained in accordance to their teachings. But there is no Bible text which speaks of purgatory.

There is no evidence that purgatory ever formed a part of the instructions of Christ or his Apostles. The reason is simple. In the Bible our eternal destiny is decided during our lifetime. There is no purging of our sins in a fiery purgatory after death, because when we die, our body and soul rest in the tomb until Resurrection morning.

#### **2) Purgatory Contradicts Clear Biblical Teachings**

A second reason for rejecting the doctrine of purgatory is the fact that it contradicts some of its clearest and most important biblical teach-

ings. If there is one truth clearly taught in the Bible, it is the certainty of salvation for believers who confess and forsake their sins, accept Christ as their personal Savior, trust in Him and obeying His commandments.

This fundamental biblical teaching is denied by the doctrine of purgatory, which is based on the assumption that Christ meritorious atoning sacrifice is not sufficient for our salvation. Sinners must also make satisfaction for their own sins during the present life and, in most cases, after death in purgatory. This teaching is foreign to the Bible, which reassures us that “we are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forth as an expiation by his blood to be received by faith. . . . For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of law” (Rom 3:24-25, 28; RSV).

“Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Rom 4:4-5; KJV). There is nothing more incompatible with the nature of the Gospel than the idea that believers must “satisfy divine justice” for their sins both during their lifetime and after death in purgatory. Yet this unbiblical belief lies at the very foundation of the doctrine of purgatory. If the Catholic Church would accept the full satisfaction for our sins provided by Christ’s atoning sacrifice, their doctrine of purgatory would collapse immediately.

### 3) Purgatory Denies the All sufficiency of the Cross

A third biblical reason for rejecting the doctrine of purgatory is its denial of the all-sufficiency of Christ’s atoning death. Hebrews declares emphatically that Christ’s suffering on the cross accomplished our salvation once for ever and for all. “For by one single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14; RSV). This verse demonstrates the completed, sufficient nature of the work of Christ.

“To affirm that we must suffer for our own sins is the ultimate insult to Christ’s atoning sacrifice! There is a purgatory, but it is not *after* our death; it was *in* Christ’s death. For ‘when he had accomplished *purification* from sins, he took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high’ (Heb. 1:3; emphasis added). ‘Purification’ or purging from our ‘sins’ was ‘accomplished’ (past tense) on the cross. Thank God that this is the only purgatory we will ever have to suffer for our sins.”<sup>49</sup>

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#### **4) The Doctrine of Purgatory is Based upon the Greek Dualistic View of Human Nature**

A fourth biblical reason for rejecting the doctrine of purgatory is its derivation from the Greek dualistic view of human nature. This view, as shown in chapter 2, found its way into the Christian Church by the end of the second century. According to the dualistic view, the body is the temporary physical flesh-and-blood “shell” that houses the soul. The soul is the nonmaterial, immortal component that leaves the body at death and lives on consciously forever in heaven or hell or in purgatory for the Catholics.

The belief in the survival of the soul contributed to the development of the doctrine of Purgatory, a place where the souls of the dead are purified by suffering the temporal punishment of their sins before ascending to Paradise.

Our study of the use of the “soul, body, and spirit” in both the Old and New Testaments (chapter 2), has shown that the Bible is consistent in teaching the indissoluble unity of the human nature, where the body, soul, and spirit represent different aspects of the same person, and not different substances or entities functioning independently. This wholistic view of human nature removes the basis for the belief in the survival of the soul in purgatory, or hell, or paradise.

It is most unfortunate that the acceptance of the pagan belief in the immortality of the soul, has conditioned the interpretation of Scripture and given rise to a host of heresies such as purgatory, eternal torment in hell, prayer for the dead, intercession of the saints, treasury of merits, indulgences, and an etherial view of paradise. These heresies have obscured the biblical view of salvation as a divine gift of grace, by promoting instead salvation as a dispensation of the church.

#### **5) The Doctrine of Purgatory Depends upon the Treasury of Merits Administered by the Catholic Church**

A fifth reason for rejecting the Catholic doctrine of purgatory is its dependency upon the treasury of meritorious works administered by the Pope and its representatives, the priests. According to Catholic theology, the church administers a treasury of merits, which is a kind of heavenly bank, where are deposited the merits obtained by Christ on the Cross and earned by the saints who did more good deeds than it was necessary for their salvation. Rather than loosing the extra merits, God deposits them in

a bank known as “the treasury of merits.” These merits can be dispensed by the church in the form of indulgences, especially to souls suffering in purgatory.

The treasury of merits is based on the belief that Christians may be more than perfect by doing more than the law requires for their salvation. They can even render satisfaction to God’s justice so meritorious as to be more than sufficient for the pardon of his own sins. These superfluous merits are like money deposited in the bank of heaven, from which the church can draw by granting partial or plenary (full) indulgences, especially to the souls suffering in purgatory.

The extra good works of the saints are called *works of supererogation*, that is, works done over and above the call of duty. The thought is that some saints had a surplus of merit (more than they needed to get to Heaven). Rather than losing these merits, God stored them in the treasury of merits, which the church can draw to grant indulgences on behalf of souls in purgatory. An indulgence is the remission of a temporal punishment for a sin whose guilt God has already forgiven.

Pope Clement VI was the first to declare in the Jubilee Bull (A. D. 1343) the doctrine of the “Treasury of the Church.” According to Ludwig Ott, a foremost Catholic apologist, the Bull speaks of “the merits (= atonements) of Mary, the Mother of God, and of all the chosen, from the greatest to the least of the just, [who] contribute to the increase of the treasury from which the Church draws in order to secure remission of temporal punishment.”<sup>50</sup>

The fundamental reason for rejecting the belief in a treasury of merits administered by the Catholic Church to grant indulgences, is the very concept of merits. In the Bible salvation is not merited; it is obtained by grace through faith. Paul explicitly says: said explicitly, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). Likewise, in Romans 4:5 the Apostle declares: “when one does not work, yet believes in the one who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.” It is “not because of any *righteous deeds* we had done but because of his mercy, he saved us” (Titus 3:5 , emphasis added). In Scripture merits and grace are mutually exclusive

“The whole idea that one can buy an indulgence, the very reason that prompted Luther’s reaction against the abuses in the Church, is repugnant. The inspired words of St. Peter himself will suffice: “. . . *you were ransomed from your futile conduct . . . not with perishable things*

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*like silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ as of a spotless unblemished lamb* ( 2 Pet 1:18-19 , emphasis added).<sup>51</sup>

## 6) The Doctrine of Purgatory Contradicts Other Catholic Doctrines

A sixth and final reason for rejecting purgatory is its inconsistency with the Catholic teaching that purgatory will be shut down at the Second Coming. Since all believers are supposed to suffer for the temporal consequences of their sins in purgatory before they can enter paradise, what will happen to the millions of believers who dies or are alive when Jesus Returns? Will they receive a special dispensation that will admit them to heaven without first paying for the temporal punishment of their sins in purgatory?

If purgatory is not necessary for those who die or are alive when Jesus comes, why should it be necessary for those who lived long before Christ's Return? Does God have a double standard of justice, sending some through the fiery purification of purgatory, while exempting others from this fiery experience?

These senseless contradictions can be resolved simply by recognizing that Christ's atoning sacrifice covers both the temporal as well as eternal consequences of our sins. Thus, there is no need for purgatory to pay for the temporal consequences of anyone's sins. Christ paid it all.

Of course, this does not mean that we are exempted in this present life from the temporal consequences of our sins. God does allow us to go through the crucible fire of pain and trials to chasten and purify our character (cf. 2 Cor. 4:17 ; Gal. 6:7 ; Heb. 12:4-11 ). But our present sufferings do not stem from the need to placate the sense of justice of a vindictive God who wants us to pay to the last penny the debt of our sins. Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross completely satisfied God's justice on behalf of the sins of the entire human race ( Rom. 3:21-26 ; 5:18-19 ; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 John 2:2).

## Conclusion

The doctrine of purgatory and its accompanying teachings about the treasury of merits, indulgences, and prayers for the death, highlights the fundamental difference between the Catholic and the biblical view of salvation. In Catholic theology salvation is dispensed by the church,

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especially through the sacramental system. The church has the authority to grant partial or plenary (full) remission of the temporal punishment of sin by selling memorial masses and indulgences. These can alleviate, shorten, and even eliminate the time spent in the purging fires of purgatory.

By contrast, in biblical teaching salvation is a divine gift of grace, not a human achievement. Jesus died to pay the penalty for all of our sins (Rom 5:8). “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed” (Is 53:5).

Jesus suffered for our sins so that we could be delivered from suffering the penalty of our sins. To say that we must also suffer for our sins to meet the demands of divine justice, is to say that Jesus’ suffering was insufficient. To say that we must atone for our sins through the purging fire of purgatory, is to deny the sufficiency of Christ’s atoning sacrifice (1 John 2:2). Simply stated, the Catholic doctrine of purgatory is contrary to everything the Bible says about salvation.

We agree with Catholics on the necessity for “purgatory” or “cleansing” of our sins, before we can enter into the glorious presence of the Lord. But we disagree on how this cleansing is achieved. Catholicism insists that after baptism believers must expiate their sins by penance in this world, and by the purging fire in purgatory. But Scripture teaches that only the blood of Christ cleanses our lives from sin.

The Bible recognizes the value of suffering and trials allowed by God to perfect our character. Our heavenly Father disciplines us, His children, with appropriate trying experiences so that we learn to despise sin, and grow into Christian maturity. But, the Bible never presents our personal suffering or works as the expiation or satisfaction for sin.

The reassuring message of Scripture is: “You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11). It is not the purgatory’s flames that cleanse the sinner from evil, but “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

In the New Earth the Redeemed will never be heard boasting about how they succeeded to enter heaven through penances and indulgences. Instead, they joyfully sing: “Unto him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (Rev 1:5,6). Jesus Christ, and nothing else, is our purification, our purgatory.

If you sense the need to experience complete forgiveness and cleansing, the time and place is now in this present life, not after death in the purifying fires of purgatory. If you have failed to live according to God's moral principles, do not despair. We serve a merciful and compassionate God who is eager to forgive us and cleanse us of the sins we confess to Him: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Do I believe in purgatory? My answer is "Yes, I believe in God's purgatory. But my purgatory is the Jesus Christ who forgives and cleanses us from all our sins."

## ENDNOTES

The six pages of footnotes have been left out in an attempt to reduce the length of this newsletter. Obviously, they will be included in the forthcoming book *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?*

# ANNOUNCEMENTS OF SERVICES AND PRODUCTS

## TWO NEW CD AND DVD ALBUMS WITH SACRED SONGS BY AN OUTSTANDING LYRIC SOPRANO

Coming from Italy, the land of great tenors and sopranos, my wife and I enjoy immensely listening to outstanding singers. How often have I wished that the Lord had given me a powerful tenor voice to enhance my presentations of our timely Adventist message!

Our Adventist Church has been blessed with many good singers, but only very few outstanding tenors and sopranos. Over the years I have been dreaming and praying that the Lord would help me find an outstanding singer interested to enhance my weekend seminars with sacred songs.

My dream came true on Saturday, October 6, 2007, when I listened spellbound to Cristina Piccardi singing with her incredibly powerful soprano voice three times during the worship service of Andrews University

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Pioneer Memorial Church (PMC). In recent months Cristina has been invited 9 times to sing during the Sabbath worship services of PMC. Dr. Kenneth Logan, PMC organist, told me that he has scheduled Cristina to sing at PMC more than any other singer, because of her exceptional lyric soprano voice. Unfortunately, I have not been privileged to enjoy her singing on previous Sabbaths, because I am away almost every weekend preaching across North America and overseas.

When I met Cristina a week ago after the divine service, we both immediately felt that the Lord was bringing us together in a providential way. She told me that she had turned down invitations to sing in a leading role with well-known symphonic orchestras, because she has decided to dedicate the gift of her voice to sing the love of God. But so far the opportunities for her singing ministry have been limited to a few local churches.

I commended her for her decision and reassured her that I was ready to help her in two ways: First, by releasing immediately a DVD album containing the dozen of sacred songs she has already sang at PMC and by sponsoring some new recordings. Second, by offering her the opportunity to sing during my weekend seminars.

Cristina responded enthusiastically to the proposal, and in an emotional tone she confessed that she had began questioning her decision to give up an opera-singer career, because it seemed that the demand for her singing ministry was limited mostly to the local churches, where she usually sings on Sabbath morning, when it is inappropriate to offer her CD/DVD albums for sale. This means that she took a minimum wage job as a receptionist to be able to support herself and her husband who is studying at the Seminary.

I reassured Cristina that soon things will change. In fact even three weeks ago at the Sunnyside SDA Church in Washington, I played on a large screen before my sermon her video recording of the song The Holy City. The congregation was ecstatic and asked me to play it again before my afternoon final lecture. After the close of the Sabbath many were eager to purchase both her CD and DVD albums. My plan is to invite her to sing live when I speak in large congregations that can afford to pay the airfare for both of us. When I speak in smaller congregations I will use her video recordings.

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## Who is Cristina Piccardi?

In my view Cristina is the best Adventist lyric soprano I have ever heard in my life. Surprising she is a slim, only 120 pounds, 5.6 feet-not the typical heavy-set soprano. My wife asked her: How can you sing with such a powerful voice when you are so slim? She replied: "It is God's gift."

Cristina was born in South Brazil 25 years ago, but has a distinctive Italian name and cultural heritage. She speaks fluently Italian because she spent the summers of 2003, 2004, and 2005 in Italy, participating in a special program for operatic singers. The program gave her the opportunity to be coached by leading international tenors and sopranos. This training contributed enormously to improve the quality of her vocal performances.

Already as a teenager she loved to sing about the love of God in churches, schools, and public events. At the age of 18 she won the Young Artists Competition for the Porto Alegre Symphony Orchestra in Brazil, singing for the first time with a Symphonic Orchestra that invited her again the following year to sing in a sacred music concert.

In 2003 Cristina completed her Bachelor of Music in Voice Performance at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil. Desirous to perfect her singing skills, she came to the USA to enroll for a Master of Music in Voice Performance at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA, where she received full scholarship during the two years of her studies, graduating in December of 2005.

In the same year she performed with symphonic orchestras in the USA and overseas. At the Annual Opera Festival in Polovdiv, Bulgaria, she won the first prize in the Puldin 2005 International Competition for Opera Singers.

After spending 5 years singing leading soprano roles with various orchestras in the USA and overseas, Cristina felt God's call to devote her life to sing sacred music. Her beautiful lyric soprano voice expresses her passion for the Lord and touches the hearts of people everywhere.

Cristina has worked as a choir director both in Brazil and in the United States and has taught voice at Andrews University in Michigan.

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At this time I consider it a real honor and privilege to offer you two newly released audio and video albums of Cristina's singing at Andrews University. These albums that will thrill and inspire you. Here is a brief description of the two albums:

**THE FIRST ALBUM is an AUDIO CD recording entitled REJOICE IN THE LORD.** It contains 11 audio Gospel songs like How Great Thou Art, He Shall Feed His Flock, Softly and Tenderly, The Holy City, etc. This is an audio recording that you can play in your car CD player, or on any CD players you have in your home.

**THE SECOND ALBUM is a VIDEO DVD recording entitled SING UNTO THE LORD.** It contains 12 sacred familiar songs that were recorded live during the recent Sabbath worship services of Andrews University Pioneer Memorial Church, in Michigan. This is a video recording that you can enjoy in your living room and play in your church.

**Special Introductory Offer for the Two CD and DVD albums:**

The regular price of the two albums is \$50.00 for the AUDIO CD ALBUM and \$100.00 for the VIDEO DVD ALBUM. **But we are pleased to offer you at this time THE TWO ALBUMS AT THE SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY OFFER OF ONLY \$50.00 for both of them, instead of \$150.00.**

**How to Order the Package of the Two Albums:**

**(1) Online** by clicking here: [http://www.biblicalpherspectives.com/cart/catalog/product\\_info.php?cPath=26&products\\_id=103](http://www.biblicalpherspectives.com/cart/catalog/product_info.php?cPath=26&products_id=103)

**(2) By calling us** at (269) 471-2915

**(3) By emailing us** your address and credit card information

**(4) By mailing a check** for \$50.00 to BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 4990, USA. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

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**SPECIAL OFFER ON 10 DVD/CD ALBUMS FOR ONLY \$150.00, INSTEAD OF THE REGULAR PRICE OF \$950.00**

This offer may sound too good to be true. At this time we are offering together as a package all the 10 DVD/CD albums, containing the recordings of Prof. Jon Paulien, Prof. Graeme Bradford, and my own. Until now these recordings were sold separately, costing considerably more. To make it possible for many to benefit from all these timely messages, I have decided to offer them together as a package for **only \$150.00**, instead of the regular price of **\$950.00**.

**The Package Includes the Following 10 Albums:**

**1) Prof. Jon Paulien's newly released DVD ALBUM video seminar on Simply Revelation.**

**2) Prof. Jon Paulien's CD ALBUM with a dozen of his books, and all his articles.**

**3) Prof. Graeme Bradford's DVD ALBUM with a two hours video lecture on Ellen White.** He shares the highlights of his book More than a Prophet. The album contains also Prof. Bradford's the publications and articles.

**4) Prof. Bacchiocchi's newly recorded DVD ALBUM called ABUNDANT LIFE SEMINAR.** The album contains 2 video powerpoint lectures: The Christian and Alcoholic Beverages and How to Build a Happy and Lasting Marriage. These two lectures summarize the highlights of Bacchiocchi's two books Wine in the Bible and The Marriage Covenant. Two separate files with 225 powerpoint slides are included.

**5) Prof. Bacchiocchi's DVD ALBUM containing 10 video powerpoint lectures on the Sabbath and Second Advent.** Some of the lectures show the documents Prof. Bacchiocchi found in Vatican libraries on the role of the papacy in changing the Sabbath to Sunday. This album contains the popular powerpoint SABBATH/ADVENT seminars Prof. Bacchiocchi presents in many countries.

**6) Prof. Bacchiocchi's DVD ALBUM on Cracking the Da Vinci Code.** The album contains a two hours video lecture, professionally taped with a virtual studio as a background. A separate file with 200 powerpoint slides is included.

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**7) Prof. Bacchiocchi's DVD ALBUM on The Mark and the Number of the Beast.** The album contains the two hours video lecture and a separate powerpoint file with the 200 slides used for the lecture.

**8) Prof. Bacchiocchi's CD ALBUM with all his books and powerpoint lectures.** The album consists of two disks. The first disk has all his 18 books and over 200 articles. The second disk has the slides and script of 25 of Prof. Bacchiocchi's popular PowerPoint presentations.

**9) Prof. Bacchiocchi's DVD ALBUM on The Passion of Christ.** The album contains the 2 hours live interview conducted by 3ABN on Prof. Bacchiocchi's book *The Passion of Christ in Scripture and History*.

**10) Prof. Bacchiocchi's MP3 AUDIO ALBUM which contains 2 disks with 22 AUDIO lectures** on vital biblical beliefs and practices. Ideal for listening in your car while driving.

**You can see the picture of all the 10 ALBUMS** and read a detailed description of them, just by clicking at this link:<http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/albumoffer.htm>

### **How to Order the Package of the 10 Albums:**

**You can order the complete package of 10 DVD/CD Albums for only \$150.00, instead of the regular price of \$950.00, in four different ways:**

**(1) Online:** By clicking here: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/albumoffer.htm>

**(2) Phone:** By calling us at (269) 471-2915 to give us your credit card number and postal address.

**(3) Email:** By emailing your order to <[sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com](mailto:sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com)>. Be sure to provide your postal address, credit card number, and expiration date.

**(4) Regular Mail:** By mailing a check for \$150.00 to BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103, USA. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

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## NEW DVD OF PROF. JON PAULIEN'S LIVE SEMINAR ON *SIMPLY REVELATION*

Prof. Jon Paulien's DVD album on *SIMPLY REVELATION* was released few months ago. We have been **airmailing** the DVD album to church leaders, pastors, and lay Adventists in different part of the world. Several pastors have already shown the lectures to their congregations. They wrote to me saying that viewing the lectures was an enlightening experience for their members.

My wife and I viewed *Simply Revelation* on our TV on a Sabbath afternoon. Though I had already watched Prof. Paulien's lectures during the taping session, I was spellbound to hear him again offering so many refreshing insights into the most difficult book of the Bible. For me it is a thrilling experience listening to a scholar like Prof. Paulien, who knows what he is talking about.

Prof. Paulien is rightly regarded as a leading Adventist authority on the book of Revelation which he has taught at the Seminary for the past 25 years. His doctoral dissertation as well as several of his books deal specifically with the Book of Revelation.

The constant demand for Prof. Paulien's CD album with his publications and articles, led me to discuss with him the possibility of producing a live video recording of a mini Revelation Seminar, which he chose to call *Simply Revelation*. As suggested by its title, *Simply Revelation* aims to present simply the message of Revelation—not to read into Revelation sensational, but senseless views.

The preparation of this video recording took several months. The *Simply Revelation* seminar consists of **four one-hour live video lectures**, which have just been recorded in the studio of Andrews University. An impressive virtual studio provides the background of the lectures. Each lecture is delivered with about 50 powerpoint slides. This mini Revelation seminar will offer you and your congregation fresh insights into the Book of Revelation. Be sure to inform your pastor about the newly released *Simply Revelation*, if he is not aware of it.

You will be pleased to know that we have placed on a separate file all the powerpoint slides and the script of the live lecture. This means that if you are a pastor or a lay member who want to use Prof. Paulien's Simply Revelation Seminar, you can pick and choose the powerpoint slides that you like.

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The file with the powerpoint slides is placed on Prof. Paulien's CD album containing all his publications and articles. The reason is that there was no memory left on the DVD disks. In spite of my pleas, Prof. Paulien was so full of the subject that he used the full 60 minutes of each lecture, leaving no space for the slides' file.

This has been a very expensive project, both in time and money. The regular price of the DVD album is \$100.00, but you can order it now **at the introductory price of only \$50.00**. The price includes the airmailing expenses to any overseas destination.

If you have not ordered before **the CD Album with Prof. Paulien's publications**, we will be glad to add it to your DVD order for only \$20.00, instead of the regular price of \$60.00. This means that you can order **both the DVD album with Prof. Paulien's four live video lectures on Simply Revelation and his CD album with all his publications and the powerpoint slides of *Simply Revelation*, for only \$70.00, instead of the regular price of \$160.00**.

As an additional incentive, I am offering you together with Prof. Paulien's DVD/CD albums, also my own popular **DVD album on The Mark and Number of the Beast, for an additional \$10.00, instead of the regular price of \$100.00**. This means that you can order **the DVD and CD albums by Prof. Paulien, together with my DVD album on The Mark and Number of the Beast, for only \$80.00, instead of the regular price of \$260.00**.

This research on *The Mark and Number of the Beast*, was commissioned by Prof. Paulien himself. He asked me to trace historically the origin and use of the Pope's title Vicarius Filii Dei and of the number 666. I spent six months conducting this investigation which was professionally taped at the Andrews University Towers Auditorium. I use 200 powerpoint slides to deliver this informative two hours lecture which is warmly received by Adventist church leaders and pastors in many parts of the world. For a detailed description of this DVD album click: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/Beast/BeastPromo>

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## Special Offer on Paulien/Bacchiocchi's Albums:

\* **ONE DVD Album of Prof. Paulien's four video lectures on *Simply Revelation* at the introductory price of \$50.00**, instead of \$100.00. The price includes the airmailing expenses to any overseas destination.

\* **ONE DVD Album of *Simply Revelation* and ONE CD Album with Prof. Paulien's publications for only \$70.00**, instead of the regular price of \$160.00. The price includes the airmailing expenses to any overseas destination.

\* **ONE DVD Album of *Simply Revelation*, ONE CD Album with Prof. Paulien's publications, and ONE DVD Album with Bacchiocchi's two hours video lecture on *The Mark and Number of the Beast* for only \$80.00**, instead of the regular price of \$260.00. The price includes the airmailing expenses to any overseas destination.

## Four Ways to Order Paulien/Bacchiocchi's Albums:

(1) **Online:** By clicking here: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/revelation/>

(2) **Phone:** By calling us at (269) 471-2915 to give us your credit card number and postal address.

(3) **Email:** By emailing your order to <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>. Be sure to provide your postal address, credit card number, and expiration date.

(4) **Regular Mail:** By mailing a check to BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103, USA. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

## SERVICE: VIDEO RECORDING, DUPLICATION, AND DISTRIBUTION OF CD AND DVD ALBUMS

If you or your church are looking for a professional and reasonable Adventist to tape, edit, duplicate, and distribute video sermons, seminars, or lectures, I highly recommend to you my assistant, Eric Halder, who has served me with distinction these past five years.

He has been responsible for editing my video lectures, maintaining my website, uploading graphics and newsletters, designing the cover of

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my books, duplicating, packaging, and mailing all my CD/DVD albums and books.

He has earned a B. A. Degree in multimedia from Andrews University in 2003. He has worked for several years as video editor with Lighthouse Productions and REACH international.

If you feel that Eric Halder can assist you or your church in any video production or would like to donate to this ministry, feel free to contact him at (269) 277-1015 or email him at [halder@preludefilms.com](mailto:halder@preludefilms.com). For further information visit his website at <http://www.preludefilms.com/> The website will be online in a few days, so please check then.

## **HOW TO CONTACT THE CENTER FOR CANCER CARE**

Last February 2007, I was told that I had only a few months to live, because my liver was infested with a three pounds cancer tumor that could not be removed surgically. I contacted several cancer centers, and the verdict of all the oncologists with whom I spoke, was essentially the same: You have a stage four terminal cancer that cannot be operated. We can only prolong your life of a few months with chemotherapy.

In a providential way the Lord lead me to the unique Center for Cancer Care, in Goshen, Indiana that offers clinical trials on different forms of cancer not readily available in most cancer centers. They use a combination of chemo and microspheres. After two treatments, over 80% of the cancer cells were shut down. And now over 98% of the cancer activity has been eliminated. I feel like a new man with a new lease on life.

To express my gratitude to God for His providential healing through the Center for Cancer Care in Goshen, Indiana, I decided to post the information on how you can contact the Center. Over 150 Adventists have already contacted the Center. The Vice-President is Vladimir Radivojevic, who is a gracious and caring Adventist Christian gentleman. Feel free to contact his secretary by phone or email. This is the address:

**Robyn R. Radford**

**Manager, Oncology Information Services**

**Center for Cancer Care at Goshen Health System**

**200 High Park Avenue**

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**Goshen, IN 46526**

**Telephone: 574.535.2973**

**Toll Free: 866.491.HOPE**

**Fax: 574.535.2488**

**[http://www.cancermidwest.com/news\\_info/contact\\_us.asp?id=210](http://www.cancermidwest.com/news_info/contact_us.asp?id=210)**

If you or someone you know has cancer, feel free to contact Vladimir. He will talk with you personally, gather your information, and place you in contact with an oncologist who can examine your situation and give you a second opinion free of charge. Vladimir told me that he wants to help patients unable to come to their Center for Cancer Care, by asking physicians to evaluate the medical records free of charge to see if the current treatments are adequate or if one of their clinical trials programs could be of special help.

## **UPCOMING SEMINARS FOR THE MONTHS OF OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER**

Gradually I am rescheduling some of the invitations I had to cancel because of liver-cancer treatments. Here is a list of the upcoming weekend seminars for the months of October and November:

### **OCTOBER 12-13: SUNNYSIDE SDA CHURCH, WA**

Location: 1875 East Lincoln Avenue, Sunnyside, WA 98944.

For directions and information call Pastor Larry Mays at (509) 840 1932 or (509) 837 4233 or (509) 837 6411

### **OCTOBER 19-20: ENGLAND: EAST HAM & STRATFORD**

Location: The East Ham SDA Church worships at Bryant Street Methodist Centre, Bryant Street, Stratford, London E14 4RU.

The Stratford SDA Church worships at 58 Janson Road (off Leytonstone Road) Stratford London E15 1TE.

For directions and information, call Pastor Leslie Ackie at 01279 427 558

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**OCTOBER 26-27: ENGLAND, LEEDS SDA CHURCH**

Location: The Leeds SDA Church is located at 169 Meanwood Road corner of Oatland Place, Leeds LS7 1JW, Great Britain.

For directions and information call Pastor Ian Sweeney, 0114 286 9965.

**NOVEMBER 2-3: BIRMINGHAM CAMP HILL SDA CHURCH**

Location: Camp Hill Sparkbrook, Birmingham, West Midlands B12 OJP, Great Britain.

For directions and information call Pastor Jeffeth Nicholson at 01543 360253.

**NOVEMBER 16-17: AVON PARK SDA CHURCH**

Location: 1410 W. Avon Boulevard, Avon Park, Florida 33825.

For directions and information call Pastor Paul Boling at (863) 453-6641, or (863) 635-6769.

**INCREDIBLE NEW OFFERS ON HITACHI PROJECTORS**

HITACHI has just released the new CP-X400 3000 lumens projector, which replaces the CP-X444. The new projector has an impressive high resolution, low fan noise, and a wealth of connectivity options. The most impressive feature of this projector is the incredible price of only \$1395.00 to help especially our churches and schools in developing countries.

**This is the special offer on the following three models:**

**CP-X260 HIGH RESOLUTION 2500 LUMENS - Only \$1095.00**

Previous SDA price for the 2500 lumens was \$2395.00.

**CP-X400 HIGH RESOLUTION 3000 LUMENS - Only \$1395.00**

This is the lowest price for an HITACHI 3000 lumens projector.

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**CP-X1250 HIGH RESOLUTION 4500 LUMENS Only \$3795.00**

Previous SDA price for the 4500 lumens was \$4900.00

**WARRANTY:** The above prices include a 3 years 24/7 replacement warranty worth about \$285.00.

You can order the HITACHI projectors online by clicking at this link:  
<http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/cart/catalog/index.php?cPath=24>

If you have a problem ordering online, call us at (269) 471-2915. We will take your order by phone. Your order will be processed immediately.

**THE SMALLEST, MOST POWERFUL REMOTE PRESENTER**

If you are looking for an outstanding REMOTE for your PowerPoint presentations, you will be pleased to know HONEYWELL has just come out with the smallest and most powerful remote in the market.

The size of the transmitter is smaller than a credit card. You can stick it inside the palm of your hand and nobody can see it. I tested the remote in an open environment, and the radio signal can go up to 400 feet of distance. IT IS INCREDIBLE! The transmitter has three buttons: forward, backward, and laser.

You can order online the new POWERPOINT PRESENTER simply by clicking here: [http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/cart/catalog/product\\_info.php?cPath=27&products\\_id=67](http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/cart/catalog/product_info.php?cPath=27&products_id=67)

If you have a problem ordering online, simply call us at (269) 471-2915. We will take your order by phone. You can also email us your order at <[sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com](mailto:sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com)>, giving us your address, credit card number, and expiration date.

**DOES YOUR CHURCH OR SCHOOL NEED A SCREEN?**

If your church/school is looking for a screen, the DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY, the largest manufacturer of screens in the world, has agreed to offer their line of screens to our Adventist churches and schools at about 30% discount.

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The procedure is very simple. Visit the DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY website at <http://www.da-lite.com>. You will see hundreds of models of screens with their respective prices. Once you find the screen that you need, give us the model number by phone (269) 471-2915 or email your request <[sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com](mailto:sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com)> We will forward your order immediately to DA-LITE that will ship the screen directly to your address. You will receive the screen at about 30% discount.

### **BED & BREAKFAST FACILITIES IN LONDON, ENGLAND**

If your travel plans call for a stop in London, you will be pleased to learn about a most gracious Adventist couple that offer the best accommodation and breakfast I have ever enjoyed. It has become my home away from home when in London. See details at: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/Promotions/BED&BREAKFAST.htm>

### **TAGNET SPECIAL NEW WEB HOSTING OFFER FOR ADVENTIST CHURCHES AND MEMBERS**

TAGNET is the largest Adventist networking organization, providing an incredible number of webhosting services to our Adventist churches and members. This newsletter comes to you through their gracious and efficient service. For detail information, visit their website at <http://www.netadventist.org> or <http://home.tagnet.org/> You may also call their office 800 - 9TAGNET. They are ready and eager to help you.