

fellow than he ever was before the Catholic priest came. Christian organisations on shore don't do Jack any good. Tracts are worthless, and Bibles and prayer books are about as useful as tracts. But one good whole-souled, manly, chaplain is a whole army in himself.

Wise Words on Purgatory

Thanks to the work of a small school of uncritical and emotional writers there are prevalent, even amongst Catholics themselves, many wild and extravagant notions on the subject of Purgatory— notions that are by no means warranted or authorised by the official teaching of the Church. Purgatory is defined in the Catechism as 'a place or state of punishment in the next life where some souls suffer for a time before they go to heaven'; and the average Catholic might well be content with that—do his duty to the suffering dead—and leave the matter there, without wasting his time on futile and profitless speculation as to the probable duration of the pains of his deceased relatives or friends. On this point the Rev. Father Hull, of the Bombay *Examiner*, has some wise and thoughtful words, which we have pleasure in reproducing. A correspondent had written to the *Examiner* as follows: 'In Dr. Faber's *All for Jesus* we are told how even canonised saints have remained for forty or fifty years in purgatory in spite of the fact that their bodies have worked miracles upon earth. Now, considering that a very short time in purgatory, even a quarter of an hour, is equivalent to a long period of suffering upon earth, it terrifies me to think how long in the ordinary course of divine justice we would have to suffer before we meet in heaven. I am aware that this is all a mystery, but I should feel much obliged if you could do something in the way of comforting me and others who may have been troubled in the same way.'

Here is Father Hull's reply—and the truths to which it draws attention cannot be too widely known. 'Catholic revelation tells us very little about purgatory. It tells us that there is such a place, or at least state, of detention from heaven, for all who die in grace, but with some of the relics of sin clinging to them. Secondly, that different degrees or amounts of suffering are undergone in purgatory in proportion to the amount of the relics of sin which cling to each individual soul. Thirdly, that these sufferings are alleviated, reduced, or shortened by the prayers of Christians on earth, and of the saints in heaven, and also by good works and the application of indulgences. But beyond this revelation does not go. Revelation does not tell us anything of the nature of the sufferings—whether they are acute pains like those of hell, or consist chiefly in a mental sense of privation and suspense. Revelation does not tell us even what is the nature of the purgative process. Some have thought that it is really purgative; that is to say, it removes certain stains and crookednesses of the soul which have been induced by sin. Others have thought that the process is purely punitive; that is to say, by sin we have incurred a certain debt of temporal punishment which we have to pay by undergoing a corresponding amount of suffering. Either of these views may be true, or both of them in combination. Revelation tells us nothing of the duration of the process in terms of earthly time. Some have more, some have less according to their deserts; but whether the difference can be made up by difference of intensity for the same time, or by the same intensity for different lengths of time, we cannot say. The whole state of the after-world is a mystery to us. It is a state of things superior to time and space, and we do not even know whether anything there can be measured in terms of time or space at all. Lastly, we have no means of measuring the relation between sin and the temporal punishment due to sin. I commit five small venial sins to-day, and I have five hours of excruciating toothache to-morrow. Would those five hours of toothache suffice as my purgatory for those five venial sins? It might suffice for more, or it might suffice for less; we simply have no data to go on. Lastly, we have no idea what effect is produced even by indulgences. Sup-

pose I really gain one plenary indulgence and offer it for one particular soul in purgatory. Will it be accepted by God for that soul alone? Will it release that soul altogether or only in part? We have no idea. If God had thought it good for us to know these things He would surely have told us more. The conclusion which I draw from the reticence of God is that He does not wish us to give the matter a single thought. Three things we know: First, that even venial sin is not a thing to trifle with. Secondly, that even the smallest of God's punishments is a thing to be taken seriously. Thirdly, whatever the punishment may be, those who have to suffer it in purgatory will feel it to be altogether just, and even merciful. Cultivating this frame of mind, let us not trouble ourselves with a moment's further thought about the matter.'

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'But what about all those stories which we read in spiritual books—stories which if true are enough to make one's hair stand on end. *Answer*.—So far as they impress you with the idea that even venial sin is a thing to be seriously avoided, so far are they ideally true; but so far as they make you miserable in feeling and worried about your relations, so far are they ideally false. As to their literal truth, we know nothing. Not one of them is guaranteed as true by the Church; and even where they seem to be well authenticated by history, this does not prove that they are literal facts. They may be a sort of apocalyptic visions embodying a doctrinal idea and nothing more. I do not know the exact passage from Faber. But I certainly should not give credence to any story about a canonised saint being forty years in purgatory while his body is working miracles on earth. Some devotional writers are often uncritical in their selection of materials, and Faber notoriously so. No theologian would take such a story seriously. It seems almost offensive to pious ears. Therefore, instead of worrying your mind with such apocryphal matter, make an act of faith that your mother is in the hands of a good God. Then set about gaining a few indulgences for her; and after that put the whole matter out of your mind.'

Intercolonial

After the usual St. Patrick's Day celebration at Oatlands, Tasmania, Rev. Father Feehan was presented with an address and a cheque for £140 from the people of the various districts of the Oatlands parish and friends, both lay and clerical, throughout Tasmania.

His Grace the Archbishop of Melbourne blessed and opened a church and convent at Wonthaggi on Sunday, March 24. The church, which is capable of seating 800 persons, was erected at a cost of about £3000.

On Tuesday, March 19, our revered and venerable Archbishop, the Most Rev. Dr. Dunne, completed his 82nd year. Born in 1830 (says the *Brisbane Age*), ordained priest in 1855, arrived in Queensland in 1863, consecrated Bishop in 1882, and raised to the Archbishopric in 1887, he has for nearly half a century zealously ministered to the Church in Queensland. May the evening of his long and arduous life be attended by every blessing.

The advance of Catholicity in the Archdiocese was evidenced on Sunday, March 24 (says the *Freeman's Journal*), when his Grace the Archbishop blessed the foundation-stone of St. Joseph's new church, Rozeile. There was a large gathering of the parishioners and their friends. His Grace the Archbishop delivered a stirring address, and a liberal response for the liquidation of the debt was made. One parishioner gave a cheque for £500, and the Very Rev. Father Moynagh contributed £100.

It is just a little over a year ago since Dr. Clune was consecrated Bishop of Perth by Cardinal Moran on St. Patrick's Day. Since then (says the *Catholic Press*) he has done wonders in reducing the heavy debt