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SANCTIFICATION, SATISFACTION, AND THE PURPOSE OF PURGATORY

Neal Judisch

Recent years have seen a resurgence of interest in the doctrine of purgatory among Christian philosophers. Some of these philosophers argue for the existence of purgatory from principles consistent with historic Protestant theology and then attempt, on the basis of those principles, to formulate a distinctively Protestant view of purgatory—i.e., one that differs essentially from the Catholic doctrine as regards purgatory's *raison d'être*. Here I aim to show that Protestant models of purgatory which are grounded in the necessity of becoming fully sanctified before entering heaven (*Sanctification Models*) fail to contrast materially with the Catholic model of purgatory, which has historically been formulated in terms of the necessity of making satisfaction for sins already forgiven (*The Satisfaction Model*). Indeed, I shall argue that contrary to widespread assumption, the Sanctification Model and the Satisfaction Model are equivalent when the latter is properly understood.

Purgatory is the process of purification for those who die in the love of God but who are not completely imbued with that love. Sacred Scripture teaches us that we must be purified if we are to enter into perfect and complete union with God. Jesus Christ, who became the perfect expiation for our sins and took upon himself the punishment that was our due, brings us God's mercy and love. But before we enter into God's Kingdom every trace of sin within us must be eliminated, every imperfection in our soul must be corrected. This is exactly what takes place in Purgatory.

—John Paul II, *General Audience, Wednesday, 4 August 1999*

A man is punished by the very things through which he sins.

—*Wis 11.16*

I. Introduction

Among the few encouraging developments on the ecumenical frontier in recent years is the noteworthy warming of Protestant sensibilities to the idea of purgatory, understood as an intermediate postmortem state in



which souls destined for heaven are purified or made fit for heavenly life.¹ Belief in purgatory has of course been a mainstay of Catholic (but not of Protestant) theology for centuries, and Catholics, true to form, are none too likely to give it up. So to the extent that Catholics and Protestants can manage to achieve agreement on the reality of an intermediate purgatorial state, this achievement may be welcomed by the ecumenically-minded as a piece of genuine progress.

That's the good news. The bad news is that the arguments for purgatory which have been advanced by at least some Protestants who affirm its existence make clear how little this otherwise encouraging development must result from any authentic increase in appreciation as to where the relevant points of disagreement (and agreement) between Catholics and Protestants actually lie. Specifically, it is clear that the arguments in question were formulated with the express intent of avoiding certain perceived errors and abuses which have long been associated with the Catholic theory of purgatory—theological muddles which, according to these Protestant purgatory proponents, supply the Catholic doctrine of purgatory with its theoretical underpinning and motivational force—but which in fact betray a misconception of what the Catholic theory is. On this view of things, the Catholic doctrine had its genesis and finds its nourishment in a conception of salvation according to which a person is put right with God more or less as a result of their own good works and meritorious efforts, in contrast to the Protestant view which specifies that a person's right standing before God is entirely a matter of grace, gratuitously applied to the individual who puts his faith in the meritorious achievements of Christ. This perceived difference between Catholicism and Protestantism is then carried over and reflected in the *function* assigned to purgatory, or the purpose it is thought to serve, within these contrasting soteriological schemes: on the Protestant version purgatory exists so that the heaven-bound individual who requires postmortem *sanctification* may complete the process of being made intrinsically holy (as distinguished from being 'reckoned' holy before the divine tribunal on account of an imputed righteousness not inherently possessed) prior to entering into the glories of heaven, whereas the Catholic version has it that the heaven-bound individual who has not, at the time of death, made up for all the debts he has accumulated through his sins must suffer postmortem punishment with a view toward making *satisfaction* for them; this individual may then "enter into the joy of his Lord" (Matthew 25.21), but only after his Lord, by way of preparation for the joyous homecoming, has exacted an appropriately agonizing amount of vengeance upon him for a suitable stretch of time.

¹See Justin D. Barnard, "Purgatory and the Dilemma of Sanctification," *Faith and Philosophy* 24 (2007), pp. 311–330; David Vander Laan, "The Sanctification Argument for Purgatory," *Faith and Philosophy* 24 (2007), pp. 331–339; Jerry Walls, *Heaven: The Logic of Eternal Joy* (New York: Oxford UP, 2002), and *Hell: The Logic of Damnation* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1992); David Brown, "No Heaven Without Purgatory," *Religious Studies* 21 (1985), pp. 447–456; and John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976). C. S. Lewis's discussion of purgatory, in his *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (Harcourt Brace & Co, 1964), pp. 106–111, is also frequently cited in this connection.

Such appears to be the general picture. So, to take a recent example from this Journal, one philosopher who operates within the mindset just described contends that the difference between his view of purgatory, which is targeted at the completion of the sanctification process, and the Catholic view, which focuses on satisfaction for sins, is that the former “is forward looking in that its purpose is to provide an occasion for the fulfillment of a future aim” (viz. intrinsic, personal holiness), whereas the latter “is backward-looking as its purpose is to provide an occasion for the remission of past failures.”² To put it in other terms, the Protestant version is aimed at ‘purging’ the “*disposition* to sin” which remains in the incompletely sanctified believer even though the *penalty* for his sins was paid *in toto* by Christ, while the Catholic version is aimed at ‘purging’ “the *penalty* for sin or sin itself” as opposed to the sinful disposition.³ This difference of purpose is then understood, in turn, to be an inevitable outworking of the fundamentally contrastive soteriological orientations of Catholicism and Protestantism: in effect, Protestants think that Jesus paid the penalty for our sins, but Catholics don’t think that. Accordingly, it’s no surprise that since the Catholic view of purgatory requires the individual to make satisfaction for his own failures, it “undermines the sufficiency of Christ’s work as a satisfaction for sin” and indeed “renders Christ’s work superfluous,” whereas the “*Sanctification Model* of purgatory does not undermine the sufficiency of Christ’s work as a satisfaction for sin” and therefore “alleviates at least one standard objection that Protestants might have against purgatory.”⁴ Thus reassured, Protestants may in good faith avail themselves of the notion of purgatory and all the theoretical benefits pertaining thereto, for even if the Catholic view of purgatory is “fundamentally incompatible with Protestantism” as regards the sufficiency (and, it would seem, the overall non-superfluity) of Christ’s atoning sacrifice, it doesn’t follow that *every* version of purgatory likewise renders “Christ’s salvific work pointless”⁵ or otherwise conflicts with any given “cornerstone of Protestant theology.”⁶

It seems to me reasonably safe to infer from remarks like these that whatever exactly a Protestant/Catholic consensus on the existence of purgatory might suggest in the abstract, in this case it appears to represent nothing more than the mutual affirmation of a comparatively tangential doctrine to which both parties have arrived in wildly different ways and for irreconcilably opposed reasons. Thus the real agreement concerning the necessity of purgatory (for at least a large class of individuals) turns out simply to highlight the radical underlying rift between Catholic and Protestant thought generally, a rift which looks to remain as unbridgeable as ever. In this essay I would like to make one very small contribution to the ecumenical effort by showing that the Protestant version of purgatory just introduced is equivalent to the Catholic one. For ease of reference I

²Barnard, “Purgatory and the Dilemma of Sanctification,” p. 326.

³Ibid., p. 326, my emphasis.

⁴Ibid., pp. 326–327.

⁵Ibid., p. 325.

⁶Ibid., p. 329, n. 7.

shall continue to refer to the Protestant conception and the Catholic conception as the Sanctification Model and the Satisfaction Model respectively. Thus my thesis may be rephrased as expressing the contention that the Satisfaction Model and the Sanctification Model amount to the same thing, so long as the Satisfaction Model is appropriately understood. To put it another, slightly less ambitious-sounding way, I aim to show that the Catholic doctrine of purgatory not only permissibly *can* but in fact *should* be understood as equivalent to the Sanctification Model of purgatory. Whether every individual Catholic over the past two millennia has understood the doctrine in precisely this way is, of course, another matter entirely; but so far as I can see the answer to this question (which is almost certainly “No”) is neither here nor there. For present purposes I shall simply take my cues from the official teaching of the Catholic Church and — to allay any suspicions that my own interpretation of the Catholic position is sneaky or idiosyncratic or excessively charitable or just plain “made up” — I shall also appeal periodically to figures who can reasonably be regarded as possessing a measure of representational authority within the world of Catholicism. (Popes, for instance.) I begin with what I take to be the common ground between Christians, of whatever stripe, who believe in the reality of purgatory.

II. Why Purgatory?

Answers to this question vary, but the common thread running throughout the range of available responses is simply that (i) gracious pardon for sins notwithstanding, we cannot enter into and enjoy full union with God without being completely and finally liberated from the influence or ‘dominion’ of sin and made intrinsically pure and unwaveringly upright of heart; yet (ii) hardly anybody we’ve heard of ever attains *that* degree of holiness before they die and frankly, to judge by the look of things, we probably aren’t going to either; but since (iii) God cannot simply ‘zap’ us with a sanctifying ray and unilaterally bestow a radically altered nature upon us all in one go, it had better be the case that (iv) there is some kind of postmortem process, or state of being, whereby we are at last transformed into the sorts of creatures who can enter into and ceaselessly celebrate that perfect and eternal union with God held out to us in the life of the world to come.

Some readers will no doubt wish to see a fuller defense of the assumption in (iii); why *can’t* God unilaterally perfect us at the point of death, making up for what we lack in the way of sanctification by sheer divine fiat? And here again the reasons provided vary. According to some philosophers, an externally imposed operation which consists in the instant and irrevocable transformation of our natures to the level of perfection required for heavenly life would simply be too profound and sudden a change for any of us to survive. Maybe it isn’t such a stretch to imagine St Francis getting through the ordeal more or less intact, but the rest of us would hardly recognize ourselves. And the intuition here is that we wouldn’t recognize ourselves because we wouldn’t *be* ourselves: the medicine couldn’t come in that heavy a dose without killing the patient, so to speak, so not even God could renovate us so radically in one fell swoop and simultaneously

preserve the sort of continuity required for personal identity through the envisioned metamorphosis.⁷ Others contend that even if such externally induced sanctification could occur without God's violating a person's *persistence* conditions, there must be *morally* sufficient reasons for Him not to do it. For if we concede that God could carry out this kind of operation at the point of death without contravening any moral principles or preventing any valuable state of affairs which would otherwise have obtained, then we have to face the question why God doesn't just perform this feat right now, right here in this life. Yet (so the argument runs) to the extent that we cannot answer this question, we compromise our strategic posture vis-à-vis the argument from evil, since if God could unilaterally sanctify us at *death* without preventing any greater good—say, the good of a gradually sanctified nature brought about through the cooperative interplay between divine grace and significant human freedom—then there's no obvious reason why He couldn't eliminate all the post-conversion evil we bring about by just cutting to the chase and unilaterally sanctifying us here and now. So if God could do this but refrained from doing it, He'd be guilty of allowing all sorts of evil which could be "properly eliminated," or which He could prevent without introducing a greater evil or averting a greater good, in which case we'd have no reply to the atheist's insistence that this is exactly what God *would* do if He really were everything traditional theism imagines Him to be.⁸ And finally, in a similar vein, others have argued that any teleological theodicy which stresses the *process of growth* towards a moral and spiritual ideal as being essential to the genuine realization of this ideal (John Hick's 'soul-making' approach is an example) must likewise have recourse to a purgatorial state, since an impeccably sanctified character bestowed from without at the time of death, as opposed to an increasingly sanctified character which continues to be developed after death from within, would short-circuit the authentic maturation of the soul and therefore undermine the justification for evil proposed by the theodicy.⁹

⁷This is the argument advanced by David Brown in "No Heaven Without Purgatory."

⁸Justin Barnard formulates this argument in "Purgatory and the Dilemma of Sanctification."

⁹Thus according to Michael Stoeber, unless we are prepared to endorse the twin theses of karma and retributive rebirth as set forth in the Hindu tradition (which Stoeber himself considers to be the wisest course), then we must instead appeal to a purgatorial realm, understood as a state in which the unfinished growth and maturation of the individual may be remedied. Such a state, he argues, is "a necessary supposition of teleological theodicy" when we reflect on the suffering and death of innocent children in particular, for if "the tortured child is removed from the teleological scheme without the chance to realise the telos that justifies moral and natural evils of the world, then that theodicy fails. To suggest that the child simply passes away is to deny divine goodness. To suppose that the child is granted eternal life is to render divine providence arbitrary or elitist. And, in any case, both proposals imply that evil cannot be fully explained in terms of the teleology" (*Evil and the Mystic's God: Towards a Mystical Theodicy* [University of Toronto Press, 1992], p. 169). See also John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (Harper, 1978).

On the whole I think each of these arguments for (iii) has something to commend it. Since my aim here is less to establish purgatory's existence and more to reconcile two allegedly rival conceptions of it, however, I shall forego any detailed discussion of them and take the reality of purgatory for granted. Supposing then we grant *arguendo* that belief in purgatory is sufficiently well motivated for Catholics and Protestants alike, we should take a moment to make explicit the function assigned to purgatory according to (iv); and to this end it will be useful to borrow two terms¹⁰ from Justin Barnard, the philosopher upon whom I relied to represent the Sanctification Model approach above. Let us say that a person S is 'lapsable' iff S possesses saving faith¹¹ in Christ and S does not (yet) possess a thoroughly sanctified nature; and let's call a person S 'sanctified' iff S possesses saving faith in Christ and also possesses a thoroughly sanctified nature. To say that S possesses a thoroughly sanctified nature is to say that S cannot sin, that S's character and dispositions are 'fixed' in such a way that under no nomologically possible circumstances would S commit evil. Putting the same thing more positively, S's will is one in purpose and holiness with the will of God. His character exemplifies the quality medieval theologians termed *impeccability*, the characteristic feature of the redeemed in heaven who, according to St Augustine, have attained to that "truer" and "superior" kind of freedom (modeled upon God's) which involves both the ability to *not* sin—an ability we haven't really enjoyed since Adam's fall—and the *inability to* sin—an inability we've never enjoyed at all.¹² Thus the sanctified may be thought of as possessing a kind of moral *libertas* which mirrors the divine freedom, a state of being which St Augustine construes as a heavenly reward, whereas the lapsable are destined to but have not yet attained this moral perfection of their natures.

So finally, with all this in place, we can say that the *exclusive object of purgatory* according to the Sanctification Model is the *transformation of the lapsable into the sanctified*: by itself, saving faith is necessary for getting into purgatory and sufficient for avoiding hell; being lapsable is necessary and sufficient for getting into purgatory; and being sanctified is necessary and sufficient for getting out of purgatory (or in rare cases just skipping it altogether) and getting into heaven. *Purgation* is thus the means by which the Christian's *inherent moral condition* "catches up" to his *unpenalizable status*, purchased by Christ, before the tribunal of God. That is what the Sanctification Model says.

¹⁰Actually, two more. I have borrowed 'Sanctification Model' and 'Satisfaction Model' from him as well.

¹¹Here I understand 'saving faith' to be whatever sort of faith it is that distinguishes the elect from those devils who "believe and tremble" (Jas 2.19). I take it that such faith is identical to the 'faith working through love' (*fides quae per dilectionem operatur*) of which St Augustine spoke in his *On Grace and Free Will* 18–20, but nothing in my argument hangs on this particular formulation of it.

¹²See St Augustine, *City of God* XXII.30. For a very enjoyable overview of the medieval discussion concerning the freedom and impeccability of the saints, see Simon Francis Gaine, *Will There Be Free Will in Heaven? Freedom, Impeccability and Beauty* (T&T Clark: Continuum, 2003).

III. Sins and Satisfactions

We know, then, that there is nothing sinful about the sanctified as regards their characters or dispositions: they love God and neighbor with all their hearts as a matter of routine. And since Jesus made satisfaction for the sins they had committed prior to becoming sanctified, there is nothing 'categorically' or 'legally' bad about them either, in the sense that they bear no guilt for all the wrongs they have done and are in consequence subject to no retributive punishment. Now the Satisfaction Model of purgatory as sketched above is *consistent* with this description of those who have gone through purgatory as being both inherently and legally upright—as having been 'purged' both of the "*disposition to sin*" and of "*the penalty for sin or sin itself*"—but even if the end result of purgation on the Satisfaction Model is consistent with the ultimate result according to the Sanctification Model, the purpose of purgation on the Satisfaction approach evidently isn't the "forward looking" one of producing sanctified individuals, but appears primarily to involve the "backward looking" aspect of meting out retributive punishments and penalties for the wrongs they have done.

Indeed, when we reflect that Barnard's description of the Satisfaction Model fails to include the suggestion that any sanctification might be taking place in purgatory at all, it is tempting to conclude that the latter aspect (the retributive punishment bit) is really the main point, maybe even the sole point, of purgatory on a Catholic view of things. Thus Barnard: "According to the *Satisfaction Model*, purgatory is a temporal state of existence after death the purpose of which is to make satisfaction (i.e., payment) for sins committed on earth for which sufficient satisfaction was not rendered by the time of death."¹³ Nor is the assumption Barnard voices here peculiar to him. For example, after quoting the relevant portion from the Council of Florence (1439), which specifies that "if truly penitent people die in the love of God before they have made satisfaction for acts and omissions by worthy fruits of repentance, their souls are cleansed after death by cleansing pains,"¹⁴ Michael Stoeber concludes,

From the official Vatican standpoint, then, purgatory is understood as a realm of physical or mental punishment, more in negative terms of painful retribution than in positive conceptions of spiritual learning and growth. Indeed, though the latter function is not ruled out in the traditional formulation, there is the sense that one can 'burn off,' as it were, the actions and effects of past moral improprieties, simply through passive suffering.¹⁵

And the mere passive suffering of painful retribution, of course, hardly suggests that any spiritual learning and growth are in view here at all; what it *does* appear to suggest, and what it *has* strongly suggested to Barnard at any rate, is that Calvin's classification of the Catholic conception of purgatory as a "horrid blasphemy" and a "deadly device of Satan"

¹³Barnard, "Purgatory and the Dilemma of Sanctification," p. 325.

¹⁴Ecumenical Council of Florence, Session 6.

¹⁵Stoeber, *Evil and the Mystic's God*, p. 167.

“seems fitting from the perspective of Protestant theology,” inasmuch as Protestant theology protests that Christ’s satisfaction for sin isn’t simply empty or fictitious.¹⁶

Over against this assessment of the Catholic position stands the Catholic position’s assessment of itself. And as far as I can tell, this latter assessment makes it tolerably clear that the “official Vatican standpoint” is similar indeed to the official Barnardian one. In a nutshell, the Catholic doctrine says that (1) the sins of Christians have been forgiven in virtue of the satisfaction rendered for them by Christ, and that (2) as a consequence, they will not suffer ‘eternal punishment’ for their sins. It then adds to this the provisos that (3) insofar as there remain ‘temporal punishments’ attached to sins for which these Christians themselves must ‘make satisfaction,’ it follows that (4) if they have not ‘made satisfaction’ for these sins prior to death then they’ve got to go through purgatory. Now when the Catholic doctrine says all this, the statements in (1) and (2) should be taken as stating that Christians will suffer no ‘legal’ *penalty* for their sins because Christ took the *punishment* for those sins upon Himself so as to secure their *forgiveness*, and the provisos in (3) and (4) should be understood as specifying the need for *lapsable* Christians to undergo a purgative regimen aimed at the *rehabilitation* or *restoration* of their spiritual *health*. That is, the Catholic doctrine of purgatory says that purgatory is for Christians who, despite the cancellation of their ‘legal’ penalties before God, still need to become thoroughly sanctified.

Admittedly, the terminological devices involved in this formulation tend to invite misgiving. But the juridical/legal language in which the doctrine is cast is simply the characteristic mode of expression that the Western tradition, both Catholic and Protestant, has historically used to get across whatever it’s trying to say. Doubtless this mode of expression can be misleading and at times does more harm than good (in fact the case before us seems a promising candidate for one of those times), but however that may be there is no question that the vision of purgatory expounded here is one with which Protestants (and Eastern Orthodox, too) should be perfectly happy.¹⁷ To see this, however, one must first appreciate how terms like ‘satisfaction’ and ‘temporal punishment’ are being deployed by those who use them to describe what’s going on in purgatory. And in order to get straight on these terms, it is of first importance to recognize that according to Catholic

¹⁶Barnard, “Purgatory and the Dilemma of Sanctification,” p. 326.

¹⁷With respect to the proper interpretation of the Catholic dogma it is worth bearing in mind, as Linda Zagzebski (“Purgatory,” in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [New York: Routledge, 1998], p. 838) has noted, that when the official teaching on purgatory was first hammered out at the Councils of Lyons (1274) and Florence (1439) it was done “with the intent of reconciling the Greek Christians,” who objected to much of what the legal and penal language in which the dogma is formulated tends *prima facie* to suggest. Given that the Eastern Orthodox mode of theological expression is much more ‘organic’ or ‘natural’ than ‘legal’ or ‘juridical’—e.g., salvation understood in terms of *deification* as opposed to *justification*, purgatory seen as a process of *growth and maturation* as opposed to *satisfaction and punishment*, etc.—it seems reasonable to believe that the Catholic participants would not lightly have aggravated Greek sensibilities with respect to the *content* of the doctrine of purgatory being propounded.

thought sin has a “double consequence” which corresponds to two *distinct kinds* of punishment for sin. That is to say, a given sinful action or omission must be thought of as resulting in two kinds of consequence, and corresponding to each kind of consequence is a particular form of punishment appropriate to it. As regards the first consequence of sin—or, if you prefer, the first *aspect* of the “double consequence” of sin; I take these expressions to be synonymous—sin “deprives us of communion with God” which in turn “makes us incapable of eternal life;” and the “privation” of eternal life “is called the ‘eternal punishment’ of sin.”¹⁸ Thus we can see that the *first consequence* of sin is to be identified with the deprivation of the sinner’s communion with God, and the *punishment* attending *this* consequence of sin is the sinner’s exclusion from eternal life: i.e., his consignment to the eternal punishment of sin, or ‘hell.’ Now this ‘eternal punishment,’ which is *one* of the two consequences of sin, should be understood as corresponding to what Barnard has in mind when he speaks of the “penalty for sin.” In other words, *this* consequence of sin relates to the ‘legal’ debt we owe to God and for which, as St Anselm insisted in *Cur Deus Homo*, only a person who is both God and Man could make a satisfaction acceptable to divine justice.¹⁹ It follows, then, that we ourselves cannot make satisfaction for this consequence of sin (i.e., we cannot ‘purge’ the “penalty for sin or sin itself”) on the Catholic view; for that is a work of Christ only. And when we appropriate the satisfaction Christ made on our behalf by repenting and putting our faith in Him we receive “forgiveness of sin and restoration of communion with God,” which, in consequence, releases us from the obligation to pay the penalty for our sins and entails that we are no longer deprived or “made incapable of” of eternal life.²⁰

So far so good. But recall that there is a second consequence of sin in addition to the one above. For although forgiveness of sins and restoration of communion with God together “entail the remission of the eternal punishment of sin,” the “temporal punishment of sin remains” — and it is of course the ‘temporal punishment’ for which *we* are expected to ‘make satisfaction,’ either in this life or in the purgatorial fires of the next.²¹ Now, this element of the current approach will likely be regarded as rendering the Satisfaction Model flatly and irredeemably incompatible with the Sanctification Model, since it may easily sound as though it takes back from us with one hand what it had given us with the other—Jesus made satisfaction for sins, it assures us, but for some reason or other, it goes on to say, we’ve got to make our own satisfaction *anyhow*; and *that* is precisely the suggestion proponents of the Sanctification Model are eager to repudiate. Yet to charge the Satisfaction Model with doublespeak on this point would be to ignore the fact that the ‘temporal punishment’ for sin really *does* correspond to a *distinct* consequence of sin and that this consequence is entirely different from the first one, the one that corresponds to the ‘eternal punishment’ of sin described above.

¹⁸*Catechism of the Catholic Church* §1472, emphasis in original; cf. §§1849–1850.

¹⁹St Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo* I.11–15, 19–25. Cf. St Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 48 art. 2, 4; q. 49 art. 3; q. 68 art. 5 and see also §§601–615 of the *Catechism*.

²⁰*Catechism* §1473.

²¹*Ibid.*

In reality, the second consequence of sin simply isn't about legal 'penalties' which need to be 'settled' in the divine law court or accumulated 'debts' for which the sinner must make 'payment'; nor is the 'temporal punishment' corresponding to this consequence a matter of vindictive 'retribution' externally imposed by God the Judge upon hapless, passively suffering sinners; nor, finally, is the 'satisfaction' required of such sinners a matter of accruing enough merit to balance out their demerits or, alternatively, just gritting their teeth and letting God extract His pound of flesh. Rather, the consequence of sin which issues in 'temporal punishment' is identical to the *corrosive effect of sin itself* upon the individual's soul; the 'temporal punishment' of this consequence, accordingly, consists in the individual's *enduring through and struggling to rectify the disorder of his soul and spiritual ill health* that sinful behavior brings in its wake; and, finally, 'making satisfaction' for sins, in this context, is to be understood as the individual's *doing whatever is required* (and allowing God to do to him whatever's required) to *restore his spiritual well-being* and so to be 'purged' of his *self-destructive attachment* to sin. To put it another way, *sinfulness*—the self-reinforcing urge to commit iniquity introduced through original sin and fostered by the habitual exercise of our capacity for it, or what the tradition simply calls 'concupiscence'—*just is* the second consequence of sin, the 'temporal punishment' for which sinners must suffer here or in purgatory. It is not some additional 'judicial' penalty God imposes on sinners from on high with the expectation of their finding a way, somehow or other, to 'make satisfaction' in the form of 'payment' for their debts; it is, as it were, the 'natural' punishment sin itself brings upon those who commit it, rather as virtue is said to bring with it its own reward.

Once these clarifications are grasped and held firmly in mind, it should be perfectly obvious that the model of purgatory expounded in the relevant sections of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is straightforwardly equivalent to the Sanctification Model, not something that stands in sworn opposition to it. Notice, for example, that it is precisely the "unhealthy attachment to creatures" (i.e., a sinful disposition) which is said to result from sin and issue in "temporal punishment" for it, and, moreover, that purgatory is identified as the process by which the individual is purified from such attachment:

To understand this doctrine and practice of the Church, it is necessary to understand that sin has a *double consequence*. Grave sin deprives us of communion with God and therefore makes us incapable of eternal life, the privation of which is called the "eternal punishment" of sin. On the other hand every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death in the state called Purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the "temporal punishment" of sin.²²

Further, the notion that the 'temporal punishment' suffered in purgatory is some sort of "backward looking" retribution God extracts from indi-

²²*Catechism* §1472, emphasis in original.

viduals in view of their “past failures” is explicitly repudiated, since the punishment in question “must not be conceived of as a kind of vengeance inflicted by God from without, but as following from the very nature of sin.”²³ And it follows from the nature of sin because sin doesn’t only harm the person against whom it is perpetrated or amass a whole ton of debt before God or whatever, it “also injures and weakens the sinner himself, as well as his relationships with God and neighbor”²⁴ because it “creates a proclivity to sin; it engenders vice by repetition of the same acts [and] results in perverse inclinations which cloud conscience and corrupt the concrete judgment of good and evil,” which in turn explains why “sin tends to reproduce itself and reinforce itself.”²⁵ Thus although “Absolution takes away sin”—i.e., although it removes what Barnard calls the “penalty for sin or sin itself”—receiving this forgiveness “does not remedy all the disorders sin has caused”—i.e., it doesn’t automatically eliminate what Barnard calls the person’s “disposition to sin.” Consequently, once he has been “Raised up from sin [i.e., forgiven], the sinner must still recover his full spiritual health by doing something more to make amends for the sin: he must ‘make satisfaction for’ or ‘expiate’ his sins,” an activity which “is also called ‘penance.’”²⁶ And if his “full spiritual health” hasn’t been recovered by the time he dies, then he’s going to have to keep on ‘making satisfaction’ and ‘doing penance’ right through the fires of purgatory until he gets it back.

So all of this talk about “satisfaction” and “expiation” and “suffering” and “penance” and the like does not refer to the poor soul’s attempt to appease the fury of God by offering itself up as an object of divine vengeance; it is aimed precisely at the “forward looking” goal of the *transformation* of the “old man” into the “new man”—in other words, at the conversion of the lapsed into the sanctified:

The forgiveness of sin and restoration of communion with God entail the remission of the eternal punishment of sin, but temporal punishment of sin remains. While patiently bearing sufferings and trials of all kinds and, when the day comes, serenely facing death, the Christian must strive to accept this temporal punishment of sin as a grace. He should strive by works of mercy and charity, as well as by prayer

²³Ibid.

²⁴*Catechism* §1459.

²⁵*Catechism* §1865.

²⁶*Catechism* §1459. Compare also St Thomas’s endorsement and explanation of the definition of satisfaction according to which “satisfaction is to uproot the causes of sins, and to give no opening to the suggestions thereof” in the *Summa Theologica*, Supp. III, q. 12 art. 3 (Fathers of the English Dominican Province): “By ‘causes’ we must understand the proximate causes of actual sin, which are twofold: viz. the lust of sin through the habit or act of a sin that has been given up, and those things which are called the remnants of past sin; and external occasions of sin, such as place, bad company and so forth. Such causes are removed by satisfaction in this life, albeit the ‘fomes’ [i.e., the ‘fuel’ of concupiscence, the effect of original sin], which is the remote cause of actual sin, is not entirely removed by satisfaction in this life though it is weakened.”

and the various practices of penance, to put off completely the “old man” and to put on the “new man.”²⁷

And this is why, finally, the kind of “conversion which proceeds from a fervent charity can attain the complete purification of the sinner in such a way that no punishment would remain,” since such a comprehensive and profound perfection of the entire life’s effort toward *conversio*, or reorientation toward God and away from sin, signals the end “of the struggle . . . directed toward holiness and eternal life” whereby the Christian “seeks to purify himself of his sin and to become holy with the help of God’s grace.”²⁸ But to be purified and to become holy with the help of God’s grace is of course equivalent to successfully consummating the sanctification process; and whenever *that* process has come to completion ‘temporal punishment’ naturally has no further application, since the whole *telos* of ‘temporal punishment’ is to spur us onward toward precisely this goal.

Putting it all together, it follows that the *exclusive object of purgatory* according to the Satisfaction Model is to allow those who die in the love of God to *suffer the ‘temporal punishments’ and ‘make satisfaction’ for sins*, where this in turn is strictly equated with *the process whereby the forgiven-but-lapsable individual is purified of his disposition to sin and made inherently holy*. Therefore, by itself saving faith is necessary for getting into purgatory and sufficient for avoiding hell; being lapsable is necessary and sufficient for getting into purgatory; and being sanctified is necessary and sufficient for getting out of purgatory (or in rare cases simply giving it a pass) and getting into heaven. In other words: the Satisfaction Model is equivalent to the Sanctification Model.

There is a prettier and somewhat less cumbersome and distracting way the same thing could be said. According to the Satisfaction Model à la Pope Benedict XVI, for example, the tripartite division of hell, purgatory and heaven maps neatly onto what may be considered the three potential spiritual states of an individual at death. At one extreme lies the frightful possibility of persons who have “totally destroyed their desire for truth and readiness to love” and “who have lived for hatred and have suppressed all love within themselves” to the point that the destruction of the good within them is “irrevocable,” which leaves them simply “beyond remedy.” That’s “what we mean by the word *Hell*.” At the other extreme stand the sanctified, “who are utterly pure, completely permeated by God, and thus fully open to their neighbours—people for whom communion with God even now gives direction to their entire being and whose journey towards God only brings to fulfillment what they already are.” This is the group of persons who populate heaven. And somewhere in between these angels and demons are those who have “in the depths of their being an ultimate interior openness to truth, to love, to God. In the

²⁷*Catechism* §1473. Also instructive in this connection is St Augustine’s distinction between the ‘remedial’ punishments of this life and of purgatory, suffered by those who haven’t completely subdued their carnal desires prior to the final judgment, and the non-‘purgatorial’ or eternal punishments of the wicked following the final judgment in hell; see *City of God* XXI.13, 15–16.

²⁸*Catechism* §1426, §1474.

concrete choices of life, however, it is covered over by ever new compromises with evil—much filth covers purity, but the thirst for purity remains and it still constantly re-emerges from all that is base and remains present in the soul.” For this batch there is purgatory, an intermediate state in which “purification and healing which mature the soul for communion with God” takes place. It is a “fire” through which they must pass “so as to become fully open to receiving God and able to take [their] place at the table of the eternal marriage-feast,” where the “fire” in question is, at its root, identical to the “gaze” and “the touch of [Christ’s] heart” which “heals us through an undeniably painful transformation” but which, “as it burns us, transforms and frees us, allowing us to become truly ourselves” and “thus totally of God.”²⁹ So, to put the conclusion reached above a bit more inspiringly, purgatory is the *purifying and transformative postmortem encounter with Christ* which takes the *broken and sick* and *heals* them, *making them fit to enjoy unsullied and unending communion with God and the saints in the life everlasting*. That is what the Satisfaction Model says.

IV. Objections and Replies

I would like in this section to consider three objections, not so much to the Satisfaction Model itself, but rather to the suggestion that any Catholic thinker prior to, say, the mid-twentieth century actually thought of purgatory that way. In a sense, of course, it doesn’t really make a difference, since once the terminology is understood as I’ve argued it should be, the model is easily seen to cohere with the terse and sketchy remarks about purgatory codified in the relevant documents antedating our time, so there isn’t any impediment to present-day Catholics accepting a position on purgatory which is identical in content to the Protestant position. But at least as regards my modest ecumenical hopes, it would still be nice to demonstrate that the Satisfaction Model I have described doesn’t amount to a shifty or disingenuous about-face on the part of contemporary Catholics who might simply be trying through a clever redefinition of terms to distance themselves from the lurid ideas of their less sophisticated predecessors. Perhaps more importantly, it seems reasonable to suspect that some of the practices and teachings *related* to the traditional doctrine of purgatory—e.g., the granting of indulgences for departed souls—conflict with what I’ve argued the point of purgatory really is on the Catholic approach. However, what I want to begin with is one difficulty for the Satisfaction Model which does not connect with any controversial praxis or dogma but which is still worth pursuing because of its intrinsic interest. I have in mind the contention, voiced by St Bonaventure and probably assumed by others, that souls in purgatory cannot sin.

The assumption is attractive: we don’t want souls in purgatory retrogressing but continuing onward and upward, perhaps fueled by something akin to what Barnard terms the “internal momentum” which carries them inexorably toward their final sanctification.³⁰ Additionally, the cessation of sin and continuous forward progression here imagined

²⁹Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical *Spe Salvi* §§45–47.

³⁰Barnard, “Purgatory and the Dilemma of Sanctification,” p. 323.

may be thought to provide a salutary, merciful assurance to souls in purgatory that they'll ultimately make it out on the right side of things, that their eventual salvation is guaranteed. Indeed, this appears to be the primary reason for which St Bonaventure insisted that souls in purgatory couldn't sin, so as to controvert the suggestion that uncertainty about their fate is one of the torments with which souls in purgatory are afflicted.³¹ Still, the obvious worry is that if souls in purgatory cannot sin, and if to be unable to sin is to be sanctified, and if to be sanctified is sufficient for getting out of purgatory and into heaven, then we have a contradiction on our hands. In particular, it looks as if the only business a sanctified soul could have in purgatory would be to suffer retributive pains for all the rotten things they had done in life, which runs against what I've said the purpose of purgatory is supposed to be.

So what to say? It seems to me that a person in purgatory may have certainty that he will ultimately be saved "as through fire" without its being the case that this certainty is grounded in introspective awareness of his inability to sin, together with an abductive inference to the effect that he must therefore be heaven-bound. (Why couldn't God just relay his fate before sending him off to get purged, as in Newman's *Dream of Gerontius*?) And I see no reason in the abstract why the trajectory of souls in purgatory couldn't be characterized by a continual "upward trend" even if there are "dips" in the form of stumblings and sins, particularly sins of omission, along the way. Still, there is some plausibility to the thesis that among the helps God extends to people experiencing postmortem purgation is an impressive type of divine grace, which involves *inter alia* preserving them from falling into any further sin or "getting any worse." But notice that even if this comforting proposal is correct it does not conflict with the condition stipulating that souls in purgatory are not yet sanctified and thus does not contradict the Satisfaction Model. For to be providentially preserved from sinning is not equivalent to possessing a sanctified nature. If S possesses a sanctified nature, recall, it follows that conditionals of the form

³¹See St Bonaventure's remarks in St Roger Bellarmine, *De Purgatorio* IV, dist. 20, p. 1, a. 1, q. iv, as cited in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* entry on "Purgatory," <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12575a.htm>. The thought that purgatorial afflictions include uncertainty as to the final deliverance of the soul is represented, for example, in St John of the Cross: "This is the reason why those who lie in purgatory suffer great misgivings as to whether they will ever go forth from it and whether their pains will ever be over. For, although they have the habit of the three theological virtues—faith, hope and charity—the present realization which they have of their afflictions and of their deprivation of God allows them not to enjoy the present blessing and consolation of these virtues. For although they are able to realize that they have a great love for God . . . they cannot think that God loves them or that they are worthy that He should do so; rather, as they see that they are deprived of Him . . . they think that there is that in themselves which provides a very good reason why they should with perfect justice be abhorred and cast out by God forever. And thus, although the soul in this purgation is conscious that it has a great love for God . . . yet this is no relief to it, but rather brings it greater affliction . . . [when] it sees itself to be so wretched that it cannot believe that God loves it . . . [and] is grieved to see in itself reasons for deserving to be cast out by Him for Whom it has such great love and desire," *Dark Night of the Soul* II.7, trans. E. Allison Peers (New York: Image Doubleday, 1990), pp. 113–114.

"If S were in situation C, S would not sin" are necessarily true, true in all (nomologically) possible circumstances, whereas if S is simply preserved by divine grace from sinning it could be that there are many possible situations such that S would freely sin in them.³² Those, on this hypothesis, are the situations God sees to it S isn't placed in while he's working his way through purgatory. Thus one could agree with St Bonaventure that it isn't possible for people in purgatory to sin while simultaneously holding that nobody in purgatory is already sanctified, since there is an acceptable sense in which both scenarios (the already-sanctified scenario and the special-grace scenario) support the proposition that individuals in purgatory "cannot sin," albeit in different ways.

Naturally, one wonders how genuinely conducive to spiritual fitness purgatory could be if things were "rigged" so that the souls there could do nothing at all to impede their own progress (even if they themselves might not *know* they couldn't do this), but it seems to me too quick to infer that a purgatory like this couldn't get the job done. To be sure, we may not be as inclined to applaud purgatory graduates here as we would if we knew there'd been a live possibility of regression or loss, and maybe we feel that the soul's progress wouldn't be all that laudable unless God were to back off a bit and let the soul more or less "go it alone." But I think these intuitions tend to misdirect the judgment. For one thing, purgatory isn't happily thought of as a 'place' for the acquisition of merit or the accumulation of accolades and rewards; the point is rather rehabilitation and growth, the eradication of dispositions to sin and the up-building and "setting" of dispositions toward holiness instead. And it isn't at all obvious why this couldn't take place unless God were prepared to disengage to the point of allowing souls in purgatory to bring genuine harm upon themselves or frustrate their own goals. Some analogies: the child's father sees to it that she uses training wheels at the outset, but she still learns how to ride; the coach makes sure her gymnast invariably has someone around to spot him, but he eventually works up strength and poise sufficient to perform the acrobatics by himself; Barnum and Bailey insist that their neophyte trapezist always be hooked up to a harness, but only so that she stays alive and in one piece long enough to learn how to fly around the tent without it. These are only analogies; but the point behind them is not inapplicable to the case of interest.

So I see no reason to conclude that souls in purgatory couldn't both be lapsable and be kept by God from damaging themselves further through fresh sin until they finally satisfy their temporal punishments and push on. But however that issue should be settled there remains a more serious question about the viability of my interpretation of the Satisfaction Model, and that is the question of how the practice of granting indulgences for the aid of souls in purgatory could be consistent with a view on which purgation is aimed at sanctification, not at "paybacks." Because here is how things look: it looks as if the Pope is transferring a surplus of "merit" the Church has "stored up" and applying it to souls in purgatory with the intention of shortening their sentence or covering a portion of their

³²I note that the truth of this claim may depend upon the acceptance of Molinism. Thanks to Tom Flint for calling this to my attention.

remaining debts, which wouldn't make sense unless these souls are being sent to purgatory for purely remunerative purposes after all. Now I have no present interest in defending the Catholic doctrine of indulgences, still less the unfortunate abuses for which this doctrine has provided occasion. But since it is reasonably clear that the Satisfaction Model really does say what I've said it does, and since it is equally clear that Catholics insist on making room for indulgences nevertheless, charity demands contemplating the possibility that there is *some* way to understand the granting of indulgences which renders it consistent with the Satisfaction Model.

As it happens one needn't look far for the basic outlines of such an understanding. To begin, if we grant the supposition that prayers offered on another's behalf can aid them in their sanctification while they are alive, then, inasmuch as the ties which "knit and bind" believers together in the "mystical body of Christ" cannot be broken by death, there is no principled reason to suppose that Christians cannot *pray* for the dead with the pious expectation that their prayers will make a difference to the purgatorial progress of the dearly departed.³³ This I take it is something with which anyone who believes in purgatory, and who concedes the efficacy of prayer, could agree. But if obtaining indulgences on behalf of the dead may be seen as an *extension* of the practice of praying for their advancement in sanctification—if it's motivated by the same convictions and anticipates the same results—then it follows that there is a way of understanding indulgences which is consistent with the Satisfaction Model. I am not, of course, claiming that anyone willing to countenance purgatory or praying for the deceased should *ipso facto* look favorably upon indulgences, or even that they shouldn't be hostile to the very idea of them. I am claiming that if there is a consistent set *S* of ecclesiological-cum-theological propositions such that *S* conjoined with the Satisfaction Model yields the possibility of granting or obtaining efficacious indulgences for the dead, then this practice is *not inconsistent* with the Satisfaction Model, regardless of whether the propositions in *S* are true or whether they're totally off the mark. To rephrase, my interest here is in whether Catholic belief concerning indulgences *contradicts* my understanding of the Satisfaction Model and thus disproves my contention that the theory of purgatory I've attributed to Catholicism is equivalent to the *Sanctification* Model; whether the doctrine of indulgences is actually *true* (or for that matter whether there's actually a purgatory containing souls to be indulged in the first place) is a question well beyond the scope of this paper.

In that spirit, then, consider Pope John Paul II's explanation of the Catholic Church's indulgence-granting behavior. Note first that the conception of purgatory with which he operates is identical to the one I have adumbrated above: the purpose of purgatory derives from the fact that although the believer is already reconciled with God he still "must be gradually 'healed' of the negative effects which sin has caused in him

³³And, for that matter, there's no reason to think departed souls couldn't return the favor. So St Augustine, *City of God* XX.9. I realize of course that the efficacy of petitionary prayer, (this understanding of) the communion of the saints, and the existence of purgatory are all controversial assumptions. I myself am prepared to accept them, but all I ask of my readers is to allow them for the sake of discussion.

(what the theological tradition calls the ‘punishments’ and ‘remains’ of sin)” prior to entering heaven, because communion with God requires that every “imperfection of the soul must be corrected” by Christ, who “removes from [souls in purgatory] the remnants of imperfection” in preparation for their heavenly reception. Accordingly, as above, the ‘temporal punishment’ a person suffers in purgatory “serves as a ‘medicine’ to the extent that the person allows it to challenge him to undertake his own profound conversion,” which is at bottom “the meaning of the ‘satisfaction’ required” of him before he attains to the beatific vision.³⁴ With this framework in place, the teaching on indulgences takes shape under the following two assumptions. First there is the conviction, previously voiced, that just “as in their earthly life believers are united in the one Mystical Body, so after death those who live in a state of purification [i.e., purgatory] experience the same ecclesial solidarity” they enjoyed during their tenure on earth, from which it follows that believers still undergoing their earthly pilgrimage may “offer up prayers and good works on behalf of [their] brothers and sisters in Purgatory.”³⁵ Second, there is the (no doubt more contentious) belief that under certain carefully specified conditions, the Church has the power to grant “a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven.” On this picture, then, the Church’s intercessory power makes it possible to assist souls in purgatory by *advancing their sanctification* in special, nonstandard ways, but nonetheless in ways that do not differ in kind from *praying* for them, and thus do not involve anything on the order of a forensic transaction absolving them of accumulated penalties or fines. Here is John Paul II:

The Church has a treasury . . . which is “dispensed” as it were through indulgences. This “distribution” should not be understood as a sort of automatic transfer, as if we were speaking of “things.” It is instead the expression of the Church’s full confidence of being heard by the Father when . . . she asks him to mitigate or cancel the painful aspect of punishment by fostering its medicinal aspect through other channels of grace. In the unfathomable mystery of divine wisdom, this gift of intercession can also benefit the faithful departed, who receive its fruits in a way appropriate to their condition. We can see, then, how indulgences, far from being a sort of “discount” on the duty of conversion, are instead an aid to its prompt generous and radical fulfillment.³⁶

Now whatever exactly one thinks about the distinctively Catholic ecclesiology underlying these claims, it is undeniably clear that *insofar as these ecclesiological claims are accepted* there is no conflict between belief in the *efficacy of indulgences* on the one hand and, on the other, the thesis that *purgatory’s exclusive purpose is to transform the lapsable into the sanctified*. In

³⁴Pope John Paul II, General Audience, Wednesday, 29 September 1999, §§2–3.

³⁵Pope John Paul II, General Audience, Wednesday, 4 August 1999, §6.

³⁶Pope John Paul II, General Audience, Wednesday, 29 September 1999, §4.

other words, there is *a* way of understanding indulgences for the dead (which, if John Paul II may serve as representative, isn't too far removed from how Catholics *do* understand indulgences) that is consistent with the Satisfaction Model of purgatory as I've laid it out. Unquestionably, it remains "unfathomably mysterious" how exactly the 'medicinal' feature of temporal punishments is supposed to be administered through an alternative "channel of grace" which brings about the desired sanctifying effect without the typical associated pains. But mystery isn't equivalent to inconsistency. And since my ambitions in this paper do not include trying to eradicate mysteries like this one, I am satisfied with the result that, mysterious or no, the doctrine of indulgences does not undermine my claim that the Satisfaction Model and the Sanctification Model may properly be considered one and the same.

One final concern should be addressed. If the Satisfaction Model truly is a "forward looking" theory oriented toward rehabilitation, sanctification and the like, what accounts for all the ideas about flames and torments and agonizing tortures and whatever else contributes to making the atmosphere of purgatory generally unpleasant? Aren't these assumptions concerning how much it *hurts* to get 'purged' much easier to reconcile with a view on which purgatory is more or less a temporary taste of hell, a place for people to go if they do not quite deserve to be consigned to the flames forever, but who do not deserve to pass into heaven entirely unscathed? And doesn't that suggest that my thesis is false, that the Satisfaction Model really is just about vindictive retributions after all?

Much could be said about the pain associated with purgation, and certainly much more than what I have the space³⁷ to say it in. For the present, then, I shall leave the task of responding to this question in the hands of St Catherine of Genoa, whose suggestive remarks about the pains of purgatory (circa 1490, about 50 years after the Council of Florence) seem a fitting way to pull together this article's main themes:

The basis of all the pains [of purgatory] is sin, whether original or actual. God created the soul pure, simple and clean from all stain of sin, with a beatific instinct towards the one from whom original sin, in which the soul presently finds itself, draws it away. When actual sin is added to this original sin, the soul is drawn still further from him. . . . When a soul draws near to the pure and clear state in which it was at its first creation, its beatific instinct is rediscovered and grows continually stronger with such force that any obstacle preventing the soul from finally reaching its goal appears to be unbearable. The more it glimpses this vision, the greater its pain. Because the souls in purgatory are without the guilt of sin, there is no obstacle between them and God except their pain, which holds them back so that they cannot reach perfection through this instinct. They can also see that this instinct is held back by a need for righteousness. For this reason, a fierce fire . . . comes into being, which is like that of Hell, with the

³⁷To say nothing of the competence; why "the flame of Everlasting Love/doth burn ere it transform," as Newman puts it, seems to me a question better left to the mystics.

exception of guilt. . . . And as for guilt, these souls are just as they were when they were originally created by God, in that God forgives immediately the guilt of those who have passed from this life distressed by their sins, and having confessed them and resolved not to commit them anymore. Only the corrosion of sin is left, and they are cleansed from this by pain in the fire. When they have been cleansed for all guilt, and united in their wills with God, they may see him clearly (to the extent that he makes himself known to them), and see also how much it means to enjoy him, which is the goal for which they have been created.³⁸

If we take into account St Catherine's insights, the painfulness of purgatory need not be taken as proof that its purpose on the Satisfaction Model differs from the point of purgation on the Sanctification approach. Indeed, St Catherine's remarks make it abundantly clear that the Protestant version of purgatory recently put forward in this Journal has been anticipated within the Catholic tradition centuries before this one, even if it has at times been differently expressed. Therefore, neither the existence of purgatory nor the purpose behind it constitutes an authentic point of division between Catholics and those Protestants who accept its reality.³⁹

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³⁸St Catherine of Genoa, *Treatise on Purgatory* III.5, in *The Christian Theology Reader*, ed. Alister McGrath (Blackwell: Oxford, 1995), p. 360.

³⁹Thanks to Tom Flint and two anonymous referees for their helpful remarks on a previous draft of this paper.