

An Unpublished Manuscript on Purgatory

Selected Passages

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Comments from the Introduction.

This manuscript contains very interesting statements about the life beyond the grave, particularly about Purgatory. The details are intermingled with much spiritual direction. Its authenticity is beyond doubt.

A nun, identified for us merely as Sister M. de L. C., of a convent at V., without warning began to hear prolonged sighs beside her. This was in November 1873. She cried out, "Oh, who are you, you frighten me. Whatever you do, don't show yourself. Tell me, who are you?" No answer was forthcoming. The sighs continued and even came nearer. In vain did the poor Sister multiply her prayers, communions, ways of the cross, and rosaries. The sighs did not cease and remained unexplained until February 15, 1874, when a voice she recognized was heard saying: "Do not be afraid, you will not see me in my sufferings. I am Sister M. G." Sister M. G. was a nun who had died at V., a victim to devotion and duty, February 22, 1871, at the age of 36.

The suffering soul then told her former companion whose advice she had often despised, that she would come frequently in order to help her sanctify herself. The plan of God was that Sister M. de L. C. by her holy life should relieve and ultimately deliver her, who in years past, had tried her patience so sorely. The answer did not lessen the fears of Sister M. de L. C., who requested her visitor to depart and never again return. But it was useless. She was told that she had only to bear it as long as God willed it. This was just what she dreaded. For several years the mysterious relation continued between the living nun and the departed religious. It was Sister M. de L. C., herself, who related these events from 1874 to 1890, in the manuscript which is here given to the public...

The Directors... are happy to be able to publish so edifying and impressive a work. A voice reaching out to us from beyond the grave makes known to us the justice and mercy of Purgatory, together with the instruction for a more perfect life of union with God, and will be helpful to many souls on their journey to eternity... We give the material as we have received it and we trust that it will foster a holy respect for Purgatory. Even if it merely deters those who say, "As long as I miss Hell, I shall be satisfied," it will have done great good.

All that follows, except for the section headings, is quoted directly from the suffering soul in Purgatory.

What happens to us immediately after death.

How can I describe what happens after the agony? It is impossible really to understand it unless one has passed through it. When the soul leaves the body it is as if it were lost in or, if I may say so, surrounded by God. It finds itself in such a bewildering light that in the twinkling of an eye it sees its whole life spread out, and at this sight, it sees what it deserves, and this same light pronounces its sentence. The soul

does not see God but is annihilated in His presence. If the soul is guilty as I was and, therefore, deserves to go to Purgatory, it is so crushed by the weight of the faults that still remain to be blotted out, that it hurls itself into Purgatory. It is only then that one understands God and His love for souls and what a terrible evil sin is in the eyes of the Divine Majesty.

We do not see God in Purgatory. That would make it Heaven.

I cannot explain to you how it is that we no longer see the earth as you do. This can only be understood when the soul has left the body, because then the earth which it has left, leaving there its body, seems to it as a mere speck compared with the vast unending horizons of eternity which then open before it.

What Purgatory is like.

No one can have a real understanding of the sufferings in Purgatory. No one thinks of them in the world.

I can tell you about the different degrees of Purgatory because I have passed through them. In the great Purgatory there are several stages. In the lowest and most painful, like a temporary hell, are the sinners who have committed terrible crimes during life and whose death surprised them in that state. It was almost a miracle that they were saved, and often by the prayers of holy parents or other pious persons. Sometimes they did not even have time to confess their sins and the world thought them lost, but God, whose mercy is infinite, gave them at the moment of death the contrition necessary for their salvation on account of one or more good actions which they performed during life. For such souls, Purgatory is terrible. It is a real hell with this difference, that in hell they curse God, whereas we bless Him and thank Him for having saved us.

Next to these come the souls, who though they did not commit great crimes like the others, were indifferent to God... They are in Purgatory for the long years of indifference. They suffer unheard of pains and are abandoned either without prayers or if they are said for them, they are not allowed to profit by them. There are in this stage of Purgatory religious of both sexes, who were tepid, neglectful of their duties, indifferent towards Jesus, also priests who did not exercise their sacred ministry with the reverence due to the Sovereign Majesty and who did not instill the love of God sufficiently into the souls confided to their care. I was in this stage of Purgatory.

In the second Purgatory are the souls of those who died with venial sins not fully expiated before death, or with mortal sins that have been forgiven but for which they have not made entire satisfaction to the Divine Justice. In this part of Purgatory, there are also different degrees according to the merits of each soul. Thus the Purgatory of the consecrated souls or of those who have received more abundant graces, is longer and far more painful than that of ordinary people of the world.

Lastly, there is the Purgatory of desire which is called the *Threshold*. Very few escape this. To avoid it altogether, one must ardently desire Heaven and the vision of God. That is rare, rarer than people think, because even pious people are afraid of God and have not, therefore, a sufficiently strong desire of going to Heaven. This Purgatory has its very painful martyrdom like the others. The deprivation of the sight of our loving Jesus adds to the intense suffering.

Sr. M. de L. C. asks the suffering soul: "Have you a more perfect knowledge of God than we have?"

What a question! Of course we know Him far better and love Him far more. Indeed, it is just that which causes our greatest suffering. On earth you simply do not know what God is. There, each one of you has an idea of what you think God is, according to your very limited knowledge, but when we leave our covering of clay and when nothing impedes the liberty of our souls, we at last begin to know God, His goodness, His mercy, His love. After this clearer view and the thirst for union, our souls yearn for God. This is our very life and we are forever repulsed because we are not sufficiently pure. This, in a word, is our worst suffering, the hardest, the most bitter. Oh, if only we were allowed to come back to earth, after knowing what God really is, what a different life we would lead! But what useless regrets, and yet on earth you do not think of these things and live as if you were blind. Eternity is of no account to you. The earth, which is only a journey and receives only the body which in itself turns to dust, is the sole object to which almost all of your desires tend and you do not even think of Heaven while Jesus and His love are entirely forgotten.

How long souls stay in Purgatory.

Each day thousands of souls come to Purgatory and most of them remain thirty to forty years, some for longer periods, others for shorter. I tell you this in terms of earthly calculations because here it is quite different. Oh, if people only knew and understood what Purgatory is and what it means to know that we are here through our own fault. I have been here eight years and it seems to me like ten thousand. Oh my God!

While you are still on earth, it is impossible to understand what God demands of a soul expiating its sins in Purgatory. You are under the impression that many prayers, well said, will place a soul almost at once in possession of eternal happiness. It is nothing of the kind. Who can fathom the judgments of God? Who can understand how pure a soul must be before He admits it to share His eternal happiness? Alas, if people only knew, if they would only consider it while still on earth, what different lives they would lead!

Spiritual advice to help us minimize our stay in Purgatory or perhaps even avoid it entirely.

Make it a practice to live in the presence of God with a pure intention. God seeks devoted souls who will love Him for His own sake. These are very few. He wants you to be one of His true friends. Many think they love God, but they love Him for their own sakes.

God desires you to think only of Him. Mortify your mind, your eyes, your tongue; that will be far more agreeable to God than corporal penances. These (corporal penances) all too often proceed from one's own will. You must treat God as your Father, as a dear friend, as a beloved spouse. You must pour out all the tenderness of your heart on Jesus alone and on Him wholly and entirely.

Your life must be one of unceasing interior acts of love and of mortification, but God alone must know of it. Do nothing extraordinary. Lead a very hidden life, yet one closely united to Jesus.

Sr. M. de L. C. asks the suffering soul: "Tell me, in what does true sanctity consist?"

You know that very well, but as you wish it I shall repeat it to you, though I have already told it to you many times. True sanctity consists in renouncing oneself from morning to night, in being a living sacrifice, in constantly putting aside the human self, in allowing God to work in and with you as He pleases, to receive the graces He sends you with profound humility, recognizing yourself quite unworthy of them, to live as constantly as possible in the Divine Presence, to perform all your actions under the eye of God, wanting Him only to be the witness of your efforts and your only reward. This is the sanctity wished for and demanded by Jesus of all those who desire to be His only and to live His life. All the rest is pure illusion.

Alas, how many lives seem to be filled with good works and at death are found empty. This is because all those actions that appeared to be good, all those showy works, all that conduct that seemed irreproachable — all these were not done for Jesus alone. Some will have their eyes opened when they come here to this life (in Purgatory). On earth they wanted to be made much of, to shine, to be thought very exact in religious observances, to be esteemed as perfect religious. This is the mainspring of so many lives. If you only knew how few people work for God and act for Him alone. Alas, at death, when they are no longer blinded, what regrets they will have. If only sometimes they would think of eternity. What is life compared to that day which will have no evening for the elect, or to that night which will have no dawning for the damned?

What are the few moments we have to pass on earth compared to eternity? At the hour of death, you will not find that you have done too much. Be very generous, do not listen to yourself but always look at the goal to which Jesus calls you. That is sanctity, pure love. Then go forward and never look back.

Oh, how little people on earth understand what a degree of detachment Jesus demands of a soul whom He wishes to make all His own. People think they love and will soon become saints because they feel a little more sensible devotion than usual, but all these natural devotions are as nothing. A soul must rise up and detach itself from its self-love, its passions, in order to free itself from all human love. It is hard, and how few there are who understand what all this means.

Accustom yourself to be always speaking heart to heart with Jesus, and let Him be the mainspring of all you do or say. Accustom yourself to speak to our Lord as to your most sincere and devoted friend.

You can do good for souls only in proportion as you are united to God. God is seeking for souls to repair the outrages which He receives; souls that love Him and make Him loved by others. He wants you to be of this number.

Live not just for heaven but for greatness in heaven

All things pass and pass quickly. Do not fret so much about things that will end one day. Aim at what will never end. By our holy actions united to Jesus, let us embellish our heavenly throne. Let us raise it up a few steps nearer to Him whom we shall contemplate and love throughout eternity.

The more a soul loves God on earth, the higher she advances in perfection, the more she will love and understand God in Heaven.