

C. S. Lewis on Purgatory

from *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*

Of course I pray for the dead. The action is so spontaneous, so all but inevitable, that only the most compulsive theological case against it would deter me. And I hardly know how the rest of my prayers would survive if those for the dead were forbidden. At our age, the majority of those we love best are dead. What sort of intercourse with God could I have if what I love best were unmentionable to him?

I believe in Purgatory.

Mind you, the Reformers had good reasons for throwing doubt on the “Romish doctrine concerning Purgatory” as that Romish doctrine had then become. . . .

The right view returns magnificently in Newman’s DREAM. There, if I remember it rightly, the saved soul, at the very foot of the throne, begs to be taken away and cleansed. It cannot bear for a moment longer “With its darkness to affront that light.” Religion has claimed Purgatory.

Our souls demand Purgatory, don’t they? Would it not break the heart if God said to us, “It is true, my son, that your breath smells and your rags drip with mud and slime, but we are charitable here and no one will upbraid you with these things, nor draw away from you. Enter into the joy”? Should we not reply, “With submission, sir, and if there is no objection, I’d rather be cleaned first.” “It may hurt, you know” - “Even so, sir.”

I assume that the process of purification will normally involve suffering. Partly from tradition; partly because most real good that has been done me in this life has involved it. But I don’t think the suffering is the purpose of the purgation. I can well believe that people neither much worse nor much better than I will suffer less than I or more. . . . The treatment given will be the one required, whether it hurts little or much.

My favourite image on this matter comes from the dentist’s chair. I hope that when the tooth of life is drawn and I am “coming round,” a voice will say, “Rinse your mouth out with this.” This will be Purgatory. The rinsing may take longer than I can now imagine. The taste of this may be more fiery and astringent than my present sensibility could endure. But . . . it will [not] be disgusting and unhallowed.

Two Perspectives on History

Directions: As you watch the video, an overview of the Early Middle Ages, make notes in the left column about new details that the video includes about this era that you do not recall from your Church history text. Following the video, add notes about key details that were included in your text that were not mentioned in the video. Optional: Take notes about the people, events, or developments that were significant enough to be included in both.

Details from the video	Included in both	Details from the text

1. How do the additional details in the video enhance your understanding of Church history during the Early Middle Ages? Give a specific example of something you understand better after watching the video.
2. How does looking at this era through the specific lens of Church history enhance your overall understanding of the era? What perspective does the textbook give you that the video alone would not have?

Name _____ Date _____

Handout 4-C

Church, State, and Individual Roles and Responsibilities

Directions: What should the role of the Church be in politics and government, and what are the responsibilities of religious leaders when it comes to these matters? What are the responsibilities of the government, and what are the responsibilities of an individual who is a member of both the Church and society at large? Answer these questions based on your assigned reading. Include information or quotes taken directly from the text, as well as information you can infer from your reading.

The Church needs to . . .

The government needs to . . .

The individual needs to . . .