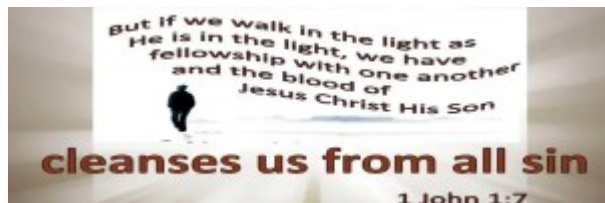


# The Papal System – XXXI. Sins Taken Away By Gifts And Favors



Continued from [XXX. The Catholic Church and Public Education.](#)

Nothing seems more astonishing than that intelligent men who have any knowledge of the Christian religion should ever imagine that gifts of property or money could blot out guilt, and cancel the record of it from the books of the judgment day. And yet nothing on earth is more certain than that this doctrine for centuries governed the leading men of Catholic Europe. It erected the most spacious and magnificent churches in the world; it founded and endowed hosts of those rich and grand old convents whose corpulent and lordly abbots, and idle throngs of unpopular monks invited covetous hands, and sanctioned general spoliation in some countries. To this doctrine the Church owed much of its power in the dark ages, much of that wealth which made her the owner of the fairest lands in Christendom, and not a few of those laws which gave her a towering supremacy over every corporation in the State and over the nation itself.

A rich sinner in the olden time bought a priestly title to heaven by founding a monastery; building a church; or by conferring some great favor on the clergy. And in the deed of gift he stipulated with scrupulous care that he made the donation: "*for the remission of his sins.*" The pious devotee, wishing a higher title to heavenly favor, followed in the same well-beaten path. The Church, through her ecclesiastical edifice, or bounty, with this solemnly expressed condition.

Let any one take up the history of some old abbey, and examine its charters, deeds, bequests, and other recorded benefactions of value; and he will find that almost every gift was bestowed, and every charter executed for the remission of the sins of the individual conferring the favor. The gates of heaven seemed open for all who would enrich the clergy and the Church.

## *St. Eligius in the Seventh Century,*

A great man for that age, says: "He is a good Christian who comes often to church, and brings his gifts to be laid on the altar of God, who does not taste of his produce till he has offered some of it to God. . Redeem your souls, says he, from punishment while you have the means in your power:—present oblations and tithes to the churches; bring candles to the holy places, according to your wealth:—and come often to the churches, and beg suppliantly for the intercession— *If ye do these things ye may come with confidence before the tribunal of the eternal God in the day of judgment and say: Give, Lord, for we have given.*" Such was the doctrine of the celebrated

Bishop of Noyon in France, a great missionary, and founder of churches in Holland, Friesland, and Suabia

*Ethelbald, King of the Mereians,*

In A.D. 726, promulgated a statute, declaring all monasteries and churches free from public taxes, works, and burdens, And this he did, "In consideration of his love of the heavenly land, and for the redemption of his own soul, determined by good works to make it free from all the bonds of sin."

*Offa, King of Mercia, founds St. Albans Convent.*

In A.D. 794 he went to Rome and solicited from the supreme pontiff, Adrian, the canonization of Alban, and the pope's counsel about founding a monastery in his honor. To this Adrian replied: "My most beloved son Offa, most mighty King of the English, we exceedingly commend your devotion about the first martyr of your kingdom, and we gladly consent to your request to build a monastery and to endow it with privileges, enjoining you, for the remission of your sins, that on your return home you shall, by the advice of your bishops and nobles, confer on the monastery of the blessed Alban whatever possessions or privileges you choose." Monastery building, according to Pope Adrian, secured the remission of sins.

*Bertulph, King of Mercia, gives a Charter to the Abbey of Croyland,*

In A. D. 851, in which he grants substantial gifts and favors to God and the blessed confessor St. Guthlac, "In behalf of the late King Wichtlaf, his brother and predecessor, and as a ransom for his own sins."

*Ethelwulf, King of the West Saxons, commands the performance of Charitable Deeds.*

In A.D. 856 he prepared a letter of instructions, or as we would say a will, directing that "Every tenth poor man in his hereditary possessions, native or foreigner, *for the benefit of his soul*, should be supplied, by his successors, with meat, drink, and clothing until the day of judgment; he commanded also three hundred mancuses (gold coins) to be carried to Rome for the good of his soul; to be distributed in the following manner; a hundred mancuses in honor of St. Peter, to buy oil for the lights of his church on Easter eve and at the cock crow; a hundred in honor of St. Paul, for the same purpose, and a hundred for the universal, apostolic pontiff."

The same Ethelweulf institutes Tithes.

In A.D. 855, shortly after his return from Rome, Ethelwulf, King of the West Saxons, with the "Free consent of all his prelates and chief men, for the first time endowed the whole Church of England with the tenths of all lands and other goods or chattels." And this he did, as he says: "For the forgiveness of my soul, and the remission of my sins." This unwise act was performed at Winchester in November 855, in the Church of St. Peter, before the great altar. All the archbishops and bishops in England were present and signed the document, thereby accepting it as a remedy to blot out Ethelwulf's

sins. Beorred, King of Mercia, Edmund, King of the East Angles, and a multitude of abbots, abbesses, dukes, earls, and others of the faithful, approved of the charter, and the dignitaries subscribed it. That charter has been executed ever since, and has burdened Englishmen for more than a thousand years. If anything could make the Saviour, whose blood, unaided, cleanses from all sin, hesitate in his career of resistless mercy, it would be the execution of a law compelling posterity to give the "tenths of all lands and other goods or chattels" to any church under heaven, thereby exciting endless heartburnings against religion; and indolence and arrogance among ministers of Jesus, independent of the love and confidence of their people.

*Beorred, King of Mercia, grants a Charter to Croyland.*

In A.D. 868, at the request of Earl Algar, Beorred confirms by charter all the lands bestowed on the monastery of Croyland, and its whole possessions and claims; and he took this step as he declares "as an almsgift for my own soul, and for the remission of my transgressions."

This charter was signed by Ceolnoth, Archbishop of Canterbury, confirmed by Elstan, Bishop of London, approved by Edmund, Bishop of Sherburn, commended by Alewin, Bishop of Winchester; Hynebert, Bishop of Lichfield, signed it; Ethelbert, Bishop of Hereford, made his cross upon it; and besides these many others ecclesiastics and nobles subscribed the document. The whole Church in England, high and low, accepted Beorred's charter as a remedy for his sins.

*King Edred confers a Charter on Croyland.*

In A.D. 948, Edred, holding "the temporal government of Great Britain," bestowed a very favorable charter on the Abbey of Croyland, of which his former minister Turketul was abbot: "The said gifts (in the charter)," he declares, "I have established and rendered lasting, to the praise of the Holy Trinity, and as a price of the ransom of my soul." The two archbishops, and four bishops sanctioned and signed the instrument, thereby accepting the doctrine that such acts took away sin.

*King Edgar bestows a Charter on Medeshamsted.*

And in this document he enumerates many gifts and favors which he confers, and he does this, he says: "By the grace of St. Peter, and out of affection for so valued a father (Bishop Ethelwold), and for the redemption of my soul." This charter was signed by all the leading ecclesiastics, including the two archbishops, showing their approval of its doctrine.

*William Rufus gives his Father's Treasures away.*

When William the Conqueror died, he left in Winchester sixty thousand pounds of silver, besides gold, precious stones, and jewels in vast quantities. His son and successor distributed them in accordance with the will of his father, bestowing on the greater churches, over the land, ten marks, and upon the smaller churches five shillings; and on each of the counties one hundred pounds for the relief of the poor. "And this he did *on behalf of the soul of*

*his father."*

*Canute confirms the rights of Glastonbury.*

In A.D. 1031, Canute visited the church of Glastonbury, and at the request of Ethelnoth, Archbishop of Canterbury, he confirmed the privileges of that renowned abbey; and this he did, as he says: "*For the love of heaven, and the pardon of my sins, and the remission of the transgressions of my brother, King Edmund.*"

*William the Conqueror founds Two Monasteries.*

By the salutary warnings of Remigius, Bishop of Dorchester, the victor of Hastings builds two abbeys "*for the atonement of his transgressions.*"

*King John deeds England and Ireland to the Pope.*

In A.D. 1213, this act, which has never found a parallel in the doings of English sovereigns, was consummated; and in the infamous document in which John transfers his dominions to Innocent III., he states that he offers, and freely grants to the pope, "*The whole kingdom of England, and the kingdom of Ireland, with all their rights and belongings for the remission of our sins, and those of our whole race (family) both living and dead.*" Such was the instrument, inspired, if not written by the pope, and ratified by him: showing that such a sacrifice could take away John's sins, in his distorted opinion.

*Henry III. makes good Laws.*

In A.D. 1236, this monarch, in a council at Merton, granted and established wholesome laws, and ordered them to be universally obeyed; and this he did, "*For the salvation of his own soul and that of his queen.*" He founded a house for Jewish converts in London, "*For the redemption of his own soul and that of his father.*"

In Burmah, it is said, that there is no such thing as love prompting an act. When relief is given to the poor, it is to obtain merit; when offerings are made on the altars, a similar motive prompts it; when supplications are made, the design is still the same. And it is asserted that a torrent of ridicule would greet the man who claimed to perform an act which seemed to be benevolent, from motives of pure compassion. So for ages in the Romish Church, while doubtless there were hosts of hearts full of pity, in acts for the public good, for charitable purposes, and for religious objects, the leading motive was precisely the one which governs the heathen followers of Gaudama: *the creation of merit*. It was for the "*good of their souls, to secure the pardon of their sins.*"

Promptings of this character bestowed the finest lands of Europe, stately ecclesiastical structures, and innumerable rich gifts on the Church; and similar motives led to the enactment of beneficent laws, and to the bestowment of immense benefits upon individuals and communities. So that ignorance of Isaiah's idea, as the Vulgate has it: "*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come up to the waters, and ye that have no money; hasten, buy, and*

eat; come, buy wine and milk without money, and without any return," conferred immense benefits occasionally on communities, and for centuries on ecclesiastics.

*This Doctrine lives in the Modern Catholic Church.*

Says Gavin: "In all families (in Spain) whatsoever, if any one is dangerously sick, there are continually friars and priests waiting till the person dies, and troubling the chief of the family with petitions for masses for the soul of the deceased; and if he is rich, the custom is to distribute among all the convents and parishes, one thousand or more masses, to be said the day of burial. When the Marquis of St. Martin died, his lady distributed a hundred thousand masses, for which she paid the very same day £5000, besides one thousand masses which she settled upon all the convents and parish churches, to be said each year forever." Surely here it was the money of the defunct marquis, which, in the estimation of the living, was to redeem his soul from the hot atmosphere of purgatory.

*A Man in Rome buys his own Soul out of Purgatory a few years since.*

The Rev. Mr. Seymour, when in the Eternal City, visited a church with a privileged altar; where one mass brings a soul from purgatory forthwith. Mr. Seymour witnessed the sale of this mass himself "to a large number of persons in the Basilica of Santa Croce di Gerusalemme in Rome. Each person stated the name of his friend in purgatory, paid four pauls, about forty cents, and received an acknowledgment in writing." He saw the same process at the Feast of the Assumption at Varallo in 1851; and he entered a bureau near the high altar of the principal church, and was received with marked politeness by the gentleman in charge of it, who opened a large account book, entered his name in it, and took his money; he then handed him the book in which he was to write the name of the soul to be released; there were twenty names just recorded in it, and to them Seymour added his own! He obtained a receipt, of which the following is a translation:

*"1851, Sept. 8th. THE SACRED MOUNT.*

"I, the undersigned, agent of the venerable fabric of the Sacred Mount of Varallo, have received from Mr. Hobart Seymour the charity of one shilling and eight pence, for one mass to be celebrated at the perpetually privileged daily altar of the most blessed Virgin Mary in Varallo.  
"In Witness, Agno Bertous."

For forty cents a soul can be rescued from purgatory forthwith, by this system. Says Seymour: "The murderer and his victim may be released from the sufferings of another world by a small sum in this, and where such a system prevails, it ceases to be a matter of surprise that crime should abound in all its most dark and terrible features."

*The Mission Book has substantially the same Doctrine.*

It says: "There is also an indulgence of one hundred days for every time we lodge a poor person, or give him alms in his necessity, or perform some other

work of mercy..... All these indulgences are applicable to the souls in purgatory." Gifts bribe God for his favor.

*The Council of Trent teaches this Doctrine.*

One of its leading canons reads:

"If any one shall say that the satisfactions by which penitents redeem their sins through Jesus Christ, are not the worship of God, but traditions of men, obscuring the doctrine of grace, and the true worship of God, and the benefit itself of the death of Christ; let him be accursed."

No matter whether the satisfactions are sufferings, meritorious prayers, or purchased masses, the great fact is asserted by the Council of Trent, that *"Penitents can redeem their sins through Jesus Christ,"* not that he has bought them; but that they, through payments or pains, can redeem their iniquities *themselves*.

*The Priests must have a proper Price for their Masses, or one Mass must stand for a Number.*

There was a serious difficulty in the times of the Council of Trent; many pious persons, as religion was then understood, requested masses in the most solemn manner from the clergy of particular churches, where they had been accustomed, when living, to worship God, and in their last testament, they had left a sum of money to be paid annually for these sacrifices; but the amount was small, and the priests could not afford to bring souls out of purgatory without a proper hire, and it was impossible, in many cases, to procure the services of these unwedded priests, whose expenses need not be great. In cases of this class, the ecclesiastical authorities were authorized to make a compromise, most probably permitting one mass to be offered up for ten, twenty, or more; so that all the dead would be remembered, and the priest not be overtaxed. No other interpretation can be put on the following decree of authoritative Trent:

"It happens frequently in certain churches, either that so great a number of masses is required to be celebrated by various legacies left by the departed, that it is impossible to give satisfaction thereto on the special days appointed by the testators, or that such alms left for celebrating the masses are so slender that it is not easy to find any one who wishes to subject himself to that duty; whereby the pious intentions of testators are frustrated, and occasion is given for burthening the consciences of those whom the aforesaid obligations concern. The holy synod, desiring that these bequests for pious uses should be satisfied in the most complete and useful way possible, gives authority to bishops in diocesan synod, and likewise to abbots and generals of orders, that in their general chapters they shall ordain in regard to this matter, whatsoever in their consciences they shall, upon a diligent examination of the circumstances, ascertain to be most expedient for God's honor and worship, and the good of the churches, in those churches aforesaid, which they shall find to stand in need of such provision; in such wise, however, that a commemoration be always made of the departed, who, for the welfare of their souls, have left the said bequests for pious

uses.”

The Council does not command the bishops and abbots to order their avaricious priests to offer up a mass for every one who has left a legacy, however small, for that purpose, as it ought to have done. That was what the deceased in his life wanted. No, the bishops in their synods, and the abbots in their chapters, are to make some different provision for such cases; and as all the dead testators are to be commemorated in a mass, and that not a separate one for each, it is one for all; or, at least, a few masses to represent all. Money, according to the Council of Trent, brings souls out of purgatory, or it keeps them in it. When the prices of masses are slender, none will be offered up, unless a heap of masses can be discharged by one; and the small prices of many form a handsome reward for a solitary mass. That all Catholic priests are of the class recognized in this decree as despising the masses with “slender” wages, we do not believe. But the council recognizes the fact that masses are to be paid for, and that there may be few oblations when they are not appreciated at a respectable pecuniary value.

Gavin speaks of a grant given by the pope to some friars in his country, by which one mass is said instead of a hundred, and this one is “equivalent to a hundred masses.” Fifty-two masses celebrated in the year would count for 5200, and these sold at a price equal to twenty-eight cents each, if they could be all disposed of, would bring some fifteen hundred dollars; so that each friar, if he only celebrated one mass every week, and obtained the ordinary price paid for it in Spain, could live most comfortably. But all this is salvation by money, when God, in the Vulgate, says: “The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from every sin.”

Continued in [XXXII. No Salvation for Protestants](#)

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