The True Life in God Prophetic Revelations and Purgatory

Question: Can you tell me where purgatory is found in the Bible or in the True Life in God messages?

Response: The existence of "purgatory" (which literally means *a place of purgation* of one's sins that have been forgiven, but whose punishment has not been fully expiated) is found of both Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. In Scripture it is based on the practice of prayer for the dead. In 2 Maccabees 12:39–45, the Bible Judas Maccabeus offering prayers and sacrifice for dead soldiers so they might be absolved of sin, indicating a post-mortem state where prayers help: *"Therefore Judas Maccabeus] made atonement for the dead that they might be delivered from their sin."* And Scripture teaches that nothing unclean will enter the presence of God in heaven (Rev. 21:27). Also Jesus teaches on Luke's Gospel, *"I tell you, you will never get out till you have paid the very last penny"* (Luke 12:59). In the Book of Job 1:15, Job offers sacrifices and prayers for his deceased sons and his children so that they might be in the next life "purified." If there is no purgatory there would be no need to offer sacrifices for the dead. The Church Father and Doctor St. Augustine (4th century) taught in *The City of God* that *"temporary punishments are suffered by some in this life only, by others after death, by others both now and then; but all of them before that last and strictest judgment"* (City of God, Bk. 21, ch.13).

From its beginning the Church has honored the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them. If there is no purgatory then there is no need to pray *for* them but only *to* them if they are in heaven, and if they are in hell no prayers can benefit them. The Church also commends for the relief of the sufferings endured by the souls in purgatory almsgiving, works of mercy and of penance, and indulgences during Jubilee Years and on the Feast Day of "Divine Mercy Sunday," which is a devotion revealed by Jesus to St. Faustina and approved by Pope Saint John Paul II.

In the ecclesially approved True Life in God prophetic revelations Jesus often speaks of the importance of praying for "souls in purgatory" in order to relieve and free them from its "purifying fires."[1] He tells Vassula that "fervent love" and "sacrifices," including "troubles" experienced, may be offered up these suffering souls.[2]

[1] TLIG messages of September 30, 1989, December 31, 2000, September 18, 1988, February 19, 1987, March 6, 1995, September 7, 1992, June 3, 1987, August 18, 1991, December 22, 1990, September 10, 1990, November 10, 1995, April 2, 1989, October 23, 1988, March 26, 1987, March 7, 1987, January 21, 1987, August 19, 1988, October 15, 1988, February 10, 1987, July 22, 1987.
[2] TLIG, July 22, 1987; September 18, 1988; September 30, 1989; November 3, 1989; August 18, 1991.

Question: Why do some eastern churches not acknowledge purgatory? Some say that after death the soul journeys on earth for anywhere from three to nine to forty days before going to heaven or hell without any purgatory. I could not find this is teaching in the Bible, and am wondering why it is promoted by some in the east as a devotion or a tradition.

Response: The teaching that after death all souls must journey anywhere from three to nine to forty days is not found in the Bible or in the writings of the early Church Fathers, and appears at variance with Jesus' words to the good thief on the cross, *"Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise"* (Lk. 23:43). If some refer to this as a teaching regarding *all* souls as a tradition (lower case "t) and others as a pious devotion, it does not for that matter constitute part of the Church's Sacred Tradition (upper case "T"), for it lacks the continuity and scope of universal ecclesial teaching authority of the Church – including her sacred authors, Church Fathers, Doctors and Ecclesial Writers – from the early centuries of Christianity.

This pious teaching finds its beginnings with a man named Marcarius of Alexendria who is said to have had a vision from an angel. Marcarius, a desert monk priest who lived in the 4th century, asserted that he saw what he believed to be the soul's journey from death to eternal life that spanned from roaming the earth (days 1-2), to its first ascent (day 3), to heavenly contemplation (days 3-9), to a series of "toll houses" where it faces accountability for its sins and beholds places of torment or hell (days 9-40), finally to receiving a temporary place in the next life until the General Resurrection (day 40). It is noteworthy that the visions of individuals, even those of saints and exemplars, share discrepancies, e.g., the details in the visions of the Lord's Passion by St. Bridgette, Blessed Anne C. Emmerich, the Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta, Maria Valtorta, etc. vary and do not always agree with each other.[3] With respect to Marcarius' vision, while some falsely attribute to him an explicit rejection of purgatory and its cleaning fire, he,

[3] There are several reasons for discrepancies in the visions of holy individuals whose names the Church has raised to her altars. For example, the revelation may have been later altered *involuntarily* by the recipient. This happens especially with intellectual locutions (received without words) which need to be translated into words. Also, when a revelation is received, it occurs in an instant and often days, weeks or months transpire before it is written down. Furthermore, several saints who had visions experienced intense mystical sufferings on account of which their recall of details contained in the vision were unintentionally compromised. St. Bridget admits such a thing in her own case. Moreover St. Hannibal di Francia stated:

"Conforming to prudence and sacred accuracy, people cannot deal with private revelations as if they were canonical books or decrees of the Holy See. Even the most enlightened persons, especially women, may be greatly mistaken in the visions, revelations, locutions, and inspiration. More than once has the divine operation been restrained by human nature. For example, who could ratify in full all the visions of Catherine Emmerich and St. Brigitte, which show evident discrepancies? I love the private revelations of holy persons, but I never accept everything.

Were I to publish revelations, I would eliminate or revise what is inconsistent with a sound criterion, or reliable tradition, or opinions of sacred, learned writers. I think of behaving prudently... My dear father, to consider any expression of the private revelations as dogma or propositions near of faith is always imprudent!... This is proved by experience, by the mystical theologians, such as St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa, Castrotevere, Poulain, etc... We cannot consider their revelations and the locutions as words of Scripture. Some of them must be omitted, and others explained in a right, prudent meaning."

much like Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, rather internalized the concept of 'fire.'[4] He attributes to fire the main function of purification, that is, the catharsis of the human being, and commonly this image of fire involves purification and removal of transgression. In Marcarius' text there emerges a strong connection between the image of divine fire and the Holy Spirit. The fire of the Spirit is neither an external fire nor one of punishment, but the result of the internal workings of the Spirit of Christ, permeating and operating within the human being that purifies, strengthens, recreates, perfects and builds the heavenly image of Christ in the human being. While Marcarius does not mention purgatory, he neither explicitly rejects the cleansing action of fire which in the west is often associated with it.

In addition to Marcarius there was the 14th-century monk Mark of Ephesus, who perplexingly rejected the teachings of several of the Church's Ecumenical Councils (e.g., the 13th century Councils of Lyons whose teachings were later adopted and developed by the 15th century Council of Florence and 16th the century Council of Trent) when denying that purgatory is a "place" as well as "purgatorial suffering and [its] temporal fire."[5] Mark does not provide any biblical and traditional support for his assertion,[6] but refers to a personal episode in the life of Marcarius. When citing in support of his assertion the Pentecost prayer of St. Basil, he incorrectly attributes to him the concept of "Hades" which Basil refers to as (the lowest stage of) purgatory,[7] but which he refers to as hell. Indeed Mark asserts that the only fire in the next life is the eternal fire endured by the souls damned to hell, but that prayers can "deliver" them from hell[8] – a teaching that appears at variance with Sacred Scripture.[9]

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[4] Marcarius writes: *"Only spirit from Spirit and fire from Fire remove the power of the evil darkness… The baptism of the Law is the shadow of the true things given through the new Law. For the baptism of the Law washed the body, but now a baptism of Fire and Spirit purifies and washes the impure mind"* (Macarius H 32.4. Cf. n. 50).

[5] Mark states: *"If souls have departed this life in faith and love, while nevertheless carrying away with themselves certain faults… such souls, we believe, must be cleansed from this kind of sins, but not by means of some purgatorial fire or a definite punishment in some place… others must be cleansed after the departure from the body, either while remaining in the same earthly place, before they come to worship God and are honored with the lot of the blessed, or — if their sins were more serious and bind them for a longer duration — they are kept in Hades, but not in order to remain forever in fire and torment, but as it were in prison and confinement under guard…*

We see no necessity whatever for any other punishment or for a cleansing fire; for some are cleansed by fear, while others are devoured by the gnawing of conscience with more torment than any fire, and still others are cleansed only the very terror before the divine glory and the uncertainty as to what the future will be" (1st Homily of Mark of Ephesus on Purgatory).

[6] The Greeks teach that there is a temporal punishment in the next life for sinful souls consists who for a time depart into a place of darkness and sorrow, are punished by being deprived of the Divine light, and are purified by means of prayers, the Holy Eucharist, and deeds of charity, and not by (a material) fire.

[7] "*Who also, on this all-perfect and saving feast, art graciously pleased to accept propitiatory prayers for those who are imprisoned in Hades, granting us a great hope of improvement for those who are imprisoned from the defilements which have imprisoned them, and that Thou wilt send down Thy consolation"* (St. Basil the Great's Pentecost Prayer [the third kneeling prayer at vespers]).

[8] *"We entreat God and believe to deliver the departed from eternal torment, and not from any other torment or fire apart from those torments and that fire which have been proclaimed to be forever"* (op. cit., 1st Homily of Mark of Ephesus).

[9] Mat. 5:22; 5:29-30; 10:28; 13:41-42; 18:9; 23:15; 25:46; 25:41; 33; 46; 47-50; Mk. 9:43-47; Lk. 12:5; James 3:6; 2 Peter 2:4; Rev. 20:10; 20:14-15; 21:8.

Mark asserts that the faithful who have died with small unconfessed sins, or who have not brought forth fruits of repentance for sins they have confessed, are cleansed of these sins either in the trial of death itself with its fear, or after death, when they are confined in hell temporarily by the prayers and Liturgies of the Church and good deeds performed for them by the faithful. He further maintains that sinners destined for eternal damnation and torment can be given a certain relief from their torment in hell by these means also.

Thirdly, a third 3rd century man who called himself "Basil the Younger" – whose existence scholars debate to this day – is alleged to have had a vision of "areal toll houses" in the next life. These 'toll houses' were 'places' that the soul visits for forty days after death where it encounters demons at various points who then attempt to accuse it of sin and, if possible, drag it to hell. Basil the Younger makes the claim that the soul can be ransomed from "hades".[10]

In addition to the Church Councils the ecclesially approved True Life in God prophetic revelations upholds the reality of purgatory and its "purifying fires" endured by the souls that go there."[11] Also the teachings of the Councils of Lyons and Florence state that the soul goes "immediately" (*mox*) to purgatory, heaven or hell. And the Council of Trent made the following doctrinal statement: *"If anyone says that after the grace of justification has been received the guilt is so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out for any repentant sinner, that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be paid, either in this world or in the other, in purgatory, before access can be opened to the kingdom of heaven, anathema sit ["let him be anathema" or excommunicated]"* (Canon 30, Decree on Justification, Sixth Session, 1547).

The Catholic Church, instructed by the Holy Ghost, has, from the sacred writings and the ancient tradition of the Fathers, taught, in sacred councils, and very recently in this ecumenical Synod, that there is a Purgatory, and that the souls there detained are helped by the suffrages of the faithful, but principally by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar; the holy Synod enjoins on bishops that they diligently endeavour that the sound doctrine concerning Purgatory, transmitted by the holy Fathers and sacred councils, be believed, maintained, taught, and everywhere proclaimed by the faithful of Christ" (Decree on Purgatory, Twenty Fifth Session, 1563).

Furthermore, the writings of the Church's saints address the varying levels in purgatory in which souls suffer in proportion to their unexpiated sins. This is particularly evident in the writings of Ss. Bridgette, Frances of Rome and in *An Unpublished Manuscript on Purgatory* that bear the Church's Imprimatur seal of approval, and which describe three main levels: In the highest level one experiences a yearning desire due to the deprivation of the sight of God and not

[10] Sacred Scripture and the Church's councils teach that hell is an eternal place and that souls in hell cannot be ransomed therefrom. The 2nd Council of Constantinople II in the 6th century condemned *apokatastasis* (the universal salvation of all souls and the devil), and, along with the 4th Lateran Council and the Council of Trent, it rejected the view that the punishment of hell in the afterlife is temporary or that all will eventually be reconciled to God.
[11] Cf. TLIG messages of August 19, 1988; September 18, 1988; April 2, 1989; November 3, 1989.

the suffering that accompanies the lower levels.[12] In the lowest level, marked by the most suffering, are those who have committed terrible crimes during life and whose death surprised them, but were saved as if by a miracle.[13] This eccesially approved work, as well as the True Life in God prophetic revelations reveal that "many souls"[14] spend "many years" in purgatory.[15]

St. Thomas Aquinas states of some souls in (the lowest level of) purgatory, *"even the demons, who rejoice in the punishment of man, accompany them and stand by while they are being cleansed, both that they may be sated with their pains, and that when these leave their bodies, they may find something of their own in them"* (*Summa Theologica, supplementum partis* III, q. 2, a. 3).

Unlike the souls in hell who experience perpetual despair, hatred and torture, the souls in purgatory experience neither of these as their wills are perfectly united with and compliant to the will of God, even in their state of desire and/or suffering. Rather, they experience profound hope (greater than any saint on earth) while they are being cleansed, as they possess with absolute certitude the knowledge that they will be perpetually united with God and the communion of saints and angels in the beatific vision. For this reason St. Francis de Sales states, *"Their bitterest anguish is soothed by a certain profound peace. It is a kind of Hell as regards the suffering; it is a Paradise as regards the delight infused into their hearts by charity."* And St. Catherine of Genoa adds, *"There is no peace to be compared with that of the souls in purgatory, except that of the saints in paradise, and this peace is ever increased by the inflowing of God into these souls, which increases in proportion as the impediments to it are removed."* These conciliar teachings are rediscovered in the True Life in God prophetic revelations where Jesus reveals the

[12] This teaching is reiterated in the TLIG message of October 23, 1988; December 31, 2000.
[13] The lowest level of purgatory being close to hell is found in the TLIG messages of March 26, 1987; June 3, 1987.
[14] Jesus reveals: *"If you only knew how many souls suffer now in purgatory … deliver them from purgatory to be able to come to Me; they are craving to be with Me, but they are unable to, because of the blemishes on their soul; deliver them by prayers and by sacrifices; deliver them by loving Me, by adoring Me; deliver them by chaining yourself to Me and My Cross; deliver them by acts of love; deliver them by sharing My sufferings; Vassula, these souls languish for Me and to be united to Me again and forever, but they must purify themselves first before being in My Presence;"*
[Vassula:] "'*Lord, You said: "and be united to me again…' Have they been with You after their death for sometime?"*
[Jesus:] *"I have delivered their soul from their body, I have shown them My Holy Face for just an instant, and at that very instant, their eyes, unveiled, facing Me in My Purity and in My Light, immediately saw The Truth face to face and realised how blemished their soul is from sin; and, in spite of their burning desire to fall in My open arms1 and follow Me, they understand that this is impossible before cleaning their soul; so with a piercing pain of sorrow, they fall back and prepare themselves to be purified; this hurts and burns them beyond words, because they cannot see Me, My absence is burning them, and the cause of their greatest suffering in purgatory is My Absence; they also undergo other sorts of sufferings, with fire, depending their sins"* (TLIG, August 19, 1988).
[15] Jesus reveals: "*In these days of ordeal for you, I have attracted many souls to My Heart and I have also liberated many souls from purgatory who were bound for many years! see? nothing goes in vain; ah! My Heart is like on fire now, for through your sufferings I can do great things!"* (TLIG, November 10, 1995).

importance of praying for the "souls in purgatory" in order to free them from their "purifying fires."[16]

I hope this information has been helpful.

In Christ,
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Nov. 8, 2026

[16] Cf. footnote 1.